
OCHORUS ORIGINALS
4
Rooted
Strong in the Storm: courage for when you're afraid, sad, tempted or treated unfairly
Ochorus

Rooted – 30 Days with God for Youth – Book 4

Strong in the Storm: courage for when you're afraid, sad, tempted or treated unfairly

Ochorus Originals

First published 2026.

OCHORUS

About Ochorus

"To make the epic classics of the Christian faith free to the Church around the world — in their own language, to the glory of God."

Ochorus is a Christian ministry based in Victoria, Canada, and Kampala, Uganda. Since 2021 we have been finding the great Christian books of the past, editing them carefully for today's readers, and giving them away — free to read and free to keep.

We are not only a website. Books printed in Uganda are placed directly into people's hands across East Africa — at pastors' conferences, and in the churches, schools and prisons we are invited to serve.

Keep reading at ochorus.com

- Hundreds of classics, sermons and biographies — free, with no ads and no account needed.
- Books in many languages, from English and Swahili to Arabic and Hindi.
- Reading plans, highlights and notes that follow you from device to device.
- Listen aloud, or save a book to read offline.
- Free downloads like this one. Share them freely.

"Freely ye have received, freely give."

Matthew 10:8

Table of Contents

About this work 6

Introduction: When the Storms Come 7

Day 1 — Built on the Rock 10

Day 2 — When I Am Afraid 12

Day 3 — The Lord Is My Shepherd 14

Day 4 — Strong and Courageous 16

Day 5 — David and Goliath 18

Day 6 — Sleep in Peace 20

Day 7 — Cast Your Cares 22

Day 8 — Pray Instead of Worry 24

Day 9 — Jesus Wept 26

Day 10 — When Someone Dies 28

Day 11 — When Home Is Hard 30

Day 12 — God Works for Good 32

Day 13 — The Way Out 34

Day 14 — Joseph Runs 36

Day 15 — Don't Be Squeezed 38
Day 16 — Daniel's Decision 40
Day 17 — Resist 42
Day 18 — Getting Back Up 44
Day 19 — The Armor of God 46
Day 20 — Belt, Breastplate, Shoes 48
Day 21 — Shield, Helmet, Sword 50
Day 22 — Even If He Doesn't 52
Day 23 — Daniel Kept Praying 54
Day 24 — Not Ashamed 56
Day 25 — It's Not Fair 58
Day 26 — Higher Ways 60
Day 27 — Wings Like Eagles 62
Day 28 — Strong When Weak 64
Day 29 — Nothing Can Separate Us 66
Day 30 — An Anchor for the Soul 68
Conclusion: Standing Strong 70

About this work

Rooted is an original Ochorus devotional series for readers aged 9 to 12, and this is its fourth book. It begins with Jesus' story of two builders: the storm hit both houses, and the one on the rock stood. Storms come to everyone, and Book 4 is about the foundation that holds when they do.

The first week is about fear, with David's trust, the Shepherd of Psalm 23, Joshua's courage, Goliath, and sleeping in peace. The second is about worry and sadness: casting cares on God, praying instead of worrying, Jesus weeping, grieving with hope when someone dies, and God as Father when home is hard. The third faces temptation with Joseph and Daniel, and teaches how to get back up after a fall. The fourth puts on the armor of God and stands with Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, Daniel in the lions' den, and Esther. The fifth holds on to hope: Joseph's "God intended it for good," God's higher ways, wings like eagles, grace that is enough, and the love nothing can separate us from.

Every day follows the same short pattern: a Scripture from the Berean Standard Bible, a teaching, a question to think about, one thing to try, and a prayer. The days on grief and on a hard home are written gently and point readers to a trusted adult, and several days remind them to tell a trusted adult if anyone is hurting them.

Introduction: When the Storms Come

Have you ever been caught outside in a big storm? The sky turns dark gray. The wind picks up. Trees bend and sway. Then the rain comes pouring down, and thunder cracks so loud you can feel it in your chest.

Life has storms too. Not just the weather kind, but the kind that happen on the inside. Maybe you've already been through some. Being scared at night. Worrying about a test or a friendship. Feeling sad when someone you love gets sick. Facing a choice where everyone around you is doing the wrong thing. Going through something that just doesn't seem fair.

Here's the truth: **everyone** faces storms. Following Jesus doesn't mean you'll never have hard days. Jesus Himself said, "In the world you will have tribulation." But He didn't stop there. He also said, "But take courage; I have overcome the world!" (John 16:33).

That's what this book is about. Not how to avoid every storm, but how to **stand strong** in them.

> *"God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in times of trouble. Therefore we will not fear, though the earth is transformed and the mountains are toppled into the depths of the seas."*
> *— Psalm 46:1–2 (BSB)*

A *refuge* is a safe place to run to, like a shelter in a storm. God is that place for you.

What's in this book

This is **Book 4** of Rooted. (If you haven't read the others, that's okay! You can start right here.)

- **Week 1 — When I'm Afraid.** What to do with fear, and why God is bigger than your giants.
- **Week 2 — Worry and Sadness.** Handing God your worries, and finding comfort when you're sad.
- **Week 3 — Temptation.** How to say no to wrong things, and how to get back up when you fall.
- **Week 4 — Standing Firm.** The armor of God, and the courage of Daniel and his friends.
- **Week 5 — Hope That Holds.** Trusting God when life isn't fair and when you feel weak.

How each day works

Every day takes about five to ten minutes and has five parts:

1. **The verse.** A short passage from the Bible. Read it slowly.
2. **The teaching.** What the verse means, often with a story of someone in the Bible who faced a storm.
3. **Think about it.** A question to think about on your own or with someone.
4. **Try this.** One small step of courage for today.
5. **The prayer.** A prayer to pray. Add your own words too!

Tips for stormy days

- **Be honest with God.** You don't have to pretend you're not scared or sad. The Bible is full of people who told God exactly how they felt.
- **Talk to someone.** God often sends His help through people. If something is really hard, tell a parent, a pastor, a teacher or another grown-up you trust.
- **Hold on to a verse.** Pick one verse from this book that helps you most, and memorize it for stormy days.
- **Missed a day? Just keep going.** God isn't going anywhere.

Remember the wise builder who built his house on the rock? The storm came, and his house stood. Let's find out how to build on the Rock.

For parents, grandparents and leaders

Book 4 of *Rooted* helps readers aged 9 to 12 face fear, worry, sadness, temptation and unfairness with faith. Scripture is quoted from the Berean Standard Bible. Two days deserve special mention. Day 10 is about grief when someone dies, and Day 11 is about when home is hard. Both are written gently, and both encourage readers to talk with a trusted adult. If your child is going through either right now, you may want to read those days together. Several days also remind readers that if anyone is hurting them, they should tell a trusted adult.

Day 1 — Built on the Rock

"Therefore everyone who hears these words of Mine and acts on them is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. The rain fell, the torrents raged, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because its foundation was on the rock."
— Matthew 7:24–25 (BSB)

Jesus told a story about two builders.

The first builder was wise. Before he built his house, he dug down deep until he hit solid rock. It was hard work! It took a long time, and nobody could see the foundation once the house was finished. But he built his house on the rock.

The second builder was foolish. He found a nice, flat, sandy spot and built his house right there. It was faster and easier. And from the outside, his house probably looked just as good as the first one.

Then the storm came. Rain poured down. Rivers flooded. The wind howled and slammed against both houses.

The house on the sand fell with a great crash. But the house on the rock stood firm.

Notice something important: **the storm hit both houses.** The wise builder didn't get a special pass. The same rain, the same floods and the same wind hit his house too. The difference wasn't the storm. The difference was the foundation.

So what's the rock? Jesus told us: "everyone who hears these words of Mine and **acts on them**." Building on the rock means listening to Jesus and doing what He says. The foolish builder heard Jesus' words too. He just didn't do anything about them.

Foundations are built before the storm, not during it. You can't pour concrete in the middle of a hurricane! In the same way, the time to build your life on Jesus is right now, on the sunny days, by trusting Him, learning His Word and obeying Him. Then when the storms come, and they will, you'll be ready.

That's what this book is about. Over the next 30 days, we'll look at all kinds of storms. And every day, we'll dig a little deeper down to the Rock.

Think about it: What's the difference between hearing Jesus' words and acting on them? Which are you better at?

Try this: Think of one thing Jesus says in the Bible that you know but haven't been doing. Do it today. That's how you build on the rock.

Dear Jesus, I want to build my life on You, the Rock. Help me not just to hear Your words, but to do them. When storms come, help me stand firm because my foundation is in You. In Your name, Amen.

Day 2 — When I Am Afraid

> *"When I am afraid, I put my trust in You. In God, whose word I praise—in God I trust. I will not be afraid. What can man do to me?"*
> *— Psalm 56:3–4 (BSB)*

What are you afraid of? Maybe spiders or the dark. Maybe getting lost, or speaking in front of the class, or something bad happening to your family. Everyone is afraid of something.

David wrote Psalm 56 at one of the scariest times of his life. King Saul was trying to kill him, so David ran away to a city called Gath. But Gath was the hometown of Goliath, the giant David had defeated! The Philistines there recognized him and grabbed him. David was surrounded by enemies with nowhere to run. (You can read about it in 1 Samuel 21.)

Look at the very first words David wrote in today's verse: "When I am afraid." Not *if* I am afraid, but *when*. David was brave. He had killed a lion, a bear and a giant. But he still got scared sometimes. Being afraid is part of being human.

Fear isn't a sin. It's a feeling. The important question is: **what do you do with it?**

David shows us: "When I am afraid, **I put my trust in You**." When fear came, David turned toward God. He didn't pretend he wasn't scared. He took his fear straight to God and chose to trust Him.

It's a little like being a small child in a crowded, noisy place. When the child gets scared, what does she do? She grabs her dad's hand and holds on tight. The noise and crowd don't disappear, but she feels safe, because she's holding on to someone strong.

Then something changed in David. By the next verse, he was saying, "I will not be afraid." The situation hadn't changed yet. His enemies were still there. But his heart had changed, because he remembered who was holding him.

You can do the same thing. When you feel afraid, say David's words: "When I am afraid, I put my trust in You." Say them out loud if you need to. Then hold on tight.

Think about it: What are you most afraid of right now? What would it look like to "put your trust" in God about it?

Try this: Memorize Psalm 56:3: "When I am afraid, I put my trust in You." Use it the very next time you feel scared.

Dear God, sometimes I'm afraid. Thank You that I can bring my fears to You. When I am afraid, I will put my trust in You. Hold me tight, and help my heart not to be afraid. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Day 3 — The Lord Is My Shepherd

"The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want. He makes me lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside quiet waters. He restores my soul; He guides me in the paths of righteousness for the sake of His name. Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me."
— Psalm 23:1–4 (BSB)

Before David was a king, he was a shepherd boy. He spent long days and nights in the fields taking care of his father's sheep. So when he wanted to describe what God is like, he knew exactly what picture to use.

Sheep aren't very smart. They wander off. They can't find water on their own. They can't fight off wolves or lions. Without a shepherd, a sheep wouldn't last very long. But with a good shepherd, a sheep is safe.

"The LORD is my shepherd." David says God takes care of him the way he took care of his sheep. And look at everything the Shepherd does:

- **"I shall not want."** He gives me what I need.
- **"He makes me lie down in green pastures."** He gives me rest.
- **"He leads me beside quiet waters."** He gives me peace.
- **"He restores my soul."** When I'm tired and worn out inside, He fills me back up.

- **"He guides me in the paths of righteousness."** He shows me the right way to go.

But then the psalm goes somewhere dark: "Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death." Sometimes the path leads through scary places. Shepherds sometimes had to lead their sheep through deep, shadowy valleys where wild animals might be hiding.

Notice that David doesn't say, "God will never let me go through a dark valley." He says, "**Even though** I walk through" it, "I will fear no evil, for **You are with me**."

That's the secret. The dark valley is still dark. But the Shepherd is right there, walking beside you. His rod was a club to fight off wild animals. His staff was a long stick with a hook to rescue sheep and guide them. Both are signs that He is protecting you.

Jesus said, "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down His life for the sheep" (John 10:11). Your Shepherd loves you so much that He gave His life for you.

Think about it: Which part of Psalm 23 means the most to you right now? Why?

Try this: Read Psalm 23 out loud tonight before you go to sleep. Try to memorize the first verse: "The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want."

Dear Lord, You are my Shepherd. Thank You for taking care of me, giving me rest, and leading me the right way. Even when I walk through dark valleys, I don't have to be afraid, because You are with me. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Day 4 — Strong and Courageous

"Have I not commanded you to be strong and courageous? Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go."
— Joshua 1:9 (BSB)

Imagine being Joshua. For forty years, he had followed Moses, the greatest leader Israel ever had. Moses talked with God face to face. Moses stood up to Pharaoh. Moses led the whole nation through the Red Sea.

Now Moses had died, and God said to Joshua, "You're next."

Joshua had to lead the whole nation across the Jordan River into a land full of walled cities and powerful armies. Do you think he was nervous? Probably! God told him "Be strong and courageous" three times in one chapter. You don't need to hear that three times unless you're a little scared.

Here's something important: **being brave doesn't mean you never feel afraid.** Being brave means doing the right thing *even when* you feel afraid.

You might not be leading an army, but you face scary things too. Walking into a new school. Trying out for a team. Telling the truth when you know you'll get in trouble. Maybe the hardest of all: standing up for a kid everyone else is picking on.

Notice *why* God told Joshua to be brave. He didn't say, "Be brave because you're strong enough." He didn't say, "Be brave because everything

will be easy." He said, "Be brave **because the LORD your God is with you wherever you go**."

Joshua's courage didn't come from his muscles or his experience. It came from knowing God was right beside him. And the same God who went with Joshua into Canaan goes with you onto the school bus, into the classroom and out onto the field.

God also said, "Do not be discouraged." To be *discouraged* means to lose your courage, to feel like giving up. When things get hard, it's easy to think, *I can't do this.* But God says, *You don't have to do it alone.*

And Joshua did it. He led God's people into the Promised Land, and God kept every promise. Not because Joshua was fearless, but because God was faithful.

Think about it: What is one thing you're afraid to do right now, even though you know it's right?

Try this: Memorize Joshua 1:9 this week. Say it to yourself the next time your heart starts pounding.

Dear God, sometimes I feel afraid. Thank You that being brave doesn't mean I have to feel brave. Help me remember that You are with me wherever I go. Give me courage to do what's right, even when it's hard. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Day 5 — David and Goliath

"You come against me with sword and spear and javelin, but I come against you in the name of the LORD of Hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied."
— 1 Samuel 17:45 (BSB)

The army of Israel was lined up on one hillside. The army of the Philistines was lined up on the other. And every morning and every evening for forty days, a giant stepped out from the Philistine side and shouted a challenge.

His name was **Goliath**. He was over nine feet tall. His armor weighed as much as a grown man. The tip of his spear alone weighed about fifteen pounds! He shouted, "Send someone to fight me!" And every soldier in Israel's army, including King Saul, was terrified.

Then a teenage shepherd named David showed up to bring food to his older brothers. He heard Goliath mocking God's people. And David asked, "Just who is this uncircumcised Philistine, that he should defy the armies of the living God?"

His brothers were annoyed. King Saul said, "You're just a boy!" But David said God had rescued him from a lion and a bear while he was guarding his sheep, and God would rescue him from this giant too.

David didn't wear Saul's armor. He took his shepherd's staff, his sling and five smooth stones from a stream. When Goliath saw him coming, he laughed and made fun of him. But David shouted back today's verse: "You

come against me with sword and spear and javelin, but I come against you **in the name of the LORD**."

Then David ran toward the giant, put a stone in his sling and let it fly. It hit Goliath right in the forehead, and the giant fell face down on the ground.

Here's the key to the story: everyone else was comparing themselves to Goliath. *He's so big, and we're so small.* David was comparing Goliath to God. *He's big, but my God is bigger.*

What are the "giants" in your life? A bully? A fear? A problem that seems way too big for you? Remember David. Your giants might be bigger than you. But they're not bigger than your God.

David also said, "the battle is the LORD's." You don't have to fight your giants in your own strength.

Think about it: What is a "giant" in your life right now? How does it look different when you compare it to God instead of to yourself?

Try this: Write your "giant" on a piece of paper. Underneath, write in big letters: "My God is bigger." Put it somewhere you'll see it.

Dear God, some of the problems in my life look like giants. But You are bigger than any giant. Help me face them like David did, trusting in You and not in my own strength. The battle is Yours. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Day 6 — Sleep in Peace

"I will lie down and sleep in peace, for You alone, O LORD, make me dwell in safety."
— Psalm 4:8 (BSB)

For a lot of kids (and grown-ups too!), nighttime is when fears come out. During the day you're busy, and there's light and noise everywhere. But at night, when the lights go off and the house gets quiet, your mind starts racing. Every creak sounds like a footstep. Every shadow looks like something scary. Worries you didn't even think about during the day come crowding in.

Have you ever lain awake at night, unable to fall asleep because you were scared or worried?

David knew what that was like. He wrote Psalm 4 during a hard time, when people were against him. But look at how he ends it: "I will lie down and sleep in peace."

How could he do that? The next words tell us: "for **You alone**, O LORD, make me dwell in safety."

David knew that locks on the doors and guards at the gate weren't what really kept him safe. God was. And God never sleeps. Psalm 121 says, "your Protector will not slumber" (Psalm 121:3). While you sleep, God stays awake. He's watching over you all night long.

Here are a few ideas for nights when you can't sleep:

- **Talk to God.** Tell Him exactly what you're scared of. He's awake and listening.
- **Say a verse.** Quietly repeat Psalm 4:8, Psalm 56:3 or Psalm 23:1.
- **Count your blessings.** Instead of counting sheep, thank God for things one by one.
- **Remember who's in charge.** God is in control, and He loves you.
- **Tell a grown-up.** If fears keep you awake a lot, talk to your parents. There's nothing embarrassing about it.

It's also okay to have a night-light, or to ask for a hug. God gave you people to comfort you, and that's one of the ways He cares for you.

Tonight, when the lights go out, remember: you're not alone in the dark. The God who never sleeps is watching over you.

Think about it: What helps you feel safe at night? What worries or fears tend to come at bedtime?

Try this: Tonight, before you fall asleep, say Psalm 4:8 as a prayer. Then name three things you're thankful for.

Dear God, thank You that You never sleep, and that You watch over me all night long. When I lie down tonight, help me sleep in peace. When I'm scared in the dark, remind me that You alone make me safe. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Day 7 — Cast Your Cares

"Cast all your anxiety on Him, because He cares for you."
— 1 Peter 5:7 (BSB)

Imagine going on a hike with a backpack. At first it feels light. But then you start picking up rocks along the trail. One rock for a worry about school. Another rock for a fight with a friend. Another for something you heard on the news. Another for a problem at home. Soon your backpack is so heavy you can barely walk.

That's what worry does. **Anxiety** is another word for worry: that tight, nervous feeling you get when you're afraid something bad might happen. Carrying worries all the time is exhausting.

Peter says to "cast all your anxiety on Him." To *cast* means to throw. Fishermen cast their nets into the water. Peter was a fisherman, so he knew all about casting! He's saying: take your worries and throw them onto God. Don't keep carrying them yourself.

Notice the word "**all**." Not just the big worries. Not just the ones that seem important enough to bother God with. All of them. Worries about grades, friends, your body, your family, the future. God wants every single one.

And why should we throw our worries on God? Because "**He cares for you**." That's the whole reason. God isn't annoyed by your worries. He isn't too busy. He cares about you, and He's strong enough to carry anything.

How do you actually cast your cares on God? You tell Him about them in prayer. Name each worry. Then picture yourself handing it to Him, like taking a heavy rock out of your backpack and putting it into His strong hands.

Sometimes you'll hand a worry to God, and ten minutes later you'll notice you've picked it back up again. That's normal! Just give it back to Him again. And again. You can do that as many times as you need to.

And remember, God often helps us through people. If a worry keeps coming back, talk to a parent or another grown-up you trust. Sharing a heavy load makes it lighter.

Think about it: What worries are in your "backpack" right now?

Try this: Write each of your worries on a small piece of paper. Pray about each one, then put them all in a box or jar labeled "Given to God."

Dear God, thank You that You care for me. Right now, I'm worried about [name your worries]. I throw all of them onto You. Please carry them for me. When I pick them back up, help me give them to You again. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Day 8 — Pray Instead of Worry

"Be anxious for nothing, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus."
— Philippians 4:6–7 (BSB)

Yesterday we learned to throw our worries onto God. Today Paul gives us a step-by-step plan for doing it.

"Be anxious for nothing." That sounds impossible! How can anyone never worry? But Paul doesn't just say, "Stop worrying." He tells us what to do **instead**. It's like this: you can't just tell yourself, *Don't think about a purple elephant.* (Now you're thinking about one, aren't you?) The best way to stop thinking about one thing is to think about something else.

Paul's plan is to turn every worry into a prayer. Here's how it works:

1. Pray about it. "In everything, by prayer." Everything! There's nothing too big or too small to talk to God about.

2. Ask specifically. "Petition" and "requests" mean asking for what you need. Tell God exactly what you're worried about and what you'd like Him to do.

3. Say thank you. "With thanksgiving." This is the part people often skip. Thank God for who He is and for how He's helped you before. Thankfulness reminds your heart that God is good and in control.

And then look at the promise: "the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds."

Surpasses all understanding means it's a peace that doesn't make sense. Your problem might still be there. You might not know how it will turn out. But somehow, deep inside, you feel calm, because you've put it in God's hands.

And that peace will **guard** your heart and mind, like a soldier standing at a gate. When worries try to sneak back in, God's peace stands in the way.

So here's a new habit: every time you notice yourself worrying, let it be a reminder to pray. Worry becomes your prayer alarm!

Think about it: Why do you think thanking God is part of the plan for beating worry?

Try this: Use Paul's plan today. When a worry comes, (1) pray about it, (2) ask God specifically for help and (3) thank Him for something.

Dear God, instead of worrying, I want to pray. Here's what I'm worried about: [tell Him]. Please help me with [ask Him]. And thank You for [thank Him]. Please guard my heart and mind with Your peace. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Day 9 — Jesus Wept

"Jesus wept."
— John 11:35 (BSB)
"The LORD is near to the brokenhearted; He saves the contrite in spirit."
— Psalm 34:18 (BSB)

"Jesus wept" is the shortest verse in the Bible. Just two words. But those two words tell us something huge about God.

Jesus' good friend Lazarus had died. When Jesus arrived, He saw Lazarus's sister Mary crying, and all their friends crying with her. And Jesus cried too.

Here's what's amazing: Jesus knew that in just a few minutes, He was going to raise Lazarus from the dead! He knew the sadness was about to turn to joy. And He *still* cried. Why? Because He loved His friends, and He felt their pain. He didn't rush them. He didn't say, "Cheer up, it's not a big deal." He was sad with them.

That tells us something important: **it's okay to be sad.**

Sometimes people think Christians should always be happy, or that being sad means you don't trust God enough. But that's not true. Jesus was sad. David cried a lot in the Psalms. The Bible says there is "a time to weep" (Ecclesiastes 3:4).

Maybe you're sad right now. Maybe a friend moved away, or your pet died, or your parents are going through something hard. Maybe you feel sad

and you don't even know why. That's okay too.

When you're sad, remember Psalm 34:18: "The LORD is near to the brokenhearted." Your heart can feel broken, like it's been cracked in pieces. And that's exactly when God comes close. He doesn't stay far away until you feel better. He draws near to you in your sadness, just like Jesus did with Mary.

You don't have to hide your tears from God. You can cry to Him, tell Him how much it hurts and ask Him to hold you. He understands. He's cried too.

And if you feel sad for a long time, or if sadness feels too heavy to carry, please tell a parent or another grown-up you trust. God often comforts us through people who love us.

Think about it: Why do you think it matters that Jesus cried, even though He knew Lazarus was about to come back to life?

Try this: If you're sad about something, tell God about it honestly today. You could also write Him a letter. If someone you know is sad, be near them, like Jesus was.

Dear Jesus, thank You that You understand what it's like to be sad. Thank You that You came close to people who were hurting, and You come close to me too. When my heart feels broken, help me remember that You are near. In Your name, Amen.

Day 10 — When Someone Dies

"Brothers, we do not want you to be uninformed about those who sleep in death, so that you will not grieve like the rest, who are without hope. For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, we also believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in Him."
— 1 Thessalonians 4:13–14 (BSB)

This might be a hard day to read. If someone you love has died, whether it was a grandparent, a parent, a friend or someone else, you might want to read it with a grown-up who loves you.

When someone we love dies, it hurts more than almost anything. We miss them. We wish we could talk to them, hug them or hear their voice one more time. Sometimes we feel sad. Sometimes angry. Sometimes numb, or confused, or even guilty. All of those feelings are normal. Feeling them doesn't mean you're doing something wrong. This deep sadness is called **grief**.

The Christians in a town called Thessalonica were grieving too. Some people in their church had died, and they were confused and heartbroken. So Paul wrote to them.

Notice what Paul does *not* say. He doesn't say, "Don't be sad." He says, "we do not want you to grieve **like the rest, who are without hope**."

Christians still grieve. We still cry. But we grieve *with hope*. What's the hope? "Since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, we also believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in Him."

Paul calls death "sleep" for people who trust Jesus. When you go to sleep, you wake up again. For those who belong to Jesus, death isn't the end. Because Jesus rose from the dead, He will raise them too. And one day, everyone who belongs to Jesus will be together with Him, and with each other, forever. A few verses later Paul writes, "And so we will always be with the Lord. Therefore encourage one another with these words" (1 Thessalonians 4:17–18).

Maybe you're not sure whether the person who died knew Jesus. That's a hard question. You can trust God with them. He is always good, always fair and full of love, and He knew them better than anyone.

Grief doesn't go away in a day. It might come in waves for a long time. That's okay. On the hard days, remember: Jesus cried at His friend's tomb. He understands. And He is close to you.

Think about it: What does it mean to grieve "with hope"? How is that different from grieving without hope?

Try this: If someone you love has died, talk to a grown-up about them today. Share a favorite memory. If you know someone else who is grieving, send them a note or a drawing to let them know you care.

Dear God, death is so hard, and it hurts to miss people we love. Thank You that Jesus died and rose again, and that death is not the end for those who belong to Him. Please comfort everyone who is grieving, including me. Help me grieve with hope. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Day 11 — When Home Is Hard

"Though my father and mother forsake me, the LORD will receive me."
— Psalm 27:10 (BSB)

Home is supposed to be a safe, happy place. And for many kids, a lot of the time, it is. But sometimes home is hard.

Maybe your parents argue a lot. Maybe they've divorced, and you go back and forth between two houses. Maybe a parent lives far away, or isn't around anymore. Maybe someone in your family is sick, or there isn't enough money, or someone has lost their job. Maybe there's a lot of yelling. Maybe you just feel like nobody at home really understands you.

If home feels hard right now, here are some things God wants you to know.

First, it's not your fault. When grown-ups have problems, kids sometimes think they caused them. But grown-up problems are grown-up problems. You didn't cause them, and it's not your job to fix them.

Second, God sees you. David wrote today's verse: "Though my father and mother forsake me, the LORD will receive me." *Forsake* means to leave or let down. David was saying: even if the people who are supposed to take care of me let me down, God never will. He will always welcome me.

Earthly parents, even really good ones, are human. They make mistakes. They get tired and stressed. But God is the perfect Father. He never loses His temper unfairly. He never leaves. He never stops loving you. Psalm 68:5

calls God "a father of the fatherless." Whatever is going on at home, you always have a Father in heaven.

Third, you don't have to carry this alone. Tell God how you feel. And talk to a grown-up you trust: a grandparent, a teacher, a pastor, a school counselor or a friend's parent.

And this is very important: if anyone at home, or anywhere else, is hurting you, scaring you or making you feel unsafe, **tell a trusted adult right away.** A teacher or school counselor is a great person to tell. That's not getting anyone in trouble. It's keeping you safe, and that's what God wants.

You are loved. You are seen. And you are never alone.

Think about it: Who are some grown-ups in your life you could talk to if things were hard at home?

Try this: Pray for your family today, by name. If home is hard right now, talk to a trusted grown-up about how you're feeling.

Dear God, thank You that You are the perfect Father, and that You will never leave me or let me down. You see everything that happens in my home. Please help my family. Give me peace, and help me talk to someone I trust when things are hard. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Day 12 — God Works for Good

"And we know that God works all things together for the good of those who love Him, who are called according to His purpose."
— Romans 8:28 (BSB)

Have you ever watched someone bake a cake? If you tasted each ingredient by itself, some would be pretty gross. A spoonful of flour? Dry and yucky. Baking soda? Bitter. A raw egg? No, thanks! But when the baker mixes them all together in just the right way and puts them in the oven, something delicious comes out.

That's a little picture of Romans 8:28.

Notice what this verse does *not* say. It doesn't say that everything that happens is good. Lots of things that happen are bad: sickness, hurtful words, sad goodbyes, unfair treatment. God doesn't pretend those things are good, and neither should we.

What the verse *does* say is that God "works all things together **for** good." God takes everything that happens in the life of someone who loves Him, even the bad and painful things, and He uses it for good. Like a baker mixing ingredients, He can take things that seem terrible on their own and bring something good out of them.

Sometimes you can see the good pretty quickly. Maybe a hard time made you more understanding of other people. Maybe losing a friend led you to a new friend who's even better for you. But sometimes you won't be

able to see the good for a long time, maybe not until heaven. That's when we have to trust.

Look at the first words: "And we **know**." Not "we hope" or "we guess." Paul was sure. How could he be so sure? Because of the cross. The cross was the worst thing that ever happened: the perfect Son of God, killed by cruel people. But God used it for the greatest good ever, saving everyone who believes. If God can bring good out of the cross, He can bring good out of anything.

So when something bad happens, you can be honest about how much it hurts. And you can also hold on to this promise: God isn't finished yet. He's still working.

Think about it: Can you think of a time when something bad happened, but later God brought something good out of it?

Try this: Think of something hard in your life right now. Pray, "God, I don't understand this, but I trust You to work it for good."

Dear God, thank You for the promise that You work all things together for good for those who love You. When hard things happen, help me trust that You are still working, even when I can't see it. I love You, and I trust You. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Day 13 — The Way Out

"No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; He will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, He will also provide an escape, so that you can stand up under it."
— 1 Corinthians 10:13 (BSB)

A **temptation** is a pull toward doing something wrong. It's that little voice that says, *Go ahead, just this once. Nobody will know. It's not a big deal.*

Maybe you're tempted to lie to get out of trouble. To copy someone's homework. To say something mean. To watch something you know you shouldn't. To take something that isn't yours. Everyone gets tempted.

This verse gives us three great truths about temptation.

1. You're not the only one. "No temptation has seized you except what is common to man." When you're tempted, it's easy to think, *I must be the worst person ever. Nobody else struggles like this.* But that's not true! Everyone faces temptation. Even Jesus was tempted. You're not weird, and you're not alone.

2. God is faithful. "He will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear." God is watching over you, and He won't let the temptation get so strong that you have no choice. With His help, you can always say no.

3. There's always a way out. "He will also provide an escape." Think of a building with a big red EXIT sign over the door. When there's a fire,

you look for the exit. God promises that in every temptation, there's an exit sign.

What might the way out look like?

- Walking away from the situation.
- Changing the subject.
- Turning off the screen.
- Saying, "No, I'm not going to do that."
- Calling a parent or friend.
- Saying a quick prayer: "God, help me!"
- Remembering a Bible verse.

The escape is usually there early. The longer you stay near the temptation, the harder it is to leave. So when you feel the pull, look for the exit sign right away, and take it!

And if you do give in, remember: God is still faithful. You can tell Him you're sorry, and He will forgive you.

Think about it: What's a temptation you face often? What could the "way out" look like for you?

Try this: Plan ahead. Write down one temptation you often face, and next to it, write your "exit plan": exactly what you'll do next time.

Dear God, thank You that I'm not the only one who is tempted, and that You are faithful. When I'm tempted, help me see the way out that You provide, and give me the strength to take it quickly. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Day 14 — Joseph Runs

"So how could I do such a great evil and sin against God?"
— Genesis 39:9 (BSB)
"But leaving his cloak in her hand, he escaped and ran outside."
— Genesis 39:12 (BSB)

When Joseph was seventeen, his jealous older brothers sold him as a slave. He was taken far from home to Egypt, where he was bought by an important officer named Potiphar.

It would have been easy for Joseph to become bitter. But the Bible says, "the LORD was with Joseph" (Genesis 39:2). Joseph worked so hard and so honestly that Potiphar put him in charge of his whole household.

But then trouble came. Potiphar's wife kept trying to get Joseph to do something wrong with her, something that would betray his master and sin against God. She asked him day after day.

Joseph said no. Look at his reason: "How could I do such a great evil and sin against God?" Joseph knew that doing wrong wasn't just breaking a rule. It was sinning against God, who loved him and had been so good to him.

One day, when nobody else was in the house, she grabbed Joseph by his cloak. And Joseph did the smartest thing he could have done. He didn't stay and argue. He didn't try to be clever. **He ran.** He ran so fast that he left his cloak behind in her hands!

Sometimes the bravest thing to do with temptation is to run away from it. The Bible even tells young people to "flee" from wrong desires (2 Timothy 2:22). Don't stay close to find out how strong you are. Get out!

That might mean leaving a sleepover when kids start doing something wrong. Closing a website. Walking away from a group that's gossiping. Getting off a game when people start using bad language.

Joseph's story didn't have an easy ending right away. Potiphar's wife lied about him, and Joseph was thrown into prison for something he didn't do! Doing the right thing doesn't always make life easy. But even in prison, "the LORD was with him" (Genesis 39:21). And later, God raised Joseph up to become the second most powerful man in all of Egypt.

Think about it: Why do you think Joseph ran instead of staying to argue? When is running away the best choice?

Try this: Think of a situation where you might need to "run" from temptation. Decide now what you'll do if it happens.

Dear God, thank You for Joseph's example. When I'm tempted, help me remember that sin is against You, who loves me so much. Give me the wisdom and courage to run away from temptation instead of staying close to it. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Day 15 — Don't Be Squeezed

> *"Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what is the good, pleasing, and perfect will of God."*
> *— Romans 12:2 (BSB)*

Have you ever played with modeling clay or cookie dough? If you press it into a mold, it takes the shape of the mold. Squeeze it into a star shape, and it becomes a star. Squeeze it into a heart shape, and it becomes a heart. The dough doesn't get to decide. It just becomes whatever shape it's pressed into.

"Do not be **conformed** to this world." To be conformed means to be squeezed into a shape. Paul is saying: the world around you is trying to squeeze you into its mold. Don't let it!

What does the world's mold look like? It says things like:

- "Everybody's doing it, so it must be okay."
- "You have to wear the right brands to be cool."
- "Being popular is the most important thing."
- "It's fine to make fun of people who are different."
- "Do whatever feels good."
- "God doesn't really matter."

That pressure is called **peer pressure** when it comes from kids your age. It can be really strong. Nobody wants to be the odd one out. It's easy to go along with the crowd, even when you know it's wrong.

But Paul says there's another way: "be **transformed** by the renewing of your mind." *Transformed* is the word we get *metamorphosis* from, like a caterpillar turning into a butterfly. Instead of being squeezed from the outside, you get changed from the inside.

How? By "the renewing of your mind." When you fill your mind with God's Word and spend time with Him, your thinking starts to change. You begin to see things the way God sees them. And then the world's mold doesn't fit you anymore.

This doesn't mean you have to be weird or unfriendly. It means you get your shape from God, not from the crowd. And here's a secret: the kids who stand for what's right, kindly and without bragging, are often the ones others end up respecting most.

Think about it: Where do you feel the most pressure to be like everyone else? What does God say about that area?

Try this: The next time you feel pressure to go along with the crowd, ask yourself, "Is this the world's mold, or God's shape for me?"

Dear God, the world is always trying to squeeze me into its mold. Help me not to be conformed to this world. Change me from the inside out by renewing my mind with Your Word. Give me courage to be the person You made me to be. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Day 16 — Daniel's Decision

"But Daniel made up his mind that he would not defile himself with the king's food or wine. So he asked the chief official for permission not to defile himself."
— Daniel 1:8 (BSB)

When Daniel was a teenager, the powerful king of Babylon attacked Jerusalem. He took many young people from Israel's best families back to Babylon, far from home. Daniel and his three friends were among them.

The king wanted to turn these young people into Babylonians. He gave them new names. He had them study Babylonian language and learning. And he gave them food and wine from his own royal table.

But for Daniel, there was a problem. Eating the king's food would mean breaking God's law. Maybe some of it was food God had told His people not to eat, or maybe it had been offered to false gods. So Daniel had a choice: go along with everyone else, or stay faithful to God.

Look at what the verse says: "Daniel **made up his mind**." Daniel decided ahead of time. He didn't wait until the plate was in front of him and his stomach was growling. He settled it in his heart first.

That's one of the smartest things you can do. Decide *before* the pressure comes. If you wait until someone offers you something wrong, or until everyone's laughing at a mean joke, it's much harder to say no. But if you've already made up your mind, you just stick to your decision.

Notice something else: Daniel was respectful. He didn't throw a fit or insult anyone. He "asked the chief official for permission." He even suggested a test: let us eat only vegetables and water for ten days, and then see how we look.

At the end of ten days, Daniel and his friends looked healthier than everyone who ate the king's food! And God gave them wisdom and understanding. When the king tested them, they were ten times better than all the other wise men in the kingdom.

Daniel was far from home, with no parents around to tell him what to do. But he stayed faithful, because he had made up his mind to follow God.

Think about it: What are some decisions you could make now, before you're in a situation where you'll be pressured?

Try this: Write down three things you've "made up your mind" about, like "I will not cheat" or "I will not make fun of people." Sign your name underneath.

Dear God, thank You for Daniel's example. Help me make up my mind ahead of time to follow You. When I'm far from home or when no one is watching, help me stay faithful. And help me be respectful even when I say no. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Day 17 — Resist

"Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Draw near to God, and He will draw near to you."
— James 4:7–8 (BSB)

The Bible tells us that the devil is real. He is God's enemy, and he wants to pull people away from God. He does it mostly with **lies**: *God doesn't really love you. You're not good enough. That sin isn't a big deal. Nobody will ever find out.*

That might sound scary. But here's the good news: the devil is not as strong as God. Not even close. He's a created being, and Jesus has already defeated him on the cross. And today's verse gives us a clear plan for how to deal with him.

Step 1: Submit to God. To *submit* means to put yourself under someone's authority. It means saying, "God, You're in charge of my life, not me." This comes first. You can't fight the devil in your own strength. But when you're on God's side, you're on the winning team.

Step 2: Resist the devil. To *resist* means to push back, to say no. When the devil whispers a lie, you don't have to believe it. When he tempts you to do wrong, you don't have to go along. Remember how Jesus resisted? He used God's Word: "It is written..."

And look at the promise: "he will flee from you." To *flee* means to run away! Imagine that. When you stand on God's side and say no, the enemy

runs. He's like a bully who backs down when someone stronger shows up. And the One standing with you is the strongest of all.

Step 3: Draw near to God. This is the best part. "Draw near to God, and He will draw near to you." Every step you take toward God, He comes toward you. The closer you are to Him, the safer you are.

Here's a simple way to remember it: **Say yes to God. Say no to the devil. Stay close to Jesus.**

You don't need to be afraid of the devil. You belong to Jesus, and "greater is He who is in you than he who is in the world" (1 John 4:4).

Think about it: What's a lie the devil might whisper to a kid your age? What truth from God's Word answers it?

Try this: Take one step to "draw near to God" today: read a psalm, pray for five minutes, or sing a worship song.

Dear God, I submit to You. You are in charge of my life. Help me resist the devil's lies and temptations. Thank You that he has to flee when I stand with You. I want to draw near to You, and I'm so glad You draw near to me. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Day 18 — Getting Back Up

"For though a righteous man may fall seven times, he still gets up."
— Proverbs 24:16 (BSB)
"Because of the loving devotion of the LORD we are not consumed, for His mercies never fail. They are new every morning; great is Your faithfulness!"
— Lamentations 3:22–23 (BSB)

Have you ever watched a baby learning to walk? They pull themselves up, wobble, take one step, and *plop!* Down they go. Then they get back up. Wobble, step, *plop!* Up again. They fall hundreds of times. But nobody says, "Well, that baby's a failure. Guess they'll never walk." Everyone knows falling is part of learning.

This week, we've talked a lot about temptation and saying no. But what happens when you don't say no? What about when you mess up, again? Maybe even the same thing you've messed up a hundred times?

Look at Proverbs 24:16: "A righteous man may fall seven times." Did you notice? The *righteous* person falls. Even people who love God and try to do right still fall sometimes. What makes them different isn't that they never fall. It's that "**he still gets up**."

When you fall, the devil wants you to stay down. He whispers, *You're hopeless. God is sick of you. You might as well give up.* But those are lies!

Here's the truth from Lamentations: God's "mercies never fail. They are **new every morning**." Every single day, God has a fresh supply of mercy

for you. Yesterday's mistakes don't use up today's mercy. It's like waking up to a brand-new, clean page.

So how do you get back up?

- **Tell God the truth.** Confess what you did. Don't hide it.
- **Receive His forgiveness.** If you belong to Jesus, He forgives you completely. You don't have to earn it back.
- **Make it right.** If you hurt someone, say sorry to them too.
- **Keep going.** Ask God for help, and take the next step.

Remember Peter? He denied Jesus three times. But Jesus forgave him and helped him get back up, and Peter became a great leader in the church.

Falling doesn't make you a failure. Staying down does. And with God's mercy, you never have to stay down.

Think about it: Is there something you keep messing up that makes you feel like giving up? What does Lamentations 3:22–23 say to you?

Try this: Tomorrow morning, as soon as you wake up, say: "Your mercies are new every morning. Great is Your faithfulness!"

Dear God, sometimes I fall, even when I really want to do right. Thank You that Your mercies are new every morning and that You never give up on me. When I fall, help me get back up, receive Your forgiveness and keep going. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Day 19 — The Armor of God

"Finally, be strong in the Lord and in His mighty power. Put on the full armor of God, so that you can make your stand against the devil's schemes."
— Ephesians 6:10–11 (BSB)

When Paul wrote his letter to the Ephesians, he was a prisoner, probably chained to a Roman soldier. Day after day, he could see that soldier's armor up close: the helmet, the shield, the belt, the sword. And God gave Paul an idea. Following Jesus is like being a soldier, and God gives us armor to protect us.

Notice how Paul starts: "Be strong **in the Lord** and in **His** mighty power." Not in your own power. You don't have to be the strongest kid in class to stand firm. Your strength comes from God.

Then Paul explains who the real enemy is. A couple of verses later he says, "our struggle is not against flesh and blood." In other words, the real battle isn't against other people. Even the kid who is mean to you is not your true enemy. The real battle is spiritual, against the devil and his "schemes." A *scheme* is a sneaky plan. The devil doesn't usually attack with a big announcement. He uses tricks, lies and temptations.

That's why we need armor. Would a soldier go into battle in his pajamas? Of course not! He'd put on every piece of his armor. And Paul says to put on "the **full** armor of God." Not just a piece or two. All of it.

Over the next two days, we'll look at each piece:

- The **belt** of truth
- The **breastplate** of righteousness
- The **shoes** of the gospel of peace
- The **shield** of faith
- The **helmet** of salvation
- The **sword** of the Spirit

Here's something amazing: every piece of armor is really a way of describing Jesus and what He gives us. He is the truth. He is our righteousness. He is our peace. He gives us faith and salvation. And He is the Word of God.

So putting on the armor of God really means staying close to Jesus. Some people even pray through the armor every morning, like getting dressed for the day.

Think about it: Why do you think Paul said our real battle is "not against flesh and blood"? How might that change the way you treat people who are unkind to you?

Try this: Draw a soldier in your notebook. Over the next two days, you'll label each piece of armor.

Dear God, thank You for giving me armor to stand strong. Help me be strong in You and in Your mighty power, not my own. Help me remember that my real battle is against the devil's schemes, not against people. Help me put on Your full armor every day. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Day 20 — Belt, Breastplate, Shoes

"Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness arrayed, and with your feet fitted with the readiness of the gospel of peace."
— Ephesians 6:14–15 (BSB)

Today, let's look at the first three pieces of the armor of God.

The belt of truth. A Roman soldier's belt might not seem very exciting. But it was important! It held everything together. His sword hung from it. It kept his clothes from tangling around his legs when he ran. Without the belt, everything else would fall apart.

The belt of **truth** holds our lives together. The devil's main weapon is lies. When you know what's true (who God is, who you are in Christ and what His Word says), his lies can't trip you up. Truth also means being honest yourself. A person who lies is like a soldier whose belt keeps slipping.

The breastplate of righteousness. The breastplate covered a soldier's chest and protected his heart and other important organs. Without it, one arrow could be the end.

Righteousness means being right with God. We can't make ourselves righteous. But when we trust Jesus, He gives us His righteousness, like a breastplate He puts on us. So when the devil says, *You're too bad for God to love,* you can point to your breastplate: *Jesus made me right with God.* And

as we live the right way, doing what's right and honest, the breastplate stays strong.

The shoes of the gospel of peace. Roman soldiers wore sturdy sandals with little spikes on the bottom, a bit like soccer cleats. They helped soldiers stand firm without slipping, and march long distances.

The *gospel* is the good news about Jesus. It gives us **peace** with God. When you know you have peace with God, you can stand firm without slipping, even in scary times. And "readiness" means being ready to go and share that good news with others. Your feet can carry the gospel wherever you walk!

Notice the first words: "Stand firm then." The goal isn't to run away or to win by attacking. It's to **stand**, to hold your ground and not be knocked over.

Think about it: Which of these three pieces do you think you need most right now: truth, righteousness or peace?

Try this: Label the belt, breastplate and shoes on the soldier you drew yesterday. Next to each one, write what it means.

Dear God, thank You for the belt of truth, the breastplate of righteousness and the shoes of the gospel of peace. Help me know Your truth and speak truth. Thank You that Jesus makes me right with You. Help me stand firm in Your peace and be ready to share the good news. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Day 21 — Shield, Helmet, Sword

"In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. And take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God."
— Ephesians 6:16–17 (BSB)

Today we'll look at the last three pieces of the armor of God.

The shield of faith. Roman soldiers carried big, tall shields, almost as tall as a person. Before a battle, they would soak their shields in water. Why? Because enemies shot flaming arrows! When a burning arrow hit a wet shield, the fire went out.

The devil shoots "flaming arrows" at us too. Arrows of doubt: *Does God really care?* Arrows of fear: *Something terrible is going to happen.* Arrows of temptation: *Just do it, it'll be fun.* Arrows of accusation: *You're worthless.*

Faith is our shield. Faith means trusting God and believing what He says. When a flaming arrow comes, you hold up your shield: *I trust God. I believe His promises.* And the fire goes out.

The helmet of salvation. A helmet protects your head, and your head is where your thoughts are. The devil loves to attack our thoughts. The helmet of **salvation** reminds us that we belong to Jesus. We are saved, forgiven and safe in Him forever. When you know that, it protects your mind from fear and doubt.

The sword of the Spirit. This is the only piece of armor that's for attacking, not just defending. And Paul tells us exactly what it is: "the

sword of the Spirit, which is **the word of God**."

Remember when Jesus was tempted in the wilderness? Every time the devil tempted Him, Jesus answered with Scripture: "It is written..." That's using the sword of the Spirit! The more Bible verses you know, the sharper your sword is.

And right after the armor, Paul adds one more thing: "Pray in the Spirit at all times" (Ephesians 6:18). Prayer is how a soldier stays in touch with his commander. It's like the radio that connects you to headquarters.

Now your armor is complete! Belt, breastplate, shoes, shield, helmet and sword, plus prayer to keep you connected to God.

Think about it: What "flaming arrows" does the devil shoot at kids your age? How could the shield of faith put them out?

Try this: Finish labeling your soldier. Then, tomorrow morning, "put on" each piece of armor in prayer as you get dressed.

Dear God, thank You for the shield of faith, the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, Your Word. Help me hold up my shield when the devil attacks, protect my mind with the truth that I'm saved, and learn Your Word so I can use it. Help me pray at all times. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Day 22 — Even If He Doesn't

"If the God whom we serve exists, then He is able to deliver us from the blazing fiery furnace and from your hand, O king. But even if He does not, let it be known to you, O king, that we will not serve your gods or worship the golden statue you have set up."
— Daniel 3:17–18 (BSB)

Remember Daniel's three friends? Their names were Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego. They had been taken to Babylon with Daniel, and they served God there faithfully.

One day, King Nebuchadnezzar built an enormous golden statue, ninety feet tall. He gathered all the important people in his kingdom and announced: "When you hear the music play, bow down and worship the statue. Anyone who doesn't will be thrown into a blazing furnace!"

The music played. Thousands of people fell on their faces. But three young men stayed standing.

The king was furious. He gave them one more chance. "If you don't bow down, you'll be thrown into the furnace immediately. Then what god will be able to rescue you?"

And the three friends gave one of the bravest answers in the whole Bible. They said, in effect, *Our God is able to rescue us. But even if He doesn't, we still won't bow down.*

Do you see how amazing that is? Their faith didn't depend on God doing what they wanted. They trusted God enough to obey Him even if

things didn't turn out the way they hoped.

The king was so angry that he ordered the furnace heated seven times hotter than usual. The three friends were tied up and thrown in. The fire was so hot that it killed the soldiers who threw them in!

But then the king jumped up in shock. "Look! I see four men, unbound and unharmed, walking around in the fire!" Someone had joined them in the flames. God had been with them the whole time.

When they came out, not a hair on their heads was burned. They didn't even smell like smoke!

Sometimes God rescues us *from* the fire. Sometimes He walks with us *through* the fire. Either way, He's there. And real faith says, "I'll follow God no matter what."

Think about it: What's the difference between trusting God only when He does what you want and trusting Him "even if He doesn't"?

Try this: Think about something you're praying for. Add these words to your prayer today: "But even if You don't, I will still trust You."

Dear God, I know You are able to do anything. I pray that You will help me with [tell Him]. But even if You don't do it the way I want, I will still trust You and follow You. Thank You that You are with me in every fire. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Day 23 — Daniel Kept Praying

"Now when Daniel learned that the document had been signed, he went into his house, where the windows of his upper room opened toward Jerusalem, and three times a day he got down on his knees, prayed, and gave thanks to his God, just as he had done before."
— Daniel 6:10 (BSB)

Many years had passed since Daniel first came to Babylon. Now he was an old man, and a new king named Darius was on the throne. Daniel did such an excellent job that the king planned to put him in charge of the whole kingdom.

But some of the other officials were jealous. They wanted to get rid of Daniel. They watched him closely, looking for anything he did wrong, but they couldn't find anything. Daniel was honest and faithful in everything.

So they came up with a sneaky plan. They said, "The only way we'll catch him is through his faithfulness to his God." They tricked King Darius into signing a new law: For thirty days, nobody could pray to any god or person except the king. Anyone who disobeyed would be thrown into a den of lions!

What did Daniel do when he heard about the law? Look at the verse. He went home, knelt by his window facing Jerusalem, and prayed and gave thanks to God three times a day, "**just as he had done before**."

He didn't hide. He didn't stop. He didn't even change his schedule. He kept doing what he'd always done.

Why could Daniel be so brave in that moment? Because he had been praying three times a day for years. His habit of prayer had built something strong inside him. When the big test came, he didn't have to find courage all of a sudden. His faith had been growing strong, day after day, prayer after prayer.

Daniel's enemies caught him, and he was thrown into the lions' den. But God sent an angel to shut the lions' mouths. The next morning, Daniel came out without a scratch!

Here's the lesson: the habits you build now will hold you up later. If you get into the habit of praying and reading God's Word every day, you'll be ready when hard times come. Courage in big moments comes from faithfulness in small ones.

Think about it: What spiritual habits are you building right now? Are they strong enough to hold you up in a hard time?

Try this: Pick a set time each day to pray, like when you wake up, after school and before bed. Try Daniel's "three times a day" for the next week.

Dear God, thank You for Daniel's faithfulness. Help me build strong habits of prayer and reading Your Word now, so that I'll be ready when hard times come. Make me faithful in small things, so I can be brave in big things. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Day 24 — Not Ashamed

"I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, first to the Jew, then to the Greek."
— Romans 1:16 (BSB)

Esther was a young Jewish woman who became queen of Persia. But nobody in the palace knew she was Jewish. She had kept it a secret.

Then a wicked man named Haman convinced the king to sign a law to destroy all the Jewish people in the kingdom. Esther's cousin Mordecai begged her to go to the king and plead for her people. But there was a problem: anyone who went to the king without being invited could be put to death!

Esther had a choice. She could keep quiet and stay safe. Or she could stand up, tell the king who she really was, and risk everything.

She asked all the Jewish people to pray and fast for her for three days. Then she said, "I will go to the king, even though it is against the law. And if I perish, I perish!" (Esther 4:16).

Esther went to the king. He welcomed her, and God used her courage to save her people.

Being known as a follower of Jesus can feel a little scary sometimes too. Maybe you're afraid kids at school will laugh if they find out you go to church. Maybe you feel awkward praying before lunch in the cafeteria. Maybe someone says something bad about God, and you're not sure whether to speak up.

Paul faced people who laughed at him, beat him and threw him in jail for talking about Jesus. But he said, "I am **not ashamed** of the gospel." Why? "Because it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes." The good news about Jesus isn't something embarrassing. It's the most powerful, life-changing message in the world!

Being "not ashamed" doesn't mean you have to preach on the playground or argue with everyone. It means you don't hide who you belong to. You might:

- Say, "Yes, I'm a Christian," when someone asks.
- Pray before you eat, even when others can see.
- Invite a friend to church or youth group.
- Kindly say, "I don't do that," when others are doing something wrong.

Jesus said that whoever acknowledges Him before others, He will acknowledge before His Father in heaven (Matthew 10:32). He's never ashamed of you.

Think about it: When do you find it hardest to let people know you follow Jesus? Why?

Try this: Do one small thing today that shows you're not ashamed of Jesus, like praying before lunch, wearing something that shows your faith, or inviting a friend to church.

Dear Jesus, You are never ashamed of me. Help me not to be ashamed of You. Give me the courage Esther had, to stand up for what's right and be known as Your follower. Thank You that the good news about You is the power of God. In Your name, Amen.

Day 25 — It's Not Fair

"As for you, what you intended against me for evil, God intended for good, in order to accomplish a day like this—to preserve the lives of many people."
— Genesis 50:20 (BSB)

"It's not fair!" Have you ever said that? Probably! Maybe your sibling got something you didn't. Maybe you got blamed for something you didn't do. Maybe a teacher, a coach or a friend treated you unfairly.

Joseph could have said "It's not fair!" more than anyone.

His brothers were jealous of him, so they threw him into a pit and sold him as a slave. **Not fair.** In Egypt, he worked hard and honestly, and then he was falsely accused and thrown into prison. **Not fair.** In prison, he helped a man named the cupbearer, who promised to remember him when he got out. But the cupbearer forgot about him for two whole years. **Not fair!**

Joseph spent about thirteen years as a slave and a prisoner, for things he didn't deserve.

But God hadn't forgotten Joseph. At just the right time, Pharaoh had a dream that no one could explain. The cupbearer finally remembered Joseph. God gave Joseph the meaning of the dream: seven years of plenty would be followed by seven years of terrible famine. Pharaoh was so impressed that he put Joseph in charge of all of Egypt, to store up food for the hard years ahead.

When the famine came, guess who showed up asking for food? Joseph's brothers! They didn't recognize him. They were terrified when they found out who he was. They thought he would get revenge.

But Joseph said today's verse: "What you intended against me for evil, **God intended for good**." Because Joseph was in Egypt, he was able to save many lives, including his own family's.

Joseph's story teaches us something important. Unfair things really do happen, and they really do hurt. God doesn't pretend they're good. But God can take even the most unfair things and weave them into something good.

Joseph also chose to forgive his brothers. That might be the most amazing part of the story. He trusted God so much that he didn't need revenge.

Think about it: Can you think of something unfair that happened to you? Is there someone you need to forgive?

Try this: Read the end of Joseph's story in Genesis 45:1–15. Notice how Joseph treats his brothers.

Dear God, sometimes life isn't fair, and it hurts. Thank You that You can take even unfair things and use them for good, like You did for Joseph. Help me trust You when things aren't fair, and help me forgive people who have hurt me. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Day 26 — Higher Ways

"'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 My ways are higher than your ways and My thoughts than your thoughts.'"
— Isaiah 55:8–9 (BSB)

Have you ever prayed and prayed for something, and God didn't do it? Maybe you prayed for someone to get better, and they didn't. Maybe you prayed that your family wouldn't have to move, and you moved anyway. Maybe you prayed for something really good, and nothing seemed to happen.

That can be confusing. It can even make you wonder, *Does God really hear me? Does He care?*

God does hear. And He does care. But today's verse reminds us of something important: God doesn't think the way we think. "My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways."

Think about the sky. How high is it? Go outside and look up. Then think about the stars, trillions of miles away. The sky is so high that no one could ever reach the top. God says His ways are higher than ours by **that much**.

Imagine a toddler who wants to play with a sharp knife. When his mom says no, he screams and cries. He doesn't understand! To him, it looks like

his mom is being mean. But his mom sees what he can't see. She says no because she loves him.

We're a little like that toddler. We see only a tiny part of the picture. God sees everything: the past, the present and the future. He knows what's truly good for us, and He knows how everything fits together. Sometimes His "no" or "not yet" comes from love we can't understand yet.

That doesn't mean it's wrong to be disappointed or confused. You can tell God exactly how you feel. The Bible is full of people who asked God, "Why?" But in the end, faith means trusting God's heart even when you can't understand His ways.

One day, maybe not until heaven, you'll see the whole picture. And you'll see that God was good the whole time.

Think about it: Have you ever prayed for something that God didn't give you? How does Isaiah 55:8–9 help?

Try this: Go outside and look up at the sky for a minute. Remind yourself: "God's ways are higher than my ways."

Dear God, sometimes I don't understand why You do what You do, or why You don't answer my prayers the way I want. Help me trust You even when I don't understand. Thank You that Your ways are higher than mine, and that You always know what's best. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Day 27 — Wings Like Eagles

"But those who wait upon the LORD will renew their strength; they will mount up with wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not faint."
— Isaiah 40:31 (BSB)

Have you ever watched an eagle fly? Most birds have to flap and flap their wings to stay in the air. But eagles can soar high in the sky, sometimes for a long time, barely moving their wings at all. How? They find rising currents of warm air, called *thermals*, and let the air carry them up and up. They don't have to work hard. They just spread their wings and rest on the wind.

Isaiah says people who trust God are like that.

Sometimes you feel tired. Not just sleepy tired, but tired inside. Tired of trying hard. Tired of a situation that never seems to change. Tired of being brave. Maybe you're tired of a problem at school, or a hard time at home, or a sickness that won't go away.

Isaiah wrote to people who felt exactly like that. God's people had been through a long, hard time, and they were worn out. So God gave them this promise.

Look at who gets the strength: "those who **wait upon the LORD**." To wait on the Lord means to trust Him, depend on Him and look to Him for help, instead of trying to do everything in your own strength. It's like the eagle spreading its wings and letting the wind carry it.

And look at what God promises:

- **"They will renew their strength."** God gives fresh energy, like recharging a battery.
- **"They will mount up with wings like eagles."** Sometimes God lifts you high above your problems.
- **"They will run and not grow weary."** Sometimes He gives you strength to keep going fast.
- **"They will walk and not faint."** And sometimes, on the hardest days, He gives you just enough strength to take the next step.

All three are gifts from God. Some days you'll soar. Some days you'll run. And some days you'll just walk, one step at a time. But God promises you won't faint.

Think about it: Is there something in your life right now that's making you feel tired inside?

Try this: Take a few quiet minutes today to "wait on the Lord." Sit still, tell God you're tired and ask Him to renew your strength.

Dear God, sometimes I feel tired and worn out. Thank You for promising to renew my strength when I wait on You. Help me stop trying to do everything on my own and rest in You, like an eagle resting on the wind. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Day 28 — Strong When Weak

"But He said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for My power is perfected in weakness.' Therefore I will boast all the more gladly in my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest on me."
— 2 Corinthians 12:9 (BSB)

The apostle Paul had a problem. He called it a "thorn in the flesh." We don't know exactly what it was. It may have been a sickness or a pain that wouldn't go away. Whatever it was, it hurt, and it made his life harder.

So Paul prayed. He asked God to take it away. Three times, he begged God to remove it.

And God said no.

But God didn't just say no. He gave Paul something better than what he asked for. He said, "My grace is **sufficient** for you, for My power is perfected in weakness."

Sufficient means "enough." God was saying, *Paul, you don't need this problem to go away. You need Me, and I am enough.*

Then God said something surprising: "My power is perfected in weakness." In other words, God's strength shows up best when we're weak.

Think about it this way. If a strong weightlifter lifts a heavy box, nobody is surprised. But if a tiny child lifts a car, everyone would know something amazing was going on! When we're weak and God helps us anyway, it's obvious that the strength came from Him.

We usually try to hide our weaknesses. We don't want anyone to know we're struggling, that we're scared, that something is hard for us. But Paul said, "I will boast all the more gladly in my weaknesses." He wasn't embarrassed anymore, because his weakness was where he saw God's power the most.

What are your weaknesses? Maybe reading is hard for you. Maybe you have a health problem. Maybe you get nervous around people. Maybe there's a sin you keep struggling with. God doesn't love you any less because of your weaknesses. And He can use them to show His power.

You don't have to be strong enough. God's grace is enough.

Think about it: What's a weakness or struggle in your life that you wish God would take away? What might God want to show you through it?

Try this: Write down a weakness you have. Next to it, write: "God's grace is enough for me."

Dear God, thank You that Your grace is enough for me. I don't have to be strong enough, because You are strong. When I feel weak, help me lean on You instead of hiding it. Show Your power through my weaknesses. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Day 29 — Nothing Can Separate Us

"For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor principalities, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord."
— Romans 8:38–39 (BSB)

What's the scariest thing you can imagine? Now here's the good news: **it can't separate you from God's love.**

Paul wrote these words to Christians in Rome. Some of them would soon face terrible persecution for following Jesus. Paul himself had been beaten, shipwrecked, thrown in prison and chased from town to town. He knew about hard times. And he asked a question: "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or distress or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword?" (Romans 8:35).

Then he answered with one of the most powerful lists in the Bible. Look at all the things that **cannot** separate you from God's love:

- **Death or life.** Nothing in life, and not even death itself.
- **Angels or principalities.** No spiritual power, not even the devil.
- **The present or the future.** Nothing happening right now, and nothing that could ever happen.
- **Any powers.** No person, government or force in the world.
- **Height or depth.** Nothing up high or down low.

- **Anything else in all creation.** In case Paul missed anything, this covers it!

Paul said he was "**convinced**." He was absolutely sure.

Think about all the storms we've talked about this month: fear, worry, sadness, death, hard things at home, temptation, unfair treatment, weakness. Not one of them can separate you from God's love. Not a bad grade. Not a mistake you made. Not a bully. Not a sickness. Not moving to a new place. Nothing.

A few verses earlier, Paul wrote, "in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us" (Romans 8:37). Not because we're strong, but because of Him who loves us.

The storm might rage. The waves might crash. But the love of God that is in Christ Jesus is like an unbreakable rope that holds you tight. And it will never, ever let you go.

Think about it: What's something you've worried might separate you from God's love? What does this verse say about it?

Try this: Write Romans 8:38–39 on a card, and add your own "neither...nor..." to the list, like "neither a bad day nor my mistakes." Keep it somewhere you'll see it often.

Dear God, thank You that nothing in all creation can separate me from Your love. Not death, not life, not the present or the future, not anything. When storms come, help me remember that Your love holds me tight and will never let me go. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Day 30 — An Anchor for the Soul

"We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure."
— Hebrews 6:19 (BSB)

Have you ever seen a big ship's anchor? It's a heavy iron hook attached to the ship by a strong chain. When the sailors drop it, it sinks all the way to the bottom of the sea and digs into the ground.

Why do ships need anchors? Because without one, the wind and waves would push the ship all over the place. In a storm, a ship without an anchor could be smashed against the rocks. But a ship with a good anchor stays put. The waves still crash. The wind still blows. The ship still rocks up and down. But it doesn't drift away.

The Bible says we have an "anchor for the soul." What is it? **Hope**.

Not "hope" like "I hope it doesn't rain tomorrow," which just means wishing. Bible hope is much stronger than that. It means being certain about something that hasn't happened yet, because God promised it.

And where is our anchor fixed? The verses around today's verse tell us: in Jesus Himself, who has gone ahead of us into God's presence. Our anchor isn't dug into our own feelings, or into how well things are going. It's dug into Jesus, who is alive, who never changes and who has promised never to leave us.

That's why our hope is "**firm and secure**." The storms can't pull it loose, because it's holding on to someone who can't be moved.

Look back at this month. You've learned that storms come to everyone. You've learned what to do when you're afraid and when you're worried or sad. You've learned how to face temptation and get back up when you fall. You've put on the armor of God and seen the courage of David, Joseph, Daniel, his three friends and Esther. And you've learned that when life isn't fair and you feel weak, God is still working, and nothing can separate you from His love.

All of it comes down to this: your hope is anchored in Jesus. And He will hold you steady, no matter how wild the storm.

Think about it: Which day in this book helped you most? What verse will you hold on to the next time a storm comes?

Try this: Draw an anchor in your notebook. Inside it, write your favorite verse from this book. Look at it whenever you need hope.

Dear Jesus, thank You that my hope is anchored in You. When storms come, hold me steady. When I'm afraid, sad, tempted or weak, remind me that You are with me and nothing can separate me from Your love. Keep my anchor firm and secure in You. In Your name, Amen.

Conclusion: Standing Strong

You did it! Thirty days of learning how to stand strong in the storms of life.

Think back over everything you've learned. You started with the wise builder who built his house on the rock, and you learned that storms come to everyone. What matters is the foundation.

You learned what to do when you're afraid: put your trust in God, remember your Shepherd, be strong and courageous, and face your giants like David did. You learned to cast your worries on God, to pray instead of worry, and that it's okay to be sad, because Jesus cried too. You learned that we grieve with hope, that God is a Father who never leaves, and that He works all things for good.

You learned how to face temptation: look for the way out, run like Joseph, refuse to be squeezed into the world's mold, make up your mind like Daniel, resist the devil and get back up when you fall. You put on the armor of God. You saw three young men stand in the fire, and Daniel keep praying when it was dangerous, and Esther risk everything to do what was right.

And you learned that when life isn't fair, when prayers don't turn out the way you hoped, and when you feel tired and weak, God's ways are higher, His grace is enough, and nothing can separate you from His love.

That's a strong foundation!

If you haven't trusted Jesus yet

The best foundation of all is Jesus Himself. If you haven't trusted Him yet, you can today. He died on the cross to pay for your sins and rose again, and He offers you forgiveness and a hope that will never let you go. You can pray something like this:

Dear Jesus, I know I have sinned, and I need You. I believe You died for me and rose again. I trust You as my Savior, and I want to follow You as my Lord. Please be my Rock and my anchor. Thank You for loving me. Amen.

If you prayed that, tell a parent, a pastor or another Christian you trust, so they can celebrate with you and help you grow.

What's next

A tree with strong roots and a sturdy trunk doesn't just stand there. It spreads out its branches and gives shade to others.

In **Book 5**, you'll learn how God's love reaches out through you: loving your family, being a true friend, forgiving people who hurt you, being part of God's family at church, and caring about people all over the world. You'll learn that the greatest commandments are to love God and love your neighbor.

Until then, keep building on the Rock. Keep your anchor in Jesus. And remember: no storm is bigger than your God.

> *"But the Lord is faithful, and He will strengthen you and guard you from the evil one."*
> *— 2 Thessalonians 3:3 (BSB)*

© Ochorus. An Ochorus Original, written for young readers, free to read and share. Scripture quotations are from the Berean Standard Bible (BSB), which is in the public domain.

This edition was prepared by Ochorus, a free library of Christian classics.

Read it online, free, at https://ochorus.com/books/rooted-4/

More free classics at ochorus.com