

Don't Fear in the Darkness

The LORD is my light and my salvation—whom shall I fear?
(Psalm 27:1).

Scripture: Psalm 27

Song: “God Will Take Care of You”

One night while in Africa, my husband and I were travelling home through unfamiliar territory because our normal route was blocked. The nighttime darkness was all-encompassing. Our GPS was not working, and we were in an unsafe area; we were in trouble. Though tempted to panic, we stopped and prayed, “God show us the way out of this darkness.” As we looked up, we saw city lights in the distance. My husband decided to follow the lights on any path we could find. Eventually we came to the main road and were able to find our way home. We rejoiced greatly!

In Psalm 27, David tells of opposition that might have tempted him to fear. Yet David looked to God, sought His help, and then confidently moved ahead. Whatever surrounded him, David knew he could rely on God not to forsake him.

Life can have unexpected twists and turns that tempt us to fear. When we pause in these moments to recall and trust that God is our light and salvation, His clarity comes to us, and His peace surrounds us. We can rejoice in the assurance that God will lead us down sure paths to our destination.

Father, I trust the light of Your presence to guide me today. In Jesus' name, amen.

June 30–July 6. **Julia Taves** has served in Africa and the Dominican Republic as the principal of international schools. She enjoys hiking and spending time with her grandchildren.

Knowing the Truth

You have an anointing from the Holy One, and all of you know the truth. I do not write to you because you do not know the truth, but because you do know it and because no lie comes from the truth (1 John 2:20–21).

Scripture: 1 John 2:20–28

Song: “Be Thou My Vision”

You may recall the signature question culminating the game show *To Tell the Truth*: “Will the real so-and-so please stand up?” Episodes would begin with the host reading aloud the unique occupation or experience of a central contestant. Then, a panel of four celebrities would try to discern—as they heard both false testimony and true—which of the three people being presented was actually the individual who had been described.

Even though Jesus was the Savior of the world, there are those who give false testimony about Him. John’s letter warns us to be aware of these spiritual imposters. John also assures his readers that authentic Christians, by God’s indwelling Spirit, are anointed to know and walk in truth. Thankfully, we have a firm test of this truth: anyone who denies Jesus is the Messiah is not to be trusted!

As believers in Christ, we have been anointed by God to know and to proclaim the truth about Jesus. As we remain in Him and testify faithfully to who He is and what He has done, we give others the opportunity to know the truth about Him and to receive Him and His gift of eternal life.

Father, thank You for giving me saving knowledge of Your Son. Grant me boldness to live and speak the truth about Him to the people around me. In Jesus’ name, amen.

Take Time to Remember

Do not eat [the Passover meal] with bread made with yeast, but for seven days eat unleavened bread, the bread of affliction, because you left Egypt in haste—so that all the days of your life you may remember the time of your departure from Egypt (Deuteronomy 16:3).

Scripture: Deuteronomy 16:1–10

Song: “Blessed Assurance”

In our family, Thanksgiving, Christmas, and Easter are a few of our most cherished holidays. We remember God’s blessings at Thanksgiving. We celebrate Jesus’ birth at Christmas. And we rejoice in His resurrection at Easter. Preparing certain foods, observing special traditions, and gathering with loved ones are part of the festivities.

Likewise, Passover is a Jewish celebration recalling Israel’s deliverance from slavery in Egypt. Special foods are prepared, such as unleavened bread, which recalls leaving Egypt in haste. The Passover celebration is a meaningful time to reflect on God’s deliverance and to rejoice in the freedom that He offers.

By Jesus’ blood, we have been set free from the slavery of sin, the power of death, and the punishment of hell. It’s important for us as Christians to remember what God has done for us in providing His Son, the perfect sacrificial lamb, who has delivered us from our adversary and redeemed our lives.

Father, thank You for what You have done for me, sending Your Son, Jesus, as the perfect sacrifice to set me free from sin and death. Thank You for reminding me to celebrate the gift of His atoning work on the cross and the triumph of His resurrection. In Jesus’ name, amen.

A Generous Heart

Celebrate the Festival of Weeks to the LORD your God by giving a freewill offering in proportion to the blessings the LORD your God has given you (Deuteronomy 16:10).

Scripture: Deuteronomy 16:11–17

Song: “Count Your Blessings”

Tiny beads, toys, flowers, hugs . . . these may be simple gifts, but Ruby, my 4-year-old granddaughter, loves to bless others by sharing with them what she has. Whether she’s at a park, at church, or attending a party, I’m blessed whenever I witness her gathering people—young and old—to excitedly give her gifts.

The Festival of Weeks was a celebration after the harvest. It was a time for God’s people to enjoy what God had provided. As a way to bless God, the people offered a sacrifice to Him out of what they had. Then everyone, no matter their means or status, got to share in what had been sacrificed. Everyone was included, and in this way, everyone was blessed. It must have made for a joyous occasion, when everyone was showing gratitude for God’s provision and good gifts, giving offerings and sharing freely with others.

God gives us blessings daily. Sharing the little or much that we have with those around us demonstrates our thankfulness to God and helps others to see His goodness too. What an honor to include all kinds of people in our sharing, as God has included us in giving His Son, the greatest blessing of all!

Father, thank You for the multitude of blessings You provide. Help me to willingly share what You have given me with others as a way to rejoice in Your goodness. In Jesus’ name, amen.

Poem of Praise

Tremble, earth, at the presence of the LORD, at the presence of the God of Jacob, who turned the rock into a pool, the hard rock into springs of water (Psalm 114:7–8).

Scripture: Psalm 114

Song: “O God, Our Help in Ages Past”

Maybe you remember writing acrostic poems when you were younger. An acrostic is typically made by writing a word vertically, and then using each letter as the beginning of a word or phrase. As a teacher, I’ve seen how using this format has helped students to engage in creative writing, communicating, and memorizing.

Psalm 114 is a skillfully-written acrostic poem, one composed as a song of remembrance and praise to God. Each line begins with a consecutive letter of the Hebrew alphabet. The people of God conveyed their praise to Him in each line of the lyrics: praise for freedom from slavery in Egypt, praise for God’s forming them into a nation, praise for clear direction, and praise for miracles that displayed God’s power and glory.

It’s an honor for us as God’s people to lift our praises to Him for His provision, protection, and direction in our lives. He is still the rock and living water for His people, so we can rejoice, write, sing, and communicate about His grace, mercy, and the help He has given us along our way.

Father, as You lead me, protect me, and provide for me in every way, even in the difficult places of life, I will continue to praise You and sing of Your wonders. In Jesus’ name, amen.

Sure Sheep

[Jesus said,] “My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one will snatch them out of my hand” (John 10:27–28).

Scripture: John 10:22–30, 34–38

Song: “Savior, like a Shepherd Lead Us”

Grazing animals, including sheep, are equipped with horizontal pupils that enhance peripheral vision. As they lower their heads to graze or drink water, their eyes also rotate so that their pupils remain horizontal—an ability called *cyclovergence*—allowing them to continue seeing all around. This is helpful, not only for keeping an eye out for predators, but also to remain aware of where safety is located.

While at the temple for the Festival of Dedication, Jesus referred to those who belong to Him as His sheep. Jesus, the Good Shepherd, knows His sheep. They follow Him, and He keeps them safe (John 10:14). In today’s passage, as Jesus challenged the Pharisees’ unbelief, He made it clear that their refusal to recognize and follow Him revealed that they were not among His sheep.

It’s a blessing to be among those who belong to Jesus, a privilege to know Him and to hear Him calling us to follow Him and walk in obedience to His Word. He is our salvation, our safe place, and as we keep our eyes and ears open to Him, He leads us in paths of righteousness and peace.

Father, You know me, care for me, and lead me daily. By Your grace, I will keep my eyes on You and follow You all the days of my life. In Jesus’ name, amen.

Found!

After the festival was over, while his parents were returning home, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem, but they were unaware of it (Luke 2:43).

Scripture: Luke 2:41–52

Song: “Beautiful Savior”

At an Independence Day event some years ago, food trucks, merchants’ tents, and hundreds of people gathered in celebration. As we wandered through the crowds with our children, we eventually gathered with relatives at a meeting place, only to find that our 4-year-old son was missing! We retraced our steps but to no avail. Trying to stay calm, we notified event authorities. Then, as we returned to our gathering place near the entrance, we saw our son sitting on our blanket calmly eating popcorn. After running to him, he surprisingly told us, “An angel-like lady gave me popcorn, and I knew you would come.”

Mary and Joseph, while traveling home from the Passover Festival, experienced concern when they could not find their son. When they backtracked, they found Him in the temple and were surprised. The boy Jesus was amazing the teachers with His understanding of Scriptures. He must have felt at home in the temple, but as an obedient son, He willingly left when His parents came for Him. Mary pondered this event as she saw Jesus grow.

Like every human being, Jesus was once a child. He was even a child who needed to obey His parents. What a Savior we have—one who is fully God and fully human, yet without sin! God did not leave us alone but came to find us in our lost state, rescuing us.

Father, thank You for finding me. Teach me to grow in Your wisdom. In Jesus’ name, amen.