



September 4



## Stepping into Strength

James Banks



*Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful.* [Colossians 4:2](#)

**Read:** [1 Chronicles 16:11–18, 28–36](#)

**Bible in a Year:** [Psalms 143–145](#); [1 Corinthians 14:21–40](#)

“Will we see any snakes?”

Allan, a young boy in our neighborhood, asked that question as we started on a hike by the river near our home.

“We never have before,” I answered, “but we might! So let’s ask God to keep us safe.” We paused, prayed together, and kept walking.

Several minutes later my wife, Cari, suddenly took a quick step backward, narrowly avoiding a poisonous copperhead partially coiled on the path ahead. We waited as the snake left the trail, giving it a wide berth. Then we paused and thanked God nothing had happened. I believe that through Allan’s question, God had prepared us for the encounter, and our prayer was part of His providential care.

Our brush with danger that evening brings to mind the importance of David’s words: “Look to the Lord and his strength; seek his face always” (1 Chron. 16:11). This advice was part of a psalm celebrating the return of the ark of the covenant to Jerusalem. It recounts God’s faithfulness to His people in their struggles throughout history, reminding them to always praise Him and “cry out” to Him (v. 35).

What does it mean to “seek [God’s] face”? It means we turn our hearts toward Him in even the most mundane moments. Sometimes our prayers are answered differently than our asking, but God is faithful come what may. Our Good Shepherd will direct our paths and keeps us in His mercy, strength, and love. May we declare our dependence on Him.

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**Prayer imparts the power to walk and not faint. Oswald Chambers**  
Read more from Oswald Chambers at [utmost.org](http://utmost.org).

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September 5



## A Little Bit of Paradise

Alyson Kieda



*He who was seated on the throne said, "I am making everything new!" [Revelation 21:5](#)*

**Read:** [Romans 8:18–23](#); [Revelation 21:1–5](#)

**Bible in a Year:** [Psalms 146–147](#); [1 Corinthians 15:1–28](#)

Gazing out my open study window, I hear birds chirping and hear and see the wind gently blowing in the trees. Bales of hay dot my neighbor's newly tilled field, and large, white cumulus clouds stand out in contrast to the brilliant blue sky.

I'm enjoying a little bit of paradise—except for the almost incessant noise of the traffic that runs past our property and the slight ache in my back. I use the word *paradise* lightly because though our world was once completely good, it no longer is. When humanity sinned, we were expelled from the garden of Eden and the ground was "cursed" (see Gen. 3). Since then the Earth and everything in it has been in "bondage to decay." Suffering, disease, and our deaths are all a result of humankind's fall into sin (Rom. 8:18–23).

Yet God is making everything new. One day His dwelling place will be among His people in a renewed and restored creation—"a new heaven and a new earth"—where "there will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away" (Rev. 21:1–4). Until that day we can enjoy the bright splashes and sometimes wide expanses of breathtaking beauty we see around us in this world, which is just a small foretaste of the "paradise" that will be.

*Dear Lord, thank You that in this world that can seem ugly with sin and decay You allow us to see glimpses of beauty.*

*Read about the life to come at [discoveryseries.org/q1205](https://discoveryseries.org/q1205).*

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**God is making all things new.**

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September 6



## Give It to God

Kirsten Holmberg



*Then [Hezekiah] went up to the temple of the Lord and spread it out before the Lord. [2 Kings 19:14](#)*

**Read:** [2 Kings 19:9–19](#)

**Bible in a Year:** [Psalms 148–150](#); [1 Corinthians 15:29–58](#)

As a teenager, when I became overwhelmed by enormous challenges or high-stakes decisions, my mother taught me the merits of putting pen to paper to gain perspective. When I was uncertain whether to take specific classes or which job to pursue, or how to cope with the frightening realities of adulthood, I learned her habit of writing out the basic facts and the possible courses of action with their likely outcomes. After pouring my heart onto the page, I was able to step back from the problem and view it more objectively than my emotions allowed.

Just as recording my thoughts on paper offered me fresh perspective, pouring our hearts out to God in prayer helps us gain His perspective and remind us of His power. King Hezekiah did just that after receiving a daunting letter from an ominous adversary. The Assyrians threatened to destroy Jerusalem as they had many other nations. Hezekiah spread out the letter before the Lord, prayerfully calling on Him to deliver the people so that the world would recognize He “alone . . . [is] God” (2 Kings 19:19).

When we’re faced with a situation that brings anxiety, fear, or a deep awareness that getting through it will require more than what we have, let’s follow in Hezekiah’s footsteps and run straight to the Lord. Like him, we too can lay our problem before God and trust Him to guide our steps and calm our uneasy hearts.

*Do you have a prayer request? Share it with the Our Daily Bread family at [YourDailyBread.org](http://YourDailyBread.org).*

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**God is our greatest help in times of distress.**

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September 7



## The Ministry of Mourning

David C. McCasland



*Godly men buried Stephen and mourned deeply for him. [Acts 8:2](#)*

**Read:** [Acts 7:54–8:2](#)

**Bible in a Year:** [Proverbs 1–2](#); [1 Corinthians 16](#)

In 2002, a few months after my sister Martha and her husband, Jim, died in an accident, a friend invited me to a “Growing Through Grief” workshop at our church. I reluctantly agreed to attend the first session but had no intention of going back. To my surprise, I discovered a caring community of people trying to come to grips with a significant loss in their lives by seeking the help of God and others. It drew me back week after week as I worked toward acceptance and peace through the process of sharing our grief together.

Like the sudden loss of a loved one or friend, the death of Stephen, a dynamic witness for Jesus, brought shock and sorrow to those in the early church (Acts 7:57–60). In the face of persecution, “Godly men buried Stephen and mourned deeply for him” (8:2). These men of faith did two things together: They buried Stephen, an act of finality and loss. And they mourned deeply for him, a shared expression of their sorrow.

As followers of Jesus, we need not mourn our losses alone. In sincerity and love we can reach out to others who are hurting, and in humility we can accept the concern of those who stand beside us.

As we grieve together, we can grow in understanding and in the peace that is ours through Jesus Christ, who knows our deepest sorrow.

*Father in heaven, help us to “mourn with those who mourn” and grow together in Your healing love.*

*Read Life After Loss at [discoveryseries.org/cb131](https://discoveryseries.org/cb131).*

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**The ministry of mourning with others helps bring healing to our hearts.**

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September 8



## Carried Through

Monica Brands



*Weeping may stay for the night, but rejoicing comes in the morning.* [Psalm 30:5](#)

Read: [Psalm 30:1–12](#)

Bible in a Year: [Proverbs 3–5](#); [2 Corinthians 1](#)

I recently stumbled across some of my journals from college and couldn't resist taking time to reread them. Reading the entries, I realized I didn't feel about myself then the same as I do today. My struggles with loneliness and doubts about my faith felt overwhelming at the time, but looking back now I can clearly see how God has carried me to a better place. Seeing how God gently brought me through those days reminded me that what feels overwhelming today will one day be part of a greater story of His healing love.

Psalm 30 is a celebration psalm that similarly looks back with amazement and gratitude on God's powerful restoration: from sickness to healing, from threat of death to life, from feeling God's judgment to enjoying His favor, from mourning to joy (vv. 2–3,11).

The psalm is attributed to David, to whom we owe some of the most pain-filled laments in Scripture. But David also experienced restoration so incredible he was able to confess, "Weeping may stay for the night, but rejoicing comes in the morning" (v. 5). Despite all the pain he had endured, David discovered something even greater—God's powerful hand of healing.

If you are hurting today and need encouragement, recall those times in your past when God carried you through to a place of healing. Pray for trust that He will do so again.

*Lord, when our struggles feel bigger than what we can handle, help us to find comfort and strength in how You've carried us before.*

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**God is lovingly working toward restoration and joy in and through the pain of our lives.**

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