

INNER STRUGGLES



Royal Navy Edition



JOHN PHILLIPS

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Foreword

I made a personal commitment of faith in Jesus Christ whilst serving in the Royal Navy during the early 1980s. It was just before the Falklands conflict when I was appointed Chief of Staff to the military Commander in the South Atlantic.

It was a very demanding three months for me with many an inner struggle but I was visibly strengthened by my faith as I took time to read my Bible and to pray. I was grateful to the many family members and friends who prayed for me.

Of course there were many serving in that conflict who would not admit to a belief in God and, yet, in stormy weather, when 30ft waves smashed into their ship, I suspect that there were few who did not pray for safe delivery.

Many who serve in the Royal Navy are confronted by dangerous situations and prayer for protection will often be a natural instinct, whatever beliefs they may or may not hold. And alongside the dangers which they face, they have to deal with the struggles of life with which we all have to contend.

This book looks at some of those struggles and provides relevant Bible verses, not as a sop but in order to show us that God longs to help us in our innermost battles. It is through the Bible that we can understand God's deep love for each of us, a love which He demonstrated by the sacrifice of His Son, Jesus, on the cross.

I pray that *Inner Struggles* will give you comfort and strength to confront life's problems and, more importantly, to realise the hope that we can have in Jesus – both for this life and beyond.

Vice Admiral Sir Peter Woodhead KCB DL

June 2020

Preface

Life is a mixture of happiness and pain; of laughter and tears; of celebration and grief; of soaring and crawling. For some, life brings more joy than sorrow; for others, life is hard with only rare moments of real joy. For us all, there are times when we struggle.

Sadly, our struggles can be the result of our own mistakes and unwise choices but often that is not the case; they may simply be the result of life's circumstances over which we have no control.

Whatever the circumstances of your own struggles, I hope that you will find comfort and help in this book. It shows us how we can draw strength from a relationship with God and through reading the Bible, which is His inspired word to us.

If you are unfamiliar with the Christian faith, I trust that this book will encourage you to explore what it means to have a personal relationship with Jesus.

God longs that every one of us might know Him personally as His child, as we journey through both the joyful and the sad seasons of life.

I pray that God will use this book to encourage you to look to Him and trust Him at all times, whatever your circumstances and whatever your struggles.

Royal Navy Edition

It has been a great privilege to have the Navy & Military Bible Society as partners with us in producing this Royal Navy Edition.

I do trust that the book will prove to be a valuable resource for RN chaplains who provide spiritual and pastoral support to men and women who serve our country.

Acknowledgements

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Val Hall of the Armed Forces' Christian Union has been especially helpful in resourcing testimonies for this edition. I am grateful to her and to all who have willingly contributed their testimony.

John Phillips

June 2020

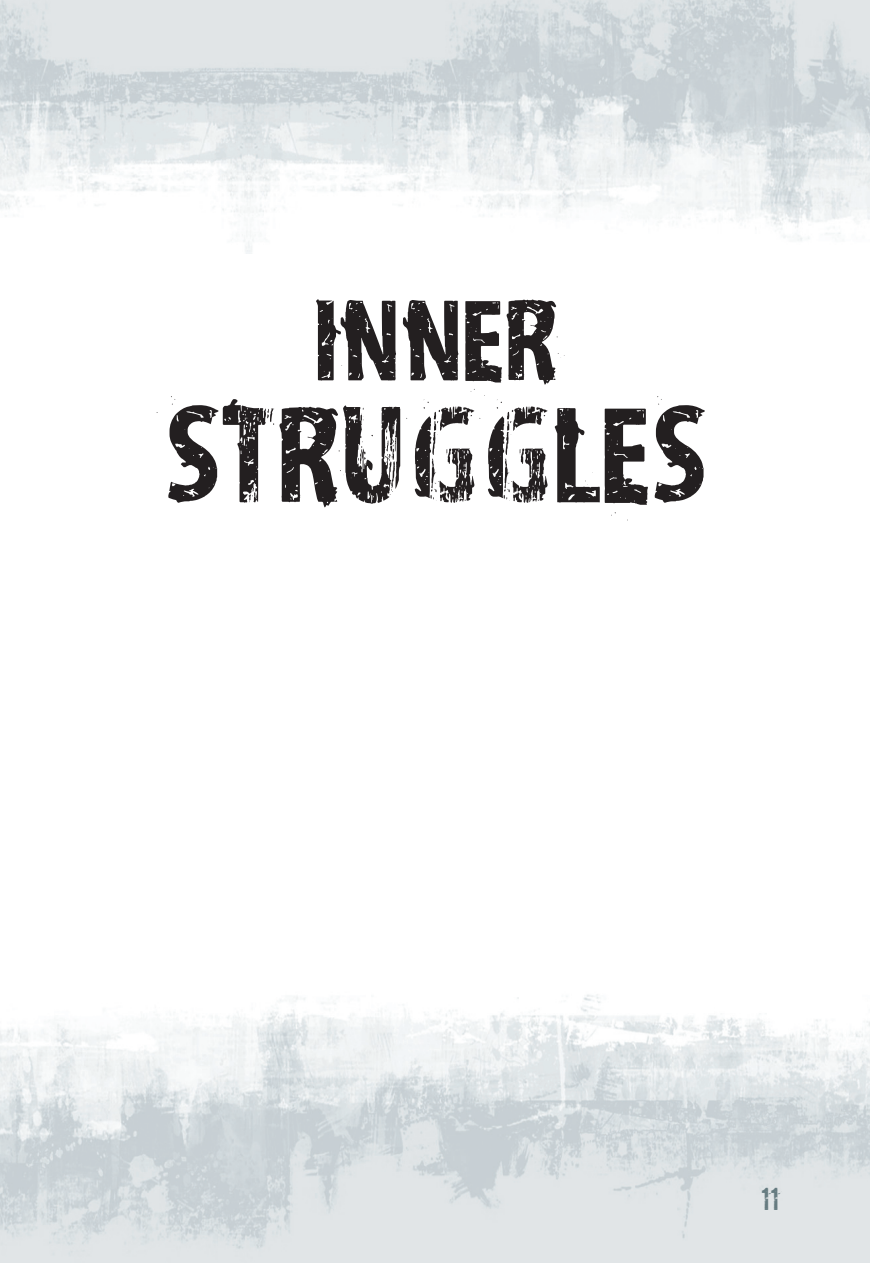
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INNER STRUGGLES

ABANDONED?

In the Psalms we read:

**Those who know your name trust
in you, for you, O LORD, do not abandon
those who search for you.**

Psalms 9:10 (NLT)

**Even if my father and mother abandon
me, the LORD will hold me close.**

Psalms 27:10 (NLT)

To be abandoned by a partner or long-term friend, or even your parents, is truly devastating. We often take it for granted that those whom we have trusted over many years will always stick by us.

Jesus knows what it means to be abandoned. He was abandoned by His closest disciples, hours before His arrest and trial. The Bible tells us that Jesus' soul was overwhelmed with sorrow. Twice He discovered His disciples asleep, after He had asked them to keep watch while He spent time alone to pray.

The following day, one of those disciples, Peter, repeatedly denied that he knew Jesus, just as Jesus said he would. At the time when Jesus most needed their support, the disciples abandoned Him.

Unlike His disciples and unlike anyone else, Jesus will always remain faithful to everyone who seeks Him and chooses to follow Him. He will never abandon them. No one could want a better friend, not only for this life but for ever.

DEAR FATHER GOD

I feel as though I have been abandoned and I need someone who, I know for certain, will always be there for me. Please help me to understand how I can know Jesus.

AMEN

ANGRY?

The Apostle Paul wrote:

‘In your anger do not sin’: do not let the sun go down while you are still angry...

Ephesians 4:26

Anger is a very powerful emotion. At times it is right to be angry: for example, at the widespread injustice in the world, especially the abuse of the poor and vulnerable by those who hold power.

Usually, however, our anger is self-centred: either we are expressing our own feelings of frustration and failure or we are venting our feelings to someone who has hurt us.

The Apostle Paul gives us two instructions. Firstly, he warns us against failing to control our anger: it can so easily cause us to act unwisely, perhaps by taking revenge against a person.

Secondly, Paul tells us not to hold on to anger, for it can quickly lead to deep-seated resentment and bitterness, which can linger, so painfully, for weeks, months and even years.

If there is someone with whom you are angry, why not ask God to help you to forgive the person? Why not decide now to release that person – and yourself – from your anger?

DEAR FATHER GOD

I realise that my anger has become such a part of my life and I do not want it any longer. Please help me to put this incident behind me – forever. Please help me to forgive (*the person's name*).

AMEN

ANXIOUS?

The Apostle Paul wrote:

Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Philippians 4:6-7

Nothing can bring greater joy than knowing Jesus. For this reason, Paul had just told the Christians in Philippi that they should always rejoice.

But Paul realises that there is one thing, above all else, which can rob people of their joy – anxiety. It can be so destructive. When we are anxious we feel as though we are carrying a great burden. We do not want to put it down or allow anyone to take it from us: we hold on to it tightly.

Paul's instruction is very clear: in every situation – whatever the circumstances – we should ask God to help us with the burden we are carrying.

There is no promise that the cause of the anxiety will be immediately resolved. However, we can expect God to protect our hearts and minds with His peace.

When anxiety comes, what do you do? Do you keep it to yourself, perhaps until it becomes just unbearable? Paul's advice is the much better option.

DEAR FATHER GOD

I do get anxious over all sorts of issues. Even now, I am anxious about (*explain the anxiety*). Please show me how to deal with this and please guard my heart and mind with Your peace.

AMEN

ASHAMED?

The Apostle Paul wrote:

**... if you declare with your mouth, 'Jesus is Lord,'
and believe in your heart that God raised him
from the dead, you will be saved.**

**As Scripture says, 'Anyone who believes
in him will never be put to shame.'**

Romans 10:9,11

Jesus encountered two women who had reason to be ashamed. One was a Samaritan whom He met as she was drawing water at a well. Jesus knew that she had had five husbands and was now living with another man.¹

Jesus met the other woman when she intruded on a dinner party at which He was a guest. She was well known as a woman of 'ill-repute'. As she anointed Jesus' feet with an expensive perfume, she wept: no doubt, her tears were tears of shame.²

Jesus did not condemn either woman. He spoke to them with gentleness and kindness. And they responded to Him, knowing that they had been forgiven and could put their shame behind them.

If you are struggling with shame, whether you have managed to hide it from others or whether it is 'in the open', why not bring it to Jesus? He already knows about it and is ready to receive you and forgive you.

DEAR FATHER GOD

I have done things of which I am ashamed, especially (*name the things which are causing the shame*). I realise that they have never been hidden from You. Please forgive me and please release me from my shame.

AMEN

CONDEMNED?

The Apostle Paul wrote:

**Therefore, there is now no condemnation
for those who are in Christ Jesus...**

Romans 8:1

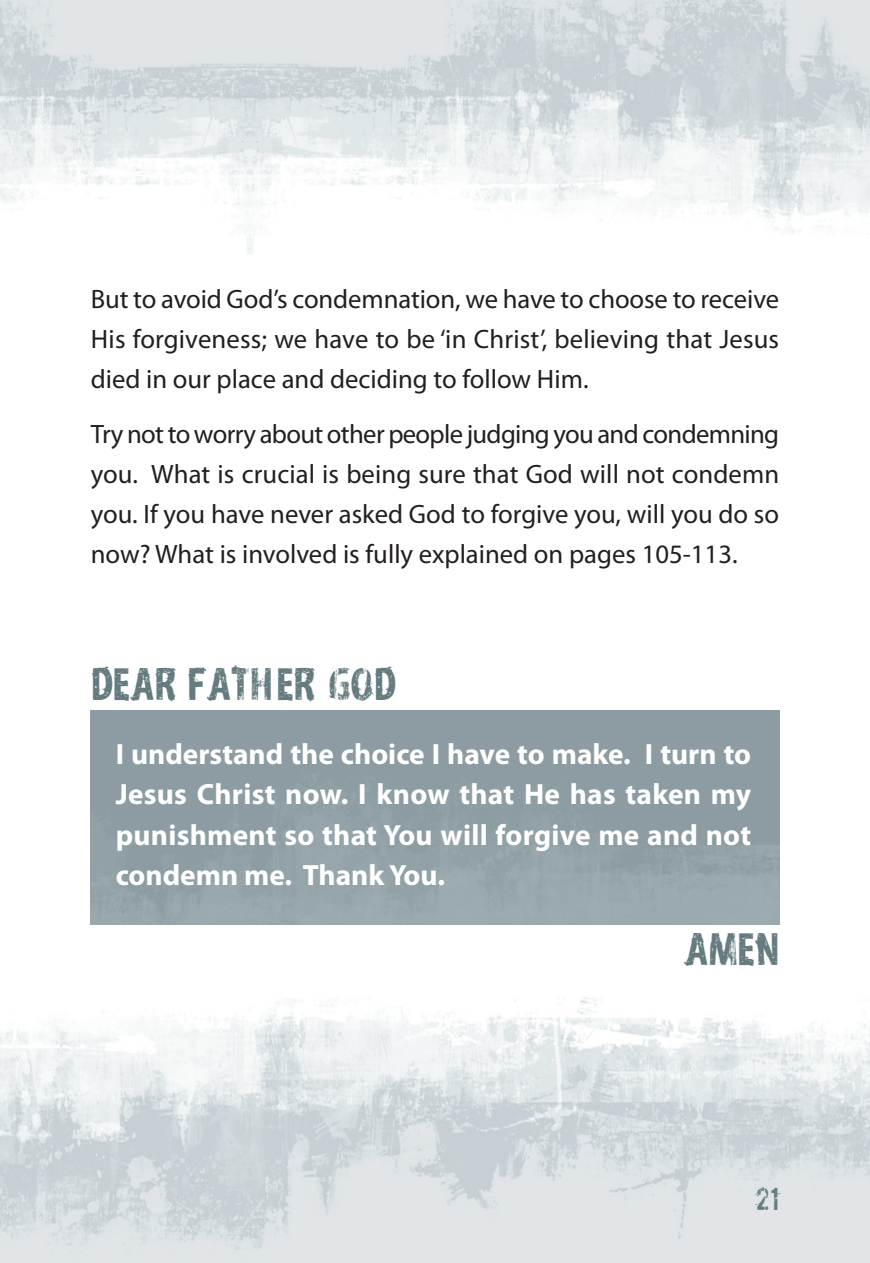
King David wrote:

**The LORD will rescue his servants;
no one who takes refuge in him
will be condemned.**

Psalm 34:22

The world is eager to condemn but God is eager to forgive. And it is God's forgiveness that really counts, for that secures our future with Him – for eternity.

We all deserve God's condemnation because we have all failed to meet His standards. But God is full of mercy and does not want to condemn us. He sent His Son, Jesus, to take the punishment which we deserve. Jesus did that when He was condemned to death in our place.



But to avoid God's condemnation, we have to choose to receive His forgiveness; we have to be 'in Christ', believing that Jesus died in our place and deciding to follow Him.

Try not to worry about other people judging you and condemning you. What is crucial is being sure that God will not condemn you. If you have never asked God to forgive you, will you do so now? What is involved is fully explained on pages 105-113.

DEAR FATHER GOD

I understand the choice I have to make. I turn to Jesus Christ now. I know that He has taken my punishment so that You will forgive me and not condemn me. Thank You.

AMEN

CRUSHED?

King David wrote:

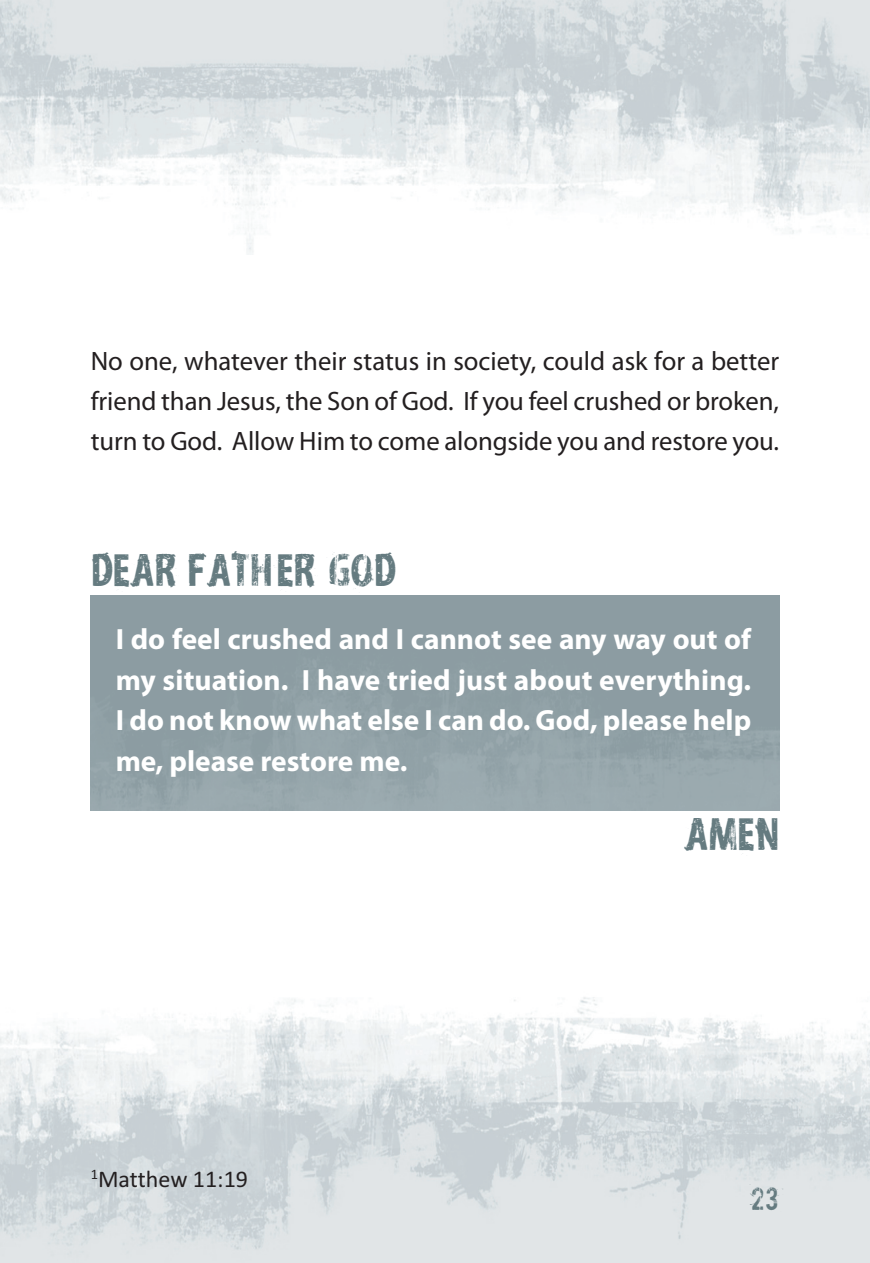
**The righteous cry out, and the LORD hears them;
he delivers them from all their troubles.
The LORD is close to the broken-hearted
and saves those who are crushed in spirit.**

Psalm 34:17-18

David wrote many Psalms in order to pour out his deepest feelings to God. There were times when he was compelled to pour out his thanks and praise to Him for all His goodness.

At other times he was in a really difficult situation and could see no way out: he felt crushed by his circumstances. Yet even in those very dark times, he knew that God had not deserted him.

Jesus Himself chose to engage with those who most needed Him: those whom society looked to crush. It was not that others did not need Jesus: they were just too blind to see their need. The religious leaders were especially critical of Jesus. They taunted Him as being a 'friend of sinners'.¹



No one, whatever their status in society, could ask for a better friend than Jesus, the Son of God. If you feel crushed or broken, turn to God. Allow Him to come alongside you and restore you.

DEAR FATHER GOD

I do feel crushed and I cannot see any way out of my situation. I have tried just about everything. I do not know what else I can do. God, please help me, please restore me.

AMEN

DESPAIRING?

The Apostle Paul wrote:

**We are hard pressed on every side, but not
crushed; perplexed, but not in despair;**

2 Corinthians 4:8

**May the God of hope fill you with all joy
and peace as you trust in him, so that
you may overflow with hope by the power
of the Holy Spirit.**

Romans 15:13

When we are on the brink of despairing, it is natural to want to cling on to the hope that there might be 'light at the end of the tunnel'. But if we cannot see the end of the tunnel, our hope can so easily begin to slip away.

As we lose hope, despair will often take its place. We may begin to imagine the worst possible outcomes to the situation we are facing. That can be exceptionally draining – and painful.

The Apostle Paul suffered both physically and mentally. At various times he was whipped, stoned and imprisoned; he experienced rejection, injustice and abuse. And yet his trust in 'the God of hope' meant that he never reached the point of despairing.

For Paul, hope did not simply mean wishful thinking; rather, it was an absolute confidence that God would not fail him. Today, Christians have that same hope, a hope which will never give way to despair.

DEAR FATHER GOD

I know that I am losing hope. I cannot face the prospect of being in utter despair. Please help me to put my trust in You, so that my hope is restored and I find peace with You.

AMEN

Richard's Story

“

At the age of just 26, I had my first proper engineering sea job as the Deputy Marine Engineer Officer on HMS Eskimo. The ship had only one propeller, one steam turbine, one boiler and one gearbox; it did, however, have a separate gas turbine to drive that gearbox if the steam turbine failed. So the ship was very short of the duplication we all expect when we fly – two engines and independent fuel and hydraulic systems etc.

One week en route across Biscay, the Marine Engineer Officer was off the ship when we found ourselves wallowing in a sea way, stationary and rolling uncomfortably in a heavy sea. I had a cohort of more experienced Chief Artificers under me but none of us could suggest where the fault might lie. We pored over engineering diagrams and we discussed it endlessly: we were floundering – and getting anxious.

**We were floundering
– and getting anxious.**

Aware that we were getting nowhere (and going nowhere!), I went down to the area beneath the plates of the engine room deck. I sat beside the main extraction pump that circulated the condensed steam. I prayed and sensed the Lord directing me to the problem.

I ... sensed the Lord directing me to the problem.

I reported to my chiefs and told them what was needed. Despite their protests that I couldn't possibly be right, it was soon proved that I was. Sadly, I failed to tell them it was an answer to prayer, preferring to take the credit myself and hoping to enhance my status and reputation. I am confident that I would not make that same mistake today.

We must never forget the depth of God's love and care for His people. He wants us to bring to Him even the mundane things of life which cause us to be anxious. How foolish when we neglect what the Apostle Peter taught us: 'Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you.'¹

Richard Meryon

¹ Peter 5:7

Jonathan's Story

“

Within my first year in the Navy, I sustained a very serious head injury, which I was fortunate to survive. In the months and years which followed I suffered from depression and loneliness, and felt increasingly distant from God.

The faith I had grown up with just didn't seem to add up any more. It seemed as though God had abandoned me at a time when I really needed Him. Eventually I stopped going to church and gradually gave up on prayer too.

It seemed as though God had abandoned me ...

I settled into an uncomfortable agnosticism. I couldn't quite explain away the life and teaching of Jesus but I concluded that I couldn't rely on Him in my day-to-day life. And so, I decided I would have to choose my own goals and make them happen

myself. But that gave no sense of meaning and purpose to my life.

I continued with my military career and got married. But I also had some destructive personal habits and was frustrated that my life as a whole just seemed pointless.

Then, through what seemed at the time a series of strange coincidences, I got in touch with some old church friends and with the Armed Forces' Christian Union. That year, my wife and I went to the Christian festival, Soul Survivor, with some of these new connections. It was there that I was finally reassured of God's presence, of His love and of the fact that He had a purpose for my life.

**I was finally reassured ...
that He (God) had a
purpose for my life.**

Although I had given up on God, He hadn't given up on me. My years in the wilderness taught me how empty life is without His love and purpose. I know now that I can trust that He is working, even in the dark situations of life and when I can't see what He is doing.

Jonathan Tweed

Sally's¹ Story

“

As a child I believed in God. I had a deep understanding that He loved me and I gained a good knowledge of the Bible through reading it regularly for myself and through the faithful teaching in my church. But, as an only child, I was always quite lonely.

My loneliness became more acute in my teens as my friends were quick to find boyfriends – and I didn't. I did have one or two and one more serious relationship but that ended. I found myself 'sizing up the possibilities' whenever I met Christian men but every possibility ended in disappointment.

Being disheartened about my marriage prospects was not the reason for choosing a military career! But I struggled with the thought of remaining single and my struggle caused me to question why I was not trusting God.

A Bible verse came to mind: 'For I know the plans I have for you,' declares the Lord, 'plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future ...' (Jeremiah 29:11). But did God really want to meet my deepest need?

But did God really want to meet my deepest need?

Finally God enabled me to accept that singleness is a gift that He gives to some. It is a gift and not a punishment! God got me to that point of relaxing and accepting my situation – that it was fine to be single. But after that, a man appeared on the scene and, yes, he is now my husband!

When we are faithful to God, He really does work out everything in our very best interests, despite the doubts we may have at the time. And we must accept that God does know what is best for us: it may not always be what *we think* it is.

... God does know what is best for us ...

”

¹Not the real name of this person

Robert's Story

“

In February 1982, getting drunk in the Cape Verdi Islands is, by the grace of God, the straw that breaks the back of my resistance. It is a mere two months since being kicked out of the Navy, and I'm fleeing the UK.

Upon discovering, at a tender age, that there was a Navy, enlisting is all I can remember ever wanting to do. I enter Dartmouth at 18, and for the next 30 months, my career teeters on a knife edge. I'm convinced I am destined to be an admiral, despite the warnings and the advice I am given. I'm not rubbish, I'm just unlucky. But the inevitable happens: I'm informed that my captain's application to have me 'withdrawn from training' has been approved.

I arrive home, unannounced, and tell my parents, 'the Navy wasn't for me'. I suspect they know the truth, but they have the grace not to question me. But many at home do. I find it awkward sustaining an unlikely lie. I spot an ad in The Times: a crew was

needed to take a yacht to Cape Town. I leap at it. We stop off in Cape Verdi.

Solo night watches afford time to reflect. It's painful, but I come to my senses: I got all I ever dreamed of... and squandered it. And I'm still at it. I concluded: 'God, if you exist, you couldn't make a worse job of my life than I have.' I did a deal – I will live as a Christian for six months, and in that time, God will have to show He is relevant to absolutely everything in life.

**'God ... you couldn't
make a worse job of my
life than I have.'**

Thirty-three years later, after many an adventure, I get a phone call – how would I like to be a reserve chaplain... in the Navy! I am now full time. It's barking mad... and quite fantastic. God is gorgeous! (Oh, and my latest challenge, given that Faslane is currently my place of work, is seeking out God's relevance in the nuclear deterrent. Who'd be an admiral?)

**Rev'd Robert Jackson,
Chaplain, Royal Naval Reserve**

DISCOURAGED?

God's words to Joshua:

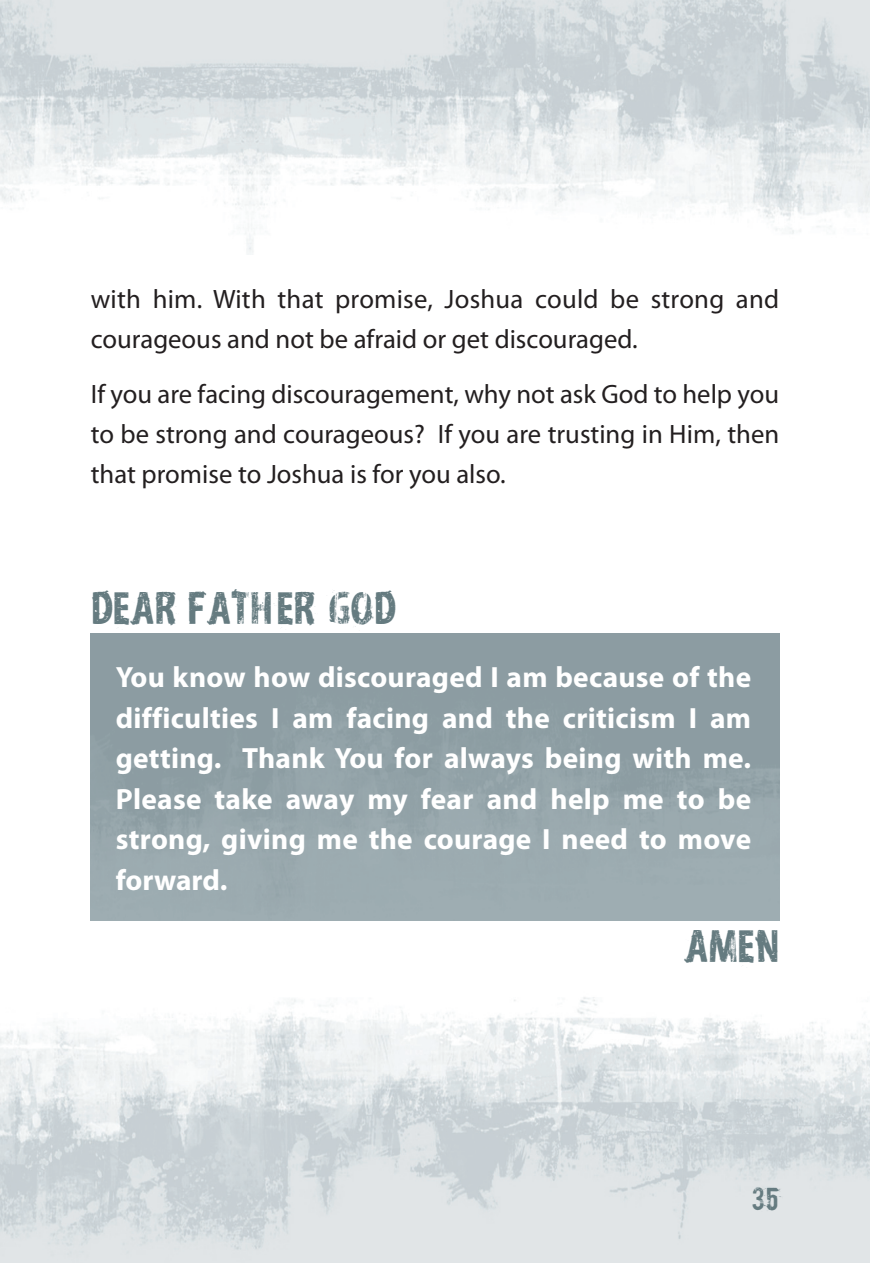
'...Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged, for the LORD your God will be with you wherever you go.'

Joshua 1:9

Discouragement has been spoken of as a disease. If we think of it in that way, then it must be the most common of all diseases. We have all suffered from it and we will always be at risk of being 'infected' again: a discouraged person can quickly discourage others.

We can become discouraged when we fail to achieve our objectives or meet unexpected obstacles. We can also become discouraged by our fear of failure or by criticism from others.

After Moses had died, God knew the enormous responsibility which Joshua would be taking on as leader of the Israelites. He encouraged Joshua with the promise that He would always be



with him. With that promise, Joshua could be strong and courageous and not be afraid or get discouraged.

If you are facing discouragement, why not ask God to help you to be strong and courageous? If you are trusting in Him, then that promise to Joshua is for you also.

DEAR FATHER GOD

You know how discouraged I am because of the difficulties I am facing and the criticism I am getting. Thank You for always being with me. Please take away my fear and help me to be strong, giving me the courage I need to move forward.

AMEN

DISTRESSED?

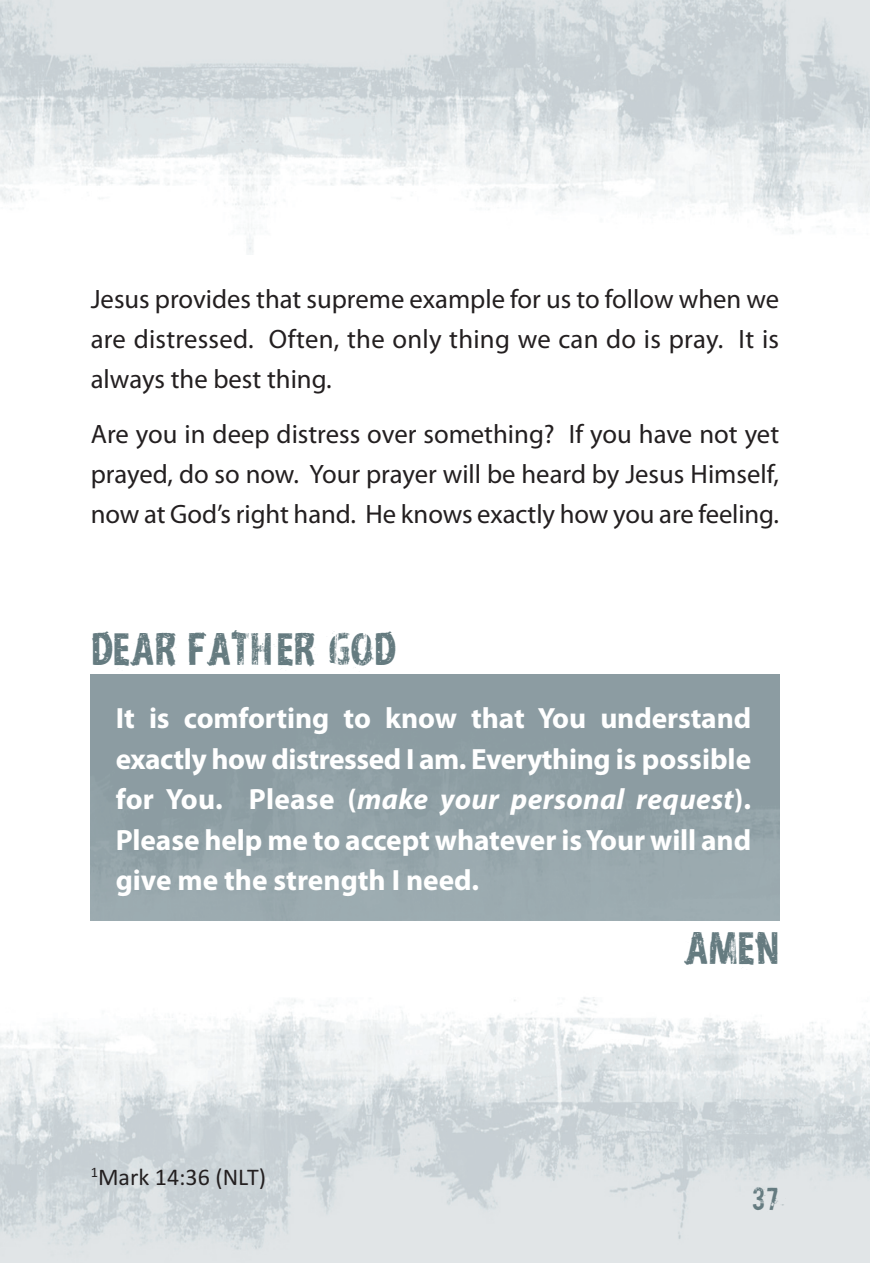
Words of Jesus:

He took Peter, James and John along with him, and he began to be deeply distressed and troubled. 'My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death,' he said to them. 'Stay here and keep watch.'

Mark 14:33-34

We must never think that, because Jesus was God, He was immune from suffering and trouble when He lived on earth. He was both God and Man and He experienced all the emotions that we experience.

So it was right that He was deeply distressed shortly before He was to be arrested. He cried out to his Father, 'Please take this cup of suffering away from me. Yet I want your will to be done, not mine.'¹ Jesus knew the horrendous suffering which the crucifixion would bring but He was willing to obey God's wishes.



Jesus provides that supreme example for us to follow when we are distressed. Often, the only thing we can do is pray. It is always the best thing.

Are you in deep distress over something? If you have not yet prayed, do so now. Your prayer will be heard by Jesus Himself, now at God's right hand. He knows exactly how you are feeling.

DEAR FATHER GOD

It is comforting to know that You understand exactly how distressed I am. Everything is possible for You. Please (*make your personal request*). Please help me to accept whatever is Your will and give me the strength I need.

AMEN

EMPTY?

The Apostle Peter wrote:

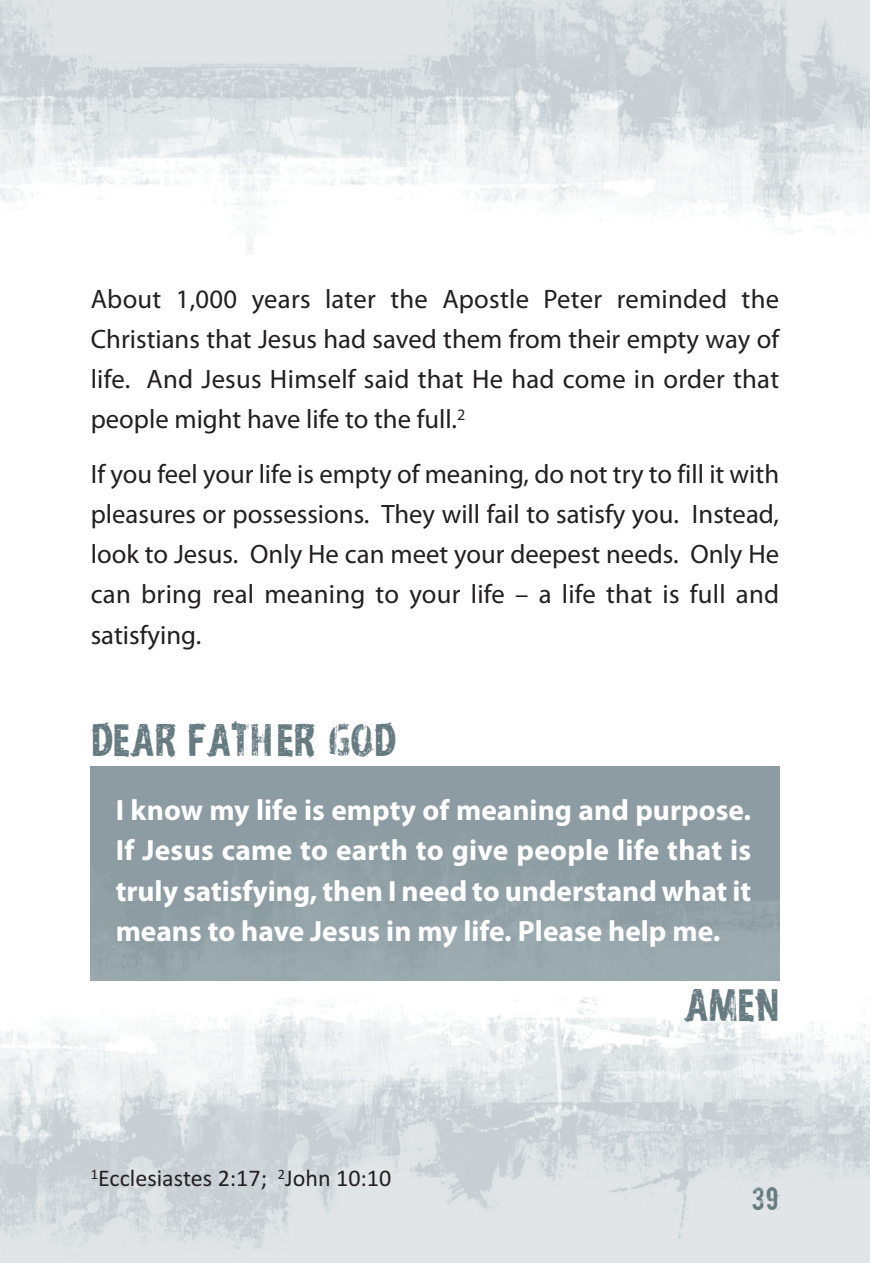
**For you know that God paid a ransom
to save you from the empty life
you inherited from your ancestors.**

**And it was not paid with mere
gold or silver, which lose their value.
It was the precious blood of Christ,
the sinless, spotless Lamb of God.**

1 Peter 1:18-19 (NLT)

Even people with busy lives may complain that their life is empty. Despite being so busy – and perhaps too busy – they recognise that something is missing: they are not being fulfilled.

Although wealthy and powerful, King Solomon, the son of King David, experienced that sense of emptiness. He was renowned for his great wisdom and he concluded that life is ‘meaningless, a chasing after the wind.’¹



About 1,000 years later the Apostle Peter reminded the Christians that Jesus had saved them from their empty way of life. And Jesus Himself said that He had come in order that people might have life to the full.²

If you feel your life is empty of meaning, do not try to fill it with pleasures or possessions. They will fail to satisfy you. Instead, look to Jesus. Only He can meet your deepest needs. Only He can bring real meaning to your life – a life that is full and satisfying.

DEAR FATHER GOD

I know my life is empty of meaning and purpose. If Jesus came to earth to give people life that is truly satisfying, then I need to understand what it means to have Jesus in my life. Please help me.

AMEN

¹Ecclesiastes 2:17; ²John 10:10

ENSLAVED?

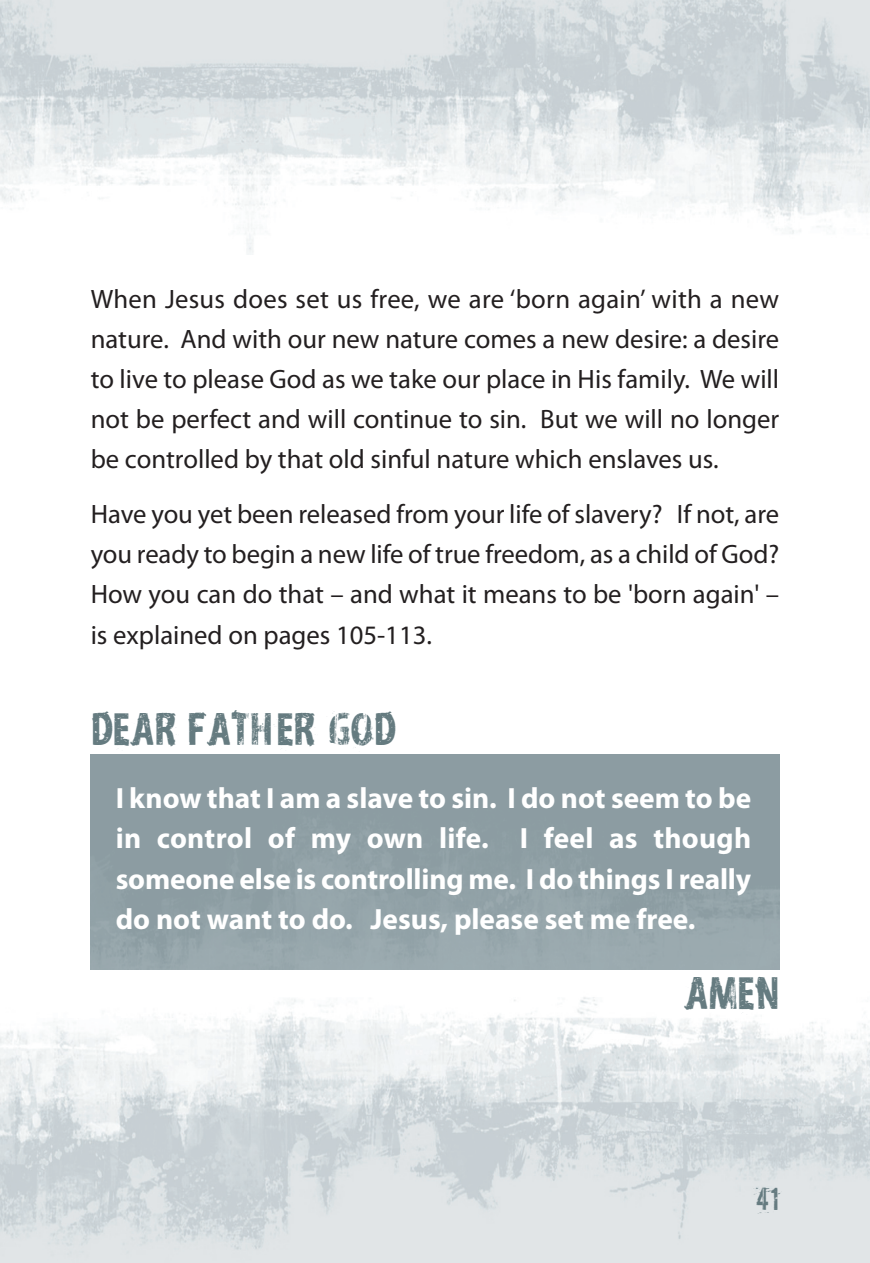
Words of Jesus:

Jesus replied, 'Very truly I tell you, everyone who sins is a slave to sin. Now a slave has no permanent place in the family, but a son belongs to it for ever. So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed...'

John 8:34-36

Almost 30 million people are thought to be living as slaves across the world today. That is a truly astonishing figure. But should we be so horrified that men and women will control and use and abuse fellow human beings?

The slave 'owners' are themselves slaves, for the Bible tells us that we are all slaves to sin (that is, we rebel against God), unless Jesus has set us free.



When Jesus does set us free, we are 'born again' with a new nature. And with our new nature comes a new desire: a desire to live to please God as we take our place in His family. We will not be perfect and will continue to sin. But we will no longer be controlled by that old sinful nature which enslaves us.

Have you yet been released from your life of slavery? If not, are you ready to begin a new life of true freedom, as a child of God? How you can do that – and what it means to be 'born again' – is explained on pages 105-113.

DEAR FATHER GOD

I know that I am a slave to sin. I do not seem to be in control of my own life. I feel as though someone else is controlling me. I do things I really do not want to do. Jesus, please set me free.

AMEN

GRIEVING?

Words of King David:

**The LORD is my shepherd, I lack nothing.
He makes me lie down in green pastures,
he leads me beside quiet waters...**

**Even though I walk through the
darkest valley, I will fear no evil,
for you are with me;
your rod and your staff,
they comfort me.**

Psalm 23:1-2,4

We can all expect to experience grief through death at some point in our lives. Some will also face it through divorce or separation.

As we grieve, we need someone to journey with us: someone willing to spend time with us but only when we need them; someone willing to talk with us but only when we wish to talk; someone willing to listen when we do not want advice;

someone willing to cry with us; someone willing to accept our outbursts of anger.

There is no better person to journey with us, through the darkest valleys, than Jesus. He always knows our deepest thoughts and our deepest needs. He will never leave those who choose to journey with Him, either through the valleys or over the hills.

It is good to have family members and close friends who will walk with you as you grieve but accept Jesus as that very best friend. You can depend upon Him totally.

DEAR FATHER GOD

I am thankful for the friends who are trying to help me but they do not really understand how I am feeling. And they do not know what to say. But You must understand completely. Please comfort me and help me through my grief.

AMEN

GUILT-RIDDEN?

Words of the Apostle:

How much more, then, will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself unblemished to God, cleanse our consciences from acts that lead to death, so that we may serve the living God!

Hebrews 9:14

Let us draw near to God with a sincere heart and with the full assurance that faith brings, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience ...

Hebrews 10:22

In a shop recently, I was overwhelmed by the range of cleaning products, with special products for each type of surface and each type of stain. I was delighted when I spotted a multi-purpose cleaner!

Stains spoil the appearance of the fabric (or carpet or surface) and it is very satisfying when you find the right product to remove them.

The worst stains are not to be found in our home but within us. They are the stains of our guilt. They are the result of the things which we have done and now regret. The very worst stains can be very difficult to live with.

There is just one remedy for our stains: the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus had never sinned Himself and was the perfect sacrifice, offered to God in our place. To receive God's forgiveness – and have our guilty conscience cleansed – we must turn to Jesus Christ.

DEAR FATHER GOD

The guilt I am carrying around with me is just too much. I must get rid of it. I keep asking myself why I did those things. Will You please help me? I do believe that only Jesus can truly cleanse me.

AMEN

HUNGRY?

Words of Jesus:

Then Jesus declared, 'I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never go hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty.

For my Father's will is that everyone who looks to the Son and believes in him shall have eternal life, and I will raise them up at the last day.'

John 6:35,40

Jesus spoke these words to the crowds, shortly after He fed more than five thousand hungry people with just five small loaves and two small fish.

The crowds hoped for more – and greater – material things from Jesus' miraculous powers but He had to disappoint them. His mission was not to satisfy their appetites for material pleasures and possessions but to meet their deep spiritual needs.

Jesus referred to Himself as the bread of life. He had come to earth to give life – eternal life. It was available to everyone who was hungry to know Jesus and to believe in Him. Today, Jesus still longs that people will have a hunger for Him.

Will you follow the crowds with their hunger for popularity, power, status, success, wealth and so much more: a hunger that will never truly be met?

Or will you choose to accept Jesus' invitation to follow Him? If you choose Jesus, your hunger will be satisfied and you will be safe with Him for eternity.

DEAR FATHER GOD

I know this to be true. I see this with my friends who have achieved and gained so much and yet are hungry for more. I do believe what Jesus has said. I know I will only find real satisfaction in following Him. I intend to do that.

AMEN

Justin's Story

“

We delight in unlikely victories, especially when it is our team, or hero, that makes a comeback from almost certain defeat.

We can all relate to spending time in difficult places, disappointment, regret, failure or pain. And if we reach rock bottom, we may doubt whether there is any possible way back.

For Christians, it is those times when we are feeling defeated that we most often hear God speak to us. It is then that we are more open to hearing God's voice. That was true for me.

Seven years ago I was in bed in excruciating pain. The pain was hardly surprising: I had a fractured pelvis, nerve damage in my left thigh, a slipped disc, a fractured elbow and a blood disorder. I was awaiting an operation on my bowel – the ninth. I was just shy of nine stone. I was not in good shape for a Royal Marine Commando and ultra-marathon runner!

I had fought on the front-line in Afghanistan and seen mates lose their lives beside me. I had fought survivor's guilt and had a long battle with PTSD. Having survived the battlefield, I was now facing my biggest battle yet. But I had no fight left in me.

... I was now facing my biggest battle yet. But I had no fight left in me.

What could I do, except pray? Church had always been part of my life. I had believed in God since the age of eight, when a friend's mum prayed for me. Her prayer had a profound effect on me.

'God, my Lord, if You are there, and I believe You are, You've got to help me. Please help me!' It was the simplest prayer but a prayer of absolute surrender at my very weakest. 'Lord Jesus, my life is Yours, I am Yours, help me,' I cried out.

'God ... if You are there ... You've got to help me.'

There was no audible voice in response but a verse of scripture, from a psalm, came to me, 'Be still, and know

that I am God.’¹ The words, penetrated right into my heart in a way that I had never experienced before. I could not get those words out of my head. It was as though something had clicked.

But being still was not something I wanted to hear even though, physically, I was not capable of moving! I was not a reflective type who wanted to be still and meditate. I was an all action guy – I was a ‘do-er’: I got things done and I got things fixed. But I knew I couldn’t fix myself, either physically or mentally. That was beyond me and I was going to need God’s help.

I knew I couldn’t fix myself ...

Just a few days later, I sat bolt upright in bed. I had this remarkable, and almost overwhelming, urge to step out onto the roof to shout out the window and praise God, despite my agony and predicament. A surreal joy and profound peace had come over me. In my physical weakness, still barely able to move, I felt the Lord was with me, lifting and strengthening me spiritually.

There was no fast fix, no immediate miraculous recovery. Yet, through a series of events and through people the Lord brought into my life, everything changed in an amazing way, after I nearly lost my

health, my flat, my job, my relationship and ultimately my life itself. I had got it wrong. God hadn't finished with me: He still had a plan for my life.

I emerged from this experience with a new identity. I loved my life as a Royal Marine Commando for it met my every need or, at least, I thought it did. That was my identity. I now realise that it did not meet my deepest need – my spiritual need. I needed a new identity – in Jesus Christ.

I needed a new identity – in Jesus Christ.

Having submitted my life wholly to Him, I have a purpose, a peace and a joy that cannot be found in anything else or in any other relationship. And my relationship with Christ is not just for this life. It brings with it the assurance of eternal life, for all who are 'in Christ' will be safe when He returns from heaven to earth to judge us all.

Amazingly, the next chapter in my life was to be spent at Bible College – quite a different environment from the Royal Marines and not what an 'all action guy' would have chosen. Only God can work such changes beyond what we can possibly imagine. ” ”

Justin Montague

Graham's Story

“

I was not 15 years old when, on a foggy 2nd February 1950 at precisely 10.00, I entered the RN Recruiting Office in Charing Cross Road in central London. Some two hours later, after a medical check, I signed up, and left with a motley gang of other boys as a Seaman Boy 2nd class. Despite being told to bring nothing more than a 'Biro' and the clothes we were wearing, I decided to take my New Testament. I wondered whether it would be a breach of regulations. Twenty of us boarded the train to Harwich en route to HMS Ganges, the RN Training Establishment for 1,500 boys.

Later that day, my New Testament was discovered by the Chief Petty Officer Instructor, who questioned me in front of the other new recruits, 'What is this?' I could not conceal my embarrassment. 'There will be little time for reading this here', I was told, and he was right! 'And by the way', he continued in a slightly

more friendly tone, 'if you are thinking of praying, I wouldn't recommend getting on your knees on this mess deck, as you will pick up splinters in your knees which could be painful when doubling around.' My 'secret' could not have come out any sooner!

Over the ensuing days and weeks I was given a bit of a hard time by my classmates – until I was selected as the Class Leader some six weeks later. That responsibility was quite a challenge and I prayed a lot. God helped me through it.

I really enjoyed the next nine months, passing the exams and progressing to become the Senior Badge Boy in my Division and then being promoted to the Senior Boy Instructor in the establishment. I held on to my faith throughout this period and by the time I left the Ganges, I had been confirmed in the wooden chapel.

Over 70 years later, at the age of 86 (and yet to retire!), having served in the Navy for more than 30 years, undertaken commercial work around the world on ordnance disposal and served as an Anglican Reader Minister for 30 years, I look back on my life with great satisfaction.

My faith in Jesus Christ has been a source of enormous comfort and strength and has brought me immense happiness. I believe that God created us for that very purpose – that we might have a personal relationship with Him.

Of course, I have encountered many struggles. At times I have been angry. And there have been times when I have questioned why God has permitted the suffering I have had to endure, notably through the death of my wonderful wife, the death of my eldest grandson and the life-threatening cancer with which my second grandson has battled. But God carried me through those painful times as my faith remained firm.

And He saw me through some harrowing storms at sea when my ship's company doubted we would survive, as the spray was freezing immediately and the build-up of ice was putting the ship into a state of loll, (rolling heavily to leeward and not recovering). But even in those frightening conditions, as the ship's bows were buried in the next huge wave for the umpteenth time, I

encountered a deep and comforting peace, which led me to believe that ‘all would be well’.

Prayer has been a source of great strength, in both the difficult times and the good times. And I am a great one for what I call an ‘arrow prayer’, a swift request for guidance, safety or blessing as one goes into action – be it on the battlefield or in the pulpit!

Likewise, the Bible has been my constant companion from those earliest days at HMS Ganges. A favourite verse of mine, amongst many others, is Psalm 27:1:

The LORD is my light and my salvation – whom shall I fear?

The LORD is the stronghold of my life – of whom shall I be afraid?

The Lord continues to be my stronghold and, when this life comes to an end, I will be with Him forever for He is my salvation – He has saved me from the guilt of my sin. (See *Our Biggest Struggle*, page 105)

Graham Shaw

INSECURE?

The words of the Apostle:

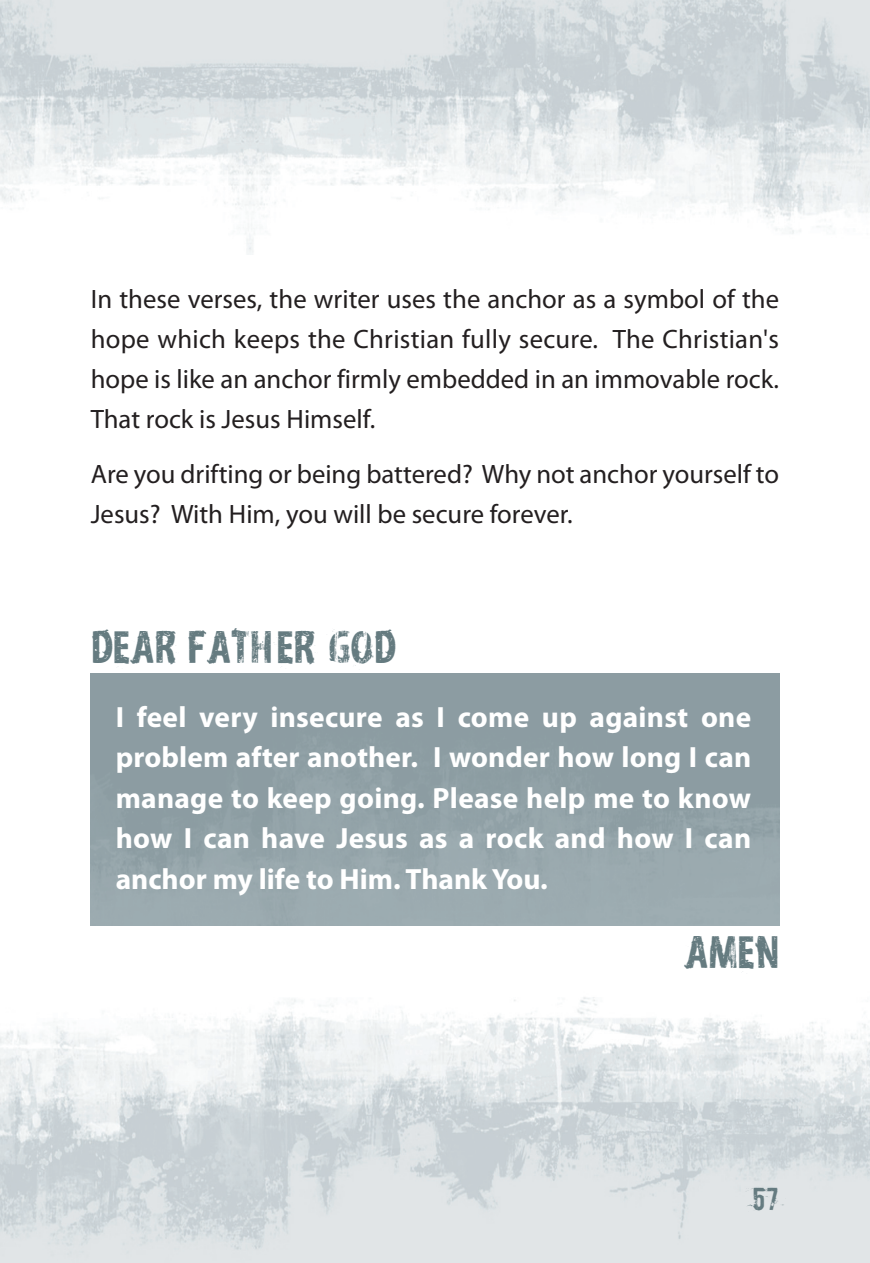
**... we who have fled to take hold of the hope
set before us may be greatly encouraged.
We have this hope as an anchor for the
soul, firm and secure.**

Hebrews 6:18b-19a

Water is an attraction for many people. Some enjoy a canal boat for the serenity and security it offers. For the adventurous, the exhilarating experience of white water rafting has greater appeal.

However, no white water enthusiast would want their life to resemble rafting, with the constant and desperate struggle to avoid overturning. Yet some people's lives are a bit like that. They are continually battered by the roaring waters of life. They long to be secure in placid waters.

Even in the apparent safety of a harbour, a boat must be anchored; otherwise, it will gently drift away with the tide or be swept away in a storm.



In these verses, the writer uses the anchor as a symbol of the hope which keeps the Christian fully secure. The Christian's hope is like an anchor firmly embedded in an immovable rock. That rock is Jesus Himself.

Are you drifting or being battered? Why not anchor yourself to Jesus? With Him, you will be secure forever.

DEAR FATHER GOD

I feel very insecure as I come up against one problem after another. I wonder how long I can manage to keep going. Please help me to know how I can have Jesus as a rock and how I can anchor my life to Him. Thank You.

AMEN

INSULTED?

The crucifixion of Jesus:

Those who passed by hurled insults at him, shaking their heads and saying, 'So! You who are going to destroy the temple and build it in three days, come down from the cross and save yourself!'

Mark 15:29-30

Insults are hard to ignore. They wound us – as they are intended to – and we cannot pretend otherwise. They may remind us of something which we want to forget; perhaps something personal about us or our family; perhaps an unhappy episode from our past. Or they may just not be true.

Even as Jesus was dying on the cross, in great pain, the crowds hurled insults at Him. Their insults never had any element of truth: it was impossible to find fault in Him.

Their cruel and spiteful outbursts would have added to Jesus' anguish, just as insults hurt us. They also mocked Jesus by

misquoting what He had said about the temple being destroyed and rebuilt in three days. They had not understood that Jesus was talking about His own body and how He would be raised to life again. And of course He was.

Instead of retaliating, Jesus entrusted Himself to Father God who judges justly.¹ When we are insulted, we should try to follow Jesus' example.

DEAR FATHER GOD

Those who insult me must hate me and I feel hatred towards them. I know I am wrong to have these feelings but it is hard to ignore remarks which are meant to hurt. Please help me not to retaliate and please protect my heart from insulting words.

AMEN

ISOLATED?

The words of King David:

**Where can I go from your Spirit?
Where can I flee from your presence?**

Psalm 139:7

The words of the Apostle Paul:

**For I am convinced that neither death
nor life, neither angels nor demons,
neither the present nor the future, nor any
powers, neither height nor depth,
nor anything else in all creation,
will be able to separate us from the love
of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.**

Romans 8:38-39

Many of us will feel isolated at some time in our lives; it may be for a matter of days or weeks or it may continue for months or even years.

Many factors can cause us to be isolated: by a move to a new area, by illness or accident, by a relationship breakdown or

family dispute, by unemployment or financial difficulties or even by imprisonment.

The words of King David remind us that we can never be isolated from God. Wherever we are, God is there too. And the Apostle Paul, whilst alone in prison, knew that God was with him. That is also true for every one of us, whatever our circumstances and however isolated we might feel.

Are you isolated from family and friends? Or perhaps you have no family or, at least, no contact with them. Remember that you are not separated from God. Receive the love He offers you, right where you are.

DEAR FATHER GOD

I am isolated and it is very painful. I am thankful that nothing can separate me from Your love. Please help me to know that You are with me at all times and may the knowledge of Your presence and Your love keep me strong.

AMEN

LONELY?

Words of Jesus:

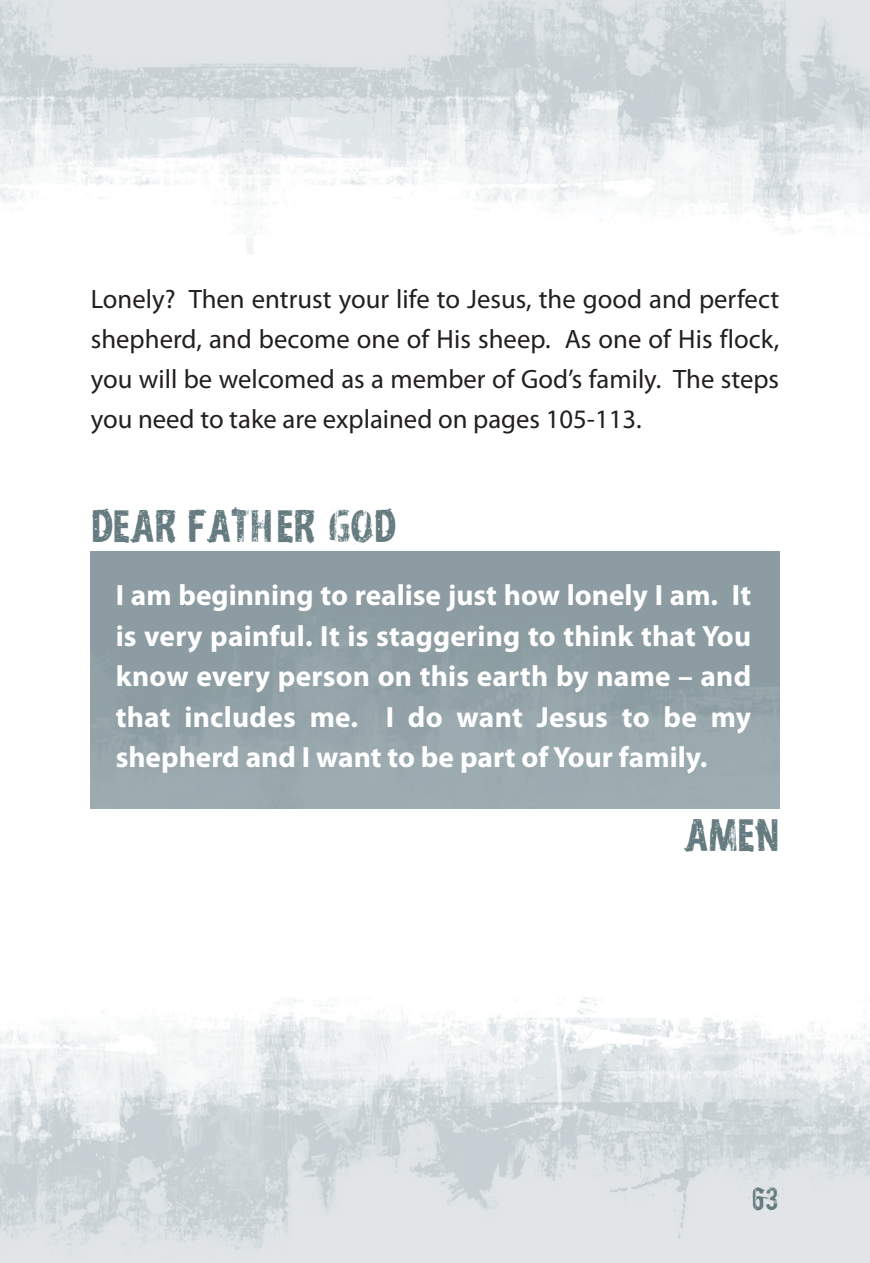
'I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me...'

John 10:14

It is very painful when we have no one: when there is no one to ask how we are feeling; when there is no one who has the time or inclination to visit or call; when there is no one who realises how lonely we are.

Jesus likens Himself to a shepherd. Shepherds know and care for all their sheep. They care for each one individually. If one sheep goes off alone, the shepherd will go and search for it. The shepherd will never forget any one of his flock.

That is a wonderful illustration of how God sees us. We are all very precious to Him. He knows every one of us by name and we are never out of His sight, never alone. We may find that difficult to grasp but it is true.



Lonely? Then entrust your life to Jesus, the good and perfect shepherd, and become one of His sheep. As one of His flock, you will be welcomed as a member of God's family. The steps you need to take are explained on pages 105-113.

DEAR FATHER GOD

I am beginning to realise just how lonely I am. It is very painful. It is staggering to think that You know every person on this earth by name – and that includes me. I do want Jesus to be my shepherd and I want to be part of Your family.

AMEN

LOST?

The words of a loving father:

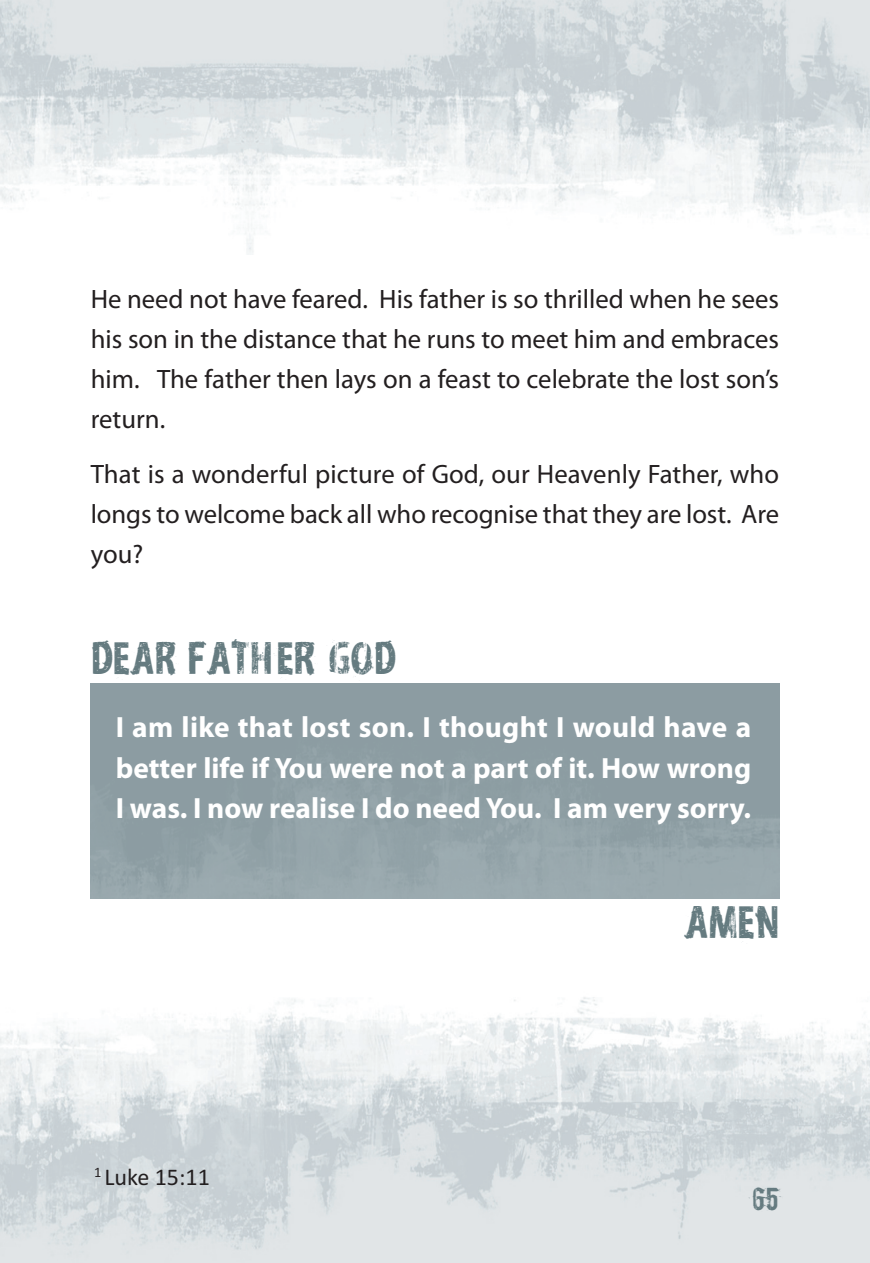
**'... But we had to celebrate and be glad,
because this brother of yours was dead
and is alive again; he was lost and is found.'**

Luke 15:32

This verse comes at the end of the parable which Jesus told of The Prodigal (or Lost) Son.¹ In the story, the younger of two sons asks his father for his share of the inheritance and then leaves home.

The inheritance is soon squandered. Without any friends and barely able to get enough food to survive, he is lost to know what to do.

Eventually, his thoughts turn to home. Reluctantly (and ashamed), he decides to return, just hoping that his father might show mercy. All he wants is to be hired as a servant.



He need not have feared. His father is so thrilled when he sees his son in the distance that he runs to meet him and embraces him. The father then lays on a feast to celebrate the lost son's return.

That is a wonderful picture of God, our Heavenly Father, who longs to welcome back all who recognise that they are lost. Are you?

DEAR FATHER GOD

I am like that lost son. I thought I would have a better life if You were not a part of it. How wrong I was. I now realise I do need You. I am very sorry.

AMEN

MALIGNED?

Words of King David:

**Do not let those gloat over me
who are my enemies without cause;
do not let those who hate me without reason
maliciously wink the eye.**

**They do not speak peaceably,
but devise false accusations
against those who live quietly in the land.**

Psalm 35:19-20

‘Sticks and stones may break my bones but words will never hurt me.’ This saying aims to encourage children to ignore what others say about them but it is not true; words can hurt. Malicious words can be more destructive than sticks and stones. And if the words are untrue, then the pain becomes even more difficult to bear.

When enemies of King David made false accusations against him, he asked God to intervene and to put them to shame. The

Bible says that we should not take revenge but allow God to act: "It is mine to avenge; I will repay," says the Lord.¹

When false accusations were made against Jesus, resulting in His death, He did not defend Himself. Instead, as He hung on the cross, He asked God to forgive those responsible.

If you have been maligned, try not to respond with anger. That will only add to your pain. Why not ask God to help you follow Jesus' example?

DEAR FATHER GOD

You know that the things being said about me are untrue and they are really hurting me. Please cause these people to stop. And please help me to put aside my anger and forgive them.

AMEN

¹Romans 12:19

OPPRESSED?

Words of the Psalmist:

**He upholds the cause of the oppressed
and gives food to the hungry.
The LORD sets prisoners free,
the LORD gives sight to the blind,
the LORD lifts up those
who are bowed down,
the LORD loves the righteous.**

Psalm 146:7-8

These verses remind us that God is compassionate: He has a concern for everyone in need but especially for those whom society looks down upon. Amongst others, the Psalmist mentions the oppressed, that is the downtrodden; the exploited; the disadvantaged; and the underprivileged.

Jesus demonstrated the reality of God's compassion when He was on earth. He always had time for people who were oppressed by others. That compassion was seen in many of the

healings He performed: of lepers; of the blind; of the lame; of the demon-possessed.

It was also seen in His choice of 'friends': He became known as a 'friend of tax collectors and sinners'.¹ (Tax collectors were resented by their fellow Jews because they worked for the Romans and were corrupt in charging extra tax for their own pockets.)

If you are oppressed, there can be no better friend to have than Jesus. He knows just how you are feeling. He has time for you if you will take time to speak with Him.

DEAR FATHER GOD

I take great comfort when I read of the sort of people Jesus chose to spend time with. I think He would have spent time with me. Please help me to understand how I can get to know Jesus as a friend.

AMEN

¹Matthew 11:19

Peace, Hope, Joy

True peace comes only from knowing God personally by faith in Jesus Christ. Jesus was called Prince of Peace¹. He alone can give us an inner peace to help us through our struggles in this life.

True hope – a sure hope – comes only from knowing that we can look forward to a glorious future, free of struggles, beyond this life.

True joy comes only from God's Holy Spirit which comes to dwell within us when we enter into a personal relationship with God.

We can only enjoy a personal relationship with God through faith in His Son, Jesus Christ. First, we must accept that there is sin in our life. Sin is our failure to observe God's laws, especially the first commandment, 'You shall have no other gods before me.'²

Then we must repent of our sin and accept God's remedy for it. It requires nothing more but nothing less.

God's words from the Bible to all who trust in Jesus:

Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. Romans 5:1-2a

Now may the Lord of peace himself give you peace at all times and in every way. The Lord be with all of you. 2 Thessalonians 3:16

Brothers and sisters, we do not want you to be uninformed about those who sleep in death, so that you do not grieve like the rest of mankind, who have no hope. 1 Thessalonians 4:13

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade. This inheritance is kept in heaven for you... 1 Peter 1:3-4

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace... Galatians 5:22a

To repent of our sin means to turn away from our sin and to resolve, with God's help, to live to please Him.

And God's remedy for our sin was His amazing act of great kindness, love and mercy: He sent His Son, Jesus, to stand in our place to take the punishment which we deserve. Jesus did that when He was crucified.

And so we have to decide whether to accept God's remedy for our sin and receive His forgiveness. If we choose not to, we will have to face God's wrath and take His punishment ourselves.

How we receive God's forgiveness – and the consequences of refusing His forgiveness – is explained more fully in *Our Biggest Struggle* on pages 105-113.

As a child of God – a Christian – we will still encounter the same struggles. But God's Spirit will give us peace and joy, knowing that we are safe in His hands. And we will have the right perspective on our struggles, with the hope – the absolute confidence – of a future eternal life with God, free of all the troubles and struggles which we have to endure in this life on earth.

You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous person, though for a good person someone might possibly dare to die. But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through him! Romans 5:6-9

Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen, since what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.

2 Corinthians 4:17-18

OVERWHELMED?

Words of Jesus:

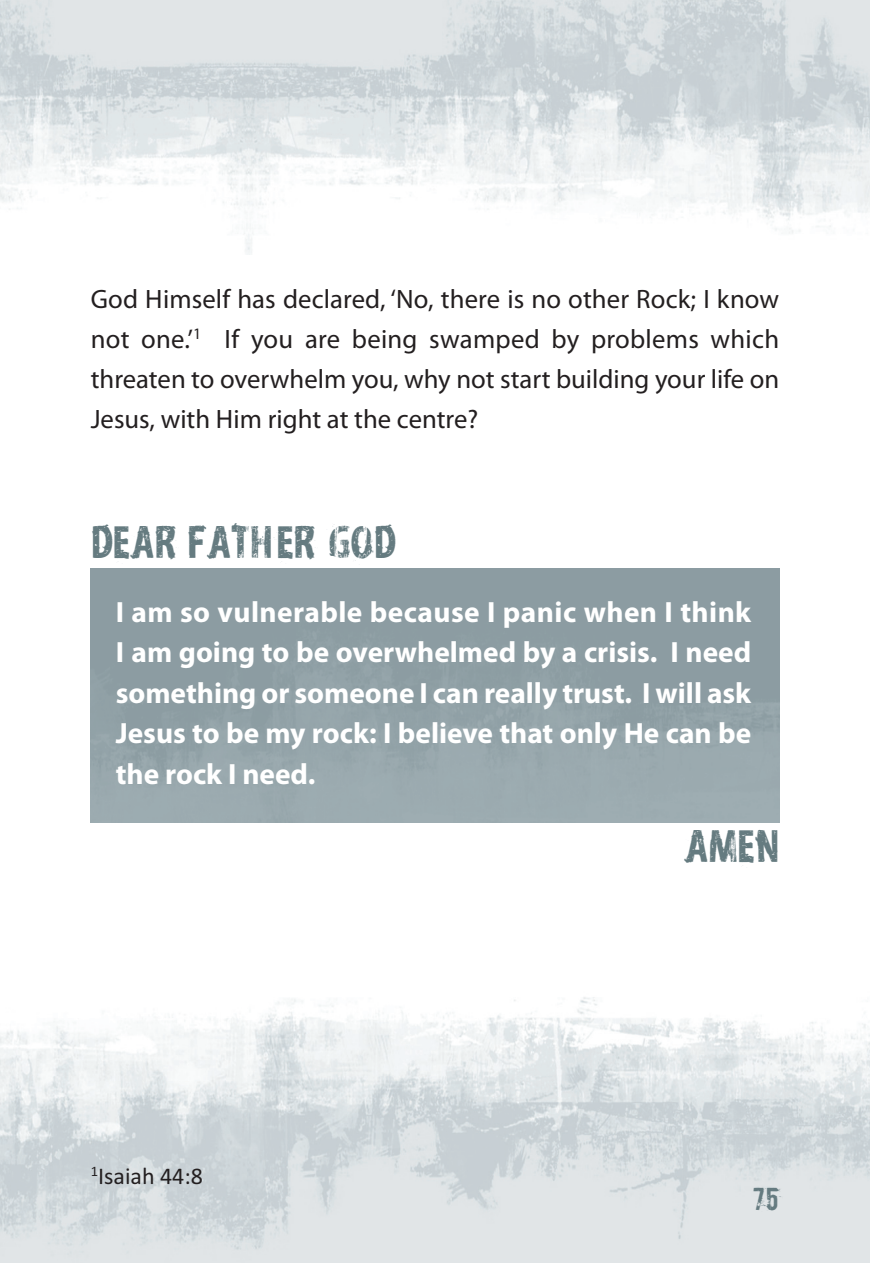
‘Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock...’

Matthew 7:24

Jesus spoke of two builders: one who built his house on foundations of rock and the other who simply built his house on sand. It was inevitable that the house without foundations would collapse when a severe thunderstorm came. And that is what happened.

Jesus used this to illustrate the importance of building our lives upon a proper foundation, in order that we should not be overwhelmed by the pressures, tensions and struggles which can be a part of everyday life.

The truly wise man is the one who puts his trust in Jesus. He knows that Jesus will be there to help him when there is a danger of being overwhelmed by troubles. The wise man's faith becomes the very foundation of his life.



God Himself has declared, 'No, there is no other Rock; I know not one.'¹ If you are being swamped by problems which threaten to overwhelm you, why not start building your life on Jesus, with Him right at the centre?

DEAR FATHER GOD

I am so vulnerable because I panic when I think I am going to be overwhelmed by a crisis. I need something or someone I can really trust. I will ask Jesus to be my rock: I believe that only He can be the rock I need.

AMEN

REJECTED?

A prophecy concerning Jesus:

**He was despised and rejected by mankind,
a man of suffering, and familiar with pain.**

Isaiah 53:3a

The trial of Jesus:

**But the whole crowd shouted, 'Away
with this man! Release Barabbas to us!'
Wanting to release Jesus, Pilate appealed
to them again. But they kept shouting,
'Crucify him! Crucify him!'**

Luke 23:18, 20-21

Rejection is always hard to accept, for we all have a fundamental need to belong and to be wanted. It is hard when your friends – even your family – turn their back on you; when your job applications are continually rejected and when you are told by a charity that you are 'not suitable' to be a volunteer.

Jesus knows all about rejection. Pontius Pilate, the Roman governor, wanted to release Jesus (under the custom of releasing a prisoner at the annual Passover festival). But the crowd rejected Jesus in favour of Barabbas who was being held in prison for insurrection and murder.

As Barabbas was freed, so Jesus was condemned to be crucified. It was no surprise to Jesus that people who once followed Him sided with the religious leaders in rejecting Him.

We know that Father God will never reject anyone who turns to Him, believing in Jesus. If you believe in Jesus you need never fear God's rejection.

DEAR FATHER GOD

I know that You will never reject me. Thank You. Please help me to overcome the pain from my past rejection. And please help me to follow Jesus' example in not retaliating against those who have hurt me.

AMEN

RESTLESS?

Words of the Apostle Paul:

But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For he himself is our peace, ...

Ephesians 2:13-14a

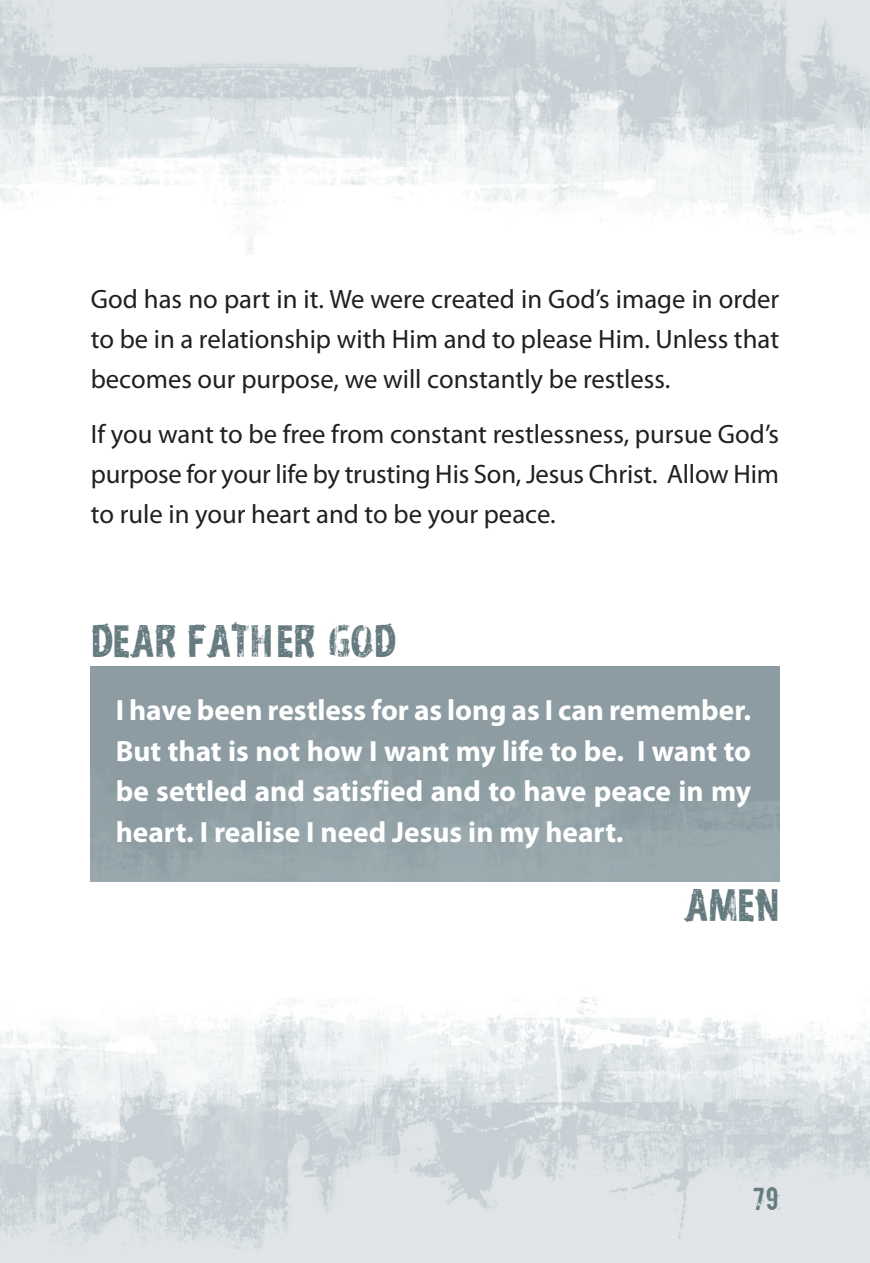
Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, ...

Colossians 3:15a

Life today seems designed to make us restless and unsatisfied: always wanting something more or just something different.

We think that we will be satisfied if we can only find a new (and better) job or home, a new relationship or a new interest. But rarely are we fully satisfied for long; often we will soon be restless again, perhaps not even sure what to strive for next.

The real reason for our restlessness is that we have failed to understand the purpose of life: that life has no real purpose if



God has no part in it. We were created in God's image in order to be in a relationship with Him and to please Him. Unless that becomes our purpose, we will constantly be restless.

If you want to be free from constant restlessness, pursue God's purpose for your life by trusting His Son, Jesus Christ. Allow Him to rule in your heart and to be your peace.

DEAR FATHER GOD

I have been restless for as long as I can remember. But that is not how I want my life to be. I want to be settled and satisfied and to have peace in my heart. I realise I need Jesus in my heart.

AMEN

SCARED?

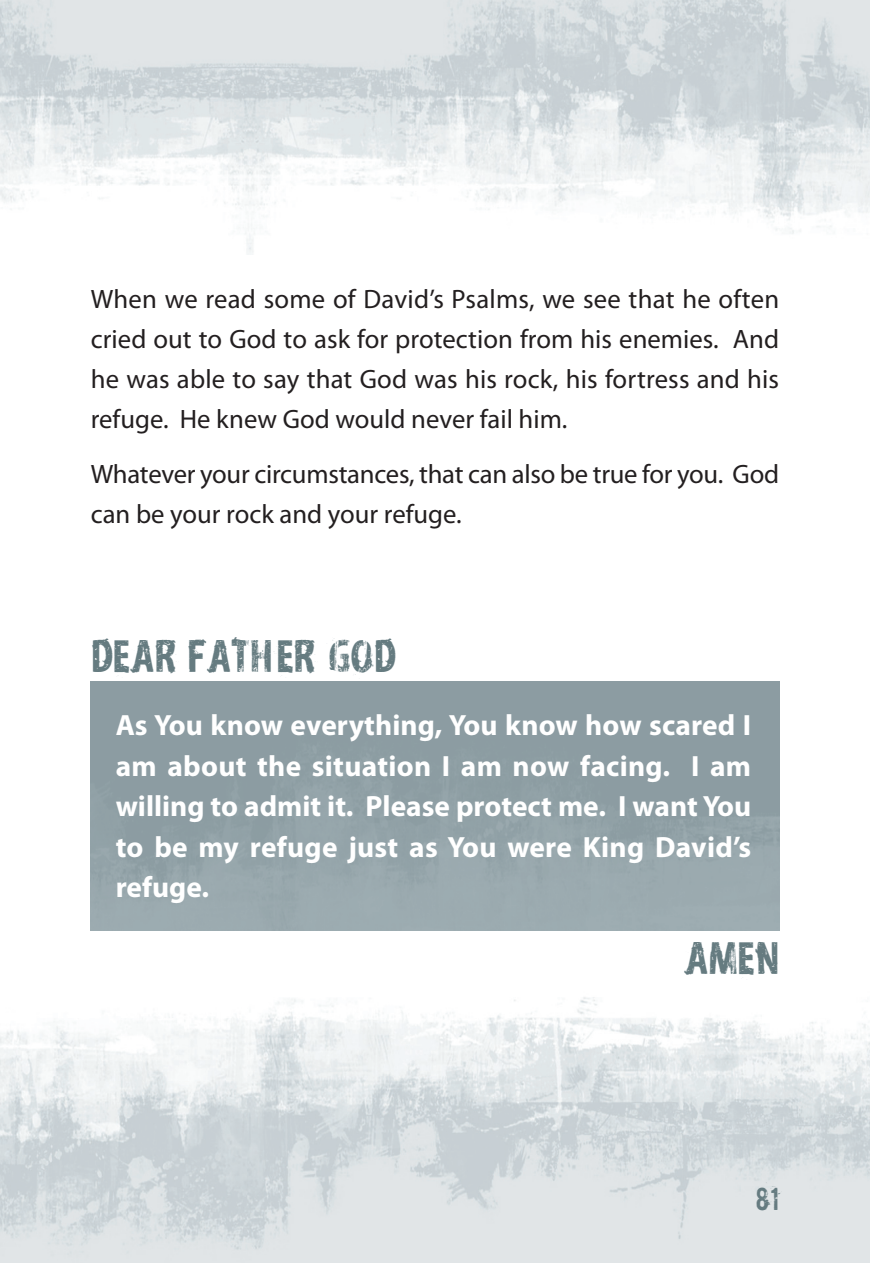
Words of King David:

**Truly he is my rock and my salvation;
he is my fortress, I shall not be shaken.
My salvation and my honour depend on God;
he is my mighty rock, my refuge.
Trust in him at all times, you people;
pour out your hearts to him,
for God is our refuge.**

Psalm 62: 6-8

David's early life as a shepherd boy may have been fairly peaceful. He did not seem to be unduly troubled by the danger of prowling lions and wolves. Nor was he scared when he faced Goliath, the great Philistine giant whom he then defeated.

Later, however, David did receive some death threats which caused him to be scared. First, King Saul tried to kill him when he became jealous of David's popularity with the people. After that, David was forced to escape from his own son, Absalom.



When we read some of David's Psalms, we see that he often cried out to God to ask for protection from his enemies. And he was able to say that God was his rock, his fortress and his refuge. He knew God would never fail him.

Whatever your circumstances, that can also be true for you. God can be your rock and your refuge.

DEAR FATHER GOD

As You know everything, You know how scared I am about the situation I am now facing. I am willing to admit it. Please protect me. I want You to be my refuge just as You were King David's refuge.

AMEN

SINKING?

Words of King David:

**I waited patiently for the LORD;
he turned to me and heard my cry.
He lifted me out of the slimy pit,
out of the mud and mire;
he set my feet on a rock and
gave me a firm place to stand.
He put a new song in my mouth,
a hymn of praise to our God.**

Psalm 40:1-3a

David begins this Psalm by describing God's help like being rescued from a slimy pit. It is a picture of David being utterly helpless, sinking slowly into the slimy mud.

Later in the Psalm, David makes a further urgent plea to God to save him, 'Be pleased to save me, LORD; come quickly, LORD, to help me.' (v13). He is overwhelmed by further troubles which, he says, are 'too many to count'. Some of them are the result of his own sin.

After pleading for God's mercy, David finally prays this prayer (v17):

'But as for me, I am poor and needy;
may the LORD think of me.
You are my help and my deliverer;
you are my God, do not delay.'

God is still lifting people out of their 'slimy pits' when they recognise how helpless they are and decide to cry out to Him. If you identify with David's circumstances – with problems too many to count – why not cry out to God as David did?

DEAR FATHER GOD

With all the issues I am facing, I feel as though I am sinking in a slimy pit, like David imagined he was. Please hear my cry for help and deliver me. I want to be on firm ground and able to praise You.

AMEN

TROUBLED?

Words of Jesus to His disciples:

**'Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you.
I do not give to you as the world gives.
Do not let your hearts be troubled
and do not be afraid. ...'**

John 14:27

Jesus spoke these words to comfort His disciples. After sharing 'The Last Supper' together, Jesus had explained that He would shortly be leaving them. This was devastating news. Naturally, they were troubled about what would happen to them: they had spent the last three years with Jesus, having given up everything to follow Him.

Jesus assured the disciples that He would not leave them on their own like orphans: God the Father would send the Holy Spirit to be their Helper.¹ And because of His presence in their hearts, the disciples would enjoy peace.

That promise was not just for those disciples. Today, every believer in the Lord Jesus Christ has the Holy Spirit living in them. They, too, can enjoy perfect peace in times of trouble.

That does not mean that followers of Jesus do not experience trouble, for we live in a troubled world. What it does mean is that, despite their troubles, God's peace will guard their hearts and minds.²

DEAR FATHER GOD

More than anything else, I want to have peace in my heart, despite everything that is going on in my life. Please give me peace that I may be able to cope with the troubles I have to deal with.

AMEN

¹John 14:16,18 ²Philippians 4:7

UNLOVED?

The Apostle John wrote:

**See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God!
And that is what we are!**

1 John 3:1a

Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love. This is how God showed his love among us: he sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him.

1 John 4:8-9

To love and to be loved are two of the most basic needs of human beings. We often take them for granted.

Sadly, because of broken relationships and broken families, many people do not have those needs met. Some may never have truly experienced love at all.

The Bible tells us that God is love. He loves us far more than we can possibly imagine and He wants every one of us to be a true child of His.

These are not just nice words to make us feel good. God proved His love by providing the way by which we can be rescued. He did that by sending Jesus to die for us.

Have you experienced God's love for yourself? If not, why not consider inviting Him to take control of your life and so become a part of His family? The steps you need to take to do that are explained on pages 105-113.

DEAR FATHER GOD

I do feel unloved. For years I have longed to find love and to be able to show love to others but I have never succeeded. Please help me to understand how I can truly know You as a father, to be Your child and receive Your love.

AMEN

Simon's Story

“ At age 47, I should not have been surprised by the corporal's question: 'No offence, padre, but are you not a bit too old for Commando training?' I was having that sort of conversation on an almost daily basis, while striving with every ounce of my being to gain the coveted Green beret and gain my flashes as a Royal Navy Commando.

I was sure that the Lord had called me to join the RN and train alongside Royal Marine recruits. And that settled it for me. If the Lord didn't think I was too old, then why should I? And I could be certain that He would see me through.

I look back with amazement that I survived the Commando Training. There were many scary moments when I questioned whether I had heard God correctly. But those momentary doubts quickly passed. I held on to that underlying confidence that I had obeyed God. I was certain that He was with me.

I was certain that He (God) was with me.

It brought a new dimension to my praying. I had never prayed before like I did then – not clever, fancy prayers but simple heartfelt cries such as: ‘God, please help me. I’m at the end of my rope!’ and ‘God, please give me the courage I need.’ We find prayers like this in many of the psalms in the Bible, written by King David and others when they had cause to be scared or anxious.

And then there were the scriptures that suddenly made so much more sense than when I was in a nice warm church. ‘Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged...’¹ came to mind when I was 25 miles into the final 30 miler commando test.

Life as a disciple of Jesus Christ is a wonderful adventure. We must be open to whatever God calls us to do or wherever He calls us to go. It may get scary at times but He will never let us down and will never abandon us.

**Life as a disciple of
Jesus Christ is a
wonderful adventure.**

”

Rev’d Simon d’Albertanson, Chaplain RN

¹Joshua 1:9

Laura's¹ Story

“

Despite my loving family and despite knowing that God accepted me, I was a loner throughout my childhood and teenage years. I felt unworthy of friendships although I still cannot fully explain the reasons for that.

At aged 17, crushed by the isolation of loneliness, I wanted to explore life without God for a while. I assured Him that that I would only be gone long enough to gain popularity and friends, maybe a boyfriend.

**I wanted to explore life
without God for a while.**

As I look back, I guess in many ways I was like the prodigal son in the Bible; I was sure that the world held so many promising possibilities.

But the next decade became an agonising experience of depression, anorexia and alcohol abuse. Finally, the loneliness I was running from caught up with me. Like the prodigal son, I came to my senses. I had abandoned God but He had not abandoned me. I am convinced that He saved me many times over those ten years.

I had abandoned God but He had not abandoned me.

My healing has been a long journey, as all-encompassing as the damage. In His love, God let my husband be a part of my restoration. This military man proved tough enough not to be shocked and loving enough to accept my weaknesses. Interestingly, his job routinely takes him away. I wonder if this was a deliberate part of God's plan: to teach me, through times apart, how to build the friendships I didn't make as a child and, ultimately, how not to feel lonely when I am alone, knowing that He is always with me.

”

¹Not the real name of this person

Philip's¹ Story

“

We all go through periods of self-doubt in our lives. I am sure that must be true for even the most confident of people. It is certainly something which I have experienced.

Throughout my Naval career I have been tested in many positions of responsibility and leadership; as a junior Officer of the Watch responsible for keeping the ship safe on the high seas; as a Navigating Officer planning a passage from one place to another and leading a team on the Bridge as a Principal Warfare Officer responsible for fighting the ship; and as a Commanding Officer leading a large team to deliver on operations.

At every stage I have struggled with doubts. I have had doubts about my own ability, about the performance of the teams I was leading and about the daily decisions of leadership.

At every stage I have struggled with doubts.

And doubts have affected my faith too. That is no surprise: all Christians experience doubts from time to time and those doubts test our faith. Satan is our powerful enemy. One of his key strategies is to weaken and try to destroy our faith, by sowing doubts in our mind. He will take great delight in seizing upon our doubts and using them to undermine our faith.

In Hebrews we are told to 'hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful.' In the next verse, we are told to 'spur one another on' and one way of doing that is by 'encouraging one another.'² I have been sustained through my times of doubt; firstly, because I have experienced God's constant faithfulness and, secondly, because of the encouragement of Christian friends, especially through their prayers.

**I have been sustained
through my times of doubt ...**

”

¹Not the real name of this person ²Hebrews 10:23-25

UNWORTHY?

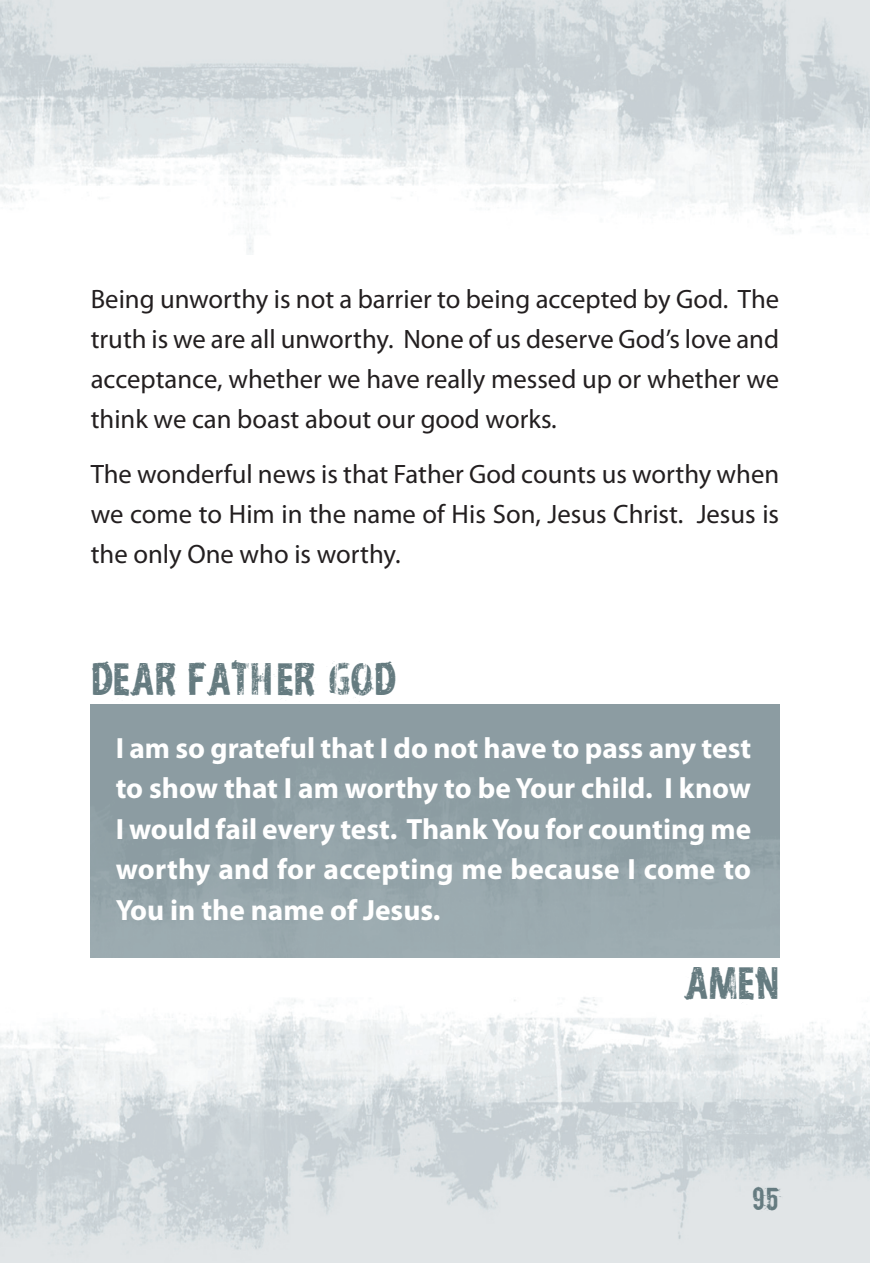
Words of the younger son in the story of The Lost Son:

**' ... I will set out and go back to my father
and say to him: Father, I have sinned
against heaven and against you. I am
no longer worthy to be called your son;
make me like one of your hired servants.'**

Luke 15:18-19

In Jesus' story of The Lost (or Prodigal) Son, the younger son decided that he had had enough of his job of feeding pigs. That was how low he had sunk, having wasted his share of his father's inheritance.

He thought that the best he could hope for was to get his dad to take him on as one of his servants: he no longer felt worthy of being his son. But he need not have worried: his father was so relieved and delighted to see his son again. (See 'Lost?', page 64)



Being unworthy is not a barrier to being accepted by God. The truth is we are all unworthy. None of us deserve God's love and acceptance, whether we have really messed up or whether we think we can boast about our good works.

The wonderful news is that Father God counts us worthy when we come to Him in the name of His Son, Jesus Christ. Jesus is the only One who is worthy.

DEAR FATHER GOD

I am so grateful that I do not have to pass any test to show that I am worthy to be Your child. I know I would fail every test. Thank You for counting me worthy and for accepting me because I come to You in the name of Jesus.

AMEN

WEAK?

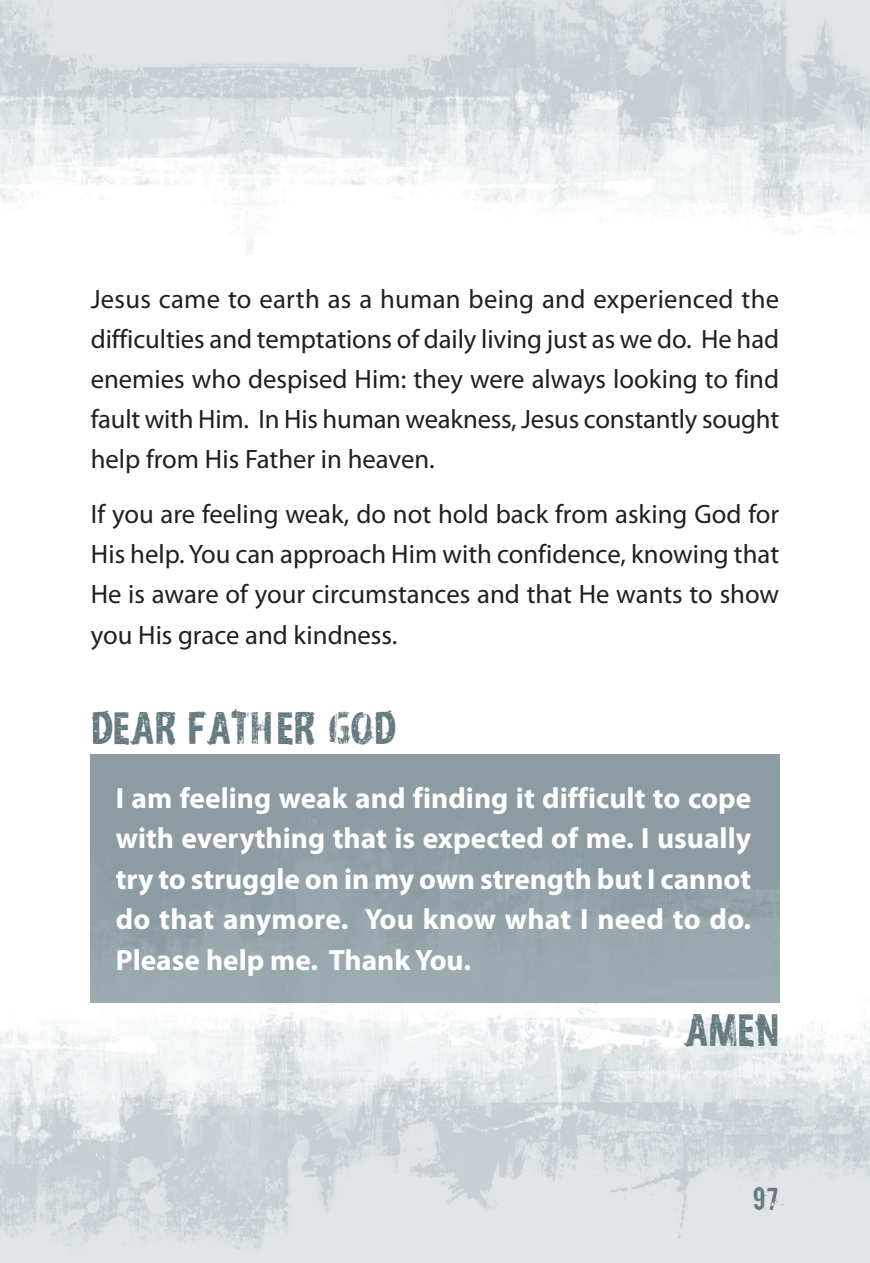
Words concerning Jesus:

For we do not have a high priest who is unable to feel sympathy for our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are – yet he did not sin. Let us then approach God's throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.

Hebrews 4:15-16

We may think that God is far too remote in heaven to be able to understand the realities of life on earth; the struggles which wear us down, leaving us so weak.

But that is not true. God knows everything about every one of us and cares for us personally. Also, these verses remind us that we come to God through Jesus (who acts as a high priest) and Jesus is certainly able to sympathise with our weakness.



Jesus came to earth as a human being and experienced the difficulties and temptations of daily living just as we do. He had enemies who despised Him: they were always looking to find fault with Him. In His human weakness, Jesus constantly sought help from His Father in heaven.

If you are feeling weak, do not hold back from asking God for His help. You can approach Him with confidence, knowing that He is aware of your circumstances and that He wants to show you His grace and kindness.

DEAR FATHER GOD

I am feeling weak and finding it difficult to cope with everything that is expected of me. I usually try to struggle on in my own strength but I cannot do that anymore. You know what I need to do. Please help me. Thank You.

AMEN

WEARY?

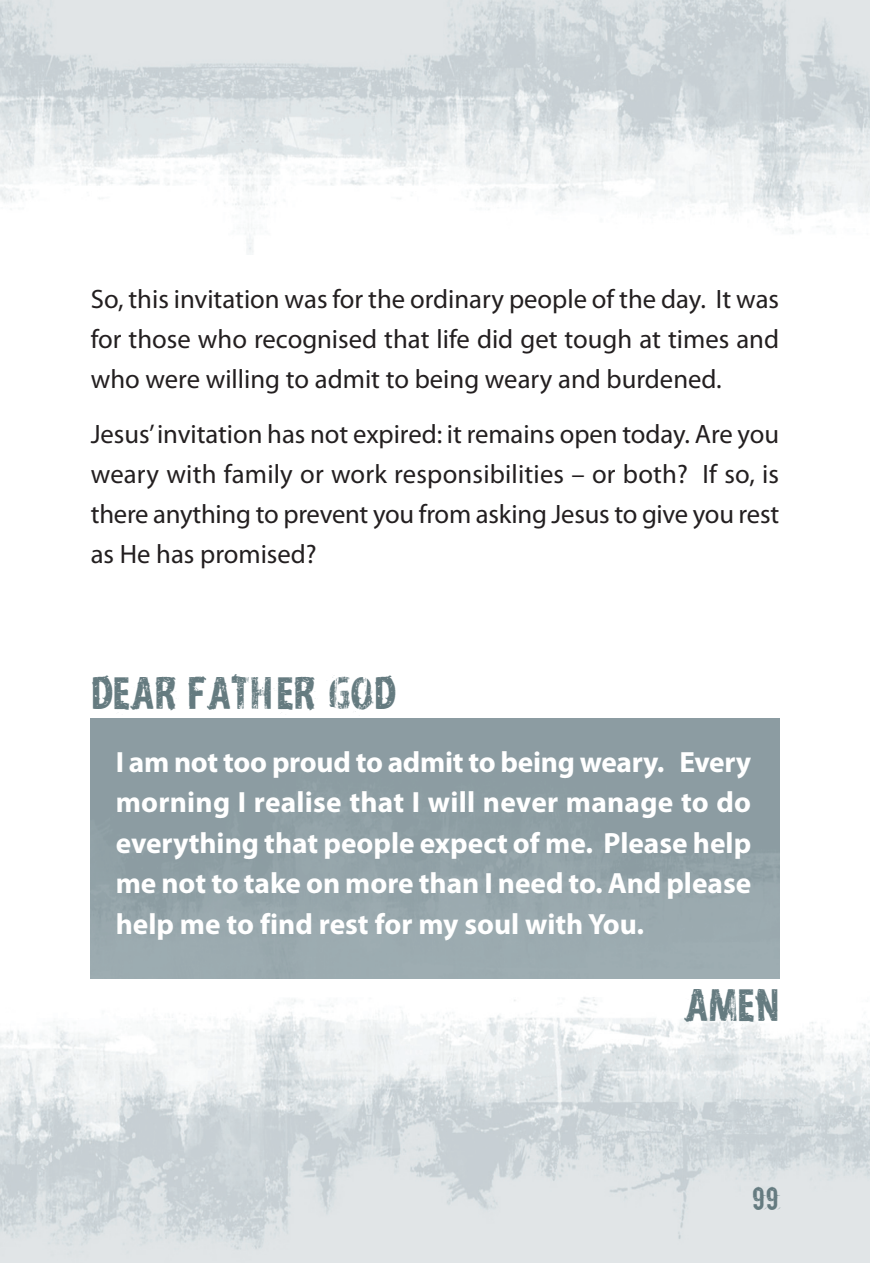
An invitation from Jesus:

**‘Come to me, all you who are weary and
burdened, and I will give you rest.
Take my yoke upon you and learn from me,
for I am gentle and humble in heart, and
you will find rest for your souls. For my
yoke is easy and my burden is light.’**

Matthew 11:28-30

Jesus always had a special concern for those who were weary with the strains and stresses of life. They were the people who really wanted to hear what Jesus had to say and how He could meet their needs.

The attitude of the religious leaders was quite different. As well as being self-righteous, they considered themselves self-sufficient. Their pride would not allow them to accept they had a need of anything or anyone. Certainly they would never admit that there was anything they could learn or gain from spending time with Jesus.



So, this invitation was for the ordinary people of the day. It was for those who recognised that life did get tough at times and who were willing to admit to being weary and burdened.

Jesus' invitation has not expired: it remains open today. Are you weary with family or work responsibilities – or both? If so, is there anything to prevent you from asking Jesus to give you rest as He has promised?

DEAR FATHER GOD

I am not too proud to admit to being weary. Every morning I realise that I will never manage to do everything that people expect of me. Please help me not to take on more than I need to. And please help me to find rest for my soul with You.

AMEN

WORRIED?

Words of Jesus:

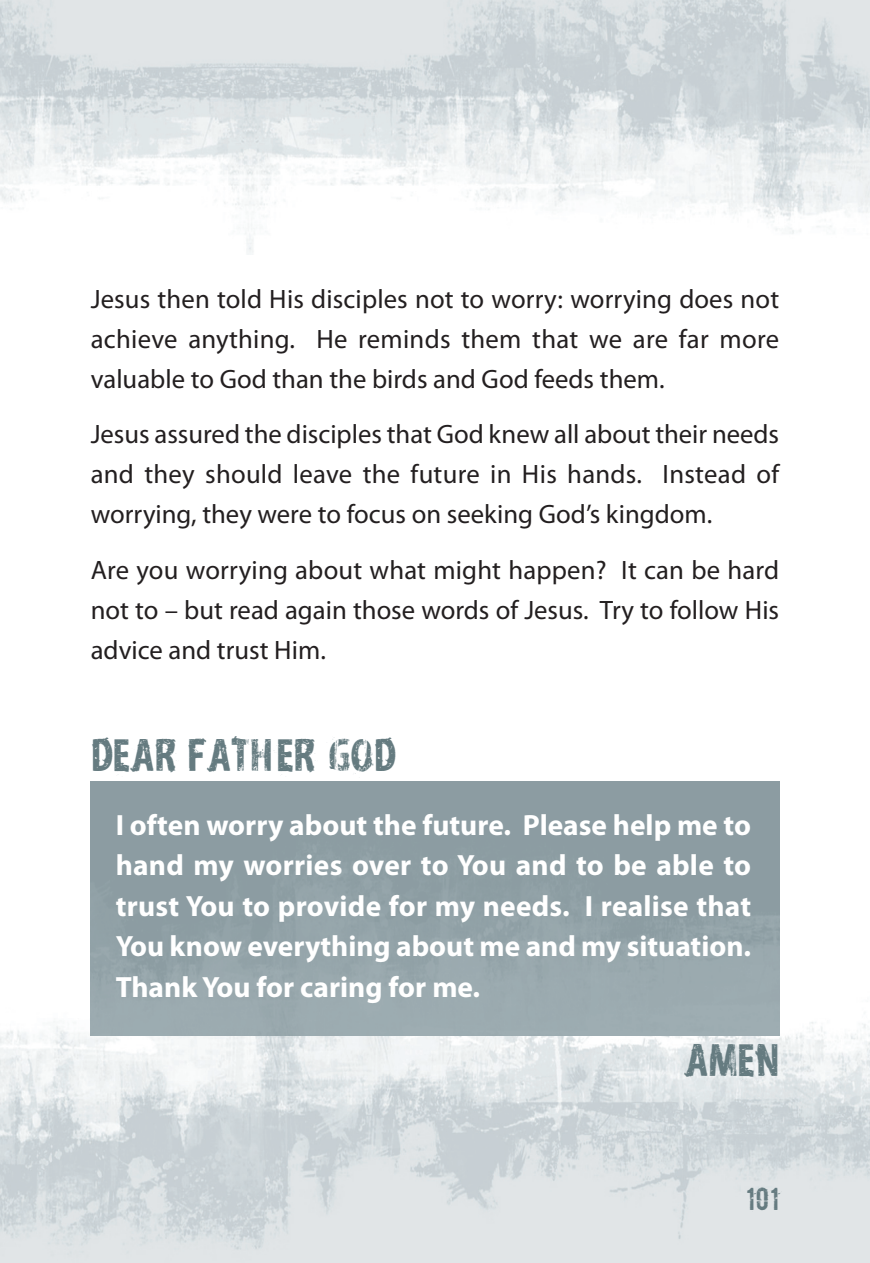
Then Jesus said to his disciples: 'Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat; or about your body, what you will wear. For life is more than food, and the body more than clothes.

Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to your life? Since you cannot do this very little thing, why do you worry about the rest? ...'

Luke 12:22-23, 25-26

Often, it is uncertainty about the future that causes us to worry: and worry is like a thief who robs us of our peace of mind.

Jesus had just told a story of a rich farmer who was obsessed with safeguarding his future. Jesus called him a fool, because life itself is uncertain. He would soon die and all his labours would be wasted. It is foolish to plan for the future but leave God out of your life.



Jesus then told His disciples not to worry: worrying does not achieve anything. He reminds them that we are far more valuable to God than the birds and God feeds them.

Jesus assured the disciples that God knew all about their needs and they should leave the future in His hands. Instead of worrying, they were to focus on seeking God's kingdom.

Are you worrying about what might happen? It can be hard not to – but read again those words of Jesus. Try to follow His advice and trust Him.

DEAR FATHER GOD

I often worry about the future. Please help me to hand my worries over to You and to be able to trust You to provide for my needs. I realise that You know everything about me and my situation. Thank You for caring for me.

AMEN

WORTHLESS?

Jesus and the blind beggar:

**He called out, 'Jesus, Son of David,
have mercy on me!'**

**Those who led the way rebuked him
and told him to be quiet, but he shouted
all the more, 'Son of David, have mercy
on me!' Jesus stopped and ordered
the man to be brought to him.**

Luke 18:38-40a

The blind beggar's cries for mercy were an embarrassment to the people. They must have thought a beggar was not someone worth bothering Jesus with. But they were wrong. They should have known that Jesus always had compassion on those in need.

Some of the people may have felt sorry for him but it seems that most of them looked down at him. Many might have regarded him as a worthless member of society. Perhaps that is how he thought about himself – worthless.

Jesus saw him quite differently: a very precious man created in God's own image. Jesus never ignored a cry for mercy and that is still the case today, for the Bible tells us that He is 'the same yesterday and today and for ever.'¹

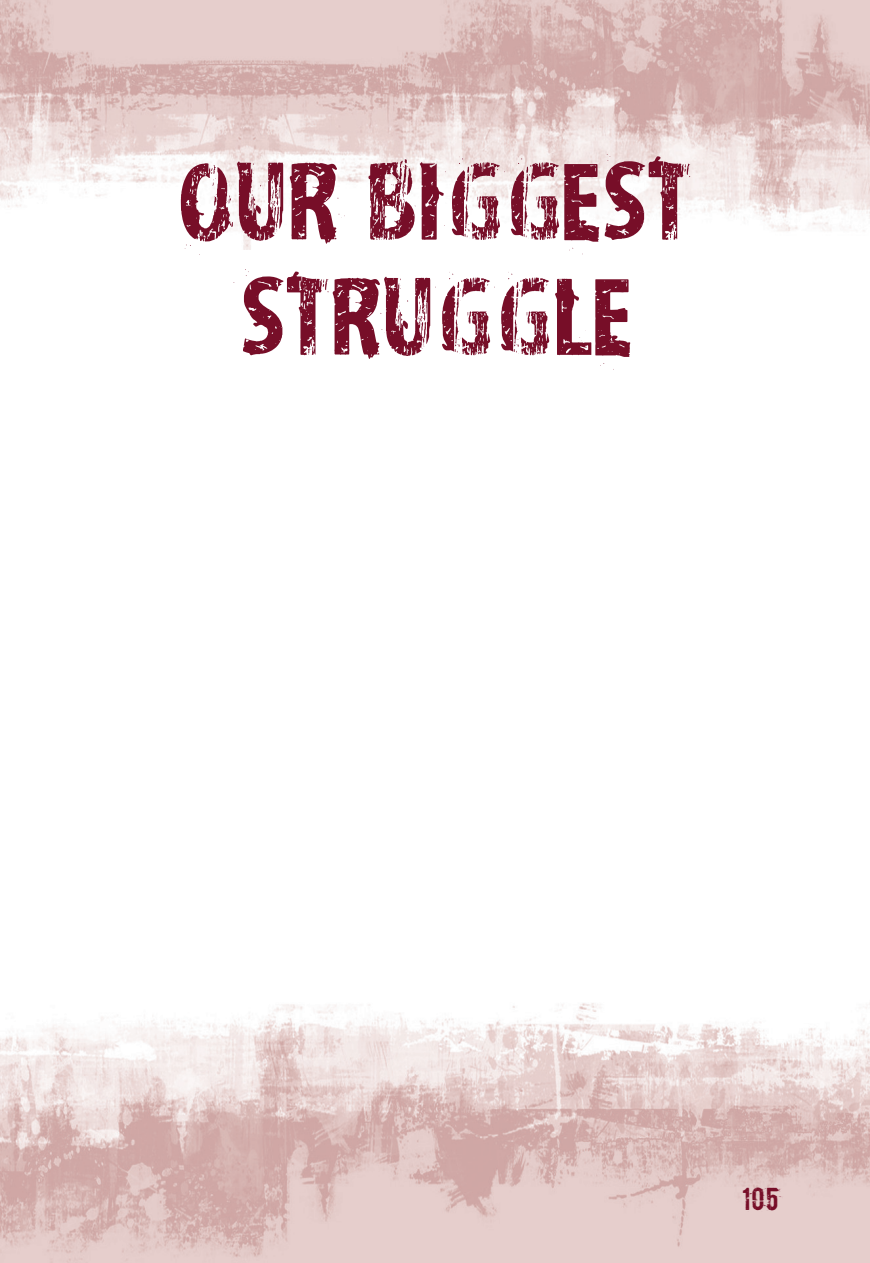
If you feel worthless for whatever reason, call out to Jesus. He will not ignore your cry. Your circumstances are not important to Him. What matters to Him most is your desire to love Him and to follow Him.

DEAR FATHER GOD

I am sure that people look upon me as being worthless. That is how I think of myself. Please God, have mercy on me just as Jesus showed mercy to that beggar and please help me through this difficult time.

AMEN





OUR BIGGEST STRUGGLE

OUR BIGGEST STRUGGLE

There is one struggle which is always in the background. Yet we may not even recognise it as a struggle. It is the struggle to obey God's laws.

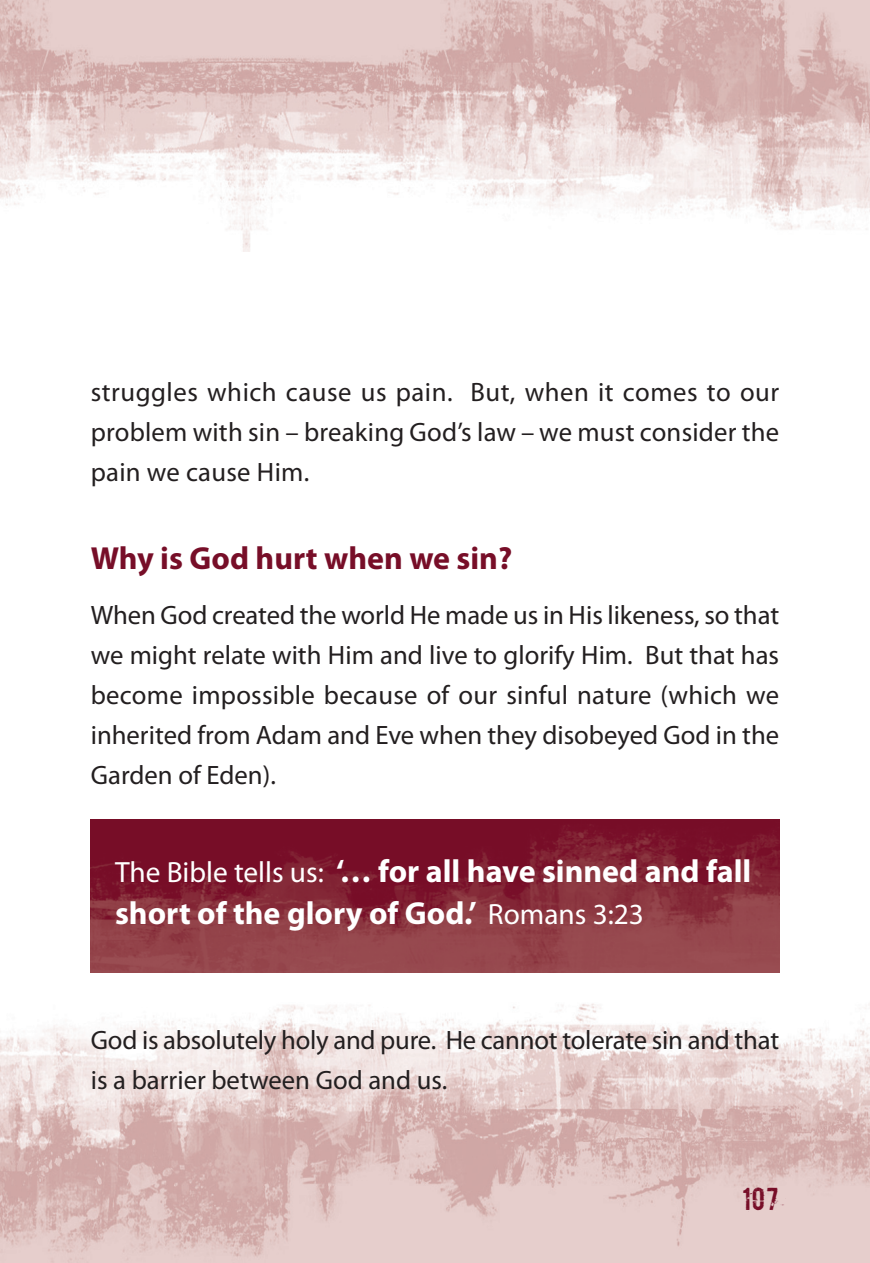
The Apostle Paul summed it up very well:

For I do not do the good I want to do, but the evil I do not want to do – this I keep on doing. Now if I do what I do not want to do, it is no longer I who do it, but it is sin living in me that does it.

Romans 7:19-20

Paul wanted to do the right things but was always failing. He knew the reason: the sinful nature within him.

Paul really struggled with these bad inner pressures. However, many people never think about this personal struggle between right and wrong. We tend only to think about the



struggles which cause us pain. But, when it comes to our problem with sin – breaking God’s law – we must consider the pain we cause Him.

Why is God hurt when we sin?

When God created the world He made us in His likeness, so that we might relate with Him and live to glorify Him. But that has become impossible because of our sinful nature (which we inherited from Adam and Eve when they disobeyed God in the Garden of Eden).

The Bible tells us: **‘... for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.’** Romans 3:23

God is absolutely holy and pure. He cannot tolerate sin and that is a barrier between God and us.

If God hates sin, does that mean He is not a God of love?

As God is just, He cannot simply ignore our sin. There has to be a punishment for it.

The Bible tells us: **For the wages of sin is death...** Romans 6:23a

But He is certainly loving and merciful. His love is so great that He longs to restore us rather than punish us. He made that possible by sending His Son, Jesus, to come to earth as a human being and to die in our place.

The Bible tells us: **But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.** Romans 5:8

Does that mean God will not punish us?

It means that we will not have to face God's punishment *but only if we choose to receive God's forgiveness*. We can ask God to

forgive us if we believe that Jesus Christ paid the penalty for our sins and if we are willing to allow Jesus to rule our lives.

There is nothing we can do to earn God's forgiveness; it is a free gift. When we accept His gift of forgiveness, we begin a new life as a follower of Jesus; the Bible describes it as being 'born again'.¹

What happens if we decide not to accept Jesus?

If we say, 'No', to God's rescue plan, we will be punished ourselves. That will happen when Jesus returns to earth, for He will come to judge – and punish – everyone who has not accepted God's offer of forgiveness.

It will be the most awful punishment of being separated from God forever.

The Bible tells us: ... **Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because they have not believed in the name of God's one and only Son.** John 3:18

¹John 3:1-21

JESUS

Why was Jesus, the Son of God,

**BETRAYED,
ABANDONED,
FALSELY ACCUSED,
MALIGNED,
CONDEMNED,
FLOGGED,
MOCKED,
SPAT ON,
ASSAULTED,
INSULTED,
RIDICULED,
HUMILIATED**

– and hung on a cross to die?

Anyone unfamiliar with the true story might assume that Jesus had been responsible for the most horrendous crimes – perhaps war crimes, acts of terrorism or serial killings – to deserve to be treated as He was and then be put to death.

His brutal crucifixion, at the age of about 33, was certainly the greatest miscarriage of justice in history but it did not destroy God's plan: it fulfilled it.

Jesus' purpose for coming to earth was to die – in our place. He willingly took the punishment which we all deserve; from the worst of criminals to the most 'upright' of law-abiding citizens.

He did that so that all our sins might be forgiven.

What do I need to do to become a Christian?

You can become a follower of Jesus and have all your sins forgiven by:

- **accepting** that you have not kept God's laws and deserve to be punished,
- **believing** that only Jesus can rescue you from God's punishment,
- **confessing** the wrong things in your life and repenting of them, that is, turning away from them,
- **deciding** to live to please God as a follower of Jesus.

If you are ready to take those steps, you can do so now by using the following prayer.

DEAR FATHER GOD

I am very sorry for everything in my life, past and present, which is not right. I now repent of my sin.

Thank You for sending Jesus to die in my place, for my sins, in order to save me from the punishment which I deserve.

I want to live to please Jesus and to make Him the centre of my life – to be my King.

Please forgive all my sins and accept me as Your child. Please fill me with Your Holy Spirit to help me live a new life.

AMEN

If you have been sincere with this prayer, God has received you as His child. All your sins – past, present and future – are forgiven.

And what now? You will need to grow as a Christian and that can only happen if you meet regularly with other Christians where the Bible is taught carefully. Therefore, the first step is to link with a local church and with Christians who will be able to help and support you.



PRAYER

ABOUT PRAYER

WHAT IS PRAYER?

Prayer is often thought to be just asking for God's help, either for ourselves or others, when struggling with difficult situations. And of course cries for help are very real prayers and most of the prayers in this section are just that.

But prayer is much more than presenting our requests to God. It is the means by which we engage with God, not only making our needs known but also sharing with Him how we feel when things are going well. Through prayer, we can worship Him; we can thank Him for His goodness and we can express remorse when we have offended Him by things we have done or said.

WHO CAN PRAY?

Many people think that they are not 'good enough', or 'religious' enough, to pray, especially if they are not 'churchgoers'. They think that a priest or chaplain has to pray for them. In a way, no one is 'good enough' to speak with God because He is so perfectly holy. And yet, He is full of love and mercy and just longs for us to talk to Him, both in the good times as well as when we are finding life tough.

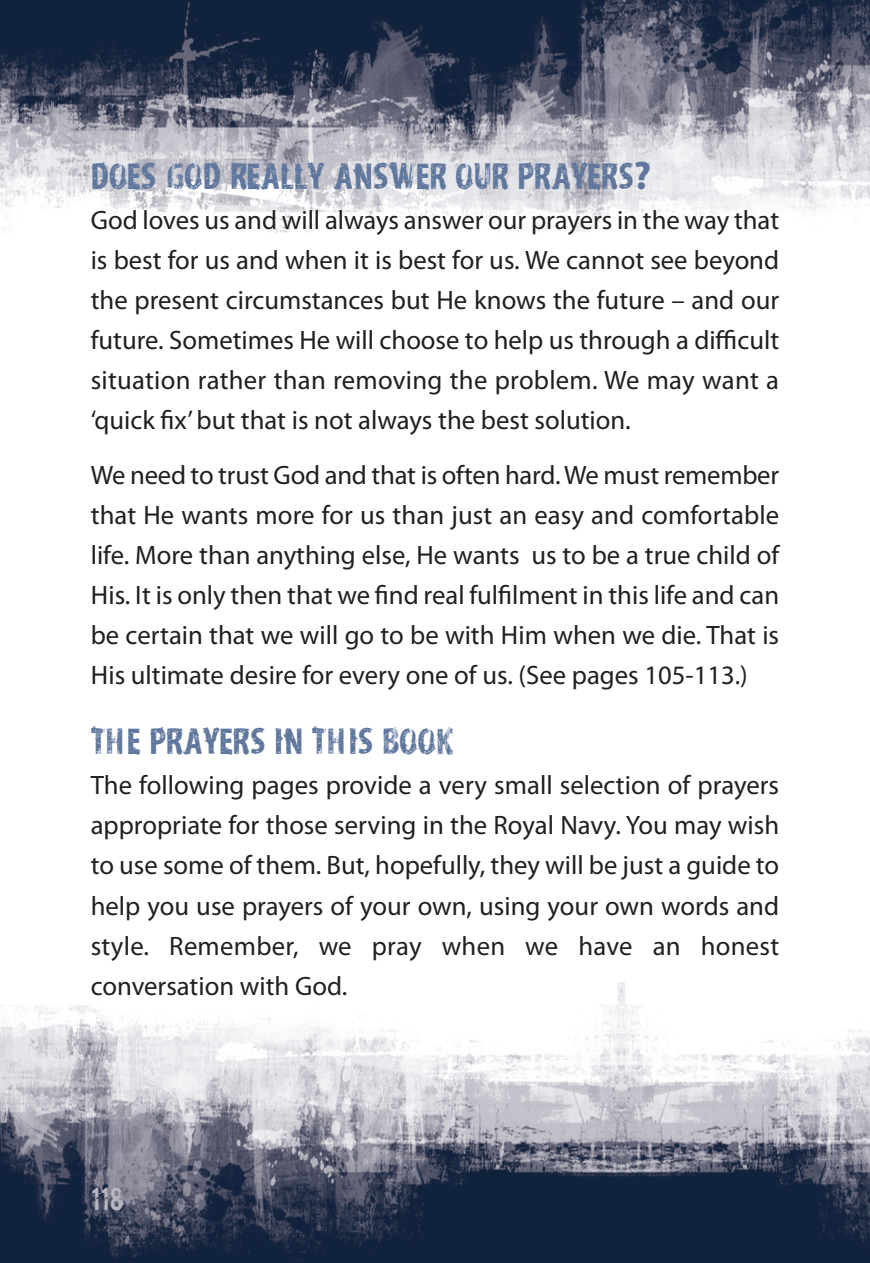
HOW SHOULD WE PRAY?

Prayer is not difficult. No special language is needed. It should simply be an honest conversation with God. He wants us to talk about how we really feel – both our happy and sad experiences – but always with respect and reverence.

When wanting to ask God for something there are three questions we should ask ourselves:

- are we living in a way that is pleasing to God?
- are we requesting something that will please God?
- are we doing what we can ourselves to meet the need?

We also need to pray with faith, which means that we must believe that God will hear our prayers and answer them. The Bible also teaches us not to give up. That may mean continuing to pray for days or weeks or even months or longer. Clearly, that can be difficult because it is only natural to want our prayers answered quickly.



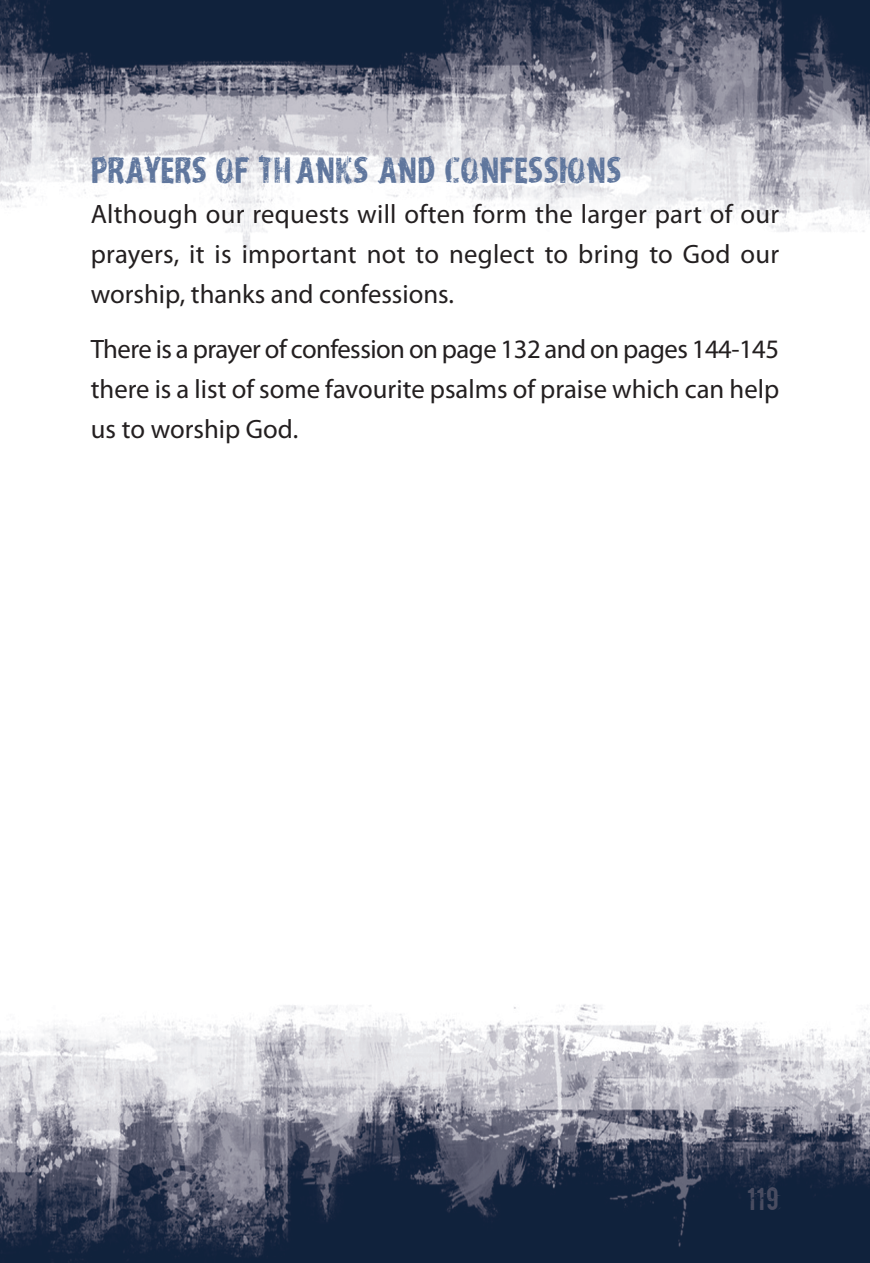
DOES GOD REALLY ANSWER OUR PRAYERS?

God loves us and will always answer our prayers in the way that is best for us and when it is best for us. We cannot see beyond the present circumstances but He knows the future – and our future. Sometimes He will choose to help us through a difficult situation rather than removing the problem. We may want a ‘quick fix’ but that is not always the best solution.

We need to trust God and that is often hard. We must remember that He wants more for us than just an easy and comfortable life. More than anything else, He wants us to be a true child of His. It is only then that we find real fulfilment in this life and can be certain that we will go to be with Him when we die. That is His ultimate desire for every one of us. (See pages 105-113.)

THE PRAYERS IN THIS BOOK

The following pages provide a very small selection of prayers appropriate for those serving in the Royal Navy. You may wish to use some of them. But, hopefully, they will be just a guide to help you use prayers of your own, using your own words and style. Remember, we pray when we have an honest conversation with God.



PRAYERS OF THANKS AND CONFESSIONS

Although our requests will often form the larger part of our prayers, it is important not to neglect to bring to God our worship, thanks and confessions.

There is a prayer of confession on page 132 and on pages 144-145 there is a list of some favourite psalms of praise which can help us to worship God.

A PRAYER

FOR WHILE I AM AWAY FROM HOME

DEAR FATHER GOD

I often feel lonely despite being part of such a large team. It is hard having long periods away from family, separated from those you long to spend every moment with.

Please help me to remember that I am never separated from You. Help me to know that You are with me and please comfort and strengthen me in my loneliness.

And, Father, help me never to forget that the separation is just as hard for my partner and our children. Please keep them safe. I pray that You will give my partner the energy and strength to cope with the children and the wisdom to train them in godly ways. Please protect our children from bad influences and unhealthy friendships.

In Jesus' Name.

AMEN

A PRAYER

FOR MY SHIP OR ESTABLISHMENT

DEAR FATHER GOD

I pray for everyone with whom I serve. Please help us to work well together, always supporting each other. Help us to avoid petty arguments and acts of selfishness.

I pray for those who are finding life tough in whatever area of their life it may be. I pray that You will help them to act wisely as they look for a solution. Please guard them against hasty and unwise decisions.

Specifically, I pray for ... *(name your friends and their needs)*.

Father God, I pray for Your help to those in command. I pray that their leadership will be respected and will create harmony and good teamwork amongst us all. And please help me always to be quick to respect and encourage others and always slow to find fault in others.

In Jesus' Name.

AMEN

A PRAYER

FOR WHILE ENGAGED ON OPERATIONS

DEAR FATHER GOD

Please protect us when deployed on training, on exercises and operations; the many dangers ranging from difficult weather to enemy fire. Please keep me and my Oppos safe. Help me never to forget that You are able to control the weather and even the people who would want to harm us.

Please help us to be alert at all times, never exposing ourselves to unnecessary danger, yet never failing to fulfil our duty.

Father, I pray for the Captain and the Command. Please give them the wisdom and skills to properly assess the risks which we face and to choose the right strategies and tactics to employ.

I pray these things too for those serving elsewhere, especially in even more dangerous situations and, in particular, in*(name the areas or conflicts)*.

In Jesus' Name.

AMEN

A PRAYER

FOR OTHER SHIPS AND ESTABLISHMENTS

DEAR FATHER GOD

As I have prayed for my family, myself and my colleagues, so I pray for all who serve in the Royal Navy, in whatever capacity. I pray for their welfare and their safety and protection.

I pray particularly, Father, that You will watch over and protect all the men and women currently deployed on hazardous operations and exercises. Please equip those in Command for the risks they have to assess and the tough decisions they face.

I pray that You will grant peace to the families of these men and women, concerned as they will be for their loved one.

Please also help all the RN chaplains as they provide pastoral support and especially those who themselves are serving in areas of high risk at the present time.

In Jesus' Name.

AMEN

A PRAYER

FOR THOSE IN COMMAND

DEAR FATHER GOD

I pray for all who hold a position of command in the Royal Navy. Please enable them to lead well by example. Grant them courage when faced with danger, wisdom when faced with difficult decisions, humility when needing advice from others and the strength to persevere when things go wrong.

Father, I pray that their leadership will be an inspiration to the men and women under their command who, in turn, will respect their authority. I pray, too, for good supportive relationships with all who serve under them.

And Father, as they have their own struggles and anxieties as we all do, I pray that they will acknowledge You and seek Your help when they need it.

In Jesus' Name.

AMEN

A PRAYER

FOR THE COUNTRY'S SECURITY

DEAR FATHER GOD

I pray that You will guide and grant wisdom to all who have responsibility for setting our country's defence policies; for the Government ministers; for their advisers and for the intelligence agencies.

I pray, too, for the heads of our armed forces, and for those appointed to the highest ranks to support them, as they implement our defence policies and determine how best to use their resources.

But, Father God, we acknowledge that You alone know everything. You are aware of all the plans of evil men scheming to create terror and destruction. We ask that, in Your mercy, You will be the defender of our nation and protect all men and women engaged in the defence of our country.

In Jesus' Name.

AMEN

A PRAYER

FOR THOSE RECOVERING FROM INJURIES

DEAR FATHER GOD

I pray for all men and women having to face the consequences, as well as the pain, of injuries suffered whilst on duty.

I pray for those currently undergoing rehabilitation; for those left with permanent disabilities and for those still struggling to come to terms with their injuries. I pray that they will look to You for Your help and comfort. As they displayed courage in serving, so I ask that You will grant to them the courage they need to face the challenges ahead. Please bring alongside them people who can support them effectively.

I pray, too, that You will help their families and friends who share their pain and struggles.

In Jesus' Name.

AMEN

A PRAYER

FOR THOSE WHO ARE GRIEVING

DEAR FATHER GOD

I pray for all who are grieving the loss of a loved one, especially those who have died while serving their country.

I pray that the bravery of their loved one may bring a measure of comfort to those devastated by their loss. I ask that You will unite families in their grief and enable parents, brothers and sisters, children and the wider family to support one another.

Most importantly, Father, I ask that You will draw them to Yourself so that they might find, in You, the comfort and strength and peace which You alone can provide. Please keep them close to You as they journey through the dark valley of grief.

In Jesus' Name.

AMEN

A PRAYER FOR VICTIMS OF CONFLICT

DEAR FATHER GOD

I pray for all victims of conflict; for those who have suffered serious injuries; for those who have lost loved ones and especially for children who have lost parents; for those facing starvation; for those who have lost their homes; for those who have fled their countries and are now labelled as 'refugees'; for those who live in fear and may have lost all hope of a secure future.

Father, please have mercy on them. Please show them that You are a God of love and compassion. Please equip and guide those who are working to meet their needs and to bring healing and to restore hope.

I pray that not only will their physical and emotional needs be met but, also, that they will discover for themselves the hope for eternity which can be found in Jesus alone.

In Jesus' Name.

AMEN

A PRAYER

FOR THOSE WORKING FOR PEACE

DEAR FATHER GOD

I remember Jesus' words, 'Blessed are the peacemakers...'¹

I pray for all peacemakers. I pray for all those striving to establish peace and reconciliation where there is conflict and for those working to maintain peace where it is under threat.

For those currently engaged in negotiating peace, I pray that You will give them wisdom, patience, courage and the appropriate skills as they seek to be mediators. And for those leaders who seem intent on pursuing acts of hostility and destruction, I pray that You will cause them to look for peaceful solutions to their grievances.

I especially pray that You will have mercy on the countries of (*name the countries*) and restore peace to those nations.

In Jesus' Name.

AMEN

¹Matthew 5:9

A PRAYER

FOR MY FAMILY AND FRIENDS IN SPECIAL NEED

DEAR FATHER GOD

I pray for those of my family and friends who are in special need of Your help: for those worried about their own health or the health of family members; for those who have been through a painful breakdown of a relationship or facing that possibility; for those struggling to manage their finances; for those needing employment; for those facing hard decisions.

I pray particularly for *(name your friends and their needs)*.

Father, where it is possible, please enable the healing of body and mind and the restoring of relationships. And please help with the finding of solutions for those with money problems and those without jobs. And please grant wisdom to those who especially need it for the decisions they have to make.

In Jesus' Name.

AMEN

A PRAYER

FOR ME AS I PREPARE TO LEAVE

DEAR FATHER GOD

Inevitably I have mixed feelings as my time in the navy draws to an end. There have been some really tough times – and some scary times – but it has been a great experience and I know that the navy was absolutely the right decision for me. But I am also sure that it is right to leave now.

Father, please help me not to be anxious as I face such a big change in my life. I am well aware that the adjustment to civilian life can be incredibly hard. Please help me with all the decisions I have to make.

And I pray for my family too. Please help them to accept the changes which will affect all of us.

In Jesus' Name.

AMEN

A PRAYER

I AM SORRY

DEAR FATHER GOD

I confess that what I did (or said) was wrong. (*State what it was you did or said.*) I am really sorry. I just wish that I had not acted so hastily. If I had taken time to think about what was happening I am sure I would have dealt with it differently. But it is too late now.

Father God, please help me to decide how I should try to make amends to ... (*name the person*). Please help them to accept my apology and to be able to forgive me.

And I realise that I have also hurt You and I need You to forgive me too, please. Thank You.

In Jesus' Name.

AMEN

Notes:

The Bible tells us, 'If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.' (1 John 1:9)

Two helpful Psalms concerning confession and forgiveness are Psalms 32 and 51.

A PRAYER

THE LORD'S PRAYER

OUR FATHER IN HEAVEN

**hallowed be Your Name,
Your kingdom come,
Your will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins
as we forgive those who sin against us.
Lead us not into temptation
but deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power,
and the glory are Yours
now and for ever.**

AMEN

Note:

Jesus taught His disciples this prayer for them to use as a pattern for their own prayers. See Matthew 6:9-13.



PSALMS

PSALMS

TO HELP US IN OUR STRUGGLES

**Psalm 91, widely known as the
Soldier's Psalm (or Prayer)**

God can protect us and defend us

Whoever dwells in the shelter of the Most High
will rest in the shadow of the Almighty,
I will say of the LORD, 'He is my refuge and my fortress,
my God, in whom I trust.'

Surely he will save you
from the fowler's snare
and from the deadly pestilence.

He will cover you with his feathers,
and under his wings you will find refuge;
his faithfulness will be your shield and rampart.

You will not fear the terror of night,
nor the arrow that flies by day,
nor the pestilence that stalks in the darkness,
nor the plague that destroys at midday.

A thousand may fall at your side,
ten thousand at your right hand,
but it will not come near you.

You will only observe with your eyes
and see the punishment of the wicked.

If you say, 'The Lord is my refuge,'
and you make the Most High your dwelling,
no harm will overtake you,
no disaster will come near your tent.
For he will command his angels concerning you
to guard you in all your ways;
they will lift you up in their hands,
so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.
You will tread on the lion and the cobra;
you will trample the great lion and the serpent.
'Because he loves me,' says the Lord, 'I will rescue him;
I will protect him, for he acknowledges my name.
He will call on me, and I will answer him;
I will be with him in trouble,
I will deliver him and honour him.
With long life I will satisfy him
and show him my salvation.'

Psalms 91

PSALMS

TO HELP US IN OUR STRUGGLES

The LORD is able to keep us safe

In peace I will lie down and sleep,
for you alone, LORD,
make me dwell in safety.

Psalms 4:8

The LORD is totally dependable

The LORD is a refuge for the oppressed,
a stronghold in times of trouble.
Those who know your name trust in you,
for you, LORD, have never forsaken those who seek you.

Psalms 9:9,10

God hears when we cry out

In my distress I called to the LORD;
I cried to my God for help.
From his temple he heard my voice;
my cry came before him, into his ears.
He reached down from on high and took hold of me;
he drew me out of deep waters.

Psalms 18:6,16

The LORD is like a shepherd

The LORD is my shepherd, I lack nothing.

He makes me lie down in green pastures,
he leads me beside quiet waters,
he refreshes my soul.

He guides me along the right paths
for his name's sake.

Even though I walk
through the darkest valley,

I will fear no evil,
for you are with me;
your rod and your staff,
they comfort me.

You prepare a table before me
in the presence of my enemies.

You anoint my head with oil;
my cup overflows.

Surely your goodness and love will follow me
all the days of my life,
and I will dwell in the house of the LORD
forever.

Psalms 23

PSALMS

TO HELP US IN OUR STRUGGLES

The LORD's love never fails

We wait in hope for the LORD;
he is our help and our shield.
In him our hearts rejoice,
for we trust in his holy name.
May your unfailing love be with us, LORD,
even as we put our hope in you.

Psalms 33:20-22

The LORD cares for the brokenhearted

The righteous cry out, and the LORD hears them;
he delivers them from all their troubles.
The LORD is close to the brokenhearted
and saves those who are crushed in spirit.

Psalms 34:17,18

God is always ready to help us

God is our refuge and strength,
an ever-present help in trouble.
Therefore we will not fear, though the earth give way
and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea,
though its waters roar and foam
and the mountains quake with their surging.

Psalms 46:1-3

God can rescue us

I waited patiently for the LORD;
he turned to me and heard my cry.
He lifted me out of the slimy pit,
out of the mud and mire;
he set my feet on a rock
and gave me a firm place to stand.
He put a new song in my mouth,
a hymn of praise to our God.
Many will see and fear the LORD
and put their trust in him.

Psalm 40:1-3

God can be our refuge

Yes, my soul, find rest in God;
my hope comes from him.
Truly he is my rock and my salvation;
he is my fortress, I will not be shaken.
My salvation and my honour depend on God;
he is my mighty rock, my refuge.
Trust in him at all times, you people;
pour out your hearts to him,
for God is our refuge.

Psalm 62:5-8

PSALMS

TO HELP US IN OUR STRUGGLES

The LORD watches over us constantly

I lift up my eyes to the mountains –
where does my help come from?

My help comes from the Lord,
the Maker of heaven and earth.

He will not let your foot slip –
he who watches over you will not slumber;
indeed, he who watches over Israel
will neither slumber nor sleep.

Psalms 121:1-4

The LORD hears our cries and forgives us

Out of the depths I cry to you, LORD;
Lord, hear my voice.

Let your ears be attentive
to my cry for mercy.

If you, LORD, kept a record of sins,
Lord, who could stand?

But with you there is forgiveness,
so that we can, with reverence, serve you.

Psalms 130:1-4

The LORD knows all about us...

You have searched me, LORD,
and you know me.
You know when I sit and when I rise;
you perceive my thoughts from afar.
You discern my going out and my lying down;
you are familiar with all my ways.
Before a word is on my tongue
you, LORD, know it completely.
You hem me in behind and before,
and you lay your hand upon me.
Such knowledge is too wonderful for me,
too lofty for me to attain.

...and He is always with us

Where can I go from your Spirit?
Where can I flee from your presence?
If I go up to the heavens, you are there;
if I make my bed in the depths, you are there.
If I rise on the wings of the dawn,
if I settle on the far side of the sea,
even there your hand will guide me,
your right hand will hold me fast.

Psalms 139:1-10

PSALMS

TO HELP US THANK AND WORSHIP GOD

A key purpose of the Psalms is to help us to worship God. The following are some of the most widely held favourite psalms of praise (with the first line).

Psalm 8

LORD, our Lord, how majestic is your name
in all the earth!

Psalm 30

I will exalt you, LORD,

Psalm 34

I will extol the LORD at all times;

Psalm 66

Shout for joy to God, all the earth!

Psalm 92

It is good to praise the LORD

Psalm 95

Come, let us sing for joy to the LORD;

Psalm 96

Sing to the LORD a new song;
sing to the LORD, all the earth.

Psalm 98

Sing to the LORD a new song,
for he has done marvellous things;

Psalm 100

Shout for joy to the LORD, all the earth.

Psalm 103

Praise the LORD, my soul;

Psalm 138

I will praise you, LORD, with all my heart;

Psalm 145

I will exalt you, my God the King;
I will praise your name for ever and ever.

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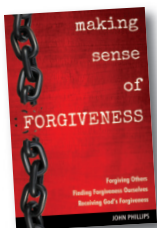
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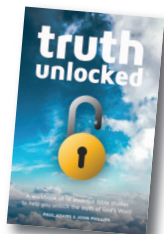
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INNER STRUGGLES

Life is a mixture of happiness and pain; of laughter and tears; of celebration and grief; of soaring and crawling. For some, life brings more joy than sorrow; for others, life is hard with only rare moments of real joy. For us all there are times when we struggle.

This book uses verses from the Bible as a means of offering hope and comfort to those who recognise their need of God's help in their struggles.

This edition has been specially produced in association with the **Naval & Military Bible Society** for those serving in the Royal Navy.




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