

## A True Reflection

**I am writing to you that you must not associate with anyone who claims to be a brother or sister but is sexually immoral or greedy, an idolater or slanderer, a drunkard or swindler. Do not even eat with such people** (1 Corinthians 5:11).

**Scripture:** 1 Corinthians 5

**Song:** “In My Life, Lord”

Occasionally, there is a tragic news story about a person who kept a dangerous, exotic pet—like a monitor lizard or a tiger—believing it would be safe to do so. Then, sadly, at some point the pet attacks and devours its owner. Of course, it was only a matter of time before the wild creature behaved according to its true nature.

In this passage, Paul warns the Corinthian church to have nothing to do with those who claim to follow Jesus but then show their true nature as they live like those who know nothing of Jesus. True followers of Jesus will be known by lives that strive to honor God and obey His Word.

In the church today, Christians who claim to follow Jesus but whose lives are marked by sin make it difficult for other sincere Christians to testify to those who don't yet know Christ. It is vitally important that how we live brings honor to the name of Jesus.

**Father,** I want my life to be a true reflection of the power of transformation You have worked in my heart. May others see You in how I live today. In Jesus' name, amen.

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September 16–22. **Mark Williams** is a pastor, college professor, and freelance writer who lives with his wife and children near York, Pennsylvania.

## Paid in Full

**[The living creatures and elders in heaven sang,] “You [Jesus] . . . purchased for God persons from every tribe and language and people and nation” (Revelation 5:9).**

**Scripture:** Revelation 5:6-14

**Song:** “Revelation Song”

Many years ago, two teenage boys walked to a small store in town with just enough change to buy two bottles of soda pop. Back then, there was a small deposit required for the glass bottles before they could be taken from the store. However, the boys didn't have enough to pay it. Stuck inside with their beverages, they were met with kindness when an older man perceived their dilemma and paid the deposits for them.

Before we knew Him, Jesus paid the debt for all humanity by His death on a cross. Trapped in the power of sin and condemned to eternal separation from God, humanity was in desperate need. Jesus came to our rescue with His atoning sacrifice and paid the price for our sin by His death, burial, and resurrection.

I was one of those boys in the story. It has been many decades since a deposit was required to take bottles from the store. But thinking back, we were so happy that the man paid our debt so we could head back to my friend's house to enjoy our big bottles of soda pop. Today, my heart is filled with gratitude that Jesus paid the price for my sin and set me free to live the life to which God has called me.

**Father,** thank You for paying the price for my sin, setting me free to experience Your abundant life! In Jesus' name, amen.

## Remember When

**Shaphan the secretary informed the king, “Hilkiah the priest has given me a book.” And Shaphan read from it in the presence of the king [Josiah]. When the king heard the words of the Law, he tore his robes** (2 Chronicles 34:18-19).

**Scripture:** 2 Chronicles 34:8, 14-27

**Song:** “The Heart of Worship”

When a teen is about to graduate from high school, a request may come for parents to provide pictures of the graduate during his or her growing-up years. Looking through these photos can be a journey through many memories that renew a sense of joy and wonder at the privilege of parenting.

In this passage, the people of Judah had been worshipping false gods from the surrounding nations for many generations. They had turned their backs on worshipping faithfully in God’s temple and had forsaken His law. Under the leadership of King Josiah, however, workers were commissioned to repair the temple, and they came across a copy of the book of the Law that hadn’t been opened or read in many years. The young king asked that the book be read aloud. Upon hearing the words from the Law, Josiah understood that the nation had gone astray and that he must lead the way to repentance.

God uses different circumstances to remind us of what has been lost or forgotten in our relationship, calling us back to a renewed sense of the privilege and wonder of walking closely with Him. May we be like young King Josiah, ready to respond quickly with repentance!

**Father,** encourage me today to desire to walk faithfully according to Your Word. In Jesus’ name, amen.

## A Sweet Kiss

**Will you not revive us again, that your people may rejoice in you? Show us your unfailing love, LORD, and grant us your salvation. . . . Love and faithfulness meet together; righteousness and peace kiss each other** (Psalm 85:6-7, 10).

**Scripture:** Psalm 85

**Song:** “Revive Us, O Lord”

Recently, at a local restaurant, an older couple had come in for lunch on a quiet weekday. When their food came, the husband removed his hat and offered a short prayer of thanks for the meal. Then, in a beautiful gesture, he took his wife’s hand and gently kissed it. Anyone observing the couple could see that their marriage was filled with the joy and peace that comes through years of faithfulness, commitment, and life lived in harmony together.

In today’s psalm, the writer envisions a time when God will fully restore the fortunes of Israel and bring revival into the hearts of the people. The people, drawn by God’s love, will give their hearts fully back to Him. The faithful obedience of God’s people will lead the nation to live together with God once again in His peace.

In our world today, peace is becoming increasingly uncommon. Everywhere we look there are people with angry faces and closed fists, sharply divided in their perspectives and opinions. Yet as the people of God, we are called to be ministers of love, faithfulness, peace, and righteousness in our communities through our obedience to God’s Word and by following the leadership of His Spirit.

**Father,** today help me be an instrument of peace through the testimony of the life I have in You. In Jesus’ name, amen.

## Let the Light Shine

**Everything exposed by the light becomes visible—and everything that is illuminated becomes a light. This is why it is said: “Wake up, sleeper, rise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you” (Ephesians 5:13-14).**

**Scripture:** Ephesians 5:3-14

**Song:** “Shine, Jesus, Shine!”

Many children are afraid of the dark. In their young minds, scary monsters lurk in the closet and under the bed, waiting to terrorize them in the middle of the night. For parents of such kids, leaving the child’s room in complete darkness is not an option. But with the help of a small nightlight plugged into the wall, imaginary monsters are banished from the room. Children can drop off to sleep with unworried hearts, and parents are able to get a full night’s sleep.

In this passage, Paul contrasts the differences between lives lived in darkness and lives lived in the light of Christ. The light of Christ is like a nightlight that penetrates even the deepest darkness and banishes the monsters of sin and shame from the human heart. This light raises God’s people to abundant life.

In our world, there are many who walk in darkness, living in the distress of hopelessness without Christ. And though the light of His truth may be uncomfortably bright at first, it is the light of Christ that brings us out of darkness and into the life for which God has created us.

**Father,** thank You for calling me out of darkness to live in Your light. Help me today to shine the light of Your mercy and grace for all to see. In Jesus’ name, amen.

## Power in the Blood

**[God said to Moses and Aaron,] “The blood will be a sign for you on the houses where you are, and when I see the blood, I will pass over you. No destructive plague will touch you when I strike Egypt” (Exodus 12:13).**

**Scripture:** Exodus 12:3-17

**Song:** “Power in the Blood”

The Red Cross is an international agency that brings humanitarian aid to regions affected by war or natural disaster. The Red Cross paints a clearly visible red cross on the top of their tents and temporary buildings to mark where they have set up in a certain region. When pilots from any country can see the symbol of the Red Cross, there is an accepted understanding to pass over and avoid bombing these sites.

As God prepared to bring about the final plague on Pharaoh and Egypt, He gave the Hebrew people specific instructions to slaughter a lamb for a feast and then to take the lamb’s blood and spread it on the sides and top of the door frame. As the death angel moved throughout the land during the night, he would pass over the houses that were marked by the blood and would spare the first-born in these homes.

Today, we can see that this Passover lamb is a foreshadowing of Jesus and His sacrifice on the cross for us. The blood of Jesus covers all our sins and saves us from the penalty of sin.

**Father,** thank You for dying on the cross for me so that Your blood would cover all my sins and restore me to a right relationship with You. In Jesus’ name, amen.

## Going Old School

**The Passover had not been observed like this in Israel since the days of the prophet Samuel; and none of the kings of Israel had ever celebrated such a Passover as did Josiah, with the priests, the Levites and all Judah and Israel who were there with the people of Jerusalem (2 Chronicles 35:18).**

**Scripture:** 2 Chronicles 35:1-6, 16-19

**Song:** “Ancient of Days”

In this world of progress and modern technology that changes overnight, the idea of going “old school” has fallen out of favor. Anything that smacks of past generations and antiquated ways of doing things is being rejected by younger generations in favor of all things high-speed, smart, and virtual. For some, old is equated with obsolete.

In today’s passage, the young King Josiah had restored temple worship and obedience to the law in Judah. In the first true national Passover celebration in hundreds of years, Josiah returned to the ancient customs of his faith and called the nation back to God and His ways. In observing and celebrating the Passover, Josiah instructed the priests to lead the nation through the ancient customs and traditions laid out in the book of the Law.

While it’s essential for the church to adapt, in some respects, to the changing times, the ancient and unchanging Word of God is our guide for faithfully walking with Jesus. And regardless of what we prefer, our worship must be built on the foundation of the eternal Word of God.

**Father,** lead me through these times with the wisdom of the Bible, Your eternal Word. In Jesus’ name, amen.