

## A Greater Purpose

**[God's servant] is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief** (Isaiah 53:3, *KJV*).

**Scripture:** Isaiah 52:13–53:3

**Song:** “Be Thou My Vision”

I came across a wise saying: “Rejection by others does not always mean you aren’t good enough, but that people failed to understand or appreciate what you offer.” This cannot be said to anyone more than it could be said about the suffering servant in Isaiah’s prophecy. However, when we feel the spear of rejection, platitudes give no comfort. Snappy quotes do not soothe the burn or stop the sting.

Jesus felt keenly the scorn and contempt of those who rejected Him, yet His prayer from the cross was, “Father, forgive them” (Luke 23:34). He focused on future glory with those who would love Him, and willingly submitted to His Father’s wise and perfect plan. Jesus knew there was a greater purpose in His suffering; He understood that the magnificent redemption story was unfolding.

It is only through the healing power of forgiveness and a Savior-centered focus that peace can be restored to our wounded hearts. Joy can return to us when we understand He has a higher purpose in all that touches our lives. He sees the bigger picture and is unfolding His gracious redemptive story in our lives.

**Father**, help me to see only Jesus, to focus on the suffering He endured to purchase my redemption. Thank You that I am accepted in Him. In Jesus’ name, amen.

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March 29–April 4. **Sandra Vosburgh** lives in upstate South Carolina. She is a Bible teacher, director of women’s ministry, pastor’s wife, and grandmother.

## Reach One

**Then Philip began with that very passage of Scripture and told [the Ethiopian official] the good news about Jesus (Acts 8:35).**

**Scripture:** Acts 8:26-35

**Song:** “Lead Me to Some Soul Today”

A Sunday school teacher had a disinterested, biblically illiterate teenager in his class; yet Edward Kimball longed for Dwight L. Moody to know the Lord, and pursued him with the love of Christ. Mr. Kimball could not have known the plans God had for this young man or that Moody would become a world-renowned evangelist. Edward Kimball simply obeyed God’s leading and shared the gospel message with him.

The Lord called Philip to leave the revival in Samaria and go to the desert. There Philip found a high-ranking official from Ethiopia reading and puzzling over Isaiah’s prophecy regarding a lamb led to slaughter. Philip testified of Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God who would be slain for the sins of the people. Philip was willing to leave the crowds and be led by the Spirit to one man in the wilderness.

We may not be called to speak to the masses like D. L. Moody, but we are called to reach the one in front of us who may be on a wilderness journey—lost, confused, and searching for truth. We do not know God’s plan for him or her, but we know that His plan for us, His people, is simply to obey His leading and lovingly share the gospel message.

**Father,** help us to testify of You to the ones You place in our paths today. Help us to reach them with Your love. In Jesus’ name, amen.

## Blindsided

**“[The Gentiles] will flog [the Son of Man] and kill him. On the third day he will rise again.” The disciples did not understand any of this (Luke 18:33-34).**

**Scripture:** Luke 18:31-34

**Song:** “I Am Not Skilled to Understand”

A movie scene showed a woman summoned to the office of the CEO. Believing she would receive a promotion, the woman entered the office with great anticipation. The CEO stood up, walked around his desk, and fired her!

The disciples believed Jesus was the Son of Man spoken of by Daniel the prophet, the one who would receive an everlasting kingdom and have dominion over all people and nations, including their current oppressor, Rome. So when Jesus told them He would be killed and rise again the third day, they reeled. They did not understand. They could not reconcile His words with their own beliefs. Perhaps, like the woman in the movie, they were blindsided because they had their own ideas of how things would be.

So many times we do not understand the how and when of things. We may set our hopes on one thing only to be blindsided by something completely unexpected. We might feel as if God has let us down. That may be a good time to consider where we would be if Jesus had not gone to the cross. The disciples eventually came to understand that God’s way was best, and so will we.

**Father**, help us to let go of any preconceived ideas that limit Your work in our lives. Your plan is best, and we want to be fully open to it. In Jesus’ name, amen.

## Remember What He Told You

**“[Jesus] is not here; he has risen! Remember how he told you, while he was still with you in Galilee” (Luke 24:6).**

**Scripture:** Luke 24:1-12

**Song:** “Wonderful Words of Life”

My breath caught in my throat when I entered a friend’s room at the nursing facility and found her bed empty. Not knowing she had been moved to a different room, I immediately became alarmed.

Several women went early in the morning to the tomb where the body of Jesus had been laid. We can imagine their surprise at finding the large stone no longer blocking the entrance. But can we imagine their panic when they looked inside and did not see the Lord’s body? In the moments of their distress and confusion, an angel appeared and told them to remember the words of Jesus. Jesus had told them He would be crucified and on the third day He would rise again. They remembered. And with great joy they ran to the disciples and told them Jesus had risen. Jesus is alive! The dark and empty tomb became evidence of victory and the source of joy.

When we face times of confusion or distress, we too must remember His Word. Jesus said, “The Holy Spirit . . . will remind you of everything I have said to you” (John 14:26). With the remembrance of His Word, victory and joy can enter every dark and empty place we may encounter.

**Father,** thank You for our living Savior. And thank You for Your living Word that guides, comforts, and sustains us in our time of need. In Jesus’ name, amen.

## Sympathy Has an Ear

**As [two of the disciples] talked and discussed these things with each other, Jesus himself came up and walked along with them** (Luke 24:15).

**Scripture:** Luke 24:13-27

**Song:** “I Would Be Like Jesus”

At the writer’s conference, I sat at a round table of eight. Throughout the meal, one person did nearly all the talking—about himself! The woman next to me leaned over and whispered, “Some people like to be the hero of their own story.” Indeed, we all like to talk. But today’s Scripture shows us there is a time to listen.

The two men on the Emmaus road were discouraged, heartbroken, and struggling to make sense of the death of the one they loved. They thought Jesus was the Messiah and would deliver them from oppression. But their hopes had been crushed. When Jesus drew near to them, He did not say “I know how you feel” and then proceed to quote Scripture. He prompted the men to talk, to share everything they had experienced in Jerusalem. He walked beside them . . . and listened. Afterward, He opened the Scriptures and helped them to understand.

To be like Jesus is to walk beside those who are heartbroken and listen to their stories. With a sympathetic ear we allow them to give voice to their sorrow. This may in turn grant us the right and the freedom to open the Scriptures and help those who are hurting to understand the gospel message.

**Father**, give me a sympathetic ear today as I walk beside those who are hurting. Help me to know when to listen and when to speak. In Jesus’ name, amen.

## I'll Host the Missionary

**[The two disciples] urged [Jesus] strongly, “Stay with us, for it is nearly evening; the day is almost over.” So he went in to stay with them (Luke 24:29).**

**Scripture:** Luke 24:28-35

**Song:** “Abide with Me”

When my family hosts a missionary in our home, we often receive a small gift that represents the country in which they serve. However, the best gift is the richness he or she adds to our lives. As we learn about the missionary's life and ministry on the foreign or home field, we learn more about our Savior and His work in the world today.

The two men on the road to Emmaus opened their home to an interesting traveler. Throughout the evening, enjoying food and fellowship, the men came to realize that the stranger before them was in fact the risen Savior. Their sorrow turned to joy. With burning hearts, they immediately returned to Jerusalem to tell other disciples they had seen the Lord. Once there, they again met the risen Christ. What joys were theirs because they willingly ministered to the weary traveler.

As I review my missions shelf with items from Albania, Guatemala, China, and other nations, I recall the names and faces of God's humble servants who have enriched our lives. What blessings can be ours when we open our homes and our hearts to those who sacrifice so much to serve the Lord at home and abroad.

**Father,** thank You for the opportunities we have to serve You through hospitality. Open our hearts to receive Your blessings as we open our homes to receive Your servants. In Jesus' name, amen.

## The Only Way

**It pleased the LORD to bruise [God's servant]; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin** (Isaiah 53:10, *KJV*).

**Scripture:** Isaiah 53:4-11

**Song:** "By His Wounds"

It may seem inconceivable to us that God, who loves His Son, would allow Him to suffer. But I think of the moment when the doctor lanced a boil on my 9-month-old son's lower back. I remember the "knife" in my own heart as I heard my baby cry out in pain. Yet it was my will that it should be done; it was the only way to remove the infection and bring about healing.

Our Father did not delight in the suffering of His Son. But it was His will. The offering up of the life of Jesus Christ to the cruelty of the cross was the only sacrifice sufficient to pay the penalty of our sin. Jesus was wounded for our transgressions, and by His wounds the poison of our sin is removed and our broken relationship with God is healed.

When the doctor finished, I held my son close to reassure him of my love and calm him with my presence. When we are in Christ, our Father picks us up and holds us close to himself. He reassures us with His presence and pours out on us His unconditional love. Jesus made this possible, and that pleases the Father.

**Father**, thank You for not sparing Your Son, but for giving Him up to take our sin and to bear sin's penalty on our behalf. In Jesus' name, amen.