

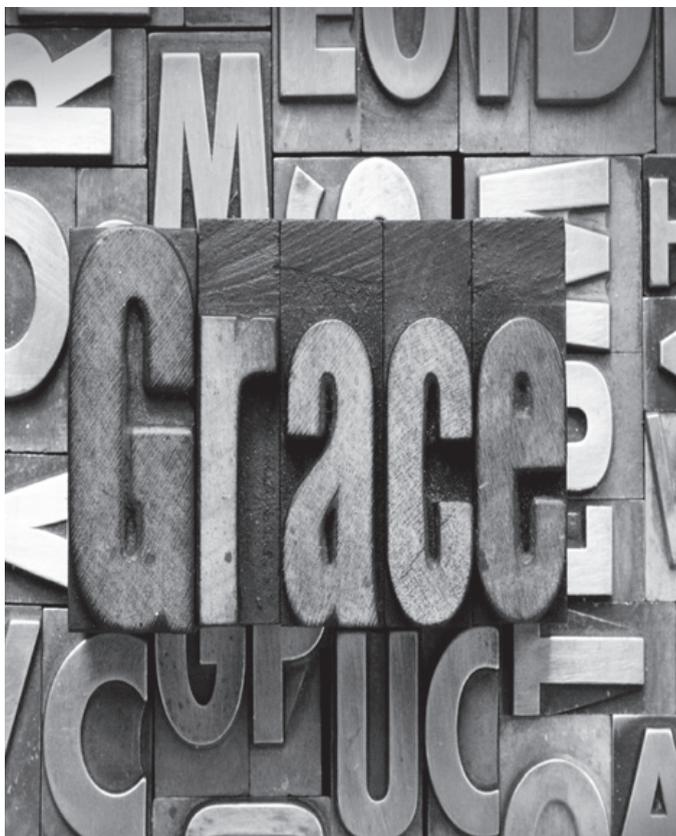


*Call In*  
**THE NEW TESTAMENT**

# The Silent Moment

He has saved us and called us to a holy life—not because of anything we have done but because of his own purpose and grace.

— 2 Timothy 1:9



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## **Call in the New Testament**

God has a long history of calling people to join His kingdom-building work. Long ago God called Noah into a massive ship-building project that God used to save a remnant of people who were focused on Him rather than wickedness (Genesis 6–8). It was a call to a task for God’s redemptive purpose—a purpose seen in all God’s commissions.

God called Abram away from his extended family and homeland to go to a new land to worship God and begin a new heritage of people set apart for God (Genesis 12:1-9). Abram accepted that call even though he realized that he was unable, in his own ability, to accomplish God’s agenda. It was not only wise but also essential for Abram to trust God to accomplish the purpose of the call to make him a blessing for all people (vv. 2-3). It is necessary for every person called by God to trust Him.

God visited Moses to call him to deliver the Hebrew people from slavery (Exodus 3). Moses listened but objected that he felt incompetent for the assignment (v. 11). God explained that the call included His commitment to be with Moses (v. 12). God is always with those He calls. Moses continued to resist, so God revealed how He was equipping Moses to overcome every obstacle to completing the work (3:13–4:17). God equips all those He calls so they will be able to accomplish what God needs from them.

More could be written on how God called and equipped Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, the judges and kings of Israel, and the prophets.

The theme of God’s call on people started in the Old Testament and continues in the New Testament. Through Jesus and the Spirit, God called out men and women of various ages from all sorts of vocations, avocations, and walks of life. Many, such as the apostles, experienced a complete redirection in their lives. They transitioned

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from fishing, tax collecting, and persecuting to become evangelists, missionaries, and church planters. God's call might turn us toward unexpected directions as well.

We who have already become part of God's eternal family have God's call on our lives. May the devotionals in this guide be a companion for you as you orient your days around Scripture, prayer, and readiness for God's further call on your life.

**Scott Stewart, Editor**

December 1

## Signed, Sealed, Delivered

**You also were included in Christ when you heard the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation. When you believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit** (Ephesians 1:13).

**Scripture:** Ephesians 1:1-14

**Song:** “Church on Fire”

When a woman receives an engagement ring, there is a lot of excitement because of everything the ring signifies. The relationship and the significant commitment behind her ring are certainly important, and even the ring itself, but it is the wedding ring that will be the symbol of the marriage covenant.

When a sinner hears the gospel and responds by confessing sin and receiving salvation by faith in Jesus, then the Spirit of God marks that person as part of God’s family. The Spirit seals the believer as a fully adopted son or daughter from the start. The Spirit does it all, but the salvation is truly “your salvation.” The evidence of the Spirit within our hearts authenticates our salvation. As members of the family, we have the privileges of natural-born sons and daughters but also the responsibility to live as members.

**Father**, thank You for providing the way of salvation through Jesus, Your Son, and for giving the Spirit’s seal of my adoption into Your family. In Jesus’ name, amen.

## Hope in the All-Powerful

**I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in his holy people, and his incomparably great power for us who believe (Ephesians 1:18-19).**

**Scripture:** Ephesians 1:15-23

**Song:** “My Hope Is Built on Nothing Less”

There was nothing more exciting for me in my youth than to play on my city’s Little League all-star team in the summer of 1993. Our team had aspirations of reaching the Little League World Series, but first we had to win our local tournament. We had lost the first game and were down on the score, with one out remaining in the second game. Our best hitter, Andy, was at the plate. Already five feet nine inches tall, Andy could hit the ball like no other 12-year-old we knew. We were confident that he was going to come through for us. But not so. Andy struck out. The tournament was over for us.

All our hopes had gone out to the plate with Andy, but he didn’t accomplish what we needed. He didn’t have the power to bring us to victory in that game.

Our heavenly Father is the only one with the power to accomplish our hope for eternal victory—because of His “incomparably great power” to conquer death. God demonstrated His power in raising Jesus from the dead and giving Him power and dominion.

**Dear Father,** I praise You for Your power at work in my life to bring me to eternal victory in Jesus. In His name, amen.

## The Origins of the Savior

**David was the father of Solomon, whose mother had been Uriah's wife** (Matthew 1:6).

**Scripture:** Matthew 1:6b-15

**Song:** "All the Way My Savior Leads Me"

Researching family history has become popular, and people are uncovering all sorts of stories about family members who lived long ago. With information about ancestors who maybe immigrated from another country or moved to a different city—and given the events that happened because of changes in each person's life—researchers might come away thinking, I might not have been born if \_\_\_\_\_ had not happened!

If researchers discover unsavory characters, they might want to ignore that branch on the family tree or focus on another branch that doesn't carry the bad influences.

A sure fact is that no matter what our past, God knows all about it and He can work in our lives for His good purposes in the future. We see this in the way God worked through David's line of descendants with Bathsheba—a woman David married after getting rid of her first husband, Uriah, a good man. Bathsheba is in Jesus' family tree (Matthew 1:1).

God has demonstrated His power and faithfulness to accomplish His salvation and good purposes in history. This includes the stories of sinful people whom He redeemed for His work and purpose. He will work in our lives as well toward His purposes and our good when we seek Him and follow Him.

**Father God,** thank You for knowing me and my family history and for redeeming me into Your eternal family. In Jesus' name, amen.

## God: Forever and Always

**About the Son [God the Father] says, “Your throne, O God, will last forever and ever; a scepter of justice will be the scepter of your kingdom” (Hebrews 1:8).**

**Scripture:** Hebrews 1:6-9

**Song:** “Behold Our God”

People who move up corporate ladders into roles to lead colleagues who were formerly peers sometimes struggle to establish their leadership authority. This is especially so if their new position and authority are not well supported from the higher management levels. Expressed affirmation from the top helps to reset how the rank and file of the organization view the one who was promoted over them.

Jesus, the Son of God, has never been promoted, or demoted. He always has been, always is, and always will be fully God. We know this from the Old Testament, in which Christian Bible scholars identify some 350 references to Jesus. These begin in Genesis 3 (v. 15) and continue into Malachi 4 (vv. 5-6). Jews have read all these passages for centuries, and still do, yet many still miss Jesus. It is as if they need an affirmation of who Jesus is. God gives that affirmation to them, and also to Gentiles, in today’s Scripture. The Father affirms the authority of Jesus and His role as supreme judge.

All of us, Jew or Gentile, must recognize the sovereignty of Jesus, the Son of God. And we must respond to the fact that He will deliver justice to all people.

**Heavenly Father,** thank You for helping us see Jesus as He truly is and for calling us to respond to Him in faith and repentance. In His name, amen.

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## Jesus Is Always the Same

**[About the Son God says,] “You remain the same, and your years will never end”** (Hebrews 1:12).

**Scripture:** Hebrews 1:10-14

**Song:** “Unchanging”

In the world of fine dining, sameness can be a killer. Top-rated restaurants must keep innovating their menus to maintain their preferred status. Of course, the innovations must be good and appealing to patrons. And so chefs spend hours adjusting and changing their recipes to create new menu items with new tastes to offer their guests. The key is to provide a novel dining experience at each visit so people come back. Only mediocre chefs will serve the same thing day after day.

While “same old same old” might not be so good in fine dining, regularity and stability are very good when it comes to relationships. The Lord makes relationship with Him easy because of His character of stability and consistency. His sameness gives us reason for confidence in our God.

This fact is so important that the writer of Hebrews returns to this truth toward the end of the letter, stating that “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever” (Hebrews 13:8). This is part of Christ’s identity and character, and also His promise. We do not need to worry about the Lord changing His mind about His children. He will always love us, always be with us, and always be good to us. And this will never end because He never ends.

**Father**, thank You for being consistent in Your love for us, Your presence with us, and Your goodness to us. In Jesus’ name, amen.

## Just Like Daddy

**The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word** (Hebrews 1:3).

**Scripture:** Hebrews 1:1-5; Matthew 1:1-6, 16-17

**Song:** "Thank You, Jesus"

Growing up I looked a lot like my mother, and not at all like my father. But my dad and I shared many common interests and behaviors. You wouldn't be able to look at me and then pick out my dad in a crowd. But if you spent time with us together, talking or playing a game with us, you would certainly conclude that we are father and son.

Jesus was conceived by the Spirit (Matthew 1:18) and born as a human descendant in David's family line, as foretold in Scripture (Isaiah 11). Jesus Christ, the Son of God, and His Father are exactly the same. The Son has the same glorious radiance as His Father and completely represented His Father—living as God incarnate on earth, teaching, loving, and serving to reveal God to us. Everything Jesus said and did while on earth reflected His Father in Heaven. This is why we come to know God the more we turn our attention to Jesus. When we read Scripture, with faith and desire to receive the truth that reveals God, our hearts and lives are transformed by the one who sustains all things, including each of us. Get to know Jesus as your Savior and Lord through His Word and receive God's life-changing and sustaining power

**Father**, thank You for sending Your Son to show us Your power and glory. I want to know You more. In Jesus' name, amen.

## A Step of Faith

**Ahaz said, “I will not ask; I will not put the LORD to the test”** (Isaiah 7:12).

**Scripture:** Isaiah 7:10-15

**Song:** “Spirit, Lead Me”

At 1,535 feet, the Oriental Pearl Tower in Shanghai is one of China’s tallest structures. More daring tourists can view the city from its glass-floored observation deck 850 feet above the ground. When I visited, I watched as tourists stood, sat, or even lay on the glass floor. I, meanwhile, kept my back pressed tightly against the wall! My feet were planted safely on solid metal flooring, but I missed out on the amazing views below.

When the Lord told King Ahaz to choose a sign as proof that God would fulfill His word, Ahaz refused, quoting God’s own words back to Him. Ahaz was hardly Israel’s most righteous king, yet in this moment he chose legalistic piety over obedience. The Lord still fulfilled His word, but Ahaz missed the opportunity to step out in faith and be involved with the Lord’s work.

Obeying God’s Word can be uncomfortable when it means we must step into uncertain times and directions. Yet when we faithfully obey His call, we gain the opportunity to join His great work, and our trust will grow as we see His Word fulfilled—an amazing view!

**Father,** give me the courage to obey Your Word to me. Help me to trust You more deeply. In Jesus’ name, amen.

## Justice Through Relationship

**“I, the LORD, have called you in righteousness; I will take hold of your hand”** (Isaiah 42:6).

**Scripture:** Isaiah 42:1-9

**Song:** “Speak, O Lord”

George Müller cared for more than 10,000 British orphans during his lifetime. In fact, he was so successful at helping older orphans secure apprenticeships and professional training that the owners of several factories and mines complained about their inability to find enough unskilled laborers. Müller was thoroughly dedicated to the cause of justice for the orphan—and also deeply committed to his faith. He constantly prayed for provision, and the method he used to seek God’s will has since been adopted by thousands of Christians.

The Lord’s chosen servant was called to mete out justice to the nations, to open blind eyes and free captives. But he wouldn’t accomplish these things alone. The servant would be empowered with the Lord’s Spirit, and the Lord said He would take hold of His servant’s hand to “keep” him. True justice can only be delivered through relationship with the true judge.

When we are passionate about a cause, it can be easy to leap in without consulting God or seeking His will. Yet true justice can only be achieved through close, intimate knowledge of the Father’s heart. If we are to fulfill His call to justice, we must first answer the call to relationship with Him.

**Father**, please increase my desire for relationship with You. Teach me to walk closely with You so that I may know Your heart and act as Your instrument for justice. In Jesus’ name, amen.

## The Labor of God's Call

**“I [Isaiah] have labored in vain; I have spent my strength for nothing at all. Yet . . . my reward is with my God”** (Isaiah 49:4).

**Scripture:** Isaiah 49:1-7

**Song:** “Dear Refuge of My Weary Soul”

After college, I spent a year working for an inner-city after-school program. Many of the kids were cynical beyond their years, having experienced more trauma by age 10 or 11 than I had in my whole life. My role involved helping them with homework they didn't want to do and enforcing classroom rules they definitely didn't want to follow. I ended many days feeling completely useless, wondering if my work made any difference at all.

In Isaiah 49, the Lord's servant suffered discouragement from the seeming lack of forward progress in his mission to redeem Israel. Despite outward difficulties, however, he reaffirmed his trust in God. And in the following verses, God revealed His plan not only to redeem Israel but all the Gentiles as well.

Obedying God's call often leaves us feeling exhausted and discouraged, unable to do anything but lift our weary hands to Him in a plea for help. In these moments, it's important to remember that He is trustworthy and His plan is good. We may never see the fruit from our efforts in this life, but He is working behind the scenes to accomplish greater things than we can even imagine.

**Father**, this life is hard, and I am so often discouraged. Yet I trust that You have a better plan than what I am able to see. Please increase my faith. In Jesus' name, amen.

## God's Unfailing Word

[The angel answered,] **“No word from God will ever fail.”**  
**“I am the Lord’s servant,”** Mary answered. **“May your word to me be fulfilled”** (Luke 1:37-38).

**Scripture:** Luke 1:26-38

**Song:** “Your Word”

William Shakespeare was a master of language. Experts have estimated that he coined more than 400 words during his life, many of which we still use every day. As language has morphed, however, Shakespeare’s plays have grown increasingly difficult for people today to read and understand. Talented actors use facial expressions and tones of voice to better communicate his meaning; but great as Shakespeare’s genius was, much of his archaic language is lost on modern audiences.

When Mary was told she would give birth to the Son of God, she was understandably puzzled, as she was an unmarried virgin. She asked how this would happen, and the angel answered her by telling her about the power of the Holy Spirit and pointing toward her cousin Elizabeth’s miraculous pregnancy in her advanced age. But in the end, the greatest encouragement toward faith that the angel offered was this: God’s Word never fails. What He says will happen, will happen.

The words we use today are fallible. Their ability to communicate is limited, and their meanings will fade. But God’s Word is unshakable, never-failing. His Word can be trusted, even when what He says seems impossible. Only with faith in that truth can we offer humble submission to His call as Mary did.

**Father,** thank You for Your unshakable Word in Scripture and that I can know with full confidence that You are able to fulfill all that You say. In Jesus’ name, amen.

## Waiting and Worshipping

**[Anna] never left the temple but worshiped night and day, fasting and praying** (Luke 2:37).

**Scripture:** Luke 2:34-38

**Song:** “While I Wait”

Several years ago, my dad was seeking God’s will on a decision. Though he wanted to take action, he felt God was telling him to wait. Confused, he asked for confirmation. The next day, my 7-year-old brother was flipping through my dad’s devotional book. “Huh,” he said suddenly. “This says, ‘Wait on the Lord.’ That’s weird.” My dad heard him and realized he had received exactly the confirmation he needed. And though waiting didn’t necessarily seem to make sense, it was what he needed to do.

Simeon and Anna spent their entire lives serving the Lord. For years Simeon had waited for the fulfillment of the Spirit’s promise that he would see the Messiah before he died. Anna, meanwhile, spent her widowhood expressing her love for the Lord daily through worship, prayer, and fasting. Their faithful obedience, demonstrated through waiting and worshipping, gave them unique receptivity to God’s Word regarding His Son’s future.

Waiting isn’t the glamorous thing to do. Most of the time we’d rather take action and do something for God. But over and over, Scripture shows God speaking to those who quietly worship and wait on Him. Rather than busily pursuing whatever to-do list we have filled our calendars with, let’s intentionally set time aside to wait on the Lord and worship Him, asking for His direction and waiting quietly for answers.

**Father**, teach me to slow my busy schedule and wait before You. Increase my desire to spend time with You. I want to hear Your voice. In Jesus’ name, amen.

## Redemption Through Sacrifice

**The women said to Naomi: . . . “Your daughter-in-law, who loves you and who is better to you than seven sons, has given him birth”** (Ruth 4:14-15).

**Scripture:** Ruth 4:9-17

**Song:** “Lead You to the Cross”

In Victor Hugo’s classic *Les Miserables*, recently released convict Jean Valjean rewards a bishop’s kindness by stealing his silver. When police capture Valjean, the bishop insists he gave Valjean the silver and gently chastises him for “forgetting” to take the valuable silver candlesticks as well. The bishop’s grace so thoroughly transforms Valjean that he spends the rest of his life performing similar acts of self-sacrifice.

After losing her husband and two sons, Naomi was so bereft of hope that she insisted her old neighbors call her Mara (which means “bitter”; Ruth 1:20) because of how bitter her life had become. In her suffering, she doubted God’s goodness entirely. By the end of the book, however, Ruth’s and Boaz’s courageous sacrifices returned hope to Naomi’s life. Through them, the Lord worked a mighty act of grace and redemption as He continued the line that led to King David—and to the Messiah.

Offering grace requires a huge amount of humility and self-sacrifice. It’s also one of the ways God most frequently draws people to Him. Sacrifice with no hope of reward is rare these days, and there is something utterly beautiful and alluring about it. If God can use our sacrifices to bring redemption in someone else’s life, can we possibly refuse?

**Father,** I want You to use me to draw people to You. Help me demonstrate Your grace. In Jesus’ name, amen.