

Stopping for Mercy

Abraham remained standing before the LORD. Then Abraham approached him (Genesis 18:22-23).

Scripture: Genesis 18:20-33

Song: “Song of Intercession”

When I start taking out ingredients and cooking utensils to bake or prepare a dish, my three daughters often ask what I am making and then offer to measure, pour, and stir. I allow them to get involved however they want (and can safely manage at their ages). That’s how they’ll learn to cook. I appreciate their participation, even though it usually takes more of my time. We have good experiences together in the kitchen.

The Lord and two companions went where Abraham was living to announce the coming birth of his son (Genesis 18:10, 14). Then the three left for their second agenda in Sodom, but Abraham went along on his own initiative (v. 16). This was when the Lord decided to tell Abraham what He was doing. Stopping progress toward Sodom, God not only allowed Abraham’s intervention, but listened to his plea and responded with a plan for mercy.

God is ready for us to stop and intercede for people headed to destruction. Whether asking God for more time or for a revelation of His mercy, we can act on our faith and step into God’s throne room to intercede for those who are spiritually lost.

Father, I want to express my concern for several people. Thank You for listening! In Jesus’ name, amen.

February 21–27. **Danell Steffen** is a stay-at-home mom of three beautiful girls and is passionate about women’s ministry and discipleship.

Delighting in God

Trust in the LORD and do good. . . . Take delight in the LORD, and he will give you the desires of your heart. Commit your way to the LORD; trust in him and he will do this (Psalm 37:3-5).

Scripture: Psalm 37:1-11

Song: “Delight in the Lord”

Growing up in rural Texas, I heard about farm kids who learned to drive tractors. The most important thing they learned was to ignore all the distractions around them to stay focused on a distant point and drive straight toward it.

David wanted to focus more on God, but he was distracted by evil people who seemed to prosper—and he was angry. Such distractions of the world, and our anger about them, can pull our focus off God. The world does not need our wrath, but it does need us to stick with God so we both follow and show others the straight path out of the wickedness.

David’s psalm describes that path as holding on to our faith in God while doing good in the world. Faith and loving action always reflect God. We focus on God by devoting ourselves to Him and His ways. Living in God’s ways is necessary in order to delight in Him, to enjoy God’s presence and goodness in our lives. Time in Scripture, prayer, and conversation with other believers on how we notice God conforming the desires of our hearts to His are also good ways to focus on God.

Father, help us learn to ignore the distractions of the world so we remain focused on You and enjoy the blessings of Your grace. In Jesus’ name, amen.

God's Rescue

The salvation of the righteous comes from the LORD; he is their stronghold in time of trouble. The LORD helps them and delivers them (Psalm 37:39-40).

Scripture: Psalm 37:21-28, 34-40

Song: “My Deliverer”

Home improvement shows are interesting to watch because of the major changes that builders can envision and describe for a home. The property owners are not able to plan or accomplish the needed change, but definitely want the change once they understand what the builder can do. It is fun watching snippets of the builders at work until the final result is ready for the happy owners to move in. When the improvements are for people who really need help, because of physical or mobility challenges, the programs are especially enjoyable.

We know that we live in a broken world and need help. We know that we're not able to fix everything ourselves. But God sees us. He is the stronghold we run to for help and deliverance. He knows what to do, and He is doing it.

The Lord saves those who put their hope in Him by turning to Him in repentance and living faithfully according to His instruction in Scripture (Psalm 37:34). This is how we gain the grace of His refuge. And what He does for us is like the homeowners often tell the builders and designers—far more than we could've imagined!

Father, thank You for Your salvation and the hope You give because of Your power to accomplish my rescue from this world. In Jesus' name, amen.

Stop Judging

Let us stop passing judgment on one another. . . . Make every effort to do what leads to peace and to mutual edification (Romans 14:13, 19).

Scripture: Romans 14:13-23

Song: “Love One Another”

As a teenager, I was annoyed at an adult who told me that I didn't know what I was talking about. At other times I decided, without substantial knowledge, that certain adults were not parenting in ways that pleased God. I know now that I was wrong in both cases and have worked to stop such judgments in order to lift up people instead.

A tendency to judge can become a pattern embedded in our hearts. Then it comes out of our mouths. But the Lord exhorts us through Paul to stop judging so we can promote peace and encourage others. We replace destructive attitudes by choosing to love people—in our hearts and with our actions. We act in love through exercising discretion about things we might eat, drink, do, and say that are personal preferences and not about tenets of Christian faith. Respecting others as they are creates opportunity to lift them up and encourage them as valuable and important people. This is what we are called to, especially when we might think and act differently than others. Being considerate of others by respecting their preferences, and not displaying or promoting our own, avoids disruption in the unity of the body of Christ so we all grow to maturity in the Lord.

Father, help me to see the people around me through Your heart of love for them and to show them Your love through me. In Jesus' name, amen.

Valuable People

[Jesus] said to [the Pharisees], “If any of you has a sheep and it falls into a pit on the Sabbath, will you not take hold of it and lift it out? How much more valuable is a person than a sheep!” (Matthew 12:11-12).

Scripture: Matthew 12:1-13

Song: “Love God, Love People”

With three young children in my house, balloons are a big deal and bring a lot of joy. All that delight makes simple balloons become pretty important in our home.

The Pharisees made up rules that they thought were pretty important. And they thought everyone else should think the same. Things like picking grain while walking through a wheat field (Matthew 12:1-2) and healing a person on the Sabbath were “unlawful” according to the Pharisees’ rules, not God’s law. Jesus didn’t find their rules important and criticized those rules as burdensome. Jesus valued people. So He helped a man with a bad hand, even on the Sabbath rest day.

Every person is more valuable than a sheep. People are so valuable to Jesus that He suffered and died for them. We who follow Jesus are to value all people and, like Jesus, watch continually for ways we can show all people their true value by loving them well, every day of the week. Maybe that could mean giving them a balloon or something else that would give them joy.

Father, help me to see all people through Your eyes and with Your heart. Strengthen me to be bold in loving people well, even when doing so might be contrary to what others around me think or say. In Jesus’ name, amen.

My Confidence

“I know that my redeemer lives, and that in the end he will stand on the earth. . . . I will see God” (Job 19:25-26).

Scripture: Job 19:23-29

Song: “My Redeemer Lives”

When life becomes challenging, we need a way to keep our heads up and our hearts encouraged. Job’s wife and his so-called friends did not help Job with that need. So Job turned to God for encouragement by digging deep into his experience with God to speak the words in today’s verse. These words have inspired songs and are otherwise frequently quoted.

Job’s confidence in God was rooted in a relationship. Job spoke of *his* God, who is the supreme, sovereign God who can bring wholeness and goodness out of the worst situations we can ever face. It may be that God will not redeem us until the end when He will still be standing over everything to save those who trust in Him. Our God will bring us through. We will be with Him.

Build your relationship with God each day, and especially on the good and easy days. Then when trials come, you will be ready to remind yourself and others that *your* redeeming God lives and will bring you through to see Him at the end.

Father, thank You for the confidence I can have in Your power to save me because of my relationship with You through Christ, my Savior. In Jesus’ name, amen.

Experiencing God

Job replied to the LORD: . . . “My ears had heard of you but now my eyes have seen you” (Job 42:1, 5).

Scripture: Job 42:1-11

Song: “Be Still and Know”

A researcher asked people to tell about the most effective ways they learn. The most common elements in the stories people told were about activities and experiences that required the students to use existing information, or find facts, to solve a problem or make a decision that they were interested in. Telling a student new information does not always lead to learning as well as an experience will.

Job had heard about God and pleased Him before the times and events recorded in the book (Job 1:8). Then came Job’s test and a lot of talk. But then God spoke out of a storm (38:1). Job’s experience with God in the trials and the storm made everything Job had heard about God gain greater meaning. The experiences helped Job see God (42:5). This is not a physical face-to-face with God but a meaningful, life-changing encounter with God.

Many know about God, but not all have experienced Him. Only when we allow ourselves to experience God do we truly know Him. We all can experience God by meeting with Him in Scripture, prayer, and worship. And by truly leaning on Him and crediting Him for what He does. God is with us. Spend time with Him today, no matter what the circumstances of your life might be.

Father, thank You for all my opportunities today to be with You so I can really know You. In Jesus’ name, amen.