

A person's hands are shown holding a small, transparent globe with a grid pattern. The person is wearing a dark, button-down shirt. The background is blurred, showing more of the person's torso and arms.

A WORLD *lenten Devotional 2021* IN NEED

INTRODUCTION



This Lent we are exploring the many ways that God speaks to us internally. In so many ways, the Holy Spirit encourages, prods, and guides us in ways that are beyond mere words.

But it is also important to always remember that the life of faith is not just an internal matter. We are called by Jesus to love our neighbors and care for the poor and needy.

This devotional is meant as an internal resource. There is a short devotional reflection and scripture to meditate on for each week-day of Lent.

However, this devotional is also designed to remind us of the many needs in our world. Each entry explores a different struggle in our world that we as Christians are uniquely called to confront. At the end of each devotional is a small action you can take towards healing the brokenness.

I hope that these reflections will open your eyes to the needs around us and that through this Lenten journey you might discover the inner voice of God calling you to bring your light to one of these many needs.

Peace and Grace,
Pastor Nate

“
HE WILL

SWALLOW UP DEATH FOREVER!
— THE —
SOVEREIGN LORD

← →
WILL ← →

WIPE AWAY ALL TEARS.

HE WILL

REMOVE FOREVER ALL

INSULTS & MOCKERY

AGAINST HIS LAND AND PEOPLE.

”

ISAIAH 25:8 NLT

HOLY
BIBLE

BIBLE.COM

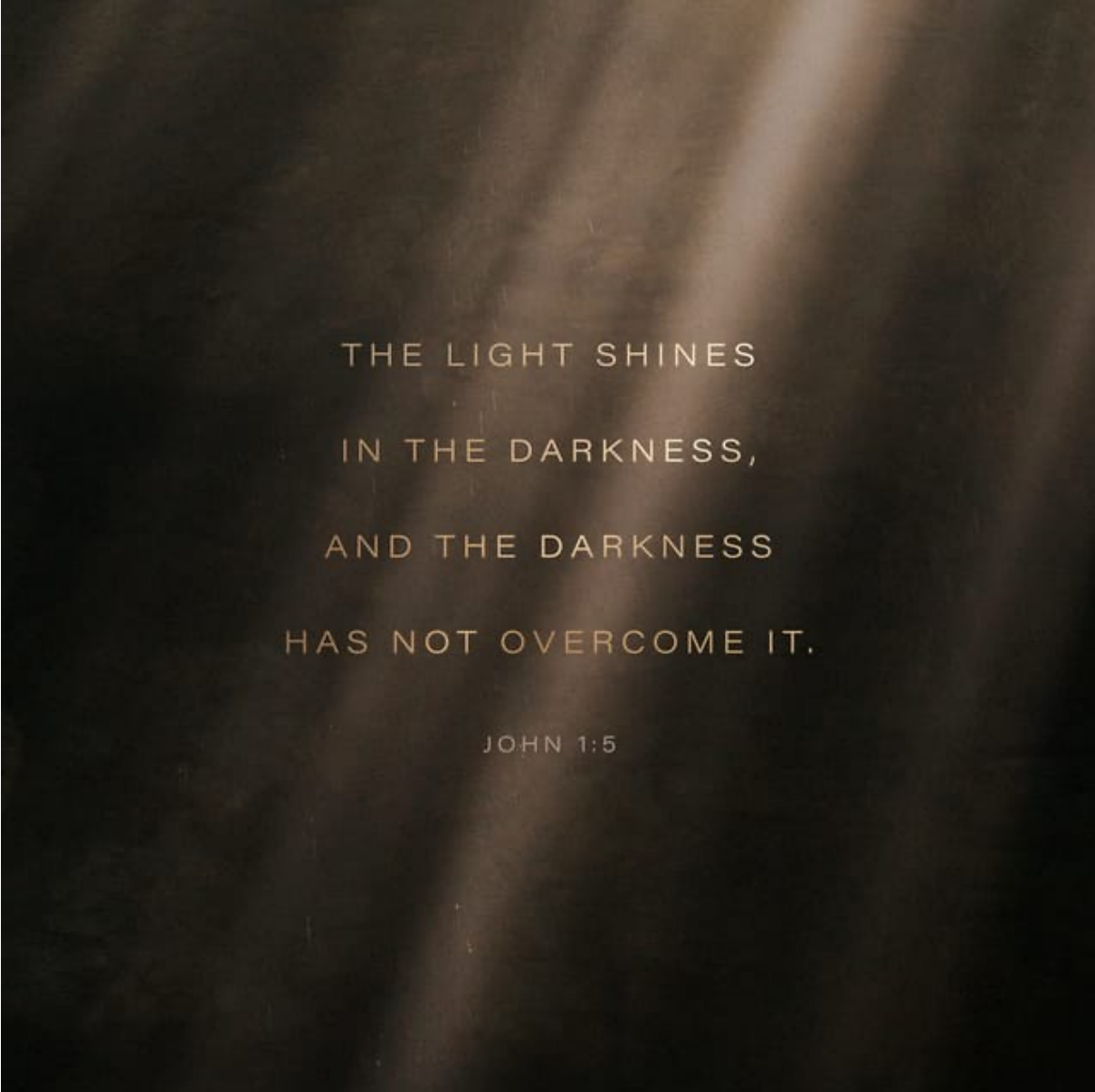
February 17th, 2021

Today is Ash Wednesday. This is a day where we hear “from dust you were made and to dust you shall return”; a poignant reminder of death's presence in our lives and the grief that accompanies it. For many, when we are faced with grief, it is a time that can challenge our faith. And yet our Christian faith speaks to Christ's presence with us in our grief and his victory over death.

Verse for Meditation: Isaiah 25:8

Action:

Today, we invite you to reach out to someone who has recently lost a loved one, or is experiencing grief. Send them a card, invite them to coffee, give them a call. Let them know that they are not alone at this time.



THE LIGHT SHINES
IN THE DARKNESS,
AND THE DARKNESS
HAS NOT OVERCOME IT.

JOHN 1:5

February 18th, 2021

Having faith in the tough times is never easy. Below are the wise words of Henri Nouwen as he reflects on the difficulty of working through the tough moments.

"There is a very old piece of wisdom that comes from the 4th century monks of the Egyptian Desert: 'Do not combat the demons directly.' Instead of paying so much attention to the prince of darkness, they advised their disciples to focus on the Lord of Light and thus, indirectly but inevitably undo the power of the demon...

I therefore want to say as clearly as I can that the first and foremost task of the peacemaker is not to fight death but to call forth, affirm, and nurture the signs of life wherever they become manifest." -- Henri Nouwen

Verse for Meditation: John 1:5

Action:

Today, we invite you to take some time to reflect on the light that you see in your life. Create a list of 5 "lights" in your life that give you hope and post it in a place where you will regularly see it.

Then Jacob woke from his
sleep and said, “Surely the
Lord is in this place—and
I did not know it!”

Genesis 28:16



February 19th, 2021

Throughout history many wars and conflicts were ignited by arguments over sacred space. Specific cities or areas held deep religious significance to multiple groups and arguments over these sacred spaces led to conflict and bloodshed. The ongoing conflict in Israel/Palestine is the result of Jewish, Christian, and Muslim groups all seeing Jerusalem as a profoundly sacred space.

Verse for Meditation: Genesis 28:16

Action: Reflect today upon the areas in your life that you consider to be 'sacred space'. If possible, spend some quiet time in your 'sacred space' praying for those whose sacred space is threatened and those who are affected by the violence in these areas.



IS IT NOT TO SHARE YOUR
BREAD WITH THE HUNGRY,
AND BRING THE HOMELESS
POOR INTO YOUR HOUSE;
WHEN YOU SEE THE NAKED,
TO COVER THEM, AND NOT
TO HIDE YOURSELF FROM
YOUR OWN KIN?

ISAIAH 58:7

February 20th, 2021

Did you know that over 30,000 people in Denver are experiencing homelessness?

Many who are homeless suffer from some form of mental illness, still many others are veterans of wars, and during the pandemic many more have become housing insecure. Winter is an especially difficult time for those who do not have a home to sleep in at night.

This need for shelter is so basic and long-standing. Throughout the Bible God's people are called to specifically care for those who are experiencing homelessness.

Verse for Meditation: Isaiah 58:7

Action: Today, we invite you to gather your extra scarves, hats, mittens and coats and donate them to Urban Peak, Denver Rescue Mission, or another local organization that cares for the homeless.

FOR WE ARE NOT
FIGHTING AGAINST
FLESH-AND-BLOOD
ENEMIES, BUT AGAINST
EVIL RULERS AND
AUTHORITIES OF THE
UNSEEN WORLD

EPHESIANS 6:12

February 22nd, 2021

Addiction is an issue that affects individuals as well as their families and friends. It is estimated that 22.6 million Americans struggle have a substance abuse or dependency problem.

People often describe addiction as a type of “demon” that they cannot escape. There is something powerful about reading the many account of Jesus casting out demons as if he were freeing that person from an addiction.

Today, as we reflect upon those that suffer from this ugly demon, we pray for them and consider our own vices.

Verse for Meditation: Ephesians 6:12

Action: Consider the habits and routines that you take for granted. Whether it is your morning cup of coffee or compulsively checking your phone, try going without it today.



THEREFORE, **ACCEPT** EACH OTHER
JUST AS CHRIST HAS **ACCEPTED** YOU
SO THAT GOD WILL BE GIVEN GLORY

ROMANS 15:7

February 23rd, 2021

Another issue that exists all over the world is misconceptions and stereotypes about different religions. These misguided assumptions can create climates of religious intolerance which often lead to violence and oppression.

Brian McLaren reflected on these dynamics in his book on Christian Identity in a Multi-faith World:

"I think the truth is, we are very, very different. Our biggest problem though, isn't our differences; our biggest problem is that we build identity by enforcing hostility toward the other. In other words, I learn who I am by learning who I am against... My question is: can we find a way of holding Christian identity that sends us toward the other with love and hospitality, rather than with fear and hostility?"

Verse for Meditation: Romans 15:7

Action: Today, do a little bit of online research about a faith tradition that is not your own. As you discover new information about another religion ask yourself, "how can the traditions and practices of this other religion teach me to be a more faithful Christian?"

THE LORD IS MY
STRENGTH AND SHIELD
I TRUST HIM WITH
ALL MY HEART.

PSALM 28:7



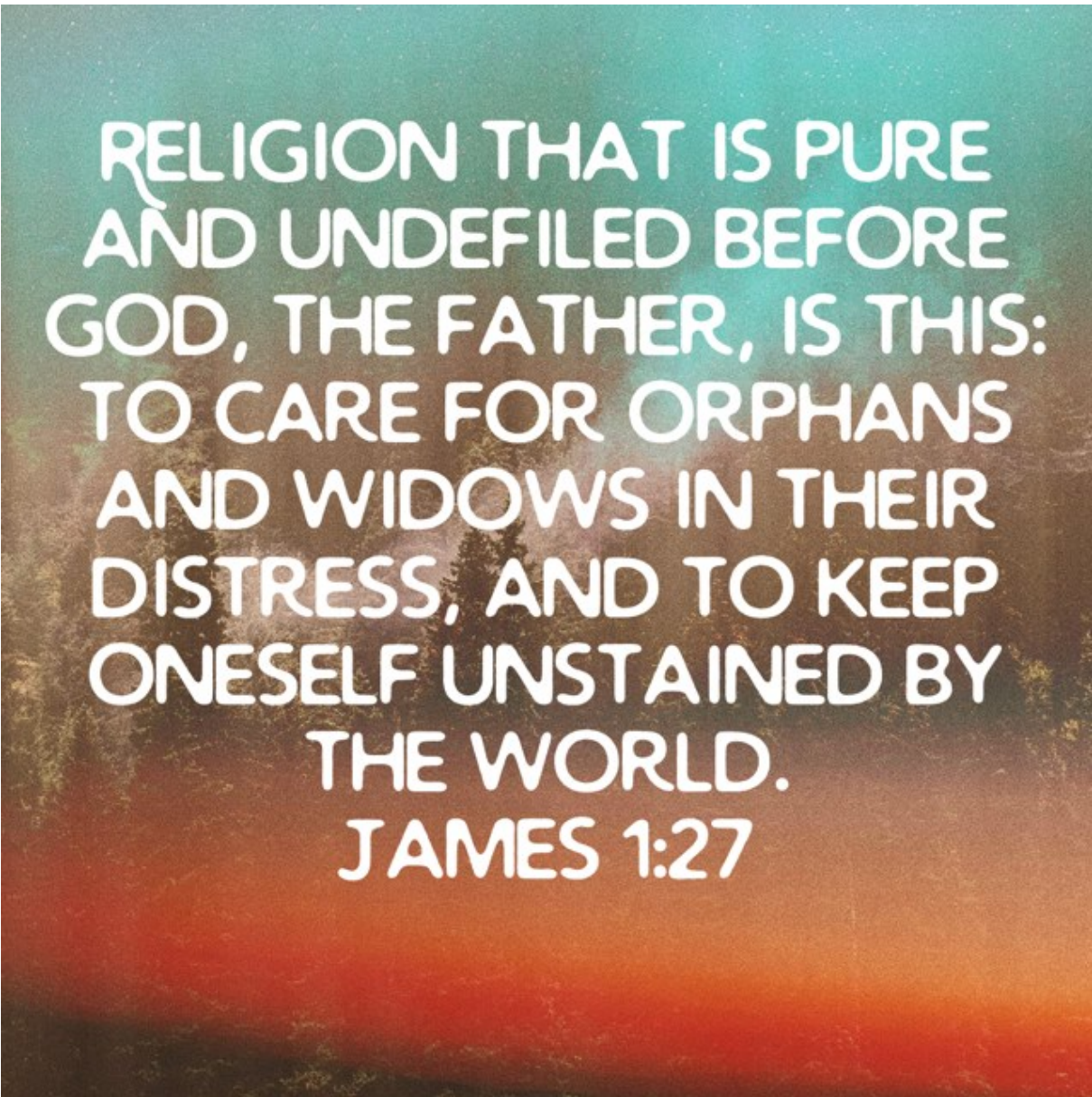
February 24th, 2021

Reading through this devotional can feel a bit overwhelming. There are so many needs in our world and becoming aware of all this pain and struggle can leave us feeling helpless and hopeless.

Every Wednesday of this Lenten journey we will pause from our usual “World in Need” devotionals and instead invite you to simply rest and reflect.

Verse for Meditation: Psalm 28:7

Action: Take time today to remind yourself that God can be trusted, that God is in control. That while the world is filled with need, it is also filled with the Presence and love of God.



RELIGION THAT IS PURE
AND UNDEFILED BEFORE
GOD, THE FATHER, IS THIS:
TO CARE FOR ORPHANS
AND WIDOWS IN THEIR
DISTRESS, AND TO KEEP
ONESELF UNSTAINED BY
THE WORLD.
JAMES 1:27

February 25th , 2021

Take time to really imagine that you or a child in your life works as a child laborer... Imagine that you are forced to work 14+ hour days. Imagine that your working conditions are unsanitary and you leave work feeling exhausted and weak. Imagine that your supervisors restrict bathroom use and access to clean water, and then beat you when you pass out from exhaustion, forcing you to go back to work. Now imagine that you and your family are so desperate for any money that you and your siblings are all forced to work like this for only \$0.36 per hour. This scenario is the reality for many children of Bangladesh who make garments for major US companies, such as Wal-Mart, Hanes and JCPenney (Details and information were found in the book Everyday Justice by Julie Clawson and are current as of 2006).

Verse for Meditation: James 1:27

Action: Take time to research some of your favorite clothing stores, to see if they use child labor. (Google: the stores name and child labor). See if you can identify alternative places to purchase your clothes that have more ethical labor practices.

*I know that the Lord
maintains the cause of
the needy, and executes
justice for the poor.*

Psalms 140:12



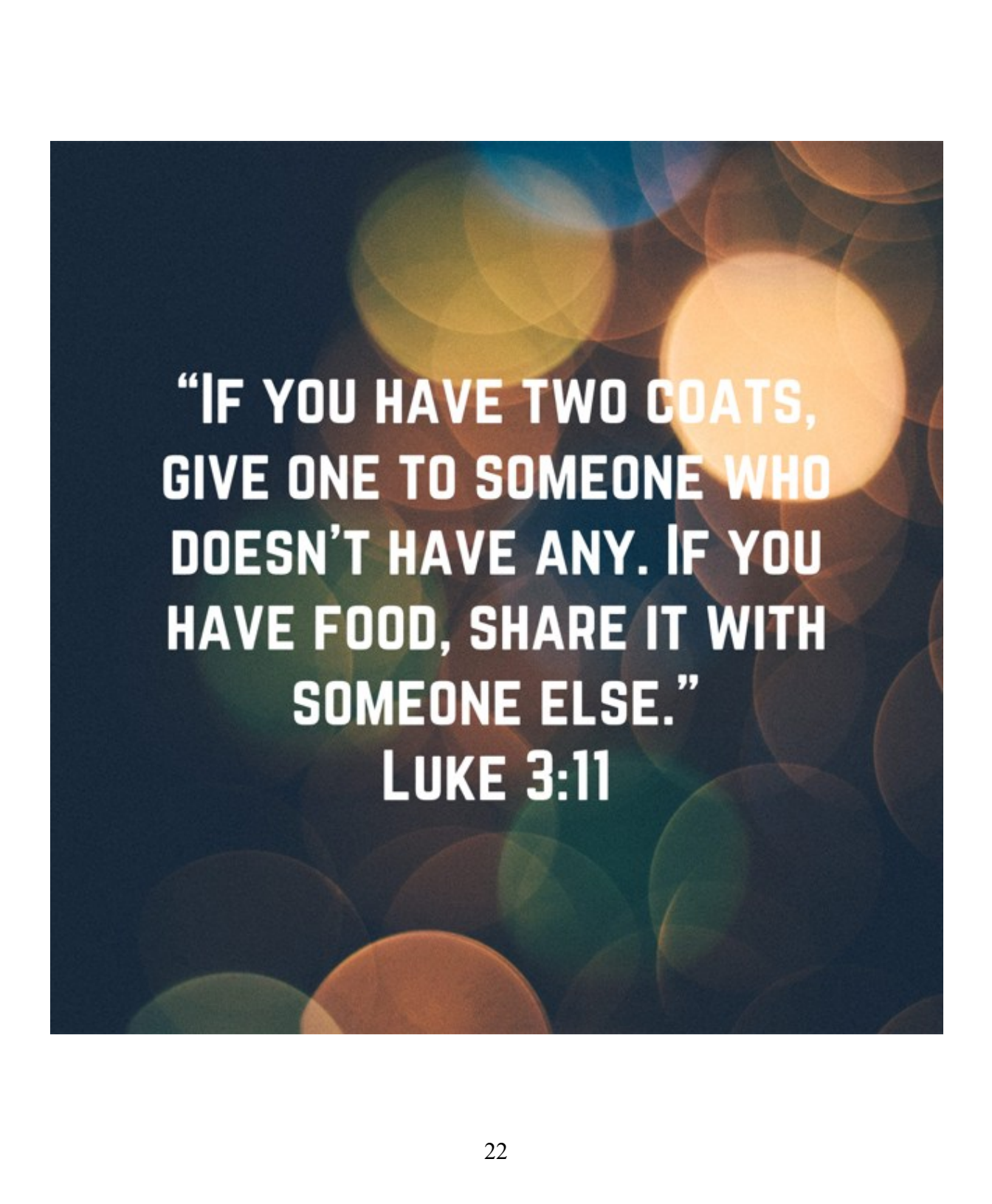
February 26th, 2021

Unemployment is often a stigmatized issue, however it is estimated that approximately one in five Americans will go on government assistance at some point in their life time (<http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2013/07/12/the-politics-and-demographics-of-food-stamp-recipients>) .

Many who are unemployed utilize welfare programs such as food stamps, unemployment insurance, and housing assistance in order to get themselves through these tough times. During the pandemic the number of individuals registering for these assistant programs has sky rocketed.

Verse for Meditation: Psalm 140:12

Action: It is estimated that a person on food stamps, receives an average of \$6.30 to provide food for themselves each day. Challenge yourself to only live off of this much money today. (Source: <http://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/how-much-could-i-receive>)

The background of the image is a dark, deep blue or black, filled with numerous out-of-focus circular light spots, known as bokeh. These spots vary in size and color, with prominent warm tones of orange, yellow, and gold, as well as some cooler shades of teal and green. The lights are scattered across the frame, creating a soft, ethereal glow.

**“IF YOU HAVE TWO COATS,
GIVE ONE TO SOMEONE WHO
DOESN’T HAVE ANY. IF YOU
HAVE FOOD, SHARE IT WITH
SOMEONE ELSE.”
LUKE 3:11**

February 27th, 2021

According to the Oxford Dictionary, Hunger is defined as “a feeling of discomfort or weakness caused by lack of food, coupled with the desire to eat.” For many, this feeling can quickly be quelled with a trip to the refrigerator. However, critical hunger and malnutrition is a growing problem facing an estimated 1 in 8 people around the world. (Specifically chronic undernourishment, as of 2012, source: <http://www.worldhunger.org/>)

Church historians have found that caring for the hungry was a key commitment of the early Christian Church and this commitment has continued to be a focus of Christians for 2000 years.

Verse for Meditation: Luke 3:11

Action: Today, as we consider those struggling with these situations, we challenge you to skip a meal. As your stomach rumbles and reminds you of your hunger, instead of running to the refrigerator, let it be a time to meditate and pray for those who are unable to eat today, not by choice.

A serene landscape photograph featuring a calm body of water under a pale, overcast sky. In the foreground, dark, moss-covered rocks are visible on the left and bottom. A single, thin wooden post stands vertically in the water on the right side. Tall, thin reeds or grasses are visible on the far right. The text "Be still before the Lord, and wait patiently for him" is overlaid in white, with "Psalms 37:7a" below it.

Be still before the Lord,
and wait patiently for him
Psalms 37:7a

March 1st, 2021

In our world of personalization, and individualization, loneliness is a growing issue. Many have become unknowingly isolated by technology and our digital way of life.

As we see our world move further and further in this direction it is poignant to note all the times that those in scripture willingly chose to isolate themselves in order to grow closer to God. At six different points in the scripture we are told that Jesus went away by himself to pray. Clearly, time alone does not have to be a destructive experience.

Verse for Meditation: Psalm 37:7

Action: Today, take 20 minutes of prayer and silence in an effort to reclaim your alone time. Challenge yourself to see this not as a time of isolation and loneliness but as a time of solitude and strength.



HEBREWS 11:1

Now faith is confidence in
what we hope for and assurance
about what we do not see.

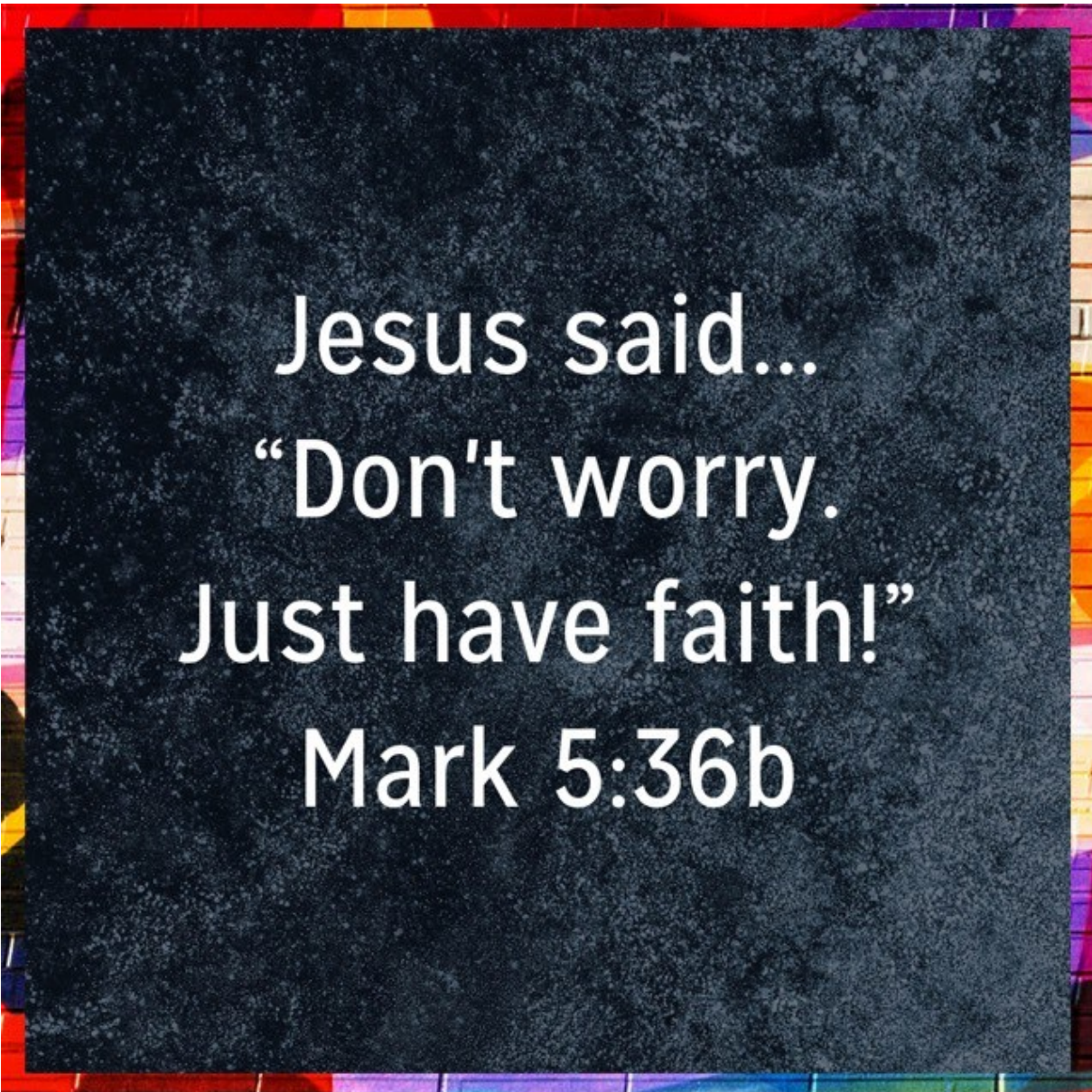
March 2nd, 2021

In our lives of faith, doubt is often characterized in a negative way, however the word 'faith' presupposes that some of this will be hard to believe and will need to be taken on 'faith'. Rather than ignoring or denying our doubts, it can be very important to wrestle with our questions.

Philosopher and Author Peter Rollins leads an experience every year called “Atheism for Lent” where he invites people to spend these 40 sacred days of Lent as a time to challenge and question their beliefs and in so emerge from Lent with a faith that is reformed and refined.

Verse for Meditation: Hebrews 11:1

Action: Take time to journal about doubts. Pray about it and refer back to it occasionally, see what God might be trying to teach you through these questions.



Jesus said...
“Don't worry.
Just have faith!”
Mark 5:36b

March 3rd, 2021

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Verse for Meditation: Mark 5:36b

Action: Take time today to remind yourself that God can be trusted, that God is in control. That while the world is filled with need, it is also filled with the Presence and love of God.



Instead, treat the foreigner as
well as you treat your own
people and love them as much
as you love yourself. Remember,
you were once foreigners in the
land of Egypt. I am the Lord
your God.

Leviticus 19:34

March 4th, 2021

Denver is home to many different races and nationalities. Unfortunately, Denver is not immune to racism and bigotry. Dozens of factors contribute to this climate of intolerance, and much is being done to combat our city's racism and segregation.

In Leviticus 19:34, God gives the Israelites this instruction: "The foreigner residing among you must be treated as your native-born. Love them as yourself, for you were foreigners in Egypt. I am the LORD your God."

This verse invites the Israelites to remember their history, and the ways that God had cared for them when they were foreigners enslaved in Egypt. Through remembering, they are thus called to have compassion for those who now live as strangers in a foreign land.

Verse for Meditation: Leviticus 19:34

Action: Take time today to reflect on the prevalence of racism in our community, as well as God's instructions to the Israelites in Leviticus 19.



MAY THE GOD
OF HOPE FILL
YOU WITH ALL
joy AND peace

ROMANS 15:13

March 5th, 2021

Over 26% of Americans suffer from a mental illness during a given year. But, mental illness affects not only an individual but their family and friends as well. Often times the road to recover is an extremely difficult and long process that can feel hopeless.

While mental illness is immensely complicated, as with all illnesses, sometimes messages of hope can provide great comfort and relief.

Verse for Meditation: Romans 15:13

Action: As we reflect on the difficulties of mental illness, take time to look at this website, and read some of the stories of those who are struggling or have struggled with mental illness. Pray for them as well as their family and friends who are affected, that all might find hope amidst their circumstances. <https://www.nami.org/Personal-Stories>

“You are the Lord, you alone; you have made heaven, the heaven of heavens, with all their host, the earth and all that is on it, the seas and all that is in them. To all of them you give life, and the host of heaven worships you.

Nehemiah 9:6



March 6th, 2021

The first article of the Apostles' Creed states: "I believe in God, the Father, the Almighty, creator of Heaven and Earth." Have you ever thought about the implications of this statement? If we really believe that God created the entirety of this world then care for the planet should be a chief concern of all Christians. Unfortunately, the effects of pollution continually harm God's creation and the long-term impact of our collective negligence is still largely unknown.

Verse for Meditation: Nehemiah 9:6

Action: Today, fast from driving your car. Ride a bike, take the bus, or simply walk to the places you need to go. View this sacrifice as a form of worship and an honoring of God the Father, Creator of Heaven and Earth.



March 8th, 2021

The life of faith is not always easy. Often times, even despite our best efforts we can find ourselves in a spiritual desert, feeling disconnected and detached from God.

These spiritual deserts are no fault of our own, they spring up without warning and can leave us feeling sacred, alone, and depressed. Often times, the best remedy for these times is to simply commit oneself to a spiritual practice. Even if the change does not come immediately, the commitment to continually seeking connection with God can move us from our desert times.

Verse for Meditation: Matthew 6:33

Action: Try a spiritual practice you have never tried before. A simple Google search can turn up dozens of possibilities, but also know that the Bethany Together 4 Good Podcast often posts episodes that describe different spiritual practices. You can find a list of all the podcast episodes at www.anchor.fm/bethanydenver



*Forgive
as the Lord
forgave you.*

COLOSSIANS 3:13

March 9th, 2021

Conflict is a reality in all of our lives. Countries are at war; we experience conflicts in our day to day lives at work and at home; we get in a disagreement with someone on our drive home etc. etc. Sometimes we may even feel like we are at spiritual war. In all of these situations, it can be difficult to find our connection with God.

And yet, at the heart of Christianity is a clear message of reconciliation. Through Jesus Christ we have forever been reconciled to God and in light of and in response to this gracious truth we are called to work for reconciliation in the world.

Verse for Meditation: Colossians 3:13

Action: Reflect on your life. Think about the areas that are in need of reconciliation. It may be a relationship - whether its with God, a friend, a relative, or a co-worker. It may be ways that you need to reconcile with yourself or a situation. Give special attention to one of these areas today, ask God to help you to find peace with the situation.



WHEN I AM AFRAID,
I PUT MY *trust* IN YOU.

P S A L M 5 6 : 3

March 10th, 2021

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Every Wednesday of this Lenten journey we will pause from our usual “World in Need” devotionals and instead invite you to simply rest and reflect.

Verse for Meditation: Psalm 56:3

Action: Take time today to remind yourself that God can be trusted, that God is in control. That while the world is filled with need, it is also filled with the Presence and love of God.



Nothing

IN ALL CREATION WILL EVER
BE ABLE TO SEPARATE US
FROM THE LOVE OF GOD

ROMANS 8:39

March 11th, 2021

Did you know that suicide is the third leading cause of death for 15- to 24-year-olds and second for 24- to 35-year-olds? That is a scary reality. And every suicide affects at least 6 people surrounding the person. It can be one of the toughest things to try and make sense of and can stir up big questions about the presence of God in the lives of both the victim and their social network.

It is so sad to consider that a person can feel such despair that to them death seems the only solution.

Verse for Meditation: Romans 8:39

Action: Today, pray for those contemplating a decision like this; that they would find the hope, care, and support they need. Pray also for the families and friends of those left to face the pain after such a loss.



COME LET US
Sing *for joy*
TO THE *Lord*

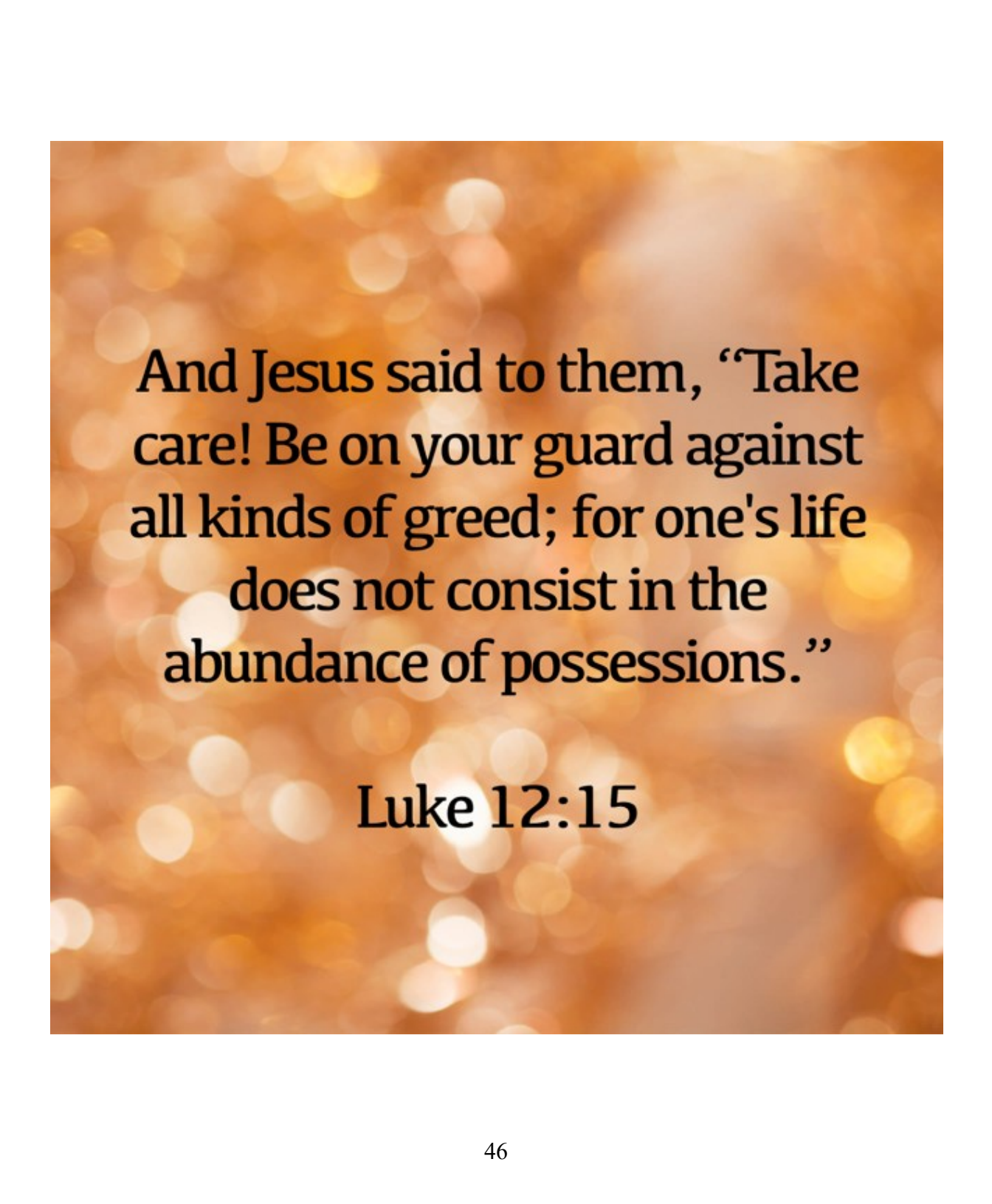
PSALM 95:1

March 12th, 2021

Statistics show that churches in America have been in steady decline for years. While fewer people are going to church, many are still looking for a spiritual community; a place to belong, a place to connect with God, and a place to grow as an individual. Often times, people are not connected with a spiritual community because they simply do not know where to look, or they don't feel comfortable engaging a new community by themselves.

Verse for Meditation: Psalms 95:1

Action: Tell a friend why you participate in a spiritual community, then ask them to join you this week. Don't be pushy or condescending but try and begin a conversation where your friend will feel comfortable asking questions. Our weekly live-stream service (on www.bethaylive.org) is perhaps the easiest way ever to invite someone to experience your community of faith.

The background of the slide is a warm, golden-brown bokeh effect, consisting of numerous out-of-focus light circles of varying sizes and brightness, creating a soft, glowing texture.

And Jesus said to them, “Take care! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; for one's life does not consist in the abundance of possessions.”

Luke 12:15

March 13th , 2021

Money and the issues of Greed are two topics that Jesus spoke of regularly throughout his ministry. However, due to the capitalist society we live in, facing our own greed and dependence on money is often extremely difficult. We have been taught that it is good to want and to obtain the latest and greatest items and we often miss the ways that our society's focus on buying and selling distracts us from Jesus' hope for our life.

Verse for Meditation: Luke 12:15

Action: Prayerful read Matthew 6:25-34 and consider what it means for your life. Then, gather up a bag of unused clothes, toys, possessions, and donate them to a local Salvation Army, or Goodwill.



speak
up for THOSE
WHO cannot
speak for
themselves

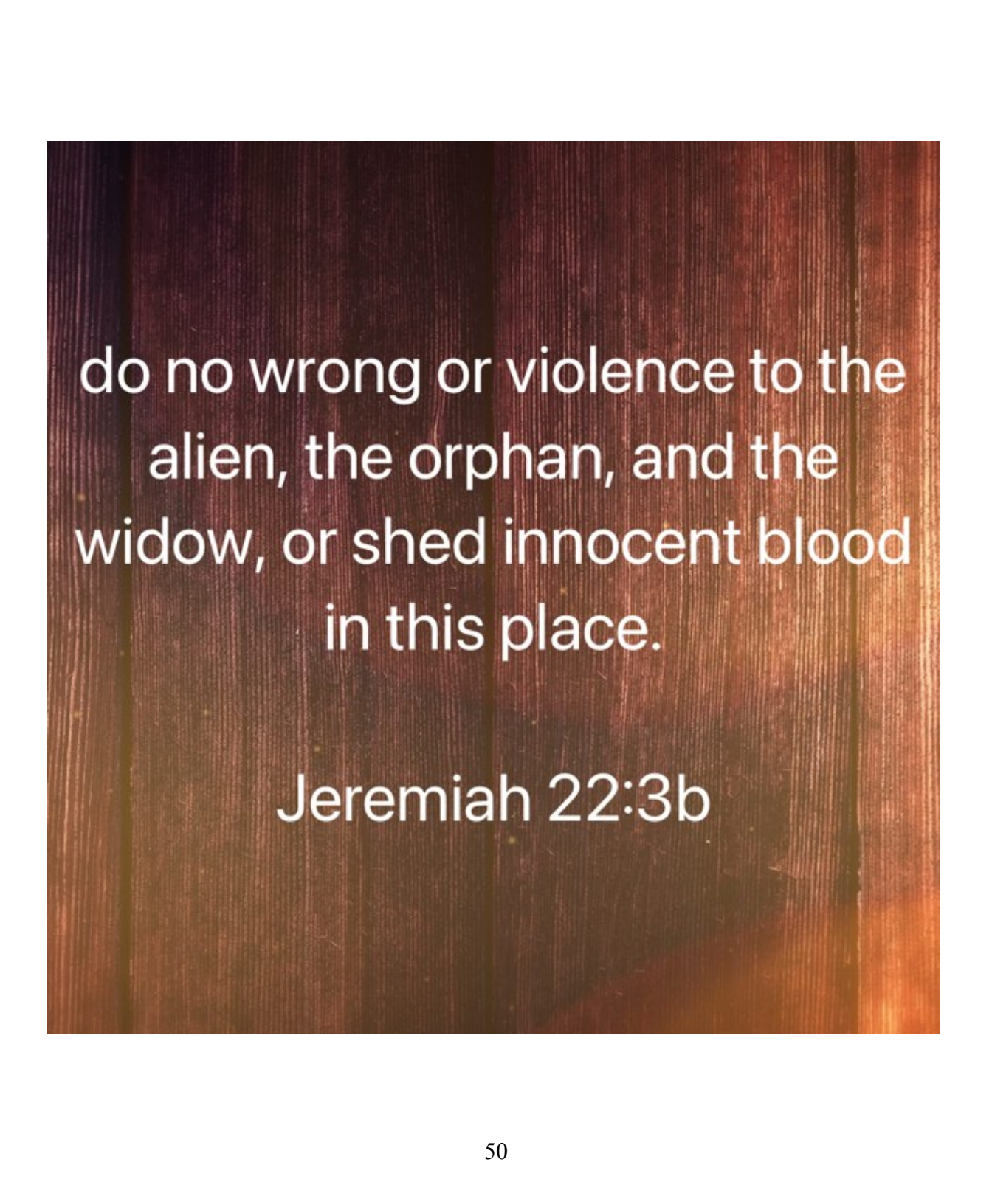
PROVERBS 31:8

March 15th, 2021

Human trafficking is a huge issue in the United States. It is estimated that between 14,500 and 17,500 people are trafficked in the United States each year and this modern-form of slavery is rarely discussed. Furthermore, we are often unaware of the ways that some of our lifestyle choices encourage the use of slavery in other countries.

Verse for Meditation: Proverbs 31:8

Action: Go to www.slaveryfootprint.org and research your own slavery footprint. Then, commit to making one small change to lessen your footprint.



do no wrong or violence to the
alien, the orphan, and the
widow, or shed innocent blood
in this place.

Jeremiah 22:3b

March 16th , 2021

Domestic Violence is an unfortunate reality for too many. It can be emotional, physical, financial, sexual, verbal or psychological abuse by any member of one's immediate family or intimate relationship. The very relationships intended to establish trust and love become the relationships that individuals learn to fear. Just as God longs to be in relationship with us, God also longs for our earthly relationships to reflect the pure love God has for us.

Verse for Meditation: Jeremiah 22:3

Action: Because this topic is often ignored and hidden, take some time today to educate yourself about this issue (<https://ncadv.org/blog/posts/remember-my-name-a-brief-history>). As you read about real people who experience life through a lens of fear, invite God into these places, that these individuals might find hope and strength through their situation.

If you or someone you know is experiencing domestic violence, call The National Domestic Violence Hotline: 1-800-799-SAFE

ISAIAH

DON'T BE
AFRAID,
FOR I AM
WITH YOU.
DON'T BE
DISCOURAGED,
FOR I AM
YOUR GOD.

41:10

March 17th , 2021

Reading through this devotional can feel a bit overwhelming. There are so many needs in our world and becoming aware of all this pain and struggle can leave us feeling helpless and hopeless.

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Verse for Meditation: Isaiah 41:10

Action: Take time today to remind yourself that God can be trusted, that God is in control. That while the world is filled with need, it is also filled with the Presence and love of God.

*Together you are the body of Christ.
Each one of you is part of his body.
1 Corinthians 12:27*



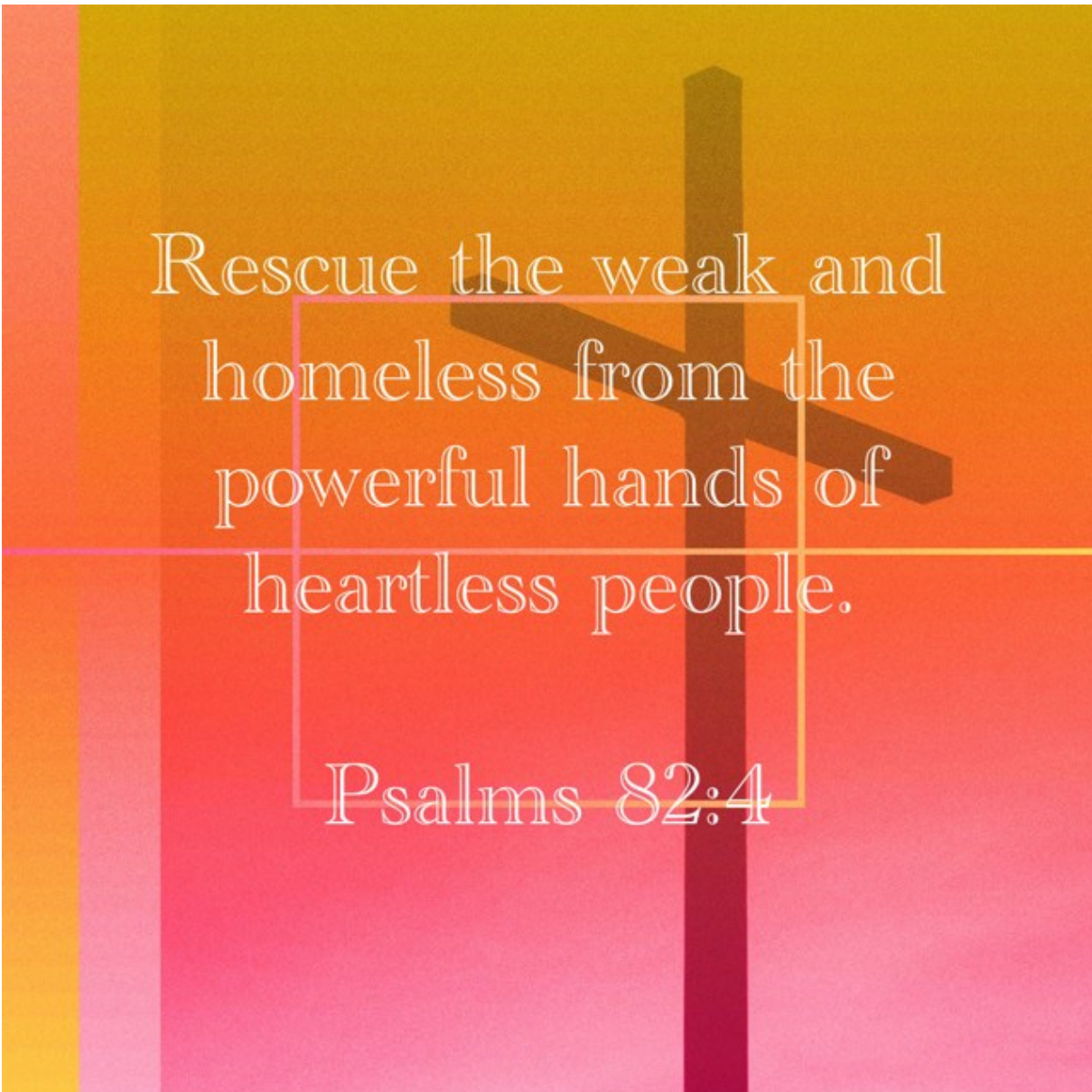
March 18th , 2021

Sometimes we come to points in our life where it is difficult to see God's presence in the midst of things. It may feel to us as if we are calling out to God and receiving no response. Here we may feel lonely, isolated, and even in despair, unsure where to turn. It is at these points that we can find it most difficult to reach out for help. However, that's often just what we need. When these times hit, it can be helpful to remember that we were created for community. And we find community when we are vulnerable or intimate with others.

Richard Rohr, a Franciscan theologian, writes about the healing power of intimacy in his book, Immortal Diamond: "Intimacy is the only gateway into the temple of human or divine love...Intimate love is the true temple that we all desire. Everyone who loves is born of God and knows God...For God is Love."

Verse for Meditation: 1 Corinthians 12:27

Action: Take a moment to consider the areas of your life where you feel that God is remaining silent. Open up to a trusted friend about your struggles, fears and doubts around this issue, and see how you might hear God through the community of intimate friends.



Rescue the weak and
homeless from the
powerful hands of
heartless people.

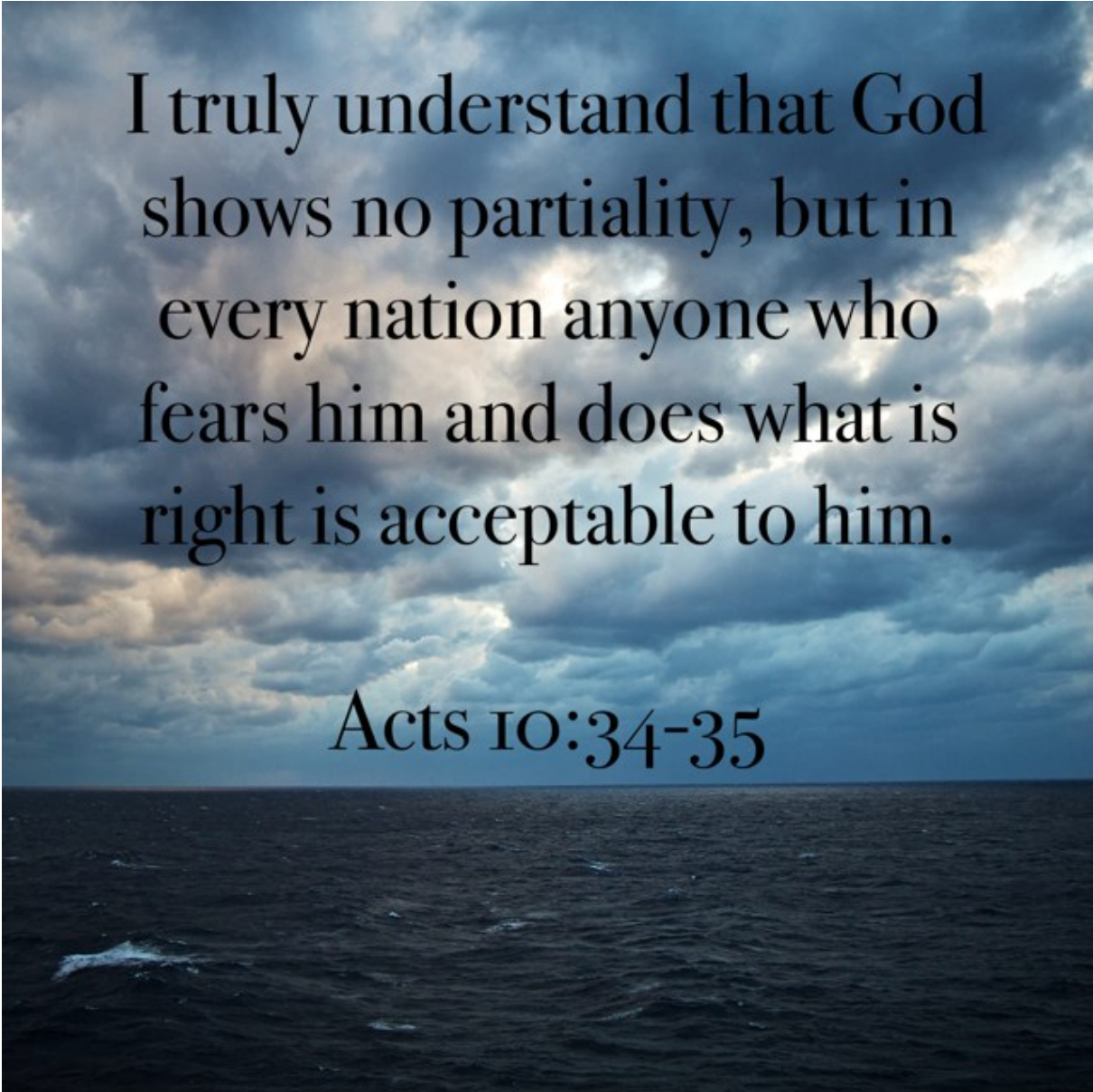
Psalms 82:4

March 19th , 2021

Unfortunately child soldiers are a very real issue for many in countries throughout the world. In Asia, Africa, South & Central America, and Oceania, children in war-torn countries are recruited into military combat. Once recruited, these child soldiers are given drugs to numb their minds from the reality of the atrocities they are committing, and then exposed to violence and hatred; sometimes as young as age 8. Even if these children are only in combat for a brief period, these experiences leave lasting impressions on their young minds.

Verse for Meditation: Psalms 82:4

Action: Ishmael Beah was a child soldier in Sierra Leone in the 1990s. He has since found refuge in America, written a book about his experiences, and founded an organization with a mission to end the practice of children in military throughout the world. Consider supporting his foundation which seeks to put an end to these atrocities.
<https://www.ishmaelbeah.com/>



I truly understand that God
shows no partiality, but in
every nation anyone who
fears him and does what is
right is acceptable to him.

Acts 10:34-35

March 20th, 2021

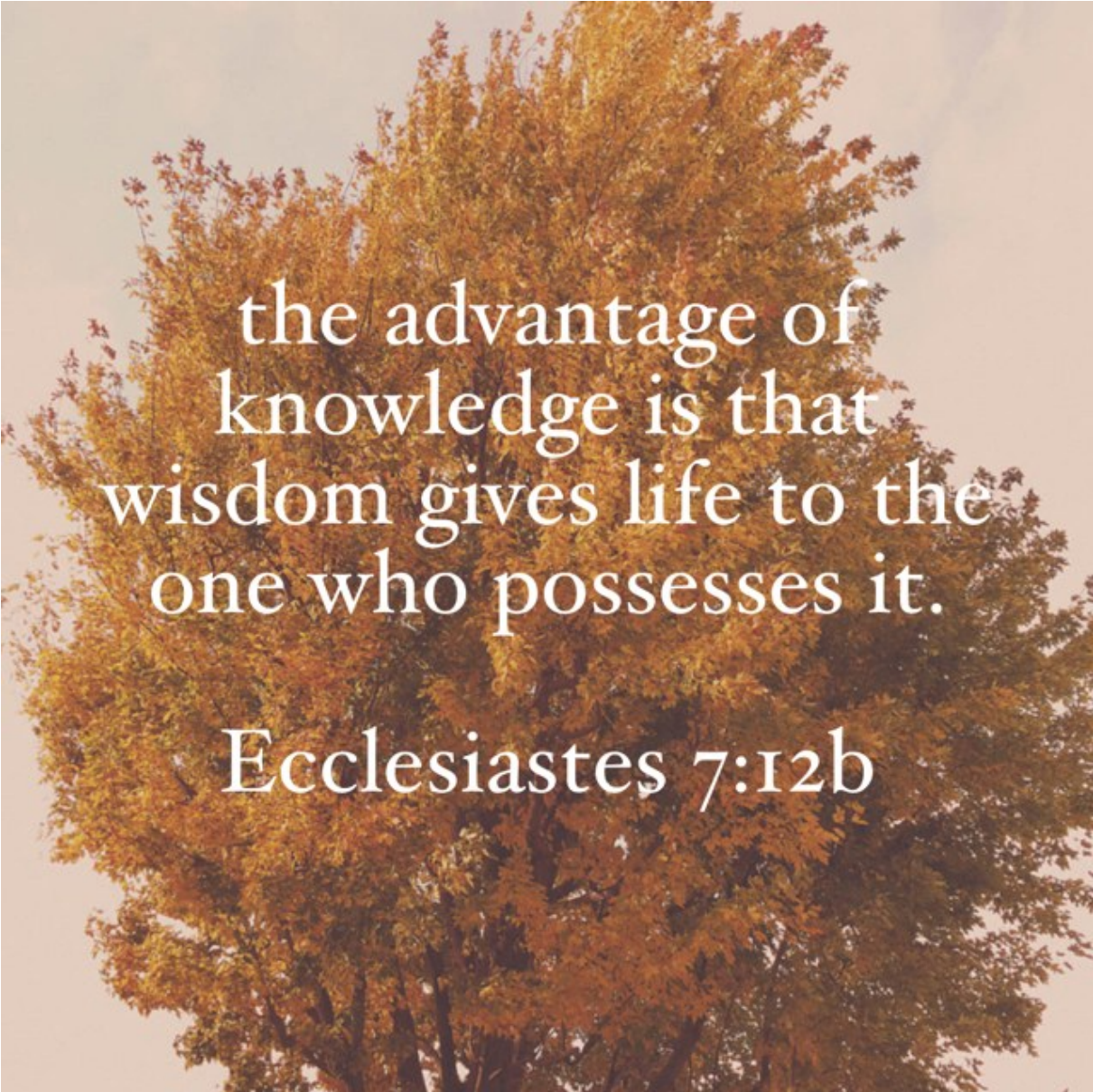
A recent study found that the average income of households with a head identifying as black was 6.5 times lower than households with a head of household who identifies as white. This racial income gap affects the overall health of our economy and continues to harm specific neighborhoods and communities. This wealth gap can be traced back to practices of the Jim Crow era where individuals in the Black community were redlined out of specific neighborhoods and not considered for higher paying jobs.

Racial divisions between Jews and Gentiles was an original issue during Jesus' time and yet so much of his ministry focused on bridging these divides.

Verses for Meditation: Acts 10:34-35

Action: Explore this list of Black-owned businesses in the Denver area and consider utilizing these locally owned businesses over large corporate chains.

<https://303magazine.com/2020/06/black-owned-businesses-denver/>



the advantage of
knowledge is that
wisdom gives life to the
one who possesses it.

Ecclesiastes 7:12b

March 22nd , 2021

Education is an essential part of any child's development. It opens doors, it creates opportunities, and it prepares people for adulthood. Not only does poor education dramatically affect the economy, but it also leads to heightened crime rates, poor health, and a lower life expectancy.

Christians have long prioritized education because quality education can improve the lives of so many.

Verse for Meditation: Ecclesiastes 7:12b

Action: Organizations like the Boys and Girls Club of America strive to provide quality after school programming. Donate some school supplies to a local Boys and Girls Club and pray for a world where proper education is afforded to all.



MY DEAR FRIENDS, WITH OUR TONGUES WE
SPEAK BOTH PRAISES AND CURSES.

WE PRAISE OUR LORD AND FATHER, AND WE
CURSE PEOPLE WHO WERE CREATED TO BE
LIKE GOD, AND THIS ISN'T RIGHT.

JAMES 3:9-10

March 23rd, 2021

We used to think of bullying as just children pushing each other on the playground. However, in recent years the ongoing negative effects of bullying have received increased attention in the media and schools. Not only are young students victims of bullying but it is an issue that occurs in the work place and among adults as well. With the increasing use of technology and the anonymity it allows, we've also seen an increase in cyber-bullying through social media sites.

When asked by his disciples which was the greatest commandment, Jesus responded, “to love the Lord your God, and to love your neighbor as yourself” meaning that bullying has no place in our Christian faith.

Verses for Meditation: James 3:9-10

Action: Pay attention to the words of those around you today, whether you are at work, at school or running errands. Which do you notice more: kind language or bullying language? Consider stepping in and sticking up for any victims of bullying that you notice. And together, let's pray for a world without bullying.



Be Strang

&

C O U R A G E O U S .

D O N O T B E

A F R A I D .

J O S H U A 1 : 9

March 24th, 2021

Reading through this devotional can feel a bit overwhelming. There are so many needs in our world and becoming aware of all this pain and struggle can leave us feeling helpless and hopeless.

Every Wednesday of this Lenten journey we will pause from our usual “World in Need” devotionals and instead invite you to simply rest and reflect.

Verses for Meditation: Joshua 1:9

Action: Take time today to remind yourself that God can be trusted, that God is in control. That while the world is filled with need, it is also filled with the Presence and love of God.

and whoever gives even a cup of cold water to one of these little ones in the name of a disciple—truly I tell you, none of these will lose their reward.

Matthew 10:42

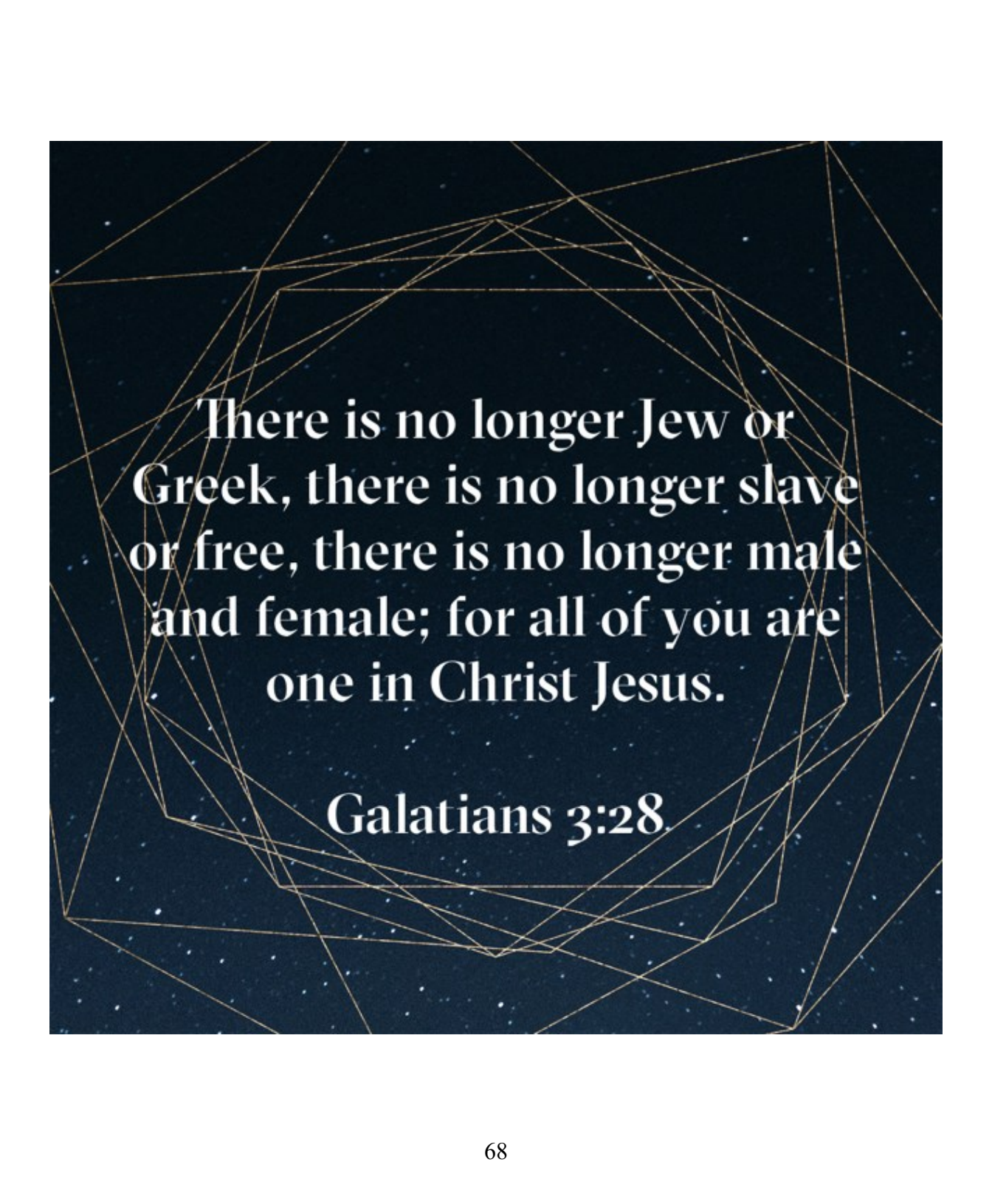


March 25th, 2021

While people can survive for several weeks without food, a human being can only go a few days without water. Water is perhaps the most essential need a person can have. And yet, over 758 million people live without clean drinking water. This need has ripple effects in communities. Children are sent on day long journeys to collect water and as a result can't attend school. Or parents set out to get water for their families and are unable to maintain employment. These complications are in addition to the physical tolls that lack of water can create.

Verse for Meditation: Matthew 10:42

Action: Consider donating to Charity: Water or if you have an upcoming birthday use their “pledge your birthday” campaign to encourage friends and family to donate in lieu of gifts. <https://www.charitywater.org/get-involved/pledge-birthday>



**There is no longer Jew or
Greek, there is no longer slave
or free, there is no longer male
and female; for all of you are
one in Christ Jesus.**

Galatians 3:28.

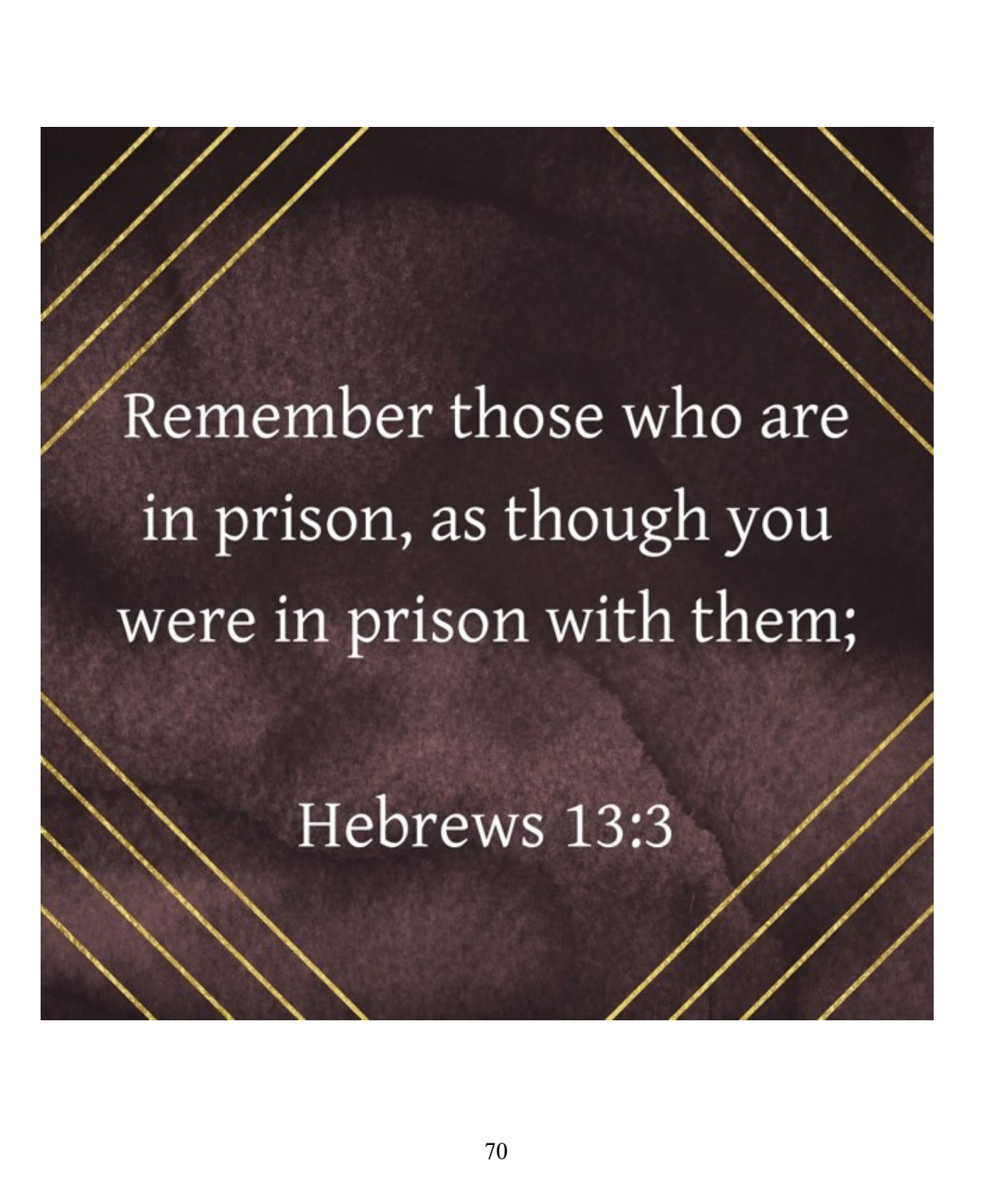
March 26th, 2021

While great strides have been made towards gender equality in the United States and throughout the world, the sad truth is that woman still disproportionately experience a lack of access to education, physical and mental health care, voting rights, and equal wages. Research has found that closing gender wage gaps and supporting the women's access to education benefits countries as a whole.

Throughout the scriptures women are upheld and celebrated as examples of faithfulness. We can quickly overlook the inclusion of these stories today but their inclusion in a book compiled thousands of years ago, during an extremely patriarchal time, speaks volumes.

Verse for Meditation: Galatians 3:28

Action: Read about the women of scripture who played vital roles in the Mission of God (here's a list of 8 key figures: <https://get.tithe.ly/blog/women-of-the-bible>). Pray for a world where women are treated with equality.



Remember those who are
in prison, as though you
were in prison with them;

Hebrews 13:3

March 27th, 2021

The United States has nearly 25% of the world's prison population. Nearly 3 million people are currently imprisoned in the US and a disproportionate number of those who are incarcerated are people of color. Many prisons and parts of our justice system are currently set up to keep people in prison because it benefits the corporations that run these facilities. Furthermore, time in prison has not been shown to have a positive effect on changing future behavior.

Verse for Meditation: Hebrews 13:3

Action: Many early Christians were imprisoned by the Roman authorities. Jesus himself was the victim of a corporate justice system. Additionally, Jesus states clearly that when we visit those who are in prison, we connect with him (Matthew 25:31-46). Today, write a letter of support and compassion to someone who is in prison.

A large, smooth sand dune dominates the foreground and middle ground. A series of footprints leads up the slope of the dune, starting from the bottom right and curving towards the left. In the background, a line of evergreen trees is visible against a sky filled with soft, white and grey clouds. The lighting suggests a late afternoon or early morning setting.

*And you should also care for them, because
you were foreigners in Egypt.
Deuteronomy 10:19*

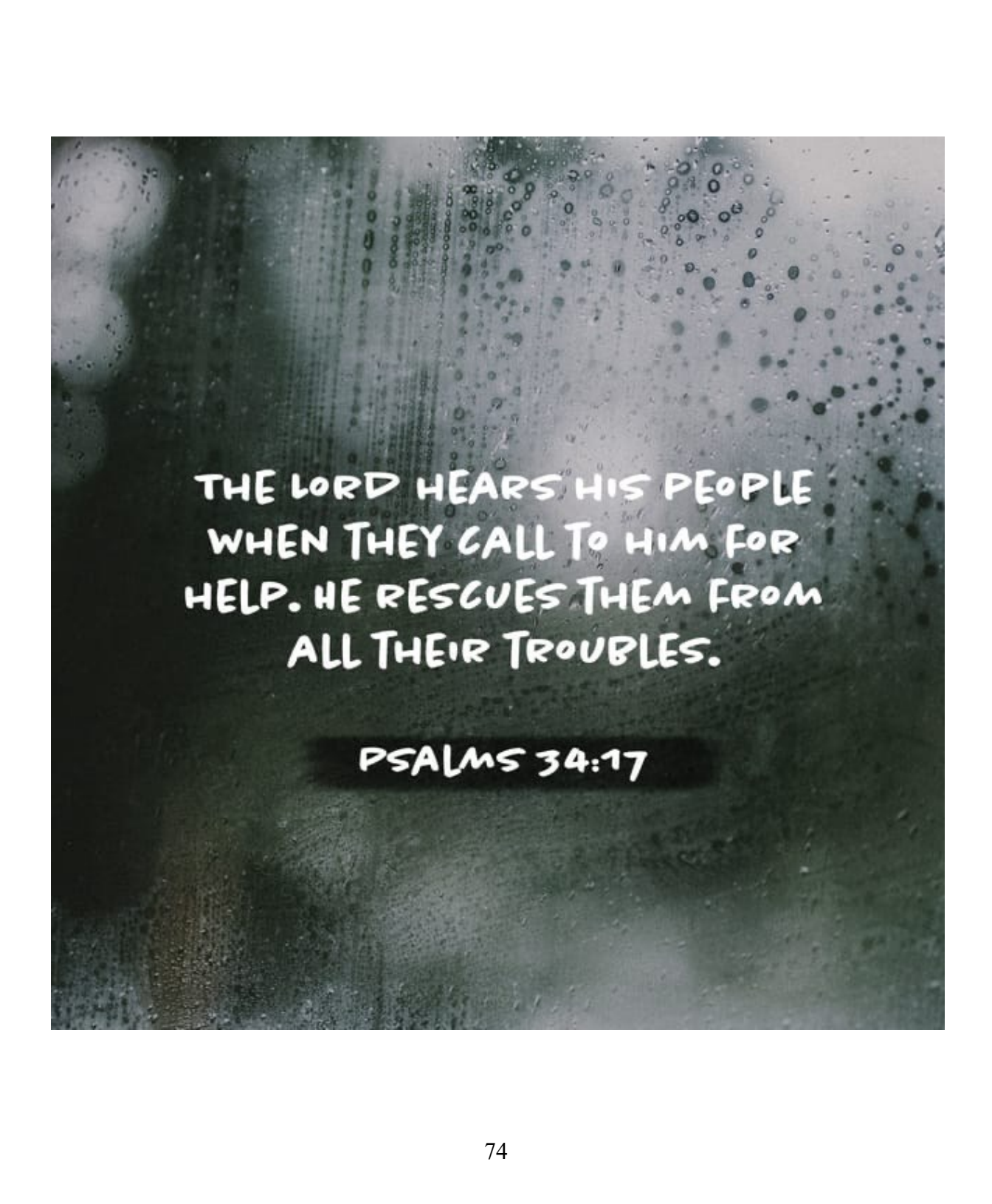
March 29th, 2021

In the Gospel of Matthew, we hear about Jesus and his family fleeing to Egypt because of the violence that King Herod was threatening. Mary, Joseph, and Jesus experienced a reality not that different that of the refugees of the world today.

The United Nations estimates that about 26 million refugees are without a nationality. This displacement results in a lack of access to basic rights such as education, employment and freedom of movement.

Verse for Meditation: Deuteronomy 10:19

Action: Educate yourself about the difference between refugees, asylum seekers, and migrants and the work of Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Services. <https://www.lirs.org/refugees-asylum-seekers-migrants-whats-the-difference/>



THE LORD HEARS HIS PEOPLE
WHEN THEY CALL TO HIM FOR
HELP. HE RESCUES THEM FROM
ALL THEIR TROUBLES.

PSALMS 34:17

March 30th, 2021

Depression is a growing mental health crisis throughout the United States. Current estimates state that around 17 million Americans suffer from Depression, nearly 2 million of which are children age 3-17. Depression is a difficult disease that effects a person's ability to enjoy their life, and it is often a very private disease that goes unnoticed by others. While the Bible never mentions depression, Jesus did give special attention to those in society who were lonely, outcast, or lost.

Verse for Meditation: Psalms 24:17

Action: Depression often occurs when we turn our anger in on our self. It can be heightened by periods of inactivity and lethargy. Today, take a walk outside and express gratitude to God for the blessings of your life. Take time to say a prayer for those who are struggling with depression.



March 31st, 2021

Reading through this devotional can feel a bit overwhelming. There are so many needs in our world and becoming aware of all this pain and struggle can leave us feeling helpless and hopeless.

Every Wednesday of this Lenten journey we will pause from our usual “World in Need” devotionals and instead invite you to simply rest and reflect.

Verse for Meditation: Proverbs 3:5

Action: Take time today to remind yourself that God can be trusted, that God is in control. That while the world is filled with need, it is also filled with the Presence and love of God.



ABOVE ALL,
LOVE EACH
OTHER DEEPLY,
BECAUSE LOVE
COVERS OVER A
MULTITUDE
OF SINS.

1 Peter 4:8

April 1st, 2021

Today is Maundy Thursday, the beginning of the Triduum - a Three Day liturgy that spans Thursday, Good Friday, and Holy Saturday. On Maundy Thursday we remember Jesus' Last Supper with his disciples. We remember how he washed the disciple's feet and his command to love one another (John 13:31-35).

Over the past weeks, these Lenten Devotionals have challenged all of us with the many needs and struggles in this world. Whether it is the homeless, child soldiers, those suffering from mental illness, or personal struggles with greed, addiction, and doubt, I hope that these devotions have helped to open your hearts to the needs of others.

Jesus commanded us to love one another because he knew that love is the only force strong enough to combat all the brokenness in this world.

Verse for Meditation: 1 Peter 4:8

Action: Look back over all the different needs that these Lenten devotionals have highlighted and challenge yourself to find new ways to reach out with love to these people and situations.



Above all, clothe yourselves with
love, which binds everything
together in perfect harmony.

Colossians 3:14

April 2nd, 2021

Here's a link to one of my favorite Beatles songs of all time: "Come Together" www.tinyurl.com/4lcezo22

I think this song is entirely appropriate for today. Allow me to explain:

Good Friday invites us to reflect on Jesus' sacrifice for our sake. On his way to the cross Jesus endured some of life's most difficult moments. He was betrayed by a close friend, he was abandoned by his other friends, he was unjustly sentenced, he was humiliated, and tortured. And yet, Jesus never protested; he knew that his journey to the cross was for a higher purpose.

That first Good Friday, between two criminals, Jesus stretched out his hands and gathered onto himself all of life's pain and all the tough moments in our human existence were brought together in God's love. It's as if Jesus was saying, "Come Together, right now, over me".

Verse for Meditation: Colossians 3:14

Action: Today, take some quiet time to reflect on Jesus' crucifixion and what it means for you. What tough moment or struggles from your life do you need Jesus to bring into God's love?



All Images were created using the YouVersion Bible App.

*YouVersion". (2021). Bible App (version 8.14.8) [Mobile application software].