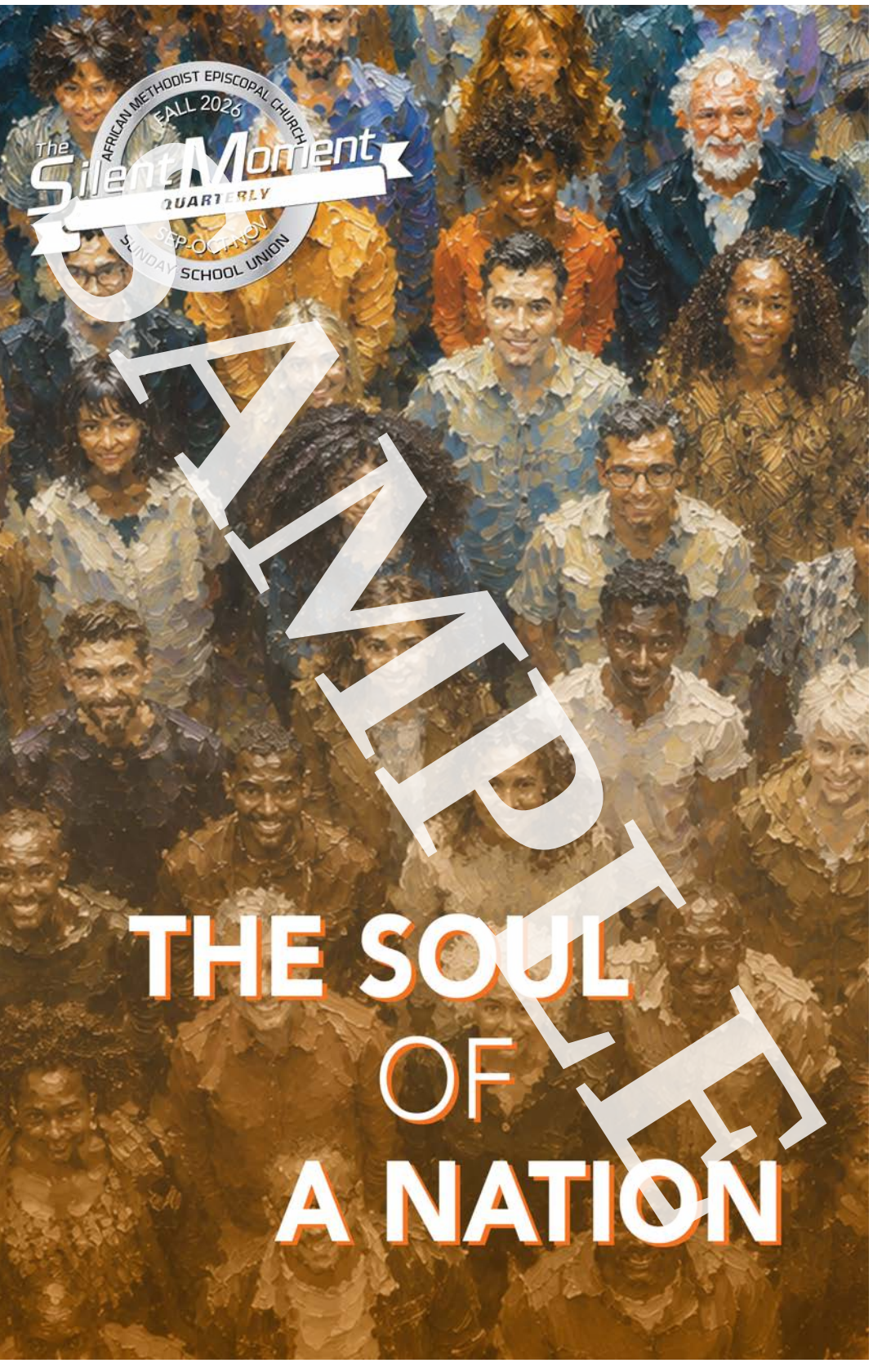




THE SOUL OF A NATION

THE SILENT MOMENT

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The Silent Moment

Again the Israelites cried out to the Lord, and he gave them a deliverer.

—— Judges 3:15



September-November 2026

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Generations: From Canaan to Jerusalem

The title of this quarter almost lends itself to a *Netflix* series—the Israelites sure give us plenty to talk about. We look at their story and mentally scream from thousands of years away, “*WHAT ARE YOU DOING?!*” The Creator of the universe chooses them to be His set-apart people. He promises a sacred relationship with Him, a land flowing with milk and honey, protection against their enemies, and His provision for everything they could ever need, want, or ask for. In return, He expects first place in their hearts.

Simple, right? We look at these chapters in history and wonder why the Israelites can’t get it right. With everything at stake, why do they make it so hard? The idols, the doubts, the egos, the longing for the one thing they don’t have . . . can they not see that God has a plan?

Hello, Pot. Meet Kettle.

It’s tempting to look at the Israelites as if somehow we would make entirely different, morally correct, God-honoring, respectable, perfect choices 100% of the time. And yet, we don’t—at least I don’t. Not today, not yesterday, and not tomorrow. I trip up on the same things as the Israelites. I don’t always trust that God has it under control. I get scared that He’s forgotten me. I think that maybe I should just do things my way to be sure they get done on my timetable. I decide that sometimes there’s a better way than what I know to be His. Just this once, at least. How about you?

My prayer is that these Scriptures and daily devotions remind you of two vitally important truths: 1) God will never give up on

you; and 2) His plan to deliver and redeem you is flawless—and complete. Over and over (and over), the Israelites fail. But when they call out to God, He is always there. This is true for us as well. We are never so far gone that He won't hear us and come running. In fact, He's already there. His plan to save us has been in place since the beginning of time, and all we have to do is cry out to Him.

Will we struggle? Yep. Will we wander away? For sure. Will we doubt and panic and do stupid things out of fear? Absolutely. Will God always be there? Will He still demand first place? Will He lead us back and let us try again when we fall short? Undoubtedly and forever. So, let's give the Israelites a break and learn to see ourselves in their story. The meantime is a little messy, but our promised land is heaven, and our victory song was written on the cross.

May His mercy, grace, and peace be yours.

Karen

Approach Each Day With a Heavenly Perspective

Using these devotions, you'll read the recommended text of the Bible, consider how its message applies to your life, then use the brief prayer to begin a conversation with God.

If you follow the ISSL Series, you'll likely notice that these devotions align with the ISSL Home Daily Bible Readings. Every day you pick up this devotional, countless people around the world are reading and studying the same verses as you. Opening the Bible each day invites us to a deeper fellowship with Christ as we apply God's Word to our lives.

September 1

See What God Has Promised

So Abram went to live near the great trees of Mamre at Hebron, where he pitched his tents. There he built an altar to the LORD (Genesis 13:18).

Scripture: Genesis 13:14–18

Song: “Standing on the Promises”

Promises are at the center of public life and everyday experience. Politicians offer promises to convince voters to support them. Most of us regularly sign contracts binding companies to deliver what they’ve promised, and we make a promise when we initiate a lease or take out a mortgage. Lawyers build careers, and court dockets are filled with disputes over promises made and broken.

But no one is suing God for breach of contract. The Scripture record as well as history confirm that God kept the promise in today’s passage. Seeing that gives us confidence to believe He will keep the myriads of promises sprinkled throughout the Bible. Reading one of them after another gives us courage to face life another day.

We may find it difficult to believe some of God’s promises. When that happens, we can imagine how Abram felt when he heard the words we’re reading today. God was prophesying something that seemed impossible to Abram. We do well to remember him when we doubt whether God’s promises can come true in our lives too.

Father, thank You for Your faithfulness to deliver on all You’ve promised. Encourage me as I choose to believe what You’ve told me is true. In Jesus’ name I pray. Amen.

The Promised Land Revealed

Then the LORD said to him, “This is the land I promised on oath to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob when I said, ‘I will give it to your descendants.’ I have let you see it with your eyes” (Deuteronomy 34:4).

Scripture: Deuteronomy 34:1–12

Song: “Great Is Thy Faithfulness”

When I think of promises made to me, two categories stand out. One is the set of promises my wife made when she married me. She stuck with me “for better, for worse, in sickness and in health.” Despite tough times and disappointments, hospital trips and sick bed vigils, she stood beside me. A close second are the promises made by employers and the government to pay me what they said they would. Long before payday, I could count on what I would receive. And when it came time to claim the promise made to me for decades by the government, my Social Security checks arrived on schedule month after month after month.

When God showed Moses the promised land, He was proving how He would keep the promise made to Abraham and his heirs centuries earlier. Imagine what Moses must have been thinking when all he could see before him would soon belong to his people. God keeps His promises!

The biblical record convinces us that God will ever be faithful. “Be content with what you have,” the Hebrews writer advises, “because God has said, ‘Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you’” (Hebrews 13:5).

Father, thank You for all the signs I see that You are keeping Your promises to me. Be with me today. In Jesus’ name I pray. Amen.

September 3

God's Promised Rest

Anyone who enters God's rest also rests from their works, just as God did from his (Hebrews 4:10).

Scripture: Hebrews 4:1–10

Song: “There Is a Balm in Gilead”

When I came down with COVID-19, I had no choice: I had to rest, and this was good. Of course, I did not enjoy the runny nose and aggravating cough. For a couple of days, I had the worst sore throat I've ever experienced. I cancelled my haircut and skipped my weekly Bible study. I didn't visit my wife living in a memory care center. I stayed in bed in the mornings and curled up under a blanket in the afternoons. I shamelessly watched hours of TV; I had no energy for anything more. I was very tired, and so I rested. After five days of isolation, I was ready to get back into the world, but I'll admit I enjoyed all the time I'd had with no obligation besides taking care of myself.

But too often we feel guilty or lazy when we rest. People are counting on us. Our long list of goals and duties contains many items not yet handled.

We do well to remember God ordained rest. Who could be more powerful than God? Who could accomplish more? But He rested, which means taking a break is holy obedience, not selfish indulgence. Sometimes a nap may be the most God-honoring pastime we could pursue!

Father, thank You for giving the command and setting the example for us to rest. Help me to feel Your presence close the next time I take a break. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

God's New Covenant

For by one sacrifice he has made perfect forever those who are being made holy (Hebrews 10:14).

Scripture: Hebrews 10:14–18

Song: “Jesus Paid It All”

When someone close to me made an appointment to visit, I was pretty sure I knew what he wanted. But when he arrived and asked me to forgive him “for everything,” I melted. In just a moment, years of resentment were washed away with my tears. But then he wanted to know what he should do next. He said he owed me restitution, although that thought had not occurred to me. Over the next year he sent me thousands of dollars to repay me for bills he decided he should have covered. Today I wonder if he felt he needed to earn my forgiveness.

And I wonder how many of us feel the same way about God. Do we feel a need to sacrifice to God, work for God, or tell others about God—all to be “good enough” for the forgiveness we know we need from Him? If so, today’s Scripture is a good reminder. The only necessary sacrifice has already been offered. Jesus paid the price we owe.

Gratitude for forgiveness received will always spur deeper devotion than fear of forgiveness unearned. Breathing freely the sweet oxygen of God’s grace, we worship and obey Him not to earn His forgiveness but to thank Him for it.

Father, thank You for providing the ultimate sacrifice to take the punishment I deserve. Help me remember it will always be enough and that You couldn’t love me more than You already do. In Jesus’ name I pray. Amen.

September 5

Whom Shall I Fear?

Hear my voice when I call, LORD; be merciful to me and answer me (Psalm 27:7).

Scripture: Psalm 27

Song: “I Need Thee Every Hour”

My wife is afraid of spiders and snakes, but my fear is vermin. I hate to admit it, but once when we found a mouse in the garage, my wife called me later at work to tell me she had caught it. I don’t even like to see squirrels scurrying along the fence in my backyard. They remind me of rats. And when I thought I heard mice in the attic above my bedroom, I couldn’t sleep. With long breaths punctuating my prayer, I repeated a phrase adapted from Psalm 3:5, 6: “I will . . . not fear . . . for God . . . is with me.”

But the issues the psalmist confronts in today’s passage are much bigger than household pests. He’s facing an army of enemies. Maybe even his parents are against him. And he knows his only strength will come from God.

Whatever our fear, there’s much to help us in today’s psalm. Not only will God be with us, but He can lift us above the thing we fear. We can live holier, more obedient lives, as we turn to God in the face of our oppression. And in the shadows of the night, we can cope with our fears by breathing deeply and repeating these words: “Hear my . . . voice when . . . I call, Lord.”

Father, help me to see how You are protecting me today from the consequences of what I fear most. In Jesus’ name I pray. Amen.

Be Strong and Courageous

Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged, for the LORD your God will be with you wherever you go (Joshua 1:9).

Scripture: Joshua 1:1–11

Song: “Same God”

Do a Google search for “locker room pep talk,” and you’ll find dozens of them, almost all sharing common attributes. They’re energetic. They remind the team of what they’ve accomplished, all they’ve learned in practice, and how they’ve overcome other excellent teams. They challenge players to depend on their teammates and to find in themselves the strength to win.

Today’s Scripture is a pep talk of another kind, directly from God, and it’s not at all about depending on yourself or any other person. Here God tells Joshua, again and again, to be strong and courageous—not because of his people or himself, but because God’s strong arm will support him, and God’s sure Word will direct him. Joshua does not need athletic prowess but humble obedience to accomplish the daunting tasks God has set before him. God will be the source of his victory.

That same God is available today for every believer. When we study God’s Word and embrace His will, we can obey with confidence that He will not fail us. God can be just as present with us as He was with Joshua. When you’re as committed to His purposes as Joshua was, “The Lord your God will be with you.”

Father, give me grace to rely on You instead of myself and to seek and see the strength You’ve promised to those who depend on You. In Jesus’ name I pray. Amen.

September 7

Hold Fast to the Teachings

So then, brothers and sisters, stand firm and hold fast to the teachings we passed on to you, whether by word of mouth or by letter (2 Thessalonians 2:15).

Scripture: 2 Thessalonians 2:13–17

Song: “Basics of Life”

Whether it’s working on a church day when I don’t *have* to, being too insecure to speak up when I should, or simply skipping daily Bible reading because I’m too tired, there are countless times I’ve been tempted to hide my beliefs or “ease up” on my spiritual practices. And Christians of old likely faced similar temptations.

It’s easy for doctrine to become a religion without feeling. But the guidelines Jesus gave Paul were intended to fuel our faith while keeping us steady. When society’s morals shift, instead of questioning our own stances, these beliefs of right and wrong guide us back to the straight and narrow path Jesus knew few would choose.

The world is always going to want us to compromise and bend “the rules” to make life more convenient. But Christianity isn’t about convenience. We are called to be set apart, just as Israel was expected to act differently than all other nations. We are called to hold fast, unchanging, to God’s never-changing Word.

Father, keep me constant and faithful when I am tempted to give in to the world’s ideals. Guide me today and always in Your truth. In Jesus’ name I pray. Amen.

Victory at the Sea

And when the Israelites saw the mighty hand of the LORD displayed against the Egyptians, the people feared the LORD and put their trust in him and in Moses his servant (Exodus 14:31).

Scripture: Exodus 14:21–31

Song: “I’m Gonna See a Victory”

While in college, I lived independently and spent my days working and my evenings writing papers. Sometimes bills were breathing down my neck that I honestly didn’t think I could pay on time. I’d work hard, manage my time and finances diligently, and pray fervently. Then, a random refund would appear on my account, and everything would work out. God always provided.

Old Testament stories aren’t just metaphors. Although our “battles” are less physical than in the days of Exodus, they are no less stressful. Let’s claim the promise that no weapon held against us is stronger than the God we serve. Let’s trust Him to give us victory. Our minds wage an unseen war, but God is still God!

The Lord wants to demonstrate His capability, like parting a sea for His people to evade the enemy or showing He cares about our simplest problems just to bolster our faith. No issue is too small or great for God.

Father, help me trust that You can use my life as a demonstration of Your power. Give me victory over all temptations, mental struggles, and health concerns. In Jesus’ name I pray. Amen.

September 9

The Lord Goes Before Us

And the cloud of the LORD was upon them by day when they set out from the camp (Numbers 10:34).

Scripture: Numbers 10:29–36

Song: “Sometimes by Step”

I heard a crash from upstairs and froze outside the front door. None of my roommates was home, and the house was completely dark with the light switch out of reach. With a healthy dose of fear, I returned to my car. When the police arrived, they took the situation seriously, calmly inspecting the home to ensure every square foot was safe. How silly I felt when all they found were shampoo bottles on the bottom of the bathtub! But they assured me they were glad I called instead of taking the risk.

Similarly, we may be tempted to trust our own instincts, not wanting to “bother” the Lord—until we find ourselves in a crisis or a crossroads, when we start asking why He’s abandoned us. Sometimes we just need to call on Jesus to reveal our next move.

The Lord has gone before us; He is aware of our surroundings, our futures, our every step. Even when the situation seems grim or we don’t actually feel Him, if we have committed our lives to following Him, we can guarantee He really is leading us. He’s the safe haven we run to and the pillar of fire we (figuratively) pursue.

Father, remind me that You are guiding me. Reveal Your presence in every situation. Keep me in the path You’ve chosen for my life. In Jesus’ name I pray. Amen.

Do Not Be Afraid

But he said to them, “It is I; don’t be afraid” (John 6:20).

Scripture: John 6:15–21

Song: “No Longer Slaves”

The idea of solo travel as a female was exhilarating. But as I boarded my flight to Morocco, the jitters settled in. Then, a native Moroccan couple sat next to me, shared their sandwiches, and talked excitedly about their country. Turns out, the husband was a highly respected former soccer player. Not only did they tell me to follow them through security, but they also offered me a ride to my hotel. Of course, I hesitated. But after watching their character, how others treated them, and knowing their daughter and grandson were picking them up, I felt peace.

The media encourages wariness of strangers and panic in response to just about everything else. Anxiety is at an all-time high. While it’s important to use discretion, Jesus never promoted distrust. Instead, in some of the most absurd situations, He told His disciples not to be afraid.

As God’s children, we don’t have to live in darkness. The enemy has no true power except sending mental messages of hate and fear. We can choose to listen to Jesus’ words of comfort and faith to overcome these lies. There’s a trove of blessings awaiting us on the other side of that boundary.

Father, I surrender all my fears to You. Let Your perfect love and steadfast peace consume my heart and mind. Help me push all fearful thoughts aside to hear Your voice of reason clearly. In Jesus’ name I pray. Amen.

September 11

Remember God's Mighty Deeds

“I will consider all your works and meditate on all your mighty deeds” (Psalm 77:12).

Scripture: Psalm 77:11–20

Song: “Desert Song”

My husband and I were elated. I'd just shown him the positive pregnancy test—we were going to be parents! Just a few hours later, trepidation set in. How were we going to provide for our child? My husband was still in college, currently at an internship; I was working full-time but knew I didn't want to work once the baby arrived. We committed these concerns to Jesus and began a fervent job search. A few months before our son was born, my husband landed a full-time position he was not qualified for, making more than he expected.

Human nature causes us to overthink. As the saying goes, “We plan, God laughs.” Truly, He has our best interests in mind! Whether we see Him working or not, we can know He will see us through, and we can praise Him in the meantime.

Take a moment to reflect on your life. Maybe you were steeped in sin, at the end of hope, when Jesus stepped in. Maybe you couldn't make ends meet but had a sudden breakthrough; maybe a supposed stroke of bad luck turned out to be a blessing in disguise. Let's give God the tribute He deserves for the deeds He has done—and those He has yet to do!

Father, You provide for me time and time again. Thank You for all You have done and all You are working behind the scenes to do. I will continue to profess and testify of Your works in my life. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

Remember Jesus' Saving Work

“This is my body, which is for you; this do in remembrance of me” (1 Corinthians 11:24).

Scripture: 1 Corinthians 11:23–27

Song: “He Paid It All”

At age 13, I committed my life to God while attending a church youth camp. The night before camp, I was sicker than I’ve ever been. Yet, when the 4 a.m. alarm sounded, I dragged my depleted body downstairs. Two days into camp, my foot began to ache terribly. My ankle was so swollen that my sandal strap had disappeared. The camp doctor theorized I was bitten by a brown recluse spider. Given our remote location, not much could be done. When the final evening service wrapped up with an invitation to anyone wanting to give their heart to Jesus and be baptized, I hobbled forward. I wasn’t going to let the enemy deter me.

Just as Jesus knew the tests that awaited Him, we all will face tests of faith. But without a test, there is no testimony. Just as Jesus could offer salvation after relinquishing His life before conquering death, so we can testify of the grace given us through His sacrifice.

Perhaps you have a defining moment when you decided to follow Christ, despite whatever hurdles the enemy threw at you. Reflect on that day and the work Jesus did to get you to that life-changing moment. And if you have not yet made that decision, open your heart to the work that Jesus wants to do in you. Don’t let the enemy deter you either.

Father, thank You for Your ultimate sacrifice. Whenever life feels unfair or difficult, point me back to Calvary and remind me Jesus did not die in vain. In Jesus’ name I pray. Amen.

September 13

Crossing Into the Promised Land

“When your descendants ask their parents, ‘What do these stones mean?’ tell them, ‘Israel crossed the Jordan on dry ground’” (Joshua 4:21-22).

Scripture: Joshua 4:14–24

Song: “As for Me and My House”

I sighed in relief. I’d graduated and secured a job in the same week! Albeit, my degree and the career weren’t in the same field, but it didn’t matter. All my hard work was done, right? Well, I still had to prove myself. There was training to survive, new skills to hone, boundaries to navigate, managers to please, and promotions to earn.

Sometimes we think obeying God will immediately make our lives happy and free of worry, the hard times behind us. Maybe the Israelites felt that way when they finally crossed over the Jordan River, but their battles had just begun. Yes, it was tremendous that God brought them safe and dry to the promised land! However, it wasn’t long before they needed to strategize and learn to fight for every inch of land the Lord had marked for them.

While believing in Christ assures our eternal destination, it does not instantly alleviate all of life’s burdens. In fact (spoiler alert) being a Christian actually places us directly in the enemy’s crosshairs. Freedom in Christ comes with true reprieve. But some days we have to reclaim our peace and joy from the enemy’s grasp and rest in what is rightfully ours.

Father, You never promised smooth sailing, but You did pledge to always be with me. Help me face today knowing You already won the war, and the battles I face make me more like You. In Jesus’ name I pray. Amen.

Live as God's Holy People

For you are a people holy to the LORD your God. The LORD your God has chosen you out of all the peoples on the face of the earth to be his people, his treasured possession (Deuteronomy 7:6).

Scripture: Deuteronomy 7:1–11

Song: “Chosen”

One of my childhood hobbies was collecting baseball cards. Now, many years removed from being a kid, I still have many of those cards. I have several old cards that are of some value—a 1964 Sandy Koufax card and a 1973 Hank Aaron card, for example. My most treasured one though is a 1956 Jackie Robinson card. It's my treasured possession.

The condition of that card is good enough that it would be worth a little money, but that's not why I value it. I value it because of who Jackie Robinson was and what he did for baseball. The value of treasured possessions is not measured in dollars and cents.

God's people are His treasured possession. He gave the Israelites a promised land and victory over their enemies. What motivated God to do this was His incredible love for His people. And He still provides, loves, and cares for us today. God wants us to know how valuable we are to Him and to live like it. Let's put Him first and trust Him. Know that He is God, and we are His people. Nothing can be better than that.

Father, as I go throughout this day, may I remember who I am in Your eyes. May I serve You well, always. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

September 15

God Will Love and Bless

“For the LORD your God, who is among you, is a great and awesome God” (Deuteronomy 7:21).

Scripture: Deuteronomy 7:12–26

Song: “How Great Is Our God”

At a recent Bible study, we were discussing God’s love for His people. A friend shared a story about how God provided for him and his family. He’d decided to run his business in a godly manner. Doing so caused him to miss some opportunities, and he was losing money. He and his wife prayed. They wanted to serve the Lord in their business, but they were going under. Not long after that prayer time, the man picked up three new opportunities that he’d never had before or seen coming.

Today’s passage reminds us that God is at work on behalf of His people. If they honor and obey Him, He will bless them. He can multiply little to make it more than enough.

In the same way, God loves us and wants to work in our lives. There are many things that threaten and challenge us. Life can be both hard and scary. In those dark and difficult moments, we can turn to the Lord and know He will stand with us. He will give us what we need to meet the moment. Fear, worry, and stress melt away in the presence of God’s greatness. Nothing this world hurls at us is too hard for the Lord.

Father, thank You for loving me and providing what I need just when I need it. Help me today to trust You even more. In Jesus’ name I pray. Amen.

Strengthened in Every Circumstance

“I can do all this through him who gives me strength”
(Philippians 4:13).

Scripture: Philippians 4:10–19

Song: “You Are My All in All”

A spring storm in our area knocked out the power for several city blocks, including the house of our friends. They weren’t worried, though. They had flashlights. All would be just fine, or so they thought. They got the flashlights out and clicked the buttons, but nothing happened. The batteries were dead. Sitting in darkness, they had to wait until power was restored to have light in their home.

A flashlight without a good battery is useless in a storm. It’s the battery that gives the flashlight power. Paul wanted his readers—in ancient Philippi and today—to know who gave him power.

Paul’s power came from knowing Jesus. Just as He strengthened Paul, Jesus strengthens us too. Whether in the ordinary day-to-day activities or the challenges when our resources are not enough, Jesus is there. He’s not going to abandon us or leave us to fend for ourselves. He will give us what we need when we need it. Paul’s contentment came from deep confidence and trust that the Lord was with him. God met Paul’s needs, and He will meet ours too.

Father, I thank You for Jesus. May I turn to Him today to get what I need for what is before me. In Jesus’ name I pray. Amen.

September 17

Armed for Spiritual Warfare

For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does (2 Corinthians 10:3).

Scripture: 2 Corinthians 10:1–5, 15–18

Song: “The Lion and the Lamb”

“How you play the game matters.” I first heard this statement from a high school baseball coach. His point was clear. He was interested in whether we were practicing things the right way. Were we disciplining ourselves to play the game correctly whether hitting, fielding ground balls, or hitting the cutoff man?

Doing things right is important. Paul makes it clear to his readers that they are engaged in spiritual warfare, but not like the world fights. The weapons used in this conflict are different and so is the battlefield. This battle is in the hearts and minds of people.

We are engaged in that same battle today. The world offers so many thoughts and ideas that go against what the Bible says. At times it can seem overwhelming. But we don’t have to be discouraged. The Lord has equipped us, and we stand on the truth of God’s Word. Looking through the lens of God’s truth gives us a powerful weapon. No matter what, the battle belongs to the Lord.

Father, thank You for being with me in the struggles and battles of this life. Help me to use the weapons of Your Word and truth in my daily life. In Jesus’ name I pray. Amen.

Christ Has Overcome the World

“I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world” (John 16:33).

Scripture: John 16:23–33

Song: “All Hail King Jesus”

This spring has been a season of storms, and not long ago one rolled through central Missouri and left quite a bit of damage in its wake. In a town not far from where I live, buildings were blown down, houses were destroyed, and life was turned upside down. The damage was widespread. Storms can cause a lot of trouble.

You don’t have to live in Missouri to know about storms. Most of us know what it’s like to have trouble in this world. From physical storms to the heartaches and heartbreaks of this life, we don’t have to go far to find trouble.

It’s important to remember that when trouble finds us, there’s hope. Jesus reassures His disciples that despite the chaos the world may throw at them, they can have peace. Jesus wants them (and us) to know the good news: He has overcome the world. Whether we face uncertainty and loneliness as the disciples did after Jesus’ ascension or we deal with the problems and hassles that this life brings, we can be confident that Jesus knows, understands, and will get us through.

Father, thank You for the peace You offer in the middle of our trouble. Help me today to know Your peace and to live in the victory You have won. In Jesus’ name I pray. Amen.

September 19

God Fights for God's People

So Joshua subdued the whole region, including the hill country, the Negev, the western foothills and the mountain slopes, together with all their kings. He left no survivors (Joshua 10:40).

Scripture: Joshua 10:40–11:5

Song: “The Battle Belongs to the Lord”

It was a bad day. A friend of mine received word that her mother's cancer had returned. Then she and her husband found out they had some additional tax payments to make that they had not anticipated. Those were just the first two of a series of hard things that arose on one day. It seemed like they were being pummeled on every side.

There are days like that. The enemy seems to launch an attack, and we feel under constant bombardment. Joshua's story provides a word of hope. The nation of Israel faced some tough foes as they entered the promised land. Those enemies had huge armies, but the victory was not theirs. Why? God fights for His people.

And He still fights for us today. There are times when we have days like my friend had. Things can get really challenging. We feel like we have nowhere to go, no one who cares. On those days, remember God is with you. He fights for you. Before they entered the promised land, God reassured His children, “I will make all your enemies turn their backs and run” (Exodus 23:27). When the battle is hard, know that you do not fight alone.

Father, thank You for being with me. Today may I rely on You to get me through. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

God Brings Victory

The LORD said to Joshua, “Do not be afraid of them, because by this time tomorrow I will hand all of them, slain, over to Israel” (Joshua 11:6).

Scripture: Joshua 11:6–9, 16–23

Song: “Victory in Jesus”

As a baseball fan, I’ve heard a lot of discussions about who the best players are at any given position. I ran across an interesting conversation. The question was, “If you had a game that you had to win or else, do or die, what pitcher would you choose to pitch?” The answer that made the most sense was Cardinals pitcher Bob Gibson. He was intense and determined to win. His 1968 season is regarded as one of the best—if not *the* best—ever. If you had to have a win on a sunny afternoon, you’d do well to give the ball to Bob Gibson. As rock-solid a choice as Gibson is, there is one even more reliable to bring the victory. Who? God.

The people of Israel faced powerful armies greater than them. The Lord, though, made it clear that He would bring victory to His people. He still does.

There are all kinds of things that threaten us today. We may feel like there’s no way to win. Losing seems inevitable, and we are bone tired. During these times may we turn to the Lord. The words “Do not be afraid” resonate with us. If God is for us, why should we fear?

Father, thank You for being with me and bringing victory in my life. May I trust You for today’s battles. In Jesus’ name I pray. Amen.

Welcoming Strangers

So they went and entered the house of a prostitute named Rahab (Joshua 2:1).

Scripture: Joshua 2:1–7

Song: “Rahab’s Lullaby”

During World War II, Johanna Eck faced a moral choice: save herself or others. Risking imprisonment or death, she sheltered the son of deported Jewish friends. After an air raid destroyed her home, she found another safe haven for him. He survived the Holocaust. Eck moved to a tiny one-room apartment but willingly shared it—and her meager rations—with a Jewish girl who escaped a Gestapo raid. While fear of Nazis deterred many from helping, Eck courageously offered hospitality.

Rahab too chooses the righteous path and opens her home to strangers. The king never asks Rahab whether she’s hidden the spies who threaten her country, so he must have known she’d welcomed them in. In his eyes, she’s guilty, and he demands that she bring them out. To defy the king’s request would certainly mean death. Yet Rahab doesn’t fear an earthly king. Her faith in the King of kings guides her words and actions.

We may never have to risk our lives to protect others. But each day as we seek to share the good news of Christ, we may have to conquer fear to stand up for what’s right, speak out against injustice, or simply welcome strangers.

Father, help me choose the path of righteousness, regardless of the risk. In Jesus’ name I pray. Amen.

Faith Without Works Is Dead

I will show you my faith by my deeds (James 2:18).

Scripture: James 2:14–26

Song: “Sent Forth by God’s Blessing”

On transplant day, Rick and Pete carpooled to the hospital. They had been close friends for decades as their families grew up in church. Although Rick had decided to be an organ donor years before, he had never considered being a living donor until Pete could no longer survive without a new kidney. So on February 16, 2018, they arrived at the hospital together, where Rick gave a kidney to his friend.

Out of the depth of his love, Rick took action. According to James, action is an integral part of a relationship with God. He makes this clear through the example of Abraham, whose lifelong faith was so strong that he was willing to sacrifice his son out of obedience to God. But good deeds aren’t limited to masters of faith. Rahab was a new believer known for her sin. Yet she was so awed by the stories of God that, by faith, she risked her life to save the spies.

James wants us to know that faith and action work together. When we are generous, care for the brokenhearted, or glorify God through our spiritual gifts, we show our love for God, and our faith comes alive.

Father, I know that I am saved by faith and not my works. But today, may my actions demonstrate my love for You. In Jesus’ name I pray. Amen.

September 23

May the Nations Know God's Salvation

May God . . . make his face shine on us (Psalm 67:1).

Scripture: Psalm 67

Song: “The Blessing”

A photograph captures a moment in time, an emotion, a memory. One photo that I treasure shows my son with his great grandmother. At 10, he's already taller and drapes his arm around her shoulders. They look at each other like best friends, big grins verging on laughter. Grandma was known for her blue eyes that twinkled with joy. The photo captures those eyes, filled with love for her grandson, and they light up her face.

God looks at us in much the same way, with eyes so full of love that His face shines upon us. Those who adore us want the best for us, and the psalmist asks the same of God: “Be gracious to us and bless us” (v. 1). But the motivation for God's blessing, the psalmist says, is our praise. The abundance of God should result in abundant praise so that everyone on earth knows God and joins in praising Him for His salvation, guidance, and justice.

Praise comes easily with life's blessings. We want to shout from the rooftops so that everyone hears of God's goodness. But even in hard times when we struggle financially or people disappoint us, we can remember that God looks at us with a love so great that He sent His Son to save us! In all situations, we can shout our praise so others may know His salvation.

Father, thank You for sending Your Son to save me. May my praise of thanksgiving bring others to salvation. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

Faith to Live By

Faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see (Hebrews 11:1).

Scripture: Hebrews 11:1–2, 29–31

Song: “By Faith”

The most famous bobsledding team in Winter Olympics captured the hearts of fans worldwide. Not because they won gold. The men crashed and had to push their sled across the finish line, disqualifying them. The team hailed from the tropics of Jamaica, saw their first bobsled six months before the games, and competed in borrowed equipment. Yet they top the bobsledders’ Who’s Who list because they faced the odds with optimistic faith and hard work.

Another unlikely addition to a Who’s Who list is Rahab. She didn’t build an ark like Noah, offer her son as a sacrifice like Abraham, or lead her people through the Red Sea like Moses. Yet she’s included among these heroes of faith. Why? She heard stories of God’s greatness and believed with faith so strong she risked her life. Her certainty of unseen things and her surety that God would save her reflect the definition of faith.

Rahab’s name is the only one that includes a descriptor—*prostitute*—which seems to increase the unlikelihood of her presence on the list. But it also shows us that a sinful past doesn’t limit our future faith. God’s grace can redeem anyone to lead a faith-filled life.

Father, like Rahab, I am a sinner redeemed by grace. And like her, may I be known for my faith through my actions. In Jesus’ name I pray. Amen.

September 25

God Shows No Partiality

“God does not show favoritism but accepts from every nation the one who fears him and does what is right”
(Acts 10:34–35).

Scripture: Acts 10:34–48

Song: “In Christ There Is No East or West”

An unusual group gathers in Birmingham, Alabama, on Sunday mornings. We come from all walks of life—blue-collar and white-collar workers, residents of a women’s addiction recovery center, individuals experiencing homelessness, former prisoners, close and shattered families. We are economically and racially diverse. But we are all equally and warmly welcomed as we join to worship.

The Bible makes it clear that God shows no favoritism. In this first recorded gospel presentation to non-Jews, Peter realizes that all who “fear God and do what is right” receive forgiveness of sins when they believe in Jesus (Hebrews 10:35, 43). While Peter speaks, the gathered Gentiles receive the gift of the Holy Spirit, undeniable evidence that God welcomes all.

Peter’s speech has much to teach us. For anyone earnestly seeking God, it’s encouraging to know that we can cry out to Him and He will respond without regarding our nationality, past, position, or possessions. For those who already believe in Jesus, this passage reminds us to accept others and, without judging them, present the gospel to all who will hear.

Father, help me throw open the doors of my church and my heart to anyone who seeks You. In Jesus’ name I pray. Amen.

Rahab's Faith in God

“The LORD your God is God in heaven above and on the earth below” (Joshua 2:11).

Scripture: Joshua 2:8–14

Song: “I Believe”

In 1781 astronomer William Herschel noticed a faint, moving object in the Gemini constellation. He had discovered Uranus. As the new planet completed its 84-year orbit, astronomers observed that its path didn't follow the laws of gravity and planetary motion. Something was altering its course. Scientists predicted the cause—an unknown planet—and calculated its location. Using this prediction, Johann Galle made the unseen known in 1846 when he discovered Neptune.

For Rahab the unseen becomes known too. She has heard the story of God parting the Red Sea so the Israelites could pass through. Now she hears stories of the complete destruction of the Amorite kings near her city. Based on these stories, she understands there's something unseen but powerful at work, impacting the Israelites' path. In a profound profession of faith, she acknowledges the unseen source as the Lord of heaven and earth.

Though God is unseen, He's always with us (Matthew 1:5). Like astronomers observing orbital anomalies, we can look for evidence of His presence in the unexpected. We can marvel at a dew-covered spider web sparkling in the sun, knowing He's the creator. We can trace our life history and see moments when He intervened. We can read His Word and be awed. We can know the unseen!

Father, open my eyes and my heart to Your presence in my life and in the world. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

Rahab Is Spared

“Only Rahab the prostitute and all who are with her in the house shall be spared” (Joshua 6:17).

Scripture: Joshua 6:6–17, 22–23, 25

Song: “Never Lost”

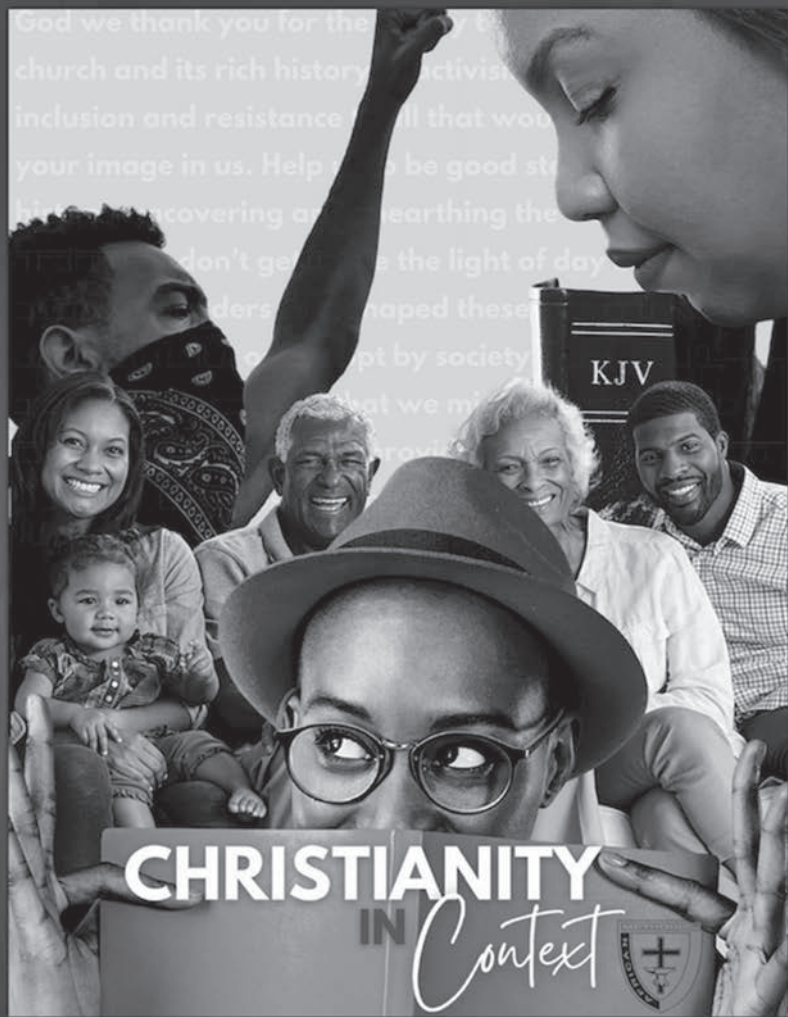
The year is 1768. After building a cabin in the wilderness, Matt promises to guard it while his father retrieves the family. At only 12, Matt struggles to survive. When he’s injured, the Penobscot tribe cares for him. As winter approaches with no sign of his family, Matt is invited to move away with the tribe. Though tempted, he remains at the cabin, determined to fulfill his promise. This survival story is *The Sign of the Beaver*, but the film adaptation’s title focuses on the theme: *Keeping the Promise*.

Today’s passage also focuses on fulfilling promises. God promises to deliver Jericho to the Israelites, the spies promise to save Rahab, and she promises to protect them. All the promises are fulfilled, highlighting the promise keepers’ faithfulness. But these promises require trust. The spies trust Rahab with their lives, she trusts them with hers, and the Israelites trust God to collapse the city’s walls. Obedience is required as well. The spies follow Rahab’s instructions, she follows theirs, and God’s people march around the city.

Through His Word, God continues to make us promises of salvation, guidance, peace, and protection. He promises never to leave us or forsake us, to love us always. Because God is trustworthy, we can obey Him without fear and find hope in His promises.

Father, as I trust You to fulfill Your promises, may hope and assurance fill my life. In Jesus’ name I pray. Amen.

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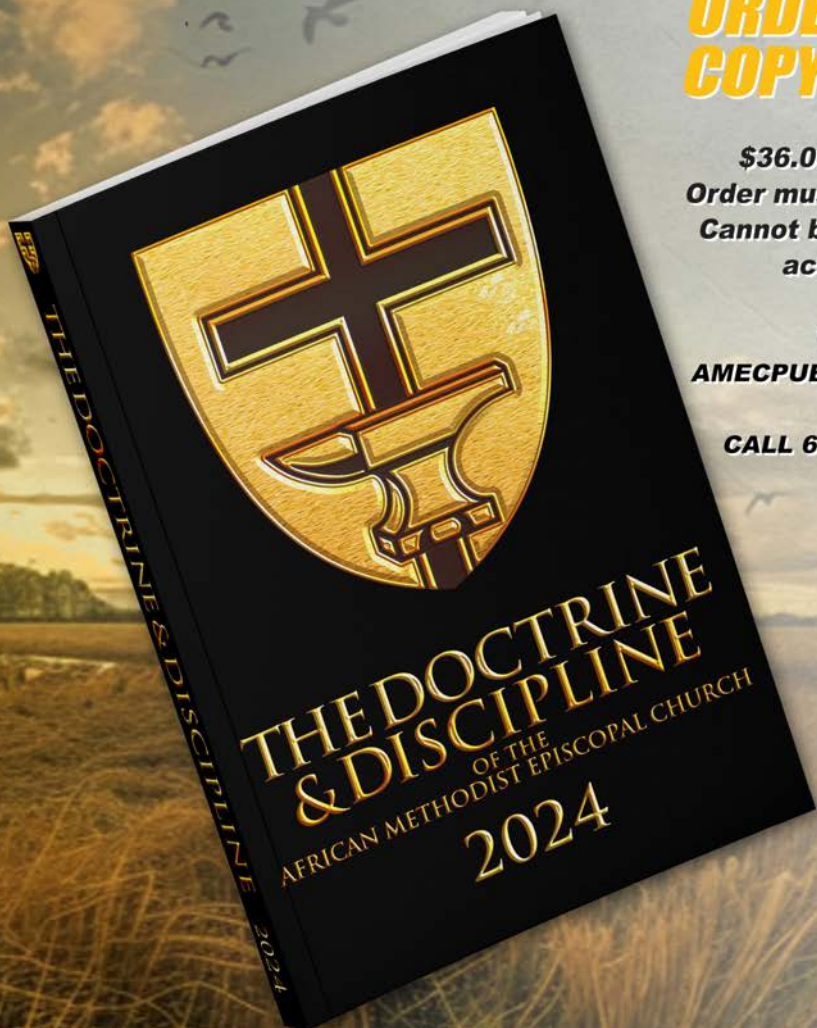
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