

GOD IS OUR REFUGE AND MIGHT

Our fourth quarter *Today's Light* readings are the Books of Nehemiah, Esther, Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Song of Solomon.

In October, we begin with God raising up Nehemiah to oversee the repair of Jerusalem's wall, despite fierce opposition. These walls were crucial in reestablishing Jerusalem and the temple in preparation for Christ's coming. In Esther, God saves His people from the wicked plots of a politically ambitious man. We close out the month with Job, whose intense suffering gives us a glimpse of God's compassionate care amid our own suffering.

We take the whole month of November to work through the Book of Psalms. We see the wide variety of life experiences represented in the pleas, prayers, and songs of thanksgiving of the various psalmists.

In December, we work through the rest of Scripture's wisdom literature. We begin with the wise sayings of Proverbs, which counsel young people in holy and godly living. Ecclesiastes explores the vanity of life on earth without God, no matter how successful any of us might be. We close with Song of Solomon, a book that shows us the depth of our Savior's love for His Church—a love that moved Him to step down from His throne in heaven and to be born of a virgin.

May our Lord richly bless your reading.

In Jesus' name,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Peggy Kuehne". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.



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Edited by Peggy Kuethe

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HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

1. Make an “appointment with Jesus.” Ink it into your daily calendar. You will need about twenty minutes.
2. Forestall interruptions. Turn off your phone and TV. Close your door. Do whatever you need to do to be alone with your Lord.
3. Establish a routine that suits your schedule and daily rhythms. Choose a time and place you will be comfortable, relaxed, and focused on the Word of God.
4. Start with prayer. Ask God to meet with you, to teach you, and to give you a heart that is open to the work of the Holy Spirit. Ask Him to personalize His Word to your circumstances today. Then talk with Him while you read.
5. Pray as you close. Ask God to bring His Word back to your mind as you need His help today. See the daily prayer list at the end of this issue.

<p>GET THE BIG PICTURE Gives you a helpful overview of the day's text before you read the passage.</p>	<p> Get the Big Picture Nehemiah's book begins about twelve years after Ezra's reformation in Jerusalem (Ezra 9–10). As the cupbearer for the king, Nehemiah holds a position of honor and responsibility in Persia. Nonetheless, he remembers his spiritual roots and identifies with his people—God's covenant people. Look for evidence of this as you read.</p> <p> Sharpen the Focus If you catch a group of children in some rule-breaking activity, you'll usually also find fingers pointing in all directions: <i>She started it. I just watched. We just got here. He did it first.</i> Even adults sometimes squirm as we wrestle with the temptation to avoid responsibility for our actions.</p> <p>In light of this tendency, then, how much more amazing Nehemiah's prayer becomes. As far as we know, Nehemiah had never even been in Jerusalem. But notice his confession:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• I confess] the sins . . . which we have sinned (v. 6).• We have acted very corruptly (v. 7).• [We] have not kept the commandments . . . that you commanded (v. 7). <p>Like Moses before him, like Samuel and Daniel and Ezra. And like Jesus Himself! Nehemiah stands beside his brothers and sisters in the faith, not to accuse or shame them but to share their grief and to ask for pardon.</p> <p>As we grow in Christlikeness, we will find the Holy Spirit nudging us to pray the same kind of prayers for our congregation and for His Church throughout the world. Not from arrogant hearts, but from hearts broken by the pain sin brings into the lives of those whom God so loves.</p> <p> Zoom In The Lord heard and answered Nehemiah's prayer for mercy, as the rest of the book will show. The Lord will also hear your prayers for His people. He has sealed His covenant of grace in the cross of His Son. So don't be afraid to pray big prayers—our Lord loves to bring good things into the lives of His people!</p> <p>9</p>	<p>October 1 Tuesday</p> <p>Read Nehemiah 1. If time is short, focus on verses 1–9. Psalms 3 Proverbs 24:13–14</p> <p>Nehemiah 1:1–3 News from Jerusalem</p> <p>Nehemiah 1:4–11 Prayer for Jerusalem</p>
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Psalms match the content for the day; **Proverbs** passages lead us through the book each year.

P.S. If you miss a day, you can just keep going at your own pace. Know that with a few exceptions, weekly readings combine Saturday and Sunday, giving you an extra day each week to do any readings you may have missed or even skip what you didn't get to. Don't feel discouraged. You can plan to read it next time around—two years from now. Remember that the goal is to get to know the Lord better, to receive strength from Him, and to receive life and salvation through His Word. Reading through the Bible by a specific date is secondary.

Suggestions

- ◆ *Cut out this bookmark; fold it on the center line.*
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- ◆ *Personalize the text further by underlining, circling, and making notes in the margin.*
- ◆ *Don't feel you must use all the colors here if you don't want to. Choose one or two topics to mark with one or two colors. Next time through, choose other topics/colors.*

Marking Guide

Praiseyellow

Forgivenessred

God's promises. . .blue

Ways to love

God & others. .orange

Givingpink

Jesus' return . . .purple

The Church. . . .green

Sin & Satangray

Old Testament
promises of the
Savior to come



What God says
about my heart



October 2024

- | | | |
|--------------------------|-------|----------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | 1 | Nehemiah 1 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | 2 | Nehemiah 2-3 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | 3 | Nehemiah 4-6 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | 4 | Nehemiah 7-8 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | 5/6 | Nehemiah 9-10 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | 7 | Nehemiah 11-13 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | 8 | Esther 1-2 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | 9 | Esther 3-4 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | 10 | Esther 5-7 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | 11 | Esther 8-10 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | 12/13 | Job 1 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | 14 | Job 2-3 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | 15 | Job 4-5 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | 16 | Job 6-7 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | 17 | Job 8-10 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | 18 | Job 11-12 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | 19/20 | Job 13-14 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | 21 | Job 15-17 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | 22 | Job 18-19 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | 23 | Job 20-21 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | 24 | Job 22-24 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | 25 | Job 25-28 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | 26/27 | Job 29-31 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | 28 | Job 32-34 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | 29 | Job 35-37 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | 30 | Job 38-41 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | 31 | Job 42 |

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November 2024

- 1 Psalms 1–6
- 2/3 Psalms 7–11
- 4 Psalms 12–17
- 5 Psalms 18–22
- 6 Psalms 23–28
- 7 Psalms 29–34
- 8 Psalms 35–41
- 9/10 Psalms 42–47
- 11 Psalms 48–53
- 12 Psalms 54–60
- 13 Psalms 61–66
- 14 Psalms 67–72
- 15 Psalms 73–77
- 16/17 Psalms 78–82
- 18 Psalms 83–89
- 19 Psalms 90–95
- 20 Psalms 96–101
- 21 Psalms 102–106
- 22 Psalms 107–113
- 23/24 Psalms 114–118
- 25 Psalm 119
- 26 Psalms 120–125
- 27 Psalms 126–134
- 28 Psalms 135–137
- 29 Psalms 138–143
- 30 Psalms 144–150

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December 2024

- | | | |
|--------------------------|-------|---------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | 1 | Proverbs 1 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | 2 | Proverbs 2-3 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | 3 | Proverbs 4 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | 4 | Proverbs 5-6 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | 5 | Proverbs 7 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | 6 | Proverbs 8 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | 7/8 | Proverbs 9 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | 9 | Proverbs 10-11 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | 10 | Proverbs 12-13 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | 11 | Proverbs 14-15 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | 12 | Proverbs 16-19 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | 13 | Proverbs 20-21 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | 14/15 | Proverbs 22-23 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | 16 | Proverbs 24-25 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | 17 | Proverbs 26-27 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | 18 | Proverbs 28-29 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | 19 | Proverbs 30-31 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | 20 | Ecclesiastes 1-2 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | 21/22 | Ecclesiastes 3-4 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | 23 | Ecclesiastes 5-6 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | 24 | Ecclesiastes 7-8 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | 25 | Ecclesiastes 9-10 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | 26 | Ecclesiastes
11-12 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | 27 | Song of Solomon
1-3 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | 28/29 | Song of Solomon
4-6 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | 30 | Song of Solomon
7-8:4 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | 31 | Song of Solomon
8:5-14 |

Today's Light[®]

OCTOBER 2024

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Peggy Kuethe, Editor



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WHO TRUSTS IN GOD A STRONG ABODE

Who trusts in God
A strong abode
In heav'n and earth possesses;

Who looks in love
To Christ above,
No fear that heart oppresses.
In You alone,
Dear Lord, we own
Sweet hope and consolation,
Our shield from foes,
Our balm for woes,
Our great and sure salvation.

Though Satan's wrath
Beset our path
And worldly scorn assail us,
While You are near,
We shall not fear;
Your strength will never fail us.
Your rod and staff
Will keep us safe
And guide our steps forever;
Nor shades of death
Nor hell beneath
Our lives from You will sever.

In all the strife
Of mortal life
Our feet will stand securely;
Temptation's hour
Will lose its pow'r,
For You will guard us surely.
O God, renew
With heav'nly dew
Our body, soul, and spirit
Until we stand
At Your right hand
Through Jesus' saving merit.

Joachim Magdeburg and *Harmonia cantionum*, Leipzig.



Get the Big Picture

Nehemiah's book begins about twelve years after Ezra's reformation in Jerusalem (Ezra 9–10). As the cupbearer for the king, Nehemiah holds a position of honor and responsibility in Persia. Nonetheless, he remembers his spiritual roots and identifies with his people—God's covenant people. Look for evidence of this as you read.



Sharpen the Focus

If you catch a group of children in some rule-breaking activity, you'll usually also find fingers pointing in all directions: *She started it. I just watched. We just got here. He did it too.* Even adults sometimes squirm as we wrestle with the temptation to avoid responsibility for our actions.

In light of this tendency, then, how much more amazing Nehemiah's prayer becomes. As far as we know, Nehemiah had never even been in Jerusalem. But notice his confession:

- [I confess] the sins . . . which we have sinned (v. 6).
- We have acted very corruptly (v. 7).
- [We] have not kept the commandments . . . that you commanded (v. 7).

Like Moses before him. Like Samuel and Daniel and Ezra. And like Jesus Himself! Nehemiah stands beside his brothers and sisters in the faith, not to accuse or shame them but to share their grief and to ask for pardon.

As we grow in Christlikeness, we will find the Holy Spirit nudging us to pray the same kind of prayers for our congregation and for His Church throughout the world. Not from arrogant hearts, but from hearts broken by the pain sin brings into the lives of those whom God so loves.



Zoom In

The Lord heard and answered Nehemiah's prayer for mercy, as the rest of the book will show. The Lord will also hear your prayers for His people. He has sealed His covenant of grace in the cross of His Son. So don't be afraid to pray big prayers—our Lord loves to bring good things into the lives of His people!

October

1

Tuesday

Read Nehemiah 1.

If time is short,
focus on verses
1–9.

Psalms 3

Proverbs 24:13–14

Nehemiah 1:1–3

News from Jerusalem

Nehemiah 1:4–11

Prayer for Jerusalem

WE'RE ALL IN THIS TOGETHER

In recent years, many large international corporations found themselves paying reparations to Holocaust survivors. Records traced these organizations or their parent organizations to the slave labor used by Nazi Germany's war machine. The logic went like this: the corporations survived and (in some cases) even thrived during World War II because of their collaboration with the Nazi government. Much of their present success can thus be traced to the head start they gained by such collaboration. Therefore, even though no one now on their payroll personally participated in the atrocities of the war, each stockholder does owe a legitimate debt to former slaves and their survivors.

The idea of "corporate guilt" is an interesting one. Any teacher can tell you that at times whole classes sin together. The senior class that takes an unauthorized day off just before graduation is one example. Little children playing together are quick to "confess" one another's sins to the nearest adult, and if we're honest, we must admit that this tendency doesn't end in childhood.

Corporate guilt. Corporate confession. Until we stop to think it through, these twin ideas sound strange to people in our times. They sound especially strange to Christians. Still, the Scriptures clearly include instances of both. Nehemiah, for example, confesses Israel's sins in 1:5-11. As he does, he doesn't say "they." He always says "we." He places himself under God's judgment along with all the sinners who deserved the exile they suffered. Given the seventy-year duration of the exile, Nehemiah could hardly have contributed to the mountain of sins he confesses, but still he confesses them.

What's going on here? Doesn't the Lord deal with individuals when it comes to sin? Is there such a thing as "corporate guilt"? Should we confess the sins of our nation? of our church?

As we wrestle with these concepts, it's helpful to think about ways we have contributed to our congregation's lack of zeal when it comes to the Great Commission, for example. Or the ways our actions have added to our nation's greed and to its appetite for violence. In many cases, "they" are actually "we." And, yes, we do need to confess corporate guilt in this sense.

Even so, a message of Gospel lies at the heart of texts like Nehemiah's prayer of confession. You see, in this prayer Nehemiah pictures for us the heart of our Savior. Jesus placed Himself under God's judgment in the place of sinners who well deserved the hell He suffered. He committed none of the sins, but nonetheless He absorbed all of the punishment. Now, risen from the dead, "He always lives to make intercession" for us (Hebrews 7:25). Part of the prayer He prays for us no doubt goes something like this:

Father, You have seen the sins (put your name here) has committed today. But I died for those sins. The debt has been paid. Therefore, Father, forgive (him/her) for My sake and credit all My righteousness, all my goodness to (his/her) account.

How does God answer those prayers our Savior prays for us? You know the answer to that! Scripture is full of our Lord's promises to forgive and restore sinners to fellowship with Him through the blood of Christ shed on the cross!

Reread Nehemiah 1:5–11, thinking about Jesus, your Intercessor. Then meditate on one or several of the Gospel passages referenced in the box below.



October

2

Wednesday

Read

Nehemiah 2–3.

*If time is short,
focus on 2:1–20.*

Psalms 26

*Proverbs
24:15–16*

Nehemiah 2

**Nehemiah's
Plan**

Nehemiah 3

**Nehemiah's
Personnel**



Get the Big Picture

Four months after Nehemiah had begun to pray for the people of Judah, he got a chance to present the problem and a proposal to King Artaxerxes. As you read, note the evidence that Nehemiah relied not on himself but on the Lord.



Sharpen the Focus

More often than you might think, God uses us as part of His answer to our own prayers:

- We may ask God to strengthen a friend who is ill and find Him sending us to visit that person with words of encouragement.
- We may pray that people in a specific foreign place hear the Gospel and find God moving us to support work in that country with our financial gifts.
- We may intercede for a co-worker who is out of fellowship with the Lord or His Church and find Him prompting us to express our concern and to show His love to that person.

Nehemiah prayed for the settlers in Judah, and soon the Lord sent him to help them. The disciples prayed for workers in Christ's harvest fields (Matthew 9:37–38), and Jesus sent them to minister in His name (Matthew 10). If you're wondering what your Lord might want you to do today, examine the direction your prayers have taken in recent weeks. Ask for your Savior's guidance. And get ready for an adventure!



Zoom In

Nehemiah went to Judah, confident in the Lord, not in himself. You can have that same kind of confidence. Forgiven and dearly loved by God, you have heaven's infinite resources at your disposal. You are Christ's servant, so "arise and build!" (Nehemiah 2:20).



Get the Big Picture

Behind the human opposition Nehemiah faced lay Satan himself, trying to derail God's covenant promises, especially His promise to send the Messiah who would be born of David's line in the land the Lord had promised to Abraham. As you read, note how Nehemiah prays and acts decisively to deal with the opposition he encounters.



Sharpen the Focus

The Lord's work done in any way but the Lord's way is not the Lord's work. Or, to put it in other words, the end will never justify the means, not even when the ends are the Lord's ends.

Think of all the many alternative ways Nehemiah could have faced his challenges. He could have looked for allies among the idol worshipers in Palestine. He could have abandoned the construction project and tried to outwait Sanballat. He could have downplayed the seriousness of his people's greed in an effort to keep the most influential people in Judah on his side. He could have raised taxes and milked his people for what he could get out of them instead of spending his own resources on the construction site. Instead, Nehemiah kept praying, and he kept plugging away at the gaps in Jerusalem's walls.

Where are you tempted to take shortcuts or to use quick fixes as you approach the tasks God has given you? You need not fall for Satan's lie that heaven helps those who help themselves. Instead, "Remember the Lord, who is great and awesome" (4:14). Remember that "our God will fight for us" (4:20). Ask a brother or sister in the faith to stand "on the wall" beside you to encourage you. Then continue to do the Lord's work the Lord's way in the power He provides.



Zoom In

Jerusalem's wall rose in just fifty-two days (6:15). The task that had seemed altogether impossible took less than two months when God's people worked shoulder to shoulder in His strength.

October

3

Thursday

Read
Nehemiah 4–6.

*If time is short,
focus on 4:1–23.*

Psalms 28

*Proverbs
24:17–20*

Nehemiah 4
Threats
from Outside

Nehemiah 5
Sins from
Inside

**Nehemiah
6:1–14**
Lies on
All Sides

**Nehemiah
6:15–19**
The Lord
on Our Side

October

4

Friday

Read
Nehemiah 7–8.

If time is short,
focus on 8:1–18.

Psalms 34

Proverbs
24:21–22

Nehemiah 7
Counting
the People

Nehemiah 8
Reading
the Law



Get the Big Picture

Nehemiah intended all along to resettle Jerusalem. Now that the city walls are finished and the gates hung, he takes a census of the people. From the list, he will select families to repopulate the city. Chapters 8–10 tell how Ezra, Nehemiah, and the other leaders rebuild the “spiritual walls” in Israel that have fallen into disrepair. Then (ch. 11) the resettlement can occur.



Sharpen the Focus

Ezra opened the book. The people stood. It was a sign of respect, of reverence. People and leaders together honored the Lord who had given them His Word of life.

Notice the two things the Word of God did in His people:

- It brought conviction and sorrow over sin (8:9).
- It brought joy (8:12).

The Holy Spirit is always at work when God’s Word is proclaimed. And the Spirit’s aim is always to bring God’s people to repentance and to work in them the joy that comes from sins forgiven and from the realization of the Lord’s faithful love.

As you read the Scriptures, do you expect to receive *information* or *transformation*?

Facts are important—Christianity is rooted in history, and our Lord has taken great care to record for us the facts of His work down through the centuries. However, His goal for us is nothing less than our total transformation into the image of Christ Jesus! He is at work in us—right now—to accomplish that, and He will also “bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ” (Philippians 1:6).

As you read the Scriptures for yourself, as you hear the Word of God proclaimed and taught, remember: You are changing. You’re becoming more like Jesus. God’s power is at work in you!



Zoom In

A verse for meditation and memorization:

The joy of the Lord is your strength.

Nehemiah 8:10



Get the Big Picture

Most of chapter 9 records the prayer Israel prayed on a day set aside for repentance and for covenant renewal. As you read, note the truth of the people's confession in Nehemiah 9:33.



Sharpen the Focus

Take a few moments right now to compose your own prayer; structure it in a way similar to the one you just read. Jot some notes for yourself in the space below:

God's goodness to my family and me in the past includes

God's faithful love to me despite my unfaithfulness includes

Present sins I want to confess include

Present distresses with which I need God's help include



Zoom In

Now pray your prayer. Remember that the "blood of the new covenant," which Jesus shed on the cross, has completely cleansed you from all sin. The next time you celebrate the Lord's Supper, let your Savior assure you of His covenant love.

October

5/6

Saturday/ Sunday

Read
Nehemiah 9–10.

If time is short,
focus on 9:32–38.

Psalm 38

Proverbs
24:23–25

Nehemiah
9:1–15
The Lord's
Faithfulness

Nehemiah
9:16–31
Israel's
Sinfulness

Nehemiah
9:32–10:39
The Covenant
Renewed

October

7

Monday

Read

Nehemiah 11–13.

If time is short,

focus on

12:27–47.

Psalm 44

Proverbs

24:26–27

Nehemiah 11
Jerusalem
Resettled

Nehemiah 12
Jerusalem's
Wall
Dedicated

Nehemiah 13
Jerusalem's
Covenant
Restored



Get the Big Picture

We leave the last chapters of Nehemiah on a (literal) note of praise. God has preserved a remnant, a small group of true believers, from whose descendants He will bring the world's Savior, just as He had promised Abraham. When Nehemiah returns to Persia, the people fall back into their former sins. So, when Nehemiah comes again to Jerusalem, he leads yet another spiritual "housecleaning."



Sharpen the Focus

Who or what most influences your life? Suppose you were to make a "top ten" list of those influences. What would appear on that list?

Israel found herself influenced toward disobedience and idolatry by an unlikely "leader." During the time Nehemiah spent away from Jerusalem (between chapters 12 and 13), Israel's most persistent enemy even took up residence within the holy temple itself. From there (13:4–9), Tobiah evidently exercised control over Israel's family and worship life. He probably had no real political power, but he used his powers of persuasion deftly.

Within a few years, Tobiah had succeeded in derailing the reforms Ezra, Nehemiah, and other faithful servants of the Lord had begun. Make no mistake, the Lord still held Israel accountable for her disobedience. No one in Israel could blame Tobiah for sins they themselves had committed. And who knows why Eliashib the priest let this sorry state develop and continue! Still, we can learn from this account and take warning from it.

Ask your Lord to help you accurately discern any ungodly influences in your life. After you've identified them, talk to Him about any sins you've committed while under those influences. Then, cleansed by the blood of His Son, walk in the freedom and righteousness that His forgiveness brings.



Zoom In

Keep your heart with all vigilance, for from it flow the springs of life. Proverbs 4:23



Get the Big Picture

Before you read today, remember that the account of Esther takes place between the events recorded in Ezra 6 and those recorded in Ezra 7. While some Jews have returned to Jerusalem with the blessing of King Cyrus some years before, most have chosen to remain in exile voluntarily. This undoubtedly grieved the Lord, but it did not stop His love toward them.



Sharpen the Focus

A young mom walks methodically up to the grocery checkout counter, her cart packed with this month's staples. A bell goes off and the manager comes running. She's this month's thousandth customer—and her groceries are free!

A seven-year-old casts his line into the water and stands beside Grandpa, waiting. Suddenly he gets a strike, and with a little help pulls in a record-setting walleye.

Have you ever had the fun of being in the right place at the right time? Esther did. But it must have seemed like anything but fun to her. Imagine, a pious Jewish girl hijacked into the harem of an ungodly king. A king no one dared to disobey.

As we shall see, the Lord had Esther “[win] favor in the eyes of all who saw her” (2:15). The Savior-God who cared for His people stood behind the stage, rewriting Satan's plot to destroy the children of Abraham. Esther didn't know it yet, but the Lord had reserved a role for her in that mighty rescue.

What circumstances in your life look more like a disaster than a delight right now? As you take them to the Lord in prayer, ask Him how He may want to use you in them while He takes you safely through them.



Zoom In

God's work at the time of Esther resembles His work on behalf of His people today. No mighty plagues, as in the time of Moses. No miraculous hailstorms during important battles, as in the time of Joshua. But the results are the same—His kingdom advances and His will is done.

October

8

Tuesday

Read Esther 1–2.

If time is short, focus on 2:1–23.

Psalms 52

Proverbs 24:28–29

[Esther 1](#)
[Queen Vashti's Downfall](#)

[Esther 2](#)
[Queen Esther's Selection](#)

October

9

Wednesday

Read Esther 3–4.

If time is short,
focus on 4:1–17.

Psalm 143

Proverbs
24:30–34

Esther 3
Haman's
Hatred

Esther 4
Mordecai's
Plan



Get the Big Picture

The book of Esther presents, for the most part, a “bare bones” account of this slice of divine history. It spells out no one’s motives. As you read, ask yourself what lay behind Haman’s rage, Mordecai’s request to Esther, and Esther’s decision to act on behalf of her people.



Sharpen the Focus

“The kingdom of God certainly comes by itself without our prayer.” So begins Martin Luther’s explanation of the Second Petition of the Lord’s Prayer. His words echo, in a sense, Mordecai’s words to Esther in 4:14. Esther could choose to keep her hands un-muddied in the whole sorry mess with Haman. If she did, the Lord would raise up a deliverer from another direction. But Esther would deny herself the privilege of playing a part in that deliverance.

What doors stand wide open to you today? In what ways could your prayers, your note of encouragement, your words of witness, your financial resources be a part of God’s plan to bring the Good News of Jesus to those who are lost in a world of hurt and headed toward an eternal hell? Has the Lord perhaps placed you in just the right position to do or say something that could make a difference in someone’s destiny?

If selfishness stands in your way, confess it and let your Savior cleanse you from that unrighteousness. If fear has you paralyzed, look to Jesus and let His love give you courage. Then pray. Speak. Act. Give. Use the privilege your Lord has given you to help usher in our coming King (see 2 Peter 3:11–12).



Zoom In

The Greek historian Herodotus claimed that when the Persians had made a sober decision, they liked to reconsider it while drunk and vice versa. If so, the words of Esther 3:15 are more meaningful. Under such “leadership,” it’s little wonder that Ahasuerus’s subjects were bewildered!



Get the Big Picture

Because assassination plots were so common in Persia, no one could approach the throne uninvited. (Ahasuerus himself later died at an assassin's hand.) But Queen Esther, trusting the Lord, dares to appear unsummoned in Ahasuerus's throne room. Filled with pride and obsessed with rage at Mordecai, Haman falls into Esther's trap just as it snaps shut.



Sharpen the Focus

"What shall be done for the one the king desires to honor?" In today's reading, we saw the answer Haman gave Ahasuerus to that question, and we saw the honor Ahasuerus bestowed on Mordecai.

Perhaps you've never thought about it this way before, but *you* are one whom the King, the Lord, desires to honor! Unlike Mordecai, who saved Ahasuerus from a death threat, none of us have earned our King's favor. Just the opposite, in fact. We have, by our sins, earned His wrath and displeasure, death now and forever.

But because of what Jesus did for us on Calvary's cross, we are now the King's favored ones. He delights in us (Psalm 16:3)! And He honors us.

- He has adopted us into His family (Ephesians 1:5). He calls us His own sons and daughters.
- He has given us "all things that pertain to life and godliness" (2 Peter 1:3).
- He has "richly provided for you an entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ" (2 Peter 1:11).
- Jesus has given us the very same glory the Father gave Him (John 17:22).

Meditate on the honor your Lord has given you. In humble faith, believe it. Then walk today as God's chosen, forgiven, protected, dearly loved child.



Zoom In

In what other ways has your Lord honored you? As you study the Scriptures in the coming days, look for what He has to say about that.

October

10

Thursday

Read Esther 5–7.

If time is short,
focus on 7:1–10.

Psalm 81

Proverbs 25:1–5

Esther 5
Esther's
First Feast

Esther 6
Haman's
Hatred

Esther 7
Haman
Hanged

October

11

Friday

Read Esther 8–10.

If time is short,
focus on 8:1–17.

Psalm 40

Proverbs 25:6–8

Esther 8
A Scepter
Extended

Esther 9
Counter
Decree
Executed

Esther 10
Mordecai
Exalted



Get the Big Picture

A “law of the Medes and the Persians,” once sealed by the ruler, couldn’t be revoked. Haman’s decree of death to all Jews thus could not be recalled. So instead, Ahasuerus gives Esther authority to issue a counter decree, giving her people the right to protect themselves. God’s people are saved, and Mordecai receives still greater honor.



Sharpen the Focus

Imagine yourself walking into the White House, asking directions to the Oval Office, and heading down the corridor to see the president. Far-fetched? Of course. The Secret Service would nab you before you took your second step. Unless, that is, the president expected you and met you at the front door.

In a sense, that’s what happened to Esther in 8:4. Ahasuerus held out his golden scepter toward her. In doing so, he invited her to approach. And it’s also what the heavenly Father does for you each time you come to Him in prayer.

In our own right, our own righteousness, we have no claim on God’s throne. Our sin disqualifies us from even being in God’s holy presence. But through Christ’s cross, we who have been God’s sworn enemies, rebels in His kingdom, have now become His own dear children. In Christ, God now “extends His golden scepter” toward us as we approach His throne:

Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need. Hebrews 4:16



Zoom In

You have access to the throne of heaven! How will you use that glorious privilege today?



Get the Big Picture

Why do people, especially God's people, suffer? That's the question the Book of Job addresses. Today's reading sets the stage for all that follows. As you read, keep in mind the fact that Job never hears the conversation that has gone on in heaven between Satan ("the accuser") and God.



Sharpen the Focus

When trouble strikes, people often ask themselves, "What have I done to deserve this? What am I doing wrong?" But as we've seen in Job 1, maybe we should ask instead, "What have I been doing right?" Job honored God, and still trouble came. Not all our trials spring from personal wrongdoing.

The Scriptures urge us to examine our hearts often. All of us need to confess that we daily sin much and deserve nothing but punishment from God. But in our place, God has punished Jesus. All of God's wrath at human sin fell on Christ as He hung on Calvary. God will never punish you or me for our sins. Our debt has been paid in full by our Savior.

No question, Job suffered terribly. But the Scriptures leave no doubt about the source of that suffering. Job suffered Satan's attack, not God's divine retribution for his sins.

So, if you or someone you love is suffering today, know that your Lord is on your side. He has taken your guilt. He wants to comfort you with the Good News of His forgiveness and His limitless love. Let Him do that.



Zoom In

A verse for meditation and memorization:

Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you. But rejoice insofar as you share Christ's sufferings, that you may also rejoice and be glad when His glory is revealed. 1 Peter 4:12-13

October
12/13
Saturday/
Sunday

Read Job 1.

If time is short,
focus on verses
1-3, 6-20.

Psalm 11

Proverbs 25:9-10

Job 1:1-5
Blessing
on Earth

Job 1:6-12
A Challenge
in Heaven

Job 1:13-22
Assaults
on Earth

October

14

Monday

Read Job 2–3.

If time is short,
focus on 3:1–26.

Psalm 21

Proverbs
25:11–14

Job 2
A New
Satanic
Assault

Job 3
“Why Was I
Born?”



Get the Big Picture

Jesus once described Satan as a thief who comes only to kill, to steal, and to destroy (John 10:10). In Job 2, Satan proves the words of Jesus true. As you read today, note the fact that Scripture does not try to minimize Job's suffering; it was indeed great. Also ask yourself what would have been on your mind and in your heart had you sat in the ash heap with Job and his three friends.



Sharpen the Focus

They sat in silence. For a week! So very great was Job's suffering. So very puzzling were God's ways. No one on that ash heap had overheard the conversation that had gone on in heaven's throne room. No one had seen Satan strut or heard his arrogant challenge to the Almighty.

And each of them, as we shall see in the coming days, harbored suspicions about God's goodness and about His justice.

Much of what happened to Job and, truth be told, much of what happens to us, seems (this side of heaven) to make no sense. We will not know all the answers until we set foot on the soil of our heavenly home. Between now and then, we will at times sail rough seas.

The question for us, as for Job, remains, “Can we trust the Captain of our ship?” Throughout most of the early part of his storm, Job did trust. But by 3:23, he begins to waver. As a result, he begins to lose his peace (3:25–26). The voyage is rockier from here out.

Sometimes Jesus calms our storms. More often, He reaches out to steady His children while we ride out those storms. If He's reaching out to you like that today, don't push Him away. Let Him hold you in His arms and comfort you. Unlike Job, you've seen your Lord's arms stretched out on Calvary's cross—for you. Your pain may be a mystery, but your Savior's love—for you—is crystal clear.



Zoom In

[Jesus says,] “Come to Me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.”
Matthew 11:28