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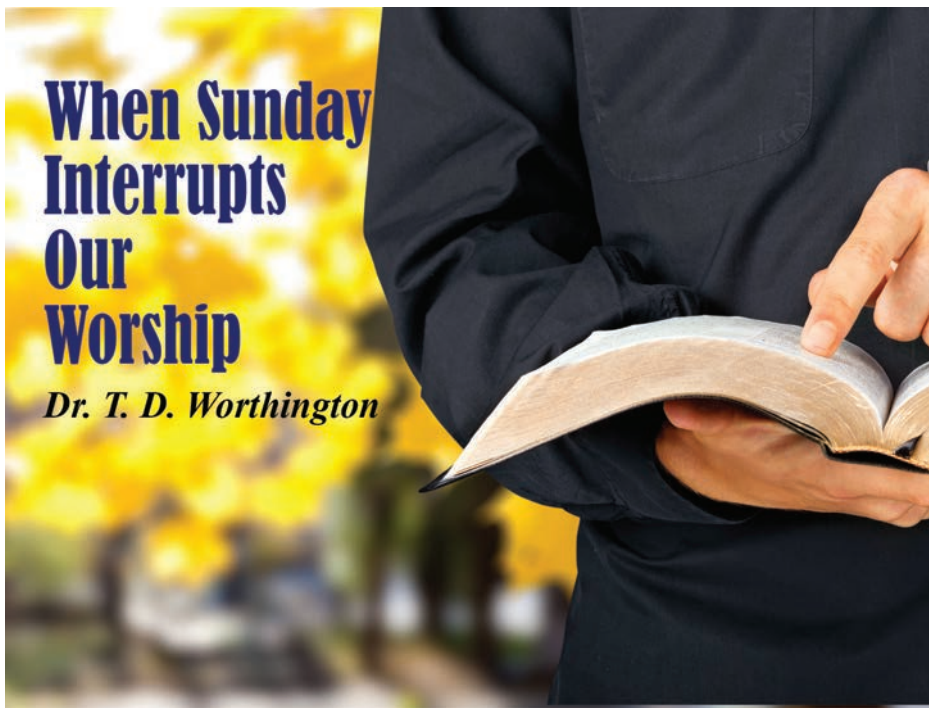
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I enjoy preaching to people at church, yet I also know that deep down some of them look forward to it being over. Let's be honest. Plans for lunch or for the evening can easily eclipse the wonder of gathering with God's people. Oh, I know these folks love the Lord and have a high regard for His church, after all no one forced them to come. Yet, many are still quietly yearning for the next thing on their calendar. When I say *"and finally,"* it can awaken even the most sleepy Christian from his deepest Sunday morning coma.

We all know we gather together to honor our Lord, but a temptation arises, to take Sundays for granted and start looking forward to what comes on Monday: to routines, relationships, events or activities, maybe even to work. Church slowly becomes an interruption in the week, instead of the exciting beginning of a new week of opportunities. How does the awe-inspiring weekly gathering of God's chosen people dissolve into an inconvenient intrusion in the flow of our lives?

If Sunday worship seems like an intrusion to you, its probably because it is. When God's children are often absent from church, it may be because they have started worshipping something else the rest of the week, and they enjoy what they worship the other six days so much that they hate to stop.

This is not a new thing. This is not just because of our modern day limited attention span. Actually Old Testament saints had the same problem. The prophet Amos writes,

"Hear this, O ye that swallow up the needy, even to make the poor of the land to fail, Saying, When will the new moon be gone, that we may sell corn? and the sabbath, that we may set forth wheat, making the ephah small, and the shekel great, and falsifying the balances by deceit?"

Amos 8:4-5

They were asking, *"when will corporate worship be over, so we can do what we really want?"* They were caught looking past

worship to what they really loved. They grumbled while considering worship like an aggravating stoplight on the freeway of life. The last words of every gathering had become the sweetest, simply because it meant they were finally dismissed.

Do you see how their hearts worked? They didn't skip worship. They were much too religious for that! They rigorously observed the new moon and Sabbath rituals as rigorously as anyone. But even before the call to worship, they wanted it to be over. They wanted to get on with their real lives. More specifically, they wanted to get back to making money and doing stuff they enjoyed. As strange as it may seem, the Sabbath was the day they actually worshipped the least. The gods that received their greatest allegiance were on the other days of the week. Pleasure and money were their gods, and the Sabbath worship of Jehovah was just another detour.

The new moon refers to monthly worship that took place in Israel (**Numbers 28:11-15**). God commanded Moses to mark the beginning of each month with a sacrifice; *"thou shalt offer it, a sacrifice made by fire, of a sweet savour unto the LORD"* (**Numbers 28:8**). Essentially, Israel held a monthly meal for Almighty God, to atone for sin, and to announce again their delight in and devotion to Him.

The Sabbath offering took place every week (**Numbers 28:9-10**), beginning while Israel wandered in the wilderness (**Exodus 16:23-29**). God said to Moses,

“Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work: But the seventh day is the sabbath of the LORD thy God:”

Exodus 20:8–10

Our Lord set this day aside for Himself and for the joy of His people. They were commanded by God to cease from their daily labors and pause to worship Him.

Because God commands our worship, it can subtly begin to feel like just another obligation rather than an immeasurable privilege. Make no mistake, it is an obligation. The God of heaven and earth orders us to come, but in ordering us, He does not burden us. He bids us into true glory and lasting joy. Has any law fallen more sweetly? When God commands us to worship, He commands what will make us happiest, like forcing us to spend an extra summer day along the shore of our favorite beach. This commandment is not burdensome; it is unbelievably beautiful.

As irresistible as the promise is, the warning is every bit as severe. If we begin, subtly or overtly, to despise the corporate worship of our God for the greener, more profitable grasses of the week, God notices. During the time of Amos, Israel was as healthy, wealthy, and prosperous as ever, giving them a false sense of security and independence. Worship had become just the icing on the cake, and they were considering cutting out the extra calories.

When Israel started overlooking the Sabbath, God gave them a stern warning;

“Behold, the days come, saith the Lord GOD, that I will send a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the LORD: And they shall wander from sea to sea, and from the north even to the east, they shall run to and fro to seek the word of the LORD, and shall not find it.”

Amos 8:11–12

This famine will not be of food or water, but of God. He will withdraw Himself. Because they took worship for granted, they would soon find themselves needing God and they would search the whole earth for His voice. But, they will search in vain. Having struck gold as a people, without having done anything to deserve to have the true God as their God, they had deserted the mines to make a few extra pennies. Now, they have lost their great blessing and privilege.

The warning and promise are no less serious for us today: Any of us who despise worship, or takes it for granted, or devalues its worth, invites the horror of a world without the fellowship of our Lord. And, if that world doesn't sound all that horrible to us, we are the most vulnerable of all.

We may never say it out loud, but some of us wouldn't mind a heaven without God, as long as it was a better, safer, more secure version of what we've got going right now. That's why Sundays feel inconvenient, and a little intrusive. We have started to treat God like a nice addition to the good life, instead of seeing Him as the One who gives us the good life in the first place. Sadly, many won't

realize how precious it is to be able to come to God's house and worship Him, until you really need Him, and you hunt high and low for Him to no avail.

So, people will continue to ask, “when will this worship service be over? When will Worthington end this message?” If the thought persists, imagine God withholding the manifestation of His Word from you. Imagine the new heaven and new earth, where God Himself will replace the sun (*Isaiah 60:19*). Then remember the wonder that God has given us Himself and His Word. Through Christ He has adopted us into His family, and lovingly commanded us to cease from our own pursuits long enough to spend a couple of hours and enjoy Him in worship.

How do we avoid falling into such a temptation, folly, and judgment? By prizing the God of worship above all else. Never has there been a gathering like the church on earth. It is a powerful and incomparable gathering, and we are invited into that gathering every Lord's Day. But, when we begin to look at coming to God's house as just an interruption to what we enjoy most, then something is definitely wrong. Perhaps it is because we are looking at Sunday as just an interruption to what we worship the rest of the week.



Dr. Worthington has been in the ministry for over forty-five years and serves as President of Pathway Ministries and Christian Bible College.



We want to teach our children so many things. Unfortunately, we don't always succeed. Our children are such a blessing in so many ways. We often forget to remember how special they are. Our lives get so busy with trying to meet our responsibilities and worrying about the problems of this world that we don't enjoy the beautiful blessings in life. I was having a typical week, and God used one of my students to teach me a very valuable lesson. One that I knew in the back of my mind, but it immediately came to the forefront.

The bell rang to begin our school day. One of my students walked by, and I greeted him. *"Good morning! How are you today?"*

"Tired"

"Tired! What kind of answer is that? What do you have to be tired about?"

In my mind, I thought, *"He is just a kid."* What does he have to be tired about? It wasn't like he had adult responsibilities. I had to chuckle. I thought, *"You just wait. You haven't seen tired yet."*

I assumed this young person had been goofing off late the night before. I just knew he didn't know what being tired was all about. But, I was wrong. He had been helping his grandfather unload a truck until the late evening. His muscles were very sore, and he was truthful when he said he was tired.

I took for granted that his response was from the typical reasons some of the teenagers in my class wanted to sleep. They sometimes kept late hours, and it was not because they were being studious and putting forth every effort on their homework.

Why did I take his statement for granted? I was expecting the

typical reasons. It reminded me to be careful what I take for granted. It is so dangerous to take things for granted.

Many of us take this beautiful world for granted. I know that it has some ugliness in it, but how can a rainbow be ugly? Its colors are so beautiful. When a bird soars through the air, it reminds me that God promises to take care of me just as he does the little sparrow. When I see the beautiful things in this world, it reminds me to be thankful for my eyesight. How many people are only thankful after they lose their sight? We just seem to take our sight for granted.

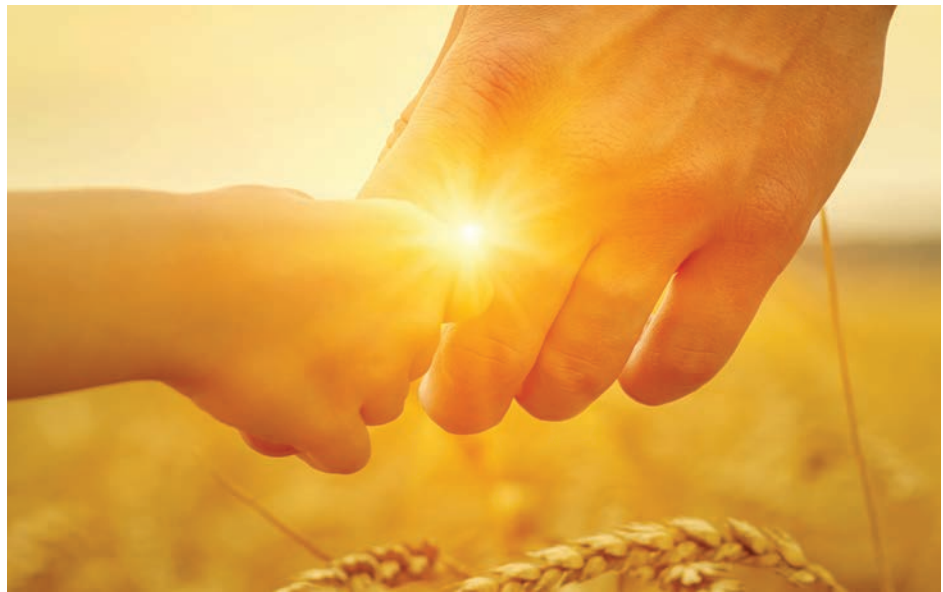
Many of us take the ability to walk for granted. Sometimes, one of the hardest things for me to do each day is to get out of bed. I lie there wishing the alarm clock hadn't gone off, and I start to feel sorry for

myself. Then I start feeling guilty because I know many people who have a much harder time getting out of bed than I do. They have diseases, or they are victims of strokes or car accidents. I really take the ability to get out of bed for granted. It is not hard at all. Let me not wait to be thankful after I lose my ability. Thank you, Lord, that I can walk.

We also take people we love for granted. Many of us take our parents for granted. I am not just talking about young people living at home, but those children who have long had their own place. The experience in our parents' gray hairs should not be ignored. But we do, don't we. How many of our parents go weeks without a call or a visit? Should that be? Are we that busy? One day, we will be the lonely old people staying alone that no one has time to come and see. Don't wait until our parents are dead to be grateful. Many times, when parents or grandparents die, the children and grandchildren are filled with regrets because they wish they had visited them more. It is too late to be grateful when our loved ones are in the grave.

Don't we take our children for granted? We are so busy doing things that enjoying the special moments escape us. Then one day, we turn around, and they are grown. Our children are not begging for our attention as they once did. We are begging for theirs. Too late! Those bonds are formed when they are young. Aren't our children one of the most important things we can focus our time on? I think so!

Many marriages split up or cease to be what they should be because



husbands and wives take each other for granted. The romance is gone. The marriage is a business. Chores are divided, and responsibilities are accessed. The routine is established. The marriage is a well-greased machine. Even the bedroom is a scheduled event. There is no communication about what is on the inside. Time is spent just dealing with problems and incidentals. Then something happens. One spouse decides to leave. Why? Because the marriage for all practical purposes ceased to be. It is wrong to give up on marriage, but it is also wrong to take your spouse for granted. Don't wait until one of you dies or leaves to appreciate what you have. It will be too late then.

Sadly, we also take our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, for granted. He died for us. He gave up everything. He was on the throne, but He came to earth to be beaten, die on the cross, and rise again so we could go to Heaven. He is in Heaven now, making intercession for us when we pray. He knows how we feel when we hurt, and He identifies with our pain. Yet, we ignore Him. We only get serious about praying when we

need something. We expect Him to be our genie in a bottle and grant our every wish. Yet, we live how we want to live with no thought of Him. We only stand for Him when there is no risk. When we stand before Him one day, will we be ashamed? We need to be grateful now. How do you show gratitude to the Lord? We need to follow the greatest commandment. We should love Him with all our heart, soul, and mind (Matthew 22:37). It should be obvious in our daily walk.

Nothing good comes from taking things or people for granted. The next time you say thank you for something, really think about what you are saying. Concentrate on your blessings. We have so much to be thankful for. Do not let it pass us by. Thankful hearts are grateful hearts.



Mrs. Worthington has five children and twelve grandchildren. She serves as Principal of Pathway Christian Academy in Goldsboro.



A Blessed Life

Are you blessed and joyful? Do you find fulfillment in your everyday life? **Psalm 1** shares six short verses about the life God blesses. This is God's prescription for happiness.

The Bible shows that being blessed directly relates to the choices we make. It depends on the kind of people we are and the kind of people we choose to associate with. From God's point of view, there are only two ways to live because there are only two kinds of people in the world, and each has made a personal choice. There are the righteous and then there are the wicked. Everyone in the world falls into those two categories. **Psalm 1** shows us how the righteous live and why they are blessed. It also shows us the result

of both ways of life. If we want to be blessed by God, we need to pay attention to this psalm.

In **Psalm 1**, the blessing begins with what the righteous person does not do. He does not walk in the counsel of the ungodly. He does not stand in the way of sinners. He does not sit in the seat of scornful. Blessings come not only from what we do, but also from what we don't do. Blessed people avoid certain things. They avoid certain people and situations. They don't hang out just anywhere, and they don't quickly buy into every line of thinking. They are careful not to join themselves to the company of those who do not love the Lord. Going to church a couple of times a week will not undo the damage that hanging around the wrong people will cause.

This is one of the ministries of **GoMix Christian Radio**. We want to give you a safe and Godly place to hang out for a while. When you listen to much of the world's music

and programming, you are hanging out with the ungodly, the sinners, and the scornful. You electronically invite them into your car, home, or business. Christian radio provides you with an alternative.

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George Campbell
May 4, 1940 - August 14, 2023



Dr. Cecil Johnson
August 3, 1940 - August 24, 2023

Champions Along the Pathway

This past year two of the champions that God allowed me the privilege to serve with were taken to glory. Every now and then our Lord allows people to cross our pathway that enrich our lives and fortify our ministries. Over the years, many such souls have entered my life. Some appeared for a season, others continued with me for many years. These were men who helped shape my identity. These were men I could trust. I will miss their wisdom and influence.

George Campbell was such a friend. George was instrumental in allowing us to acquire **WZRU** and **WZRN**. Although he faced several handicaps in life, it did not stop him from aggressively pursuing his ambitions. Today, our Christian message reaches thousands of people because of the tireless efforts of George Campbell. At the age of 83, George went to be with his Lord back in August.

A few days later, **Dr. Cecil Johnson** was also promoted to glory. Cecil was the founder and past-president of **Christian Bible College**.

Under his tireless leadership the college helped thousands better equip themselves for Christian Service. I had the privilege of serving as vice-president of CBC for a number of years. Today Christian Bible College is another outreach ministry of Pathway. Cecil was also 83 years old.

I was thinking about how we have unique connections and distinct meanings attached to every friendship in our lives. We interact with our friends differently. I realize that although I am blessed with many friends, I will never have another friend exactly like them again. Yet, every time we get a grateful call from a lister of WZRU or WZRN, or I sign a diploma for a graduate of Christian Bible College, I will recall with fondness the influence of George Campbell and Dr. Cecil Johnson. Such were the giants that helped me along the journey.

T. D. Worthington

Dad, The Wolves Are Coming!

Protecting Her Purity

A Father's Fortress



Mrs. Amber Sherman

My husband and I often find ourselves talking about the suffering or trouble young people find themselves in. Being in youth ministry, as well as ministry to all ages, we come across many who (*themselves or their children*) have gotten off the right path somewhere along the line and are now enduring hardship. Unfortunately, many never stop to analyze where things truly went wrong.

A particular concern lately is how many Christian girls and young ladies do not seem to know what it means to dress like a godly young lady. I was talking with my husband about the boundaries my parents set forth in our home growing up and how only upon looking back did I see the filters it had put upon what came into my life. May I explain?

Growing up, my parents not only guarded what we wore, but where we went and with whom we went. I was not allowed to date until I was 16 and could drive myself home if a date went sideways. My clothing had to cover up what was supposed to be guarded from eyes other than that of my husband one day. My

dresses and skirts had to come to the knee (*including the slit*). My shorts had to be loose and come to the tip of my fingertips. My shirts could be sleeveless, but no bra straps or cleavage showing. My clothing had to be loose as well, protecting my body from perverted eyes that would care little for me and only for what they could gain from my flesh.

Why did my parents put down such “strict” rules? For one, my dad was a man, and he had the insight to know that he was the only one who would view me through the eyes of a father. He understood how the male mind works, and he was protecting me. I did not always appreciate it at the time, griping how other girls wore more lax clothing and I seemed outdated and out of style.

My mother supported my father. He would often tell her if our clothing was bordering on temptation to the male species...and she listened. She was the one who shopped for our clothes or talked to us if our clothing was borderline. We were not always happy with what we were told, but we had been trained and

raised to honor and obey our parents. Does this mean we always did? No, no child does. It does mean we were convicted when we did not, and we knew that what we were doing was wrong.

Can I tell you how this unconsciously helped me and saved me from harm and heartache? My parents' "boundaries" acted as a filter. I told my husband that there were so many guys who never approached me, though I knew they thought I was pretty. Why not? It was because of how I dressed and how I conducted myself. My clothing and my lifestyle proclaimed that I desired to live a pure life. Guys who were only interested in my body said, *"No thanks. I am not wasting my time with her."* Which consequently meant...I did not have my time wasted by them. I was young and gullible, as so many young girls are.

When young girls and ladies dress revealingly, they attract the wolves. I have lost count of the times I have heard young girls and women say, *"I always attract losers. What is wrong with me?"* Or I have heard others say, *"She is such a sweet and pretty girl. I don't know why she only gets the bad ones."* Clothing that is too tight, too low, too short, and too little attracts the wrong guys.

Fathers, it is your divinely appointed duty to protect and guard your daughter's physical and spiritual purity until the day she walks down the aisle, and you hand her over to her husband. It then becomes his duty to protect and guard her purity physically and spiritually. As you guard her until that day, be mindful that your little girl is only "little" in your eyes. The rest of the males in this world do not see her as such. Protect her, guide her, guard her... even if it makes her angry at this time when she lacks discernment.

Your daughter does not know how a man's mind works, so she cannot in her own perception know how crucial it is for her to dress in a godly and pure way. After marriage a young lady's eyes should be opened somewhat, and understanding should come for why you zealously

guarded her in this manner against those who would care little for her.

Mothers, it is your divinely appointed duty to support and respect your husband. When he comes to you and tries to tell you your daughter should not dress in a certain way, do not belittle him and brush his concerns aside. Do not take for granted that other men or teens will restrain themselves as your husband has done and is doing. Many will not. Do not forget that very few couples go to the altar intimately pure, if they marry at all. Many teens end up pregnant out of wedlock. Many women go on to their 2nd or 3rd marriage before finding the right kind of guy. There is a reason for this.

My parents' vigilance provided a shield of protection and a filtering of filth and waste from my life. There were so many battles I did not have to face due to this "filter" of godly apparel, combined with a caution of outside influences, and following Biblical principles. The Word of God commands us to be separate from the world – that includes how we dress and how we conduct ourselves.

"Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath



light with darkness? ... for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.”

2 Corinthians 6:14,16-18

Will you provide that for your daughter? She may not thank you now, but in years to come, she will. As will her husband and children. Future generations depend upon the discernment of the present. She will have so much more heading her way, things she is totally unprepared for, if you do not provide a fortress through filters.

My husband says: “A quick look around families today (even Christian ones) will show one word coming to the fore more than any other: dysfunction. Fatherless kids, marriage-less couples, break-ups, needless heartbreak, and a lack of true understanding of what

God’s design is for the family is the blame for this dysfunction.

While we could easily lay these failures at the feet of Biblical illiteracy, each home’s success or failures lay at the feet of the priest of the home: the fathers. God has charged fathers with the responsibility of safeguarding their wife, children, and home from the ravenous wolves that are plentiful out in the world.

Whether others could possibly be the reason for blame or not, ultimately the responsibility will rest on the dads. This is a high calling and certainly not an easy one – but it is one worth undertaking just the same.”



Mrs. Amber Sherman is the mother of four and serves as a teacher at Pathway Christian Academy in Goldsboro, NC

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Unacknowledged Blessings

We are all familiar with the narrative of Jesus feeding the five thousand found in **John 6:1-13** as well as in the other gospels. Jesus used a boy's lunch consisting of five loaves and two fish to feed five thousand men plus women and children.

In John's account, I recently noticed something that I don't believe I had noticed before. It was a detail that seems insignificant. As a teacher, I would have told my students that it did not belong in the paragraph because it was off topic with the rest of the paragraph. However, John, under inspiration of God, chose to include it. Verse **10** says, ***“And Jesus said, Make the men sit down. Now there was much grass in the place. So the men sat down, in number about five thousand.”*** Why do we need to know that there was much grass there?

Mark and Luke mention in their accounts that this incident took place in a desert area. I decided to ask a friend who had been to Israel what the terrain was like. His response was that most of Israel is rocky even in the desert. I imagine that if the disciples had made the people sit on rocky terrain, they would have complained about being uncomfortable, and the miracle and Jesus' words would have been lost in their grumbling. Apparently, God had not only provided the nourishment for all of those people, but He had also prepared a grassy area ahead of time as the setting for the miracle. The God of all comfort not only cares for providing our spiritual and emotional comfort. He is the source of our physical comforts also.

How often do we ignore the comforts that God sends our way just to brighten our days, and we fail to acknowledge them? Do we thank Him for the comfortable temperature and the padded pews at church so that we are not distracted from hearing His Word? Do we recognize His hand in the cool breeze that comes on a hot day? Do we thank Him for a peaceful summer evening? On a cold winter day, do we acknowledge the warmth of a comfortable home or the peacefulness of gently falling snow? Do we thank Him for the comfort of fellowship that we have with close friends? Do we thank Him for our pain-free days? Do we recognize His emotional comfort when we are hurting? Do we thank Him for the relaxing recliner or the comfortable bed to sleep in? Do we offer our appreciation to Him for the ability to share the comfort that He gives with others who are hurting?

So often, we only complain to Him when we perceive that we are uncomfortable in some way. We take our blessings for granted. What comforts has our Heavenly Father provided especially for you to show that He cares, and you have forgotten to thank Him? Ponder that! *(And don't forget to thank Him.)*



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