

## RED LETTER DAY—1 WHY HAVE YOU FORSAKEN ME?

Above (Jesus') head they placed the written charge against him: **THIS IS JESUS, THE KING OF THE JEWS.** 38 Two robbers were crucified with him, one on his right and one on his left. 39 Those who passed by hurled insults at him, shaking their heads 40 and saying, "You who are going to destroy the temple and build it in three days, save yourself! Come down from the cross, if you are the Son of God!" 41 In the same way the chief priests, the teachers of the law and the elders mocked him. 42 "He saved others," they said, "but he can't save himself! He's the King of Israel! Let him come down now from the cross, and we will believe in him. 43 He trusts in God. Let God rescue him now if he wants him, for he said, 'I am the Son of God.'" Matt 27:37-43

**trusts: *peitho* (pi'-tho); to convince, to rely on with inward certainty, have full confidence, or complete trust.**

From the sixth hour until the ninth hour darkness came over all the land. 46 About the ninth hour Jesus cried out in a loud voice, "Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?"-which means, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" Matt 27:45-46

## WE ONLY SEE PART OF THE STORY

Now we see but a poor reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known. 1 Cor 13:12

For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways," declares the Lord. 9 "As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts. Isa 55:8-9

**WHAT TO REMEMBER WHEN YOU DON'T UNDERSTAND**

### 1) **GOD IS GOOD.**

*No one is good — except God alone.* Mark 10:18

### 2) **GOD IS FOR ME.**

*If God is for us, who can be against us? 32 He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all — how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things? Rom 8:31-33*

### 3) **GOD IS WITH ME.**

*...Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you.* Hebrews 13:5

*Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; 6 in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight.* Prov 3:5-6

## THE BETTER I KNOW GOD

- **THE LESS I ASK “WHY?”**
- **THE MORE I ASK “WHAT?”**

*God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.* 2 Cor 5:21

## TALK IT OVER

- Share a time when you felt completely alone or abandoned by God.
- God is good. God is for me. God is with me. How will these truths change your beliefs?
- What are the frustrations or questions you struggle with? How can you change your *why* to *what* in each of those areas?

Talk it over to process what God is saying to you through Jesus' last words. Join the conversation on our Facebook page. Go further with the Talk It Over study guide from [www.lifechurch.tv/talkitover](http://www.lifechurch.tv/talkitover).

Talking through the message during the week helps you turn what God is saying to you into action steps. These talking points, questions, and scriptures are designed to help you take the next step.

With your Bible or YouVersion.com, read **Matthew 27:37-46**.

This passage of Scripture describes some of Jesus' final moments as He was crucified on the cross. As He was tortured and ridiculed while hanging on the cross, Jesus cries out to God, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"

- Describe your current level of trust in God. What types of events or situations help you build your trust in God?
- Why do you think it is so hard to trust God when we are in the midst of difficulties and so easy to trust Him when life is good?
- Describe a time when you felt completely alone or abandoned by God. How did God ultimately show you that you were not alone?
- We have all experienced tragedies and difficult situations that have caused us to ask the question, "Why, God?" What are some of the "why" questions you have asked?

Read **Isaiah 55:8-9, Mark 10:18, Romans 8:31-33, and Proverbs 3:5-6**.

These verses show us that God is good, God is for us, and God is with us when we endure times of difficulty we don't understand.

- How have you experienced God's goodness while enduring tough times?
- What are some of the frustrations or questions you are currently struggling with? How can you change your "why" to "what" in each of these areas?
- How have the tragedies and trials you have experienced throughout your life ultimately shaped you into the person you are today? What did they teach you about God?
- What types of things do you think God is trying to tell you through the difficulties you're facing right now?

## NEXT STEPS

Here are some specific things you can do this week to help you better understand why we endure difficult times and how you can build your trust in God.

We all know someone who is currently going through difficult times. Do something this week to help comfort that person and show them that God has not abandoned them. Pray for them throughout the week. Ask God to comfort them and show Himself to them during their difficult time.

Go deeper into the Bible during this series. Go to our Facebook page ([www.facebook.com/lifechurchtv](http://www.facebook.com/lifechurchtv)) and read through the daily posts that explore the ideas from this message in other parts of the Bible. Leave a comment to share what God showed you in the passage.

Use these prayer tips to talk it over with God and to expand your conversations both in person and online:

- In prayer, confess those areas of your life where you feel abandoned by God. Ask Him for His comfort.
- Commit to God in prayer that you will strive to grow your trust in Him, especially during tough times.
- Thank God for all the times He has shown His love to you during difficult circumstances. Praise Him.
- Pray and ask God to show you "what" instead of "why" when it comes to enduring things in your life you don't understand.
- Pray for someone you know who's dealing with a tragedy or going through hard times. Ask God to comfort them.

## RED LETTER DAY—2 FATHER FORGIVE THEM

*Two other men, both criminals, were also led out with (Jesus) to be executed. When they came to the place called the Skull, there they crucified him, along with the criminals—one on his right, the other on his left. Luke 23:32-33*

*Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing." Luke 23:34*

*For he bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors. Isaiah 53:12*

### THE BEFORE CHRIST RESPONSE

- **YOU OWE ME AND JUSTICE IS MINE.**

*You have heard that it was said, 'Eye for eye, and tooth for tooth.'*  
Matthew 5:38

### THE AFTER CHRIST RESPONSE

- **GOD FORGAVE ME SO I'LL FORGIVE YOU.**

*Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.*  
Matthew 6:12

*Therefore, the Kingdom of Heaven can be compared to a king who decided to bring his accounts up to date with servants who had borrowed money from him. 24 In the process, one of his debtors was brought in who owed him millions of dollars. 25 He couldn't pay, so his master ordered that he be sold—along with his wife, his children, and everything he owned—to pay the debt. 26 "But the man fell down before his master and begged him, 'Please, be patient with me, and I will pay it all.' 27 Then his master was filled with pity for him, and he released him and forgave his debt. Matthew 18:23-27 NLT*

## LESSON FROM THE FORGIVEN SERVANT

- **THE DEBTOR CAN'T ALWAYS REPAY YOU.**

*In the process, one of his debtors was brought in who owed him millions of dollars. 25 He couldn't pay... Matthew 18:24-25a NLT*

- **THE OFFENDED CAN ALWAYS SHOW MERCY.**

*Then his master was filled with pity for him, and he released him and forgave his debt. Matthew 18:27 NLT*

### CONSEQUENCES FOR UNFORGIVENESS

*'You evil servant! I forgave you that tremendous debt because you pleaded with me. 33 Shouldn't you have mercy on your fellow servant, just as I had mercy on you?' 34 Then the angry king sent the man to prison to be tortured until he had paid his entire debt. 35 That's what my heavenly Father will do to you if you refuse to forgive your brothers and sisters from your heart. Matthew 18:32-35 NLT*

### WHAT DO YOU DO WHEN THE OFFENSE SEEMS TOO BIG?

- **JESUS' LOVE IS GREATER THAN ANY OFFENSE.**

*Shouldn't you have mercy on your fellow servant, just as I had mercy on you?' Matthew 18:33 NLT*

*For if you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. 15But if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins. Matthew 6:14-15*

### TALK IT OVER

- What has someone forgiven you of that you are most grateful for?
- How have you been aware of being imprisoned by your own unforgiveness in the past? How has withholding forgiveness poisoned your relationships?
- Who are the people you haven't forgiven that you would commit to pray for regularly?

Break free from the prison of unforgiveness. Start by talking it over with someone this week. Join the conversation on Facebook. Get resources from [www.lifechurch.tv/talkitover](http://www.lifechurch.tv/talkitover).

Talking through the message during the week helps you turn what God is saying to you into action steps. These talking points, questions, and scriptures are designed to help you take the next step.

**With your Bible or YouVersion, read Luke 23:33-34.**

This passage tells about Jesus being taken to die on the cross. One of Jesus' final actions was to ask God to forgive the very people who were killing him.

- What has someone forgiven you of that you are most grateful for?
- Before you knew Christ as your Savior, how did you treat others who wronged you? Do you treat them differently now?
- Describe a time when another person hurt your feelings and you had a hard time forgiving them. How did that bitterness and resentment affect your life?
- How has withholding forgiveness poisoned your relationships?
- God is so willing to forgive us. Why are we sometimes unwilling to forgive others?
- In what ways has God shown you mercy by forgiving your sins? How has that forgiveness impacted your life?

**Read Matthew 18:21-35.**

This parable told by Jesus describes a servant who couldn't repay a debt that he owed to his king. The king forgave his debt, but later when that same servant refused to forgive someone who was in debt to him, the king sent the servant to prison to be tortured.

- Describe a time when you forgave someone who hurt you. How did your act of forgiveness impact your life and the lives of others?
- How is it possible for us to forgive the wrongs others have done to us? Why is important that we forgive?
- What does forgiveness look like in your life right now? What are some things you can do to develop an ongoing attitude of forgiveness?
- What are some practical ways you can show mercy this week to someone who has wronged you?
- Who are the people you haven't forgiven that you would commit to pray for regularly?

## NEXT STEPS

Here are some specific things you can do this week to help you begin to show mercy and forgiveness towards others and break the bondage of bitterness.

If someone has hurt you, begin the process of forgiving that person. Ask God to soften your heart so that you can forgive. Think about an appropriate time to share with that person that you have forgiven them. Don't rush through the process of forgiving. Take enough time to be sure you're sincere.

Spend some time this week asking God to help you turn away from bitterness, and ask Him to help you become a forgiver instead. Read the following scriptures this week as you pray for those you need to forgive:  
Matthew 6:9-15, Romans 12:19-21, Luke 6:27-37,  
Luke 11:4 and Luke 7:47-48.

**Use these prayer tips to talk it over with God and to expand your conversations both in person and online:**

- Thank God for the power of forgiveness that you have experienced in your own life.
- Ask God to remove any bitterness you have. Ask Him to give you a heart of forgiveness in its place.
- Pray for any people who have hurt you. Ask God to help you begin the process of forgiving them.
- Ask God to help you treat others with mercy and forgiveness. Ask Him to help you and guide you.
- Ask God to help you receive and understand His complete forgiveness..

## RED LETTER DAY—3

### I THIRST

Later, knowing that all was now completed, and so that the Scripture would be fulfilled, Jesus said, "I am thirsty." 29A jar of wine vinegar was there, so they soaked a sponge in it, put the sponge on a stalk of the hyssop plant, and lifted it to Jesus' lips. 30When he had received the drink, Jesus said, "It is finished." With that, he bowed his head and gave up his spirit. John 19:28-30

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.  
Matthew 5:6

The Pharisees heard that Jesus was gaining and baptizing more disciples than John, 2although in fact it was not Jesus who baptized, but his disciples. 3When the Lord learned of this, he left Judea and went back once more to Galilee. 4Now he had to go through Samaria. 5So he came to a town in Samaria called Sychar, near the plot of ground Jacob had given to his son Joseph. 6Jacob's well was there, and Jesus, tired as he was from the journey, sat down by the well. It was about the sixth hour.

7When a Samaritan woman came to draw water, Jesus said to her, "Will you give me a drink?" 8(His disciples had gone into the town to buy food.)

9The Samaritan woman said to him, "You are a Jew and I am a Samaritan woman. How can you ask me for a drink?" (For Jews do not associate with Samaritans.)

10Jesus answered her, "If you knew the gift of God and who it is that asks you for a drink, you would have asked him and he would have given you living water."

11"Sir," the woman said, "you have nothing to draw with and the well is deep. Where can you get this living water? 12Are you greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well and drank from it himself, as did also his sons and his flocks and herds?"

13Jesus answered, "Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, 14but whoever drinks the water I give him will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life."

15The woman said to him, "Sir, give me this water so that I won't get thirsty and have to keep coming here to draw water."

16He told her, "Go, call your husband and come back."

17"I have no husband," she replied.

Jesus said to her, "You are right when you say you have no husband. 18The fact is, you have had five husbands, and the man you now have is not your husband. What you have just said is quite true."

19"Sir," the woman said, "I can see that you are a prophet. 20Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, but you Jews claim that the place where we must worship is in Jerusalem."

21Jesus declared, "Believe me, woman, a time is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. 22You Samaritans worship what you do not know; we worship what we do know, for salvation is from the Jews. 23Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks. 24God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in spirit and in truth."

25The woman said, "I know that Messiah" (called Christ) "is coming. When he comes, he will explain everything to us."

26Then Jesus declared, "I who speak to you am he." John 4:1-26

### NEED, SEED & FEED

- **NEED REQUIRES LOVE.**
- **SEED REQUIRES HOPE.**
- **FEED REQUIRES FAITH.**

### TALK IT OVER

- What side of need are you on? Are you “needed” or “needy”? Explain.
- How thirsty are you for more of God? What steps can you take to quench that thirst?
- Once Jesus has satisfied your thirst, how will you pour out your life to fill the needs of others?

With such a rich message, which part spoke to you most? Identify the next steps God wants you to take by talking it over on the phone, over lunch, even in the car on the way home. For more, visit [www.lifechurch.tv/talkitover](http://www.lifechurch.tv/talkitover).

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**With your Bible or YouVersion, read John 19:28-30.**

These verses describe Jesus' moment of death while hanging on the cross. Just before His death, Jesus said, "I am thirsty," and He was given one last drink to quench His thirst.

- What types of things are you hungry and thirsty for? Do you hunger and thirst for God, or for something else? Explain.
- What kinds of circumstances or situations tend to cause you to lose your hunger and thirst for God?
- In what ways has your relationship with God brought you fulfillment and satisfaction?

**Read John 4:1-42.**

This passage tells the story of the Samaritan woman who asked Jesus to give her a drink. Jesus responded by meeting her need and satisfying her thirst, even though Jews were not supposed to associate with Samaritans.

- What side of need are you on? Are you "needed" or "needy"? Explain.
- What are some things you can do that will make you able to help when you run into others who have needs?
- Describe a time when you helped meet someone else's needs. In what ways did your act of kindness bring you satisfaction?
- Do you know anyone with some specific needs? What are those needs? What can you do to help meet some of those needs?
- What immediate needs do you have that others could help you with? Share these with your group.

## NEXT STEPS

Here are some specific things you can do this week to help you quench your thirst for God by helping someone else in need:

Earlier, you identified the immediate needs of someone you know. This week, do something to help that person get those needs met. If their needs are greater than you can meet on your own, consider asking your family, friends, or LifeGroup to help you.

One reason we don't help others like we should is that we're not in a position where we can: spiritually, mentally, physically, or financially. Earlier, you listed some things you could do to help you help others, meeting needs as you encounter them. Act on those things this week. Start by making a plan.

**Use these prayer tips to talk it over with God and to expand your conversations both in person and online:**

- Ask God to make you hunger and thirst for Him.
- In prayer, confess any areas of your life that are causing you to lose your thirst for God. Ask Him to change these areas, and to show you what you can do.
- Tell God what your needs are. Ask Him to comfort you and to help you get your needs met.
- Ask God to send you opportunities to help others in need. Ask Him to give you whatever you'll need to help meet those needs.
- Pray for the needs of your friends, your family, your co-workers, and your LifeGroup. Ask God to supply ways to meet those needs.

## RED LETTER WORDS—4 “IT IS FINISHED!”

Later, knowing that all was now completed, and so that the Scripture would be fulfilled, Jesus said, "I am thirsty." 29 A jar of wine vinegar was there, so they soaked a sponge in it, put the sponge on a stalk of the hyssop plant, and lifted it to Jesus' lips. 30 When he had received the drink, Jesus said, "It is finished." With that, he bowed his head and gave up his spirit. John 19:28-30

*tetelestai* (te-tel-les'-ty); to end, complete, execute, discharge a debt.

- WE HAVE UNFINISHED BUSINESS.

...I know your deeds; you have a reputation of being alive, but you are dead. 2 Wake up! Strengthen what remains and is about to die, for I have not found your deeds complete in the sight of my God. Rev 3:1-2

- IDENTIFY YOUR UNFINISHED BUSINESS.

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## FINISHING STRONG

### 1) MAKE A COMMITMENT.

Now finish the work, so that your eager willingness to do it may be matched by your completion of it, according to your means. 2 Cor 8:11

Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done. Luke 22:42

### 2) TAKE THE NEXT STEP.

Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit. Gal 5:25

Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path. Ps 119:105

## WHAT'S YOUR NEXT STEP?

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...being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus. Phil 1:6

However, I consider my life worth nothing to me, if only I may finish the race and complete the task the Lord Jesus has given me—the task of testifying to the gospel of God's grace. Acts 20:24

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**With your Bible or YouVersion, read John 19:28-30 and Revelation 3:1-2.**

In John 19:28-30, Jesus' final words were "It is finished", indicating He had completed the task God sent Him to do. Just like Jesus had a specific task during His life, each one of us has specific things God has called us to do in our lives.

- What tasks or purposes do you feel God has called you to complete? What have you already completed for Him?
- As long as we are still living, we can be sure God's work in us and through us is not yet complete. We all have unfinished business. What is the unfinished business in your life?
- What is holding you back from completing your unfinished business?

**Read 2 Corinthians 8:10-12, Galatians 5:22-26, Philippians 1:3-6 and Acts 20:22-24.**

These passages give us the blueprint on how to finish strong and complete our unfinished business.

- What do these passages say to you about finishing strong?
- Describe a time when you finished strong. What did you learn from that accomplishment?
- A lot of people start, but few finish. Why do you think it is so hard for most of us to stay the course?
- Do people in today's world have trouble keeping their commitments? Why do you think that is?
- What is one thing you can do right now to help you finish strong? How will you take that next step?
- What are some specific ways your friends, family and LifeGroup can help you take your next step?

## NEXT STEPS

Here are some specific things you can do this week to help you work towards completing your unfinished business:

One of the best ways to uncover the tasks God has called you to do is to talk it over with a mature believer or someone you look up to. Identify who that person is for you. Spend time this week talking to that person. Ask them to help you process how to complete your unfinished business.

Earlier, you identified the unfinished business in your life and considered your next step toward finishing strong. Write this step down and keep it in a prominent place where you will see it often and be reminded of your unfinished business. Ask someone to hold you accountable until this step is complete. Once you have completed this step, ask God and others to help you identify the next task and to continue to hold you to it.

**Use these prayer tips to guide your time with God this week to expand your conversations both in person and online:**

- Ask God to reveal what your unfinished business is and how you can complete it.
- Commit to focusing on your task and finishing strong. Seek God's help and guidance as you identify your unfinished business.
- Ask God to show you what your next step should be as you complete the work God has called you to do.
- Ask God to remove the distractions in your life that are keeping you from taking your next step.
- Ask God to strengthen you to finish all of the tasks He has called you to do.

**RED LETTER DAY—5**  
**YOU WILL BE WITH ME IN PARADISE**

**WHEN YOU COMPARE YOURSELF WITH OTHER PEOPLE:**

- **YOU FEEL BETTER ABOUT YOURSELF.**
- **YOU FEEL WORSE ABOUT YOURSELF.**

*Two other men, both criminals, were also led out with (Christ) to be executed. 33 When they came to the place called the Skull, there they crucified (Jesus), along with the criminals — one on his right, the other on his left... Luke 23:32-33*

*39 One of the criminals who hung there hurled insults at (Jesus): "Aren't you the Christ? Save yourself and us!" 40 But the other criminal rebuked him. "Don't you fear God," he said, "since you are under the same sentence? 41 We are punished justly, for we are getting what our deeds deserve. But this man has done nothing wrong." 42 Then he said, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom." 43 Jesus answered him, "I tell you the truth, today you will be with me in paradise." Luke 23:32-33, 39-43*

**THE FORGIVEN ONE**

**1) ADMITS WRONG.**

*We are punished justly, for we are getting what our deeds deserve. But this man has done nothing wrong. Luke 23:41*

*For the person who keeps all of the laws except one is as guilty as a person who has broken all of God's laws. NLT James 2:10*

**2) ASKS FOR ETERNAL HELP.**

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

*Therefore no one will be declared righteous in (God's) sight by observing the law; rather, through the law we become conscious of sin. 21 But now a righteousness from God, apart from law, has been made known... 22 This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. Rom 3:20-22*

*Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. 1 Peter 1:3*

**TALK IT OVER**

- How did you rate on your scale of 1-100? What does your number say to you about where you stand with God?
- How have you relied on your own goodness to get right with God?
- Unlike the thieves, you still have time left to live. If Jesus really is the Son of God who died to offer you complete forgiveness, how does your life need to change?

God drew you here today to set your life on a new path. Talk about your experience with someone this week to help you process what you heard. Find resources to help at [www.lifechurch.tv/talkitover](http://www.lifechurch.tv/talkitover).

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**With your Bible or YouVersion, read Luke 23:26-43.**

This passage describes the two thieves that were crucified on both sides of Jesus. One insulted Jesus while the other called out to Jesus and trusted Him. The one who trusted was forgiven by Jesus and was given assurance of a place in heaven.

- On a scale from 1-100, how would you rate yourself as a person? What would you change if you could?
- How are we all like the two thieves on the cross?
- In what ways do you feel you have more going for you than most? In what ways do you feel inadequate compared to others?
- How have you relied on your own goodness to help you get right with God?

**Read Romans 3:19-26.**

These verses explain that we can never be good enough. We will always fall short of perfection. But through faith in Jesus, we can be made righteous – or perfect – in God's eyes.

- Describe your experience when you called out to God for forgiveness and accepted Christ as your Savior.
- How has God's forgiveness changed you?
- What does God's forgiveness teach you about how we should live our lives?
- Do you need to call out to God about any wrongs or weaknesses in your own life?
- In this week's sermon, we learned that good people don't go to heaven...forgiven people go to heaven. What does that statement mean to you?

## NEXT STEPS

Here are some specific things you can do this week to help you and those around you experience God's grace and forgiveness in a deeper way:

Spend time in prayer confessing the areas of your life where you need God's forgiveness. Be honest with God about your weaknesses and the areas where you most desperately need His help. Pray and consider whether to also seek the counsel of a mature, trusted believer.

Seek out someone you know who is in need of God's grace and forgiveness. Set aside time to visit with them over coffee, lunch or a common activity. Share how God's forgiveness has changed you. Take time to listen and respond to their questions. Pray and ask God to touch that person's heart as you visit with them.

**Use these prayer tips to guide your time with God this week and to expand your conversations with others.**

- Confess any wrongs in your life to God in prayer and ask for His grace and forgiveness.
- Have an honest conversation with God and assess where your current relationship is with Him. Ask for His continued grace and help as you grow in relationship with Him.
- Thank God for the ways His grace and forgiveness have changed you.
- Commit to God that you will model His grace and forgiveness in all areas of your life, especially in your relationships with others.
- Pray for those who do not know Christ as their Savior. Pray they will call out to Him and personally experience God's grace and forgiveness.