

A 30-DAY DEVOTIONAL

Unshakable
PURSUIT

Chasing the God Who Chases Us

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Day 6 He Is Not Far

TODAY'S READING:
ACTS 17:26–28

Frank and his small group of friends had been walking for miles with dusty feet, sore backs, and heavy backpacks that were only feeling heavier by the minute. They'd been getting only the tiniest bit of interest in any conversation they'd had that day as they walked village to village in a remote part of Africa, telling people about Jesus in a place where accepting Him can make you a social outcast—or even get you killed.

They thought it might be time to go home.

Almost.

They compared thoughts and tired legs, and all felt compelled to go to that one last house in the distance. And in that compulsion, they trudged on.

As they approached, a man with a wide smile stepped out to meet them. “Come in,” he said. “I’ve fixed you dinner.” And as they entered the house, they realized he had a meal prepared and a place set for each one of them. Bewildered, the group sat and started to eat, and as they talked, they began to ask questions about the man’s family, including an adolescent boy who was there in the room with them.

The man proudly told them that the boy was his son, Isa. And with that, the group was even more bewildered—“Isa” is the word for “Jesus” in that part of the world. Frank asked the question burning in everyone’s mind: “Why did you decide to name him that?”

The man answered, “When he was born years ago, a man in a white robe appeared to me in a dream, and he told me to name the boy Isa.”

“Do you know what the name means?” Frank asked.

The man smiled and said, “No, but when I had that dream, the man in my dream told me that one day some people would come and tell me what it means. And then last night, the man in the white robe was in my dream again, and he told me I should cook a meal for you because you were coming today to tell me.”

AS CLOSE AS OUR VERY BREATH

When missionaries get together, these are the kinds of stories that get shared around the table—the mind-blowing ways they’ve seen God rush into their corner of the world in a way humans could have never anticipated or orchestrated. I have a feeling heaven may contain a lot of us praising God eternally for story after story after story of how God showed up in the most desperate, most remote, and most unexpected places to rescue us lovingly and extravagantly, for His glory, for our good, and for the good of others.

We may feel far-flung at times, but He is not far from each one of us (Acts 17:27).

Even as He draws us to reach out for Him and find Him, He's already about as close as He could possibly get, breathing life into our lungs, infusing it into our cells, speaking it into our souls. Paul says it again in Romans 1:20, that these invisible attributes of God—His eternal power and divine nature—have been there for us to see and hear and feel since the world was made. He's the force breathing the universe into life, piling up the waters of the sea and holding everything in the world together. He's the One appearing to people in dreams all over the world, preparing their hearts to hear His name, spurring them to start looking for the blinding light behind the glimmer they've seen.

And He's waiting for them, for all of us, to make that meal and invite Him in so He can be known.

FEELING OUR WAY TOWARD HIM

The truth of God's presence is buried deep in the heart of every human alive, Paul writes. The truth of who God is screams at us through everything around us, but more often than not, that truth gets tragically suppressed or twisted. That's what it was like for the people Paul spoke to in Athens in Acts 17:16–28. They were surrounded by idols to the Greek gods, misguided attempts by the Athenians to credit someone bigger than themselves with the complex mysteries they saw in the world around them.

It's what all humankind is prone to do until the scales fall off of our eyes—we try to find another way to explain the unexplainable, to satiate the insatiable desire to worship something or someone.

It's our broken flesh's knee-jerk reaction to the cry for something bigger in our souls.

I got an email from someone recently who said she had a small group she really liked to go to—she enjoyed their opinions, and she enjoyed their company. But as much as she wanted to, she just couldn't get herself to believe in their God.

"After many years of searching, I still do not know how to know if God is really involved in planning my life," she said, adding that she felt as though her life had turned out the way she'd made it. "I think I want eternal life, and I love the basic Christian philosophy," she said, "but I just cannot find it in my heart of hearts to believe there is a power orchestrating every minute detail of all of our lives."

I stared at the screen for a long time, trying to figure out what to say back. I wished I could show up on her doorstep with the man from the remote village in Africa, the one with the son named Isa, and have him tell her how God had pursued him in the middle of a dry, arid land in a way humans could never explain short of God's hand at work. I wished I could sit down and have coffee with her and tell her stories from my own life and the lives of my friends where God has intervened in ways we couldn't logically explain, friends like Evelyn, who had the tree split her house in two.

But I realized that even though thousands of miles separated me and my friend, God couldn't have been closer—He was right there, giving her every breath she was breathing. He's not far from me, and He's not far from her, and even now she's feeling her way toward Him though she doesn't see Him yet.

And I prayed that He would bring her journey to a crossroads, one where she would see Him for who He is, see the twists in her path for what they are, and fall down in worship of the undeniable Engineer who has been pursuing her all along. I prayed she would soon have eyes to see that He is more than a philosophy to want and her life is more than the decisions she's made.

God is the immeasurable prize at the end of the path.

And once you truly see it, it's the only song your heart knows how to sing.

AS YOU PRAY

- Ask God to open your eyes to see His hand even more in your life, in the minute details and the major events. Thank Him for what He's done. And ask Him to infuse the markers of His faithfulness into your heart and grow that into deeper trust in Him in the present and the future.
- Ask Him to give the people around you eyes to see the truth of who He is.
- Ask Him to continue to draw His people around the world into places where they can hear and have soft hearts to believe.