

FAITH
40 DEVOTIONS INSPIRED
BEHIND
BY POPULAR WORSHIP SONGS
THE
WRITTEN BY SCOTT SAVAGE
SONG

*Where Music
Meets the Heart of God*

KLOVE
BOOKS

Faith Behind the Song: Where Music Meets the Heart of God
(40 Devotions Inspired by Popular Worship Songs)
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Published by K-LOVE Books in partnership
with Forefront Books, Nashville, Tennessee.
Distributed by Simon & Schuster.

Library of Congress Control Number: 2026902915

Print ISBN: 978-1-63763-514-8

E-book ISBN: 978-1-63763-515-5

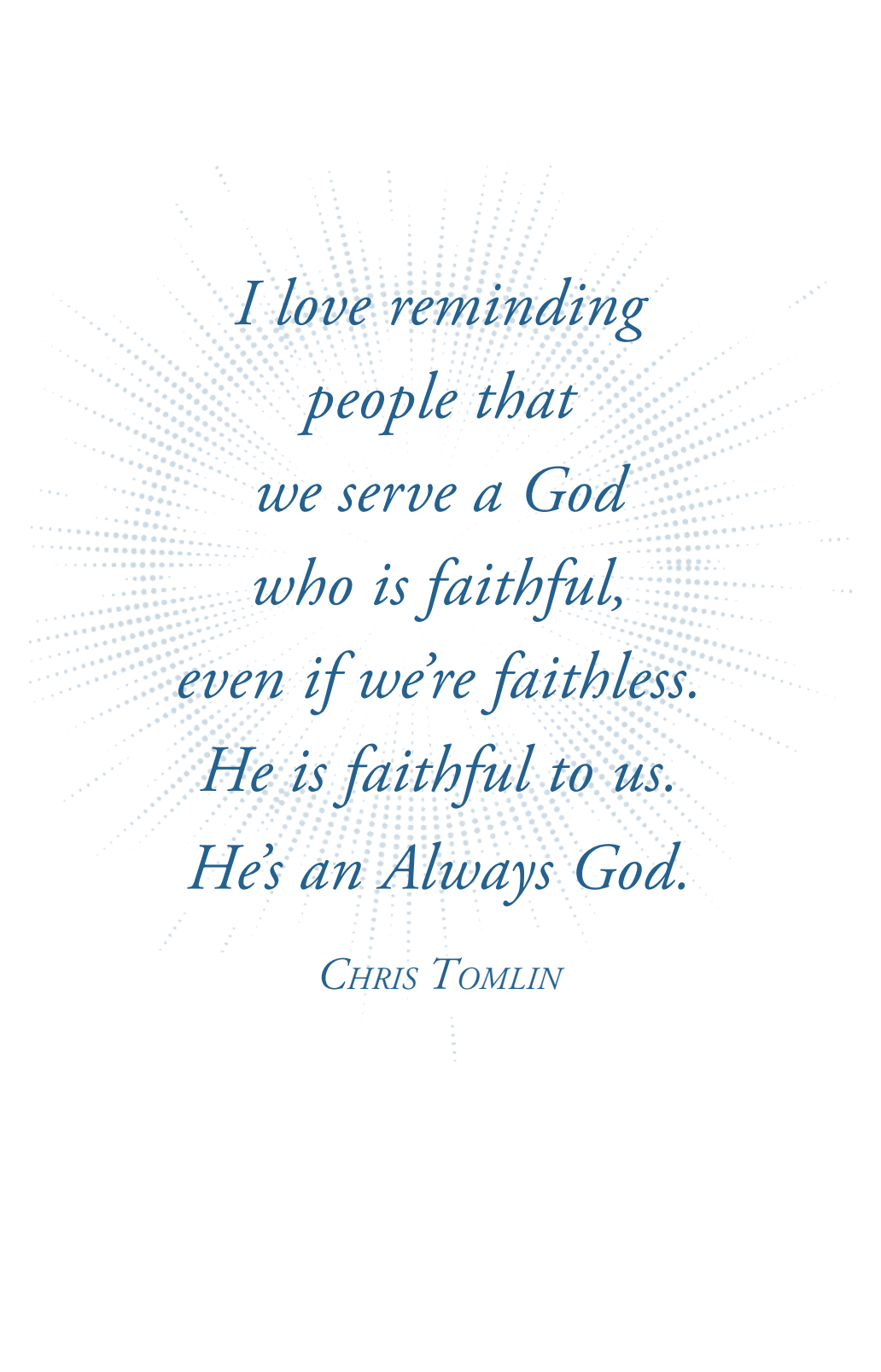
Cover Design by Greg Jackson/Thinkpen Design
Interior Design by Mary Susan Oleson, Blu Design Concepts

Printed in the United States of America
26 27 28 29 30 31 VEP 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

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*I love reminding
people that
we serve a God
who is faithful,
even if we're faithless.
He is faithful to us.
He's an Always God.*

CHRIS TOMLIN

1

Holy Forever

They were calling out to each other,
“Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of Heaven’s Armies!
The whole earth is filled with his glory!”

—ISAIAH 6:3

A few years ago, our family visited Glacier National Park for the first time. I went paddleboarding one evening at sunset. The air was quiet, and the water was like glass. It felt like heaven on earth. As my paddle cut through the water, I felt God’s loving presence surrounding me. Reflecting on God’s power as Creator helped answer a big question I had been asking for months.

I looked down from my paddleboard, marveling at the clear water and my ability to see the bottom of the lake. The water’s clarity embodied the kind of clarity I sensed with God.

FAITH BEHIND THE SONG

A couple of hours later, I stepped off the lake, praising God and overwhelmed by His grandeur. I walked back to our friend's trailer, pinching myself and asking, *Was that real? Did that just happen?* The overwhelming sense of God's power I felt on that lake is at the heart of Chris Tomlin's popular song "Holy Forever." The song invites us to join the thousands of generations before us who have worshipped at the throne of God.

*A thousand generations falling down in worship
To sing the song of ages to the Lamb
And all who've gone before us and all who will believe
Will sing the song of ages to the Lamb.¹*

In an interview with *The Christian Post*, Tomlin discussed how this song fits within his extensive library and within the world of worship music today. He described two types of worship styles: transcendence and deliverance.

"There are the songs of deliverance, which when it comes to worship, those are the songs of rescue like 'Lord, I need You, rescue me, I need your grace,' Tomlin explained. 'We need those songs. Then there are those other songs of transcendence. There's nothing about me in the deal; it's just taking our eyes off ourselves and just [switch focus] onto the glory of God.'"²

HOLY FOREVER

I love the framework that Tomlin offered. We need both songs of deliverance and songs of transcendence. “Holy Forever” is undoubtedly a song of transcendence that helps reset the lens through which we see ourselves, the world, and God.

Author Carlos Whittaker, in his book *Kill the Spider*, encourages readers to cultivate a sense of God’s transcendence by practicing wonder. Wonder requires us to shift our focus during challenging times. “We gaze at life and glance at God in desperate times. But, everything changes when we gaze at God and glance at life.”³

If you’ve had an encounter with God’s transcendence, then you know exactly what Tomlin and Whittaker are describing. You realize just how big God is and how small you are, how holy God is and how unholy you are. In a world where our immediate access to information and our sense of control can make us feel more powerful than we truly are, we need experiences of transcendence that remind us of God’s holiness and overwhelming power.

In Isaiah 6:5, the prophet saw a vision of the throne room of God and cried out, “It’s all over! I am doomed, for I am a sinful man. I have filthy lips, and I live among a people with filthy lips. Yet I have seen the King, the Lord of Heaven’s Armies.”

FAITH BEHIND THE SONG

An encounter with God's transcendence leaves us feeling unworthy of His love and mercy. In light of that unworthiness, God's faithfulness is remarkable.

Through "Holy Forever," Tomlin invites us to remember God's character—transcendent yet faithful. When he spoke with Air1 in 2022, Tomlin said he loves "reminding people that we serve a God who is faithful, even if we're faithless. He is faithful to us. He's an Always God."⁴

I'm grateful that Tomlin sought to write a transcendent song that helps us remember how unlike us God truly is. We worship a God who is big enough to handle the burdens and struggles we face today. It's comforting to know the glory of a God like that!

Prayer

God, my problems seem big, overwhelming, and unsolvable. Help me recognize Your glory and majesty today. I want to know Your power today. When I am tempted to focus on the size of my problems, help me meditate on Your holiness and power in my life. In the mighty name of Jesus, I pray. Amen.

Application

When you need a reminder of God's transcendence in your life, spend time in God's creation. Stargaze, hike, or get out on the water. Put your phone away. Be quiet before God—listen for His still, small voice. Read Isaiah 6 and listen to Chris Tomlin's song "Holy Forever." As you enter God's creation and quiet the noise of your daily life, may you find your heart reset and your viewpoint recalibrated in light of God's transcendence.

2

Made for More

For we are God's masterpiece.
He has created us anew in Christ Jesus,
so we can do the good things
he planned for us long ago.

—EPHESIANS 2:10

Have you ever told a friend, “I have a bad feeling that this person is about to cancel,” and then the appointment was canceled? Or have you ever been lying in bed and thought, *I don't think I locked all the doors in the house*, and got up to discover that one of the doors was unlocked? In those moments, it's so important to pay attention to those feelings and check into those areas of concern.

If you've ever felt a lack of peace and uneasiness like this, you know that God often works through that

FAITH BEHIND THE SONG

uneasiness to disturb, unsettle, and open us up to something new. Perhaps you've been thinking, *I was made for more than this*. I love what Pastor Vance Pitman says about how to handle those moments: "A lack of clarity is always a call to deeper intimacy."

Josh Baldwin wrote a song about this kind of stirring entitled "Made for More." In the chorus, Baldwin declares—

*So why would I make a bed in my shame
When a fountain of grace is running my way
I know I am Yours
And I was made for more.*⁵

When I think about this song and the reminder it gives us about who God says we are and our calling from Him, I think of Ephesians 1. Paul declares his longing for the believers to comprehend how they were made for more: "I pray that your hearts will be flooded with light so that you can understand the confident hope he has given to those he called—his holy people who are his rich and glorious inheritance. I also pray that you will understand the incredible greatness of God's power for us who believe him" (vv. 18–19).

MADE FOR MORE

In 1 Peter 2:9, Peter reminds us of our identity and purpose: “But you are not like that, for you are a chosen people. You are royal priests, a holy nation, God’s very own possession. As a result, you can show others the goodness of God, for he called you out of the darkness into his wonderful light.”

One of the most sobering places to visit is a graveyard. Todd Henry once wrote, “The most valuable land in the world is the graveyard. In the graveyard are buried all of the unwritten novels, never-launched businesses, unreconciled relationships, and all of the other things that people thought, ‘I’ll get around to that tomorrow.’ One day, however, their tomorrows ran out.”⁶

We often go through life missing out on what God has in store for us, leaving us with untapped potential and an unfulfilled calling. I’ve seen how God uses rock bottom to wake people up to His whisper they’ve been ignoring. I’ve also seen God work as someone finds “success” only to discover an emptiness that leads them to ask God an important question: “Is there more?”

In the caption for the “Made for More” album trailer, Baldwin shares how he found God speaking to him both in failure and success: “In the valleys, He was my help,

FAITH BEHIND THE SONG

my Prince of Peace, my Savior and Friend. In the highest moments, I was reminded how we are created in the image of God, and we were made for so much more than we imagine for ourselves.”⁷

So if you're feeling restless or uneasy today, don't ignore that feeling; it could be a gentle nudge from the Holy Spirit getting your attention. If you're wondering, *Was I made for more, Jesus?* the answer is yes! Don't settle for merely gratifying the desires of your sinful flesh. Don't settle for just following the pattern of this world. Don't settle for being popular or well-liked. Don't settle for pursuing wealth or accumulating possessions. Don't settle when God has made you for more, much more!

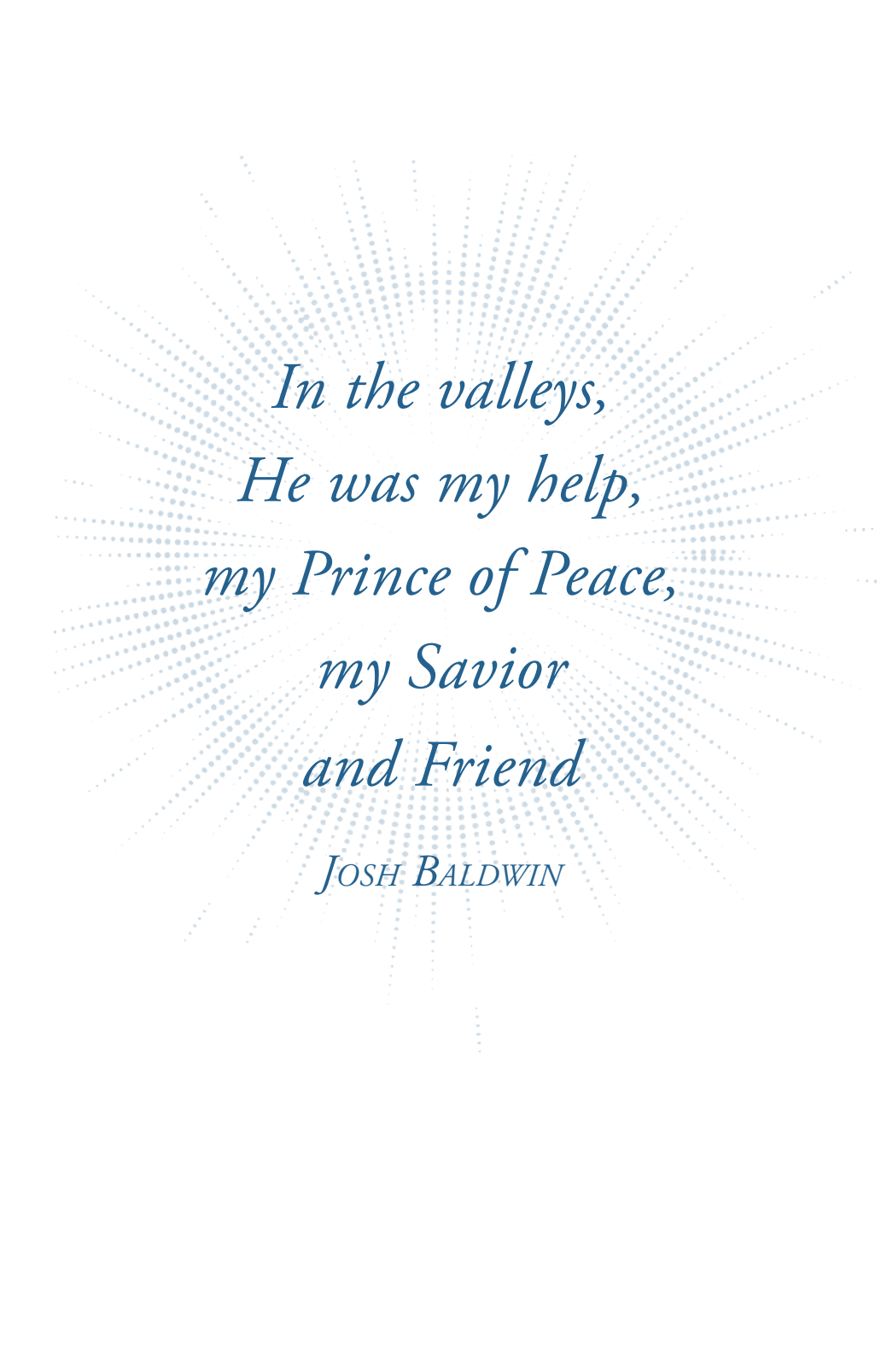
Seek God. Pursue deeper intimacy with God. Invite others to pray with you. Go after all that God has for you.

Prayer

Heavenly Father, I feel unsettled today. I'm grateful for what you've given me and the opportunities you've opened for me, but I sense that I was made for more. I want to live a life that is full of purpose. I want to bring glory to You. Would You show me what to do next, Lord? I'm listening for Your direction. I'm Yours! In the mighty name of Jesus, I pray. Amen.

Application

Think of a trusted friend who is also a follower of Jesus. Send them a text and schedule a time to meet up over coffee or a long walk. Share what has been stirring inside you and invite them to prayerfully support you. Read Proverbs 3: 5-6 and put it into practice.



*In the valleys,
He was my help,
my Prince of Peace,
my Savior
and Friend*

JOSH BALDWIN

3

Praise

As the deer longs for streams of water,
so I long for you, O God.
I thirst for God, the living God.

PSALM 42:1–2

What signals the start of fall for you? Is it the return of pumpkin flavors? Maybe it's football games on the weekend or a chance to wear sweatshirts again. "Hoodie season" is my term for the time between October and March when I pull out my favorite hooded sweatshirt. During this time, I look forward to wearing my sweatshirt, curling up with a warm drink in my favorite chair, and watching football.

However, my feelings never last forever. By the time March comes around, I'll be done with hoodies. Instead of enjoying my favorite sweatshirt, I'm ready for warmer days,

FAITH BEHIND THE SONG

flip-flops, and my paddleboard. Isn't it funny how what excites us today can be the very thing we're ready to leave behind tomorrow?

Do you struggle with fickle feelings or indulge in short-lived enjoyment too? If so, consider your approach to faith and worship. Just as we long for our favorite fall clothes only to grow tired of needing them a few months later, we often overflow with prayer and praise in one circumstance only to withhold it in another.

This experience is the subject of Elevation Worship's collaboration with Brandon Lake and Chandler Moore entitled "Praise." Bouncing back and forth between praising God and withholding praise from Him is an all-too-common experience for Jesus-followers. Some days you're eager to blast your favorite worship song, while other days you quickly skip over the very same song.

Psalm 42:4 reflects this kind of sentiment: "My heart is breaking as I remember how it used to be: I walked among the crowds of worshipers, leading a great procession to the house of God, singing for joy and giving thanks amid the sound of a great celebration!"

It's normal to have seasons where our hearts are not in it the way they once were—when we don't feel like praising God.

PRAISE

Elevation Worship addressed this directly when they wrote, “But praise isn’t just a feeling or response when you think of how good God has been to you.” Our relationship with God must grow beyond our emotions or awareness in a given moment. “Praise is how you fight for your perspective. Praise is how you take your imagination back from the enemy. Praise is how you inspire your faith and remember God’s faithfulness.”⁸

This same attitude is repeated in Psalm 42:5–6, where the psalmist acknowledges his feelings but chooses to praise anyway:

Why am I discouraged?

Why is my heart so sad?

I will put my hope in God!

I will praise him again—

my Savior and my God!

The song “Praise” offers us an invitation to sing in the middle of all kinds of circumstances as a way to fight our spiritual enemies. It can be hard to praise in adversity—crazy hard! When we’re in the valley, praise can feel unnatural and unrealistic. Whether we realize it or not, sometimes we praise God based on our circumstances or feelings, which are as inconsistent as my feelings about my favorite hoodie.

FAITH BEHIND THE SONG

Instead, Elevation Worship reminds us to praise in all changing circumstances because of something unchanging—the character and faithfulness of God.

I'll praise 'cause You're sovereign

Praise 'cause You reign

Praise 'cause You rose and defeated the grave

I'll praise 'cause You're faithful

Praise 'cause You're true

Praise 'cause there's nobody greater than You.⁹

Our emotions will never be as consistent or reliable as God's character. Our intentions will never be strong or secure enough to carry us through life's highs and lows. That's why we can't praise God based on anything related to ourselves or our circumstances.

I'm so grateful for the reminder Elevation Worship has given us to praise God based on who He is and what He has done. Just as we may not be “feeling” the weather, we may not feel like it's time to praise. So today, don't think about whether you feel like praising God. Instead, consider why God is worthy of praise, and then allow your feelings to catch up with the faithfulness of God.

PRAISE

Prayer

God, I've been feeling some big emotions lately, and things haven't been easy. I haven't felt like praising You. But when I think about all that You've carried me through, it's pretty wild! Thank You for Your patience and grace; I don't deserve Your goodness. I praise You for being faithful to me, even when I haven't been faithful to praise You. In the mighty name of Jesus, I pray. Amen.

Application

Think back through the past six months. If you're a little fuzzy, scroll through the photo app on your phone or your social media posts. Pull out a piece of paper and a pen and make a "faithfulness list" about the ways you've seen God's character at work in your life. Once you've added several items to your list, pause and give praise back to God.

4

You've Already Won

I am leaving you with a gift—peace of mind and heart.

And the peace I give is a gift the world cannot give.

So don't be troubled or afraid.

—JOHN 14:27

I love making lists.

I make lists for just about everything. When it comes to my to-do lists, I always start with what I've already completed. Checking off something as I build the list gives me a sense of satisfaction.

However, one of my biggest obstacles in following Jesus is my tendency to measure my worth and value by what I accomplish. I've struggled to rest for this very reason. Rest often feels like something I earn through my productivity rather than something I receive as a gift from God.

FAITH BEHIND THE SONG

If you can relate, you may find deep meaning in the contemporary Christian duo Shane & Shane's song "You've Already Won." From personal experience, many of us know that transitioning from a life of performance to one of receiving God's grace is difficult. As if that weren't challenging enough, we have a spiritual enemy who wants us to continue to measure ourselves by our performance. Satan seeks to condemn us for our failures and convince us that our worth must be secured through yet another perfect performance.

Shane & Shane counters those lies in this song, part of a live album recording at Liberty University. They dedicated it to followers of Jesus in Ukraine who were trusting Jesus amid incredible turmoil and conflict in their country.

In the chorus, they declare a sense of assurance in a world of insecurity and uncertainty.

I'm fighting a battle

You've already won

No matter what comes my way

*I will overcome.*¹⁰

We are fighting in a spiritual battle to not only trust in God's grace for our salvation but also to rest daily in His grace

YOU'VE ALREADY WON

for our identity and worth. Yet as many have said, we are not fighting *for* our victory—we are fighting *from* His victory.

In “You’ve Already Won,” Shane & Shane also shows their deep love for the hymns and hymn writers who came before them. This song’s lyrics harken back to two beloved hymns: “The Solid Rock” and “It Is Well.”

One day, while walking to his workshop, a phrase came to Edward Mote’s mind: “On Christ, the solid Rock, I stand: all other ground is sinking sand.”¹¹ Later that week, he visited his friend’s wife who was battling an illness. He shared with her those words, along with a few additions he had written. She was so encouraged that he finished the song and began sharing it.

“It Is Well” is one of the most famous and influential hymns in church history. Horatio Spafford wrote the lyrics as he traveled a section of ocean where the ship carrying his family had sunk. His wife survived, but his four children did not. His faith was mingled with grief as he wrote the hymn’s famous opening lines.

*When peace like a river, attendeth my way,
When sorrows like sea billows roll;
Whatever my lot, Thou hast taught me to say,
“It is well, it is well, with my soul.”*¹²

FAITH BEHIND THE SONG

As you read these words, both old and new, you may be thinking, *So how do I find that peace in the middle of my battle? If God's already won through what Jesus did, then where do I start?*

What if you started by checking your posture? Many of us spend a significant portion of our workdays in unhealthy postures. As I typed those words, I realized I had become hunched over my laptop. I sat up straighter, hoping to avoid neck and shoulder pain tonight. Similarly, it might be wise to ensure that your posture toward God has not shifted into one of achievement.

Ephesians 2:8–9 describes our life with God through a posture of receiving—embracing God's gift of grace rather than hustling for our worth through earning: “God saved you by his grace when you believed. And you can't take credit for this; it is a gift from God. Salvation is not a reward for the good things we have done, so none of us can boast about it.”

It might also be helpful to take some time to meditate on the crucifixion of Jesus. Instead of turning on a movie or starting to watch a new show, what if you read one of the Gospels straight through? Each Gospel takes about one and a half to two and a half hours to read. It's hard to be in awe of something you're not experiencing personally.

As you work on your list of tasks today, allow what God

YOU'VE ALREADY WON

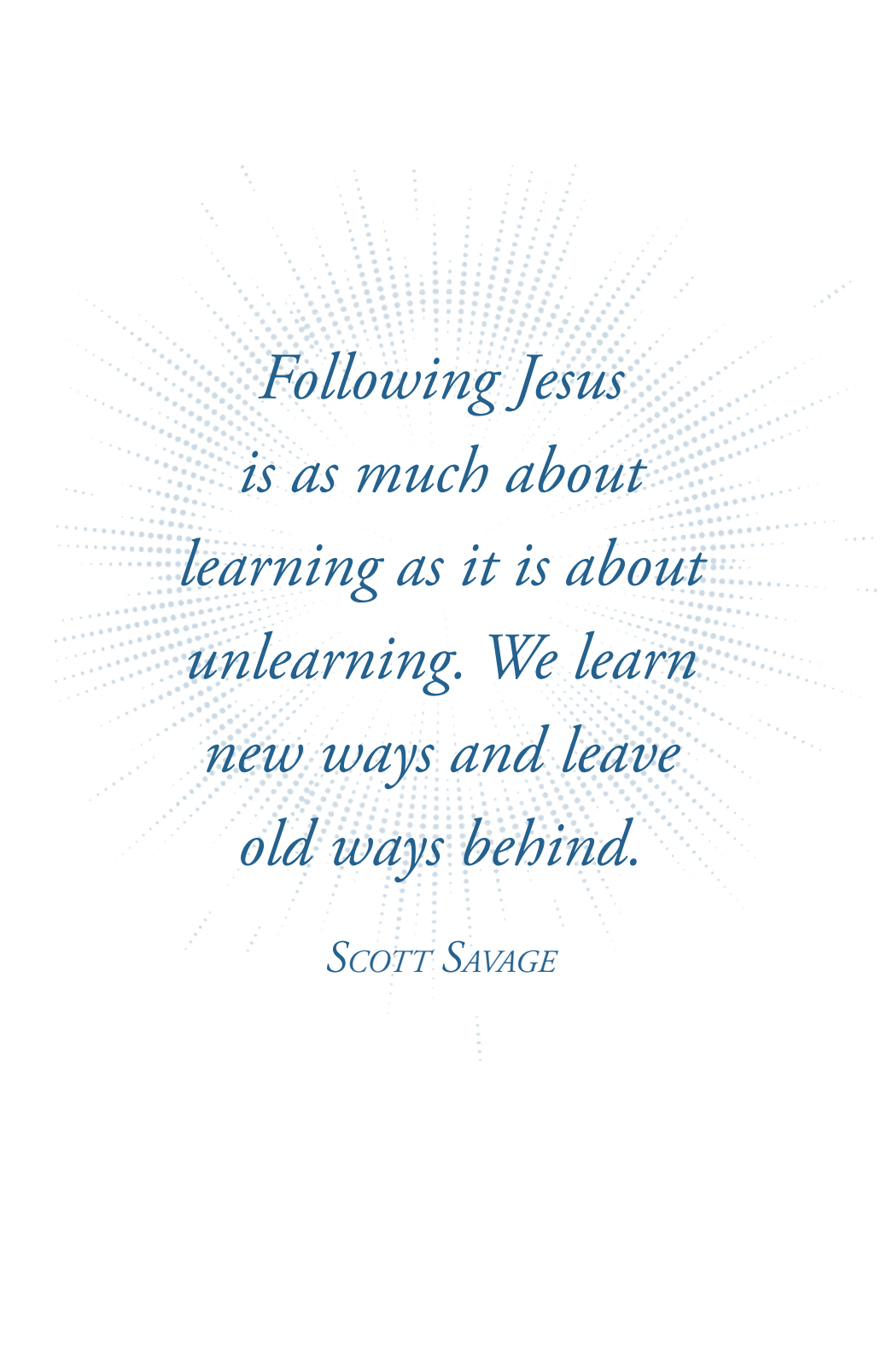
has already done for you to shape how you approach what needs get done. No matter what battles you face today, the greatest battle you'll ever face has already been won!

Prayer

Father, forgive me when I forget all that You've done for me. All too often, I go into battles ignoring what You've already won. I get caught up in trying to achieve status with You, wearing myself out as I seek to prove my worthiness, which You've already declared over me. Thank You for the gift of grace—that I did nothing to earn. Your love for me still amazes me today! In the mighty name of Jesus, I pray. Amen.

Application

Put your phone on “Do Not Disturb” mode and listen to “You’ve Already Won.” Close your eyes and focus on the lyrics. As their song reminds us, you may not know what God is doing in your current season, but you know what He’s already done—you know how the story ends. Set your focus on what Jesus has done for you and reflect on His love and care. No matter what comes your way, you won’t have to fight alone!



*Following Jesus
is as much about
learning as it is about
unlearning. We learn
new ways and leave
old ways behind.*

SCOTT SAVAGE

5

In the Room

Seek the Kingdom of God above all else,
and live righteously, and he will give you
everything you need. So don't worry about tomorrow,
for tomorrow will bring its own worries.

Today's trouble is enough for today.

—MATTHEW 6:33–34

Have you ever been in a room where God's presence was especially palpable? Have you ever been in a gathering of believers when it seemed as though God was as close as the person standing next to you?

One evening, I went to the prayer chapel at my Christian college to pray with a friend who was ending an unhealthy relationship. The friend left to initiate that conversation, and I said

FAITH BEHIND THE SONG

I would stay back to pray. I intended to wait an additional fifteen minutes.

But as I prepared to get up from my knees, I felt a strong presence—like a hand on my back—pressing me back down. It was utterly unexpected and bewildering! I didn't know what to do with that sensation, but I sensed I should continue interceding on behalf of my friend. Several times over the next two hours, whenever I tried to get up, that “hand” was there. It was as if God were saying, “Don't leave yet, keep pressing in and praying.”

To this day, that night remains my most extended period of prayer and the most profound experience I've had of the Holy Spirit. Something sacred and glorious happened in that building.

Later, I learned that my friend was having that conversation just outside the chapel, and it was more difficult than expected. Would my interruption have made it easier for my friend not to take that courageous step? I don't know what would've happened if I had stopped praying, but I know that God wanted me to stay in the room and keep praying for boldness and obedience.

I thought about that story while listening to Matt Maher's song “In the Room.” Maher partnered with Chris Brown to deliver a powerful, lyrically rich song. The chorus expresses a deep hunger for God's presence:

IN THE ROOM

I just wanna be in the room

Wanna be in the room when You move

And I'm not leaving

*Not leaving till You do.*¹³

We all know what hunger feels like. Perhaps you're craving a particular kind of food for lunch or a specific type of dessert before bed. But there's something beyond mere hunger—desperation. The bridge of Matt Maher's "In the Room" describes the kind of desperation people often feel when seeking God's presence. Specifically, the song mentions two moments when people had a "whatever it takes" attitude about getting into God's presence.

In Mark 2:2–4, we read about some men who were desperate to get their friend to Jesus so that he could experience healing: "While he was preaching God's word to them, four men arrived carrying a paralyzed man on a mat. They couldn't bring him to Jesus because of the crowd, so they dug a hole through the roof above his head. Then they lowered the man on his mat, right down in front of Jesus."

In Matthew 9:20–21, we read about a woman who was desperate to get near Jesus, pressing through a crowd with the hope that even a touch of His garment would bring the healing

FAITH BEHIND THE SONG

she needed: “Just then a woman who had suffered for twelve years with constant bleeding came up behind him. She touched the fringe of his robe, for she thought, ‘If I can just touch his robe, I will be healed.’”

As you consider my story from the prayer chapel, these stories from the Gospels, and the lyrics of “In the Room,” I wonder: What are you hungry for God to do? In what ways are you desperate for Him to break through? If you can name that longing, craving, or work you long for God to do, then how can you emulate the relentless desperation these men and women had for God’s presence and power?

- **Pray relentlessly.** Desperation often means staying in prayer or remaining in worship longer than you expected—or perhaps even longer than you are comfortable doing.
- **Share vulnerably.** My friend vulnerably shared about a scary but necessary conversation. Because of that, I was able to join them in their desperate search for God’s work in the conversation. People cannot support, encourage, or partner with us unless they understand what we need.
- **Care compassionately.** In Mark 2, four men compassionately carried their friend to Jesus. We have people in our

IN THE ROOM

lives who need God's presence and power, but they may be held back in some way. Our compassion can help them overcome those obstacles and find their way to meeting God in a life-altering way.

I'm praying for you to experience God powerfully in this season of your life!

Prayer

Heavenly Father, I'm hungry for You. I want to experience You like those I read about in the Gospels. Like the woman with the "issue of blood," I'm desperate for You (Luke 8:43 KJV). I like staying in my comfort zone, but I am so hungry for Your presence that I'm willing to get uncomfortable to experience You. I just want to be in the room when You move. In the mighty name of Jesus, I pray. Amen.

Application

If you need a breakthrough today, listen to "In the Room." Make the lyrics your prayer to God. Pause the song and repeat the chorus out loud. May a spirit of desperation and dependence grow within you as you seek the Holy Spirit's movement. Seek first the kingdom of God and keep praying until He moves!