

# Stones of Remembrance



## *Joshua 4:1-7*

When all the nation had finished passing over the Jordan, the LORD said to Joshua, <sup>2</sup>“Take twelve men from the people, from each tribe a man, <sup>3</sup>and command them, saying, ‘Take twelve stones from here out of the midst of the Jordan, from the very place where the priests’ feet stood firmly, and bring them over with you and lay them down in the place where you lodge tonight.’” <sup>4</sup>Then Joshua called the twelve men from the people of Israel, whom he had appointed, a man from each tribe. <sup>5</sup>And Joshua said to them, “Pass on before the ark of the LORD your God into the midst of the Jordan, and take up each of you a stone upon his shoulder, according to the number of the tribes of the people of Israel, <sup>6</sup>that this may be a sign among you. When your children ask in time to come, ‘What do those stones mean to you?’ <sup>7</sup>then you shall tell them that the waters of the Jordan were cut off before the ark of the covenant of the LORD. When it passed over the Jordan, the waters of the Jordan were cut off. So these stones shall be to the people of Israel a memorial forever.”

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## *Seeking Him: In Christ*

Gracious Father in Heaven, praise your holy name. For you are high and lifted up. As we take in your Word we cannot help but be astonished at what you have done for us. Not only do we marvel at what you have done but what you have given us as a result of your work.

What even transcends your gifts is the gift and treasure of you, yourself. You and only you qualified us to share in the inheritance of the saints in Light, for you rescued me from the domain of darkness. You are the only one who had the power to transfer us to the kingdom of Your beloved Son. By your work you reconciled all things to yourself; specifically you reconciled me by Christ’s body through His death. For we were buried with Christ in His baptism and raised with Him through faith. You, Oh life-giver, made us alive together with your Son. How gracious you are to forgive all our transgressions, cancelling the certificate of decrees against us having nailed my indictment of sins to the cross. Oh, why did you do all this for us? So we may be presented to you holy, blameless, and beyond reproach.

To you, who created everything, we give a heart of gratitude, for you In Christ we are **Chosen Redeemed** through His blood, **Forgiven** of our trespasses, **Given** an **Inheritance** and **Sealed** with the Holy Spirit of promise.

We begin and end with your praise, My Saviour and God.

May we walk in him to your pleasure, Lord.

In Jesus’ Name, Amen.



# Meditation

## for the mind

## SLOW TO ANGER

Amy Timco

actually has every right to be angry and execute judgment instantly, He doesn't.

Psalm 103:8 says, "The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love." He does not hurry to punish us for our wrongdoing. Although He is the one being in the universe who

What does it mean to be slow to anger? Again and again in the Scriptures we see God bearing with His people in their sin, not wiping them out as they deserved. Giving them second and third and fourth chances to obey. Teaching them and revealing Himself and His laws to them.

At the same time, God's slowness to anger does not mean that He never becomes angry. The Bible portrays Him as righteously wrathful against sin. There will be a day of judgment. His holy wrath is what happened to Jesus on the cross—more even than the intense physical suffering, He was actually abandoned by God as He hung there. He underwent the complete withdrawal of the Father's love and affection... something you and I, as believers, will never experience.

It's interesting to note in this passage how God's patience is not mere passivity or simply the absence of anger. He is not disengaged. It's active mercy, active grace. Being slow to anger goes hand in hand with having steadfast love (called lovingkindness in some translations). In case there was any doubt about the extent, it's *abounding* steadfast love. He doesn't just withhold His wrath from me; He also showers me with undeserved, unexpected blessings. He doesn't just give me enough to get by, but is rich in mercy toward me (Ephesians 2:4).

I need to know more about this kind of love. The verses surrounding Psalm 103:8 expand on the thought:

7 He [the Lord] made known his ways to Moses, his acts to the people of Israel.

8 The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.

9 He will not always chide, nor will he keep his anger forever.

10 He does not deal with us according to our sins, nor repay us according to our iniquities.

11 For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his steadfast love toward those who fear him;

12 as far as the east is from the west, so far does he remove our transgressions from us.

13 As a father shows compassion to his children, so the Lord shows compassion to those who fear him.

In verse 7, God is telling the people about Himself (which is an incredible act of condescension and kindness in itself). He is making known His character and acts—truths we could never find out for ourselves. Quick on the heels of this self-revelation, the Lord, through David, reminds us of His all-encompassing mercy and kindness. Faced with the knowledge of the holy, we need that reassurance.

Look at verse 9... do you ever feel like God is mad at you for not keeping his standards better or (at the least) behaving more like a Christian? Even as a grace-covered child of God, I fall into this temptation often. But keep reading: verse 10 gives us another dimension of His character to chew on. I had been rereading this passage over the course of a week or so, when one day verse 10 suddenly stopped me in my tracks. *He does not deal with us according to our sins. Whaaaaaat? Nor repay us according to our iniquities.*

Stop. Think. Soak in that truth a minute.

Why? Verses 11 and 12 tell us: it's because of his steadfast love. It's because he removes our transgressions from us (which is different from just ignoring or excusing them). David uses the biggest examples he can think of to paint the breadth of God's love. Then suddenly, from the vastness of the heavens and the philosophical distance between east and west, he brings it down to a personal, even intimate dynamic we understand from human relationships. Verse 13: it's because He is a compassionate and loving father to those who fear him.

*God is slow to anger. The more I learn about the depth of my offenses, the more amazing this truth becomes.*

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As a mom, I have a lot to learn about being slow to anger. I do need to punish wrongdoing as I train my children in the fear and instruction of the Lord. Parenting books tell me that discipline needs to be swift so that children (especially younger children) connect it with what they did wrong. So I need to be quick to discipline, but slow to get angry? Lord, please help me! (cont.)

## SLOW TO ANGER (CONT.)

I'm so thankful that God is slow to get angry with me. Thankful doesn't even really express it when I consider who I am, what I've done, and what I'm capable of. I disobey Him more often than I'd like to admit, and that's not even taking into account the sins I am blind to. And yet His mercies continue to pour into my life; He gives me life and breath even when I am using it to flout His will. He provides for my needs though I do not deserve His kindness. He is patient with me.

I want to become slower to anger and abound in steadfast love. Rather than focusing on my sin, I will meditate on God's character and longsuffering patience. Lord, let the truth of Psalm 103:8 fill my mind: "The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love."



# The Grace and Glory Report

## NEVER WITHOUT

Sarah Blake

Loss. Sometimes it comes abruptly, without warning. Sometimes it creeps in slowly, dragging little bits away, silently, sneakily. And sometimes it comes in waves, unrelenting ones. For us, that winter, it was our furnace dying, hot water tank breaking, van needing extensive repair, ice damage in our walls, drainage issues, et cetera, et cetera, et cetera. All of this in two short months, all of it burdening us financially beyond our means.

Our hands were in the air, waving flags of surrender. "We're listening, Lord! What do you want us to do? Are we doing something wrong?" So we prayed, we dove deeper into God's Word. The answer we received:

- **Keep being faithful.** James 1:2-3: Count it all joy my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness.
- **Wait for me.** Psalm 27:14: Wait for the Lord; be strong, and let your heart take courage; wait for the Lord!

- **You are not alone.** Isaiah 43:2: When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you; when you walk through the fire you shall not be burned, and the flame shall not consume you.
- **I love you.** Psalm 103:8: The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.
- **You are mine.** Isaiah 43:1b: Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine.



So we pressed on. And God, in his grace, gave us exactly what we needed, exactly when we needed it: friends with an HVAC company to replace our furnace and hot water tank at a reduced cost. A husband with mad drywall skills to fix the walls. Generous friends with an unbeatable offer of a car to replace our broken van. And friends dropping off meals to warm our hearts as we tried to remain steady. Things evened out. I would almost call it... normal. Months passed, and although we continued to praise Him for His provision through that time, we had no immediate need, no circumstances pushing us in desperation, back to the feet of Jesus.

But then loss started creeping its way back in. Work got slow at my husband's job. Hours were cut back. Then they were cut again, and then cut again. We live on one income so I can be home with our kids, homeschooling and mothering. With the last cut in hours, he was no longer full-time and we would no longer be able to pay all of our bills. We prayed together, we talked, and we weighed options. We couldn't sustain our family much longer on what we were making. Soon, we wouldn't be able to pay our mortgage.

So, we spent several whole evenings talking, praying, and seeking the Lord. We prayed for specific guidance — to know if we should stay and stick it out as long as we could through the hour-cut, or leave and find a new job that would have better pay? I think our exact words were: "Lord, please make it so clear what we should do...just black and white...make it obvious." After one particularly emotional evening of prayer, my husband returned to work in the morning and was unexpectedly let go from his job.

Loss — abrupt, without warning. What now!?! No job. Not just cut hours, but NO JOB. Then it was like a tap on the shoulder. Did we forget so fast? Had we not just prayed less than 12 hours ago? We asked Him to lead us. He did. We would go. But we were scared. "What is happening? We thought your answer might be a little easier to swallow Lord. Now what?" That same answer came flooding back from months ago: **Keep being faithful. Wait for me. You are not alone. I love you. You are mine...**but a new truth this time: **Trust me.** Isaiah 46:4 (NIV) I have made you, and I will carry you; I will sustain you and I will rescue you. (cont.)

The same day, he was presented with an offer for temporary work — to sustain us while he looked for another job. Our loving church helped us financially, to carry us through this difficult time. We were showered with love and concern, which reminded us that the God who made us, loved us and sent us comfort through friends and family. And best of all, just four weeks after losing his job, he was recruited, without even a resume, by a company that wanted him as part of their management team, based solely on how kind and gracious he had been with their company in previous dealings. And so, the Lord was faithful to rescue us from our troubles.



I know well that earthly troubles and tribulation will continue to test us, push us, and stretch us. But I also know, for certain, that I serve a God who loves me, who reaches down from His holy throne to sustain me. And for that, I will forever praise him. **Psalm 73:26 says, “My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever.”**

# Cultural comment

## A BIBLICAL PERSPECTIVE ON OUR GOVERNING AUTHORITIES

Audra Giamei

As of January 20th, 2017, Donald Trump is the 45th president of the United States. Some people are excited and hopeful as they think about a Trump presidency and other people feel fearful and are despairing. I don't doubt that within our body at Riverview, there are those of us who fall into one of those two categories (and many others who are somewhere in between). How should we as believers respond to Donald Trump as our president? How can we think rightly about those who govern our nation? Let's use Scripture to remind us how to think rightly about government. There are several things to consider:

### **Rulers are placed in power by God and are under His control**

(see Romans 13:1/ Daniel 2:21/ 2 Chronicles 20:6/ Proverbs 21:1)

“...He removes kings and sets up kings...” (Daniel 2:21) God removes and sets up rulers. Not only

does He remove and set them up, they are under His control. God rules over the kingdoms of nations and the king's heart is a stream of water in the hand of the Lord, He turns it wherever He will. President Trump is not our president by chance, and he is not outside of the control of God. He is a God-given authority over our lives as the President of our nation. I do not profess to know how the Lord will use President Trump in our nation or in the world at large (whether as a blessing, judgment, or a mixture of both), but I do know our Lord has set him up in power. I can trust the Lord and rest in his sovereignty over the affairs of our nation.

**We are to be subject to our governing authorities unless they are telling us to violate God's commands** (see Romans 13:1/ Titus 3:1/ 1 Peter 2:13-17/ Acts 5:29/ Acts 4:18-20)

“Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God” (Romans 13:1).

There is no authority except from God. Earthly rulers have a God-given authority to which we are subject. We are commanded in God's word to be subject to our governing authorities unless they are asking us to violate God's commands. We are subject to our governing authorities because there is no authority except from God. The way in which a soldier is subject to his commanding officers is the way in which we are subject to our governing authorities. Obedience is required. When we are

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*When we are subject to our governing authorities for the Lord's sake, we do the will of God and by doing so, put to silence ignorant and foolish people.*

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subject to these human institutions for the Lord's sake, we do the will of God and by doing so, put to silence ignorant and foolish people. A Christian who rebels against earthly, God-given authority dishonors Christ. A lack of submission opens the door for criticism of the believer. President Donald Trump is an authority over us that we are required to submit to unless he asks us to violate God's Word.

**We are to pray for our leaders**

“First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people, for kings and all who are in high positions, that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way” (1 Timothy 2:1-2).

Scripture commands us to pray for our leaders. We are commanded to pray for President Donald Trump. We should pray that President Trump wouldn't be lacking anything out of a heart of compassion for him. We should thank God for giving us government (and President Trump) which is a means of restraining evil in the world (1 Peter 2:14). We should pray that he would know Christ and walk wisely as a result of knowing Him. I have to admit, I almost never pray for the government authorities that are over me. This is an area in my life where I am personally lacking.

(cont.)

## A BIBLICAL PERSPECTIVE ON OUR GOVERNING AUTHORITIES (CONT.)

### **We are not to place our hope in earthly leaders, neither are we to despair**

(see Psalm 146:3/ Psalm 47:2/ Psalm 103:19/ 1 Timothy 6:15/ Matthew 10:28/ 2 Corinthians 5:20/ 1 Peter 1:13/ Philippians 3:20/ Hebrews 11:16/ Hebrews 12:22/ Jeremiah 29:7/ 1 Peter 2:11)

“Put not your trust in princes, in a son of man, in whom there is no salvation” (Psalm 146:3).

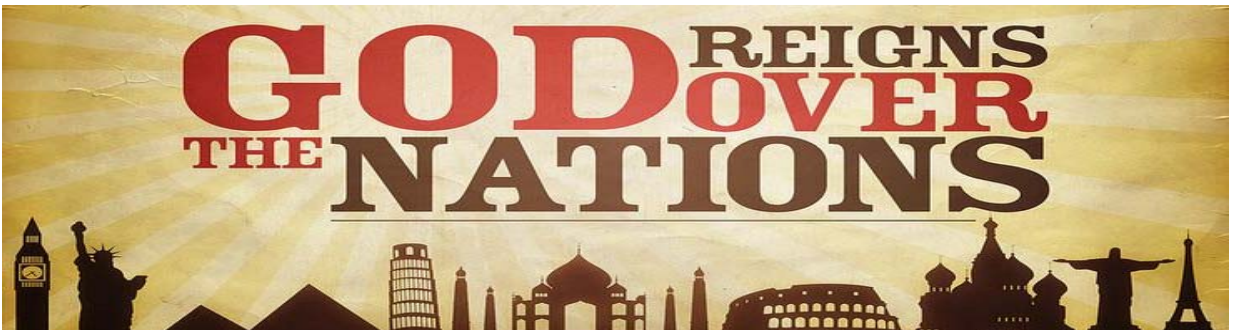
While we are here on earth, it is right for us to be involved in the city, state, and nation where we live. We should pray for the city of Novelty, the state of Ohio and the United States of America. We should seek its welfare, for in its welfare, we find our own. We can and should use lawful means to change where we live for the better, but we must remember we are here as pilgrims and aliens. Our true home, nation and loyalty is to a heavenly king and kingdom. We are here as His ambassadors on earth. Our God is a great King over all the earth. He is the King of kings and Lord of lords. We will one day be with Him in the place He has prepared for us. We shouldn't put our hope in princes, in earthly governments, kings or men. Our hope should not be in President Donald Trump, but in Jesus Christ. Our hope should not be in Trump, but neither should his presidency cause despair. If you are fearful of what a Trump presidency will mean, we need not fear man. Whether we prosper as a nation or fall, we must set our hope fully on the grace to be brought to us at the revelation of Christ.

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*Our God is a great King  
over all the earth. He is  
the King of kings and  
Lord of Lords.*

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We can rest in God's grace considering His sovereign plan for our nation. In His sovereignty, Donald Trump has been placed as our president and he is not outside of God's control. Unless President Trump asks us to violate God's commands, we are to honor God by being subject to the President. We are commanded to pray for our President. If you are find yourself placing your hope in President Donald Trump rather than in God, repent and hope in God. If you find yourself fearing what a Donald Trump presidency will mean for our nation, repent and fear God rather than man. Let us live as pilgrims here who seek the welfare of the nation to which we have been sent, while acting as ambassadors of the Heavenly King and country to which we belong.





# Doers of the *Word*

## ARE YOU A PICKY EATER?

Melissa Fry

**I have not departed from the commandment of his lips;  
I have treasured the words of his mouth more than my portion of food.  
(Job 23:12)**

Are you a picky eater? Some people don't care for fish, bananas, or onions, but they'll eat them if that's what's being served. They'd rather choke them down than be hungry. However, others simply won't eat tomatoes no matter what the cost. They'd rather starve! The problem with extremely picky eaters is that they're prone to miss out on vital nutrients God intends everyone to have. They won't be healthy if all they'll ever eat are fruit snacks and french-fries.

Job 23:12 encourages us to treasure God's word more than our daily portion of food. Just think about that. Job would rather be physically hungry if it meant being spiritually satisfied. If that's the case, then no one can afford to be a spiritually picky eater. In other words, we must consume a biblically well-balanced, healthy diet. So whether you like tomatoes or not, let me ask you, are you a spiritually picky eater? Are you missing out on vital spiritual nutrients that God intends to use to feed your soul?

After spending some time evaluating my own spiritual diet, let me offer you four indications that you might be a spiritually picky eater, and as a result, spiritually malnourished.

**Your Word**  
*my treasure*

**You only read Psalms.** Often we can use the Psalms like sugar and caffeine for the soul. We look for a quick sweet burst of encouragement and motivation from them. However, a spiritual diet that only consists of psalms won't keep you going strong in the long run. A spiritually balanced diet would include reading a Psalm daily in connection with other Scriptures. For example, 1 and 2 Samuel provide a great complement to the Psalms David authored, providing context to David's lament, joy, requests, and praises. Just like omega 3, 6, 9s the Psalms can be good for your heart.

**You avoid portions of Scripture that are difficult to understand.** The Bible is a book written by 40 different authors, from different time periods and cultures. It includes different genres and was written over a span of approximately 1500 years. So let's face it, certain portions can leave you saying to yourself, "I didn't understand a thing I just read!" The Old Testament prophets are not as easy to understand as the practical sections of Paul's letters. But we need both to see Christ accurately foreshadowed in the Old Testament and fulfilled in the New Testament. When Paul wrote to Timothy he said, "All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work" (2 Timothy 3:16-17). This references both Old and New Testaments, noting that all the Old Testament Scriptures are just as important as the New Testament. It all comes from God and is profitable to teach you what's right, what's not right, how to get right, and how to stay right with God.

Don't worry about whether you fully understand those difficult portions of the Bible right away. Read them anyway. God put them there for a reason and his reasons are always best. Trust the Holy Spirit to use them in your life anyway to help you grow and keep you spiritually healthy. The more you read them, the more you'll begin to understand what they say and what they mean.

**You ignore portions of Scripture that make you uncomfortable.** God's Word is designed to expose the thoughts and intentions of our hearts (Hebrews 4:12). That's not comfortable because our thoughts and motives are often not pleasing to the Lord. Therefore, exposing ourselves to the less palatable portions of Scripture is like taking the requisite "No Thank You Bites." It can be difficult to swallow the doctrine of election Romans 9 teaches. Chewing on 1 Corinthians 6 which warns against sexual immorality doesn't taste so good. No one really savors the flavor of James 1 since it confronts sinful speech. Most let the dish full of Ephesians 5 holding the differing roles of husbands and wives pass right by.

Such avoidance marks us as picky eaters. We must fill our plate with the whole counsel of the Word, not with just what "tastes" good. If we don't, we will starve and be depleted of the vital spiritual nutrients needed to grow in the Lord. The good news is after a while those "No Thank You Bites" begin to pack flavor and satisfy in an unexpected way. Though it's okay to have life verses or favorite portions of the Bible, being picky about your intake, especially avoiding uncomfortable portions of Scripture, can be an indication of greater problems, like selfishness, laziness, ingratitude, and even rebellion.

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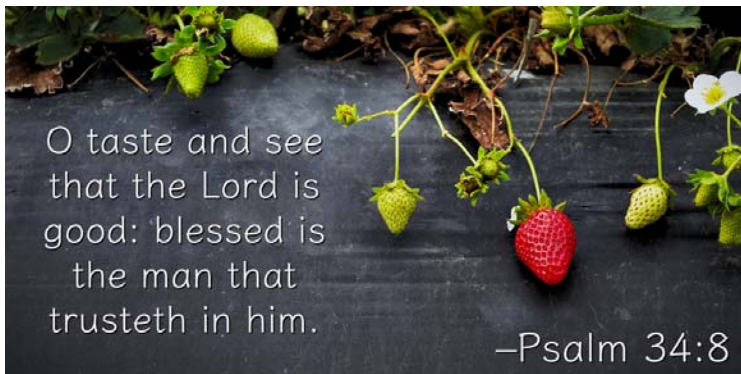
**You don't have a plan.** At the beginning of each month I sit down to plan a menu for our family meals. It helps me budget, shop, prepare, and enjoy both healthy and great-tasting meals.

However, that's not something I can provide for my family, or myself, without a plan. If I don't have a plan, we're going to end up eating cereal for dinner or getting Chinese takeout three times a week. Many people are starving spiritually, not because the Bible is difficult or uncomfortable, but simply because they don't have a plan. I get it. The Bible is a big book and it can be intimidating to think about reading it all. Yet you can't let that keep you from starting somewhere.

Are you a picky eater? Do you know one? Let me suggest three simple steps to help free you from picky eating, enrich your spiritual diet, and strengthen your overall spiritual health:

1. **Start with Jesus.** If you're spiritually starving, read the Gospels and get to know who Jesus is, why he came, what he accomplished, and what he expects from you. Jesus is the central theme of the entire Bible. If you know him, you'll begin to understand the purpose of all Scripture and how it fits together to exalt Him.
2. **Get a good Study Bible.** Study Bibles contain both the text of Scripture and notes that will help you digest the content. They explain cultural, historical, grammatical, and practical issues concerning every portion of the Bible. They may not be as in-depth as a full commentary set, but they'll be enough to help you understand things you don't get right away. I'd recommend either the MacArthur Study Bible or the ESV Study Bible. Both contain the best conservative scholarship and are true to the original texts.
3. **Make a simple plan and stick to it.** This is probably the most important thing I could suggest to you. ESV.org has one-year reading plans they make available. But that may even be too big of a bite for you to swallow. So plan something smaller and more manageable. MyBiblePlans.com lets you create custom reading plans. Just make sure you don't camp out too long in one place or avoid those difficult and uncomfortable books and chapters of the Bible! It takes at least thirty days to form a habit, so make a plan and stick to it.

So how are you going to approach your spiritual diet this year? Are you going to plan a well-



balanced diet or are you just going to go for what is palatable? God has made a feast with His Word, and He desires to satisfy your soul. Psalm 34:8 says, "Oh, taste and see that the LORD is good! Blessed is the man who takes refuge in him." Fill your plate and enjoy a meal full of the Word daily, for you will be satisfied.

Let me leave you with this last encouragement from 1 Peter 2:2-3: "Like newborn infants, long for the pure spiritual milk, that by it you may grow up into salvation—if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is good."