

# Room 5020

Dave Branon



*You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done. **Genesis 50:20***

**Read: Genesis 50:15–20**

**Bible in a Year: Isaiah 47–49; 1 Thessalonians 4**

Jay Bufton turned his hospital room into a lighthouse.

The fifty-two-year-old husband, father, high school teacher, and coach was dying of cancer, but his room—Room 5020—became a beacon of hope for friends, family, and hospital workers. Because of his joyful attitude and strong faith, nurses wanted to be assigned to Jay. Some even came to see him during off-hours.

Even as his once-athletic body was wasting away, he greeted anyone and everyone with a smile and encouragement. One friend said, “Every time I visited Jay he was upbeat, positive, and filled with hope. He was, even while looking cancer and death in the face, living out his faith.”

At Jay’s funeral, one speaker noted that Room 5020 had a special meaning. He pointed to Genesis 50:20, in which Joseph says that although his brothers sold him into slavery, God turned the tables and accomplished something good: “the saving of many lives.” Cancer invaded Jay’s life, but by recognizing God’s hand at work Jay could say that “God intended it for good.” That’s why Jay could use even the ravages of cancer as an open door to tell others about Jesus.

What a legacy of unwavering trust in our Savior even as death was knocking at the door!  
What a testimony of confidence in our good and trustworthy God!

*Lord, difficult things come into our lives so often. Please help us to trust You enough to see that nothing is beyond Your control. Help us to tell of Your love even in the tough times.*

---

**By God’s grace, we can have our best witness in the worst of times.**

---

# Invisible Influence

Jennifer Benson Schuldt



*Do not quench the Spirit.* **1 Thessalonians 5:19**

**Read:** **1 Thessalonians 5:16–24**

**Bible in a Year:** **Isaiah 50–52; 1 Thessalonians 5**

On a visit to the National Gallery of Art in Washington, DC, I saw a masterpiece called *The Wind*. The painting showed a storm moving through a wooded area. Tall, thin trees leaned to the left. Bushes thrashed in the same direction.

In an even more powerful sense, the Holy Spirit is able to sway believers in the direction of God's goodness and truth. If we go along with the Spirit, we can expect to become more courageous and more loving. We will also become more discerning about how to handle our desires (2 Tim. 1:7).

In some situations, however, the Spirit nudges us toward spiritual growth and change, but we respond with a "no." Continually stonewalling this conviction is what Scripture calls "quench[ing] the Spirit" (1 Thess. 5:19). Over time, things we once considered wrong appear not to be quite as bad.

When our relationship with God seems distant and disconnected, this may be because the Spirit's conviction has been repeatedly brushed aside. The longer this goes on, the harder it is to see the root of the problem. Thankfully, we can pray and ask God to show us our sin. If we turn away from sin and recommit ourselves to Him, God will forgive us and revive the power and influence of His Spirit within us.

*God, show me how I have resisted Your Holy Spirit. Help me to listen when You speak. I want to be right with You again.*

---

**Yielding to the Holy Spirit leads to right living.**

---

**You can make a difference.**

# An Encounter with Stones



David C. McCasland

*He was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities. [Isaiah 53:5](#)*

**Read:** [Isaiah 53:1–6](#)

**Bible in a Year:** [Isaiah 53–55](#); [2 Thessalonians 1](#)

After centuries of war and destruction, the modern city of Jerusalem is literally built on its own rubble. During a family visit, we walked the Via Dolorosa (the Way of Sorrow), the route tradition says Jesus followed on His way to the cross. The day was hot, so we paused for a rest and descended to the cool basement of the Convent of the Sisters of Zion. There I was intrigued by the sight of ancient pavement stones unearthed during recent construction—stones etched with games played by Roman soldiers during their idle moments.

Those particular stones, even though likely from a period later than Jesus, caused me to ponder my spiritual life at the time. Like a bored soldier passing time in idle moments, I had become complacent and uncaring toward God and others. I was deeply moved by remembering that near the place I was standing, the Lord was beaten, mocked, insulted, and abused as He took all of my failure and rebellion on Himself.

“He was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was on him, and by his wounds we are healed” (Isa. 53:5).

My encounter with the stones still speaks to me of Jesus’s loving grace that is greater than all my sin.

*Lord Jesus, through Your great sacrifice for us, we find forgiveness, healing, and hope. Thank You that we live today and forever in Your love.*

---

**Our sin is great—God’s grace is greater.**

---

**[You can make a difference.](#)**

# We've Got the Power!



Xochitl Dixon

*Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit. [Galatians 5:25](#)*

**Read:** [Romans 7:14–25](#)

**Bible in a Year:** [Isaiah 56–58](#); [2 Thessalonians 2](#)

The loud crackling noise startled me. Recognizing the sound, I raced to the kitchen. I'd accidentally tapped the start button on the *empty* coffee maker. Unplugging the appliance, I grabbed the handle of the carafe. Then I touched the bottom of the container to ensure it wasn't too hot to place on the tile counter. The smooth surface burned my fingertips, blistering my tender skin.

As my husband nursed my wound, I shook my head. I knew the glass would be hot. “I honestly do not know why I touched it,” I said.

My response after making such a mistake reminded me of Paul's reaction to a more serious issue in Scripture—the nature of sin.

The apostle admits to not knowing why he does things he knows he shouldn't do and doesn't want to do (Rom. 7:15). Affirming that Scripture determines right and wrong (v. 7), he acknowledges the real, complex war constantly waging between the flesh and the spirit in the struggle against sin (vv. 15–23). Confessing his own weaknesses, he offers hope for victory now and forever (vv. 24–25).

When we surrender our lives to Christ, He gives us His Holy Spirit who empowers us to choose to do right (8:8–10). As He enables us to obey God's Word, we can avoid the searing sin that separates us from the abundant life God promises those who love Him.

*Lord, thanks for breaking the chains that used to bind us to a life controlled by our sinful nature.*

---

**The Holy Spirit transforms us through His love and by His grace.**

---



# When Beauty Never Ends



James Banks

*Because your love is better than life, my lips will glorify you. **Psalm 63:3***

**Read:** **Psalm 27:1–4**

**Bible in a Year:** **Isaiah 59–61; 2 Thessalonians 3**

I love looking at the Grand Canyon. Whenever I stand at the canyon rim I see new brushstrokes of God’s handiwork that take my breath away.

Even though it’s just a (very large) “hole” in the ground, the Grand Canyon causes me to reflect on heaven. A very honest twelve-year-old asked me once, “Won’t heaven be boring? Don’t you think we’ll get tired of praising God all the time?” But if a “hole in the ground” can be so overwhelmingly beautiful we can’t stop looking at it, we can only imagine the joy of one day seeing the very Source of beauty—our loving Creator—in all of the pristine wonder of the new creation.

David expressed this longing when he wrote, “One thing I ask from the Lord, this only do I seek: that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to gaze on the beauty of the Lord” (Ps. 27:4). There’s nothing more beautiful than the presence of God, which draws near to us on this earth as we seek Him by faith, looking forward to seeing Him face to face.

On that day we’ll never tire of praising our amazing Lord, because we will never come to an end of fresh, new discoveries of His exquisite goodness and the wonders of the works of His hands. Every moment in His presence will bring a breathtaking revelation of His beauty and His love.

*Beautiful Savior, please help me to seek You every day and to live even now in Your presence and Your love.*

---

**We were created to enjoy God forever.**

---

**You can make a difference.**