



30-Day Bible Scripture
CHALLENGE

CONNECTING POINT
FIRST CHURCH OF CHRIST
LET YOUR LIGHT SHINE

<p>Day 1 Psalm 31:24 Be of good courage, and He shall strengthen your heart, all you who hope in the Lord.</p>	<p>Day 2 Psalm 39:7 "And now, Lord, what do I wait for? My hope is in You."</p>	<p>Day 3 Psalm 71:5 For You are my hope, O Lord God; You are my trust from my youth.</p>	<p>Day 4 Psalm 71:14 But I will hope continually, and will praise You yet more and more.</p>	<p>Day 5 Proverbs 13:12 Hope deferred makes the heart sick, but when the desire comes, it is a tree of life.</p>	<p>Day 6 Zechariah 9:12 Return to the stronghold, you prisoners of hope. Even today I declare that I will restore double to you.</p>
<p>Day 7 Psalm 42:5 Why are you cast down, O my soul? And why are you disquieted within me? Hope in God, for I shall yet praise Him For the help of His countenance.</p>	<p>Day 8 Romans 4:18 ...who, contrary to hope, in hope believed, so that he became the father of many nations, according to what was spoken, "So shall your descendants be."</p>	<p>Day 9 Proverbs 24:14 So shall the knowledge of wisdom be to your soul; if you have found it, there is a prospect, and your hope will not be out off.</p>	<p>Day 10 Psalm 119:147 I rise before the dawning of the morning, and cry for help; I hope in Your word.</p>	<p>Day 11 Hebrews 6:19 This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which enters the Presence behind the veil.</p>	<p>Day 12 Psalm 78:7 That they may set their hope in God, And not forget the works of God, but keep His commandments;</p>
<p>Day 13 Psalm 119:114 You are my hiding place and my shield; I hope in Your word.</p>	<p>Day 14 Lamentations 3:24 "The Lord is my portion," says my soul, "Therefore I hope in Him!"</p>	<p>Day 15 Psalm 16:9 Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoices; my flesh also will rest in hope.</p>	<p>Day 16 Psalm 33:22 Let Your mercy, O Lord, be upon us, just as we hope in You.</p>	<p>Day 17 Hebrews 11:1 Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.</p>	<p>Day 18 Hebrews 10:23 Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful.</p>
<p>Day 19 Psalm 119:43 And take not the word of truth utterly out of my mouth, for I have hoped in Your ordinances.</p>	<p>Day 20 Jeremiah 17:7 "Blessed is the man who trusts in the Lord, and whose hope is the Lord."</p>	<p>Day 21 Jeremiah 29:11 For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the Lord, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope.</p>	<p>Day 22 Lamentations 3:26 It is good that one should hope and wait quietly for the salvation of the Lord.</p>	<p>Day 23 Romans 5:5 Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us.</p>	<p>Day 24 Psalm 119:74 Those who fear You will be glad when they see me, because I have hoped in Your word.</p>
<p>Day 25 1 Corinthians 13:7 (love)...bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.</p>	<p>Day 26 Colossians 1:27 To them God willed to make known what are the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles: which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.</p>	<p>Day 27 Colossians 1:23 If indeed you continue in the faith, grounded and steadfast, and are not moved away from the hope of the gospel which you heard, which was preached to every creature under heaven, of which I, Paul, became a minister.</p>	<p>Day 28 Ephesians 1:18 the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints.</p>	<p>Day 29 1 Corinthians 9:10 Or does He say it altogether for our sakes? For our sakes, no doubt, this is written, that he who plows should plow in hope, and he who threshes in hope should be partaker of his hope.</p>	<p>Day 30 Romans 8:24-25 For we were saved in this hope, but hope that is seen is not hope; for why does one still hope for what he sees? But if we hope for what we do not see, we eagerly wait for it with perseverance.</p>



Ida Lewis is the most celebrated lighthouse keeper in American history. Born in Newport, Rhode Island, on February 25, 1842, her father was appointed keeper of the Lime Rock Lighthouse in Newport in 1854. However, in less than four months he suffered a stroke, so his family had to take over his duties and Ida would play a key role.

By the age of 14, she became one of the best swimmers in all of Newport. She also rowed her siblings to school every weekday in a wooden boat. It was her rowing and swimming skills that would come in handy in the years to come. She and her mother ran the lighthouse from 1857 until 1872 when her father died.

Ida's mother became the "official" keeper, but Ida was very involved in the work as well and even more so as her mother's health began to fail. When her mother died in 1879, she was finally named keeper of the lighthouse. Her first rescue took place in the fall of 1858, when she was 16. A sailboat capsized on a cold, wintry day. Four young men struggled to hold on in the cold waters until Ida arrived in her small boat and pulled them all to safety. Her most famous rescue was in 1869 when she rescued two soldiers who became victims of an overturned boat in the Newport Harbor during a fierce snowstorm. A 14-year-old companion had drowned before Ida arrived.

She is credited with 18 rescues during her 39 years of service, but some estimate the number at twice that. She kept no records and was hesitant to discuss her accomplishments. Ida died of a stroke in 1911, while on duty, at the age of 69. More than 1,400 people came to the Thames Street Methodist Church to pay their respects and say good-bye.

In 1924, the Rhode Island legislature officially changed the

name of Lime Rock to Ida Lewis Rock and the Lime Rock Lighthouse was changed to the Ida Lewis Lighthouse — the only lighthouse in the United States named for one of its keepers. It is now home to the Ida Lewis Yacht Club.

Ida Lewis made sure the light in the lighthouse was always shining and knew her number one job was to rescue those who would perish without her help.

The church of the Lord, Jesus Christ, has a similar and even more important assignment. We're to be "the light of the world" and to "let our light so shine...."

What does it mean to let your light shine?

According to Hebrew and Biblical understanding, light is the manifestation of God Himself. It is His presence in the world, bringing hope and healing to humanity.

To let our light shine means:

- To live in such a way that others see Jesus in us. We reflect His character, love, and truth in all we do.**
- Being people of integrity, who others can trust.**
- To be kind and compassionate, patient and forgiving.**
- Living our lives in such a way as to point others to Christ.**

One of the most well-known verses about shining your light is [Matthew 5:16](#). It says, "In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven."

CONT...

This is such an important verse because it not only tells us to let our light shine, but it also tells us why. When our light shines, it allows others to see the good things that God has done in our lives. And when they see that, it brings glory to God! **How awesome is that?**

7 practical ways to let your light shine:

There are so many practical ways that we can let our light shine. It begins with living out our faith in our everyday lives. When we do this, people will take notice and be drawn to Christ. Here are some specific ways you can let your light shine:

1. Get involved in your community

One practical way to do this is by being involved in your community. Get involved in local service projects or volunteer at a local nonprofit. You can also shine your light by being a good example to those around you. Be kind, patient, and understanding. Show others the love of Christ through your actions.

2. Share your faith

Share your faith with others! You don't have to be pushy or forceful, but you can share your testimony and what Christ has done in your life. You can also invite others to church or Bible study. When you shine your light, people will take notice.

3. Be authentic

Be authentic in our relationships with others. When we are real with people and show them who we truly are, it gives them the opportunity to see Christ in us. It also allows them to feel comfortable coming to us with their own struggles and needs because they know we will accept them just as they are.

4. Be compassionate

When we show compassion, it opens the door for people to see the love of Christ in us. It also allows them to feel cared for and valued, which can be a powerful witness for the gospel.

5. Have faith

Live out your faith boldly. This means being unashamed of the gospel and sharing it with others, even when it's not popular or easy. Being bold in our faith shows others that

we are not afraid to stand up for what we believe in. It also gives them the courage to do the same.

6. Pray

Pray for opportunities to shine your light. Ask God to open your eyes to people and situations where you can be a witness for Him.

7. Be an example

Live your life in such a way that others can see Christ in you. Let them see His love, joy, peace, and patience working in and through you. You can set an example by forgiving, being patient, and being kind.

If we want to make a difference in this world, we must let our light shine for Christ. We must be intentional about it. But the good news is that it's not difficult to do! By following the seven practical tips above, you are definitely on the right path!

Prayer to shine your light.

Father, thank You for calling us to be the light of the world. Please give us the courage to shine our light in dark places. Help us to reflect Your character in all we do. And help us never grow weary of doing good, for, in due season, we will reap a harvest if we do not give up. In Jesus' name, Amen.

And that's it, folks, how to shine a light.

If you are feeling lost or struggling to find your light, I encourage you to seek God first and foremost. Ask Him to reveal His will for your life and open your eyes to see the world through His lens. When we surrender our lives to Christ, He promises to give us everything we need to live a life that is abundantly full of His love and grace.

I pray that you will be able to shine your light brightly, knowing you are never alone in the darkness. God is always with you, leading and guiding you towards His perfect plan for your life.

Shine on!

Blessings,

Pastor David

Loving God, watch over our children as they begin their new school year. Bless them with joy at seeing friends, excitement at new experiences, and a love of learning.

Guide and protect all who learn, replacing fear with joy, anxiety with peace, and tiredness with energy. Give wisdom, patience, and joy to teachers as they serve their students.

In Jesus' name we pray.
Amen.

St. Peter Lutheran Church
Greene, Iowa

A BACK-TO-SCHOOL PRAYER



On any given weekend, if you are going to be out of town, you don't have to miss a thing. You can join us online at the normal service time at [fcoc.online.church](https://www.fcoc.online.church) or anytime on our church [YouTube Channel](#).

If you're going to be gone, we hope you'll join us online wherever you are. And, you can still give online at [cherokeefcc.com/give](https://www.cherokeefcc.com/give) to help us continue to reach as many people as possible during the summer months.

- 1 – Ezekiel 18-19
- 2 – Ezekiel 20-21
- 3 – Ezekiel 22-23
- 4 – Ezekiel 24-27
- 5 – Ezekiel 28-31
- 6 – Ezekiel 32-34
- 7 – Ezekiel 35-37
- 8 – Ezekiel 38-39
- 9 – Ezekiel 40-41
- 10 – Ezekiel 42-43
- 11 – Ezekiel 44-45
- 12 – Ezekiel 46-48
- 13 – Joel 1-3
- 14 – Daniel 1-3
- 15 – Daniel 4-6
- 16 – Daniel 7-9
- 17 – Daniel 10-12
- 18 – Ezra 1-3
- 19 – Ezra 4-6; Psalm 137
- 20 – Haggai 1-2
- 21 – Zechariah 1-7
- 22 – Zechariah 8-14
- 23 – Esther 1-5
- 24 – Esther 6-10
- 25 – Ezra 7-10
- 26 – Nehemiah 1-5
- 27 – Nehemiah 6-7
- 28 – Nehemiah 8-10
- 29 – Nehemiah 11-13; Psalm 126
- 30 – Malachi 1-4

September Chronological Bible Reading Plan

Esther Circle Cookie Plates



The ladies of Esther Circle would like to have input from the congregation for someone you might know who would enjoy a get a plate of treats this

year. We greatly appreciate your input for this particular ministry. We are gearing up for November when the treat plates go out.

We will have a sign-up sheet for cookies the first three Sundays in November. We will send a reminder out when it gets closer to November.

Thank you for your input and participation.

The Goats are Back!



Please make your donations to Esther Circle directly. You can buy as many goats as you like. If you can't donate for a whole goat that is just fine we will pool all the donations together to purchase as many goats as we can with the donations.

This a fun way to make a direct impact on changing the direction of a families life.

The ladies of Esther Circle are teaming up with IDES to sponsor goats again this year. It has been a while since we have done this. This will take place in the month of October.

One goat costs \$60 and provides a sustainable food source for those who receive them. A goat can provide cheese, milk, and once a herd is built they also provide a meat source.



Thanks again for your support!

Date	Offering	On Campus Attendance	Online Attendance	Total Attendance
07/30/2023	\$1535.35	55	24	79
08/06/2023	\$2306.25	64	19	83
08/13/2023	\$1664.43	51	20	71
08/20/2023	\$2385.50	53	20	73

September 2023 Volunteer Worship Schedule

3	10	17	24
Children's Church	Children's Church	Children's Church	Children's Church
Polly Fishman	Sholeen Sparks	Dixie Draper	Angela Hall
Children's Sunday School	Children's Sunday School	Children's Sunday School	Children's Sunday School
Polly Fishman	Sholeen Sparks	Dixie Draper	Angela Hall
Communion Message	Communion Message	Communion Message	Communion Message
Guy Fishman	Mike Sparks	David Hall	Kirk Nelson
Worship Leader	Worship Leader	Worship Leader	Worship Leader
Sharon Henkel	David Hall	Sharon Henkel	David Hall
Piano	Piano	Piano	Piano
N/A	Eleanor Johnston	N/A	N/A
Singers	Singers	Singers	Singers
Nancy Nelson	Marica Casey	Nancy Nelson	Angela Hall
Larry Heschke	Mark Casey	Larry Heschke	Sharon Henkel
PowerPoint	PowerPoint	PowerPoint	PowerPoint
Braella Inman	Nancy Nelson	Braella Inman	Nancy Nelson
Sound	Sound	Sound	Sound
Mike Sparks	Larry Heschke	Mike Sparks	Larry Heschke
Janitorial	Janitorial	Janitorial	Janitorial
Larry Heschke	Larry Heschke	Larry Heschke	Larry Heschke
Jean Heschke	Jean Heschke	Jean Heschke	Jean Heschke

New GriefShare Program to Be Offered by First Church of Christ

This program features biblical, Christ-centered teaching that focuses on grief topics associated with the death of a loved one. The DVD seminar features nationally respected grief experts and real-life stories of people, followed by a small group discussion about what was viewed. Past participants have related how helpful the information and follow-up discussions were to them.

Many grieving people find they are only beginning the work of healing when friends or family have returned to their daily life routines. Too often people, including Christians, tend to stuff their grief instead of allowing it to do the God-given work for which it is intended. Don't allow fear of what others may think to keep you from what could help you. Confidentiality is very much a part of this program.

Your bereavement experience may be recent or not so recent. You will find encouragement, comfort and help in grieving the death of a spouse, child, parent, sibling, other family member, or friend. No matter what the cause of your loved one's death, this is an opportunity to be around people who understand what you are feeling. You will learn how to recognize the symptoms of being stuck in grief and that you do not need to live in bondage to certain emotions. You will learn valuable information about facing your new normal in life and renewing your hope for the future.

GriefShare will be held **Monday evenings from 6:30 - 8:00pm beginning September 11** and running for 13 weeks. The weekly seminars will meet in the Chapel of First Church of Christ.

Cost: \$20 (includes workbook)

Child care: No

Any questions, call Pastor David at [641-638-4762](tel:641-638-4762)

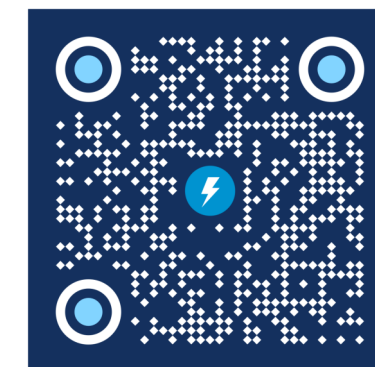
Registration: online is preferred and highly recommended by [CLICKING HERE](#) or scanning the QR code. You can also call the church office at [712-225-2667](tel:712-225-2667). Please register by September 4th.

GRIEF SUPPORT GROUP

Help and encouragement after the death of a loved one

GriefShare is a special weekly seminar and support group designed to help you rebuild your life. We know it hurts, and we want to help.

Mondays 6:30pm – 8:00pm
September 11 - December 4
First Church of Christ, 712-225-2667
772 N 2nd Street, Cherokee, IA 51012
griefshare.fcoc@gmail.com



SCAN ME



SEPTEMBER CELEBRATIONS

September 1
Royden & Della Rupp

September 6
Jerry Clark

September 8
Dereck H. (MCS Student)

September 10
David & Anita Cougill

September 18
Lorraine Duvall

September 21
Shawn & Brooke Joy

September 22
Richard M. (MCS Student)

September 23
Curt Wiese

September 25
Mary Hasbrouck

September 28
Patrick F. (MCS Student)



The Spirit moved in dramatic ways in the early church. The gospel was preached, thousands were added to their number, many were healed, and the good news about Jesus was spread across continents. Covering the exciting action of the Spirit in the years just following Jesus' life on earth, this study will open your eyes to the Spirit's power in the past *and* present and help you apply the riches of Scripture to your own life.

Beginning September 12th, join us at 10:30am each Tuesday morning this fall and be a part of this exciting study through the Book of Acts. Invite a friend to attend with you!

Gus Gano
Celebrating 90 Years
September 11, 2023
His family is asking to send him birthday wishes!
704 E. Spruce - Cherokee, IA 51012

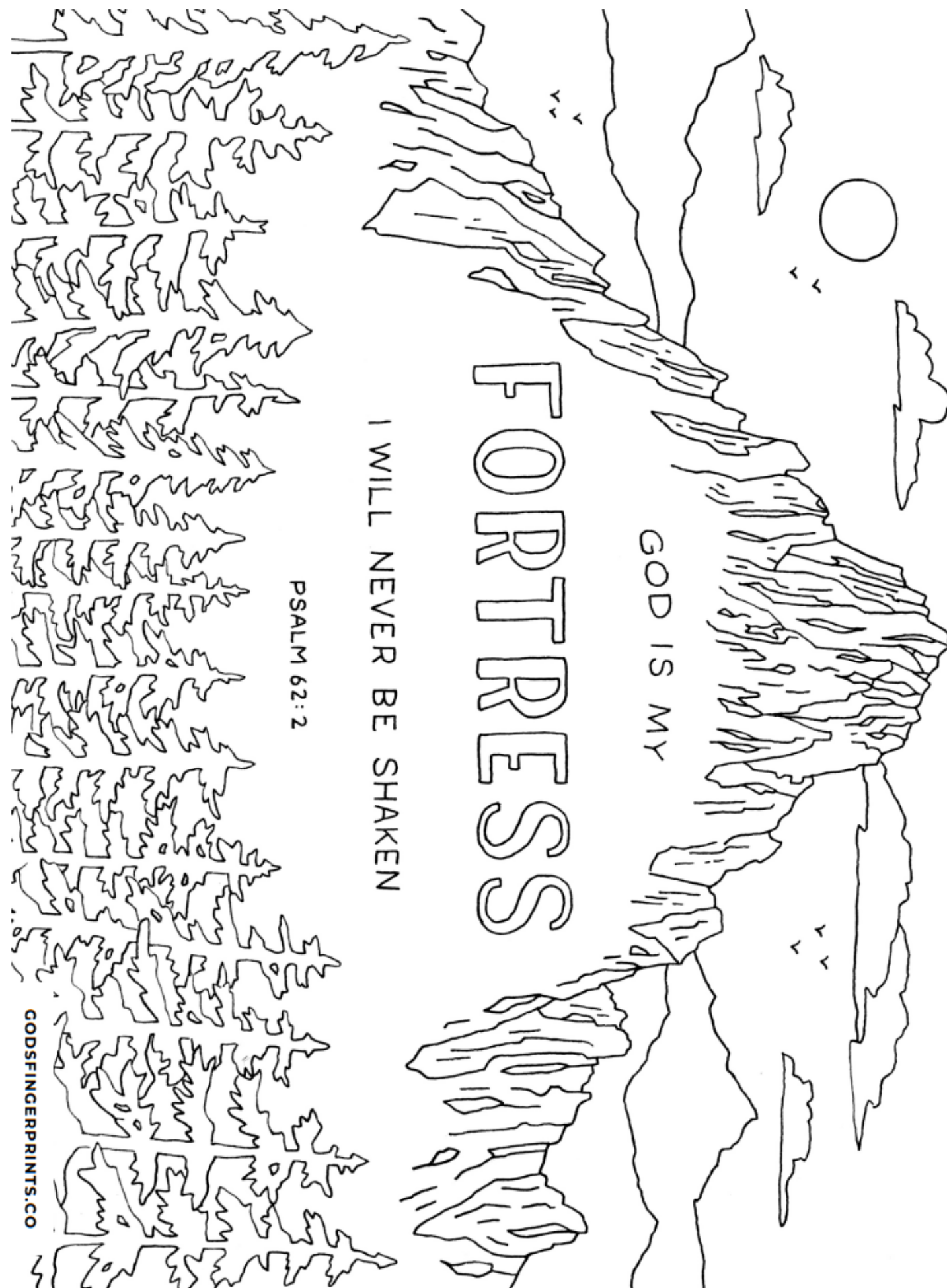


Word Search Heroes of Faith

Hebrews 11:13-35

- ALL DIED
- NOT HAVING PROMISES SEEN
- AFAR OFF
- EMBRACED THEM
- CONFESSED STRANGERS
- PILGRIMS SEEK
- HOMELAND DESIRE
- HEAVENLY COUNTRY
- ABRAHAM TESTED
- OFFERED ISAAC
- BLESSED JACOB
- ESAU
- MOSES CHOOSING TO SUFFER AFFLICTION
- RAHAB
- DID NOT PERISH
- GIDEON
- BARAK
- SAMSON
- JEPHTHAH
- DAVID
- SAMUEL
- STOPPED LIONS
- QUENCHED VIOLENCE
- ESCAPED SWORD
- MADE STRONG
- VALIANT
- DEAD
- RAISED TO LIFE

Q U E N C H E D S E S I M O R P C K W N A D E S I R E J
A V H X H V B L B C O U N T R Y U T A I X R V I B J M E
U N W T B I A B F J R E F F U S O T E U Q R N S I Q A D
H L O N C T H X O E C M M F Y F P P C Z A O T T U S D A
J M J S F I A F U H Y V D C F L H O J I E Q L R H V E E
L D T Q M V R Z O Y J E K E Q B N Q S D K V O A I B S D
H V J B D A X O G U S B R M R F E E I E G B N N Z O T U
Q B E S F R S J X S X E P X E C D G G L C W Y G E V R S
Q X E A G I T N E J D C J S N T H D J U A S E E V E O E
D E Z I N V F L X H W B S E O C S A M U E L X R D S N E
N E K G F R B M N O J E L L U Q B E V K N M V S M C G K
J D P A X J C Y J S D O I D G N I V A H T O N V X A J P
X A H P R Z R L H U I F N O I T C I L F F A V Y W P A H
B V S B O A Q N J V E M X L X C I Q M A H A R B A E C A
X I I H Q T B E A F A R O F F B T M X S V I L C A D O H
O D R H P X S V T L V E M B R A C E D T H E M A L S B T
M S E J V K Q A N K T M S D P V Q U Q D T N Z A L W I H
G W P X T D V E A J D N M P M R P N B L N L P S D O K P
J X T H M E P H I F G J I J H H J M M A I A U I I R T E
T Q O P F T X O L Y M N R H D V H U O O T Q L V E D Y J
B J N G V S F M A Q A Q G Q K O M X N S Q T T E D R W A
W G D Q V E J K V T F M L K X L W S F H E Z L C M N X O
D X I E H T X O X B I C I B P W L D R I N S W E K O L G
E P D R E N J F T X F S P H W Y B J W U M S W K J I H O



Rapha International Responds to Movie “Sound of Freedom”

If you watched *The Sound of Freedom* and now you want to take a deeper dive into the issues surrounding child trafficking, read this message from Rapha International:

Rapha’s mission depends upon people becoming aware of the trafficking and abuse of children, and then becoming compelled to do something to help protect them. We are grateful that the newly released film, *The Sound of Freedom*, is sparking conversation about the injustice of child sex trafficking. That conversation is the first step. In our experience at Rapha, we’ve seen two additional steps that lead people to become committed advocates for children around the world:

- 1.) **a deeper understanding of human trafficking** and
- 2.) **a practical way to get involved.**

A deeper understanding of human trafficking is an important part of becoming an advocate for children.

The events portrayed in *The Sound of Freedom* demonstrate the injustice and suffering that are synonymous with human trafficking. However, the most common circumstances surrounding the trafficking of children are not represented in the story. Here are a few examples of common dynamics of child sex trafficking that will help cultivate a deeper understanding:

The causes of human trafficking. The circumstances that lead to human trafficking are very complex. Understanding those circumstances does not excuse the behavior of traffickers and abusers, but acknowledges that systemic and cultural issues also play a role in human trafficking. It’s not just bad people doing bad things, but also risk factors that make some particularly vulnerable. Research shows that vulnerability to human trafficking is tied to “gender inequality, socioeconomic status, power relationships within a family, disorganized communities, cultural norms, racism, sexism, political priorities, public policies and law, and existence and effectiveness of law enforcement” (Sharma et al, 2022).

Why does that matter? Understanding what causes human trafficking is essential to building successful programs to protect children and prevent abuse. If human trafficking is attributed solely to the evil behavior of bad actors, it is difficult to build a case for prevention. Prevention and intervention into trafficking requires organizations to provide critical services at the community level to address the underlying issues. Those services are not prioritized when people believe that human trafficking is solely a law enforcement matter that can only be addressed by men with guns. When advocates and organizations understand that strengthening families and communities has a profound impact on combating human trafficking, real and sustainable change can happen for vulnerable children.

The emotional manipulation and grooming of trafficked children. The tactics used to recruit children into trafficking and exploitation are very diverse. It can happen that children are abducted by traffickers, as portrayed in *The Sound of Freedom*. It is much more common, however, that children are groomed by their abusers, financially coerced, or emotionally manipulated into exploitation. Research has identified five steps common in the grooming of children for commercial sexual exploitation: 1.) victim selection; 2.) gaining access and isolation; 3.) trust development; 4.) desensitization to touch; and 5.) maintaining control (Winters et. al, 2021).

Why does that matter? If our only model for survivors of sex trafficking are children who are physically trapped and begging to be freed, we will have an incomplete vision of survivors. Tragically, many survivors of child sex trafficking are not aware that they are being exploited and have deep emotional bonds with their abusers. When they are rescued, it is not uncommon for survivors to feel anger and distrust during their “rescue.” At Rapha, one of our goals for each child we serve is for her to find joy, peace, and happiness. We know, however, that those do not come immediately or even quickly for most survivors. Essential to serving survivors is understanding them and walking with them through a complex emotional journey that may be difficult to understand.

The intervention into human trafficking. A comprehensive and holistic intervention into a case of human trafficking is a long process. Children who have experienced trafficking are likely to have medical and mental health challenges that take time and professional support to resolve. Addiction disorders, high risk pregnancies, and homelessness are among the many complicated issues potentially facing children who have been rescued from sex trafficking. Long term support in the areas of education, criminal justice, relocation, legal and immigration assistance, and employment are often necessary to provide a survivor with an opportunity for sustainable freedom (Marburger & Pickover, 2021).

Why does that matter? When a law enforcement operation is considered the sole intervention into human trafficking, survivors are left with a high likelihood of being exploited again. Rescuing people from dangerous situations is important, but rescue is only the beginning. To provide real freedom and lasting safety, programs must be put in place to provide ongoing care and support for trafficking survivors. These types of programs are costly to operate; widespread understanding of the complex needs of survivors is crucial to build the coalitions and support networks that make them possible.

CONT...

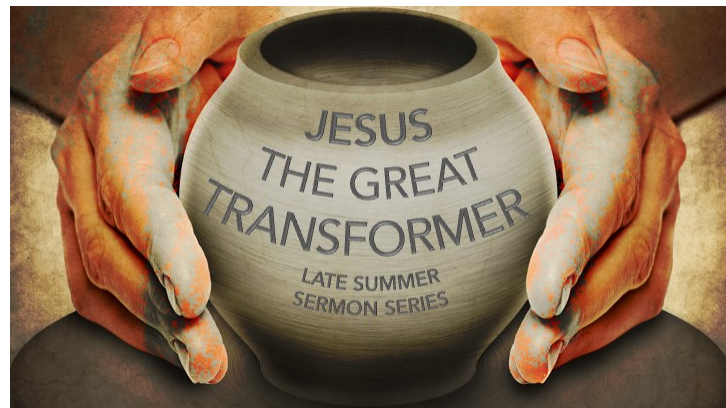
CONT...

The position, appearance, and behavior of perpetrators. Perpetrators of child sexual abuse and trafficking are diverse. Portrayals that characterize perpetrators as deviant, explicitly violent, or frightening contribute to an incomplete understanding of human trafficking. In fact, the grooming process in abuse and trafficking (as explained above), often requires perpetrators to appear trustworthy and above reproach. The Polaris Project, a leading anti-trafficking and research organization in the United States, states that, "Traffickers come from all genders, races, ethnicities and walks of life. In sex trafficking situations, they may be intimate partners or spouses of the victims, family members, friends or benefactors, business acquaintances and bosses" (2023).

Why does that matter? Similarly to understanding survivors, understanding perpetrators is essential to an effective response to human trafficking. The false belief that a perpetrator of human trafficking will be easily identified as a dangerous person can provide more protection for perpetrators who are hiding in plain sight- as a neighbor, friend, teacher, or even a spiritual leader. Perpetrators can often use their positions as respected and trusted community members to access and exploit children.

With a deeper understanding, the last step to becoming an effective advocate is to find a way to become involved in the fight against human trafficking.

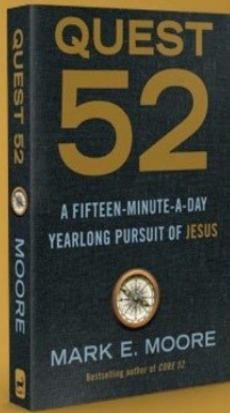
It takes a global community to combat a global problem like child sex trafficking. We are so grateful that The Sound of Freedom is sparking conversation around the issue, and that so many people are responding by looking for ways to get involved and make an impact. If you have any questions or would like to discuss the film, this statement, or Rapha's work, please feel free to contact us at freedom@rapha.org with the subject line The Sound of Freedom.



First Timothy chapter 2, verse 5, tells us, "There is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus..." God is so holy, so powerful, that his full presence can't be tolerated by mere human beings. The Bible says that no man can look at the face of God and live. The book of Revelation says that in the last days, when people actually see God's power, they will call for the mountains and the rocks to fall on them and to hide them from the face of the one who sits on the throne (16:16).

But Jesus Christ brought God down to the realm of our daily lives. He said, "If you've seen me, you've seen the Father" (John 14:9). He channels the truth of God so that we can safely relate to him, and understand him, and benefit from him. And when we allow Jesus Christ to come into our lives, he transforms us from the darkness of sin to the light of His holiness, from the coldness of selfishness to the warmth of compassion, from the banal activities of this world to the excitement and joy of the Spirit. Second Corinthians 3:18 says, "We are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord."

In this four-week sermon series "**Jesus: The Great Transformer**" we are going to learn from some people in the Gospel of Luke who were exposed to this transforming power of God and had their lives changed forever. Join us each week and learn how his transformative power can be set free in your life!



Next Group Meeting
September 12th
6:30pm
In the FCC Chapel



The Office Will Be Closed
Monday - September 4, 2023

Proudly Presenting: The Savior of the World

Read John 1:6-8 (ESV)

There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. He came as a witness, to bear witness about the light, that all might believe through him. He was not the light, but came to bear witness about the light.

Reflect

How did you first hear that Jesus is the Messiah? Who witnessed to you?

Have you ever had the honor of introducing someone important to others? Maybe you were extremely proud to introduce your future spouse to your family for the first time. Or maybe you proudly introduce your kids or grandkids to everyone you meet. Perhaps, you've been an actual M.C. and as "Master of Ceremonies," you had the distinct privilege to introduce someone truly famous to a waiting crowd.

But regardless of the relative status or fame of your most noteworthy introduction, I think we can all agree that John the Baptist had the highest honor given to man. John the Baptist was given the special role and distinct privilege of introducing the Savior of the world.

John's mother, Elizabeth, and Jesus' mother, Mary, were cousins. John was born about 6 months before Jesus. His birth was miraculous, too. We read about it in [Luke 1:5-25, 57-80](#). His parents Zechariah and Elizabeth were barren and their childbearing years had passed them by. Zechariah was a priest serving in the temple when the angel, Gabriel, appeared to announce that his wife would soon give birth to a son they would name, John. Zechariah requested a sign so that he could know the angel's words were true, especially because he and his wife, Elizabeth were so old. Gabriel told him that because he didn't believe his words, Zechariah wouldn't be able to speak until his son was born.

Gabriel told Zechariah that his son would "be great before the Lord. And he must not drink wine or strong drink, and he will be filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother's womb. And he will turn many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God, and he will go before him in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, to make ready for the Lord a people prepared" ([Luke 1:15-17](#)).

John the Baptist was the one Isaiah had prophesied would come before the Messiah. "A voice cries: In the wilderness prepare the way of the LORD; make straight in the desert a highway for our God" ([Isaiah 40:3](#)). Over 700 years before John and Jesus were born, Isaiah prophesied that they both would come. The Messiah was coming but a forerunner would come first in order to prepare the way.

You see, John didn't just have the honor and privilege of telling people that the Messiah was coming. He had a responsibility. For about 400 years, God hadn't spoken through any prophet. God used John the Baptist to break the silence. As the apostle John wrote, John the Baptist wasn't the Light of the World. He wasn't the Messiah. It was his job to proclaim that the Light of the World was coming. He bore witness to Jesus Christ. But his message wasn't always well received. He was persecuted and thrown into prison for faithfully bearing witness to the Light. So while John was given an amazing privilege of introducing the world to its Savior, his life was far from easy.

All of us have been called to bear witness to the Light of the World. Like John, we are also called to proclaim that Jesus is the Messiah, the Savior of the World. As Christians, it is an incredible honor to bear His great name and represent Him to the world. But being His witnesses isn't always easy. Sharing His message with others won't always be well received. Even so, may we faithfully bear witness to the Light so that all might come to believe in Him.

Pray

Jesus, You are the Light of the World and You are my Lord and Savior. Equip me and give me the courage to faithfully bear witness to You even if my message isn't well received. It is an incredible honor and privilege to be able to introduce others to the Savior of the world. Amen.