

good news

MSM ● ● ● ● ● A DEVOTIONAL ● ● ● ● ● ARC

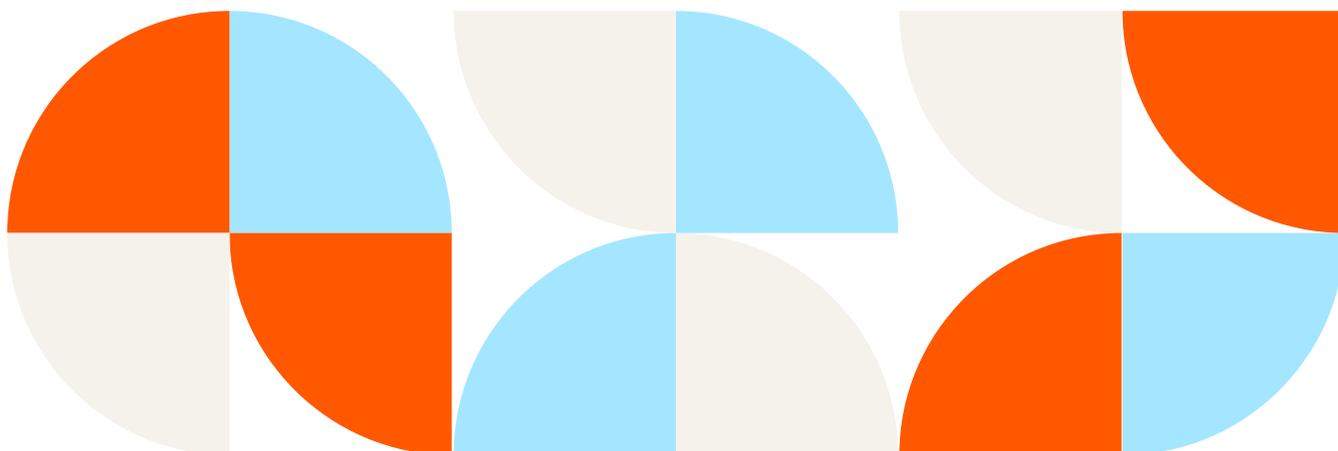




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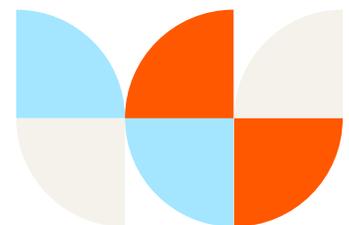
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● ● ● Before You Begin ● ● ●

Many times we ask questions like, “God where were you when...” or, “How is God present when I am feeling...” It can be a frustrating feeling when we do not have the answers to the questions. Some of the most valuable places of growth in our faith are times of doubt that push us to find answers to difficult questions. Through this process we learn more about who Jesus is and solidify what we believe to be true about Him.

Good News is a seven day devotional that will seek truth about God amidst the thoughts and feelings we encounter in our day to day lives. Each day you will spend time looking at various thoughts, feelings, or questions our writers have had for God while walking through different seasons of their faith. The goal each day is to study the questions each writer brought to God and the truth they learned about God through their personal testimonies and scripture. Each of them has learned to live differently because of the way they saw God through their questions and trials.

While this book covers seven different topics or scenarios, there are so many more questions you might be wrestling with. Our hope is that you are able to relate to or learn from at least one of these, and our challenge is that you bring forward to God the questions you are thinking through. There will be a time of reflection at the end for you to process your thoughts and feelings that you want to bring to God. We believe that seeking God for truth will change your heart, and you will live differently because of the answers you find.



● ● ● What to Expect Each Day ● ● ●

Each day you will hear from different writers about the questions they wrestled with and the Good News they have learned in light of it.

READ

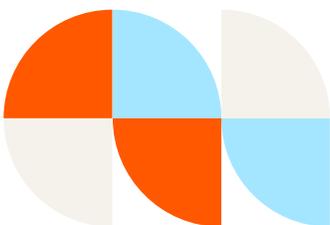
Each day will have a story or example the writer experienced when asking questions in their life. Then read about when they brought this question to God and the Good News they discovered about God and His character.

RESPOND

Next, there will be a few questions for you to respond to related to the reading and space to journal out your answers.

PRAY

We encourage you to take time reading through each of these stories and truths about God. There will be space for you to take notes and journal your responses to the readings, write out similar questions you wrestled with, a new truth that you learned about God, or a story that came to mind. At the end of each page there will be scripture and a prayer prompt for you to spend time sitting in prayer with God as you reflect on the response questions, scripture, and devotional.



GOOD NEWS WHEN... I'M COMPARING MYSELF TO OTHERS.

- Tylie

READ

“Woe to him who strives with him who formed him, a pot among earthen pots! Does the clay say to him who forms it, ‘What are you making?’ or ‘Your work has no handles?’ Woe to him who says to a Father, ‘What are you begetting?’ or to a woman, ‘With what are you in labor?’” Thus says the LORD, the Holy One of Israel, and the one who formed him: “Ask me of things to come; will you command me concerning my children and the work of my hands? I made the earth and created man on it; it was my hands that stretched out the heavens, and I commanded all their host.”

I’m a big feeler. The older I get, the more I realize this. I have a

lot of emotions, which can feel really scary. Something I feel a lot about is comparison to the people around me. In my eyes everyone seems more “put together” than I feel. I find myself being envious of my friends, who seem to keep their emotions in check, while I never quite can. In the last year or so, there have been a lot of times that I asked God, “Why?” - Why can’t I be more like everybody else? Why can’t I be less emotional and more put together? Why can’t I use my brain more than my feelings? These questions tend to linger in my brain, and I end up feeling kind of stuck.

But here’s what we see in Isaiah 45:9-12, God didn’t design me to be like everybody else. Let me say that again in case you missed it: God didn’t design us to be like everybody else. I love the image that Isaiah gives us of a pot being made. It would be ridiculous for a clay pot to come out of the furnace, look at the pots around it, and then turn to the potter and say, “Why didn’t you make me more like those pots? That one

● ● ● **Day One** ● ● ●

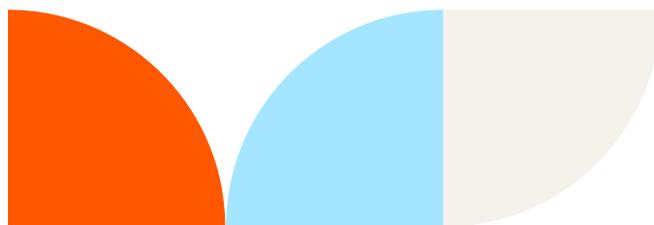
has a handle. That one is taller. That one can hold a lot more. You made me wrong.”

This is almost funny to think about, right? And yet, how often do we do the exact same thing? When I compare myself to the people around me who I see as less emotional, I am essentially saying to God, “You made me wrong!”

But our Father is kind to us, and thankfully He knows much better than we do. He reminds us that we are “fearfully and wonderfully made,” as Psalm 139 says. He made us on purpose, not to be like everybody else, but to be completely unique in the way we relate to God and His creation. I get to love Jesus and love the people around me in unique ways because of the tender and compassionate heart that He has given me. And He made you different from me, different from your family and friends and your neighbors and the celebrity you want to be like, and that is a really good thing.

In response my prayer has been this: Father, you created me with love and care and intention. Who am I to critique your work? You formed me and shaped me exactly as you wanted me to be.

Thank you for being a Creator who takes His time, and who makes beautiful things. Help me to trust you as I rest in this truth, that I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Thank you for caring for me, Lord.



● ● ● **Day One** ● ● ●

3. *How has God made you unique and unlike anyone else?*

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SCRIPTURE

Isaiah 45:9-13

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PRAYER

Spend time in prayer asking God to highlight to you the ways that He made you unique. Think about ways you can remember that the next time you go to compare yourself to others.

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● ● ● Day Two ● ● ●

GOOD NEWS WHEN... THE WORLD'S VOICE SEEMS LOUDER THAN GOD'S VOICE.

- *Corinne*

READ

When I was growing up and I really wanted something, I would strategically think through which parent to ask. While I always went for the one that was most likely to say yes, there were moments I was met with a no, and I would ask the other parent hoping for better luck. Sometimes one would say yes while the other would say no, which made it confusing which one to follow knowing I would disobey one of them because of the approval from the other. As I have gotten older I find myself in this situation less with my parents and more with God. I often come to Him with the things I desire and hope for, but am sometimes met with a no. Just like when I

would ask my parents for things, it can be confusing which one to follow.

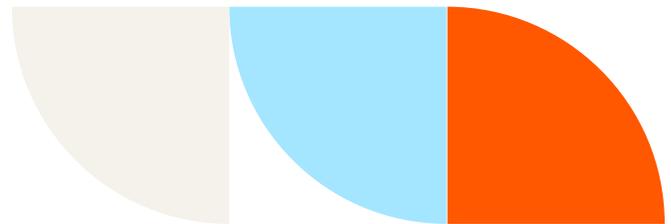
There are so many times I have come to God with the question, “Where are you when the world is telling me something different than you?” One of the most recent times I found myself asking this question was when I was applying for colleges. I knew I wanted to go to a Christian school and pursue a Bible degree. I had a lot of people tell me to consider other options for school and even encouraged me to study a different major. I was met with a mix of responses any time I would tell people where I wanted to go or what I wanted to do. I knew I was not choosing a school or a profession that was “successful” in the world's eyes. At the same time, my best friend from high school was preparing to go to an incredibly prestigious school to become a doctor. Every time we would tell people our schools and dreams side by side, hers would be praised much more than mine. It was frustrating and defeating in a lot of moments.

● ● ● Day Two ● ● ●

I started to ask Jesus why I was being called to something that was so “unsuccessful” in the world's eyes. This is just one of many instances where I have come to God with the question of where are you when the world is telling me something different than you. The “world” was telling me what I was choosing was not the best option and picking something else would be more highly praised or successful.

This was not something I learned quickly, and I wrestled with this for a long time. What I have learned and found a lot of comfort in is the truth of John 15:9. Jesus teaches us that we are not of the world because we are a part of Him. Jesus calls us to be different from the world. What I have learned is that it is difficult to go against the world, and a lot of times you will receive pushback for it. While it can be easy to conform to the world in those moments, I have seen multiple times in my life that following Jesus is so much better. There is a reason that He is calling us

out of the world even if we can not see it right away. I constantly think about these moments and the times I still come to Jesus with this question, but the GOOD NEWS is that Jesus is calling us to something so much better. I am learning that I want to trust His voice above the world even when it does not make sense because it has always been good and right in my life.



● ● ● Day Three ● ● ●

GOOD NEWS WHEN... I'M FEELING DISCOURAGED.

-Henry

READ

The summer after I graduated from college my life changed drastically. I finished school, moved from living with friends to living at home, and was searching for a full-time job all during the beginning of the pandemic. I felt blessed when I found a job only a few weeks after I graduated, but I would soon find out the job was not what I expected. For a whole year I was getting up early, driving far, and doing work that made days go by slowly. Watching my friends having fun relaxing, hanging out, and going on adventures while I was stuck at work made me feel even more frustrated. For months I was unsuccessful at finding another job. I felt miserable, lonely, and discouraged. Everyday I went to

work I felt stuck and helpless; it seemed like this uncomfortable situation was never going to end. The burden of being miserable week after week felt so heavy; there was no way I could have persevered on my own. My discouraging situation helped me recognize I needed to depend on God for hope and strength. There have been times recently when I've been put in situations that feel hopeless. I find myself asking, 'God, why would you place me here?' or 'Why would you let this happen to me?'

My feelings of discouragement reminded me of how Joseph continued to be faithful to God and persevere through the trials he was facing in Genesis 37-39. Joseph was sold into slavery by his brothers, wrongly accused by Potiphar's wife, and put in in jail. Joseph's story is an awesome illustration of how God sustains us and blesses us for being faithful through bleak situations.

James writes concisely about handling difficult circumstances

● ● ● **Day Three** ● ● ●

2. *What helped you get through that experience?*

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SCRIPTURE

Genesis 37-39, James 1:2-4, Romans 8:28

PRAYER

Talk to God about moments that you have felt discouraged. Spend time considering how God showed up in those movements and how you can find encouragement and joy from Him. Feel free to use the lines below to write out your prayer.

3. *How can you find joy in these moments?*

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GOOD NEWS WHEN... I'M FEELING SAD.

- Brent

READ

Sadness, pain, death. There is not a single person who has ever lived without experiencing at least one or maybe even all of these things. Jesus himself experienced all three. For those of us who follow Jesus and claim Him as our Savior, we say we have the hope of eternal life without sadness, pain, and death. As someone who has experienced these things myself, I can tell you that just saying I believed was not enough to comfort me. I knew I could not just say things like, "I can have peace because this person I know believed in Jesus and is with Him now," or "I know that my sadness here on earth won't last forever, and Jesus will make all things new." These things aren't wrong, they just didn't feel like enough.

Last year, my grandpa, who was one of my closest friends, died. I believed full-heartedly that he was with Jesus now because he had put his faith in Him. Even though I knew he was with Jesus, I was still in sadness. Here's why just saying I was a believer didn't feel like enough to comfort me. First, saying I believed did not involve learning new things about God in the Bible. Secondly, saying I believed did not equal me living it out.

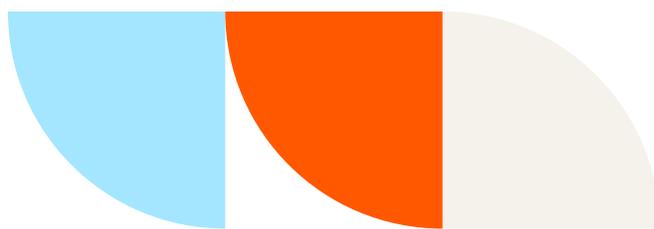
Let's take the first one first. Saying I believed in Jesus sometimes felt lazy. I learned when I was sad that those simple words did not always comfort me, but what I noticed was that reading my Bible more provided a lot of comfort. Learning more about God and what He cares about every day provided such peace and comfort to me. When I read the Bible when I was sad, I found out that God actually cared about me more than I thought.

● ● ● **Day Four** ● ● ●

What about the second thing? Just saying I believed in God did not equal me living for God. My grandpa was the best servant I had ever seen, and He loved the way Jesus loved. He was a great example of what a life devoted to Christ should look like. I said I believed in God, but did not live for God like my grandpa did. Once I started living as my grandpa did, which was truly following Jesus and being a servant, I realized that I believed more deeply what I had already known, and it changed my life!

These two things, learning more and living more, helped me in moments that I felt overwhelmed with sadness. For you, these things may be helpful and provide comfort in moments when you are feeling sad, but I want to remind you that even with these two things you may still feel sad because we live in a world of sin. I am so grateful that we have Jesus for comfort in these moments. I can not imagine how much harder it would be to try to hold the weight of my sadness on my

own. I encourage you to learn and live for God even in sadness. God is with you in your sadness and wants to help you in it.



● ● ● **Day Four** ● ● ●

RESPOND

1. *Who is someone that you go to in moments of sadness?*

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3. *What does it look like for you to share moments of sadness with God?*

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2. *What are the thoughts and feelings you have towards God when you are feeling sad?*

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SCRIPTURE

Romans 12:2, Colossians 3:17,
Psalm 34:17-18

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PRAYER

Take time to sit in prayer. Think about the feelings you have towards God when you are sad, happy, angry, frustrated. How do you see Him in these moments, and how do you see Him inviting you to share those feelings with Him?

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GOOD NEWS WHEN... THINGS DON'T HAPPEN IN THE TIMING I WANT THEM TO.

- Haley

READ

Since I was little, I have always been a planner. Whether it was mapping out what I was going to do with my best friend in elementary school for our play date or what I would end up doing for my career. I would do whatever it took to build toward what I thought was best in the timing I thought made the most sense! I like to say I was born that way, but I really got it from my mom. She was out the door prepared, always 5 minutes early to things, and was so good at preparing me for my day so I would never feel like I was missing anything. I quickly caught wind of how helpful that was and

have continued doing that for myself as I have gotten older. As a result of being a planner, I have noticed when things don't go the way I anticipated or they happen slower than the timing I was expecting, I get really disappointed. How come my plans don't always go as planned? How come things don't happen in the timing I want them to? The moment I started asking these questions, I realized that I was depending on the timing of my plans more than the timing of God's plans. The Good News is that we serve a God who is all-knowing of the plans for our life. In our disappointment, we can seek Him and His word for affirmation of what He has next for us. He will guide your steps—it is a promise!

What are some plans that you have for your life? Are you okay with the reality that the God who made the entire universe may have a different plan? What would it look like to start the practice of submitting your plans to God, asking Him to lead you wherever He thinks is best?

GOOD NEWS WHEN... GOD'S PLANS ARE DIFFERENT THAN MINE.

- Phoebe

READ

It was the summer before seventh grade underneath a morning sunrise on a lake somewhere in New Hampshire. I was wrestling with God in a season of grief and confusion. My coach had suddenly passed away in a motorcycle accident a few weeks before, and it was the first time I had lost someone close to me. He believed in me, rooted me on, and pushed me to become better. I had anticipated having him as my volleyball, basketball, and softball coach throughout high school. I had envisioned growing under his leadership and becoming the player he believed I could be. His death came as a shock as I processed how differently my life would look than I had anticipated.

As the sun rose, I was asking God some of my biggest questions. “God, why did this happen? God, how did you even let this happen? God, is everything going to be okay?” Unfortunately, God very rarely answers some of our biggest “why” questions. Sometimes, with time, God gives us the eyes to see some of the reasons as to “why” He has us journey through difficult seasons. When I started to ask God “why, how, and is everything going to be okay,” I was essentially asking God if His plans were safe for me. I wanted to know if He had my best interest in mind, if I could trust Him with my future, and if He is good.

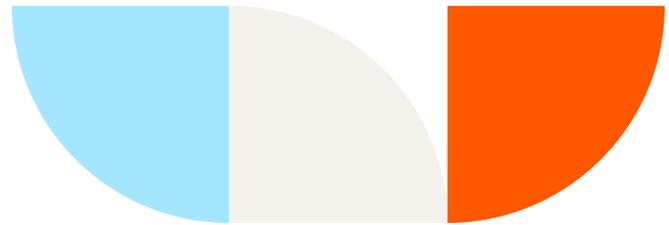
In Habakkuk 1:5, God says; “Look at the nations and watch - and be utterly amazed. For I am going to do something in your days that you would not believe, even if you were told.” This verse stirs up awe and excitement within me. God does not promise safety or protection from hardship. He does not

● ● ● Day Six ● ● ●

promise that our lives will be free of sadness, loneliness, or the mundane. What He promises is that He is up to something bigger than we could even imagine. He promises to be with us wherever we go; “Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be frightened, and do not be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go.” Joshua 1:9. He promises that He is good.

In the middle of this lake in New Hampshire, as I was asking God if everything was going to be okay, He answered a better question. Amidst all of the evergreen trees around the lake, there was one tree illuminated by the sun breaking through the clouds. The top of this tree had branches in the shape of a cross. God was peaking through the clouds in that moment, reminding me of the biggest and best plan He had for my life. He planned long ago to save me from my sins by dying on a cross, defeating death forever by rising from the grave, and ascending into heaven. In that

moment, I gave my life to Christ. I knew that any plans He might have for my life, no matter how different they are from mine, are better because of His plan to save me all along. He has a history of good plans. He is worth trusting with our futures.



RESPOND

1. *When have you felt like God's plans were different from the ones you had for yourself?*

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2. *What fears or doubts keep you from believing that God's plans are better than anything else?*

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3. *Consider a disappointment in your life right now; allow yourself to honestly open up to God, acknowledging the pain you feel. He is near.*

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● ● ● **Day Six** ● ● ●

SCRIPTURE

Habakkuk 1:5, Joshua 1:9

PRAYER

Spend time in prayer answering the question: Do I think God is good? If yes, how have you seen his goodness in your life, and if not, spend time looking at scripture and thinking through why you may have a hard time seeing that He is good.

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GOOD NEWS WHEN... I DON'T BELIEVE I DESERVE GOOD NEWS.

- Tony

READ

Have you ever been to a Ross Dress for Less or a Marshalls? You know, one of those discount clothing stores? Well during my freshman year of college, I worked at a Ross to help pay for tuition, and let me tell you, it was tough. The workload itself wasn't all that hard. I learned how to run a cash register, fold clothes, and even work as a security guard for the store. The part of the job that was the most exhausting was picking up all the clothes up off of the floor.

Now I know you're thinking, "It couldn't have been be that bad!" But, it was. For some reason, people would often take clothes

off of the hangers to see if they liked it and then put it in their cart or just drop it on the floor. So many times I would clean up a whole aisle only to come back to it messier than before 15 minutes later. The mess that was made every time I worked was overwhelming and discouraging. I mean, why should I clean it up at all if it's only going to be messy again?

I believe that there's a huge similarity between how I would feel working at Ross and how we can feel about our walks with Jesus. We sin, we are convicted by that sin, we ask for forgiveness, and then we discover that we are still sinning! We find ourselves asking in our hearts, "Didn't I just clean up this mess?!" Maybe you even discover that your heart is even messier than it was before. Have you ever felt that way? Do you feel that way right now?

When we are aware of the mess in our hearts, we can easily become overwhelmed. We can get to the end of a book of devotionals, like

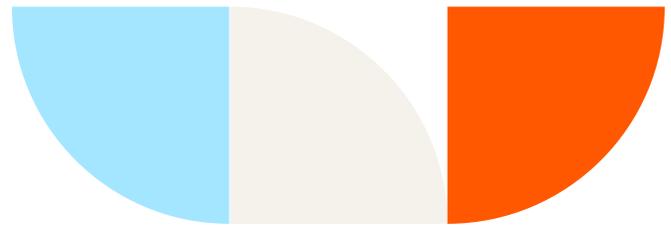
● ● ● Day Seven ● ● ●

this one, and still struggle with our sin. And sometimes, that struggle can cause us to believe the lie that we are too messy for God; that we don't deserve any good news from Him. That couldn't be further from the truth.

God knows our hearts. He knows them very well. He knows every square inch of dirt that lives there, even the parts that we don't know about. He also knows that our hearts tend to forget truth. This is why 1 John 3:20 tells us "God is greater than our heart, and He knows everything." So you might feel like you don't deserve God's love or God's help, but His response to you is, "Nonsense." What God has said and what God has done goes beyond our emotions. He is bigger, better, and all around more awesome than you will ever think.

Many times I was overwhelmed at my job at Ross, but at some point every day the store would close, and I would finish cleaning up without anyone getting in the way. Praise God that we too look

forward to an eternity when our hearts will no longer be messy, and we enjoy Him forever. God is greater than our hearts.



● ● ● **Day Seven** ● ● ●

RESPOND

1. *What are times that you felt like you were doing the same thing over and over?*

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2. *How do you see God's grace in your life, what have you asked Him for forgiveness for?*

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3. *What are ways we can remind ourselves of God's grace?*

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● ● ● **Day Seven** ● ● ●

SCRIPTURE

1 John 3:20

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PRAYER

Spend time in prayer reflecting on these truths. Bring forward to God the things you have asked for forgiveness and the areas that you have seen His grace in your life. Pray through 1 John 3:20 and think through whether or not you have received God's grace? End in time of prayer reminding yourself of the truth in this verse that He has given it to you!

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● ● ● **Responding to the Good News** ● ● ●

What is the Good News God is Teaching You?

Take time to fill out the boxes on the next two pages so you don't forget what God taught you.

QUESTIONS I HAVE

STORIES THAT STOOD OUT TO ME

VERSES I WANT TO REMEMBER

I WANT TO LIVE DIFFERENTLY BY...

● ● ● **Scripture to Highlight** ● ● ●

ISAIAH 45:9-13

JOHN 15:9

GENESIS 37-39

JAMES 1:2-4

ROMANS 8:28

JEREMIAH 29:11-13

ROMANS 8:28

ROMANS 12:2

COLOSSIANS 3:17

PSALMS 34:17-18

PSALMS 32:8

PROVERBS 3:5-6

HABAKKUK 1:5

JOSHUA 1:9

1 JOHN 3:20

**good
news**

