QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

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CHAPTER 1

God’s Great and Precious Promises

1. Who are the “heroes of the faith” listed in Hebrews 11:7–34? Why are they considered heroes?

2. In this chapter faith is defined as “the deeply held belief that God will keep his promises.” Right now in your life is it easy to believe that God will keep his promises? Or is it difficult? Why?

3. Read Matthew 8:5–11. Scripture often describes how people were amazed at Jesus. Multitudes followed him around in awe of how he performed miracles, healed the sick, and cast out demons. But in this story we see that Jesus is the one who is amazed. Why? What does this say about how Jesus values our faith in him?

4. Max cites several passages that describe why we can trust God as a promise maker and promise keeper:

   “He never changes or casts a shifting shadow” (James 1:17 NLT). God’s character is consistent and stable.

   “God can be trusted to keep his promise” (Heb. 10:23 NLT). He is trustworthy.
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“God is able to do whatever he promises” (Rom. 4:21 NLT). He is able. His power is unlimited.

“It is impossible for God to lie” (Heb. 6:18 NLT). God does not trick or lie; he speaks only the truth.

• Which of these characteristics of God do you need to be reminded of in your current circumstances?
• How does knowing this about God give you hope in his promises?

5. After sharing the story of his shaky left thumb, Max says he had two options: “I could ponder the problem, or I could remember the promise.” What problem are you pondering today?

6. Now consider the following promises from God:

   “The Lord is with you” (Judg. 6:12).

   “And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose” (Rom. 8:28 NKJV).

   “In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world” (John 16:33).

• Which of these promises could combat the problem you’re pondering today?
• Have you ever seen any of these promises play out in your life? What were those circumstances? How could remembering the way God has kept his promises in the past give you hope that he will keep his promises now and in the future?
7. Peter wrote, “[God] has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature” (2 Peter 1:4). The Greek word translated as “precious” is ὑπεραιρεῖται, which means “of great price, precious, held in honour, esteemed, especially dear.” You probably hold dear a lot of things in your life—your family and friends, your job, or your home—but do you consider the promises of God especially dear? Do you hold them in honor and esteem, or do you tend to prize earthly possessions and people over God’s promises?

8. How do you need to grow as a Person of the Promise?
- Do you believe in God’s promises but need a reminder of how rich they are?
- Are you feeling jaded by life and questioning whether God will keep his promises?
- Is this your first time to learn about the promises of God?
- Identify where you are right now on the spectrum of faith. Where would you like to be after studying Unshakable Hope alongside the Scriptures?
1. Fill in the blank: God made us in his ______. (See Genesis 1:26.) What does this imply about humans in comparison to the rest of God’s creation?

2. What are some godlike attributes we all have?

3. Scripture says, “We . . . are being transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit” (2 Cor. 3:18). If we are already created in God’s image, what does it mean that we are being transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory?

4. We often look to people or things rather than to God to define us, to give us a sense of identity. In what or whom do you try to find your identity?

5. Talking about the love he has for his unborn granddaughter, Max makes the comparison that God loves us simply because we bear his image. Do you find this easy or hard to believe, and why?
6. Throughout our lives other people try to tell us who we are.
   • Has anyone ever falsely labeled you? If so, how did this affect
     the way you saw yourself?
   • If not, have you ever falsely labeled someone else? What were
     the consequences?

7. To combat the labels others have given us, it helps to look at who
   the Bible says we are. Read the following passages and consider
   what they say about your own identity. What truths do they
   point out that contradict false labels you’ve accepted about
   yourself?

   “Therefore you are no longer a slave but a son, and if a son, then
   an heir of God through Christ” (Gal. 4:7 NKJV).

   “For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might
   become the righteousness of God in Him” (2 Cor. 5:21 NKJV).

   “Therefore I say to you, do not worry about your life, what
   you will eat or what you will drink; nor about your body, what
   you will put on. Is not life more than food and the body more
   than clothing? Look at the birds of the air, for they neither
   sow nor reap nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father
   feeds them. Are you not of more value than they?” (Matt.
   6:25–26 NKJV).

   “Your eyes saw my substance, being yet unformed.
   And in Your book they all were written,
   The days fashioned for me,
   When as yet there were none of them.
   How precious also are Your thoughts to me, O God!
   How great is the sum of them!” (Ps. 139:16–17 NKJV).
8. Because God is the creator of all people, we all bear his image.
   • How does knowing that all people are his image bearers affect the way you see others and interact with them?
   • How could this change the way you interact with even the most difficult people in your life?

9. Think of someone you know who lives out this truth of being an image bearer of God.
   • How does this person reflect God?
   • Using this person as inspiration, how could you live as an image bearer today?
1. Thoughts and opinions about Satan and his role in our lives vary greatly, even within the church. As Max pointed out, four out of ten Christians strongly agree that Satan is not a living being but rather a symbol of evil.
   • What are your thoughts on how the devil is portrayed in Scripture?
   • Do you believe he plays a role in our daily lives? If so, how? If not, why not?

2. The Greek word for devil is diabolos, which means “to split.”
   • How does this definition expose the devil’s motives?
   • How does it expose the tactics he uses against us?

   • According to this passage, what caused Satan’s downfall?
   • What does a person’s pride have to do with Satan? (See 1 Timothy 3:6.)
4. First Peter 5:8 says Satan is “a roaring lion looking for someone to devour.”
   - Why is this a fitting comparison?
   - Have you ever experienced the devil in this way? If so, when and how?

5. John 10:10 says the evil one has come “only to steal and kill and destroy.” Think about those three verbs.
   - What in your life has Satan tried to steal?
   - What has he tried to kill?
   - What has he tried to destroy?

6. Read Matthew 4:1–11. In this passage “the tempter” tempted Jesus three times:

   “If You are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread” (v. 3 NKJV).

   “If You are the Son of God, throw Yourself down. For it is written: ‘He shall give His angels charge over you,’ and, ‘In their hands they shall bear you up, lest you dash your foot against a stone’” (v. 6 NKJV).

   “The devil took Him up on an exceedingly high mountain, and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. And he said to Him, ‘All these things I will give You if You will fall down and worship me’” (vv. 8–9 NKJV).

   - What strategy was the tempter using against Jesus in verse 3?
   - What strategy did he use against Jesus in verse 6?
   - What strategy did he use in verses 8–9?
7. Now read Jesus’ response to each of these temptations:

“It is written, ‘Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God’” (v. 4 NKJV).

“It is written again, ‘You shall not tempt the Lord your God’” (v. 7 NKJV).

“Away with you, Satan! For it is written, ‘You shall worship the Lord your God, and Him only you shall serve’” (v. 10 NKJV).

- What was Jesus’ strategy against Satan?
- How can this dialogue inform the way you fight against the lies of Satan in your life?

8. Ephesians 6:12–17 details how we can guard ourselves against Satan.

- What pieces of armor did Paul list in this passage?
- Think about an area of your life that Satan seems to have a hold on right now. What piece of armor do you need to fight him in this particular area? How could you equip yourself today with the belt of truth, the breastplate of righteousness, the sword of the word of God, or the shield of faith?

9. Just because Satan roams the earth today, it does not mean he always will. Read Romans 16:20.

- What does this passage say about Satan’s fate and his power in our lives?
- How can these truths give you hope as you face the Enemy today?
10. How did this chapter change or challenge your view of Satan?

• Did you need to be reminded that he is a real and present threat?

• Did you need to be reminded that his power over you is finite in comparison to Christ’s power in you?

• Or did you need to remember that Satan is ultimately defeated and his authority will not stand?

• How can you apply this knowledge to whatever temptation you are facing today?
1. Have you ever received a significant inheritance? Or have you ever daydreamed about receiving one? How would this gift change your life for the better?

2. Scripture says we are “heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ” (Rom. 8:17). A couple of verses before this one Paul wrote, “You did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, ‘Abba, Father’” (v. 15 NKJV). What does it mean to be adopted by God?

3. In ancient Rome adoption was serious business. If a father did not feel he had a worthy heir, he could handpick someone from the community to adopt and, therefore, to inherit his land and wealth. According to Roman law this adoption brought four significant changes in the adoptee’s identity:

   a. He lost all relationship to his old family, and he gained all rights as a member of the new family.
   b. He became an heir to his new father’s estate.
   c. His former life was completely wiped out. All his legal debts
were canceled as if they never existed.
d. In the eyes of the law, the adoptee was literally and absolutely the son of his new father.²

• The audience of Paul’s letter to the Romans would have understood this, but how does this change your view of being an adopted child of God?
• Have you accepted that you are an adopted child of God, and are you ready to live out your inheritance? Or do you still need to believe that you have been adopted by God?

5. Read 1 Chronicles 29:11–12. What sort of inheritance do we receive from our Father?

6. The story of Joshua leading the Israelites to the promised land of Canaan is a good illustration for how we, as heirs of God, approach our inheritance. God told Joshua, “Now therefore, arise, go over this Jordan, you and all this people, to the land which I am giving to them—the children of Israel. Every place that the sole of your foot will tread upon I have given you” (Josh. 1:2–3 NKJV).

   God tells each of us the same thing: “Arise and receive the inheritance I have promised you.” But we don’t all believe in this inheritance. If you put yourself in the story of Joshua, where would you be?
• Are you standing at the edge of the Jordan, questioning whether God really does have a good inheritance for you in the promised land?
• Are you pursuing your inheritance but not in the promised land? Perhaps you’ve gotten off course and you’re looking for your inheritance elsewhere—at your job, in your relationships, or in your wealth.
• Or are you living in the abundance of the promised land, receiving the inheritance God has for you?
• If you are questioning God’s inheritance for you or if you’ve gotten off the path, looking for your inheritance elsewhere, what do you need to believe about God in order for you to live in the abundance of the promised land?

7. At the end of this chapter, Max tells the touching and tragic story of Hein and Diet, a couple who hid Jews during the Nazi occupation of the Netherlands. How did this couple live out of their God-given inheritance?

8. How could you live out of your God-given inheritance?
   • What do you feel you are lacking today? Peace? Patience? Love? Grace?
   • How can God meet that need and do more than you even asked for?

9. How does living from our inheritance help show those around us the love of Christ? How could not living out of our inheritance hurt our Christian witness to others?
1. What role has prayer played in your life over the years—as a child, as an adolescent, as a young adult, and today? Has your prayer life changed, or have your thoughts about prayer changed? If so, how and why?

2. Early in this chapter Max recounts the story of Elijah in 1 Kings. Read 1 Kings 17:1–7 and 18:20–40.
   • How long did the prophets of Baal call on their god for fire (vv. 25–29)?
   • What excuses did Elijah give for Baal’s silence (v. 27)?
   • Why did Elijah drench the altar with water (vv. 33–35)?
   • How long did it take God to respond to Elijah’s prayer for fire (vv. 36–38)?
   • Why did Elijah want God to perform this sign (vv. 36–37)?

3. Most likely you’ve never seen God send fire to the earth in response to one of your prayers, but have you ever seen God directly answer one of your prayers in a miraculous way?
   • If so, how did that affect the way you view God?
• How did that affect your prayer life?
• If not, how has a lack of answered prayers affected the way you view God?
• How has it affected your prayer life?

4. James 5:16 says, “When a believing person prays, great things happen” (NCV). Is it easy for you to believe this, or are you skeptical of the power of prayer? Why?

5. God doesn’t always answer our prayers on our time line or in the way we want him to answer them. This can cause us to grow skeptical of prayer or feel as if God is distant and doesn’t care.
• What prayer have you been praying that God has not answered yet?
• How does this unanswered prayer affect the way you view God?
• Why do you think God hasn’t answered this prayer yet?
• How do you reconcile verses like James 5:16 with not-yet-answered prayers?

6. Fill in the blank: Max says that God cares about our prayers because we are God’s ______.

7. When you pray, do you see God as your father and yourself as his child? If not, how do you picture him when you speak to him?

8. How does viewing God as your father affect the way you view unanswered prayers? Why does God sometimes say no? Why does he remain silent sometimes?

9. If great things happen when a believing person prays, we should
be praying about every area of our lives. What have you not prayed about that you need to take to God? How could prayer help the situation?

10. This chapter includes a story about a Christian named Dmitri who was imprisoned in Russia during the communist era. He was in prison for seventeen years, yet he still worshipped God, and he still prayed. What would seventeen years of prison do to your faith and your prayer life? How can you find encouragement from Dmitri’s story?

11. Read Matthew 18:19. What does this passage say about prayer and community? How often do you pray with others? How could you incorporate communal prayer into your life?

12. Do you know someone who has a rich prayer life? How has his or her example influenced your own approach to prayer? What have you learned from observing a strong prayer warrior?

13. Since you are a Person of the Promise, what kind of prayer life do you hope to have? What steps toward that goal could you start taking today?
CHAPTER 6

Grace for the Humble

1. In your own words define pride.

2. Fill in the blank: God resists the proud because the proud resist ______.

3. Scripture is clear and direct regarding humility and pride. Read Psalm 10:4; Proverbs 16:5; Proverbs 26:12; Isaiah 2:12; and Isaiah 5:21. These are just a few verses that describe God’s disdain for pride.
   • Why do you think the Bible so often addresses this topic?
   • Why does God hate pride so much?

4. How are the tragic tales of Bernie Madoff and King Nebuchadnezzar similar? How are they different?

5. Recall an instance in your life when you were prideful about something. What happened as a result?

6. How does pride hurt our relationship with others? How does pride hurt our relationship with God?
7. An example of pride is recorded early in Scripture. Read Genesis 3:1–6. How did pride play a role in the first sin of Adam and Eve in the garden?

8. Right after Adam and Eve sinned, Scripture says, “Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves coverings” (Gen. 3:7 NKJV).

   • Compare this verse to Genesis 2:25.
   • Adam and Eve felt shame after they sinned, not before. How might the emotions of pride and shame be connected?

9. Pride often compensates for shame. It’s frequently what we go to in order to cover up insecurities or fears. But pride will never free us from those things. Max says that “wonderful freedom is found in the forest of humility.” What does he mean by this? Has pride ever felt like a prison to you? If so, how?

10. Read Romans 8:1–2. What do these verses tell us about our shame when we’re in Christ? How could believing that Christ’s sacrifice took away our sin—and, therefore, our shame—free us to live humble lives instead of prideful ones?


   • Before he knew Christ, what did Paul boast about?
   • Once he knew Christ, what did Paul think about the things he listed in Philippians 3:4–6?
   • How has knowing Christ changed the way you boast and what you boast in? Or has it changed the nature of your boasting?
12. At the end of his seven years in the wilderness, Nebuchadnezzar said, “I praised the Most High; I honored and glorified him who lives forever. . . . Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise and exalt and glorify the King of heaven, because everything he does is right and all his ways are just” (Dan. 4:34, 37).

• Why did it take so long for Nebuchadnezzar to be humbled?
• Nebuchadnezzar praised God in these verses. How does humility pave the way for worship? And how can pride inhibit or prevent worship?

13. Spend some time thinking about pride and shame in your life.

• List specific areas of your life where you think you might be in bondage to pride. Why are you holding on to pride? How could you find freedom in humility?
• Think of some areas of your life where you feel ashamed. Are any of them connected with the areas of pride you listed in the previous question?
• What do you want freedom from today? How could the love of Christ help usher in that freedom?
• What would your life look like if you were free from shame and pride? How would that affect your relationships with others and with God?
1. The incarnation is what separates Christianity from all other religions in the world. What is unique about the incarnation? How is Jesus different from the gods other religions worship?

2. John 1:1–18 beautifully tells the story of the incarnation. What words are used for Jesus in these verses? How is he described? Underline all the descriptions, or write them down in a list.

3. The Greek word John used for “Word” is logos. Logos would have been a familiar term for his contemporary audience. Greek philosophers had long been using it to describe a central figure or divine being that gave meaning and order to the universe. Knowing this, why would John choose this particular word for Jesus?

4. In many ways the incarnation is a mysterious event that’s hard for us to comprehend. Now that you’ve reviewed John 1:1–18, how would you explain the incarnation to someone?

5. Echoing John 1, Paul wrote, “The Son is the image of the
invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For in him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things have been created through him and for him” (Col. 1:15–16). Later in Colossians, Paul said, “For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form” (2:9).

- These verses indicate that Jesus was both fully God and fully man. Why did Jesus have to become fully man?
- Why did he need to remain fully God?

6. Do you think the divinity of Jesus is important to the Christian faith? Why or why not?

7. First John 4:2–3 says, “By this you know the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is of God, and every spirit that does not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is not of God” (NKJV).

- How can you know someone has the Spirit of God?
- How can you know someone doesn’t have the Spirit of God?

8. Max wrote, “Had Jesus simply descended to earth in the form of a mighty being, we would respect him but never would draw near to him. . . . Had Jesus been biologically conceived with two earthly parents, we would draw near to him, but would we want to worship him?”

- Do you tend to view Jesus through his humanity or through his divinity?
- How does this affect your relationship with him?
- How might it benefit you to think more about Jesus’ other side?

9. Read the following verses: Mark 4:38; Luke 2:52; John 4:6; and
John 12:27. How do these verses indicate Jesus’ humanity?

10. Think of a difficult circumstance you are facing now. What aspect of Jesus’ humanity could help you connect with him in the midst of this trial?

11. Because Jesus became flesh, God understands us more than we might think. Hebrews 4:15–16 says, “We do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet he did not sin. Let us then approach God’s throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.”

• When you approach God in prayer, are you confident that you will receive grace, or do you fear God’s response?
• Since our high priest, Jesus, understands us, how does that affect the way we approach God in prayer?

12. Spend some time before God’s throne today. Approach him, knowing that your high priest, Jesus, knows and understands everything you are bringing to the feet of God. Feel comforted in his presence today, because you have a God who gets you.
CHAPTER 8

Christ Is Praying for You

1. What promise gives birth to unshakable hope?

2. What was your initial reaction to the idea that Christ prays for you? Have you ever considered this before?

3. Romans 8:34 says, “Christ Jesus who died—more than that, who was raised to life—is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us.”
   • Max talks about the Greek word we translate as intercede. What does it mean?
   • What does it mean for Jesus to intercede for us?
   • That word is used several times in Scripture. Look up Hebrews 7:24–25 and Romans 8:26–27. What do these verses say about whom Jesus and the Spirit intercede for, how they intercede, and why they intercede?

4. Have you ever prayed for someone else? If you have, then you have taken part in intercession. Considering how fervently we can pray for other people, how does this help you understand what it means for Christ to intercede for you?
5. Read Matthew 14:22–32.
   • What happened while the disciples were on the Sea of Galilee?
   • Where was Jesus, and what was he doing?

6. Think of a “storm” you have been in or perhaps are in right now—a difficult time in your life with dark waters and threatening winds. Did you believe Jesus was interceding for you with the Father during this time? If so, how did it affect the way you dealt with that storm? If not, how could it have changed the way you walked through that difficult time?

7. Max brings up a common argument: “If Jesus was praying, why did the storm even happen?” What does he say about this? What do you think about his answer?

8. In John 16:33 Jesus said, “In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.”
   • What two promises does Jesus make in this verse?
   • How can this help us understand why we go through storms in life?
   • Read John 16:32. In this verse what storm was coming that Jesus referenced?
   • How does it make you feel to know that Jesus also faced storms?
   • How does it affect the way you view the storms in your own life?

   • Who told the disciples to get into the boat and cross the Sea of Galilee?
   • How does this change the story for you? Does knowing that the journey was Jesus’ idea cause you to see the storm and his appearance in the middle of it any differently?
• How could this change the way you see your own storms? How could this give you hope?

10. This chapter includes the story of successful Christian recording artist Chris Tomlin and how Jesus interceded on Chris’s behalf when he was going through a storm. Has a storm ever produced something good in your life? Do you think Jesus played a role in that? If so, how?

11. After the disciples saw Jesus walk on water during the storm, what did they do for the first time recorded in Scripture? (See Matthew 14:33.) Why do you think they were moved to worship in this moment?

12. As People of the Promise, we can be certain that Jesus is interceding for us. Spend some time in worship as a response to this truth.
1. Max talks about the two different ways we tend to respond to our spiritual debt. We either try to do more to earn our way to heaven, or we throw our hands up in defeat, unable to believe in a God who would require so much of us. The legalist and the atheist. Which extreme do you tend toward?

2. In his letters the apostle Paul often addressed this issue of how we deal with our spiritual debt. Why was he especially qualified to write on this topic? (See Acts 9:1–20.)

3. Referencing Psalm 14, Paul said in Romans 3:10–11, “As it is written: ‘There is no one righteous, not even one; there is no one who understands; there is no one who seeks God.’”
   • Who is the ultimate standard of righteousness? (See Hebrews 4:14–15.)
   • How does it make you feel to know that a sinless life is the standard?

4. Read Romans 7:22–25. Does Paul’s description of being a slave
to God’s law and at the same time a slave to his sinful nature resonate with you? How so?

5. Romans 8 is a central chapter in the New Testament because it lays out the security of our salvation in Christ. The chapter opens with this bold statement: “Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus” (v. 1).
   • How does that statement help resolve the dilemma described in Romans 7:22–25?
   • The language in this statement is absolute. No condemnation. Not a little condemnation or less condemnation but no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. Does your life reflect that you believe you are free from condemnation? Or do you live with the weight of condemnation?

6. Romans 8:2 explains why Romans 8:1 is possible.
   • What does verse 2 say?
   • What is the law of the Spirit?
   • What is the law of sin and death?

7. Read John 19:28–30. What happened on the cross? How is that act central to this conversation about freedom from the law and freedom from condemnation?

8. Read Mark 15:37–38. What did the tearing of the temple veil symbolize?

9. In Matthew 11 Jesus said, “Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you
will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light” (vv. 28–30). This is not a promise most rabbis would make. During Jesus’ day there were many rabbis who had groups of followers. A follower of a rabbi was expected to study and learn every law given to the Hebrew people. That was a heavy task.

- Why then was Jesus saying that his burden was light and his yoke was easy?
- How does believing in Christ bring us rest?
- How could it bring you rest right now?

10. As People of the Promise we can be certain there is no condemnation hanging over our lives. Are you certain of this? If not, what makes you doubt it?
CHAPTER 10

This Temporary Tomb

1. Everyone has a different relationship with the reality of death. Some have come to terms with it and are at peace. Others are afraid of it. Some don’t think about it at all. Currently, what is your relationship with death? When you were growing up, how was death addressed? What did people say about it? How was it explained to you?

2. Has someone close to you passed away? What was that experience like? How did it affect your view of death?

3. There are all kinds of beliefs about what happens after we die. Some believe in reincarnation; others believe we disappear into nothingness. But the Christian faith has a unique take on death. Read Luke 23:40–43.
   • What does this conversation teach us about what happens after we die?
   • What is the paradise Jesus referred to?

4. Max says paradise is not the end of our journeys after death. What happens next? (See 1 Thessalonians 4:16.)
5. John 5 talks about our resurrection: “I tell you the truth, the time is coming and is already here when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will have life... Then they will come out of their graves” (vv. 25, 29 NCV).
   • What images do those verses conjure up for you?
   • Now read 1 Corinthians 15:42–44.

6. Max points out that our bodies will be completely whole after they are resurrected. Imagine what that would look like for you. What physical limitations do you have today? What would it be like to live without those limitations?

7. Beyond our bodies being whole, the earth will be whole as well. Revelation 22:3 says, “No longer will there be any curse.” Read Genesis 3:16–19.
   • What curses did God put on the earth and on humanity?
   • What would this world look like without any curse?

8. Even though Scripture is clear about what happens to us after we die and how the best is yet to come for all who believe, why do we still fear death? Why do we still try everything we can to avoid it?

9. Second Corinthians 4:18 says, “We set our eyes not on what we see but on what we cannot see. What we see will last only a short time, but what we cannot see will last forever” (NCV).
   • Max talks about the Greek verb Paul uses in “set our eyes.” What is that word, and what does it mean?
   • How could you set your eyes on what you cannot see?
   • How could this eternal perspective encourage you regarding whatever you are struggling with right now?
10. No matter what season of life you are in, spend a moment thinking about your final days. How do you hope to feel about death once it is close? What needs to change now in your mindset or in your heart to prepare you for that time?

11. The promise in this chapter is that because of Christ, “death has been swallowed up in victory” (1 Cor. 15:54). Consider Jesus’ death and resurrection. How can these events give you hope not only for future glory but for today?
C H A P T E R  1 1

Joy Is Soon Coming

1. What is something you feel hopeless about right now, something that truly causes you to despair, something that when you look at it, you see no way out, no possibility for change?

2. This chapter talks about Mary Magdalene, a central character in the Gospels. How did Mary first meet Jesus? (See Luke 8:1–3.)

3. John 19:25 says that Mary Magdalene stood by the cross of Jesus with Jesus’ mother and aunt. What does this indicate about Mary’s relationship with Jesus?

   • What is the difference between Mary’s reaction to the empty tomb and Simon Peter’s and John’s reactions?
   • What does this tell us about Mary and how she must have felt in that moment?

5. Consider your answer to the first question. What is your reaction to hopelessness? How do you deal with it?
6. Romans 5:3–5 is one of the most beloved passages in Scripture about hope. Paul wrote, “We also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance; and perseverance, character; and character, hope. Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us” (NKJV).

- According to these verses, what precedes hope?
- The Greek word used for perseverance in this passage is *hupomoné*. One definition of *hupomoné* is “enduring, patient, steadfast.” How could suffering produce patient, steadfast waiting?
- How did Mary model a *hupomoné* type of perseverance after she saw the empty tomb?

7. Think back on a time you felt hopeless in another area of your life.

- What happened in that scenario?
- Do you see any purpose in that suffering?
- Did it produce any of the fruit—perseverance, character, or hope—Paul talked about in Romans 5:3–5?

8. Psalm 30:5 says, “Weeping may last through the night, but joy comes with the morning” (NLT). Read the rest of the story of Mary at the tomb in John 20:11–18.

- How does Mary’s experience at the tomb reflect this truth that joy comes with the morning?
- How does this story reflect what we learned about hope in Romans 5:3–5?

9. Mary was certain Jesus was dead because she had watched him die. She was certain his body had been stolen from the grave because she had found his tomb empty. However, her despair
QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

turned to unbelievable hope as soon as Jesus said her name (John 20:16).

• What does this tell you about the circumstance that seems hopeless to you now?
• Could Jesus be saying your name even in the midst of this? When have you heard his voice or seen him work during this difficult time?

10. Max said that the greatest news in the world is not that God made the world. What is the greatest news?

• How could knowing that God sees you and loves you give you hope?
• Could you find hope in your seemingly hopeless circumstance even if that circumstance doesn’t change?

11. End this time by reading Psalm 103:8–13. Insert yourself into the passage: “God is sheer mercy and grace; not easily angered, he’s rich in love for me. He doesn’t endlessly nag and scold me, nor hold grudges forever. He doesn’t treat me as my sins deserve, nor pay me back in full for my wrongs. As high as heaven is over the earth, so strong is his love for me. And as far as sunrise is from sunset, he has separated me from my sins. As parents feel for their children, God feels for me” (The Message).
You Will Have Power

1. What comes to mind when you think about the Holy Spirit? What sorts of images or experiences does that stir up?

2. The first time we read about the Holy Spirit is in the creation story in Genesis 1:2: “The earth was without form, and void; and darkness was on the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters” (NKJV). What does this early mention of the Holy Spirit in the Bible tell us about the importance of the Holy Spirit?

3. The Trinity is made up of three parts: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.
   • When you think about your faith, do you see the Father, the Son, or the Holy Spirit as playing the central role? Why is this?
   • Which one of the Trinity do you most often pray to, and why?
   • Do you see the Holy Spirit as an active part of your daily life? If so, how? If not, why not?

4. What four words does Max use to describe how the Holy Spirit interacts with us?
5. Read Ephesians 1:13–21.
   • What does this passage say about the power of the Holy Spirit in us?
   • Ephesians 1:19–20 says the same power that raised Christ from the dead lives in us. What do you think about that? Is that easy or difficult for you to believe, and why?

   • How do we bear this type of fruit?
   • What role does the Holy Spirit play in our bearing fruit?

7. Max says, “Saints are never told to create unity but rather to keep the unity the Spirit provides. Harmony is always an option, because the Spirit is always present.”
   • What do you think about this statement?
   • What has been your experience with unity among believers?
   • How could the Holy Spirit bring unity to your community?

   • What does this passage say about the role of the Holy Spirit in discipleship?
   • How does the Holy Spirit guide us in truth?
   • When you look back over your Christian journey, how has the Holy Spirit revealed truth to you?

9. The Holy Spirit gives us power, he creates unity among the saints, he guides us in truth, and he also makes us holy. Another word for holy is sanctified. First Corinthians 6:11 says, “But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified
YOU WILL HAVE POWER

in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God” (NKJV).

• The Greek word for sanctified means “to separate from profane things and dedicate to God.” What area of your life has the Holy Spirit sanctified?

• Second Corinthians 3:18 says, “But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord” (NKJV). Our salvation is a one-time event, but the process of sanctification, of becoming more holy, is an ongoing one. What area of your life has not been sanctified yet?

• Sometimes we try to take the work of sanctification upon ourselves. We do as Paul said, “After starting your new lives in the Spirit, why are you now trying to become perfect by your own human effort?” (Gal. 3:3 NLT). Are there any areas of your life in which you are trying to sanctify yourself? How could you allow the Holy Spirit back into that process?

10. Are you producing the fruit of the Spirit? Are you loving, joyful, peaceful, patient, kind, good, faithful, gentle, and self-controlled? Or are you lacking the fruit of the Spirit? Spend some time assessing this.

• Where are you allowing the Holy Spirit to work?

• Where are you not allowing him to work?
CHAPTER 13

Justice Will Prevail

1. Identify something that happened in your life that wasn’t fair. How did this event make you feel? How did this event affect the way you view God?

2. Before reading this chapter what did you know about Judgment Day?
   - If you were raised going to church, did your church often talk about God’s judgment? If so, how did you receive this message?
   - If you were not raised hearing about God’s judgment, how did you receive the message in this chapter?

3. Read what Scripture says about God’s judgment in the following passages: Matthew 12:36; Acts 17:30–31; Romans 14:10; 2 Corinthians 5:10; and Revelation 20:11–12.
   - When will the Judgment Day happen?
   - Who will be judged?
   - How will they be judged?

4. This idea of justice and judgment is a double-edged sword. On one hand it’s hopeful to know that God will judge those who
have treated us wrong. On the other hand it’s unsettling to know that we also will be judged. How do you feel about this tension?

5. What role will Christ play in our judgment? (See Romans 2:16.)

6. Our complete forgiveness will never be more evident than when we are being judged with Christ beside us. Do you feel fully forgiven by God?
   • If not, what sin or baggage are you still holding on to?
   • What part of your life do you not believe has been forgiven?

7. Max points out that on Judgment Day we will not only be judged for our wrongs, but also our good deeds will be recognized. As Hebrews 6:10 says, “God is not unjust; he will not forget your work and the love you have shown him as you have helped his people and continue to help them.”
   • Have you ever done a good deed that went unrecognized? Were you expecting recognition but never received it? What was that experience like? Was it disappointing not to be recognized for your work?
   • Knowing that God sees everything you do, how are you encouraged to do good even if you are never recognized for it?

8. The parable of the talents tells the story of three servants who were entrusted with money from their master. Read the parable in Matthew 25:14–30.
   • What does the talent symbolize in this story?
   • What do the actions of the first two servants, who multiplied their talents, symbolize?
   • What do the actions of the last servant, who buried his talent in the ground, symbolize?
• What did the master mean when he said, “For whoever has will be given more, and they will have an abundance. Whoever does not have, even what they have will be taken from them” (Matt. 25:29)?

9. The master told the first two servants, “Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master’s happiness!” (Matt. 25:21, 23). We all long to hear these words on Judgment Day.

• What do you hope Jesus will commend you for? What do you hope to have been faithful with?
• What gifts do you believe God has given you that you could use for kingdom work? How could you be more fruitful with what you have been given?

10. People of the Promise have no reason to fear Judgment Day. And People of the Promise can have faith that God will bring justice to all things.

• Do you fear God’s judgment? Spend some time talking to him about your fears.
• Is there a circumstance or person in your life that you believe needs justice or God’s judgment? Bring that person or circumstance to Christ. Ask him to help you surrender the situation to God’s sovereign judgment so you don’t have to carry the weight of it anymore.
1. This chapter talks about hope as an anchor. How is hope an anchor for the soul?

2. Hebrews 6:19–20 says, “We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure. It enters the inner sanctuary behind the curtain, where our forerunner, Jesus, has entered on our behalf.” The inner sanctuary is the Holy of Holies. Before Christ’s death on the cross, only high priests could enter this part of the temple, and they could enter only once a year to offer a sacrifice to God on behalf of the people.
   • What is the significance of Jesus’ entering the Holy of Holies on our behalf?
   • What does this have to do with hope? Ultimately what is our hope rooted in?

3. Review the promises given in this book:
   God has given you his very great and precious promises.
   You are stamped with God’s image.
The devil’s days are numbered.
You are an heir of God.
Your prayers have power.
There is grace for the humble.
God gets you.
Christ is praying for you.
There is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.
This tomb is temporary.
Joy is soon coming.
You will have power through the Holy Spirit.
Justice will prevail.

• How does Jesus make each of these promises possible? Or how does he fulfill each promise?
• What kind of hope do we have apart from Christ?

4. Fill in the blanks: “Since no one can take your _____, no one can take your _____.”

5. Max shares the tragic story of Jonathan McComb, a man who lost his wife and two children in a flood. How did you react to the words Jonathan spoke at his family’s funeral?

6. Have you ever felt hope in the midst of tragedy? What did it feel like? Why did you have hope even though the situation appeared hopeless?

7. Think about what your hope is anchored to right now.
   • Is it anchored to the promises of God through Christ, or if you’re honest, is it anchored to something else?
• A good way to test this is to ask yourself, “What is something, or someone, I cannot live without?” Whatever or whoever that is, that is where your hope is anchored.

• What keeps us from anchoring our hope in God’s promises?

8. Isaiah 40:31 offers a beautiful promise: “But those who wait on the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint” (NKJV, emphasis mine). The New International Version translates this verse as “but those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength” (emphasis mine). The Hebrew word translated here both as “wait” and “hope” is qavah. It means both to wait and to hope. How do we wait on the Lord with hope?

9. Go back and read the list of promises in question 3.

• Which one of these promises do you need the most right now? Why?

• How could you stand on that promise today?

10. This book does not include every promise made by God, because the Bible is full of God’s promises. Make a list of other promises God has made that are special to you.

11. You are a Person of the Promise. After reading this book, what does that mean to you?

• How can believing that you are a Person of the Promise change the way you interact with God, with others, and with yourself?

• How can being a Person of the Promise give you unshakable hope?
12. Declare these words over your life: I will build my life on the promises of God. Since his promises are unbreakable, my hope will be unshakable. The winds will still blow. The rain will still fall. But in the end I will be standing—standing on the promises of God.