



## FAMILY DEVOTIONAL GUIDE & COLORING SHEETS

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# Shine

*scripture songs*

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# A Note from Carrie



Dear Friends and Families,

What a joy it is to share this devotional guide with you to read and color as you listen and sing along to Shine Scripture Songs!

My hope and prayer is that this album, along with these devotionals and coloring sheets, will be a tool God uses to help your children and families hide His Word and truth deep in your hearts.

God's Word is living and active, and we know that it changes us as we allow it to take root in our lives. I love to tell my kids that the Bible is like a treasure map, constantly revealing new things through the power of the Holy Spirit! What an adventure it is to open God's Word each day and discover what He has for us!

Thank you for using this resource! I would love for you to share the album with others so they, too, can sing along to Shine! And please feel free to share this devotional guide, available on my website at [carriegotchermusic.com](http://carriegotchermusic.com).

Many blessings to your family as you grow in God's Word and shine brightly for Christ!

Blessings,

Carrie Gotcher



# 01 Armor of God



**SCRIPTURE** Eph. 6:10-17

**SONG** Armor of God

Armor of God Verse: Eph. 6:10-17

As followers of Jesus, we have an enemy - the devil or deceiver. He is clever and crafty and is trying in all his ways and power to do just what his name says: deceive and trick us. But praise God that "He who is in us is greater than he who is in the world." (1 John 4:4) And with His greatness, God gives us constant and covering protection from the devil and his schemes. God gives us a full suit of armor to protect us from the evil one and to give us bold power to fight him off! Ephesians 6:10-17 describes this armor in detail and how it is God through the Spirit who gives us strength to stand. This isn't our own strength we gain by trying harder or working to be good - rather, it is the goodness, power and strength of God Almighty living inside of us. Paul is writing this letter and he tells us in chapter 6 verse 13 that with God's armor we can stand against the devil and ultimately overcome!

Here is the armor God gives us: He says we have His truth as a belt around our waist. A belt lets us stand tall and firm with our core engaged and that's what God's truth does. His truth is the Gospel of Jesus Christ - that Christ lived a perfect life then died and rose to defeat sin and death for every person. This truth as a belt is ever-present with us and centers our body in Him.

Next God gives us the breastplate of His righteousness covering our chest and protecting our heart. 2 Corinthians 5:21 says, "God made Him to be sin who knew no sin so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God." Righteousness is a big word for being holy and pure before God. By the blood of Jesus, we are told that we can have His righteousness. And that holiness covers our very heart that pumps life through our body.

God gives us the strongest footwear. He says to have our "feet fitted with the Gospel of peace" in verse 15. The word "Gospel" means good news. This is the best news - that in spite of our sin, we can have peace with God by the blood of Jesus. This good news of peace makes our steps firm and leads us on the path God has for us.

Paul tells us also to take up the shield of faith. Our faith and trust in God allows us to fight off the tricks and schemes the devil throws at us. Paul calls those the enemy's flaming arrows. They are aimed to pierce our hearts and make us doubt the goodness and truth of God. But the faith God pours into our hearts acts as a strong shield against those attacks.

Last, Paul tells us to put on the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit (verse 17). The gift of salvation in Christ Jesus we wear in our battle as a helmet covering our heads. We wear it as a crown, protecting our minds and reminding us of the heavenly Kingdom we represent. The sword of the Spirit is the only defensive weapon we have in our fight. Clearly in its power it is the only one we need. Paul tells us the sword we use to attack the enemy is God's Word or the Bible. Just as Christ fought Satan in the wilderness using the Word (Matthew 4), so we equip ourselves for battle when we spend time in the word, studying it, reading it, praying it and singing it. His Word is alive inside of us and changes us from the inside out. (Hebrews 4:12) What a gift we have that we are not left alone in our battle against the deceiver in this world. In Christ, we are fully suited up in the living and powerful armor of God.



**BE STRONG IN THE LORD**  
*and in the strength*  
**OF HIS MIGHT.**

Breastplate of  
Righteousness

Helmet of  
Salvation

Shield of  
Faith

Belt of Truth

Sword of  
the Spirit

Shoes of the  
Gospel of Peace

**PUT ON THE FULL ARMOR**  
**OF GOD. — EPH. 6:10-11 —**



## 02 Fruit of the Spirit



**SCRIPTURE** Galatians 5:22-23, 25

**SONG** Fruit of the Spirit

The Fruit of the Spirit Verse: Galatians 5:22-23, 25

I love freshly grown fruit in the Summer. There is nothing here in West Texas quite like the sweetness of a juicy Pecos cantaloupe on a hot summer day. I love the amazing flavors of a home-grown tomato. They don't even taste like the ones you buy at the store. And yes, they are also a fruit. Growing up in Oklahoma, we loved to get fresh summertime Rush Springs watermelon or Porter peaches. Fresh fruit awakens the taste buds to the fullness of summertime.

In Galatians 5, Paul is reminding the Galatians what kind of fruit their lives produce by the power of the Spirit of God. He tells the believers that they should be filled with the Holy Spirit and produce its wonderful fruit. He tells us that the Spirit is at war with our flesh and they want the opposite of each other - the Spirit seeks to make life-giving fruit from the inside of us while the flesh seeks evil and destruction.

So how do we produce this good fruit and fight off the flesh? Is it by digging our heels in and trying as hard as we can to be good? I lived a lot of my life this way believing that the goodness in my life depended on me. We know we are all sinners. Romans 3:23 tells us "all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God..." But God didn't leave us in our sin! He also didn't put our righteousness on our own shoulders. Instead, he put it on His perfect Son on the cross. Colossians 2 tells us we were dead in our sin. But God "cancelled the record of debt that stood against us...nailing it to the cross." What a relief that none of us have to try to be perfect. Christ was perfect for us and still took our sins to the cross. Now, because of Christ, John 15 tells us He is the vine and we are the branches. Christ says if we "remain in Him [we] will bear much fruit." He says without Him we can do nothing. So how do we produce fruit? By simply abiding, living and resting in Christ. He is the source, the nourishment and the supplier of all of our goodness. Any fruit our lives produce is from His love and any goodness living inside of us and overflowing into the beautiful fruits of His Spirit: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.





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## 03 Extra Mile



**SCRIPTURE** Matthew 5:38–48

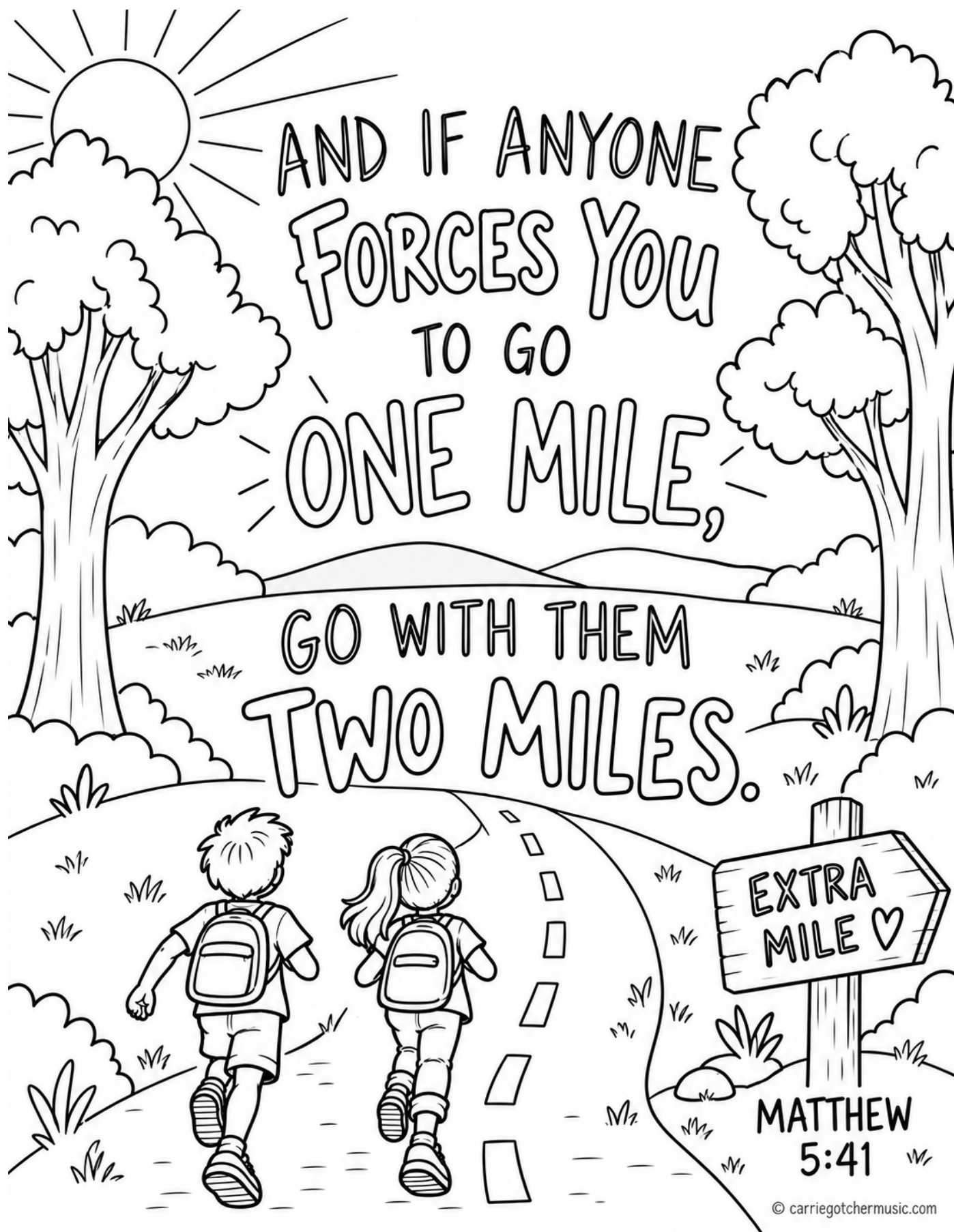
**SONG** Extra Mile

The Extra Mile Verse: Matthew 5:38–48

In Matthew 5, Jesus is giving his mountainside sermon. People came from miles around, filling the mountainside to hear Jesus' teaching. It was unlike anything they had ever heard. Throughout this message found in Matthew chapters 5 through 7, Jesus challenges the people around him to consider the true intent and heart of the law rather than trying to legalistically accomplish what it says. Jesus wants our hearts tuned to His, not just our actions. He shows us that pure actions flow from a heart changed by Him. In these chapters, Christ takes several points of the Law and says to not just live them, but to be changed by the Spirit's purpose in those laws. He's showing us in each of these Laws how not just to obey the law, but to lay our lives and will down by doing them. We often call Christ's Kingdom the "upside down Kingdom" because Jesus took what the people knew and turned it on its head. One example is found in Matthew 19 when Christ tells His disciples that many people who want to be first will be last and many that are last in this life will be first in the next. He again illustrates the upside down kingdom again in Matthew 20 when he tells his disciples that instead of looking to be important, His followers should seek to serve one another. These verses teach us what Christ wants life in the upside down kingdom to look like. We see the upside down kingdom throughout the Bible and especially in the life of Christ. Jesus could have come down as a royal king, but instead He was born in a stable amongst animals. We could also call it the sacrificial Kingdom because Jesus calls each of us to sacrifice our own desires as He did on the cross.

In Matthew 5:38, Jesus says the people have heard the phrase, "an eye for an eye." This was a law in Leviticus saying to give someone an equal punishment to the crime they committed. But Jesus flips that idea and tells us not to resist someone coming after us. He says if someone slaps us to turn the other cheek and be slapped again. This sounds crazy! But I believe Jesus' point was to go above and beyond for the people around us - even our enemies. He goes on to encourage His followers to give their shirt and coat for someone, to walk an extra mile with them, and even to love our enemies. What could be more upside down than that? Turning the other cheek, giving even the clothes on our backs, walking an extra mile for someone, and loving those who hate us show the sacrificial love of Christ. Jesus says in Luke 9:23, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will save it." Surely we can be inspired by the One who gave His very life for us to sacrifice ourselves in big and small ways everyday.







# 04 When I'm Afraid



**SCRIPTURE** Psalm 56:3-4, 8-11

**SONG** When I'm Afraid

When I'm Afraid Verse: Psalm 56:3-4, 8-11

In Psalm 56 we see David lay his heart before God. The story of what is happening in David's life when he writes this Psalm is found in 1 Samuel 21. David was being pursued by King Saul. King Saul was very jealous of David's military success. The Philistines were also after David, which made him feel surrounded. He says in Psalm 56:2, "my enemies trample on me all day long." David, who killed a lion with his bare hands and Goliath, the giant of the Philistines, with just a single stone, felt afraid and surrounded. But, David knew where to go with these feelings and where his previous strength had come from - the Lord! David cries out to God,

"When I'm afraid, I put my trust in You.

In God, whose word I praise,

In God I trust;

I shall not be afraid.

What can flesh do to me?" Psalm 56:3-4

When things feel heavy and dark our fear can seem overwhelming. However, in those moments, we like David know where to go. We know the source of light, power and strength - Yahweh, the Lord!

We see a perfect example of trusting Christ when we're afraid in Matthew 14. Jesus had just spoken to large crowds all day and fed over 5,000 people that evening on a mountainside. He fed such an enormous crowd with only 5 loaves and 2 fish. After such a big day, he sent the disciples ahead of Him to cross the sea. While they were out on the water, they saw something coming across the sea toward them. They were terrified! Finally, they realized it was Jesus walking out to them. Peter called out to Christ that if it was Him, to call Peter onto the water with Him. Christ told Peter to come, and in faith he did. Matthew 14:30 says, "But when he [Peter] saw the wind, he was afraid, and beginning to sink he cried out, 'Lord save me!'" Peter knew Jesus' power and was locked in on Him when he stepped out of the boat. But, as soon as he took his eyes off Jesus, he became afraid. This is so much like my own heart. When I keep my gaze on Christ, I feel His peace and power with me to live boldly in Him. When I lose focus on Christ in my life, I can so quickly be consumed with worry, anxiety and fear. Praise God in Christ that just as He did for Peter on the water, when we are falling Christ reaches out His hand and pulls us up again (Matthew 14:31).

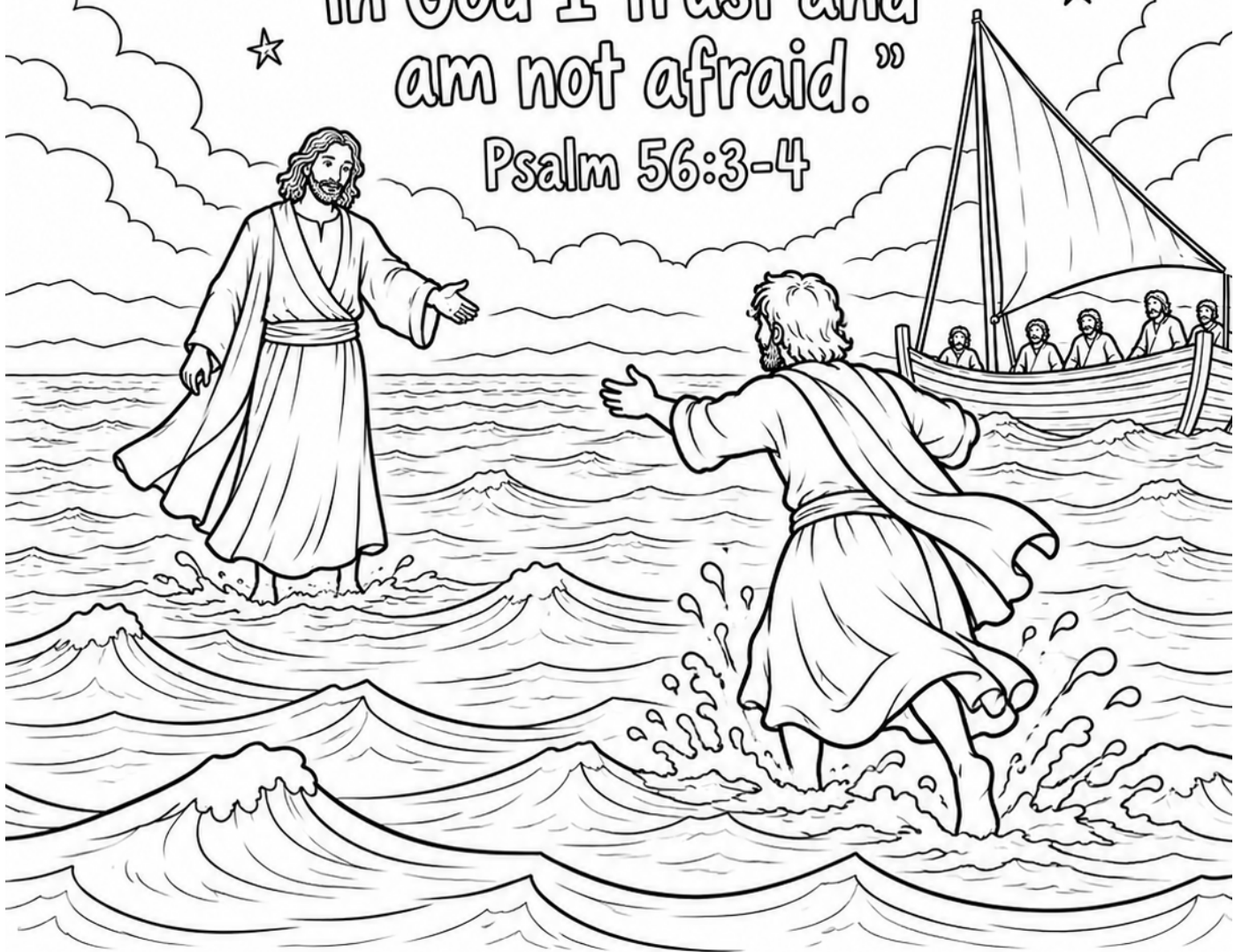
Looking back at Psalm 56 again, we see David tells us that God knows his longings and his tears. The same is true for us. Psalm 139 tells us that God knows our coming and our going. God knows our hearts and our ways. We can trust our awesome God who walks on water to hold us steady when we are afraid.



“When I’m afraid  
I put my trust  
in You.”

In God, whose word I praise –  
in God I trust and  
am not afraid.”

Psalm 56:3-4





# 05 The Lord's Prayer



**SCRIPTURE** Matt. 6:8-13

**SONG** The Lord's Prayer

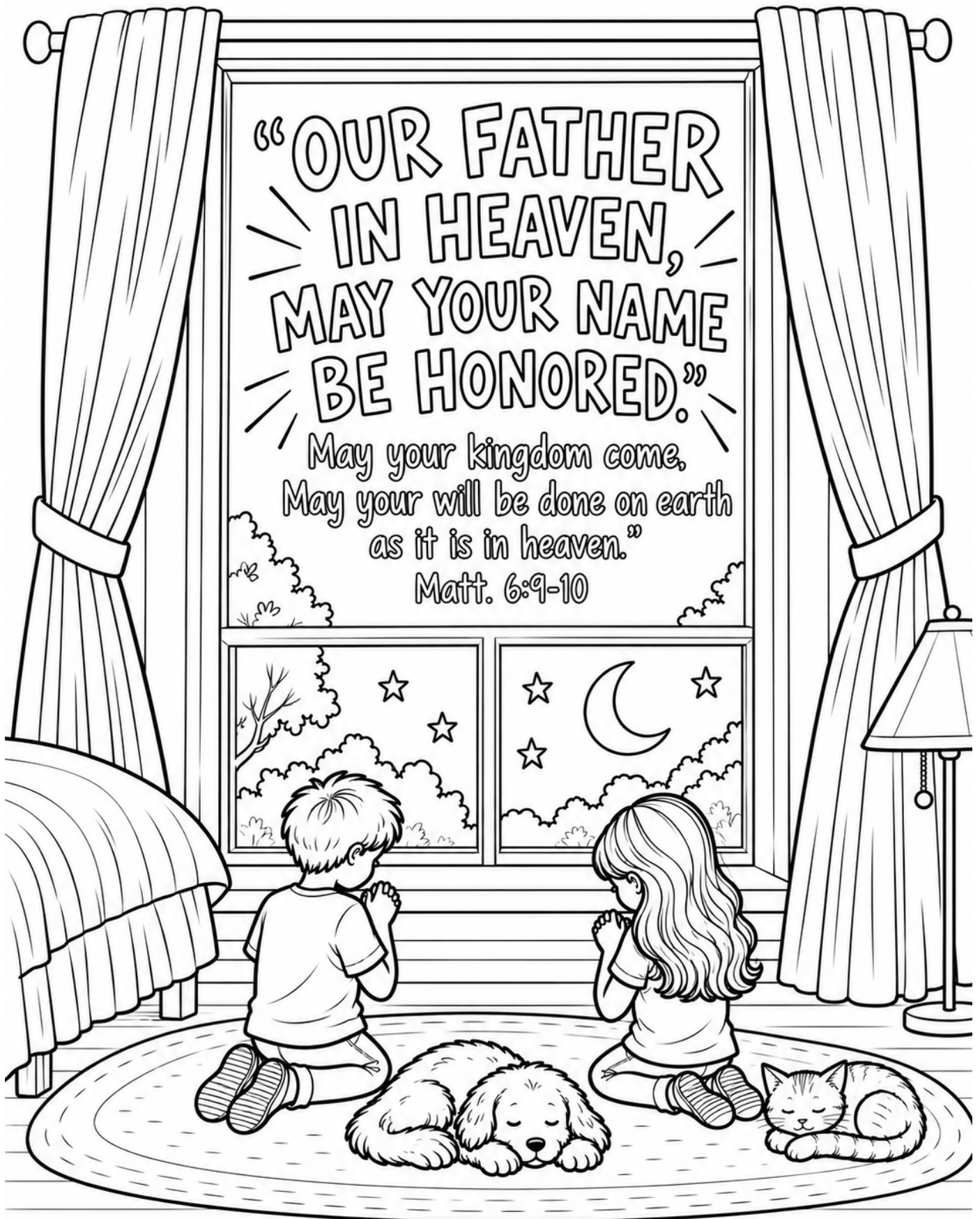
The Lord's Prayer Verse: Matt. 6:8-13

What an amazing thing prayer is! When I stop to consider that Yahweh - the I Am - the ever-being One and creator of the universe wants to talk and listen to me - it blows my mind!

God wants to know us intimately in prayer. In Matthew 6, Christ teaches us how to pray and talk to God the Father. The prayer He prays is both profound and simple. As Christians, we often say Christ has shown us the ACTS way to pray: Adoration, Confession, Thanksgiving and Supplication (asking). Christ begins with Adoration of the Father. When we adore someone, we want to spend time with them, talk with them and tell them and others how special they are. Who more should we do this with than our awesome creator God? Christ then prays for forgiveness or Confession of sin as an example for us. Christ lived a perfect life and did not need to confess anything, but He prays this as an example for us while knowing He was soon going to the cross to make that forgiveness possible for us. We also see in this prayer Christ was showing us to pray with Thankfulness. When we pray with thankfulness we set our hearts to trusting God's provision for our present and future. Finally we see Jesus pray with Supplication, or asking for what we need. He asks for bread, forgiveness and freedom from temptation. Christ uses clear and concise words, knowing the Father already knows what we need before we ask (Matt. 6:8)

Sometimes when we pray in front of other people, we can become focused on ourselves and on sounding eloquent and intelligent. Jesus warned us against this at the beginning of Matthew 6. God wants prayer to be a time we come before him and turn our minds and hearts before Him completely. When we do this, God blesses us in incredible ways. Paul says in Phillipians 4:6-7 that because of God's goodness, we don't have to worry about anything. He says we can unload all our worries right at Jesus' feet in prayer. And He reminds us to do this in a spirit of thankfulness - knowing that the work and help we need has already been done by Christ on the cross. When we pray with open and surrendered hearts, Paul says God gives us His "peace that passes understanding." What an incredible gift! If you don't know how to pray like this or want a more open heart before God, simply ask Him for it. James 1:5 says that He gives wisdom to all without finding fault. God wants to help us as we come before Him. Ultimately, He has given us the ability and made the way for us to talk to Him. Let's take advantage of this all day every day.







# 06 Fearfully and Wonderfully Made



SCRIPTURE Psalm 139

SONG Fearfully and Wonderfully Made

Fearfully and Wonderfully Made Verse: Psalm 139

You were made on purpose. What an incredible thought! The God who made everything planned you specifically. I love Psalm 139 because it details this truth for us. Psalm 139:13 tells that God made us each in our mother's womb. God formed each of us in the depths and knows us completely. Verse 16 tells us that before we even had a form, God knew us. He knows us better than we know ourselves. And he knows the length and number of all our days (verse 16). God has a complete plan for each of our lives. I find it so comforting that God loves each of us, His wonderful creation, so deeply. We can trust Him with every part of our lives - the huge decisions that weigh on us and the little daily decisions that mark our steps. God is in all of it! The beginning of Psalm 139 tells us that God searches our hearts, He knows our actions and our thoughts before we even make or have them. And even more than that, in the midst of all of our movements, God is caring for us. The CSB version of Psalm 139 says that God encircles us. He's a covering all around His children.

There are some big words for how God is over all things, knows all things and is present in all things. The word "sovereign" is a big word for the truth that God is over all or in charge of everything. To be sovereign over something is to reign or preside over someone or something. God is sovereign over our lives. He allows us free will to make choices, but He has the ultimate say in everything that happens in our lives and in our world. God is sovereign over our activities, our thoughts and our actions. Psalm 139:1-3 (NIV) says,

"You have searched me, Lord,

and you know me.

You know when I sit and when I rise;

You perceive my thoughts from afar.

You discern my going out and lying down;

You are familiar with all my ways."

"Omniscient" is a fancy word for one that knows all things. God is the only true God and is truly all-knowing. Psalm 139:4 says that before a word is even on our tongues, God knows them. Romans 11:36 says, "For from Him and through Him and to him are all things." In Luke 12, Jesus tells His followers not to worry, because "even the very hairs of your head are numbered." God knows and cares about all the details of our lives - even down to the smallest thing like the number of hairs on our heads.

"Omnipresent" is a word that means that God is everywhere all at once. By His Spirit, God is always with us no matter where we are or what we do. David describes God's omnipresence in Psalm 139:7-10 (NIV) by saying,

"Where can I go from your Spirit?



Where can I flee from your presence?

If I go up to the heavens you are there.

If I make my bed in the depths you are there.

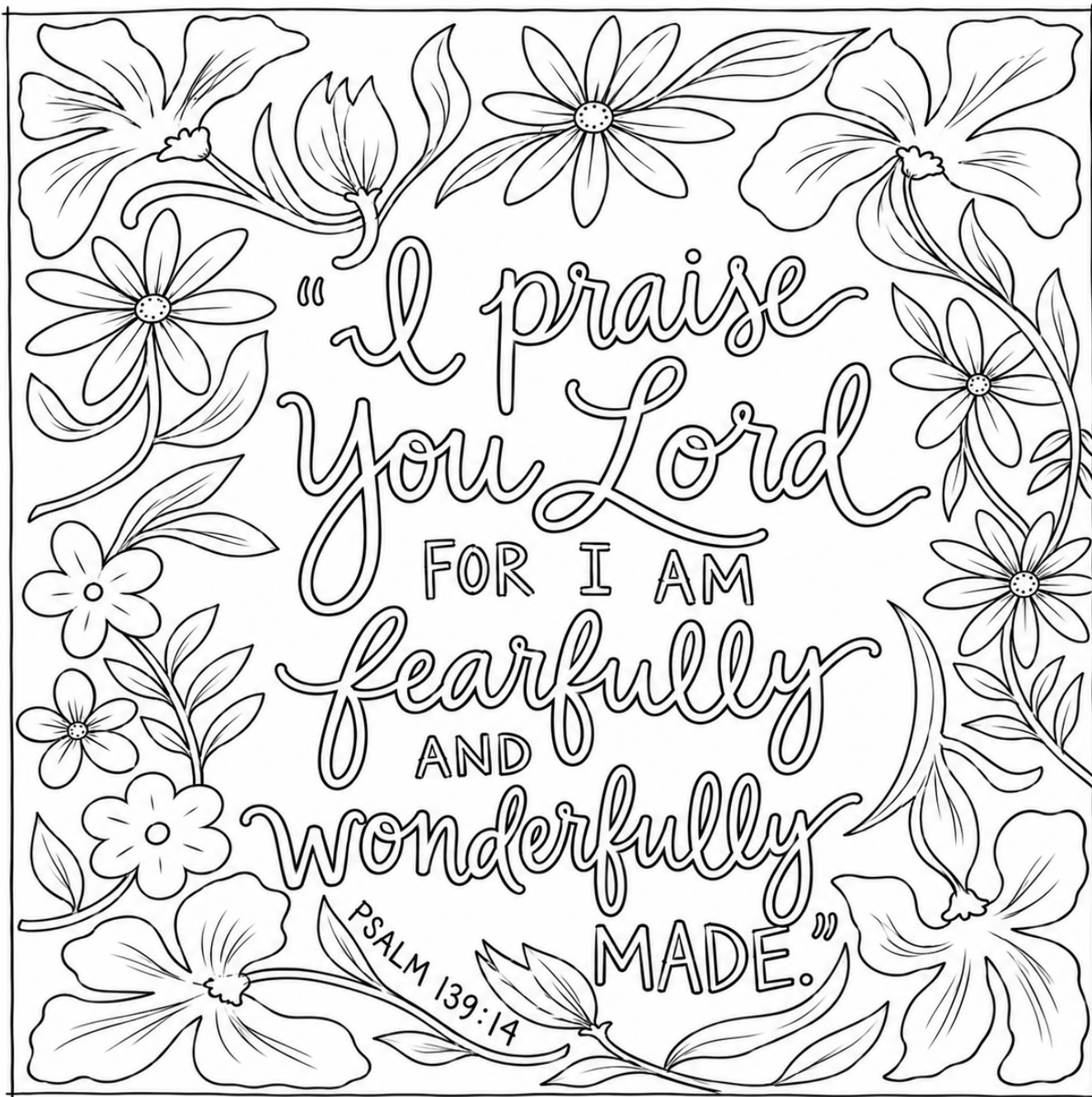
If I rise on the wings of the dawn,

if I settle on the far side of the sea,

even there your hand will guide me,

your right hand will hold me fast."

It is an incredible blessing that the God who is over all, knows all, and made all knows each of us and cares for us so deeply that He sent His perfect Son to give His life and make a way for us to Him.





# 07 Don't You Know?



## SCRIPTURE

SONG Don't You Know?

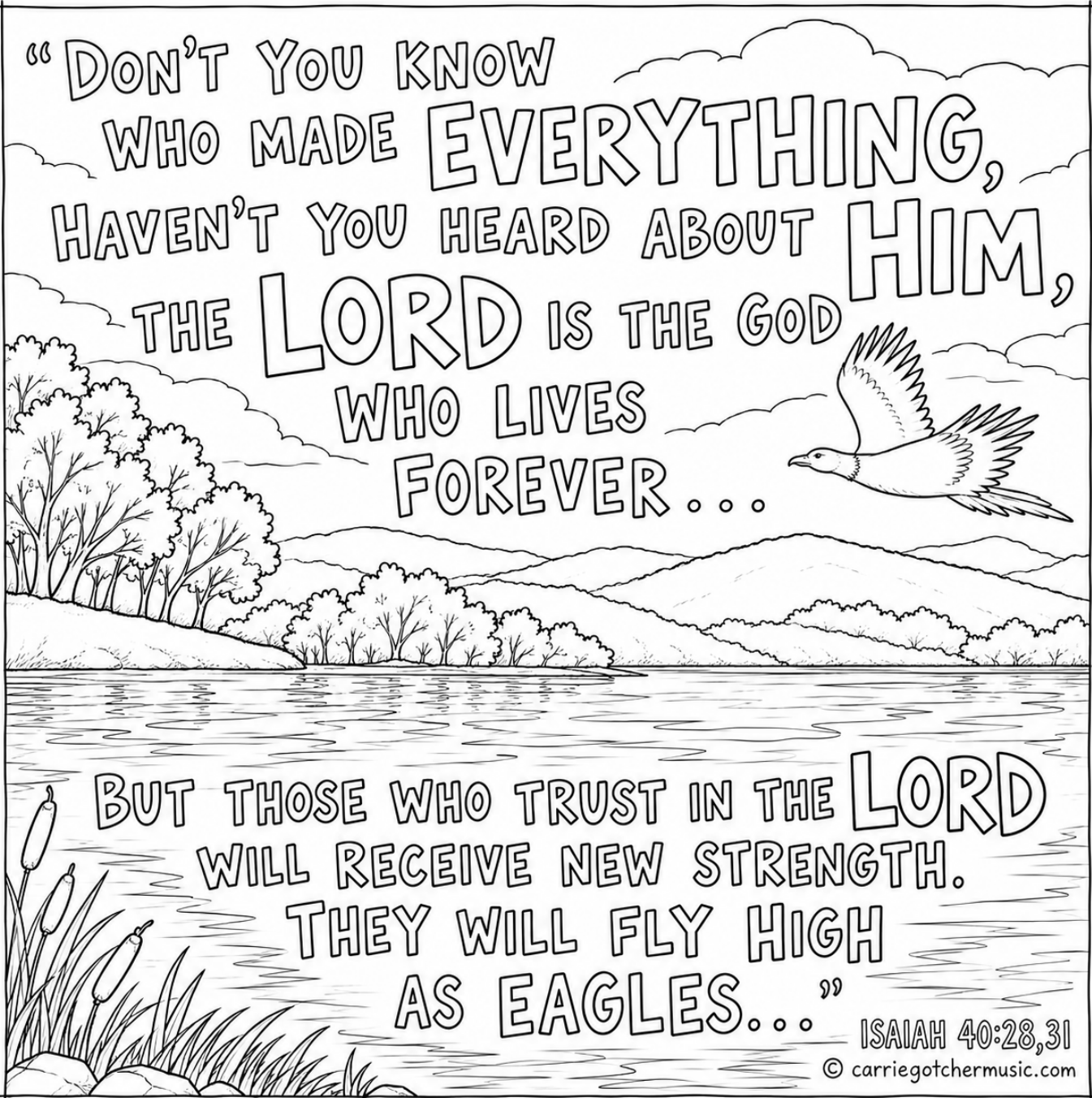
Don't You Know? Scripture: Is. 40:28-31

Have you ever set an alarm to wake you up thinking it will softly ease you up from your slumber only to be jolted by a blaring horn at full volume demanding your attention? It can be so disorienting and such a hard way to wake up. It seems this is what the prophet Isaiah is expressing in Isaiah 40. Isaiah cries out to the people of Israel in verse 28, "Do you not know? Have you not heard? The Lord is the everlasting God, the creator of the ends of the earth." It's as if Isaiah is shouting, "Wake up people! The God of the Universe is your God! You know Him and He is with you!" I love this passage of scripture because in it the prophet Isaiah proclaims the incredible nature of our God. He is the only true God and is with us to strengthen and lead us beyond what we can imagine.

In verse 28, Isaiah calls God "Yahweh." This is the personal name God gives himself to Moses at the burning bush in Exodus 3. There the Lord tells Moses His name is basically "I Am" or the "ever-being One" named Yahweh. Isaiah says this Yahweh is the One who made everything in Genesis 1. He is the One with perfect understanding who never gets tired. Can you imagine being in charge of everything and never getting sleepy or overwhelmed? God's strength and stamina are beyond that of even the strongest Olympic athlete. And our Lord, Yahweh, sees everything in this world and in our hearts clearly.

The next few verses I find so encouraging because they tell us that God shares all His goodness with us - His kids who believe and trust in Him. We are His beloved creation. God gives power to the struggling and strength to the hurting and weak. The apostle Paul through the Spirit tells us that getting to our weakest point and relying on Christ's strength can be the best place for us. He says in 2 Corinthians 12:9-10 that at our lowest point we must rely on Christ's strength and through Him "when [we] are weak, then [we] are strong." But our generous and loving God doesn't give us a small amount of strength. Isaiah finishes this passage saying that when we wait for and trust in the Lord for our strength that we soar like a majestic eagle. Through God's power we can face all things in our day knowing that we have His strength to fly and overcome. Maybe tomorrow morning when we hear our alarm go off we can remember Isaiah's wake-up call to the Israelites - that the Almighty and Everlasting God has all the power and He invites us to take His strength to face the day!





“DON'T YOU KNOW  
WHO MADE **EVERYTHING**,  
HAVEN'T YOU HEARD ABOUT **HIM**,  
THE **LORD** IS THE GOD  
WHO LIVES  
FOREVER...

BUT THOSE WHO TRUST IN THE **LORD**  
WILL RECEIVE NEW STRENGTH.  
THEY WILL FLY HIGH  
AS EAGLES...”

ISAIAH 40:28,31

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# 08 In the Beginning



**SCRIPTURE** Gen. 1-2:2

**SONG** In the Beginning

In the Beginning Verse: Gen. 1-2:2

In the beginning, God created everything! This was the beginning of time for the earth and creation but not for God. He has always been! (Rev. 1:8, Ps. 90:2) What a hard idea for our minds to understand. We see in Genesis 1:1, that God made life as we know it from nothing. God spoke and made light! God said the word and sky, earth and seas formed. At His mere command God made everything from nothing.

A beautiful thing we see in scripture is that God the Father, Son and Spirit were all present at Creation! The Hebrew word for God used in Genesis 1 is Elohim, which means a singular God in plural (or multiple) form. We know God the Father was speaking creation into existence. Genesis 1:2 tells us that God the Spirit was there hovering over the waters. John 1 also tells us that in the beginning of creation was the Word and this Word is Jesus Christ. Colossians 1:16-17 tells us that everything was created by Christ! As Bible teacher Tara Leigh Cobble explains, Jesus was present at the beginning and doing much of the work of creation. It is beautiful and amazing to see all 3 parts of God present at creation.

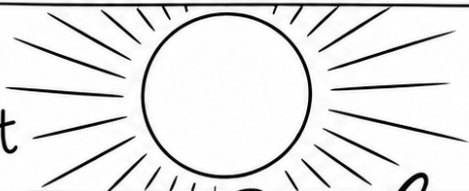
God the Father, Son and Spirit, did this incredible thing in 6 days. He made everything, from the glowing fiery sun to give us warmth and daylight, to the tiniest crustacean and the tallest giraffe. God honed His creative powers to make all parts of our vast and majestic earth. He looked at each part of His marvelous creation and said it was "good." After God made man on day 6, He said it was "very good." The world had order, beauty and peace in the beginning. All was as it was intended to be in the garden. After His incredible work, on the 7th day God called for a day of rest. A break for Father, Son and Spirit. I wonder if God took this rest to take in all His awesome work - the mighty mountains, the crashing waves, the fuzzy grizzly bear and the stunning desert rose. God's beauty and majesty are on display for all the world to enjoy. Romans 1:20 tells us, "For since the creation of the world, God's invisible qualities - His external powers and divine nature - have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that people are without excuse." All of God's creation points us back to Him!



# IN THE BEGINNING

DAY 1

Light



DAY 2

Water



Skies

*God created*

DAY 3

Land,  
Seas,  
Plants



DAY 4

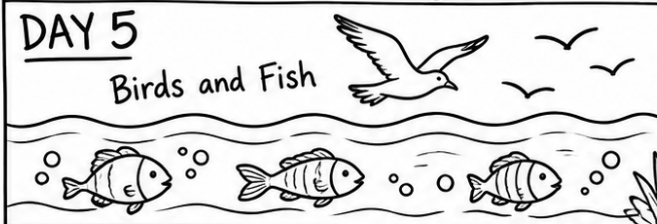
Sun, Moon  
and Stars



*the earth*

DAY 5

Birds and Fish



DAY 6

Animals  
and Man



DAY 7

God Rested



"... so on the seventh  
day He rested from all  
His work."

GENESIS 2:2

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# 09 Long, Wide, High and Deep



**SCRIPTURE** Eph. 3:14-19

**SONG** Long, Wide, High and Deep

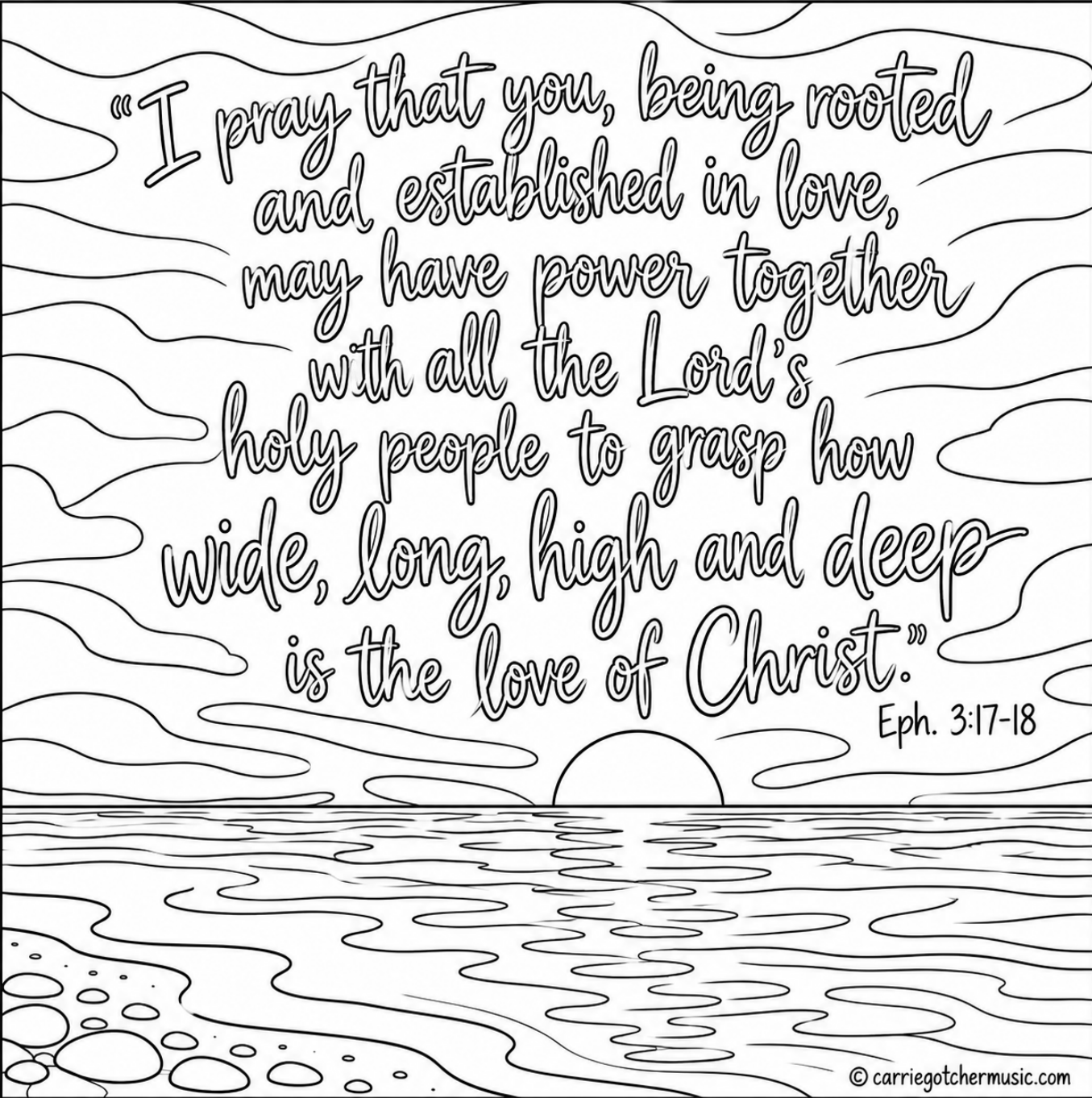
Long, Wide, High and Deep Verse: Eph. 3:14-19

Have you ever considered how vast the ocean is? There is over 139 million square miles of ocean - and that is just the surface area! There are parts of the ocean so deep that they have hardly been seen or explored by humans. This depth and width is overwhelming and hard for our minds to comprehend. It reminds us of how small we are in the scope of this great planet. The enormous ocean is mysterious and overwhelming while also filled with such power and beauty. It is much like God's love for us!

Paul writes in his letter to the Ephesians that he is on his knees before God the Father, begging that we - His beloved creation - could have an inkling of Yahweh's (God's personal name) love for us. He says in verse 14 that all families of the earth are named by God - so we are named by Him and made in His image (Gen. 1:26). Paul prays that we would be strengthened by the power of the Spirit (vs. 16-17) to have Christ living inside our hearts. With Christ living in us, we are rooted in His love and because of that we are able to gain a small measure of understanding of God the Father's great love for us - how, long, wide, high and deep this incredible love is! Paul says this love is truly immeasurable. It's even greater than the gigantic ocean.

Paul ends this prayer to the Ephesians in chapter 3 verse 20 by reminding them that just as God's love is beyond understanding, so is His power. The God who created the universe and all things has power to do so far beyond what our finite minds can even imagine. His love is immeasurable and His power is limitless. The next time you see the grand ocean may it remind your heart that God's love for you and power in your life is even greater than that.





"I pray that you, being rooted  
and established in love,  
may have power together  
with all the Lord's  
holy people to grasp how  
wide, long, high and deep  
is the love of Christ."

Eph. 3:17-18

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# 10 Go, Go, Go!



**SCRIPTURE** Matthew 28:18-20

**SONG** Go, Go, Go!

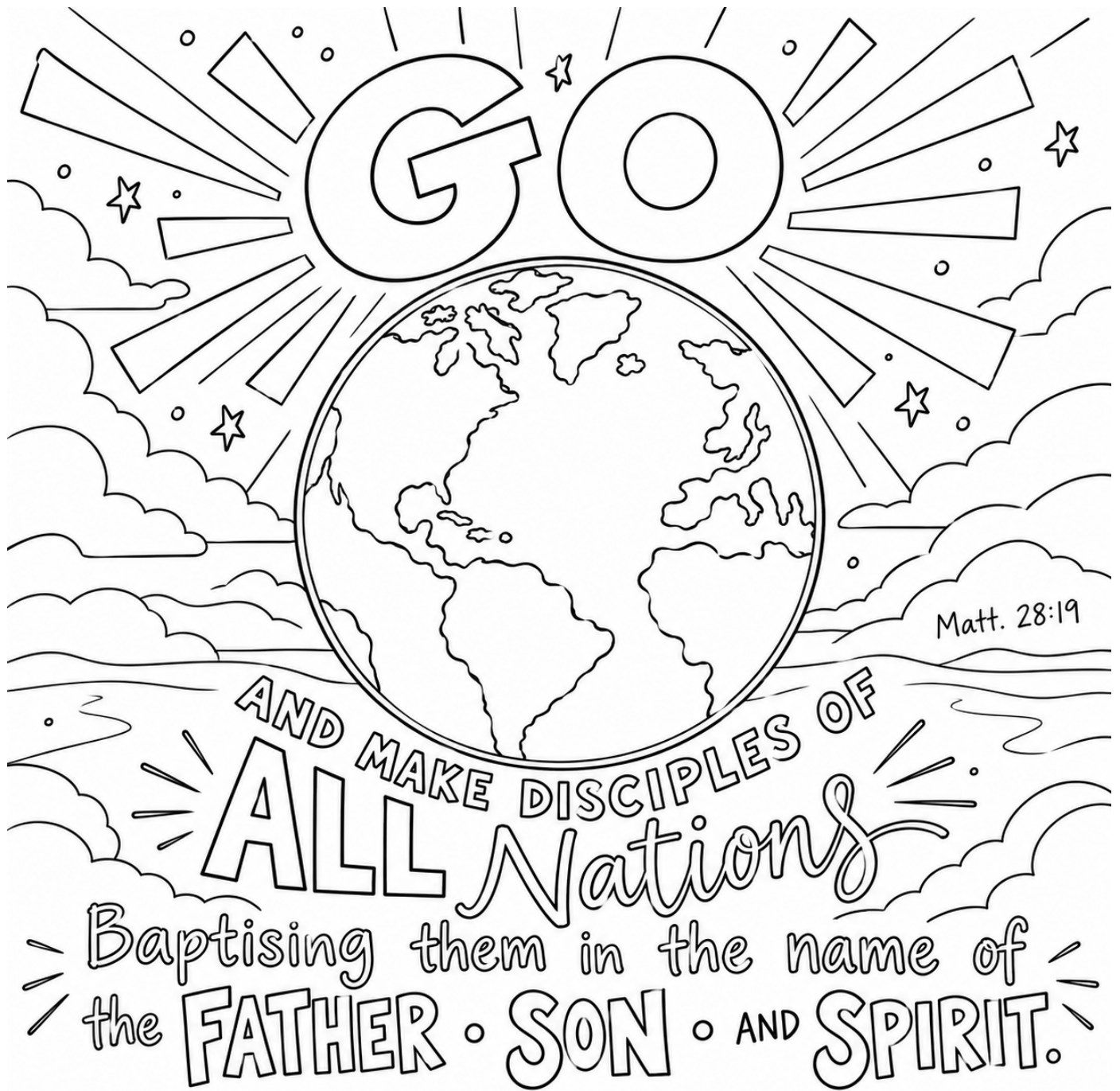
Go, Go, Go! Verse: Matthew 28:18-20

My husband and I love to travel. We love going to new places and experiencing new cultures. We love adventures - a beautiful hike, a canoe ride, biking in a new city, or soaring in a parachute. We have found that going to new places and doing new things pushes us out of our comfort zone and makes us rely in a greater way on God.

In Christ, each day of our Christian life can truly be an adventure! In Matthew 28 we read that Christ had died on the cross and had been raised back to life - the tomb was empty! Mary Magdalene and friends had gone to the tomb and instead of finding Jesus sealed inside there was a huge earthquake and a man in dazzling white rolled the stone away from Jesus' tomb and sat on it. He tells the stunned ladies, "He is not here for He has risen." (verse 6) He then tells them Jesus has gone ahead of them to Galilee. The disciples go there to where Jesus had previously told them to go and they see Jesus there. They all worship Him there - the risen Savior. Jesus gives the disciples an incredible calling. He first confirms to them that He has authority over all things both in heaven and on earth. How comforting it is to know Christ is greater than any other power in heaven or earth. He has defeated death and has the initial word AND final say in all things. Jesus gives His disciples and all believers here an incredible mission. He tells them to "Go and make disciples of all nations." He says to share His truth and teaching and to baptize people in His name. And he ends with the wonderful promise that He is with us to the very end. Christ doesn't leave us alone to go and share. In fact, Philippians 2:13 tells us it is the Father "working in us to will and to act." When we love Jesus, His love and light will pour out of us and shine through us. Our deep love for him compels us to share it with everyone we meet!

God may call us to go near or far to share His love and help make disciples. In Christ, truly every day can be a grand adventure in sharing who He is and what He has done. I once heard the wonderful writer and speaker Jill Briscoe share that each of our mission fields is right between our two feet. I love that image - wherever we are, that is where we are to spread Christ's love and truth! So go ahead - take that leap of faith even if it means jumping right where you are to share the Gospel of God's overwhelming love in Christ!







# 11 Shine Like Stars



**SCRIPTURE** Philippians 2:13-14

**SONG** Shine Like Stars

Shine Like Stars Verse: Philippians 2:13-14

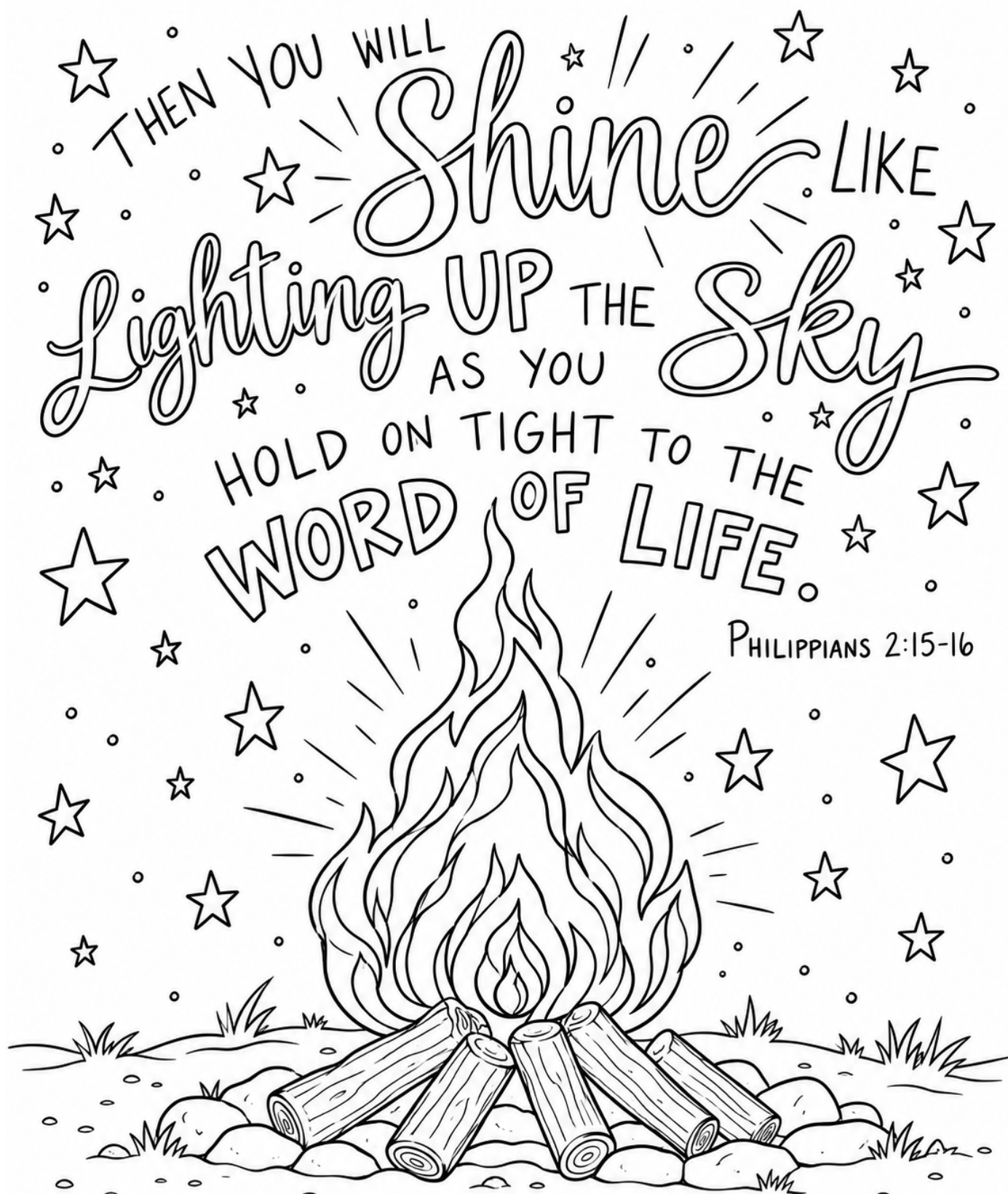
We were made to SHINE the love and joy of Christ so brightly in this dark world! Think of a bonfire piled a hundred feet high with fire wood. The fire I'm describing isn't merely glowing embers of a fire long past, but a blazing hot glow that radiates to all who come near to the flame. This is the way God wants us to shine His love and light!

Reading Philippians 2 as a mama, my heart wants to focus on "do everything without complaining or arguing." I feel myself wanting to point my fingers at my kids and remind them this command is for them. As soon as I go down this path though, I feel the Spirit convicting me of my own complaining and sighing heart! Whether doing dishes, taking in groceries or even tucking in at bedtime, when I'm tired I can sure feel my heart being full of complaints.

However, as I read this passage more deeply, I see that the command is not just to not complain, but rather to not live selfishly. Philippians 2 tells us to live humbly thinking of and putting others first just as Christ did. The Creator of the universe Himself "did not consider equality with God" as attainable. So surely since Christ humbled Himself in such a way, I can humble my heart and see the reality of my deep sin and need for Him.

When we live with humble hearts submitted to Christ, it makes us SHINE His light! The result of living from a humble perspective is that we no longer complain and argue but rather rejoice in times of service. With Christ's help we can have open hands in times of disappointment or when things don't go our way. I don't believe we can achieve this way of living on our own, but rather as Paul says in Phil. 2:13, that it is God working in us and through us. Living with His light and goodness lets us serve each other and shine so brightly with His joy! And He makes us shine especially brightly in the darkness of this world. May we let the love and light of Christ grow and shine in and through us like a giant bonfire in our hearts!





— @carriegotchermusic —



# 12 He's Coming



**SCRIPTURE** Isaiah 9:6-7

**SONG** He's Coming

Advent: He's Coming Verse: Isaiah 9:6-7

Our oldest sons are twins and when they were little they hated it when "Dada went to work." They would cry when he left and be waiting all day with great anticipation for when he would get home. The last hour before Dad got home seemed to stretch out forever. When they finally heard the garage door open they would sprint to the back door and Gibson would lock it just before Wes (Dad) turned the handle to open the door. When he finally unlocked the door, Wes would chase the boys down the hall as they squealed with delight. Just thinking of it makes me smile.

The joy and anticipation of the Christmas season is much like the anxious waiting my boys did for Dad each day. In the Christian church calendar, we call the weeks leading up to Christmas, "Advent." The word Advent comes from the Latin word, "adventus," which means waiting for the arrival of someone very special. It was often used to describe the visit of a king or royal person. When we taught our kids about the season of Advent, we would have them cup their hands around their mouths and whisper, "He's coming! He's coming!" back and forth to each other. There are so many wonderful and special things about Christmas but we can so often be distracted by the noise and glitter, presents and busyness of the season. In celebrating Advent, we seek to fix our hearts on the true wonder of Christmas: That God the Father, the Creator of all things, sent part of himself so humbly and became human for us. It is truly mind-blowing that God left the majesty of heaven to be born in a simple manger in a stable likely full of animals. Christ the Son was born into the world, and then lived a perfect life. He knew from the beginning - the Bible says even before the foundation of the world (1 Pet. 1:19) - that God's plan was to send Him, the Christ, to save us from our sins by giving his life.

At Christmas, we decorate our homes, gather with family and friends, we share meals, hang sparkling lights and exchange presents. We do this not just for the joy of the season but in deep celebration of the gift God has given us in Christ.

The true meaning of Christmas is the truth that God became man and came for us. His life, death and resurrection is the greatest gift we could ever receive. In Advent, we celebrate that Jesus came and anticipate with joy that He will come back again and make all things right. In this season, may our hearts, like my precious boys' at the back door, cry out in longing for the return of our heavenly Savior!



