

Whoever dwells in the shelter of the Most High will  
rest in the shadow of the Almighty. [ PSALM 91:1 ]

## SAFE AND STILL

**A**s a full-of-energy preschooler, my son Xavier avoided afternoon quiet time. Being still often resulted in an unwanted, though much-needed, nap. So, he'd wiggle in his seat, slide off the sofa, scoot across the hardwood floor, and even roll across the room to evade the quiet. "Mom, I'm hungry . . . I'm thirsty . . . I have to go to the bathroom . . . I want a hug."

Understanding the benefits of stillness, I'd help Xavier settle down by inviting him to snuggle. Leaning into my side, he'd give in to sleep.

Early in my spiritual life, I mirrored my son's desire to remain active. Busyness made me feel accepted, important, and in control, while noise distracted me from fretting over my shortcomings and trials. Surrendering to rest only affirmed my frail humanity. So I avoided stillness and silence, doubting God could handle things without my help.

But He's our refuge, no matter how many troubles or uncertainties surround us. The path ahead may seem long, scary, or overwhelming, but His love envelops us. He hears us, answers us, and stays with us . . . now and forever into eternity (PSALM 91).

We can embrace the quiet and lean into God's unfailing love and constant presence. We can be still and rest in Him because we're safe under the shelter of His unchanging faithfulness (V. 4).

XOCHITL DIXON

**In what ways have you seen God's protection in your life? How can you face difficulties knowing that God has you under His wings?**

*Heavenly Father, thank You for providing a safe haven of unfailing love.*

*To learn more about growing spiritually in your walk with God, visit [ChristianUniversity.org/SF104](http://ChristianUniversity.org/SF104).*

The LORD himself goes before you.

[DEUTERONOMY 31:8]

## PRESERVED

While I was clearing out the garden in preparation for spring planting, I pulled up a large clump of winter weeds . . . and leapt into the air! A venomous copperhead snake lay hidden in the undergrowth just below my hand—an inch lower and I would have grabbed it by mistake. I saw its colorful markings as soon as I lifted the clump; the rest of it was coiled in the weeds between my feet.

When my feet hit the ground a few feet away, I thanked God I hadn't been bitten. And I wondered how many other times He had kept me from dangers I never knew were there.

God watches over His people. Moses told the Israelites before they entered the Promised Land, "The LORD himself goes before you and will be with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged" (DEUTERONOMY 31:8). They couldn't see God, but He was with them nonetheless.

Sometimes difficult things happen that we may not understand, but we can also reflect on the number of times God has preserved us without our ever being aware!

Scripture reminds us that His perfect, providential care remains over His people every day. He's always with us (MATTHEW 28:20).

JAMES BANKS

**How does the biblical truth that God watches over His people comfort you? Who can you tell about His faithfulness today?**

*Faithful Father, thank You for watching over me every day.  
Please give me grace to walk closely with You  
in everything I do today.*

Jesus answered: "Don't you know me, Philip, even after I have been among you such a long time? Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father."

[JOHN 14:9]

## KNOWING THE FATHER

According to legend, British conductor Sir Thomas Beecham once saw a distinguished-looking woman in a hotel foyer. Believing he knew her but unable to remember her name, he paused to talk with her. As the two chatted, he vaguely recollected that she had a brother. Hoping for a clue, he asked how her brother was doing and whether he was still working at the same job. "Oh, he's very well," she said, "And still king."

A case of mistaken identity can be embarrassing, as it was for Sir Beecham. But at other times it may be more serious, as it was for Jesus' disciple Philip. The disciple knew Jesus, of course, but he hadn't fully appreciated who He was. He wanted Jesus to "show [them] the Father," and Jesus responded, "Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father" (JOHN 14:8-9). As God's unique Son, Jesus reveals the Father so perfectly that to know one is to know the other (VV. 10-11).

If we ever wonder what God is like in His character, personality, or concern for others, we only need to look to Jesus to find out. Jesus' character, kindness, love, and mercy reveal God's character. And although our amazing, awesome God is beyond our complete comprehension and understanding, we have a tremendous gift in what He's revealed of Himself in Jesus.

CON CAMPBELL

**How well do you know God's character?  
How does it match your perception of who Jesus is?**

*Dear God, help me to grow in my knowledge and appreciation  
of who You are.*

When times are good, be happy; but when times are bad, consider this: God has made the one as well as the other. [ECCLESIASTES 7:14]

## WHO KNOWS?

**A**ccording to Chinese legend, when Sai Weng lost one of his prized horses, his neighbor expressed sorrow for his loss. But Sai Weng was unconcerned. He said, "Who knows if it may be a good thing for me?" Surprisingly, the lost horse returned home with another horse. As the neighbor congratulated him, Sai Weng said, "Who knows if it may be a bad thing for me?" As it turned out, his son broke his leg when he rode on the new horse. This seemed like a misfortune, until the army arrived at the village to recruit all able-bodied men to fight in the war. Because of the son's injury, he wasn't recruited, which ultimately could have spared him from death.

This is the story behind the Chinese proverb which teaches that a difficulty can be a blessing in disguise and vice versa. This ancient wisdom has a close parallel in Ecclesiastes 6:12, where the author observes: "Who knows what is good for a person in life?" Indeed, none of us know what the future holds. An adversity might have positive benefits, and prosperity might have ill effects.

Each day offers new opportunities, joys, struggles, and suffering. As God's beloved children, we can rest in His sovereignty and trust Him through the good and bad times alike. God has "made the one as well as the other" (7:14). He's with us in all the events in our lives and promises His loving care. POH FANG CHIA

**Can you think of an example where a misfortune turned out to be a blessing? How can you keep your focus on God in good times as well as in bad times?**

*Sovereign God, thank You for ordering my life. Help me to praise You in both good and bad times, believing that You work all things for the ultimate good of those who love You.*

**BIBLE IN A YEAR | NUMBERS 34-36; MARK 9:30-50**

Mind your own business and work with your hands. [1 THESSALONIANS 4:11]

## MINDING MY OWN BUSINESS

**Y**ears ago, my son Josh and I were making our way up a mountain trail when we spied a cloud of dust rising in the air. We crept forward and discovered a badger busy making a den in a dirt bank. He had his head and shoulders in the hole and was vigorously digging with his front paws and kicking the dirt out of the hole with his hind feet. He was so invested in his work he didn't hear us.

I couldn't resist and prodded him from behind with a long stick lying nearby. I didn't hurt the badger, but he leaped straight up in the air and turned toward us. Josh and I set new world records for the hundred-yard dash.

I learned something from my brashness: Sometimes it's best not to poke around in other people's business. That's especially true in relationships with fellow believers in Jesus. The apostle Paul encouraged the Thessalonians to "make it your ambition to lead a quiet life: You should mind your own business and work with your hands" (1 THESSALONIANS 4:11). We're to pray for others and seek by God's grace to share the Scriptures, and occasionally we may be called to offer a gentle word of correction. But learning to live a quiet life and not meddling into others' lives is important. It becomes an example to those who are now outside God's family (v. 12). Our calling is to "love each other" (v. 9). DAVID H. ROPER

**What happens when you meddle in other people's business? What's the first thing you should do instead for others?**

*God, teach me to know what it means to love others better.*

**BIBLE IN A YEAR | DEUTERONOMY 1-2; MARK 10:1-31**

I, Daniel, understood from the Scriptures. . . .  
So I turned to the Lord God and pleaded with him  
in prayer and petition. [DANIEL 9:2-3]

## PLEADING WITH GOD

**A** family's prayer time ended with a surprising announcement one morning. As soon as Dad said, "Amen," five-year-old Kaitlyn proclaimed, "And I prayed for Logan, because he had his eyes open during prayer."

I'm pretty sure praying for your ten-year-old brother's prayer protocol isn't what Scripture has in mind when it calls us to intercessory prayer, but at least Kaitlyn realized that we can pray for others.

Bible teacher Oswald Chambers emphasized the importance of praying for someone else. He said that "intercession is putting yourself in God's place; it is having His mind and perspective." It's praying for others in light of what we know about God and His love for us.

We find a great example of intercessory prayer in Daniel 9. The prophet understood God's troubling promise that the Jews would have seventy years of captivity in Babylon (JEREMIAH 25:11-12). Realizing that those years were nearing their completion, Daniel went into prayer mode. He referenced God's commands (DANIEL 9:4-6), humbled himself (v. 8), honored God's character (v. 9), confessed sin (v. 15), and depended on His mercy as he prayed for His people (v. 18). And he got an immediate answer from God (v. 21).

Not all prayer ends with such a dramatic response, but be encouraged that we can go to God on behalf of others with an attitude of trust and dependence on Him.

DAVE BRANON

**When you pray for others, how are you seeking the mind of God?  
How do you seek His perspective?**

*Dear heavenly Father, help me to know You better so that when I pray for others, I can filter my requests through my knowledge of Your will.*

*To learn more about the practice of prayer, visit  
[ChristianUniversity.org/SF120](http://ChristianUniversity.org/SF120).*

BIBLE IN A YEAR | DEUTERONOMY 3-4; MARK 10:32-52

But these are written that you may believe.  
[JOHN 20:31]

## THE REASON FOR WRITING

**"T**he Lord is my high tower . . . . We left the camp singing." On September 7, 1943, Etty Hillesum wrote those words on a postcard and threw it from a train. Those were the final recorded words we would hear from her. On November 30, 1943, she was murdered at Auschwitz. Later, Hillesum's diaries of her experiences in a concentration camp were translated and published. They chronicled her perspectives on the horrors of Nazi occupation along with the beauty of God's world. Her diaries have been translated into sixty-seven languages—a gift to all who would read and believe the good as well as the bad.

The apostle John didn't sidestep the harsh realities of Jesus' life on earth; he wrote of both the good Jesus did and the challenges He faced. The final words from his gospel give insight into the purpose behind the book that bears his name. Jesus performed "many other signs . . . which are not recorded" (20:30) by John. But these, he says, were "written that you may believe" (v. 31). John's "diary" ends on the note of triumph: "Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God." The gift of those gospel words allows us the opportunity to believe and "have life in his name."

The gospels are diary accounts of God's love for us. They're words to read and believe and share, for they lead us to life. They lead us to Christ.

JOHN BLASE

**How might it change the way you read the Gospels if you thought of them as diaries? How are you being led to the heart of Christ through them?**

*Gracious God, thank You for the gift of the Scriptures, written down by faithful hands so that I might believe and have life.*

BIBLE IN A YEAR | DEUTERONOMY 5-7; MARK 11:1-18