

## Seeking the Lord

**This poor man cried, and the LORD heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles** (Psalm 34:6, *KJV*).

**Scripture:** Psalm 34:4-14

**Song:** “I Will Call upon the Lord”

Being bullied can be hard . . . unless you have a big brother nearby, that is. I have a friend who was scrawny as a kid. He was an easy target of bigger boys in his one-room schoolhouse in rural Virginia in the 1930s. But my friend had a secret weapon when in trouble. “Buford!” he would call. Then his massive older brother would come running to his rescue and put the bullying to a stop.

David wrote Psalm 34 after a fearful experience at the hand of powerful enemies. David had sought help from the Philistines when pursued by King Saul, but he soon realized his mistake and pretended to be crazy to escape from the Philistines. It was in this time of trouble that David called on the Lord and was delivered. In the psalm, David invites others to “taste and see” God’s same goodness in their trials (v. 8).

Like all humans, God’s people experience trouble on a regular basis, whether the trouble is financial, relational, or occupational. However, the comfort that Christians have is in knowing that when they experience hardships, help is nearby. When His people call, the Lord comes to their rescue.

**Father**, help us to remember that You are a very present help in trouble. In Jesus’ name, amen.

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July 25–31. **David Madsen** lives in Wisconsin with his wife and four daughters. He teaches at a Christian college and serves as chaplain at a local factory.

## Jesus, Key to the Father

**All things are delivered unto me of my Father: and no man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him** (Matthew 11:27, *KJV*).

**Scripture:** Matthew 11:25-30

**Song:** “In Christ Alone”

One summer day, when I was about 8 years old, my dad announced that our scheduled father-son outing would be canceled. The problem was that the key to our only remaining car had somehow ended up with my mom and sisters, who had gone shopping. Still, I was determined to start the car by any means I could. I tried to jam a pair of scissors into the ignition but only managed to break the scissors in the process. I learned quickly how essential the key was to starting the car; there was no substitute.

After teaching the multitudes, Jesus prayed to the Father, giving thanks that the gospel had been revealed to the humble. When He turned back to the people, He told them the Father could be revealed only through the Son. He himself was the key to God, and in coming to Christ they would find rest for their souls.

Many people in the world try to reach God via their own determined path and apart from Jesus: by just being “good people,” doing acts of charity, or performing religious rituals. However sincere these people may be, though, there is no substitute for God’s Son. He is the one true key to the Father.

**Father,** I come to You through Jesus, who is the key to knowing You. In Jesus’ name, amen.

## Taking the Time to Ask

**Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name: ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full** (John 16:24, *KJV*).

**Scripture:** John 16:23-27, 32-33

**Song:** “What a Friend”

Good news travels fast—especially when it concerns candy! One day after church I noticed our little daughter Rachel, along with several other children her age, making a dash for a certain lady in our church. I learned later that she was the “gum lady” of the church. She gladly gave a piece of gum to any child who simply asked.

In the upper room, Jesus revealed to His disciples that He was going to the Father. Despite the sorrow the disciples must have felt, Jesus left them the very special promise of receiving anything they might need—provided they asked in His name. Jesus reminded the disciples that because they loved and believed in Him, God loved them too and would answer their prayers. He warned them that they would experience tribulation as they spread the gospel to the world but that they did not need to fear, because He had overcome the world.

As believers, we have God’s promise that He will take care of our needs as well. We can bring to our God whatever hardship or heartache we experience; He is more than able to help us in times of trial. God has an ample supply of grace, forgiveness, and provision, no matter what we might be experiencing. We simply need to ask.

**Father,** thank You for this reminder that You will supply all our needs and that we simply need to ask. In Jesus’ name, amen.

## A Love for God's Word

**My soul hath kept thy testimonies; and I love them exceedingly** (Psalm 119:167, *KJV*).

**Scripture:** Psalm 119:161-176

**Song:** “Thy Word”

Few people would question Brazilian businessman Zero Freitas's love for vinyl records—after all, his collection numbers over seven million! Freitas began collecting records at a young age after his parents bought a stereo. As a lover of records, he dreams of one day establishing a record library that is open to the public and where he can share his love for records with others.

The psalmist had no greater love than God's Word. Despite the persecution he faced from enemies, his heart was fixated on Scripture; he would not be distracted by the hardships of life or the allurements of the world. He delighted in God's Word, praising the Lord as he learned about His perfect ways. The psalmist records that God's Word was his joy, his peace, his hope, and his salvation; and his desire was to share that love with others.

Many things compete for our love in this life—whether people, experiences, or things. However, people often disappoint. The things of this world fail to measure up and are quickly forgotten; therefore, spending our love on them is often a losing endeavor. But those who work to cultivate a love for God's Word above all else will experience a return on their investment that will not disappoint: joy, peace, hope, and salvation. And as was true for the psalmist, this love will be one they will want to share with others.

**Father**, help us to love Your Word more and more each day. In Jesus' name, amen.

## God's Unending Mercy

**For a small moment have I forsaken thee; but with great mercies will I gather thee** (Isaiah 54:7, *KJV*).

**Scripture:** Isaiah 54:6-10

**Song:** "I Will Sing of the Mercies of the Lord Forever"

In *The Hiding Place*, Corrie ten Boom details her trying experiences in a Nazi concentration camp, imprisoned for hiding Jews. After her release and the end of World War II, Corrie went on to share her testimony around the world as a traveling speaker and author. In one of Corrie's later books, she recorded that the power to witness so tirelessly for Christ came from the Holy Spirit and the Bible; His grace for the task was unending. Her book was appropriately titled *Plenty for Everyone*.

Israel's constant backsliding resulted in receiving severe judgment from God on a regular basis. Despite Israel's unfaithfulness, though, the Lord sent the prophet Isaiah to tell the people that His judgment was only temporary. God would draw His people to himself again with eternal mercy and kindness, and the prophet related that this promise was as good as God's promise to Noah not to flood the earth again.

If we are honest, we will admit to times of spiritual "coolness" in our lives as well. We may have gone through the motions of church attendance and even Christian service while, at the same time, having hearts that were apathetic and callous. But as He did with the Israelites, the Lord wants to draw us back to himself with His mercy, a mercy that is unending and plentiful enough for everyone.

**Father**, thank You for Your plenteous mercy toward us even when we have failed. In Jesus' name, amen.

## Christ, the Way to God

**Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me** (John 14:6, *KJV*).

**Scripture:** John 14:1-14

**Song:** “The Way, the Truth, the Life”

A house I once rented had the unique characteristic of having only one door—one way in and out. This dwelling, an older house built long before modern codes, gave no opportunity to slip out a back door or side door when in a hurry. And there was no chance of coming in from the backyard without coming clear around to the front. However, despite the seeming inconveniences, locking up at night was clear and straightforward. There was never any question of how to get outside or how to come in.

At the Last Supper, Jesus tried to comfort His disciples by telling them He was going to prepare a place for them in Heaven. Thomas seemed confused by Christ’s statement and asked how they would know how to get there. Jesus stated clearly that He is the way to God, the one true door to Heaven.

Some mistakenly believe that all religious roads lead to the same destination of eternal life. However benevolent this notion may seem, it is untrue. Christ’s death on the cross is the one and only payment for our sins that God will accept. As Christ said in so clear and straightforward a manner, He is the only way to the Father. He is the only door to Heaven.

**Father**, we acknowledge that You and You alone are the way to God. In Jesus’ name, amen.

## Demonstrating Our Love for Christ

**If ye love me, keep my commandments** (John 14:15, *KJV*).

**Scripture:** John 14:15-29

**Song:** “More Love to Thee, O Christ”

“It’s not exactly what I expected,” I said as we approached the amusement park, the destination of our vacation. Instead of the mammoth world-class rides I was prepared to see, I saw tiny carnival rides more suited for toddlers than for preteens. My disappointment was abated, however, when we actually read the sign and realized that this was a different amusement park. We drove ahead, and finding the amusement park that was the “real deal,” we were fully satisfied with the rides there.

Jesus challenged His disciples to prove their love for Him by obeying His commands. Their authentic love would manifest not in mere professions or declarations, but in the “real deal” of their obedience to His Word. Jesus promised them that those who truly loved Him would be the recipients of the Father’s love and the special help of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit would give them everything they needed to follow Christ’s commands.

As Jesus said, we testify of our love for Him when we do what He says. The Lord’s expectations for us as His people are not extraordinary—He simply assumes that His followers will . . . well, follow Him. As we yield to the Spirit’s work in our lives and obey Christ’s commands, we will show ourselves to be the “real deal” for Him.

**Father**, help us to demonstrate our love to You by obeying You. In Jesus’ name, amen.