

"This devotional reminds moms of the importance of their labors and cheers them on in their daily tasks."

Melissa Kruger, author of *Walking with God in the Season of Motherhood*



THIRTY-ONE DAILY READINGS TO HELP YOU
BE GOSPEL-SATURATED ALL DAY, EVERY DAY

gospel

MEDITATIONS

for

MOTHERS

CHRIS ANDERSON

JOE TYRPAK

HANNAH ANDERSON

WITH TRACEE VEENSTRA & ANGELA JEFFCOTT

gospel
MEDITATIONS
for
MOTHERS

“Mother’s Day and mom books can sometimes bring on the mom-guilt. Sometimes it can puff a mom up, making her quick to boast in herself. This book is for the weary and guilt-ridden, and the one who thinks she’s doing alright. We all need the Savior and daily reminders that only God can establish the work of our hands.”

—**Courtney Reissig**, author of *Glory in the Ordinary* and *The Accidental Feminist*

“*Gospel Meditations for Mothers* certainly strikes a chord to give comfort, empathy, direction, and sympathetic counsel to Christian mothers in our culture! Best of all, it points young and old alike to the Scriptures for ultimate guidance. These encouraging words answer questions as well as grab the heart to meet needs of everyday life. I loved it!”

—**Terry Pettit**, wife of Dr. Steve Pettit—together they have engaged in evangelistic, musical, and collegiate ministry for over three decades

“In the midst of busy days and sleepless nights, moms need the encouragement that only the gospel can give. *Gospel Meditations for Mothers* offers powerful biblical truth and guidance that reminds moms of the importance of their labors and cheers them on in their daily tasks. Whether you’re parenting a toddler or a teen, these gospel-focused reflections will minister to your heart as you care for your children.”

—**Melissa Kruger**, author of *Walking with God in the Season of Motherhood*

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Introduction

The value of a mother is difficult to express without sounding clichéd. “The hand that rocks the cradle rules the world,” it is said. True. And somewhat trite, due to its familiarity. But a mother’s work *is* exceptionally important—and excruciatingly difficult much of the time. The physical price of carrying a child—of surrendering your position at the top of the food chain as you share your nourishment, your oxygen, and your very life with another for nine months—is surpassed only by the investment you make in that child for the rest of his life.

When Paul was looking for the perfect illustration of the deep affection and responsibility he felt for the Thessalonian Christians, he (and the Spirit) could do no better than the selfless care of a mother: “But we were gentle among you, like a nursing mother taking care of her own children” (1 Thessalonians 2:7). The allusion needs no explanation. Everyone who has ever *been* or *had* a mother just understands.

Joe Tyrpak and I fall into the latter category. We’ve had wonderful mothers. And we’re married to wonderful mothers. Further, we pastor wonderful mothers. We’re thankful for the opportunity to provide to mothers some instruction—and some much-needed encouragement!—along with our utmost respect and gratitude for your ministry.

This is our ninth collaboration in the *Gospel Meditations* series, and in this booklet we’re blessed to have three guest contributors writing with us:

Hannah Anderson lives in the Blue Ridge Mountains of Virginia with her husband, Pastor Nathan Anderson, and three young children. She is a respected author, acclaimed for her two books, *Made for More* and *Humble Roots*. She is a contributor to The Gospel Coalition blog and one of the best examples of women who minister the Word to women with orthodoxy and artistry.

Angela Jeffcott lives in northern Utah, where her husband, Tommy Jeffcott, has pastored for ten years. Together they have three children, and Angela homeschools the two oldest. She is an addicted and aspiring writer who delights to focus her readers’ attention on the themes of hope and grace with prayers for their growth and encouragement.

Tracee Veenstra is a proud mother, a joyful widow, and an engaging conference speaker. She and her family were blessed by *Gospel Meditations for the Hurting* during her husband’s bout with cancer and her daughter’s subsequent brain surgery, and her kind appreciation sparked a friendship. I remember gathering with my girls to pray for them when Tim passed away. In God’s good providence, one of my daughters eventually roomed with Brooklyn Veenstra in college. Both mom and daughter have a resilient faith in Christ.

As always, our prayer is that you will find encouragement not merely from our words, but from the God-breathed Word, which alone is authoritative and sufficient. Read this as a guide to the Word, not a substitute for it. Be encouraged in your eternally important work. And thank you for your labor of love!

—CHRIS ANDERSON, EDITOR

Love to the Universe and Back

READ 1 JOHN 3

“See what kind of love the Father has given to us.” 1 JOHN 3:1

My eleven-year-old son is a bit of a mystery to me. I’m beginning to suspect that he always will be. He’s more like his grandfather than either my husband or me. He’s quiet and holds his cards close to his chest, taking everything in and letting very little out. His first-grade teacher called him an “old soul.”

He’s also a worrier, and he recently told me that he’s decided not to be president when he grows up because the president has “a lot of problems to solve.” When he shows me his schoolwork topped with As and glowing comments, he flashes a crooked grin but then drops his eyes. His confidence is fragile, as if he’s afraid that something will sweep in and steal it away.

My husband and I try to meet each of our children where they are, to learn them, to receive who God has made them to be. But one night when I was tucking him into bed, he asked me something that made me doubt all of my parenting to this point.

“Mommy, do you love me to the end of the universe?”

I was stunned. *How could he not know? How could he not know that every time I look at him my heart bursts with joy? How could he not know that I love him?*

But then I realized that this was not about whether I knew I loved him but whether he knew that I loved him. And if he needed to hear it again, I needed to say it again.

“Oh honey, I love you to the end of the universe and back again. I love you just because you exist. And I will always love you. No mistakes you make, no bad things you do can stop me from loving you.”

His lips slowly formed into a lopsided smile, and his blue eyes begged me to confirm that what he was hearing was true. He sighed and said, “Thank you for telling me that.”

Then he rolled over and went to sleep.

If you’ve been a Christian for any length of time, you know that we talk about God’s love a lot. When we’re young, we sing “Jesus Loves Me” and learn John 3:16, the words tumbling off our tongues: “For God so loved the world. . . .” As we grow older, we can sometimes take God’s love for granted, wanting to move on to more profound or practical insights. But for some of us, nothing could be more profound or practical than this simple truth: Jesus. Loves. Me. And He doesn’t love me because of what I do for Him; He loves me because He is love.

If life with my son has taught me anything, it’s that some of us need to be reminded of God’s love. Some of us need to hear it again and again. So to you—you with the lopsided grin and expectant eyes—let me say this: When you doubt, when you wonder if God really does love you, all you need to do is look at the gospel. “For God so loved the world,” John 3:16 continues, “that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.”

Let the gospel affirm God’s love for you as many times as you need to hear it.

—HANNAH

Fear Not

READ 1 JOHN 4:7–21

“In God, whose word I praise, in God I trust; I shall not be afraid.” PSALM 56:3–4

Do you remember what you were afraid of when you were a child? Common childhood fears include darkness, monsters, or being alone. I always thought when I grew up my fears would leave. As I got used to sleeping without a nightlight and realized monsters weren't real, I imagined myself free from worries.

But adulthood brings a whole different set of fears with it, fears that only expand in motherhood. Suddenly you are responsible to raise, nurture, protect, feed, watch over, and care for someone who can do nothing without you. I remember many naptimes when I would stand over my newborn, watching her sleep, overwhelmed with the reality of being a mother, fearful I would somehow fail that tiny girl lying in the crib.

The Bible speaks to the fear and worry that all moms face. It shows us two types of fear, one good and one bad. The first is the fear of God (Psalm 2:11, 67:7; Deuteronomy 6:13). This fear is a reverential or “in-awe-of” fear. We see who we are compared to our all-knowing Creator, and we marvel at Who He is because He is so far above us. Mary, the mother of Jesus, gives us an example of this reverential fear in her prayer in Luke 1:50: “His mercy is for those who fear him.”

But there is a second type of fear that we are warned about. This fear is being anxious or afraid about things we can't control or predict. When we look at our world and imagine what it will be like for our children in the coming years, it's difficult to not be anxious. But think about what worrying does to us. It robs us of joy because we don't focus on the good we have. It keeps us from sleep and rest, altering our physical and mental abilities. But most importantly, it makes our concerns more important to us than trusting the God Who is powerful enough to help with them. This second type of fear keeps us from the first; it keeps us from fearing the Lord the way we should.

When we worry about how our children will grow up or how we'll provide for what they need, we are in essence telling God that we don't believe He will oversee them. But if you have a proper fear of God, then you know that nothing is outside of His control. You can “cast your anxieties on him,” as Peter says, “because He cares for you” (1 Peter 5:7). That's also why Jesus instructs us to not worry about tomorrow: because God will take care of it (Matthew 6:25–34; Luke 12:6–7, 22–32).

Fear and its hold on us was destroyed at the cross. When we fix our mind on Jesus and the sacrifice He made for us there, we can rest in His loving care. The God Who overcame death can also provide, protect, lead, and comfort us through all our lives. It takes a daily reminder to lean on God and not let fear control our minds, but He has promised to care for us just as a shepherd cares for his sheep (Psalm 23; Isaiah 40:11).

Solomon's direct counsel is precisely what we need: “In the fear of the LORD one has strong confidence, and his children will have a refuge” (Proverbs 14:26). May the Lord help us to fear Him . . . and nothing else.

Let the gospel remind you there is no need to fear because of Christ.—ANGELA

How to Raise a Pharisee

READ MATTHEW 23

“Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you . . . outwardly appear righteous to others, but within you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness.” MATTHEW 23:27–28

Every mother has dreams about the future vocation of her children. Mom may want Junior to grow up to be a doctor, a teacher, or a missionary. While few would admit it out loud, some are absolutely *determined* to see Junior grow up to be a Pharisee, and they have a thorough training regimen to make that goal a reality. Here are several nearly fool-proof ways to raise Pharisees:

Teach them they are very good and that others are very bad. The Pharisees of Jesus’ day were noted for their self-righteousness. They congratulated themselves on their goodness and condemned those whom they deemed to be sinners (Luke 15:1–2; 18:9–14). They didn’t benefit from Christ’s work to save them because they didn’t see the need—they believed they were already spiritually “fit as a fiddle” (Matthew 9:10–13). If you want your children to eschew grace and embrace a works-based religion, congratulate them on their goodness even as you condemn other children in your neighborhood and church in front of them. Works every time!

Teach them to keep the rules, no matter what. You’ll never succeed in raising a true legalist unless you train them that rule-keeping is the secret to godliness. The smaller the rule, the more important it becomes (Matthew 23:23). Have a long list of “to-dos” and “taboos.” Maximize external matters as tell-tale signs of either godliness or compromise, while minimizing the condition of their hearts. Teach them to scrutinize those who seem to be serving the Lord but don’t follow your list of rules (Luke 13:14). Remind them that the “cup” and “tomb” of their lives don’t need to be internally clean, as long as they *look* clean (Matthew 23:25–28).

Teach them to value approval and appearances. Teach them to love—indeed to *seek*—the praise of men (Matthew 6:1–2, 5, 16). Teach them to learn the art of the spiritual “humble brag.” Show them that it is sometimes necessary to alter their behavior (or perceived behavior) so that one who disapproves of them will be won over. Make them absolutely *captive* to the opinions of others. Sanctify this fear of man by calling it their “testimony.” Of course, at times that will mean deceiving others to keep up appearances. Teach them that your family’s reputation must be preserved at all costs. For example, tell them that while your family might secretly enjoy a certain movie or television show, they must never *mention* that fact to people at church. Teach them to be clever that way. They’ll get it! Hypocrisy is vital to the development of your budding Pharisee (Matthew 23:13, 15, 23, 25, 27, 29).

Teach them that God’s approval depends on their performance. Above all, teach them that God will accept them only if they behave, at least in the ways you’ve delineated for them (Matthew 23:13). Don’t just teach them; *show* them! Tell them you love them and are proud of them only when you think they deserve it. When they don’t measure up, make them feel like outcasts (Luke 19:7). Condemn them. Withhold mercy. Teach them that God will do the same. It’s essential that they equate God’s approval and man’s. If pastors and teachers think they’re holy, God surely must. Be sure they live under constant pressure to earn God’s favor by their performance, lest they be like the wretched sinner who confessed his sins to God and was therefore justified (Luke 18:9–14).

If, on the other hand, you want to raise children who value the grace of God as extended to them through the finished work of Jesus—well, *taking this advice will do you no good whatsoever.*

Let the gospel help you point your children away from works to Jesus’ grace.—CHRIS

Motherhood Is a Marathon

READ HEBREWS 11:11–12:2

“You have need of endurance.” HEBREWS 10:36

My mom is a hero in my eyes. She’s also a hero in my siblings’ eyes. See, I’m the middle child of eight—My oldest brother is ten years older than me and my youngest brother is ten years younger. Yes, you did the math right. My mom had at least one infant or toddler in the house for a few decades of her life! And all of us kids are amazed by her. Now that I and all my siblings are adults and have children of our own, we often tell her, “Mom, you’re incredible! We can barely keep our heads above water with *four* children—not to mention *eight*! How did you do it?” Her simple, honest answer is this: “There are about twenty years of my life that I don’t remember; they’re a blur.” (Mind you, my mother was a teetotaler.) As she sought to raise her kids to love Jesus (often singlehandedly because Dad’s work frequently took him out of town), she was in constant demand and beyond exhausted—pretty much every day.

Motherhood is a marathon, not a sprint. Like a marathon, motherhood involves enduring when you’re exhausted, enduring when you’re aching, and enduring when you can’t imagine how you’re ever going to make it across the finish line. Motherhood involves numerous hardships, including (at least) sleepless nights, rebellious kids, and incessant menial responsibility. For many mothers, there are added hardships such as cabin fever (during long, cold winters or long, hot summers), criticism, singleness, and children with special needs. In addition, the marathon of motherhood involves common besetting sins—Some moms try to *escape* their responsibility through binge watching; others try to *dull* the marathon’s pain through exorbitant spending or through excessive eating and drinking; still others tend to stoically *absorb* their hardships, allowing themselves to become spiritually hardened and deeply embittered at God and others in the process. Motherhood is a marathon. How can you endure?

The writer to the Hebrews likens the whole Christian life to a marathon with his vivid words in the twelfth chapter: “Since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us” (12:1). As in a marathon, few things in the Christian life are of greater encouragement than examples of those who’ve experienced the hardships you’re experiencing and made it through. In this brief encouragement, the writer urges struggling Christians to consider the “huge crowd of witnesses” (NLT)—believers who endured trial upon trial by nothing but faith in the Lord. He urges you to consider (among others) Abraham and Sarah, Moses and Rahab. Then the author encourages you to consider Jesus.

Jesus is the preeminent *Example*, ultimate *Object*, and final *Reward* of your faith. Look to Jesus as the *Example* of faith because He fixed His own heart on trusting His Father, and that allowed Him to endure greater suffering than you and I will ever know. Look to Jesus as your faith’s *Object* because, as this entire letter unpacks, He is God’s perfect Son who became the perfect Man, He is the perfect Leader of God’s people, He is the perfect and eternal High Priest, He is the perfect Mediator of the covenant that can make you perfect, and He Himself is the perfect once-for-all Sacrifice for sin. Look to Jesus as your faith’s *Reward* because, when your race is done, you will see His face, enter His kingdom, and experience His unending joy.

Mom, “run with endurance.” Fix your eyes on Jesus. You’ll cross the finish line (both the finish line of motherhood and the finish line of the Christian life) and join the crowd of faithful heroes cheering others on to worth-it-all endurance.

Let the gospel of Jesus’ self-sacrificial endurance lead you to endure.—JOE

Abounding in Hope through Trial and Loss

READ PROVERBS 3

“Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding.” PROVERBS 3:5

We decided to wait until our daughter’s performances in the school play had ended to break the news. On Mother’s Day 2015 I could hear myself speaking, but I still wasn’t grasping the words: “Sweetheart, Dad has been diagnosed with cancer.” In that instant, her world was turned upside down, just like ours had been ten days prior. The following morning’s surgery would reveal what we didn’t want to hear—the cancer was advanced.

Brooklyn had always been a daddy’s girl who adored going on “ventures” with him. The next twelve months would be the adventure we never anticipated. As we reflect back, we thank God for His sovereign plan: Although she had been disappointed not to graduate with her class due to health issues (see Day 20), only God could have known that later we would be praising Him for His perfect plan in allowing her to be right where she needed to be during her dad’s illness.

Cancer can be explained as both brutal and beautiful—brutal because of the horrific effects of the disease on the body, but beautiful because you have a front-row seat to God’s grace in action. “Strength for today and bright hope for tomorrow,” a line from “Great is Thy Faithfulness,” became our family’s anthem as *chemotherapy, anti-nausea medications, blood transfusions, and PET scans* quickly became household words.

Paul prayed for the believers in Rome: “Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you will abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit” (Romans 15:13 NASB). Hope is a reservoir of emotional strength, and without it, we sink into self-pity. If we don’t consistently preach hope in God to ourselves, then we will find ourselves with a discouraged and unsettled spirit. Through the Holy Spirit, God provides the strength that we need to deal with the troubles of today. But more importantly, He provides us with hope for tomorrow. Because of our faith in the finished work of Jesus Christ on the cross, we can be confident of a future in heaven, where we will spend eternity praising God and enjoying the gift of being reunited with fellow believers who have gone before us.

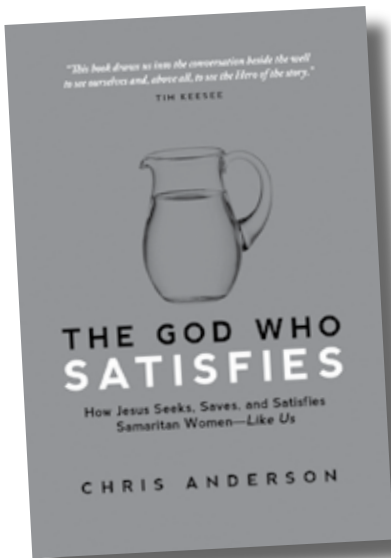
At 2:51 p.m. on April 28, 2016, Brooklyn witnessed her dad’s last breath on this earth. Imagine what occurred in that moment for him. This was his moment of glorification; his faith was made sight. He was immediately free from pain, excess fluid, and cancerous tumors. At that moment, he was personally united with the Son of God Who was slain for us.

Look at God through your circumstances, and He will seem very distant and small. But if through faith you look at your circumstances through God, He will draw very near and reveal His greatness to you. At Brooklyn’s university, God brought together four girls who lost their dads on April 28th—different years, but all on that date. God has used that group of girls to minister grace to each other’s hearts.

Brooklyn and I have two precious treasures to remind us of Tim’s triumph: a t-shirt quilt assembled for Brooklyn by dear friends and a gratitude journal that we kept during his sickness. Our hearts are refreshed reading back through the entries of God’s faithfulness through what Tim referred to as his “cancer assignment.” Record those acts of His faithfulness in your life. Because, when you look back and re-read what He has done and what He has brought you through, it will give you peace. You will see how His sovereign hand and perfect plan carried you through.

Let the hope of the gospel stir your heart to trust Him with your next steps.

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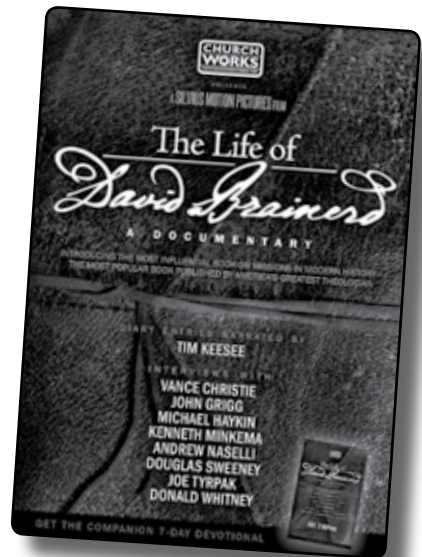


“In this little book, a gifted poet transitions to prose. I have known Chris Anderson for over two decades, first as a student and then as a fellow laborer in the work of the Kingdom. This book’s focus on the Samaritan woman is full of Christ and the glorious gospel of grace. Written in an easy-to-read, popular style full of real-life illustrations, the book effectively links helpful background facts and precisely-stated theological truths to experiential application. It is a book that can be used for evangelism as well as for warming the believer’s heart to renewed gratitude for what Christ has abundantly supplied.”

—**Michael P. V. Barrett**, dean and professor at
Puritan Reformed Theological Seminary and
author of *Complete in Him* and *Beginning at Moses*

“This DVD documentary represents an excellent introduction to the life and ministry of the famed missionary. Together the interviewees paint a picture of Brainerd that is informed by the best scholarship, is honest about his various struggles and failures, but remains warmly sympathetic to Brainerd’s life, thought, and missionary zeal. The film itself reflects quality craftsmanship and includes many beautiful shots of locations that were prominent in Brainerd’s life, original manuscripts of his writings, and portraits, statues, and other memorials of figures discussed in the documentary. The film should prove a helpful resource for use in local church Sunday School classes, small groups, and discussion groups.”

—**Nathan A. Finn**, dean and professor at Union
University and writer for the Jonathan Edwards
Center at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School



OTHER TITLES IN THIS SERIES

Gospel Meditations for Women

“Wrestling with guilt and frustration, far too many Christian women are living below the privileges of their spiritual inheritance. The solution is not found in any strengthened resolve of duty, but rather in having souls settled in the blessed liberty of Christ through the sweet enjoyment of the gospel. A union of sound doctrine and practical teaching, *Gospel Meditations for Women* beautifully highlights those unbinding messages of grace that so powerfully ignite joyful passion for Christ and holy living. What an invaluable resource!”

—**Holly Stratton**, conference speaker and blogger at *LifeHurts.us*

Gospel Meditations for Men

“A model of robust biblical thinking, this little book is gospel gold, an ample treasury for men who long to renew their minds and be transformed by the mighty themes of the gospel.”

—**Milton Vincent**, author of *A Gospel Primer for Christians* and pastor of Cornerstone Fellowship Bible Church, Riverside, California

Gospel Meditations for Missions

“By almost any standard—the intentionality of local churches to train, assess, and prepare prospective missionaries; the length of time it takes a missionary to raise support; the little sense of gospel partnership we have with the missionaries we do support—Western Christians don’t do missions very well. The reason we don’t do missions well is that we’ve not thought about missions well. This book has our poor thinking about missions in its crosshairs.”

—**Matthew Hoskinson**, pastor of The First Baptist Church in New York City and author of *Assurance of Salvation*

Gospel Meditations for Prayer

“Brief and biblical, these meditations are full of sharp edges. They lead us to pray as cross-bearing disciples of Christ. Yet Anderson, Tyrpak, and Trueman comfort us with Christ’s perfect grace for fallen people. So *Gospel Meditations for Prayer* is an encouraging book, but one designed to stretch you.”

—**Joel Beeke**, president of Puritan Reformed Theological Seminary, Grand Rapids, and editor of *Taking Hold of God: Reformed and Puritan Perspectives on Prayer*

Gospel Meditations for the Hurting

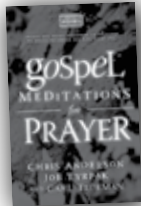
“These meditations are Word-centered prescriptions that blow away the meaningless Christian platitudes often used to mask unanswerable pain. Until that day when Christ Himself wipes away all tears from our eyes, the Scriptures provide strength, help, and hope in this broken world. Let this book guide you to Christ, the only sure and lasting Refuge.”

—**Tim Keese**, author of the *Dispatches from the Front* DVD series and book and executive director of Frontline Missions International

Gospel Meditations for Christmas

“This work is more than a mere devotional and collection of meditations for Christmas. These meditations are a mini Christology. I hope they will be read far beyond December. There is too much truth here to be relegated to the Christmas season alone. I highly recommend this work for your greater understanding and worship of Jesus Christ.”

—**Rick Holland**, pastor of Mission Road Bible Church, Kansas City, and professor of Homiletics at The Expositor’s Seminary



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About the Authors



CHRIS ANDERSON has pastored since 1997. He's the senior pastor of Killian Hill Baptist Church in Lilburn, Georgia. He has written dozens of modern hymns published by Church Works Media and has recently published his first full-length book, *The God Who Satisfies*. He and his wife, Lori, have four daughters.



JOE TYRPAK has served as a pastor of Tri-County Bible Church in Madison, Ohio, since 2005. He recently produced a DVD, *The Life of David Brainerd: A Documentary*, and a companion devotional. He and his wife, Hannah, have four children.



HANNAH ANDERSON lives in the Blue Ridge Mountains of Virginia with her husband, Pastor Nathan Anderson, and three young children. She is a respected author, acclaimed for her two books, *Made for More* and *Humble Roots*. She is a contributor to The Gospel Coalition blog and one of the best examples of women who minister the Word to women with orthodoxy and artistry.

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