

## Our Father's Approval

**He received honor and glory from God the Father when the voice came to him from the Majestic Glory, saying, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased" (2 Peter 1:17).**

**Scripture:** 2 Peter 1:16-21

**Song:** "Well Done"

Telling a child that you are pleased communicates that he or she is on the right track. As children, we wanted to hear our parents tell us that they were pleased with us. When we heard them express their approval, we were encouraged to continue making good choices with hopes of hearing their affirmations again.

The words in today's passage—"This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased"—are God the Father's approval of His perfectly obedient Son, Jesus. Here, Peter is remembering his experience on the mountain when Jesus was transfigured and Peter, James, and John heard a voice speaking these words (Matthew 17:1-9).

When we are in Christ, God is our Father and we are His beloved children. Every day we should remind ourselves that we belong to Him and that He loves us, and it is God's affirmation that truly matters. As we seek to do His will and serve Him faithfully, we look forward to the day when we will hear Him say to us, "Well done, good and faithful servant!" (Matthew 25:21).

**Father,** remind me that I am living for Your affirmation and validation, to hear that You are well-pleased with my life. In Jesus' name, amen.

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July 22–28. **Dr. Vanesa M. Scott-Thompson** lives in Illinois. She is a wife, mother, non-profit leader, and a published author.

## Standard-Bearer of Righteousness

**In the last days scoffers will come, scoffing and following their own evil desires. They will say, “Where is this ‘coming’ he promised? Ever since our ancestors died, everything goes on as it has since the beginning of creation” (2 Peter 3:3-4).**

**Scripture:** 2 Peter 3:1-15

**Song:** “Days of Elijah”

At a recent Christian concert I attended, the vocalist said, “We are living in a time where right is wrong and wrong is right.” I paused to consider that declaration because it seems as if we truly are living in such a time when wrong has been normalized, and many people are taking their cues and values solely from the culture, disregarding the counsel of God’s Word.

Today’s passage reveals that Peter knew that Christians would be scoffed at for their commitment to Christ and for their faith in His return. He also knew that the scoffers would be following their own evil desires. In these current times, in fact, it seems as if the “seven deadly sins”—pride, envy, gluttony, lust, anger, greed, and slothfulness—are even *celebrated* in our culture. What are followers of Christ to do in these times?

With the erosion of upright living in our world, Christians can be the standard-bearers of righteousness. Our values and morals must remain grounded in God’s Word as we walk by His Spirit. We must remember that God has called us to be salt and light in the world, and that He is with us as we stand in His grace and truth.

**Father**, help me to be a standard-bearer of righteousness, a light in the darkness of this world. In Jesus’ name, amen.

## Our Strength and Fortress

**You are my strength, I watch for you. . . . You are my strength, I sing praise to you; you, God, are my fortress, my God on whom I can rely** (Psalm 59:9, 17).

**Scripture:** Psalm 59:1-9, 17

**Song:** “You Are My Strength”

Some movie plots recount historic battles and portray castle fortresses with moats and drawbridges. These manmade defenses were put in place to protect against an enemy’s army getting close enough to launch an attack. They were meant to make the castle a secure fortification for those within.

Today’s passage emphasizes that God is our fortress and strength. We can rely on Him in every circumstance of life—in the valleys as well as on the mountaintops. Our valley experiences might include a long-term illness, a miscarriage, the loss of a loved one, depression, unemployment, or perhaps even feeling as though God is distant or absent. On the flip side, our mountaintop experiences might include things like a special vacation, a milestone event, the birth of a child, or seeing someone we have been praying for receive the gift of salvation. God is our strength in all the ups and downs of life.

It’s easy to understand our need to rely on the strength of God during our valley experiences, but we also need to praise Him for being a fortress when we are on the mountaintop. God’s strength is constant and consistent, and we can absolutely rely on Him.

**Father**, I praise You today that You are my strength and fortress and that I can rely on You to keep me safe from the enemy. In Jesus’ name, amen.

## Wise Preparations

**[Jesus said,] “The foolish [virgins] said to the wise, ‘Give us some of your oil; our lamps are going out.’ ‘No,’ they replied, ‘there may not be enough for both us and you. Instead, go to those who sell oil and buy some for yourselves’” (Matthew 25:8-9).**

**Scripture:** Matthew 25:1-13

**Song:** “He’s Preparing Me”

Financial experts and advisors urge their clients to have an emergency savings fund for life’s unexpected events. If you own a home, a car, appliances, or other equipment, it is certain that something is going to need to be replaced or repaired at some point. That’s why it’s wise to have extra finances on hand to be able to cover the cost.

In today’s passage, the foolish virgins asked to borrow oil from the wise virgins. The foolish virgins knew that their lamps required oil to keep burning. However, they did not bring an emergency supply with them. The wise virgins anticipated that there could be a delay in the bridegroom’s arrival, so they had purchased extra oil in advance and brought it with them.

In my own life, I want to be like those wise virgins, having foresight in my spiritual life as well as in life’s practical matters, such as finances. Having the foresight to be prepared for the unexpected is prudent. We can practice wisdom in our daily lives by preparing for emergencies and disasters. More importantly, we can prepare spiritually, readying our hearts and minds for Christ’s return.

**Father,** help me be like the wise virgins, preparing for the unexpected in matters of daily life but especially in matters of eternal life. In Jesus’ name, amen.

## Using Our God-Given Gifts

**[Jesus said,] “Whoever has will be given more, and they will have an abundance” (Matthew 25:29).**

**Scripture:** Matthew 25:14-21, 24-30

**Song:** “Use Me”

My daughter is gifted in the arts. At nine years old, she can sing, dance, draw, and swim. She regularly watches YouTube videos to help develop her singing, dancing, and drawing abilities. She also takes weekly lessons to improve her swimming form. As I watch her progress, I could not imagine her not using her gifts.

According to the Scriptures, everyone who belongs to Christ has at least one spiritual gift, and some of us have multiple gifts. (See 1 Corinthians 12:4-12, Ephesians 4:7-16, and Romans 12:4-8.) God’s Spirit distributes these gifts as He sees fit, equipping us to serve in God’s kingdom to His glory. Today’s passage reminds us that we should not sit on our gifts or say that we are afraid to use them. We don’t want to be like the man with the one bag of gold who was afraid and hid what he was given. His master called him wicked and lazy, and then gave his gold to a faithful servant who had been entrusted with much more.

Through the gifts God has given us, He reveals His grace and truth to the world around us—to our families, our churches, our places of work, our communities, and even our nation. As we faithfully serve Him, no matter how big or small the result, He is pleased with us.

**Father,** help me use the gifts You’ve given me to share with the world and bring glory to You. In Jesus’ name, amen.

## Solitude

**Let him sit alone in silence, for the LORD has laid it on him**  
(Lamentations 3:28).

**Scripture:** Lamentations 3:25-36

**Song:** “In the Garden”

I often walk alone to a creek near my home. When I arrive there, I like to sit and watch the creek’s waterfall. I go to this place because it provides solitude when I need it. I have gone there after a funeral to reflect on my own life’s influence and impact in the world. I have gone there to sing songs to God. I often sit at the creek’s edge in silence before the Lord.

In the New Testament there are examples of Jesus seeking solitude during His ministry on earth. Jesus spent 40 days in the wilderness before beginning His public ministry (Luke 4:1-2). He sought to go to a solitary place after hearing of John the Baptist’s death (Matthew 14:12-13). He prayed all night before choosing the 12 disciples (Luke 6:12-16). He prayed in Gethsemane before He was betrayed and arrested (Matthew 26:36-46).

Jesus’ example of seeking time alone with His Father is a model for us to follow. We can seek solitude wherever we can find it: in a car, a closet, a backyard, a park. The busyness of life does not need to rob us of time to be still in God’s presence. When we seek to humbly quiet our hearts in solitude and silence before Him, He will meet us in those moments, ministering His grace and comfort to us.

**Father**, lead me to times and places of solitude so that I can pray, sing, reflect on Your Word, or just be still before You. In Jesus’ name, amen.

## Waiting on the Lord

**I wait for the LORD, my whole being waits, and in his word I put my hope. I wait for the Lord more than watchmen wait for the morning, more than watchmen wait for the morning (Psalm 130:5-6).**

**Scripture:** Psalm 130

**Song:** “I Don’t Mind Waiting”

When I was a teenager, I took the bus to school. As I waited at the bus stop, there were some days when I was constantly looking in the direction of the bus for its arrival. It always seemed the bus took longer when I looked for it, and the wait felt shorter when I just watched the cars and the people go by.

As Christians we often have trouble waiting on the Lord to answer our prayers. God’s perspective of time is different from our own. Ecclesiastes 3:1 tells us that “there is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under the heavens.” We see time as seconds, minutes, hours, days, weeks, months, and years. We can often wait on the Lord patiently for seconds, minutes, hours, or even days, but we typically have trouble when we have to wait on the Lord for weeks, months, or years. It just seems like too long a time.

We can be assured, though, that the Lord does answer our prayers in *His* timing. We have to trust that, in His wisdom, He will answer our prayers at the appointed time.

**Father**, help me wait on You to answer my prayers no matter how long it takes because my hope is in You. In Jesus’ name, amen.