

CLOSE TO GOD

SCRIPTURE: HOSEA 13:4–6

So Little to Ask

*It was I who fed you in the wilderness,
in the land of drought.*

Hosea 13:5

It's really quite simple, straightforward, and upfront. It is not complicated or mysterious, and it asks little of us.

The thirteenth chapter of Hosea records the anguished heart of God. God's people are to acknowledge none other. That should be easy, right? There is no God but Yahweh. For God is the one who saves Israel and cares for them in the desert. Hosea 13:5 records that even in those blisteringly hot places, God takes care of Israel. God feeds them not merely a few morsels but enough to fill them up (v. 6) every day for forty long years. They gripe and complain. Yet God feeds them until they're more than satisfied.

That's when things take a nasty turn. They neglect to thank the Lord, who saved them and gave them everything they have. I could be one of them. I too can be spoiled and unappreciative.

How about you? Do you count yourself lucky or blessed by the Lord our God?



*Lord, we want to be your grateful people every day. In
Jesus' name. Amen.*

John Fischer, Lacey, Washington

MONDAY, MAY 21, 2018

CLOSE TO GOD

SCRIPTURE: MARK 1

Only the Beginning!

*The beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ,
the Son of God.*

Mark 1:1

Mark's Gospel begins at the beginning. Good place to start! But of the four Gospel writers, Mark delivers the most abrupt ending. There is no dramatic conclusion detailing Jesus' resurrection and ascension. Could Mark be telling us that life without Jesus is always a beginning? An inauguration without end?

With Jesus in your life, you become a child of God. Your sins are forgiven and forgotten. As we travel life's roads with Jesus, we discover it's only the beginning. When I think I've overcome this sin or that, I fall flat on my face. Years later, I'm still at the starting gate. In this life, we never arrive. There are always more hills to climb.

We keep pressing forward. Mark says that Jesus' own beginning was good news. Prevailing over one sin, even one time, is certainly good news. Keep at it. Don't give in or give up. With Jesus close by, every day becomes a new beginning! That's very good news!



Thank you, Jesus, for daily new beginnings. Amen.

John Fischer, Lacey, Washington

TUESDAY, MAY 22, 2018

CLOSE TO GOD

SCRIPTURE: 2 CORINTHIANS 4:16–5:10

Not Quite Sure

So we do not lose heart. Even though our outer nature is wasting away, our inner nature is being renewed day by day.

2 Corinthians 4:16

Since I was two years old, my left leg has been smaller than my right one due to polio. Recently, my wife observed that my left leg seems even smaller. The disparity alarms her. Using a measuring tape, the gap has widened by a few inches. What does this atrophy mean?

Paul writes in 2 Corinthians about our outward nature wasting away while our spiritual life becomes renewed daily. All of us face some kind of “wasting away.” Our hearing goes. Eyesight dims along with memory. Children grow up and move away. Jobs come and go. We’re no longer able to do what we previously enjoyed.

Not everything is worse, however! Paul talks about renewal at any age. The wasting away may open up more time for worship: for reading God’s Word and praying for others, for relying on Jesus’ loving help . . . and meaning it.

We aren’t wasting away. Our relationship with Jesus can grow ever deeper. Atrophy will fade away as we lay our trophies down at God’s feet.



*Lord Jesus, we want to grow closer to you every day.
Amen.*

John Fischer, Lacey, Washington

WEDNESDAY, MAY 23, 2018

CLOSE TO GOD

SCRIPTURE: ISAIAH 49:8–16

God's Tattoo

*See, I have inscribed you on the palms of my hands;
your walls are continually before me.*

Isaiah 49:16

When children left home in ancient Israel, moving to some distant place, there was the strong possibility that they would never see their parents again. The parents would tattoo the name of their child on the palm of their hand. Every time they gazed at their palms, there would be the reminder of that beloved child. Even if they never saw the child, that child was never forgotten.

Looking through some old family photos, I notice one of my paternal great grandparents. It is the only picture of Johann Adam and Christiana Fischer anyone has. Their son, my grandfather, left for America as a young teen, never to return to Germany, never to see home again, never to hug either of his parents. I can't imagine how devastating that would be, how heartbroken and bereft they must have been. This was not uncommon years ago.

Isaiah wants to reassure us that no matter where we are, the Lord is always with us, always concerned. We are always close to God's hands and heart. At this moment, we're that close, even if it feels quite the contrary.



Thank you, Lord, for being ever close to us. Amen.

John Fischer, Lacey, Washington

THURSDAY, MAY 24, 2018

CLOSE TO GOD

SCRIPTURE: COLOSSIANS 3:1–17

Like Cornstarch

Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony.

Colossians 3:14

On Christmas Day in 1972 I received a Chinese wok as a present from my parents. The next spring, I enrolled in a couple of adult school Chinese cooking classes at the local high school. I loved every lesson, and that wok was really put to work!

Chinese stir-frying has an aromatic, smooth sauce that binds together the meat and vegetables. What usually creates that binder is cornstarch dissolved in water. That cornstarch slurry connects all the flavors and spices neatly together without bringing attention to itself.

The apostle Paul urges us to clothe ourselves with love, which acts like no other binder known to humanity. Love is the great binder of the Christian life. Like cornstarch!

In a self-centered world, we can be renewed as we come close to Jesus, caring and compassionate. We can be kind and sympathetic, putting ourselves in someone else's shoes. We are all bound together by God's love.

These are big words that I'd like to be even bigger in my heart. Join me?



Lord, help us to be bound together in your love. For Jesus' sake. Amen.

John Fischer, Lacey, Washington

CLOSE TO GOD

SCRIPTURE: COLOSSIANS 2:6–15

Drowning in Debt

God made you alive . . . when he forgave us all our trespasses, erasing the record that stood against us with its legal demands. He set this aside, nailing it to the cross.

Colossians 2:13–14

Debt keeps piling up for individuals, corporations, and countries. Whether that's true for you or not, we all owe a debt to the Lord. I know I do, as I have so often missed God's mark.

Our Scripture today is amazing. The apostle Paul refers to being “dead in trespasses” (v. 13). Then in verse 14 he writes about “erasing the record.” The Greek word used here is *cheirographon*—an ancient IOU. Every sin committed issues an IOU to God.

Unfortunately, we're also bankrupt, unable to pay off our debt. What are we to do?

Don't fret. Jesus has done it all. He has taken our IOU's and written “Paid in Full” across the top. Then they're nailed to the cross for all to see and believe what Jesus has done for us. Jesus did what no one else ever could.

Jesus willingly gives all for us. It cost everything so that it wouldn't cost us what we couldn't give anyway. I told you these verses are amazing!



Thank you, Jesus, for giving your all. Amen.

John Fischer, Lacey, Washington

SATURDAY, MAY 26, 2018

CLOSE TO GOD

SCRIPTURE: PSALM 88

What Happy Ending?

O LORD, God of my salvation

.....
*let my prayer come before you;
incline your ear to my cry.*

Psalm 88:1–2

Here's a psalm that contains no happy ending. It tells us what we already know—life doesn't always turn out the way we'd like it to.

Remember a time when you cried out to God and no one seemed to be there? I do. When friends disappeared or gossip filled the air, even the promise of heaven felt empty. Do you know what I needed most in those times? Someone to sit close by, letting me vent. I needed someone to use their two ears and pray with me.

Later in my own story, life got better in some ways, not so great in others. Not everything collapsed around me. Neither did I get everything I had hoped for. Looking at Psalm 88:1, I notice that the psalmist hasn't lost faith in the Lord. The psalmist hangs onto God for dear life. I'm doing the same. I'm still holding on to the One who is my salvation. No matter what. Even without some happy endings in this life. Even then. Especially then.



*Thank you, Jesus, that we can always trust you.
Amen.*

John Fischer, Lacey, Washington