



**GOD  
IS  
OUR  
HELP**

**Our Daily Bread  
Reflections for  
Living with His  
Love and Strength**

**PATRICIA RAYBON**

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**Our Daily Bread**  
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for Living with His Love and Strength*  
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To Joyce Dinkins, a strong friend,  
brave editor, and priceless help as we  
share with joy God's mighty Word

So we say with confidence, “The Lord is my helper;  
I will not be afraid.”

Hebrews 13:6

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# INTRODUCTION

I wasn't supposed to write these opening words. I'd finished writing *God Is Our Help* when a team member at Our Daily Bread Publishing reminded me to write an introduction to this humble book. I grumbled a bit, to be honest. More writing? Now? But what would I say? In truth, I simply didn't know what to add that would do our mighty God justice and inspire our hopeful hearts.

Then I went to church. Sitting on a pew the next Sunday, I was inspired to hear a soloist lift the weary congregation to our feet. She sang this: "Take your burden to the Lord and leave it there."

The simple song gripped my heart. I grew up hearing the melody in my little childhood church in an earnest part of inner-city Denver. Countless other little churches and singers have sung the beloved song too—many of us not knowing why its unassuming words offer such a powerful witness for a riveting

truth: God is real, and when we have a burden, He helps us overcome it. The song's bold words declare it.

If you trust Him through your doubt,  
He will surely bring you out.  
Take your burden to the Lord and leave  
it there.

I mention the little song to invite us into these reflections on how God helps us. In countless ways, He helps. So the song's story is worth knowing, and the Lord seemed to invite me to share it. Digging into its background I came upon a child named Charles, born during my nation's slave era—that time of terror and sorrow that I hadn't planned to mention in this collection at all. The era was traumatizing, and its hurts still linger. But here was tiny Charles, born then. And he needed help. We all do.

The little boy Charles, however, had lost both his father, a slave, and his mother, a free woman, by age five. Orphaned and homeless, he sought comfort from his mother's sister, also free, who took Charles in to ensure he too remained free. Yet he wasn't free. Not really.

He couldn't read or write. Hired out as a child to work odd jobs for assorted people, he stayed

unschooled for years but remained desperate for learning. Finally, by age seventeen, he'd taught himself the basics of reading. Sitting by firelight every night, he sounded out letters to learn words written on random scraps of paper he'd found.

Still, in young adulthood, after America's Civil War, he could find work only as a hod carrier (brick carrier) and, later, as the unpaid janitor at a Philadelphia church he attended with his new wife, Daisy.

To support them, he toiled long days through his labors. After work hours, he then took night classes and correspondence courses, learning even to read Hebrew and Greek so he could better understand the truth of the Bible. Thus qualified for ordination in the Methodist Episcopal Church, he eventually became pastor of the congregation whose church he'd once cleaned on his hands and knees as a janitor.

Today, Dr. Charles Albert Tindley is remembered as a stunning, stirring preacher and a founding father of gospel music—one who transformed his church of 130 members to a multiracial congregation of 10,000.

How did he overcome his humble beginnings? How do we find help for our setbacks and hardships? To whom do we turn when we don't know where to go?

A core answer is found in the unassuming songs

Tindley wrote about life in God. His roster of nearly fifty hymns includes “Bye and Bye (When the Morning Comes),” “I’ll Overcome Someday” (considered the basis for the Civil Rights anthem “We Shall Overcome”), “What Are They Doing in Heaven Today,” and “Leave It There.”\*

He wrote the latter song, according to one story, when a friend came to see him to unload his troubles. After listening to the man’s many nagging worries, Tindley told him he needed to take all his troubles, dump them in a sack, then take the sack to God and “leave it there.”†

Tindley’s homespun advice rings with its biblical basis: “Cast thy burden upon the LORD, and he shall sustain thee” (Psalm 55:22 KJV).

As Jesus declared, “Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest” (Matthew 11:28).

\* “Charles Albert Tindley (1851–1933), Grandfather of Gospel Music,” February 18, 2005, Discipleship Ministries, United Methodist Church, <https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/resources/charles-albert-tindley-1851-1933-grandfather-of-gospel-music>; “Charles Albert Tindley,” Hymnary.org, accessed August 29, 2023, [https://hymnary.org/person/Tindley\\_CA](https://hymnary.org/person/Tindley_CA).

† Gary Chapman, “Leave It There,” A Hymn a Week, February 9, 2013, YouTube video, 5:39, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HyxQZQjLaC4>.

Above this truth stands our Father God himself—  
whispering His invitation to remember this:

Even to your old age and gray hairs  
I am he, I am he who will sustain  
you.

I have made you and I will carry you;  
I will sustain you and I will rescue  
you.

(Isaiah 46:4)

What does this mean? God is our Help. He was  
Help to Charles Tindley. He is Help to you and me.  
So . . .

Remember the former things, those of  
long ago;  
I am God, and there is no other;  
I am God, and there is none like me.

(v. 9)

May we trust that. Never doubt. He will surely  
bring us out. Now let's study and praise Him. Hearts  
on fire. Knowing His help is on its way.

But when?  
Right now.

# OUR SHELTER IN A TIME OF STORM

It was after ten at night when I headed for home from a club meeting at a new friend's house. To my surprise, when I left, snow was flying. The calendar said *April*, but conditions shouted *blizzard*. Driving on dark, unfamiliar streets, I could barely see the road in front of me. Not even my car lights helped. Reflecting brightly off swirling snow—back into my eyes—the lights barely helped me see a few feet ahead.

Wind-whipped flurries left me feeling disoriented and lost. The closer I got to home, the worse conditions seemed to get. I was surprised to feel panicked. My windshield wipers flew across the glass at top speed. I turned up the car's heater and turned on the window defroster—both barely helping.

Right away, I found myself praying. Praying for help.

But why would God listen? Let alone respond?

These are reasonable questions. Our lives some days can feel storm whipped, disorienting, and downright dangerous.

Will God help? Help as this humble devotional book declares?

He will help—and for one extraordinary reason. God is our Helper—and He loves us.

No, let me say it better. God our Helper loves *me*. Can you look in a mirror and say such life-changing words?

*God loves me.*

Then, can you believe it?

### **Seize It**

It's *the* concept to grasp to your heart as you read this collection. I state that not as a demand but as a confession: the truth that God loves me has challenged my heart for my entire life. I didn't grow up in a home where love was expressed lavishly. Sure, my hardworking, God-loving, good parents moved mountains for my big sister and me. Thus they got us to our little Black church every Sunday of every month of every year. They made sure we knew Jesus as friend and Savior. They matched us with godly pals, loving teachers, and wholesome activities. They

monitored our education—even paying for college when the time came—giving us every opportunity to know more, do more, see more, be more.

But give us a warm hug?

Such needful expression wasn't their way—not their way of giving help. This wasn't their fault. Their generation wasn't shaped, some say, to shower affection as a show of help.

Thus I grew up “hungry for touch” as an expression of help. A healthy touch that affirmed I mattered. Healthy touch that proclaimed I was seen, heard, respected, and understood but was also blessed by helpers who loved me.

What a contrast to popular songs of the day that crooned endlessly about “love.” But did the crooning help us know what *love* meant? Did it help me trust the psalmist's announcement that love for me by a helping God “endures”? From “everlasting to everlasting”—even if I could have grasped that idea?

Over and over, however, the writer of Psalm 136 proclaims such a lasting, hard-wearing, warming love. Consider the opening first third of this Bible song:

Give thanks to the LORD, for he is  
good.

GOD IS OUR HELP

*His love endures forever.*  
Give thanks to the God of gods.  
*His love endures forever.*  
Give thanks to the Lord of lords:  
*His love endures forever.*

to him who alone does great wonders,  
*His love endures forever.*  
who by his understanding made the  
    heavens,  
*His love endures forever.*  
who spread out the earth upon the  
    waters,  
*His love endures forever.*  
who made the great lights—  
*His love endures forever.*  
the sun to govern the day,  
*His love endures forever.*  
the moon and stars to govern the night;  
*His love endures forever.*

On and on, this remarkable psalm announces God's love for me—and you—each statement followed by the stunning announcement that God's helping love, for *us*, is both permanent and lavish. Healthy too. Thus it doesn't hold back, shame, condemn, exploit,

ridicule, or retreat from us. Thus God's loving help doesn't fade away. Nor grow disinterested. Thus God is never unfaithful. Nor hurtful. Nor does God's great concern or passion for us fade away.

### **Believe It**

The Lord's great help for us, therefore, doesn't get stale. Or turn cold. Or grow intolerant. Or weary when it's past ten o'clock at night, snow is flying, and I can barely see the road beyond a few feet in front of my little car.

But there's more. Not even when I have sinned by taking not a snowy road but the wrong road does God stop offering His love that helps.

Many times, answers the writer of Psalm 106, the Lord's rebellious people also "wasted away in their sin" (v. 43), just as you and I have probably sometimes done. And yet?

God "took note of their distress when he heard their cry; . . . and out of his great love he relented," causing "all who held them captive to show them mercy" (see vv. 44–46).

This, then, is the essence of God's help. It's love.

**God's loving  
help doesn't  
fade away.**

I was confirmed of that in perhaps a strange way. Completing the first novel of a mystery series I've been blessed to write, I allowed a love story to take root in the plot. *But what should my main character's love interest be like?*

Every resource I studied said the "love character" is known most for giving steadying help. Not just a romantic, the love character is committed to being a helper. Committed in the way that God helps us.

Thus, in my snow-whipped car that night, God helped my panic cease. He helped me to see the road so I could drive it wisely and with confidence.

He helped me turn onto the right street and creep my way to the block where my husband and I are blessed to live next to good neighbors who for ump-teen years, as my late mother would say, have become beautiful friends

Thus, this same God helped me to write down these plain and humble thoughts in this little reflection as a reminder that "out of his great love for us," He'll never stop helping me, and He'll never stop helping you.

Lavishly. Reliably. Decently. Properly.

On every single day, in fact, His helping love for us is enduring. Ongoing and tolerating, braving and long-suffering, persistent and imperishable—always

connecting Him to us. How long? “From everlasting to everlasting” (Psalm 106:48). That’s forever and forever.

On even an ordinary day, perhaps like this one, He is ready to help you right this minute because of His durable love. Thus today, right at this minute, ask Him for His loving help.

His answer may be surprising. It may not look like what we expect. It may require us to wait. It may lead us to a story or a Scripture we didn’t expect. But because of His great love for us, when we ask Him for help, His answer will be a form of this sweet and loving answer: Sure, my love.

# Friendship Bench

*The LORD would speak to Moses face to face, as one speaks to a friend.*

Exodus 33:11

In the African country of Zimbabwe, war trauma and high unemployment can leave people in despair—until they find hope on a “friendship bench.” Hopeless people can go there to talk with trained “grandmothers”—elderly women taught to listen to people struggling with depression, known in that nation’s Shona language as *kufungisisa*, or “thinking too much.”

The Friendship Bench Project is being launched in other places, including Zanzibar, London, and New York City. “We were thrilled to bits with the results,” said one London researcher. A New York counselor agreed. “Before you know it, you’re not on a bench, you’re just inside a warm conversation with someone who cares.”

The project evokes the warmth and wonder of talking with our Almighty God. Moses put up not a bench but a tent to commune with God, calling it the tent

of meeting. “Inside the Tent of Meeting, the LORD would speak to Moses face to face, as one speaks to a friend” (Exodus 33:11 NLT). Joshua, his assistant, wouldn’t even leave the tent, perhaps because he so valued his time with God (v. 11).

Today we no longer need a tent of meeting. Jesus has brought the Father near. As He told His disciples, “Now you are my friends, since I have told you everything the Father told me” (John 15:15 NLT). Yes, our God awaits us. He’s our heart’s wisest helper, our understanding friend. Talk with Him now.



What worries consume your thoughts today? As you talk to God about these concerns, what good thoughts about Him can you focus on instead?

*Dear God, thank you for encouraging our hearts with noble thoughts of you. When we're sick with worry, point our minds back to you, our caring and healing friend.*

**Exodus 33:9–11** NLT

As he went into the tent, the pillar of cloud would come down and hover at its entrance while the LORD spoke with Moses. When the people saw the cloud standing at the entrance of the tent, they would stand and bow down in front of their own tents. Inside the Tent of Meeting, the LORD would speak to Moses face to face, as one speaks to a friend. Afterward Moses would return to the camp, but the young man who assisted him, Joshua son of Nun, would remain behind in the Tent of Meeting.