

Always Remembered

[God said of Zion,] “I will not forget you! See, I have engraved you on the palms of my hands” (Isaiah 49:15-16).

Scripture: Isaiah 49:14-23

Song: “I Will Not Forget Thee”

Tattoos are a growing industry worldwide. According to a 2021 statistic, there were more than 20,000 tattoo salons in the US alone. Interestingly, nearly 23 percent of customers later regret at least one of their choices. A top reason for removing a tattoo is because it bears the name of someone no longer in the customer’s life.

In the Old Testament, God designed the high priest’s clothing so that he would bear the names of Israel’s tribes on his shoulders and over his heart as a memorial before the Lord (Exodus 28:9-30). Later, when God’s people were in captivity because of their persistent idolatry, they wondered whether God had forgotten them. He assured them, however, that they were permanently inscribed on His palms.

Sometimes *we* may feel that God has forgotten *us*. We may feel alone, unseen, forgotten, or rejected. Whatever the circumstance, whatever our perception, we can remember that the resurrected Christ appeared to His disciples, bearing the marks of His love for them (and for us) on His nail-pierced hands. As ones who have, by faith, received His forgiveness, we can know we are always loved, always remembered.

Father, thank You for Your eternal love that gives me a permanent place in Your heart and kingdom. In Jesus’ name, amen.

June 1–4. **Dianne Neal Matthews** lives in Tennessee with her husband of 48 years. She enjoys traveling to visit their children and grandchildren, cooking, tackling DIY projects, and serving her local church.

Strengthened to Walk

We beseech . . . and exhort you by the Lord Jesus, that as ye have received of us how ye ought to walk and to please God, so ye would abound more and more (1 Thessalonians 4:1, *KJV*).

Scripture: 1 Thessalonians 3:11–4:8

Song: “Step by Step”

After major spinal surgery, I had mixed feelings about walking. I knew it was good exercise, but my walking had changed. My gait was stiff and unsteady, I had to take smaller steps, and sometimes I stumbled. I also struggled with pain, especially on uneven surfaces. Eventually, I found a physical therapist who understood what my body needed. With treatments and exercises that targeted improperly working muscles, I became able to walk more smoothly and more confidently.

Jesus compared the Christian life to walking a narrow road (Matthew 7:14). Walking this road with steady, strong steps requires us to be intentional about our spiritual fitness. Otherwise we might find ourselves unsteady in our devotion, stumbling in our obedience, hesitant to step out in faith, or even falling for one of Satan’s deceptions.

We have all the resources we need to help us grow stronger and more consistent in our daily walk. The Bible offers guidance to show us the right path. Through prayer, we exercise faith as we look to God for all that we need. And the Holy Spirit empowers us to keep in step with what pleases God. By God’s grace through these provisions, we can walk with confidence along this narrow path of life.

Father, by Your kind provisions, I’ll walk steadily on the path You’ve set before me today. In Jesus’ name, amen.

Spiritual Decluttering

You have taken off your old self with its practices and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator (Colossians 3:9-10).

Scripture: Colossians 3:8-17

Song: “I Want to Be More like Jesus”

Marie Kondo has become known worldwide as a tidying expert. Her business, bestselling books, and popular television show all aim to help people declutter their homes and achieve a more enjoyable lifestyle. At the heart of her philosophy is being able to know what to discard and what to keep. These decisions are based primarily on whether an item sparks a sense of joy.

For the Christian, God’s Spirit produces the fruit of joy in us as we keep in step with Him (Galatians 5:22-25). But sometimes our joy can be lacking when we allow our lives to become cluttered with flesh-driven thoughts, attitudes, and behaviors of our old nature. Paul lists some of these: ungodly anger (Ephesians 4:26), rage, malice, slander, filthy language, and lies (Colossians 3:8-9).

Decluttering is a good practice in the home, but it’s even more important in our spiritual lives. As we examine our hearts and minds in light of God’s Word, we can discard what is not pleasing to Him. Then by His Spirit, He will help us live in the righteousness Jesus modeled. Keeping our lives free from the clutter of sin is a surefire way to make room for the joy God intends for us.

Father, search my heart and help me discard what is not Christlike so that I might live more fully in Your joy. In Jesus’ name, amen.

Safe in the Center

The LORD will go before you, the God of Israel will be your rear guard (Isaiah 52:12).

Scripture: Isaiah 52:1-12

Song: “A Mighty Fortress Is Our God”

It wasn't a horror movie, but the hairs on the back of my neck stood up anyway, and the scene haunted me long after we turned off the television. Several frightened friends walked single-file through a narrow passage in a cave, their way lit only by the feeble torch held by the leader. I wondered which would happen first: *Would the person in front be surprised by some unseen danger? Or would someone discover that their friend at the back of the line had disappeared?*

When Moses led the Israelites out of slavery in Egypt, they faced an unknown path. The book of Exodus relates how God went before them in a pillar of cloud by day and of fire at night (13:21). When Pharaoh changed his mind and chased after them with his army, the pillar of God's presence moved behind the Israelites. Their enemies saw them but could not touch them (14:19-20).

The safest place to be in this dangerous world is in the center of God's will. If we're following Him, there's no need to fear unknown dangers ahead. He will meet them himself. We also don't need to live in dread of failures that are behind us. His forgiveness has taken care of those. Our obedience to God's leading ensures a “safe zone” where our enemies cannot harm us.

Father, help me live this day without fear or worry, trusting that Your loving presence surrounds me wherever I go. In Jesus' name, amen.