

## Jesus Makes All the Difference

**He answereth him, and saith, O faithless generation, how long shall I be with you? how long shall I suffer you? bring him unto me** (Mark 9:19, *KJV*).

**Scripture:** Mark 9:14-27

**Song:** “Complete in Thee”

During the 1956 Hungarian Revolution and resulting crackdown by Soviet soldiers, Susan Kadar decided to make her escape from communist Hungary to nearby free Austria. But how would she know the right direction to go to cross the border? In the end, Kadar used a small compass—one the local Girl Scouts had given her as a child—to guide her to safety. The intervention of that vital instrument ended up making all the difference between a life of oppression and a life of freedom.

When Jesus returned with Peter, James, and John from His transfiguration (Mark 9:2-13), He found a crowd gathered around His other disciples. These disciples had tried to cast out a demon from a possessed boy, but they’d failed because they lacked the necessary faith. Jesus, however, was able to provide what was needed, intervening to free the boy from his demonic oppression.

We struggle sometimes to deal with life’s challenges because of our own limitations, especially our lack of faith. Yet in our uncertainty and weakness, Christ’s presence is our vital help, intervening in our struggle, leading and guiding us safely through life.

**Father**, in my weakness, uncertainty, and insufficiency, remind me that You make all the difference. In Jesus’ name, amen.

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October 21–27. **David Madsen** lives in Wisconsin with his wife and four daughters. He teaches English at a Christian college and serves in his local church.

## Our Secure Anchor

**Draw me not away with the wicked, and with the workers of iniquity, which speak peace to their neighbours, but mischief is in their hearts** (Psalm 28:3, *KJV*).

**Scripture:** Psalm 28

**Song:** “We Have an Anchor”

In 2018, Aldi Novel Adilang, age 19, was working as a lamp keeper on a fish trap—a small, raft-like structure made for catching fish. The vessel, which had neither motor nor steering capability, was anchored 78 miles off the Indonesian shore. Tragedy struck when the anchor’s rope snapped and strong winds sent Adilang and the trap some 1,200 miles (1,930 km) into the ocean. He was finally rescued after spending 49 days adrift on the Pacific—all because his anchor was lost.

In Psalm 28, David prays that God will keep him from being swept away by the wicked. He recognizes what the tragic end of evildoers will be and asks God to protect him from becoming like them. David understood that to withstand the allure of the world, his confidence must be anchored in the Lord’s sustaining support.

Our fallen world is full of trials and temptations, and even believers can get caught up in the evils of our age. But God is able to protect us as we turn our eyes to Him and keep our trust tethered to Him. When our lives are firmly anchored in Christ, He will keep us safe and secure.

**Father**, in this world where evil churns like a storm all around us, I’m grateful that You are my secure anchor, keeping me steadfast in Your ways. In Jesus’ name, amen.

## It's Wise to Trust the Lord

**Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding** (Proverbs 3:5, *KJV*).

**Scripture:** Proverbs 3:1-8, 13-14

**Song:** “Guide Me, O Thou Great Jehovah”

When the Louisiana Purchase was made in 1803, explorers Lewis and Clark made their famous expedition to scout out the Western frontier. However, they didn't merely rely on their own instincts to get them through the wilderness. Sacagawea, a Native American woman, was hired to be their guide. Not only did she help them navigate the wilderness, but she also served as translator for the expedition as they interacted with indigenous tribes. She even showed the explorers which plants in the new lands were edible. Lewis and Clark were wise in relying on the guidance of someone who knew more than they did, and the journey proved a success for them.

In Proverbs 3, Solomon—history's wisest man—instructed his son not to rely on his own instincts along life's journey but to look to God to lead him and to remain confident that God's way is right. Such divine guidance, Solomon said, is better than any earthly riches.

It's tempting for us to trust our own instincts as we navigate life rather than look to God for guidance. Yet God is all-wise, and He can be trusted to lead us in every decision. Those who look to the Lord to lead can be confident that their life's journey will be a success.

**Father,** thank You for reminding me today that trusting Your way is the wisest course in life. In Jesus' name, amen.

## God Taught Us How to Love

**In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him** (1 John 4:9, *KJV*).

**Scripture:** 1 John 4:4-13

**Song:** “Teach Me Thy Way, O Lord”

In a recent BBC *Music* magazine survey, 174 current classical music composers voted Johann Sebastian Bach the greatest composer of all time. But Bach’s musical skill wasn’t just a result of his own ability; his whole family was part of his success. Bach’s father was a professional violinist, organist, and trumpet player. Bach’s brother was an accomplished organist, and his uncles were renowned musicians as well. All these helped teach the now-acclaimed composer the art of music, shaping him into the amazing musician he became.

The apostle John reminds believers to love others. But he also reminds them that it’s God who has shown us how to love. When God sent Jesus to die for our sins, He demonstrated the greatest, most sacrificial love the world has ever known. John is pointing out that God himself teaches believers *how* to love by His own example.

It’s important for us to remember to love others as God commands. But it’s also important for us to remember that God showed us how to love by giving His Son for our salvation. As we learn from God’s own example of love, we will be shaped into His likeness and be able to love as He does.

**Father,** thank You for teaching me how to love so I can better love others. In Jesus’ name, amen.

## God's Love Rubs Off on Us

**We love him, because he first loved us** (1 John 4:19, *KJV*).

**Scripture:** 1 John 4:14-21

**Song:** “Your Love, O God, Has Called Us Here”

Eric Liddell's parents had given their lives as missionaries in China, and their heart's desire was to share Christ's love with the Chinese people. Liddell himself—famously portrayed in the movie *Chariots of Fire*—followed in their footsteps. Despite having won gold in the 1924 Olympic Games and being at the pinnacle of worldwide fame for his sprinting abilities, he set aside athletics and returned to China as a missionary. His parents' love for the people of China had rubbed off on Liddell, who said, “God made me for China.”

The apostle John draws believers' attention to the love that God demonstrated to the world in sending His Son to provide salvation. But John also notes that as believers abide in Christ, God's love makes us more loving to others as well. He adds that those who profess a love for God must also love other Christians. After all, John reminds us, we only love God because He first loved us.

As believers we are called to love others—particularly our brothers and sisters in Christ. But we can't conjure up divine love on our own. Instead, we should remember that as we abide in Christ, we will become more like Him, and this includes being more loving. As we let God's love rub off on us, we will not only love Him more but also love others as we should.

**Father**, remind me that as I abide in You, I will love like You do. In Jesus' name, amen.

## Trust the Lord, Not Your Heart

**The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?** (Jeremiah 17:9, *KJV*).

**Scripture:** Jeremiah 17:5-11

**Song:** “Trusting Jesus”

In one part of John Bunyan’s book *The Pilgrim’s Progress*, Christian is on his journey to the Celestial City when he sees two men climbing over a wall to get on the path. These men—named Formalist and Hypocrisy—were quickly told by Christian that if they didn’t enter the path by the narrow gate, as he had, they would not be allowed entrance to the city. Although Formalist and Hypocrisy were persuaded that following their own notions would lead them to the destination as well, the two intruders ended up deviating from the right path to the places called Danger and Destruction instead.

Jeremiah warned the Israelites against trusting any earthly way to live other than God’s way. The prophet pointed out both the wickedness and deceitfulness of the human heart, saying that those who trust their own hearts to direct their lives will end up empty and despairing. In contrast, Jeremiah declared that those who trust the Lord with their lives will be blessed.

Today, a common mantra in our culture is “Trust your heart.” But believers should recognize that our hearts, due to our stubborn sinful natures, can’t be trusted. Relying on our own notions to lead us in life will result in a disappointing end. Instead of confiding in our own way of living, we are far wiser to trust in the Lord’s guidance and direction.

**Father**, please keep teaching me to trust in You instead of myself. In Jesus’ name, amen.

## God Is Better Than Anything Else

**My soul, wait thou only upon God; for my expectation is from him** (Psalm 62:5, *KJV*).

**Scripture:** Psalm 62

**Song:** “Jesus Is Better”

At his local thrift store in Phoenix, Arizona, Zach Norris found a treasure—a rare 1959 Jaeger-LeCoultre Deep Sea Alarm watch. He instantly realized it was worth far more than the \$5.99 price tag. In fact, after buying the antique watch, Norris turned around and sold it for more than \$35,000! He gladly spent a small amount of his money for something he knew was of much greater value.

In Psalm 62, David declares that following God’s way far exceeds any other way people could live their lives. He charges those around him not to value other people, powerful positions, or material things more than the Lord. David notes that although the things of this world may give temporary pleasure, they are deceptively fleeting and, in the end, lead to destruction. But David trusted in both the Lord’s power and His mercy to preserve him in the midst of a world heading to destruction. He realized God’s way is always best.

Today, our materialistic culture can cause even believers to have misplaced priorities. Although we should know better, we can begin to value the things of this world more than the things of God. But following God is better than anything our fallen world can offer. And, in the end, those who put the Lord first in their lives will find that His way is a true treasure.

**Father,** You are my true treasure! My relationship with You is better than anything else. In Jesus’ name, amen.