



August 28

Paying Attention

David H. Roper



Blessed is he who considers the poor. [Psalm 41:1 nkjv](#)

Read: [Psalm 41:1–3](#)

Bible in a Year: [Psalms 123–125](#); [1 Corinthians 10:1–18](#)

John Newton wrote, “If, as I go home, a child has dropped a halfpenny, and if, by giving it another, I can wipe away its tears, I feel I have done something. I should be glad to do greater things; but I will not neglect this.”

These days, it’s not hard to find someone in need of comfort: A care-worn cashier in a grocery store working a second job to make ends meet; a refugee longing for home; a single mother whose flood of worries has washed away her hope; a lonely old man who fears he has outlived his usefulness.

But what are we to do? “Blessed is he who considers the poor,” wrote David (Ps. 41:1 nkjv). Even if we can’t alleviate the poverty of those we meet along the way we can *consider* them—a verb that means “to pay attention.”

We can let people know we care. We can treat them with courtesy and respect, though they may be testy or tiresome. We can listen with interest to their stories. And we can pray for them or with them—the most helpful and healing act of all.

Remember the old paradox Jesus gave us when He said, “It is more blessed to give than to receive” (Acts 20:35). Paying attention pays off, for we’re happiest when we give ourselves away. Consider the poor.

Father, as we go through our day, show us the everyday folks who need our attention. Grant us the love and the patience to truly consider them, as You have so patiently loved us.

Only a life given away for love’s sake is worth living. Frederick Buechner



August 29



Overflowing Fruit

Xochitl Dixon



I chose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit—fruit that will last. [John 15:16](#)

Read: [Galatians 5:16–25](#)

Bible in a Year: [Psalms 126–128](#); [1 Corinthians 10:19–33](#)

During the spring and summer, I admire the fruit growing in our neighbor's yard. Their cultivated vines climb a shared fence to produce large bunches of grapes. Branches dotted with purple plums and plump oranges dangle just within our reach.

Although we don't till the soil, plant the seeds, or water and weed the garden, the couple next door shares their bounty with us. They take responsibility for nurturing their crops and allow us to delight in a portion of their harvest.

The produce from the trees and vines on the other side of our fence reminds me of another harvest that benefits me and the people God places in my life. That harvest is the fruit of the Spirit.

Christ-followers are commissioned to claim the benefits of living by the power of the Holy Spirit (Gal. 5:16–21). As God's seeds of truth flourish in our hearts, the Spirit produces an increase in our ability to express "love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control" (vv. 22–23).

Once we surrender our lives to Jesus, we no longer have to be controlled by our self-centered inclinations (v. 24). Over time, the Holy Spirit can change our thinking, our attitudes, and our actions. As we grow and mature in Christ, we can have the added joy of loving our neighbors by sharing the benefits of His generous harvest.

Lord, please cultivate the fruit of the Spirit in our hearts and minds so our neighbors can enjoy Your sweet fragrance in and through our lives.

The fruit of the Spirit changes us so we can impact the lives of those around us.



August 30



Made Clean

Amy Boucher Pye



I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean. [Ezekiel 36:25](#)

Read: [Ezekiel 36:24–32](#)

Bible in a Year: [Psalms 129–131](#); [1 Corinthians 11:1–16](#)

When I opened our dishwasher, I wondered what went wrong. Instead of seeing sparkling clean dishes, I removed plates and glasses that were covered in a chalky dust. I wondered if the hard water in our area was wreaking havoc, or if the machine was broken.

God's cleansing, unlike that faulty dishwasher, washes away all of our impurities. We see in the book of Ezekiel that God is calling His people back to Himself as Ezekiel shared God's message of love and forgiveness. The Israelites had sinned as they proclaimed their allegiance to other gods and other nations. The Lord, however, was merciful in welcoming them back to Himself. He promised to cleanse them "from all [their] impurities and all [their] idols" (36:25). As He put His Spirit in them (v. 27), He would bring them to a place of fruitfulness, not famine (v. 30).

As in the days of the prophet Ezekiel, today the Lord welcomes us back to Him if we go astray. When we submit ourselves to His will and His ways, He transforms us as He washes us clean from our sins. With His Holy Spirit dwelling within us, He helps us to follow Him day by day.

Lord God, the feeling of being cleansed and forgiven is like no other. Thank You for transforming me into a new person. Teach me to submit to You daily that I might grow more and more closely into the likeness of Jesus.

The Lord makes us clean.



August 31

September >

God's Radiant Beauty

Sheridan Voysey



For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made. [Romans 1:20](#)

Read: [Romans 1:18–25](#)

Bible in a Year: [Psalms 132–134](#); [1 Corinthians 11:17–34](#)

Lord Howe Island is a small paradise of white sands and crystal waters off Australia's east coast. When I visited some years ago, I was struck by its beauty. Here, one could swim with turtles and with fish like the shimmering trevally, while moon wrasses drifted nearby, flashing their neon colors like a billboard. In its lagoon I found coral reefs full of bright orange clownfish and yellow-striped butterfly fish that rushed to kiss my hand. Overwhelmed by such splendor, I couldn't help but worship God.

The apostle Paul gives the reason for my response. Creation at its best reveals something of God's nature (Rom. 1:20). The wonders of Lord Howe Island were giving me a glimpse of His own power and beauty.

When the prophet Ezekiel encountered God, he was shown a radiant Being seated on a blue throne surrounded by glorious colors (Ezek. 1:25–28). The apostle John saw something similar: God sparkling like precious stones, encircled by an emerald rainbow (Rev. 4:2–3). When God reveals Himself, He is found to be not only good and powerful but *beautiful* too. Creation reflects this beauty the way a piece of art reflects its artist.

Nature often gets worshiped instead of God (Rom. 1:25). What a tragedy. Instead, may earth's crystal waters and shimmering creatures point us to the One standing behind them who is more powerful and beautiful than anything in this world.

The beauty of creation reflects the beauty of our Creator.
