Together with God

Stories of Faith

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Editor

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From Our Daily Bread Ministries
A Lesson in Patience

PSALM 37:1–9

*Be still before the LORD and wait patiently for him; do not fret when people succeed in their ways, when they carry out their wicked schemes.*

**Psalm 37:7**

It may take only a year for a construction crew to put up a tall building, but God takes a century to grow a sturdy oak. So too, the Lord may seem to be working slowly to accomplish His purposes in our lives, but His grand designs take time.

The great New England preacher Phillips Brooks (1835–1893) was noted for his poise and quiet manner. At times, however, even he suffered moments of frustration and irritability. One day a friend saw him pacing the floor like a caged lion. “What’s the trouble, Dr. Brooks?” asked the friend. “The trouble is that I am in a hurry,” said Brooks, “but God isn’t.” Haven’t we often felt the same?

Jonathan Goforth (1859–1936), a missionary to China, was convinced that the city of Changte should be his field of spiritual labor. But his faith was severely tested as he was mobbed and threatened when visiting the city. Finally, after six frustrating years, Goforth was granted permission to begin his work. Within three days of reaching Changte he had received no less than thirty-five offers of land, among them the very site he had chosen earlier as the most ideal spot for the mission.

Wait patiently for the Lord (Psalm 37:7). If you do, you’ll find that He will give you what’s best—in His time!

**Henry Bosch**

*God is never in a hurry, but He is always on time.*
Mary’s Bible

Psalm 119:97–104

*I delight in your commands because I love them.*

Psalm 119:47

When Mary Jones was ten years old, she began saving money for something special she wanted to buy. She babysat, tended neighbors’ gardens, and sold eggs from her own chickens. By the time she was sixteen, she had accumulated enough money to get what she so desperately wanted.

Was it a new car? A fresh wardrobe? A new cell phone? No, Mary Jones was sixteen in the year 1800, and what she had been saving for was a Bible. But there was no place to buy one in the tiny Welsh village where she lived, so she walked to Bala—twenty-five miles away. There Rev. Thomas Charles had one Bible left to sell, and after some convincing, Mary talked him into selling it to her.

Because of Mary’s hunger for the Bible, Rev. Charles and others began discussing the need of making the Scriptures more readily available. The British and Foreign Bible Society was started, and during the next one hundred years it distributed more than two hundred million copies of God’s Word worldwide. To Mary, nothing was more important than the Bible, and her persistence paid huge spiritual dividends.

Do we treasure God’s Word as much? How often do we even walk across the room to pick up the Bible and read it?

*Lord, help us to cherish your Word.*

Dave Branon

Many people store the Bible on the shelf instead of in their heart.
I See You

PSALM 121

The Lord will watch over your coming and going both now and forevermore.

Psalm 121:8

When Xavier was two, he darted into one aisle after another in a small shoe store. Hiding behind stacks of shoeboxes, he giggled when my husband, Alan, said, “I see you.”

Moments later, I saw Alan dash frantically from aisle to aisle, calling Xavier’s name. We raced to the front of the store. Our child, still laughing, ran toward the open door leading to a busy street. Within seconds, Alan scooped him up. We embraced as I thanked God, sobbed, and kissed Xavier’s chubby cheeks.

A year before I became pregnant with Xavier, I’d lost our first child during the pregnancy. When God blessed us with our son, I became a fearful parent. Our shoe store experience proved I wouldn’t always be able to see or protect our child. But I discovered peace as I learned to turn to my only sure source of help—God—when I struggled with worry and fear.

Our heavenly Father never takes His eyes off His children (Psalm 121:1–4). While we can’t prevent trials, heartache, or loss, we can live with confident faith, relying on an ever-present Helper and Protector who watches over us (vv. 5–8).

We may encounter days when we feel lost and helpless. We may also feel powerless when we can’t shield loved ones. But we can trust that our all-knowing God never loses sight of us—His precious and beloved children.

Xochitl Dixon

God always keeps His eye on His children.
Listeners and Doers

JAMES 1:22–27

Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world.

James 1:27

The phone rang in the night for my husband, a minister. One of the prayer warriors in our church, a woman in her seventies who lived alone, was being taken to the hospital. She was so ill that she was no longer eating or drinking, nor could she see or walk. Not knowing if she would live or die, we asked God for His help and mercy, feeling particularly concerned for her welfare. The church sprang into action with a round-the-clock schedule of visitors who not only ministered to her but showed Christian love to the other patients, visitors, and medical staff.

James’s letter to the early Jewish Christians encouraged the church to care for the needy. James wanted the believers to go beyond just listening to the Word of God and to put their beliefs into action (1:22–25). By citing the need to care for orphans and widows (v. 27), he named a vulnerable group, for in the ancient world the family would have been responsible for their care.

How do we respond to those who are at risk in our church and community? Do we see caring for the widows and orphans as a vital part of the exercise of our faith? May God open our eyes to the opportunities to serve people in need everywhere.

Amy Boucher Pye

True faith demands not only our words, but our actions.
An Athlete Dying Young

ISAIAH 55:6–11

“For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways,” declares the LORD.

ISAIAH 55:8

No one ever played college basketball like Pete Maravich. He was a ball-handling wizard and a scoring machine who broke nearly every major college scoring record. Ten years as an NBA star and millions of dollars later, he retired—unhappy and empty.

But that’s not the end of the story. In 1983, Pete surrendered his life to Christ. For the next four years, his driving passion was to share with others the wonderful joy he had found in Jesus. Then, early in 1988, he died suddenly of heart failure. He was only forty years old. Why did God take him so soon?

Why didn’t He allow Pete to continue leading people to Christ with his hard-hitting testimony? Perhaps Pete’s autopsy report holds the answer. Doctors discovered that Pete had a congenital heart problem that should have prevented him from playing basketball. Suddenly, we could get just a glimpse of God’s marvelous ways. He didn’t take Pete early; He preserved his life until he had accepted Christ and made his testimony known.

When death claims a believer who is still in the prime of life, we wonder why. That’s natural. But our wondering should never lead to abandoning the reality of God’s goodness or wisdom. He remains trustworthy. His ways are higher, and so much better, than our ways.

D A V E  B R A N O N

The more clearly we see God’s sovereignty, the less perplexed we are by man’s calamities.
The Secret of Strength

**HEBREWS 11:32–40**

*That is why, for Christ’s sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong.*

*2 Corinthians 12:10*

If there’s anything we tend to despise, it’s weakness. Strength, on the other hand, is regarded as praiseworthy. But the apostle Paul made a puzzling statement: “When I am weak, then I am strong” (2 Corinthians 12:10).

How could he say that? He discovered that when his own strength gave out and his personal resources of energy and wisdom were depleted, he had to rely completely on God’s inexhaustible grace. When he did that, his experience was like that of a traveler in the desert who tosses aside his bone-dry canteen because he has come to an oasis with an abundant supply of crystal-pure water.

Hudson Taylor (1832–1905), founder of the China Inland Mission (now OMF International), knew the secret of strength through weakness. Complimented once by a friend on the impact of the mission, Hudson answered, “It seemed to me that God looked over the whole world to find a man who was weak enough to do His work, and when He at last found me, He said, ‘He is weak enough—he’ll do.’ All God’s giants have been weak men who did great things for God because they reckoned on His being with them.”

Have we learned the secret of abandoning our utterly inadequate self-sufficiency in order to draw on the resources of God’s unlimited power?

**Vernon Grounds**

To experience God’s strength, we must recognize our weakness.
A friend of mine, Elizabeth-Ann, was single and radiantly contented. “But how is that possible?” she was often asked. To answer this question, she wrote a book titled Complete As One, which is based on Colossians 2:10. She recalls being challenged years ago by a comment about a friend: “You know what I appreciate about June [another friend]? She’s so satisfied with Christ.”

That phrase, “satisfied with Christ,” left a profound impact on Elizabeth-Ann. She was twenty-one at the time and had been converted three years earlier. Her friends were getting engaged and married, and she was happy for them. But she was hearing comments like, “Have you seen how radiant Mary is?” and “I’ve never seen John so happy.” This set her to thinking: These friends are Christians. Certainly it is appropriate for them to radiate happiness, but why do they have to get a spouse before they experience the joy and fulfillment Christians should have? So she began praying, “Lord, I don’t want to marry until I have learned to be satisfied with you.”

Elizabeth-Ann remained single, yet she believes that God has answered her prayer. She is rooted and built up in Christ. And that’s the key to completeness—whether married or single.

Joanie Yoder

For lasting satisfaction, put God’s will first.