

Amazing Grace

Our 2025 Lenten Devotional Booklet

***Our Spirit-inspired guide
for daily reading and reflection.***

Ash Wednesday, March 5 – Holy Saturday, April 19



*Lenten
Devotions*

1. A Life Transformed by Grace

John Newton, once a cruel slave trader, experienced a radical transformation through the grace of God. On a stormy night at sea, facing death, Newton cried out to God for mercy, and in that moment, he was saved. Over time, he became a powerful voice for abolition and an eloquent preacher of God's mercy, writing the hymn "Amazing Grace" as a testimony to the incredible change he underwent.

Ephesians 2:8-9 reminds us, *"For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast."* Newton's life was a living testimony to this truth. His salvation, like ours, was not earned but given freely by God's grace.

Let us reflect on how God's grace has transformed our own lives, not because of anything we've done, but because of His amazing, unearned love.

2. Heart Transformation through God's love

John Newton, who later wrote the famous hymn *Amazing Grace*, experienced a profound transformation through God's love, despite his tumultuous past. His mother, a godly woman, died when he was just six years old, leaving a void that led him to a life of rebellion. Yet, even in his darkest moments, God's love pursued him, eventually leading him to a radical change of heart.

John 8:36 reminds us, "So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed." Just as God's love broke through John Newton's hardened heart, His transforming love has the power to set us free from sin and despair, offering us a new life in Christ. God's grace is not only for the lost but for anyone willing to receive it, bringing freedom and redemption.

3. God's life-changing love

John Newton, as a young man, witnessed a tragic event—seeing a man hung for a crime. It left him shaken, but it also marked the beginning of a profound realization of life's fragility and the need for redemption. Years later, Newton would experience God's life-changing love, which transformed him from a sailor lost in sin to a preacher of grace.

2 Corinthians 5:17 tells us, *"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!"* Just like Newton's life was radically changed by God's grace, so too are we made new when we accept Christ's love. His love offers not just forgiveness, but a completely transformed life—no matter where we've been or what we've done.

4. Lenten Devotion

Every Sunday in our church bulletin we have a Call to Worship and a monthly Memory Verse. Very often our verse has been Proverbs 22:6. "Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old, he will not depart from it." This verse kept running through my head as I read the opening chapters of Amazing Grace, our Lenten book about the life of the author of this song, John Newton 1725-1807.

There is much to analyze about his troubled life, but in particular how critical his childhood was to how that life unfolded. John loved attending the NonConformist church with his mother, especially the joyful singing and the minister's message, "We have all transgressed the laws of God, but we can be redeemed through Christ's mercy." John felt the love in that church and from his mother as she was trying to direct his path. But unfortunately she died when he was 7, and John was immediately sent to boarding school. His father's church was very different and didn't inspire him the same way. Being a sea captain, his father was away for months at a time. We have no evidence of any work on his father's part in John's religious and moral education. As a result, John seemed to be rudderless and lacking in morals and social skills. What was surely lacking was a role model for becoming a kind and empathetic human being. His father ran his family like his ship, with "arrogance as a shield and fear as a whip." John lost several friends when a boat went down that he was supposed to be on. The shock of being spared led him to cloister himself away for two years, reading his Bible and praying. He hoped to become holy by avoiding all distractions, which led to depression. His father's answer was to help to place him as a seaman who on a ship to Jamaica to be an overseer of slaves for a wealthy sugar planter. This would make him "worthy of the Newton name." John said yes to please his father, but then vacillated. This led to a host of faulty decisions that eventually landed him in the slave trade, a saga in itself.

His motto was: "Never deliberate."

In short John lacked training in the way that he should go. There was much pain and heartache before he found the path that God had chosen for him. And what a momentous path it was! In this sinful world, a child can be lured from the good path by so many things, but we pray that good training and prayer would keep that from happening. Let John Newton's story be the example!

Chris George

5. A man lost in the filth of his own sin

John Newton, once a young man hardened by a life of sin, grew up near the foul stench of his hometown's sewage, a smell that seemed to cling to everything he knew. Yet, in the midst of that darkness, he encountered God's sweet love. 1 Timothy 1:15 declares, "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the worst." For Newton, the overwhelming love of God transformed him from a man lost in the filth of his own sin to one who would write, "Amazing Grace, how sweet the sound." No stench is too great for God's love to reach. His grace is always greater, drawing us out of our mess and into His sweet embrace.

6. God's love, strong and corrective, but also gentle and redemptive

John Newton, as a young boy, endured harsh schoolmasters who disciplined him severely. Yet, as he grew older and experienced God's grace, he realized that God's love, while strong and corrective, was also gentle and redemptive. Jesus's parable in Luke 15:7 reminds us that there is great joy in heaven over one sinner who repents. This reflects God's love—unwavering, but tender. Unlike the harshness John faced, God's correction is always filled with compassion, seeking our restoration, not our condemnation. In His love, we find both strength and mercy, drawing us closer to Him, as He rejoices in every heart that returns.

7. God's love broke through, offering comfort

Young John Newton experienced deep trauma after losing close friends in a shipwreck, feeling the sting of grief and loss. In such despair, he could have been consumed by bitterness, but God's love broke through, offering comfort. Isaiah 53:5 reminds us that Jesus, the ultimate source of comfort, "was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds, we are healed." No matter our pain or loss, God's comforting love can heal us, for Jesus bore our griefs and sorrows to bring us peace.

8. The true Christian has no home in this present world. He is, and must be—a stranger and a pilgrim upon earth. His citizenship, treasure, and real home are in a better and eternal world. Every step he takes — is a step nearer to his Father's house! He sets the Lord always before him, and finds himself equally near the Throne of Grace at all times and in all places.

I trust, my dear sir, that you will carry out a determination similar to that of the patriarch Jacob, who made this vow: "If God will be with me and protect me on this journey and give me food and clothing, and if He will bring me back safely to my father—then I will make the Lord my God!" — Genesis 28:20-21. May the Lord Himself write it on your heart!

You are now at Rome, the center of the Fine Arts; a place abounding with everything to gratify a person of your taste. Athens had the pre-eminence in the Apostle Paul's time; and I think it highly probable, from many passages in his writings, that he likewise had a taste capable of admiring and relishing the beauties of painting, sculpture and music—which he could not but observe during his abode in Athens.

But he had a higher, a spiritual, a divine taste, which was greatly shocked and grieved by the ignorance, idolatry, and wickedness which surrounded him; insomuch that he could attend to nothing else! This taste, which cannot be acquired by any effort or study of ours—but is freely bestowed on all who sincerely ask it from the Lord, divests the vanities which the duped world admire; and enables us to judge of the most splendid works of unsaved men, according to the declaration of the Prophet, "They hatch viper's eggs and weave spider's webs! Whoever eats their eggs will die; crack one open-and a viper is hatched!" — Isaiah 59:5.

Much ingenuity is displayed in the weaving of a spider's web—but, when finished, it is worthless and useless. Incubation of eggs requires close diligence and attention; if the hen is too long away from her nest, the egg is spoiled. Why should she sit at all upon the egg, and watch it, and warm it night and day—if it only produces a viper at last!

From the readings of John Newton submitted by Lydia Pizner

9. God's comforting love is an anchor

In the midst of young John Newton's grief, after surviving a deadly storm while his friends perished, he wrestled with feelings of guilt and loss. In those dark moments, God's comforting love was his anchor. John 3:16 reminds us that God's love is immeasurable and unconditional: "For God so loved the world that he gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life." Despite his sorrow, Newton found hope in the truth that God's love extends beyond this life, offering healing and peace. In times of grief, we too can rest in the comfort that God's love never fails and that He offers eternal life to all who believe.

10. God's Fatherly Love

As a young boy, John Newton's father, a sea captain, often sailed away for long periods, leaving him feeling abandoned. Yet, even in the absence of an earthly father's presence, God's fatherly love never fails to reach us. In Romans 3:23-24, we are reminded, "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and all are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus." God's love is not dependent on our perfection; it is freely given through Christ. Just as a father's love for his child is unwavering, God's love, though sometimes unseen, is always present, calling us back to Him, no matter how far we wander.

In Christ, we find our perfect Heavenly Father who never leaves.

11. God's family love

Young John Newton, grieved at a young age, experienced the pain of loss when his mother died and his father remarried. Despite this, God's family love was evident in his life. In the midst of his trials, he found solace in the embrace of God's love, which never changes. Just as God's love is extended to all His children, regardless of earthly circumstances, His grace appeared to John in a powerful way.

Titus 2:11 reminds us, "*For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men.*" No matter our background, God's love is an invitation to all. It's a love that adopts us into His eternal family, a love that transcends human experiences, and it teaches us to live with grace, just as young John Newton would come to understand through his own life and faith.

12. Romans 8:35-39 - "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? As it is written: 'For your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered.' No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us."

At times we may feel like we are sheep being led to slaughter, just as the disciples did. But then we remember, just as they did, that the Lamb of God was slaughtered 2,000 years ago. Death could not hold him. He is risen! He is victorious and therefore, we shall be too! What can separate us from the victorious love of Christ? Cancer? No! Death? No! Heartache? No! Financial loss? No! Divisiveness? No! Mental illness? No! Worry? No! Guilt? No! Shame? No! You can come up with more. You can spend the rest of your life coming up with scenarios, but the answer will always be "No!" God's love for us in Christ is the greatest love. It can overcome every obstacle. The only thing that can keep you from the loving arms of Christ is your "no." God loves you enough to let you reject him, but He loves you enough to let that be the only way he's not holding you in his loving arms.

Lord, may we never say "no" to your loving presence. Amen.

Amanda DeGreen

13. God's remembering love

John Newton, as a young boy, experienced deep loneliness and alienation when his father remarried, stripping their home of any trace of his mother. He felt like a stranger in the place he once knew as home, a sharp contrast to the love and comfort he had once known. Yet, God's love for us never fades or abandons. As Psalm 103:8 says, "The Lord is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love." In times of loss or rejection, we can rest in the unshakable truth that God's love remembers us, even when the world forgets or turns away. His love is a constant presence, never leaving or forsaking us, always a place to return to.

14. A New Man Transformed by Grace

John Newton, once a captain of a slave ship and living a life of rebellion, was dramatically transformed when he encountered God's grace. His life was radically changed, leading him to pen the famous hymn *Amazing Grace*, reflecting on how God saved a wretch like him.

Romans 5:8 reminds us, "But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us." Just like Newton, we are all undeserving of God's love, yet He offers grace freely. Through His sacrifice, we are made new, not because of anything we've done, but because of His incredible love.

As we reflect on this truth, let us remember that no one is beyond the reach of God's transforming power. In His grace, we find forgiveness, freedom, and a new purpose.

15. God's love is not based on our past

God's love is transformative, even for the most broken. In 1 Corinthians 15:10, Paul says, "*But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace to me was not without effect.*" Paul knew that the grace of God had changed him, just as it would change John Newton 100's of years later. Newton, once a captain in the brutal slave trade, was overwhelmed by God's grace. His life, marked by cruelty and sin, was radically transformed when he encountered God's mercy. He later penned the beloved hymn "*Amazing Grace*," a testament to the powerful, redeeming love of God that can rescue even the most lost.

Let us remember that God's love is not based on our past but on His grace. Just as He changed Paul and Newton, He offers the same transformation to us, no matter where we've been or what we've done.

16. "In the year King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord! He was sitting on a lofty throne, and the train of His robe filled the Temple. Hovering around Him were mighty seraphim, each with six wings. With two wings they covered their faces, with two they covered their feet, and with the remaining two they flew. In a great chorus they sang, 'Holy, holy, holy is the Lord Almighty! The whole earth is filled with His glory!' The glorious singing shook the Temple to its foundations, and the entire sanctuary was filled with smoke! Then I said, 'Woe is me, for I am ruined, because I am a man of unclean lips and live among a people of unclean lips, because my eyes have seen the King, the Lord Almighty!'" — Isaiah 6:1-5

Oh! for a glance of what Isaiah saw, and has described! Oh! that we, by the power of that faith, could behold the glory of the Lord filling this house; that we could realize the presence and the attitude of His attendant angels! They cover their faces and their feet with their wings, as overpowered by the beams of His majesty; and conscious, if not of defilement like us, yet of unavoidable inability as creatures, to render Him the whole of that praise and homage which are justly due to Him!

Oh! that, by faith, we could enter into the spirit of their ascription -- 'Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord Almighty, the whole earth is filled with His glory!' If we were all thus affected, as the prophet was, surely each one for himself would adopt the prophet's language. Or, if a comfortable hope in the Gospel prevented us from crying out, "Woe is me, for I am ruined!" we should, at least, say, (the Hebrew word might be so rendered,) "I am silenced, I am struck dumb! I am overwhelmed with confusion and shame; for I am a man of unclean lips myself, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips, for my eyes have seen the King, the Lord Almighty!"

If we have a degree of this impression, we shall not perplex ourselves concerning the second causes, or immediate instruments of our calamities. The evil of sin, contrasted with the holiness and glory of God, will engross our thoughts! And we shall ascribe all the troubles— we either feel or fear—to our own sins, and the sins of those among whom we dwell.

From the readings of John Newton submitted by Lydia Pizner

17. God's Unfailing Love

Romans 6:23 tells us, *"For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord."* This verse highlights the stark reality of sin's cost—death. But even in our rebellion, God offers us the free gift of eternal life through Jesus.

Consider John Newton's life, especially his time aboard the "Greyhound." Captured by the press gang and forced into naval service, he was brought low in his own rebellious ways. Yet, it was in that very darkness that God's love began to pierce through. Newton's encounter with grace on that ship ultimately led to his transformation, from a slave trader to a man who would later pen the beloved hymn, "Amazing Grace."

God's love is not limited by our circumstances or our past. No matter where we find ourselves, His gift of life is always available, calling us into freedom and transformation. Just as Newton was rescued from despair, so too are we invited into God's abundant grace, offering us the gift of eternal life in Christ.

18. God's Love in the Storm

In Matthew 11:28-30, Jesus offers a comforting invitation: *"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest."* This promise of rest is rooted in God's overwhelming love for us, a love that doesn't abandon us in our trials but meets us in them.

In 1748, John Newton, aboard a slave ship off the coast of Ireland, faced a terrifying storm that nearly claimed his life. In the midst of his fear, he felt a profound awakening to God's presence and grace. This moment marked the beginning of his journey to salvation, showing that God's love often meets us most powerfully in our darkest storms. No matter the storm, Jesus invites us to find rest in Him, reminding us that His love is unwavering and powerful enough to calm our fears.

19. God's love is always ready

God's love is transformative and humbling. James 4:6 reminds us, "But He gives more grace. Therefore it says, 'God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.'" Just as the storm was a turning point for John Newton, God's love can meet us in the most difficult moments and bring change. Newton's heart was softened, leading him to embrace and read the Bible, live out the Bible with Holy Spirit's help, and abandon his role in the slave trade, swapping slave trade for spreading the good news of Jesus. God's grace, poured out in abundance, changed his life forever. It's a reminder that no matter how far we've gone astray, God's love is always ready to transform us.

20. Lenten Devotion

Hope Lost

Read 1 Peter 1:3, Jeremiah 29:11

1 Peter 1:3 "Blessed be the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the Dead."

In the book, "Amazing Grace", John Newton found himself as the first mate to a cruel, godless Captain, Richard Jackson, on a "slaver" out of Liverpool. John was forced to see and perform many acts of cruelty by his Captain who gleefully watched as John fell from grace and lost all hope. He was ordered by Jackson to take a smaller vessel to Plantain Island to purchase slaves from a slave factory there. John became very ill with a fever sickness shortly after landing. He remained in and out of consciousness during this bout with fever. He cried and began to pray for his life. He felt like a hopeless sinner. At that moment, he understood the desire to have Christ back in his life. He needed God's grace but he felt so hopeless. His fever went away when he admitted that!

In our lives, we all have ups and downs. We tend to lean heavily on Christ's grace and our faith during our most troubled times. But life truly is a constant string of ups and downs. We need to praise him for the good times and pray for hope and strength always.

Thank you, Lord, for your love and presence in our lives at all times. We are all wretched sinners and unworthy of your grace. Yet you are constant and gracious in your grace for us. In Jesus's name, forever we pray, Amen

Missy Bibb

21. God's Love for Us Wretches

In Psalm 51:10, David cries out, “*Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me.*” This prayer reflects a deep awareness of his sin and a longing for God's cleansing touch. John Newton, once a "wretched man" known for his reckless ways, echoed this same cry of desperation. His life at sea was marked by moral chaos, yet God's love pursued him. Newton's transformation from a slave trader to a hymn writer, especially in his famous *Amazing Grace*, highlights the power of God's love to redeem even the most broken.

God's love is not for the righteous, but for the lost, the wretched, and the wandering. Like David and Newton, we too can come before God with our brokenness, asking Him to create in us a clean heart, knowing that His love is greater than any mistake. His grace is sufficient, and it changes everything.

22. Changed by Grace: Forsaking Wickedness

Isaiah 55:7 "Let the wicked forsake their ways and the unrighteous their thoughts. Let them turn to the Lord, and he will have mercy on them, and to our God, for he will freely pardon."

Have you ever found yourself in the camp of the wicked? Have you ever lined up against God in word or deed? We all have. Sometimes it's difficult to even know that we're in the wrong camp because there is so much in our culture that is displeasing to God.

Here's a quick exercise that we tried on the youth retreat that might help. Pick a popular song. Read the lyrics out loud. Answer two questions: 1. Does this song honor God? 2. Does this song honor others?

We often find ourselves listening to or watching or saying or doing things that do not honor God. It's a daily battle. When you find yourself in the wrong camp, start running, and don't stop until you've made it back to God's camp. It's a place of love and peace and joy and refuge. He's waiting with open arms.

Lord, help us to always desire to be in your camp. Give us the strength to reject the things that do not honor you. While we're on this earth, help us to reside in your camp. We ask in the name of the One who has saved us for everlasting life in your camp. In Jesus's name we ask. Amen.

Amanda DeGreen

23. Changed by God's Grace: God's Grace is sufficient

In 2 Corinthians 12:9, Paul reminds us, "But he said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.'" God's grace isn't just an unearned favor; it is a transformative force that changes us from the inside out. When we feel weak, inadequate, or unworthy, God's grace steps in, filling us with strength, peace, and purpose. It is through our weaknesses that God's power shines brightest, reminding us that our transformation isn't by our own effort, but by His unmerited grace. We are changed not by striving, but by surrendering to His sufficiency. Let His grace empower and change you today.

24. "May you experience the love of Christ—though it is so great you will never fully understand it!" — Ephesians 3:19

There is no love which can be compared with the love of Christ. He is God manifest in the flesh; all things were created by Him, and for Him. This high and lofty One, who inhabits eternity, in the fullness of time, assumed our nature, was born of a woman, made under the law to redeem those who were under the law—so that sinners, believing in Him, might not only escape deserved condemnation—but actually become His children!

For this great purpose, though truly God, He emptied Himself and appeared upon earth in the form of a servant; submitted to a state of poverty, reproach and opposition; was despised and rejected of men, lived a suffering life, and terminated His sufferings by a cruel and ignominious death—for He became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross!

The LAMB, once upon the cross, is now the Lamb upon the throne, possessing and exercising all power in heaven and on earth. Yet He is still mindful of those for whom He suffered; His heart is made of tenderness; His affections melt with love; He appears in the presence of God for them, as their great High Priest, Advocate and Intercessor.

By His holy Word He invites, and by the power of His Holy Spirit He draws, and encourages, and enables the weary and heavy-laden to come to Him for rest. He promises to save them to the uttermost; to support and guide them safely through all their conflicts, temptations, and trials; to lead them safely through the dark valley of the shadow of death; and then to receive them to Himself, that they may be forever with Him to behold His glory!

You may truly say, "In the Lord I have righteousness and strength. The Lord is my Shepherd, therefore I have everything I need. I need not fear. He will support me by His arm, cheer me with His presence, protect me by His power, guide me by His counsels, and afterwards receive me to glory!"

Such is the love of Christ! When we attempt to consider the glory of His divine person, the depth of His humiliation, the unknown sorrows and agonies which wrung His heart in Gethsemane, and on Golgotha; and that He endured all this for His enemies, even for those whose hearts were, both by nature and habit, alienated from Him; the power He exerts in reconciling them to Himself; the blessings He bestows upon them in this life, when they are renewed by His grace; and the eternal happiness He has prepared for them in the eternal state—I say, when we attempt to conceive of this love, in its origin, progress, and effects—we are soon overwhelmed, our thoughts are swallowed up, and we can only wonder and adore in silence!

This love of Christ to sinners is inexpressible, unsearchable and unfathomable! It is an ocean without either bottom or shore!

"May you experience the love of Christ—though it is so great you will never fully understand it!" — Ephesians 3:19

From the readings of John Newton submitted by Lydia Pizner

25. Changed by grace: No condemnation in Christ

Romans 8:1 declares, "Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus." Through God's grace, we are no longer defined by our past mistakes or failures. His grace frees us from guilt and condemnation, offering us a new identity in Christ. This grace doesn't just forgive us; it transforms us, enabling us to live in the freedom and love of God. We are changed not by our own efforts, but by His incredible mercy and power.

Prayer: Lord, thank You for the gift of grace that changes us. Help us to embrace the freedom we have in Christ, knowing that we are no longer condemned. Transform our hearts and minds by Your love, and empower us to live each day in the strength of Your grace. In Jesus's name, Amen.

26. Changed by Grace: Amazing Grace

The hymn *Amazing Grace* reminds us of the incredible gift of God's unmerited favor: "I once was lost, but now am found; was blind, but now I see." Hebrews 4:16 encourages us, "Let us then approach God's throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need." Through God's amazing grace, we are no longer defined by our past, but are welcomed into His presence with boldness. Grace gives us hope, restores our sight, and empowers us to live transformed lives.

Prayer: Lord, thank You for Your amazing grace that finds us in our deepest need and lifts us up. Help us to approach You boldly, knowing Your mercy and grace are always available to us. Transform our hearts and lives, and help us to walk confidently in the freedom You provide. In Jesus's name, Amen.

27. Newton's Hymn Writing

John Newton, the author of the beloved hymn "Amazing Grace," was a man transformed by God's grace. Once a slave trader, he experienced the deep forgiveness of God, which led him to pen hymns that speak to God's mercy and redemption. In Matthew 7:7-8, Jesus encourages us, saying, "*Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you.*" John Newton's life reflects this promise. He asked for forgiveness, sought God's will, and knocked at the door of grace. In return, he found a life of purpose, humility, and a heart that overflowed with praise.

Prayer:

Lord, thank You for the example of John Newton and his powerful hymns that remind us of Your amazing grace. Help us to seek You with all our hearts, ask for Your guidance, and knock on the door of Your mercy, knowing that You will answer. May we, like Newton, live lives transformed by Your love and share that grace with others. In Jesus's name, Amen.

28. John 14:6

"Jesus answered, 'I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.'"

Jesus is THE way to the Father. This way is difficult. It is full of suffering. But other paths can be difficult too. The thing that separates this path from all the others is that it is the only path of peace.

Jesus is THE truth. If we want to be lied to, we can go anywhere else. If we want the absolute truth at all times, there is only one place to go. We must go to the One who always tells the truth and who loves us the most, Jesus.

Jesus is THE life. Want to experience death? Go down a different path and find your "truth" elsewhere. Want an abundant life? Go to Jesus.

Jesus is THE way, THE truth and THE life.

Holy Spirit, help us to stick with Jesus. We want to experience the Abundant Life! Amen.

Amanda DeGreen

29. God seeks us in grace

In Luke 19:10, Jesus says, *"For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost."* This verse reveals the heart of God's love for sinners. Jesus did not come for the righteous, but for those who were lost, broken, and in need of redemption. God's love is not based on our perfection but on His grace. He seeks us out, not because we deserve it, but because He loves us deeply. No matter where we are or how far we've fallen, His love is relentless, always pursuing us with open arms.

Prayer:

Father, thank You for Your unwavering love that seeks out sinners like me. Thank You for sending Jesus to save the lost and bring us into Your embrace. Help me to remember that no one is beyond Your reach, and may Your love transform my heart to reflect Your mercy to others. In Jesus's name, Amen.

30. God's Grace for the backslider

John Newton, once a slave trader and later a powerful preacher of God's grace, struggled with backsliding in his faith. Despite his transformation, there were times when he faltered. Psalm 130:3-4 reminds us, *"If you, Lord, kept a record of sins, Lord, who could stand? But with you there is forgiveness, so that we can, with reverence, serve you."* Newton, like all of us, was aware of his shortcomings, but he found hope in God's forgiveness. No matter how far we stray, God's mercy is greater, and He is always ready to forgive and restore us.

Prayer:

Lord, thank You for Your abundant forgiveness, even when we stumble. Like John Newton, help us to remember that no failure is too great for Your mercy. May we always return to You with repentant hearts, trusting in Your love and grace. In Jesus's name, Amen

31. Delivered from darkness

In Colossians 1:13-14, Paul reminds us that through Christ, we have been "rescued from the dominion of darkness and brought into the kingdom of the Son he loves, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins." God's grace is the transformative power that shifts us from darkness into light, from sin into redemption. It's not by our efforts, but by His mercy and love that we are changed. This grace doesn't just forgive us; it completely transforms us, shaping us into His image and leading us to a life full of purpose and peace.

Prayer:

Heavenly Father, thank You for the incredible gift of Your grace. Thank You for rescuing me from darkness and bringing me into the light of Your love. I pray that Your grace would continue to transform my heart and mind, making me more like Christ each day. Help me to live in the freedom of forgiveness and to share Your grace with others. In Jesus's name, Amen.

32. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also” -- Matthew 6:21.

We must not conform to the spirit of the world. As members of society, we have a part to act in it, in harmony with others. If our works are not of the world, our principles and ends are to be entirely different. Diligence in our respective callings is, as some have already observed are commendable, and our duty; is not the same views which stimulate the activity of the people of the world. If we rise early, and take rest late, our endeavors spring from and terminate in ourselves, to establish and increase our own importance, like the builders of Babel. We may give ourselves a name, or provide means for the gratification of our sinful passions.

If we succeed, we sacrifice our own ambitions; if we are crossed in our designs, we are filled with anxiety and impatience; we either murmur or are despondent. However, a Christian is to pursue their lawful calling with an eye to the glory of God, and with submission to his wisdom. So, if we act in faith, we cannot be disappointed.

We cast our care upon our Heavenly Father who has faithfully promised to take care of us. What we give, we receive with thankfulness, and are careful as very faithful stewards to improve everything of God’s causes, and the good of mankind. If we meet with losses, God is not disconcerted, knowing that all of his concerns are under a Divine direction; that the Lord whom we serve, chooses for us better than he could ever choose for himself; and that his best treasure is safe, out of the reach of the various conformities of the world.

From the readings of John Newton submitted by Lydia Pizner

33. God seeks the lost one

The hymn *Amazing Grace* speaks of God's unmerited favor and the transformation He offers. In Matthew 18:12-14, Jesus tells the parable of the lost sheep, illustrating God's relentless pursuit of each one of us. Just as the shepherd leaves the ninety-nine to find the one lost sheep, God’s grace seeks us out, no matter how far we have wandered. His grace is not based on our worth but on His unwavering love and desire for all to be saved.

Prayer:

Lord, thank You for Your amazing grace that seeks and saves us even when we are lost. Just as You pursued the one sheep, You chase after each of us with love and mercy. Help us to recognize the depths of Your grace in our lives and to share that grace with others. May we always be reminded that no one is beyond the reach of Your love. In Jesus's name, Amen.

34. Hymns from our heart

John Newton, best known for writing the hymn "*Amazing Grace*," lived a life marked by profound transformation. Once a slave trader, his encounter with God's mercy led him to become a minister and a passionate advocate for abolition. Newton's hymn writing flowed from his deep understanding of grace, particularly the grace of Christ revealed through the light that illuminates the darkness. John 1:9 reminds us that Jesus is the "true light that gives light to everyone," offering illumination to our hearts and guiding us out of darkness. Newton, through his hymns, invited others into that light, celebrating God's redemptive power.

Prayer:

Lord, thank You for sending Your Son as the true light to guide us out of darkness. Like John Newton, may we embrace Your mercy and grace, and let it shine through us to others. May the hymns of our hearts reflect Your glory and lead others to the light of Christ. In Jesus's name, Amen.

35. Rescued from the grip of sin

In Romans 7:24-25, Paul cries out, "What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body that is subject to death? Thanks be to God, who delivers me through Jesus Christ our Lord!" These verses highlight the tension of our struggle with sin and the overwhelming truth of God's love for sinners. Despite our failings, God's love never wavers. He sent Jesus to rescue us from the grip of sin, offering grace to the undeserving. Our victory is not in our own strength, but in the mercy and redemption found through Christ.

Prayer:

Father, thank You for Your immeasurable love for sinners like me. Even in our brokenness, You reach out with grace and rescue us through Jesus. Help us to live in the freedom You've given, and may we always remember the power of Your love to save and transform. In Jesus's name, Amen.

36. Lenten Devotion Persecution

Read: Acts 11:9 & Mark 4:17

Mark 4:17 "But since they have no root, they last a short time. When trouble or persecution comes because of the word, they quickly fade away."

John Newton, the author of "Amazing Grace", carried around many horrible memories of his years in the slave trade. But Christians across America and Europe were enlightened in the knowledge that slavery was inhumane and wasn't compatible with their faith. John was a clergyman at that time and felt the same as those Christians. He was asked by his contemporaries to write about his experiences on the slaving ships. He was reluctant to share all the gruesome details, feeling ashamed. Many of these writings were published. People in his community were looking at him differently and persecuting him in their speech. He felt called to continue to testify to help end slavery because of his need to follow the cross of Jesus.

We, as Christians, are faced with choices, small may they be sometimes, every day. Will we make the right choices based on our faith in God? Will we be naval gazers?

Father in heaven, guide us and give us the strength to make all our choices faith-based. We also pray for forgiveness and your amazing grace when we fail. Amen

Missy Bibb

37. Lifted out of the pit

John Newton, once a rebellious slave trader, experienced a dramatic transformation through God's grace. However, his journey wasn't without moments of backsliding. Even after his conversion, Newton struggled with doubts and sin. Yet, in his deepest failures, he trusted in God's ability to lift him out of the pit, just as the psalmist declared in Psalm 40:2-3: "He lifted me out of the slimy pit, out of the mud and mire; he set my feet on a rock and gave me a firm place to stand. He put a new song in my mouth, a hymn of praise to our God."

Newton's life reminds us that even when we falter, God is faithful to rescue and restore us, giving us a new song of redemption.

Prayer:

Lord, thank You for Your grace that reaches into the deepest pit of our sin. Like John Newton, we know what it means to backslide, but we also know You are faithful to restore us. Lift us out of the muck and mire and place our feet on solid ground. Put a new song in our hearts, a song of praise to You, our Redeemer. Amen.

38. God changes our heart and moves our lips

Romans 10:9 says, *"If you declare with your mouth, 'Jesus is Lord,' and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved."* This verse reminds us that God's grace is not something we can earn but a gift that transforms us. When we confess Jesus as Lord and believe in His resurrection, we are made new. His grace empowers us to leave behind our old ways and live with a new purpose, guided by His love and truth. Through God's grace, our lives are no longer defined by sin but by His redemptive work in us.

Prayer:

Father, thank You for the amazing gift of Your grace. I confess Jesus as Lord and believe in His resurrection. I thank You for changing my heart and my life. Help me to walk in the newness of life, living out Your grace in every moment. May my actions reflect Your love, and may I always seek to honor You. In Jesus's name, Amen.

39. God's cleansing righteousness

The hymn *Amazing Grace* speaks of the transformative power of God's grace in our lives, acknowledging that we are all sinners in need of redemption. As we sing, "I once was lost, but now am found," we remember the truth of 1 John 1:9: "*If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*" God's grace is not only a gift but a cleansing power that restores us, no matter how far we've fallen. We can approach Him with the confidence that He will forgive and renew us.

Prayer:

Dear Lord, thank You for the amazing grace that finds us when we are lost and forgives us when we confess our sins. We humbly ask for Your forgiveness today, trusting in Your faithfulness to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. May Your grace continue to guide and transform our lives. In Jesus's name, Amen.

40. "I shall not die, but live, and declare the works of the Lord" -- Psalm 118:17.

My heart is like a highway, like a city without walls or gates: nothing so false, so frivolous, so absurd, so impossible, or so horrid, but it can obtain access, and that at any time, or in any place; neither the study, the pulpit, nor even the Lord's table, exempt me from their intrusion.

In defiance of my best judgement, and best wishes, I find something within me which cherishes and hangs on to these evils, from which I should start and flee, as I should if a toad or a serpent was put in my food, or in my bed. Oh, how vile must the heart, at least my heart be, that can hold a discussion with such abominations, when I so well know their nature and their tendency!

I would not be influenced by a principle of myself on any occasion: yet this evil I often do. The pride of others often offends me, and makes me studious to hide my own; because their good opinion of me depends much on their not perceiving it.

That the Judge of all the earth will do right, is to me as evident and necessary as two and two make four. I believe that he has a sovereign right to do what he will with his own, and that this sovereignty is but another name for the unlimited exercise of wisdom and goodness. But my reasonings are often such, as if I had never heard of these principles, or had formally renounced them.

I am invited to take the water of life freely, yet often discouraged, because I have nothing, in any way, to pay for it. If I am at times favored with some grace from the above-mentioned evils, it rather gives me a more favorable opinion of myself than increases any admiration of the Lord's goodness to so unworthy of a creature such as myself.

This is only a small piece of my heart; even if my thoughts are grievous, it is not desperate; I have a gracious and infallible Lord. I shall not die, but live, and declare the works of the Lord.

From the readings of John Newton submitted by Lydia Pizner

41. Christ's riches for our poverty

John Newton, best known for writing the beloved hymn *Amazing Grace*, experienced a profound transformation from a life of sin to one of faith. His journey mirrors the heart of Matthew 5:3, where Jesus says, "*Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*" Newton, once a man lost in pride and rebellion, came to realize his own spiritual poverty. His hymns, especially *Amazing Grace*, reflect the deep gratitude and awe of a heart that understands the grace of God in the face of human weakness.

Newton's writing was born from his own experience of being spiritually poor, yet finding immeasurable riches in Christ's grace. His hymns continue to remind us of the transforming power of God's mercy, calling us to humbly acknowledge our need for Him.

Prayer:

Lord, thank You for the grace that has transformed our hearts, just as You transformed John Newton's life. Help us to recognize our own spiritual poverty and come to You with humility. May our lives, like his hymns, reflect the boundless grace You've shown us. Teach us to rely fully on You, trusting that, in our weakness, You make us strong. In Jesus's name, Amen.

42. God's Love and guidance for Sinners

Psalm 23:1-4 reminds us that the Lord is our shepherd, guiding us even through the darkest valleys. Though we are sinners, God's love never abandons us. He leads us to green pastures, restores our souls, and protects us from harm. Even when we stray or feel lost, His love draws us back to Him, offering forgiveness and grace.

Prayer:

Dear Lord, thank You for being our faithful Shepherd. In Your love, You lead us beside still waters and restore our souls, even though we fall short of Your glory. Help us to rest in Your love and trust in Your guidance through every dark valley. May we always remember that You are with us, and Your love for sinners knows no bounds. In Jesus's name, Amen.

43. Holy Spirit reminds us when we forget

John Newton, the author of the beloved hymn "Amazing Grace," often reflected on how easy it was for him to forget God's work in his life. Despite being rescued from a life of sin and becoming a preacher of the good news of Jesus Christ, he would sometimes lose sight of the transformative grace that had saved him. In moments of struggle, Newton testified how Holy Spirit would remind him that God faithfully works for the good through all things together, both good and bad, for those who love God, as Paul writes in Romans 8:28. Newton's struggles remind us that even when we forget God's faithfulness, He remains constant and continues to work for our good.

Prayer:

Lord, we confess that like John Newton, we often forget the ways You have worked in our lives. We get caught up in the struggles and distractions of this world, losing sight of Your grace. Holy Spirit, please help us to remember that all things, even the hard times, are useful to God to work through those things together for our good, teaching us to love You, Lord. Strengthen our faith, and remind us of Your unwavering presence and purpose in our lives. In Jesus's name, Amen.

44. Luke 23:42-43 -- "Then he said, 'Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.' Jesus answered him, 'Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in paradise.'"

Have you ever thought about the man who was hanging on the cross beside Jesus? The word used to describe this man is best translated robber or bandit. He was used to getting what he wanted or needed by coercion or force. Not this time. He recognizes that Jesus is a King with a kingdom. The man recognizes that this kingdom cannot be entered by coercion or force. He recognizes that any favor that came upon him would be a gift. And so it is with us. Jesus is King. He has a kingdom. We cannot enter it through coercion or force or good works. So we make a request.

Lord Jesus, remember us. We are just sinners who deserve to be hanging on a cross, but you did that for us. Thank you for the undeserved gift of your grace. Amen.

Amanda DeGreen

45. Eyes forward

In Philippians 3:12-14, Paul reflects on his journey of transformation through God's grace. He acknowledges that he has not yet attained perfection, but he presses on, striving to grow and follow Christ more closely. God's grace empowers us to forget what lies behind and focus on the future that He has called us to, knowing that it is His grace that changes us from the inside out. We are not defined by our past mistakes or achievements, but by the love and purpose God has for us.

As we move forward, let us lean into His grace, trusting that He is at work in us, shaping us into the people that He has called us to be.

Prayer:

Lord, thank You for Your transforming grace. Help me to forget what is behind and press on toward the future that You have called me to. May Your grace continue to change me, shaping me more into the image of Christ. Strengthen me to keep moving forward, knowing that I am never alone in this journey. In Jesus's name, Amen.

46. My stains are gone

The hymn *Amazing Grace* captures the transforming power of God's grace, calling us from spiritual blindness to sight, from lostness to salvation. In Isaiah 1:18, God invites us, saying, "*Come now, let us reason together, says the Lord. Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow.*" This verse echoes the core of *Amazing Grace*—the assurance that, no matter how stained we are by sin, God's grace can cleanse us, making us new.

Prayer:

Lord, we thank You for Your amazing grace that cleanses us from all sin, no matter how deep or dark. Just as You promised in Isaiah, You wash us clean, making our hearts white as snow. Help us to live in the freedom of Your grace, sharing Your love with others. In Jesus's name, Amen.

47. Deep forgiveness leads to profound gratitude

John Newton, the writer of the beloved hymn "Amazing Grace," understood the profound power of grace. His life, once filled with rebellion and sin, was transformed by the mercy of God. In his hymn writing, Newton often reflected on the forgiveness and love that Jesus offers, recognizing that those who are forgiven much, love much (Luke 7:47). This understanding was rooted in the overwhelming grace that changed his life, just as it can change ours. Newton's hymns serve as a reminder of God's mercy and our deep need for it.

Prayer:

Lord, thank You for the grace that transforms lives, as You did for John Newton. May we, like him, recognize the depth of Your forgiveness and respond with hearts full of love and gratitude. Help us to understand the magnitude of Your mercy and to share it with others. In Jesus's name, Amen.

48. "If you love me, keep my commandments." -- John 14:15

The truth of the believer's love is manifested by being able to be obedient to God's word. This is two~ fold, and without any reservation. We need to submit to God's will, as made known to others, by thought, word and deed. We should aim to walk in our Savior's footsteps and make it a priority to accept and obey his commandments, without any exceptions and without any hesitation.

Again, we need to submit to God's will, yield to his sovereignty, accept his wisdom and truly know we have no reason to complain of anything, because we are sinners, and because we know that God does all things well.

Therefore, this acceptance is not forced, but is an act of trust. We therefore rejoice that the Lord, has taken away all of our sins. It is a believer's privilege to walk with God in the beauty of faith and by the power of his Spirit, which helps us gain a growing victory to be closer to God.

By the same principle of faith, a believer's conduct is regulated and to be honored by God, where we need to love and forgive others as God has forgiven us.

By our faith it enables us to be prosperous in all that we do. We learn that we can gain prosperity with moderation; and we know and feel, that what the world calls good is of no value, unless it is accompanied with the presence and blessings of him who loves us.

From the readings of John Newton submitted by Lydia Pizner

49. God's Love for Sinners

Romans 5:1-2 reminds us, "Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand." Despite our sinfulness, God's love for us is not based on our worth but on His grace. Through Jesus, we are reconciled to God, not by anything we have done, but because of His great love. This love brings peace and access to His grace, transforming us from enemies to children of God.

Prayer:

Father, thank You for Your incredible love that reaches out to sinners like me. Thank You for justifying me through faith in Jesus Christ, granting me peace and grace. Help me to fully embrace Your love and live in the freedom that comes from knowing I am reconciled to You. May Your love transform my heart to reflect Your grace to others. In Jesus's name, Amen.

Having come to the end of our Lenten journey, we pray you'll join us for our Easter Worship celebration of the resurrection of our Lord.



Lenten Devotions

*Christ the King Lutheran Church
611 Riverchase Pkwy W, Hoover, AL 35244
205-988-5004 www.ctkbham.org
www.facebook.com/ctkbham*