

CHANGE YOUR LIFE. CHANGE YOUR WORLD.

# activated

Vol 26 • Issue 8

## OUR FATHER'S LOVE

Always ready to forgive and restore

## The Trinity

God in three persons

## The Fruit of the Spirit

An illustration from nature

## God Remembers

You matter to Him





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## PERSONALLY SPEAKING A LIFETIME OF LEARNING

I was watching an instructional video about how to make studying the Bible a consistent habit. The teacher was explaining that deepening our relationship with God should be our primary purpose in her studies, and then she added with a twinkle in her eyes, “Spoiler alert: It never ends!”

That was food for thought. *It never ends*. Getting to know God in His fullness and glory is our lifelong journey, and even then, this amazing adventure will never end. As Paul said, now we understand God and His ways as if we were looking through an old, first-century, blurry mirror, but in eternity we will know Him as He knows us. “Now we see things imperfectly, like puzzling reflections in a mirror, but then we will see everything with perfect clarity. All that I know now is partial and incomplete, but then I will know everything completely, just as God now knows me completely” (1 Corinthians 13:12 NLT). How long will it take to get to know God completely? Well, who knows? We will have all eternity for this amazing adventure. “This is God, our God forever and ever. He will guide us forever” (Psalm 48:14).

That’s the beautiful part! It’s like a young married couple who are getting to know each other; there is a lifetime of experiences, joys, and even challenges ahead. Slowly but surely, their lives meld as they discover the inner depths of each other’s souls. How wonderful for us to discover God in this way, and how He delights in walking hand in hand with us, revealing His nature to us as we go. What an exciting prospect! “Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God!” (Romans 11:33).

This month’s issue of *Activated* explores several facets of God’s nature: His consistency and faithfulness (page 3), His mercy and love (pages 8-9), and His sovereignty, goodness, comfort, and presence (pages 12-13). The feature article provides an in-depth study of the Trinity (pages 4-6).

It is encouraging to know that we don’t have to understand all God’s ways before we begin our journey, and He has promised to be with us and guide us every step of the way.

Happy traveling!

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A woman with long brown hair, wearing a striped shirt and light-colored pants, is sitting on the hood of a dark blue car. She is looking out over a field of tall grass towards a sunset. The sun is low on the horizon, casting a warm glow over the scene. In the background, there are rolling hills and a line of trees. A hat is resting on the car's hood next to her.

# GOD IS FAITHFUL

BY AMY JOY MIZRANY

MY MOTHER'S FAVORITE HYMN IS "GREAT IS THY FAITHFULNESS," BY THOMAS O.

CHISHOLM. We love to sing it together. The words in the first verse are incredibly powerful:

Great is Thy faithfulness, O God my Father;  
There is no shadow of turning with Thee.  
Thou changest not, Thy compassions, they fail not;  
As Thou hast been, Thou forever will be.

There is such comfort in knowing that God kept us yesterday, He is keeping us today, and He always will. My mom especially loves the last verse of the song:

Pardon for sin and a peace that endureth,  
Thine own dear presence to cheer and to guide;  
Strength for today and bright hope for tomorrow,  
Blessings all mine, with ten thousand beside.

Some things are so constant about God's faithfulness that we almost forget about them. We remember and are grateful for the forgiveness for our sins. But what about the peace He gives, the strength for every day, the hope for tomorrow, and His wonderful presence with us so that we are never alone? At times we take these things for granted.

God is so faithful, but sometimes we forget the fact that we are blessed and instead think, "Oh cool! Everything is working out great for me." But it's not that life is smiling at us and we are managing to cope so well with all that comes our way. The truth is that *God* is smiling at us, caring for us, and grasping our hand to pull us through the tests and trials that would otherwise defeat us.

We cannot truly fathom or repay the faithfulness the Lord shows us. In fact, we often are forgetful, unfaithful, and dismissive of His constant merciful presence. But the Bible says, "If we are not faithful, he will still be faithful. Christ cannot deny who he is" (2 Timothy 2:13 CEV). We don't deserve it, but He has chosen to love us and He *always* will. "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever" (Hebrews 13:8). Jesus never changes.

Let's stop for a minute today and take a look around us at the beauty in nature, our friends and loved ones, our triumphs and successes, and the fruit of the Holy Spirit manifested in our lives—love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control (Galatians 5:22–23). God's faithfulness towards us truly *is* great.

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# THE TRINITY: GOD IN THREE PERSONS

BY PETER AMSTERDAM

**THE CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE OF THE TRINITY**—the belief that God exists in three persons but is also one God—can be difficult to understand. In this article, we'll explore what this means.

As Christians, we believe that God exists as three persons—God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. We believe that Jesus, the Son of God, took on human form and that He was conceived by the Holy Spirit in the womb of His mother, Mary ([Matthew 1:20](#)). After preaching and teaching for some years, Jesus was crucified and died on the cross, and on the third day He rose from the dead ([1 Corinthians 15:3-5](#)). Forty days later, He ascended into heaven, where He sits at the right hand of God the Father ([Hebrews 1:3](#)).

Before His ascension, Jesus told His disciples that the Father would send the Holy Spirit to strengthen and guide them and to remain with them always ([John 14:16-17](#)). Since the day of Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit descended upon the apostles and the other followers of

Jesus ([Acts 2:1-31](#)), the Holy Spirit has continued to dwell in all those who have entered the kingdom of God through accepting Jesus as their Savior.

For the uninitiated, the impression could be that Christians believe in three Gods, but that's not the case—Christians believe that there is only one God. The doctrine of the Trinity explains the concept that God has always existed as three persons—Father, Son and Holy Spirit—in one being, each distinct from the other and yet one being. Each of the persons is fully God, having all of the attributes and the complete essence of God.

One of the great scriptures from the Old Testament is “Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord” ([Deuteronomy 6:4 KJV](#)). This monotheistic belief was unique to Israel in the time of the Old Testament, as virtually all cultures in the region were polytheistic until the time of Christ. Christianity is monotheistic as well, as





Christians believe there is only one God, and affirm this same Bible verse, “the Lord our God is one Lord.” However, unlike Judaism, Christians understand that God is tri-personal—three persons in one Being.

The concept of three persons in one God is not explicitly expressed in the Old Testament, though there are many Old Testament verses which infer it (Proverbs 30:4, Isaiah 61:1). The understanding of the three persons in one God became clearer in the New Testament because of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus, and the subsequent outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the believers. The followers of Jesus came to understand that Jesus was God, but was distinct from the Father, and that the Holy Spirit was also God, but was distinct from the Father and the Son. And so, it was in New Testament times that the truth of the Trinity unfolded and was revealed.

### BIBLICAL AFFIRMATIONS OF THE TRINITY

Although the word *Trinity* doesn’t appear within the biblical text, Scripture reveals the doctrine, and the word *Trinity* conveys the concept. Let’s take a look at Scripture that affirms that each of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are God.

**The Father is God.** The following verses express that the Father is God: “You, O Lord, are our Father; our redeemer from of old is Your name” (Isaiah 63:16). Jesus taught His disciples, “Pray then like this: Our Father in heaven, hallowed be Your name” (Matthew 6:9). In John chapter 17, Jesus prays to the Father while affirming His own authority: “Father, the hour has come; glorify your Son that the Son may glorify you, since you have given him authority over all flesh, to give eternal life to all whom you have given him” (John 17:1-2).

**The Son is God.** The following verses express that Jesus is God: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him, and without Him was not any thing made that was made” (John 1:1-3). “For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form” (Colossians 2:9 NIV). “No one has ever seen God, but the one and only Son, who is himself God and is in closest relationship with the Father, has made him known” (John 1:18 NIV).

**The Holy Spirit is God.** 1 Corinthians chapter 2 depicts the Holy Spirit as omniscient, knowing everything, one of the attributes of God alone. “For the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God... No one comprehends the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God” (1 Corinthians 2:10-11). This next verse shows that the Holy Spirit was present before the creation of the world: “Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters” (Genesis 1:2). And lastly, the following verse shows that the Holy Spirit works in our lives as Christians. “You were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God” (1 Corinthians 6:11).

### THREE DISTINCT PERSONS

The way the New Testament authors refer to Father, Son, and Holy Spirit shows their distinctness—that they are *different* from one another and that they *interact* in ways that show they are not the same person. For example, *Jesus* asks the *Father* to send the *Spirit*, which shows three different Persons interacting together: “I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper,



to be with you forever, even the Spirit of truth” (John 14:16–17).

In 2 Corinthians, Paul lists the three persons of the Trinity as distinct from one another: “The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all” (2 Corinthians 13:14). And when Jesus pronounced His Great Commission to the disciples before ascending into heaven, He commanded them to baptize new believers in the name of each person of the Trinity: “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit” (Matthew 28:19).

The apostles and disciples—who were all Jewish and who had all their lives believed there was only one God—came to understand, especially after His resurrection, that Jesus, this man they knew and lived with, was God. They knew He wasn’t God the Father, but that He *was* God. Once Jesus had ascended into heaven and the promised Holy Spirit powerfully came into their lives at Pentecost, these same men came to understand the Holy Spirit as God, yet they knew that the Spirit was neither the Father nor the Son.

The writers of the New Testament understood, accepted, and wrote in terms of one God, and of the distinct persons of the Trinity. The early church believed it, and Christians today believe it. This belief is at the heart of the Christian faith.

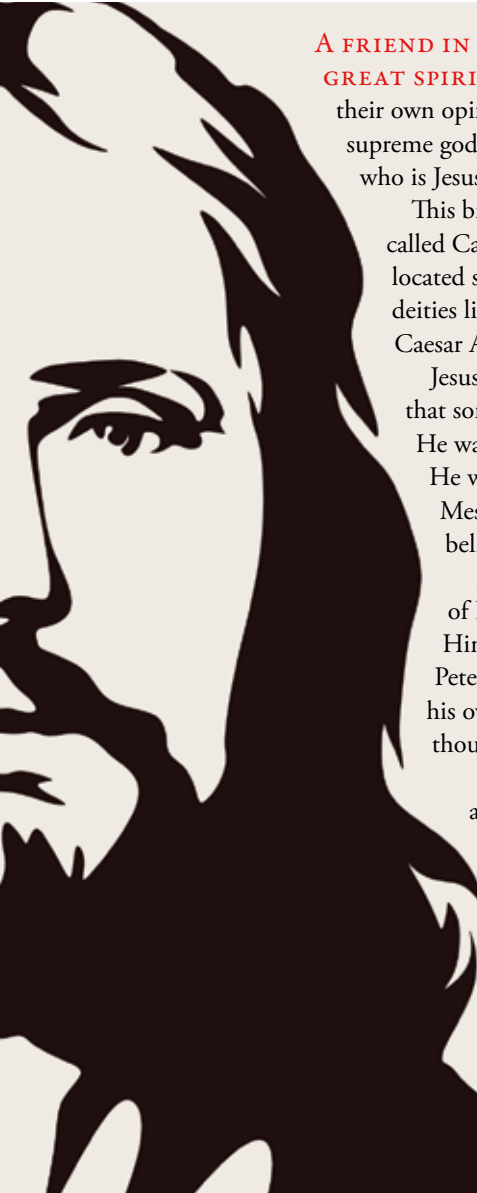
In truth, the concept of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit being one God is impossible for us as humans to completely understand. We have nothing like it in our world—it’s completely beyond our experience. That might be disconcerting, but it’s also consistent with our belief that an all-powerful, all-knowing creator God exists. In the book of Isaiah, we read, “For My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways, declares the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways and My thoughts than your thoughts” (Isaiah 55:8–9).

It stands to reason that understanding some aspects of God and His nature and essence is beyond our human experience and understanding. So, if you feel you can’t fully understand it, don’t worry about it. The important things to know are: there is one God, there are three Persons in God, God loves you, Jesus died for your salvation, and the Holy Spirit is with you as a helper and counselor (John 14:16–18).

PETER AMSTERDAM AND HIS WIFE, MARIA FONTAINE, ARE DIRECTORS OF THE FAMILY INTERNATIONAL, A CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY OF FAITH. ADAPTED FROM THE ORIGINAL ARTICLE. ■

# WHO IS JESUS?

BY UDAY PAUL



**A FRIEND IN INDIA TOLD ME THAT HE BELIEVES THAT JESUS CHRIST IS A GREAT SPIRITUAL MASTER AND THAT HE RESPECTS HIM FOR THAT.** Others have their own opinions about the identity of Jesus. Some believe that He is an incarnation of the supreme gods, some believe that He is one among a long line of prophets, and so on. So, who is Jesus really and who is He to us?

This brought to mind a conversation that Jesus had with His disciples in a place called Caesarea Philippi, which was an important Greco-Roman city in Palestine located some miles north of the Sea of Galilee. It was a center of worship of various deities like the fertility god Baal, the Greek god Pan, and even the Roman emperor Caesar Augustus.

Jesus asked His disciples who the people said that He was. The disciples replied that some said that He was Elijah, some that He was John the Baptist, and others that He was Jeremiah or one of the prophets. Then Jesus asked them who *they* thought He was. To that Simon Peter answered and said that he believed that Jesus was the Messiah and the Son of the living God. Jesus told Peter that he was blessed for believing this and that this truth was a revelation from God (Matthew 16:13–19).

Jesus told His disciples that it was not important what other people thought of His identity, but who they knew Him to be after their intimate walk with Him. When Peter confessed the truth about Jesus, then Jesus went on to articulate Peter's identity. Peter's accurate perception of Jesus led to an accurate perception of his own identity and mission in life. That perception was not based on what Peter thought of himself or what others thought of him, but on who Jesus said he was.


Reflecting on this passage of Scripture caused me to affirm my personal belief as to who Jesus really is. While there are shades of truth in the beliefs of Jesus as a prophet or a unique enlightened spiritual master, He is much more than these things. Jesus is, as Peter declared, the Messiah or Anointed One, the Son of God. He is the living Savior who atoned for our sins and who gives salvation and eternal life to all who believe in Him. Our relationship with Jesus brings purpose and fulfillment to our lives.

UDAY PAUL IS A FREELANCE WRITER, VOLUNTEER, AND TEACHER  
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# OUR FATHER'S LOVE

BY SIMON BISHOP

A photograph of a man with a beard and a young boy standing outdoors on a grassy field. They are both smiling and looking at each other. A soccer ball is balanced between their heads. The background is a soft-focus landscape with trees and a goalpost under a bright sky.

I'M WRITING THIS SHORTLY AFTER WE CELEBRATED FATHER'S DAY, WHICH WAS ALSO AROUND THE TIME OF MY LATE FATHER'S BIRTHDAY. I have been thinking about what it means to be a father. I have been a dad for 30 years now. I have nine children, so I have had a lot of experience, which also means I've made a lot of mistakes and learned many important and sometimes difficult lessons throughout the years.

One thing I have seen with my own children, which I also experienced with my father, is that love is often spelled T-I-M-E. No matter how much I love, protect, provide and care for my children, it is usually the time I spend with them that they appreciate most and remember for a long time.

One of my earliest memories of my father is that every night, as we went to bed, he would tell us stories about his life and childhood. By his own account he



was quite a naughty kid, and before Jesus changed his life, he was a wayward adult as well. Many of his stories were about his mistakes. I credit his honesty in his accounts of his life with the fact that I was never tempted to do many of those things such as smoke, take drugs, steal, get into petty crime, etc.

He talked openly about his mistakes and often brought out the negative consequences of his actions. Although I didn't recognize this at the time, he was a good example of humility. I rarely remember him telling stories in which he was the hero; instead, he would share things that either taught me important lessons or were testimonies of God's mercy and goodness in his life.

Although as Christians we have an understanding of God as our Father, before Jesus' teachings, the concept of God as our Father was presented in the Old Testament in a less personal way. However, when Jesus taught His disciples to pray, He told them to address God as their Father, and He used the term Abba, which is the informal or affectionate way that people would address their fathers at that time. Abba is similar to calling your father Papa or Daddy.

Jesus taught us that, as His followers, we have been granted the right to enter into a more intimate and personal understanding of and relationship with God. "To all who believed Him and accepted Him, He gave the right to become children of God" (John 1:12 NLT). Since God is our Father, we can consider the relationship He wants to have with each of us to be a good example of what a father should be like with his children.

Here are a few of the attributes of God, our Father: God shows us grace and mercy. "Be merciful, even as your Father is merciful" (Luke 6:36).

God provides for us. "If you then, imperfect as you are, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in Heaven give good things to those who ask Him!" (Matthew 7:11 WNT).

God loves us as His children. "See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are" (1 John 3:1).

God disciplines us as a father. "As you endure this divine discipline, remember that God is treating you as his own children" (Hebrews 12:7 NLT).

When I think of the love I feel for each member of our family, I sense, to a slight degree, the love that our Heavenly Father bears for His children.—*Russell M. Nelson*

Oh, it is wonderful to know that our Heavenly Father loves us—even with all our flaws! His love is such that even should we give up on ourselves, He never will.—*Joseph B. Wirthlin*



If you haven't yet experienced the unconditional love of the Father, you can do so now by inviting His Son, Jesus, into your life. Jesus said: "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me" (John 14:6). Simply pray this prayer:

*Dear Jesus, I believe that You are the Son of God and that You died on the cross for me so that, through Your sacrifice, I can live forever with You in heaven. I ask that You forgive my sins. I open the door of my heart and life to You. Please fill me with Your Holy Spirit and help me live in a way that glorifies You. Guide my life and help me to follow You. In Your name I pray. Amen.*

Another attribute of good fathers that is evident in God's love towards us is that He is willing to go to any lengths to help us regain our relationship with Him, even when we are separated from Him because of our sins or disregard.

Jesus told the Parable of the Prodigal Son who took his inheritance and went to a faraway land where he squandered it in reckless living. Eventually, he had nothing and was hungry, so he decided to go back home. He thought he could at least be one of his father's servants. But when the father saw his son returning to him, he felt such compassion that he ran to meet him and embraced him. Before the son could apologize or admit his mistakes, the father showered him with love, and they celebrated. (See Luke 15:11–32.)

May we each reflect the Father's unconditional love to the people in our lives and those we encounter throughout our day, and be good examples of the love that God, our Father, shows us.

SIMON BISHOP DOES FULL-TIME MISSION AND HUMANITARIAN WORK IN THE PHILIPPINES. ■

# GOOD LORD!

BY PHILLIP LYNCH

**SOMETIMES I'M AMAZED AT HOW DENSE I CAN BE!** I've been reading the Bible regularly for the past 40 years, but it was only yesterday that something so elementary struck me that I wondered where my head had been the past four decades.



I've been bothered recently by what a raw deal God usually gets. In many of the books I've read and the television shows and movies I've watched, it seems that whenever God comes up, He is portrayed as hard and unyielding, even mean. I was getting tired of this portrayal because it simply doesn't match up with the God I know. At the same time, I admit that I have also occasionally wondered about God's goodness—not so much *whether* He was good, but rather if I was the only one somehow missing out on it. But even when battling with my own questions about God's justness, I knew that these other portrayals were grossly unfair.

I was thinking about this and how God must get fed up with humanity's grumblings and accusations, when the words came to me, "Love endures long and is patient and kind." (See [1 Corinthians 13:4 NKJV](#).) I recognized them immediately as part of Apostle Paul's famous discourse on love. Then I was reminded of how John the Beloved captured the essence of God's nature in three simple words: "God is love" ([1 John 4:8](#)). It struck me that [1 Corinthians chapter 13](#) is also describing God.

What a God! He puts up with us because it is His nature to do so. His justice and righteousness are tempered with infinite patience, kindness, forbearance. He is a God who endures all that we unjustly throw at Him. He isn't conceited, arrogant, rude, unbecoming, self-seeking, touchy, fretful, resentful, or vengeful. He is a God who will freely and graciously give all things to His children. (See [Romans 8:32](#).)

What struck me the hardest was that while I was pointing to "specks of dust" in the eyes of these authors and scriptwriters who I thought were giving God such a raw deal, I was excusing the "log" in my own eye when I complained to God about His "neglecting" me. As I said, I can be dense.

"Why do you see the speck that is in your brother's eye but do not notice or consider the beam [of timber] that is in your own eye? ... First take the beam out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take out the speck that is in your brother's eye" ([Luke 6:41–42 AMPC](#)).

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# I KISSED THE SUN

BY CURTIS PETER VAN GORDER

**IT DAWNED ON ME THIS MORNING HOW AWESOME THE SUN IS!** It's so good to feel the sun's warmth on my face, especially during those cold dark dank days of winter. It's as if the sun is lovingly kissing me. Every problem seems solvable and a smile returns to my face. Many songs have been written about how the sun touches our soul.

In Psalm 2, King David tells us to “kiss the Son,” which is understood to be a prophetic reference to Jesus (Psalm 2:12). The Bible teaches that the physical world bears witness to its Maker (Romans 1:20); in that way, the sun can be viewed as a symbol of God. The sun is too bright to look at directly, which reminds us of just how powerful God is. “The heavens declare the glory of God” (Psalm 19:1). Imagine us without the sun; there would only be darkness and void!

Sunlight is something we take for granted, but it is truly mind-boggling when you take the time to learn more about our life-giving star. It's not the biggest star, though it seems so huge to us. In fact, 1.3 million earths would fit inside the sun. The biggest known star is UY Scuti, with a radius 1,708 times larger than that of our sun. Thank God that our sun is just the right size. Our distance from the sun is perfect, putting us in a zone where everything is right—not too hot or too cold—playfully dubbed the “Goldilocks zone.”

We marvel at the power of Niagara Falls, but we are gobsmacked at the power of the sun. The tremendous heat of 15 million degrees Celsius at its core, and the pressure from a force of gravity that is 28 times stronger than earth's, cause nuclear fusion to occur at its core continuously.

I could go on till the crack of dawn expounding the sun's wonders, but I think you get the idea.

So, the next time the sun shines down on you, blow it a kiss, or better yet, kiss Jesus, “the sun of righteousness” (Malachi 4:2), in gratitude and affection for being the light of the world!

“Jesus spoke to them, saying, ‘I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life’” (John 8:12).

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# A CHRISTIAN PERSPECTIVE ON SUFFERING

BY LILIA POTTERS



SUFFERING AND HARDSHIP ARE AN INEVITABLE PART OF LIFE, AND PEOPLE OFTEN WRESTLE WITH THE QUESTION: *Why does a loving God allow bad things to happen?* Looking back on my life, while there were many high points and blessings that I am very thankful for, there were also some deep lows and losses that were very difficult for me.

During those hard times, the scriptures I read comforted and strengthened me. They didn't always satisfy my desire for immediate clarity of *why* these seemingly bad things were happening to me, but the Bible offered me wisdom, encouragement, and hope.

Here are some scriptures and biblical insights that helped me see the purpose of suffering and find strength during those difficult times:

## GOD'S SOVEREIGNTY AND GOODNESS

One foundational truth of the Christian faith is that God is sovereign and good, even when life is painful. While we may not always understand His plans, the Bible assures us that God is at work in all things for the ultimate good of His children.

We know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose ([Romans 8:28](#)).

"My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways," declares the Lord. "As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts" ([Isaiah 55:8-9](#)).



In moments of confusion, we are called to trust that God's understanding far surpasses our own and that His plans are ultimately for our benefit.

### THE ROLE OF SUFFERING

Suffering is not without purpose in the Christian life. Trials can refine our character, strengthen our faith, and help us grow spiritually.

Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything ([James 1:2–4 NIV](#)).

We rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us ([Romans 5:3–5](#)).

Challenges are opportunities for God to shape us into the people He intends for us to be, enabling us to grow in maturity, compassion, and resilience.

### JESUS IS OUR EXAMPLE IN SUFFERING

The life and death of Jesus Christ are central to the Christian understanding of suffering. Jesus endured unimaginable pain and hardship, demonstrating that God is not distant from human suffering. Instead, He entered into it fully.

We do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet he did not sin ([Hebrews 4:15 NIV](#)).

To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps ([1 Peter 2:21 NIV](#)).

Through Christ's suffering and resurrection, believers find hope that their pain is not in vain and that ultimate victory is assured.

### HOPE AMID SUFFERING

While suffering can feel overwhelming, the Bible reminds us that it is temporary compared to the eternal joy awaiting those who trust God.

He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away ([Revelation 21:4](#)).

Our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all ([2 Corinthians 4:17 NIV](#)).

Eternal life and the restoration of all things provide hope and perspective, reminding us, as Christians, that suffering is not the end of the story.

### GOD'S COMFORT AND PRESENCE

God promises to be with His children during trials, offering comfort and peace, so we in turn can comfort others when they go through difficult times.

The Lord is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit ([Psalm 34:18 NIV](#)).

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves receive from God ([2 Corinthians 1:3–4 NIV](#)).

I found that the assurance of God's presence can bring immense peace, even in the darkest moments. You can find the same comfort and peace by claiming His promises as your own.

LILIA POTTERS IS AN AUTHOR AND CERTIFIED AUTISM RESOURCE SPECIALIST WHO LIVES IN THE U.S. ■



# FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT

BY MARIE ALVERO

**“THE HOLY SPIRIT PRODUCES THIS KIND OF FRUIT IN OUR LIVES:** love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. There is no law against these things!” (Galatians 5:22–23. NLT).

I remember the first house I lived in that had fruit-bearing trees. We were in the tropics, so we had guava, custard apple, and papaya trees. All of us kids in the neighborhood knew which trees had the best fruit. We knew what months to expect fruit. When there was a cluster of guavas high up in a tree, we would cobble together “harvesting operations” to get the fruit before the birds did.

When a tree is bearing fruit, it’s not a secret. The tree will usually flower, and the flowers will turn to seeds, then fruits. At first tiny, then ripening and growing larger, the branches will become laden with fruit. The fruit attracts birds and insects, the tree is obviously active and creating growth.

Sometimes, for a host of reasons, the tree will stop bearing fruit or bear less fruit; this is also apparent, especially when compared with other trees that are producing. My point is that when trees are bearing fruit, it is obvious. The kids know it. The birds know it.

The same can be said of the fruit of the Holy Spirit. When we are showing the fruit of God’s Spirit in our lives, it is not a secret. There is love, joy, peace, and all the other fruits to see. You cannot pretend to be filled with the Holy Spirit any more than an apple tree can pretend that it’s growing apples.

I think God gave us an easy way to know if we have the Holy Spirit in our lives: are we growing the fruit? When a tree is not producing fruit, it’s pretty easy to troubleshoot. Does it need more nutrients, more sun, shade, water, pollinating? What’s the tree not getting? Or getting too much of? Correct it and you will get fruit. It is the same with us. If we are not showing the fruit of the Spirit, we can ask what conditions need to be changed. Do we need to spend more time in prayer? Do we need to ask God to “prune” something out of our lives? Do we need to be patient for fruit to develop?

It’s so gracious of God to use illustrations that play out in nature, rhythms and processes that we can understand and apply to our own lives.

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# GOD REMEMBERS

BY MARIA FONTAINE

**GOD LOVES US—ETERNALLY AND UNCONDITIONALLY—AND HE REMEMBERS EVERY EXPRESSION OF OUR LOVE FOR HIM.** He keeps track of our faithfulness to Him and the teachings in His Word, and our perseverance in whatever situation we are in. He rejoices in our labors of love and every time we reach out to those who are suffering and in need (Hebrews 6:10).

What He *doesn't* keep track of in His mercy and He *doesn't* remember against us are our failures, our mistakes, and our sins (Hebrews 8:12). He remembers our frame, that we are only dust and have so much to learn, and as we repent of our shortcomings, He covers them in His love and forgives us (Psalm 103:14).

It may take us a lifetime and beyond to fully become the person God created us to be, but He rejoices every time we choose to fulfill His purpose in our lives. Regardless of what tasks He calls us to in this life, what matters to Him is our faithfulness to do our best (Revelation 2:10).

Of course, being faithful in the face of the day-in and day-out struggles of life isn't easy. We need God's Spirit working in and through us to meet the great need in this troubled world for His love and truth, and to reach the many lost and empty hearts in need of the Savior.

Regardless of the challenges we face in this life—illness, loss of loved ones, unfair treatment, lack of finances—our example of trusting the Lord can impart hope to those around us.

As we acknowledge our need for God's strength in our weakness, we find that His grace provides what we need to follow Him day by day (2 Corinthians 12:9). If we keep our eyes fixed on Him, no matter what we face, we can continue to press on to take hold of our heavenward calling in Jesus (Philippians 3:12–14 NIV). God's Spirit can shine through us to bring His peace, clarity and comfort to people around us who are mired in the confusion of this world.

Jesus sees your heart. Even if your situation only allows you to manifest His love in seemingly small ways, everything we do for Jesus and others matters to God. So wherever we find ourselves, let's be faithful to “continually offer to God a sacrifice of praise through Jesus” and “not forget to do good and to share with others, for with such sacrifices God is pleased” (Hebrews 13:15–16 NIV).

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FROM JESUS WITH LOVE

# MY SPIRIT AT WORK IN YOU



There is only one person just like you in the entire universe, and you are precious to Me! You are My handiwork—My masterpiece—created to do the good works that I prepared in advance for you to do (Ephesians 2:10 NIV). While this requires commitment and determination on your part, always remember that it is the power of My Spirit at work within you that will empower you to become and do all that I have planned for you.

I have designed you to be like a lamp filled with the oil of My Spirit that radiates My light to the world around you. It is important that you tend well to your lamp and allow Me to replenish you, so that your light will shine so brightly that people will see your good works and be drawn to Me (Matthew 5:14–16).

Take time to come to Me in prayer and to study My Word, which will give you the strength to persevere and to keep your eyes on the things that truly matter. Take a moment to praise and worship Me, and let your heart overflow with My joy. As you enter into My presence with thanksgiving, I will fill you with all joy and peace so that you may overflow with hope by the power of My Spirit (Romans 15:13 NIV).