



the
answers
to
your
deepest
longings

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Dear friend,

I remember the day I closed my eyes as tears fell, and I whispered, "God, please either take this longing of my heart away or show me Your answer. I just don't think I can keep hoping for what no longer seems possible."

If you've ever prayed a similar prayer, I want you to know you're not alone. Unmet expectations and longings are tough on the human heart. Especially when what we keep praying for is a good thing ... a reasonable request ... something we see God blessing others with.

And it's at this exact point of desperation that our lives can go in one of two directions. We can press into God and learn to trust Him more fully, or we can give in to the enemy and fall for temptations that will leave us even more empty. If he can get our attention with temptations that falsely promise to ease the ache of an unmet longing, then he can start to fool us with his deceptions. But remember, his ultimate goal isn't to comfort us ... it's to crush us with his accusations.

This is how he works. Tempt. Deceive. Accuse.

He used this method on Eve in the garden. (Genesis 3:6) He tried to use it on Jesus at the end of His 40-day fast in the desert. (Matthew 4:1-11) And it's the same method we are warned about near the end of the Bible in 1 John 2:15-17:

"Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, love for the Father is not in them. For everything in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—comes not from the Father but from the world. The world and its desires pass away, but whoever does the will of God lives forever" (NIV).

What does this look like for us today?

Lust of the flesh

God's not going to provide what I need. I need to take this into my own hands. I need to maintain control.

Lust of the eyes

God won't give me what I desire. I'm not satisfied with the things God has given me.

Pride of life/Wanting to appear important

God won't give me what I deserve. I'm going to grasp for it myself.

What our souls are *truly* longing for, though, is more of God. His best is the only source of true satisfaction. He is the only answer to our every desire. He holds all the answers to all our disappointments and will direct our desires in His way, in His will and in His timing. He's got a good plan for good things.

That's why it feels so imperative that we do this study together. For the next 40 days, we'll be feasting on the very thing Jesus used to defeat the enemy at the end of His 40 days of fasting — the Word of God. Eve's dialogue with Satan allowed him to weave his tangled web of justifications. Jesus, on the other hand, shut Satan down with the truth of God.

We don't have to be held hostage by Satan, friend. We are onto him and his schemes. And the enemy's power is nothing compared to the freeing promises of God.

We're in this together,

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Longing

We all long for something or someone. A longing, or a yearning desire, is one of the great shared human realities. Yet, at times we overlook those longings because they're unseen and invisible. It's easy for us to get into a habit of doing, acting, talking and living out of rhythms and routines and overlook that there is something underneath that is driving us. The driving force is longing.

Our longings produce an ache within us, and the enemy loves to use our aches to tempt us to turn away from God and ultimately turn inward to satisfy our longings. Turning inward tempts us to look to things like food, money and success for our satisfaction. But these things, void of God, will leave us restless. James wrote, "But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire. Then desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin, and sin when it is fully grown brings forth death" (James 1:14-15).

Scholar, pastor, theologian and church father St. Augustine said, "Our hearts are restless, until they rest in You."[1] Augustine points out a deep truth in the opening pages of Scripture: God created humanity with a longing to love. (Genesis 1-2) There is a spiritual and physical reality to our longing and we see it play out in the human heart.

God designed the human heart to pump blood to our physical body for survival. We

need the blood the heart pumps through our bodies in order to work and function the way God intended. In a similar way, the heart spiritually pumps out love. Before the fall, God designed the human heart to pump love and the object of that love was God Himself. God designed us to pump and pour out love from our hearts onto Him. This is worship. However, at the Fall, something went tragically wrong. It's not that the heart ceased pumping love, because we were created with that basic foundational longing to love. Rather, sin damaged our heart, knocking it off kilter, redirecting its love toward objects that promise a sufficient love but only deliver bondage and enslavement instead. Revelation 18:14 describes this damaged longing: "The fruit for which your soul longed has gone from you, and all your delicacies and your splendors are lost to you, never to be found again!"

Friends, this kind of longing produces an unending restlessness. We are desperate for satisfaction, yet we are left in an endless cycle of seeking and searching. What's worse is the only thing waiting for us at the end of this longing is loss. However, this does not and should not be our story. The only rest we will find is when our "heart-pumps" realign to the source of true satisfaction that leads to salvation – God Himself. First Peter 2:2 captured this powerfully by saying: "Like newborn infants, long for the pure spiritual milk, that by it you may grow up into salvation."

The one true Source to experience this type of satisfaction is found in and through Jesus Christ. Jesus says, "Do not work for the food that perishes, but for the food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give to you. For on him God the Father has set his seal" (John 6:27).

As we journey through the storyline of Scripture in 40 days, we find deeply rooted into the sentences, verses, chapters and books of the Scriptures the reality of longing fleshed out in very specific ways. Humanity essentially longs for eight things that we will discuss each week:

Week 1 Purpose

Week 2 Freedom

Week 3 Security

Week 4 Rescue

Week 5 Redemption

Week 6 Fulfillment

Week 7 Identity

Week 8 Christ's Return

To fulfill our longings, we often look to what my friend Lysa TerKeurst, in her book *It's Not Supposed to be This Way,* refers to as "lesser loves." The pages of Scripture are filled with examples of humanity's feeble attempts to find satisfaction through the pursuit of these eight longings. Longings are not bad in and of themselves, and they are not wrong! However, they can only be truly beneficial when we experience them in and through Christ. As we go through the Bible in 40 days, we will witness both the devastation and great joy of longing.

Most importantly, we will discover that our longing will find its true rest and satisfaction in Jesus.

longing for week one

Take a moment and recall the first time someone asked you, "What do you want to be when you grow up?"

How old were you? How did you answer that question? Why did you answer the way you did? The answer is directly connected to how we try to find our place in this world. Figuring out our place comes from understanding our purpose. Purpose. We long for purpose because God created us for a purpose. Wrapped up in that purpose is the biblical truth that our purpose involves dignity and destiny.

Genesis 1:26-27 reminds us that humanity is made in the likeness and image of God. God graciously bestowed the mark of His image upon His children. This image gives us a status that cannot be taken away and a dignity unlike any other created thing. With this dignity in mind, we are set up to work out God's purpose for our lives. We find the first commission God gave to Adam and Eve in Genesis 1:28, where God gives humanity dominion over the earth and commands them to be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth with image bearers of God. Here we have the foundations of the intended purpose of God for mankind. God intended for His people to be faithful representations of God on the earth and spread His glory from Eden to the ends of the earth. Therefore, humanity's purpose is intrinsically tied to the work and will of God.

In Genesis 3, the Fall disrupts God's intended purpose for humanity but does not destroy it. We now live in the tension between the purpose of God and the purpose of man. Proverbs 19:21 captures not only the tension but the outcomes: "Many are the plans in the mind of a man, but it is the purpose of the LORD that will stand." One of the most important decisions we must make — that is not a one-and-done but a continual intentional decision — is to follow the purpose of God. Sin tempts us to follow our thoughts, intentions and longings for our own purposes, and the fruit of this can tragically result in idolatry.

This week, we will explore the intersection of God's purpose and the purpose of man, beginning with Adam and Eve and wrapping up with Abraham. We will see the great blessing and joy that comes from obedience and submitting to the purpose of God. We will also see the utter destruction that takes place when humanity attempts to exert their own purpose, ignoring and rejecting the purpose of God.

Creation

God in His grace created a good world.

"And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good..."

GENESIS 1:31

In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. In the beginning, God created everything good. God spoke and transformed formless and empty into light and order. There was no chaos. No evil. Even the darkness of the night had a good purpose to bless and sustain life.

God called His creative work "good" on each day except for the sixth day. On that day, He described his work differently because God created something very special on this day.

01 Who does God create? (Genesis 1:27)

What words did God speak in Genesis 1:26-27? What does it mean to you that you've been made in the image of God?

03	Why do you think God calls His creation "very good" instead of "good"? (Genesis 1:	:31)
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Genesis 2 gives more specificity on who God created on the sixth day.

Read Genesis 2:18 and 21-22. Who else does God create? Circle or write down how many times you see the word "good" in Chapter 2.

As we consider the word "longing," what did God identify as lacking in Adam's life? (Genesis 2:18) Who fulfilled that longing? (Genesis 2:21-23) While this is a picture of marriage, it also shows that God has designed humanity for fellowship with one another. Describe a friend or family member for whom you are grateful.

06

It's important that we understand "good" to mean more than simply beautiful or well-made. Read Ecclesiastes 7:29. Identify another word that speaks of God's creation and relates to the word "good." What does this teach about how God made mankind?

Tucked in this wonderful, creative work of God, we find a great promise. We find the hope that God has a plan bigger than what we see in the hard places in our lives. Bigger than the mess in which we may find ourselves. These places and messes may frighten, unsettle and confuse us, even lead us to feelings of fear, anxiety and hopelessness. But God. The creation account brings hope. Creation shows us God is an expert at beginnings. Good beginnings. Because of this, we can trust Him when circumstances arise that we may not understand or may question. We can trust Him when He creates or allows circumstances that lead us out of what feels safe and comfortable.

God has not changed since Genesis 1. Scripture tells us He is never-changing. (Malachi 3:6; Hebrews 13:8) The God of Genesis 1 is the God of today and the God of forever. Just as He did during Creation, He is able to bring good to all things. He is able to bring order and beauty in ways that bring hope and confidence.

07

One more question to take us a bit deeper. Did you know the Son of God took part in creation? Read John 1:3 and Colossians 1:16 and reflect on what it means to you that God the Son made the world!

The Fall (Adam and Eve)

Adam and Eve had longings that they tried to fulfill outside of God's design.

"So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate."

GENESIS 3:6

Chapter 2 ends with Adam and Eve naked without shame. Completely comfortable and vulnerable in who they are with God and with each other. No need to hide anything. No doubt, insecurity, unworthiness, fear, anxiety or regret. They knew their Creator loved them. He surrounded them with peace, pleasure and purpose. Absolute perfection.

Enter the enemy, who spoke four words that stole it all away. "Did God actually say ...?" (Genesis 3:1) Words intended to lure God's children away from their Creator. To separate them from the One in whom they found love and purpose. The One who held their destiny in His hands.

OI Name three things Eve longed for that she reasoned the forbidden fruit would fulfill. (Genesis 3:6)

In what ways do we long for these things today? How might God Himself actually fulfill all of these things in the truest sense? (See for example John 4:34; Proverbs 23:26; Proverbs 2:6)

Even though Eve ate first, Scripture says Adam "was with her," (Genesis 3:6) and 1 Timothy 2:14 says he "was not deceived." What should Adam have done?

Satan made into a burden what God spoke as a blessing. Have you heard those lies before? Words intended to deceive you, to turn your heart from the very One who lovingly and intentionally formed and created you and knows you by name? I know I have.

Adam and Eve's choice to believe the enemy over God cut them off from intimate fellowship with God and from God's best gift of all: life forever with Him.

God told Adam and Eve that if they ate the fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, they would "surely die" (Genesis 2:17). The serpent said they would not die. (Genesis 3:4) What are two ways in which Adam and Eve died? (Genesis 3:19; Romans 5:12)

They no longer lived, enjoyed and worked in the safe, beautiful, fruitful garden. God sent them away into a dry, unfruitful land that required sweat and hard work to bear any kind of fruit.

The end of perfection in the Garden of Eden came when Adam and Eve chose to sin. The devil, the liar and father of lies, enticed them away from God's beautiful plan for them. Adam and Eve failed to recognize the work of the enemy.

The good news tucked into this account is that even in the midst of Adam and Eve's bad choices, God is in control. God is greater, stronger and wiser than Satan. God is the Creator; Satan is only a created one. This good news carries forward to God's children today.

In all of this sin, deception and corruption, we find a glimmer of hope in Genesis 3. What does God say man will do to the serpent? (Genesis 3:15) How is this fulfilled in Romans 16:20?

More good news comes in the New Testament. First John 4:4 gives us a great truth to stand on in our battles, "Little children, you are from God and have overcome them, for he who is in you is greater than he who is in the world." Satan and God are not equal. God is all-knowing and all-powerful. Satan is not.

Thankfully, God has made it easier to recognize the enemy at work in our midst. He has given us His written Word that identifies the evil one and outlines his schemes and tactics. This is good news because now we can be on the alert. We know how to recognize him. We won't be caught off guard as Adam and Eve were. Friend, thank God today for the gift of God's Word. Treasure it. Read it. Study it. Pray through it so that the enemy will never have the advantage.

Noah and the Flood

God flooded the world, but Noah and his family found favor with God.

"But Noah found favor in the eyes of the Lord."
GENESIS 6:8

Now we meet another of God's created ones. His name is Noah. Noah's godly life stood in stark contrast to the wickedness and evil on display in the lives of the people around him. God's Word tells us "Noah was a righteous man;" "blameless;" and that he "walked with God" (Genesis 6:9).

OI Read Genesis 6:5 and write your observations about the thoughts and intentions of mankind's heart during that time.

Noah stood apart. He was different, and his faithful obedience left a mark that will forever sit in the pages of Scripture, etched into God's Story.

We can presume the people mocked Noah as he built this giant boat, explaining that it was because a great flood was coming from the earth and the sky. It probably seemed even more ridiculous because some scholars believe it had never rained on earth before that day. (Genesis 2:4-6; Hebrews 11:7)

It is so much easier to go with the flow. To not rock the boat. To fit in. To follow the crowd.

But, that's not God's way. God commands us to not conform to the pattern of this world. He calls us to be transformed by the renewing of our mind. And we renew our minds through His living and active Word. (Romans 12:2)

Noah did not conform. He allowed His mind to be transformed through God's Word. He heard. He listened. He believed and He obeyed. What about us? What will we choose?

But, Noah was not perfect.

Read Genesis 9:21-25. What happened to show Noah was not perfect? No one is without sin — not even God's best leaders, patriarchs, kings or prophets, (1 John 1:8) and no one does good all of the time. (Ecclesiastes 7:20) Jesus stated that no one is good except God alone. (Mark 10:18) God saw everything and knew everything about Noah, yet what did Noah find in the eyes of the Lord? (Genesis 6:8)

The word "favor" in Genesis 6:8 can also be translated "grace." Write your thoughts here about God's tremendous grace toward Noah and his family. How have you experienced this in your own life?

The Tower of Babel

Mankind tried to glorify themselves with a tower but God dispersed them throughout the earth.

Then they said, "Come, let us build ourselves a city and a tower with its top in the heavens, and let us make a name for ourselves, lest we be dispersed over the face of the whole earth."

GENESIS 11:4

Through these early chapters of Genesis, we see God's people filled with pride and ambition, repeatedly engaging in acts of disobedience. Their prideful ambition led them to fulfill the longing of their hearts in things of the world rather than God. Sound familiar?

This takes us back to the longing discussed at the beginning of this week. We learned that God created us with a longing to be known. However, He intended to fully fulfill that longing with the truth that we are fully known and loved by Him.

01

In Genesis 11:4 and 11:8, what did the people fear, and what actually took place?

Like the tower builders, we too often fail to find our fulfillment in God. We seek after the things of this world to satisfy us. Things like recognition, popularity and acceptance by our peers.

In this account, God's people wrongly fulfilled this longing by seeking glory for themselves, not God. Over time, their arrogance led to rebellious acts of defiance that culminated in them uniting to establish a powerful empire for themselves. Rather than looking to God for purpose and destiny, they looked to make a name for themselves.

02

Imagine a scenario where they had obeyed God. How do you think this would impact the unity of nations and ethnicities today?

curses

In the Bible, curses often refer to God's holy discipline as a consequence of sin. They began in Genesis when God cursed the ground due to Adam's disobedience. They continued in Deuteronomy when God promised to send plessings or curses, depending upon the people's obedience to His commands. In the New Testament, the Apostle Paul spoke of false teachers saying, "let him be accursed." (Galatians 1:8) The Greek word used here is anathema, which means to devote to

God's command to His people in Genesis was to "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth" (Genesis 1:28). Settling in one place and building a tower to the sky directly defied this command. So, God intervened and spoke these words,

And the LORD said, "Behold, they are one people, and they have all one language, and this is only the beginning of what they will do. And nothing that they propose to do will now be impossible for them. Come, let us go down and there confuse their language, so that they may not understand one another's speech" (Genesis 11:6-7).

God did just that and scattered them over the face of the earth.

Oh, if only we would know God's commands and His ways are good. Know beyond head knowledge. Know and believe deep in our soul His commands are good. His purposes are good. He is good.

03

The people building the tower of Babel wanted to make a name for themselves. (Genesis 11:4) They wanted self-glory rather than God's glory. Can you relate? For example, sometimes we work so hard to build our platforms on social media. In and of itself, that's not a bad thing. But, when the motive behind our platform building is not pure, that's when sin enters in. We have to check our hearts. Have there been times when you have desired the attention of others more than God's glory and will in your life?

God calls us to obedience. God blesses and rewards obedience and brings curses and consequences for disobedience. We've watched it with our own eyes in these stories. Whether we understand them or agree with God's commands, we would do well to trust Him and His ways. They are always good, and He is trustworthy.

Abraham

God promised Abraham would father many nations; he believed and obeyed.

"And he believed the LORD, and he counted it to him as righteousness."

GENESIS 15:6

God met Abram at a time when he was doubting God's promises. God saw Abram, came to him and spoke great encouragement. "Fear not, Abram, I am your shield; your reward shall be very great" (Genesis 15:1). In his old age, Abram focused on the physical: what his eyes could see and what his mind could comprehend. God promised to make him into a great nation, but he had no children. God graciously reassured Abram that a son was coming.

He told Abram to look to the heavens and count the stars and said, "So shall your offspring be" (Genesis 15:5).

Without any change of circumstances, Scripture says Abram believed the Lord. He believed God would do what He said He would do. That is faith. And, God responded to Abram's faith by crediting righteousness, right standing with God, as his reward.

righteousness

important word for us since it is said that we are counted righteous for believing in Christ. (2 Corinthians 5:21; Romans 4:6-24; 5:19; 10:3) In both Greek and Hebrew, the word is full of meaning. Part of its meaning is doing what is right — that is, obedience to God, and doing justice in the world. The second part of its meaning, and just as important, is the connotation of having a legal right standing before a judge. Both of these meanings are inseparable from each other in the biblical sense of the word.

As with Noah, righteousness — or right standing with God — did not mean Abram was a sinless person. He simply trusted the Lord. Read Romans 4:4-5. God's Word says this same situation applies to all men and women who trust in the Lord. Describe what it means for you to place your trust in the Lord.

01

God's ways have not changed over these thousands of years. He is the same yesterday, today and forever. Trusting God at His Word ... trusting His promises ... will lead us to righteousness. The key is faith. Abram was renamed "Abraham" by God because of Abram's faith to believe that God would make him the father of many nations. (Genesis 17:5)

Faith doesn't mean we never doubt or have questions. In fact, Abraham immediately began asking God how the things He spoke of were possible (Genesis 15:8) and even laughed at other things God promised. (Genesis 17:17) Have you ever doubted God, or asked God why difficult things happen? How were your questions or doubts answered?

God's promises are eternal and unchangeable.
They will not fail because God cannot fail.

We can believe the enemy or we can believe God.

We can succumb to lies or stand on Truth. In the garden, Adam and Eve chose to believe the lies of the enemy. Noah and Abram (Abraham), on the other hand, chose to believe the truths of God. Though, let us not forget, Noah and Abraham were not perfect. The times Noah and Abraham failed to follow God and misplaced their longings, God sent harsh consequences as a result.

It seems clear from what we've studied: Choosing lies and self-satisfaction leads to curses and consequences. Choosing truth and humility leads to blessings and fulfillment. Why? Because when we choose to believe lies, we fall into the hands of the enemy. We hear the devil's voice instead of God's, so he determines who we are, our path, even our destiny.

When we trust ourselves, or others, over God, we risk moving so far from God that we forget His heart. His goodness. His love. We forget God's commands are good. His purposes are good. He is good.

Trusting in and obeying God's Word is where we find our true and lasting significance, satisfaction and security.

Abraham lived this well. God had promised to make him into a great nation, yet Abraham found himself without children. How could God's promise come to fruition with no heirs? Was God truly trustworthy?

Abraham cried out to God in discouragement. God came to Abraham and graciously reassured him a son was coming. He reminded Abraham of His promises. Scripture says Abraham believed the Lord ... without any visible proof ... without Sarah being pregnant. Abraham took God at His Word. He believed God would do what He said He would do.

This, my friend, is the essence of faith. God's ways have not changed. God's promises and purposes are eternal and unchangeable. They will not fail because God cannot fail. When the lies of the enemy — fear, doubt, anxiety, unbelief, discouragement — rush in, we must immediately take those thoughts captive. Captive to the Truth of God's Word. The Truth of who we are as children of the One True God.

Read aloud the truth of who you are in Christ.

You are Loved.

1 JOHN 3:1

You are Forgiven.

1 JOHN 1:9

You are Redeemed.

EPHESIANS 1:7

You are A New Creation.

2 CORINTHIANS 5:17

You are Holy.

HEBREWS 10:10

You are Set Apart.

ROMANS 8:30-39

You are A Temple of the Holy Spirit.

1 CORINTHIANS 3:16-17; 6:19-20

You are Made with Purpose.

1 PETER 2:9: 4:10

Now, pray and declare these truths over your heart and mind.

Abba Father, my Creator,

I praise You that I'm fearfully and wonderfully made. Thank You that I am forgiven and redeemed by the blood of Your Son, Jesus. Thank You that in and through the power of Your Holy Spirit, I am a new creation. Because of Your grace and mercy, I am Your hand-crafted masterpiece and You have good and perfect purposes for me. Please grant me wisdom and discernment as I walk out that plan. Help me to discover who You've created me to be. Expose the lies of the enemy. Wash away anything You have not authored for my

life. Protect me from the devil's schemes. Give me eyes to see myself, not in the world's eyes, but in Your eyes. Father, may I know deep in my heart that I am holy, created in Your image and set apart for Your purposes. Open my eyes to see my true beauty, a beauty that reflects Your heart, Your character, Your strength and Your dignity. Plant Your Truths deep in my heart. Fill me with Your Holy Spirit and bless me all the days of my life. I ask all this in the name of Your Son, Jesus. Amen.

the journey: at-a-glance

We realize we can't study every story in the Bible in 40 days. So, along the way, we'll share other important events you can read about on your own.



God in His grace created a good world. GENESIS 1:31

In the first relational dynamic we see between siblings, Cain killed his brother, Abel. GENESIS 4

Mankind tried to glorify themselves with a tower, but God dispersed them throughout the earth. GENESIS 11:4 God called Abraham out of the land of Ur.

GENESIS 12



Adam and Eve had longings that they tried to fulfill outside of God's design.
GENESIS 3:6, 15

God flooded the world, but Noah and his family found favor with God. GENESIS 6:8



Job continued to revere God in his suffering.

JOB 1-3, 38-42

The Lord tested Abraham's faith by asking him to sacrifice his son. GENESIS 22



The Lord destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah with fire. GENESIS 19 Jacob had 12 sons who became the tribes of Israel. GENESIS 29-30

12

God promised that Abraham would father many nations; Abraham believed and obeyed. GENESIS 15:6



Abraham sent Hagar and Ishmael away. GENESIS 21

Isaac was born, and

Isaac had two sons named Esau and Jacob. GENESIS 25

Jacob wrestled with God and was renamed "Israel."