

"This collection of thirty-one meditations is a must-read for any man striving to fulfill his God-given role as a father."

John MacArthur



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

gospel MEDITATIONS *for* FATHERS

CHRIS ANDERSON
JOE TYRPAK
DAVE DORAN
MILTON VINCENT

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MEDITATIONS

for

FATHERS

“This collection of thirty-one meditations is a must-read for any man striving to fulfill his God-given role as a father. Since each reading is both biblical and practical, it equips the reader to lead family members to greater love to Christ and to God’s Word.”

—**John MacArthur**, pastor of Grace Community Church, Sun Valley, California, chairman of *Grace to You*, and author of hundreds of books

“Out of the park! This devotional simply smashes it over the wall. You will not be bored, condescended to, or lectured. Instead, you will be encouraged, taught, and well fed. Amazing devotional!”

—**Todd Friel**, host of Wretched Radio, conference speaker, and author of several books, including *Reset for Parents*

“What a gift *Gospel Meditations for Fathers* is to Christian families everywhere! So many Christian dads will say how much they want to grow in being spiritual leaders in their homes, but they are unsure what that looks like and what to do. This short but powerful series of thirty-one meditations offers tremendous insight and practical instruction on how to proceed. I have no doubt that dads who read through these meditations and heed their wise advice will reap enormous benefits for their children and families.”

—**Bruce A. Ware**, professor of Christian Theology at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary and author of several books, including *Big Truths for Young Hearts*

“I have long believed that many of the problems in homes today occur because too many dads are AWOL as far as their spiritual responsibilities are concerned. This team of four pastors has written a booklet which, if used, would be a great help to fathers. It can instruct, inspire, and challenge all of us male leaders to be mature believers, and to be a blessing to our wives, children, and friends.”

—**John Thornbury**, conference speaker, author of biographies on Asahel Nettleton and David Brainerd, and pastor of Winfield Baptist Church (PA) for forty-four years

Introduction

I remember it like it was yesterday. The day I heard my wife was expecting. The day I first heard the swish-swish-swish of the baby's heartbeat. The day I found out that my baby was a girl. The day I first felt a kick. The day I got the call that my wife was in labor. The day—that same day—I first held my daughter. Each of those days, with each of my four daughters, has been equally memorable.

Fatherhood has never been terrifying to me. I love it. It thrills me. But it has been *sobering*. Part of that was realizing that I was responsible to be the provider for three people, then four, then five, then six! These babies needed food, diapers, and shelter—not to mention toys and a scandalous number of dresses. Don't get me started on college! But the financial weight is insignificant compared to the spiritual weight. The first time I held each of my babies in my hands—not cradled in the curve of my arm, but held *in my hands*, with a head in my right hand and a hind in my left, so I could make eye contact—it occurred to me that this little one is going to live somewhere forever. Forever! They're what mathematicians call a *ray*: they have a starting point, but no ending point. That's an overwhelming thought, and it has driven me to prayer. *"Lord, whatever happens with my finances, my health, the church I pastor, whatever—nothing matters more than this eternal soul. Save my girl. That's beyond my pay grade, but it's easy and delightful to You. Open her eyes. Draw her to Yourself. Save my baby."* I'd pray this constantly until they professed Christ—and I'd keep on praying it until there was compelling evidence that they had truly been born again. Occasionally, I'd put a postscript on those very serious prayers: *"And if this baby girl would grow up to look like her mother rather than me, well, that would be great, too."*

This devotional is written by dads, for dads. All of us know the thrill and burden of fatherhood; none of us claim to have it all figured out. But we're students of the Word. We're pastors. And we've had the joy of pointing our little ones to Christ. We want to encourage and assist you as you do the same.

I'm thrilled to have Pastors Dave Doran and Milton Vincent writing along with Joe Tyrpak and me. Dave is a long-time friend and one of the pastors I've most admired for the last twenty years. Milton Vincent—well, he's *Milton Vincent*! His book *A Gospel Primer for Christians* has shaped my thinking, along with the thinking of thousands more. I admire each of these men.

Our prayer is that these thirty-one articles will give you a better understanding of the Scriptures. The Bible alone is inspired; our comments about it are not. So focus your attention primarily on the Word.

The four of us dedicate this book to our own fathers, who gave us faithful pictures of our heavenly Father. May God be exalted through it!

—CHRIS ANDERSON, EDITOR

A Father's Adequacy

READ 2 CORINTHIANS 2:14–4:6

"Not that we are adequate in ourselves to consider anything as coming from ourselves, but our adequacy is from God." 2 CORINTHIANS 3:5 NASB

Some men feel inadequate in their role as a father, so they withdraw and leave it to their wife to carry the load. Some men feel totally adequate in and of themselves to handle the upbringing of their children. "I got this," they say to themselves before prayerlessly entering a room to shepherd their teen in some complex matter of the heart. I have done exactly this, and shortly thereafter I have fled from my child's bedroom like one of the seven sons of Sceva, overwhelmed by a situation I thought I was competent to handle. As much as you, I need the following reminders.

We truly are inadequate as dads. Raising children is impossibly hard and requires a thousand miracles that we cannot perform. Yes, our children are born bearing the image of God, yet Satan blinds them to the glory of Jesus (2 Corinthians 4:4). David says, "Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me" (Psalm 51:5). Our sin-broken children come to us with the same warning label, and to us God gives the task of training them toward Christ. No one is adequate for such a task.

We should confess our inadequacy. As a spiritual father to many (1 Corinthians 4:15), Paul engaged in the business of preaching the gospel to spiritually dead people and calling them to faith in Christ, just as we do with our own children. Yet how can dead people believe in Christ and experience salvation? Even after experiencing the miracle of regeneration, Paul's spiritual children still stood in need of a thousand more miracles to reach maturity. Consequently, Paul ponders his ministry and finds himself asking, "Who is adequate for these things?" (2 Corinthians 2:16 NASB). A few verses later he looks within himself and says, "Not that we are adequate in ourselves to consider anything as coming from ourselves" (2 Corinthians 3:5 NASB). Men do not easily confess to feelings of inadequacy, but Paul does so, and every father should join him in his confession.

We should count on our adequacy in God. Wonderfully, Paul does not stop with confessing his inadequacy, but goes on to say, "our adequacy is from God, who . . . made us adequate" (2 Corinthians 3:5–6 NASB). Paul had the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit to help him in his ministry, and he also had "the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ" in his heart to deliver to others (2 Corinthians 4:4–6). Paul's confidence in such overwhelming provision explains his eager willingness to engage in the very ministry he felt so personally inadequate in doing.

We often do the opposite. We hate feeling inadequate so much that we avoid doing things which make us feel that way. We prefer instead to busy ourselves with tasks that we feel adequate in performing. Our wife is crying out for our help and our children are starving for godly male leadership in the home, yet what do we do? We occupy ourselves with work (because we feel adequate in our profession), we work on our car (if we feel adequate doing that), we go golfing with the guys (if we feel adequate doing that), we watch TV (because it asks nothing of us), or we do any number of things that lie safely inside our "adequacy zone." As for me, I have mowed my lawn twice in a row on a few occasions, admiring the straightness of my mowing lines, while inside the house my leadership was desperately needed.

Meanwhile, the triune God waits for us inside those very areas we avoid, and He stands ready to do His greatest miracles there. So if you feel inadequate in your role as a dad, that's okay. In fact, that's wonderful. Now look to God. Find your adequacy in Him, and throw yourself into the good work of fathering your children.

Let the gospel remind you of the One Who makes you adequate.—MILTON

The Perfect Father

DAY

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READ PSALM 103

"As a father shows compassion to his children, so the LORD shows compassion to those who fear him." PSALM 103:13

Do you marvel that Jesus told us to address the eternal and almighty God with the tenderest of terms: "Our Father in heaven . . ." (Matthew 6:9)? You should. Even the apostle John marvels at the Christian's privileged position: "See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are" (1 John 3:1). Through the sacrifice of His eternal Son, God has turned rebels into His own children. The Scriptures celebrate the theme of God's Fatherhood again and again. As His sons, it inspires our worship. As fathers who aren't in heaven, it inspires our imitation.

Our Father loves us in spite of us. Psalm 103:13–14 revel in God's father-like love for us. It isn't a deserved love, but a "compassion" (v. 13). Though we are but "dust" (v. 14)—sinners who deserve to be crushed under His feet—He loves us. As blasphemous as it may sound, God looks at the Christian—hidden in Christ (Colossians 3:3)—and says what He said of Jesus: "This is my beloved son, in whom I am well pleased" (Matthew 3:17; 17:15).

Our Father gives us only good gifts. Matthew 6:32 says that our heavenly Father knows our needs. Matthew 7:7–11 teach that He meets those needs with good gifts. Even human fathers give their children bread, not stones. How much more will our perfect Father give us "every good and every perfect gift" (James 1:17). And if He doesn't give it, we know it wasn't good.

Our Father disciplines us to build our character. Hebrews 12:7–11 (explaining Proverbs 3:11–12) informs us that God disciplines us when we sin. He does so not to vent His frustration, but to help us grow in righteousness.

Our Father forgives us, even when we stray from Him. The Father's love is especially evident in His forgiveness of the prodigal son in Luke 15:11–32. The best of us, on our best days, are but prodigals who rebel against Him. Yet, He waits for us, then welcomes us when we repent. Indeed, He *runs* to us—something that was borderline scandalous for a respected man in Jesus' culture. The Father forgives and restores us—again, in spite of us. All of these displays of the Father's care and grace are challenges to us as we lead our own children.

A few years ago, I was privileged to write a hymn with my daughter Rebekah. I wrote the text and she supplied a beautiful and fitting tune. It's titled "The Father Looks on Me," and it reflects on God's amazing love for His children.

The Father looks on me and sees not what I was or am;
He views the righteousness of Christ, and not my cursed sin.

The Father looks and pities me; He knows that I am dust.
He treats me not as I deserve, but as though I were just.

The Father looks on me and gives a loaf and not a stone.
He showers me with perfect gifts, for all my needs are known.

The Father looks on me with love—a child He's welcomed home.
He found an orphan, poor and soiled, yet claimed me as His own.

The Father looks for me with hope, for me, His wayward son.
I stand afar, detained by shame; He cries for joy and runs!

The Father looks on me and smiles, for it is Christ He sees;
"This is my own beloved son, in whom I am well pleased."

Let the gospel of God's love inform and inspire your love for your children.—CHRIS

Start at the Beginning

READ GENESIS 1:26–31 AND 2:15–25

“So God created man in his own image . . . male and female he created them.” GENESIS 1:27

Because the Bible is inspired and given to us to reveal the Creator and His will for His creation, we must consciously and consistently ground our understanding of the family in the Scriptures. In them, the Creator details how the created are to live! Three simple truths form the pillars of the family.

Humanity is created by God (Genesis 1:26–28). The Bible is clear that human origin is by creative act (vs. evolution). Male and female are made in God’s image, so they share a personal, spiritual, and moral resemblance to their Creator. Since God’s image gives all human life dignity, to kill or curse another human is a sin against God Himself (Genesis 9:6; James 3:9–10). Because both bear God’s image, men and women have equal worth before God and equal access to Him through Christ (Galatians 3:28; 1 Peter 3:7). All human life is sacred. Any effort to declare one gender superior to the other is contrary to God’s Word. The differences, though, between male and female are by divine design, complementing one another to fulfill God’s plan for creation. These are not learned distinctions and characteristics, and they cannot be ignored. Men and women are not interchangeable. Men and women have distinctive roles and abilities according to God’s plan for the created order.

Marriage is established by God (Genesis 2:18, 21–25). Marriage is a gift from God designed to complete and perpetuate the race. Without the companionship marriage provides, His work of creation was “not good.” Obviously, the gift of the woman was necessary for the multiplication of the race! Recognizing marriage as a divinely given institution means we reject the idea that it is merely a social convention. Man didn’t invent marriage; God did! In Ephesians 5 Paul makes it clear, from his use of Genesis 2, that God’s eternal plan of redemption was the basis for the institution of marriage—God established it with the intent that it would symbolize the relationship between Christ and the church. God’s plan came first, then marriage. So marriage has a far greater significance than the world gives it, and, sadly, than even many Christians acknowledge. Marriage is a sacred responsibility, commitment, and stewardship before God. God’s plan was, and is, one man and one woman for one lifetime. Exceptions to this can only be supplied by God Himself.

Family is directed and permitted by God (Genesis 1:28). Contrary to some modern views, marriage and family are a package deal! Many describe procreation as the chief purpose of marriage, but I don’t think that is correct. The bearing and raising of children is certainly one of the purposes of marriage but not the primary purpose. The primary purpose of marriage is for the companionship and completion of the race, a portion of which is reproductive (Genesis 1:28). The Bible, though, is clear that bearing children is the normal pattern of marriage (1:28; 1 Timothy 5:14). All other things being equal, the expectation is that married people will bear children. I tell pre-marital couples that the choice to get married is the choice to be potential parents. There is only one foolproof way not to have children and God doesn’t allow that (1 Corinthians 7:1–5)! The words “all other things being equal” acknowledge that the actual bearing of children is a matter over which God is sovereign (Genesis 4:1; Psalm 127:3). God’s plan for each married couple rules over their plans, so He may give a child before the couple planned to have one, or He may not give a child, at least naturally, to a couple that desires one. A marriage is not incomplete without children, but it should not be entered without being ready for children.

Let the gospel’s power to reconcile you to your Creator shape your view of marriage and family, seeing them as good gifts for humanity that reflect and advance His glory. Sin has marred those gifts, but God’s grace can restore and renew them.—DAVE

Grace for Your Worst Day

READ GENESIS 38–39

“By the grace of God I am what I am.” 1 CORINTHIANS 15:10

Many people avoid reading Genesis 38 because it recounts one of the grossest scenes in the Bible—when Judah gets his daughter-in-law Tamar pregnant as she plays the part of a prostitute. Yet, if you skip this “dirty” chapter and focus only on the “clean” example of Joseph (in chs. 37, 39), you’ve missed the point that God is making. God intentionally puts the immorality of Judah in chapter 38 in stark contrast to the purity of Joseph in chapter 39 to teach every believer—and every Christian man, in particular—unforgettable lessons about His grace.

You need God’s saving grace (ch. 38). Judah teaches you that God can save you, even if you’re the most immoral man. Judah is depicted as a corrupt individual. He kidnapped and sold his younger brother out of jealousy, deceived his father, left his family, married a pagan woman, raised rebellious boys, cared nothing for his widowed daughter-in-law, hired (someone he thought was) a prostitute working for an idol temple, and then wanted to kill his daughter-in-law for her immorality. Judah is the epitome of an ungodly man! But when he frankly admits his unrighteousness (v. 26), it’s the major turning point in his life. Although his confession of guilt is brief, it’s the watershed. Judah presents a powerful example of humble repentance that the rest of the Bible will more fully develop (Isaiah 55:7; Luke 18:13). A personal relationship with God begins with a simple admission: “I’m not righteous. I’m a sinner.” Have you ever admitted that to God, yourself, and others? If not, I pray you do so. God sent Jesus to die for sinners so that you could be forgiven if you turn from your sin. And what assures you that God will save even notorious sinners is the prophecy that Christians will forever populate a city that has Judah’s name written on the gate (Waltke, *Genesis: A Commentary*, p. 515; Revelation 21:12). God loves to save the worst sinners—like Judah, like me, like you.

You need God’s sustaining grace (ch. 39). Joseph was everything that his older brother Judah wasn’t: Joseph was a remarkably successful home manager, and he continually resisted immorality. Yet, shockingly, while Judah seemed to have little lasting personal consequence for his irresponsibility, Joseph ended up in prison for his *virtue*! Despite the injustice, God gave Joseph grace. Just like God made Judah’s worst moment the major turning point for good in his life, God made Joseph’s worst hardship turn out for good—it eventually led to his greatest promotion. Through this horrible trial God was with Joseph and blessed him: God brought Joseph to Pharaoh’s attention and used him for worldwide good. Dad, consider Joseph’s experience of God’s grace. No matter how badly you’re mistreated and no matter how repeatedly you’re tempted to sin, God can sustain you to endure injustice and resist sexual temptation. God loves to shower His sustaining grace on suffering believers—like Joseph, like me, like you.

God’s grace can save the most immoral sinner and sustain the most afflicted saint. I’m sure that both Judah and Joseph look back on these horrific events and say, “It was one of the worst things that ever happened to me, yet it was one of the best.” That’s how God’s providence works for all who trust Jesus. In his exceptional book, *If God Is Good*, Randy Alcorn writes, “When we consider the best and worst things that have happened to us, we often see a startling overlap” (p. 236). And this dynamic shouldn’t surprise anyone who has considered Christ’s cross, because the worst day of human history is also the best. On Calvary Jesus was hated, abused, and wrongly condemned; yet through His death sinners can be forgiven, rescued from death, and welcomed forever into God’s family. Don’t underestimate the power of grace.

Let the gospel fill you with hope that God can save and sustain you.—JOE

“Give Me Your Heart”

READ PROVERBS 1

“My son, give me your heart, and let your eyes observe my ways.” PROVERBS 23:26

I have four daughters. Just a few years ago, I had four *teen* daughters. Those of you with only sons (Dave Doran?) may think I’m not qualified to write a parenting book. But those of you with daughters know that a parent with that many girls is a parenting ninja. “Wax on. Wax off.”

As much as I joke or complain, the truth is that I’m beyond blessed. My girls are among my best friends. And by God’s great grace, I’m among theirs. I remember the joy I felt when my oldest, at age sixteen, said to me, “Dad, you’re, like, my best friend.” (For those of you who don’t have teens, she’s not comparing me to her actual best friend. “Like” can now serve as an intensifying adverb. So I’m *really* her best friend.) I was immediately struck by two thoughts when I heard this. First, that’s amazing. Praise God! And second, wow, we need to get this girl more social opportunities.

I’m not the measure of an effective dad, but I’d like to share a few thoughts on becoming your child’s best friend—especially if you have daughters.

Friendship with your child is indeed the goal. I once believed that my children didn’t need to like me, as long as they obeyed me. “You’re their parent, not their friend!” That’ll preach. But Proverbs 23:26 is an invitation to deep friendship and intimacy. William Arnot exhorts, “A parent should spare no effort to make himself the companion of his [child]: the victory is half won when the [child] learns to like the company of his [parent].”

You can ask for your child’s heart, but in reality, you’ll need to earn it. You want your child’s heart—not just their affection, but their admiration. You want a close relationship that results in deep spiritual influence. How do you get that? You earn it. If you want “relational capital” when they’re older, you need to make constant relational “deposits” when they’re young. How? Tickle them. Read to them. Listen to them. Tuck them in. Take them on business trips, as expensive and inconvenient as it will be. Be at their ballgames, recitals, and concerts. Create memories with them. You can spend five hours on the weekend golfing. But for a few years, that time might be better spent playing catch, or even “Pretty Pretty Princess.”

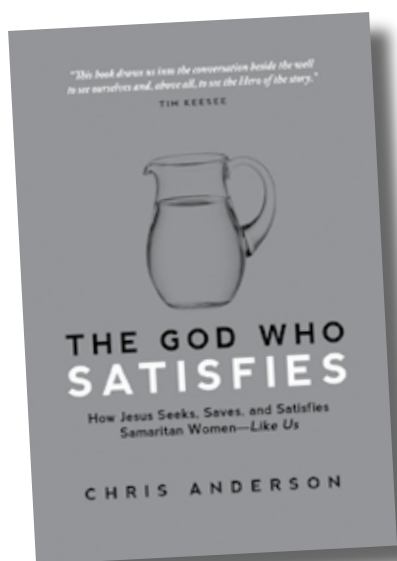
There are plenty of competitors for your child’s admiration. Beat them. The entire book of Proverbs describes a competition for the heart of the simpleton. It’s especially clear in Proverbs 9, where both lady wisdom and the harlot call out to the simpleton to attend their feast. He has a choice to make. The same is true in Proverbs 23:26. “My son, give *me* your heart—not the immoral woman, or your deceitful friend, or the enticing sinners of Proverbs 1:10.” This is especially urgent for dads of daughters. Pop, if your girl isn’t completely secure in her relationship with you—if you’re not communicating enough affection, affirmation, and overall interest in her—there are plenty of knuckleheads who will offer to take your place. The price for your daughter will be excruciating. Earn her heart, then protect it.

Put in the work while they’re young, then enjoy them when they’re teens and adults. It’s like the old Fram oil filter commercial: “You can pay me now, or pay me later.” I’m enjoying my adolescent and adult daughters. We’re best friends. That’s all due to God’s grace. It’s primarily due to the power of the gospel in their lives. But it’s also due, in part, to their mother’s wonderful work and to our efforts to discipline them, train them, and *win their hearts* when they were young.

Let the gospel help you win your child’s heart, both to you and to your Savior.—

CHRIS

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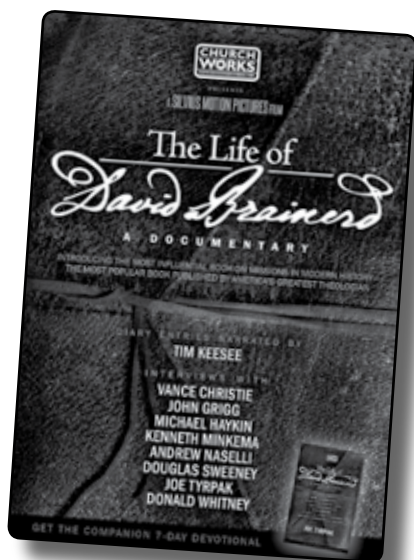


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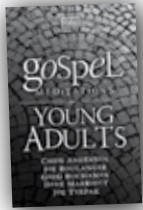
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"This DVD documentary represents an excellent introduction to the life and ministry of the famed missionary. Together the interviewees paint a picture of Brainerd that is informed by the best scholarship, is honest about his various struggles and failures, 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 Young Adults

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—**Voddie Baucham**, dean of theology at African Christian University, Lusaka, Zambia, and author of several books



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*



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“Can we do missions without meditating on the gospel? Of course not. And yet, how many well-meaning, mission-minded saints go off into the harvest having failed to prepare their own hearts with due consideration of the good news? Too many I fear. *Gospel Meditations for Missions* helps us slow down to consider what is of first importance that we might hold this treasure more fully in our clay hearts. I joyfully commend it.”

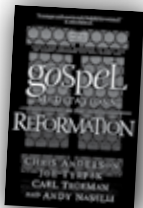
—**Thabiti Anyabwile**, pastor of Anacostia River Church, Washington, DC, and author of *What is a Healthy Church Member?*



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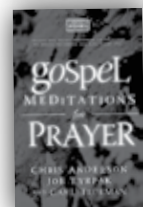
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“Theologically rich, thoughtful, and historically rooted devotionals are a rare treat. This volume, which unfolds the theological commitments and pastoral heart of the Reformers, is a unique and enormously helpful devotional. As the Reformers reminded us, sound doctrine must always lead to true worship. My hope is that this devotional leads many Christians to encounter biblical truth in a fresh way.”

—**R. Albert Mohler, Jr.**, president of The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, host of *The Briefing*, and author of many books



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—**Joel Beeke**, president of Puritan Reformed Theological Seminary, Grand Rapids, and editorial director of Reformation Heritage Books

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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 is the author of *The God Who Satisfies*, a full-length book that unpacks the amazing grace of Jesus in John 4. 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 has produced a DVD, *The Life of David Brainerd: A Documentary*, and a companion devotional. He and his wife, Hannah, have four children.



DAVE DORAN has served as the senior pastor of Inter-City Baptist Church in Allen Park, Michigan, since 1989. He also has the privilege of serving as the president of Detroit Baptist Theological Seminary. He is the coauthor of *For the Sake of His Name*. Dave and his wife, Claudia, have four adult sons.



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