



THE
NAME
OF
JESUS

- 25 DAILY DEVOTIONS FOR ADVENT -

DAVID PLATT

THE NAME OF JESUS

Written by David Platt

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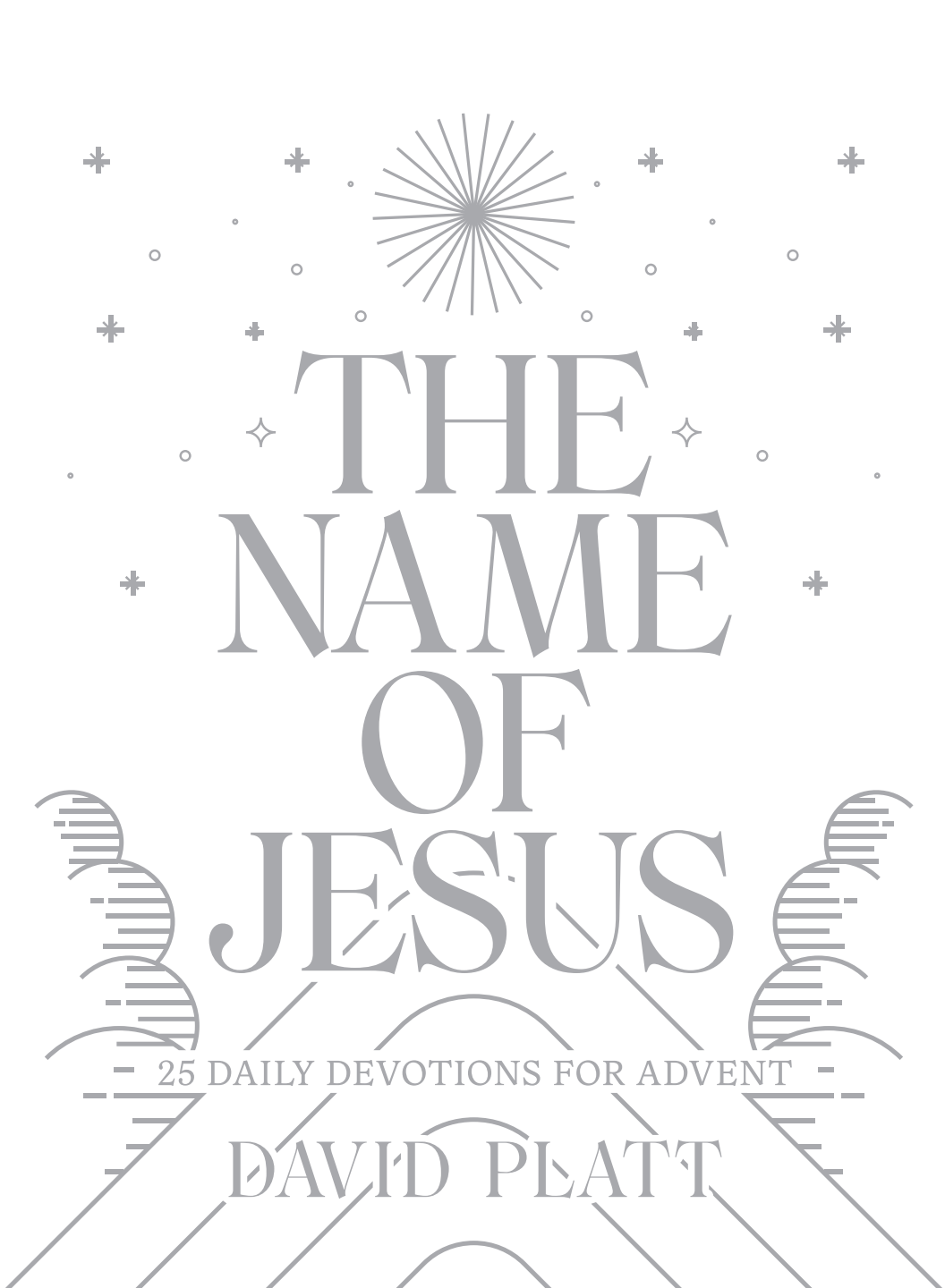
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Radical Inc.

First Printing: 2025

ISBN: 979-8-9855655-8-4

Printed in China



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Introduction

I remember the days when my wife and I decided on names for our six children. With each of them, as soon as we found out they were on the way, we settled on their names. In the months and sometimes years (through adoption) we waited for their arrival in our family, we mentioned their names constantly, wondering and dreaming about who they would be and what they would be like. On the day they finally came into our family, we were ecstatic to put a face with a name and begin the indescribable journey of discovering the depth of who they are.

As we approach Christmas day, the moment when we celebrate the birth of Jesus, I want to invite you to pause each day to meditate on his name. From the beginning of creation and for centuries prior to his arrival, God the Father told us about the name of his Son. Then, when Jesus finally came, angels announced his name with fanfare the world had never seen. Ever since that day, people have witnessed the unparalleled wonder of Jesus' name in the way he lived, died, rose from the grave, ascended to heaven, and now continues his work through his Holy Spirit.

That's what this Advent book is about. Advent refers to the arrival of someone highly anticipated, the coming of someone extremely significant. This book is a journey through a small portion of the many names of Jesus in the Bible. It is intended to guide us, encourage us, challenge us, and fill us with hope as we anticipate the celebration of Jesus' birth.

At the same time, this book is a reminder that there are approximately 3.2 billion people spread across over 7,000 distinct people groups who still don't know the truth about his name. Some of them have never even heard his name. I've met men, women, and children in villages from the Amazon to the Himalayas whom I have asked, "What do you know about Jesus?" only to hear them respond, "Who is that? I don't know anything about him." Others have heard the name of Jesus accompanied by falsehoods about who he is. Multitudes of people have been told Jesus is merely a prophet among many prophets, or even a god among many gods. They've never heard the truth about who Jesus is, and they currently don't know someone who can share that truth with them. They are considered "unreached" by the gospel, the good news of Jesus' name.

Before Jesus left the earth, he gave us a clear command to make his name known among all of these people groups (Matthew 28:19). So as we walk through this Advent journey, let's celebrate the name of Jesus. Each day, let's read a verse or passage of Scripture that describes one of Jesus' names, let's meditate on what it means, and let's reflect—either alone or through discussion with family or friends—on the wonder of who Jesus is and how his name has unique power to transform our lives. Then let's pray, praising Jesus for who he is, then asking God to make Jesus' name known among some of the largest unreached people groups in the world, and ultimately surrendering our lives and resources to God as an answer to that prayer.

In the end, let's look forward to the day when Jesus will return and we will see the glory of Jesus' name like we never have before, and we will join with men and women from every tribe, language, people, and nation to praise his name for all of eternity.

Day 01

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Jesus

She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus,
for he will save his people from their sins.

⋮

Matthew 1:21

Can you imagine how shocking this message was to hear? First, for Joseph to find out that his soon-to-be wife was pregnant? Then second, for him to learn that the son she was going to have—and he was going to adopt—would save people from their sins? That’s what Jesus’ name means: “Yahweh, the Lord, saves.” And when you think about it, this is shocking for all of us to hear.

Most people don’t think they need to be “saved.” Most people I talk with either don’t believe in God or they believe that when they stand before God one day, he will allow them into heaven because their good deeds will outweigh their bad deeds.

But that’s not true. God does exist, and all of us have sinned against him. To sin is to turn from God and his ways to ourselves and our own ways. Over the course of 39 books in the Old Testament of the Bible leading up to this announcement in the first book of the New Testament, this message was crystal clear: even the best of people sin against God. And no matter how many good deeds any one of us does, we cannot erase this reality.

This is bad news for all of us. Because just one sin against an infinitely holy, eternally just God leads to infinite, eternal judgment from him. That means we all need to be saved from our sins.

And that leads to the best news for all of us. God loves you and me so much that he has made a way for us to be saved from our sins. God has come to us in the person of Jesus, and with the first announcement of his name, God communicated to you and me: “I want to save you from your sins.”

In other words, God has said to us, “I have come to do what you cannot do yourselves.” That means we can’t—and don’t need to—overcome our bad deeds with enough good deeds in our lives. Instead, we need to stop trusting in ourselves altogether. We’ll never be saved from our sins because we’re good enough. We’ll only be saved from our sins because God is gracious enough. Thankfully, God has shown his grace to us in Jesus, who came to live a life of no sin, to die on the cross for our sin, and to rise from the grave in victory over sin.

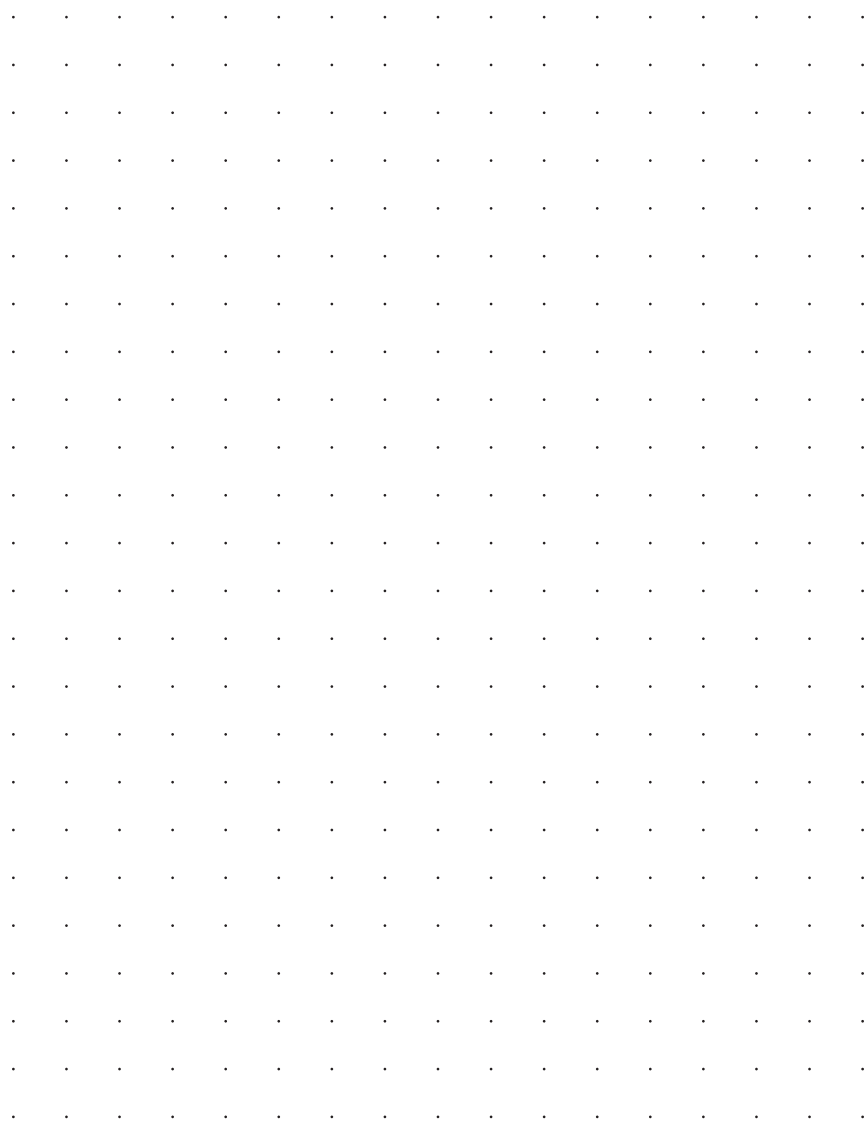
The greatest news in all the world is that you can be saved from your sins—and from infinite, eternal judgment due your sins—by turning from your sin and yourself and trusting in Jesus as your Savior. Trusting Jesus—whose name means “the Lord saves”—is without question the most important decision you can make in your entire life.

REFLECT

Have you trusted in Jesus as your Savior? If not, what is keeping you from trusting him? Every follower of Jesus I know has had questions or reservations before they followed him, so talk with a Christian friend about the questions or reservations you might have. Or if you have already trusted in Jesus as your Savior, identify a friend, family member, or neighbor who you can talk to this Christmas season about the One who came to save them from their sins.

PRAY

Praise Jesus for saving you from your sins, and pray for opportunities to share Jesus with friends, family members, and neighbors this Christmas season. Then pray for the Shaikh people who mainly live in Bangladesh, India, and Pakistan. They comprise over 102 million people, almost all of whom are Muslim and have never heard that Jesus is the only One who can save them from their sins.



Day 02

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Snake Crusher

I will put enmity between you and the woman, and
between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise
your head, and you shall bruise his heel.

⋮

Genesis 3:15

The first time we ever see the gospel—the good news that Jesus will save all who trust in him from their sins—is in the third chapter of the Bible. In Genesis 3:15, God delivers a promise that will shape the rest of the story of the Bible and all of human history, including each of our lives.

Everything was good in the first two chapters of the Bible. God and men and women existed together in perfect harmony with each other and all of creation. But at the beginning of Genesis 3, sin entered the world when Satan—through the form of a serpent—tempted Adam and Eve to disobey God. They gave in to that temptation in a moment that became known as the “fall” of humanity.

From that moment on, everything that was good became spoiled by sin. Man and woman were now separated from God, and their relationship to God was marked by guilt, shame, and fear. Man and woman’s relationship with each other and all of creation was also marred. Ever since Genesis 3, the curse of sin has affected all of human history, leading to natural disasters, moral evil, horrible injustices, unimaginable suffering, and ultimate death.

Yet here in the middle of what is in some ways the worst chapter in the Bible, God gives a promise. He tells the serpent that there will be “enmity,” or hostility, between his offspring and the offspring of the

woman. All who will come after Adam and Eve—including you and me—will experience a battle with sin in our hearts and the effects of sin in our lives. At the same time, God promises that eventually an Offspring from Eve will come, and though Satan would harm his heel, this Offspring would “bruise,” or as some translations say, “crush,” the serpent’s head. In other words, God promised to send someone who would decisively destroy sin and Satan himself.

Jesus is the fulfillment of this first promise, and his coming makes clear that God does not leave us alone in our battle with sin. Jesus, “born of a woman” (Galatians 4:4) named Mary, lived a sinless life, never once giving in to temptation. Then, although he had no sin of his own to pay for and no curse for which he deserved to die, Jesus chose to die. As Galatians 3:13 says, he became “a curse for us.” He took the curse of our sin upon himself on the cross so that we could be forgiven of all of our sin against God. Then he rose from the grave, defeating sin and death and triumphing over Satan (Colossians 2:15).

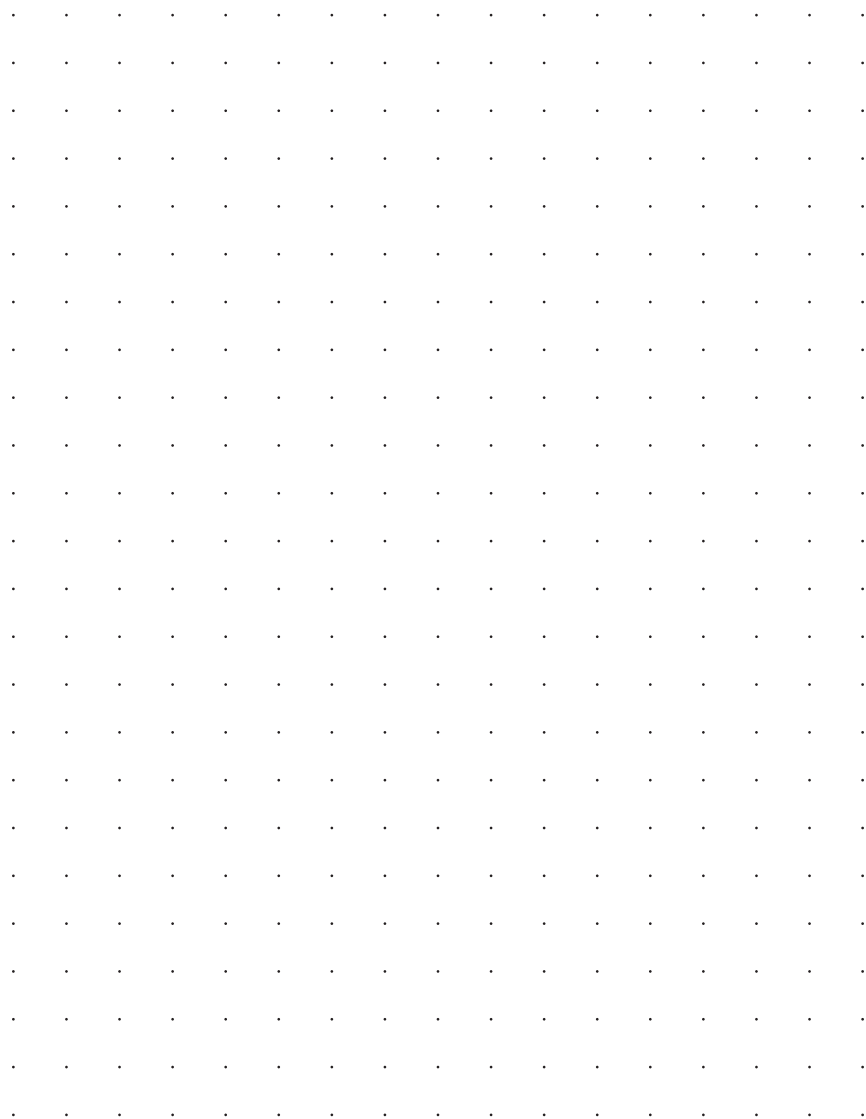
Jesus is the Snake Crusher, the fulfillment of God’s promise in Genesis 3:15, and he gives all who trust in him freedom from the power of Satan today and the penalty of sin forever.

REFLECT

How does Jesus' victory over Satan affect the way you battle sin in your own life? In what specific ways do you need to trust Jesus to give you power over sin and Satan today? If you haven't already, identify other followers of Jesus who can encourage and pray for you as you battle against sin with the power of Jesus in you.

PRAY

Praise Jesus for his victory over sin, Satan, and death, and pray for his help in your battles with temptation and sin. Then pray for over 119 million Japanese men, women, and children who live in Japan, most of whom do not know—and have not even heard about—the victory of Jesus over sin and death.



Day 03



The Son of God

And the angel answered her, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy—the Son of God.”



Luke 1:35

What does it mean for Jesus to be the Son of God? Does this mean that God had a child just like you or I might have children? Or that Jesus is different from God, much like you and I are different from our father? Or is this, as Muslims teach, just a metaphorical title for Jesus that applies to other people who are particularly blessed by God?

This unique name of Jesus sets him apart from everyone else in history and plunges us into the deep mystery of the Trinity. The Bible teaches that there is one God who exists eternally in three persons: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. Each of these persons is fully God, and there is only one God. If that sounds hard for you to understand, then you're not alone. Because we are not God, we cannot fully understand everything about him. But just because something is mysterious does not mean it's not true. The Bible reveals that Jesus has existed eternally as the Son of God and that he took on flesh (true humanity) when he came into the world.

Once we recognize that Jesus as the Son of God is the second person of the Godhead, it only makes sense that the angel who announced Jesus' birth would say, "Unto you is born this day . . . a Savior, who is Christ *the Lord*," a title that is reserved for God

alone. And this is why a multitude of angels then began saying, “Glory to God in the highest” (Luke 2:11-14).

In a sense, this is the most staggering claim in all of Christianity. Once you realize that Jesus is God, all the other stories about him make sense. It’s not too surprising to see him walking on water once you realize he’s the God who made the water. Of course he can feed over 5,000 people with only five loaves and two fish when he’s the One who formed that bread, those fish, and all 5,000 of those people. Even Jesus’ resurrection from the grave makes sense because he is the Lord of life. What’s most shocking is actually that he died.

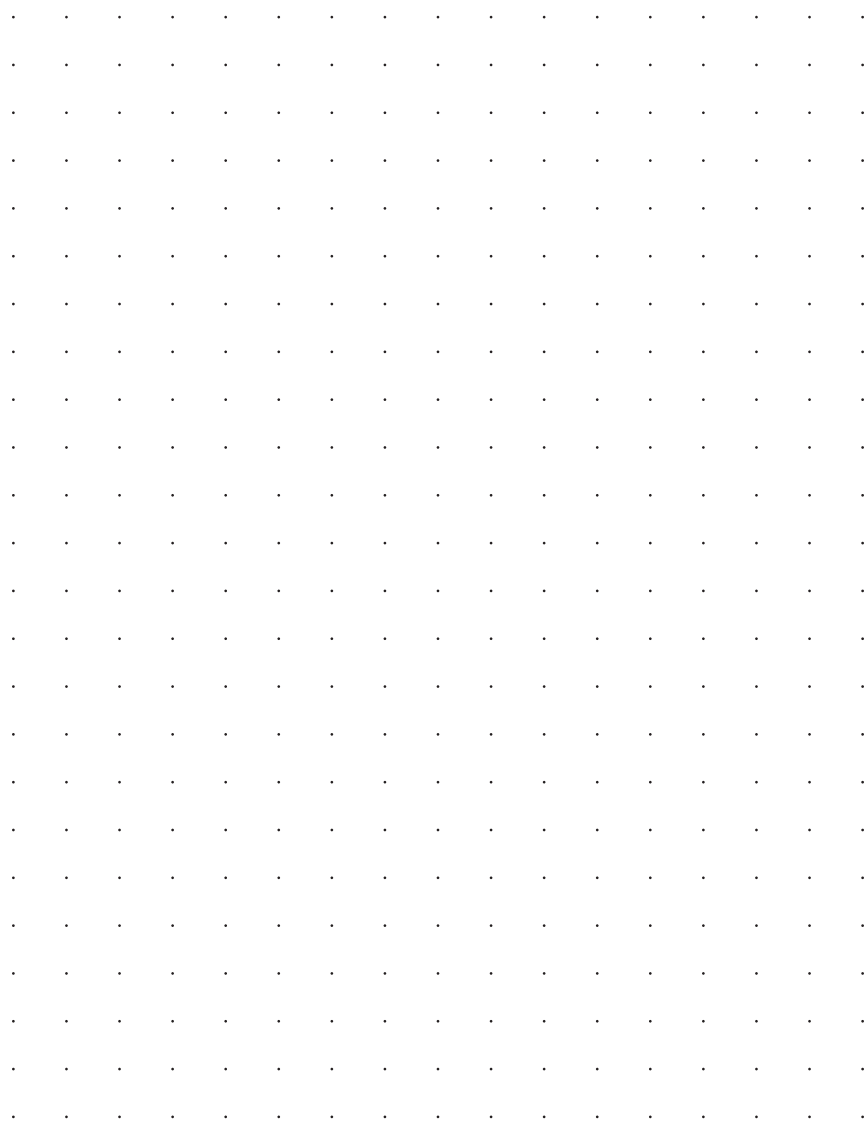
This truth is far too amazing to drown out with sleigh bells and stockings at Christmastime. God himself has come to us. The Creator has come to creation. So let this name of Jesus as the second person of the Trinity, the Son of God, drive you to awe and wonder in humble worship.

REFLECT

Why do you think Jesus—the Son of God—has come to us? How does this truth that Jesus is God in the flesh change your life, including the way you talk about Jesus? Who can you share this truth with today or tomorrow?

PRAY

Praise Jesus as the Son of God, possibly bowing on your knees or your face in worship as you do so. Then pray for over 67 million Turks, most of whom live in Turkey. Almost all of them have been taught that Jesus is not God in the flesh, and they have never heard the good news that God himself has come to save us from our sins.



Day 04

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The Son of Man

No one has ascended into heaven except he who
descended from heaven, the Son of Man.

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John 3:13

Jesus is the Son of God and the Son of Man. As the Son of God, he is completely unlike us, for he is fully God. However, as the Son of Man, Jesus is completely like us (except without sin), for he is fully human.

We sometimes forget this at Christmas. We sing carols about a silent night with cattle lowing while Jesus makes no sound. I'm sure there were moments of peaceful silence, but let's not forget that newborn babies cry. A lot. And all the more so when they wake up next to a cow. "Screaming night, holy night," doesn't have quite the same ring to it, but I don't know many parents who look back at the first few nights after having a baby and think, "Things were so quiet."

Understanding the humanity of Jesus is important not only for our knowledge of who Jesus is, but also for how he works in our lives. If we are not careful, we can focus so much on the fact that Jesus is not like us (because he is God) that we forget he is also like us (because he is human). Are you ever tired, exhausted, or weary? Have you ever experienced emotional distress, physical pain, or relational hurt? Do you ever feel alone or angry, concerned or confused, broken or beat down? Do you sometimes cry out because you feel like you can't take it anymore?

Jesus has experienced all of these things, and more. That means when you experience any of these things, you have a God who is familiar with your struggles. Jesus, the Son of Man, is near to you, not distant from you, in your struggles and your suffering. This is why Corrie Ten Boom's sister Betsie could say from the depths of a Nazi death camp, "there is no pit so deep that He is not deeper still."¹

Jesus not only descended from heaven to identify with us in our humanity, but he also ascended to heaven after he died on the cross and rose from the grave. The Son of Man now reigns at the right hand of God the Father, and he is ready at every moment to provide you with everything you need amidst the trials and temptations you face in your humanity. And the Bible teaches that one day, the Son of Man will return to this world to fully and finally save every woman, man, and child who trusts in him from sin, suffering, and death forever.

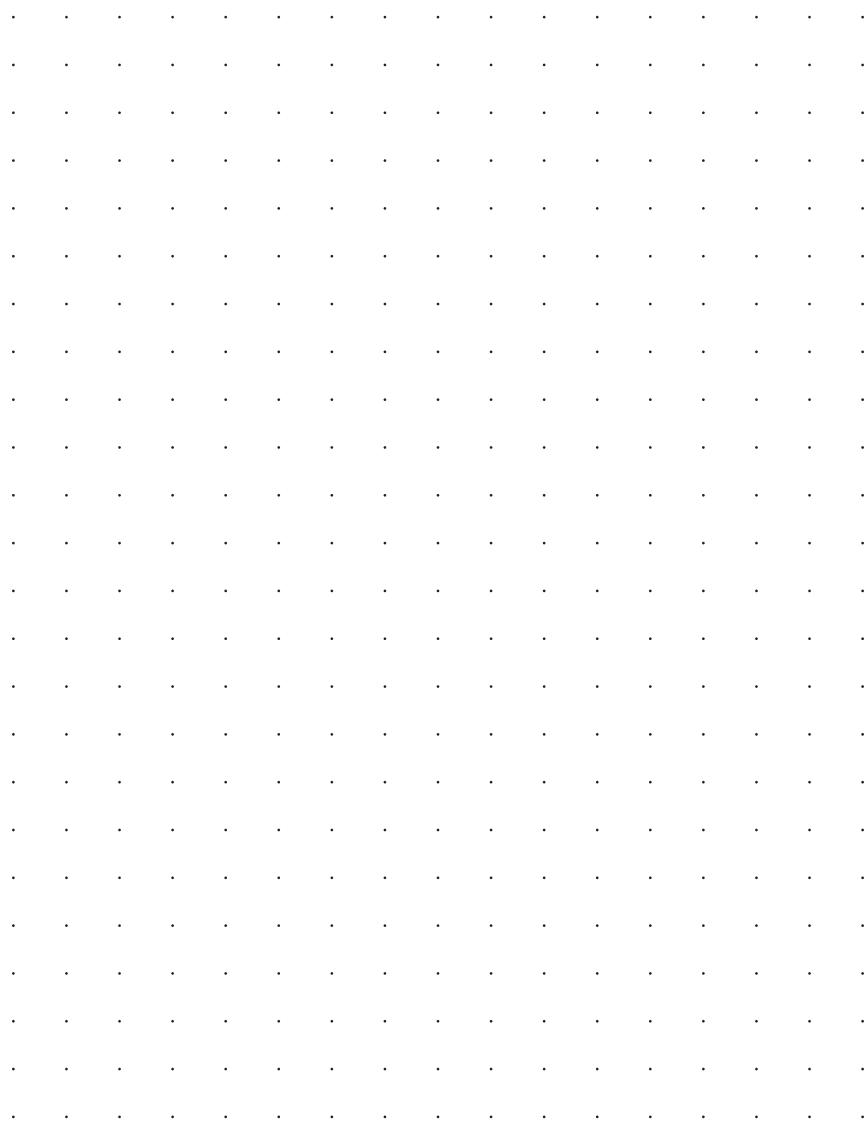
1 Corrie Ten Boom, *The Hiding Place* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 1971, 2022), 135.

REFLECT

How does knowing Jesus as the Son of Man transform the way you face trials and temptations in your life? How can you specifically encourage someone today who is walking through hard days in his or her life with this truth about Jesus as the Son of Man?

PRAY

Praise Jesus as the Son of Man and express to him specific struggles in your life right now, remembering that he understands what you are walking through. Then pray for over 51 million Chamar people, almost all of whom live in India, who have not been reached with the good news that the one true God has become human like us for our salvation.



Day 05

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Servant

For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to
serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.

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Mark 10:45

This may be my favorite Christmas verse in all of the Bible. Many people may not see it as a Christmas verse, but Jesus is telling us the reason he came to us, and what he says is astonishing. In this verse, Jesus says that the whole reason he came was to “serve” us, and the word he uses can be translated “to wait on tables.” There is a sense in which Jesus is saying, “I came to wait on you.”

Just think about that. You or I go to a restaurant, someone comes to our table, and he or she asks, “How can I help you? What can I get you? How can I serve you?” That’s what Jesus is saying in Mark 10:45. In fact, he’s saying that’s the whole reason he came to the world—to say to you and me, “How can I help you? What can I get you? How can I serve you?”

Jesus did not come as a powerful ruler whose personal whims were to be catered to by lowly servants. Instead, Jesus came to *be* the lowly servant. More specifically, he came to be *your* lowly servant. For all who trust in Jesus, he says to you, “In my relationship with you, I am your servant.”

Now obviously this doesn’t mean that Jesus does whatever we want him to do. And yes, there is a sense in which the Bible does call us servants of Jesus.

But think about this question: How do you become a Christian in the first place? Isn't it by letting Jesus serve you? More specifically, by letting Jesus save you from your sin through his life, death, and resurrection for you? This is the last part of Mark 10:45. He came to give his life as a ransom for you. That word "for" means "instead of." Jesus came to serve you in a way you could never serve yourself: by saving you from your sin. The Christian life begins with trusting Jesus to serve us in this way.

But this is also how the Christian life continues. It's not like we move on from needing Jesus to help us once we become his followers. We never move on from needing Jesus to serve us. Every single day, at every single moment, we need Jesus to serve us with his strength, his peace, his wisdom, his hope, and his help in every single facet of our lives. We can't even breathe without Jesus serving us!

As crazy as it may sound, see Jesus as your servant today. Go to him in prayer with everything you need amidst everything that's going on in your life. Let him serve you with his Word, leading and guiding and directing your thoughts and desires and actions. And in it all, hear him saying at every moment, with deep love for you, "I am here to serve you."

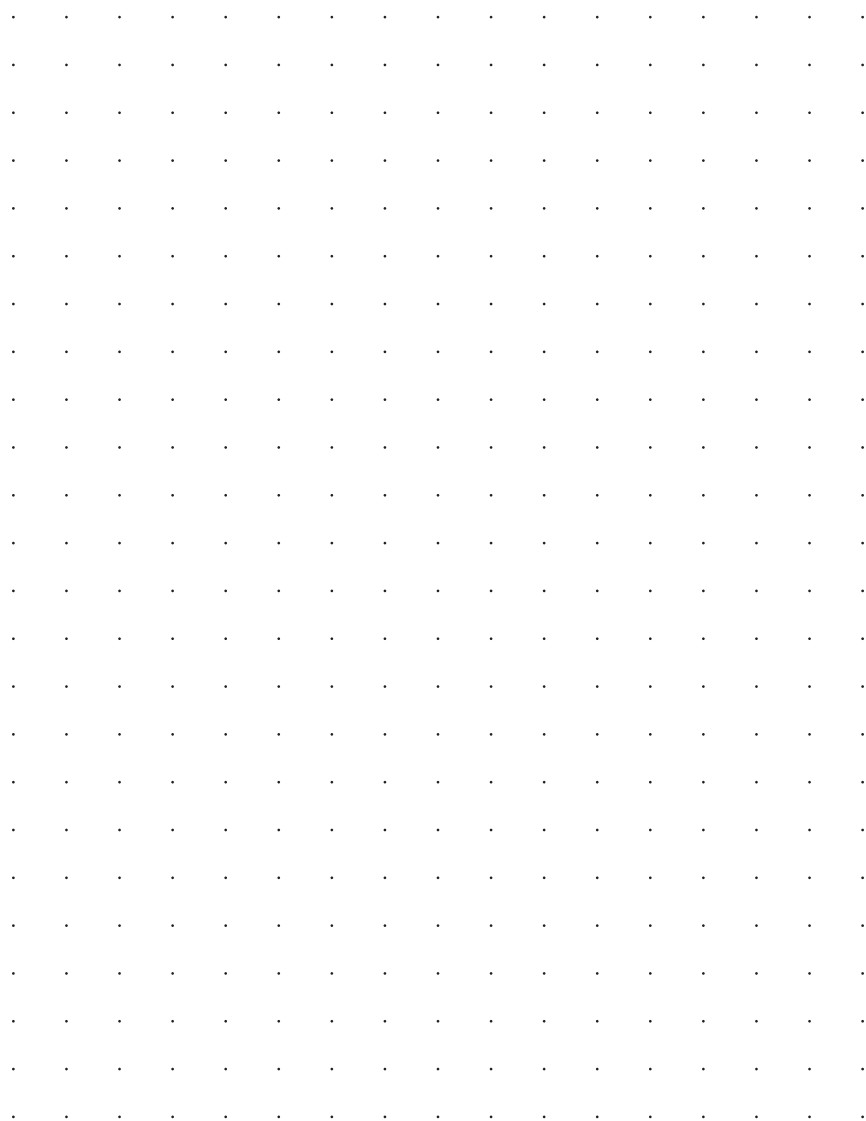
REFLECT

What are some of the ways you need Jesus to serve you today?

How does seeing Jesus as your servant lead you to worship him?

PRAY

Praise Jesus as your servant and ask for his help in specific areas of your life. Then pray that over 25 million Moroccan Arabs would be reached with the good news that Jesus came to serve them.



Day 06

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Immanuel

All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet: “Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel” (which means, God with us).

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Matthew 1:22-23

Over 700 years before Jesus came, God made a promise through Isaiah the prophet during a time of great anxiety among God's people. They were being threatened with war and were worried that they would be destroyed, yet God promised that he would not leave them alone. He would be with them; he would protect and provide for them; and he would defend and deliver them.

But this promise from God through Isaiah wasn't just about God's presence for God's people *then*. Isaiah was saying that one day, a miracle would happen. A virgin would give birth to a son, and his name would be "Immanuel," which means "God with us." That's why over 700 years after God gave this promise, an angel said to Joseph, "Your soon-to-be-wife is going to have this son that God promised centuries ago, and in a way no one could have fathomed, your son will be God with us."

This verse teaches us so much, but let's just consider two truths here.

First, God is faithful to his Word. This verse shows us that when God makes a promise in his Word, he fulfills it in the world. Every promise God makes to us will prove true. When God says, "I will never leave you nor forsake you," that is a guarantee: you

will never be alone in this world (Hebrews 13:5). Because God has said he is our “refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble,” you can know that you will never face trouble without his strength at your side (Psalm 46:1). Because God has said he will “supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus,” you can know that you will never have a need that is too great for God to meet (Philippians 4:19). God always keeps his promises.

As a result of God’s faithfulness, we can also rest in this second truth from Matthew 1:22-23: all who trust in Jesus are free from worry. No matter what you face in this world, you never have to worry about anything. For God, your Creator, your Savior—the Supplier of divine help, boundless strength, never-ending comfort, supernatural peace, overcoming joy, and unshakable hope—is always with you. As God promised his people centuries ago, he will ultimately protect, provide for, defend, and deliver you. And one day, when you breathe your last breath and move on from this world, even then you will not be alone. You are free from all worry or fear of death itself, for the One who is with you has conquered the grave, and he will usher you into his presence to be with him for all eternity.

REFLECT

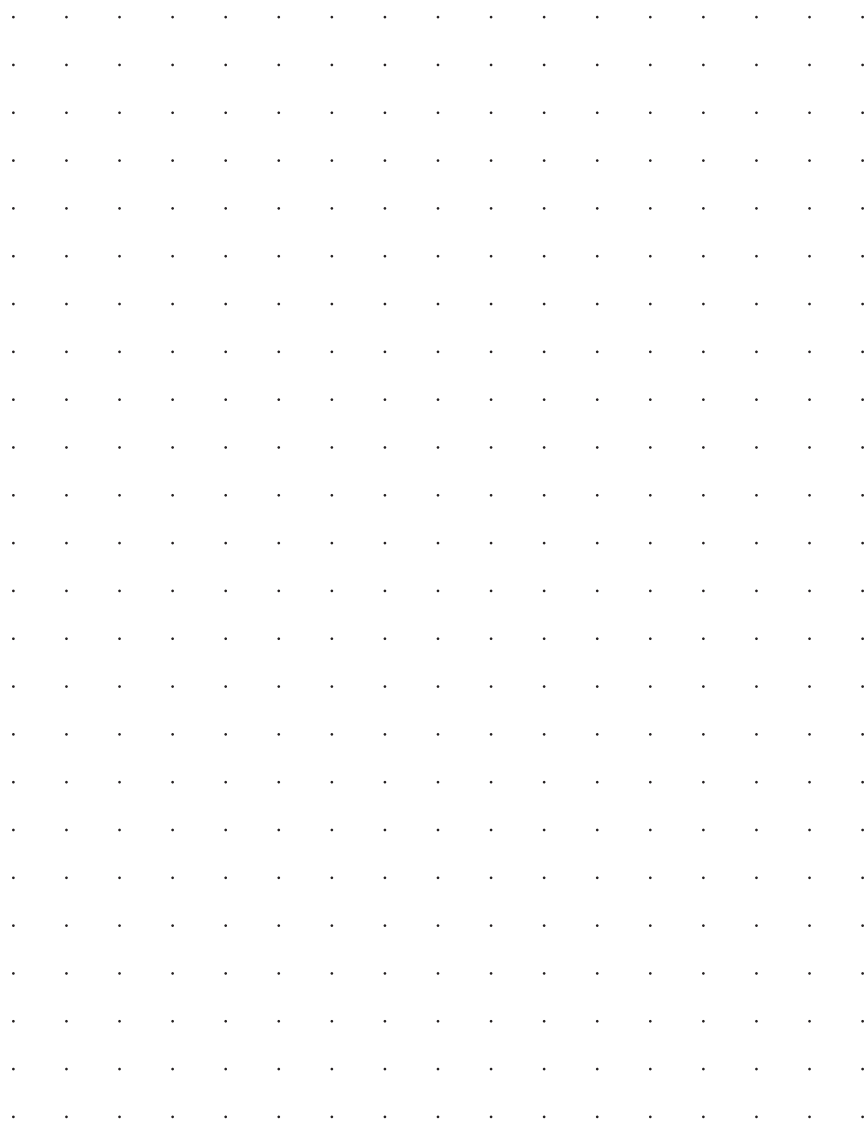
Jesus is Immanuel: God with us now and God with us forever.

How does “God with you” change your outlook on your life today?

Who can you encourage with the truth that God is with us?

PRAY

Praise Jesus as God with us in this world and God with you in your life, and pray that God will help you to live in light of his presence with you. Then pray for over 50 million Yadav men, women, and children in India who have not heard that Jesus is the one true God who has come to be with us.



Day 07



Wonderful Counselor

For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called ***Wonderful Counselor***, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.



Isaiah 9:6

Over the next few days, let's consider different names of Jesus that Isaiah prophesied over 700 years before Jesus even came. We'll start with one of the most well-known verses in Isaiah and the first name for Jesus we see there: Wonderful Counselor.

We all need counsel at different points in our lives, particularly when we walk through challenging circumstances. Seeking counsel requires humility, an acknowledgment that we want to make wise decisions in our lives but we're not always sure which direction is best. As a result, we seek help in the form of good counsel from people we respect.

Have you ever made a bad decision on your own and in hindsight wished you had sought counsel from others? Or have you ever sought counsel and followed it, only to later find out that the counsel you received was unwise? No one enjoys the regret we feel when we make unwise decisions on our own or follow unwise counsel from others.

Sadly, even the best counsel in this world is still going to be imperfect. But the good news of Isaiah 9:6 is that God has given us a wonderful, perfect, completely good, always reliable counselor. This is who Jesus is. His Word is filled with wisdom, and his Spirit who

lives in us is called the Counselor (John 14:26).

As we humble ourselves before Jesus, we can trust completely in his counsel. He is God in the flesh counseling, leading, guiding, and directing our lives and decisions according to that which is good and right. This is exactly the kind of counsel we need, particularly when you think about how he saves us from our sins and ourselves. We are all prone to choose our ways (which are unwise) over God's ways (which are wise), and Jesus not only saves us from our sinfulness, but he fills us with his Spirit so that we can walk with the counsel of God himself.

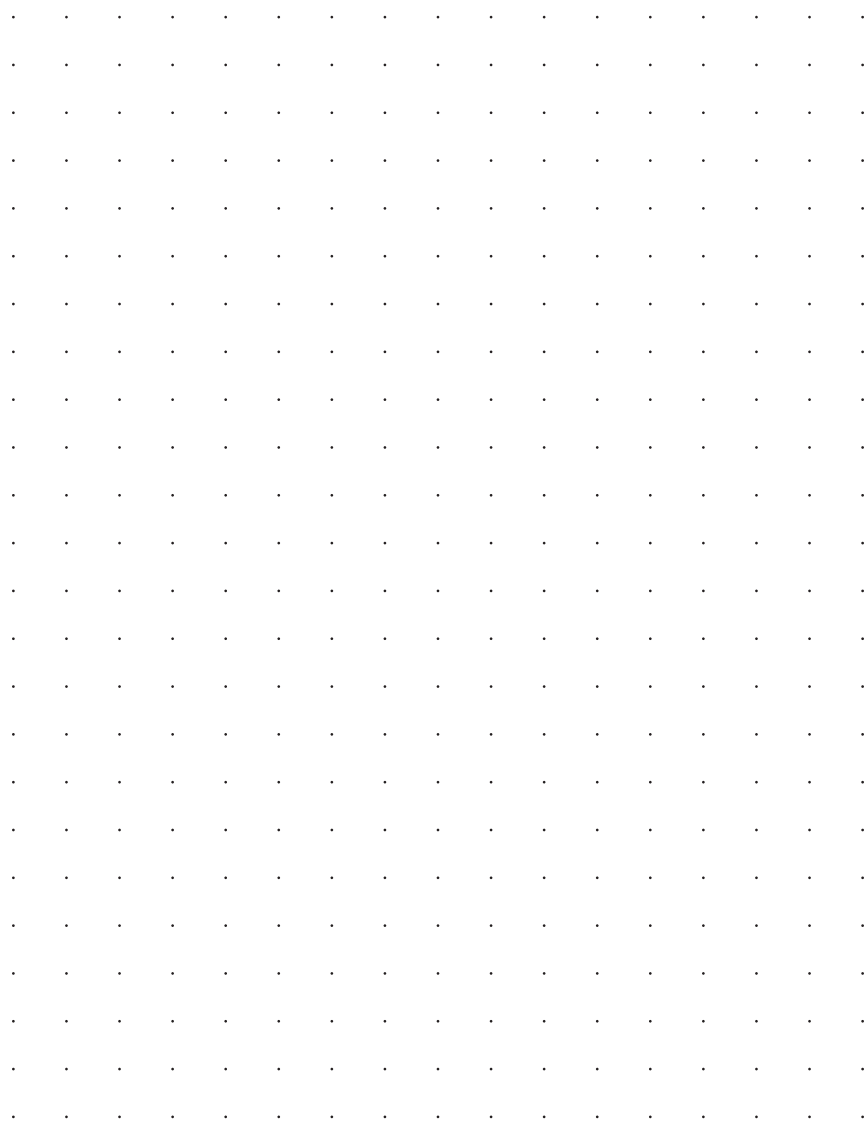
Amidst whatever circumstances you walk through or decisions you make each day, seek and trust in Jesus as your Wonderful Counselor.

REFLECT

When you need counsel in a certain situation, is your first impulse to look to Jesus and ask for his counsel, or do you usually go to others first? How can you train yourself to look to Jesus first, then to filter what others say through his Word and the leadership of his Spirit?

PRAY

Praise Jesus as your Wonderful Counselor and express your need for specific counsel in your life right now. Then pray for over 42 million Persians in Iran, most of whom have yet to hear that Jesus is their Wonderful Counselor who will save them from their sins and themselves and lead them to eternal life by his Spirit.



Day 08



Mighty God

For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, ***Mighty God***, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.



Isaiah 9:6

We've already considered what it means for Jesus to be God in the flesh, but in light of this second name for Jesus in Isaiah 9:6, let's think about the "might" of Jesus.

Throughout the Gospel accounts of Jesus' life on this earth, we see demonstrations of his might. One of my favorite sequences in the book of Mark begins at the end of Mark 4, where Jesus calms a storm. The Bible says the disciples were afraid for their lives when the storm arose, but interestingly, the Bible says they were "filled with great fear" *after* Jesus spoke and the wind and the waves were still. Why? Because they realized that this man in the boat with them had power over nature.

In the next story, at the beginning of Mark 5, Jesus encounters demons who had possessed a man. Jesus told these demons what to do and they obeyed, distinctly demonstrating Jesus' power over demons. Then a woman who had been sick for over a decade simply touched Jesus' garment and she was healed, showing Jesus' power over disease. Finally, Mark 5 ends with Jesus raising a young girl who had died back to life.

When you put these four short stories together, you see quite a picture of Jesus' might. As God, he has power over nature, demons,

disease, and death itself.

Now let this soak in. If you are a follower of Jesus, this same Jesus lives in you. In other words, the “Mighty God” who has power over nature, demons, disease, and death lives in you!

This doesn't mean that you or I need to go out and try to still the wind and waves next time we see a storm coming over the water. But it does mean that no matter what temptations or trials we face in this world, we have the resources of the Mighty God in us. You are not weak in the fight of faith in this world. The Mighty God is *in* you and *for* you, and that means nothing this world throws at you can stand against you.

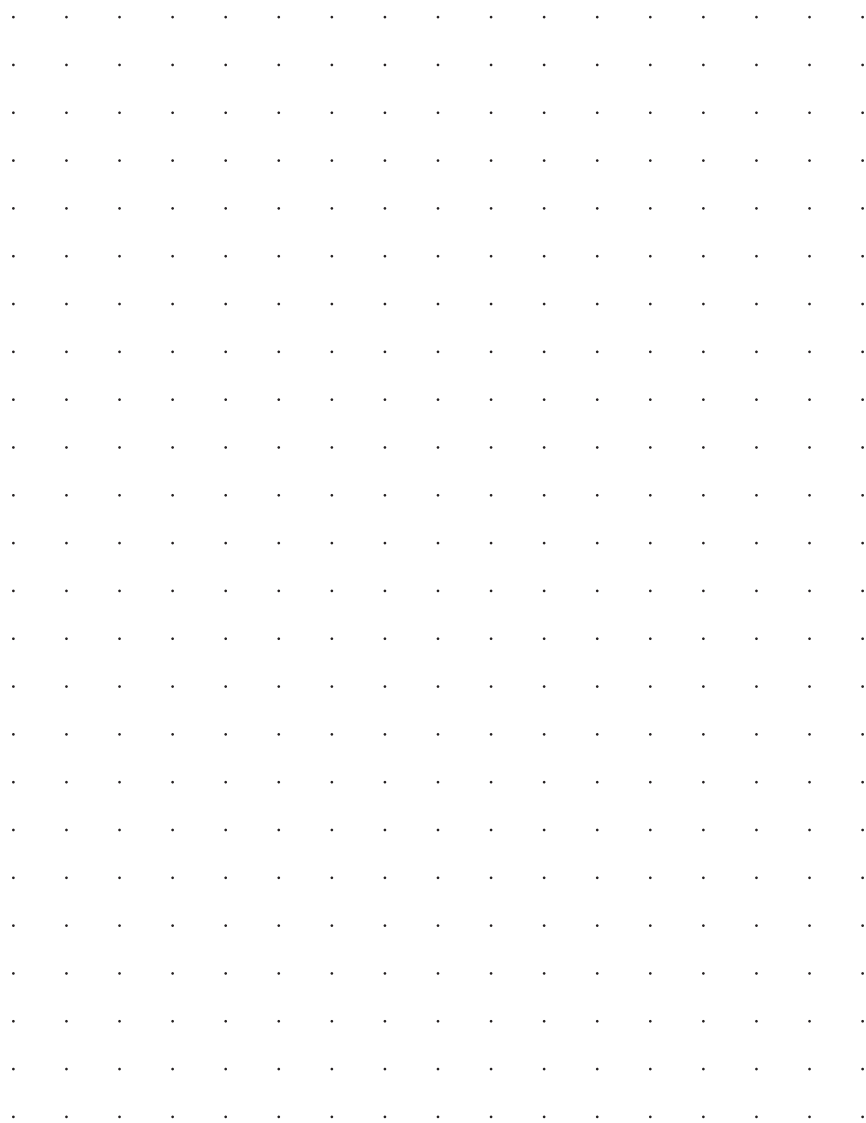
Indeed, in the words of Paul in Romans 8:31, “What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us?”

REFLECT

In what specific ways do you feel weak and in need of Jesus' might? How would your life look different if you were depending at every moment on Jesus' power instead of your own?

PRAY

Praise Jesus for his might and express your need for his strength and power in your life in specific ways. Then pray for over 38 million Sunda in Indonesia who have been taught that Jesus is just a man and who desperately need to hear that Jesus is the Mighty God who alone has the power to save them from their sins.



Day 09



Everlasting Father

For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, ***Everlasting Father***, Prince of Peace.



Isaiah 9:6

How can a son, a child, be called “Everlasting Father”? When Isaiah 9:6 identifies this name of Jesus, it doesn’t mean that Jesus replaces God the Father. Remember, God is triune, one God existing eternally in three persons: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit.

In order to understand this name of Jesus, we need to understand the context of Isaiah 9:6. Isaiah is painting a picture of an ideal king, which is what is meant by “the government” being “upon his shoulder.”

Now imagine what it would be like to have a king as your dad. It would mean you are royalty! And imagine that your dad, the king, not only ruled over everyone in his kingdom flawlessly, but he also loved you as his child perfectly. This is what God is promising to provide for his people in the coming of Jesus.

I’m not a king, but by God’s grace, I am a dad. I love my kids more than words can express. Honestly, I’m in awe that I’m their dad. I praise God for the privilege and responsibility of caring for them. I want to work for their good in every way possible.

The problem is, I’m an imperfect father, which means my love

for them isn't perfect. As much as I want to lead and serve them wisely, I'm not perfectly wise, and I don't always know what is best for them. As much as I try to work tirelessly for their good, my strength often fails, and I don't always do what is best for them. As much as I long to help them in every way that is good for them, I am limited in the help I can provide.

But Jesus is different. His reign as king in our lives demonstrates the love of a Father who is perfectly wise. He always knows what is best for us. He also never tires, which means he works at all times for our good, even when we are sleeping—because he doesn't sleep! Like a perfect father, there are no limits to the good help he can and will provide for us.

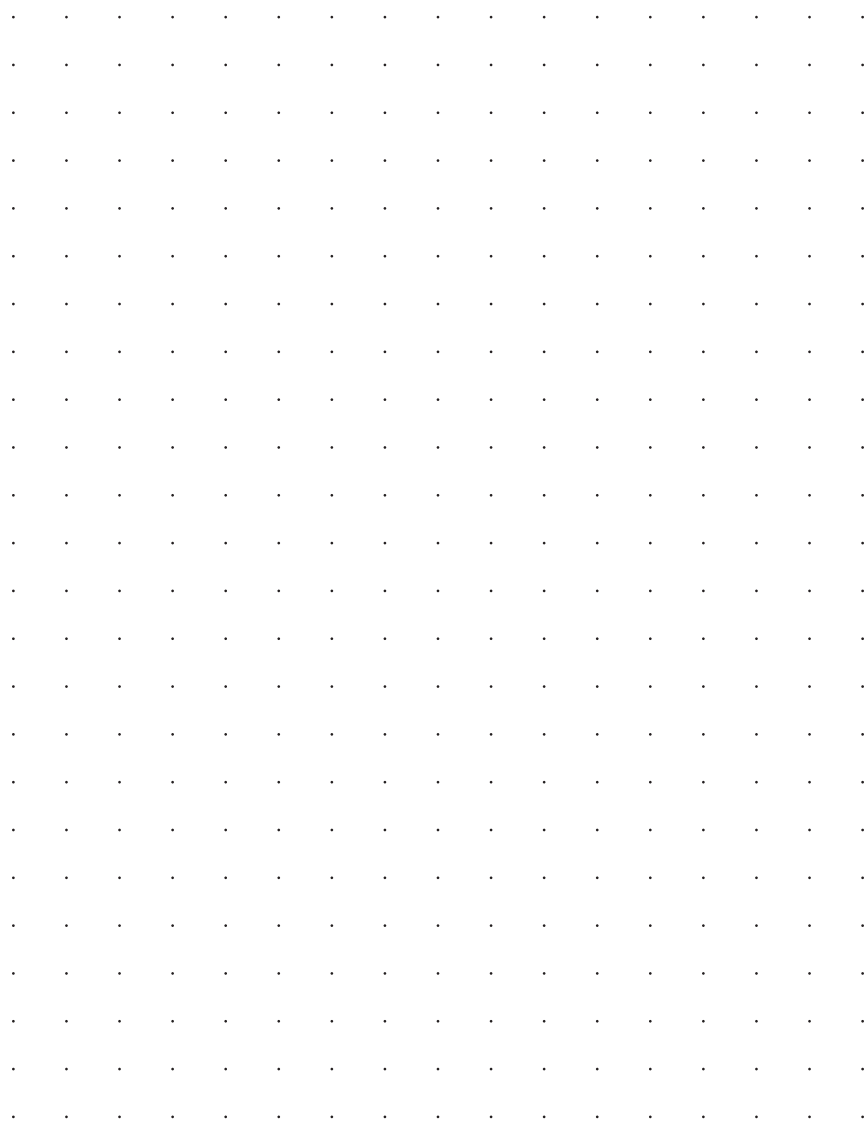
I have experienced the joy of being loved by a good dad in this world, and I obviously don't know what your relationship with your dad is like, or whether you have a relationship with him at all. Regardless, be encouraged by this good news. Over 700 years before Jesus came, God promised that he was going to send Jesus so that you could enjoy his perfect love not just as a citizen of his kingdom, but as a child in his family. And remember that you will experience this love forever and ever and ever, for his name is *Everlasting* Father.

REFLECT

List out the characteristics of a good father in this world. Then consider the ways Jesus is a perfect demonstration of all these attributes.

PRAY

Praise Jesus as the Everlasting Father, the King who loves his people as a dad loves his children, and thank him specifically for the ways he has loved you. Then pray for over 38 million Java Pesisir Lor in Indonesia who cannot become children of God until they hear the truth about Jesus.



Day 10



Prince of Peace

For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, ***Prince of Peace.***



Isaiah 9:6

We live in a world of war, conflict, disputes, division, hatred, hurt, pain, and sorrow. None of these things are new to our generation. All of these things have existed ever since sin came into the world, and all of these things will exist as long as sin remains in the world.

But listen to what God promised in Isaiah 9:6: he was going to send his Son to be the Prince of Peace. God was saying, “I’m going to send you a King who will not just end one war, settle one conflict, solve one dispute, or heal one hurt. I’m going to send you a King who will end all wars, settle all conflicts, solve all disputes, and heal all the hurts of those who trust in him. I’m going to send you the Prince of Peace.”

Just think about what it takes to bring about peace. For years, people have been working for peace in the Middle East. Anyone who helps broker such peace will need to have the trust of both sides (or really, all sides) in this conflict, and such a peacemaker will need sufficient resources to intercede for all parties in order to bring peace among them.

This is why Jesus alone can bring peace to the entire world. Wars, conflicts, and the like are all pictures of sin against God, demonstrating the awful consequence of sin in the world. But as we have seen, Jesus is fully God, which means he perfectly represents God before sinful people. At the same time, he is fully man, which means he perfectly represents people before a holy God. He alone

has all the resources needed to bring God and sinners together. That's why 1 Timothy 2:5 calls Jesus the perfect "mediator between God and men." Though he had no sin for which to die, he chose to die for us, and Colossians 1:20 says he made "peace by the blood of his cross."

Jesus has made it possible for you and me to be forgiven of our sins and to have peace with God (Romans 5:1). As a result of our peace with God, the way is open for us to experience peace with one another, as Jesus empowers us to "live peaceably with all" (Romans 12:18).

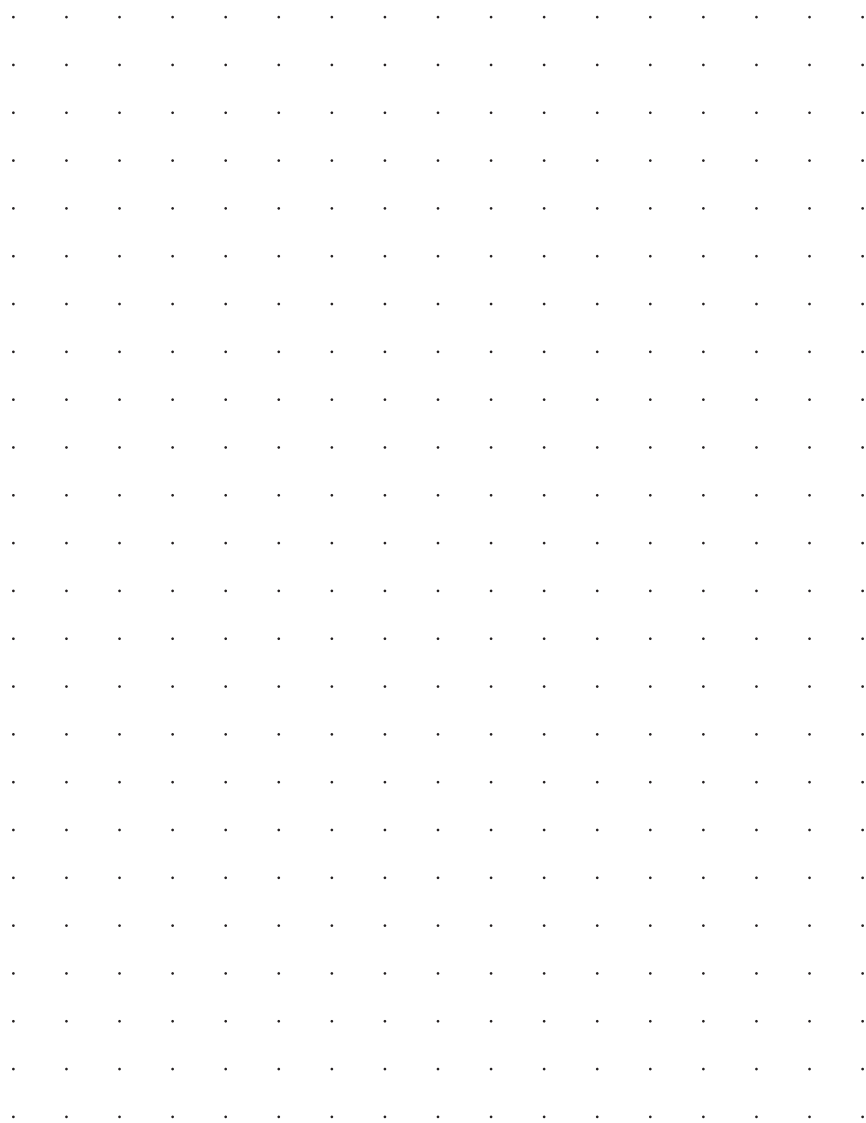
Even so, we are surrounded by a lack of peace in this world. That's because God's promise is not yet completely fulfilled. Jesus, the Prince of Peace, is coming back for all who trust in him. And on that day, he is going to put an end to all wars, conflicts, disputes, division, hatred, hurt, pain, and sorrow. So today, in this weary, warring world, heed the encouragement of Colossians 3:15: "Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts" as you enjoy his peace, mirror his peace, spread his peace, and wait for the day when his peace will rule perfectly in the world.

REFLECT

Imagine what a world would look like with only peace. Then consider what it means to “let the peace of Christ rule in your heart” as you wait for that world to come.

PRAY

Praise Jesus for the peace he alone can make possible, and pray for his peace to rule your heart and spread in the world, particularly where there is conflict around you and war around the world. Then pray for over 38 million Muslims among the Hausa of Nigeria who haven't heard the good news that Jesus is the Prince of Peace.



Day 11



Banner for the Peoples

In that day the Root of Jesse will stand as a banner
for the peoples; the nations will rally to him,
and his resting place will be glorious.



Isaiah 11:10, NIV

What does it mean for Jesus to be a “banner for the peoples”?

To help answer that question, picture the opening ceremonies of the Olympic Games. Thousands of people look on in person, along with millions of others behind screens, as athletes enter a stadium walking behind the flag of their country. As crowds cheer them on, joy beams from the faces of Olympians who are representing their respective nations. Eventually, they all gather under one Olympic flag with rings representing the colors from every country’s flag in this competition that brings them together.

With this imagery in your mind, now picture the way the Bible talks about how humankind is made up of nations, or peoples (we see both of these terms in Isaiah 11:10). Every one of us belongs to a distinct ethnic group, or people group, with whom we share common language and cultural characteristics. This is more specific than even our own country, for most countries are comprised of diverse people groups. Some researchers estimate there are more than 16,000 distinct people groups in the world.

Much like those Olympic athletes who represent their nation, it is right and good to be proud of your ethnic background and the people group to which you belong. Our differences beautifully display

the creativity of our Creator, and our histories testify to God's grace through those who have gone before us.

Now imagine a scene in which people from every single ethnic group in the history of the world come streaming into one place and gather under one banner that represents the beauty and glory of *all* the nations. This is Jesus. He is the only Savior who can deliver anyone from any people group from their sin, and he is the only King who is worthy of the worship of every nation in history.

It's no surprise, then, that right after Jesus is born, wise men—well-respected, high-ranking officials with power and influence—from the nations come to bow down before him with extravagant offerings.

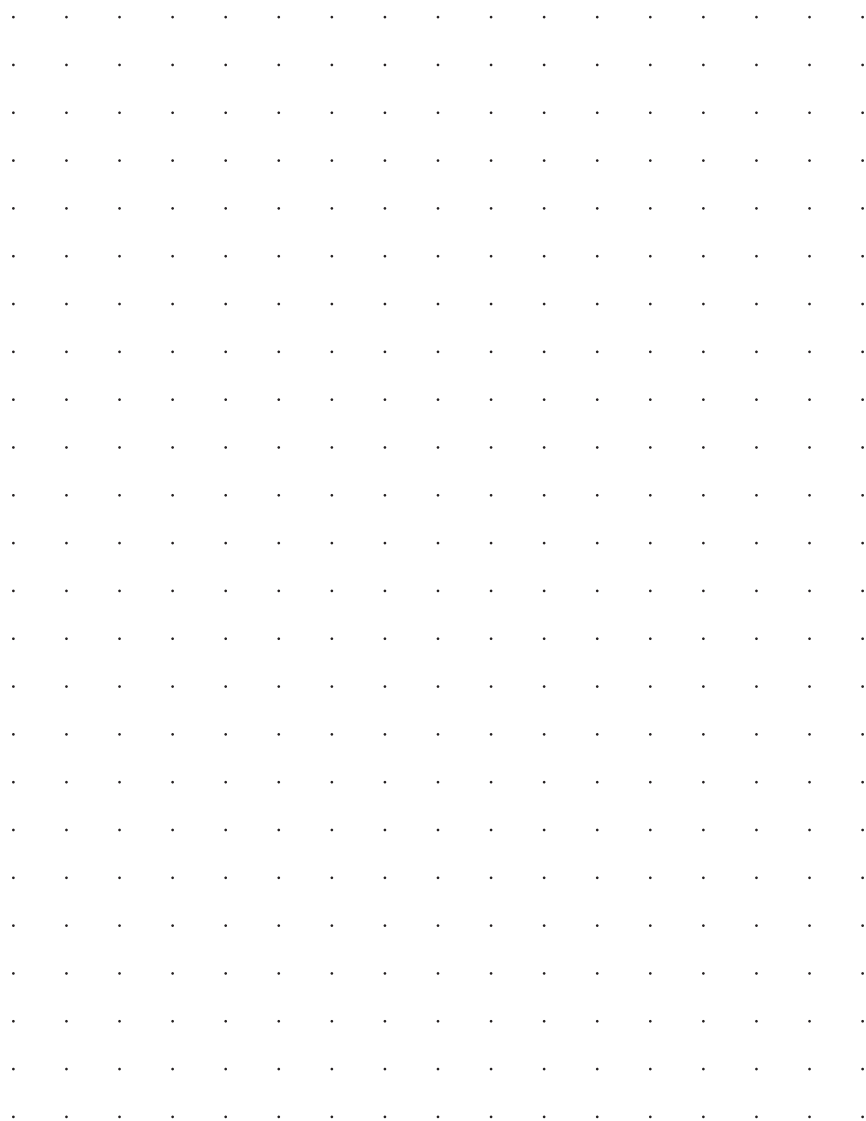
It's a foretaste of the ultimate ceremony to come in heaven, when men and women from every nation will gather around Jesus as the banner for the peoples, just as God promised in Isaiah 11:10.

REFLECT

What does it say about Jesus' character that he will be worshiped not just by certain groups of people but by *every* group of people? How does that affect the way you view—and act toward—people from different people groups?

PRAY

Praise Jesus as the banner for all peoples, pray for salvation to spread in specific countries that come to your mind, and pray particularly for over 35 million people among the Xiang Han of China who have not been reached with the good news that Jesus is the Savior and Lord of all nations.



Day 12

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Perfect Judge

Behold my servant, whom I uphold,
my chosen, in whom my soul delights;
I have put my Spirit upon him;
he will bring forth justice to the nations.
He will not cry aloud or lift up his voice,
or make it heard in the street;
a bruised reed he will not break,
and a faintly burning wick he will not quench;
he will faithfully bring forth justice.
He will not grow faint or be discouraged
till he has established justice in the earth;
and the coastlands wait for his law.

⋮

Isaiah 42:1-4

We live in a world of rampant injustice. There is no shortage of children, women, and men who are oppressed, impoverished, orphaned, widowed, enslaved, abused, displaced, forgotten, or even killed. Meanwhile, there is no leader in this world who is perfectly just. On the contrary, many leaders in this world actually contribute to more injustice. In the midst of it all, we long for a leader who is not only perfectly just himself, but who can also bring about perfect justice in the world.

In Isaiah 42, God promises to send that leader, whom he calls his “servant.” Three times in the first four verses of this chapter, we read about the effect of his leadership:

“He will bring forth justice to the nations.” (v. 1)

“He will faithfully bring forth justice.” (v. 3)

“He will not grow faint or be discouraged till he has established justice in the earth.” (v. 4)

This promise of coming justice is sobering and encouraging at the same time. As sinners before a holy God, we have every reason to fear justice from him. The Bible refers to the payment due our sins as death (Romans 6:23), specifically as the “punishment of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord” (2 Thessalonians 1:9). This judgment is what we all deserve.

But the good news of the Bible—and the great news of Christmas—is that God has sent his “servant,” Jesus, to keep his law perfectly. Jesus never sinned one time. He lived the perfectly just, righteous life that none of us could live. Then, even though he had no sin for which to die, he chose to die on the cross to pay the penalty for the sins of all who trust in him. You can be forgiven of all your sin and free from God’s judgment due sinners for all eternity by repenting (turning from your sin and yourself) and believing in Jesus (trusting him as your Savior and your Lord).

One day Jesus will bring forth justice in all the earth. On that day, all who trust in Jesus will join with him in a new heaven and a new earth where evil, unrighteousness, and injustice will be vanquished and the justice of Jesus will be perfectly established.

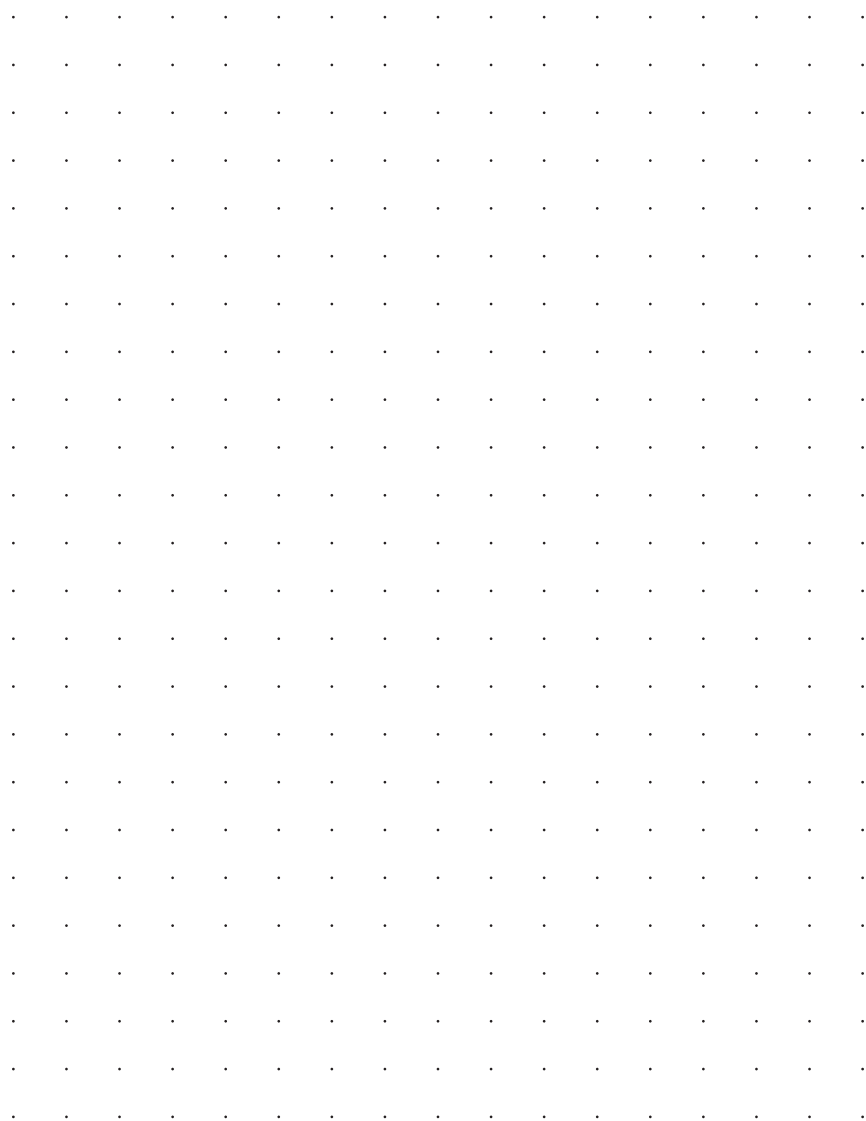
Therefore, let’s do justice in this world and spread the gospel among all nations as we wait for the return of the Perfect Judge.

REFLECT

Many people don't think about Jesus as a judge. Why is this truth good news for followers of Jesus, and how might it affect the way we (1) react when we are wronged, (2) view those who want to harm us, and (3) think about and respond to the evil and injustice we see in the world around us?

PRAY

Praise Jesus as the Perfect Judge, ask him for help to do justice in the world, and pray for God's salvation from the just penalty for sin to spread to over 42 million Brahmin in India who have yet to hear this good news.



Day 13



Man of Sorrows

He had no form or majesty that we should look at him,
and no beauty that we should desire him.

He was despised and rejected by men,
a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief;
and as one from whom men hide their faces
he was despised, and we esteemed him not.



Isaiah 53:2-3

The world would consider him to be worthless.

That's the picture of Jesus presented in the beginning of Isaiah 53. Look at the description of Jesus in these two verses. According to the standards of this world, people would hardly even want to look at him. He would not be attractive to them. Instead, he would be despised and rejected by them, to the point where people would hide their faces from him and have no esteem for him.

It's sobering to imagine how you and I might have responded to Jesus had we been alive in the first century. I'd like to think we would have esteemed and honored him, but the reality is that most people wanted nothing to do with him. The likelihood is that you or I would have shared that sentiment. After all, we tend to gravitate to people who are attractive and beautiful, people with wealth and fame.

This is part of what makes Jesus so unique. For God to come to the world in the flesh, for the King of all nations to come to his creation, we might think he would come with worldly majesty and beauty that would attract us to him. Instead, he came as a "man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief." This is so unlike—and so much better than—the kind of plan we would devise.

Jesus came to us to identify with us in a world where we have all at times felt rejected, alone, and acquainted with grief and sorrow. In the very next verse of Isaiah 53, Isaiah describes how Jesus has “borne our griefs and carried our sorrows” (Isaiah 53:4). How is that possible—for Jesus to bear our griefs and carry our sorrows?

We experience grief and sorrow in this world because of sin and all its effects. Jesus, the Suffering Servant of Isaiah 53, is familiar with such grief and sorrow, both in his life in this sinful world and in his death on the cross for our sin. But the good news of the Bible is that Jesus has risen from the dead, overcoming and ultimately severing the root of grief and sorrow—sin and death itself.

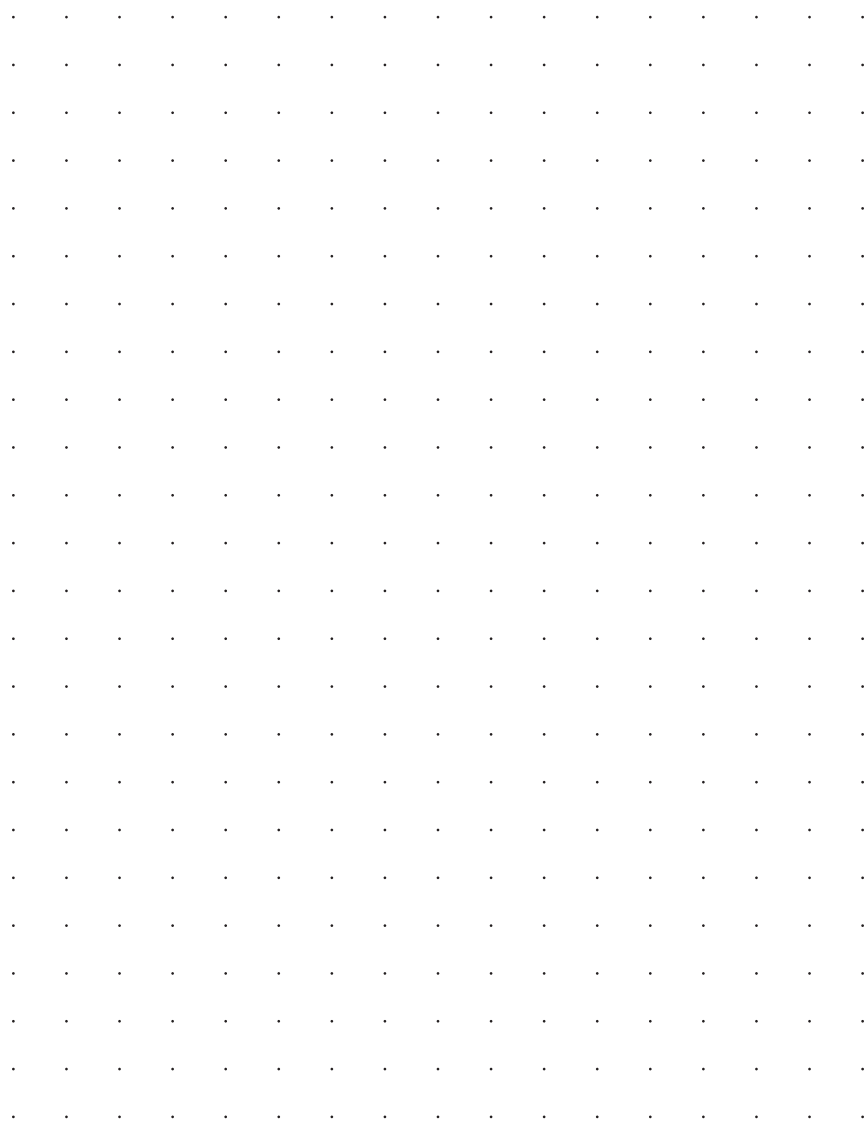
All of this means that when we walk through grief and sorrow, we can know that Jesus will carry us through. We can trust him to hold us all the way until the day when “he will wipe away every tear from [our] eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore” (Revelation 21:4).

REFLECT

How have you experienced Jesus as the One who carries our griefs and sorrows, or in what ways do you need Jesus to carry you through griefs and sorrows? Who can you encourage with this picture of Jesus as they are walking through grief or sorrow?

PRAY

Praise Jesus as the Man of Sorrows, share your griefs and sorrows with him, ask him to carry you in every way you need, and ask him to carry others in ways they need. Then pray for the spread of Jesus' victory over sin, sorrow, suffering, and death to over 37 million Arabic-speaking Algerians who have never heard this truth about Jesus, the Man of Sorrows.



Day 14



Good Shepherd

But you, O Bethlehem Ephrathah,
who are too little to be among the clans of Judah,
from you shall come forth for me
one who is to be ruler in Israel,
whose coming forth is from of old,
from ancient days. . . .
And he shall stand and shepherd his flock in the
strength of the LORD,
in the majesty of the name of the LORD his God.
And they shall dwell secure, for now he shall be great
to the ends of the earth.
And he shall be their peace.



Micah 5:2, 4-5

These verses from Micah feature a detailed promise about the Messiah to come. King David had been born in Bethlehem, a small village about five or six miles south of Jerusalem, perceived as “little,” even insignificant, in the land of Judah. But Micah promises that this relatively inconsequential village would one day become an eternally important city.

This prophecy reappears in Matthew 2, when King Herod hears about a baby who was born “king of the Jews” (Matthew 2:2). Herod is threatened by this news, and when he inquires of the chief priests and scribes about where this king will be born, they read from Micah 5:2, saying he will be born in Bethlehem. That’s when Herod sends the wise men on a mission to find this promised king, never imagining that this baby born not far from his palace had actually existed “from ancient days” and was God himself.

What’s even more fascinating than this precise prediction of the place where Jesus would be born is the blend of descriptions for Jesus in this prophecy. He would indeed be a king from the line of David, a “ruler” of Israel. But more than that, he would be a “shepherd” for the people of God. Do you remember King David’s humble upbringing in Bethlehem as a shepherd caring for and protecting

his sheep? Micah was promising that a far greater shepherd would come to care for and protect God's people as their King.

In Micah's day, just a couple of chapters before this prophecy, God had condemned the leaders of his people for not caring well for them. In this prophecy, God was saying, "I'm going to come and personally care for my people, and I will shepherd them to true security and everlasting peace." Years after he was born, Jesus would say to his followers, "I am the good shepherd." Then he told them, "The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep" (John 10:11).

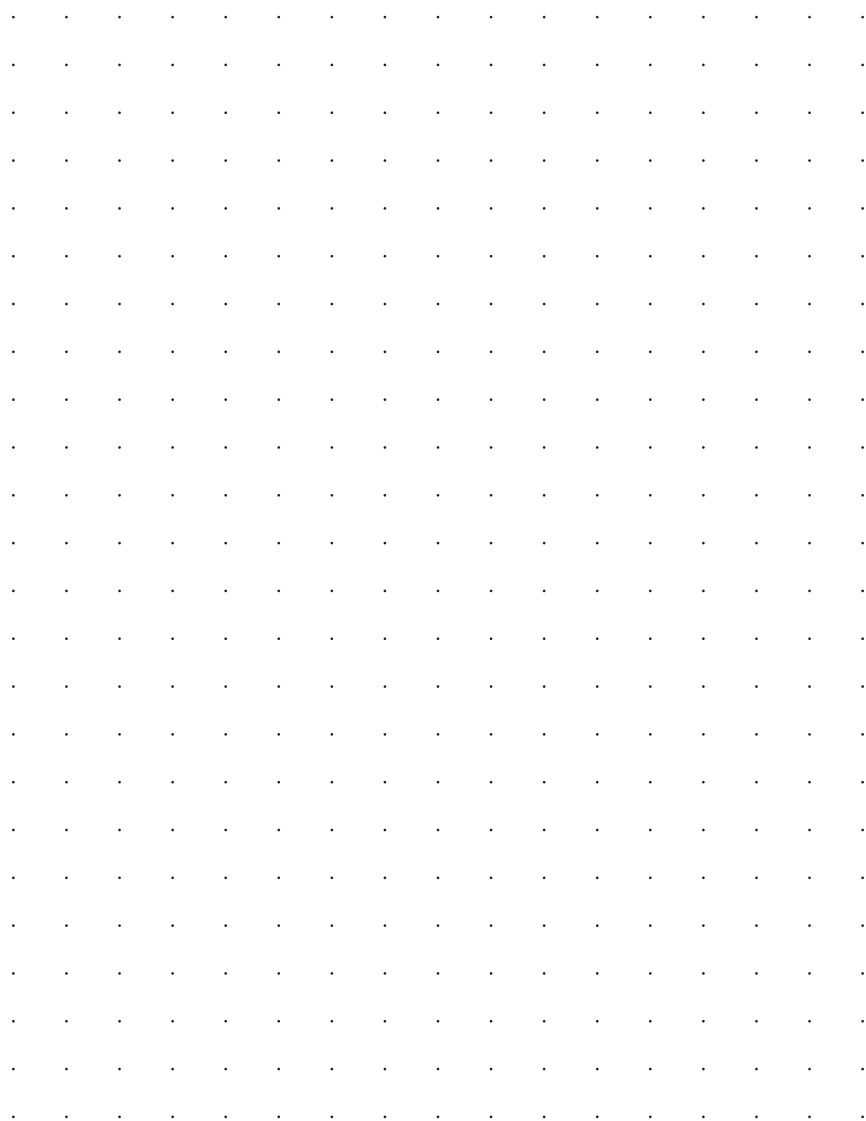
If you are a follower of Jesus, this is who Jesus is for you today. The King of all the nations is the Shepherd of your life. He loves you. He laid down his life so that you can live. He is committed to leading, guiding, protecting, and caring for you in every way you need all the way to the day when your "shepherd . . . will guide [you] to springs of living water" in heaven (Revelation 7:17). This means that you can have complete peace and security in your life today, for you know that Jesus is your Good Shepherd now and forever.

REFLECT

In what ways do shepherds care for and provide for their sheep?
How does thinking about Jesus as your Good Shepherd affect the way you view his leadership in your life in the past, in the present, and in the future?

PRAY

Praise Jesus as the Good Shepherd, thank him for specific ways he has cared for you, and offer a prayer of surrender to his shepherding leadership in your life. Then pray for his glory as the Good Shepherd to spread to over 32 million Pashtun people in Pakistan who don't yet know how he laid down his life in love for them.



Day 15

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Lord

Behold, I send my messenger, and he will prepare the way before me. And the Lord whom you seek will suddenly come to his temple; and the messenger of the covenant in whom you delight, behold, he is coming, says the LORD of hosts.

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Malachi 3:1

When we think of Christmas, we often think of gifts. Some of them we give, and others we receive. In light of this promise about Jesus in Malachi 3:1, let's think about the greatest gift God could possibly give us, and the greatest gift we could possibly receive in our lives. Malachi is the last of thirty-nine books in the Old Testament. In the backdrop of all these books are stories of failed leaders. Just think of the most prominent leaders among God's people in the Old Testament, people we call heroes of the faith:

- Abraham lied about his wife.
- Moses sinned so severely that he was forbidden to enter the Promised Land.
- The entire book of Judges contains stories of evil leaders who led God's people into unimaginable suffering.
- The same pattern continues in the books of Samuel, Kings, and Chronicles, all recounting kings whose leadership before God and his people was marred by sin.
- Even David, the best king, the man after God's own heart, was guilty of adultery and murder, among other things.

It's hard not to feel discouraged and hopeless after reading centuries of history where this is the story that repeats over and over again. Yet here, in the last book of the Old Testament, in the next to

the last chapter, God says, “Behold, I send my messenger, and he will prepare the way before me.”

Wait a minute. “Me?” God is referring to himself here. What does this mean? Well, God continues.

“And the Lord whom you seek will suddenly come to his temple.” Is this saying what it seems like it’s saying? That the Lord himself is actually going to come?

Yes. Malachi 3:1 is a promise that after sending multitudes of prophets and kings, leaders and judges, God was going to come to the world. And this is the greatest gift God could possibly give us.

Himself.

Jesus is the Lord God himself who has come to us. And according to the New Testament, this is the central confession of the Christian life: “Jesus is Lord” (Romans 10:9). For Jesus to be Lord of your life means that you realize you have in Jesus the greatest gift, God himself.

Is this true in your life? Do you see Jesus as the greatest gift you

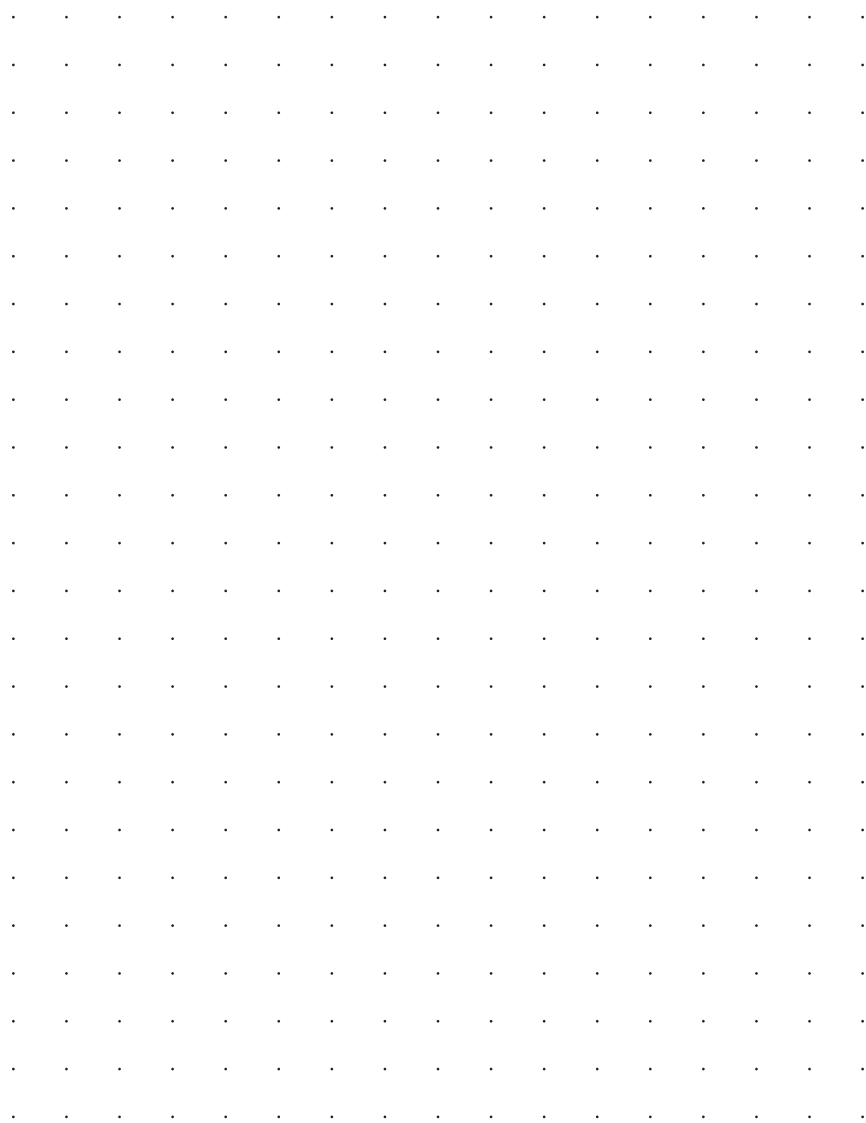
have received, in such a way that you seek him above everyone and everything else and you are satisfied in him far above every other gift in this world?

REFLECT

Why is God himself the greatest gift imaginable? What does it mean practically for you to follow Jesus as Lord and enjoy him as the greatest possible gift?

PRAY

Praise Jesus as the Lord of your life, and pray for help to love and seek him over and above every other gift in the world. Pray for the spread of this good gift to over 38 million Maharashtra men, women, and children in India who have not heard about the greatest gift in the world that is possible to receive through Jesus alone.



Day 16



Word Made Flesh

And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us,
and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only
Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.



John 1:14

When God freed his people from slavery to the Egyptians in the Old Testament, he brought them to Mount Sinai, where he revealed himself to them in a stunning display of his glory. There he gave them instructions for constructing a tabernacle, a place where God's presence would dwell in their midst as they traveled from place to place. Once the tabernacle was constructed, the book of Exodus closes with this scene. Just imagine it as you read it:

Then the cloud covered the tent of meeting, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle. And Moses was not able to enter the tent of meeting because the cloud settled on it, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle. Throughout all their journeys, whenever the cloud was taken up from over the tabernacle, the people of Israel would set out. But if the cloud was not taken up, then they did not set out till the day that it was taken up. For the cloud of the LORD was on the tabernacle by day, and fire was in it by night, in the sight of all the house of Israel throughout all their journeys.
(Exodus 40:34-38)

What a sight—God's presence dwelling among his people in the form of a cloud in their midst! This is how God led his people from place to place during the day, along with a fire that lit up the sky at night, throughout all their journeys.

This picture from the Old Testament brings to life Jesus' introduction in John's Gospel in the New Testament. The word John uses for "dwelt" in John 1:14 comes from the same word used for "tabernacle" in the Old Testament. As the revelation (or Word) of God in the flesh, Jesus was a living picture of the glory of God in their midst. More astonishing than what God's people had seen or even imagined at Mount Sinai or in a cloud by day and fire by night in all their journeys, the glory of God was now tabernacling in an even greater way right in front of them—in the flesh!

As we continue reading in the New Testament, after Jesus dies on the cross and rises from the grave, he ascends into heaven and sends his Spirit to dwell in his people. This is where you and I come into the picture. If you have trusted in Jesus as your Savior and Lord, the Bible says that the "Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you" and that God "will also give life to your mortal [body] through his Spirit who dwells in you" (Romans 8:11).

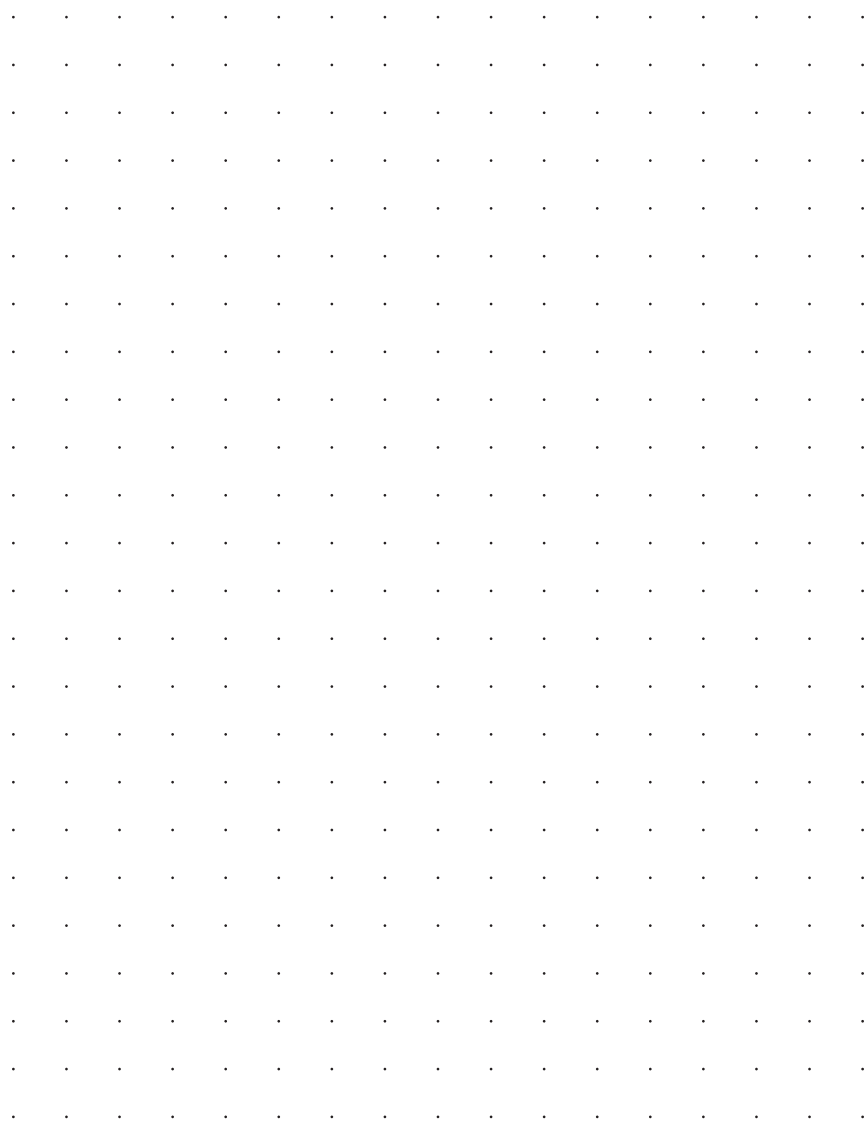
God invites you to live every day in light of this reality. Far greater than seeing and following a cloud by day and fire by night (like the Israelites), and more beneficial than walking alongside God's glory in the flesh (like his original disciples), you have the glory of God's Spirit dwelling inside you, leading you at every moment and giving you the life that only he can provide every day.

REFLECT

How does your everyday life change when you realize that the Spirit of God is dwelling in you? What keeps you from realizing this at every moment and living accordingly?

PRAY

Praise Jesus as the Word made flesh, thank him for putting his Spirit inside of you, and ask him to help you walk in step with his Spirit in all that you do. Then pray for the spread of God's glory in Jesus to over 31 million Burmese in Myanmar who have not heard the truth about Jesus, the Word made flesh.



Day 17



Lamb of God

The next day he saw Jesus coming toward him,
and said, “Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes
away the sin of the world!”



John 1:29

One of the most vivid images in the Old Testament is the blood of the Passover Lamb. In Exodus 12, God described how he was going to bring judgment upon sin in a way that would affect both the Egyptians and the Israelites. Specifically, the firstborn son in every family was going to die. However, God provided a way for the Israelites to be saved from his holy judgment through a substitute sacrifice: the blood of a spotless lamb.

God told his people to take a spotless lamb and bring it into their home for four days, during which time the family would care for that lamb. Then, after those four days were complete, they were to sacrifice the lamb. We can only imagine children asking their parents, “Why did we sacrifice this lamb that was in our home?” The parents’ answer would be clear: “The lamb was a substitute, so that no one else in our family would have to die.”

On the night of the Passover, God’s people wiped blood from this substitute sacrifice across their doorposts so that when God’s judgment came to their house, it would “pass over” them, seeing that the price for sin, which is death (Romans 6:23), had already been paid by another. Families and individuals in Israel did not escape God’s holy wrath that night because they were morally superior to the Egyptians. The entire basis for the salvation of

God's people was the blood of a substitute sacrifice over their homes. Those who trusted God's provision were spared the judgment they deserved.

Fast forward many generations to John 1, when John the Baptist sees Jesus coming toward him. The first words out of his mouth in that moment are, "Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!" In this bold statement, John was declaring to every person in all the world: there is only one way you can be spared from the holy judgment of God due to your sin. It is not by being better, smarter, richer, more successful, or more upright than other people. The only basis for salvation in your life is trust in the blood of Jesus to cover your sins and spare you the judgment you deserve.

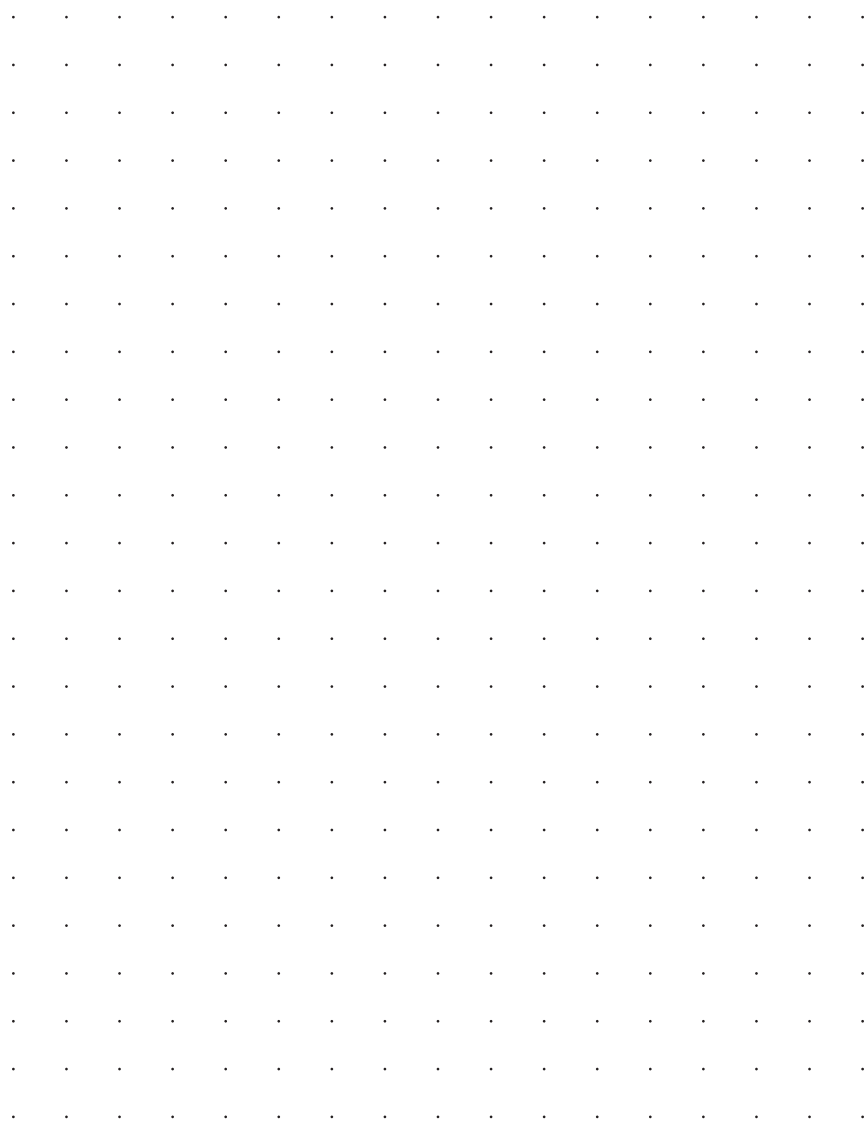
We should shudder to think of where we would be without the blood of Jesus to cover over our sin. His blood opens the door not only for forgiveness of our sins and salvation from eternal death, but for restoration to God and life with him forever. If you have never put your trust in the blood of Jesus to cover over your sins, God invites you to trust in his sacrifice as your substitute today. When you do, and for all who have, tell everyone you know in all the world: Jesus is the only One who can take away their sins.

REFLECT

What would your life be like without the blood of Jesus to cover over your sins? What holds you back from sharing with others about what Jesus did on the cross?

PRAY

Praise Jesus as the Lamb of God who takes away your sins and others' sins, and pray for boldness and compassion to share about him with others in the world. Then pray specifically for the 28 million Northern Uzbek people, most of whom live in Uzbekistan, who have never heard about Jesus' blood that alone can take away their sins.



Day 18

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I AM

Jesus said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you,
before Abraham was, I am.”

⋮

John 8:58

As soon as Jesus said, “I am” in John 8:58, the religious leaders who heard him picked up stones to kill him. Why would they respond that way? The answer to that question goes back many centuries to a burning bush.

In Exodus 3, God spoke to Moses through a burning bush and called him to lead his people out of slavery in Egypt. Overwhelmed by this commission and afraid of how people might respond to him, Moses asked God what to say when the people asked who had sent him to help them. God answered: “I AM WHO I AM. This is what you are to say to the Israelites: ‘I AM has sent me to you.’” (Exodus 3:14, NIV).

This was a history-making scene not just in the life of Moses, but in the entire Bible, for it was the moment God revealed his name to his people in a way that would shape his covenant relationship with them forever. This name for God, Yahweh, is based upon the Hebrew verb “to be.” When God revealed himself as “I AM,” he was saying, “I am the One Who Is.” Think for a moment about what we know about God in light of his name, “I AM.”

- God is self-existent. He was not created, and he did not come into being. Unlike everything else in all creation,

he has always been.

- God is self-sufficient. We are dependent upon oxygen around us, food and water that nourish us, and ultimately God who provides all of these things. But God does not depend on anyone or anything else for his sustenance. We are needy, but God has no needs.
- God is eternal. He has no beginning or end. He is Lord over time itself.
- God is immutable. Who God is now is who he has always been and who he will always be. His perfections never change, his glory never dims, and his beauty never fades.

God alone possesses all of these attributes. He alone is the great I AM. Now we get a glimpse into why religious leaders were so incensed when Jesus said, “Before Abraham was, I am.” (John 8:58). In their ears, Jesus’ words were blasphemous because he was actually claiming to be Yahweh.

As you think about this name for Jesus, consider how Jesus is all of these things. Consider the mystery of how the self-existent God humbled himself to be born as a baby. The self-sufficient Creator left his throne in glory to be dependent upon his creation. The eternal Lord of time chose to enter the world at a particular time and place, and the immutable King of glory chose to grow and live and

die so that you and I might have life forever.

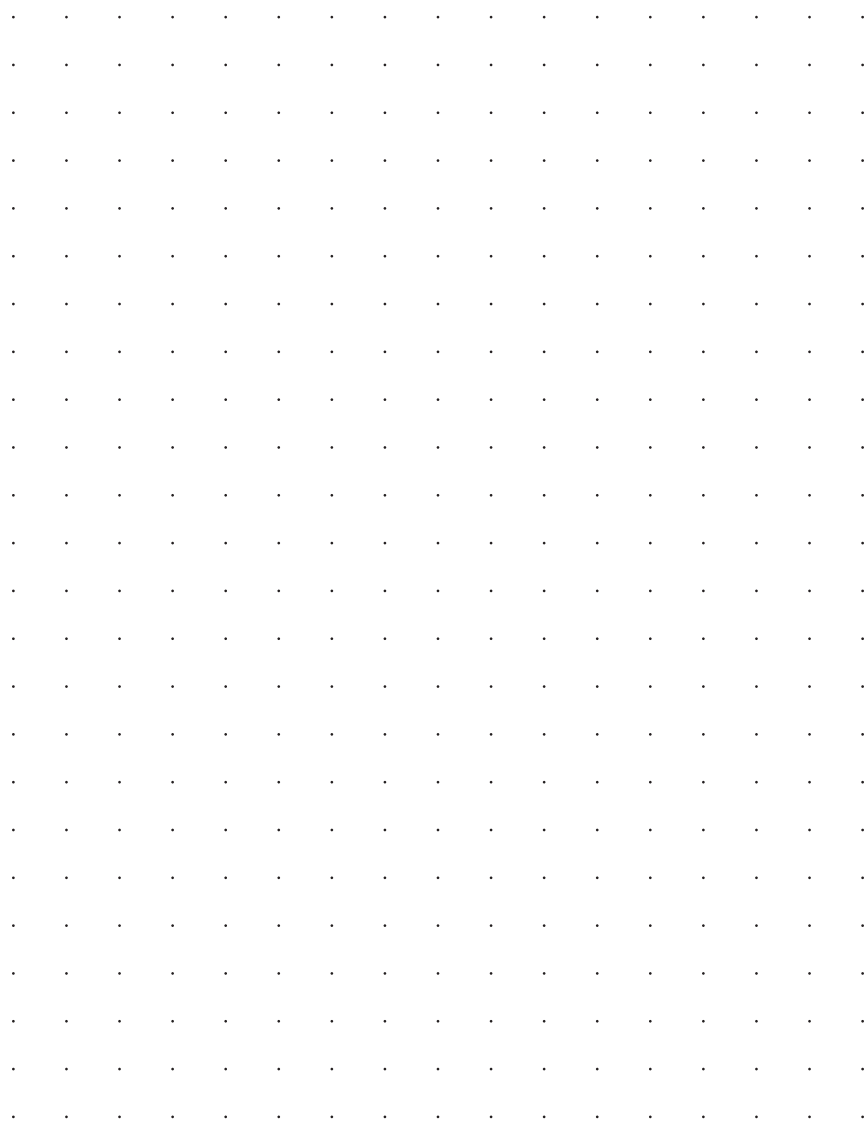
All praise and honor be to Jesus, the great I AM.

REFLECT

How do these attributes of Jesus (his self-existence, self-sufficiency, eternity, and immutability) bring practical encouragement to your life today?

PRAY

Praise Jesus for all of these attributes and confess your need for him in specific ways in your life today. Then pray for the spread of his glory among over 33 million Rajput people in India with Hindu backgrounds who worship millions of gods but have never heard the truth about Jesus, the great I AM who is above all other (so-called) gods.



Day 19



Bread of Life

Jesus said to them, “I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst.”



John 6:35

God created us to crave. At the beginning of the world, God made Adam and Eve with a built-in craving for food, a need for air, and a longing for companionship. The Garden of Eden was not a place where they had no desires or needs. Instead, it was a place where all their desires and needs were met by God. Sin only entered the world when they chose to fulfill their cravings apart from God. They chose to indulge in a gift (a piece of fruit) apart from trust in God as the giver of all the good gifts they needed.

In a very similar way, you and I have many cravings that are intended to be satisfied by our Creator. Our desires are designed to drive us to God for their fulfillment. Sin enters our lives when we do the same thing Adam and Eve did—when we seek satisfaction apart from God and pursue gifts in this world apart from the giver of all good gifts.

With this foundation, think about Jesus' words to the crowds in John 6. He had just fed over 5,000 people with five loaves of bread and two fish. The people were in awe, and they were craving more. That's when Jesus looked at them and said, "I am the bread of life." Deliberately referring to himself as the I AM from Exodus 3, Jesus was saying, "True satisfaction is found in me. Whoever eats or drinks the things of this world will continually be hungry and thirsty.

But whoever comes to me (or believes in me) will never hunger or thirst again.”

Do you believe this? Do you believe that true satisfaction in your life is not found in gifts (or things we might get in this world), but in the giver of those gifts (in God alone)?

Don't misunderstand. God loves giving gifts. He loves giving forgiveness of sin. He loves giving promises of his presence and protection and provision. He loves giving us food and water, air for our breathing lungs and strength for our beating hearts. He loves giving us friendships with people who reflect his love for us. He loves giving us multitudes of gifts. But we will miss the point of God's generosity if at any point we begin to look to those gifts for satisfaction apart from him as the giver. We need to remember that the ultimate craving in our lives is not for *something*, but for *Someone*.

Jesus alone can satisfy us. When he says that whoever comes to him will “never” thirst, the word is emphatic, as if he is saying, “You will never, ever, ever thirst.” This means that when we come to Jesus, we are free from living for the fleeting pleasures of this world, and we are free to live for everlasting pleasure in the world

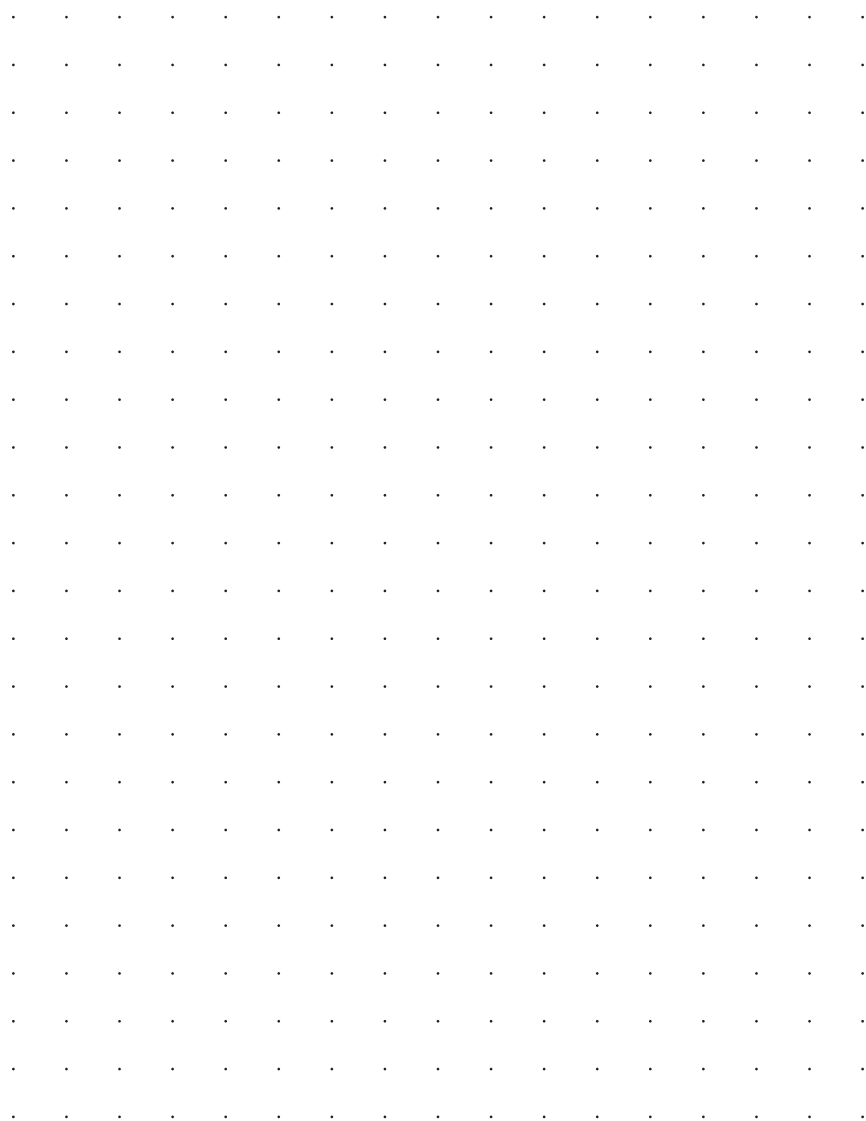
to come. It means we can be content with what Jesus provides for us each day, trusting that God will supply every need we have “according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 4:19). In the end, it means that we can live with confidence that even when our bodies stop working, our lungs stop breathing, and our hearts stop beating, our satisfaction in God will endure, for we will spend eternity in perfect communion with the giver of every good gift.

REFLECT

What gifts in this world are you prone to seek over and above Jesus? What practical steps can you take in your life to seek and be satisfied ultimately in God as the giver of every gift you enjoy?

PRAY

Praise Jesus as the Bread of Life, and thank him for all his good gifts in your life. Then pray for the spread of his never-ending life to over 26 million men, women, and children in North Korea, most of whom are experiencing unimaginable earthly suffering and have never heard about how Jesus alone can give them eternal life.



Day 20

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Light of the World

Again Jesus spoke to them, saying, “I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.”

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John 8:12

Listen to how the world began.

The earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters. And God said, "Let there be light," and there was light.
(Genesis 1:2-3)

What an amazing scene. Darkness was everywhere until God spoke. "Let there be light," he said. All of a sudden, light was created. We can only imagine what it looked like for light to come into existence for the very first time. Ever since that day, pictures of light and darkness permeate the story of the Bible and all of human history.

Just two chapters after light was created, Adam and Eve chose sin, plunging the entire human race into spiritual darkness marked by sin and death. We have all followed in their footsteps. Each of us has chosen darkness over light. In John 3:19, we read about how we have "loved the darkness rather than the light." We are not innocent people living in a dark world; we are sinful people who love darkness.

Yet in God's grace, we see glimpses of his light shining throughout the Old Testament. While God's people wandered in the wilderness, they were led by a cloud during the day and a fire by night (Numbers 14:14). The psalmist declared, "The LORD is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear?" (Psalm 27:1). Isaiah prophesied that God's coming servant would be a "light for the nations" (Isaiah 49:6). Right before this verse in John 8, Jesus goes up to Jerusalem during the Feast of Booths (or Feast of Tabernacles), a celebration in which God's people lit candles to commemorate God's past presence with them.

In Genesis 1, God spoke and shattered the darkness with his light. In John 1, we're told that the Word through which God overcomes the darkness is Jesus himself. John describes Jesus this way: "In him was life, and the life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it" (John 1:4-5). Jesus has overcome darkness through his life, death, and resurrection. And he says to everyone anywhere in this dark world, and everyone everywhere whose heart has loved darkness, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life."

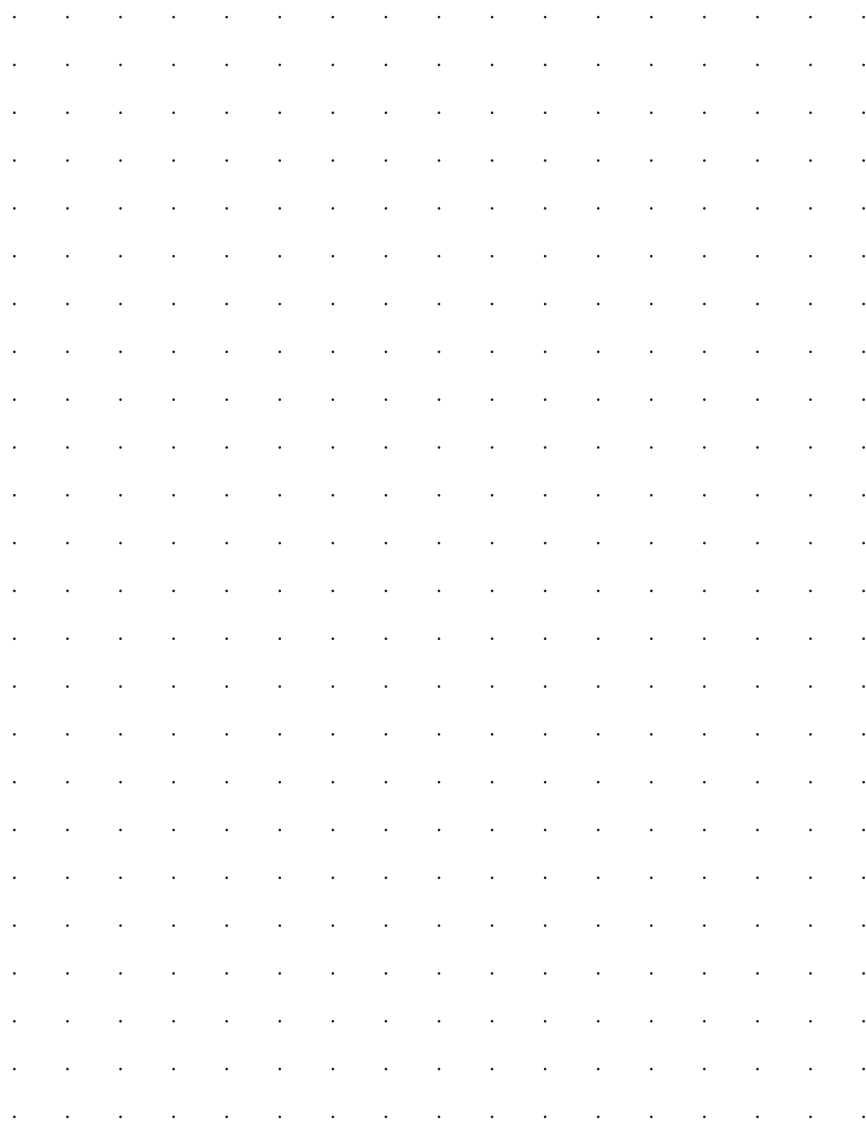
Live today in the light of the life Jesus has made possible for you. As you do, remember Jesus' words to us in Matthew 5:14 and 16: "You are the light of the world. . . . Let your light shine before others" in this dark world so that the people around you might experience the light of life that is only possible in Jesus.

REFLECT

What evidence do you see in your life and in the world around you that we love darkness? What does it mean, then, for you to live in the light of Jesus today? And what does it mean for you to be the light of the world?

PRAY

Praise Jesus as the Light of the World and ask him to overcome specific areas of darkness in your heart with his light. Ask him for help in being light in the world around you today, and pray for over 24 million Thai people, most of whom are in Thailand, who are living in darkness and on a road that leads to eternal darkness yet still haven't heard about Jesus, the Light of the World.



Day 21



Great High Priest

Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. 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 4:14-16

Sympathetic resonance.

The Oxford Companion to Music uses this term to describe an unusual dynamic between two pianos sitting on the same stage. If you strike middle C on one piano, the strings in the other piano gently respond with the same note. One piano automatically resonates with the other.

The book of Hebrews describes Jesus as a “great high priest” in a way that this musical dynamic illustrates. Jesus, the author of Hebrews says, is able to “sympathize with our weaknesses” precisely because Jesus’ humanity is like ours (except without sin). In other words, similar to how two pianos resonate with one another because they are both pianos, Jesus is able to resonate with us because, like us, he is truly human. Jesus knows what it’s like to be tempted. Jesus knows what it’s like to be tried. Jesus knows what it’s like to experience the range of human emotions that we all experience. And in this way, Jesus is able to sympathize with us.

This beautiful reality goes to an even deeper level when we realize that Jesus is committed to helping us in every way we need. Jesus doesn’t just know what it’s like to feel weak; he knows how to

help us with his strength. Jesus doesn't just know what it's like to hurt; he knows how to heal our hurts. Jesus doesn't just know what it's like to face sin; he knows how to help us overcome sin.

This is what makes Jesus the "Great High Priest." Throughout the Old Testament, God's people depended on priests to stand in the gap between them in their sin and God in his holiness. Even the high priest could only enter the Holy of Holies once a year, and he could only do so after offering a sacrifice for his sins.

But Jesus is different. He is the holy God in the flesh, and he had no need to offer sacrifice for his sin, for he had none. Instead, he offered himself as a sacrifice for *our* sins, opening the door for sinners like you and me to be forgiven of our sin and welcomed into God's holy presence.

As a result, we can come into God's holy presence with confidence. This invitation is not just for select people, but for every follower of Jesus. And it's all possible through our Great High Priest.

Based on who Jesus is, his sympathetic resonance with us, and

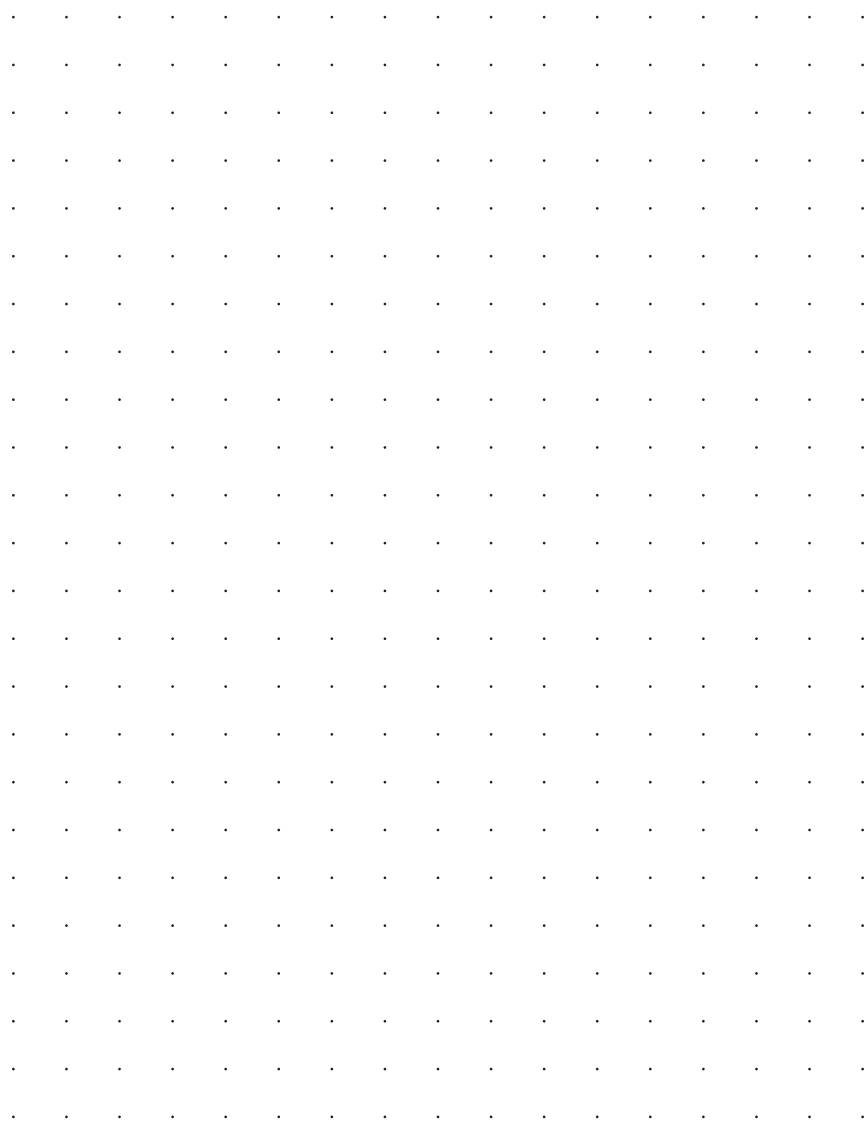
what he has done for us, let us go to the throne of grace as we face temptations and trials in this world, for there we will find all the mercy and grace we need.

REFLECT

How does it change your relationship with Jesus to view him as your sympathetic high priest? In what specific ways do you need his mercy and grace amidst temptations and trials you are facing?

PRAY

Praise Jesus as the Great High Priest and confess your need for God's mercy and grace in specific areas of your life. Then pray for over 20 million Kurmi people in India who have yet to hear the good news of Jesus as their Great High Priest.



Day 22



Intercessor

Consequently, he is able to save to the uttermost those who draw near to God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them.



Hebrews 7:25

An intercessor is someone who advocates on another's behalf, standing in the gap and working for the good of someone else. This is why prayer is often called *intercession*. When you pray for someone, you are advocating before God on their behalf. You are standing in the gap before God for them, and you are working for their good.

According to Hebrews 7:25, Jesus is our intercessor. What an awesome thought. Jesus came 2000 years ago to be born, live, die, and rise from the grave for us as our intercessor. He stood in the gap between our sin and God's holiness, he did the ultimate work on the cross for us, and he made the way for us to be reconciled to God.

But his intercessory work on our behalf did not stop at the cross or even with his resurrection. Jesus ascended to heaven, where he now sits at the right hand of God the Father, and do you know what he's doing? He is interceding for us! According to Hebrews 7:25, at all times he is living to intercede for you and me. Jesus lives today to make it possible for us to experience communion with God and provision from his hand in every way we need at every moment we need it.

What confidence it brings to know that Jesus is living at this moment to intercede for us. On an earlier day we referenced Romans 8:31 and the confidence we can have knowing that God is for us. Now listen to what the Bible says right after that:

If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things? Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us. (Romans 8:31-34)

Jesus has not stopped working for your good. Indeed, he is working for your good right now. In the words of Romans 8:28 right before these verses above, God is working all things in our lives ultimately for our good.

As a result of his intercession, Hebrews 7 says Jesus is able to save us to “the uttermost,” or completely. Since he always lives to make intercession for us, we can be confident that as we look to him and lean on him as our intercessor, he will provide everything we need to bring us home to him. Let Jesus’ intercession for you transform

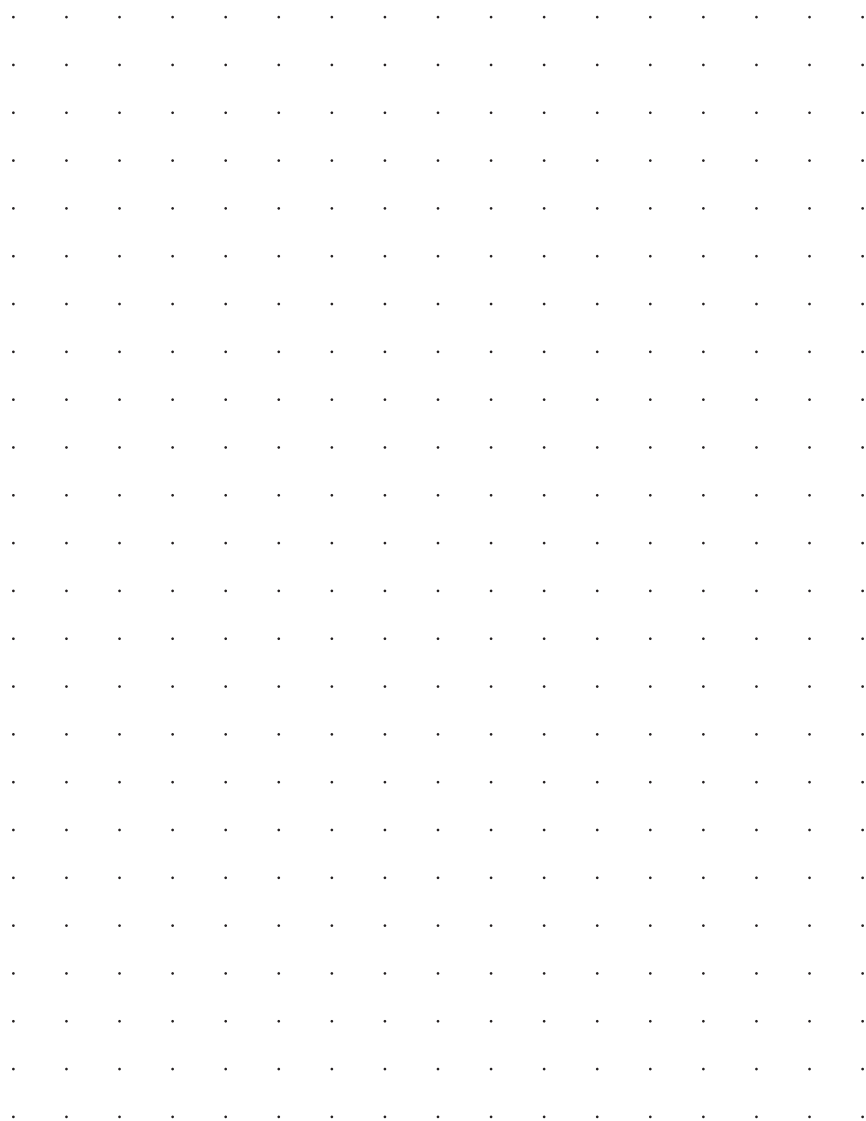
your perspective on everything you walk through in this world. And live with confidence that in the end, Jesus your intercessor will save you to the uttermost.

REFLECT

How does knowing that Jesus is your intercessor specifically affect your life today? Who is God calling you to intercede for in prayer today? And who can you intercede for as a witness to Jesus this week in order to bring them to him?

PRAY

Praise Jesus as your intercessor, express your need for his help in specific areas of your life, and pray that God will use you to bring people to Jesus. Then pray (intercede!) for over 22 million Teli people in India who have never heard the good news that Jesus can become their intercessor before God through faith in the gospel.



DAY 23

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Ransom for the Nations

And they sang a new song, saying, “Worthy are you to take the scroll and to open its seals, for you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation.”

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Revelation 5:9

Revelation 5 contains what may possibly be the most breathtaking scene in all of the Bible.

It begins with God seated on a throne with a scroll in his right hand. This scroll contains God's ultimate plan for the eradication of sin, evil, suffering, and death in the world. An angel asks, "Who can open this scroll and break its seals?" In other words, "Who can bring about the end of sin and death in the world?" In response, no one is able to step forward, and John (who is telling this story) begins to weep loudly. You and I would do the same if we knew that sin, evil, suffering, and death would be the end of each and every one of our stories.

But then John turns and sees Jesus, depicted as a Lion-like Lamb who was once slain now standing before the throne of God the Father. Jesus goes to the throne and takes the scroll in a jaw-dropping display of his unique and unmatched glory. Immediately the worshipers around the throne fall on their faces and sing a song that had never been sung in heaven.

In that song, they praise Jesus for "ransoming" people with his blood. This word for "ransom" could also be translated "redeem" or "purchase," and it refers to the price Jesus paid to make it

possible for people from every tribe, language, people, and nation in the world to be saved. As we've already seen, when the Bible talks about "nations" like this, it's not just referring to the 200 or so geopolitical entities that we might call countries today. Instead, it's referring to the thousands of ethnic groups, or people groups, which dot the human landscape with their unique languages and cultures.

Revelation 5 is a declaration that Jesus loves people from every single ethnic group in the world so much that he has paid the ransom price for their salvation. This is why we have prayed in each of these days leading up to Christmas for a different unreached people group—because Jesus loves each of them and has given his life for all of them.

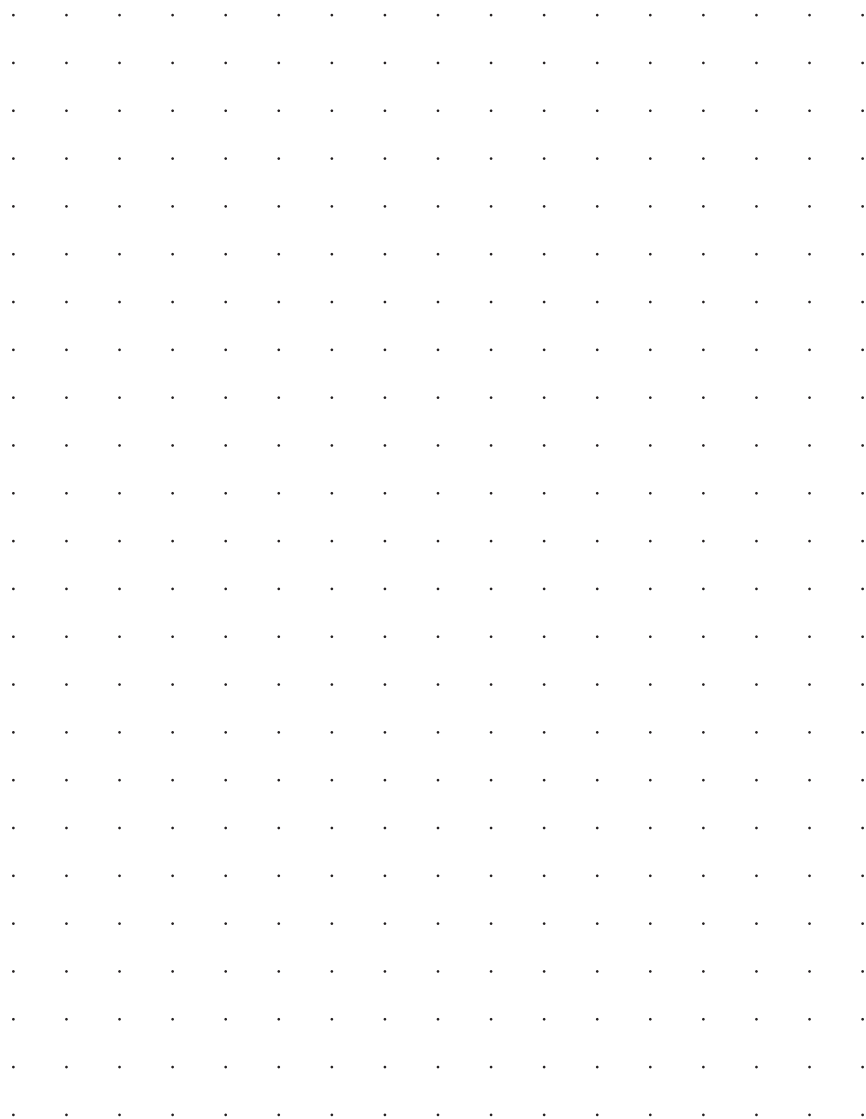
This means that if we have the Spirit of Jesus inside us, we will love all the ethnic groups of the world, and we will give our lives praying, giving, and going however God leads us until all these people groups in the world experience his love. All who know Jesus as the Ransom for the Nations will live with resolve to spread his worth among the nations until a multitude greater than anyone can count gathers around God's throne to praise Jesus for the salvation he has brought to every tribe, language, people, and nation (Revelation 7:9-10).

REFLECT

What would it look like for your life to be consumed with praying, giving, and going wherever God leads for the spread of his redeeming love to all the nations? If this is the ultimate purpose of God in history, then what is keeping you from living for this purpose today?

PRAY

Praise Jesus for ransoming you with his blood, and pray for over 21 million Java Mancanegari people in Indonesia who have still not heard the good news of how Jesus has paid the price for their sin. Ask God to help you live for the spread of his love to them (and others like them).



Day 24

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The Name We Do Not Know...Yet

Then I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse! The one sitting on it is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he judges and makes war. His eyes are like a flame of fire, and on his head are many diadems, and he has a name written that no one knows but himself. He is clothed in a robe dipped in blood, and the name by which he is called is The Word of God. And the armies of heaven, arrayed in fine linen, white and pure, were following him on white horses. From his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations, and he will rule them with a rod of iron. He will tread the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God the Almighty. On his robe and on his thigh he has a name written, King of kings and Lord of lords.

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Revelation 19:11-16

Our passage today paints one of the most powerful pictures of Jesus in all the Bible. The Suffering Servant who came into Jerusalem riding on a humble donkey is now coming out of heaven riding on a warhorse. Just think about the names, images, and titles that describe Jesus in this passage, many of which we have meditated on in this journey leading up to Christmas:

- *He is Faithful and True.* The God who promised to come for his people now fulfills that promise, faithful and true to his Word.
- *He is the Righteous Judge.* Jesus is coming to right all wrongs and dispense the justice of God fairly and finally.
- *He is the Messianic Warrior.* Jesus is on the assault against evil, injustice, and unrighteousness in the world.
- *His eyes are like a flame of fire.* Jesus is omniscient, seeing everything in our lives and in the world; nothing is hidden from his knowledge.
- *On his head are many diadems.* Many crowns adorn Jesus'

head, identifying him as the true and authoritative King above all kings and Lord above all lords.

- *He is clothed in a robe dipped in blood.* Jesus is the holy avenger and victorious conqueror of God's enemies.
- *He is the authoritative Word of God.* As the perfect revelation of who God is, Jesus brings all of history to its appointed consummation in salvation and judgment.

Yet, in the middle of this passage, amidst all of these descriptions of Jesus, did you notice that Jesus has a name that “no one knows but himself”? Throughout the Bible, a name reveals a person's character, and Revelation 19 makes clear that the glory of Jesus' character will not be fully revealed until the day when he returns and we see him as he is.

Feel the wonder of what this means. We see so many names, images, titles, and descriptions of Jesus all over the Bible, each of them revealing his majesty in a unique way. But as we look

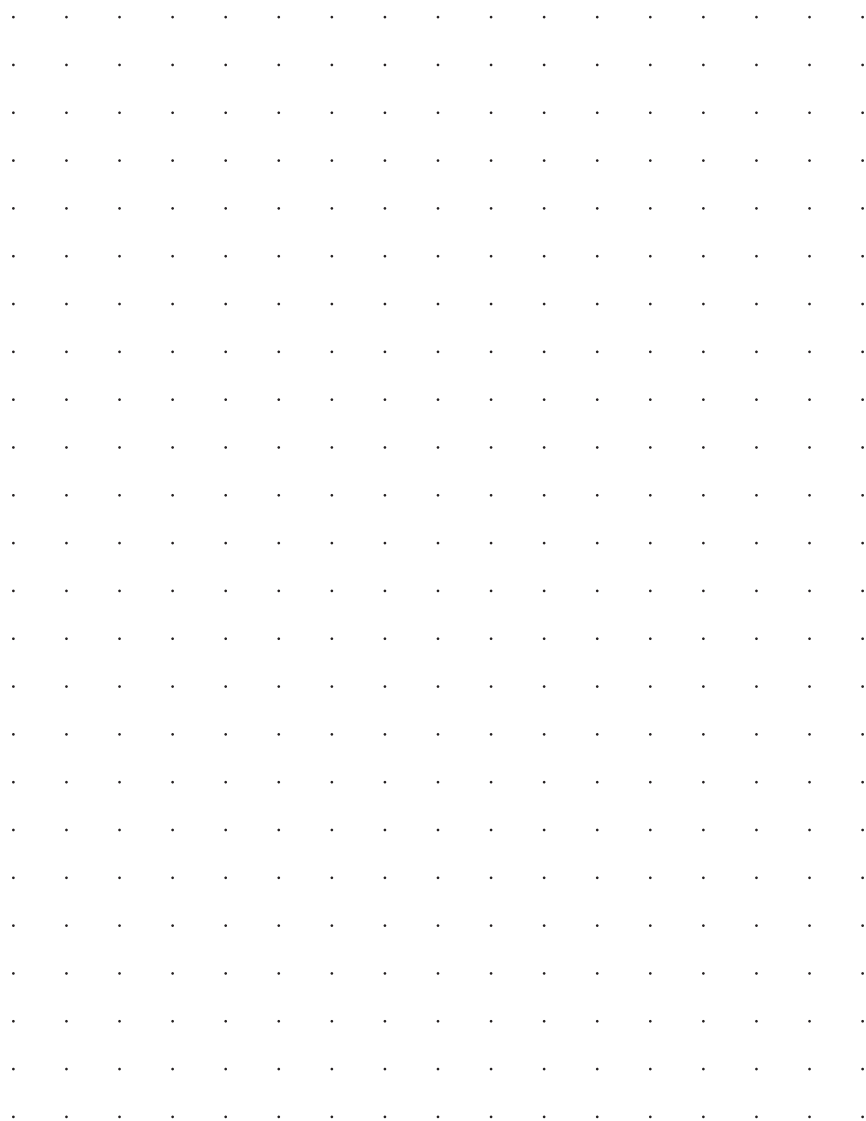
forward to heaven, we realize there is much more majesty to be seen. As much as we know about Jesus' glory now, we still have so much to learn. And because the glory of Jesus is infinite, we will spend all of eternity discovering more and more glory to exalt and enjoy in him.

REFLECT

How does this portrait of Jesus in Revelation 19 affect the way you live, from how you worship him to how you walk through life with him by your side (or more appropriately, living inside you)?

PRAY

Praise Jesus for all these names and descriptions in Revelation 19 and express your longing to see and enjoy more and more glory in him. Then pray for over 125 million Bengali Muslims in Bangladesh who have yet to even hear what the Bible has revealed about Jesus.



Day 25



A Savior Who Is Christ the Lord

For unto you is born this day in the city
of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.



Luke 2:11

As we finally celebrate the day when Jesus was born, let's reflect on the names of Jesus declared by the angel who announced his birth to the shepherds in fields nearby.

Jesus is the "Savior." With this proclamation, this angel was essentially saying to these shepherds and everyone else in the world, "You are sinners, all of you." Every person in human history before that point and after that point, including you and me, has rebelled against God and stands guilty before him, deserving eternal judgment. But this angel was announcing the greatest news in all the world: "Because of this baby, you can be saved from the penalty, power, and—when you take your last breath on this earth—presence of sin forever!"

Jesus is also the "Christ." No, that's not his last name. This word means "Messiah," or "Anointed One." This declaration of Jesus as the "Christ" is a reference to all the promises of Jesus' coming throughout the Old Testament, including many of the passages we have meditated on in this Advent journey. The angel was telling these shepherds, "The One you have been waiting, longing, and hoping for has finally come! He is here!"

Jesus is the “Lord.” As we have seen, this name is a reference to Yahweh, or God himself. This name of Jesus on Christmas Day confronts us with the question every single one of us must answer. It’s the most important question in our entire lives, for our eternity hinges on our answer. The question is, have you confessed Jesus as the Lord of your life?

The Bible makes clear that Jesus is indeed Lord, so that is not up for question. In the words of Philippians 2:9-11:

Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

One day, every single person from every single people group in all of history will realize that Jesus is Lord. So the question is not, “Have you *made* Jesus the Lord of your life?” The reality is, Jesus *is* the Lord of your life—and of every other life in this world. The question is, “Have you *submitted* your life to his lordship?” Everyone will call him Lord; the only question that remains is, “Will you bow before his lordship now, or when it is too late?”

If you have never trusted in Jesus as the Savior, the Christ, and the Lord of your life, God is inviting you to do so today. He loves you so much. Why wait another day to trust in his love for you, knowing that your life today and for eternity are dependent upon submitting to his lordship, and realizing that you are not guaranteed to be alive tomorrow?

If you have trusted in Jesus as the Savior, the Christ, and the Lord of your life, then rejoice all over again today at this angelic announcement. It is indeed “good news of great joy . . . for all the people” (Luke 2:10). Celebrate this good news with all your heart and share it with everyone you can.

REFLECT

Who in your life needs to hear that Jesus, the promised Savior for sinners and Lord of all, has come? Make a list and be intentional about seeking to share the gospel with them, starting today. Then consider how God is leading you to spread the gospel to unreached people around the world.

PRAY

Praise Jesus as Savior, Christ, and Lord, pray for people you know who have not followed him, and pray for boldness to share Jesus with them. Then pray for all people in every people group in the world to be reached with the good news of great joy that is for all of them, and for God to use your life however he wants toward that end.



