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Out of the Swamp: How I Found Truth

A Wayfarer's Journey Through Grace

By Skyler Thomas

With Original Songs and Devotionals

Out of the Swamp: How I Found Truth *A Wayfarer's Journey Through Grace*

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Dedication

To those still in the swamp, who haven't yet heard the call.

To those at the water's edge, learning what it means to be washed clean.

And to those walking in unforced rhythms, discovering that grace is not just sufficient— it's everything.

This is your story too.

And most important, to my loving wife and children who didn't leave me when things got at their worst. You make life pure joy.

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Out of the Swamp: How I Found Truth (Introduction)

The Wayfarer's Anthem

"I used to think love was something I earned. Then I met it in a swamp. Covered in mud, gasping for air, convinced I was too far gone—that's when I felt it. Not a rescue that pulled me out immediately, but a presence that sat with me in the muck and whispered, 'I'm here. I've been here the whole time. And I'm not leaving.'"

Who This Book Is For (And What It's Really About)

Are you tired? Not just physically tired—soul tired. The kind of tired that sleep doesn't fix.

Do you ever lie awake at night wondering if there's more to life than what you're experiencing? Do the achievements feel hollow? Do the relationships feel exhausting? Does the constant striving to prove you're enough feel… well, like it's never enough?

If any of that resonates, this book might be for you.

Because here's what I've discovered: there's another way to live. Not perfect. Not easy. But different. Better. More real.

And you don't have to figure it out alone.

Now, I need to be honest with you about something: this is a book about finding something more. And that "something more" is a spiritual connection—but probably not the kind you're thinking of.

This isn't about religion. It's not about joining a church or converting to any particular faith tradition. But yes, I'm going to introduce you to some faith-based authors. Yes, I'll cite passages from the Holy Bible. Because these ancient texts and thinkers have mapped this journey before us, and their wisdom matters.

Here's what this book IS about: introducing you to a God who created you and loves you exactly where you are right now. Not where you should be. Not where you wish you were. Right where you are.

If you've never been to church, that's okay. You might actually have an advantage—fewer bad experiences to unlearn.

If you walked away from church years ago, I get it. I did too. The institution failed a lot of us. But this isn't about going back to what hurt you.

If you're not sure you even believe in God, stick with me. I'm not asking you to sign a statement of faith. I'm inviting you into a story—mine, and maybe yours—about what happens when you stop pretending and start being honest.

Here's the thing: I'm going to talk about God. About Jesus. About finding something real in the middle of the mess.

But I'm not going to ask you to believe it all right now. I'm just asking you to consider: *What if there's a Love that meets you exactly where you are? What if you don't have to clean yourself up first? What if the brokenness you're carrying is the exact place where healing begins?*

This is what I mean by "spirituality" instead of "religion":

Religion says: Follow the rules, perform well, measure up, and maybe you'll be acceptable.

Spirituality says: You're already known. Already seen. Already loved. Now come find out what that means.

I talk about **God** not as some distant cosmic force or angry judge, but as the source of the love you've been searching for your whole life. The kind of love that doesn't depend on your performance. That doesn't quit when you mess up. That runs toward you, not away from you.

I talk about **Jesus** not as a religious figure on a stained-glass window, but as God choosing to step into human skin. To live our life. To feel our pain. To show us what Love looks like with hands and feet. He didn't come to start a religion. He came for people who were drowning—people like you and me.

I talk about **the Spirit** not as some spooky religious concept, but as the presence of God that can actually live in you. That whispers truth when you're believing lies. That gives you strength when you have none left. That transforms you from the inside out.

Why would any of this matter to you?

Because maybe you've tried everything else.

Maybe you've tried achieving your way to meaning. Working harder. Making more money. Finding the right relationship. Filling the void with whatever you could find. Maybe you've even tried to just be a better person through morality (whatever that is). And if you're honest, it's all come up short.

Not because you're doing it wrong. But because you were designed for something deeper. Something that doesn't break when life breaks. Something that doesn't end when your heart stops.

An old theologian named Augustine said it like this: *"Our hearts are restless until they rest in You."*

That restlessness you feel? That ache for more? That's not a flaw. That's your soul telling you there's something real to find.

Here's what I'm NOT doing:

I'm not trying to get you to join a church (though finding a good community later might help).

I'm not asking you to become religious (please don't).

I'm not going to quote a bunch of Bible verses at you like proof-texts (though I will tell you some ancient stories that might surprise you).

Here's what I AM doing:

I'm inviting you to consider that the God you might have given up on never gave up on you.

I'm showing you what it looked like when I stopped running and started being honest.

I'm suggesting that the swamp you're in might be the exact place where you finally meet Love.

If you're thinking: *"I don't know if I buy any of this God stuff…"*

Good. Questions are allowed here. Doubt is part of the journey. You don't have to have it all figured out to keep reading.

If you're thinking: *"I've been hurt by religious people…"*

I'm sorry. Truly. The system fails people all the time. Hypocrites are real. Church can wound. But please don't confuse the failure of religious people with who God actually is.

If you're thinking: *"Why should I give this a try?"*

Because you picked up this book for a reason. Something in you is still searching. Still hoping. Still wondering if there might be more.

And I'm here to tell you: I believe there is.

Not religion. Not performance. Not rules.

But a Love that wades into your swamp.

A grace that meets you exactly where you are.

A Life that doesn't end when this one does.

This book is for the messy, the broken, the burned-out, the skeptical, the searching.

It's for people who know they don't have it all together and are tired of pretending otherwise.

If that's you, keep reading.

Let's walk together.

Setting the Scene: The Crash

You know that moment when you can't keep pretending anymore?

For me, it came in whispers:

"I can't do this anymore."

Eight words. Not eloquent. Not packaged. Just real.

And honesty—raw, desperate honesty—became my first step toward something better.

Then my world crumbled into pieces I could hardly recognize.

The Crisis and the Promise

It was more than burnout. It was a moral breakdown—an unraveling of the life I'd tried to hold together. My performance-based identity collapsed. I crossed boundaries those closest to me couldn't accept. As a leader, husband, and father, I lost the trust that defined my identity.

What remained? Shame. Emptiness. And the desperate hope that I could still be loved.

But here's what I discovered:

Love meets us exactly where we are. Not where we should be. Not where we pretend to be. Exactly where we are—mud and all.

My Story of Burnout

Everything looked right from the outside. Working harder. Mentoring people at work. Involvement in community. Being a good family man. People looked to me as an example of service and commitment.

But underneath? Relationships fracturing in ways I couldn't control or understand.

At work, conflict I couldn't navigate. Conversations that went sideways no matter how carefully I tried. My boss pulled me aside one day with words that landed like a punch: the dynamic wasn't working, and I was part of the problem. What?! I had no idea. But surely I could have recognized the signs.

At home? Even worse. The kind of tension you can feel in the air before anyone says a word.

I was trying so hard. Pouring hours into teaching. Creating content. Showing up for people. But internally? Drowning. Wondering if I could make any of it work. Wondering if anyone noticed I was falling apart.

Then the facade crumbled.

What I'd been hiding—what I'd managed to keep in the shadows while maintaining the appearance of having it all together—could no longer stay hidden.

And the institution I'd trusted? The community I'd served so faithfully? They didn't know how to handle brokenness. No resources for restoration. Only consequences. Instead of healing, I heard condemnation. Instead of compassion, I felt rejection.

It felt like friendly fire—wounded by the very people who were supposed to carry my burdens. The ancient wisdom says, "Carry each other's burdens." Instead of being carried, I was crushed.

So I walked away.

Into the swamp of shame, isolation, and despair. Into a place where the questions were bigger than the answers and the pain was more real than the platitudes.

Henri Nouwen, the brilliant writer who himself walked through seasons of severe depression, named what I was experiencing:

> "There is a deep hole in your being, like an abyss. You will never succeed in filling that hole, because your needs are inexhaustible… You have to work around it so that gradually the abyss closes. Since the hole is so deep and your anguish so total, you run away from it, afraid that you will fall into it."
>
> — Henri Nouwen, *The Inner Voice of Love*

That abyss—that bottomless hole—I'd spent years trying to fill it with performance of hard work and good deeds, community approval, maintaining the image, and working more hours to accomplish tasks in order to make me feel better about myself. But in the swamp, I was too tired to run. And I no longer resisted moral temptation. Now I had to look at it. I had to face what I'd been avoiding.

Maybe you can't relate to my specific story. The details might be different.

But perhaps you know someone who's walked a similar path. Or maybe you've walked a different path with the same ending: wounded to the point of wanting out. Standing in the wreckage where the pieces can't be put back together.

That's where this journey begins.

Not in victory, but in the swamp. Not with all the answers, but with the honesty to admit we don't have them.

The Years of Performance

For years, I'd been what one writer called "the impostor"—the false self shaped by others' expectations rather than who I really was. He wrote:

> "The impostor is a liar, a phony, a hypocrite. It is the self presented to the world to gain approval, to win esteem, to be admired. But it's not who you really are. Living as an impostor means living a lie…"
>
> — Brennan Manning, *Abba's Child*

That was me.

As "a leader" who felt nothing. I was giving advice I didn't believe. The person quoting wisdom while drowning in doubt. The "strong one" who was actually drowning.

The years kept accumulating. More money. Recognition. People saying, "Your teaching has really helped me." Being seen as a technical expert at work. And all the while, the exhaustion grew beneath the performance like water seeping into a foundation, slowly undermining everything.

Then came the moment when the façade cracked.

I can still see it clearly—the counseling session where I finally said out loud: “I don’t know if I believe any of this anymore.”

The words hung in the air like a confession at a trial.

I waited for condemnation.

But what came instead was terrifying freedom. The freedom of admitting: “I can’t do this anymore.”

The Journey Metaphor: Three Movements

So where does this journey take us?

This book follows three movements—three stages of the journey from performance to authenticity, from drowning to dancing, from the swamp to the unforced rhythms of life.

Movement 1: The Swamp

This is where we’re stuck. The quicksand of shame. The muck of failure. The waters of despair rising.

Dark water you can’t see through. The smell of rot. Heavy silence. Muck that clings and pulls. Everything exhausting.

This isn’t just depression (though it might include that). This isn’t just spiritual dryness (though that’s part of it).

This is the accumulated weight of years of performing instead of being. Conversations that felt hollow. Service that felt like work. Community that felt like critique. Meaning that became a burden instead of a gift.

An ancient writer knew this place:

> *“Save me, O God, for the floodwaters are up to my neck. Deeper and deeper I sink into the mire; I can’t find a foothold. I am in deep water, and the floods overwhelm me. I am exhausted from crying for help; my throat is parched. My eyes are swollen with weeping, waiting for my God to help me.”*
>
> — Psalm 69:1-3 (NLT)

Worn out calling for help.

That’s the swamp.

Pause and consider: Have you ever felt this way? That sinking feeling, the exhaustion of trying to keep it all together?

Why spend so many chapters talking about the swamp?

Because it isn't a niche struggle—it's epidemic. The swamp shows up everywhere. In the writings of thinkers across centuries. Because it is the universal human condition.

It's so common that many never even stop to name it. For some, it becomes the assumed backdrop of life: heavy, stagnant, normal. Others rationalize it, assuming that true depth requires long seasons of despair.

And candidly? There are millions who don't even realize life doesn't have to be this way. They've made peace with the swamp because they've never glimpsed the possibility of another kind of life.

That's why it matters to pause here.

Because until we name the swamp for what it is, we can't imagine leaving it.

Movement 2: The Water's Edge

The transition space.

You've dragged yourself (or been dragged) out of the swamp. Now you're at the edge of something clean, something clear. Living water. The kind that refreshes. That quenches real thirst. That becomes a spring within you.

But you're terrified to step in.

Why? Because you're filthy. Covered in swamp muck. Reeking of failure and shame. You're convinced the water will reject you. That you need to clean up first before you can approach.

This is where love does its most subversive work.

Where you discover that the invitation isn't "Clean yourself up and then come."

It's "Come as you are, and restoration will find you."

An ancient letter put it this way: *"But because of great love for us, the Source of all mercy made us alive even when we were dead in our broken patterns—it is by radical kindness you have been saved."*

Even when we were dead. Even when we were in the swamp.

That's when healing came.

Movement 3: Unforced Rhythms of Life

Life after surrender.

Not perfection, but participation. Not arrival, but walking.

There's an ancient invitation that speaks to this:

> *"Come to me, all of you who are weary and carry heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you. Let me teach you, because I am humble and gentle at*

> *heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy to bear, and the burden I give you is light."*
>
> — Matthew 11:28-30 (NLT)

Unforced rhythms—that's what this final movement is about.

Picture someone who's learned to swim—or better yet, learned to float. Still in the water, but no longer fighting it. No longer exhausting yourself trying to stay afloat through sheer effort. Learning to rest in the water that holds you.

One spiritual teacher captured the essence of what the world needs most:

> "The greatest issue facing the world today, with all its heartbreaking needs, is whether those who, by profession or culture, are identified as 'people of Christ' will become disciples—students, apprentices, practitioners—of Jesus Christ, steadily learning from him how to live the life of the Kingdom of the Heavens into every corner of human existence."
>
> — Dallas Willard, *The Great Omission*

The unforced rhythms are about becoming apprentices—not of a religious system, but of a way of life. Learning to live sustainably, authentically, in the flow of grace rather than the grind of performance.

Setting Expectations

So what can you expect from this book?

This isn't a how-to book. I don't have five steps to fix your life.

What I have is a story—mine, and maybe yours too. What I have is fourteen songs that became fourteen chapters that became a map through the swamp.

What I have is the conviction that love is real, that it's for wayfarers like us, and that it meets us exactly where we are.

One writer put it this way:

> "The broken human is not simply an imperfect creature who needs improvement: we are rebels who must lay down our arms. Laying down your arms, surrendering, saying you are sorry, realizing that you have been on the wrong track and getting ready to start life over again from the ground up—that is the only way out of our 'hole.'"
>
> — C.S. Lewis

This book is about laying down arms.

About surrendering the self-salvation project. About admitting we've been on the wrong track and getting ready to start over.

It’s about discovering what one ancient teacher discovered: *“When I am weak, then I am strong.”*

That the swamp—the place of weakness, brokenness, and desperation—is exactly where transformation happens.

The Songs as Spiritual Markers

Each chapter centers on a song.

These aren’t illustrations of the teaching—they’re the heart of it. Each song was written in a specific season, in a specific struggle, and became a waypoint on the journey. The book is the story behind the songs. The songs are the soundtrack of healing.

When you reach each chapter, I’ll invite you to listen first, read second. Let the music do what music does—bypass your defenses and touch the ache directly. Then we’ll unpack it together.

The ancient Psalms taught me this. They’re not theological treatises set to music. They’re prayers that became songs. Laments that became worship. Honest cries that became sacred text.

David didn’t write about crying out in the cave. He cried out, and that cry became a psalm.

These fourteen songs are my psalms: imperfect, incomplete, but honest.

And honesty is where healing begins.

Key Truth: Love in the Muck

A Word About “Scandal”

Throughout this book, I’m going to use the word “scandal” a lot. And I want you to understand why.

A scandal breaks the rules. It violates expectations. It offends sensibilities. It makes people uncomfortable because it doesn’t fit the system they’ve built.

When I say love is “scandalous,” I don’t mean it’s shocking in a tabloid sense. I mean it operates on principles that completely violate the economy we know—the economy of earning, deserving, performing, and paying back.

The scandal is this: In every system humans create, love has conditions. Acceptance has requirements. Forgiveness has limits. Acceptance has to be earned.

But love doesn’t have to work that way.

Love says: - “I love you when you’re covered in swamp mud.” (Scandalous—shouldn’t I have to clean up first?) - “I forgive you before you’ve proven you’ve changed.” (Scandalous—shouldn’t I have to earn it?) - “I call you ‘beloved’ when you’re still a mess.” (Scandalous—shouldn’t I

have to deserve that title?) - “I meet you in the muck and call it holy ground.” (Scandalous—how can failure be holy?)

This is offensive to our sense of fairness. It violates our understanding of justice. It breaks every rule we have about how love should work.

That’s the scandal.

Love isn’t just nice. It’s not just generous. It’s revolutionary. Dangerous. World-upending.

If you could earn it, it wouldn’t be free—it would be payment. If you deserved it, it wouldn’t be love—it would be obligation. If you had to clean up first, it wouldn’t be scandalous—it would be sensible.

But love doesn’t do sensible. Love does scandalous.

Throughout this book, when you see the word “scandal,” remember: it’s not a problem. It’s the point.

The scandal is what makes it love. The scandal is what makes it real. The scandal is what makes it for you.

Because if love only came to the deserving, you and I would still be in the swamp.

Here’s the scandalous truth that changes everything:

Love doesn’t wait for you to clean up. It wades into the muck with you.

And here’s the scandal: it calls that muck ‘holy ground.’ Because anywhere you finally meet your true self IS holy ground—swamp mud and all.

Remember the ancient story of Moses at the burning bush? The voice said, *“Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy ground.”*

Moses was standing in the wilderness. Tending sheep. Running from his past. Not in a temple. Not in a place of worship. In the wilderness.

And the voice said: This is holy ground.

The swamp becomes holy ground when you meet truth there.

Not because the swamp is good. But because honesty enters it. And wherever honesty is becomes sacred.

An ancient truth captures this: *“Love shows itself in this: While we were still broken, restoration came for us.”*

While we were still.

Not after we cleaned up. Not once we got our act together. Not when we finally believed hard enough.

While we were still.

In the swamp. In the muck. In the middle of our mess.

The Wayfarer Identity

So who is a wayfarer?

Someone on a journey, often weary. A pilgrim. A traveler. A wanderer.

Not someone who has arrived, but someone honest enough to admit they're still on the road. Not someone perfect, but someone willing to keep walking.

The metaphor of journey saturates human wisdom:

- Abraham, called to leave everything familiar and go to a land he would discover as he went
- Ancient peoples, wandering years in the wilderness learning to trust
- Jesus, who had no place to lay his head
- The early spiritual seekers, who called their path "The Way"
- Ancient writers who described believers as "foreigners and strangers on earth" seeking "a better country"

Wayfarers know:

- **The road is long and we're not there yet** — We're still becoming who we're meant to be
- **We'll walk through swamps, deserts, and dark valleys** — Ancient wisdom promises the valley, not just green pastures
- **We don't travel alone** — The promise: *"I am with you always"*
- **The point isn't arrival; it's learning to walk authentically** — The call is to "walk humbly"
- **Authenticity matters more than appearance** — *"People look at the outward appearance, but the heart is what matters"*
- **Questions are allowed, doubt is part of the journey** — Even the faithful sent messengers asking, *"Are you the one, or should we expect someone else?"*
- **We're all just beggars telling other beggars where to find bread** — Martin Luther

One teacher describes this wayfaring path:

> "The spiritual life is not a life of success but a life of faithfulness. It's not about never falling, but about getting back up. It's not about perfection, but about direction."
>
> — Richard Rohr, *Falling Upward*

Closing Image: The Traveler at the Trailhead

Picture a traveler at the beginning of a long road.

Pack on their back. Mud on their boots. Questions in their hearts.

They don't know exactly where the road leads. They don't know how long it will take. They don't know what they'll encounter along the way.

But they know two things:

1. They can't stay in the swamp.
2. They don't have to walk alone.

An ancient seeker, reflecting on his own journey from the swamp to wholeness, wrote these now-famous words:

> "You have made us for yourself, O Lord, and our hearts are restless until they rest in you."
>
> — Augustine of Hippo, *Confessions*

That restlessness is mercy.

It's your soul refusing to settle for substitutes, calling you out of the swamp and onto the road.

So we begin.

Not with answers, but with honesty. Not with arrival, but with willingness to walk.

The journey is long.

But love is real.

And the Wayfarer's Anthem is this: **I can't do this alone. But I don't have to.**

Let's walk together.

Out of the Swamp: How I Found Truth (Movement 1)

MOVEMENT 1: IN THE SWAMP (The Struggle)

> "Love is closest to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit."
>
> — Ancient wisdom

The swamp is where honesty begins.

For too long, we've been taught that strength means pretending everything is fine. That integrity means wearing our best face and smiling through the pain. That acceptance is for people who've cleaned themselves up just enough to deserve it.

The swamp says: no more.

The swamp is where we finally stop performing. Where we sink to our knees in the muck and admit: I'm not okay. I'm not strong. I'm not sure I even know what I believe anymore. I'm drowning, and I don't know how to save myself.

And here's the mystery: this is exactly where healing meets us.

Not in the polished conference room. Not in the perfectly curated social media post. Not in the moment we finally get our act together.

Love meets us in the swamp.

The ancient people knew the swamp—generations of oppression and bondage. David knew it—hiding in caves, running from enemies, writing poems of lament. Job knew it—loss, broken body, friends who offered platitudes instead of presence. Jonah knew it—literal fish belly, running from truth, discovering that you can't outrun what's real.

The swamp is not the enemy. The swamp is where pretending dies so that truth can live.

What This Movement Is About

Movement 1 is the movement of crisis. Of honesty. Of desperation that finally becomes prayer.

This isn't the "fix yourself" movement. This isn't the "seven steps to breakthrough" movement. This is the falling-on-your-face, crying-for-help, finally-admitting-you-can't-do-this-alone movement.

And here's what makes the swamp sacred: it's the only place where real healing can begin.

Because you can't heal what you won't name. You can't receive help if you're still pretending you don't need it. You can't be rescued if you're still convinced you can save yourself.

The swamp forces the question: Will you keep performing, or will you get honest?

Most of us spend years—sometimes decades—avoiding the swamp. We build platforms above it. We construct elaborate systems to keep us from sinking. We wear masks that say "I'm fine" while drowning inside.

But eventually, the platform collapses. The systems fail. The mask cracks.

And we find ourselves here. Knees in the muck. Water rising. No way to pretend anymore.

This is where the journey begins.

The Shift: From Performance to Honesty

If you're reading this book, chances are you've spent a lot of energy trying to appear okay.

Maybe you've been the strong one in your family—the one everyone leans on, the one who never breaks down, the one who holds it all together.

Maybe you've been the spiritual one—the one with the right answers, the encouraging words, the faith that never wavers (at least publicly).

Maybe you've been the successful one—the one who achieves, who produces, who proves their worth through accomplishments.

Or maybe you've just been the one who smiles and says "I'm fine" when you're falling apart inside.

The swamp is where all of that ends.

Not because you want it to end. But because you can't maintain it anymore. The weight of pretending has become heavier than the risk of being honest.

This movement is about making the shift from "I have to look okay" to "I need help."

From "I can handle this" to "I'm drowning."

From "Let me just work harder" to "God, if You're real, I need You."

That shift feels like failure. Like weakness. Like giving up.

But it's actually the beginning of everything.

The Metaphor: Sinking to Stand

There's an old story about a man caught in a flood. He climbs to his roof as the water rises. A boat comes by to rescue him, but he waves it away: "God will save me."

A helicopter appears overhead, dropping a ladder. He waves it away: "God will save me."

The water rises. He drowns. In heaven, he asks God, "Why didn't You save me?"

God replies: "I sent you a boat and a helicopter. What more did you want?"

The swamp is where we finally stop waving away the rescue.

We stop insisting we can handle it ourselves. We stop waiting for some magical moment when we'll suddenly have enough strength. We stop pretending the water isn't rising.

We reach up. We grab the rope. We cry out: "Help."

And here's the mystery: the moment we stop trying to save ourselves is the moment rescue becomes possible.

You have to sink before you can learn to stand on something other than your own strength.

You have to admit you're drowning before you can receive the life preserver.

You have to get honest about the swamp before you can find the path out of it.

This is the counterintuitive truth of Movement 1: weakness isn't the obstacle to rescue. Weakness is the prerequisite.

What You'll Discover in the Swamp

These four chapters will take you through the essential movements of crisis and honesty:

You'll learn to **name where you are** without sugarcoating it. The swamp is real. Your struggle is real. The exhaustion, the shame, the fear—all real. And naming it honestly is the first act of courage.

You'll learn to **pray without pretense**. Not the eloquent prayers you think you should pray, but the raw, desperate, honest cries that actually connect with what's Real. "Help" is a complete prayer. "I can't do this" is a complete prayer. "If You're there, I need You" is a complete prayer.

You'll learn to **make the decision** that changes everything. You can't stay in the swamp forever. At some point, you have to choose: Will I accept the help being offered, or will I keep insisting I can save myself?

You'll learn that **something has to die** before something new can live. The false self. The illusions of control. The belief that you can manage your own redemption. Death is terrifying. But it's also the doorway to resurrection.

This won't be comfortable. The swamp never is.

But it will be honest. And honest is the language healing speaks.

The Journey Through the Swamp:

Chapter 1: My Swamp - You recognize where you are. Stuck. Sinking. No longer able to pretend you're okay. This is the moment of brutal honesty: naming the swamp for what it is.

I Will Rise

Chapter 2: But Then I Prayed - In your desperation, you cry out. Not eloquent words—raw, honest, desperate words. And you discover that honest conversation with yourself, with the universe, with whatever you call the Divine—that's the language of authentic relationship.

But Then I Prayed

Chapter 3: STOP!!! And Make a Decision - You reach the crossroads. You can't stay in the swamp forever. Healing is offered, but it must be received. You have to choose: the swamp or the water's edge.

STOP!! And Make a Decision

Chapter 4: Dying Changes Everything - Something has to die. The false self. The illusions. The control. Death feels like the end, but it's actually the beginning. Before resurrection, there must be a tomb.

Dying Changes Everything

These four chapters don't offer quick fixes. They offer solidarity. They say: you're not alone in the swamp. You're not the first to sink. And somehow—mysteriously, miraculously—the swamp is where the journey toward healing begins.

Entering This Movement

Before you begin these four chapters, take a moment to prepare yourself. This isn't light reading. This is soul work.

Where is your swamp?

Not the metaphorical, theoretical swamp. Your actual swamp. The place where you're stuck right now. The situation that's draining you. The pattern you can't break. The shame you can't shake. The failure you can't escape.

Name it. Be specific. Don't soften it. Don't spiritualize it yet.

This is…

What are you afraid to admit?

What truth have you been avoiding? What weakness have you been hiding? What need have you been denying?

If you could be completely honest—with yourself, with God, with one other person—what would you say?

Practice saying it out loud right now. Even if it's just a whisper: "I'm not okay."

What would it cost you to get honest?

Would you have to drop the mask? Disappoint someone? Admit you need help? Let go of control?

The swamp requires honesty. And honesty requires courage.

Are you ready?

One more thing:

You don't have to be strong to enter the swamp. You just have to be honest.

You don't have to have faith figured out. You just have to be willing to cry out.

You don't have to know how this ends. You just have to take the next step.

So take a breath. Steady yourself. And step into the honesty that healing requires.

The swamp is waiting. But so is grace.

When you're ready, turn to Chapter 1: My Swamp.

Out of the Swamp: How I Found Truth (Chapter 1)

MOVEMENT 1: IN THE SWAMP (The Struggle)

Chapter 1: My Swamp

> "You have made us for yourself, O Lord, and our hearts are restless until they rest in you." — Augustine, *Confessions*

I Will Rise

Listen at: http://go.skylerthomas.com/8o4Etw

Scan to listen: I Will Rise

Before you read this chapter, I want you to know something.

If you're still reading, you're already curious. Maybe skeptical, but curious. That's enough.

This chapter is going to talk about the swamp—that stuck place where you've been living, maybe for years. It's going to name some hard truths. It's going to introduce you to some people who've been there and some ancient wisdom that speaks to it.

And at the end, I'm going to ask you to consider something. Just consider it—not commit to it, not sign up for anything. Just open your mind to a possibility you might not have thought about before.

A possibility that the stirring you feel, the restlessness, the longing—might be more than random. Might be something, or Someone, calling to you.

You don’t have to believe it yet. You don’t have to understand it all. You just have to keep reading.

Can you do that?

One more thing about the music.

Maybe you’re not ready for it yet. I know it’s going to have a spiritual slant to it. But just start listening.

Because I think you’ll find much of it is a desperate plea for more than just my own limitations. It’s a plea for something greater.

And that something greater—I hope you’ll discover through this journey—is God’s love in a way you may have never considered.

You know you’re in the swamp when you start defending it.

When someone asks if you’re okay and you snap back, “I’m fine.” When a friend gently suggests you might need help and you list all the reasons why your situation is different, more complicated, not what it looks like from the outside. When you catch yourself explaining why you have to stay—why leaving isn’t an option, why this is just how life is, why everyone else simply doesn’t understand.

The swamp doesn’t announce itself with a sign. It’s not marked on any map. You don’t wake up one day and think, “Ah yes, I’ve arrived at my personal hell.” It creeps in. A compromise here. A numbing behavior there. A toxic relationship you’ve learned to navigate. A performance you maintain because it’s easier than being honest. A shame you carry that’s become so familiar you can’t imagine living without its weight.

And here’s what makes the swamp so dangerous: you get functional in it. You learn to breathe the toxic air. You figure out where to step to avoid sinking deeper. You develop a routine, a rhythm, a way of existing that looks normal from the outside while you’re dying on the inside.

This chapter is about the moment you stop defending and start seeing. When the explanations fall away and you’re left with the raw truth: this place was never meant to sustain life. And you can’t keep pretending it does.

The writing that follows came from my moment of seeing. Not in a flash of revelation, but in a slow, painful recognition that I’d built a life in a place that was killing me. And the first step toward freedom wasn’t a grand gesture—it was simply admitting the truth: This is my swamp. And I’m drowning in it.

Key Themes

Stories of the Swamp

Want to know something interesting? This swamp

Key Themes

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thing isn't new. People have been stuck in swamps for thousands of years. And som

Key Themes

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e of their stories might sound familiar.

The Ancient Captives

There's a story ab

Key Themes

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out a group of people stuck for four hundred years. Generationals swamp. They coul

Key Themes

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dn’t free themselves. So they groaned. They cried out. And there response?

> “I

Key Themes

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have certainly seen the oppression of my people in Egypt. I have heard their cries of

Key Themes

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distress because of their harsh slave drivers. Yes, I am aware of their suffer in

Key Themes

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g. So I have come down to rescue them from the power of the Egyptians…”

>

>

Key Themes

Exodus 3:7-8 (NLT)

Not "try harder."

Not "fix yourself first."

I have come down

Key Themes

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n to help the m.

The Man in the Fish

Then there's this wild story about a guy in the

Key Themes

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ultimate swamp — literally inside a fish. From that impossible place, he prays:

Key Themes

> “I cried out to the LORD in my great trouble, and he answered me. I called to

Key Themes

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you from the land of the dead, and LORD, you heard me! … Those who worship fa

Key Themes

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Key Themes

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thsongs of praise, and I will fulfill all my vows. For my salvation comes from the

Key Themes

LORD alone.”

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Jonah 2:2, 8-9 (NLT)

Even from inside a fish, he name s w

Key Themes

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hat he'd been doing: "clinging to worthless idols."

The swamp is where you disc

Key Themes

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over that everything you’ve been clinging to is worthless. Every substitute. Every prop.

Key Themes

Every false salvation.

The Fugitive in the Cave

And there's the fugitive hiding

Key Themes

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in a cave, writing this:

> “I cry out to the LORD; I plead for the LORD’s mer

Key Themes

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cy. I pour out my complaints before him and tell him all my troubles… I look for so

Key Themes

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meone to come and help me, but no one gives me a passing thought! No one will he

Key Themes

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lp me; no one cares a bit what happens to me.”

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—Psalm 142:1-2, 4 (NLT)

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Key Themes

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e does n’t clean up his prayer. Doesn’t spiritualize his pain. Doesn’t pretend.

That ho

Key Themes

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nesty — that raw vulnerability — IS courage. The complaint IS the prayer.

The Core Truth

Here’s where I need to be straight with you about something from scripture.

There’s a letter written two thousand years ago that gets quoted a lot, but usually just one line: “While we were still broken, love died for us.”

But here's the full passage, and it matters:

> "When we were utterly helpless, Christ came at just the right time and died for us sinners. Now, most people would not be willing to die for an upright person, though someone might perhaps be willing to die for a person who is especially good. But God showed his great love for us by sending Christ to die for us while we were still sinners. And since we have been made right in God's sight by the blood of Christ, he will certainly save us from God's condemnation. For since our friendship with God was restored by the death of his Son while we were still his enemies, we will certainly be saved through the life of his Son."
>
> — Romans 5:6-10 (NLT)

Four words describe where we were when love came: powerless, lost, broken, opposed.

That's the swamp. No ability to save yourself (powerless). No spiritual credentials (lost). Failing morally and spiritually (broken). Actively opposed to truth (enemies).

The text doesn't soften it. It names it. And then drops the bomb: WHILE we were still in that state—love came for us.

Not after we cleaned up. Not once we got our act together. Not when we finally mustered enough strength.

While we were still.

Swamp-dwellers. Muck-covered. Mid-mess.

This is why scripture is different from any other approach. It doesn't start with "get yourself together first." It starts with "you can't, and that's exactly when love shows up."

This is the scandal:

> "Now what was the sort of 'hole' man had got himself into? He had tried to set up on his own, to behave as if he belonged to himself. In other words, fallen man is not simply an imperfect creature who needs improvement: he is a rebel who must lay down his arms. Laying down your arms, surrendering, saying you are sorry, realising that you have been on the wrong track and getting ready to start life over again from the ground floor—that is the only way out of a 'hole.'"
>
> — C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*

Here is the scandal and the glory: Love comes to you in the muck. Not after you've cleaned yourself up. Not once you've proven yourself worthy. In the muck. While you're still a rebel. While you're still in the swamp. That's where healing finds you.

Here's the swamp's hidden gift: it forces surrender. I'd tried everything else—more discipline, more service, more belief, more performance, even more "morality" (being good). Nothing worked. So I did the only thing left: I laid down my arms.

And here's the glory: that's exactly when healing shows up. Not after you've cleaned yourself up. In the muck. Mid-swamp. While you're still broken and messy and desperate.

There’s an ancient song—a testimony from someone who’d been exactly where you are—that captures this perfectly:

> “I waited patiently for the LORD to help me, and he turned to me and heard my cry. He lifted me out of the pit of despair, out of the mud and the mire. He set my feet on solid ground and steadied me as I walked along.”
>
> — Psalm 40:1-2 (NLT)

Out of the slimy pit. Out of the mud and mire.

That’s the swamp. And the promise isn’t that you have to climb out yourself. The promise is that God reaches down into the muck and lifts you out.

Burned out. Swamp-stuck. Performance-exhausted.

Maybe that’s you. I know it was me.

And the promise is this: He hears the cry. He lifts us out.

Not “clean up first.” Not “try harder.” Just come. As you are. Muck and all.

And I will give you rest.

The Wayfarer Moment

Admitting “I’m not ok

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It feels like death.

But it’s actually courage.

This is how you become truly known.

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Sawgrass Lake Park, St. Petersburg, FL

Song Integration

Lyrics: I Will Rise

[Verse 1]

I built these walls, I learned to

Song Integration

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fight, Kept my heart locked up so tight. Hid my fear behind a smile, But I've

Song Integration

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be en si nk in g all th e w hi le.

[Pre-Chorus] I hear You calling through the night, A

Song Integration

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voice so strong, yet full of light. You pull me close, You draw me higher, Out of

Song Integration

the swamp, into the fire. **[Chorus]** I won't stay where shadows grow, Whe

Song Integration

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Song Integration

ng life, Leaving the swamp for the morning light. Oh, I will rise … I will ris

Song Integration

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[Verse 2]

I made a home in sinking ground,

Afraid to leave, afraid to dro

Song Integration

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wn. But chains aren't homes, and wounds don't heal When I resist the love yo

Song Integration

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[Pre-Chorus] I hear You calling through the night, A voice so strong

Song Integration

---

g, yet full of light. You pull me close, You draw me higher, Out of the swam

Song Integration

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p, into the fire.

[Chorus] I won't stay where shadows grow, Where my heart

Song Integration

turns cold, where the dark winds blow, I’m stepping out, I’m choosing life, Leavi

Song Integration

ng the swamp for the morning light. Oh, I will rise … I will rise.

[Bridge] I

Song Integration

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see the road, I see the dawn, And though I shake, I'll carry on. No more hidi

Song Integration

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ng, no more chains, Your grace is stronger than my pain!

[Final Chorus] I w

Song Integration

on't stay where shadows grow,
Where my heart turns cold,
where the dark wind

Song Integration

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Song Integration

ning light. Oh, I will rise … I will rise.

[Outro]

No turning back, I’m walki

Song Integration

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ng free,
The past is gone,
Your love in me.
The past is gone,
Your love in me.
O

Song Integration

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h, I will rise … I will rise.

Key Takeaways

- **Honesty is the doorway to healing.** You can't heal what you won't name. Stop defending the swamp and start seeing it for what it truly is—a place of disconnection and slow death.
- **Performance exhausts; authenticity frees.** The impostor self keeps you trapped in endless striving. Grace meets you as you are, not as you pretend to be.
- **Your restlessness is a mercy.** The deep thirst you feel isn't a flaw—it's your soul refusing to settle for substitutes and pointing you toward the living water you actually need.
- **Powerlessness is the prerequisite for grace.** God doesn't wait for you to clean up or prove yourself worthy. He reaches into the muck while you're still broken and says, "Come as you are."

Reflections for the Road

Practice: The Five-Minute Honest Conversation

Find a quiet space.

Reflections for the Road

Set a timer for five minutes. And just be honest. Outloud if possible. In

Reflections for the Road

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writing if necessary. In prayer if that's your language. In conversation

Reflections for the Road

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with yourself if not.

Don’t edit yourself. Don’t soften it. Don’t try to m

Reflections for the Road

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ake it sound better. Just be honest. Talk about the swamp. How lo

Reflections for the Road

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ng you've been there. What it feels like. What you're angry about, co

Reflections for the Road

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nfused about, afraid of. Talk about the performance. The exhausti

Reflections for the Road

on. The isolation. The shame. Say "Help." When the timer goes

Reflections for the Road

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off, breathe.

Take a breath.

Time needed: 5 minutes

Tip for star

Reflections for the Road

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tings mall: If 5 minutes of unfiltered honesty feels too long or ov

Reflections for the Roadwhelming, start with just 2 minutes. Or if speaking out loudfe

Reflections for the Road

Feels too vulnerable, write your honest thoughts in a journal instead. T

Reflections for the Road

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he goal is honesty, not eloquence or a specific format. Some people

Reflections for the Road

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find it easier to be honest in writing first, then build up to speaking their

Reflections for the Road

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truth aloud.

You've just spoken the most important truth: there

Reflections for the Road

alone.

The universe hears. Not because it was eloquent. Because it was

Reflections for the Road

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true. And truth is the language healing speaks.

Closing Image

You're still in the swamp. Let's be honest. This isn't the rescue chapter. This is the honesty chapter. The naming chapter. The cry-for-help chapter.

The swamp hasn't vanished. You're still stuck. Feet still in muck. Water still murky. Way out still unclear.

But something shifted.

You’ve looked up.

For the first time in months—maybe years—you’ve stopped looking down at the muck, stopped looking around at the darkness, stopped looking inward at the failure.

You’ve looked up.

And you see something you haven’t seen in a long time: light. Just a glimmer. Just a hint. Filtering through the canopy. Weak, maybe. But real.

It’s not much. Not the blinding sunrise. Not the dramatic breakthrough. Just… a sliver. A crack in the darkness. Proof that somewhere beyond this place, light exists.

You can’t see the source yet. You can’t see the full picture. You can’t see the path out.

But you can see that the swamp isn’t all there is. There’s something beyond it. Above it. Outside it.

Take a breath.

For so long, you believed the swamp was your permanent address. That this stuck place, this numb place, this drowning place—this was it. This was all there was.

The light proves otherwise.

It doesn’t fix anything. Not yet. The muck is still thick. The water is still dark. You’re still sinking.

But the light changes the narrative.

Before: This is all there is. I’m stuck forever. There’s no way out.

Now: There’s something beyond this. Light exists. Maybe—just maybe—there’s a way.

And in that moment—that brief, fragile, barely-there moment—hope flickers.

Not rescue yet. Just realization.

You can’t save yourself.

And maybe—just maybe—that’s okay. Maybe admitting “I can’t” is the doorway to discovering “there is a way.”

You look up again. The light is still there. Faint but real.

And you whisper the only honest prayer left: “Help.”

It’s a beginning.

Out of the Swamp: How I Found Truth (Chapter 2)

MOVEMENT 1: IN THE SWAMP (The Struggle)

Chapter 2: But Then I Prayed

> "I cry aloud to the LORD; I lift up my voice to the LORD for mercy." — Psalm 142:1

But Then I Prayed

Listen at: http://go.skylerthomas.com/swI2s8

Scan to listen: But Then I Prayed

An Invitation to Consider

Before we dig into this chapter, I want you to consider something.

What if that stirring in the middle of the night isn't just anxiety or restlessness?

What if the God of the Universe—the God who created you—has been calling to you? Not with demands. Not with conditions. Just calling.

Wanting to hear from you. Wanting to speak to you.

I'm not asking you to believe everything right now. I'm not asking you to commit to a religion or join a church or sign a statement of faith.

I'm just asking you to consider: what if He's there? What if He's been there all along, waiting for you to turn toward Him?

You don't need a huge performance prayer. No religious jargon. No fancy words.

Just a simple prayer. Something like this:

"Yes, God. I want to listen to You. I want to consider what You may have to offer me from my swamp."

That's it. That's enough.

Because the God who created you doesn't need your eloquence. He just wants your honesty.

He doesn't need your strength. He just wants your willingness.

He doesn't need your certainty. He just wants you to crack the door open and say, "I'm listening."

What if that's all it takes? What if the turning point—the "but then I prayed" moment—is simply saying yes to the possibility that Someone is calling your name?

Can you do that? Can you just consider it?

If you're still here, consider it might not be an accident or coincidental.

Now what?

This chapter is about what happens when you finally run out of options. When you've tried everything and nothing works. When self-sufficiency collapses and you reach out—not with polished words, but with honest cries.

You might not call it prayer. Maybe you've never prayed before. Maybe prayer feels too religious, too formal, too… much.

That's okay. Because what I'm talking about isn't religious performance. It's honest conversation with whatever is Real, whatever is greater than yourself.

And if you're willing to consider that "whatever" might actually be Someone—that changes everything.

Keep reading.

Here's the pattern most of us follow when life falls apart:

First, we try to fix it ourselves. We strategize, problem-solve, work harder. We're competent—we've handled crises before.

When that doesn't work, we try to manage it. We numb the pain, stay busy, medicate with work (or substances), Netflix, food, scrolling—whatever keeps the darkness at bay.

When that stops working, we start bargaining. *If I just… If they would… If this changes…* Desperate negotiations from a position of no power.

And finally—only finally—when we've exhausted every other option, when we're flat on our backs with nothing left, we reach out. Not the polished words we learned growing up, but the raw, honest cries that are barely more than groans: "Help."

This chapter is about that moment. When self-sufficiency collapses. When all our strategies fail. When we run out of moves and discover that running out of moves was the point all along.

Because reaching out isn't the last resort when everything else fails. It's the first reality we keep trying to avoid: we need help more than we need solutions.

The writing that follows came from a season when I learned to speak honestly instead of performing politely. When "But then I prayed" became the turning point in every valley I walked through.

Prayer—conversation with the Divine, with your deepest self, with what's Real—in the swamp doesn't look like prayer on the mountaintop (or in a flashy church setting). Mountaintop prayer is full of gratitude and joy, hands raised, voice strong. Swamp prayer is different.

Swamp prayer is:

- Groaning when words won't come: "And the Holy Spirit helps us in our weakness. For example, we don't know what God wants us to pray for. But the Holy Spirit prays for us with groanings that cannot be expressed in words" (Romans 8:26, NLT)
- Crying out instead of composing: "I cry out to the LORD; I plead for the LORD's mercy" (Psalm 142:1, NLT)
- Complaining honestly instead of pretending piously: "O LORD, how long will you forget me? Forever? How long will you look the other way?" (Psalm 13:1, NLT)
- Questioning reality instead of defending platitudes: "LORD, why do the wicked prosper? Why are evil people so happy?" (Jeremiah 12:1, NLT)

In the swamp, you learn that honest conversation isn't about saying the right things. It's about saying the real things.

Henri Nouwen reflects on the prodigal son:

> “The prodigal son’s confession—‘Father, I have sinned’—came not from a place of spiritual maturity but from the pigpen, from desperation, from coming to his senses in the midst of ruin.”
>
> — Henri Nouwen, *The Return of the Prodigal Son*

This is swamp prayer: painfully, uncomfortably, refreshingly honest.

No spiritual jargon. No performance. No pretending everything’s fine when it’s not. Just raw human beings crying out from the depths of their need.

And here’s the scandalous truth: this kind of honesty is what healing prefers. Because honest conversation—even angry, doubting, or desperate—is still connection. Performance is isolation.

Key Themes

Stories of Prayer

Throughout history, the most po

Key Themes

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werful prayers have come from the most desperate places.

Moses in Crisis (E

Key Themes

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xodus 32:11-13, NLT)

Moses is on the mountain receiving the Law — forty days

Key Themes

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and nights in God’s presence, tablets being written by the finger of God Himself. B

Key Themes

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ut down below, the people have grown impatient. They’ve melted their gold jewelry

Key Themes

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and cast an idol, a golden calf, and are dancing around it, worshiping it.

God sees it. And

Key Themes

His anger burns hot.

"I have seen these people,"

God tells Moses,

"and they are a stiff-

Key Themes

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Key Themes

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at I may destroy them.”

Moses is standing before the living God, hearing a divine se

Key Themes

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nt en ce of de str uc ti on pr on ou nc ed on an en tir e na ti on . T he pe op le he le d ou t of E gy pt. T he

Key Themes

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people he's been shepherding through the wilderness. They're about to be annihilated.

Key Themes

This is the moment Moses could have stepped back, let God’s justice fall, maybe ev

Key Themes

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Key Themes

s forward. And he prays — not safe, not polished, not deferential. He argues with G

Key Themes

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od. Reminds God of His promises. Interceded desperately: > “But Moses tried to

Key Themes

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pacify the LORD his God. ‘O LORD!’ he said. ‘Why are you so angry with your

Key Themes

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Key Themes

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cha strong hand?’”

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Exodus 32:11 (NLT)

Moses prays honestly, boldly, desper

Key Themes

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ately. He appeals to God’s reputation, God’s promises, God’s character. And in cr

Key Themes

---

edibly

God listens. God relents. The prayer changes the outcome.

The Tax Collector

Key Themes

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ctor's Prayer (Luke 18:13, NLT)

Jesus tells a parable about two men who went up

Key Themes

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to the temple to pray. Picture the scene: the grand temple courts, people gathered

Key Themes

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for prayer, the religious elite visible and vocal.

The first man, a Pharisee, stands pr

Key Themes

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ominentlywherepeoplecanseehim.Hisprayerisaperformance:“God,Ithank

Key Themes

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you that I am not like other people — robbers, evil doers, adulterers — or even like th

Key Themes

is tax collector. I fast twice a week and give a tenth of all I get.”

Everything about

Key Themes

his prayer screams confidence. He’s listing his resume. Comparing himself fa

Key Themes

vorably to others. Standing tall.

These condman is a tax collector — a collaborator with

Key Themes

Rome, a traitor to his own people, a man who’s gotten rich by exploiting others. He

Key Themes

knows what people think of him. He knows what he thinks of himself. He stands

Key Themes

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at a distance. Not up front. Not visible. Back in the shadows where people like hi

Key Themes

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Key Themes

And he beats his chest — an outward sign of inward anguish — as he prays the only pr

Key Themes

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ayer he has left:

> “But the tax collector stood at a distance and dared not even lift

Key Themes

his eyes to heaven as he prayed. Instead, he beat his chest in sorrow, saying, ‘O God

Key Themes

, be merciful to me, for I am a sinner.’”

>>

— Luke 18:13 (NLT)

No resume. N

Key Themes

---

o comparisons. No religious credentials. Just raw, desperate honesty: I’m a sinner. H

Key Themes

---

ave mercy. Jesus’ verdict? The tax collector — the desperate one, the honest one, th

Key Themes

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e one who brought nothing but need — went home justified. The Pharisee didn’t.

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Key Themes

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ist or ic al P ra ye rs fr o m th e S w a m p A u g us ti ne of H ip p o (3 54 - 43 0 A D) sp en

Key Themes

t years wrestling with his own brokenness — sexual addiction, intellectual pride,

Key Themes

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spiritual confusion. Even after his conversion, he looked at the wreckage of his in

Key Themes

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ner life and knew he could dn't fix it himself. So he prayed with brutal honesty:

> “T

Key Themes

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he house of my soul is too narrow for you to come to it. May it be enlarged by you. It is

Key Themes

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in ruins: restore it.”

This is the prayer of someone who’s stopped pretending the ho

Key Themes

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use is in good shape. Someone who’s looked at the ruins and said: I can’t fix this. B

Key Themes

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ut may be You can.

Martin Luther (1483-1546) battled depression so severe he sometim

Key Themes

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es could n't get out of bed. The spiritual anguish was crushing — doubts, despair, a sens

Key Themes

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e of God’s absence. In one of his darkest moments, he wrote this prayer:

> “I am du

Key Themes

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stand as he s and full of sin … I have no other refuge or comfort than your dear Son Jesu

Key Themes

s Christ.” Not theological precision. Not spiritual victory. Just desperate clinging

Key Themes

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to the only hope he had left: Jesus. These weren't prayers from mountaintops. They

Key Themes

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were prayers from swamps, prisons, depressions, doubts, and desperation. Pray

Key Themes

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ers that brought the real mess, the actual ruins, the honest brokenness before God.

Key Themes

And every single one was heard.

The Wayfarer Moment

Prayer isn't about having the right words. It's about bringing our real selves—broken, desperate, honest—to whatever we call Real.

For so long, I thought I had to pray the "right" way. Thought the universe was listening for spiritual maturity, unwavering faith, positive thinking. So I prayed prayers I thought were acceptable, not prayers that expressed what I actually felt.

Those prayers bounced off the ceiling.

But when I finally stopped performing and started being real—when I prayed the ugly prayers, the doubting prayers, the angry prayers, the desperate prayers—something shifted.

Not because God suddenly started listening. He had been listening all along. But because I finally started being honest.

And honesty is the language of connection.

> "We must lay before Him what is in us, not what ought to be in us."
>
> — C.S. Lewis, *Letters to Malcolm: Chiefly on Prayer*

Reality doesn't need our pretense. It already knows the truth. What it wants is for us to know it—and to speak it.

The swamp teaches us to reach out without pretense. To cry out without composing. To pour out our souls without editing.

And when we do, we discover something astonishing: this is the conversation that’s been waiting all along.

Not the polished one. The real one.

Song Integration

Lyrics: But Then I Prayed

[Verse 1]

The night was long, th

Song Integration

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e weight was strong, The shadows whispered, “You don’t belong.” I felt th

Song Integration

e fear, the dark surround, No light, no hope, no solid ground.

[Pre-Chorus]

Song Integration

And in my sorrow, in my despair, I found Your presence waiting there.

[Ch

Song Integration

or us]

But then I prayed, and You were near, Your voice of love cast out my fe

Song Integration

ar. Your mercy came, Your grace remained, The chains were gone — You healed

Song Integration

my pain. But then I prayed, but then I prayed. **[Verse 2]** The storms rolled in,

Song Integration

the waves were high, The questions burned, “Lord, why, oh why?” My strength

Song Integration

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gth was gone, my faith ran dry, Yet still I lifted up my cry.

[Pre-Chorus]

Song Integration

And in the chaos, I heard You say, “My child, I’m here, don’t turn away.”

[C

Song Integration

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horus]

But then I prayed, and You were near, Your voice of love cast out my

Song Integration

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fear. Your mercy came, Your grace remained, The chains were gone — You healed

Song Integration

edmy pain. But then I prayed, but then I prayed. **[Bridge]** Mountains move, an

Song Integration

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Song Integration

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pe is fa in t, Y ou r na m e al on e su st ai ns th e sa in ts. I ca lle d to Y ou , an d Y ou re pl

Song Integration

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ied, Your lovere stored my life inside. **[Chorus]** But then I prayed, and Y

Song Integration

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Song Integration

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Song Integration

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then I prayed.

[Outro]

So I will pray through every fight, I'll lift my song

Song Integration

in darkest night.

Key Takeaways

- **Honest prayer trumps perfect prayer.** God doesn't need your eloquence—He wants your reality. Raw, messy, doubting prayers connect more deeply than polished performances.
- **Lament is a legitimate form of prayer.** Bringing your pain, anger, and confusion directly before God without sugarcoating is biblical faith, not lack of faith.
- **Prayer is surrender, not strategy.** Stop trying to manipulate outcomes and start yielding to a larger reality. "Not my will, but Yours" is the prayer that changes everything.
- **Presence changes the equation.** When you cry out, you discover you're not alone in the swamp. God doesn't always remove the trial immediately, but He never leaves you to face it alone.

Reflections for the Road

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Reflections for the Road

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Reflections for the Roading

ingingyourordinaryconcernstoalovingpresencewithoutfacade, with

Reflections for the Road

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out pretending to be holy, without concealing true feelings.

Here's how

Reflections for the Road

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to practice it this week:

Daily (5-10 minutes):

Each morning or even

Reflections for the Roading, sitin a quiet place. No special posture required. No religious la

Reflections for the Road

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Reflections for the Road

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these three things:

1. **“This is where I am…”**

- Name your ac

Reflections for the Road

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tual state. Not where you should be. Where you ARE.

- *“I’m exhaus*

Reflections for the Road

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ted.”

- *“I’m angry at You.”*
- *“I don’t know if I believe any more.*

Reflections for the Road

- *"I'm terrified about [specific thing]."*
- *"I feel nothing."*

2. **"T**

Reflections for the Road

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his is what I need…”

- Ask honestly. No spiritualizing. What do yo

Reflections for the Road

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u actually need? - *“I need this situation to change.”* - *“I need to feel somet*

Reflections for the Road

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hing beside s numb.”

- *“I need help with my daughter.”*
- *“I need to kno*

Reflections for the Road

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w Y ou ’r e re al. ”

- *“I ne ed re st. ”*

3. **“I’ m wi lli n g to … ”**

- What are

Reflections for the Road

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you willing to do? Even if it’s small. - *“I’m willing to show up to mor*

Reflections for the Road

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row and try again.”

- *“I’m willing to be honest instead of hiding.”*

-

Reflections for the Road

“I’m willing to ask for help.”

- *“I’m willing to keep talking to You even*

Reflections for the Road

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though I'm angry.

- *"I'm willing to trust You with this one thing."*

Reflections for the Road

That’s it. No closing formula required. No “amen” if it doesn’t

Reflections for the Road

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feel right. Just honest conversation.

This Week: Try this practice fo

Reflections for the Road

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r 7 days. Keep it simple. Keep it honest. Don't perform. Don't pret

Reflections for the Road

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end.

At the end of the week, notice: - Did anything shift? - Did honesty

Reflections for the Road

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feel different from religious performance? - Did you sense anythi

Reflections for the Road

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ng — even faintly — listening? Remember: You’re not trying to pr

Reflections for the Road

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ay "correctly."

You're learning to bring your real self instead of your

Reflections for the Road

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edited self. That's swamp prayer. And it's the kind that gets heard.

Closing Image

You're still in the swamp. Water still dark. Way out still unclear. But you've cried out. And discovered something profound: you're not alone.

Presence is here. In the muck. In the mess. Mid-desperation.

It's not waiting for you to clean up before it comes close. It's close to the brokenhearted. It saves the crushed in spirit.

You expected thunder. You expected lightning. You expected a dramatic rescue with angels and trumpets and immediate deliverance.

Instead, you got this: a quiet knowing. A gentle pressure on your shoulder. A whisper in the chaos that says, *"I see you. I'm here."*

Not what you asked for. But somehow—impossibly—exactly what you needed.

Take a breath.

You're still stuck. Still covered in muck. Still can't see the way out.

But you're not alone anymore. And that changes the mathematics of the swamp.

Before, it was: you versus the muck, you versus the darkness, you versus the despair. A losing battle. An impossible fight.

Now it's different. Now there's Presence. Now there's Someone in the swamp with you. Not pulling you out yet. Not fixing it yet. Just… there. Steady. Holding. Present.

So you whisper it again, this time not with resignation but surrender: "Help me."

And the help is already there. Not in the form you expected. Not on your timeline. But present. Real. Holding you even as you sink.

Because that's what love does. Doesn't wait for us to get it together. Meets us in the falling apart.

You're still in the swamp.

But now you're not alone in it.

And somehow—impossibly—that changes everything.

Out of the Swamp: How I Found Truth (Chapter 3)

MOVEMENT 1: IN THE SWAMP (The Struggle)

Chapter 3: STOP!! And Make a Decision

> "I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Now choose life, so that you and your children may live." — Deuteronomy 30:19

STOP!! And Make a Decision

Listen at: http://go.skylerthomas.com/8vYOR0

Scan to listen: STOP!! And Make a Decision

An Invitation to Consider

You've named the swamp. You've considered that God might be calling.

Maybe you even whispered that prayer: *"Yes, God. I want to listen."*

But now comes the harder part. The decision part.

What if I told you that even your doubt can be part of the prayer? What if you could say to God:

"God, I'm not sure I believe all this. Help me with my unbelief. I'm ready to start listening to Your advice for my life. I want to leave this swamp, but I don't know how. Help me. I'm opening myself up to making a decision to continue this journey of discovery."

That's enough. That's honest. That's real.

You don't have to have it all figured out. You don't have to believe everything perfectly. You just have to be willing to take the next step.

To pray—even if it's just "Help."

To listen—even if you're not sure you'll hear anything.

To decide—to continue this journey of discovery, wherever it leads.

Can you accept the possibility that God can help you even in your unbelief? That He can lead you out of the swamp even when you're not sure He's real?

Because here's the truth: He doesn't need your certainty. He just needs your willingness to take one step.

Keep reading. And be ready to decide.

You've cried out for help. Now what?

Let me tell you what I wish someone had told me years earlier:

You can't heal what you won't name. You can't leave where you won't admit you're stuck. And you can't change direction until you first stop moving in the wrong one.

You've spent long enough analyzing the swamp. Understanding how you got there. Processing the pain. Talking about it with your therapist, your support group, your journal. And all of that has value—real value. Self-awareness is important.

But at some point, awareness has to lead to action. Understanding has to become decision. Knowledge has to translate into movement.

Because here's the uncomfortable truth: you can know everything about your swamp—its depth, its toxicity, how you ended up there, why you've stayed—and still die in it. Knowledge alone doesn't save you. Decision does.

This chapter breaks the pattern of the previous ones. It’s urgent. Confrontational. The song is written in rap/spoken word because sometimes truth needs to interrupt, not soothe. Sometimes love sounds like “STOP!” not “it’s okay.”

If you’ve recognized your swamp (Chapter 1) and you’ve learned to speak honestly in it (Chapter 2), there’s only one question left: What are you going to do about it?

Not tomorrow. Not when you feel ready. Not when you have all the answers figured out.

Now.

The writing that follows came from the moment my secrets were exposed and the people who loved me most said, “We’re not going to watch you die. You have to choose… or we walk.” It’s about the crossroads we all reach eventually—the moment when staying put is no longer an option, and forward is the only way through.

You’re at that crossroads now. And you have to choose.

Choose. This day. How you will live.

Why now? Why can’t you take your time, think it through, weigh all the options?

Because every day you don’t choose healing, you’re choosing something else: - Choosing the swamp (familiar misery) - Choosing control (exhausting illusion) - Choosing performance (soul-crushing work) - Choosing to stay stuck (slow death)

Not deciding feels like neutrality, but it isn’t. It’s still a decision—for the status quo. It’s a decision to keep drowning.

Key Themes

Stories of Decision Throu

Key Themes

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ghout history, the crossroads moment has defined destinies. Not the gradual dr

Key Themes

ift, but the crisis decision — the moment someone stopped, turned, and chose a

Key Themes

different path.

Moses at the Burning Bush (Exodus 3-4)

Moses had been running fo

Key Themes

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r 40 years. Hiding in the wilderness. Tending sheep. Trying to forget who he was and wha

Key Themes

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the'done. The swamp of shame and exile had become comfortable — or at least

Key Themes

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t fa m ili ar. T he n ca m e th e bu rn in g bu sh . T he vo ic e ca lli ng hi s na m e. T he i m po ss

Key Themes

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ible assignment: “Go back. Confront Pharaoh. Lead my people out.” Moses argu

Key Themes

ed. Made excuses. Tried every angle to avoid the decision: - “Who am I to do this

Key Themes

?”

- “What if they don’t believe me?” - “I’m not eloquent enough.” - “Please send so

Key Themes

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meone else.” But finally, he made the choice. Not because he felt ready. Not becaus

Key Themes

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Key Themes

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in the wilderness.

He turned from the swamp of hiding toward the terrifying pa

Key Themes

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th of calling.

The Prodigal Son’s Turning Point (Luke 15:17-20)

> “When he

Key Themes

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finally came to his senses, he said to himself, ‘At home even the hired servants ha

Key Themes

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Key Themes

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say, “Father, I have sinned against both heaven and you.”’

> > —Luke 15:17-18 (N

Key Themes

LT) Three decisive phrases: 1. **“When he finally came to his senses”** - Reality br

Key Themes

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ok e th ro ug h. T he ill us io n sh att er ed . H e sa w th e s w a m p fo r w ha t it w as . 2. **“I**

Key Themes

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will go home to my father”

- Not “I should.” Not “some day I might.” I WILL GO.

Key Themes

3. **“So he returned home to his father”** - The decision became action. He didn

Key Themes

’t wait until he felt worthy or had the perfect speech. He moved. The turning poin

Key Themes

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Key Themes

on and desperation finally overpowered pride and shame.

Peter's Denial and R

Key Themes

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restoration (John 21:15-17)

After betraying Jesus three times, Peter went

Key Themes

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back to fishing. Back to the old life. The swamp of failure and shame. Then Je

Key Themes

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sus sh o w ed up on th e be ac h. A sk ed Pe te r th re e ti m es : “ D o yo u lo ve m e? ” E ac h

Key Themes

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time, Peter had to choose: Will I defend myself? Will I run? Or will I answer hone

Key Themes

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stly?

> “Lord, you know everything. You know that I love you.”

Jesus said, “The

Key Themes

n feed my sheep.”

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— John 21:17 (NLT)

That vulnerable admission — “You kn

Key Themes

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Key Themes

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sroads. Peter chose honesty over hiding. Restoration over resignation. Forward

Key Themes

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overback. Jesus’ response: “Feed my sheep.” Not “Earn your way back.” Not “Pro

Key Themes

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ve yourself first.”

Just: You’ve chosen truth. Now live your calling.

The Rich You n

Key Themes

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g Ruler's Missed Crossroads (Mark 10:17-22)

Not every story ends with the eri

Key Themes

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ght choice. A wealthy young man ran up to Jesus, desperate: “What must I do to inhe

Key Themes

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rit et er na l lif e? ”

Je su s ga ve hi m th e pa th fo r w ar d: “ G o, se ll ev er yt hi ng yo u ha ve an

Key Themes

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d give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me.”

Key Themes

> “At this the man’s face fell, and he went away sad, for he had many possessions.

Key Themes

”>>

Mark 10:22 (NLT) He stood at the crossroads. He saw the choice clea

Key Themes

rly. But he could dn’t let go of the swamp—his wealth, his security, his identity—

Key Themes

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even though it was killing him spiritually. He walked away sad. Not because he didn’t

Key Themes

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know the answer. Because he knew it and still chose the swamp. This is the tr

Key Themes

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aged y: You can see the path and still refuse to walk it.

Martin Luther’s Crisis D

Key Themes

ecision (1517)

Martin Luther, a Catholic monk and professor, was drowning in re

Key Themes

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ligious performance. Trying to earn salvation through endless confession, self-puni

Key Themes

shment, spiritual discipline s. The swamp of "never enough." Then here discovered

Key Themes

grace in scripture: "The righteous will live by faith" (Romans 1:17).

On October

Key Themes

31, 1517, he nailed 95 theses to the church door in Wittenberg — challenging the entire re

Key Themes

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ligious system he’d devoted his life to.

When summoned to recant before the Diet of

Key Themes

Worms, he faced the ultimate crossroads: Safety or truth? The approval of the chur

Key Themes

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ch or the fr ee do m of co ns ci en ce ?

Hi s an s w er : “ H er e I st an d. I ca n do no ot he r.”

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Key Themes

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t decision cost him everything—security, reputation, even his life was threatened. B

Key Themes

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ut it sparked a Reformation that changed the world.

Because one man stopped, looked

Key Themes

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at the crossroads, and chose truth over comfort.

Corrie ten Boom's Wartime C

Key Themes

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hoice (1940s)

Corrie ten Boom and her family were comfortable watchmaker

Key Themes

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s in Holland. When the Nazis invaded, they faced a choice: Stay safe and silent, or

Key Themes

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risk everything to hide Jews.

They chose to act. Transformed their home into a hidi

Key Themes

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ng place. Saved an estimated 800 lives. Eventually they were betrayed, arrested,

Key Themes

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sent to concentration camps. Corrie’s father died after 10 days. Her sister Betsie

Key Themes

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died at Ravensbrück. But before she died, Betsie told Corrie:

> “We must tell

Key Themes

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people what we have learned here. We must tell them that there is no pit so deep th

Key Themes

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at He is not deeper still.”

>>

—

Betsie ten Boom, *The Hiding Place*

After the war,

Key Themes

Corrie could have chosen bitterness. Hiding. Safety. But she chose to travel the wor

Key Themes

ldsharing forgiveness

—

even forgiving a guard from Ravensbrück who approached

Key Themes

her after a speaking event.

The crossroads didn’t end with her wartime decision.

E

Key Themes

---

very day after, she had to choose again: bitterness or forgiveness, hiding or witness, sa

Key Themes

---

fety or mission.

The Pattern of Decision

Notice what these stories have in com

Key Themes

mon:

1. **Crisis precipitates clarity** - The burning bush. The pigpen. The beach

Key Themes

---

confrontation. The church door. The Nazi invasion. Crisis forces the decision. 2.

Key Themes

The choice is binary - There's no middle ground. Moses couldn't half-confront Pha

Key Themes

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raoh. Peter couldn't partially confess his love. Luther couldn't somewhat stan

Key Themes

d. The decision is all or nothing.

3. **Fear doesn't disqualify you**

- Everyperson was

Key Themes

terrified. Moses argued. The prodigal rehearsed his speech. Peter knew how

Key Themes

n failure. Luther faced death threats. Fear is normal. Paralysis is optional.

4. **The**

Key Themes

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decision precedes the feeling

- No one felt ready. No one waited for courage. T

Key Themes

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hey chose, then moved, then the courage followed.

5. **Inaction is a choice** - The

Key Themes

---

rich young ruler didn't make a "wrong" choice. He made no choice—which was

Key Themes

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choosing the swamp by default.

You're standing at your own crossroads.

The pa

Key Themes

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The Wayfarer Moment

The decision to leave the swamp is terrifying—not because you don’t know what to do, but because you do.

For me, the hardest part wasn’t figuring out the right choice. It was admitting I’d been making the wrong one.

For years.

The swamp wasn’t happening to me. I was choosing it. Every day I stayed, I chose it again.

That’s the brutal honesty this chapter ponders: you’re not a victim of the swamp. You’re its tenant. And eviction requires your signature.

Viktor Frankl, who survived Auschwitz, wrote:

> “Between stimulus and response there is a space. In that space is our power to choose our response. In our response lies our growth and our freedom.”
>
> — Viktor Frankl, *Man’s Search for Meaning*

That space—that moment between the swamp and the decision—that’s where freedom lives.

You can’t control what happened to you. Can’t control the circumstances that led to the swamp. Can’t control other people’s choices that contributed to your pain.

But you can control what you do next.

That’s your power. That’s your freedom.

And no one—not your past, not your circumstances, not your fears—can take that from you.

Song Integration

Lyrics: Stop/Decide (The Rap)

(Intro

Song Integration

)

Yo, I’m trapped in the noise, I’m lost in my mind, Skeletons creeping, they

Song Integration

’re crossing the line.
Doubts keep spinning,
I’m running in place,
But I hear

Song Integration

Your voice calling, cutting through the haze. **(Verse 1)** I can’t fake it, no, I ca

Song Integration

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n’t shake it, The pain in my chest, I just can’t take it. Voices screaming, got

Song Integration

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me stuck in my head, Skeletons dancing where the angels once tread. What's sl

Song Integration

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eek? What's weak? Who's real? Who's fake? I'm drowning in the questions I can'

Song Integration

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Song Integration

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of the chaos; I’m begging You today.”

(Hook) STOP! Gotta make a decision

Song Integration

, Your voice breaks through with a crystal vision. The fear fades out, now I se

Song Integration

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e You're near, All I gotta do is turn and let You steer.

(Verse 2) You said, "Lay it do

Song Integration

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wn, I’ll carry the weight, Let Me take your struggle, it’s never too late.”

Step

Song Integration

by step, yeah, I'm walking the light, The chains fall off as I step in the fight.

Song Integration

The lies I believed, now they crumble and fall, Your love lifts me higher, breaking

Song Integration

through it all. I was lost in my shame, but You called my name, Now I’m runn

Song Integration

ing toward You, never the same.

(Hook) STOP! Gotta make a decision,

Song Integration

Your voice breaks through with a crystal vision. The fear fades out, now I see

Song Integration

You're near, All I gotta do is turn and let You steer.

(Bridge)

Grace, grace, it's gr

Song Integration

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eater than sin, It pulls me from the darkness I was living within. Hell on Earth?

Song Integration

That's the weight of my shame,
But Heaven is Your love,
now I'm praising

Song Integration

Your name.

You whispered to me, "Give me your pain, I'll take what's broken and d

Song Integration

make you whole again.”

Eternal peace, yeah, it’s all that I need, So I follo

Song Integration

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w Your voice, let it take the lead.

(Chorus)

Grace, grace, God’s grace, Pul

Song Integration

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lingme out of my darkest place. Grace, grace, it's a holy embrace, Now I'

Song Integration

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Song Integration

I make the decision, To follow Your path, walk the perfect vision. The

Song Integration

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shame is gone, my heart feels new, I'm stepping in faith, God, I'm trusting

Song Integration in You.

Key Takeaways

- **Neutrality is a myth.** Not deciding is still deciding—for the status quo, for the swamp, for slow death. Every day you don't choose healing, you're choosing something else.
- **Decision precedes feeling.** You don't wait until you feel ready, brave, or certain. You decide first, then courage follows. Faith moves before feelings catch up.
- **The crossroads demands a response.** You can't stay at the fork forever. Forward or back. Life or death. Water or swamp. Choose this day how you will live.
- **Letting go is an act of faith.** Transformation requires releasing your grip on control, certainty, and the familiar—trusting that grace will catch you when you step off your dead-end road.

Reflections for the Road

Practice: The

Reflections for the Road

Line in the Sand

Find a quiet space. Grab a piece of paper. Draw a li

Reflections for the Road

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ne down the middle.

On the left side, write: **SWAMP**

On the ri

Reflections for the Road

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ght side, write: **WATER**

Under "Swamp," list what staying lo

Reflections for the Road

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oks like. What you'll keep doing. What you'll keep feeling. Where yo

Reflections for the Road

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u’ll be in a year if nothing changes.

Under “Water,” list what leavin

Reflections for the Road

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g looks like. What you'll have to risk. What you'll have to let go of. W

Reflections for the Road

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hat might be possible if you trust.

Look at both columns. Really lo

Reflections for the Road

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ok. Now make a choice. Circle one. Not the one that feels safest.

Reflections for the Road

Not the one that requires less. The one that’s TRUE.

Then take one

Reflections for the Road

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action—today—that moves you toward what you circled.

One acti

Reflections for the Road

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on. Not ten. Just one. Move.

Closing Image

A foot raised. A breath held. The moment before the step.

The swamp is behind you. Familiar. Known. Safe in its misery.

The water's edge is ahead. Unknown. Uncertain. Terrifying in its promise.

And you stand at the crossroads.

This is the moment where everything pivots. Not when you arrive at the destination. Not when the transformation is complete. Right here. In the choosing.

For a moment, everything is suspended. You could go back. You could change your mind. You could tell yourself "maybe later" or "not yet" or "I'm not ready."

The swamp whispers its temptations: *At least you know what to expect here. At least you've learned to survive. At least it's familiar.*

The water whispers its invitation: *There's cleansing here. There's life here. There's something more than survival.*

And you—you're caught between comfort and calling.

But you don't go back.

You take a breath. You feel your heart pounding. You acknowledge the fear—real fear, legitimate fear—and you choose anyway.

Take a breath.

And then: movement.

One foot forward. Then the other.

Not running. Not confident. Not sure this is the right choice. Just moving.

Toward the water.

You've chosen. And now you walk.

Each step is a decision. Each step is an act of trust. Each step says: *I believe there's something better than where I've been, even if I can't yet see where I'm going.*

The swamp is behind you. The water's edge is ahead.

And you—with trembling legs and racing heart and a courage you didn't know you possessed—you're a wayfarer now.

Not because you're fearless.

Because you moved anyway.

Move.

Out of the Swamp: How I Found Truth (Chapter 4)

MOVEMENT 1: IN THE SWAMP (The Struggle)

Chapter 4: Dying Changes Everything

> "I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me." —Galatians 2:20

Dying Changes Everything

Listen at: http://go.skylerthomas.com/7U8VKi

Scan to listen: Dying Changes Everything

An Invitation to Consider

You've named the swamp. You've prayed—even if it was just "Help." You've made a decision to keep walking this journey.

But here's what nobody tells you at the beginning: deciding to leave the swamp means something in you has to die.

Not physically. But the version of you that's been surviving in the muck. The coping mechanisms you've relied on. The false self you've performed being. The illusions about how life works.

Those have to go.

And that feels terrifying. It feels like loss. Like defeat. Like the end.

But what if it's not the end? What if it's the beginning?

This chapter is about death—but not the kind you need fear, though it might be difficult. It's about the death that leads to life. The kind of dying that makes space for something new to grow.

I'm not going to sugarcoat it: this part is hard. Really hard.

But I want you to know something before you read further: on the other side of this death is resurrection. On the other side of letting go is freedom. On the other side of the tomb is new life.

You don't have to understand it all right now. You just have to keep reading. Keep walking. Keep trusting that the path leads somewhere good.

Can you do that?

Before we go further, let's pray together. A simple prayer, but an honest one—for the journey that may come.

"God, I'm scared of what has to die in me. I'm scared of letting go. But I'm also tired of living the way I've been living. If there's new life on the other side of this death, I want it. Help me trust You through this. Help me let go of what needs to go. Help me believe that You're leading me somewhere good. I'm willing to keep walking, even when I don't understand. Amen."

Someone once said: "Almost dying changes little. Dying changes everything."

You can come close to the edge, peek over, and walk back unchanged. You can almost hit bottom and still cling to the old life. Almost-dying gives you a scare, maybe a wake-up call. But it doesn't transform you.

Dying does.

I'm not talking about biological death. I'm talking about the psychological, spiritual deaths we must undergo if we're going to truly live. The deaths that happen daily—to old patterns, false selves, broken ways of being.

Because here's what they don't tell you when you first commit to change: that initial decision wasn't the end of dying. It was the beginning.

Maybe you committed your life to God years ago—as a teenager, a young adult, or maybe you were even baptized as an infant. That baptism symbolized death, burial, and resurrection. That moment was real. That commitment mattered.

But I'm not talking about that decision right now.

I'm talking about the death that needs to happen today. The swamp you're in now has nothing to do with who you were when you first believed (if that situation fits you). That person was sincere. That person meant every word. But there's a reason you picked up this book now and are reading it.

Life happened. Pain accumulated. False selves formed to protect you. Old patterns crept back in. And the death that needs to happen now is different from the transformation you imagined back then. This is a new death—not of your initial faith (if that's you), but of everything that's grown up around it. Everything that's keeping you stuck.

There's a moment in every healing journey when you realize: something has to die.

Maybe it's a relationship that's turned toxic. Maybe it's a dream that's become an obsession. Maybe it's the version of yourself you've been clinging to—the capable one, the strong one, the one who has it all together. Maybe it's your understanding of reality—the tame, manageable version you created to feel safe.

Something has to die. And you know it.

Death feels like defeat. Failure. The end.

But what if death is the beginning?

The writing that follows came from my two deaths—once to my old self, once to my illusions about how life works. Both felt like endings. Both turned out to be grace.

Before resurrection, there must be a tomb.

Key Themes

Stories of Death and Transformation

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Key Themes

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he Phoenix Process: Elizabeth Lesser, in *Broken Open: How Difficult Times Can*

Key Themes

Help Us Grow, calls this "the phoenix process" — the experience of going through fir

Key Themes

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e and being transformed. If you're in a spiritual crash, you have to decide whether to

Key Themes

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resistit or surrender to it. This is the holy ground of transformation — the dark, mes

Key Themes

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sy, terrifying part of the journey where you let the old you die so the new you can

Key Themes

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Key Themes

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to this chapter.

And Lesser says you have a choice: resistor surrender.

Resisting lo

Key Themes

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oks like staying busy, staying numb, staying in control. Pretending the crash hisn’

Key Themes

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that happening. White-knuckling your way through. Surrendering looks like admittin

Key Themes

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g: “I can’t hold this together any more. Something has to change. Something has

Key Themes

to die.”

The holy ground of transformation is dark. Messy. Terrifying. But it’s also

Key Themes

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where the new you is born.

Jesus in Gethsemane:

It's night. The Passover meal

Key Themes

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is finished. Jesus leads His disciples to an olive grove called Gethsemane—a

Key Themes

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familiar place, a place He's gone before to pray. But tonight is different. Tonight,

Key Themes

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the weight of what’s coming presses down on Him with crushing force.

He takes Pe

Key Themes

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ter, James, and John a little farther into the garden. And then He tells them somet

Key Themes

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hing He’s never said before: “My soul is crushed with grief to the point of death.

Key Themes

"Not "I'm concerned about tomorrow."

"Not "This will be difficult."

Soul-crus

Key Themes

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he d. To the point of death. He leaves the mand goes a little fa rther — alone now —

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and falls face-down on the ground. In one of the most honest moments in all of spiri

Key Themes

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r and bowed with his face to the ground, praying, ‘My Father! If it is possible, let th

Key Themes

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is cup of suffering be taken away from me. Yet I want your will to be done, not m

Key Themes

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in e.’ ”

> >

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Matthew 26:39 (NLT) This is crucial: Jesus didn’t want to die. He

Key Themes

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didn't spiritualize it. Didn't pretend it was noble or easy. He asked for another way

Key Themes

— desperately, repeatedly. Luke says His sweat became like drops of blood falling

Key Themes

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to the ground. The anguish was so intense it manifested physically. “If it is possib

Key Themes

le … take this cup away.” He’s begging for escape. For a different plan. For re

Key Themes

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lief from what He knows is coming: betrayal, abandonment, torture, the cross.

Key Themes

And beyond the physical suffering — the spiritual horror of bearing the full weight

Key Themes

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of humanity's sin, of being separated from the Father.

But then, in the midst of th

Key Themes

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at crushing anguish: “Yet I want your will to be done, not mine.” That’s the death

Key Themes

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that changes everything. Not the death on the cross — that comes later. This is the

Key Themes

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death in the garden. The death of His will. His preference. His desire to avoid pain.

Key Themes

Surrendered to a larger reality, a deeper trust.

And because He died that death in the

Key Themes

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garden before He died the death on the cross, resurrection was possible.

Paul's Dai

Key Themes

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ly Death: Paul, in his letters, talks about dying constantly.

> "And as for me, why wou

Key Themes

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ld I risk my life hour by hour? For I swear, dear brothers and sisters, that I face de

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Key Themes

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in you.”

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1 Corinthians 15:31 (NLT) Everyday, a death to self. Everyday, a

Key Themes

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surrender.

> “My old self has been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live,

Key Themes

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but Christ lives in me. So I live in this earthly body by trusting in the Son of God,

Key Themes

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who loved me and gave himself for me.”

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Galatians 2:20 (NLT)

The old Pa

Key Themes

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ul is dead. Saul, the persecutor, is gone. A new creation lives.

> “I once thought thes

Key Themes

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Key Themes

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has done. Yes, everything else is worthless when compared with the infinite valu

Key Themes

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e of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have discarded everything else,

Key Themes

counting it all as garbage, so that I could gain Christ.”

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Philippians 3:7-8 (NL

Key Themes

T) Paul had to die to: - His reputation (from respected religious leader to rejected ou

Key Themes

tcast) - His certainties (all his theological training had to be reconsidered) - His

Key Themes

control (shipwrecked, beaten, imprisoned) - His plans (wanted to go to Spain,

Key Themes

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ended up in Rome — in chains)

But ever y death brought resurrection. Every loss

Key Themes

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brought again. Everytomb preceded new life.

Choosing Vulnerability:

Brené Brow

Key Themes

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n sp ea ks to w ha t it m ea ns to tr ul y be se en :

> “ W e cu lti va te lo ve w he n w e all o w ou

Key Themes

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Key Themes

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honor the spiritual connection that grows from that offering with trust, respect, ki

Key Themes

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ndness and affection.”

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—Brené Brown, *The Gifts of Imperfection*

This is another

Key Themes

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r kind of death — the death of hiding. The death of presenting only our curated, acce

Key Themes

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Key Themes

Dying to the false self means letting ourselves be deeply seen and known. Not just ou

Key Themes

r strengths, but our vulnerabilities. Not just our successes, but our failures. Not

Key Themes

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just who we wish we were, but who we actually are. This terrifies us. Because w

Key Themes

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hat if we're seen and rejected? What if we're known and found wanting? But Br

Key Themes

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owner reveals the truth: love grows from the offering of our vulnerable, powerfu

Key Themes

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Key Themes

What if the everything you’re most afraid to look at is exactly what needs to die so

Key Themes

you can truly live?

A Deeper Truth

All these stories—from Elizabeth Lesser to Jesus to Paul to Brené Brown—point to the same reality: transformation requires death. Not metaphorical “letting go” or positive thinking. Actual death of something that’s been alive in you.

By now, you should be convinced that the God who created you has been calling you into a better way of living. That the voice you’re hearing isn’t just some made-up fantasy in your head.

You’ve named the swamp. You’ve prayed. Have you decided to keep taking the journey?

The question isn’t whether you believe the spiritual language. The question is: **Are you ready to let the old version of you die so the real you can live?**

An ancient writer named Paul captured this in Galatians 2:20. Whether you take this literally or metaphorically, here’s what it means for anyone in the swamp:

Unpack every phrase: - **“My old self has been crucified with Christ”** - Something in you has already died. The old self, the false self, the ego-driven self—crucified. - **“It is no longer I who live”** - The old you is no longer running the show. This isn’t self-improvement. This is death and resurrection. - **“But Christ lives in me”** - The resurrection. New life. Not self-generated. Christ-generated. - **“So I live in this earthly body”** - Still human. Still here. Still embodied. But the source has changed. - **“By trusting in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me”** - The foundation. Not your performance. Love itself. Radical sacrifice.

This kind of transformation isn’t a once-for-all event that happens and never needs to happen again. The symbolic death in baptism, in therapy, in recovery, in spiritual awakening—all of these point to an ongoing reality we live out across our entire lives.

As we grow from childhood into adulthood, as we experience the complexities and harsh realities of life, we discover new layers of the false self that need to die. New illusions about reality that need to be shattered. New areas of control we must surrender.

The child who committed to change believed. The teenager questioned. The young adult faced new temptations. The adult confronted failure. The mature person learned to let go.

Each stage of life requires its own deaths, its own resurrections. We're not repeating the initial transformation—we're living into the fullness of what that transformation means, layer by layer, death by death, resurrection by resurrection.

The Wayfarer Moment

Song Integration "Dying Changes Everything"

The Wayfarer Moment

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confronts us with the most paradoxical truth in spiritual transformati

The Wayfarer Moment

on: we must die to live, lose ourselves to find ourselves, descend in

The Wayfarer Moment

to the tomb before experiencing resurrection. The chapter teaches th

The Wayfarer Moment

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at transformation requires actual death of the false self, and the songgi

The Wayfarer Moment

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ves voice to this terrifying yet liberating reality.

The chorus — *“Almos*

The Wayfarer Moment

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t dying changes nothing, dying changes everything"

— crystallizes the

The Wayfarer Moment

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chapter's core teaching. This distinction is theologically crucial. Al

The Wayfarer Moment

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most dying is flirtation with transformation without commitment. It’s

The Wayfarer Moment

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touching the edge of surrender but pulling back, acknowledging what ne

The Wayfarer Moment

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eds to die but refusing to let it actually expire. And as the song declares,

The Wayfarer Moment

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this changes nothing. The chapter illustrates this through multiple fr

The Way fa re r Mo m en t

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a m e w or ks : th e de at h of th e fa ls e se lf, th e de at h of co nt ro l, th e de

The Wayfarer Moment

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ath of performance-based identity. In each case, partial death is insuffi

The Wayfarer Moment

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cient. The song’s insistence on complete death echoes Paul’s radical st

The Way fa re r Mo m en t

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at e m en t in G al ati an s 2: 20 : “I ha ve be en cr uc ifi ed wi th C hr ist an d I no lo

The Wayfarer Moment

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The Wayfarer Moment

“I no longer live.” This is total death, and only this kind makes resurrecti

The Wayfarer Moment

on possible.

The opening verse

"I'm sinking deep, the waters rise

The Wayfarer Moment

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ng, lost inside this broken place” — evokes baptismal theology. Roman

The Wayfarer Moments

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s 6: 3-4 teaches that baptism represents being buried with Christ in death

The Wayfarer Moment

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The Wayfarer Moment

ning are actually the waters of transformation. They close over the

The Wayfarer Moment

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old self completely, suffocating what was, creating space for what

The Wayfarer Moment

will be. “Drowning in my own disgrace” names the spiritual reality

The Wayfarer Moment

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precipitating this death — not some abstract fallse self but the actual

The Wayfarer Moment

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mess we’ve made, the patterns we’ve established, the shame we’ve

The Wayfarer Moment

accumulated. But the whisper — *"Child, you will be found"* — reveal

The Wayfarer Moment

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s this as mercy. God enters the waters with us, guides us through the

The Wayfarer Moment

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death, promises discovery on the other side. The theological tensio

The Wayfarer Moment

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n is profound: we must go under completely (full immersion, to

The Way farer Moment

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tal death) while trusting Love will not let us stay under (resurrection is pr

The Wayfarer Moment

omised). We want to keep one foot on solid ground, one part protecte

The Wayfarer Moment

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The Wayfarer Moment

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or m ati on . The ch or us co nt in ue s: *“I re le as e th e ch ai ns I’ m cl ut ch in g, no*

The Wayfarer Moment

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w I rise on healing's wings.”

This sequence matters theologically. R

The Wayfarer Moment

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release precedes rising. We don’t rise by our own power; we rise beca

The Wayfarer Moment

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use we’ve finally stopped clutching the chains anchoring us to the s

The Wayfarer Moment

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wamp, to the false self. The chains we clutch are paradoxically both

The Wayfarer Moment

bondage and false security — familiar even as they kill us. The chapter

The Wayfarer Moment

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teaches through Richard Rohr that transformation happens through su

The Wayfarer Moment

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bt ra cti on , no t ad di ti on . The so ng e m bo di es th is: “I re le as e” is th e ac ti

The Wayfarer Moment

on required of us. "Now I rise" is what grace does in response. "Spirit

The Wayfarer Moment

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lifts me from the waters, breath of heaven fills my lungs” invokes Gen

The Wayfarer Moment

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esis 2:7 — new creation theology. We're not being resuscitated to our

The Wayfarer Moment

old life but breathed into existence as new creations.

Verse two

“The

The Wayfarer Moment

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veil is torn, the light is breaking”

— references Jesus’ death when th

The Way fare r Moment

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e temple veil tore (Matthew 27:51), symbolizing direct access to God

The Wayfarer Moment

’s presence. In our death to self, the veil between false identity and tr

The Wayfarer Moment

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ue identity is torn. “Flames of mercy burn around me” connects to the refi

The Wayfarer Moment

ner's fire from Malachi 3:2-3 — not punishment but purification, bu

The Way farer Moment

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rning a way what is false while preserving what is true. “No mor

The Wayfarer Moment

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e running, no more hiding, I am free, I’m found again” speaks to the de

The Wayfarer Moment

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at h of the i m po st or . The fa ls e se lf ru ns an d hi de s, m ai nt ai ns pe rf or

The Wayfarer Moment

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mance, protects the image. But in complete death, this exhausting pa

The Wayfarer Moment

tternfinallyends. We stop running because there's nothing left to pr

The Wayfarer Moment

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otect. We stop hiding because we've been fully seen and are still loved.

The Wayfarer Moment

This song serves as Movement One’s climax because it names the hard

The Wayfarer Moment

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est truth: transformation requires death — actual death of whose thou

The Wayfarer Moment

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ght we were, what we thought we needed, how we thought life w

The Wayfarer Moment

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orked. And on the other side of that death, in the tomb, in the Saturday w

The Wayfarer Moment

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aiting, resurrection begins. The song doesn’t rush past the tomb but ho

The Wayfarer Moment

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nors the complete submersion, the staying dead towhat needs to st

The Wayfarer Moment

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ay dead. Yet it also refuses to leave us there. “Dying changes everythi

The Wayfarer Moment

—ing” because death is not the end—it’s passage, transformation, the

The Wayfarer Moment

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door way to life we could n’t access any other way.

Song: “Dying

The Wayfarer Moment

Changes Everything”

Verse 1

I’m sinking deep, the waters rising L

The Wayfarer Moment

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ost inside this broken place Breathing in the weight of silence Drowni

The Wayfarer Moment

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ng in my own disgrace My eyes grow dim, my strength is failing Shado

The Wayfarer Moment

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ws closing all around
But in the stillness I hear whispers
“Child, you

The Wayfarer Moment

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will be found”

Pre-Chorus

Tick tock … time fades out

Love breaks th

The Wayfarer Moment

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rough the doubt

Chorus

Almost dying changes nothing

Dying change

The Wayfarer Moment

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The Wayfarer Moment

’s wings Spirit lifts me from the waters Breath of heaven fills my lung

The Wayfarer Moments

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The Wayfarer Moment

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is torn, the light is breaking A timeless moment has come Flam

The Wayfarer Moment

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es of mercy burn around me Pulling me toward wholeness’ throne Gra

The Wayfarer Moment

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The Wayfarer Moment

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more running, no more hiding I am free, I’m found again

Pre-Ch

The Wayfarer Moment

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or us Tick tock … time fades out Love breaks through the doubt

Chor

The Wayfarer Moment

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us (Big)

Almost dying changes nothing

Dying changes everything

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The Wayfarer Moment

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Now I rise on healing’s wings
Spirit lif

The Wayfarer Moment

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ts me from the waters Breath of heaven fills my lungs Insurrender I di

The Wayfarer Moment

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sc over New life rising with the sun

Bridge (Build) I have crossed fro

The Wayfarer Moment

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The Wayfarer Moment

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love divine Dying changes everything *(Repeat as needed, rising each time*

The Wayfarer Moment

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e)

Verse 3

Now I stand, my chains are broken
Every shadows wept

The Wayfarer Moment

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a way Hope is rising, truth has spoken Night has turned to brighter day

The Wayfarer Moment

I will sing of resurrection Testify to what love’s done From the grave

The Wayfarer Moment

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into its glory

All my battles now are won

Final Chorus / Tag

Almost

The Wayfarer Moment

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dying changes nothing

Dying changes everything

I am living in this pr

The Wayfarer Moment

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essence Breathing heaven’s holy breath

Outro (Soft, reflective)

Heart be

The Wayfarer Moment

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at slows. Tick…tock…time is gone Eternal life has just begun Love,

The Way fare r Moment

You’re my only song Dying changed it all

Key Takeaways

- **Almost dying changes nothing; dying changes everything.** Partial surrender keeps you in the swamp with a different view. Complete death to the false self is what resurrection requires.
- **The tomb is not the end—it’s passage.** Saturday’s darkness between death and resurrection is where trust is tested. You can’t skip the waiting, but the waiting isn’t wasted.
- **What dies stays dead.** Don’t resuscitate old patterns, false identities, or survival mechanisms. Let what needs to die remain buried so new life can emerge.
- **You can’t resurrect yourself.** Transformation isn’t self-improvement—it’s being made alive by God’s power. Your job is to surrender; His job is to raise you.

Reflections for the Road

Practice: The Burial Ritual

Find a quiet place. Some where you can

Reflections for the Road

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be honest. Somewhere you can grieve. Bring something that repres

Reflections for the Road

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ents what needs to die. Maybe: - An old journal from a season you’

Reflections for the Road

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Reflections for the Road

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dream you’re surrendering - An object that represents the false self

Reflections for the Road

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you’ve been performing

Hold it. Look at it. Acknowledge it. Thank reali

Reflections for the Road

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ty for it, even. For what it was. For what it taught you. For how it

Reflections for the Road

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protected you when you needed protection. Then say out loud: **“I**

Reflections for the Road

’m letting this die. I’m releasing it. I’m surrendering it to what

Reflections for the Road

’s Real.”

Pause. Breathe. Let yourself feel the weight of it.

Then spea

Reflections for the Road

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k this burial prayer: **“I surrender this. I let it die. I trust reality**

Reflections for the Road

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to transform what's meant to live and to bury what's meant to

Reflections for the Road

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stay dead. I trust that Saturday doesn't last forever. I trust that

Reflections for the Road

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life is making all things new. Amen.”

If possible, literally bury the

Reflections for the Road

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object. Or put it away somewhere you won’t see it — a box in the e

Reflections for the Road

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closet, a drawer you don't open. A physical act of release. You've

Reflections for the Road

named the death. You’ve released it. Now you wait. In the tomb. O

Reflections for the Road

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n Saturday. But you’re not alone. And Sunday is coming.

Closing Image

The tomb. Silent. Dark. Waiting.

Saturday—the day between death and resurrection. The most honest place to be.

You've died. Or something in you has died. Or something needs to die and you're finally letting it.

And now you're here. In the dark. In the silence. In the waiting.

It doesn't feel like grace. It feels like loss. It feels like the end.

But here's what the tomb teaches: Death is not the end. It's passage.

There's a story of someone spending Saturday in the grave. Silent. Still. Hidden.

Those who loved him spent Saturday in despair, thinking it was over. Thinking Friday's death was final.

They didn't know Sunday was coming. They couldn't see resurrection from inside Saturday.

Neither can you.

But it's coming anyway.

The tomb is dark, but it's not empty. Love is there. In the silence. In the waiting. In the dying.

And love is the force that raises the dead.

So you wait. You grieve. You trust.

This is not passivity. This is not giving up. This is the hardest work there is—letting go of what you desperately wanted to keep, releasing what you thought defined you, surrendering control over outcomes you can't control anyway.

Take a breath.

You let what needs to die stay dead.

No resuscitation of the old self. No resurrection of the false identity. No revival of the patterns that brought you to the swamp in the first place.

Dead stays dead.

But death is not the last word.

And you keep your face turned toward Sunday—toward transformation you can't yet see but believe is coming anyway.

Saturday is dark. Saturday is silent. Saturday is waiting.

But Saturday is not forever.

Because dying changes everything.

And Sunday always comes.

Out of the Swamp: How I Found Truth (Movement 2)

MOVEMENT 2: AT THE WATER'S EDGE (The Turning)

> "On the last day, the climax of the festival, Jesus stood and shouted to the crowds, 'Anyone who is thirsty may come to me! Anyone who believes in me may come and drink! For the Scriptures declare, "Rivers of living water will flow from his heart."'"
>
> — John 7:37-38 (NLT)

A Moment to Consider

By now, you should see the tempo and pattern of the book. You've been introduced to scriptures and writings about the true character of God's love. You've walked through four chapters about naming the swamp, crying out for help, making a decision, and letting something die.

Maybe you've been nodding along, intellectually interested but still holding back.

Maybe you've prayed the prayers but kept one foot in the swamp, just in case this doesn't work out.

Maybe you're standing at this water's edge thinking, "This all sounds nice, but is it real? Is this God thing actually important to my life?"

Here's what I want to ask you:

Are you ready to at least acknowledge that the tugging of your soul toward something greater than yourself has merit?

Not asking you to have it all figured out. Not asking you to become religious (that's the last thing I would suggest). Not asking you to check all the theological boxes.

Just asking: Can you admit that maybe—just maybe—there's something real here? That the Voice you've been hearing isn't just wishful thinking? That the pull you feel toward Love, toward Truth, toward Something More might actually be worth following?

Because if you can't admit that yet, the rest of Movement 2 is going to feel like empty religious language.

But if you can take that one small step—acknowledging that this might be real, that God might actually love you, that grace might actually be for you—then what comes next will change everything.

You don't have to be certain. You just have to be willing.

Take a moment. Right now. Before you keep reading.

Can you say, even tentatively: "God, I'm willing to believe You might be real. I'm willing to consider that You love me. I'm willing to let You wash me, even if I don't fully understand how."

That’s enough. That willingness opens the door.

You’ve left the swamp.

It wasn’t easy. Maybe you’re still looking back over your shoulder, wondering if you made the right choice. Your feet are heavy with swamp mud. Your clothes are soaked, clinging to you. You smell like the muck you just escaped.

But you’re here. At the water’s edge.

This is liminal space. The in-between. Not swamp anymore, but not healed yet either. Not drowning, but not dancing. Not death, but not resurrection. Not Friday, not Sunday.

This is Saturday. Tomb time. Transition.

The water’s edge is where grace does its most subversive work.

You want to clean yourself up before you step into the water. You’re embarrassed by the mud, the stench, the evidence of where you’ve been. Surely you need to get yourself together first, right?

Wrong.

Grace says: Come as you are. Mud and all. Shame and all. Questions and all.

The water isn’t there to judge you. It’s there to wash you.

But here’s the hard part: You have to let yourself be washed. You have to get in the water. You have to let grace touch the wounds.

And that’s terrifying.

Because what if you’re too dirty? What if the water rejects you? What if grace has limits and you’ve exceeded them?

These chapters—5 through 8—are about discovering the answer to those fears. And the answer is always the same: Grace is deeper than your shame. Wider than your failure. Stronger than your sin. More persistent than your doubt.

Want to know what you’ll discover at the water’s edge?

You’re going to encounter something—Someone—in new ways: - Living Water that quenches thirst you didn’t know how to name - Shadow that covers and protects in the scorching wilderness - Amazing grace that reaches those who don’t deserve it - An invitation to dig deeper, to go beneath the surface and find bedrock truth

There’s an ancient story about a woman who came to a well at noon—the hottest time of day, when nobody else would be there. She was hiding from judgment, carrying shame from five

failed marriages. And she met someone there who offered her “living water”—water that becomes a spring welling up to eternal life.

You’re going to learn what she learned: being truly known and truly loved changes everything.

You’re going to discover what ancient poets knew: that there’s shelter, refuge, rest—a shadow of protection under whose wings we find safety.

You’re going to learn what an old hymn declares: Amazing grace, how sweet the sound, that saved a wretch like me.

You’re going to learn what the deep places teach: that grace doesn’t just wash the surface—it goes all the way down to bedrock.

These aren’t abstract theological concepts. They’re water on your parched tongue. Shade on your scorched skin. Arms that hold you when you collapse. Truth that sets you free.

The water’s edge is where you stop running from what’s Real and start running toward it.

Where you stop hiding and start being found.

Where you stop performing and start receiving.

This is the turning. The hinge of your story. The moment when the narrative shifts from “I can’t” to “maybe I can be helped.” From “I’m too far gone” to “grace reaches farther.”

The Journey at the Water’s Edge:

Chapter 5: Living Waters Edge - You stand at the edge of the water, filthy from the swamp, convinced you have to clean yourself up before you can approach. But grace invites you to come as you are. The water doesn’t recoil—it receives you. This is the scandalous truth: you don’t clean yourself up to receive grace. You receive grace to be cleaned.

Living Waters Edge

Chapter 6: In the Shadow of Your Grace - In the desert of transition, you discover that grace isn’t just rescue from the pit—it’s shelter in the wilderness. The shadow doesn’t remove the sun; it provides covering under it. You learn the difference between hiding FROM truth and hiding IN truth. And you discover that the shadow proves the light is real.

In the Shadow of Your Grace

Chapter 7: Amazing Grace I Did Receive - You stand at the water’s edge covered in the consequences of your choices—the shame of trampling on grace, the grave of autonomy, the dead-end road of self-rule. And you hear the whisper: “Amazing grace, how sweet the sound, that saved a wretch like me.” Not someone mostly good. A wretch. Grace is scandalous precisely because it’s for those who don’t deserve it. And when you step toward the water, you feel Love’s hand lifting you from the grave.

Amazing Grace

Chapter 8: Dig a Little Deeper - The surface mud is washing away, but underneath is scar tissue—layers of protection, coping mechanisms, wounds you've been medicating for years. Real healing requires going deeper. Cutting through the scar tissue. Opening the wound so it can drain. Excavating through performance, shame, wounds, and false beliefs until you hit bedrock truth: You are loved. You are worthy. You are enough. And grace goes all the way down.

Dig a Little Deeper

So stand here. At the edge. Feel the coolness of the water lapping at your toes. Hear the invitation: Come. Drink. Be washed. Be healed. Be made new.

You don't have to have it all together. You don't have to understand it all. You just have to wade in.

The water's not going to hurt you. It's going to heal you.

One step at a time.

What would it mean to approach healing without pretense? To come as you are, not as you think you should be?

Grace is deeper than you know. Wider than you can measure. Stronger than your shame. More faithful than you've dared to hope.

At the water's edge, you're about to discover just how amazing grace really is.

Entering This Movement

Before you wade into these four chapters, pause here at the water's edge. Look at where you've been. Feel where you are. Prepare for what comes next.

Look back at the swamp.

You've come through Movement 1. That wasn't easy. You got honest. You named the swamp. You cried out. You made the decision. You let something die.

That took courage. Real courage. Not the kind that pretends to be strong, but the kind that admits weakness.

Don't minimize what you did. Don't rush past it. You stepped out of the swamp. That matters.

Look at where you are now.

You're at the edge of the water. Still carrying the mud from the swamp. Still smelling like the muck you just escaped. Still a little shaky from the journey.

You're in liminal space. The in-between. Not swamp anymore, but not healed yet either.

This is uncomfortable. Liminal space always is. Because you're between identities—no longer who you were, not yet who you're becoming.

But this is also sacred space. Because this is where grace does its most transforming work.

What this movement requires:

Movement 1 required honesty. You had to stop pretending and get real about the swamp.

Movement 2 requires receptivity. You have to let yourself be washed, held, healed. You have to receive what you can't earn.

That's harder than it sounds.

Because everything in you wants to clean yourself up first. To prove you're worthy of grace. To do something to deserve the healing.

But grace doesn't work that way. Grace says: Come as you are. Receive what you can't earn. Let yourself be loved.

Can you do that?

Can you step into the water without trying to clean yourself up first?

Can you receive grace even though you don't deserve it?

Can you let yourself be known—really known, mud and all—and still believe you're loved?

That's the work of Movement 2.

The woman at the well knew this.

She came to draw water at noon—the hottest time of day, when nobody else would be there. She was hiding from judgment, carrying shame from five failed marriages.

And she met Someone there who offered "living water"—water that becomes a spring welling up to eternal life.

She tried to deflect. To change the subject. To avoid being fully known.

But He kept bringing her back to the truth: I see you. All of you. And I'm offering you living water anyway.

Being truly known and truly loved—that's what she discovered at the well.

That's what you're about to discover at the water's edge.

One question before you begin:

Are you willing to be known?

Not the version of yourself you present to the world. But the real you. The one who's been hiding in the swamp. The one who's afraid of being rejected. The one who's convinced there's not enough grace for them.

Are you willing to let grace see all of that? And trust that it's enough?

If you are—even tentatively, even uncertainly—then you're ready.

The water is here. The invitation is extended. Grace is waiting.

Wade in. One step at a time. The water's not going to hurt you. It's going to heal you.

When you're ready, turn to Chapter 5: Living Waters Edge.

Out of the Swamp: How I Found Truth (Chapter 5)

MOVEMENT 2: AT THE WATER'S EDGE (The Turning)

Chapter 5: Living Waters Edge

> "Whoever drinks the water I give them will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give them will become in them a spring of water welling up to eternal life." — John 4:14

Living Waters Edge

Listen at: http://go.skylerthomas.com/nXiDRV

Scan to listen: Living Waters Edge

Have you ever stood at a threshold between your old life and something new? Not knowing if you're ready. Not sure you're worthy. Covered in the evidence of where you've been, wondering if you're clean enough to step forward?

That's where this chapter lives. At the water's edge.

And here's what I want you to know: You don't have to clean up first. The water is what cleans you.

I know that might sound strange. Or too good to be true. Or like spiritual talk that doesn't apply to real life.

But stay with me. Because this chapter is about the moment when everything you've been carrying—the shame, the failure, the mud from the swamp—meets something that can actually wash it away.

Can you be open to that possibility? Even if you don't fully believe it yet?

A Prayer of Invitation

You've walked through four chapters. You've named the swamp. You've cried out for help. You've been confronted with the need to decide. You've learned that something has to die.

And now you're here. At the water's edge.

Maybe this is the moment. The moment when you stop spinning in circles and start walking straight. When you stop analyzing and start trusting. When you make the decision to let God in—not just to your thoughts, but to your soul.

If you're ready—even if you're scared, even if you're uncertain—you can pray this prayer right now. Out loud or in your heart. Perfectly worded or stumbling through. It doesn't matter. What matters is that you mean it.

"God, I need You. I can't do this on my own anymore. I've tried, and I'm exhausted. I'm stuck in this swamp, and I don't know the way out.

I believe You're real—or at least, I want to believe. Help me with my unbelief.

I'm sorry for the ways I've pushed You away, for trying to run my own life, for making a mess of things. I know I can't fix this by myself.

Jesus, I believe You came for people like me—broken, messy, stuck. I believe You died so I could be forgiven and live a new life. I accept that gift. I receive Your grace.

Come into my life. Come into my soul. Fill me with Your Spirit. Teach me to hear Your voice. Lead me out of this swamp and into the life You have for me.

I'm willing to follow, even when I don't understand. I'm willing to trust, even when I'm afraid. I'm choosing You—today, right now.

Thank You for not giving up on me. Thank You for meeting me here, in the mess. I'm Yours. Amen."

If you prayed that prayer—even tentatively, even with doubts still swirling—something real just happened. Not because the words were magic. But because God was listening. And when you opened the door, He stepped in.

You might not feel different right away. You might still feel stuck, still feel afraid. That's okay. This is the beginning, not the end. The decision has been made. Now comes the journey.

This chapter is about what happens when you step into the water. When you let grace wash over you. When you discover that the water doesn’t recoil from your mud—it cleanses it.

Keep reading. You’re about to get wet.

What Is Grace? (And Why Do You Need It?)

We’ve been using this word a lot. Grace

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ask, “Are you worthy?” It just invites: “Come and drink.”

Grace is love without conditions

—

and that's the scandal.

Maybe you've spent your whole life trying to earn love. Be good enough

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as you are, so stay there.”

Grace says, “Come as you are—and I’ll make you new.”

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u’re thirsty.
There’s a deep thirst in you that nothing in this world can satisfy. Not success. Not re

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What does grace do?

Grace does what you cannot do for yourself. It forgives—taking

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Here’s the deepest truth: Grace isn’t just a concept or a force. Grace is the charac

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e,
you're being held by Love itself.
That's why the water is called "living water."
It's not just H_2O.

It’s the presence of God flowing into your life, into your soul, into your deepest places. And that’s why

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There’s a moment between leaving and arriving that feels impossible.

You’ve left the swamp—made the decision, taken the first steps, walked away from the place that was killing you. But you haven’t arrived anywhere yet. You’re in the liminal space. The threshold. The water’s edge.

Behind you: everything you’ve known. The familiar toxicity. The adaptive survival patterns. The identity you built in the muck.

Ahead of you: the unknown. Clean water that both attracts and terrifies you. An invitation you’re not sure you’re qualified to accept.

And here’s what makes this moment so hard: the swamp is still on you. You can smell it on your clothes. Feel the dried mud cracking on your skin. Taste the bitterness in your mouth. You’ve left, but you’re not yet clean. You’ve chosen freedom, but you’re not yet free.

This is the water’s edge—where decision meets transformation. Where leaving meets arriving. Where the old is passing away but the new hasn’t yet fully come.

And the question that haunts you: Can I really step into that clean water looking like this?

Part of you wants to clean up first. Get yourself together. Become worthy of the gift before you receive it.

But there’s no pre-water ritual. No “get yourself ready first” station.

Just the water. And you. And the invitation.

The writing that follows came from my time at this threshold. When I’d made the decision to leave but couldn’t yet see how transformation would happen. When I stood at the edge of grace, covered in swamp, and had to learn the hardest lesson:

You don’t clean up to receive grace. Grace is what cleans you up.

You kneel at the water’s edge, hands trembling. The bank is soft under your knees. You lean forward, cupping your hands together, and dip them into the water.

It’s shockingly cool. But also… alive. You can feel the current trying to pull your hands downstream. You can feel the movement, the energy, the power.

You lift your cupped hands to your lips and drink.

The water is cool and sweet and everything you didn’t know you needed. It tastes like snow-melt and stone and something you can only call purity. It washes away the bitter taste of the swamp, the metallic tang of fear, the sour residue of shame.

You drink again. And again. Greedy for it now. Desperate for it.

And as you drink, something inside you whispers: This is what I’ve been thirsting for. Not just water. Living water. The kind that reaches all the way down into the dried-up, hollowed-out places and says, “I can make this live again.”

You look at the river. Then at yourself. Then back at the river.

The invitation is clear: Come in. Let yourself be washed. Let the water do what you cannot do for yourself.

But can you? Can you really step into that clean water covered in all this filth? Can you trust that the water is strong enough to handle your mess?

The sun climbs higher. The mist begins to thin. And you’re still kneeling at the water’s edge, caught between the swamp you’ve left and the cleansing you need, wondering if grace is really as scandalous as they say—scandalous enough to wash even you.

Key Themes

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2. The Threshold – Where Obedience Meets Miracle

Or consider another story from the book of Joshua. Ancient Israel stood on the edge of the promised land after wandering forty years. Between them and the promise: the Jordan River. And it’s not just flowing—it’s flooding:

> “It was the harvest season, and the Jordan was overflowing its banks. But as soon as the feet of the priests who were carrying the Ark touched the water at the river’s edge, the water above that point began backing up a great distance away… And all the people crossed over.”
>
> — Joshua 3:15-16 (NLT)

God gives Joshua strange instructions: Have the priests carrying the ark of the covenant step into the water. Not after it parts. Before. While it’s still flooding.

They have to get their feet wet before the miracle happens.

Imagine being one of those priests. Carrying the most sacred object—the symbol of divine presence—toward a flooding river. Every instinct screams: Wait for the water to stop! Don’t risk it! Don’t step in until it’s safe!

But that’s not how trust works. Trust doesn’t wait for risk to disappear. Trust steps in while the risk is real.

And they do it. The moment their feet touch the water’s edge, the water from upstream stops flowing.

The water’s edge is where obedience meets miracle. Where faith becomes sight. Where stepping forward in trust releases transformative power.

The edge is the threshold. You can stand on the shore and talk about water all day. You can study it, analyze it, understand its chemical composition. But until you step in—until your feet touch the water’s edge—you don’t experience it.

Eugene Peterson writes:

> “The Christian life is not a quiet escape to a garden where we can walk and talk uninterruptedly with our Lord; nor is it a fantasy trip to a heavenly city where we can compare our blue ribbons and gold medals with other Christians… It is the active and loving obedience of faith, lived in the rough and tumble of this world, where God’s grace intersects with human need.”
>
> — Eugene Peterson, *A Long Obedience in the Same Direction*

The water’s edge is where that intersection happens. Where grace meets our desperate need. Where theology becomes experience.

3. The Transition from Running From to Running Toward

There’s a psychological and spiritual shift that happens at the water’s edge. A reversal. A turning.

Before, we run from what’s Real. We hide like the first humans in the garden: “I heard you, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid.”

We flee like Jonah, running to get as far from truth’s call as possible, ending up in the belly of a fish before we finally surrender.

We avoid by staying so busy with activity that we never have to face the intimacy that Reality actually wants with us.

Why do we run? Because we're afraid. Afraid Reality will see the real us and be disappointed. Afraid it will demand things we're not willing to give. Afraid we'll be rejected if we don't perform well enough. Afraid that if we get too close, we'll discover that love has conditions after all.

So we run. Or we hide. Or we stay busy. Anything to keep truth at arm's length.

But the swamp changes things. In the swamp, hiding doesn't work anymore. Performance fails. Busyness exhausts us. And we discover that we're not running from judgment—we're running from love.

Because judgment we could handle. We've been handling judgment our whole lives. Self-judgment, others' judgment, internalized shame—we know what to do with that. We perform, we prove ourselves, we try harder.

But love? Unconditional, unearned, relentless love? That's terrifying.

Because if we're loved as we are, then we have to stop performing. Stop earning. Stop hiding. And we don't know who we'd be without all that.

At the water's edge, something shifts. We stop running from and start stumbling toward.

We start seeking like the ancient poet: "As the deer pants for streams of water, so my soul pants for you."

We start thirsting like the crowds who heard Jesus cry out: "Let anyone who is thirsty come to me and drink."

We start reaching like the woman with the issue of blood, desperate enough to push through the crowd and touch the hem of Jesus' garment because we finally realize: Our greatest danger isn't being seen in our need. Our greatest danger is dying of thirst while standing next to the fountain.

A.W. Tozer understood this desperate thirst:

> "God is looking for people through whom He can do the impossible—what a pity that we plan only the things that we can do by ourselves."
>
> — A.W. Tozer, *The Pursuit of God*

We come to the water when we finally admit we can't save ourselves. When we stop planning what we can do and start receiving what only God can do.

For years, I ran. I was in involved, teaching, doing all the "right things"—and running. Because I was terrified He'd get too close and see the real me. The mess. The doubt. The darkness. The anger. The parts that didn't fit the image.

The swamp was awful, but at least I could hide there. At least the mud covered me. At least I could blend into the murk and no one—not even God—could see clearly.

But at the water's edge, I couldn't hide anymore. I was exposed. Vulnerable. Raw.

And I realized: I wasn't running from judgment. I was running from love.

The water's edge is where I stopped running from God and started stumbling toward Him. Where I discovered that the most honest prayer I could pray wasn't "Make me good enough." It was "See me as I am—and please don't turn away."

And He didn't. He doesn't. He never does.

4. Baptism: Death to Old, Birth to New

Baptism is the ritual of the water's edge—the physical enactment of what happens spiritually when we come to God.

Baptism is obedience. Even Jesus submitted to baptism, telling John the Baptist: "It should be done, for we must carry out all that God requires" (Matthew 3:15, NLT). After His resurrection, Jesus commanded His followers: "Go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit" (Matthew 28:19, NLT). This isn't optional—it's a command.

Baptism is death and resurrection. Going under the water: Death. Burial of the old self. The swamp-covered, broken version of you dies. Coming up out of the water: Resurrection. New life. You emerge clean, forgiven, made new.

This isn't just metaphor. Paul says it's spiritually real:

> "For we died and were buried with Christ by baptism. And just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glorious power of the Father, now we also may live new lives. Since we have been united with him in his death, we will also be raised to life as he was."
>
> — Romans 6:4-5 (NLT)

When you go under the water, you're united with Christ in His death. When you come up, you're united with Him in His resurrection.

Why baptism matters: It's obedience to Jesus's command. It's your public declaration before witnesses—"I belong to Jesus now." It's a spiritual marker, a covenant moment that changes something we don't fully understand. And it's your initiation into the community of believers.

Have you considered baptism?

If you prayed that prayer earlier in this chapter—if you invited God into your soul—then baptism is your next step. Not because you have to earn anything, but because obedience flows from love. Because public declaration solidifies private decision. Because there's something powerful about going under the water and coming up new.

Talk to a pastor. Find a church community. Schedule your baptism. Step into the water.

Standing at the water's edge forever isn't the goal. The goal is to step in. To go under. To come up new.

And if you've already been baptized, remember your baptism. Remember the old you that died and the new you that rose. Remember the covenant you made, the identity you claimed, the life you said yes to.

Baptism isn't only about our pledge to God—it's also about God's pledge to us. The water's edge is where we receive what Love offers, not where we prove we're worthy to receive it.

5. The Vulnerability of Letting Yourself Be Washed

There's something deeply vulnerable about being washed. To be washed, you have to be touched. You have to let someone see the dirt. You have to stop hiding.

This is the tender, terrifying heart of the chapter.

Think about Jesus washing the disciples' feet in John 13:

> "When Jesus came to Simon Peter, Peter said to him, 'Lord, are you going to wash my feet?' Jesus replied, 'You don't understand now what I am doing, but someday you will.' 'No,' Peter protested, 'you will never ever wash my feet!' Jesus replied, 'Unless I wash you, you won't belong to me.'"
>
> — John 13:6-8 (NLT)

It's the night before His crucifixion. Jesus knows what's coming. And He takes off His outer garment, wraps a towel around His waist, pours water into a basin, and begins washing their feet.

Peter's reaction is classic: "No, you will never ever wash my feet!"

Why? Because it's humiliating. The Master shouldn't serve the servant. The clean shouldn't touch the dirty. This is backwards. Wrong. Uncomfortable.

But Jesus says something profound: "Unless I wash you, you won't belong to me."

Let that sink in. Unless I wash you. Not "unless you wash yourself." Not "unless you clean up first." Unless I wash you.

What's He saying? You're already loved. Already accepted. Already Mine. You just need to let Me serve you. Let Me wash the parts of you that have gotten dirty walking through this world. Let Me touch the places you think are too shameful, too broken, too contaminated.

For us, the vulnerability is this: Admitting we need washing. Admitting we can't clean ourselves up. Admitting we're dirty and letting Love touch the dirt.

That's terrifying. Because what if it recoils? What if even grace has limits? What if I'm too much even for living water?

But the wayfarer at the water's edge discovers: Grace has no limits. Grace washes what shame says is unwashable. Grace touches what fear says is untouchable.

Timothy Keller illuminates this scandalous grace:

> “The gospel is this: We are more sinful and flawed in ourselves than we ever dared believe, yet at the very same time we are more loved and accepted in Jesus Christ than we ever dared hope.”
>
> — Timothy Keller, *The Meaning of Marriage*

This is the water’s edge truth: You’re worse than you thought—and more loved than you imagined. Both at the same time.

At the water’s edge, I was trying hard to practice vulnerability and connection. I was meeting with friends, making progress on creative projects, engaging in introspection and prayer. Outwardly, momentum was building.

But I was also exhausted. Disconnected at times. Empty in ways I couldn’t quite articulate.

The water’s edge isn’t instant healing. It’s the beginning of healing. You can be making real progress and still feel the weight of the journey. That’s not failure—that’s honesty.

Ruth Haley Barton writes about this tender in-between place:

> “Transformation is not about trying harder or doing more. It is about entering more deeply into the mystery of our own belovedness… and trusting the process that is beyond our control.”
>
> — Ruth Haley Barton, *Sacred Rhythms*

At the water’s edge, we learn to trust the process even when we can’t control the outcome. We step in, covered in mud, and trust the water to do what only water can do.

You can be stepping toward the water and still be covered in swamp mud. That’s not hypocrisy—that’s the reality of transformation. It doesn’t happen all at once. It happens in stages, in steps, in moments of surrender and trust.

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Wayfarer Moment

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od. I shouted at Him in the darkness: “Why not me, Lord? Why am I

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I walked a way that night. Heart hardened. Or so I told myself.

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home. I decided it was time to do some work on my life. Which mea

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God speak Would You pour down like rain Washing my eyes to see You

The Core Scripture Truth

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much-needed miracle in my life.

I put my feet into the water. The Li

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viving Water’s Edge.

And I was comforted in knowing: it’s going to be

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The Core Scripture Truth

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The Core Scripture Truth

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ng water's edge. The miracle is available. You can be made whole.

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writing is the struggle. The song is the musical translation.

Song Integration

Standing at Lake Hefner's boat ramp that April morning, I was at the end of myself. The boat ramp descends into the lake, pavement giving way to water—a threshold between termination and transformation. The road I'd been traveling—self-sufficiency, performance, earning worthiness—had run out. The pavement simply stopped. And beyond it: water.

"Living Water's Edge" emerges from the tension between two biblical realities: our profound unworthiness and God's scandalous willingness to make us whole anyway. This isn't a song about people who stumbled slightly. This is about people "burdened down by guilt and shame, no hope to be relieved"—the terminally stuck, the chronically unworthy, those who've given up hope that miracles are for them.

The opening verse asks: "Have you longed for a miracle, felt unworthy to believe?" This is the honest cry of someone who's watched God move in other lives while convinced they're somehow disqualified. But then the verse pivots with devastating grace: "Jesus stands with arms wide open, He's the Savior of your soul." Not "Jesus will open His arms once you prove yourself." Jesus *stands*—present tense, already positioned—with arms *wide open*. The posture precedes the person's arrival. The welcome exists before the worthiness.

This echoes the father in Luke 15 who sees the prodigal "while he was still a long way off" and runs to him. Grace doesn't wait at the finish line. Grace runs toward us while we're still covered in pig slop, still rehearsing apologies, still convinced we'll be lucky to be hired as servants.

Verse two shifts to testimony: "Have you seen a heart surrendered, healed by mercy's gentle hand?" Mercy's hand is *gentle*—crucial because those who've lived with shame expect punishment. They brace for the blow. But mercy is gentle precisely because it knows how fragile the shame-bearer is. "Bring your pain and all your burdens; leave them at the cross tonight." The invitation is comprehensive—not "bring your acceptable struggles" but "all your burdens." And the timing—"tonight"—creates urgency through availability. Why wait? Why carry it another day?

"Let His power make you righteous, shining pure in holy light." This is imputed righteousness—we're made right not through our effort but through Christ's finished work. The agency belongs to God. Our part is reception, not production.

The chorus declares: "Come and drink the living water, let it wash your fear away." This references John 7:37-38—Jesus's invitation to the thirsty. Notice what the water washes away: fear. Not just guilt, but the fear underneath—fear of rejection, exposure, fear that we're unlovable at the core. "Jesus breaks the chains that bind you; He's your miracle today." Not "might break" or "will consider." He *breaks* them. Present tense. And He's your miracle *today*—not someday, not after you've earned it. Today.

The bridge intensifies the desperation: "Have you felt the weight of sorrow, like a chain you cannot break?" This is learned helplessness—you've tried so many times to change that you've given up trying. But into this darkness: "Jesus sees your every struggle, and He whispers, 'You are Mine.'" Not "You'll be Mine if you fix yourself." *You are Mine.* Present possession. The claim precedes the change.

“Through His grace, the chains will shatter; you will rise in love divine.” The chains don’t gradually loosen—they *shatter*. Complete break. Total freedom. “Lift your hands and call upon Him; He will meet you where you stand.” Romans 10:13—no prerequisites, no qualifications. Just call. And He meets you *where you stand*—in the mess, at the dead end, covered in shame.

This song became my declaration that I was wrong about grace. Grace *is* for me. Miracles *are* for me. Not because I earned them, but because Jesus stands with arms wide open and says, “You are Mine.” Worthiness isn’t the prerequisite. Thirst is. The living water’s edge isn’t for the worthy. It’s for the thirsty. The miracle isn’t that the water changes you before you enter—the miracle is that the water receives you exactly as you are, and *then* begins the transformation from the inside out.

Lyrics: Living Water’s Edge

Key Takeaways

- You don’t clea

Lyrics: Living Water’s Edge

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nup to receive grace; grace cleans you up. The water doesn’t re

Lyrics: Living Water’s Edge

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coil from your mud—
it was hesita way.
Come as you are, cove

Lyrics: Living Water's Edge

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red in swamp, and let the living water do what only it can do. -

G

Lyrics: Living Water’s Edge

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race is scandalously free—and that’s the point.

You can’t

Lyrics: Living Water’s Edge

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earn it, deserve it, or repay it. It’s a gift for the thirsty, the broken,

Lyrics: Living Water’s Edge

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the stuck, and the exhausted — which means it’s for you.

- **Bein**

Lyrics: Living Water’s Edge

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g fully know and fully loved is possible. The woman at

Lyrics: Living Water's Edge

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the well discovered that Jesus sees everything and still offers living

Lyrics: Living Water’s Edge

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water. Transparency isn’t rejection — it’s the doorway to real relatio

Lyrics: Living Water’s Edge

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nship.

- **Baptism is both death and birth.** Going under symbo

Lyrics: Living Water’s Edge

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lizes dying to the old self; coming up represents resurrection to new

Lyrics: Living Water’s Edge

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life. This public declaration marks your covenant and identity transf

Lyrics: Living Water’s Edge

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ormation.

Reflections for the Road

These aren’t homework. They’re invitations. Gentle questions to help you engage with your own thirst, your own need for living water.

Questions for the Journey:

1. **Where are you with the water? Still in the swamp? At the edge? Already in, being washed?**

   Be honest about where you actually are, not where you think you should be. If you’re still in the swamp, that’s okay. If you’re at the edge but afraid to step in, that’s okay too. Grace meets you where you are.

2. **What’s keeping you from stepping into the water? Fear? Shame? Unworthiness? The belief that you have to clean up first?**

   Name the obstacle. Shame loses its power when it’s brought into the light. Fear shrinks when it’s spoken aloud. What’s the lie you’re believing about grace?

3. **Read John 4 slowly. Put yourself in the woman’s place. What does Jesus see in you? What does He offer?**

   This isn’t theological study. This is personal encounter. Imagine yourself at the well. Imagine Jesus asking you for a drink. Imagine Him seeing everything you’ve ever done—and offering you living water anyway.

4. **What would it mean to stop trying to clean yourself up and just come to the water?**

What would change if you stopped performing? Stopped trying to earn grace? Stopped waiting to be good enough? What if you came as you are—right now, in this moment, with all your mess—and let grace wash you?

Practice: The Water Ritual

Closing Image

You're standing in the water now. Not all th

Practice: The Water Ritual

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Practice: The Water Ritual

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ng and clean. The mud from the swamp is starting to wash away.

Practice: The Water Ritual

Not instantly. Not all at once. But gradually. With each step deeper, mor

Practice: The Water Ritual

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e of it lifts off. Carried downstream by the current. You look down at yo

Practice: The Water Ritual

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urfeet. You can see the mthrough the water. Clear. The stones beneath

Practice: The Water Ritual

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the ms mooth and solid. You look at your hands. Still muddy. But less th

Practice: The Water Ritual

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an before.

You cup water and pour it over your arms. Watch the mud run of

Practice: The Water Ritual

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f in br o w n str ea m s. U nd er ne at h: sk in. Y ou r ac tu al sk in. Y ou ’d al m os t

Practice: The Water Ritual

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forgotten what it looked like. You're still a mess. You're still cove

Practice: The Water Ritual

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red in swamp. But you’re also being washed. Both are true at the sa

Practice: The Water Ritual

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me time.

Take a breath.

This is the water's edge. Not instant tran

Practice: The Water Ritual

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sformation. The beginning of transformation. Not immediate perfec

Practice: The Water Ritual

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tion. The start of healing. You take another step. The water rises to yo

Practice: The Water Ritual

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urknees. Colder. Stronger current. But also… invigorating. Alive. You

Practice: The Water Ritual

’re wading in. One step at a time. Letting the water do what you coul

Practice: The Water Ritual

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Practice: The Water Ritual

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me and the fear and the exhaustion, somethingstirs. Somethingthat

Practice: The Water Ritual

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feels almost like… hope. Not the fragile, easily crushed hope you've

Practice: The Water Ritual

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known before. But something stur di er. Something rooted not in your ab

Practice: The Water Ritual

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ility to clean yourself up, but in the water's ability to wash you.

Living

Practice: The Water Ritual

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water.

You're at the water's edge. And you're wading in. And it's the

Practice: The Water Ritual

beginning of everything.

Out of the Swamp: How I Found Truth (Chapter 6)

MOVEMENT 2: AT THE WATER'S EDGE (The Turning)

Chapter 6: In the Shadow of Your Grace

> "Whoever dwells in the shelter of the Most High will rest in the shadow of the Almighty." — Psalm 91:1

In the Shadow of Your Grace

Listen at: http://go.skylerthomas.com/wqg9eX

Scan to listen: In the Shadow of Your Grace

An Invitation to Reflect

You've walked through five chapters now. You've named the swamp, cried out for help, made a decision to move, let something die, and stepped into living water.

Maybe you've even accepted baptism—that powerful symbol of death to the old and birth to the new.

But now I need to ask you something important:

How seriously have you been able to accept God? To accept Jesus? To accept the living water of baptism washing over you?

Are these just ideas you're entertaining? Nice concepts you're considering? Or are you actually letting them change you?

Because here's what I've discovered: there's a difference between acknowledging truth and living in it. Between knowing about the water and actually staying immersed in it.

You've made it this far. But the journey doesn't end at the water's edge. The question is: **Are you ready to continue this journey dwelling in the living water and moving forward with your life?**

Not going back to the swamp. Not just standing at the edge analyzing. But actually walking forward, day by day, learning what it means to live washed, sheltered, and held by grace.

This isn't about perfection. It's about direction. It's about choosing, again and again, to stay in the water rather than retreat to what's familiar.

So before you read further, pause. Consider:

Can you say, even imperfectly: "God, I'm choosing to stay in the water. I'm choosing to keep walking forward. I'm choosing to let Your love define me, even when it's hard, even when the wilderness stretches ahead, even when I don't understand everything yet."

That's enough. That's the commitment that opens what comes next.

Because in this chapter, you're going to discover something crucial: Grace doesn't just wash you. Grace shelters you for the journey ahead.

Have you ever been disappointed that healing didn't look the way you expected?

You thought getting out of the swamp meant the hard part was over. You thought grace would whisk you away to some peaceful place where everything would finally be easy.

But here you are. You've been washed. You've stepped into the water. You've felt grace begin its work.

And you're discovering that there's still a journey ahead. Still hard terrain. Still scorching days and uncertain paths.

Maybe you're wondering: *Is this all there is? Did I leave the swamp just to end up in a desert?*

I've been there. And here's what I learned: Grace doesn't always look like escape. Sometimes grace looks like shelter.

Can I show you what I mean?

You've been washed. You've stepped into the water, felt grace begin its work, experienced the first cleansing. And you thought—maybe you hoped—that would be the end of the hard part.

But you're discovering something: leaving the swamp doesn't mean instant arrival in paradise. There's a wilderness between the swamp and the promised land. A space of formation. A season of walking.

And the wilderness is hard in different ways.

The swamp was toxic and suffocating. The wilderness is exposed and relentless. In the swamp, you couldn't breathe. In the wilderness, you feel every scorching reality. Heat beats down. The path stretches endlessly. Your resources feel insufficient.

This is where many wayfarers give up. They expect grace to remove them from all difficulty. Eliminate every trial. Make life comfortable and easy. And when they discover grace does something different—provides shelter within the trial rather than escape from it—they're tempted to turn back.

But here's what you're learning: grace isn't just rescue from the pit. Grace is also shelter in the wilderness.

The shadow doesn't eliminate the sun. It provides covering under it.

Grace doesn't always remove the hard season. It shelters you through it.

This chapter is about dwelling in that shadow. About learning that presence in the midst of difficulty is grace enough. That you don't face the heat alone.

The writing that follows came from my wilderness season. When I'd been washed but not yet arrived. When I had to learn that grace isn't always escape—sometimes it's shelter. And that shelter is enough.

Key Themes

Stories of Shadow

Want

Key Themes

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to hear some ancient stories about this kind of shelter?

Ruth Under Boaz’s

Key Themes

Wing (Ruth 2:12)

Picture Ruth in the harvest fields of Bethlehem. She’s a M

Key Themes

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oa bite wi do w in a fo re ig n la nd — no hu sb an d, no se cu rit y, no le ga l pr ot ec ti on . Je wi sh la

Key Themes

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Key Themes

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grain they drop or leave behind. It’s back breaking work, hot and humiliating, and yo

Key Themes

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u're completely at the mercy of the field owner's generosity. Ruth bends and ga

Key Themes

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thers, bends and gathers, working from sunrise in fields that aren't hers, gleaning sc

Key Themes

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raps to keep herself and her mother-in-law Naomi from starving. She’s vuln er

Key Themes

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able. Exposed. A foreign woman alone among men who could exploit her or driv

Key Themes

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Key Themes

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ople, her gods — to follow Naomi and Naomi’s God, he speaks a blessing over her th

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at captures the heart of shadow grace:

> “May the LORD, the God of Israel, under

Key Themes

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whose wings you have come to take refuge, reward you fully for what you have do

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ne.”

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Ruth 2:12 (NLT)

Ruth had left everything to come under the wing-sh

Key Themes

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swings.

And what happens? God provides through Boaz. Protects her from harm. C

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overshe r in the harvest field. Redeems her story completely

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oaz, bears a son named Obed, and becomes part of the lineage of King David and Jesu

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s Himself. Shadow grace doesn’t promise comfort or ease. But it promises cove

Key Themes

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ring. And under that covering, redemption happens.

Israelites Under the Cloud

Key Themes

d (Exodus 13:21-22)

When God led Israel out of Egypt into the wilderness, He didn

Key Themes

’t remove the wilderness. The desert was still scorching hot by day, the sun beating do

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ra tu re pl u m m et ed — bi tte r co ld un de r a va st sk y of st ar s. B ut G od di dn ’t le av e th e m

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exposed. He accompanied them:

> “By day the LORD went ahead of the min

Key Themes

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a pillar of cloud to guide the m on their way and by night in a pillar of fire to give th

Key Themes

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emlight, so that they could travel by day or night. Neither the pillar of cloud by day

Key Themes

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nor the pillar of fire by night left its place in front of the people.”

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Exodus 13

Key Themes

:21-22

Imagine waking up in the desert camp, the sun just rising, heat already buil

Key Themes

ding. You look ahead and there it is — the cloud. Massive. Moving slowly in fron

Key Themes

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t of the camp. Leading. And as you walk behind it, you notice: it’s not just showing

Key Themes

direction. It’s providing shade. Shadow. Covering from the relentless sun. The cl

Key Themes

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Key Themes

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at God was present, leading, sheltering. In the scorching wilderness, that shadow mea

Key Themes

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nt the difference between survival and death.

At night, the cloud transformed into fir

Key Themes

— warm thin the cold, light in the darkness, constant reminder that they weren't al

Key Themes

one. God didn't teleport them to the promised land. He walked them through th

Key Themes

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e wilderness, step by step, mile by mile. But He never left the me exposed. The shado

Key Themes

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w of His presence covered the me every single day of the journey.

Jesus' Lament O

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ver Jerusalem (Matthew 23:37)

Perhaps the most heartbreaking image of shad

Key Themes

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Key Themes

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hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were not willing.”

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— Matthew

Key Themes

23:37

The tender image: a hen gathering her chicks under her wings. When danger

Key Themes

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comes, the mother hen doesn't run. She spreads her wings and calls her chicks to

Key Themes

safety beneath her. She covers them with her own body, willing to take the blow he

Key Themes

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rs el f to pr ot ec t th e m.

T hi s is th e he ar t of G od . L on gi ng to ga th er us . A ch in g to

Key Themes

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cover us. Willing to take the wounds so we can be sheltered. But—and here’s the

Key Themes

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tragedy

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we have to be willing. We have to come. We have to run to the shelter instea

Key Themes

d of a way from it.

The shadow is there. The wings are spread. The invitation is gi

Key Themes

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ven. Will we come?

Deep Dive: Psalm 91

We’ve touched on this psalm, but it deserves

Key Themes

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deeper exploration. Psalm 91 is the ultimate shadow-grace text:

> “He who d

Key Themes

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wells in the shelter of the Most High will rest in the shadow of the Almighty … He

Key Themes

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will cover you with his feathers, and under his wings you will find refuge; his fa it

Key Themes

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hfulness will be your shield and rampart. You will not fear the terror of night, nor the

Key Themes

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arrow that flies by day, nor the pestilence that stalks in the darkness, nor the plague th

Key Themes

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at destroys at midday.”

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Psalm 91:1, 4-6

Notice what God promises: - Shelte

Key Themes

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r fr o m te rr or - R ef ug e fr o m ar ro w s - Pr ot ec ti on fr o m pe sti le nc e an d pl ag ue

B ut

Key Themes

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notice what He doesn’t promise: *the absence of terror, arrows, pestilence, or pl*

Key Themes

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ague. The dangers are still real. The threats still exist. But under the shadow, we’

Key Themes

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recovered. The evil that would destroy us cannot penetrate the shelter of those wings.

T

Key Themes

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his is shadow grace: not immunity from trial, but invincibility in trial. Not escape

Key Themes

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from danger, but safety within danger. Not the absence of the storm, but the presence

Key Themes of Love in the storm.

The Wayfarer Moment

Grace doesn’t promise no suffering. Grace promises no suffering alone.

This is the wayfarer truth we discover in the shadow: Reality doesn’t always remove the pain, but it never leaves us in it alone.

The sun still beats down. The wilderness is still real. The journey is still hard.

But we’re covered. Sheltered. Never abandoned.

In the swamp, we felt alone. Isolated. Forgotten.

At the water’s edge, we discover the shadow. And in that shadow, we find we were never alone at all. Love has been with us all along, waiting for us to stop running and start resting.

The shadow isn’t the absence of light—it’s the shape love makes when it stands between us and harm.

Song Integration

L

Song Integration

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lyrics: In the Shadow of Your Grace

[Verse 1]

I’ve been running,
I’ve been hiding

Song Integration

, Worn out from the fight. Tangled up in chains I fastened, Lost inside the

Song Integration

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night.

[Pre-Chorus]

But You call my name,
You take the weight,
You step ri

Song Integration

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ght into my mistake. You tear the veil, You light the way, I won't go back, I won

Song Integration

’t be the same!

[Chorus]

Oh, in the shadow of Your grace,
Every fear begins

Song Integration

to fade. Wherever cy meets me face to face, I am free, I’m not the same!

[V

Song Integration

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verse 2]

I’ve been restless, wide-eyed, sleepless, Haunted by my past. But Your bl

Song Integration

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ood is still my ransom, And Your love is built to last.

[Pre-Chorus]

You call m

Song Integration

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y name, You take the weight, You step right into my mistake. You tear the veil,

Song Integration

You light the way, I won't go back, I won't be the same!

[Chorus]

Oh, in the

Song Integration

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shadow of Your grace, Every fear begins to fade. Where mercy meets me face to

Song Integration

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face, I am free, I’m not the same!

[Bridge]

No more hiding, no more grav

Song Integration

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e, Hellishshaking, heavenstays! Chains are falling, fear erased, I am free in Jesu

Song Integration

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s’ name!

[Tag] I won’t bow down, I won’t break, Darkness runs when I say His

Song Integration

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name! I won't bow down, I won't break, I'm alive in Jesus' name!

[Final Chorus

Song Integration

] Oh, in the shadow of Your grace, Every fear begins to fade. Wherein mercy mee

Song Integration

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ts me face to face, I am free, I’m not the same!

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Song Integration

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Key Takeaways

- **Grace shelters, not just rescues.** God doesn't always remove the trial, but He covers you through it. The shadow doesn't eliminate the sun—it provides protection under it.
- **Hide IN God, not FROM God.** Running toward shelter is faith; running from exposure is fear. Bring your shame into the shadow of grace where it's covered, not hidden.
- **Shadow is proof of light.** You can't have shadow without a light source. Resting in God's shadow means you're closer to His presence than you've ever been.
- **Dwelling is different from visiting.** Psalm 91 invites you to live in the shelter, not just stop by in crisis. Make presence your primary residence, not your emergency contact.

Reflections for the Road

Practice: Shadow R

Reflections for the Road

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est

Find a quiet place where you won't be interrupted. If possible, find

Reflections for the Road

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actual shade — under a tree, in the shadow of a building, anywhere

Reflections for the Road

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with a clear contrast between sun and shadow.

Sit in the shadow. Fe

Reflections for the Road

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el the temperature difference. Notice how the same sun that wou

Reflections for the Road

ldscorch you is now blocked by something substantial.

Close your eyes

Reflections for the Road

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and pray: **“God, I’m sitting in shadow right now. Physical**

Reflections for the Road

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shadow. And I need spiritual shadow too. I need Your covering

Reflections for the Road

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g. Your shelter. Your wings over me.”

Name what you’re carryi

Reflections for the Road

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ng: the shame, the fear, the exhaustion, the trial that won't end. T

Reflections for the Road

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hen pray: **“I do n’t understand why You have n’t removed th**

Reflections for the Road

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is. But I trust that Your shadow is enough. Cover me. Shelter

Reflections for the Road

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me. Let me rest here, under Your wings, trusting that You’

Reflections for the Road

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rebetween me and the heat.”

Sit there for as long as you can. Fi

Reflections for the Road

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Reflections for the Road

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lem-solve. Don’t plan. Just rest in the shadow. This is what dw

Reflections for the Road

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elling looks like: choosing to stay in presence even when the trial isn’

Reflections for the Road

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t over. Trusting that the shadow is sufficient.

Closing Image

You're still at the water's edge. The journey isn't over. There's more road ahead, more wilderness to cross, more unknowns to face.

But something has changed.

You're no longer running from the sun. You're resting in the shadow.

The heat is still real. The sun still beats down. The journey is still hard.

But over you, sheltering you, covering you, is the shadow of the Almighty.

Take a breath.

You look up and see the source of the shadow: Love itself, standing between you and the scorching trial. Not removing it, but covering you through it.

And you realize: this is enough. Not what you wanted, perhaps. But enough.

The shadow proves the light is real.

And where there's light, there's the One who is Light.

So you breathe. You rest. You trust.

And you take the next step, knowing you're not walking alone. The shadow moves with you. The covering remains. The presence never leaves.

You're learning to live in the shadow of grace.

And in that shadow, you're finding something you didn't expect: not escape from the wilderness, but peace within it.

Not the absence of trial, but the presence of Love in trial.

Not the end of the journey, but the strength to keep walking.

One step at a time.

Under His wings.

In the shadow of grace.

Out of the Swamp: How I Found Truth (Chapter 7)

MOVEMENT 2: AT THE WATER'S EDGE (The Turning)

Chapter 7: Amazing Grace I Did Receive

> "For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith— and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God." — Ephesians 2:8

Amazing Grace

Listen at: http://go.skylerthomas.com/UCBWc5

Scan to listen: Amazing Grace

An Invitation to Receive

You've walked through six chapters now. You've named the swamp, cried out, decided, died to the old, stepped into the water, and discovered grace shelters you in the wilderness.

But here's a question that might make you uncomfortable:

Do you really believe you're worthy of this? Do you believe grace is actually for you?

Because if you're honest, part of you is still keeping score. Still calculating whether you've done enough, been good enough, believed hard enough to deserve what you're receiving.

Part of you is still trying to earn it.

And that’s the problem. Because what comes next—what you’re about to encounter in this chapter—can’t be earned. Can’t be deserved. Can’t be worked for or achieved.

It can only be received.

Grace is the most offensive word in the language because it says: “You’re getting this for free, and there’s nothing you can do about it.”

No performance required. No goodness quota. No earning your way in.

Just… receiving.

So I need to ask you: **Can you let go of trying to deserve it? Can you stop calculating your worthiness? Can you simply open your hands and receive what’s being freely given?**

This is harder than it sounds. Because receiving grace means admitting you’re the kind of person who needs it. Not someone mostly good who stumbled. Not someone who tried their best. But someone who absolutely, categorically doesn’t deserve it.

A wretch, in fact.

And grace says: “That’s exactly who this is for.”

Before you continue reading, pause. Consider:

Can you say, even if it feels scandalous: “God, I don’t deserve this. I can’t earn it. I can’t repay it. But I’m opening my hands to receive it anyway. Amazing grace—for a wretch like me.”

That’s the prayer that opens the door.

Because what comes next isn’t about what you’ve done or who you’ve been. It’s about what Love does for those who don’t deserve it.

Keep reading. Because what comes next might offend you—or it might save you.

You know the feeling when you realize you’ve been given something you absolutely don’t deserve?

Not a small gift. Not a favor you could repay. But something so extravagant, so unearned, so wildly disproportionate to anything you’ve done that it stops you in your tracks.

That’s grace.

And here’s what makes it so hard to receive: we’ve been conditioned to believe grace is for people who are mostly good. People who stumbled a little but tried their best. People who deserve a second chance because they’ve earned it through effort.

But that’s not grace. That’s mercy. That’s fairness. That’s getting what we’ve worked for.

Grace is different. Grace is scandalous.

Grace is for wretches.

Not people who stumbled—people who ran. Not people who tried their best—people who didn't even try. Not people who deserve it—people who absolutely, categorically, objectively do not.

"Amazing grace, how sweet the sound, that saved a wretch like me."

Not a mostly-good person. A wretch.

This chapter is about receiving what you don't deserve. About standing at the edge of clean water while still covered in swamp mud and discovering: the water isn't waiting for you to clean up first.

The water is what cleans you up.

The writing that follows came from my encounter with scandalous grace. When I'd trampled on every gift, ignored every warning, chosen my way instead of the right way—and discovered grace wasn't done with me.

Grace, in fact, had just begun.

Key Themes

Stories of Scandalous Grace

Wanted to hear more

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e st or ie s a b o ut th is ki n d of gr ac e?

T he P ro di ga l S o n: F ro m th e Pi g pe n to th

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e Father's Embrace (Luke 15:11-32)

There's a famous story Jesus told about a

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younger son who demanded his inheritance early (essentially wishing his father de

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ad), left home, squandered everything in wild living, and ended up in a pigpen, so desp

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er at e he ’s ea ti ng pi g fo od . Fr o m th at pi gp en , he m ak es a de ci si on : > “I wi ll go ho m

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e to my father and say, ‘Father, I have sinned against both heaven and you, and I am

Key Themes

no longer worthy of being called your son. Please take me on as a hired servant.”

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Key Themes

Luke 15:18-19 (NLT)

He’s not expecting grace. He’s expecting to be a servant at

Key Themes

best. He’s rehearsing his speech, his apology, his offer to earn his way back. But

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watch what happens:

> “So he returned home to his father. And while he was still a lo

Key Themes

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ng way off, his father saw him coming. Filled with love and compassion, he ran to his

Key Themes

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son, embraced him, and kissed him.”

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— Luke 15:20 (NLT)

The father doesn’t

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wait for the apology. Doesn't wait for the son to grovel. While the son is still far of

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f, the father runs. And when the son tries to give his speech, the father cuts him of

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f. He calls for the best robe, a ring, sandals. He throws a party. This is scandalo

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us grace. The son deserves nothing. He’s squandered everything. He’s come home

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smelling like pigs. But the father doesn’t care about what he deserves. The fath

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ionship. And in God’s economy, you’re a son or daughter not because you’ve earned it

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but because He's declared it.

Henri Nouwen, in his profound meditation on this para

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ble, *The Return of the Prodigal Son*, writes:

> “The father’s love is unconditional…

Key Themes

There are no ‘ifs.’ The love of the father is given, not as the reward for effort, but as

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a pure gift. The younger son did not deserve that love… But the father gives it any

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way. The love of the father is free; it is not dependent on any behavior, performan

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ce, or result. It simply is."

>>

— Henri Nouwen, *The Return of the Prodigal Son*

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Nouwen spent hours contemplating Rembrandt’s painting of this scene, and he disc

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overed something profound: the father’s hands on the son’s shoulders aren’t just ho

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ldin g — they're blessing. One hand is strong and masculine, the other gentle and

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feminine. Together they represent the fullness of God’s love: both strength and te

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ant. The father makes him a son. That’s grace.

The Woman Caught in Adultery

Key Themes

: No Condemnation (John 8: 1-11)

There religious leaders drag a woman ca

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ught in adultery before Jesus. The Law says she should be stoned. They're testing Jesu

Key Themes

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s, trying to trap Him.

Jesus bends down and writes in the dust. Then He says:

> “Al

Key Themes

l right, but let the one who has never sinned throw the first stone!”

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— John 8:7

Key Themes

(NLT)

One by one, the accusers leave. Starting with the oldest — the ones who've li

Key Themes

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ved long enough to know their own sin.

Finally, it's just Jesus and the woman.

Key Themes

And Jesus asks:

> “Then Jesus stood up again and said to the woman, ‘Where

Key Themes

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are your accusers? Didn't even one of the mconde mn you?'

'No, Lord,' she said.

Key Themes

And Jesus said, ‘Neither do I. Go and sin no more.’”

>>

— John 8:10-11 (NLT)

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o condemnation. Not "You're forgiven because you promised never to do it agai

Key Themes

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n.”

Not “You’re forgiven because you’ve suffered enough.”

Just: “Neither do I.”

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Key Themes

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t’s grace. Unearned. Undeserved. Freely given.

And notice what follows: “Go and

Key Themes

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sin no more.”

Grace doesn’t excuse sin—it empowers transformation. It doesn’

Key Themes

t say, “Keep living however you want.” It says, “You’re free now. Free from cond

Key Themes

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emnation. Free from the power of sin. So go live like the free person you are.”

Z

Key Themes

Zacchaeus: Grace That Seeks the Seeker (Luke 19:1-10)

Zacchaeus is a chief tax

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collector—a collaborator with Rome, a thief who's grown rich by extorting his so

Key Themes

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mbs a tree to see Him.

Jesus stops under the tree, looks up, and says:

> “Zacch

Key Themes

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aeus!” he said. “Quick, come down! I must be a guest in your home today.”

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Key Themes

Luke 19:5 (NLT)

The crowd grumbles: "He has gone to be the guest of a sinn

Key Themes

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er.”

But Zacchaeus responds to grace with transformation:

> “I will give half my wea

Key Themes

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lt h to the poor, Lord, and if I have cheated people on their taxes, I will give them

Key Themes

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back four times as much!”

>>

— Luke 19:8 (NLT)

Jesus didn’t demand restitution

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first. He offered relationship first. And the relationship produced transformation. T

Key Themes

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hat's how grace works. It doesn't wait for us to fix ourselves. It meets us where we

Key Themes

are, offers relationship, and then — out of that relationship — transformation flows.

Key Themes

John Ortberg captures this perfectly: > “Grace is the offer of God’s ceaseless pres

Key Themes

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ence and irrational love. The only thing you have to do is to want to be with Jesus more e

Key Themes

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than you want anything else.”

>>

— John Ortberg, *The Me I Want to Be*

Zacchaeus

Key Themes

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wanted to see Jesus more than he wanted to maintain his reputation. He climbed

Key Themes

a tree — ridiculous for a wealthy tax collector. And Jesus saw him, called him down,

Key Themes

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and offered relationship. That’s grace—meeting us in our ridiculous, desperate se

Key Themes

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ek in g an d sa yi ng , “ C o m e do w n. I w an t to be wi th yo u. ”

The Core Scripture Truth

Here’s the theological bedrock of everything we’re exploring in Ephesians 2:8-9:

Let’s unpack this verse phrase by phrase, because it changes everything.

“By grace you have been saved”:

Grace is the means. Not effort. Not goodness. Not trying really hard. Grace.

And notice the tense: “have been saved.” It’s done. Accomplished. Complete. You’re not trying to get saved. If you’re in Christ, you are saved. Present reality, not future hope.

“Through faith”:

Faith is the instrument. The way grace is received. Not works, but trust. Belief. Reliance on God’s promise rather than your own ability.

Faith isn’t the same as perfection. You don’t have to have perfect faith to be saved. You just have to have faith—even mustard-seed-sized faith—in a perfect Savior.

“And this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God”:

This is crucial. Both the salvation and the faith are gifts. You can’t even take credit for believing. God gives the grace. God gives the faith. You receive.

Why does Paul emphasize this? Because our default mode is to try to contribute something. To earn a little bit. To prove we’re worthy. But grace, by definition, can’t be earned. The moment you think you’ve contributed to your salvation, you’ve moved from grace to works. And works can’t save.

“Not by works, so that no one can boast”:

If salvation were by works, then the people who did the most works would have bragging rights. They’d be “better Christians” than those who did fewer works.

But in grace, there’s no hierarchy. The apostle Paul and the thief on the cross stand before God on the same footing: utterly dependent on grace.

No one can boast. Not about how good they are. Not about how hard they tried. Not about how much they’ve done for God.

We can only boast in this: Amazing grace, how sweet the sound, that saved a wretch like me.

Andrew Murray beautifully expresses this:

> “The first link between my soul and Christ is not my goodness but my badness, not my merit but my misery, not my standing but my falling, not my riches but my need.”
>
> — Andrew Murray, *Abide in Christ*

We don’t come to grace because we’re good enough. We come because we’re desperate enough. And that desperation—that acknowledgment of our wretchedness—is the beginning of transformation.

The Wayfarer Moment

Song Integration

The first time I truly understood John Newton's "A

The Wayfarer Moment

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mazing Grace," I was standing at a dead end of my own making, and

The Wayfarer Moment

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the word “wretch” suddenly stopped being offensive and started be

The Wayfarer Moment

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ing honest. This isn’t a song about minor mistakes. This is about mor

The Wayfarer Moment

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The Wayfarer Moment

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g condemnation and receiving grace instead.

To understand this hym

The Wayfarer Moment

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n, you need to know how wrote it. John Newton was a slave trader. He co

The Wayfarer Moment

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mmandedship transporting kidnapped Africans across the Atlantic in

The Wayfarer Moment

horrific conditions. He profited from human suffering on an industrial sc

The Wayfarer Moment

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ale. When a violent storm nearly sank his ship in 1748, Newton cried

The Wayfarer Moment

out to God. That moment began a long transformation—but even af

The Wayfarer Moment

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ter his conversion, he continued in the slave trade for years. Only

The Wayfarer Moment

later, after entering ministry, did he become an active abolitionist, wor

The Wayfarer Moment

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king with William Wilberforce to end the slave trade in Britain. When N

The Wayfarer Moment

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e wton called himself a wretch, he wasn’t being dramatic. He was be

The Wayfarer Moment

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ing factual. Modern Christianity has a complicated relationship with

The Wayfarer Moment

“wretch.” Some hymnals have softened it: “that saved and strengthe

The Wayfarer Moment

ned me" or "that saved a soul like me." But the softening misses th

The Wayfarer Moment

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e point entirely. Grace only makes sense if we're honest about what w

The Wayfarer Moment

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e're being saved from. If we're basically good people who just need a lit

The Wayfarer Moment

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tle help, grace isn't amazing

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it's redundant. But if we're wretches

The Wayfarer Moment

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so far gone we can’t save ourselves, having actively participated in ev

The Wayfarer Moment

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il—then grace isn't just nice. It's necessary. It's scandalous. It's a

The Wayfarer Moment

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mazing. The word “wretch” isn’t about self-loathing. It’s about ho

The Wayfarer Moment

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nest assessment. Romans 3:23 doesn’t say “all have stumbled a little

The Wayfarer Moment

—it says "all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." All. Eve

The Wayfarer Moment

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rysingleone. We’reallwretcheslinneedofgrace. Andthat’sgoodnews. B

The Wayfarer Moment

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ecause if grace is only for the basically good, most of us are disqualif

The Wayfarer Moment

ied. But if grace is for wretches, we all qualify. The original writing

The Wayfarer Moment

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from my blog captures the journey: “I traded it in for my version of free

The Wayfarer Moment

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dom/Ruling others from my own throne.” This is the Genesis 3

The Way farer Moment

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temptation: "You will be like God" — the seductive belief that we can

The Wayfarer Moment

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define reality for ourselves, that autonomy is the highest good. So I

The Wayfarer Moment

took the gifts I'd been given and threw them away for my version of fr

The Wayfarer Moment

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The Wayfarer Moment

I was living / Turned out to make me a slave / Rather than bringing

The Wayfarer Moment

life to me / It buried me in my own grave.”

Sometimes God lets us ex

The Wayfarer Moment

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haust our own options. He doesn’t intervene the moment we st

The Wayfarer Moment

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art running. He lets the path we’ve chosen reveal its true nature. He lets

The Wayfarer Moment

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us hit the dead end. Not because He's cruel, but because that's when

The Wayfarer Moment

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we're finally ready to listen. The dead-end path isn't punishment. It'

The Wayfarer Moment

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s mercy. “I stepped off that dead end road / And simply trusted He

The Wayfarer Moment

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would save / With each step I took, I felt His hand / Lifting me out of m

The Wayfarer Moment

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y grave.”

Simply trusted. Not “I cleaned myself up and then approach

The Wayfarer Moment

ed.” Just trust. That’s all grace requires. Not perfection, not perform

The Wayfarer Moment

ance. And the miracle: with each step toward the water, I felt His hand

The Wayfarer Moment

. Not after I arrived. *With each step*. He metme in the moving. Gra

The Wayfarer Moment

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ceactive, present, immediate. The three verses I recorded trace the

The Wayfarer Moment

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journey. Verse 1: The Rescue

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“Amazing grace, how sweet the so

The Wayfarer Moment

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und / That saved a wretch like me.”

All passive voice — things done

The Wayfarer Moment

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to me, not *by* me. Grace is the actor. I’m the recipient. Verse 2: The Fe

The Wayfarer Moment

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and Relief — grace teaches holy fear (appropriate awe) and relieves

The Wayfarer Moment

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fear (terror of condemnation). Both. Verse 3: The Testimony

“’Ti

The Wayfarer Moment

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s grace hath brought me safe thus far / And grace will lead me home.”

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Looking back: I didn’t survive through my own strength. Looking for

The Wayfarer Moment

ward: grace *will* lead me home. Certainty. "Amazing Grace" has en

The Wayfarer Moment

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dured for centuries because we're all wretches, and we all need grace.

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The scandal isn't just that grace saved me once. The scandal is that

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grace keeps saving me — daily, hourly, every time I turn from the dead

The Way farer Moment

- end path and move toward the water’s edge.

Key Takeaways

- **Grace is for wretches, not nice people.** If you deserved it, it wouldn’t be grace—it would be payment. The scandal is that God loves you while you’re still a mess, not after you clean up.
- **You traded true freedom for false freedom.** Autonomy isn’t liberty—it’s slavery in disguise. Real freedom comes through surrender to the One who died to set you free.
- **Grace is costly, not cheap.** It cost Christ His life and will cost you your old life built on self-rule. But what you gain is life itself—abundant, eternal, real.

- **Your dead-end road is grace's invitation.** When your self-made path stops short of living water, that's not failure—it's God showing you where the real source is. Step off and run toward it.

Reflections for the Road

Practice: Writing Your Grace Story

Grace becomes real whe

Reflections for the Road

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n it becomes personal. When it’s not just doctrine but story. Take so

Reflections for the Road

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metime—unhurriedtime—and write your own grace story. Not

Reflections for the Road

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a theological essay. A story. Answer these prompts: - Where was

Reflections for the Road

I when grace found me? - What dead-end road had I travelled? - W

Reflections for the Road

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hat did I think about myself? About God? About my worthiness

Reflections for the Road

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to be loved? - When did I hear the invitation to turn toward the wat

Reflections for the Roader's edge? - What did stepping toward grace feel like? - How has gr

Reflections for the Road

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ace lifted me from my grave?

Don't worry about making it sound

Reflections for the Road

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polished or spiritual. Write it honestly. Write it in your own voice. Writ

Reflections for the Road

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e it as your testimony. And then, if possible, share it with someone. N

Reflections for the Road

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ot to impress them. Just to declare it. To say out loud: This is w

Reflections for the Road

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hat grace did for me.

Because when grace stops being doctrine an

Reflections for the Road

d becomes your story, it changes everything.

Closing Image

You're standing in the water now. Not all the way in yet—just ankle-deep. But you're in.

And the water is exactly what was promised. Living. Flowing. Clean.

The mud from the swamp is starting to wash away. Not all at once, but gradually. With each step deeper, more of it lifts off and is carried downstream.

You look down at your feet and you can see them clearly for the first time in years. The water is so clear you can see straight to the bottom. And you realize: This is what I've been longing for. Not just to be clean, but to be seen—truly seen—and loved anyway.

Take a breath.

You cup water in your hands and pour it over your arms. The mud runs off in brown streams. Underneath: skin. Your actual skin. You'd almost forgotten what it looked like.

You're still a mess. You're still covered in swamp residue. But you're also being washed. Both are true at the same time.

And from somewhere deep inside—deeper than the shame, deeper than the fear, deeper than the old lies—you hear it rising up. Your voice. Singing.

Amazing grace, how sweet the sound, that saved a wretch like me. I once was lost but now I'm found, was blind but now I see.

It's not just a hymn anymore. It's your story.

You're at the water's edge. You've stepped in. And grace is washing you clean.

One step at a time. One breath at a time. One grace-filled moment at a time.

You're being made new. And it's only just beginning.

Out of the Swamp: How I Found Truth (Chapter 8)

MOVEMENT 2: AT THE WATER'S EDGE (The Turning)

Chapter 8: Dig a Little Deeper

> "They will be like a tree planted by the water that sends out its roots by the stream." —Jeremiah 17:8

Dig a Little Deeper

Listen at: http://go.skylerthomas.com/i0kY88

Scan to listen: Dig a Little Deeper

An Invitation to Go Deeper

You've journeyed through seven chapters now. You've named the swamp, cried out, decided, died to the old, stepped into living water, found shelter in grace, and received what you don't deserve.

You've been washed. The surface mud is gone. You look better. Smell better. Function better.

But now I need to ask you something uncomfortable:

Are you willing to let grace go deeper than the surface?

Because here's what I've learned: Getting clean isn't the same as getting healed.

It’s like the sign in the doctor’s office: “Do you want to be right, or do you want to be well?”

You can wash off the mud and still carry the wounds underneath. You can look healed on the outside while the infection still festers inside. You can function well while the scar tissue hides the pain you’ve never actually dealt with.

Grace doesn’t just want to clean you up. Grace wants to heal you from the inside out. And that requires digging—opening wounds you’ve spent years protecting, feeling pain you’ve been numbing, facing truths you’ve been avoiding.

Here’s the hard truth nobody tells you upfront: You can’t heal what you won’t feel. And you can’t feel what you keep buried.

This chapter is about excavation. About going beneath the surface to the deep places where real transformation happens.

And I’m not going to lie to you—it’s terrifying. It’s going to hurt. You’re going to want to stop halfway through and just settle for looking clean on the outside.

But if you’re willing—if you can say, even with fear, “God, I don’t want to just look healed, I want to BE healed. Dig as deep as You need to”—then what comes next will transform you from the inside out.

Are you ready to go deeper? To let grace excavate not just your behavior but your heart? To dig through the scar tissue until you hit bedrock truth?

If yes, take a breath and keep reading.

This is where transformation stops being surface-level and starts becoming soul-level.

There’s a difference between clean and healed.

You can wash off the surface mud—the visible stains, the obvious filth, the stuff everyone can see. The water does that quickly. You step in. The dirt rinses away. You look clean.

But underneath? That’s where the real work begins.

Underneath the surface are the wounds you’ve carried for years. The scar tissue that formed over the original pain. The coping mechanisms you developed to survive. The defense strategies that became so automatic you forgot you were using them. The ways of numbing, avoiding, performing, pretending that protected you from feeling the full weight of what happened.

The surface dirt washes away easily. The scar tissue? That requires excavation.

This chapter is about the moment you realize: if you want real healing—not just cleaning, but healing—you’re going to have to go deeper.

You’re going to have to dig.

Digging is terrifying. Underneath the scar tissue is the original wound. The one you've been protecting for years. The one that still hurts when you accidentally brush against it in the middle of the night.

To heal that wound, you have to open it again. You have to cut through the scar tissue, drain the toxins, let air and light reach the infection that's been festering in the dark.

You can't numb this. Real healing requires you to feel. To face. To dig.

The writing that follows came from my season of excavation. When I discovered that time doesn't heal all wounds—it just buries them deeper. The only way to true healing was through the pain I'd been avoiding for years.

Grace doesn't just wash the surface. Grace goes deep. All the way down to the bedrock truth of who you are beneath the wounds, beneath the scars, beneath the lies you've believed about yourself.

But you have to let it.

You have to dig.

Key Themes

Stories of Digging Deeper

Want to hear

Key Themes

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some ancient stories about this kind of excavation?

Isaac Re-Digging the

Key Themes

Wells (Genesis 26:18)

Picture the scene: Isaac is living in the Negev, the dry so

Key Themes

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Key Themes

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ells, there's no survival. No water for people, no water for flocks, no way to stay in th

Key Themes

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Key Themes

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water, established a life. But after Abraham died, enemies came and filled in

Key Themes

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every single well. They hauled dirt and rocks, stopped up the openings, buried the

Key Themes

sources. It was sabotage — an attempt to drive Isaac out, to reclaim the land, to erase

Key Themes

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e Abraham's legacy. Isaac could have left. Could have said, "The wells are gone.

Key Themes

The work is undone. I'll start somewhere else." But he didn't. The text says:

> "

Key Themes

Here opened the wells his father had dug, which the Philistines had filled in afte

Key Themes

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r Abraham’s death. Isaac also restored the names Abraham had given them.”

>

Key Themes

> — Genesis 26:18 (NLT)

Isaac had to dig again. Shovel by shovel, stone by stone,

Key Themes

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removing the fill, excavating through layers of debris until he hit the original well sh

Key Themes

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aft. The wells had been there. His father had done the work. Water had flowed. B

Key Themes

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ut over time, they'd been deliberately stopped up, buried, hidden. Now Isaac had

Key Themes

to re-dig the m. Hard, sweaty, exhausting work. Digging through sabotage. Excav

Key Themes

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ating through enemy interference. Going back to what was true from the beginnin

Key Themes

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g. This is the work of excavation. The well was dug. Your true identity was establ

Key Themes

is he d. The truth about you was set. The well is there. But over the years, enemies

Key Themes

have filled it in. Trauma, lies, shame, false beliefs — they've stopped up the well. Di

Key Themes

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gging deep er means re-opening the wells. Going back to what was true from the be

Key Themes

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ginning. Excavating through all the fill until you hit water again. And when you do,

Key Themes

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the water is still there.

Still living.

Still life-giving.

Deep Calls to Deep (Psalm

Key Themes

42:7)

The psalmist writes:

> "I hear the tumult of the raging seas as your waves and

Key Themes

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surging tides sweep over me.”

>>

— Psalm 42:7 (NLT)

There’s a depth in Rea

Key Themes

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lity that calls to the depth in you. Not the surface you. Not the performed you. There

Key Themes

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Key Themes

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Key Themes

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to dig. To go below the surface. To cut through the scar tissue and invite healing in

Key Themes

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to the wound. Deep calls to deep. The depth of Love is reaching for the depth of yo

Key Themes

urneed. When they meet, healing happens.

Timothy Keller writes:

> “We never be

Key Themes

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come safe from temptation. We become holy not by avoiding sin, but by loving God

Key Themes

. When we flee to God in our fear and brokenness, we find that He can use even our

Key Themes

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darkest moments to draw us deeper into His love.”

>>

—

Timothy Keller, *Walking wi*

Key Themes

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Key Themes

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Key Themes

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Key Themes

The Woman at the Well Going Deeper (John 4)

It’s noon — the hottest part of th

Key Themes

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e day. No one comes to the well at noon if they can help it. You come in the morning or

Key Themes

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evening when it’s cooler, when the other women are there, when drawing water

Key Themes

becomes a social event.

But this woman comes at noon. Alone. Because she can’t fa

Key Themes

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ce the other women. Can't bear the stares, the whispers, the judgment. Fivem

Key Themes

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arriages. Five. And the man she’s with now isn’t even her husband. Everyone kno

Key Themes

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ws. Everyone talks. So she comes when no one else is there. Except today, there’

Key Themes

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s a Jewish man sitting by the well. A Jew. In Samaria. Jews don’t come here. And they

Key Themes

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definitely don’t talk to Samaritan women. But He does. “Give me a drink.”

T

Key Themes

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he conversation starts surface-level, defensive:

Woman: “You’re a Jew. I’m a Sa

Key Themes

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mar ita n. Why are you even talking to me?”

Jesus could have stayed at that level

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cult

Key Themes

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ural barriers, religious differences, safe territory. But He goes deeper: Jesus: “If

Key Themes

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you knew how asking, you'd ask me for living water."

Woman: "You don'

Key Themes

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Key Themes

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again, but whoever drinks the water I give will never thirst.”

Woman: “Sir, give me

Key Themes

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this water!”

Getting closer. She’s starting to want something. But Jesus goes even

Key Themes

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deeper: Jesus: “Go call your husband.” There it is. The question she dreads. There

Key Themes

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ality she can’t escape. Woman: “I don’t have a husband.”

She states it simply. Fl

Key Themes

atly. Hoping that ends it.

Jesus: “You’re right. You’ve had five husbands, and the

Key Themes

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man you're with now isn't your husband."

Now we're at the wound. The shame. T

Key Themes

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Key Themes

out. There as on she's alone.

And Jesus

He does n't condemn her. Doesn't lectur

Key Themes

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her.
Doesn’t pull back in disgust. He just sees her. Fully. Knows her completely.

Key Themes

And still offers her living water.

From this depth — the place of wound and shame

Key Themes

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and honesty

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she encounters Jesus as the Messiah. And everything changes. She le

Key Themes

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aves her water jar behind and runs back to town, no longer hiding, and tells everyone:

Key Themes

“Come see a man who told me everything I ever did!”

That’s what happens whe

Key Themes

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new
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truth
go
deep.
Transformation flows from depth, not surface.

The Core Scripture Truth

Here’s the promise that makes digging possible:

> “If you look for me wholeheartedly, you will find me.”

— Jeremiah 29:13 (NLT)

God isn’t hiding from you. He’s not playing games, making Himself difficult to find so only the spiritually elite can reach Him.

But He is deep. And finding Him requires going deep.

“With all your heart.” Not with half. Not with the surface layer. With all of it. The whole thing. The wounds and the shame and the false beliefs and the raw, unfiltered need.

When you seek Him there—in the depths, not just the shallows—you find Him. And when you find Him, you discover He’s been there all along. In the deep. Waiting for you to stop protecting yourself long enough to let Him in.

This isn’t about earning presence by being vulnerable enough. It’s about discovering that Love’s presence is already there, in the depths, and the work is removing the barriers we’ve erected to keep it (and everyone else) out.

The Wayfarer Moment

Song Integration

“Time heals all

The Wayfarer Moment

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wounds” — it sounds like truth until you discover something painful: tim

The Wayfarer Moment

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e doesn’t heal wounds. Time just buries them deeper under layers of sc

The Wayfarer Moment

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artisu e until we've convinced ourselves we're finew hen we're actu all

The Wayfarer Moment

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y just numb. “Dig a Little Deeper” emerged from that season of exca

The Wayfarer Moment

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vation—when I learned you can’t heal what you won’t feel, and you

The Wayfarer Moment

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can't feel what you keep buried. My counselor, Dr. Petit, explained

The Wayfarer Moment

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it with devastating clarity: “It’s been said time heals all wounds … yet fo

The Wayfarer Moment

r the untreated or poorly treated wound, time will infect then scar. F

The Wayfarer Moment

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or the unset or improperly set bone, time will knit then lame.”

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The Wayfarer Moment

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The Wayfarer Moment

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es infected and forms scar tissue over the infection. A broken bone left

The Wayfarer Moment

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unset knits back together in the wrong position, leaving you permanently

The Wayfarer Moment

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y la me.

The same is true spiritually and emotionally. Time doesn’t

The Wayfarer Moment

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heal soul wounds. Proper treatment does. And proper treatment requ

The Wayfarer Moment

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ir es di gg in g — op en in g th e w ou nd , dr ai ni ng th e in fe cti on , th en gi vi ng

The Wayfarer Moment

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time as the servant of healing rather than as the supposed healer itself. F

The Wayfarer Moment

or years, I'd been functioning around my wounds rather than healing the

The Wayfarer Moment

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m. I looked healed. I sounded healed. But I was just well-rehearsed at

The Wayfarer Moment

hiding. The turning point came when my counselor helped me disti

The Way fa re r Mo m en t

ng ui sh be tw ee n th e “r ea cti ve se lf” an d th e “r ea l se lf.” A ft er m o m en

The Wayfarer Moments

ts when I’d reacted poorly, he would ask: “What specifically was reac

The Wayfarer Moment

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tive? Once that becomes clear, we can explore why that’s a trigger.”

The Wayfarer Moment

That question opened the door to excavation. Triggers aren't random. T

The Wayfarer Moment

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hey're connected to wounds. To disarm the trigger, you have to heal the

The Wayfarer Moment

wound. But to heal the wound, you have to open it. This terrified me. T

The Wayfarer Moment

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he wound was covered, scarred over. Opening it meant feeling the original

The Wayfarer Moment

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pain again. Meant acknowledging how deep it went. Meant admitting I w

The Wayfarer Moment

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as n’t as healed as I’d been pretending to be. The song begins by calling out

The Wayfarer Moment

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the platitude: “They say that time can heal what’s broke, but it just

The Wayfarer Moment

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whispers empty hope.” Time as healer is an empty promise. The pr

The Way fa re r Mo m en t

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e-ch or us ca pt ur es th e br ea ki ng po in t: “I tri ed to fa ke it ’ti l I m ad e it, bu t I ca

The Wayfarer Moment

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n’t outrun what’s breaking me.”

The decision to stop running and start

The Wayfarer Moment

digging. The chorus is theologically crucial: “So I’m gonna dig a little

The Wayfarer Moment

deeper, down where the hurting hides. Open the scar so grace can reach,

The Wayfarer Moment

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the pain that’s buried deep inside.” We don’t dig just to feel the pain —

The Wayfarer Moment

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we dig so grace can reach what’s been inaccessible. As long as the wou

The Wayfarer Moment

nd is buried under scar tissue, grace can't touch it. But when we expose

The Wayfarer Moment

it to light and truth, grace can do its healing work. “It’s gonna hurt, I kno

The Wayfarer Moment

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wit will, and healing starts when I finally feel.”

Verse two introduces

The Wayfarer Moment

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the promise that makes excavation possible: “Truth won’t run, it stan

The Wayfarer Moment

ds its ground, and mercy whispers through the sound: ‘You’re not al

The Wayfarer Moment

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one, I’m still right here, even in your tears.”

Presence in the pain. God does

The Way fa re r Mo m en t

n’ t w ait un til w e’ re he al ed to sh o w up . He m ee ts us in th e m es s, in th e

The Wayfarer Moment

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tears, in the raw exposed wound. Not after them, not despite them, bu

The Wayfarer Moment

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t in the m.

The bridge confesses dependence: “I can’t do this on my ow

The Wayfarer Moment

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n, but I was never meant to be alone.”

We can’t heal ourselves. We need

The Wayfarer Moment

divine help and human help — counselors, friends, community. "You are ac

The Wayfarer Moment

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The Wayfarer Moment

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es n’t wait for us to clean up before reaching in. Here reaches into the chao

The Wayfarer Moment

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s and calls our hearts by name

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identity based not on our wounds but

The Wayfarer Moment

on whose we are.

The final chorus testifies: “So I dig a little deeper, Y

The Wayfarer Moment

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The Wayfarer Moment

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m whole again. It hurts, but I can feel again.”

The paradox of healing: th

The Wayfarer Moment

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e pain does n’t disappear, but it’s no longer the only reality. God’s presen

The Wayfarer Moment

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ce in the pain is also real. And presence transforms pain from something

The Wayfarer Moment

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that destroys to something that refines. Since writing this song, excava

The Wayfarer Moment

tion has become a rhythm, not a one-time event. But I’m no longer afra

The Way farer Moment

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id of the digging. The deeper I go, the more grace I find. Time doesn’

The Wayfarer Moment

the all wounds. But grace—when we're willing to dig deep enough to let

The Wayfarer Moment

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it reach us — heals what time cannot.

Lyrics: Dig a Little Deeper

Verse 1 They say that time can heal what’s broke, But it just whispers empty hope. I’ve waited long, I’ve played the game, But every day still feels the same.

The echoes say, “Just give it time,” But time’s been cruel to heart and mind. If healing comes with every day, Why do I still feel this way?

Pre-Chorus I tried to fake it ’til I made it, But I can’t outrun what’s breaking me.

Chorus So I’m gonna dig a little deeper, Down where the hurting hides. Open the scar so grace can reach, The pain that’s buried deep inside. It’s gonna hurt, I know it will, And healing starts when I finally feel. I’m gonna dig, dig a little deeper, ’Til I find my soul.

Verse 2 The night comes calling like before, I see those shadows on my door. Every memory wakes again, I feel the weight I can't defend.

Truth won't run, it stands its ground, And mercy whispers through the sound: "You're not alone, I'm still right here, Even in your tears."

Pre-Chorus I've tried to numb it, tried to drown it, But grace keeps reaching down for me.

Chorus So I'm gonna dig a little deeper, Down where the hurting hides. Open the scar so grace can reach, The pain that's buried deep inside. It's gonna hurt, I know it will, And healing starts when I finally feel. I'm gonna dig, dig a little deeper, 'Til I find my soul.

Verse 3 (The Turning Point) Morning breaks, the light comes in, A softer voice beneath my skin. The chains I wore begin to slide, As mercy breathes me back to life.

I feel Your love in every breath, A quiet peace where fear once slept. I'm not the same, I'm waking new, The pain is real — but so are You.

Bridge I can't do this on my own, But I was never meant to be alone. You reach into the mess I've made, And call my broken heart by name. You say, "Come and drink from the well that won't run dry." And for the first time, I believe — I'm alive.

Final Chorus So I dig a little deeper, You meet me in the pain. You wash my wounds with holy light, And I am whole again. It hurts, but I can feel again, I can laugh, I can cry again. 'Cause I dug, I dug a little deeper, And I found You there within.

Key Takeaways

Reflections for

Key Takeaways

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the Road

These aren't questions to answer quickly. They're invitations to dig.

Key Takeaways

Questions for the Journey:

1. **What scar tissue are you carrying that's maski**

Key Takeaways

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ng as healing?

Where have you learned to function around a wound without actual

Key Takeaways

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y healing it? Where are you telling yourself "I'm fine" when really you're just nu

Key Takeaways

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mb?

2. **What would it look like to dig a little deeper in your relationship wi**

Key Takeaways

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the God?

Are you keeping Him at the surface level? Sharing edited versions of

Key Takeaways

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yourself? What would it take to invite Him into the depths — the wounds, the sh

Key Takeaways

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a me, the false beliefs?

3. **Who are the safe people in your life who can he**

Key Takeaways

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lp you dig?

You can’t do this alone. Who can you trust to sit with you in the pain wi

Key Takeaways

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thout trying to fix it too quickly? If you don’t have anyone, who could you ask

Key Takeaways

God to bring into your life?

4. **Read Psalm 42 slowly. What is the "deep" that's**

Key Takeaways

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calling to the "deep" in you right now?

Don't rush past this. Let the imag

Key Takeaways

- Every sink in. Waterfalls. Waves. Depths. What is Love inviting you into? Wha

Key Takeaways

- t is it calling out of you?

Practice: Excavation Journaling

This is hard work. Don't rush it. Set aside unhurried time—maybe a whole afternoon or evening. Find a quiet place where you won't be interrupted.

Bring your journal. And pray this prayer:

"God, I invite You to excavate. Show me the layers I've been living under. Help me dig through performance, shame, wounds, and false beliefs until I hit bedrock truth. I trust that Your grace is deep enough to reach all the way down. Give me courage to not turn away from what You uncover. And help me know I'm not alone in this. Amen."

Then work through these layers, one at a time:

Layer 1: Performance - How do I perform for others? What version of myself do I present? - What am I afraid people will see if I stop performing?

Layer 2: Shame - What do I believe about myself that I'm ashamed of? - Complete this sentence: "If people really knew _____ about me, they would _____."

Layer 3: Wounds - What are the significant wounds I carry? (Name them. Be specific.) - How have these wounds shaped the way I relate to God, to others, to myself?

Layer 4: False Beliefs - What conclusions did I draw from my wounds? - What lies do I believe about my worth, my identity, my belovedness?

Layer 5: Bedrock Truth - Beneath all the layers, what is the truth God speaks over me? - What does Scripture say about my identity?

Write honestly. Don’t edit. Don’t make it sound spiritual. Just dig.

And when you hit bedrock—when you uncover the truth underneath all the layers—receive it. Let it sink in. Let it be the foundation you build on.

Closing Image

You’re in the water now, and it’s deeper than before. Not ankle-deep anymore

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you hit bedrock.

Solid. Unshakeable. True.

Take a breath.

You are loved. You are worthy. You are

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Out of the Swamp: How I Found Truth (Movement 3)

MOVEMENT 3: UNFORCED RHYTHMS OF LIFE (The Transformation)

> “Are you tired? Worn out? Burned out on religion? Come to me. Get away with me and you’ll recover your life. I’ll show you how to take a real rest. Walk with me and work with me—watch how I do it. Learn the unforced rhythms of grace. I won’t lay anything heavy or ill-fitting on you. Keep company with me and you’ll learn to live freely and lightly.”
>
> — Matthew 11:28-30 (The Message)

The crisis is over. The rescue has happened. The water has washed you clean.

But now what?

Most of us assume that once we're out of the swamp and through the water's edge, we've arrived. Crisis averted. Problem solved. Time to get back to normal life.

But here's what we discover: there is no going back to normal. Because "normal" was the life that led us to the swamp in the first place.

What we need isn't a return to the old patterns. We need new rhythms entirely. Rhythms that don't produce swamps. Rhythms that sustain life instead of draining it. Rhythms that flow naturally from grace instead of grinding against it.

Unforced rhythms.

Not the frenetic pace of performance. Not the exhausting treadmill of religious striving. Not the constant pressure to prove, produce, and perform.

Rhythms. Natural. Sustainable. Life-giving.

The kind that fit with how you were actually made to live.

Here's the hard truth: Most of us have been in survival mode so long, we've forgotten there's another way to live.

Survival is getting through. Transformation is growing into.

Survival is crisis management. Transformation is intentional cultivation.

Survival asks, "How do I make it through today?" Transformation asks, "What kind of life am I building?"

In the swamp, survival was the only option. You were drowning—just trying to breathe, trying to keep your head above water, trying to make it one more day without completely falling apart.

At the water's edge, you moved from drowning to breathing. From desperation to hope. From death to life. But you were still focused on immediate needs—getting clean, finding healing, experiencing rescue.

But this? This is different.

This is learning to live beyond crisis. To build a life that doesn't just react to emergencies but actually grows toward something. To develop rhythms that sustain you not just in the hard seasons, but in every season.

This is where transformation happens. Not in the dramatic moment of crisis or the pivotal encounter at the shoreline, but in the steady, daily rhythm of learning to walk with God.

You've left the swamp. You've been washed at the water's edge. Now you're learning what it means to live—really live—in the unforced rhythms of grace.

And this is where everything changes. Not all at once. But day by day. Breath by breath. Step by step.

The Journey Into Rhythm:

Chapter 9: Unforced Rhythms of Grace - The shift from frenzy to rhythm, from performance to presence. What does it mean to work from rest instead of toward it? To build a sustainable spiritual life that doesn't burn out because it was never built on hype in the first place? This is about manna—daily bread, daily grace. About discovering that grace provides the stable foundation beneath life's natural fluctuations.

Mindful Bliss of Grace

Chapter 10: Deep Roots, Strong Growth - Like a tree planted by streams of water, transformation happens underground before it's visible above the surface. This is the hidden work of spiritual formation—putting to death what doesn't belong (pride, reactivity, isolation, bitterness) and cultivating what does (humility, responsiveness, connection, forgiveness). Deep roots don't guarantee constant productivity, but they do guarantee sustainable fruitfulness over time.

I Will Trust You Lord

Chapter 11: Redemption's Story - Your story isn't separate from the larger story—it's woven into it. From creation through fall through redemption toward restoration. The pain has purpose. The waiting has meaning. The struggle isn't random. Every chapter of your life, even the broken ones, fits into the narrative of grace.

Redemption Story

Chapter 12: Nothing is Wasted - In grace's economy, nothing is wasted. Not "almost nothing." Nothing. Every tear, every failure, every lost year, every broken relationship. This is the scandalous promise that what seems irredeemable can be redeemed. Abraham on Mount Moriah. Joseph from pit to palace. Your timeline viewed through the lens of grace.

Nothing is Wasted

Chapter 13: Devil's On The Run - There's a fundamental shift that happens when you stop fighting for victory and start fighting from victory. Jesus didn't just survive the enemy's attack—He disarmed him, made a public spectacle of him, triumphed over every power of darkness. You learn to fight from rest instead of from fear, to resist from confidence instead of from desperation.

Devil's On The Run

Chapter 14: Living in the Moment - Most of us live everywhere except the present moment. Replaying yesterday's conversations. Rehearsing tomorrow's scenarios. Carrying the weight of past mistakes and borrowing future worries. This is about learning to be present—to fix your eyes on what's Real instead of on what was or what might be. To trust that this moment, with sufficient grace, is enough.

This Moment is Enough

These six chapters don't offer a program to complete. They offer a way to walk. A rhythm to learn. A life to live.

Not perfectly. Not without stumbling. But with a new kind of stability. Because the roots are going deep. The rhythms are becoming established. The transformation is happening—not in dramatic crisis moments, but in the steady, daily choosing to walk with grace instead of against it.

Pause and consider: What would it mean to stop surviving and start thriving? To stop reacting and start cultivating? To stop grinding and start resting?

The swamp taught you honesty. The water's edge taught you grace. Now the rhythm teaches you sustainability.

This is where faith becomes a way of life instead of a series of desperate rescues. Where spiritual life stops being exhausting and starts being life-giving. Where you discover that grace isn't just the emergency intervention—it's the daily bread. The morning-by-morning manna. The unforced way of living that doesn't burn out.

You've made it through the swamp. You've stepped into the water. Now you're discovering what it means to let grace carry you—to live in the rhythms you were designed for all along.

Welcome to the unforced rhythms of grace.

This is where transformation happens.

Entering This Movement

You're standing in a different place now than when you started this book.

Look back for a moment. Not with regret or nostalgia, but with recognition:

Movement 1: The Swamp - You learned to be honest. You named where you were. You cried out for help. You made the decision to accept rescue. You let something die. That wasn't easy. But it was necessary.

Movement 2: The Water's Edge - You encountered grace. You were washed. You discovered shadow and shelter. You received amazing grace. You dug deeper. You learned that grace is scandalous, relentless, sufficient. That wasn't comfortable. But it was transforming.

Now you're here. Movement 3. And the question shifts:

Not "How do I survive?" (That was the swamp.)

Not "How do I receive grace?" (That was the water's edge.)

But "**How do I live?**"

How do I build a life that doesn't produce swamps? How do I develop rhythms that sustain instead of drain? How do I walk forward in a way that doesn't collapse back into crisis?

This is the movement of integration. Of sustainable formation. Of learning to live from grace instead of toward it.

What makes this movement different:

In the swamp, everything was urgent. Desperate. Life-or-death. You were in survival mode.

At the water's edge, everything was encounter. Discovery. Relief. You were experiencing rescue and healing.

But here? Here everything is rhythm. Cultivation. Consistency. You're learning to live.

And that requires something different from you.

Not the dramatic cry for help. Not the overwhelming experience of grace washing over you.

But the steady, daily choice to walk in rhythm. To send roots deep. To trust the story. To believe nothing is wasted. To fight from victory. To be present.

This is harder in some ways. Because it's not dramatic. It's daily.

But it's also where real transformation happens. Not in the crisis moment or the mountain-top experience, but in the unforced rhythms of everyday faithfulness.

The metaphor: From Running to Walking

In the swamp, you were running—frantic, panicked, desperate to escape.

At the water's edge, you stopped running. You stood still. You let yourself be held, washed, healed.

But now you're learning to walk. Not running from crisis. Not standing still in relief. But walking—one foot in front of the other, step by step, breath by breath.

Walking has rhythm. It's not urgent. It's not static. It's movement with cadence. Sustainable. Steady. Natural.

That's what these six chapters teach: the walk. The rhythm. The unforced way of living that doesn't burn out because it was never built on urgency or hype in the first place.

Before You Enter These Chapters:

Take a moment to acknowledge the shift you're making.

You're not in crisis anymore. (Thank God.) But that also means the adrenaline is gone. The urgency that carried you through the swamp and propelled you to the water's edge—that intensity won't sustain you here.

Here, you need something different: faithfulness. Consistency. Rhythm. The willingness to show up day after day, even when it doesn't feel dramatic.

Can you do that?

Can you trade the intensity of crisis for the steadiness of rhythm?

Can you trust that transformation happens not just in breakthrough moments, but in the daily faithfulness of putting one foot in front of the other?

If you can, you're ready for Movement 3.

If you're not sure yet, that's okay too. These chapters will teach you. Step by step. Breath by breath. One rhythm at a time.

Welcome to the unforced rhythms of grace. This is where you learn to live beyond crisis—not just surviving, but thriving. Not just rescued, but rooted. Not just healed, but whole.

When you're ready, turn to Chapter 9: Unforced Rhythms of Grace.

Out of the Swamp: How I Found Truth (Chapter 9)

MOVEMENT 3: UNFORCED RHYTHMS OF LIFE (The Transformation)

Chapter 9: Unforced Rhythms of Grace

> "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest… Learn from me… and you will find rest for your souls." — Matthew 11:28-29

Mindful Bliss of Grace

Listen at: http://go.skylerthomas.com/jYgQNf

Scan to listen: Mindful Bliss of Grace

An Invitation to Rest

You've walked through eight chapters now. You've named the swamp, cried out for help, made a decision, let something die, stepped into living water, found shelter in grace's shadow, received what you don't deserve, and dug deep to let healing reach the wounds.

You've experienced dramatic grace. Life-changing encounters. Rescue. Cleansing. Healing.

But now I need to ask you something important:

Are you exhausted from trying to maintain the intensity?

Because here's what happens after the crisis: We try to keep the fire burning through sheer effort and willpower. We pray longer. Read more. Volunteer for everything. We assume that sustaining grace requires the same intensity as receiving it.

And we almost crash again. Different swamp, same drowning.

Here's what I've discovered: **Grace isn't meant to be lived in constant crisis mode.**

The swamp taught you honesty. The water's edge taught you grace. But now? Now you're learning something that might feel revolutionary—or maybe even scandalous:

You don't have to keep performing. You can rest. Even while you're working.

This chapter is about the shift from frenzy to rhythm. From desperate intervention to daily bread. From crisis faith to sustainable presence.

It's about discovering that grace offers rhythm—a sustainable way of walking with God that actually fits with how you're made. Not manufactured intensity. Not constant peak experiences. Not exhausting striving.

Unforced rhythms.

But here's the challenge: If you've been living in frenzy for years—and most of us have—rhythm will feel foreign at first. Maybe even wrong. The guilt will whisper, "Shouldn't I be doing more?" The fear will ask, "What if I fall behind?" The comparison will accuse, "Everyone else seems busier. Am I being lazy?"

So before you continue, pause. Consider:

Can you say, even tentatively: "God, I'm tired of running. I'm willing to learn a different pace. I'm willing to believe that You delight in me when I'm resting as much as when I'm working. Teach me Your unforced rhythms."

That's enough. That willingness opens the door.

Because what comes next isn't about doing more—it's about living from a different place. Not striving toward fullness, but living from fullness. Not working for rest, but working from rest.

Welcome to the unforced rhythms of grace.

Let's be honest about what rhythm actually feels like. Because if you've been living in frenzy for years—and most of us have—rhythm will feel foreign at first. Maybe even wrong.

Rhythm feels like: - **Breath:** Deep, full, unforced. You're not gasping anymore. You're breathing. - **Pace:** You're walking, not sprinting. And you're not collapsing from exhaustion at the end of the day. - **Space:** There's margin in your calendar. Silence in your schedule. Room to breathe. - **Presence:** You're actually here. Not mentally rehearsing the next thing or replaying the last thing. Here. - **Simplicity:** You've stopped juggling seventeen balls and picked up the three that actually matter.

But here’s what rhythm might also feel like, at least at first: - **Guilt:** “Shouldn’t I be doing more?” - **Fear:** “What if I fall behind?” - **Comparison:** “Everyone else seems busier. Am I being lazy?” - **Disorientation:** “I don’t know how to just be. I only know how to do.”

This is normal. Because rhythm challenges everything our culture teaches us about productivity, worth, and significance.

Our culture says: More is better. Busy is virtuous. Rest is weakness. Your value is measured by your output.

Grace says: Enough is enough. Sustainable is sustainable. Rest is sacred. Your value was settled at the cross.

> “The great danger facing all of us is not that we shall make an absolute failure of life, nor that we shall fall into outright viciousness, nor that we shall be terribly unhappy… The danger is that we may fail to perceive life, and fall into a working routine and a sleeping routine.” — Dallas Willard, *The Spirit of the Disciplines*

Rhythm requires unlearning. It requires deprogramming years of messages that tied your worth to your productivity. It requires believing something scandalous: God delights in you when you’re resting as much as when you’re working.

Maybe more.

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Stories of Rhythm

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in the Wilderness (Exodus 16:4-31)

God’s provision for Israel in the wilderness w

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the ground. Every morning, the people had to go out and gather it.

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OR D said to Moses, ‘I will rain down bread from heaven for you. The people are to

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go out each day and gather enough for that day. In this way I will test the mand see w

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own provision? Some couldn't. They tried to hoard manna for the next day, and it

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rotted. They tried to control tomorrow’s provision, and it turned to worms. But thos

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were sustained. Day after day. Year after year. Bread from heaven in daily rhyt

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hm. God could have given them a month’s worth at once. He didn’t. Because He w

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as teaching the m something more important than efficient meal planning. He

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receiving. The same lesson applies to us. We want the mega-dose of grace that wi

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ll last forever. God gives us daily bread. Not because He's stingy, but because He

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wants relationship. He wants us to come back every morning. To receive fresh gr

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ace. To maintain the rhythm.

Elijah's Rhythm of Rest and Engagement

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(1 Kings 19:1-18)

Elijah had just experienced one of the greatest spiritual victories

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s in Israel’s history. Mount Carmel. Fire from heaven consuming the water-soak

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ed altar. The prophets of Baal defeated, executed. Rain ending a three-year drought.

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The entire nation witnessing God’s power. Elijah at the peak of his ministry, running

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in the strength of the Lord.

And then, one message from Queen Jezebel: “By this

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time tomorrow, you’ll be dead like the prophets you killed.”

And Elijah crashed.

Not

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gradually. Instantly. He ran for his life into the wilderness, a day’s journey into

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barren, empty wasteland. He collapsed under a broom tree — a scraggly desert bush of

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fering mini mal shade — and prayed to die: “I have had enough, LORD. Take my lif

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e. I am no better than my ancestors” (1 Kings 19:4). This is burnout. Total depletion

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. The crash after the adrenaline high. One day he’s calling down fire; the next day

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he wants to die.

God’s response is instructive. He didn’t rebuke Elijah for weakness.

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Didn’t say, “Pull yourself together—you just won a great victory!”

Didn’t lecture

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him about faith or courage. Didn't demand that he get back to work.

Instead, God gave

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him exactly what he needed: rest, food, and time.

An angel touched him: “Get

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up and eat." Elijah opened his eyes to find fresh-baked bread and a jar of water. He at

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e. And slept. The angel came again: “Get up and eat, for the journey is too much

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for you.”

Again, Elijah ate and drank. And then he travelled for forty days and nights to M

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ount Horeb, strengthened by that food, resting as he went. Only after that —

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ijah had been physically restored, emotionally recovered, spiritually renewed

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er. And only then did God give him his next assignment. God honored the rhythm. Wor

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k. Rest. Engagement. Withdrawal. Victory. Recovery. Intensity. Sabbath.

Elijah ha

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d then need to rest. That’s not failure. That’s human. That’s how God designed you.

Elija

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h’s story tells me: It’s okay to be tired after a victory. It’s okay to need recovery time. It’

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s okay to sleep and eat and rest before diving into the next thing. God isn’t impres

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sed by our burnout. He’s pleased by our sustainability.

The Sabbath Rest (G

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Genesis 2:2-3; Mark 2:27)

The pattern of Sabbath is woven into creation itself. On the

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seventh day, God rested. Not because He was tired. But to establish a pattern. A

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rhythm. Six days of work. One day of rest. This isn’t arbitrary. It’s design. Godm

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ade you to need rest. To need rhyth m. To need patterns of engagement and with draw

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al, work and Sabbath.

When the religious leaders tried to turn Sabbath into a legalis

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tic bu rd en , Je su s re cl ai m ed it: > “ T he Sa bb at h w as m ad e fo r m an , no t m an fo r th

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e Sabbath.”

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Mark 2:27

Sabbath is a gift. A rhythm designed for your flourishi

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ng. It’s not about rule-keeping. It’s about soul-keeping. Sabbath says: Your w

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or this n’t measured by your productivity. You are beloved even when you’re not prod

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24 hours without your help.

I used to see Sabbath as wasted time. A day I could be ge

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tting things done. But now I see it as the axis around which the whole week revolves

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. The day that reminds me: I am not what I produce. I am God’s beloved child. A

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nd that’s enough. Walter Brueggemann writes:

> “Sabbath is not simply the pause

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that refreshes. It is the pause that transforms.”

> — Walter Brueggemann, *Sabbath*

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as Resistance

This is what I’m learning. Sabbath isn’t just recovery time so I ca

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elf, my work, my worth. The pause itself does the deeper work.

The Core Scripture Truth

Matthew 11:28-30 - “Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.”

This is Jesus’ manifesto for sustainable spiritual life. Let’s unpack it slowly:

“Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened”

Jesus' invitation is not to the strong, the capable, the ones who have it all together. It's to the exhausted. The burned out. The ones carrying loads they were never meant to carry.

If you're tired—not just physically tired, but soul-tired—you're exactly who Jesus is calling.

"I will give you rest"

Not "I will give you more work." Not "I will give you higher standards." Rest. Real rest. Soul rest. The kind of rest that comes not from escaping responsibility but from living in rhythm with grace.

"Take my yoke upon you"

A yoke is a working tool. Jesus isn't calling you to quit everything and retreat from life. He's calling you to work—but to work in partnership with Him. To let Him set the pace. To let Him carry the weight. To work in His strength, not your own.

"Learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart"

The teacher matters. Jesus doesn't drive you with shame. Doesn't demand perfection. Doesn't measure your worth by your productivity.

He is gentle. Humble. Patient. And as you learn from Him—as you watch His rhythms, adopt His patterns, live in His pace—you discover a different way of being.

"You will find rest for your souls"

Not just physical rest. Soul rest. The deep, abiding peace that comes from living in alignment with how you were made. From walking in the unforced rhythms of grace.

"My yoke is easy and my burden is light"

Easy doesn't mean effortless. It means well-fitting. Like a yoke custom-made for the ox wearing it. Jesus' way of life fits you. It's designed for human beings. It's sustainable.

Light doesn't mean weightless. It means right-sized. Not crushing. Not overwhelming. Bearable. In fact, more than bearable—life-giving.

The Wayfarer Moment

Lyrics: Mindful Bliss of Grace

[Verse 1]

Ebb and flow, the waves

The Wayfarer Moment

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embrace my feet,
Your whisper s call where sea and skyline es meet.

The Wayfarer Moment

The setting sun declares the close of day,
Your steadfast love shines br

The Wayfarer Moment

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ight along the way.

[Chorus]

Great is Your faithfulness, steady an

The Wayfarer Moment

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The Wayfarer Moment

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as on, Your love still persists, You lead me, Lord, into mindful bliss.

[

The Wayfarer Moment

Verse 2] Morning dew reflects Your tender grace, The sunlight streaks re

The Wayfarer Moment

---

veal Your holy face. Each step I take along the sandy trail, Your vo

The Way fa re r Mo m en t

ic e re m in ds m e, lo ve wi ll ne ve r fa il.

[C h or us]

G re at is Y ou r fa it hf

The Wayfarer Moment

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ulness, steady and true, Mercies each morning are always brand new. T

The Wayfarer Moment

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hrough every season, Your love still persists, You lead me, Lord, into m

The Wayfarer Moment

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indfulblis s.

[Verse 3]

Starry skies proclaim Your mighty name, The

The Wayfarer Moment

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moon’s soft glow reveals Your love remains. I lift my heart and ca

The Wayfarer Moment

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stmy cares above, Your Spirit wraps me in eternal love.

[Chorus

The Wayfarer Moment

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Great is Your faithfulness, steadyand true,

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The Wayfarer Moment

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The Wayfarer Moment

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oulead me, Lord, into mindful bliss.

[Bridge]

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The Wayfarer Moment

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ms, through winds that roar, Your steadfast grace remains forever m

The Wayfarer Moment

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ore.
Each tear I cry, each prayer I raise, Lifts me higher to endless praiseless

The Wayfarer Moment

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[Verse 4]

This is my story, this is my song, Praising my Savior

The Wayfarer Moment

all the day long. Mercies descending from heaven above, Filling my heart

The Way farer Moment

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t with Your endless love.

[Outro]

Into mindful bliss, I rest in You

The Wayfarer Moment

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r grace, Each moment I live, I behold Your face. Your mercies endu

The Wayfarer Moment

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re, Your promises stay, Forever I'll walk in Your holy way.

Key Takeaways

- **Grace offers rhythm, not frenzy.** You don't have to maintain crisis-level intensity to stay faithful. Jesus' yoke is easy and light because it fits how you're designed to live.
- **Receive daily bread, don't hoard tomorrow's grace.** Like manna in the wilderness, grace is meant to be gathered fresh each morning. Trust today's provision and let tomorrow take care of itself.
- **Work from rest, not toward it.** Sustainable faithfulness means maintaining rhythm—withdrawal and engagement, solitude and community, Sabbath and work—just as Jesus modeled.
- **Your worth isn't measured by productivity.** Resting is an act of faith, declaring that God values you as His beloved child whether you're producing or simply being present.

Reflections for the Road

Questions for the Journey:

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3. **Read Matthew 11:28-30 slowly.** "Come to me, all you who are weary and

burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and

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Practice: Creating Your Rule of Life

Many Christians throughout history have created what they called a “Rule of Life”—not rules in the legalistic sense, but rhythms. Patterns. A framework for sustainable spiritual living.

Here’s a simple process:

1. Listen to your life

What brings you life? What drains you? When do you feel most connected to God? Pay attention for a few days.

2. Identify life-giving rhythms

Based on what you’ve noticed, what rhythms sustain you? Morning prayer? Weekly Sabbath? Daily walks? Regular connection with friends?

3. Build them into your life as rhythm, not rules

The difference: rules say “you have to.” Rhythms say “this is life-giving.” Don’t try to implement everything at once. Pick one or two rhythms this month.

4. Hold them loosely

Life changes. Seasons change. What worked last year might not work this year. That’s okay. The goal is sustainability, not perfection.

5. Review and adjust

Every few months, review your rhythms. What’s working? What’s not? What needs to change?

Closing Image

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MOVEMENT
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THMSOFLIFE(The Transformation)

Chapter 10: Deep Roots, Strong Growth

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I Will Trust You Lord

Listen at: http://go.skylerthomas.com/DxCmnx

Scan to listen: I Will Trust You Lord

An Invitation to Go Deeper

You've discovered rhythm. You've learned the unforced way of living. You're not in crisis mode anymore, not frantically trying to maintain impossible intensity.

But now I need to ask you something uncomfortable:

When stress comes, when pressure mounts, when circumstances get hard—do you still revert to old patterns?

Be honest. Do you still react defensively when criticized? Still withdraw when hurt? Still carry bitterness longer than you should? Still struggle with pride, with comparison, with the need to prove yourself?

Here’s what I’ve discovered: **Rhythms are good. But rhythms without roots become rote. Practices without depth become performance.**

You need more than sustainable patterns. You need deep foundations. The kind that reach down to streams of living water and anchor you when everything else shakes.

This chapter is about what happens underground. The hidden work. The slow transformation that no one sees but everyone eventually experiences.

It’s about discovering that you’re not just learning new habits—you’re becoming a new person. And becoming takes time. It happens in the dark, unseen, in the patient work of roots going deep.

Think of a tree during drought. Surface plants die—they had no depth, no reserves, nothing to draw from when conditions got hard. But the deeply rooted? They stay green. Not because they’re stronger or trying harder. Because their roots have gone deep enough to reach water others can’t access.

That’s what this chapter is about. Not what you look like on the surface. But what’s happening underground.

Deep roots require putting to death what doesn’t belong: pride, reactivity, isolation, bitterness. And cultivating what does: humility, responsiveness, connection, forgiveness.

None of this is impressive. None of this gets applause. None of this makes for a dramatic testimony.

But it’s everything. Because roots determine what happens above ground.

So before you continue, pause. Consider:

Can you say, even with hesitation: “God, I don’t just want to look different. I want to BE different. Do the deep work in me—the underground work, the unseen work. Send my roots down deep until I’m anchored in You, not in circumstances.”

That’s the prayer that opens transformation.

Because what comes next isn’t about impressive growth. It’s about sustainable depth.

Here’s the hard truth about roots: you can’t see them. You can’t measure them. You can’t Instagram them.

All the visible growth—the fruit, the leaves, the branches—gets attention. But the roots? They’re hidden. Underground. Doing their work in the dark.

This is frustrating for those of us who like to track progress. We want to see results. We want to measure growth. We want before-and-after photos that prove we’re changing.

But deep roots don’t work that way.

Deep roots look like: - Choosing to respond instead of react, even when no one’s watching - Forgiving someone who doesn’t deserve it and will never know you did - Staying connected to

community when you'd rather withdraw - Releasing bitterness for the hundredth time because it keeps trying to take root - Practicing humility in small, daily choices that no one applauds

None of that is impressive. None of that gets likes on social media. None of that makes for a dramatic testimony.

But it's everything. Because roots determine what happens above ground.

When the drought comes—and it will come—surface plants die. They had no depth. No reserves. Nothing to draw from when conditions got hard.

But the deeply rooted? They stay green. Not because they're stronger or trying harder. Because their roots have gone deep enough to reach water others can't access.

The question isn't "What do I look like on the surface?"

The question is "What's happening underground?"

Key Themes

Stories of Roots and Growth

The Parable of

Key Themes

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the Sower (Matthew 13:1-23)

Picture a farmer at sunrise, walking through

Key Themes

his field with a bag of seed slung across his shoulder. Here ac he s in, pu lls ou t a ha nd fu

Key Themes

l, and with a practiced motion scatters it in a wide arc. These seds catch the light as

Key Themes

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some landing on the hardened path where people walk, some on the rocky

Key Themes

outcropping at the field's edge, some among the tangle of thistles and thornbus

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ce. Hard ground, no penetration, gone. The rocky ground is more deceptive. With hi

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n days, bright green shoots push through the thin layer of soil. It looks promising—

Key Themes

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fast growth, visible progress. But underneath, the roots hit stone. They can’t go de

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ep. They spread sideways, searching for depth that isn't there. When the sun cli

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mbs high and hot, these plants are the first to wilt. Now at er reaches them. The shall

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orny ground also shows promise at first. These seed s germinate, the plants grow. B

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ut so do the weeds. Thorns that were cut back last season return with a vengeance, gr

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owing faster, reaching higher. They don't kill the good plants outright — they just cro

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Key Themes

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Key Themes

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e roots reach moisture. When storms come, these roots hold firm. The plants gro

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> “These seed falling on rocky ground refers to someone who hear

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s the word and at once receives it with joy. But since they have no root, they last only a

Key Themes

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short time. When trouble or persecution comes because of the word, they quickly

Key Themes

fall away.”

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—Matthew 13:20-21

No root. That’s the problem. Enthusiasm without ou

Key Themes

t depth. Emotion without foundation. The person receives the Word with joy

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Key Themes

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ere's initial excitement, genuine response. But when heat comes, they wither. Why

Key Themes

? No root.

This is the warning: don’t settle for surface-level faith. Don’t mist

Key Themes

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ake initial enthusiasm for deep transformation. Send roots deep now—through sust

Key Themes

ained practices, patient trust, consistent rhythms — so when heat comes (and it will)

Key Themes

, you don’t wither. The good soil represents those who “hear the word, accept it, and

Key Themes

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produce a crop” (Mark 4:20). But even good soil requires cultivation. Weeding. W

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Key Themes

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s can go deep and fruit can come.

The Vine and the Branches (John 15:1-8)

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Key Themes

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ent — with branches spreading out in all directions. Run your hand along a healthy branch

Key Themes

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and you can feel it: firm, supple, alive. The connection point where branch meets vine is

Key Themes

seamless, organic. Sap flows from the vine through the at connection, carrying nu

Key Themes

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Key Themes

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mediate. It looks similar at first — same shape, same leaves. But touch it and you

Key Themes

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feel the brittleness. The leaves are already starting to brown at the edges. Give it a

Key Themes

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few days and it’s completely dead, fit only for burning. > “I am the vine; you are

Key Themes

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the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart fr

Key Themes

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Key Themes

.” This is the language of roots, of connection that sustains life. Branches don’t try to

Key Themes

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produce fruit through effort or will power. They remain connected to the vine. A

Key Themes

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nd fr ui t ha pp en s na tu ra ll y, in ev ita bl y, or ga ni ca ll y. Y ou do n’ t m an uf ac tu re fr ui t th

Key Themes

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rough striving. You remain connected through sustained practices—prayer that keep

Key Themes

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s the conversation going, Scripture that keeps the life flowing, worship that keep

Key Themes

s the heart open, community that keeps the connection strong. And fruit — love,

Key Themes

joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control

— grows

Key Themes

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the way grapes grow on a branch: not by trying, but by remaining. But remaining

Key Themes

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requires intentionality. A branch doesn’t have to work to stay connected, but it can be

Key Themes

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cut off if diseased. It can be pruned to produce more fruit. It can even choose to pull

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a way from the vine. The vine dresser tends the branches carefully, cutting away

Key Themes

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what's dead, trimming back what's unproductive, ensuring that every branch that rem

Key Themes

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Key Themes

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e — they're active cooperation with God's life flowing into you. You position yourself

Key Themes

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under the flow. You remain in the connection. You abide in the relationship. And

Key Themes

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the fruit comes, not from your effort but from His life in you.

Jeremiah’s Pro

Key Themes

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mise (Jeremiah 17:7-8)

Picture two trees in the same region during a drought

Key Themes

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year. The first tree stands alone in an open field, dependent entirely on rainfall. Its roots

Key Themes

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spread wide but shallow, searching for moisture that isn't there. As the rain less

Key Themes

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hat little moisture remains. It survives, barely, but produces no fruit this year. May

Key Themes

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be next year, if the rains return. The second tree looks different even from a distan

Key Themes

ce. Its leaves are deep green, almost glossy. It stands tall, full, healthy—not because

Key Themes

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it’s stronger or more resilient by nature, but because of where it’s planted: right by a

Key Themes

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stream. You can see its roots at the water’s edge, thick and gnarled, disappearing in

Key Themes

to the mud. Those roots don't just touch the water — they're in it, drawing consta

Key Themes

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ntly from a source that doesn’t depend on weather patterns.

> “Butblessed is the on

Key Themes

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Key Themes

d by the water that sends out its roots by the stream. It does not fear when heat comes

Key Themes

; its leaves are always green. It has now or ries in a year of drought and never fails to

Key Themes

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bear fruit.”

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Jeremiah 17:7-8

This is Jeremiah’s promise, and it’s built on tr

Key Themes

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trust and resilience.

Trust as the foundation. Your roots go where your trust is. If

Key Themes

you trust yourself, roots stay shallow — limited by your capacity. If you trust God,

Key Themes

roots go deep — accessing an infinite source. **Does not fear when heat comes.** Thi

Key Themes

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s is the promise: resilience. Heat will come. But deeply rooted trees don’t fear it.

Key Themes

Not because heat doesn’t hurt, but because deep roots access water even when surfac

Key Themes

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e conditions are scorching. **Never fails to bear fruit.** An even stronger promise than

Key Themes

Psalm 1's "fruit in season." Why? Because the tree is constantly connected to the str

Key Themes

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Key Themes

(constant internal source). When you're deeply rooted in God, you don't become fr

Key Themes

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uitless in hard seasons. The fruit might look different — not abundance, but endurance

Key Themes

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e; not productivity, but presence. But you never fail to bear it.

The Core Scripture Truth

John 15:5-8 - “I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. If you do not remain in me, you are like a branch that is thrown away and withers… This is to my Father’s glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples.”

This is Jesus’s teaching on remaining—on abiding. And it’s the theological foundation for everything this chapter teaches about deep roots.

“I am the vine; you are the branches.”

The relationship is organic, not mechanical. Not master and servant. Vine and branches. Living connection. Shared life. The sap that flows through the vine flows through the branches.

You’re not disconnected from Jesus, trying to imitate Him from a distance. You’re connected to Jesus, sharing His life.

“If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit.”

The condition is remaining. Not striving. Not performing. Not white-knuckling your way to holiness. Remaining. Abiding. Staying connected.

And the promise is fruit. Not because you’re trying to produce it. But because life is flowing from the vine into the branches. The fruit is inevitable when the connection is sustained.

“Apart from me you can do nothing.”

This is both humbling and liberating. Humbling because it reminds you: you’re not the source. You can’t generate spiritual life through your own effort.

Liberating because it takes the pressure off. You don’t have to produce. You just have to remain.

“This is to my Father’s glory, that you bear much fruit.”

The goal isn’t your glory. It’s the Father’s. When you bear fruit—when love, joy, peace, patience, kindness grow in you—people see it and give glory to God.

Not because you’re amazing. Because God’s grace is transforming you.

This is the theological anchor: remain in Jesus. Let His words remain in you. And fruit will come—not forced, but organic. Not manufactured, but received. Not through your effort, but through your abiding.

Deep roots make abiding possible. And abiding makes fruit inevitable.

The Wayfarer Moment

Ps

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> Oh, the joys of those who do not

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The Way farer Moment

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of the wicked,
> or stand around with sinners,
> or join in with mockers.
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The Wayfarer Moment

But they delight in the law of the LORD, > meditating on it day and ni

The Wayfarer Moment

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ght.
> They are like trees planted along the riverbank,
> bearing fr

The Wayfarer Moment

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uit each season.

> Their leaves never wither,

> and they prosper in all th

The Wayfarer Moment

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The Wayfarer Moment

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ered by the wind. > They will be condemned at the time of judgment.

The Wayfarer Moment

> Sinners will have no place among the godly.
> For the LORD wat

The Wayfarer Moment

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ches over the path of the godly, > but the path of the wicked leads to destr

The Wayfarer Moment

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Psalm 1 (NLT)

Song Integration

The counselor looked at me and said, “You’re doing all the right things, but your roots haven’t gone deep enough yet.”

I didn’t want to hear that. I’d been practicing the rhythms for months. Showing up to prayer even when I didn’t feel like it. Reading Scripture even when it felt dry. Staying connected to community even when I wanted to withdraw.

But I couldn’t see results. I still struggled with the same issues. Still reacted defensively. Still battled pride. Still felt the pull of isolation.

I was discouraged, wondering: *Is any of this working? Am I actually growing? Or am I just going through the motions?*

The answer, I discovered, was that transformation happens underground before it’s visible above the surface.

Then I read Psalm 1. And Jeremiah 17. And something clicked.

The tree planted by streams of water doesn't produce fruit immediately. First, roots go down. Deep. Searching for water. Anchoring in soil. Building the underground foundation that will support everything above ground.

The fruit comes later. In season. When roots are ready.

I was expecting visible growth—immediate fruit, dramatic change, measurable progress. But God was doing underground work. Sending my roots deeper. Teaching me to draw from living water instead of surface emotions.

Psalm 1 became my anchor. The image of a tree "replanted in Eden, bearing fresh fruit every month, never dropping a leaf, always in blossom"—that's not describing constant productivity. It's describing sustainable fruitfulness rooted in something deeper than circumstances.

The tree thrives not because it tries harder but because it's connected to a source of life that never runs dry.

That's when "I Will Trust You Lord" was born. The song is a declaration: even when I can't see growth, even when the work feels invisible, even when drought comes—my roots are going deep. I'm planted by streams of living water. And I will trust the hidden work.

The chorus captures the promise: "Like a tree beside the river, I will stand so tall. Through the fire, through the season, You're my all in all."

Not standing because I'm strong. Standing because I'm rooted. Not thriving because conditions are perfect. Thriving because I'm drawing from a source deeper than circumstances.

The bridge confronts the fears: "No fear in the drought… No doubt in the storm… Your love is my anchor… I'll trust You, Lord."

This isn't denial. It's confidence. Rooted confidence that says: I can face drought because my roots go deeper than surface water. I can weather storms because I'm anchored in something immovable.

When I sing this now, it reminds me: the work happening underground is just as real—maybe more real—than the work visible above ground. And if I'll trust the process, keep showing up, keep putting roots down deep, the fruit will come.

In season. When roots are ready.

Lyrics: I Will Trust You Lord

Key Takeaways

- **Roots determine resilience.** Surface gro

Lyrics: I Will Trust You Lord

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Lyrics: I Will Trust You Lord

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shallow plants wither while deeply rooted trees stay green

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Lyrics: I Will Trust You Lord

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through effort, but through connection to living water.

- **Put prid**

Lyrics: I Will Trust You Lord

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e, reactivity, isolation, and bitterness to death. These keep ro

Lyrics: I Will Trust You Lord

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ots shallow. Replace them with humility, responsiveness, connecti

Lyrics: I Will Trust You Lord

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on, and forgiveness to create conditions for deep growth. - **Re**

Lyrics: I Will Trust You Lord

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main in the vine; fruit follows naturally. You don't manuf

Lyrics: I Will Trust You Lord

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Lyrics: I Will Trust You Lord

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Lyrics: I Will Trust You Lord

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- **Trust the hidden work.** Themos

Lyrics: I Will Trust You Lord

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Lyrics: I Will Trust You Lord

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red. Keep showing up, keep practicing, keep remaining — the root

Lyrics: I Will Trust You Lord

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s are going deeper than you realize.

Reflections for the Road

Questions for the Journey: - What needs to die so roots can go deep? Where is pride keeping you shallow? Where is reactivity preventing growth? Where is isolation cutting you off? Where is bitterness poisoning the soil? - What practices position you by the stream? Prayer? Scripture? Sabbath? Solitude? Worship? Community? Are you practicing them consistently? - Where are you trying to manufacture fruit instead of remaining in the vine? Are you striving to be more loving? Trying harder to be joyful? White-knuckling your way to peace? - What does “fruit in season” mean for you right now? Not every season is fruitful. Some are for growth. Some for pruning. Some for rest. What season are you in?

Practice: Cultivating Deep Roots

Here’s a simple framework for sending roots deep through spiritual disciplines:

1. Daily: Drink from the stream

Choose one practice that connects you to God daily. Morning prayer and Scripture. Lectio divina. Journaling. Listening prayer in silence. The practice matters less than the consistency.

2. Weekly: Sabbath rest

Set aside one day (or a few hours) each week for Sabbath. Not as legalism. As gift. Stop striving so you can receive rest. Stop producing so you can receive belovedness.

3. Monthly: Solitude and silence

Once a month, create extended space for solitude. A few hours. A half day. A full day if possible. Intentional time alone with God. Away from noise, hurry, screens, people. Listen. Rest. Let God search your heart.

4. Seasonally: Examine your roots

Every few months, review: Are my roots going deeper? Or am I staying shallow? Am I more reactive or more responsive? More isolated or more connected? More bitter or more forgiving?

5. Community: Grow in groves

Trees don’t grow in isolation. Their roots intertwine with other roots. You need community. Real community. Where you can confess struggles, receive prayer, offer encouragement, practice forgiveness, serve together.

Closing Image

You’re standing at

the base of an ancient tree. Massive. Towering. Its canopy spreads wide, providing shade for ac

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Redemption Story

Listen at: http://go.skylerthomas.com/MN36D4

Scan to listen: Redemption Story

An Invitation to See

You've been through ten chapters now. The swamp. The water's edge. The rhythms. The roots. You've experienced rescue, cleansing, healing, and transformation.

But now I need to ask you something that might change how you see everything:

What if your story isn't separate from THE story?

What if the pain you've experienced has context? What if the waiting has meaning? What if the struggle isn't random?

Here's what I've discovered: **Your story—the swamp and the rescue, the breaking and the healing, the death and the rising—follows the same pattern as every redemption story ever told.**

Creation. Fall. Redemption. Restoration.

This isn't coincidence. It's the arc of reality itself. The shape of how grace works. The pattern woven into the fabric of existence.

You're not just surviving your circumstances. You're participating in the grand narrative of redemption that's been unfolding since before time began.

This chapter is about seeing your story within God's story. And when you do, everything stops being random.

The years in the swamp aren't just years you lost. They're the wilderness—like Israel in the desert, like Elijah in the cave, like David on the run. Necessary preparation for what comes next.

The water's edge isn't just a nice metaphor. It's baptism. It's Red Sea crossing. It's Jordan River moment. The place where the old dies and the new begins.

The unforced rhythms aren't just helpful life hacks. They're manna in the wilderness. They're Sabbath rest. They're the sustainable pace of people learning to walk with God.

The deep roots aren't just personal growth. They're becoming the tree of Psalm 1, the vine of John 15, the planting of the Lord for His glory.

When you see your story within God's story, you start to live differently. With purpose. With hope. With perseverance. With mission.

So before you continue, pause. Consider:

Can you say, even tentatively: "God, my story is part of Your story. The broken chapters, the painful seasons, the years I thought were wasted—they're all woven into the redemption arc You're writing. Help me see my life through that lens."

That shift in perspective changes everything.

Because what comes next isn't just about understanding theology. It's about seeing your life—all of it—as part of the greatest story ever told.

Key Themes

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ies of Redemption

The Redemption Promise in Eden (Genesis 3:15)

The

Key Themes

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moment sin enters the world, God speaks a promise of redemption:

> “And I wi

Key Themes

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ll put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers;

Key Themes

he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel.”

>>

— Genesis 3:15

This is th

Key Themes

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e first gospel proclamation — the protoevangelium. Even as God pronounces the curse,

Key Themes

He promises redemption. A seed of the woman will come who will crush the serp

Key Themes

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ent’s head. The entire Old Testament is the unfolding of this promise. Through A

Key Themes

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Until finally, in the fullness of time, the Seed comes: Jesu

Key Themes

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s, born of a woman, who crushes the serpent’s head at the cross.

Redemption was

Key Themes

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n’t an afterthought. It was promised from the beginning. John Piper writes:

> “T

Key Themes

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he gospel is not a new plan. It is the revelation of God’s eternal purpose — the mystere

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ry hidden for ages but now revealed.”

>

—

John Piper, *God is the Gospel*

Before the

Key Themes

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foundation of the world, God knew. Before sin entered, redemption was planned. T

Key Themes

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his is the depth of His love.

Joseph's Story (Genesis 37-50)

Joseph's story is

Key Themes

one of the clearest pictures of "nothing is wasted" in all of Scripture.

Picture seventee

Key Themes

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n-year-old Joseph, his father’s favorite, wearing the coat of many colors that mar

Key Themes

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ks hi m as sp ec ial . His br ot he rs ha te hi m fo r it

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ha te hi m fo r th e fa vo rit is m, ha te hi m

Key Themes

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for the dreams he tells about the mbowing down to him.

One day they're far from

Key Themes

home, tending flocks. Joseph comes to check on them. And they see their chance. T

Key Themes

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hey grabhim. Strip off the hated coat. Throw him into an empty cistern — a dry

Key Themes

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pit in the ground. They sit down to eat lunch while he's calling for help from the

Key Themes

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darkness below. Then they sell him to passing traders. Twenty shekels of silver. The

Key Themes

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ir br ot he r, so ld li ke li ve st oc k.

Jo se ph en ds up in E gy pt as a sl av e in P ot ip ha r’ s ho us e.

Key Themes

He works his way up, proves himself trustworthy—and Potiphar's wife notices hi

Key Themes

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m. She proposes him. He refuses. Day after day, she pursues him. Finally, she gr

Key Themes

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abs his cloak, and when he runs, she uses it as evidence: "He attacked me!"

Jose

Key Themes

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ph go es to pr is on . A n in no ce nt m an , i m pr is on ed fo r do in g th e ri gh t th in g. F or ye

Key Themes

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ars, he’s there. He interprets dreams for fellow prisoners — the cupbearer and

Key Themes

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the baker. He asks the cupbearer to remember him when he’s released. But the

Key Themes

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cupbearer forgets. Two more years pass. Then Pharaoh has a dream. The cupbearer

Key Themes

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ars of famine. Pharaoh puts him in charge of preparing Egypt for the coming crisis.

Key Themes

The pit led to Potiphar's house. The prison led to the palace. And ultimately, Jo

Key Themes

Joseph's position saves not just Egypt, but his own family — the very brothers who

Key Themes

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betrayed him — when they come begging for food during the famine.

When his brot

Key Themes

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hers finally recognize him and fear his revenge, Joseph speaks words that capture th

Key Themes

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e heart of redemption: “You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to ac

Key Themes

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complish what is now being done, the saving of many lives” (Genesis 50:20). W

Key Themes

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hat others meant for evil, God meant for good. What looked like wasted years

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Key Themes

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avery, false accusation, imprisonment — became the preparation for his purpos

Key Themes

e. Nothing—not one moment of suffering—was wasted in God’s economy.

Pet

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er’s Denial and Restoration (Luke 22:31-32; John 21:15-19)

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you as wheat. But I have prayed for you, Simon, that your faith may not fail. And whe

Key Themes

n you have turned back, strengthen your brothers” (Luke 22:31-32). Peter had protes

Key Themes

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ted: “Lord, I’m ready to go with you to prison and to death!” But Jesus knew better:

Key Themes

“Before the rooster crows today, you will deny three times that you know me.

Key Themes

"Hours later, it happens. Jesus is arrested. Peter follows at a distance to the high

Key Themes

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priest's courtyard. It's cold. A fire burns in the center. People are gathered around it fo

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out being identified as one of His followers.

A servant girl looks at him in the fir

Key Themes

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elight. “This man was with him.” Peter’s response is immediate: “Woman, I don’

Key Themes

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t know him.”

A little later, someone else sees him: “You also are one of them.”

“M

Key Themes

an, I am not!”

About an hour passes. Peter is still there, still trying to remain anony

Key Themes

mous. Another person insists: "Certainly this fellow was with him, for he is a Gali

Key Themes

lean.”

Peter replies with emphasis: “Man, I don’t know what you’re talking about!

Key Themes

"Immediately, while he's still speaking, the rooster crows. And at that moment

Key Themes

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t, Jesus — being led past — turns and looks at Peter. Their eyes meet across the co

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urtyard. And Peter remembers the prediction. He goes outside and weeps bitterly. T

Key Themes

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he en e m y’ s att ac k w as re al. Sa ta n sif te d Pe te r. T he de ni al ha pp en ed — th re e ti m es ,

Key Themes

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just as Jesus said it would.

But Jesus' prayer was more powerful than Satan's sifting

Key Themes

. After the resurrection, Jesus finds Peter fishing on the Sea of Galilee. They co

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Key Themes

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e three denials, three affirmations of love, three commissions to feed His sheep.

Key Themes

“Simon son of John, do you love me?”

“Yes, Lord, you know that I love you.”

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Key Themes

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Key Themes

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es Jesus commissions him.

The threefold denial is answered with threefold restor

Key Themes

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ation. The damage is redeemed. The enemy’s attack is reversed. The devil’s goal

Key Themes

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was to destroy Peter. But Jesus’ goal was to strengthen him through the trial. And Jesus

Key Themes

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won. This is always the pattern: the enemy means it for harm, but God uses it

Key Themes

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for good. The devil attacks, but Christ restores. The accuser condemns, but th

Key Themes

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e Advocate defends.

Paul’s Transformation (Acts 9; 1 Timothy 1:12-16)

Key Themes

Paul’s story is violence transformed into mission. Before his conversion, he’s Sa

Key Themes

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ul of Tarsus, a rising star among the Pharisees. He's breathing out murderous th

Key Themes

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reats against the Lord’s disciples. He goes to the highpriest and asks for letters

Key Themes

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to the synagogues in Damascus — authorization to hunt down Christians, arrest the

Key Themes

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m, and bring the mback to Jerusalem in chains. He’s on fire with religious zeal. He

Key Themes

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stood there approving when they stoned Stephen, the first Christian martyr. Heen

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terrs house after house in Jerusalem, dragging men and women off to prison. And no

Key Themes

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Key Themes

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light from heaven suddenly flashes around him — brighter than the sun. He falls to th

Key Themes

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e ground. And he hears a voice: “Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?”

“Who are yo

Key Themes

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u, Lord?”

“I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting.”

The one he’s been hunting is hu

Key Themes

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nting him. The one he thought was dead is very much alive. And in that moment, ever

Key Themes

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ything Saul thought he knew shatters.

Jesus tells him to go into Damascus and wait fo

Key Themes

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r in str uc ti on s. Sa ul ge ts up fr o m th e gr ou nd , bu t w he n he op en s hi s ey es , he ca n’ t

Key Themes

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see. His companions have to lead him by the hand into the city. For three days, he’s bl

Key Themes

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ind. He does n’t eat. Doesn’t drink. Just sits in the darkness, his entire worldview

Key Themes

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collapsing and rebuilding. Then Jesus sends a disciple named Ananias to him. Ana

Key Themes

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nias is terrified — he's heard about Saul. But he obeys. He lays hands on Saul, and immm

Key Themes

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ediately something like scales falls from Saul’s eyes. He can see again. And he’s ba

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Key Themes

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comes the one who builds it across the Roman Empire. The murderer becomes the

Key Themes

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missionary. Paul never forgets his past. But he sees it redeemed:

> “I was once abl

Key Themes

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Key Themes

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in me, the worst of sinners, Christ Jesus might display his immense patience as an

Key Themes

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example for those who would believe.”

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1 Timothy 1:13-16

His worst moment

Key Themes

ents become testimonies to God’s greatest grace. Nothing wasted.

The Core Scripture Truth

Romans 8:28-30 - “And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son… And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified.”

This is the redemption arc applied to individual lives. Let’s unpack it:

“In all things God works for the good”

Not some things. All things. Not just the good experiences. All experiences. God is at work in the swamp and at the water’s edge, in the dying and in the rising, in the valleys and on the mountains.

This doesn’t mean all things are good. They’re not. Sin is evil. Suffering is real. Brokenness hurts.

But it does mean God is working in all things. Taking even the broken pieces and weaving them into a story of redemption.

“For the good of those who love him”

The promise is conditional. It’s for those who love God—who are in relationship with Him, who trust Him, who have responded to His call.

If you’ve entered the redemption story—if you’ve responded to God’s call, trusted in Jesus, been brought into the family—then this promise is yours.

God is working all things for your good. Not for your comfort. Not for your ease. But for your ultimate good—conformity to Christ, participation in His kingdom, eternal glory with Him.

“Called… justified… glorified”

Paul traces the redemption arc in three movements:

Called - God pursued you. Spoke to you. Drew you to Himself. Your “yes” wasn’t the beginning—God’s call was.

Justified - You were declared righteous. Not because you earned it. But because Jesus’ righteousness was credited to you. You stand before God forgiven, accepted, beloved—based on Christ’s finished work.

Glorified - Past tense. Even though it’s future. Why? Because in God’s eternal perspective, it’s already done. The story is written. The ending is secure.

You will be glorified—fully redeemed, completely restored, eternally with Christ.

This is the theological anchor: your redemption is part of God’s eternal purpose. He foreknew you. Predestined you. Called you. Justified you. And He will glorify you.

The story isn’t in doubt. The ending is secure.

The Wayfarer Moment

Lyrics: Redemption Story

[Chorus]

From the beginning, His

The Wayfarer Moment

---

love was displayed, Throughevery fall, His promise stayed. A Savior

The Wayfarer Moment

’s grace, a story divine, Redemption secured for hearts like mine.

The Wayfarer Moment

[Verse 1]
Before the stars adorned the night,
Before the sun gave

The Wayfarer Moment

---

earth its light, The Word was spoken, creation came, Through Jesus, th

The Wayfarer Moment

---

e Maker, who knew our name. He formed the earth, the skies, these

The Wayfarer Moment

as, Breathed life into humanity. From dust we rose, His Spirit's fla

The Wayfarer Moment

me, To bear His image, to praise His name.

[Chorus]

From the be

The Wayfarer Moment

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ginning, His love was displayed, Throughevery fall, His promise stay

The Wayfarer Moment

ed. A Savior’s grace, a story divine, Redemption secured for hear

The Wayfarer Moments

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ts like mine.

[Verse 2]

In Eden's garden, peace was found, Until the

The Wayfarer Moment

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serpent’s lie unbound. The fruit was taken, the fall began, Sin entered th

The Wayfarer Moment

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e hearts of every man. Yet even then, God’s love remained, A Savior pr

The Wayfarer Moment

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omised to break the chain. From Adam’s sin to grace restored, Apl

The Wayfarer Moment

an offer redemption from the Lord.

[Chorus]

From the beginning, Hi

The Wayfarer Moment

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s lo ve w as di sp la ye d, T hr ou gh ev er y fa ll, Hi s pr o m is e st ay ed . A Sa vi

The Wayfarer Moment

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or’s grace, a story divine, Redemption secured for hearts like min

The Wayfarer Moment

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e.

[Verse 3] Throughkings and prophets, His voice was heard, Declari

The Wayfarer Moment

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ng His truth, His holy word. David, the shepherd, a king would rise, Throu

The Wayfarer Moment

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ghis line, the Savior arrive. Isaiah spoke of a suffering King, Who

The Wayfarer Moment

’d bear our sins and salvation bring. Elijah’s fire, Daniel’s stand, God’s fa

The Wayfarer Moment

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it hfulness across the land.

[Chorus]

From the beginning, His love

The Wayfarer Moment

was displayed, Throughevery fall, His promise stayed. A Savior’s gr

The Wayfarer Moment

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ace, a story divine, Redemption secured for hearts like mine.

[Bri

The Wayfarer Moment

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d ge]

Oh, the cross, where mercy flows, The empty grave, the stor

The Wayfarer Moment

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y shows. Sin defeated, love prevailed, Through Christ alone, redempt

The Wayfarer Moment

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ion hailed. Oh, the cross, where hope is found, His grace abounds, His lo

The Wayfarer Moment

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ve pr of ou nd . He bo re th e w ei gh t, th e de bt w as pa id, In Hi m, th e vi ct or y’

The Wayfarer Moment

s displayed.

[Verse 4] Mary, chosen, her heart so pure, Through her, G

The Wayfarer Moment

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od's love would long endure. She held the Savior, her baby boy, The King of

The Wayfarer Moment

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kings, her heart’s great joy. Did she know the cross He’d face, The

The Wayfarer Moment

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pain, the nails, the world's disgrace? Through grief, she trusted, thro

The Wayfarer Moment

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ugh loss, she prayed, Believing in the plan God made.

[Verse 5] The le

The Wayfarer Moment

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aders schemed, their hearts grew cold, Blinded by power, they sought co

The Way farer Moment

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ntrol. They called Him a blasphemer, sentenced His death, Yet loveen

The Wayfarer Moment

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dured with His final breath. Betrayed by a kiss for silver’s gleam, Den

The Wayfarer Moment

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ied by a friend in a broken dream. Yet grace would triumph, death undo

The Wayfarer Moment

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ne, Victory through God’s risen Son. **[Verse 6]** To die with Christ,

The Wayfarer Moment

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to rise anew, To walk His path, His love pursue. The cross became th

The Wayfarer Moment

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e bridge to grace, A gift of life in His embrace. Through history's there

The Wayfarer Moment

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ad, His story flows, A love eternal, a truth that grows. My story

The Wayfarer Moment

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now entwined with His, A song of hope, a life that lives.

[Final Chorus]

Fr

The Wayfarer Moment

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The Wayfarer Moment

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The Wayfarer Moment

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d for hearts like mine.

[Outro]

His story echoes through all of time,

The Wayfarer Moment

A Savior’s love, so pure, so kind. One day we’ll stand before His throne

The Way fare r Moment

, Forever redeemed, forever His own.

Key Takeaways

- **Your story fits within God's Story.** You're not a random accident—you're part of the grand narrative of Creation, Fall, Redemption, and Restoration that spans all history.
- **Nothing in your life is wasted.** Every season, even the painful ones, can be redeemed. God weaves even your failures and wounds into a tapestry of purpose and beauty.
- **You have a redemptive role to play.** Your transformed life becomes part of how God redeems others. Your scars become credentials, your story becomes testimony, your healing becomes hope.
- **The Gospel is THE Story that makes sense of your story.** Understanding the larger biblical narrative helps you see where you fit and why your life matters eternally.

##

Reflections for the Road

Questions for the Journey:

1. **Where do you see your story fitting in**

to the redemption arc?

Look back at your life. Can you identify creation (who you were made to be

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Story” below.

2. **Read Romans 8:28-30 slowly.**

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Practice: Telling Your Redemption Story

One of the most powerful spiritual practices is learning to tell your redemption story. Here's a framework:

1. Creation - Who you were made to be

Before the swamp. Before the brokenness. Who did God create you to be? What gifts? What longings? What was the original design?

2. Fall - Your swamp

Name it. Be specific. What was your particular experience of brokenness? Don't sugarcoat it. The fall was real. The swamp was deep.

3. Redemption - Your water's edge encounter

When did you meet grace? What was your turning point? How did God pursue you? When did you respond? What changed?

4. Restoration - The journey since then

This is where you are now. Between "already redeemed" and "not yet fully restored." What has God been doing? What rhythms have you learned? What roots have you grown?

5. Consummation - The hope ahead

How does the promise of final restoration shape how you live now? One day, all things will be made new. How does that hope sustain you?

6. Share your story

Your redemption story isn't just for you. It's a testimony of God's faithfulness that can encourage others. Find someone to share it with.

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And you’ll see your story woven perfectly into His story. This is redemption’

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Nothing is Wasted

Listen at: http://go.skylerthomas.com/smBjeW

Scan to listen: Nothing is Wasted

An Invitation to Believe the Impossible

You've come through eleven chapters. You've seen your story within God's story. You've discovered purpose, rhythm, depth.

But now I need to ask you the hardest question yet:

When you look back at your life—really look back—what do you see?

Be honest. Do you see years in that toxic relationship? The job you stayed at too long because you were too afraid to leave? The ministry that blew up spectacularly? The friendships you let die because you were too proud? The opportunities you missed?

When you look back, do you see a timeline full of black holes? Years where nothing good grew. Nothing valuable was learned. Just… waste?

Here's the question that haunts many of us: *Can God really redeem this? Or are some things just… lost?*

The enemy whispers: "Those years are gone. That potential is wasted. Those relationships are dead. You can't get it back. It's too late."

But here's what I've discovered, and it's the most scandalous promise in Scripture:

In God's economy, nothing is wasted. Not "almost nothing." Not "most things." Nothing.

Every tear. Every failure. Every lost year. Every broken relationship. Every season you wish you could erase—God can redeem it all.

This doesn't mean the pain wasn't real. It doesn't mean the consequences don't matter. It doesn't minimize the loss.

It means God specializes in turning crucifixions into resurrections. He takes what looks like absolute waste and transforms it into raw material for redemption.

This chapter is about believing the impossible: that the years you thought were lost have been woven into a larger story of transformation.

That nothing—absolutely nothing—is wasted in His hands.

So before you continue, pause. This is hard to believe. I know. Consider:

Can you say, even with doubt mixed in: "God, I don't see how You can redeem those years. But I'm willing to believe You can. I'm willing to trust that even the seasons I wish I could erase are being woven into something purposeful. Show me how nothing is wasted."

That's the prayer that opens eyes to redemption.

Because what comes next isn't just theological theory. It's the scandalous truth that changes how you see your entire timeline.

Let's be brutally honest about what waste feels like. Because if you've looked back at your timeline and seen black holes, you know this geography intimately.

Waste feels like: - **Time you can never recover.** Years spent in patterns that brought nothing but destruction. - **Potential squandered.** The person you could have become if you'd made different choices. - **Relationships damaged beyond repair.** Bridges burned. Trust shattered. No going back. - **Opportunities missed.** Doors that closed while you were too paralyzed to walk through them. - **Lessons learned too late.** Wisdom that came after the damage was already done.

This isn't just regret. Regret is "I wish I'd done that differently." Waste is "That season contributed nothing. It's just gone."

And the question that haunts you: *Can God really redeem this? Or are some things just… lost?*

The enemy whispers: "Those years are gone. That potential is wasted. Those relationships are dead. You can't get it back. It's too late."

But grace whispers something different: "In God's economy, nothing is wasted. Not 'almost nothing.' Not 'most things.' Nothing."

Every tear. Every failure. Every lost year. Every broken relationship. Every season you wish you could erase—God can redeem it all.

This doesn't mean the pain wasn't real. It doesn't mean the consequences don't matter. It doesn't minimize the loss.

It means God specializes in turning crucifixions into resurrections. He takes what looks like absolute waste and transforms it into raw material for redemption.

This is the scandalous promise: nothing—absolutely nothing—is wasted in His hands.

Key Themes

Stories of Redemption

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seph: From Pit to Palace (Genesis 37-50)

Joseph’s story is one of the clearest

Key Themes

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pictures of "nothing is wasted" in all of Scripture.

Betrayed by his brothers. Sold into

Key Themes

slavery. Falsely accused. Imprisoned. For years, it looked like total waste. But God

Key Themes

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was weaving a story of redemption. The pit led to Potiphar's house. Prison led to

Key Themes

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the palace. And ultimately, Joseph’s suffering positioned him to save not just Egy

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pt, but his own family — the very ones who betrayed him. His words to his brothers

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capture the heart of "nothing is wasted":

> "You intended to harm me, but God in

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tended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives.

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Genesis 50:20

What others meant for evil, God meant for good. Not that G

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on and turned it into salvation. Nothing was wasted — not the betrayal, not the slav

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into a story of redemption.

The Cross: Ultimate Redemption of Waste (Luke 23

Key Themes

:33-43)

If you want to see God’s power to redeem waste, look at the cross.

Themos

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potential, executed as a common criminal. Three years of ministry, ended. Disciple

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s scattered. Hope crushed. Wasted. That’s what it looked like. But that’s not wha

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hen all waste, all sin, all brokenness was gathered up and transformed.

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Colossians 2:15

Deaths wallowed up in victory.

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The grave robbed of its power.

If God can redeem the cross

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t. No loss is too final.

In God’s economy, nothing is wasted. Not even death itself.

Key Themes

The Wasteland Restored (Joel 2:25-27)

After devastating judgment — locusts

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that destroyed everything

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God makes a promise:

> "I will repay you for the years

Key Themes

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the locusts have eaten

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the great locust and the young locust, the other locusts

Key Themes

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and the locusts swarm … You will have plenty to eat, until you are full, and you will pr

Key Themes

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ai se th e na m e of th e L O R D yo ur G od , w ho ha s w or ke d w on de rs fo r yo u. ” > > —

Key Themes

Joel 2:25-26 The years the locusts have eaten. The wasted years. These seasons of de

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vastation and loss.

God doesn’t just stop the locusts. Here pays. Here restores. He

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redeems the wasted years.

This is the promise: no season is so wasted that God

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can’t redeem it. The years you think are lost

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God will restore them. Not by turn

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ing back time. But by redeeming what was, transforming it, using it for His pu

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rposes.

The Core Scripture Truth

Genesis 22:14 - “So Abraham called the name of that place, ‘The Lord will provide’; as it is said to this day, ‘On the mount of the Lord it shall be provided.’”

Romans 8:28 - “And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.”

These two passages—separated by centuries—speak the same truth: God is in the business of redemption. Of provision. Of ensuring that nothing is wasted in His hands.

Genesis 22 shows us God’s character: He is the God who provides. Even when the test is unbearable. Even when obedience seems to contradict the promise. Even at the last possible moment. God provides.

Romans 8 shows us God’s commitment: He works all things—not some things, but all things—for the good of those who love Him.

This isn’t wishful thinking. It’s covenant faithfulness. God has bound Himself to redeem your story, no matter how broken the chapters.

Together, these passages form the theological foundation for believing nothing is wasted:

God’s provision is certain. On the mountain of the Lord—in your darkest moments, your most desperate situations—provision will be made. It may not come when you expect. It may not look like you imagined. But it will come.

God’s redemption is comprehensive. All things. Not just the good things. Not just the spiritual things. All things. Every moment, every experience, every pain, every struggle—God is working it for good.

This doesn’t mean the pain wasn’t real. It doesn’t mean the waste didn’t hurt.

It means God specializes in turning waste into wonder. Ashes into beauty. Mourning into dancing.

In the economy of God, nothing is wasted. Each tear, each failure, each loss becomes an opportunity for grace.

The Wayfarer Moment

Lyrics: Nothing is Wasted

[Verse 1]

You asked me to let go of what I

The Wayfarer Moment

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held too tight The plans I made, the dreams I shaped, the pieces of my

The Wayfarer Moment

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life I tried to hold it all together, afraid of what I'd lose
But love means la yi

The Way fare r Moment

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ng down the outcome And trusting everything to You

[Chorus]

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The Wayfarer Moment

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will provide, You always do Even when I don’t know what You’re

The Wayfarer Moment

leading me through Even when I walk through fire, You stay in the e

The Wayfarer Moment

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flame You hold my sorrow, You know my name In the valley, in the

The Wayfarer Moment

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waiting, I have tasted In the economy of Your love, nothing is waste

The Wayfarer Moment

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[Verse 2]

I’ve walked through days that felt like silence

And nights I

The Wayfarer Moment

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couldn't catch my breath I said I'd follow wherever Youle dme But I

The Wayfarer Moment

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was scared of what came next I couldn’t see beyond the moment Still

The Wayfarer Moment

You whispered, "I am near" You never promised all the answers Y

The Wayfarer Moment

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ou only asked me not to fear

[Chorus]

You will provide, You always

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The Wayfarer Moment

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The Wayfarer Moment

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ow, You know my name In the valley, in the waiting, I have tasted In th

The Wayfarer Moment

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e economy of Your love, nothing is wasted

[Verse 3]

So here I a

The Wayfarer Moment

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The Wayfarer Moment

asked me for perfection Just a heart that says, “I’ll try” And in the br

The Wayfarer Moment

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eaking, I found healing In the loss, I found Your grace You're the God

The Wayfarer Moment

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who turns my ashes Into beauty I can’t replace

[Bridge]

You don’t

The Wayfarer Moment

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was te the waiting, You don’t waste the pain Even when I’m walking

The Wayfarer Moment

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through fire or rain
Every breath I breathe, every pain I've tasted
In the

The Wayfarer Moment

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economy of Your love, nothing is wasted

[Final Chorus]

You will

The Wayfarer Moment

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provide, You always do Even when I'm breaking in two Even when I

The Wayfarer Moment

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walk through fire,
You stay in the flame
You never leave me alone

The Wayfarer Moment

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in the pain In the valley, in the waiting, I have tasted In the economy of

The Wayfarer Moment

Your love, nothing is wasted

[Outro]

So I lay it down again E

The Way fa re r Mo m en t

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ve n w he n I do n’ t un de rst an d Y ou ar e go od … an d no th in g is w as te d Y

The Wayfarer Moment

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you are near when I let go
You are strong when I feel low
You are kind…

The Wayfarer Moment

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and nothing is wasted You've seen every tear I've cried Held my he

The Wayfarer Moment

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art when hope had died You stayed … and nothing is wasted So I'll tr

The Wayfarer Moment

Just You in the silence I'll believe You through the dark You are faithful

The Wayfarer Moment

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in the waiting
You are healing every part
I won’t fear what comes to m

The Wayfarer Moment

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or row I won’t chase what’s not mine to hold You are God … and nothin

The Wayfarer Moment

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g is wasted

Key Takeaways

- **God redeems every wasted season.** Romans 8:28 promises that God works ALL things—not just good things—together for good for those who love Him. Your painful past isn't disqualified; it's raw material for redemption.
- **Suffering can birth compassion.** The pain you've walked through equips you to comfort others in similar struggles. Your wounds become the very thing that allows you to reach people no one else can.
- **Count the cost, then trust the process.** Following Jesus requires sacrifice, but what you gain far outweighs what you give up. The pearl of great price is worth selling everything else.
- **Jehovah Jireh—God provides.** Just as He provided a ram for Abraham when Isaac was on the altar, God provides what you need at the exact moment you need it. Trust His timing, not your anxiety.

Reflections for the R

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joyful and painful.
Where do you see patterns?
Where do you see the thread of grace?
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Practice: The Timeline Exercise

Here’s how to do timeline work:

1. Draw your timeline

On a large piece of paper, draw a horizontal line representing your life from birth to now. Mark major life events.

2. Mark the spiritual seasons

Using different colors, mark seasons of growth, wandering, suffering, joy. Be honest. Don’t spiritualize everything.

3. Look for the thread of grace

Go back over your timeline and look for moments of grace—even in the hardest seasons. Where did God show up? Use another color to mark these moments.

4. Name what you’re learning

For each major season, write a one-sentence summary of what you learned or how you grew. Even the painful seasons. Even the “wasted” years.

5. Write a prayer of redemption

End by asking God to redeem every season. To use even the wasted years for His glory and your good.

Closing Image

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triumphing over them by the cross.”

> — Colossians 2:15

Devil’s On The Run

Listen at: http://go.skylerthomas.com/xSXwkH

Scan to listen: Devil’s On The Run

An Invitation to Stand

You’ve walked through twelve chapters. You’ve experienced rescue, rhythm, depth, redemption. You’ve discovered that nothing is wasted.

But now I need to ask you something crucial:

When the accusations come at 3 AM—when they feel true—do you know where you’re standing?

You know these voices. They always show up in the dark, in the quiet, when you’re too tired to fight back effectively:

You're not really forgiven. God's still angry. You've failed too many times. You'll never be free. This sin is too big.

And here's what makes it so hard: sometimes it feels like all the progress you've made is fragile. One accusation away from crumbling.

The enemy whispers: *See? You haven't really changed. This is who you are. This is who you'll always be.*

But here's what I've discovered, and it's the truth that changes the battle:

This isn't a fight for victory. It's a fight from victory.

The war is already over. The enemy has already been defeated. You're not fighting to win—you're enforcing the win that's already been won.

Colossians 2:15 says: "Having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross."

Disarmed. Public spectacle. Triumphed.

Past tense. Done. Finished.

This chapter is about the fundamental shift from desperate warfare to confident standing. From fighting for freedom to standing in freedom. From resisting from fear to resisting from rest.

The devil is on the run. Not because you're strong. Because Christ is victorious.

And you—standing in Christ's victory—don't have to earn freedom. You just have to stand in the freedom that's already yours.

So before you continue, pause. Consider:

Can you say, even when the accusations feel true: "Jesus, the cross. The cross settles this. I'm not fighting for victory—I'm standing in victory. The enemy is defeated. I resist from rest, and he flees."

That's the declaration that shifts the battle.

Because what comes next isn't about fighting harder. It's about standing firmer.

Let's be honest about what spiritual warfare feels like. Because if you've been in the fight, you know it's not theoretical. It's visceral.

Spiritual warfare feels like: - **Accusations that feel true.** "You're not really forgiven. God's still angry. You've failed too many times." - **Temptations perfectly tailored to your weaknesses.** The enemy knows where you're vulnerable. - **Despair that whispers "give up."** What's the point? You'll never change. This is who you are. - **Isolation.** The lie that you're alone. That no one else struggles like this. That if people knew, they'd reject you. - **Confusion.** Feeling like you can't tell God's voice from the enemy's lies from your own thoughts.

But here’s the shift: spiritual warfare from victory feels different.

When you’re fighting from victory instead of for victory, the battle changes: - **Accusations lose their power.** Not because they stop coming, but because you know they’re lies. The cross settles it. - **Temptations don’t define you.** You’re not your struggles. You’re beloved. The temptation is an attack, not an identity. - **Despair has no ground.** Hope is anchored in Christ’s finished work, not your performance. - **Isolation breaks.** You’re part of a body. Connected. Not alone. - **Truth becomes clear.** God’s voice sounds like grace. The enemy’s voice sounds like accusation. And you’re learning the difference.

The battlefield is still real. The enemy still attacks. But you’re not desperately fighting for freedom anymore.

You’re standing in freedom. Enforcing victory. Resisting from rest.

Key Themes

Stories of Spiritual Warfare

Jesus’ Temptation

Key Themes

in the Wilderness (Matthew 4: 1-11)

Forty days. Forty nights. No food. No sh

Key Themes

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elter. Just Jesus, alone in the wilderness — a barren landscape of stone and sand, scor

Key Themes

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ching heat by day, bitter cold by night. The same wilderness where Israel wandered fo

Key Themes

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r fo rt y ye ar s. T he sa m e ki nd of te sti ng gr ou nd w he re G od ’s pe op le fa ile d ag ai n an d ag

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Jesus is hungry. Not the kind of hunger you feel when you skip lunch. The kind th

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Key Themes

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ing for food. Every stone looks like bread. And that’s exactly when the enemy

Key Themes

shows up. *"If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become bread.*

Key Themes

”

If. That word is a knife. The Father just spoke at Jesus’ baptism: “This is my

Key Themes

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beloved Son.” But now the devil plants doubt: *If* you are … *If* God really loves you,

Key Themes

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why are you starving? *If* you're really His Son, why doesn't He provide? Prove it.

Key Themes

Use your power. Take care of yourself.

Jesus’ response cuts through the fog of hunger wi

Key Themes

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Key Themes

comes from the mouth of God.’” The second test shifts location—suddenly they’re at

Key Themes

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the highest point of the temple in Jerusalem, hundreds of feet above the ground. Pe

Key Themes

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op le be lo w lo ok li ke an ts. T he dr op is di zz yi ng . *“I f yo u ar e th e So n of G od , th ro w yo*

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Key Themes

— Psalm 91, God’s promise of protection. See? God will catch you. He has to. It’

Key Themes

s promised. Test it. Prove it. Force God’s hand. Jesus doesn’t flinch: “It is also

Key Themes

written: ‘Do not put the Lord your God to the test.’”

The third temptation is the

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most brazen. The devil shows Jesus all the kingdoms of the world in an instant

Key Themes

— their wealth, their power, their glory. Everything Jesus came to redeem, offe

Key Themes

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red as a shortcut. *“All this I will give you if you will bow down and worship me.”*

Key Themes

No more *if*. Now it's a straight-up offer: Skip the cross. Avoid the suffering. T

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ake the kingdom now. Just bow.

Jesus’ final response is sharp, decisive: “Away fro

Key Themes

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mme, Satan! For it is written: ‘Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only.’”

Key Themes

And the devil left. Fled. Ran. This is the pattern for every believer. The enemy

Key Themes

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will attack your identity in Christ. He’ll offer shortcuts. He’ll tempt you to doubt

Key Themes

God’s promises. Your response? Stand on truth. Speak Scripture. Resist with conf

Key Themes

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id en ce . A nd he wi ll fl ee . Ju st li ke he fl ed fr o m Je su s.

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Key Themes

14:22-33)

The storm hits in the middle of the night. Wind howling. Waves crashing

Key Themes

over the bow. The disciples are straining at the oars, trying to keep the boat from capsizing

Key Themes

izing. They're experienced fisherm en—they've been through storms before. But th

Key Themes

is one is different. Relentless. Exhausting. And Jesus isn’t with them. Then, in the

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pre-dawn darkness, they see something impossible: a figure walking on the water. T

Key Themes

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heir first reaction isn't fait h — it's terror. "It's a ghost!" But then they hear His vo

Key Themes

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ice cutting through the wind: “Take courage! It is I. Don’t be afraid.”

Peter, impu

Key Themes

lsive as always, shouts back: “Lord, if it’s you, tell me to come to you on the water.

Key Themes

"Come."

One word. One invitation. And Peter—reckless, passionate Peter—cli

Key Themes

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mbs over the side of the boat. His foot touches the surface. And it holds. He takes an

Key Themes

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other step. Still holding. He’s walking on water. Actually walking on water. For a

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few glorious moments, Peter is doing the impossible. Eyes locked on Jesus. Faith

Key Themes

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overriding physics.

Then he notices the wind. Feels the spray of the waves hitting hi

Key Themes

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s legs. Hears the roar of the storm around him. His brain catches up with what he’s

Key Themes

doing

I'm standing on water, this is insane, I'm going to drown

and the mo

Key Themes

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ment he shifts his focus from Jesus to the circumstances, he starts to sink. Not

Key Themes

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slowly. Fast. Water up to his knees, his waist, his chest. Panic floods in.

And he cries

Key Themes

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out: “Lord, save me!”

Three words. Not a theological treatise. Not a confession

Key Themes

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of unworthiness. Not an apology for his lack of faith. Just a desperate, drowning cr

Key Themes

y. And immediately — not after Peter proved himself, not after Peter had a bette

Key Themes

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r attitude, not after Peter pulled himself together and deserved it—immediately,

Key Themes

Jesus reached out His hand and caught him.

That's the pattern. Not "get yourself to ge

Key Themes

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there and then call on Jesus.”

But “call on Jesus from the middle of your sinking.”

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Key Themes

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Key Themes

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sus reaches out immediately when you cry out.

> “We are not necessarily do

Key Themes

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ubting that God will do the best for us; we are wondering how painful the best will

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turn out to be.”

> — C. S. Lewis, *Letters to Malcolm*

The Fall of Satan (Revelatio

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n 12 :7 - 12)

Picture the scene: war breaks out in heaven. Not a skirmish. Not a di

Key Themes

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sagreement. War. Michael and his angels arrayed against the dragon and his forces

Key Themes

. The ancient serpent, the one who deceived Eve in the garden, the accuser who ha

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thought he could win.

But he couldn’t.

“He was not strong enough.”

> “Then war br

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Key Themes

. The great dragon was hurled down — that ancient serpent called the devil, or Sata

Key Themes

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n … The accuser of our brothers and sisters, who accuses them before our God day

Key Themes

and night, has been hurled down.”

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— Revelation 12:7-10

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ntly removed. Hurled. Throwndown like a defeated enemy. The one who claim

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ed to be like God, the one who promised Eve she could be like God, the one who ha

Key Themes

s been accusing God’s children for millennia — cast out. Expelled. Defeated. And th

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Key Themes

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have come the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God, and the author

Key Themes

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ity of his Messiah!”

The accuser is cast down. His accusations no longer stand. His

Key Themes

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authority is revoked. His place in heaven is gone. The victory is complete, cosmic,

Key Themes

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irreversible.

And the call to believers?

> “They triumphed over him by the blood of

Key Themes

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the Lamb and by the word of their testimony; they did not love their lives som

Key Themes

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uch as to shrink from death.”

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Revelation 12:11 You overcome by the blood of

Key Themes

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the Lamb (Christ's finished work) and the word of your testimony (standing in trut

Key Themes

h). Christ’s victory + your faith = the devil on the run.

The Core Scripture Truth

Colossians 2:13-15 - “And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross.”

The cross is the turning point of all spiritual warfare. What looked like defeat was actually the decisive victory.

Jesus didn’t just survive the enemy’s attack—He dismantled it.

Disarmed. Every weapon the enemy had—sin, death, condemnation, accusation—was stripped away. He has no legitimate claim. No legal ground. No authority.

Public spectacle. The victory wasn't secret or private. It was public. Visible. Undeniable. The powers of darkness were put on display—defeated, humiliated, powerless.

Triumphing. This is the language of a victory parade. Jesus didn't just win—He celebrated. The cross wasn't Plan B. It was the plan. And it worked perfectly.

This is the theological foundation for "the devil is on the run." Not wishful thinking. Not positive confession. Not spiritual bravado.

Reality. Accomplished fact. The cross changed everything.

Ephesians 6:10-11: "Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on the full armor of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes."

Notice: you're strong in the Lord, not in yourself. The armor is God's armor, not your own. And the call is to stand, not to fight for ground you don't have.

You're holding ground that's already been won. Standing in victory that's already been secured. Resisting an enemy who's already been defeated.

This is spiritual warfare from rest. From confidence. From the unforced rhythms of grace.

The devil is on the run. Not because you're strong, but because Christ is victorious.

And in Him, you share that victory.

The Wayfarer Moment

Lyrics: Devil's O

The Wayfarer Moment

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n The Run

[Verse 1]

Devil on the run

He’s a wicked beast

Tried to ta

The Wayfarer Moment

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kemedown
But he lost his feast
He kicked me hard
Left me buried

The Wayfarer Moment

---

deep But I rose in grace While he lost his keep

[Verse 2]

In my darkest

The Wayfarer Moment

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night I forgot the gift I had He pulled me low Told me lies and mad

The Wayfarer Moment

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emem ad But even in the pit Jesus called my name Now I walk in

The Wayfarer Moment

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light I’m not the same

[Pre-Chorus]

Don’t befooled By the snak

The Way fa re r Mo m en t

e in th e w ee ds H e do n’ t ca re ’B ou t yo ur ho pe or yo ur ne ed s H e ca n’ t gi

The Wayfarer Moment

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The Wayfarer Moment

[Chorus]

Now I rise, now I run
By the power of the Son
But the

The Wayfarer Moment

Devil is a liar He's Done!! Ain't no grace where he's from Tried to

The Wayfarer Moment

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steal, tried to kill But my soul he could dn’t take Devil’s on the run ’Cause

The Wayfarer Moment

I’m saved by grace

[Verse 3]

Chains are gone

Yeah, the stone rolled

The Wayfarer Moment

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back He lost the war On a bloodstained track Truth is fire And the lie

The Way fa re r Mo m en t

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w on ’t st an d I’ m a ch il d of G od W it h a s w or d in m y ha nd

[C h or us

The Wayfarer Moment

– repeat]

Now I rise, now I run
By the power of the Son
But the D

The Wayfarer Moment

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evil is a liar He's Done!! Ain't no grace where he's from Tried to st

The Wayfarer Moment

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eal, tried to kill But my soul he could dn’t take Devil’s on the run ’Cause I’

The Wayfarer Moment

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m saved by grace

[Bridge – Breakdown / Call & Response]

O

The Wayfarer Moment

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the blood! Oh the Lamb! Crushed the devil With a mighty hand

The Wayfarer Moment

Ain’t no grave! Gonna hold me down! I’ve been bought And I wear the cr

The Wayfarer Moment

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own You can growl You can scream But you can’t run From the Ki

The Wayfarer Moment

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ng Devil’s on the run

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He lost everything

[Final Chorus – Tago ut st

The Wayfarer Moment

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Now I rise, now I run By the power of the Son But the Devil

The Wayfarer Moment

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is a liar He's Done!! Ain't no grace where he's from Tried to steal,

The Wayfarer Moment

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tried to kill But my soul he couldn’t take Devil’s on the run Yeah, the de

The Way fare r Moment

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vil’s on the run Jesus won — and I’m saved by grace

Key Takeaways

- **Fight from victory, not for victory.** The battle was won at the cross. You’re not fighting to defeat the enemy—you’re enforcing Christ’s already-accomplished victory by standing firm in truth.
- **The devil is already defeated.** Colossians 2:15 declares that Jesus disarmed the powers and authorities and made a public spectacle of them. Don’t give a defeated enemy more credit than he deserves.

- **Lies lose power when exposed to truth.** The enemy's primary weapon is deception. When you identify the lie and speak God's truth over it, the stronghold crumbles. Light always dispels darkness.
- **Walk in the freedom Christ secured.** You're not in bondage anymore—you're free. Live like it. Resist the devil from a place of rest, not fear, knowing he must flee when you stand firm.

Reflections for the Road

Questions for the Journey:

- Where are you still fighti

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Practice: Truth Declarations

One of the most powerful practices for spiritual warfare is declaring truth over the enemy's lies. Here's how:

1. Identify the lie

What is the enemy whispering to you? What accusation feels most powerful? Write it down.

2. Find the countering truth

Search Scripture for the truth that directly counters the lie. For example: - Lie: "You're not really forgiven." Truth: 1 John 1:9, Colossians 1:13-14 - Lie: "God is angry with you." Truth: Romans 5:1, Romans 8:1 - Lie: "You'll never be free." Truth: John 8:36, Galatians 5:1

3. Declare the truth out loud

Don't just think it. Speak it. "Enemy, you say I'm not forgiven. But God's Word says that if I confess my sins, He is faithful and just to forgive me. I am forgiven—completely, fully, eternally. Your lie has no power here."

4. Stand firm

The lie will come back. That's what the enemy does. But every time it returns, declare the truth again.

5. Thank God for the victory

End by thanking God for the victory that's already been won. For the truth that sets you free. For the armor He provides. For the fact that in Christ, the devil is on the run.

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This Moment is Enough

Listen at: http://go.skylerthomas.com/jIthAe

Scan to listen: This Moment is Enough

An Invitation to Be Here

You've journeyed through thirteen chapters. From swamp to water's edge. From crisis to rhythm. From scattered to rooted. From waste to redemption. From defeat to victory.

But now I need to ask you one final question:

Where are you right now?

Not physically. Mentally. Emotionally. Spiritually.

Are you here? Or are you replaying yesterday's conversations you wish you'd handled differently? Rehearsing tomorrow's scenarios that might never happen? Catastrophizing outcomes that probably won't come to pass?

Be honest. Most of us live everywhere except the present moment.

We're stuck in the past, replaying and regretting. Or anxious about the future, planning and preparing and trying to control outcomes that aren't ours to control.

Never here. Never now. Always scattered across yesterday and tomorrow.

The cost of that is crushing. You're exhausted from carrying regrets that belong to yesterday and borrowing worries from tomorrow. Your today is weighed down by burdens it was never meant to carry.

But here's what I've discovered, and it's the truth that brings rest:

This moment is enough.

Not because it's perfect. Not because all your questions are answered or your problems are solved.

But because God's name is "I AM"—present tense—and His grace meets you here, now, in this breath, in this step, in this exact moment you're living.

This final chapter is about learning to be present. To live here, now, instead of scattered across time. To fix your eyes on what's Real instead of on what was or what might be.

To trust that this moment, with sufficient grace, is enough.

You don't need tomorrow's grace today. You can't access yesterday's moments anymore. All you have—all you've ever had—is this moment.

And when you stop running from it and start receiving it as the gift it is, you discover something remarkable:

It's enough.

So before you continue—this final time—pause. Actually pause. Be here. Consider:

Can you say, even if it feels strange: "God, I'm here. Right now. Not yesterday, not tomorrow. Here. This moment is enough. Your grace meets me here. Help me stay present. Help me be here with You."

That's the prayer that opens presence.

Because what comes next isn't about doing more. It's about being here—fully, completely, presently here—where grace has always been waiting.

Most of us live everywhere except the present moment.

We replay yesterday's conversations, regretting what we said or didn't say. We rehearse tomorrow's scenarios, anxious about what might happen or what we'll need. We carry the weight of past mistakes into today and borrow future worries to make today even heavier.

But we're rarely here. Fully present. Fully alive to this moment.

And we wonder why we're exhausted. Why anxiety feels constant. Why life feels like it's always somewhere else—either behind us in regret or ahead of us in fear.

Living in the present feels like: - **Breath.** Deep, full, unforced. Not gasping for what's gone or hyperventilating about what's coming. - **Attention.** Actually listening to the person in front of you instead of mentally rehearsing your response. - **Gratitude.** Noticing what's here instead of obsessing over what's missing. - **Rest.** Not from activity, but in activity. Working from presence instead of from anxiety. - **Trust.** Believing that today's grace is sufficient for today. And tomorrow's will come tomorrow.

But here's what living in the present might also feel like, at least at first: - **Discomfort.** Because the present requires you to feel what you've been avoiding. - **Boredom.** Because you're so used to constant stimulation and distraction. - **Vulnerability.** Because being here means acknowledging what's actually true right now. - **Fear.** Because if you're not planning for tomorrow or fixing yesterday, what if everything falls apart?

This is normal. Because presence challenges everything our culture teaches us about productivity, control, and security.

Our culture says: Plan everything. Control outcomes. Never slow down.

Grace says: Be here now. Trust God with outcomes. Rest is not weakness.

Presence is a practice. A discipline. A choice you make moment by moment to come back here, to this breath, to this moment, to this sufficient grace.

Key Themes

Stories of Presence

Adam

Key Themes

and Eve in the Garden (Genesis 1-3)

In the beginning, God created humans and

Key Themes

placed the mina garden. Not a palace with protocol and hierarchy. Not a temple wi

Key Themes

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thrituals and rules. A garden — soil under their feet, fruit on the trees, animals to

Key Themes

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name, work to do with their hands. Simple. Present. Alive.

Picture the scene: even in

Key Themes

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g comes, the heat of the day fading. A breeze moves through the trees. And they he

Key Themes

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Key Themes

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heaven. Not a vision or a dream. Walking. Present. With them. This is what hum

Key Themes

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anity was made for: present-moment communion with God. No anxiety about

Key Themes

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tomorrow. No regret about yesterday. Just now. This moment. This conversation

Key Themes

. This walk together. But the serpent’s temptation was all about pulling the mout of

Key Themes

the present.

“You will be like God, knowing good and evil.”

Not today. Tomorrow.

Key Themes

Not what you have. What you could have. Not content in this moment. G

Key Themes

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E ve lo ok ed at th e fr ui t — pl ea si ng to th e ey e, de sir ab le

Key Themes

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for gaining wisdom — and she reached beyond the present moment. Reached for

Key Themes

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tomorrow’s wisdom today. Reached for knowledge God hadn’t given yet. Reached be

Key Themes

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yond simple trust.

And everything broke. Not just in that moment. In every moment

Key Themes

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Key Themes

. Back to simple presence. Back to walking with Him in the cool of the day. Back

Key Themes

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to this-moment trust instead of tomorrow's anxiety.

The Exodus and Daily M

Key Themes

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anna (Exodus 16)

Everymorning in the wilderness, the Israelites would wake to

Key Themes

find the ground covered with something they’d never seen before. Thin flakes, white

Key Themes

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like coriander seed, appearing with the dew. They called it "manna" — literally, "

Key Themes

What is it?”

The routine became sacred: rise early, before the sun gets too hot. W

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Key Themes

for today. Just today. God’s instruction was explicit: “Each one is to gather as much

Key Themes

as they need. Take an o mer for each person you have in your tent.”

Not more. Not less.

Key Themes

Just enough. Some people didn’t trust it. They gathered extra, hoarding manna for

Key Themes

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tomorrow just in case God didn’t show up again. But the next morning, they’d open th

Key Themes

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Key Themes

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Key Themes

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era double portion, and it would keep. Because God wanted them to rest, to trust th

Key Themes

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at His provision covered even the day they didn’t work.

The lesson repeated six days a

Key Themes

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week for forty years: trust today's provision for today. Tomorrow will have man

Key Themes

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Key Themes

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Key Themes

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tomorrow at the expense of today's trust. Just receiving today's grace with open ha

Key Themes

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nds, knowing tomorrow's grace will be there when you need it.

Jesus' Temptation:

Key Themes

Present Trust (Matthew 4)

Forty days into His wilderness fast, Jesus is physically

Key Themes

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depleted. Hunger gnaws at Him. The stones scattered across the barren ground actually

Key Themes

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y lo ok li ke br ea d. Hi s bo dy is sc re a m in g fo r fo od , an d H e ha s th e po w er to fi x it

Key Themes

— one word and those stones become loaves. The devil’s first temptation is all about

Key Themes

escaping the present moment’s discomfort: “If you are the Son of God, turn the es

Key Themes

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e st on es to br ea d. ”

In ot he r w or ds : W hy su ff er no w w he n yo u co ul d so lv e th is i m

Key Themes

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mediately? Why trust the Father’s provision when you have the power to provide for

Key Themes

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yourself?

Jesus’ response anchors Him in the present: “Man shall not live on bread al

Key Themes

one, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.” The Father’s word for

Key Themes

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this moment is: fast. Trust. Wait. So that’s what Jesus does. The second temptati

Key Themes

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on shifts tactics—this time the devil tries to get Jesus to force tomorrow's provisi

Key Themes

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on into today: “Throw yourself down from the temple and angels will save you.”

Key Themes

Test God’s future faithfulness now. Make Him prove He’ll show up tomorrow by m

Key Themes

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anufacturing a crisis today.

Jesus refuses: “Do not put the Lord your God to the

Key Themes

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test.”

Trust doesn’t demand proof. Trust waits for God’s timing, God’s provision

Key Themes

, God’s way — not mine, not now, not on my terms. The third temptation is the em

Key Themes

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ost blatant pull into the future: “Bow down and I’ll give you all the kingdoms.

Key Themes

"Everything Jesus came for—redemption, restoration, the kingdom of God—of

Key Themes

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fered right now. Skip the cross. Bypass the suffering. Take the future today. Je

Key Themes

Jesus’ answer is decisive: “Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only.”

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Key Themes

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s m o m en t’s ca ll is w or sh ip an d ob ed ie nc e. N ot to m or ro w ’s sh or tc ut. T hi s m o m en

Key Themes

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t. This trust. This faithfulness. Everytemptation was an invitation to abandon pres

Key Themes

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ent trust for immediate relief, manufactured proof, or future shortcuts. And ever

Key Themes

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y response was Jesus choosing to stay in the moment, trusting the Father’s word fo

Key Themes

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r now.

This is the pattern: present trust defeats future anxiety. Moment-by-m

Key Themes

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omen t obedie nce over comes the temptati on to control what’s next.

The Core Scripture Truth

Hebrews 12:1-2 - “Let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith.”

This passage captures the theology of living in the moment.

The race isn’t in the past—those miles are behind you. The race isn’t in the future—those miles haven’t arrived yet. The race is now. This step. This breath. This moment.

And the key to running it well? Fixing your eyes on Jesus.

Not on the finish line so far you can’t see it. Not on the starting line you’ve already left. On Jesus. Who is present. Here. Now.

Pioneer and perfecter. Jesus has run this race. He knows the way. And He’s with you—not just at the finish, but in this moment.

This is the theological foundation for living in the moment: God is not just the God of your past or your future. He is the God of your present.

The great “I AM”—not “I was” or “I will be,” but “I AM.” Present tense. Here. Now.

> “But he said to me, ‘My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.’”
>
> — 2 Corinthians 12:9

Sufficient. Not abundant for tomorrow. Not stored up for next week. Sufficient for today. For this moment. For this need.

That’s all you need. And it’s enough.

The Wayfarer Moment

Song Integration

I’d

The Wayfarer Moment

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spent most of my life living anywhere but the present moment. M

The Wayfarer Moment

y mind was either in the past — replaying conversations, regretting de

The Wayfarer Moment

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cisions, obsessing over what I should have said — or in the future — catastr

The Wayfarer Moment

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ophizing outcomes, trying to control variables I couldn’t control. The

The Wayfarer Moment

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present? I was rarely there. Because the present required me to feel, to

The Wayfarer Moment

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be vulnerable, to acknowledge what was actually true right now.

Anxiety

The Wayfarer Moment

was my constant companion. The low-grade, ever-present anxiety

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of someone who can't trust God with the moment in front of him. I w

The Wayfarer Moment

as always preparing, always planning, always trying to get ahead of

The Wayfarer Moment

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the next crisis. And I was exhausted.

During a season of transition, whe

The Wayfarer Moment

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n everything felt uncertain, a friend asked: “What do you need right no

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w?

Not tomorrow. Right now.”

I couldn’t answer. I’d spent so long li

The Wayfarer Moment

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viing in yesterday and tomorrow that I’d forgotten how to be present to

The Wayfarer Moment

today.

“Maybe the question you need to ask isn’t ‘What’s going to happ

The Wayfarer Moment

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en?’ but ‘Is God’s grace enough for this moment?’”

I wanted to say

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yes. But honestly? I didn’t know if I believed it. That’s when I began st

The Wayfarer Moment

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udying how God met people in their present moments throughout Script

The Wayfarer Moment

ure. Adam and Eve weren't given tomorrow's grace — they were give

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n the garden that day. Abraham wasn’t promised the full picture

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he was called to trust God in that moment of promise. Joseph wasn’t

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told the palace was coming

he was called to remain faithful in the pr

The Wayfarer Moment

is on. The pattern was clear: God’s people have always been called to live

The Wayfarer Moment

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in the present tense. To trust that today's grace is sufficient for to

The Wayfarer Moment

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day. “This Moment is Enough” emerged from this study. I wante

The Wayfarer Moment

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d to trace redemption history through the lens of present-moment

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faithfulness — from the garden through the flood, Abraham’s yes, Jo

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seph's redemption, all the way to Jesus. And there frain became my an

The Wayfarer Moment

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them: “We’re not promised tomorrow, only the breath we breathe.

The Wayfarer Moment

Here in this moment, God’s mercy never leaves.”

This isn’t resign

The Way fa re r Mo m en t

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ati on . It’ s li be ra ti on . I’ m no t pr o m is ed to m or ro w. I do n’ t ne ed to m

The Wayfarer Moment

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or row’s grace today. I just need this breath, this moment, this sufficien

The Wayfarer Moment

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The Wayfarer Moment

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believe this moment is enough—anxiety loses its grip. You're free to be

The Wayfarer Moment

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fully present, fully here, fully alive to the grace that’s already presen

The Wayfarer Moment

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t.

Lyrics: This Moment is Enough

[Verse 1] In the garden mercy covered the fall, Two hearts broken, yet God heard the call. The waters rose, but His promise remained, A rainbow whispered through the pouring rain. Love was alive in the moment back then.

[Chorus] We're not promised tomorrow, only the breath we breathe. Here in this moment, God's mercy never leaves. From Genesis to Jesus, the story carries us— This moment is the promise, This moment is enough.

[Verse 2] Abraham walked with nothing in hand, Trusting the covenant, trusting God's plan. Years went by, but His word held fast, A future was born from a simple "yes." Faith is alive in the moment we live.

[Chorus] We're not promised tomorrow, only the breath we breathe. Here in this moment, God's mercy never leaves. From Genesis to Jesus, the story carries us— This moment is the promise, This moment is enough.

[Bridge] These ancient stories are the ground beneath our feet, The God of creation still makes our lives complete. From the garden to the cross, from the grave to today, The God who redeemed them is redeeming us the same.

[Verse 3 – Final Verse] Joseph was broken, then lifted again, From prison walls to the palace of men. What others meant for harm, God turned to grace, Forgiveness and mercy took sorrow's place. Redemption is here in the moment we're in.

[Chorus – Final] We're not promised tomorrow, but love is here today. The God of all beginnings is guiding every step we take. From Genesis to Jesus, His story carries on— This moment is the promise, This moment leads us home.

[Outro] The story isn't over, the story lives in us. This moment is a gift of grace— This moment is enough.

This moment is a gift of grace— This moment is enough.

Key Takeaways

Reflections for the Road

Questions for the Journey:

1. **Where do you sp**

Key Takeaways

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end most of your mental energy—past, present, or future?

Be honest. Are you

Key Takeaways

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replaying yesterday's conversations? Rehearsing tomorrow's scenarios? Catas

Key Takeaways

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trophizing outcomes that may never happen? Notice where your mind goes whe

Key Takeaways

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n it w an de rs. W rit e it do w n. W ha t is on e sp ec ifi c th in g yo u’ re ca rr yi ng fr o m ye

Key Takeaways

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sterday or borrowing from tomorrow that's weighing down your today?

2. **Rea**

Key Takeaways

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d Exodus 3:14 and Matthew 6:34 slowly.

"I AM WHO I AM" (Exodus 3:14

Key Takeaways

). God’s name is present tense. And Jesus says, “Do not worry about tomor

Key Takeaways

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row, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its o

Key Takeaways

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w n” (Matthew 6:34). If God is “I AM” (not “I was” or “I will be”), and tomorrow

Key Takeaways

’s grace will come tomorrow, what does that mean for this moment right no

Key Takeaways

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w? Is this moment enough?

3. **What does "fixing your eyes on Jesus" look**

Key Takeaways

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like practically for you today?

Not wandering eyes that constantly look around

Key Takeaways

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at what might go wrong. Not backward eyes living in regret. Not anxious eyes str

Key Takeaways

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aining to see the distant future. Fixed eyes. On Jesus. On this moment. Wha

Key Takeaways

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t does that actually look like in your life today? When you notice your mind wande

Key Takeaways

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ring to past or future, what will you do to bring it back to this moment?

4. **Read L**

Key Takeaways

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uke 10:38-42 slowly

Mary and Martha. Martha is distracted by preparation

Key Takeaways

s. Mary sits at Jesus’ feet, present and attentive. Jesus says, “Mary has chos

Key Takeaways

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en w ha t is be tte r.” W he re ar e yo u be in g M ar th a ri gh t no w ? T oo bu sy , to o di str

Key Takeaways

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acted, too productive to be present? What would it look like to choose Mary's part

Key Takeaways

— even for just one moment today?

5. **How will you practice presence this week**

Key Takeaways

k?

Not all the practices. Just one. Breath prayers throughout your day? Daily exa

Key Takeaways

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men each evening? One tech-free meal where you're fully present? A walk with

Key Takeaways

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out headphones where you notice what’s here? Which one practice will you actually

Key Takeaways

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y do? When will you start? What will you say no to in order to say yes to this pr

Key Takeaways

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practice? Be specific. Make it small. Make it real.

Practice: The Daily Examen

One of the most powerful practices for cultivating present-moment awareness is the Daily Examen. Here’s a simple version:

1. Become aware of God’s presence

Take a few deep breaths. Acknowledge that God is present with you right now. Thank Him for this moment.

2. Review the day with gratitude

Walk through your day from start to finish. Notice where you saw God’s presence. Where you experienced grace. What brought joy, peace, or connection.

3. Pay attention to your emotions

What moments stirred strong emotions—joy, anger, peace, anxiety? Don't judge them. Just notice them. These are often clues to where God is at work.

4. Choose one feature of the day

Pick one moment that stands out. Sit with it. What was God doing in that moment? What was He inviting you to?

5. Look toward tomorrow

Not with anxiety, but with hope. What's one thing you're facing tomorrow? How do you want to respond? What grace do you need? Ask God for that grace. And trust that when tomorrow becomes today, the grace will be there.

Closing Image

You're standing at the edge of tomorrow, but you're not stepping into it yet. Not because you're afraid. But because you're learning the sacred art of being here. Now. In this moment.

The sun is setting on today. Tomorrow is still dark, still unknown. But this moment—this space between what was and what will be—is filled with light.

You can feel it. God's presence. Not in yesterday's memory. Not in tomorrow's promise. Here. Now. In this breath.

You remember the journey. The swamp. The water's edge. The unforced rhythms. The deep roots. The redemption story. The promise that nothing is wasted. The truth that the devil is on the run.

All of it leading here. To this moment.

And you understand: every moment of the journey was preparation for this. For learning to be present. To trust. To receive this moment—just as it is—as enough.

Tomorrow will come. It always does. And when it arrives, it will bring its own grace, its own challenges, its own moments.

But you don't need tomorrow's grace today. You just need this moment's grace. And it's here. Sufficient. Complete. Enough.

You whisper the prayer that's become your anthem: "This moment is a gift of grace. This moment is enough."

And you mean it. Because you've learned the secret: God is the great I AM. Not I was. Not I will be. I AM.

Present tense. Here. Now. In this moment.

You take a breath—deep, full, grateful. And you step forward. Not into tomorrow. Into this moment. The only moment that’s actually yours.

And in this moment, you find everything you need: grace for this breath, strength for this step, love for this person, wisdom for this choice.

This moment is enough.

Not because it’s perfect. But because God is in it.

And God is always enough.

The journey continues. There are miles ahead. But you’re not walking them yet. You’re walking this step. Living this breath. Trusting this moment.

And this moment—this sacred, grace-filled, God-inhabited moment—is enough.

More than enough.

It’s everything.