

EASTER REFLECTIONS FOR DAILY LIVING

CISSIE GRAHAM LYNCH



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Cissie Graham Lynch is the daughter of Franklin Graham and granddaughter of Billy Graham. She is a ministry spokesperson for Samaritan's Purse and the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association. Cissie and her husband, Corey, have two children and live in Florida.

Dear Friend,

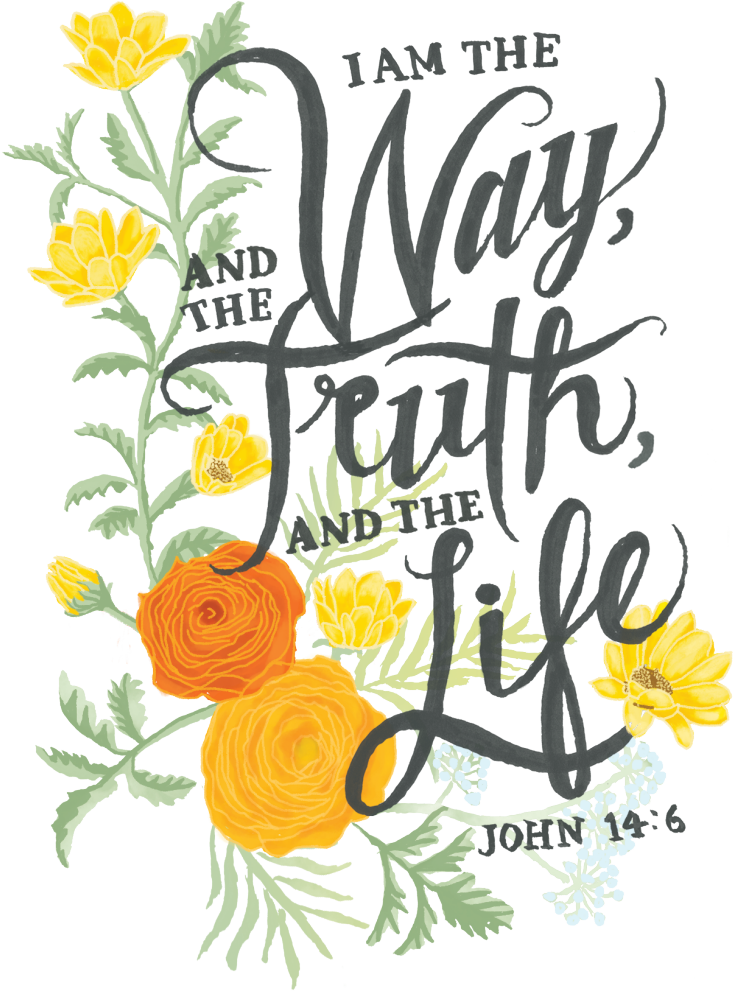
As the long winter continues, many of us have hearts that desire the warmth of the sun. Cold temperatures and shorter days drag on, and we long for spring-green buds on the trees, blooming flowers, and new life. Like winter, the pathway to change can feel slow and dreary.

Entering the Easter season, the days ahead can seem long and painful. This is a time to reflect and consider our walk with God. Allow yourself quiet time before the Lord so you can hear His tender voice, and let Him show you the areas in your life which hinder you from living in full obedience to His will. Allow the Son, Jesus, to warm your heart and soul during this period of reflection.

This season, we remember Jesus' love for us, demonstrated when He was nailed to the cross. A quote I often remember is, "The cross is the love of God and the wrath of God combined in one moment." We look forward with anticipation to Easter, the day Jesus conquered death!

As you read this devotional, I hope you will take time to renew your spirit and refresh your soul before the Lord. Through Scripture, allow the Lord to speak His truth to you. I pray, as you reflect on His precious words this season, you will allow the Lord to challenge you to live a life full of obedience, on your knees at the foot of the cross.

Cissie Graham Lynch


I AM THE
Way,
AND THE
Truth,
AND THE
Life
JOHN 14:6

What is Truth?

Read John 18:28–40.

"What is truth?"

Over 2,000 years ago, Pilate, the Roman governor over Judea, looked into the eyes of Jesus and asked this question. He didn't know he was speaking to the King of kings, the one and only Truth. He was confused and believed truth to be relative. He did not realise he was standing face to face with the One who is "*the way, and the truth, and the life*" (see John 14:6).

Pilate found Jesus innocent of all charges. He didn't understand why the Jewish leaders wanted to execute one of their own men. Even his wife warned him, "*Have nothing to do with that righteous man, for I have suffered much because of him today in a dream*" (Matthew 27:19). Pilate had to make a decision. But instead of standing for what was right, he gave in to the demands of the Jews and handed Jesus over to be executed.



Pilate didn't know what truth was. Therefore, he even bypassed his conscience and gave in to the desires of the world.

How often are we like Pilate? Because our heart doesn't have a foundation of truth, we bypass our conscience and we give in to the popular calls of the world. We may think we know God, but because we are not rooted in Scripture, we often make the wrong choice when faced with a moral dilemma.

In a world of relativism, how can we know what truth is? It is quite simple. We must study God's Word. All the answers we could ever want are found in His unchanging Word. We need to know what we believe and why we believe, so that when a compromising world comes against us, we can stand strong on the solid foundation of God's Word.

"*Therefore, everyone who hears these words of Mine and acts on them will be like a sensible man who built his house on the rock*" (Matthew 7:24, HCSB).

It is God's Word alone that can teach and train about truth in a world that is forever compromising. We can use it to rebuke those who oppose us. We can use it to

correct those with false ideology. We can use it to guide our daily steps. God's Word, not our changing human opinions, needs to be the solid rock we stand on.

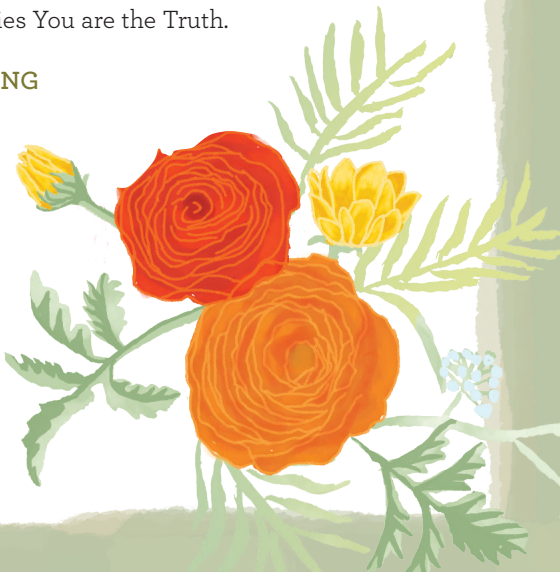
"*All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work*" (2 Timothy 3:16–17, NIV).

PRAYER:

Dear God, I thank You for the gift of Your Word. As I study it, I pray that through the Holy Spirit, You will help me to have clarity and understanding. May I hide it in my heart so I will be able to stand on a solid foundation of Your truth, so I will be able to correct, teach, and rebuke a world that forever denies You are the Truth.

ADDITIONAL READING

John 1:1–14
John 8:31–47
John 14: 1–14
3 John 1:3–4




OH LORD,
God
OF MY
Salvation
PSALM 88:1

Persecution

Read Mark 14:66–72.

Standing for truth can take us down a lonely road. Standing for your beliefs in Christ often brings isolation. Following Jesus can seem like a solitary journey.

Jesus tells us, "*If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you. ... If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you*" (see John 15:18–21).

Even one of Jesus' closest friends turned his back on Him at a time when He already felt abandoned. After Jesus was captured and arrested, He was taken to be judged.

When reading Psalm 88, I never pictured Jesus in a dark pit until I stood in the place believed to have been Caiaphas's house. Before Jesus was taken to Pilate, He would've been put in an underground cell, where the worst of offenders would be held. And while Jesus was spat on, mocked, and had His outstretched arms tied to the rock walls in the courtyard outside, the rooster crowed. Peter, one of His inner circle, had denied ever knowing him. Read Psalm 88 and imagine the agony of Jesus:

O Lord, God of my salvation,
I cry out day and night before you.
Let my prayer come before you;
incline your ear to my cry!
For my soul is full of troubles,
and my life draws near to Sheol.
I am counted among those who go down to the pit;
I am a man who has no strength,
like one set loose among the dead,
like the slain that lie in the grave,
like those whom you remember no more,
for they are cut off from your hand.
You have put me in the depths of the pit,
in the regions dark and deep.
Your wrath lies heavy upon me,
and you overwhelm me with all your waves.
You have caused my companions to shun me;
you have made me a horror to them.
I am shut in so that I cannot escape;
my eye grows dim through sorrow. ...
O Lord, why do you cast my soul away?
Why do you hide your face from me?
Afflicted and close to death from my youth up,
I suffer your terrors; I am helpless.
Your wrath has swept over me;
your dreadful assaults destroy me.



They surround me like a flood all day long;
they close in on me together.
You have caused my beloved and my friend to shun me;
my companions have become darkness.

Remember, when you have taken a stand and you feel the world is persecuting you, God doesn't ask you to walk a path His Son Jesus didn't endure. The King of kings and Lord of lords loved you so much He went down to the deepest pit. He was rejected by all men, His dearest friends turned their backs, and He died the most brutal death.

Being a child of God is not easy, but we can endure the journey and continue to stand strong by holding on to God's sweet promise: "*I will never leave you nor forsake you*" (Hebrews 13:5).

PRAYER:

Lord, when I feel alone, let me feel Your presence. Guide my heart to focus on You. Let me boldly stand for Your Word and truth even when darkness surrounds me. You are my strength and comfort. You are my joy and hope, and the giver of peace.

ADDITIONAL READING:

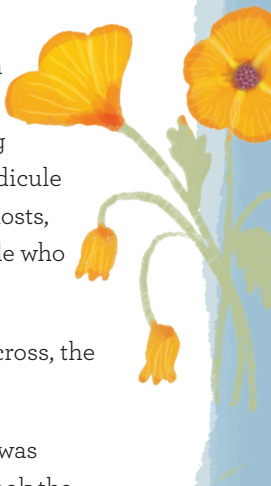
Matthew 26:30–35
John 17:13–19
John 18:12–24
Psalm 119:161


Blessed is the Man
who walks not
IN THE COUNSEL of THE
Wicked
PSALM 1:1

Mocking

Read Matthew 27:27–31.

When you're a child of God and decide to stand on His truth, there will be times when the world will mock you.



These days, it is hard to find a show on television that is not making fun of the Christian faith or mocking Jesus. Fictional characters representing Christianity are the targets of humiliation and ridicule for their "silly, self-righteous beliefs." Talk show hosts, comedians, and even politicians take jabs at people who claim the Name of Christ.

Two thousand years ago, when Jesus hung on a cross, the world mocked Him.

Jesus was beaten and His body abused until He was unrecognisable. He bore humiliation and pain, took the sins of the world, and hung on a cross for the entire world to see. And before He took His last breath, the crowds and men below Him laughed at and ridiculed Him. They



shouted insults and cast lots for His clothes. As the Roman soldiers mocked Jesus, they didn't realise that they were the ones who needed a Saviour.

"So *also the chief priests, with the scribes and elders, mocked him, saying, 'He saved others; he cannot save himself. He is the King of Israel; let him come down now from the cross, and we will believe in him. He trusts in God; let God deliver him now, if he desires him. For he said, "I am the Son of God."' And the robbers who were crucified with him also reviled him in the same way*" (Matthew 27:41–44).

Even today, 2,000 years after that dark day in history, Jesus is still being mocked in that same spot.

If you visit the tomb in Israel where many people believe Jesus was buried, you find a beautiful, tranquil garden which surrounds the tomb. A few steps away, at the viewing platform where you can see a rock that resembles a skull—believed to be Golgotha—you are met with the fumes of exhaust, horns, and the busyness of a chaotic bus station. Above the rock, over the entrance to an Islamic graveyard, is a large Arabic sign that reads, "Allah, the one true God."

When Jesus cried out with His last breath, Satan thought he had won. But three days later, Jesus rose from the grave.

I believe Satan began to tremble because Jesus conquered death, and one day Satan will see his last day, when Jesus achieves ultimate victory.

Jesus endured the pain, the humiliation, and the mocking because He loves you. And if you love Him and live a life unashamed of the Gospel, you will at some point endure persecution or mocking for your faith. Stand boldly and make Satan tremble.

The same power that resurrected Jesus Christ from the tomb lives in you.

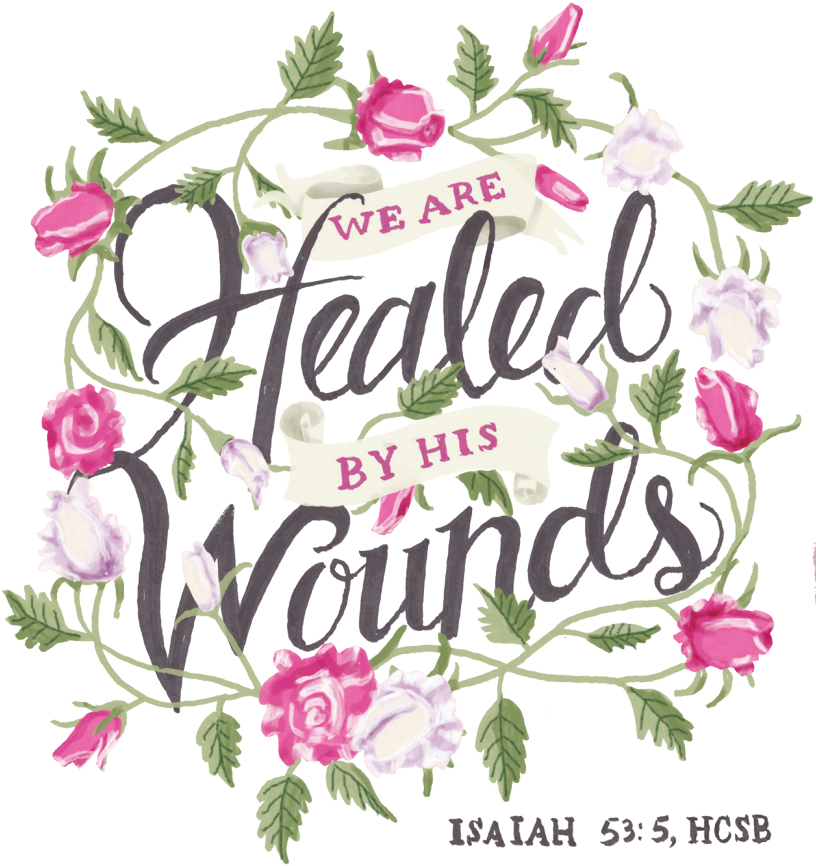
PRAYER

Father God, thank You for giving us the ultimate sacrificial gift in the death and resurrection of Your Son, Jesus Christ. Use me, Lord, to boldly share Your Word in an always compromising world. Help me to overcome persecution and mockery in my own life and be used for Your glory and purpose.

ADDITIONAL READING:

Romans 8:11
Psalm 1
Luke 23:6–12
Luke 23:23–43




WE ARE
Healed
BY HIS
Wounds
ISAIAH 53:5, HCSB

The Cross

Read John 19:16–19.

What does the cross mean in today's society?

We wear it around our necks, we hang it on our walls as decoration, we place it on the side of the road to memorialise lives lost. Many people today don't realise the sacrifice that God made through Christ's death on the cross because we have glamorised it for the sake of a holiday—a day off work.

But at the time of Christ, the cross caused great distress. It was the symbol of ultimate torture and cruelty—human crucifixion. The writers of the Bible didn't include the horrific details about what happened to the human body during crucifixion because they didn't need to. Those who lived in fear of this barbaric death penalty knew all too well its effects.

The great Roman politician Cicero said about crucifixion, "It is a crime to bind a Roman citizen; to scourge him is a

wickedness; to put him to death is almost parricide. What shall I say of crucifying him? So guilty an action cannot by any possibility be adequately expressed by any name bad enough for it."

The cross represents the nasty, despicable mess of this world—the ultimate darkness—but the world is overcome and made perfect through the blood of Christ and love of God, providing the hope of eternity. Christ's ultimate sacrifice erased the sin of everyone who believes in Him. Jesus died, arms wide open, to create a direct path to the Father. He provides a bridge that takes us from our sin-filled humanity to the perfect home that awaits us in heaven.

But he was pierced for our transgressions;
he was crushed for our iniquities;
upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace,
and with his wounds we are healed.
All we like sheep have gone astray;
we have turned—every one—to his own way;
and the Lord has laid on him
the iniquity of us all.
He was oppressed, and he was afflicted,
yet he opened not his mouth;
like a lamb that is led to the slaughter,
and like a sheep that before its shearers is silent,
so he opened not his mouth.

By oppression and judgment he was taken away;
and as for his generation, who considered
that he was cut off out of the land of the living,
stricken for the transgression of my people?
(Isaiah 53:5–8)

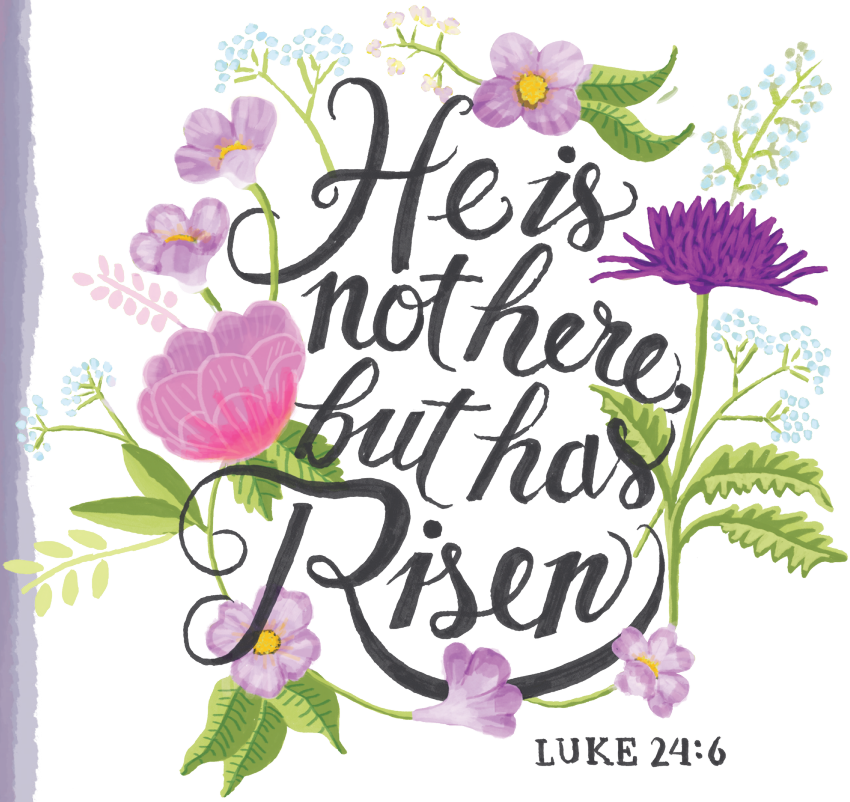
When Abraham took Isaac with him to make a sacrifice without bringing an animal, he assured his son, "*God Himself will provide*" (see Genesis 22:1–14, HCSB). Some 2,000 years later, God would give His own Son as the perfect offering, the "lamb that was slain" to take our place.

PRAYER

You are the author and creator of life. Dear Jesus, I thank You for giving us the promise of eternal life through Your death on the cross, resurrection from the grave, and ascension into heaven. Let me remember that the cost of my sins has already been paid through the cross. Remind me today and always that no works that I do, or sacrifice that I make, can ever come close to repayment for what You have already done. You are my salvation.

ADDITIONAL READING:

Romans 5:8
Luke 14:27
Hebrews 12:2
Philippians 2:5–11


He is not here, but has Risen
LUKE 24:6

Serving

Read Luke 24:1–10.

Do you have a person you would call if you need help? If you have a car problem? If you need something painted? If you need a recipe or to know how to cook something?

Most of us can think of one or more such people—people we depend on for their expertise, who have a specialty or talent that makes us think of them and call on them when we are in need. I have often struggled with the fact that I am not that person. I don't have many strengths—I perceive myself as someone who is just average. This comes from a lifetime surrounded by men who are talented and called into different fields—whether my grandfather, dad, and brother, who were called to ministry and to share the Gospel around the world; or my husband, who was a player in the National Football League.

When we look at the women who were close to Jesus and His ministry, they probably felt like they didn't have much to offer. They weren't His disciples. There wasn't anything that they could do or offer to the



teacher they adored. They couldn't go before the Sanhedrin and speak in His defense. They couldn't stand before the mocking crowds ... yet what they could do is serve Him. And we are called to simply be followers of Christ and serve Him.

Mary Magdalene was one of the few who followed Christ to the cross and sat at the foot of the cross. That had to be one of the loneliest, darkest, and saddest places to be. It was a place filled with desperate agony, where the soldiers mocked Christ Himself. Did they mock His followers as well? Despite all of this, Mary stayed there.

We often look at our lives and compare them to the lives of others. We focus on what we can't do instead of what we can do. Mary Magdalene set an example of what we can do: follow and serve. And when we do follow and serve Jesus, He will honour our obedience to Him.

Jesus honoured Mary Magdalene and appeared to her before anyone else when He rose from the grave. What an honour for her! She was devastated from the loss of her teacher, but then—what joy!

Mary Magdalene and the other women were faithful to Him, and they were honoured for that faith. Because they were

women, they were severely limited in what society would allow them to do, but they could be obedient and serve Jesus. They followed Him to the tomb and prepared His body for burial—and they even went back to mourn, although the soldiers would not let them too near. When Jesus chose them to be the first to see Him after the resurrection, they told others the Good News.

God calls us to serve Him. When we serve Him in obedience, He will honour us. How sweet it was for Him to choose these women who had served Him faithfully to witness the promise fulfilled in the life and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

PRAYER:

Jesus, let the gifts and talents You have given me be a ministry to others. Let me serve those around me with love and honour to glorify Your Name. Help me to be obedient to Your Word and leading so that others will see Your works alone.

ADDITIONAL READING:

2 John 1:6
Romans 2:6–8
1 Corinthians 10:31
Ephesians 2:4–10


For by
grace
you have been
saved
through
faith
EPHESIANS 2:8

Restored



Read John 21:15–19.

The greatest thing about God's love is that it is unwavering—it has no end—and He's still willing to meet us each morning when we rise.

Satan tries to tell us that after failing Jesus, we have to go back to our own ways. Whether we forget the truth, give into the pressures of the world, or struggle with losing our identity, we are tempted to stay in the mess we've created for ourselves.

The disciple Peter followed and loved the Lord wholeheartedly, was part of His ministry on earth, and witnessed many miracles. Yet, at the most critical moment, Peter denied knowing Jesus.

Peter was humiliated when he denied his best friend three times, so he went back to fishing. But Jesus showed up. Not only did He restore Peter's ministry, but He gave Peter even more responsibility.



Because of Peter's repentance, Jesus restored him and strengthened him even after his failure.

Satan wants us to believe that we have blown our opportunity, that we've failed. He plants those seeds of doubt in our hearts. Peter was devastated and heartbroken after betraying Jesus, but, even then, Jesus came to him on the banks of the Sea of Galilee. He forgave Peter and restored him.

There are times in our lives when we fail those we love. Even when we fail Him, Jesus never abandons us. If we have a repentant heart, He will still use us, as He did Peter.

We see that Jesus prayed for Simon Peter. "*But I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned again, strengthen your brothers*" (Luke 22:32). Even though Peter wavered, he was not destroyed. Through Peter's example, we know Jesus, the Lord of lords and King of kings, goes to battle for us in prayer.

Even though we may waver and falter, Jesus is waiting for us, just as he was for Peter on the beach. He is ready and willing to forgive us and to use us to strengthen His kingdom.

PRAYER

Lord, only You can restore that which is broken. When I am weak and my flesh fails You, turn my heart back towards Your unending love and grace. And when I've come to the end of myself, use me for Your purposes to turn the lives and hearts of others to the everlasting salvation found only in You.

ADDITIONAL READING

Matthew 28:16–20
Acts 1:1–11
Ephesians 4:7
Ephesians 2:8–9



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