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# BECOME STEADFAST & WISE

BY JONATHAN GRIFFITHS

To listen to more sermons in this series, visit <https://encounterthetruth.org/listenerfavorites>.

## JAMES 1:1-11

We all need to know how to follow Jesus with sincerity, integrity, and consistency. We live in a complex world where trials come. We walk by faith, not by sight. We face hard decisions, grief, anguish, and strain. We face opposition for following Christ. We live with the tension of being away from our eternal homeland and the presence of God. Navigating this life is tough, and we need help.

James tells us:

- To count it all joy when you meet trials of various kinds (v. 2)
- That the testing of your faith produces steadfastness (v. 3)
- If you lack wisdom, ask the Lord for it, and it will be given to you (v. 5)



### REFLECTION

1. What needs to shift for you to “count it all joy when you meet trials of various kinds?”
2. How would you differentiate between happiness and joy?
3. Think of a time when the Lord allowed pain and suffering in your life. How did it produce steadfastness and perseverance in you?
4. How would you score yourself in a “faith audit” of joy in your present circumstances?
5. Does your prayer life reflect that heaven is “open” or “closed” to you? In what ways?
6. What trial might you need to prepare for that could be coming around the corner?



### PRAYER

Gracious Father, I know that you are a loving God who uses all trial, all pain, and all suffering to strengthen our faith and our resolve. Nothing is wasted with You. Give me wisdom to view the tough times through the lens of eternity and to count them all as joy. Amen.

# A CONFIDENCE IN TRIALS

BY JONATHAN GRIFFITHS

To listen to more sermons in this series, visit <https://encounterthetruth.org/listenerfavorites>.

## 1 Peter 1:6-9

When you face trials or endure suffering and heartache, choose to trust God. Learn to love Him more deeply. Find your joy in Him and His saving work. And keep going along that winding path of discipleship. Remember, you're going somewhere you want to reach. Getting there may be costly and painful, but keep your focus on the the destination: eternal paradise with our Saviour, Jesus Christ.

### Trials:

- Will come to all believers (John 16:33)
- Should not surprise believers (1 Peter 4:12)
- Won't last forever (1 Peter 1:6)
- Test the genuineness of our faith (1 Peter 1:7)
- Have purpose (1 Peter 1:9)

### REFLECTION



1. When have you had to choose between entrusting yourself to Jesus more fully or becoming embittered toward him because of your circumstances? What did you choose?
2. What circumstance or trial are you walking through that needs to be viewed "in light of eternity"?
3. How does viewing suffering and trials through eternity's lens change how we walk through them?
4. What truths in God's Word (Scripture) have been encouraging to you during difficult times?
5. How would you answer "Why do bad things happen in our lives?" to someone who is a follower of Jesus versus someone who is not?
6. Think about a hard or painful time that the Lord used to refine you. Take a moment now to thank Him for bringing you through it, and ask Him to use it for His glory.



### PRAYER

Lord Jesus, give me the strength to cling to you during trials and hard times, knowing that you are good, you are near, and you always have a purpose for my pain. Your suffering led to victory, and so will mine. Remind me today that you are sovereign and sufficient in all things. Amen.

# THE COST OF SELF-RELIANCE

BY JONATHAN GRIFFITHS

To listen to more sermons in this series, visit <https://encounterthetruth.org/listenerfavorites>.

## GENESIS 16

It is because of the grace of God that your sin neither disqualifies you from being used by God nor supersedes the perfect will of the All-Mighty God. At the end of the day, there are really only two religions in the world—two ways to approach God. There is the self-serve approach, where you seek to get things done your way and on your terms. Then, there is the approach of allowing God to take care of things. One is the way of *effort*, the other is the way of *belief*. One is the way of *works*, the other is the way of *faith*.

Pursuing God's plan your way:

- Highlights the domino effects of sin, as one wrong decision leads to another and another.
- Highlights the abundant grace of God, whereby His perfect will is always accomplished because of His sovereignty.
- Highlights the choice between two ways to live: the way of the flesh or the way of the promise.

### REFLECTION



1. Where in your life are you attempting to “figure it out” for yourself? What needs to shift for you to turn that over to your all-knowing heavenly Father, trusting his way and his timing?
2. What are you “weary of waiting for” from the Lord?
3. Do you find yourself in a situation that feels hopeless or beyond your ability to handle? How can you abandon your self-reliance and yield to the plans of the one who sees and hears all things?
4. As you look back in your life, where do you see God's abundant grace, working his perfect will in your life or the lives of your loved ones?
5. Where are you in danger of engaging in a do-it-yourself religion?

### PRAYER



El Roi (the God who sees me), forgive me for the times when I believe the lie of self-reliance. There is no room for it under the lordship and provision of Jesus. You are the God who sees, when no one else sees. You are the God who hears, when no one else hears. You're never far away. You never show up too late. Your ways are higher, and you see the end from the beginning of all things and all of time. Remind my heart to trust you to the uttermost. Amen.

# DANGERS ALL AROUND

BY JONATHAN GRIFFITHS

To listen to more sermons in this series, visit <https://encounterthetruth.org/listenerfavorites>.

## TITUS 1:1-16

Whose version of "truth" matters most? If you look to anyone but God and His Word, you are in danger of a truth that denies the gospel of justification by faith and faith alone. In the end, these alternate truths end up being faith plus works. It's a different gospel. It is a false message. Eternity rests on true gospel faith. This isn't about personal preference or a lifestyle choice. This is about heaven and hell, eternal gain and eternal loss, joy and suffering. It's about life, and it's about death.

### Dangers:

- The Church is at risk from false teachers (v. 10)
- The Church is at risk from a toxic culture (v. 12)
- The Church is at risk from an undiscerning flock (v. 13)

### REFLECTION



1. How do you guard against false teachings?
2. Why is Christian fellowship necessary to weed out false teaching?
3. How do/can you help others, and others help you, identify false teaching?
4. Who do you allow to speak into your life (pastors, teachers, influencers)? Are you vetting them through the truth and the light of Scripture?
5. What true cleansing (be it thoughts or lifestyle choices) has the gospel brought to your life?
6. Do you agree that knowing truth, as God defines it, is a matter of life and death? Why or why not?

### PRAYER



All-knowing God, help me to stand firm in the truth and inerrancy of your Word. I want to know truth as you define it and to recognize false teaching for what it is: a lie. I don't want to align my life with anything outside of your Word or apart from your Son. Make me a discerning follower of Jesus. Keep me sound in my faith. Keep me grounded in your truth. Amen.

# ENDURING BY FAITH

## BY JONATHAN GRIFFITHS

To listen to more sermons in this series, visit <https://encounterthetruth.org/listenerfavorites>.

### HEBREWS 11:23-40

For us who know and love Jesus Christ, the pressing question for us is simply this: How do we live by faith during fearful times? As we face situations and realities that would naturally cause us fear—situations where it would be normal and rational to be afraid—what will it look like to walk through such days in faith, as the people of God?



#### REFLECTION

1. How should we walk through fear-filled situations? What Scripture supports your response?
2. Why do we find it so difficult to trust the Lord when we feel overwhelmed by fear?
3. Like Moses, have you experienced greater fear of your surroundings or a person than of God?
4. In Exodus 14:19-22, God takes the Israelites through the Red Sea. What do we learn about God's character from his decision to take the impossible route to freedom?
5. Where do you need to trust God rather than fear your circumstances?
6. Consider ways you could respond when friends or family talk to you about their fears. Be prepared with a few ideas (such as examples of God's faithfulness in your life or from Scripture).
7. What is one way that you can endure by faith the next time fear threatens you?



#### PRAYER

Faithful Father, help me to trust you over my circumstances. Help me, by faith, to take the next step when I cannot see past my current footing. Let my faith be rewarded with the boast of "Only God could have accomplished this." You still move in miraculous ways today. Help me endure whatever comes my way, by faith in Jesus Christ and him alone. Amen.

# GOD'S GREAT GENEROSITY

## BY JONATHAN GRIFFITHS

To listen to more sermons in this series, visit <https://encounterthetruth.org/listenerfavorites>.

### EPHESIANS 1:1-10

If you are in Christ—a follower of Christ—then you are a child of God, and that makes you privileged, that makes you blessed, and that makes you rich. A “lavish” gift is one that comes at great cost. Your adoption as a child of God and your redemption from the darkness of sin came at a very great cost. The price was Jesus' life. As you ponder your salvation and the lavish gift that it is, consider what He freely sacrificed for you.

God lavished us in riches through:

- Adoption (v. 3)
- Redemption (v. 7)
- Revelation (v. 9)

#### REFLECTION



1. Where in your life might you be overlooking the spiritual riches that God has lavished upon you?
2. How do you grapple with the truth that God chose you, and not the other way around?
3. What is Paul's purpose in these first ten verses of Ephesians? What is Paul pointing you to?
4. When is the last time you praised God for pursuing you and for the many good gifts that he has given you? How could you make this a regular part of your day?
5. Having been told the future of this universe (v. 10), how are you to live in light of that revelation?

#### PRAYER



Generous God, out of love, before all of creation, you chose me to be your adopted child. My mind cannot comprehend this. Thank you for lavishing me with your love. Help me to see daily the many gifts that your adoption affords me. Help me to praise you because I wake up each morning covered in redemption. Help me to purposefully live with eternity in mind, as I choose to believe the truth you have revealed through your Word. Amen.

# THE GRACIOUS & MERCIFUL GOD

BY JONATHAN GRIFFITHS

To listen to more sermons in this series, visit <https://encounterthetruth.org/listenerfavorites>.

PS. 103:8-14; ROM. 3:23; 11:6

If there is a distinction between grace and mercy, it is that God's mercy speaks of his goodness in our distress when we cannot save ourselves, while his grace speaks of his goodness in our guilt when we deserve only his punishment. In mercy God spares us destruction, and in grace he forgives us and makes us his children. Richard Sibbes famously said, "There is more mercy in Christ than sin in us." What a comfort that is. There's plenty of sin in us, but a boundless store of mercy in Christ.

**Read:**

- Our helpless estate before God—Romans 3:9-18
- Where grace and mercy come in—Romans 3:23-24

## REFLECTION



1. Consider the list of sins in Romans 3:10-18. Where do you see yourself (before Christ)?
2. Where has God proven gracious and merciful toward you?
3. Do you find yourself having trouble receiving grace? Why or why not?
4. Who do you know who needs to hear about God's grace-filled gift of salvation? Pray for them.
5. As you better understand your own sin, where do you need God's grace today?
6. What do you truly believe about grace? Do you find yourself attempting to earn it?
7. Who have you been reluctant to extend grace and mercy to? Will you begin today?

## PRAYER



Gracious and merciful God, help me to receive your grace and mercy as a gift, by faith, knowing that I have done nothing to earn them. You offer them freely because you love me. Remind me to come and receive daily from you. Help me to better understand your grace and mercy and to extend it to others, underserved, just as we were given it, undeserved. Amen.

# THE KING WHO JUDGES THE HEART

BY JONATHAN GRIFFITHS

To listen to more sermons in this series, visit <https://encounterthetruth.org/listenerfavorites>.

## GENESIS 16

It is unsettling to realize that someone can see right through us. Sometimes we prefer to engage with Jesus Christ on a largely superficial level, to present to him our best self. But God sees everything. He hears every thought and observes every action. Religion can become a disguise for the heart. It is a universal instinct to see our standing before God as an outward issue rather than an inward one. Jesus shows that it is not an external problem of dirty hands—it is an internal problem of a filthy heart. What is the cleansing agent that can reach within the human heart? It is nothing less than the blood of Christ, shed at Calvary.

Jesus reveals three things in this passage:

- The hypocritical heart of religion (vv. 1-9)
- The defiling heart of sin (vv. 10-20)
- The humble heart of faith (vv. 21-28)

### REFLECTION



1. Where in your life are you “outwardly religious” but really “inwardly godless”?
2. What do you see when you look at your heart? Do you seek to do good works to glorify God, or are you seeking the praise and recognition of others?
3. For what sin do you need to seek the Lord's cleansing? Cleansing is yours if you ask in faith.
4. As you look at your life, your choices, and your heart, what are some ways that you are holding back from God?
5. Take a moment and ask yourself, “Is my heart far from the Lord?” What evidence in your life supports your answer?

### PRAYER



Omniscient God, you see all. Forgive me when I hide from you, when I run from you, when I ignore you. You know the places in my life and in my heart that need cleansing. Show me every corner that is not surrendered to you. Forgive me for believing the lie that I can have an outward appearance that is cleaner than my inward desires. Thank you for the healing, saving, and restoring power of Jesus. Amen.

# TAKING REFUGE IN THE LORD

BY JONATHAN GRIFFITHS

To listen to more sermons in this series, visit <https://encounterthetruth.org/listenerfavorites>.

## PSALM 16

If we don't see and believe that God is our everything, if we don't take refuge in him and his all-sufficient provision for us in this life and the next, we will live in fear of the unknown. We'll constantly worry that our needs will not be met. We must look to Christ, who delighted in His people, despite their sin and opposition to Him. He delighted in the Father's provision, even though the road was often hard. He delighted in the precepts of God and perfectly obeyed the law. He delighted in the Father's protection, even as he faced the cross.

Those who take refuge in the Lord:

- Delight in the Lord's people (v. 3)
- Delight in the Lord's provision (v. 5)
- Delight in the Lord's precepts (v. 7)
- Delight in the Lord's protection (v. 9)

### REFLECTION



1. In what ways are you living as one who takes refuge in the Lord?
2. How have you found delight in the people of God (v. 3)?
3. Think about a time you allowed the Word of the Lord to counsel you. What was the result?
4. Of the "delights" for those who take refuge in the Lord (listed above), which do you struggle with? Which come more naturally to you?
5. What steps could you take to ensure that God's Word is written on your heart?
6. Where in your life have you seen the provision and protection of God?

### PRAYER



Loving Father, I echo the words of David, "Preserve me, O God, for in you I take refuge. You are my Lord; I have no good apart from you." I know that you will carry the one who takes refuge in you, and you will carry such a person through death and into the joy and security of eternal life. Help me to take refuge in Jesus, the one who perfectly delighted in all that you have for me. Amen.

# WALK PRAYERFULLY & WISELY

BY JONATHAN GRIFFITHS

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## COLOSSIANS 4:2-6

Prayer does not come naturally for anyone. Christians are called to be “steadfast” in prayer because it takes intentionality and work. Prayer affects how you walk in this world. Prayer shapes how you speak to others. Prayer shifts your perspective from a worldly vantage point to a kingdomly vantage point. Prayer is acknowledging the many needs you have: the need for wisdom, the need for grace, the need to give grace, the need to forgive, the need to show love, the need for strength.



### REFLECTION

1. How is your prayer life going right now?
2. What role does prayer play in your daily life? Is it a daily priority or a half-hearted effort?
3. What are you least likely to bring to the Lord in prayer? What are you most likely to bring to him?
4. If you were to make a plan to pray throughout the day, what would that look like? How would it go?
5. Do you pray for wisdom? In what areas of your life could you benefit from godly insight right now?
6. What does “Walk in wisdom toward outsiders, making the best use of the time” (v. 6) look like in your life?
7. How can you display Christ this week?



### PRAYER

Wise Father, with thanksgiving, I come to you today and ask for wisdom in my daily walk. Remind me of my need for You, my utter dependence upon You for all things. Bring to mind the needs of others, areas in which I need godly wisdom, and times that my words need to be seasoned with salt. As a representative of Jesus in this world, help me display his likeness faithfully and truly, and forgive when I fall short. Amen.

# A WORD OF WARNING

BY JONATHAN GRIFFITHS

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## HEBREWS 5:11-6:20

It is possible to completely stagnate in terms of spiritual development. Perhaps it is because it is difficult for you to digest substantial teaching. Or maybe you simply choose not to. But to grow in spiritual maturity, or even to survive as a believer in such a complicated world, you need to go deep in your understanding of the Word of God. You need solid theology and rich biblical knowledge.



### REFLECTION

1. As you look back on your walk with the Lord, when have you seen times of growth?
2. Are you now in a season of growth or a season of stagnation? What evidence do you see of this?
3. Think of an area of your life where you have experienced the goodness of God. Where in your life do you need that goodness now?
4. How has God used your local church and other believers to help keep you from falling away from Him? Think of specific people or actions of others.
5. What does "spiritual sluggishness" look like in your life? What needs to shift?
6. Consider these words from the great hymn, "Come Thou Fount" (Robert Robinson, 1758):

*Oh, to grace how great a debtor  
Daily I'm constrained to be  
Let Thy goodness like a fetter  
Bind my wandering heart to Thee*

*Prone to wander, Lord I feel it  
Prone to leave the God I love  
Here's my heart, oh take and seal it  
Seal it for Thy courts above*



### PRAYER

Faithful God, incline my heart to run to your Word daily, and to remain there, to be changed there. Thank you for being a promise-keeping, oath-fulfilling God. Where in my life do I need to repent for spiritual sluggishness? Wake me up to the warning signs of falling away so that I may avoid them and return to you. Amen.



JONATHAN GRIFFITHS serves as Lead Pastor of the Metropolitan Bible Church in Ottawa, Canada, sits on the Council of the Gospel Coalition Canada, and gives leadership to the Timothy Trust, which exists to promote expository Bible ministry. He loves to train and mentor developing leaders for gospel ministry. Jonathan studied theology at the University of Oxford and completed his PhD on Hebrews at the University of Cambridge. He takes a keen interest in current affairs, not least politics and economics. He and his wife, Gemma, have three children.

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