

## Vital Communication

**Because the Sovereign LORD helps me, I will not be disgraced. Therefore have I set my face like flint, and I know I will not be put to shame** (Isaiah 50:7).

**Scripture:** Isaiah 50:4-9

**Song:** “Victory in Jesus”

At the height of the Vietnam War, US ground troops could expect their radio operators to survive in combat for somewhere between 5 and 30 seconds. Weighed down with heavy equipment and often outfitted with a 10-foot antenna, these soldiers were both vulnerable and valuable targets. Enemy soldiers knew that if they could disrupt vital communication, they could prevail.

Isaiah was sent by God to deliver an important message to His people, as their communication with God had become dangerously disrupted. Israel had stopped listening to God, and Isaiah was calling them to reconnect their hearts to God’s vital truth and love. To carry out his mission, Isaiah relied on prayer—his spiritual radio, so to speak—in the battle at hand.

When it seems as though the enemy is prevailing in our lives, it may seem difficult to *remain* steadfast in prayer. With challenges like work demands, medical issues, and difficult relationships, our problems may begin to overwhelm us. In such stressful times, it’s important to remember that prayer is essential to our spiritual survival and vital to our victory.

**Father,** I will remain prayerful, seeking Your presence even when it feels like I’m being overwhelmed. I will trust that You are bigger than my burdens. In Jesus’ name, amen.

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June 12–18. **Zach Schaar** lives Canton, Ohio, with his wife and two daughters. He is passionate about encouraging others to know, love, and trust Jesus Christ.

## Grateful Heirs

**He was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was on him, and by his wounds we are healed (Isaiah 53:5).**

**Scripture:** Isaiah 52:13–53:12

**Song:** “Blessed Assurance”

A very wealthy man once sought legal advice regarding how to best pass on his legacy to his heirs. The result was a trust document full of contingencies, the purpose of which was to ensure that the children would always remember the price that was paid for their inheritance. This man labored diligently to build his fortunes and wanted his children to be grateful for all that they would receive upon his death.

Jesus gave His life on the cross so that we could become co-heirs of Heaven. As children so situated and blessed, we may be tempted to take for granted all that He has provided for us. We may even find ourselves behaving ungratefully toward the Lord and in response to His sacrifice. However, if we keep Him and His generous mercy as our focal point, we won't squander our lives in selfish pursuits. Instead we'll live to give honor and tribute to Him.

God longs to be our lifelong provider. Like a good father, He has planned out our inheritance carefully, and with the blood of Jesus, He has “signed the paperwork.” There are no loopholes or strings attached to receive His gift of forgiveness by way of grace through faith. We need only gratefully receive it.

**Father,** thank You for Christ's sacrifice on the cross. Help me never to take for granted this gift of life I've been given. In Jesus' name, amen.

## True Love

**Jesus looked at him and loved him. “One thing you lack,” he said. “Go, sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me”** (Mark 10:21).

**Scripture:** Mark 10:17-27

**Song:** “O How He Loves You and Me”

One of my daughter’s favorite books is a fairytale. The storyline describes a young woman longing to meet her perfect match. Many nights before bed we can be found reading, as my daughter eagerly awaits the highlight of the story: the moment a wealthy and honorable prince meets the young woman and they fall in love.

Love is a powerful force. We all have the ability to love others, but sometimes our love is self-seeking and misdirected. Jesus’ love, however, is perfect. The love He has for us is best described, not in words, but in what He has done. God revealed the greatness of His love by holding nothing back from rescuing us, sending Jesus himself to provide for our salvation.

Faithfully, the Lord will show us what prevents us from living wholly in His love. He will indicate changes we need to make, revealing selfish loves that get in the way of true love. At first, we may not like what He shows us, but to love God with our whole heart we must stand ready to turn away from anything that challenges our full devotion to Him.

**Father,** thank You for loving me enough to be honest with me, even when it hurts. In Jesus’ name, amen.

## A Heart to Serve

**[Jesus said,] “Even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many”** (Mark 10:45).

**Scripture:** Mark 10:35-45

**Song:** “I Surrender All”

Before COVID-19 slowed things down, North Americans were some of the busiest people on the planet! Between work, recreational activities, household chores, and errands, there was little time left to spend on anything else. In fact, according to a survey published in 2019, the average American had less than 30 minutes of free time available each week! As God’s people, the danger of being too pre-occupied with our own calendars is that we may miss some of the opportunities for service that God has planned for us.

Leaving the glories of Heaven, Jesus came to earth with a heart set on doing His Father’s will. During His three years of ministry, Jesus preached, performed miracles, taught and trained His disciples, and also fielded continual harassment, ridicule, and detraction from His opponents. Yet with everything going on around Him, Jesus did not allow the things that did not matter in life to take precedence over His call to serve, which included giving His life as a ransom for us.

A servant’s heart is an open heart, one that turns away from being self-centered and is, instead, ready to follow Jesus’ example. When we approach each day prayerfully asking, *How would You have me serve You, Lord?*, God will lead us into the work He has for us.

**Father**, I want to lay down my own agenda today to be of service in Your kingdom. In Jesus’ name, amen.

## The One Who Lifts Us

**He raises the poor from the dust and lifts the needy from the ash heap** (Psalm 113:7).

**Scripture:** Psalm 113

**Song:** “Cornerstone”

Charles Spurgeon (1834–1892) said, “I have learned to kiss the waves that throw me up against the Rock of Ages.” All of humanity is prone to being tossed about and beaten up by life’s storms, but only those who belong to God can ever know the blessed truth of Spurgeon’s words. It is through our trials that we come to know the character of God—to understand that He sees and cares for us when we’re crushed and needy, that He will be with us and lift us up again.

In the midst of trials, it can be tempting to believe God has abandoned us, but His Word tells us otherwise (Hebrews 13:5). In all circumstances, God is with His people; He is never absent in times of trouble. The same God who is with us on the mountaintop of joy is also present in the valley of sorrow.

Today it may seem as though you’re in the teeth of a terrible storm. Or you may see a storm rising in the distance. Or perhaps you’re enjoying a time of calm after a storm. In any circumstance, tether yourself to God. He is the one who sees you, knows you, loves you, will never leave you, and will lift you up again.

**Father**, in the wind and the waves of life, I will entrust myself to Your care and wait for You to lift me up. In Jesus’ name, amen.

## A Ministry of Giving

**[Jesus said,] “Truly I tell you, wherever the gospel is preached throughout the world, what she has done will also be told, in memory of her” (Mark 14:9).**

**Scripture:** Mark 14:1-9

**Song:** “We Are an Offering”

Years ago, amid the holiday season, three anonymous donors paid off nearly \$500,000 worth of layaway items at a well-known department store. Many of the families impacted by this act of generosity had multiple children and were overjoyed to find out that their items had been paid for. While the identity of the donors still remains unknown, their kindness was not soon forgotten.

The woman who anointed Jesus with perfume saw an opportunity to bless Jesus. As the clock wound down on His earthly ministry, she made the decision to be profoundly generous. To her, it wasn't about the money, the publicity, or bragging rights. Her motives were to honor Jesus with her very best. While her name is not mentioned in Scripture, her sacrificial gift serves as a reminder of full-hearted love.

When we give of our time, resources, or abilities, we break free from the bondage of selfishness. Our fleshly impulses tempt us to acquire and keep what we have for ourselves, even to the point of hoarding, but Jesus tells us there is greater joy found in giving than receiving. Living with a godly perspective of our resources allows us to identify opportunities to serve others and show kindness to those who need it most.

**Father,** thank You for giving Your Son, Jesus. Help me to be generous on all occasions with the blessings You have given me. In Jesus' name, amen.

## Restoration

**“This is what the Sovereign LORD says: I am going to take the stick of Joseph—which is in Ephraim’s hand—and of the Israelite tribes associated with him, and join it to Judah’s stick. I will make them into a single stick of wood, and they will become one in my hand”** (Ezekiel 37:19).

**Scripture:** Ezekiel 37:15-28

**Song:** “Sweetly Broken”

One year I played the part of the Grinch in my church’s Christmas production. As a thank-you for participating, I received a Grinch-themed tree ornament. While decorating our tree a couple of years ago, I noticed that a piece of the ornament had broken off. Although I wasn’t able to reattach it, I decided this small defect gave the Grinch some character and added depth to the ornament’s meaning.

Israel had been broken. Split into two kingdoms and removed from their homeland, God’s people longed for rescue. While it seemed as though all hope was lost, God was still in control. Even while the people were in exile, God used their situation to demonstrate His power and His devotion to them.

Our brokenness does not have to defeat us; it can become part of our redemptive story. God may not have repaired a difficult situation yet, but that does not mean He won’t. As we look to God, He will revive our hope and provide a “second wind” while we wait for Him. We may not see how it will turn out, but He is working to heal us and bring us into a place of restoration.

**Father,** thank You for Your love and restorative power at work in my life. In Jesus’ name, amen.