

## Impatient Love

**When I could stand it no longer, I sent to find out about your faith** (1 Thessalonians 3:5).

**Scripture:** 1 Thessalonians 3:1-6

**Song:** “Soon and Very Soon”

War separated my husband and me for our first year of marriage. We’d thought, when he left for Iraq, that the deployment would be six months. Once the shock and disappointment of the extended deployment news abated, loneliness and longing to see each other were our constant companions.

Such longings, common for a couple, are not so common for short-time friends. But that was how Paul felt about the brothers and sisters he’d left behind at Thessalonica. He not only longed to see them; he couldn’t stand not knowing if they were holding fast to Christ. Timothy’s report of the Thessalonians’ faithfulness to God—and their similar longing for Paul and his fellow ministers—warmed Paul’s shepherd heart.

Beloved, this beautiful example is ours to follow. Let us thank God for, and continually mention in prayer, those we disciple and those who disciple us. Prayer like this will revolutionize our affections, making it true that we too long to see our fellow Christians and can’t stand not to hear from them.

**Father**, help me to be as Paul: longing to see and hear news of my brothers and sisters in Christ and always praying for their good in You. Please bring them to mind today so that I might often pray for them. In Jesus’ name, amen.

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 September 28–October 4. **Courtney Ritter** loves to share, chew on, and savor God’s Word with others. She lives in Texas with her servant-hearted husband, two boisterous kiddos, and a pair of sassy pups.

## Love Births Bravery

David said to the Philistine, “. . . I come against you in the name of the LORD Almighty, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied” (1 Samuel 17:45).

**Scripture:** 1 Samuel 17:41-51

**Song:** “Brave”

Human trafficking, modern-day slavery, proliferates globally with an estimated 40.3 million victims. One brave little Jesus lover named Natasha has devoted years to fighting this giant. In Jesus’ name, she stands against the darkness, the traffickers who defy the living God. Her “stones and sling” are prayers, meals, Christian counseling, referrals, clothes, and a quiet room provided so trafficking survivors can rest in peace and “taste and see that the LORD is good” (Psalm 34:8). Love of God and others has birthed and sustained Natasha’s stand against evil.

Another warrior, named David, loved God and was a faithful little shepherd of his dad’s sheep. That love later made him a faithful shepherd-king of God’s sheep, the Israelites. Being a God lover propelled David beyond the scared, sidelined soldiers to be the slayer of the giant who profaned his God’s name and threatened God’s people with slavery.

David and Natasha have followed our good shepherd, Jesus, who frees His sheep from spiritual slavery. We too need not tremble on the sidelines but are free to proclaim liberty to the captives. May our love of God compel us to lovingly protect other sheep, being ready when called to slay giants.

**Father,** make me one after Your own heart. Birth bravery in me so that when You call, I am ready to fight for Your people and those who are yet to be Your people. In Jesus’ name, amen.

## Love Puts Off to Put On

**Jonathan took off the robe he was wearing and gave it to David, along with his tunic, and even his sword, his bow and his belt (1 Samuel 18:4).**

**Scripture:** 1 Samuel 18:1-5

**Song:** “When I Survey”

Growing a pigtail and wearing Chinese clothing (to the shock of fellow missionaries) was only the beginning for Hudson Taylor. Sailing into China’s interior (in 1854) and leading dozens of other missionaries there, he would lose four children, his wife, and his health as he put off Western comforts in order to put on love, bringing the gospel to the lost.

Taylor is in good company, as countless Christians have “put off” comfort in order to “put on” love (Colossians 3:14). True love obeys God and produces joy (John 15:10-11). But growing pains can precede. Jonathan’s love had him put off any desire for his father’s crown, symbolized in giving the protective armor to David. Jesus put aside His divine position to become the greatest servant ever, obeying and putting on temporary death for future joy (Philippians 2:4-8; Hebrews 12:2).

Denying oneself as Christ did demands death to self. From loving the unlovable to releasing present good in anticipation of future greatness, putting on love often requires putting off ourselves. But joy is the reward of obedience! The essential question is: What would God have me put off so that I might put on love and receive joy?

**Loving Father,** make me like You. Help me to put off what You want me to and to put on love. Thank You for the joy of obedience. In Jesus’ name, amen.

## Love of God Empowers Love of Enemy

**When Saul saw how successful [David] was, he was afraid of him** (1 Samuel 18:15).

**Scripture:** 1 Samuel 18:12-18

**Song:** “A Mighty Fortress Is Our God”

Imagine this: You’ve closed your laptop, having given your all at work again. Colleagues, superiors, even rivals revere your ethics, stunning successes, talents, and energy. Though your praises are sung everywhere, you don’t dance to that music—because you know God has given you that ability and deserves the song. Still, the head of your company is jealous of your success. It is sort of a modern-day scenario of David’s life.

As a man after God’s heart, he was too humble and loved God too much to do anything against God’s wishes. With reverence for God’s will, David respected his boss, Saul, as God’s chosen king. And David also knew by faith and experience that God was his protector against every enemy. Why would God protect David? He delighted in David (Psalm 18:19). So instead of dancing to the praise from people for his exploits (or collapsing from fear and oppression), David danced and rested in God’s secure love and delight for him.

How can one love an enemy? Receive God’s love through Christ, and return it to Him with your whole heart, soul, mind, and strength. Love casts out fear. Remain in Him as your delighted protector. Pray for your enemy. Fear will flee and love will follow.

**My Father,** keep me on Your path. Draw my enemies there too. Thank You that when I was Your enemy, Christ died to bring me to You as friend. In Jesus’ name, amen.

## Love Encourages

Jonathan went to David at Horesh and helped him find strength in God. “Don’t be afraid,” he said. “My father Saul will not lay a hand on you. You will be king over Israel” (1 Samuel 23:16-17).

**Scripture:** 1 Samuel 23:14-18

**Song:** “A God Who Sees”

When Jackie Robinson broke the color barrier in baseball, he was not only on a dangerous path riddled with bigotry in action; he was also on a lonely path, as the Civil Rights Movement was not yet in full swing. One faithful figure in his life kept him from the potential danger of being alone in enemy territory. Though some historians say that Robinson’s Christian faith is why he entered the fight to bring equal opportunity to baseball, some biographers assert that he would not have persevered without his loving wife, Rachel, beside him, strengthening and encouraging him.

In a battle as fierce as Robinson’s, even the strongest faith and calling can waver. A brother or sister in arms is needed to counteract the enemies’ lies and strategies with the truth about God. Another example of a faithful encourager, Jonathan, went to David as discouragement crept in due to Saul’s murderous plots; Jonathan reminded David of God’s good plans. From where would David have received strength had Jonathan not been there to point him to the only source of it?

We all need encouragement. Find someone who will help you find strength in God by reminding you to think high, right thoughts of Him.

**Oh Father,** please bring encouragers into my life who will help me to find strength in You. And help me to encourage others. In Jesus’ name, amen.

## Love Meets Need

**“Don’t be afraid,” David said to [Mephibosheth], “for I will surely show you kindness for the sake of your father Jonathan” (2 Samuel 9:7).**

**Scripture:** 2 Samuel 9:1-10a

**Song:** “Who You Say I Am”

As a rebellious college student, I became depressed in a season of great sin. On one particularly low day, I showed up late to cheerlead at an event where my scholarship hung in the balance. My face mirrored my wrecked heart, but a teammate swept me into a closet and fixed my makeup while whispering kind words to help me go before hundreds of people. She was kind to me even though I had gossiped about her, and she knew it.

David met great needs when he sought out Mephibosheth, a man self-described as a “dead dog” (9:8). David had made a covenant with Mephibosheth’s father, Jonathan, and he wanted to honor it. David embraced as his own son a disabled royal who had been forgotten.

A righteous king never forgets a covenant. God keeps His promise to welcome all who call on His Son, Jesus. No one deserves it. But anyone can be a loved, adopted child embraced by Jesus and welcome at the King’s table. It’s the greatest inheritance. Share it. Walk out your royal calling. Let gospel-driven love meet the needs of others.

**Father,** thank You for Jesus, who met my greatest need as He bore the punishment for my sins. Through Him I am healed and welcomed as a beloved child in Your kingdom. Help me to meet the need of others by sharing the gospel so that they can frolic too. In Jesus’ name, amen.

## Love Speaks Up

**“Let not the king do wrong to his servant David; he has not wronged you, and what he has done has benefited you greatly”** (1 Samuel 19:4).

**Scripture:** 1 Samuel 19:1-7

**Song:** “Your Love Defends Me”

My husband was arrested as a young teen, after he thought it would be fun to slip inside an open window of his school. He harmlessly walked around until the police arrived. His mother admitted that it was a serious misstep and that he would make amends. But she spoke up to say that he was a good kid with high hopes; a record would ruin his chances. They let him go. He would later go on to graduate from West Point and fly helicopters in the Army.

Love often requires speaking up. Jonathan spoke up when his father, King Saul, wanted to murder David—reminding him of David’s blamelessness, loyalty, and benefit to the crown. Saul was convicted by his son’s words and delayed his murderous intentions for a time. If Jonathan had remained silent, evil against David would have occurred directly at Saul’s hands and indirectly from Jonathan’s inaction. And then truth might also have been buried.

Speaking the truth is helpful. Merely thinking good thoughts won’t expose the bad. Wishing for help isn’t helpful. Jesus spoke up to warn, to heal, to save, to do good, and to prevent evil. His example is ours to follow. Let us humbly seek God’s wisdom and listen to His call to speak up.

**Father,** You always say the right thing. Help me to do likewise, speaking up when You want me to. In Jesus’ name, amen.