

Measuring God's Love

I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the Lord's holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ (Ephesians 3:17-18).

Scripture: Ephesians 3:14-21

Song: "The Love of God (Is Greater Far)"

Measuring devices come in all shapes and sizes, and we use them for various applications. Children experiment with rulers to draw straight lines as they learn to measure length, height, and width. Scientists use the metric system to document scientific results, while contractors rely on tape measures, speed squares, or levels to determine project specifications. Even the finest chefs in the world need a measuring spoon or two as they create divine cuisine!

Our Creator needs no measuring device to determine the amount of love He bestows upon us. When Paul addressed the church of Ephesus, he explained that the love of Christ has no depth, width, or height. With faith rooted in that love, Paul endured considerable physical and mental hardships throughout his lifetime.

We experience many hardships during our lifetimes as well. Our days are unpredictable, and we often fear financial failure, broken relationships, illness, and overwhelming emotional distress; yet our hearts remain hopeful as we seek refuge in the mighty arms of our Lord and Savior.

Father, my faith is rooted in Your unconditional love, and I'm thankful for the hope You bestow on me during trials and tribulations. In Jesus' name, amen.

January 29–February 4. **Kellie M. Everett** lives in Tennessee with her husband and children. She is a stay-at-home mom and author.

The Crashing Waves of Life

You [God] rule over the surging sea; when its waves mount up, you still them (Psalm 89:9).

Scripture: Psalm 89:1-13

Song: “O Maker of the Mighty Deep”

Virginia Beach was the setting for an incredibly interesting vacation with my husband. I can see it now—an exquisite beachfront stretched out beneath a vibrant blue sky, nestled against the vastness of the ocean’s horizon. The sun was warm and gentle as it blazed brilliantly above our heads; it was pure perfection. I felt carefree jumping into the water, but I was unaware of an approaching storm, and the waves were stronger than expected. No sooner had I jumped in, than the sea tossed me right back out! (To this day, I remain “salty” about falling and losing my all-time favorite sunglasses!)

The psalmist praised the Lord for His faithfulness and promised to pass this knowledge down to future generations. He understood God to be all-powerful, all-knowledgeable, and all-present—a God whose mighty hands are powerful enough to control the surging sea. He had faith in the unconditional love of God.

Our lives can be much like my experience at the beach. We feel carefree as we frolic amidst soft, gentle waves until we fall helplessly into a thrashing surge of turmoil. In these seasons, we remember that God is in control. Our faith acquires new understanding as He lifts us out of despair and steadies our feet to continue our stroll along the shore of life.

Father, I’m thankful for Your continuing presence as You guide me. Your love is faithful and powerful, and You rescue me from dangerous storms. In Jesus’ name, amen.

God's Love, a Promise Guaranteed

[God] remembers his covenant forever, the promise he made, for a thousand generations (1 Chronicles 16:15).

Scripture: 1 Chronicles 16:8-22

Song: “My Redeemer Is Faithful and True”

Worldly turmoil simmered in 1916 when President Woodrow Wilson (1856–1924) ran for and won re-election. His campaign slogan had been, “He kept us out of war.” In 1914, World War I had ensued, and as conflict brewed in Europe, U.S. voters were pleased by this implicit promise to remain neutral. However, an attack on U.S. merchant ships resulted in the loss of innocent lives. Within a year of Wilson’s re-election, U.S. involvement in World War I was no longer avoidable.

Our words are not always reliable; we’re often fickle with our promises, sometimes with devastating consequences. Thankfully, God’s promises are guaranteed! He has never broken His covenant with generations past, present, or future. In today’s passage, David is thankful for God’s faithfulness and, with delight in his heart, raises his hands to praise the Lord. David recounts multiple occasions of God’s deliverance and directs God’s people to do the same.

Time and again, God has provided refuge, comfort, and peace to His people in the midst of darkness and uncertainty. When struggles ensue, He is always present. We see His consistency and remain hopeful as He uses life’s events to build character and strengthen our faith. He is committed to caring for us as we walk the path of righteousness in His presence.

Father, my faith becomes stronger each day as I remain rooted in Your love. Please use my life and words to extend Your promise of salvation to others. In Jesus’ name, amen.

Life's Unpredictable Variables

[The twenty-four elders said,] “We give thanks to you, Lord God Almighty, the One who is and who was, because you have taken your great power and have begun to reign” (Revelation 11:17).

Scripture: Revelation 11:14-19

Song: “God’s Love Never Changes”

I used to purchase two new Boston ferns each spring and then lament as they burnt to a crisp within a month. When I announced this chronic problem to my women’s group, Mrs. Nell, one of the group’s members, brought over a new Boston fern the next day. She taught me about proper sun exposure, temperature, and the importance of an efficient watering routine. She even shared her secret fish-oil mixture that virtually guaranteed success! Of the three ferns I acquired that season, the variables in their care produced very different outcomes. Only the fern nourished steadfastly with Mrs. Nell’s instruction lived for many years.

Scripture tells us that the 24 elders will fall before God and praise Him with thanksgiving. Their humility reflects their reverence and the honor they feel in serving a living God whose existence is from eternity past, a God who always remains the same.

The variables in our lives are unpredictable, and everyone’s experience in life is different. But as God’s children we can, like that well-nurtured fern, thrive under God’s wise and consistent care. No matter what comes, we can remain certain that our living God, who is eternal, remains faithful, steadfast, and loving.

Father, I cannot rely on this uncertain world for what I need; but thank You that I can find consistent refuge and care in Your love for me. In Jesus’ name, amen.

Birds of a Feather

I long to see you so that I may impart to you some spiritual gift to make you strong—that is, that you and I may be mutually encouraged by each other’s faith (Romans 1:11-12).

Scripture: Romans 1:8-17

Song: “Come, Let Us Join Our Friends Above”

“Birds of a feather flock together” is a proverb whose English origins can be found in a 1545 work of religious satire written by William Turner. Turner’s metaphor points to the tendency of people with things in common to be drawn to one another and to spend time together.

In the world of birds, flocking behaviors provide many perks! Birds in large numbers may be able to scare away predators or confuse them by scattering. When searching for food, a flock has many eyes scanning the terrain and can more readily locate resources. Finally, birds flying together can enhance aerodynamics, aligning in a V formation during flight to conserve energy during the long migration journey.

The apostle Paul was yearning to return to his friends in Rome. He praised and encouraged them for their ability to work together in spreading the gospel message. As a group of believers, they had accomplished much in their service for the Lord.

Christian fellowship is vital. Praying together, we can fend off the enemy’s attacks. As we study God’s Word together, we nurture our faith. When we work together as God’s people and encourage one another, we are restored and replenished along the journey to our eternal home.

Father, the spiritual community You’ve given me is a blessing I cherish. Help us to thrive as we serve You. In Jesus’ name, amen.

Arm Yourself, Stay Alert

Pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. . . . Be alert and always keep on praying for all the Lord's people (Ephesians 6:18).

Scripture: Ephesians 6:10-18

Song: "Put on the Full Armor of God"

For motorcycle enthusiasts, enjoying a leisurely ride is relaxing but can also be quite dangerous. Therefore, riders must remain alert. Animals in the road, highway debris, and inattentive drivers are life-threatening, and there's no telling what's around the next curve. Some bikers refer to these dangers as "road gremlins" and tie a "guardian bell" to their bike to fend them off. Lore has it that the bell's jingle brings gremlins to ruin. Although details of the legend vary, one constant is the tradition that a rider cannot buy his or her own guardian bell; it must come as a gift from another rider.

The apostle Paul shared the gift of the gospel with many people. In today's passage he explained that the protective elements of faith are like a suit of armor covering the soul and securing endurance to face opposition, with the believer's trust in God growing stronger with each test of faith.

We are blessed to be covered head to toe with the full armor of God. No matter where our journey leads, we do not survive by luck or superstition. Instead, we're sustained by the goodness of our Heavenly Father. His love surpasses all understanding and is the ultimate protection from evil along life's road.

Father, thank You that in Your wisdom and love, You've provided spiritual armor for me to put on each day. In Jesus' name, amen.

Enduring Patience

The LORD is the everlasting God. . . . He will not grow tired or weary, and his understanding no one can fathom (Isaiah 40:28).

Scripture: Isaiah 40:12-13, 25-31

Song: “Sweet Will of God”

Mothers of strong-willed little ones can tell some interesting stories. My son has the stubbornness of a mule and the drive of a wild rhinoceros! Unloading groceries is a weekly test of his physical strength as he challenges himself to pick up the heaviest items. He mastered milk jugs and has moved on to massive bags of dog food and great big watermelons! One day, he decided to grab a gigantic case of water. I told him it was too heavy, but unfazed, he somehow managed to pull it from the truck. As it began to fall, I caught the bottom, and together we carried it inside. Once there, he turned to show me his little muscles, thinking he carried it all by himself. Although his stubbornness is frustrating, moments like these are rewarding.

In today's passage, God provides consistent reassurance that He is patient. He doesn't give up on us when, at times, we try to accomplish our own goals without waiting for Him. He understands the determination of our human nature and doesn't grow weary of teaching and guiding us.

We often attempt to accomplish things or carry emotional burdens without God's assistance. Time and again, He catches us, and sometimes we may not even know it. Even when we're headstrong, He still loves us and cares for us.

Father, I'm grateful for Your patience with me as You teach me to trust and obey You. In Jesus' name, amen.