



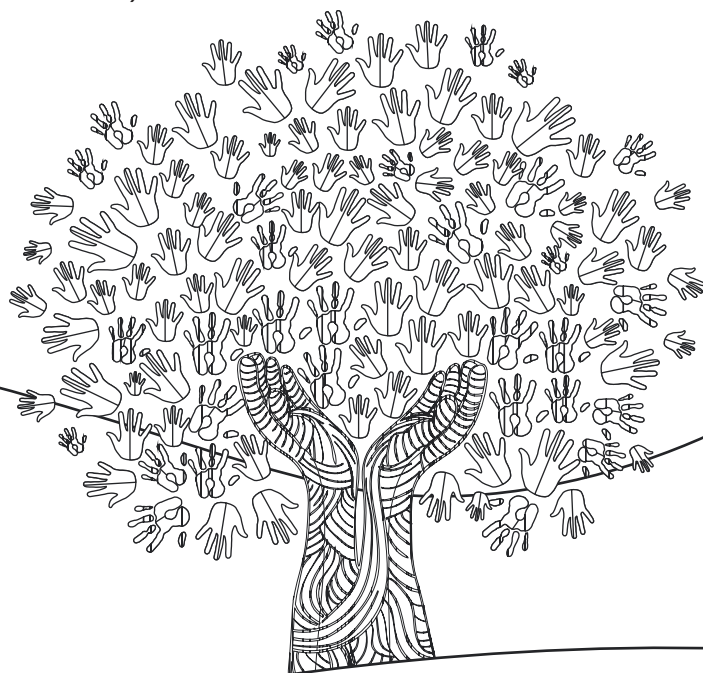
Certain people came down from Judea to Antioch. Here is what they were teaching the believers. "Moses commanded you to be circumcised," they said. "If you aren't, you can't be saved." But Paul and Barnabas didn't agree with this. They argued strongly with them. So Paul and Barnabas were appointed to go up to Jerusalem. Some other believers were chosen to go with them. They were supposed to see the apostles and elders about this question. The church sent them on their way. As they traveled through Phoenicia and Samaria, they told how those who weren't Jews had turned to God. This news made all the believers very glad. When they arrived in Jerusalem, the church welcomed them. The apostles and elders welcomed them too. Then Paul and Barnabas reported everything God had done through them. Some of the believers were Pharisees. They stood up and said, "Those who aren't Jews must be circumcised. They must obey the law of Moses." The apostles and elders met to consider this question. After they had talked it over, Peter got up and spoke to them. "Brothers," he said, "you know that some time ago God chose me to take the good news to those who aren't Jews. He wanted them to hear the good news and believe. God knows the human heart. By giving the Holy Spirit to non-Jews, he showed that he accepted them. He did the same for them as he had done for us. He showed that there is

no difference between us and them. He made their hearts pure because of their faith. "Now then, why are you trying to test God? You test him when you put a heavy load on the believers' shoulders. Our people of long ago couldn't carry that load. We can't either. No! We believe we are saved through the grace of our Lord Jesus. Those who aren't Jews are saved in the same way." Everyone became quiet as they listened to Barnabas and Paul. They were telling about the miraculous signs and wonders God had done through them among non-Jews. When they finished, James spoke up. "Brothers," he said, "listen to me. Simon Peter has explained to us how God first showed his concern for those who aren't Jews. He chose some of them to be his very own people. The prophets' words agree with that. They say, "After this I will return and rebuild David's fallen tent. I will rebuild what was destroyed. I will make it what it used to be. Then the rest of the people can look to the Lord. This means all the non-Jews who belong to me. The Lord says this. He is the one who does these things.' (Amos 9:11,12) The Lord does things that have been known for a long time.

(Acts 15:1-18)

"Thinking" space.

My thoughts, questions and feelings about what the Bible is saying to me today.



Living



What do these Bible verses say about how I should live for God? What will I do to live in that way?

“Just me and God” space.

Things I’m praying to God and things He’s saying to me.

Loving



What do these Bible verses say about how I should love like God? What will I do to love in that way?

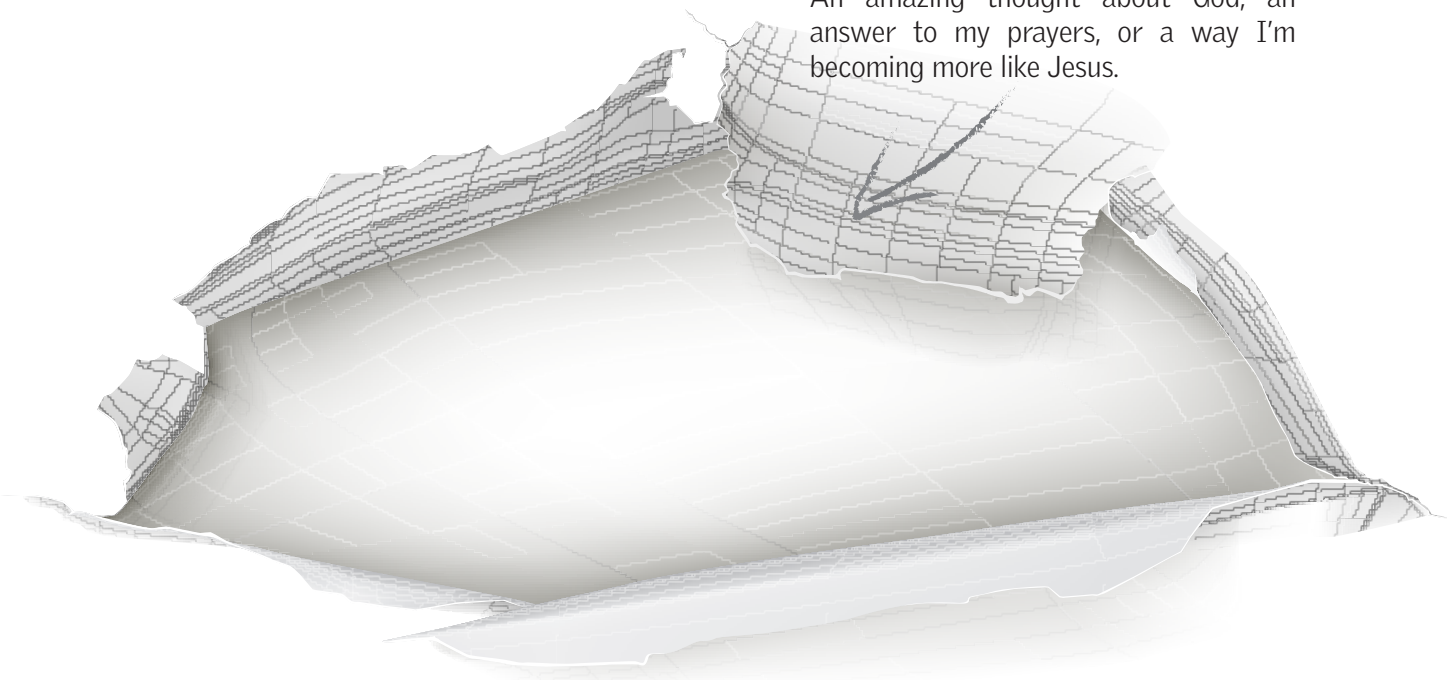
Serving



What do these Bible verses say about how I should serve others like God? What will I do to serve that way?

“WOW” space.

An amazing thought about God, an answer to my prayers, or a way I’m becoming more like Jesus.



You have heard of my earlier way of life as a Jew. With all my strength I attacked the church of God. I tried to destroy it. I was moving ahead in my Jewish way of life. I went beyond many Jews who were my own age. I held firmly to the teachings passed down by my people. But God set me apart from the time I was born. He showed me his grace by appointing me. He was pleased to show his Son in my life. He wanted me to preach about Jesus among those who aren't Jews. When God appointed me, I didn't talk to anyone. I didn't go up to Jerusalem to see those who were apostles before I was. Instead, I went at once into Arabia. Later I returned to Damascus.

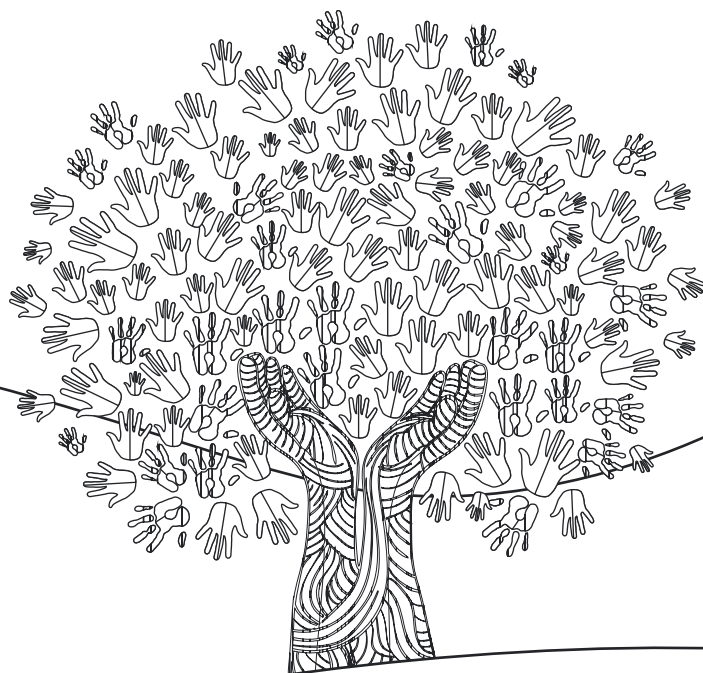
When Peter came to Antioch, I told him to his face that I was against what he was doing. He was clearly wrong. He used to eat with those who weren't Jews. But certain men came from the group that was led by James. When they arrived, Peter began to draw back. He separated himself from the non-Jews. He was afraid of the circumcision group. Peter's actions were not honest. The other Jews joined him. Even Barnabas was led down the wrong path. I saw what they were doing. It was not in line with the truth of the good news. So I spoke to Peter in front of them all. "You are a Jew," I said. "But you live like one who is not. So why do you force non-Jews to follow Jewish ways?" We are Jews by birth. We are not "non-Jewish

sinner." We know that no one is made right with God by obeying the law. It is by believing in Jesus Christ. So we too have put our faith in Christ Jesus. That is so we can be made right with God by believing in Christ, not by obeying the law. No one can be made right with God by obeying the law. We are trying to be made right with God through Christ. But it is clear that we are sinners. So does that mean that Christ causes us to sin? Certainly not! Suppose I build again what I had destroyed. Then I prove that I break the Law. Because of the law, I died as far as the law is concerned. I died so that I might live for God. I have been crucified with Christ. I don't live any longer. Christ lives in me. My faith in the Son of God helps me to live my life in my body. He loved me. He gave himself for me. I do not get rid of the grace of God. What if a person could become right with God by obeying the law? Then Christ died for nothing!

(Galatians 1:13-17; 2:11-21)

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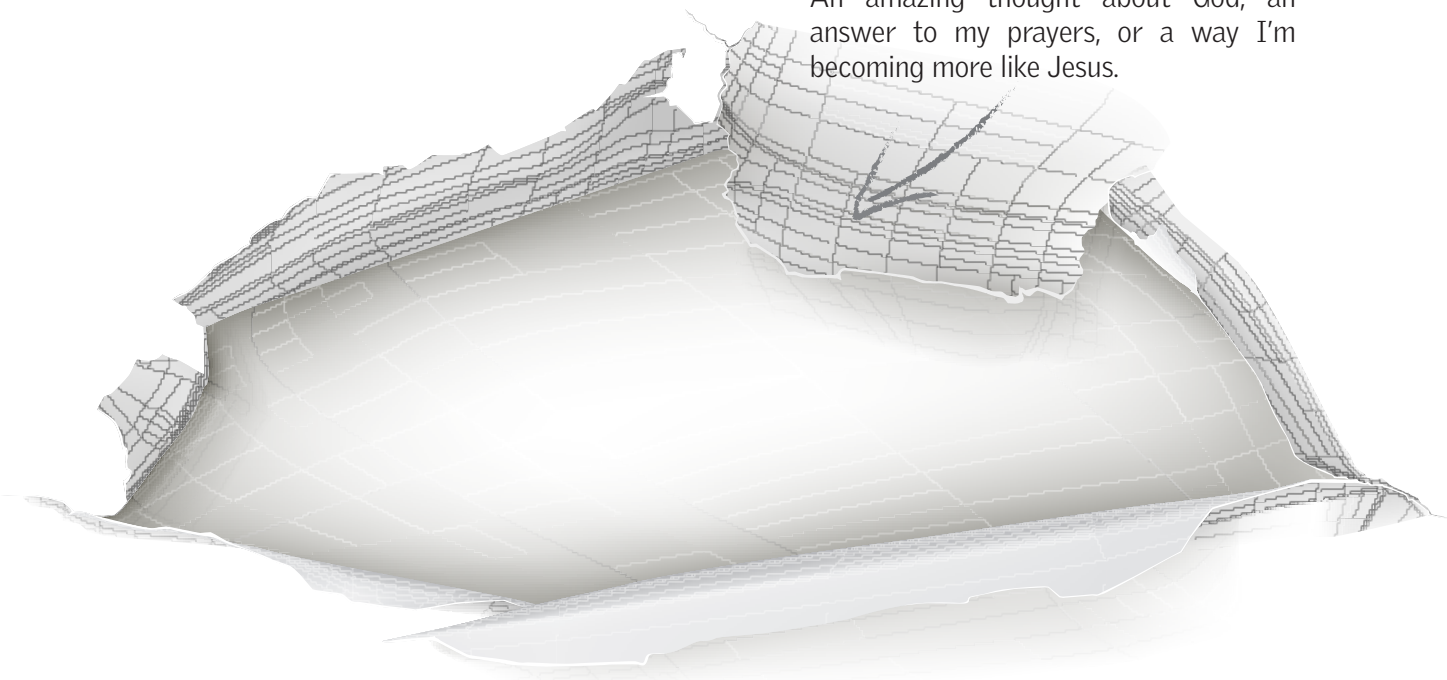
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You foolish people of Galatia! Who has put you under an evil spell? When I preached, I clearly showed you that Jesus Christ had been nailed to the cross. I would like to learn just one thing from you. Did you receive the Holy Spirit by obeying the law? Or did you receive the Spirit by believing what you heard? Are you so foolish? You began with the Holy Spirit. Are you now trying to complete God's work in you by your own strength? Have you suffered so much for nothing? And was it really for nothing? Why does God give you his Spirit? Why does he work miracles among you? Is it because you do what the law says? Or is it because you believe what you have heard? Think about Abraham. Scripture says, "Abraham believed God. God accepted Abraham because he believed. So his faith made him right with God." (Genesis 15:6) So you see, those who have faith are children of Abraham. Long ago, Scripture knew that God would make non-Jews right with himself by believing in him. He announced the good news ahead of time to Abraham. He said, "All nations will be blessed because of you." (Genesis 12:3; 18:18; 22:18) So those who have faith are blessed along with Abraham. He was the man of faith.

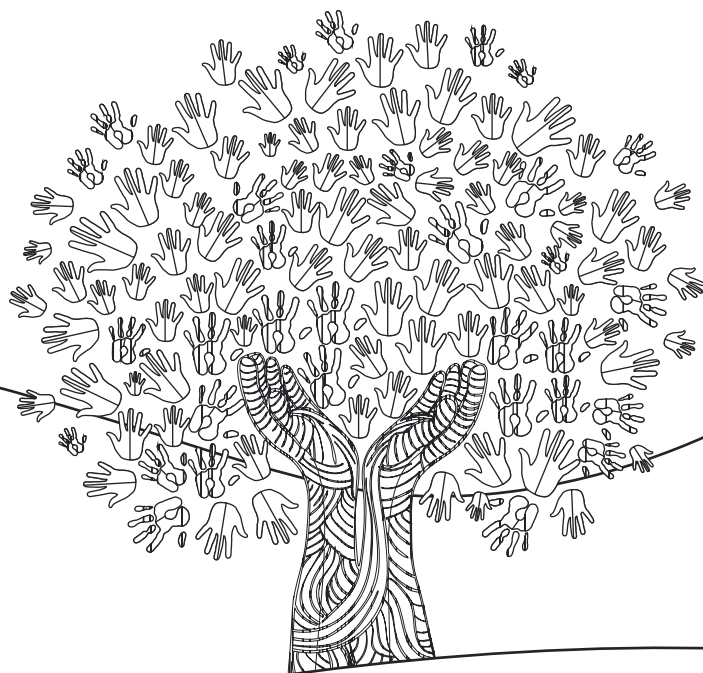
Before faith in Christ came, we were held prisoners by the law. We were locked up until faith was made known. So the law was put in charge until Christ came. He came so that we

might be made right with God by believing in Christ. But now faith in Christ has come. So we are no longer under the control of the law. You are all children of God by believing in Christ Jesus. All of you who were baptized into Christ have put on Christ as if he were your clothes. There is no Jew or Greek. There is no slave or free person. There is no male or female. Because you belong to Christ Jesus, you are all one. You who belong to Christ are Abraham's seed. You will receive what God has promised.

(Galatians 3:1-9, 23-29)

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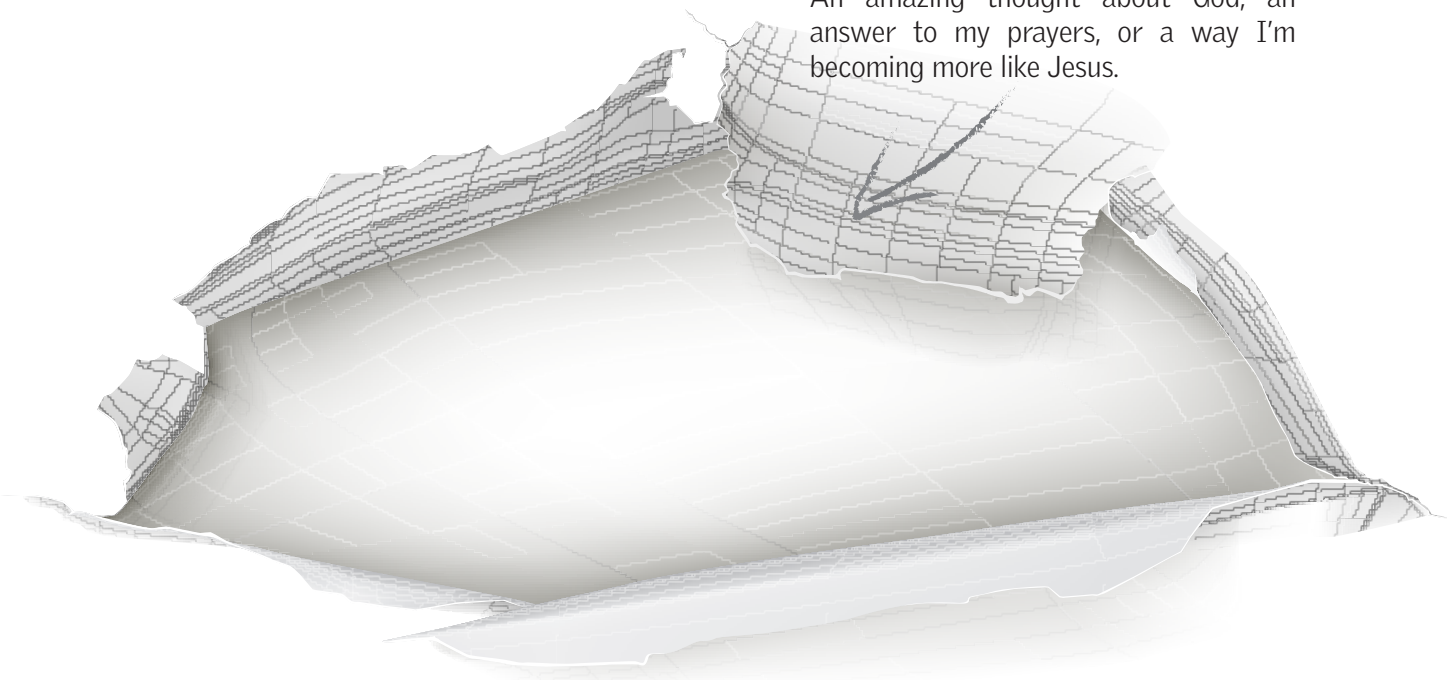
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The day of Pentecost came. The believers all gathered in one place. Suddenly a sound came from heaven. It was like a strong wind blowing. It filled the whole house where they were sitting. They saw something that looked like tongues of fire. The flames separated and settled on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit. They began to speak in languages they had not known before. The Spirit gave them the ability to do this.

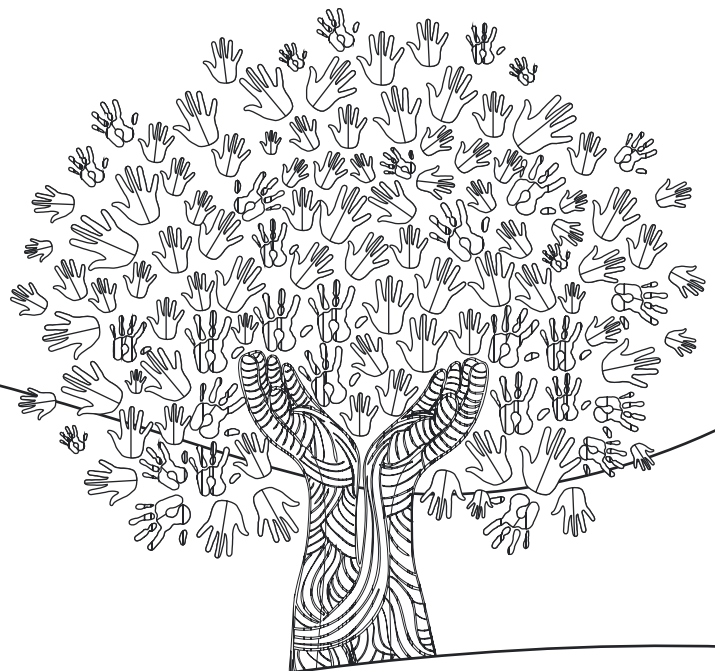
God's children. Because you are his children, he gives you what he promised to give his people.

(Acts 2:1-4; Galatians 4:1-7)

Here is what I have been saying. As long as your own children are young, they are no different from slaves in your house. They are no different, even though they own all of the property. They are under the care of guardians and those who manage the property. They are under their care until the time when their fathers give them the property. It is the same with us. When we were children, we were slaves to the basic things the people of the world believe. But then the right time came. God sent his Son. A woman gave birth to him. He was born under the authority of the law. He came to set free those who were under the law. He wanted us to be adopted as children with all the rights children have. Because you are his children, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts. He is the Holy Spirit. By his power we call God "Abba." Abba means Father. So you aren't slaves any longer. You are

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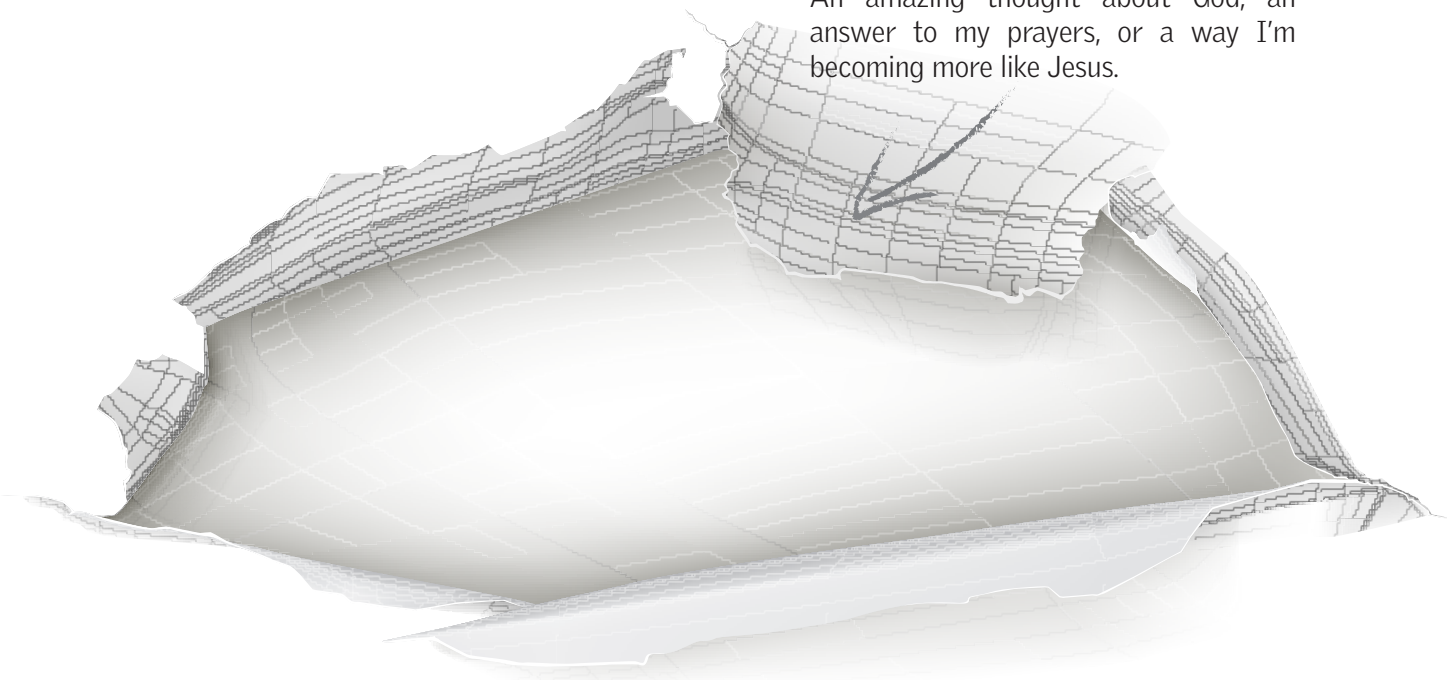
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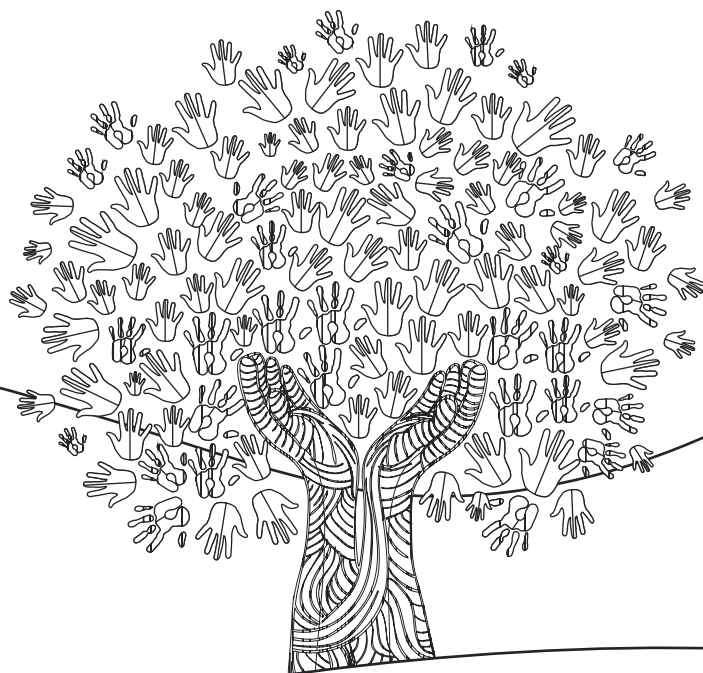


Blessed is the one who obeys the law of the LORD. He doesn't follow the advice of evil people. He doesn't make a habit of doing what sinners do. He doesn't join those who make fun of the LORD and his law. Instead, he takes delight in the law of the LORD. He thinks about his law day and night. He is like a tree that is planted near a stream of water. It always bears its fruit at the right time. Its leaves don't dry up. Everything godly people do turns out well. Sinful people are not like that at all. They are like straw that the wind blows away. When the LORD judges them, their life will come to an end. Sinners won't have any place among those who are godly. The LORD watches over the lives of those who are godly. But the lives of sinful people will lead to their death.

(Psalms 1:1-6)

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