



GOD IS

HIS CHARACTER REVEALED IN
HIS CREATION

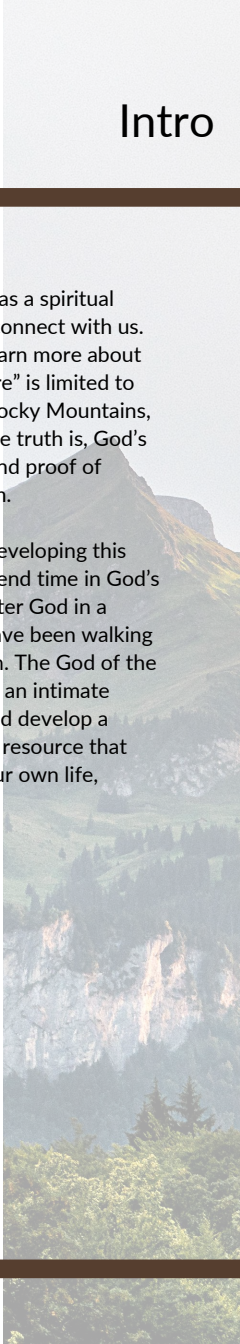
A 21-DAY SOLO TIME GUIDE
FROM WILDERNESS TREK

FROM WT

Intro

Hello reader! At Wilderness Trek, we believe in the power of nature as a spiritual tool. We believe that God uses nature to capture our attention and connect with us. Our time in nature can be an act of worship and an opportunity to learn more about who God is and His plan for our lives. It is easy to assume that “nature” is limited to State and National Parks- that His “creation” is encountered in the Rocky Mountains, the Grand Canyon, Yellowstone Geysers, and Caribbean beaches. The truth is, God's creation is all around us. We are surrounded by tangible reminders and proof of God's character, but our eyes and hearts are often not aware of them.

Our hopes for you are the same intentions we had for ourselves in developing this curriculum. First, we hope you personally engage with nature and spend time in God's creation that He made for us to enjoy! Second, we hope you encounter God in a powerful way. Whether you are new to your faith or whether you have been walking with God for decades, there is always more for us to learn about Him. The God of the entire universe is also the God of you and me- of our lives. He wants an intimate relationship with you! Finally, we hope you interact with scripture and develop a habit of time alone with God. This study is intended to be a teaching resource that helps you think critically about scripture and find applications for your own life, regardless of the passage.



THE STAKES

Intro

Before you go any further, we want you to know why this study is so important to us (and why we hope it is meaningful for you).

We believe that we have a problem- a sin problem. Sin is anything we do that falls outside of God's will for our life. We all sin and no matter how hard we try, we can't get rid of that part of us. God didn't create us this way. In the beginning, the world was perfect, and the first humans were too- Adam and Eve. God intended for us to enjoy a perfect Earth and be in His presence forever into eternity. But in one act of disobedience against God, sin entered the world, and with it, all pain, evil, sadness, illness, and brokenness (Genesis 2). It broke God's heart.

God is holy- completely good, true, and right (Psalm 19:7-11). God is so perfect that He cannot even be around imperfection- which includes us and our sin (Isaiah 59:2). No matter how hard we try, we keep sinning. We simply can't be "good enough" to make it to God on our own. God had every opportunity to turn His back on the world, but He didn't. The Creator of the universe is a loving being. He cares about us, His creation, and wanted us to be reconciled to Him now into eternity. He knew that we would never be able to solve our sin problem, so He created a way for us to get to Him- Jesus (Romans 5:8, 1 John 4:10).

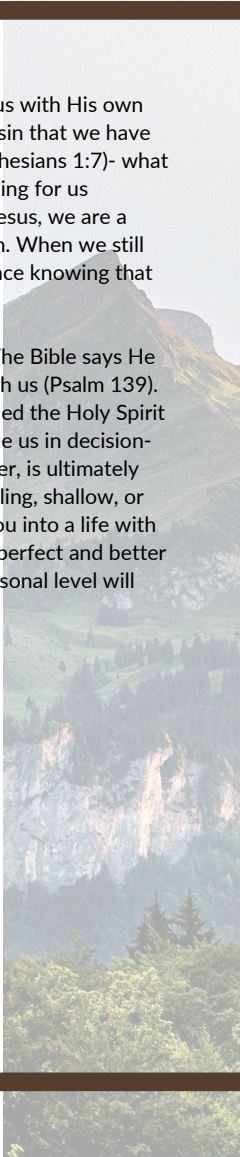
The Bible says that Jesus is God's Son (Matthew 3:17), and that He has the same spirit of God (John 10:30). He was in the presence of God since the very beginning of time (John 1:1-2). God decided to give up His Son, a part of himself, and send Him to Earth- our sinful, broken Earth. Jesus was born to a human body and lived a human life (Galatians 4:4), but completely without sin (2 Corinthians 5:21). He was a radical teacher that loved the unlovable (Matthew 9:36), served the undeserving (Mark 10:45), and humbled himself despite His heavenly abilities (Philippians 2:5-7). Jesus was hated by people who disagreed with Him (Matthew 26:4), and eventually was imprisoned and sentenced to a death He didn't deserve- He literally never did anything wrong (John 19:1-7)! Jesus died a criminal's death on the cross and miraculously rose again three days later (Luke 24:6-7). Jesus' perfect life was the payment for our sin-debt; His resurrection declared victory over sin and our separation from the Father (Romans 6:5-6, 1 Peter 2:24). Jesus is the way to God and to a life with Him (John 14:6).

THE STAKES (cont.)

Intro

This story is the ultimate good news. God fought for us, and bought us with His own Son so that we could spend eternity with Him (Galatians 4:5). Every sin that we have ever done or will do in the future has been erased through Christ (Ephesians 1:7)- what a gift! We didn't do anything to earn it or deserve it- God did everything for us (Ephesians 2:8-9) . When we accept His gift of forgiveness through Jesus, we are a part of His family forever, and nothing can ever separate us from Him. When we still continue to sin (it's inevitable), we can ask for forgiveness in confidence knowing that Jesus has already covered it (1 John 1:9).

God went to such great lengths because He loves us (Psalm 86:15). The Bible says He made us, He knows us, and He wants to be in a close relationship with us (Psalm 139). This broken world is not our home, but God has given us a helper called the Holy Spirit to help us understand God's voice, equip us with His power, and guide us in decision-making (John 14:26). A close relationship with God, our Creator Father, is ultimately what we are created for. Wherever your faith is- non-existing, struggling, shallow, or fully thriving- God wants you to get to know Him better and invite you into a life with Him (1 John 4:13). This life is by no means easy or perfect, but He is perfect and better than everything else. Getting to know your Heavenly Father on a personal level will transform your life (Ezekiel 36:26, 2 Corinthians 5:17).



PREPARATION

Day 1 How-to

Setting: Find or create a space where you can focus on God. Avoid or eliminate tangible distractions such as your phone, TV, or others. Try to find a space outside where you can connect with God through nature. Each day, the study will refer to a different aspect or component in nature. We encourage you to seek these things out and experience them tangibly in your solo time.

Where are you going to complete your solo time each day?

Mindset: Prepare your heart and mind to encounter God. Try to quiet your thoughts and refrain from thinking about the day's tasks or your shopping list. We believe that God alone teaches, changes lives, and reveals His character, so approach every day with prayer, asking that He would do so. Evaluate your motives; this study is not intended to be a way for you to check a box and get brownie points- it's just between you and God.

Where is your heart? Examine your motives and any internal barriers.

Pacing & Flow: Don't rush! Take it slow to have the most meaningful solo time. Maintain a "spirit of prayer" for the duration of your quiet time- listen to what God may be trying to communicate with you and respond in whatever method helps you connect with Him best- journaling, drawing, silence, singing, walking/hiking, etc.

How much time are you going to dedicate to solo time; how are you going to keep yourself accountable?

What do you want to get out of this study? List 3 goals you'd like to achieve.



GOD IS LIGHT

Day 2
The Sun

Framing Verse

"The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness can never extinguish it." John 1:5

Just as the sun brings light to the world, God's perfection brings light to our life and frees us from our spiritual darkness. God's sacrifice of Jesus reconciles our broken relationship with Him.

Main Passage

5 This is the message we heard from Jesus and now declare to you: God is light, and there is no darkness in him at all. **6** So we are lying if we say we have fellowship with God but go on living in spiritual darkness; we are not practicing the truth. **7** But if we are living in the light, as God is in the light, then we have fellowship with each other, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, cleanses us from all sin. **8** If we claim we have no sin, we are only fooling ourselves and not living in the truth. **9** But if we confess our sins to him, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all wickedness. **10** If we claim we have not sinned, we are calling God a liar and showing that his word has no place in our hearts.

1 John 1:5-10

Reflection Questions

- What do you think it means that God is light? What does this statement reveal about God's character?
- What do you think the author means by spiritual darkness?
- Romans 3:23-24 says "For there is no distinction: for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus." What does this verse reveal about us? What problem do we have?
- What do you think it means to "walk in the light?" Do you think you are currently living in the dark? Or in the Light? Is there anything you need to bring to light?
- How can you walk in light today?

Guided Prayer

- Praise God for His perfection, thank Him for His light
- Acknowledge my sin problem
- Ask for opportunities and boldness to live in the light

Things for Thought

John 8:12 says, "Jesus spoke to the people once more and said, 'I am the light of the world. If you follow me, you won't have to walk in darkness, because you will have the light that leads to life.'"

**Jesus is the manifestation of God's light on Earth.
Who is Jesus to you?**

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GOD IS LOVE

Day 3
The Birds

Framing Verse

"What is the price of five sparrows—two copper coins? Yet God does not forget a single one of them. And the very hairs on your head are all numbered. So don't be afraid; you are more valuable to God than a whole flock of sparrows."

Luke 12: 6-7

God loves His creation. Every bird and animal is cared for, but the Father loves us much more. God's sacrificial and unconditional love defines our relationship with Him.

Main Passage

3 So Jesus told them this story: **4** "If a man has a hundred sheep and one of them gets lost, what will he do? Won't he leave the ninety-nine others in the wilderness and go to search for the one that is lost until he finds it? **5** And when he has found it, he will joyfully carry it home on his shoulders. **6** When he arrives, he will call together his friends and neighbors, saying, 'Rejoice with me because I have found my lost sheep.'

7 In the same way, there is more joy in heaven over one lost sinner who repents and returns to God than over ninety-nine others who are righteous and haven't strayed away!" **Luke 15:3-7**

Reflection Questions

- What is a parable? Why do you think Jesus used parables to tell us about God?
- How many sheep are secured? How many are lost? What actions does the Shepherd take in this story? Why?
- Imagine yourself in this story. Where would you be? Are you the sheep? The Shepherd? Somewhere else in the story? Why?
- What does this passage reveal about God's character?
- What can we learn about our identity and relationship with God from this story?
- What does this verse reveal to you about your standing with God?
- What does it look like to live as "loved by God" with your thoughts and actions?

Guided Prayer

- Thank God for His love. Thank Him for having perfect love and not human love.
- Confess that we are not worthy of God's love for us, and that we are not capable of fully returning it.
- Ask for guidance to live as loved by God.

Things for Thought

Jesus uses parables to teach us about God's character.

parable: a simple story used to illustrate a moral or spiritual lesson

"But God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us." Romans 5:8

Jesus is the ultimate representation of God's love for us. God sacrificed His Son so that we can be right with God and experience a relationship with Him. Just like the birds or the lost sheep, God never forgets about us or abandons us. Take time to reflect on God's love for you, and identify things that might be preventing you from accepting that love.

REFLECTION

Day 3

The Birds

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When I see birds, I will remember how much more my Heavenly Father loves me.

GOD IS TRUTH

Day 4
Rocks

Framing Verse

"He is the Rock; his deeds are perfect. Everything he does is just and fair. He is a faithful God who does no wrong; how just and upright he is!"

Deuteronomy 32: 4

God is perfect. Because He defines truth and is truth, He is a reliable and firm foundation for our life.

Main Passage

24 "Anyone who listens to my teaching and follows it is wise, like a person who builds a house on solid rock. **25** Though the rain comes in torrents and the floodwaters rise and the winds beat against that house, it won't collapse because it is built on bedrock. **26** But anyone who hears my teaching and doesn't obey it is foolish, like a person who builds a house on sand. **27** When the rains and floods come and the winds beat against that house, it will collapse with a mighty crash." **Matthew 7: 24-27**

Reflection Questions

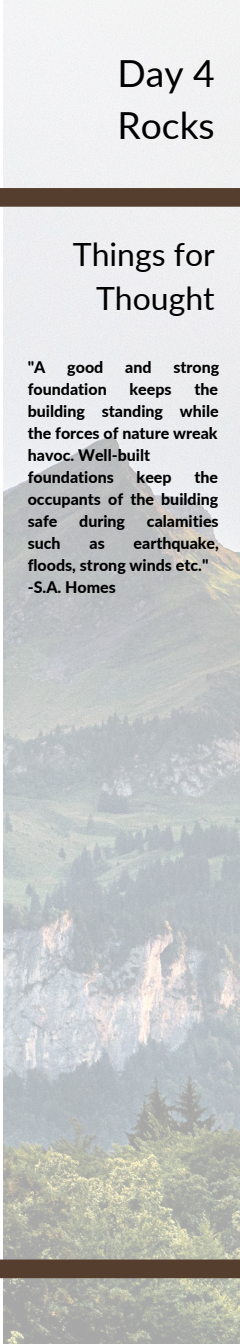
- What was the difference between the two builders? What was each outcome?
- Why do you think this was the outcome?
- What do you think it means to build on a firm foundation. Which was the better foundation- sand or rock?
- What do you think the sand foundation represents?
- What do you want to "build" with your life? What foundation are you building on? Are you building on any sand?
- What does it look like for you to build on God's truth today?

Guided Prayer

- Praise God that He is true and a firm foundation.
- Acknowledge the "sand" I build on- the meaningless things I place trust in. Confess it to God.
- Ask for God's assistance in diligently building on the rock of Truth.

Things for Thought

"A good and strong foundation keeps the building standing while the forces of nature wreak havoc. Well-built foundations keep the occupants of the building safe during calamities such as earthquake, floods, strong winds etc." -S.A. Homes



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GOD IS POWERFUL

Day 5
The Sky

Framing Verse

"O Sovereign Lord! You made the heavens and earth by your strong hand and powerful arm. Nothing is too hard for you!" Jeremiah 32:17

God is incredibly powerful. Just look up- the vast skies reveal His strength and size. When we experience God's power, we should respond with awe and humility.

Main Passage

7 God stretches the northern sky over empty space and hangs the earth on nothing.

8 He wraps the rain in his thick clouds, and the clouds don't burst with the weight. **9** He covers the face of the moon, shrouding it with his clouds. **10** He created the horizon when he separated the waters; he set the boundary between day and night.

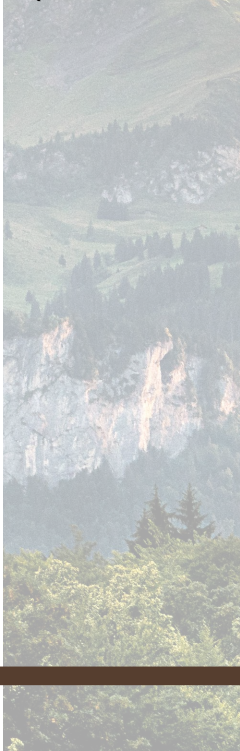
11 The foundations of heaven tremble; they shudder at his rebuke. **12** By his power the sea grew calm. By his skill he crushed the great sea monster. **13** His Spirit made the heavens beautiful, and his power pierced the gliding serpent.

14 These are just the beginning of all that he does, merely a whisper of his power. Who, then, can comprehend the thunder of his power? **Job 26:7-14**

Things for Thought

"When God paints the sky, He is speaking...to you and to me. He is reminding us every day that the beautiful work of art there in the sky is declaring His glory. When God paints the sky, it's a reminder that He has spoken."

-Quiet Time Ministries



GOD IS POWERFUL

Day 5
The Sky

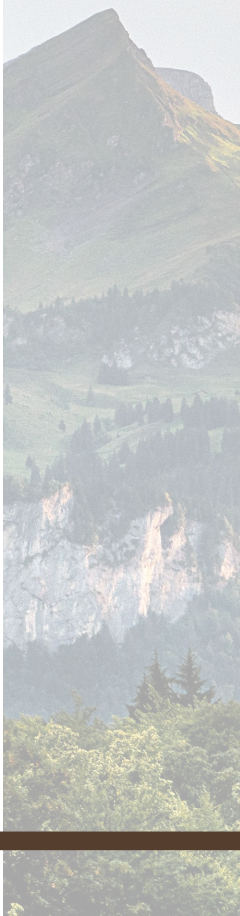
Reflection Questions

- How is God's power expressed in this passage? highlight/circle the illustrations of God's power.
- What types of power are seen in this passage? Re-read verse 14. How does the power of calm differ from the power of thunder? Which do you more often associate with God?
- In what ways does this type or power displayed in these verses challenge your previous view of God?
- Think of a time where you have fought to be in control? Is there any area of your life that you love to be in control?
- Do you think we were created to be in control of our own lives? Why/Why not?
- Do you think God is all-powerful? Is there something you think is "too big" for God? Do you think anything is too small for God?
- What area of your life/worldview do you need to surrender to God's control?

Guided Prayer

- Praise God for His incredible power. Tell Him how you see His power.
- Confess our lack of power and unworthiness to commune with Him.
- Proclaim surrender of power to God in your life.

Things for
Thought



GOD IS ETERNAL

Day 6
The Grass

Framing Verse

The grass withers and the flowers fade, but the word of our God stands forever."

Isaiah 40:8

God is eternal- He exists outside of our timeline. Instead of being consumed by temporary and fleeting matters, we have to choose to focus on our eternal purpose.

Main Passage

24 But I cried to him, "O my God, who lives forever, don't take my life while I am so young! **25** Long ago you laid the foundation of the earth and made the heavens with your hands. **26** They will perish, but you remain forever; they will wear out like old clothing. You will change them like a garment and discard them. **27** But you are always the same; you will live forever. **28** The children of your people will live in security. Their children's children will thrive in your presence." **Psalms 102: 24-28**

Reflection Questions

- Do you think God has a beginning or an end? According to this passage, how far back does God go? How far into the future does God go?
- What does the author say about things on Earth? What do you think it means that they will all wear out like a garment? Think about the clothes you own and how they age.
- What words would you use to describe how it feels to know that God will never go away and is eternal?
- Make a list of things that you think are temporary, and the things you think are eternal.
- How can you invest your time, energy, and heart in eternal matters today?

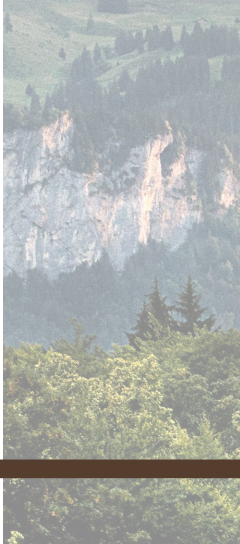
Guided Prayer

- Praise God for His eternal nature. Thank Him that He has always been & will always be.
- Ask God for help in avoiding distraction by temporary matters.
- Ask for an eternal focus.

Things for Thought

"God, by definition, must be infinitely great. If we have a God we can grasp, he ceases to be God. By definition, God must be incomprehensible. If we could unravel the mysteries of His Person, we would elevate ourselves to His level, which we cannot."

Eternity is a hard concept for us to understand, but we weren't created to understand everything. That's what makes Him God and us not.



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This is a reflection worksheet for Day 6, titled "The Grass". The word "REFLECTION" is prominently displayed at the top left. To the right, it says "Day 6" and "The Grass". The main body of the page is filled with horizontal lines for writing. On the right side, there is a vertical strip containing a photograph of a mountain range with green grassy slopes and rocky peaks. At the bottom, a dark brown banner contains the text: "When I see the grass, I will remember that God is eternal and will outlast everything."

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GOD IS OMNISCIENT

Day 7
The Stars

Framing Verse

"He counts the stars and calls them all by name." Psalm 147:4

Scripture says that God has names for each of the billions of stars in our galaxy. He knows everything about the universe and everything about us, so our relationship with Him is close and personal.

Main Passage

1 O Lord, you have examined my heart and know everything about me. **2** You know when I sit down or stand up. You know my thoughts even when I'm far away. **3** You see me when I travel and when I rest at home. You know everything I do. **4** You know what I am going to say even before I say it, Lord. **5** You go before me and follow me. You place your hand of blessing on my head. **6** Such knowledge is too wonderful for me, too great for me to understand!

Psalm 139: 1-6

Reflection Questions

- How thoroughly does God know us? List 6 things God knows about us from the passage.
- Who knows the most about you? Why do you think they know so much about you?
- Why do you think God knows so much about you?
- Is there anything you wish God didn't know about you? Why do you wish that?
- What do you try to keep hidden from God?
- Read Ephesians 2:4-5: "But God is so rich in mercy, and he loved us so much, 5 that even though we were dead because of our sins, he gave us life when he raised Christ from the dead." What is God's response to knowing us- even the bad?
- How does God's personal knowledge of us change or impact our relationship with Him?

Guided Prayer

- Thank God for His ability to know everything about us individually and about the inner workings of the universe. Acknowledge that I do not know what God knows.
- Confess my desire to know as much as God and tendency towards doubt and anger when answers are not revealed.
- Ask for strength to trust and persevere through situations of "unknowns."

Things for Thought

Omniscient: all-knowing

Read John 20:24-31.

When Jesus' reappears to the disciples after His resurrection, Thomas demands proof to believe that Jesus is really there. Instead of scolding or reprimanding, Jesus is patient with Thomas.

Our all-knowing God wants our trust, but He understands that we are quick to doubt and become frustrated when we don't have the answers we want. God is patient. Though He may not always give us the answer we want, God welcomes our questions.

What questions do you have for God? What will you do if you don't get the answer you want?

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GOD IS OMNIPRESENT

Day 8
Air

Framing Verse

"For the life of every living thing is in his hand, and the breath of every human being." Job 12:10

God's spirit is everywhere, all the time. There is no place we can go to run away or hide from God. Like the air, we can't see God, but we can be sure He is always with us.

Main Passage

7 I can never escape from your Spirit! I can never get away from your presence!
8 If I go up to heaven, you are there; if I go down to the grave, you are there. **9** If I ride the wings of the morning, if I dwell by the farthest oceans, **10** even there your hand will guide me, and your strength will support me. **11** I could ask the darkness to hide me and the light around me to become night—**12** but even in darkness I cannot hide from you. To you the night shines as bright as day. Darkness and light are the same to you. **Psalm 139:7-12**

Reflection Questions

- List the places in this passage where God is present. OR circle verbs for God's action.
- Where is your "heaven" where you can feel God the most/commune with Him?
- Where is your "Sheol"- where you feel hidden from God?
- Think back to a time you felt alone. Why did you feel that way?
- How would you act or think differently if you were reminded that God was always present? How does God's presence change our relationship with Him/others?
- How do you think we can better stay connected to God when we feel like we are in Sheol?

Guided Prayer

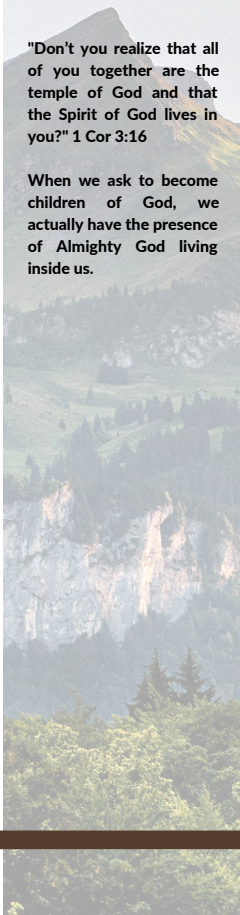
- Thank God for His ability to be in all places, all the time.
- Thank God for His persistent personal presence in spite of our sin.
- Confess any turning away, running from God, doubt in His presence.
- Ask for reminders of God's presence.

Things for Thought

Omnipresent: all-present

"Don't you realize that all of you together are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God lives in you?" 1 Cor 3:16

When we ask to become children of God, we actually have the presence of Almighty God living inside us.



[illegible]

Air

When I breathe air into my lungs, I am reminded of God's spirit. Even though I can't see Him, I know He is with me.

GOD IS AN ARTIST

Day 9
Colors

Framing Verse

"For we are God's masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so we can do the good things he planned for us long ago." Ephesians 2:10

God takes pleasure in His creation. God's creation is a reflection of His character- good. Nature reflects God's creativity and wonder, but we also are a part of His creation. God deserves credit, praise, and ownership of His creation.

Main Passage

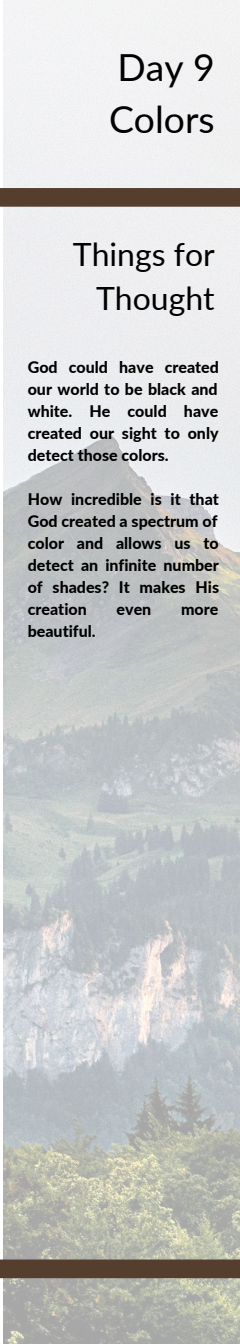
1 In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. **2** The earth was formless and empty, and darkness covered the deep waters. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the surface of the waters. **3** Then God said, "Let there be light," and there was light. **4** And God saw that the light was good. Then he separated the light from the darkness. **5** God called the light "day" and the darkness "night." And evening passed and morning came, marking the first day. **6** Then God said, "Let there be a space between the waters, to separate the waters of the heavens from the waters of the earth." **7** And that is what happened. God made this space to separate the waters of the earth from the waters of the heavens. **8** God called the space "sky." And evening passed and morning came, marking the second day. **9** Then God said, "Let the waters beneath the sky flow together into one place, so dry ground may appear." And that is what happened. **10** God called the dry ground "land" and the waters "seas." And God saw that it was good. **11** Then God said, "Let the land sprout with vegetation—every sort of seed-bearing plant, and trees that grow seed-bearing fruit. These seeds will then produce the kinds of plants and trees from which they came." And that is what happened. **12** The land produced vegetation—all sorts of seed-bearing plants, and trees with seed-bearing fruit. Their seeds produced plants and trees of the same kind. And God saw that it was good. **13** And evening passed and morning came, marking the third day. **14** Then God said, "Let lights appear in the sky to separate the day from the night. Let them be signs to mark the seasons, days, and years. **15** Let these lights in the sky shine down on the earth." And that is what happened. **16** God made two great lights—the larger one to govern the day, and the smaller one to govern the night. He also made the stars. **17** God set these lights in the sky to light the earth, **18** to govern the day and night, and to separate the light from the darkness. And God saw that it was good. **19** And evening passed and morning came, marking the fourth day.

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Things for Thought

God could have created our world to be black and white. He could have created our sight to only detect those colors.

How incredible is it that God created a spectrum of color and allows us to detect an infinite number of shades? It makes His creation even more beautiful.



GOD IS AN ARTIST

Day 9
Colors

20 Then God said, "Let the waters swarm with fish and other life. Let the skies be filled with birds of every kind." 21 So God created great sea creatures and every living thing that scurries and swarms in the water, and every sort of bird—each producing offspring of the same kind. And God saw that it was good. 22 Then God blessed them, saying, "Be fruitful and multiply. Let the fish fill the seas, and let the birds multiply on the earth." 23 And evening passed and morning came, marking the fifth day. 24 Then God said, "Let the earth produce every sort of animal, each producing offspring of the same kind—livestock, small animals that scurry along the ground, and wild animals." And that is what happened. 25 God made all sorts of wild animals, livestock, and small animals, each able to produce offspring of the same kind. And God saw that it was good. 26 Then God said, "Let us make human beings in our image, to be like us. They will reign over the fish in the sea, the birds in the sky, the livestock, all the wild animals on the earth, and the small animals that scurry along the ground." 27 So God created human beings in his own image. In the image of God he created them; male and female He created them. 28 Then God blessed them.

Genesis 1:1-28

Reflection Questions

- Circle each day's creation and God's reaction to His creation.
- What do you think God's intention in creation was?
- What does it mean that God created us in His image? What do you think that says about how God feels about us? What does this reveal about our purpose?
- What actions give God credit for His creation? This includes the world and ourselves.
- How do you treat God's creation- nature, yourself, and others? Do you treat God's creation as "good?"
- How can you be an advocate for God's creation today in your thoughts and actions? This includes the Earth and its inhabitants.

Guided Prayer

- Thank God for His creation. Thank Him for creating me in His image for His purpose.
- Confess that I don't always live like I'm God's masterpiece.
- Ask for reminders of God's goodness and opportunities to live out my Heavenly purpose.

Things for Thought

"Many Christians today believe the environment (God's creation) is an exploitable commodity, given to us to use as we see fit. If we are careless in our stewardship of God's creation, we not only destroy that which He has made for His glory, but we also deny others the opportunity to see with wonder and awe God's creation."

-Wayland Baptist University

How could environmental stewardship and conservation be spiritual issues? Does this differ from your previous understandings?

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The image shows a worksheet titled "REFLECTION" in large, bold, dark brown capital letters at the top left. To the right of the title, in the top right corner, it says "Day 9" and "Colors" in a smaller, dark brown font. Below the title, there are 20 horizontal lines for writing, arranged in two columns of ten. A thick brown horizontal bar runs across the top of the page, just below the title and subtitle. On the right side of the page, there is a vertical strip showing a photograph of a mountain landscape with green slopes, rocky peaks, and some evergreen trees. At the bottom of the page, there is a paragraph of text in a bold, black font: "When I scenes beautiful colors and scenes in nature, I will remember to respect God's creation and praise Him for what He has done."

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GOD IS A JUST JUDGE

Day 10
Storms

Framing Verse

"And the Lord will make his majestic voice heard. He will display the strength of his mighty arm. It will descend with devouring flames, with cloudbursts, thunderstorms, and huge hailstones." Isaiah 30:30

Sometimes when we sin, God allows punishment to correct us and restore our focus on Him, but this stems from His love for us and pursuit of our best interest. Like storms, punishment is uncomfortable, but eventually the rain ceases.

Main Passage

1 The Lord gave this message to Jonah son of Amittai: **2** "Get up and go to the great city of Nineveh. Announce my judgment against it because I have seen how wicked its people are." **3** But Jonah got up and went in the opposite direction to get away from the Lord. He went down to the port of Joppa, where he found a ship leaving for Tarshish. He bought a ticket and went on board, hoping to escape from the Lord by sailing to Tarshish. **4** But the Lord hurled a powerful wind over the sea, causing a violent storm that threatened to break the ship apart. **5** Fearing for their lives, the desperate sailors shouted to their gods for help and threw the cargo overboard to lighten the ship. But all this time Jonah was sound asleep down in the hold. **6** So the captain went down after him. "How can you sleep at a time like this?" he shouted. "Get up and pray to your god! Maybe he will pay attention to us and spare our lives." **7** Then the crew cast lots to see which of them had offended the gods and caused the terrible storm. When they did this, the lots identified Jonah as the culprit. **8** "Why has this awful storm come down on us?" they demanded. "Who are you? What is your line of work? What country are you from? What is your nationality?" **9** Jonah answered, "I am a Hebrew, and I worship the Lord, the God of heaven, who made the sea and the land." **10** The sailors were terrified when they heard this, for he had already told them he was running away from the Lord. "Oh, why did you do it?" they groaned. **11** And since the storm was getting worse all the time, they asked him, "What should we do to you to stop this storm?" **12** "Throw me into the sea," Jonah said, "and it will become calm again. I know that this terrible storm is all my fault." **13** Instead, the sailors rowed even harder to get the ship to the land. But the stormy sea was too violent for them, and they couldn't make it.

continue to next page

Things for Thought

Nineveh was at the center of the neo-Assyrian empire, known in the Bible as being one of the most evil pagan cities.

What is the real reason for Jonah's disobedience?

"Jonah knew that if he warned the people of Nineveh that God was mad at them, they might decide to ask God for forgiveness. And if they asked God to forgive them, Jonah knew God would forgive them because God is loving and full of mercy. So the answer to the question is: Jonah didn't want to go to Nineveh because he hated the Ninevites so much that he did not want God to forgive them." - Hovseth

Jonah's disobedience stemmed from a deep heart issue. How have your heart issues led to disobedience?

GOD IS A JUST JUDGE

Day 10
Storms

14 Then they cried out to the Lord, Jonah's God. "O Lord," they pleaded, "don't make us die for this man's sin. And don't hold us responsible for his death. O Lord, you have sent this storm upon him for your own good reasons." **15** Then the sailors picked Jonah up and threw him into the raging sea, and the storm stopped at once! **16** The sailors were awestruck by the Lord's great power, and they offered him a sacrifice and vowed to serve him. **17** Now the Lord had arranged for a great fish to swallow Jonah. And Jonah was inside the fish for three days and three nights. **1** Then Jonah prayed to the Lord his God from inside the fish. **Jonah 1:1-17**

Reflection Questions

- What was Jonah's response to God's call? Why do you think that was his response?
- Why do you think God sent the whale? What purpose did both the storm and the whale have in Jonah's faith?
- Does this tell us anything about God feels about Jonah's choices? What do you think this passage reveals about how God views some of our choices?
- Do you think God was motivated by anger or by love for Jonah? Why do you feel this way?
- **"For his anger lasts only a moment, but his favor lasts a lifetime! Weeping may last through the night, but joy comes with the morning."** Psalm 30:5 Our God is both full of wrath and full of love. Which of the two is more powerful/enduring according to this verse? Which of the two do you focus on more? Why?
- What do you currently need to repent from in order to realign with God's instruction? What practical actions must be done to do so? Consider words, thoughts, actions, relationships.

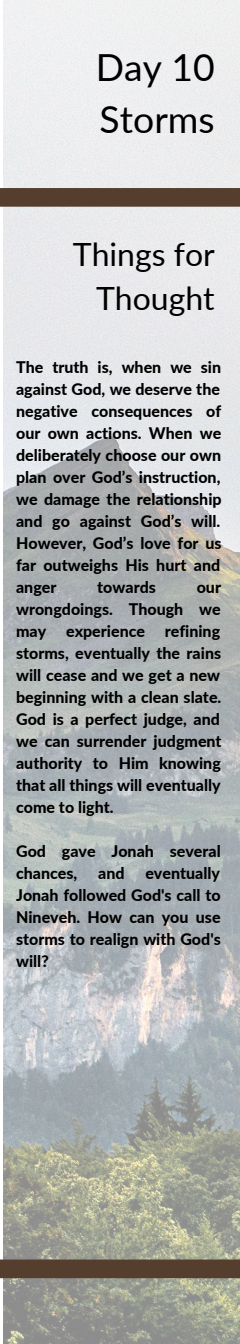
Guided Prayer

- Praise God for His simultaneous wrath and mercy, which we cannot understand.
- Thank God for His grace and mercy in withholding punishment though we deserve it.
- Confess our desire to play the judge over our own life circumstances and in our relationships with others.
- Proclaim submission to personal refinement and surrender to God's timely judgement of the Earth.

Things for Thought

The truth is, when we sin against God, we deserve the negative consequences of our own actions. When we deliberately choose our own plan over God's instruction, we damage the relationship and go against God's will. However, God's love for us far outweighs His hurt and anger towards our wrongdoings. Though we may experience refining storms, eventually the rains will cease and we get a new beginning with a clean slate. God is a perfect judge, and we can surrender judgment authority to Him knowing that all things will eventually come to light.

God gave Jonah several chances, and eventually Jonah followed God's call to Nineveh. How can you use storms to realign with God's will?



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GOD IS FORGIVING

Day 11
Snow

Framing Verse

"Though your sins are like scarlet, I will make them as white as snow." Isaiah 1:18

Our sin problem is something that we simply can't get rid of on our own. However, Jesus' death on the cross paid for our sins and completely erased them, so that we could be reconciled to the Father.

Main Passage

11 Jesus told them this story: "A man had two sons. **12** The younger son told his father, 'I want my share of your estate now before you die.' So his father agreed to divide his wealth between his sons. **13** A few days later this younger son packed all his belongings and moved to a distant land, and there he wasted all his money in wild living. **14** About the time his money ran out, a great famine swept over the land, and he began to starve. **15** He persuaded a local farmer to hire him, and the man sent him into his fields to feed the pigs. **16** The young man became so hungry that even the pods he was feeding the pigs looked good to him. But no one gave him anything. **17** "When he finally came to his senses, he said to himself, 'At home even the hired servants have food enough to spare, and here I am dying of hunger! **18** I will go home to my father and say, "Father, I have sinned against both heaven and you, **19** and I am no longer worthy of being called your son. Please take me on as a hired servant."' **20** "So he returned home to his father. And while he was still a long way off, his father saw him coming. Filled with love and compassion, he ran to his son, embraced him, and kissed him. **21** His son said to him, Father, I have sinned against both heaven and you, and I am no longer worthy of being called your son.' **22** "But his father said to the servants, 'Quick! Bring the finest robe in the house and put it on him. Get a ring for his finger and sandals for his feet. **23** And kill the calf we have been fattening. We must celebrate with a feast, **24** for this son of mine was dead and has now returned to life. He was lost, but now he is found.' So the party began. **Luke 15:11-24**

Things for Thought

This famous parable is the story of the "Prodigal Son."

The story has two lessons. The first is commonly understood- God loves us unconditionally. His love never goes away.

The second lesson is often ignored- God wants us to repent, or turn away from our sins, and ask for His forgiveness.

Do you have a practice of confession and asking for forgiveness? Do you accept the forgiveness God offers?

GOD IS FORGIVING

Day 11
Snow

Reflection Questions

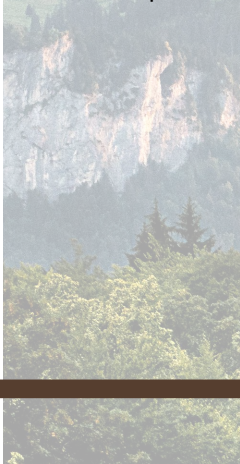
- What are the three characters in this story? Who do you think they represent?
- Who do you relate to most in this story?
- What actions does the Son take in the beginning of the story? How do you think this made the Father feel?
- What is the primary reason for the son returning to His father?
- What is the Father doing at the time of the son's return? What does he do when he sees his son?
- How does this story make you feel? What does this passage reveal about our relationship with God?
- Think of a time when you have "run away" from God-maybe it's now. What barriers have kept you from returning?
- What does this passage teach us about God's reaction to us when we return to Him?
- What does it mean to "return home" to the Father for you? What things might you have to give up, turn away from?

Guided Prayer

- Thank God for His forgiveness that we don't deserve.
- Confess what we need God's forgiveness for.
- Ask and receive God's forgiveness. Move forward feeling cleansed of those sins.

Things for Thought

Jesus' undeserved death and miraculous resurrection covered all the sins of time. When we accept the gift of Christ's sacrifice, we become a part of God's family forever- so we only need to do it once! Nothing we could ever do could revoke it. Yet unfortunately, we are still human and we are still going to keep on sinning. We still need to ask for forgiveness for these sins, but we can do so confidently knowing that as a child of God, Jesus' death has already covered it. No matter how many times we turn away from God, He is always awaiting our return with open arms.



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GOD IS RELATIONAL

Day 12
Us In Nature

Framing Verse

"O people, the Lord has told you what is good, and this is what he requires of you: to do what is right, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God."
Micah 6:8

God is a relational being. Take a walk or play in creation to interact with its Creator.

Main Passage

1 Jesus entered Jericho and made his way through the town. **2** There was a man there named Zacchaeus. He was the chief tax collector in the region, and he had become very rich. **3** He tried to get a look at Jesus, but he was too short to see over the crowd. **4** So he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore-fig tree beside the road, for Jesus was going to pass that way. **5** When Jesus came by, he looked up at Zacchaeus and called him by name. "Zacchaeus!" he said. "Quick, come down! I must be a guest in your home today." **6** Zacchaeus quickly climbed down and took Jesus to his house in great excitement and joy. **7** But the people were displeased. "He has gone to be the guest of a notorious sinner," they grumbled. **8** Meanwhile, Zacchaeus stood before the Lord and said, "I will give half my wealth to the poor, Lord, and if I have cheated people on their taxes, I will give them back four times as much!" **9** Jesus responded, "Salvation has come to this home today, for this man has shown himself to be a true son of Abraham. **10** For the Son of Man came to seek and save those who are lost." Luke 19:1-10

Things for Thought

"Tax collectors were responsible for collecting tolls and taxes on behalf of the Roman government. They were generally free to collect extra taxes from the people in order to make a profit. Opportunities for theft, fraud, and corruption abounded, and tax collectors are portrayed negatively in almost all Greco-Roman literature."
-Harper Collins

Sit with God for a moment to evaluate your relationship with Him.

- Who is God to you? Is there a relationship or simply a coexistence?
- Who is seeking whom in your relationship with Him?
- How can your relationship be strengthened?

GOD IS RELATIONAL

Day 12
Us In Nature

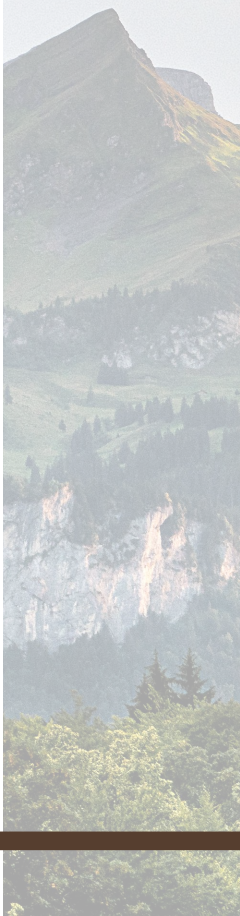
Reflection Questions

- What are some things we learn about Zacchaeus and his character/reputation?
- What surprising thing happens in verse 5? What do you think the crowd's reaction was? What does that reveal about Jesus' character?
- Who is seeking whom in this story, do you think?
- Why do you think Jesus specifically chose to connect with Zacchaeus?
- Where do you find yourself in this story? Are you seeking God out like Zacchaeus? Are you one of the "grumblers" in the crowd?
- **"If you look for me wholeheartedly, you will find me." Jeremiah 29:13**
Because of Jesus, and through Jesus, we are offered direct access to the Father and a personal relationship with Him. Building a relationship requires mutual interaction? What does it look like to seek out God today?

Guided Prayer

- Thank God that He offers Himself to us and is not distant or hidden. Thank God that He sees us, seeks us out, and wants to be with us, despite our brokenness.
- Confess anything that is preventing you from seeking out God and pursuing a relationship with Him.

Things for Thought



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GOD IS SOVEREIGN

Day 13
Seasons

Framing Verse

"He controls the course of world events; He removes kings and sets up other kings. He gives wisdom to the wise and knowledge to the scholars." Daniel 2:21

God has a purposeful hand in every event that occurs in nature and in our lives. Instead of fighting and struggling for control over our circumstances, we should rest in the fact that only God has control.

Main Passage

14 Pay attention to this, Job. Stop and consider the wonderful miracles of God!
15 Do you know how God controls the storm and causes the lightning to flash from his clouds? **16** Do you understand how he moves the clouds with wonderful perfection and skill? **17** When you are sweltering in your clothes and the south wind dies down and everything is still, **18** he makes the skies reflect the heat like a bronze mirror. Can you do that? **19-23** "Can you shout to the clouds and make it rain? **24** Can you make lightning appear and cause it to strike as you direct? **25** Who gives intuition to the heart and instinct to the mind? **26** Who is wise enough to count all the clouds? Who can tilt the water jars of heaven **27** when the parched ground is dry and the soil has hardened into clods? **Job 38:14-18; 35-38**

Reflection Questions

- Write in your own words a brief explanation of how this passage portrays God and His relationship with nature.
- Is it easy for you to submit to Earthly authority? What about to God's authority? Why or why not?
- Which authority do you place the highest respect in? (God, Government, Family, Your own Wants)
- Where do you think you fit into the passage above?
- Reread verse 14 of this passage. and re-write the verse below with your name substituted for Job. What things compete with God for your attention and respect?
- How can you shift to a posture of humility and submission towards God in your thoughts, words, or actions?

Guided Prayer

- Praise God for His sovereignty- His hand and intention in every event and situation.
- Confess that I want to be the sovereign over our own life. (Be specific)
- Surrender to God's control. Sit with God for a moment to listen to anything He may be trying to reveal.

Things for Thought

"God's sovereignty is his right and power to do all that he decides to do."

-John Piper

Each season brings something unique to the year. Spring, summer, fall and winter all have different qualities but are crucial to nature's balance.

What "seasons" have you experienced in your life? What purpose do you think those seasons served?

Listen to the song,

"So Will I" by Hillsong Worship

While listening, reflect on God's sovereignty and your response.

GOD IS FAITHFUL

Day 14
Rainbows

Framing Verse

"When I see the rainbow in the clouds, I will remember the eternal covenant between God and every living creature on earth." **Genesis 9:16**

God never breaks His promises. The rainbow signifies God's promise to Noah, but also reminds us of His promises to us in scripture, all of which will be fulfilled.

Main Passage

6 For you are a holy people, who belong to the Lord your God. Of all the people on earth, the Lord your God has chosen you to be his own special treasure. **7** "The Lord did not set his heart on you and choose you because you were more numerous than other nations, for you were the smallest of all nations! **8** Rather, it was simply that the Lord loves you, and he was keeping the oath he had sworn to your ancestors. That is why the Lord rescued you with such a strong hand from your slavery and from the oppressive hand of Pharaoh, king of Egypt. **9** Understand, therefore, that the Lord your God is indeed God. He is the faithful God who keeps his covenant for a thousand generations and lavishes his unfailing love on those who love him and obey his commands.

Deuteronomy 7:6-9

Reflection Questions

- Have you ever broken a promise? Has someone ever broken their promise to you? Describe how you felt when the promise was broken.
- What promises are stated in this passage?
- Would you rate yourself as a trusting or not trusting person? Why? What have others done to merit/lose your trust?
- Do you view God as trustworthy? Why or why not? Do you think scripture paints God as trustworthy? Why or why not?
- What area of your life do you not trust God in? What do you think might be holding you back?
- How does living with trust change our thoughts and actions about our circumstances?

Guided Prayer

- Praise God that He is faithful in His word and pursuit of us. Confess that we do not return in consistent faithfulness.
- Bring your doubts to God. Wrestle with any area you feel God to be unfaithful. Compare this with scripture.
- Ask for a faithful heart.

Things for Thought

"For all of God's promises have been fulfilled in Christ with a resounding "Yes!" And through Christ, our "Amen" (which means "Yes") ascends to God for his glory." **2 Corinthians 1:20**

All of God's promises to us are fulfilled in Jesus. Who is Jesus to you?

GOD IS A COMMUNICATOR

Day 15
The Wind

Framing Verse

"Then the Lord answered Job from the whirlwind" Job 38:1

God is constantly communicating with us, often in a variety of ways. We often don't hear the wind until we are actively listening for it. Similarly, we have to actively seek out God's voice in order to discern it.

Main Passage

1 My heart pounds as I think of this. It trembles within me. **2** Listen carefully to the thunder of God's voice as it rolls from his mouth. **3** It rolls across the heavens, and his lightning flashes in every direction. **4** Then comes the roaring of the thunder—the tremendous voice of his majesty. He does not restrain it when he speaks. **5** God's voice is glorious in the thunder. We can't even imagine the greatness of his power. **Job 37:1-5**

11 And as Elijah stood there, the Lord passed by, and a mighty windstorm hit the mountain. It was such a terrible blast that the rocks were torn loose, but the Lord was not in the wind. After the wind there was an earthquake, but the Lord was not in the earthquake. **12** And after the earthquake there was a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire. And after the fire there was the sound of a gentle whisper. **13** When Elijah heard it, he wrapped his face in his cloak and went out and stood at the entrance of the cave. And a voice said, "What are you doing here, Elijah?" **1 Kings 19: 11-13**

Things for Thought

"In the most basic sense, prayer is simply a conversation with God, however, it is a conversation that changes over time as we mature in our faith. Part of the process is moving from praying for God to meet our needs toward praying for God's will to be done."
- Lexin

How would you rate your prayer life?

"I am nothing—how could I ever find the answers? I will cover my mouth with my hand. I have said too much already. I have nothing more to say." Job 40:4-5

Sometimes we forget that part of communicating with God is being silent and listening to Him. How would you rate your listening skills?

GOD IS A COMMUNICATOR

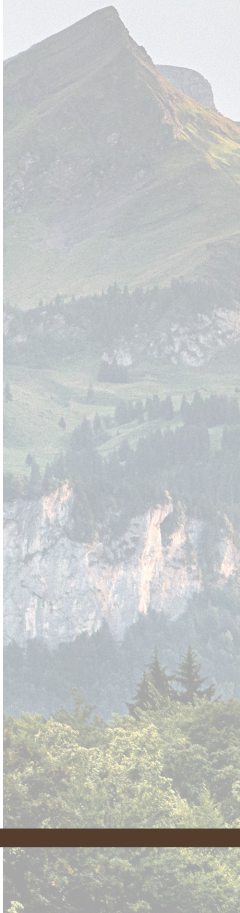
Things for Thought

Reflection Questions

- How does God speak in the passage from Job? How does God speak to Elijah?
- How have you heard God's voice? Which story did it most resemble?
- Think of a time where you experienced miscommunication. How did that situation make you feel? How have you felt disconnected from God's voice?
- God is speaking, but we don't always know how to listen to God. Sometimes we just choose not to. Listening to God requires the right attitude, availability, and discernment.
- Attitude: Do you want to hear from God, or do you just want Him to listen to you?
- Availability: How much time do you give to prayer? What distracts you?
- Discernment: What tools, if any, do you use to identify God's voice in your life? How does God's voice differ from other messages in our world?

Guided Prayer

- Thank God for communicating with us.
- Ask for personal discernment and Christian council to distinguish God's voice.
- LISTEN! Be still, quiet your mind, and reflect on anything God may be trying to communicate with you today.



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GOD IS GRACIOUS

Day 16
Rain

Framing Verse

"Ask the Lord for rain in the spring, for he makes the storm clouds. And he will send showers of rain so every field becomes a lush pasture." **Zechariah 10:1**
God is generous in nature and delights in giving us good gifts. He offers for free the best gift of all time- a close relationship with Him and access to His very spirit. His generosity demands our thanksgiving.

Main Passage

5 Then, teaching them more about prayer, he used this story: "Suppose you went to a friend's house at midnight, wanting to borrow three loaves of bread. You say to him, **6** 'A friend of mine has just arrived for a visit, and I have nothing for him to eat.' **7** And suppose he calls out from his bedroom, 'Don't bother me. The door is locked for the night, and my family and I are all in bed. I can't help you.' **8** But I tell you this—though he won't do it for friendship's sake, if you keep knocking long enough, he will get up and give you whatever you need because of your shameless persistence. **9** "And so I tell you, keep on asking, and you will receive what you ask for. Keep on seeking, and you will find. Keep on knocking, and the door will be opened to you. **10** For everyone who asks, receives. Everyone who seeks, finds. And to everyone who knocks, the door will be opened. **11** "You fathers—if your children ask for a fish, do you give them a snake instead? **12** Or if they ask for an egg, do you give them a scorpion? Of course not! **13** So if you sinful people know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him" **Luke 11: 5-13**

Reflection Questions

- Why is the friend given what he needs? What do you think the message of this story is?
- What does this passage reveal about God's character?
- What instructions does this passage provide for our relationship with God?
- What is the only gift we are absolutely guaranteed when we ask? (Verse 13) Why don't you think God promises anything else?
- In what ways are your prayers to God limited or entitled? What are the things you are too afraid to ask for? What are the things you believe God "owes" you?
- What do you think it means to live by Holy Spirit? What does that look like? How can you live by the spirit today?

Guided Prayer

- Thank God for His graciousness in giving blessings that we don't deserve.
- Ask to receive and live by God's spirit

Things for Thought

"But when the Father sends the Advocate as my representative—that is, the Holy Spirit—he will teach you everything and will remind you of everything I have told you." John 14: 26

When we ask to become a child of God, we receive a "helper" called the Holy Spirit- God's spirit in us. How has your life been impacted by God's spirit?

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The image shows a worksheet titled "REFLECTION". At the top right, it says "Day 16" and "Rain". Below the title, there are many horizontal lines for writing. On the right side, there is a vertical strip showing a mountain landscape with green hills and trees. At the bottom, there is a sentence: "When rain comes, I will thank God for His blessing to the land and His blessings for me."

GOD IS OUR PROVIDER

Day 17
Flowers

Framing Verse

"Look at the lilies and how they grow. They don't work or make their clothing, yet Solomon in all his glory was not dressed as beautifully as they are."

Luke 12:27

God cares for us and promises to give us what we need- even if it's not what we want. Instead of worrying, we live with God's peace.

Main Passage

22 Then, turning to his disciples, Jesus said, "That is why I tell you not to worry about everyday life—whether you have enough food to eat or enough clothes to wear. **23** For life is more than food, and your body more than clothing. **24** Look at the ravens. They don't plant or harvest or store food in barns, for God feeds them. And you are far more valuable to him than any birds! **25** Can all your worries add a single moment to your life? **26** And if worry can't accomplish a little thing like that, what's the use of worrying over bigger things? **27** "Look at the lilies and how they grow. They don't work or make their clothing, yet Solomon in all his glory was not dressed as beautifully as they are. **28** And if God cares so wonderfully for flowers that are here today and thrown into the fire tomorrow, he will certainly care for you. Why do you have so little faith? **29** "And don't be concerned about what to eat and what to drink. Don't worry about such things. **30** These things dominate the thoughts of unbelievers all over the world, but your Father already knows your needs. **31** Seek the Kingdom of God above all else, and he will give you everything you need. **32** "So don't be afraid, little flock. For it gives your Father great happiness to give you the Kingdom." **Luke 12: 22-32**

Reflection Questions

- List the 2 creatures in this passage and what God provides for them.
- What two things does the passage discourage us from worrying about?
- What do you worry about? List as many things as you can in 1 min.
- According to this passage, what do we get when we worry? Why don't we have to worry?
- How does this passage change your thoughts, and actions?

Guided Prayer

- Thank God for His provision of our Earthly needs and of His kingdom/presence on Earth.
- Bring God your worries and doubts. Wrestle with God through any unmet needs or troubling life situations.
- Ask for the kingdom and for focus on our eternal home. Ask God to replace worry with His peace.

Things for Thought

We certainly have practical needs on Earth, but sometimes our worries consume us and distract us from our Heavenly purpose. Is your focus on the temporary or eternal?

"Wherever your treasure is, there the desires of your heart will also be."

Luke 12: 34

Christian author Jennie Allen says it best in her book, [Ger Out of Your Head](#):

"Now, yes, I believe in medicine and counseling. No, I do not think you can just change your thoughts and all of a sudden be out of mental illness. But I absolutely believe that in disciplining and training our thoughts that it can eventually, over time change our minds."

Mental illness is more than just a spiritual issue. God can use medicine and counseling to help realign our thoughts with His. If you are battling a mental illness, God's heart breaks with yours. Please be bold in seeking out the help you need.

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GOD IS UNCHANGING

Day 18
Sunrises &
Sunsets

Framing Verse

"I am the Lord, and I do not change." **Malachi 3:6**

God never changes, and neither does His word. We are sure that the sun will rise and set every day. We can be just as confident in God and His word.

Main Passage

1 Dear friends, do not believe everyone who claims to speak by the Spirit. You must test them to see if the spirit they have comes from God. For there are many false prophets in the world. **2** This is how we know if they have the Spirit of God: If a person claiming to be a prophet acknowledges that Jesus Christ came in a real body, that person has the Spirit of God. **3** But if someone claims to be a prophet and does not acknowledge the truth about Jesus, that person is not from God. Such a person has the spirit of the Antichrist, which you heard is coming into the world and indeed is already here. **4** But you belong to God, my dear children. You have already won a victory over those people, because the Spirit who lives in you is greater than the spirit who lives in the world. **5** Those people belong to this world, so they speak from the world's viewpoint, and the world listens to them. **6** But we belong to God, and those who know God listen to us. If they do not belong to God, they do not listen to us. That is how we know if someone has the Spirit of truth or the spirit of deception. **1 John 4:1-6**

Reflection Questions

- Re-read the warning in verse 1. Why shouldn't we believe everything we are told?
- What is the distinction between truth/truth-speakers and lies/false prophets?
- Where do lies originate? Who listens to lies? (verse 5)
- Where does truth originate? Where can we access this truth?
- What lies do you encounter in your life? Where do they come from?
- We are instructed to "test every spirit" to see what's from God and what's not. What tools does God give us for "testing" events and ideologies? What does it look like to "test the spirits" in your life?

Guided Prayer

- Thank God that He is unchanging and that His word will always be true.
- Sit with God and consider any lies you entertain.
- Ask for God's help in discerning and resisting lies with truth.

THINGS FOR THOUGHT

We certainly have practical needs on Earth, but sometimes our worries consume us and distract us from our Heavenly purpose. Is your focus on the temporary or eternal?

"Wherever your treasure is, there the desires of your heart will also be."

Luke 12:34

If we believe that God is eternal and unchanging, then His word must still be true for us today as it was for the first believers. Explore scripture using the Bible or internet searches and use God's truth to refute the lies you addressed in the reflection questions.

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GOD IS A REDEEMER

Day 19
Pinecones

Framing Verse

"So be truly glad There is wonderful joy ahead, even though you must endure many trials for a little while. These trials will show that your faith is genuine. It is being tested as fire tests and purifies gold." **1 Peter 1:6-7**

When immersed in fire, pine cones soften and explode, spreading their seeds to take root and create new trees. Though God does not create or inflict suffering, He sometimes allows it in order to refine us to be more like Him. He takes our mess and turns it into something beautiful in His timing.

Main Passage

18 When Joseph's brothers saw him coming, they recognized him in the distance. As he approached, they made plans to kill him. **19** "Here comes the dreamer!" they said. **20** "Come on, let's kill him and throw him into one of these cisterns. We can tell our father, 'A wild animal has eaten him.' Then we'll see what becomes of his dreams!" **21** But when Reuben heard of their scheme, he came to Joseph's rescue. "Let's not kill him," he said. **22** "Why should we shed any blood? Let's just throw him into this empty cistern here in the wilderness. Then he'll die without our laying a hand on him." Reuben was secretly planning to rescue Joseph and return him to his father. **23** So when Joseph arrived, his brothers ripped off the beautiful robe he was wearing. **24** Then they grabbed him and threw him into the cistern. Now the cistern was empty; there was no water in it. **25** Then, just as they were sitting down to eat, they looked up and saw a caravan of camels in the distance coming toward them. It was a group of Ishmaelite traders taking a load of gum, balm, and aromatic resin from Gilead down to Egypt. **26** Judah said to his brothers, "What will we gain by killing our brother? We'd have to cover up the crime. **27** Instead of hurting him, let's sell him to those Ishmaelite traders. After all, he is our brother—our own flesh and blood!" And his brothers agreed. **28** So when the Ishmaelites, who were Midianite traders, came by, Joseph's brothers pulled him out of the cistern and sold him to them for twenty pieces of silver. And the traders took him to Egypt. **Genesis 37: 18-28**

This is just the beginning of the story. Please continue reading Genesis 37-41 to complete the reflection questions below.

Things for Thought

God gave Joseph the spiritual gift of interpreting dreams. Joseph's 11 brothers grew very jealous of this gift and the favor it brought him.

While enslaved, Joseph was framed for a crime he did not commit and was imprisoned. While in prison, Joseph continues to honor God by interpreting the dreams of other prisoners. Eventually, God uses this gift to redeem Joseph and his situation.

GOD IS A REDEEMER

Day 19
Pinecones

Reflection Questions

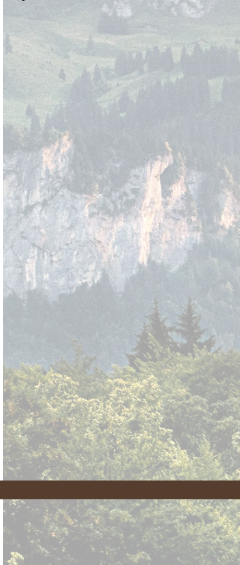
- What kind of emotional and physical struggles did Joseph endure? Who were his oppressors?
- Do you think Joseph's situation was fair or unfair? Do you think life on Earth is more fair or unfair? Why?
- What was Joseph's response to his sufferings? What was his attitude toward God and his circumstances? What is your response to suffering in your own life?
- According to the Bible, God has no fellowship with evil, therefore He cannot create or inflict suffering. After reading this passage, why do you think bad things happen to believers? Why doesn't God always stop or prevent suffering?
- What would it look like to adopt a Joseph-like attitude towards suffering in your life?

Guided Prayer

- Praise God for who He is- what has He revealed to you today about Himself?
- Confess an area where you need refining and reworking. Confess resistance to suffering and refinement.
- Bring to God a situation or relationship needing redemption.

Things for Thought

"If it's not good, God's not done yet." God is reconciling the world to Himself and is in the business of working all things together for good. He takes our suffering and sin and turns it into something beautiful that redeems us and glorifies Him. Sometimes, we get to witness that while we are here on Earth. Other times, God finishes His work on the other side of eternity. Either way, we must be confident in the hope that God already has the victory over evil, and one day all His children will be with Him in paradise.



The image shows a worksheet titled "REFLECTION" in large, bold, dark brown capital letters at the top left. To the right of the title, it says "Day 19" and "Pinecones" in a smaller, dark brown font. Below the title, there are 20 horizontal lines for writing, arranged in two columns of ten. On the right side of the page, there is a vertical strip containing a photograph of a mountain landscape. The mountain has a sharp peak and is covered in green vegetation and trees. The sky is blue with some light clouds. At the bottom of the page, there is a dark brown horizontal bar. Above this bar, centered, is the text "When I see pine cones, I will be reminded that God brings good and beauty out of my mess." in white, bold, sans-serif font.

Day 19
Pinecones

REFLECTION

When I see pine cones, I will be reminded that God brings good and beauty out of my mess.

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Day 19
Pinecones

REFLECTION

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GOD IS WORTHY OF PRAISE

Day 20
Trees

Framing Verse

"A good tree produces good fruit, and a bad tree produces bad fruit. A good tree can't produce bad fruit, and a bad tree can't produce good fruit. Yes, just as you can identify a tree by its fruit, so you can identify people by their actions"

Matthew 7: 17-20

Just as good trees bear good fruit, an active relationship with God should result in us producing good "fruit," or works that show that we have been redeemed and transformed by God. God has done everything for us, and He deserves everything in return. We can use what we have to bear fruit and praise Him.

Main Passage

14 Again, the Kingdom of Heaven can be illustrated by the story of a man going on a long trip. He called together his servants and entrusted his money to them while he was gone. **15** He gave five bags of silver to one, two bags of silver to another, and one bag of silver to the last—dividing it in proportion to their abilities. He then left on his trip. **16** "The servant who received the five bags of silver began to invest the money and earned five more. **17** The servant with two bags of silver also went to work and earned two more. **18** But the servant who received the one bag of silver dug a hole in the ground and hid the master's money. **19** "After a long time their master returned from his trip and called them to give an account of how they had used his money. **20** The servant to whom he had entrusted the five bags of silver came forward with five more and said, 'Master, you gave me five bags of silver to invest, and I have earned five more.' **21** "The master was full of praise. 'Well done, my good and faithful servant. You have been faithful in handling this small amount, so now I will give you many more responsibilities. Let's celebrate together!' **22** "The servant who had received the two bags of silver came forward and said, 'Master, you gave me two bags of silver to invest, and I have earned two more.' **23** "The master said, 'Well done, my good and faithful servant. You have been faithful in handling this small amount, so now I will give you many more responsibilities. Let's celebrate together!' **24** "Then the servant with the one bag of silver came and said, 'Master, I knew you were a harsh man, harvesting crops you didn't plant and gathering crops you didn't cultivate. **25** I was afraid I would lose your money, so I hid it in the earth. Look, here is your money back.' **26** "But the master replied, 'You wicked and lazy servant! If you knew I harvested crops I didn't plant and gathered crops I didn't cultivate, **27** why didn't you deposit my money in the bank? At least I could have gotten some interest on it.' **28** "Then he ordered, 'Take the money from this servant, and give it to the one with the ten bags of silver."

continue to next page

Things for Thought

"Yes, I am the vine; you are the branches. Those who remain in me, and I in them, will produce much fruit...When you produce much fruit, you are my true disciples. This brings great glory to my Father." John 15: 5, 8

Jesus says that bearing fruit glorifies God. We can bear fruit by "remaining" in Him. (Other versions may say "abiding"). What does it look like to remain or abide in Christ?

GOD IS WORTHY OF PRAISE

29 To those who use well what they are given, even more will be given, and they will have an abundance. But from those who do nothing, even what little they have will be taken away. **30** Now throw this useless servant into outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.' **Matthew 25:14-30**

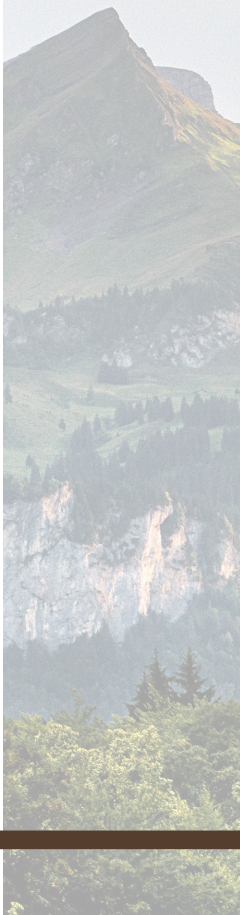
Things for Thought

Reflection Questions

- What are the similarities between the servants? What are their differences?
- What type of Christian does the first servant represent? What type of Christian does the last servant represent?
- Which servant do you identify with? Why?
- Make a list of everything under your influence to steward. Include resources, gifts/talents, and relationships.
- **Romans 12: 1 says, "I appeal to you therefore, brothers, 1 by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship."** God is worthy of our praise. The best way we can praise God is by offering ourselves, and everything we have, to be used by Him. How are you currently using your resources, gifts/talents, relationships? Do they bring personal prosperity or do they bear fruit for God and bring glory to His kingdom? If so, how? If not, why not? Why do you think God gave you these resources?
- What is one choice you can make to praise God with your talents?

Guided Prayer

- Thank God for His nature, His blessings, the resources/abilities He has entrusted to us.
- Confess our hesitation, greed, fear to utilize our resources/gifts for the kingdom.
- Ask for opportunities to utilize our resources/gifts and for awareness and boldness in those opportunities.



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CLOSING THOUGHTS

Framing Verse

"For ever since the world was created, people have seen the earth and sky. Through everything God made, they can clearly see his invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature. So they have no excuse for not knowing God"

Romans 1:20

Evaluation

- Refer back to your goals and learning objectives for this study. How did you meet your goals/Did you meet them?
- What quality of God most resonates with you? Why does this stick out to you? How does this quality shape your relationship with Him? How does it change your thoughts or actions?
- What quality of God is most difficult for you to understand or accept? Why do you think that is? How does this quality shape your relationship with God? How does it change your thoughts or actions?
- How has your relationship with nature changed?
- Think for a moment about God's character. What quality can you think of that was not covered in this study? Create your own devotional using the template below:

Main Passage

Choose a main passage that refers to the quality you chose above. Use your own understanding of scripture or the Internet to find an applicable passage.

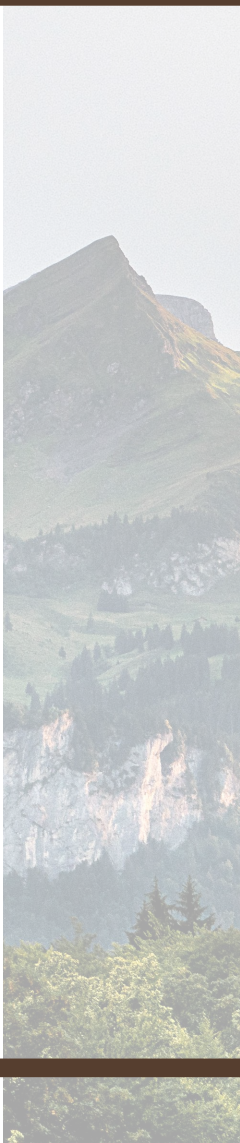
(Ex: "God is Love bible story")

Reflection Questions

- What is happening in this passage? Who is the author/audience, or who are the characters involved?
- What does this passage reveal about God's character?
- Where do I fit in this passage? What does this passage reveal about me?
- How does this passage shape or illustrate my relationship with God?
- What is my response to this passage? How does this passage impact or change my words, thoughts, and actions?

Guided Prayer

- Thank God that He is unchanging and that His word will always be true.
- Sit with God and consider any lies you entertain.
- Ask for God's help in discerning and resisting lies with truth.



NEXT STEPS

Congratulations reader! We hope that this study has transformed your relationship with God and that you have experienced Him in powerful ways over the course of the last 21 days. We pray that doesn't stop now! Continue to seek God out in the Word and in prayer, and He will continue to reveal Himself. Maintaining a quiet-time routine can be difficult, but we want to encourage you to be diligent.

Resources for Further Study

Devotionals

- "Jesus Calling" - Sarah Young
- "Unshakable" - Christine Caine
- "The Purpose Driven Life" -Rick Warren

Christian Reading & Self-Help

- "Crazy Love" - Francis Chan
- "Get Out of Your Head" - Jennie Allen
- "The Ragamuffin Gospel" - Brennan Manning
- "Welcome to Adulthood" -Jonathan Pohluda
- "Celebration of Discipline" -Richard Foster

Internet Resources

- "YouVersion" -Bible app & devotional resources
- "Blue Letter Bible" -biblical commentaries

In addition to these recommendations, you can find over 40 years of devotionals and curriculum on the Wilderness Trek website.

