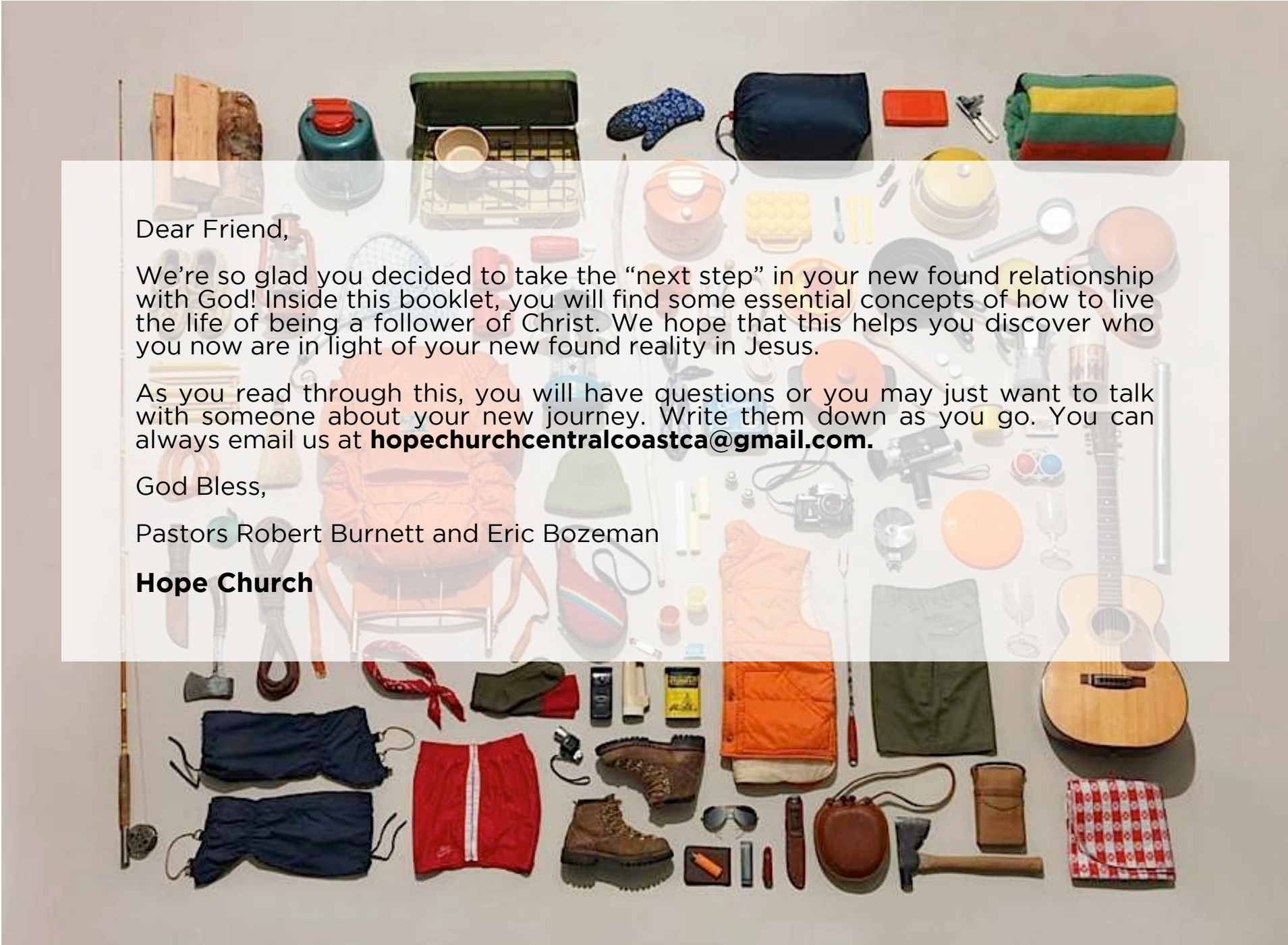




THE JOURNEY

A top-down photograph of a large assortment of items laid out on a light-colored, neutral surface. The items are organized into several rows. The top row includes a stack of firewood, a blue water container, a green camping stove with a pot, a blue glove, a dark blue bag, a red rectangular object, a small metal tool, and a rolled-up green and yellow striped blanket. The middle section contains a variety of smaller items like a yellow pot, a magnifying glass, a camera, a flashlight, a small orange bag, and a guitar. The bottom row features a pair of blue shorts, a pair of red shorts, a pair of brown boots, a pair of sunglasses, a red and white checkered bag, and a small red and white striped bag. The items are arranged in a way that suggests they are being presented or cataloged.

Dear Friend,

We're so glad you decided to take the "next step" in your new found relationship with God! Inside this booklet, you will find some essential concepts of how to live the life of being a follower of Christ. We hope that this helps you discover who you now are in light of your new found reality in Jesus.

As you read through this, you will have questions or you may just want to talk with someone about your new journey. Write them down as you go. You can always email us at **hopechurchcentralcoastca@gmail.com**.

God Bless,

Pastors Robert Burnett and Eric Bozeman

Hope Church

TAKING THE PLUNGE

Baptism is a natural next step in the life of a follower of Christ, but before you take the plunge, you must know what it is and what it isn't.

Baptism is not salvation. It is not what gives us freedom from sin, nor is it what gets us entry into Heaven. Only our belief in Christ can do that.

“Remember that the Lord draws no distinction between Jew and non-Jew—He is Lord over all things, and He pours out His treasures on all who invoke His name because as Scripture says, ‘Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved’” Romans 10:12-13

Baptism is a command by Jesus and He Himself even modeled it

(Mark 1:9-11). Not only this, but baptism is a symbolic ritual as to what God is doing in the depths of your heart

and soul. A famous Apostle named Paul describes it this way...

“Did someone forget to tell you that when we were initiated into Jesus the Anointed through baptism's ceremonial washing, we entered into His death? Therefore, we were buried with Him through this baptism into death so that just as God the Father, in all His glory, resurrected the

Anointed One, we, too, might walk confidently out of the grave into a new life.” Romans 6:3-4

Baptism, to the believer in Jesus Christ, is a symbolic gesture of dying to our old way of life (going under the water) and rising to a new life in our belief in Jesus (coming out of the water).

BIBLE READING AND PIZZA?

Everyone loves to eat...

It's one of the great necessities of life! We plan our schedules around food, we entertain around food, we even use food as a reward both for us and our pets!

What is interesting though, is that Jesus speaks of reading the Bible as a necessity equal to eating.

As he wanders in the desert for 40 days and 40 nights in preparation of His task to redeem mankind, Jesus is visited and tempted by Satan. When Satan sees Jesus' hunger, he tempts Him to turn a few rocks into bread. Here is Jesus' response...

"It is written, 'Man does not live by bread alone. Rather, he lives on every word that comes from the mouth of the Eternal One.'" Matthew 4:4

You see, reading the Bible is to our souls what eating food is to our bodies. Without it, we will waste away, become good for nothing, and eventually die. As you read your Bible, you will find strength, encouragement, and peace that you never knew existed. You will find the promises of God that He earnestly wants to give you.

A time to reflect...

Here are a few verses to get you started on your journey of Bible reading. Take a moment to read them, discuss them, and ask questions about them.

John 15:1-11

Psalms 119:9-11

Colossians 1:10

Ephesians 6:17

Use the space below to answer these questions.

1. Why do we need God's Word?
2. What does God's Word do for us?
3. How does it cause maturity?
4. How does it defend you?

ADDING GOD TO YOUR “FRIENDS” LIST

Why did Facebook become so popular?

Think about it...Facebook and other social medias exploded for one reason and one reason alone...

COMMUNICATION.

Suddenly, it became easy to talk to your cousin on the other side of the country, easier to connect with friends that you hadn't seen or spoken to in years, and even easier to share your life through pictures and videos with people you love who may have never had the chance to see those people and events in your life.

We are social creatures and at the deepest part of our being we desire to have meaningful, lasting relationships. Facebook, Twitter and Instagram did that, but God invented it.


Check this out

As God was creating the world, He spoke into existence everything. The Bible says that He said the words, “Let there be light” and then out of nothing light appeared. He said, “Let there be plants” and plants appeared. “Let there be animals” and you got it, animals appeared! (Genesis 1:1-25) You see God's power is so great that His voice alone creates and causes life.

Everything in existence was created by God through the spoken word. Everything, except mankind.

Here is how the Bible describes the creation of mankind...

“One day the Eternal God scooped dirt out of the ground, sculpted it into the shape we call human, breathed the breath of life into the nostrils of the human, and the human became a living soul.” Genesis 2:7



You see, ever since humanity's inception, God has had a special place for us above all other creation. We meant so much to Him, that He created us by hand. We meant so much to Him, that He breathed life into us.

Taking it a step further.

Now that we understand what we mean to God, we must then understand how to cultivate a deeper friendship with Him. Just as you grow deeper with people by talking to them and experiencing life with them, so too do we do this with God in order to have a deep, meaningful, and lasting relationship with Him.

The Bible tells us that communication with God is **prayer**. Jesus models for us a prayer that gives us insight in how to talk with God.

"Here's how to pray: Father in Heaven, may Your name be revered. May Your kingdom come. May Your will be accomplished on earth as it is in Heaven. Give us the food we need for tomorrow, and forgive us for our wrongs, for we forgive those who wrong us. And lead us away for temptation. And save us from the evil one."
Luke 11:2-4

A time to reflect...

Here are a few verses to get you started on your journey of Prayer. Take a moment to read them, discuss them, and ask questions about them.

Matthew 6:9-11

Philippians 4:6-7

1 Thessalonians 5:17

Romans 12:2

Use the space below to answer these questions.

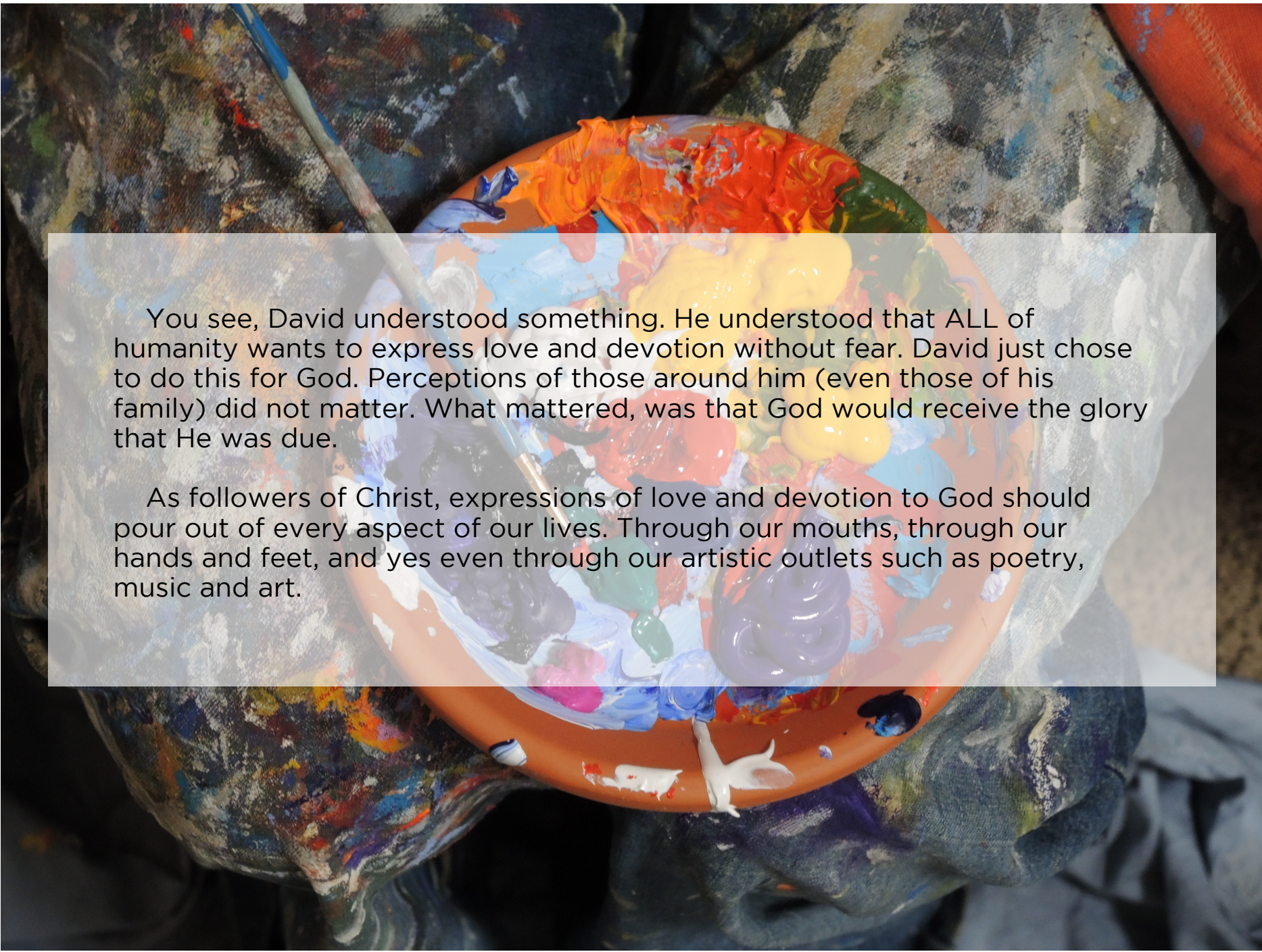
1. How do we pray?
2. What do we get from prayer?
3. How often should we pray?

CREATIVE AND ARTISTIC EXPRESSION

Expression is something that resonates with us. We want to be heard. We want to be understood. We want to create. More so than that, we want to do all of these things with delight and freedom.

There is a story of a man in the Bible who expressed himself in just this way. King David (known for his battle with Goliath) found himself dancing and singing in the streets of his city completely unashamed of his actions. David (and the rest of the city) were celebrating the return of their most prized possession, the ark of the covenant. This chest was a symbol of God's promises to the people and held some of their most precious relics. When it was returned from the camp of their enemies, the people rejoiced. David began to run in the streets, rejoicing, singing, and playing instruments. He was so unashamed that his wife became embarrassed of him. She told him that he was acting like a fool. Here is David's response to her...

"In God's presence I'll dance all I want! He chose me over your father and the rest of our family and made me prince over God's people, over Israel. Oh yes, I'll dance to God's glory—more recklessly even than this" 2 Samuel 6:21.



You see, David understood something. He understood that ALL of humanity wants to express love and devotion without fear. David just chose to do this for God. Perceptions of those around him (even those of his family) did not matter. What mattered, was that God would receive the glory that He was due.

As followers of Christ, expressions of love and devotion to God should pour out of every aspect of our lives. Through our mouths, through our hands and feet, and yes even through our artistic outlets such as poetry, music and art.

A time to reflect...

Here are a few verses to get you started on your journey of Worship. Take a moment to read them, discuss them, and ask questions about them.

John 4:20-24

Acts 20:35b

Romans 12:1

Matthew 22:37

Use the space below to answer these questions.

1. What is “true” worship?
2. What is our “attitude” in worship?
3. How do we prepare for worship?

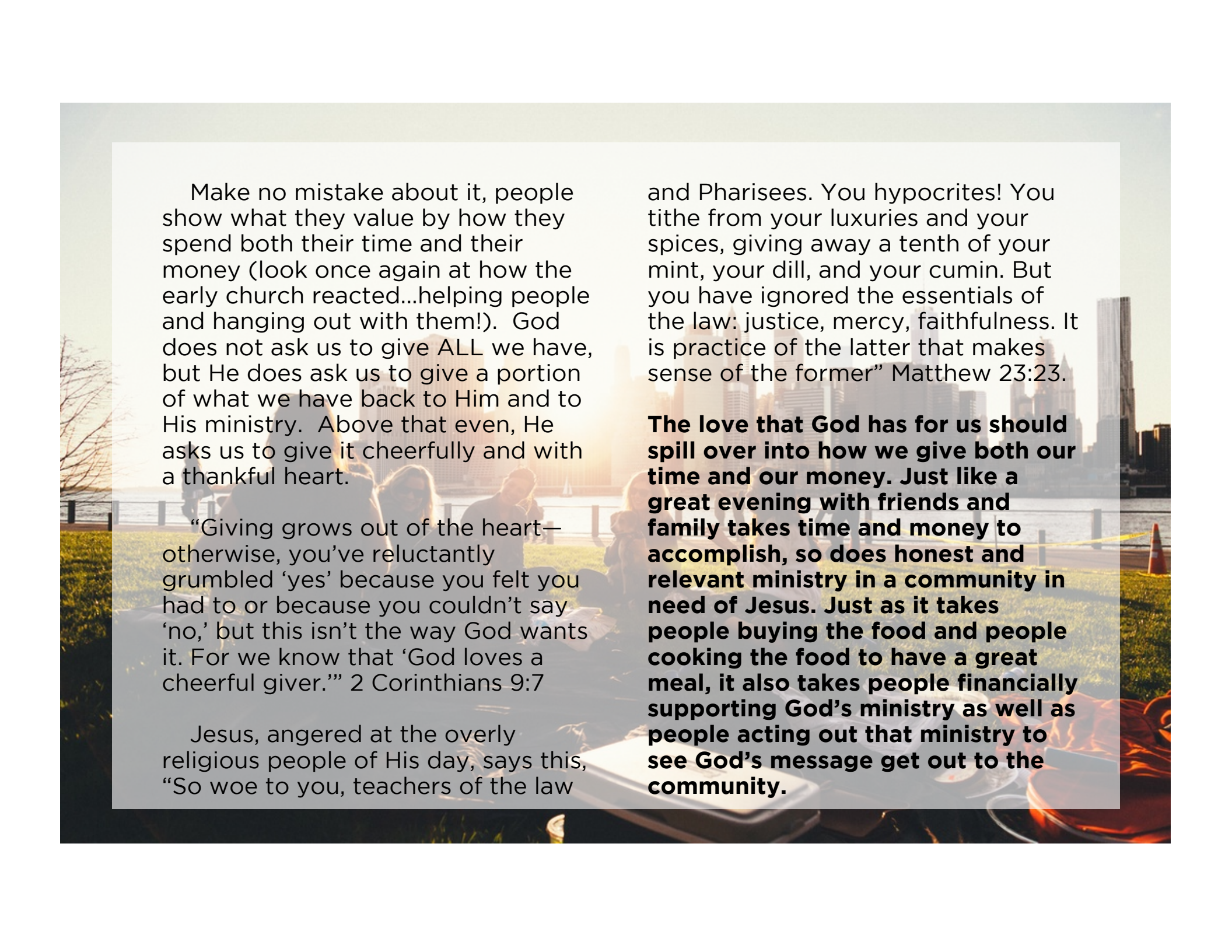
BUYING AND COOKING THE MEAL

Let's face it, things cost money. When putting on a party or having friends over for dinner, there is a certain expense to all of this. You don't think about the money, however, because these people mean something to you. They are a part of your life and you are a part of their's.

God understands economics and finances and that is why He built these systems into our worship to Him.

When the Christian movement started, giving was a natural part of who the people were. They understood the local economy and that many were poor, while some were very wealthy. Because of the people's love for God and for each other, something extraordinary took place. Here is what happened...

“The community continually committed themselves to learning what the apostles taught them, gathering for fellowship, breaking bread, and praying. Everyone felt a sense of awe because the apostles were doing many signs and wonders among them. There was an intense sense of togetherness among all who believed; they shared all their material possessions in trust. They sold any possessions and goods that did not benefit the community and used the money to help everyone in need. They were unified as they worshiped at the temple day after day. In homes, they broke bread and shared meals with glad and generous hearts. The new disciples praised God, and they enjoyed the goodwill of all the people of the city. Day after day the Lord added to their number everyone who was experiencing liberation” Acts 2:42-47



Make no mistake about it, people show what they value by how they spend both their time and their money (look once again at how the early church reacted...helping people and hanging out with them!). God does not ask us to give ALL we have, but He does ask us to give a portion of what we have back to Him and to His ministry. Above that even, He asks us to give it cheerfully and with a thankful heart.

“Giving grows out of the heart—otherwise, you’ve reluctantly grumbled ‘yes’ because you felt you had to or because you couldn’t say ‘no,’ but this isn’t the way God wants it. For we know that ‘God loves a cheerful giver.’” 2 Corinthians 9:7

Jesus, angered at the overly religious people of His day, says this, “So woe to you, teachers of the law

and Pharisees. You hypocrites! You tithe from your luxuries and your spices, giving away a tenth of your mint, your dill, and your cumin. But you have ignored the essentials of the law: justice, mercy, faithfulness. It is practice of the latter that makes sense of the former” Matthew 23:23.

The love that God has for us should spill over into how we give both our time and our money. Just like a great evening with friends and family takes time and money to accomplish, so does honest and relevant ministry in a community in need of Jesus. Just as it takes people buying the food and people cooking the food to have a great meal, it also takes people financially supporting God’s ministry as well as people acting out that ministry to see God’s message get out to the community.

A time to reflect...

Here are a few verses to get you started on your journey of Giving. Take a moment to read them, discuss them, and ask questions about them.

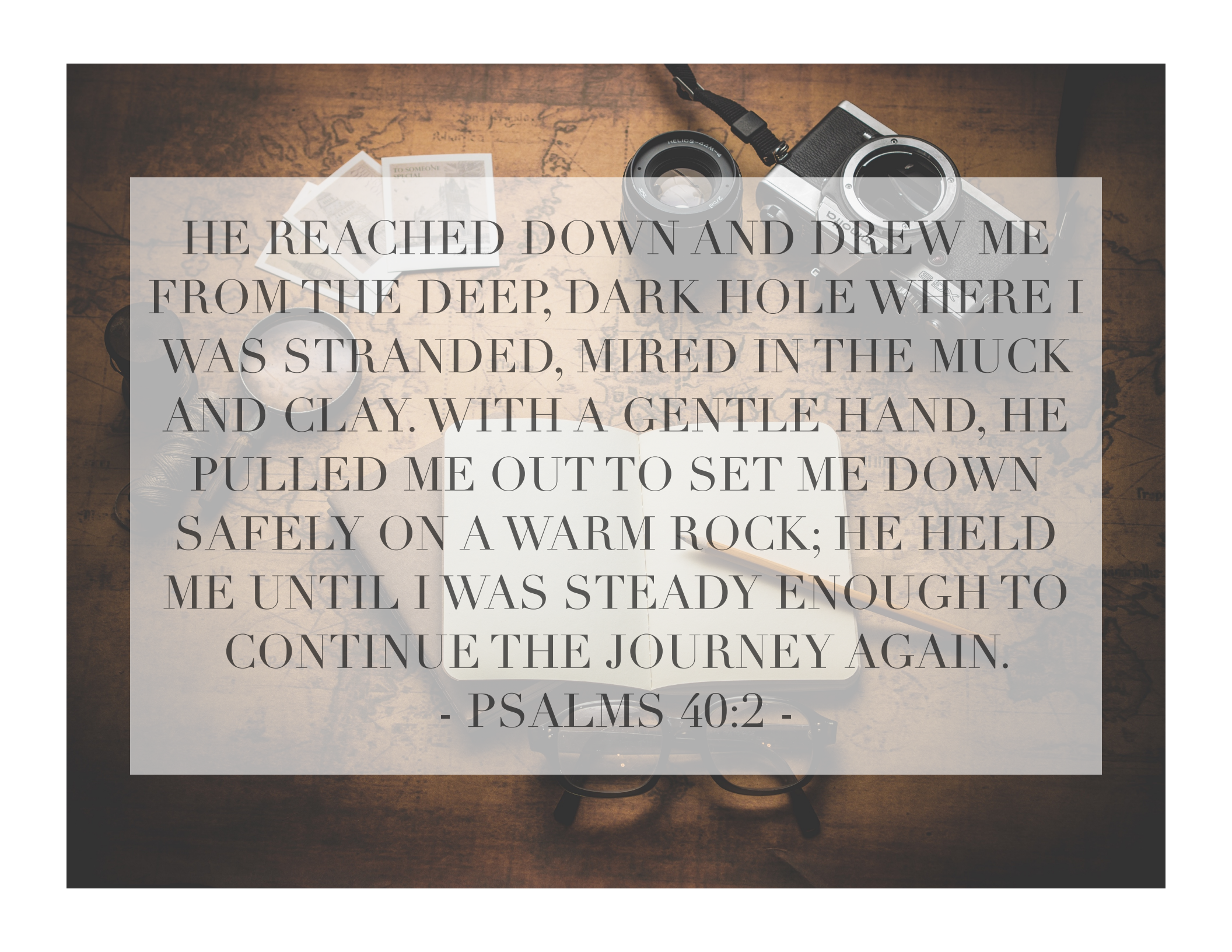
Luke 9:12-17

Acts 4:32-37

2 Corinthians 9:6-8

Use the space below to answer these questions.

1. How does giving work?
2. What kind of attitude should we have toward giving?
3. How do we prepare to give?

A still life composition featuring a vintage camera, a lens, a map, and a notebook on a wooden surface. The camera is a silver and black rangefinder-style camera with a black strap. Next to it is a lens with a black cap. A map is spread out on the wooden surface, and a notebook with a pencil is also visible. The text is overlaid on a semi-transparent white rectangle in the center of the image.

HE REACHED DOWN AND DREW ME
FROM THE DEEP, DARK HOLE WHERE I
WAS STRANDED, MIRED IN THE MUCK
AND CLAY. WITH A GENTLE HAND, HE
PULLED ME OUT TO SET ME DOWN
SAFELY ON A WARM ROCK; HE HELD
ME UNTIL I WAS STEADY ENOUGH TO
CONTINUE THE JOURNEY AGAIN.

- PSALMS 40:2 -



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