

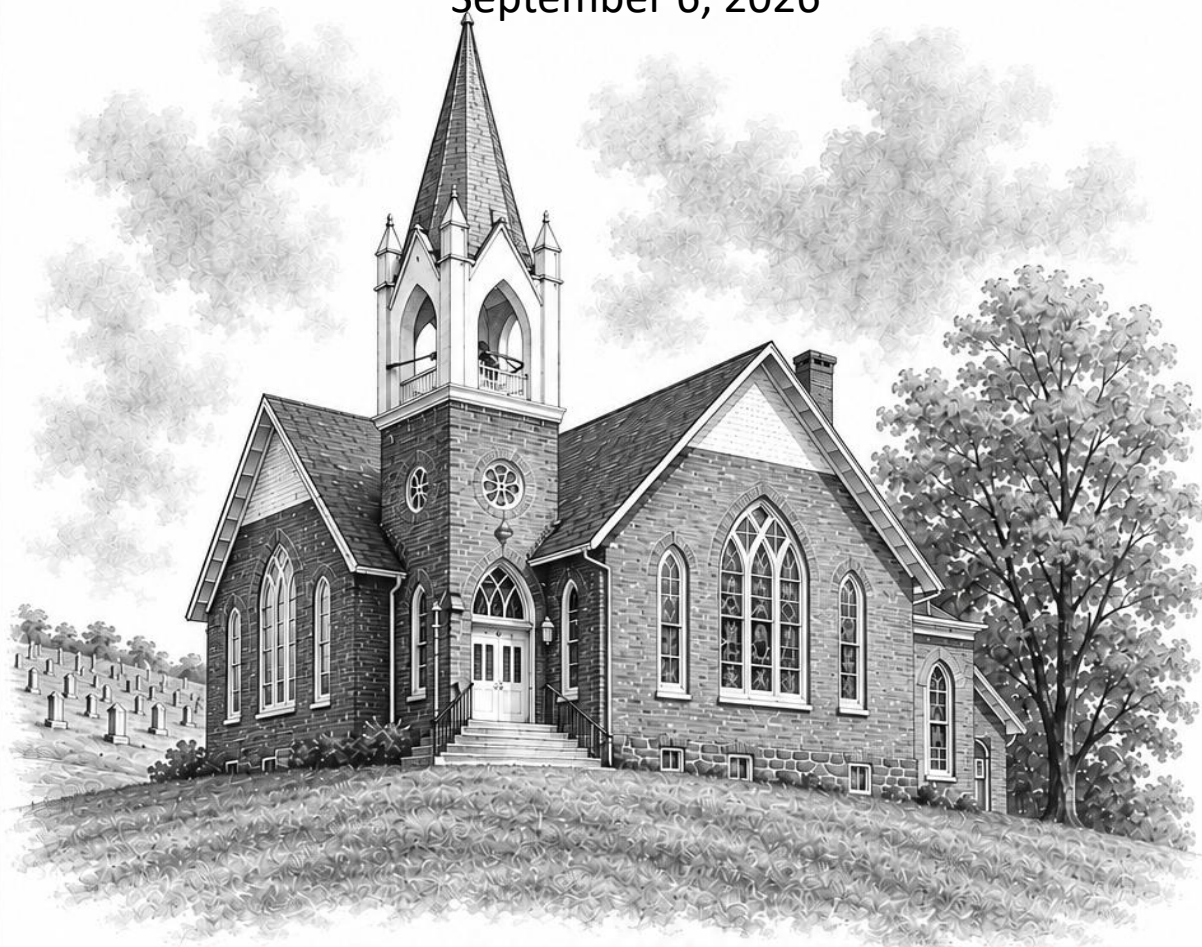
Emmanuel

(BAUST)

UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

SERVICE OF WORD

September 6, 2026



Rev. Roger Wilmer, Jr.

2930 Old Taneytown Rd., Westminster, MD 21158

Sunday Service 10 am

Service of Word

September 6, 2026

Fifteenth Sunday After Pentecost

"In Every Prayer, We Grow." Colossians 1:9-10

*For those who are able, please stand

L = Liturgist P= People

Prelude

Accompanist

Welcome and Announcements

Liturgist

*Call to Worship

L: Teach me, O Lord, the way of Your statutes,

P: and I will observe it to the end.

L: Give me understanding, that I may keep Your law

P: and observe it with my whole heart.

L: Lead me in the path Your commandments,

L: for I delight in it.

P: Turn my heart to Your decrees;

L: in Your righteousness, be gracious to me.

(from Psalm 119:33-40)

*Hymn

Holy, Holy, Holy! Lord God Almighty!

Green 136

(Requested by Rev. C)

*Prayer of Confession

Lord God, we have judged others harshly, unfairly and casually. We tend to focus on the sin, brokenness and foibles of others, rather than on the growth and work we are called to. We've made assumptions about what others want and need, robbing them of the freedom to speak for themselves. We've tuned out the voices bold enough to express views that are different from ours. We've relied upon Your grace, time and time again, while hastily denying that You are eager to give it not only to us, but to our enemies, also. Help us to see others as You see them; help us to see You with faith and trust.

*Words of Assurance

Rev. Wilmer

*Song of Praise	Glory Be to the Father Glo-ry be to the Fa-ther, and to the Son, and Ho-ly Ghost; as it was in the be-gin-ning, is now, and ev-er shall be, world without end. Amen, Amen.	Green 734
Scriptures	Exodus 12:1-14 Romans 13:8-14 Matthew 18:15-20	Liturgist Rev. Wilmer
Sermon Hymn	O God, Our Help in Ages Past	Green 84
Sermon	If God is so good, Why... (Gen 1:26,27; Psa 33:13-22)	Rev. Wilmer
Invitation to Join God's Family		Rev. Wilmer
*Affirmation of Faith	To be reconciled to God is to be sent into the world as a reconciling community. This community, the church universal, is entrusted with God's message of reconciliation and shares God's labor of healing the enmities which separate people from God and from one another. Christ has called the church to this mission and given it the gift of the Holy Spirit. The church maintains continuity with the apostles and with Israel by faithful obedience to God's call. (from The Confession of 1967)	
Prayers of the People		Rev. Wilmer
Our Lord's Prayer	(using debts)	
Invitation to Offering	Offering may be placed in the plates near the sanctuary entrances. Ushers will bring them to the altar during the offertory.	
Offertory		Accompanist
*Offertory Response	Doxology <i>Praise God from whom all blessings flow; Praise Him, all creatures here below; Praise Him above, ye heavenly host; Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Amen</i>	Green 34
*Prayer of Dedication	L: Please join me in the prayer of dedication. P: God, these offerings seem insignificant in light of all that You have offered us. We give because You gave. We love because You first loved us. Receive our gifts	

and our lives, and use them, we pray, for Your reconciling work in the world You love. Amen.

***Closing Hymn**

My Hope Is Built on Nothing Less

Green 405

***Benediction**

Rev. Wilmer

Postlude

Accompanist

CCLI License (includes Streaming) #1391774

Announcements for September 6, 2026

"Whoever you are and wherever you are on life's journey, you are welcome here!"

Church Website: ebuucc.com

Church Email: office@ebuucc.com

Church Phone Number: 410-202-8655

Phone Number for Rev. Wilmer: 301-639-6477

Email for Rev. Wilmer: pastorrwilmer@hotmail.com

We extend a warm welcome to each one in worship today, whether you are a member, friend, or first-time guest. We are grateful that you have joined us for worship and fellowship.

If you are not currently receiving our church newsletter and would like to be included, or if you would like to receive prayer updates, church news, and special announcements through our electronic mailings, please contact us using the church email.

EBUCC Offerings: Baust members, friends, and visitors may put regular offerings and special donations in the offering plates placed just inside the front and rear entrances to the sanctuary. During the offertory, these plates will be brought to the altar by our ushers.

Let's Keep in Touch: If you know of a member or friend of our Baust Church Family who would appreciate a visit, phone call, or pastoral care, please contact Rev. Roger Wilmer. Office hours are held on Wednesdays, and appointments may be scheduled at any time.

Caring and Sharing Ministries of Taneytown has suggested dessert mixes (such as cake, brownie, gelatin, pudding) for September. Basic necessary non-perishable products other than desserts will also be greatly appreciated. Items may be placed on the table in the back porch of the Parsonage or brought to church. Also, items donated may be placed in the cabinet at the back portico of Trinity Lutheran Church. As always, thank you for supporting our community's needs.

Altar Flowers: Altar Flowers are given to the Glory of God in loving memory of Dave Robinson by Sue Robinson.

Grief Share Group: Grief Share Group will meet in the Parsonage on Wednesdays' @ 5:30-7pm Dates: Sept. 9, 23, Oct. 7, 21, Nov. 4, 18 & Dec. 2 & 16. A support group to help you move through the grief process. A Grief Share support group is a safe, welcoming place where people understand the difficult emotions of grief. Through this 13-week group, you'll discover what to expect in the days ahead and what's "normal" in grief. Since there are no neat, orderly stages of grief, you'll learn helpful ways of coping with grief, in all its unpredictability—and gain solid support each step of the way.

Bible Study: Bible study series continues this Thursday at 6PM in the parsonage. We will be discussing the Book of Acts. Bible Study is now available online, as well as, in person. To get the link, go to our church website, go to Group tabs, then click on Bible Study and the link will be there.

September's book selection is "*Fairlight*", by Kevin Provance. If you grew up in Carroll County, you've probably passed places like this your whole life. Fairlight is a multigenerational historical novel rooted in the landscapes, memory and history of Westminster, Taneytown and Bruceville, from the years before the Civil War to the echoes still felt generations. Sometime

the past isn't as far away as we think. The group will meet on Tuesday, September 29 at 6pm in the Parsonage to discuss this book.

Re-Scheduled: The Antique Car & Tractor Show and Baked Apple Festival: This event will be held **September 19, 2026** (with the Yard Sale) from 10AM-2PM. **How can we help?** See the sign-up sheets in the Good Shepherd room for donating baked items, peeling apples (8am on 9/18), and helping to prepare and serve food on 9/19. Also, monetary donation can be given to Carolyn or placed in the offering plate (marked Tractor Show).

Church Yard Sale: Join us for our **First Annual Church Yard Sale** on **Friday, September 18** and **Saturday, September 19**, from **8:00 a.m.–2:00 p.m.**, at **Emmanuel (Baust) United Church of Christ, 2950 Old Taneytown Road, Westminster**. We are now accepting donations of clean, gently used items for the sale. Donation drop-off begins **September 1** at the Parish Social Hall. We also welcome volunteers to help organize donations before the sale and assist during the event. **All proceeds will benefit the church's General Fund.** For more information or to volunteer, please contact **Jane Rodkey or Susie Lawrence**. Invite your family, friends, and neighbors to come shop and support the ministry of Emmanuel (Baust)!

Fall Community Market: Join the Trinity United Church of Christ, 3229 York St., Manchester, Md. on Saturday, September 19, **from 8am–1p.m.** Vendors wanted: contact: Amanda for rental spaces (443-857-4981). Shop Local, Support Community, Celebrate Together. This is a Church Family Friendly Event!

Announcing: "Pleasant Valley Bluegrass" sponsored by St. Matthew's UCC on October 10, 2026. Doors open at 2pm, music starts at 3pm. Three bands for a continuous concert, delicious food available for purchase. Held at the Pleasant Valley Community Fire Company. See our website or our Facebook page for more information www.saintmatthewsucc.org – under events or search Pleasant Valley Bluegrass on Facebook.

Consistory: Our next meeting will be on Tuesday, September 8, 2026 at 6:30 pm in the parsonage.

Newsletter Items: Newsletter items for October 2026 are due September 20th to Jane Rodkey.

If anyone would like to send Andy Hood a card his address is: 1750 Burrier Lane, Keymar, Md 21757.

First Sunday of the Month Lunch:

Place: Flick's Pub

Date & Time: September 13, 2026 @ 12:00pm

Address: 100 Antrim Blvd., Taneytown, MD. 21787 Phone:
(410) 756-6400 Web: flickspub.com

Reservations: Bob (443) 789-7035 by 12:00 Sat. 9/12/26

Prayer Concerns: Please take time to review the list at the end of the bulletin and see if there are people we need to add or remove from the list. Contact the office so we may keep the concerns up to date.

Accompanist: Susan Hardinger

Looking Ahead to Worship: Sunday, September 13, 2026

Pastor: Rev. Wilmer

Scripture Readings:

Exodus 14:19-31

Psalms 114

Matthew 18:21-35

Serving in Worship:

Liturgist: Nancy Edwards

Media Tech: George Hardinger

Accompanist: Susan Hardinger

Prayer Concerns

Church Members

Nancy Edwards

Duane Rodkey

Jennifer S. Brown

Linda Dennis

Betty Gross

Skeeter Dull

Sue & Calvin Bloom

Dan & Betty Heltibridge

Carl Bloom

Will Wilt

Linda Goodwin

Bick & Lois Bickerton

Peggy Warner

Brent Grove

Bob Miller

Eddie Dutterer

Friends

Mini DeLore

Wingerden Family

Libby Fuss

Brandon Mollett

Lainey Hood

Tom Hennin

Sylvia Miller

Bob Peters

Sharon Herb

Shelley Simmont

Andrea Mathias Warren

Chris Johnson

Ken Morningstar

Andy Hood

In God's Service

Pastor: Rev. Roger Wilmer

Secretary: Jane Rodkey

Accompanist: Jennifer Sullivan Brown

Choir & Music Director: Beth Brandenburg

Consistory President: Jim Stonesifer

Liturgist: Bob Miller

Media Tech: Corey Wilt

If God Is So Good, Why...

A Question Worth Asking — And Answering

Genesis 1:26–27 | Psalm 33:13–22

Today's Scriptures Genesis 1:26–27 (NIV) *"Then God said, 'Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground.' So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them."* Psalm 33:13–22 (NIV) *"From heaven the LORD looks down and sees all mankind; from his dwelling place he watches all who live on earth — he who forms the hearts of all, who considers everything they do. No king is saved by the size of his army; no warrior escapes by his great strength. A horse is a vain hope for deliverance; despite all its great strength it cannot save. But the eyes of the LORD are on those who fear him, on those whose hope is in his unfailing love, to deliver them from death and keep them alive in famine. We wait in hope for the LORD; he is our help and our shield. In him our hearts rejoice, for we trust in his holy name. May your unfailing love be with us, LORD, even as we put our hope in you."*

Key Themes — Created in God's Image (*Imago Dei*): Human dignity, value, and purpose rooted in the Creator — The Reality of Suffering: Pain is real — and so is the God who sees it — God Sees, God Knows: He "forms the hearts of all" and watches from heaven (*Ps. 33:15*) — Human Strength Is Not Enough: No army, no wealth, no power can substitute for God's deliverance — Hope Is Not Wishful Thinking: Biblical hope is anchored trust in God's unfailing love

SERMON NOTES — FIVE QUESTIONS TO GUIDE YOUR LISTENING

Use these questions to engage with today's message. Space is provided for your personal notes.

1. Genesis 1:26–27 says we are made in God's image. How does knowing you bear the image of God (*Imago Dei*) shape the way you understand your own suffering and the suffering of others?
2. Psalm 33:13–15 says God "looks down" and "forms the hearts of all." In seasons of pain or confusion, what does it mean — practically — to believe that God sees your situation completely?
3. The psalmist declares that "no king is saved by the size of his army" (*v. 16*). What are the "armies" or human solutions you tend to trust first before turning to God? How does today's sermon challenge that?
4. The sermon title asks, "If God is so good, why...?" How does today's message help you frame — or re-frame — that question without dismissing the reality of pain?
5. Psalm 33:20–22 closes with "we wait in hope for the LORD." What is one specific area of your life where God is calling you to shift from striving to trusting? How does this passage speak to that?

"The eyes of the LORD are on those who fear him, on those whose hope is in his unfailing love." — Psalm 33:18

[Emmanuel "Baust" UCC | September 6, 2026 | Pastor R. Wilmer, Jr.]

A PERSONAL & SMALL GROUP DEVOTIONAL

IF GOD IS SO GOOD, WHY...

A Six-Day Devotional Journey Through Doubt, Trust & Hope

Genesis 1:26-27 | Psalm 33:13-22

Few questions cut deeper than this one. When life breaks open — through loss, illness, injustice, or unanswered prayer — even the most faithful heart can whisper, “*If God is so good, why...?*” This six-day devotional does not run from that question. Instead, it walks you through God’s Word to discover that the question itself is an act of faith — and that the God who made you in His image is also the God who sees you, holds you, and will not let you go.

“The LORD looks down from heaven and sees all mankind.”

— Psalm 33:13 (NIV)

If God Is So Good, Why... • Six-Day Devotional • Cover

DAY ONE

Made in His Image — So Why Do I Feel So Broken?

Theme: Identity & Suffering

Key Scripture — Genesis 1:26-27 (NIV)

“Then God said, ‘Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground.’

*So God created mankind in his own image,
in the image of God he created them;
male and female he created them.”*

Genesis 1:26–27, New International Version

“

You were not made for brokenness

—

and yet the One who made you has never been closer than in the middle of it.

”

There is a dissonance that faithful people rarely speak aloud: if I bear the image of God — the very stamp of heaven upon my soul — why does my life feel so fragile? Why do mornings arrive heavy? Why does grief linger where praise once lived? The tension is real, and it deserves an honest answer.

The doctrine of the *Imago Dei* — that every human being is made in the image and likeness of God — is one of the most radical declarations in all of Scripture. Before any law was given, before any covenant was sealed, before any temple was built, God declared your worth. Not by your productivity, your reputation, or your emotional health, but by His own creative act. You bear His

image the way a coin bears the face of a king: not because the coin earned it, but because the king stamped it.

But we live east of Eden now. Creation was declared “very good,” and then came the fracture. The image was not erased — Scripture nowhere teaches that — but it was marred. We feel that marring in our bodies, in our relationships, in the gap between who we long to be and who we actually are on our hardest days. Pain does not mean the image is gone. It means we live in a world where the image has not yet been fully restored. And that restoration is exactly what God is working toward.

Here is the hope: bearing His image means you are never beneath His notice. A shepherd does not abandon a sheep because it is wounded — he leaves the ninety-nine to find it. The God who carved His likeness into your very being is not repulsed by your brokenness. He is drawn to it. Your suffering does not disqualify you from His love; it is often the very place where His love becomes most tangible. You are not broken beyond His image. You are broken *within* it — and He has never stopped seeing you there.

Prayer

Lord, on the days when I cannot feel Your image in me — when pain speaks louder than promise — remind me of what You declared before I drew a single breath. You made me. You stamped Your likeness on my soul. That is not undone by what I am walking through today. Let that truth be louder than the lies. Help me to see myself the way You see me: not as someone You have abandoned, but as someone You are holding. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

REFLECTIONAL QUESTIONS

1. When life becomes painful, how does it tend to distort the way you see yourself? What words or labels does pain attach to your identity that God has never spoken over you?
2. What does it mean *practically* to carry God's image into your current suffering? How might knowing you bear His image change the way you walk through this season?
3. What lies has the enemy whispered to you about your worth — especially in moments of weakness, failure, or loss? How does Genesis 1:26–27 directly contradict those lies?
4. Think of someone in your life who is suffering right now. How does the truth of the *Imago Dei* reshape the way you see them — and how you might respond to them this week?
5. If a dear friend came to you and said, “I feel so broken — I don’t even feel like a child of God anymore,” what would you say to them? Now — can you say that same thing to yourself?

If God Is So Good, Why... • Day One

DAY TWO

God Is Watching — But Is He Doing Anything?

Theme: God's Sovereignty & Presence

Key Scripture — Psalm 33:13–15 (NIV)

*“From heaven the LORD looks down
and sees all mankind;
from his dwelling place he watches
all who live on earth —
he who forms the hearts of all,
who considers all they do.”*

Psalm 33:13–15, New International Version

“

To be truly seen by someone who loves you completely is not a small thing

—

it is the one thing your soul has always needed.

”

The psalmist paints a sweeping image: the LORD looks down from heaven and *sees* all mankind. That word — *sees* — ought to bring comfort. And for many of us, it does, until suffering arrives and we discover an uncomfortable distinction: seeing is not the same as acting. We know this because we live it. “Lord, I know You see me — but I need You to *move*.” The gap between those two things is where faith is tested most severely.

There is a crucial difference between surveillance and shepherding. A security camera sees everything in its frame — and does nothing. But the God of Psalm 33 is no passive observer. The psalm does not say He merely watches from a distance; it says He “forms the hearts of all” (v. 15). The Hebrew word for “forms” is the same word used in Genesis 2 when God fashions Adam from the dust — it is the word of a craftsman, an artist, a tender creator. God’s gaze is not the cold eye of a judge reviewing footage. It is the warm, purposeful attention of the One who made the very heart He is watching.

Connect this to the God of Genesis 1. The One who looked at the first human being — made in His own image — and called it “very good” is the same One looking at you today. His seeing has never been casual. It has always been intimate. He designed the chambers of your heart. He knows its rhythms, its wounds, its longings. To be seen by Him is not to be examined — it is to be known.

Suffering does not mean God has looked away. It may mean, instead, that He is watching more closely than ever — the way a parent never takes their eyes off a child who is learning to walk through pain. His timing is not our timing, but His eyes are always, always on us. And those eyes are eyes of love.

Prayer

God, I confess that there are days when Your silence feels like absence. Help me to know — deep in the marrow of who I am — that Your eyes on my life are not the eyes of a judge waiting for me to fail, but the eyes of a Father who formed my heart and has never once stopped watching over it. Teach me to rest in being seen by You, even when I cannot yet see what You are doing. In Jesus' name, Amen.

REFLECTIONAL QUESTIONS

1. Have you ever felt unseen by God? Describe that season. What did it feel like, and what did you begin to believe about God during that time?
2. What is the difference, in your own words, between God watching your life and God actively shepherding your life? How does Psalm 33:15 bridge that gap?
3. The psalm says God “forms the hearts of all.” What does it mean to you that the God watching your life is the same God who designed your heart? How does that truth change the nature of His gaze?
4. Recall a time in your life when God’s timing felt painfully wrong — but looking back, proved to be right. What did you learn about His character through that experience?
5. What would it look like for you to pray today with the confidence that God truly sees you — not merely observing, but intimately present? Write a short, honest prayer below in your own words.

DAY THREE

Why Can't I Fix This Myself?

Theme: Human Limitation & Dependence on God

Key Scripture — Psalm 33:16-17 (NIV)

*“No king is saved by the size of his army;
no warrior escapes by his great strength.
A horse is a vain hope for deliverance;
despite all its great strength it cannot save.”*

Psalm 33:16-17, New International Version

“

The moment you stop white-knuckling your own rescue is the moment God

,

s hands become visible.

”

We live in a culture that celebrates self-sufficiency as a virtue. We admire people who “figure it out,” who hustle harder, who refuse to be victims of their circumstances. There is something noble

in resilience. But the psalmist, writing thousands of years before our productivity culture was born, dismantles the entire architecture of self-rescue in just two verses. No king. No warrior. No horse. All of it — vain hope.

Take a moment to ask yourself honestly: What are the “armies” and “horses” in your life? Perhaps it is the savings account you have built as a buffer against the future. The right connections, the strategy you have refined, the credentials behind your name. It might even be the therapist, the medication, the exercise routine — all genuinely good things, all legitimately helpful things. The psalmist is not saying wisdom and means are wrong. He is saying they were never designed to be your savior. There is a difference between using a good tool and trusting it with your soul.

The question “If God is so good, why doesn’t He let my plan work?” sometimes contains a hidden assumption: that the plan is the point. But what if it isn’t? What if God is less interested in your outcomes than in your posture — the posture of a heart that has learned to trust rather than manage, to lean rather than strive? Suffering has a way of stripping away the armies we have assembled and leaving us face to face with the question: Can I trust God when I have nothing left to offer Him but my need?

The answer the whole of Scripture gives is a resounding, grace-filled yes. God does not ask for your plan. He asks for your hand. Let go of the reins — not because the effort was wrong, but because the One who holds all things has never needed your horse to get there.

Prayer

Lord, I confess the armies I’ve been trusting. I confess the strategies, the savings, the relationships, the plans — all the things I have quietly placed on the throne of my security instead of You. I do not come to You with my hands full today. I come with them open. Teach me what

*true dependence on You looks like. Not passivity — but trust. Not helplessness — but surrender.
Take what I am holding and replace it with what only You can give. In Jesus' name, Amen.*

REFLECTIONAL QUESTIONS

1. What are the “armies and horses” in your own life right now — the resources, strategies, or relationships you are most tempted to trust for your ultimate security?
 2. What is the single hardest area of your life to release control over? What fear sits underneath that grip?
 3. What is the difference between healthy dependence on God and passive resignation? How do you tell them apart in your own daily life?
 4. How has suffering — past or present — exposed places of self-reliance in you that you did not know existed? What did God reveal about your heart in those moments?
 5. Name one specific thing — one “army” — you can symbolically place in God’s hands today. What would it look like to actually surrender it? What is your next step?
-

If God Is So Good, Why... • Day Three

DAY FOUR

If God Is Good, Why Does He Allow This?

Theme: Theodicy, Pain & Trust

Key Scripture — Psalm 33:18-19 (NIV)

*“But the eyes of the LORD are on those who fear him,
on those whose hope is in his unfailing love,
to deliver them from death
and keep them alive in famine.”*

Psalm 33:18-19, New International Version

“

God has never promised you the absence of famine

—

He has promised you His presence inside it.

”

This is the question at the heart of everything. Theodicy — why a good and all-powerful God permits suffering — has occupied the greatest minds in the history of human thought, and none of them have fully resolved it. That is not a failure of theology. It is an honest acknowledgment that some mysteries are not puzzles to be solved but realities to be lived through — with trembling hands and stubborn faith. Today, we do not sidestep the question. We walk straight into it.

Psalm 33:18-19 offers the most honest answer Scripture gives: God’s eyes are specifically on those who fear Him — not to insulate them from famine, but to keep them alive *through* it. Read that again. The promise is not the absence of death-threats. It is deliverance from them. There is a world of difference between a God who prevents suffering and a God who meets you in the middle

of it and refuses to let it have the final word. The psalmist is offering us the second kind of God — and this God is the true One.

The temptation in suffering is to read God's silence as absence, His delay as indifference, His allowance as evidence against His goodness. But the whole arc of Scripture pushes back against that reading. Think of Joseph in the pit. Think of the Israelites in Egypt. Think of the disciples in a storm while Jesus slept nearby. In every case, the suffering was real. And in every case, the God who seemed absent was the most present He had ever been.

Here is the deep truth Genesis 1 offers in this moment: God made us as relational beings, fashioned in His image — made for communion with Him. Suffering, at its most purposeful, is often the tool that strips away the substitutes we have trusted and drives us back into that original, unmediated relationship. Not because God causes pain for sport, but because He loves us too much to let us live our whole lives at a comfortable distance from the only thing that was ever truly enough. His faithfulness is most visible not from suffering, but from inside it.

Prayer

God, I won't pretend I understand You today. There are things I am carrying that I cannot make sense of, and questions I have brought to You that still have no answer. But I choose to trust what I know of Your character over what I feel in this moment. You are good. You have always been good. And even here — especially here — You have not left. Help me to find You in this famine, not just beyond it. In Jesus' name, Amen.

REFLECTIONAL QUESTIONS

1. What is your personal “If God is so good, why...?” question right now? Write it out honestly — the full weight of it. God is not afraid of your honesty.
2. How do Psalm 33:18–19 reframe your question? What does the difference between “kept from famine” and “kept alive in famine” mean for how you understand God’s faithfulness?
3. Have you ever experienced God’s faithfulness from *inside* a season of suffering — not just in hindsight? What did that look like? How did it change you?
4. What does it mean to “fear the LORD” in the context of pain? How is holy fear different from terror — and how does it become an anchor in suffering rather than a source of it?
5. If someone you love came to you wrestling with this question, what would you say? How would you hold both the reality of their pain and the goodness of God at the same time without dismissing either?

If God Is So Good, Why... • Day Four

DAY FIVE

Waiting on God — When Hope Feels Like Foolishness

Theme: Hope, Patience & Active Waiting

Key Scripture — Psalm 33:20–21 (NIV)

*“We wait in hope for the LORD;
he is our help and our shield.
In him our hearts rejoice,
for we trust in his holy name.”*

Psalm 33:20–21, New International Version

“

Waiting is not wasted time

—

in the hands of God, it is the sacred space where faith is forged.

”

“We wait in hope.” Two of the most countercultural words in the modern world. We do not wait well. We refresh, we scroll, we fill silence with noise and uncertainty with activity. Waiting feels like weakness, like giving up, like watching life pass while others move forward. And yet here is the psalmist, writing under inspiration of God, giving us waiting as the posture of the trusting heart. Not as a last resort. As a first response.

The Hebrew word translated “hope” in this passage is *qavah* — and it carries a richness that our English word flattens. *Qavah* means to bind together, to be tightly wound, like strands of a rope twisted into one cord. Biblical hope is not a thin wish or an optimistic shrug at the future. It is a cord wrapped around the character of God and held with both hands. It is tethered. It is tensioned. It cannot be cut loose by circumstances, because it is not attached to circumstances — it is attached to *Him*.

The psalm also tells us what we are waiting *with*: “He is our help and our shield.” We wait, but we are not waiting alone, and we are not waiting unprotected. There is active provision happening in the waiting. Help is being prepared. Shields are being raised. The God who called you to wait has not gone idle while you do. He is working in the interval in ways that only the interval makes possible.

Remember Genesis 1: the God who created an entire, breathtaking, perfectly calibrated cosmos took six days. He was not in a hurry then. He is not in a hurry now. He is never late and never early — He is perfectly, sometimes maddeningly, always sovereignly on time. Your waiting is not a sign that God has forgotten. It is a sign that something worth the wait is still being prepared.

Prayer

Lord, while I wait — and the waiting is hard — anchor my heart in You. Remind me that You are not absent in this interval; You are working in it. Let my waiting be worship rather than worry, trust rather than tension. Bind my hope to Your character, not my circumstances. And when I am tempted to take back the reins, remind me that You are both my help and my shield — and that You have never once dropped either role. In Jesus' name, Amen.

REFLECTIONAL QUESTIONS

1. How does waiting on God make you feel — honestly? Does it feel like trust, or does it feel like helplessness? What does your gut reaction to waiting reveal about your view of God?
2. In your own words, what is the difference between passive resignation (“I give up”) and active biblical hope (“I wait with expectation”)? Which one do you tend toward, and why?
3. The psalm says God is “our help and our shield.” What does each of those words mean to you specifically in your current season? Where do you most need help? Where do you most need a shield?
4. Describe a time when waiting on God — even when it was painful — produced something better than your own timeline would have allowed. What did that season teach you about His character?
5. What is one practical spiritual discipline — a habit, a rhythm, a daily act — you could adopt this week to cultivate hope as an active practice rather than a passive feeling?

DAY SIX

Choosing to Trust — Even Now

Theme: Surrender, Faith & Moving Forward

Key Scriptures — Psalm 33:22 & Genesis 1:27 (NIV)

*“May your unfailing love be with us, LORD,
even as we put our hope in you.”*

Psalm 33:22, New International Version

*“So God created mankind in his own image,
in the image of God he created them;
male and female he created them.”*

Genesis 1:27, New International Version

“

Faith does not require an explanation

—

*it requires a choice. And that choice, made again and again, is what moves us
forward.*

”

Six days. Six honest, sometimes painful, always hopeful conversations with God and with yourself. You began in Genesis 1, standing in the glow of creation's morning, told by the voice of the Almighty that you bear His image. You have walked through sovereignty and silence, through human limitation and divine watching, through the hardest question any heart can ask. And now you arrive at the last verse of Psalm 33 — not with all your answers, but with something better: a posture.

Notice how the psalmist ends. Not with a declaration of certainty. Not with a tidy explanation of why suffering exists. He ends with a prayer: “May your unfailing love be with us, LORD, even as we put our hope in you.” This is the posture of a faith that has wrestled and not quit. It is a faith that has sat in the tension between what we feel and what we know — and chosen to trust the God it cannot fully see over the pain it cannot fully explain. That is not weakness. That is one of the most courageous acts a human being can perform.

Bring it full circle. We began in Genesis 1 — created in the image of a God who is unquestionably good. We close in Psalm 33 — waiting in hope for a God who is unshakeably faithful. The journey between those two truths is called life. And in the middle of that journey, when the question rises again — because it will — you have a choice. You can demand that God explain Himself. Or you can trust that the One who made you in His image has never — not even for a breath, not even in your darkest night — stopped watching over you with unfailing love.

That is enough. In fact, it is everything. You are not the same person who opened this devotional six days ago. Something has shifted — maybe subtly, maybe profoundly. What shifted is not circumstances. What shifted is you. And that is the very work of God. His unfailing love has been with you all along. Now go forward in it.

Prayer

Lord, I choose You. Not because all my questions have been answered — they haven't. Not because the pain is gone — it may not be. But because You are good, and Your love never fails. Because You made me in Your image and have never once stopped watching over me. Because You are my help and my shield, and Your faithfulness has outlasted every single thing I was afraid of. I put my hope in You — again, and always. In Jesus' name, Amen.

REFLECTIONAL QUESTIONS

1. Looking back over these six days, what has shifted in you — in your thinking, your faith, your posture toward God? Be as specific as you can.
2. What is your personal answer now to the question, “If God is so good, why...?” It does not have to be complete or polished. Write where you honestly are today.
3. What is one truth from Genesis 1 or Psalm 33 that you want to carry forward — a verse, an image, a phrase — that you will return to when suffering or doubt arrive again?
4. The next time suffering shakes your faith — and it will come — what will your first response be? What do you want to do differently than you have done before?
5. Write your personal one-sentence declaration of trust below — a statement that anchors your heart, in your own words, to the God who sees you, holds you, and will not let you go.

If God Is So Good, Why... • Day Six

A Final Word

The question “If God is so good, why...?” will return. Life will see to that. But now you carry something you may not have carried before — the memory of His image on your soul, the knowledge that His eyes have never left you, and the anchor of a hope that does not disappoint.

Return to these pages. Return to His Word. Return to Him.

These devotionals may also be used in small groups. Consider sharing one reflectional question per session and allowing each member space to respond without pressure. The goal is not agreement — it is honest, safe, Scripture-anchored conversation.

SCRIPTURE INDEX

Scripture Reference	Translation	Devotional Day & Theme
Genesis 1:26–27	NIV	Day 1 — Made in His Image; also Day 6 (closing anchor)
Genesis 1:27	NIV	Day 6 — Choosing to Trust (paired key scripture)
Psalms 33:13–15	NIV	Day 2 — God Is Watching
Psalms 33:16–17	NIV	Day 3 — Why Can’t I Fix This Myself?
Psalms 33:18–19	NIV	Day 4 — If God Is Good, Why Does He Allow This?
Psalms 33:20–21	NIV	Day 5 — Waiting on God
Psalms 33:22	NIV	Day 6 — Choosing to Trust
Psalms 33:13–22	NIV	Cover Scripture Banner — Series Anchor