



# grace and gratitude

A 40-Day Thanksgiving Meditation

charles a. barrett

# GRACE AND GRATITUDE

A 40-DAY THANKSGIVING MEDITATION

CHARLES A. BARRETT



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Grace and Gratitude: A 40-Day Thanksgiving Meditation

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## ABOUT GRACE AND GRATITUDE

2020. A year like no other. A year that seems to be a drama or suspense-filled horror story with one unexpected plot twist after another. To say that it has been difficult is an understatement. Despite all of the positive affirmations that were made as we approached 2020, from seeing clearly or perfectly to everything coming into focus, the last few months have not been what we expected. In fact, if we knew what was on the other side of January 1, many of us would have opted to remain in 2019.

A global pandemic of epic proportions, the novel corona virus, also known as COVID-19, has affected people from all walks of life. While some lost jobs and financial security, others unexpectedly said goodbye to life-long friends and loved ones. With the constant recurrence of death, whether COVID related or otherwise, it's nearly impossible to casually scroll through our social media feeds without being inundated with scores of RIP tributes, almost to the point of becoming numb. With families devastated and economies decimated, chronic uncertainty perpetuates fear and anxiety.

And if COVID wasn't enough to overwhelm the world, social injustice as a consequence of systemic racism continues to rear its head through the senseless killings and mistreatment of unarmed individuals, particularly Black people living in the United States. Whether Breonna Taylor in Kentucky, Ahmaud Auberry in Georgia, George Floyd in Minnesota, or those whose names we don't know, civil unrest and political tensions exacerbated an already stressed citizenry during this complicated time in world history. From the turbulence of demonstrations for civil rights that are reminiscent of the 1960s, to political divisiveness and economic peril, you name it, 2020 has it.

But in spite of these things, and albeit counterintuitive due to how much life has changed, we still have a lot for which we can be thankful. In fact, I am reminded of these words recorded in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> verses of Habakkuk chapter 3:



*Even though the fig trees have no blossoms, and there are no grapes on the vines;  
even though the olive crop fails, and the fields lie empty and barren; even though  
the flocks die in the fields, and the cattle barns are empty, yet I will rejoice in the  
LORD! I will be joyful in the God of my salvation!*

Despite wondering if we would make it this far, here we are. Amidst worrying about providing for ourselves, and juggling additional responsibilities for friends, family members, neighbors, and coworkers, we're still here. Although students were saddened because they couldn't finish the school year in face-to-face settings, and some endured the disappointment of not experiencing milestone events to celebrate their years of dedication and hard work, God is still good, and we are grateful.

Without denying how challenging this year continues to be, or the range of emotions that we are feeling, *Grace and Gratitude: A 40-Day Thanksgiving Meditation* is a collection of inspirational readings that centers our hearts and minds on being thankful and encourages you, the reader, with the hope that better days are ahead. For 40 days, I invite you to spend a few moments in quiet meditation reading a short passage of scripture, reflecting on the thought for the day, and writing a few notes that are important for you to remember. Depending on the day, your notes will take different forms. Sometimes they will be simple, yet significant things that you recall God doing for you or your loved ones. At other times they will be ideas that come to you after reading and reflecting. Whether personally encouraging sentiments that you don't want to forget, or ways that you can continue growing as a friend, sibling, spouse, employer, student, or leader, record and revisit them throughout the year.

As you read, reflect, and remember, know that I am thankful for you and always praying for you.

CAR

# DEDICATION

*To the more than 600 individuals who have subscribed  
to receive a daily text message from me, thank you.  
I am grateful for the opportunity to encourage you  
and speak into your lives.*

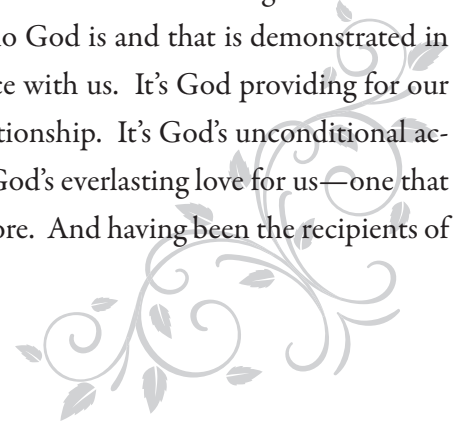
DAY 1

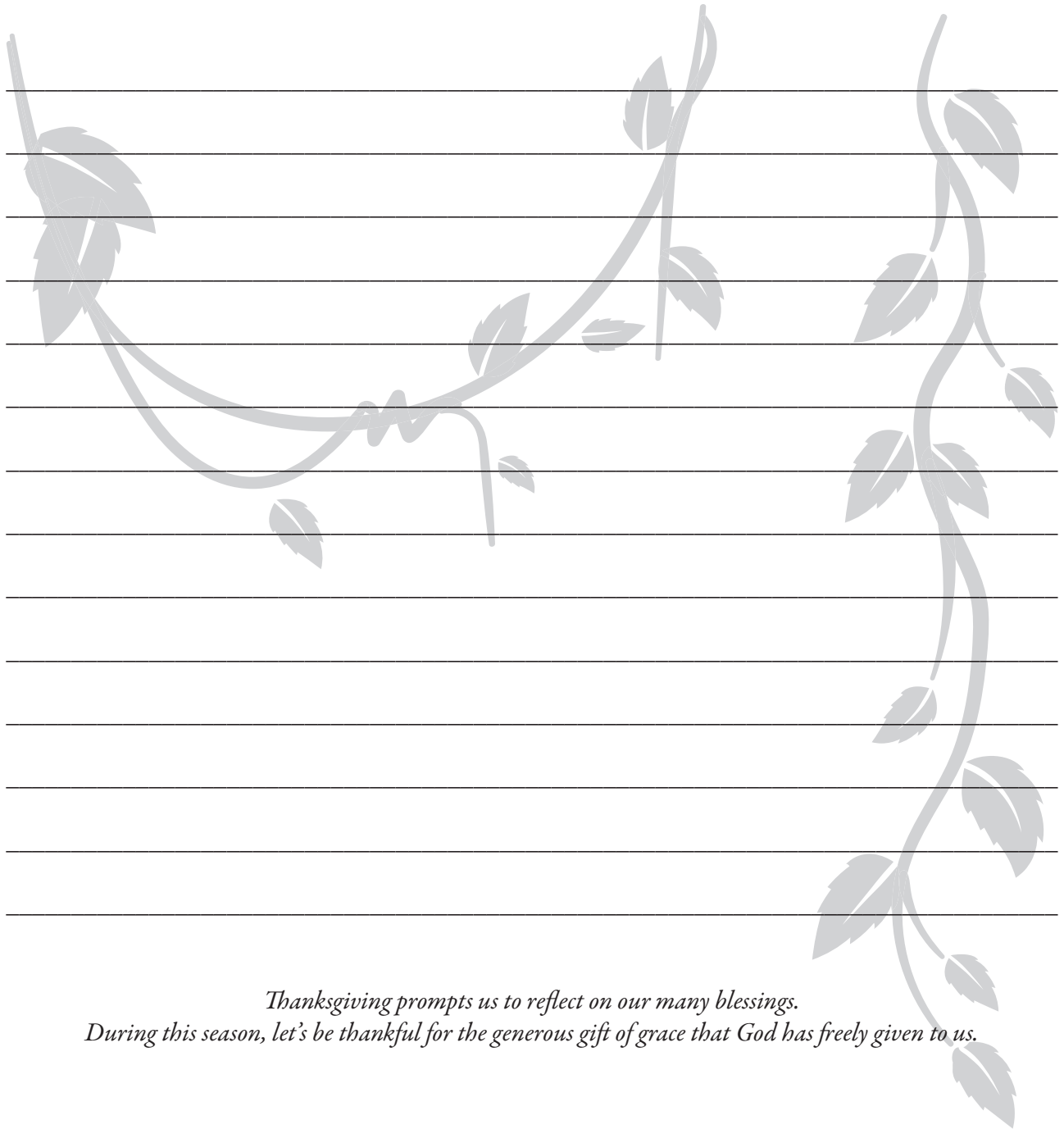
## INVISIBLE BLESSINGS

*God saved you by his grace when you believed.  
And you can't take credit for this; it is a gift from God.  
Salvation is not a reward for the good things we have done, so none of us can boast about it.*

Ephesians 2: 8-9

The holiday season has always been one of my most favorite times of the year. Traditionally beginning with Thanksgiving, it's a wonderful time to think about everything that we have. Quite naturally, tangible objects come to mind—a place to live, food to eat, clothes to wear, money in the bank (regardless if it seems to be enough), and a host of other items that help to make life more comfortable and convenient. But as we're thinking about and thanking God for these blessings, we should also remember something that we often cannot see: grace. A lot can be said about this enduring quality of who God is and that is demonstrated in immeasurable ways; but a few things come to mind. It's God's patience with us. It's God providing for our needs. It's God's ability to restore us after there's been a breach in relationship. It's God's unconditional acceptance of us, despite what we've done. And perhaps most of all, it's God's everlasting love for us—one that never runs out. Although uncertainty abounds, grace abounds even more. And having been the recipients of such grace, let's extend the same to others.





*Thanksgiving prompts us to reflect on our many blessings.  
During this season, let's be thankful for the generous gift of grace that God has freely given to us.*

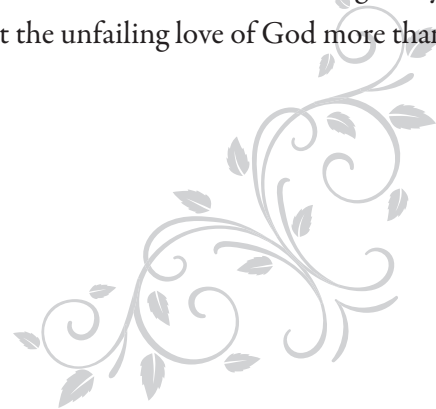
DAY 2

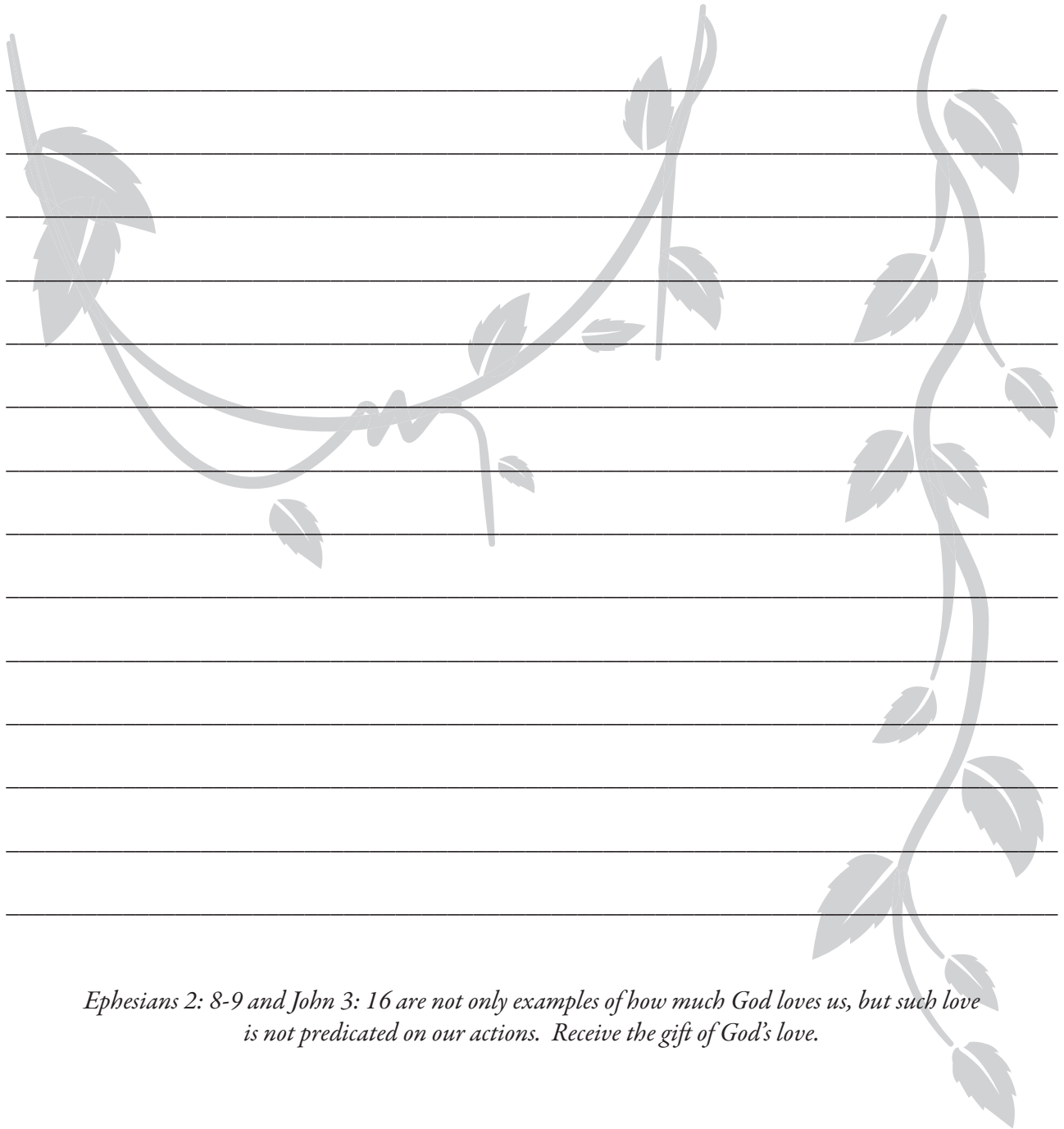
## WORK LESS, RECEIVE MORE

*“For God loved the world so much that he gave his one and only Son,  
so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life.”*

John 3: 16

Since we were little children, many of us have been taught that hard work pays off. And while there is some truth to this, it can also lead to developing an unhealthy work ethic. In other words, we work more, in order to earn more, so that we can buy more. This, however, is not God’s plan for us. Life is more than working to acquire earthly possessions. Life is also about becoming more comfortable with receiving. Consider these questions: how balanced is my lifestyle? Am I consumed with doing more in order to have more? How uncomfortable am I with receiving from others? Do I accept God’s unconditional love for me? Starting today, let’s unlearn unhealthy ways of living by readjusting our mindset to trust the unfailing love of God more than our own efforts.





*Ephesians 2: 8-9 and John 3: 16 are not only examples of how much God loves us, but such love is not predicated on our actions. Receive the gift of God's love.*

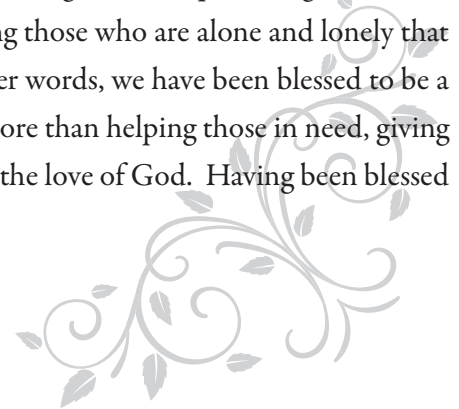
## DAY 3

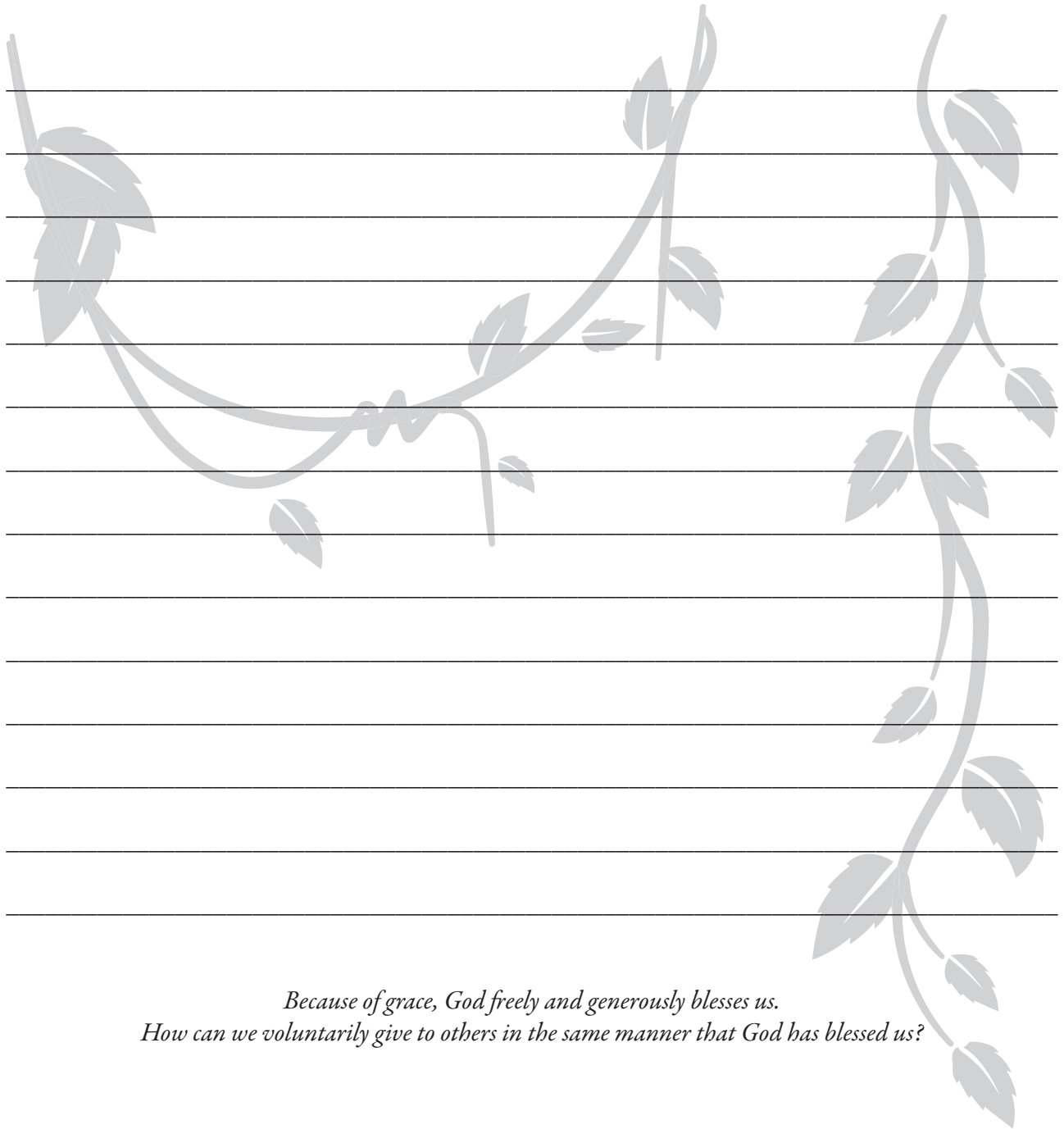
# BLESSED TO BE A BLESSING

*‘For I was hungry, and you fed me. I was thirsty, and you gave me a drink. I was a stranger, and you invited me into your home. I was naked, and you gave me clothing. I was sick, and you cared for me. I was in prison, and you visited me.’ “Then these righteous ones will reply, ‘Lord, when did we ever see you hungry and feed you? Or thirsty and give you something to drink? Or a stranger and show you hospitality? Or naked and give you clothing? When did we ever see you sick or in prison and visit you?’ “And the King will say, ‘I tell you the truth, when you did it to one of the least of these my brothers and sisters, you were doing it to me!’”*

Matthew 25: 35-40

It is inaccurate to think that God takes care of everything. Yes, God is omnipotent; but because God is all powerful does not mean that God always uses such power to right the wrongs of the world. In fact, not only is restraint one of the best indicators of power, influence, or strength, but God is revealed through people—you and me. It is the everyday actions of feeding people, giving them something to drink, providing them with clothes to wear, caring for our neighbors when they are sick, and visiting those who are alone and lonely that not only demonstrate that God is real, but that God lives in us. In other words, we have been blessed to be a blessing. And because we have, others should never be without. But more than helping those in need, giving to those who can't give anything to us in return is the best way to show the love of God. Having been blessed to be a blessing, how can you bless someone today?





*Because of grace, God freely and generously blesses us.  
How can we voluntarily give to others in the same manner that God has blessed us?*



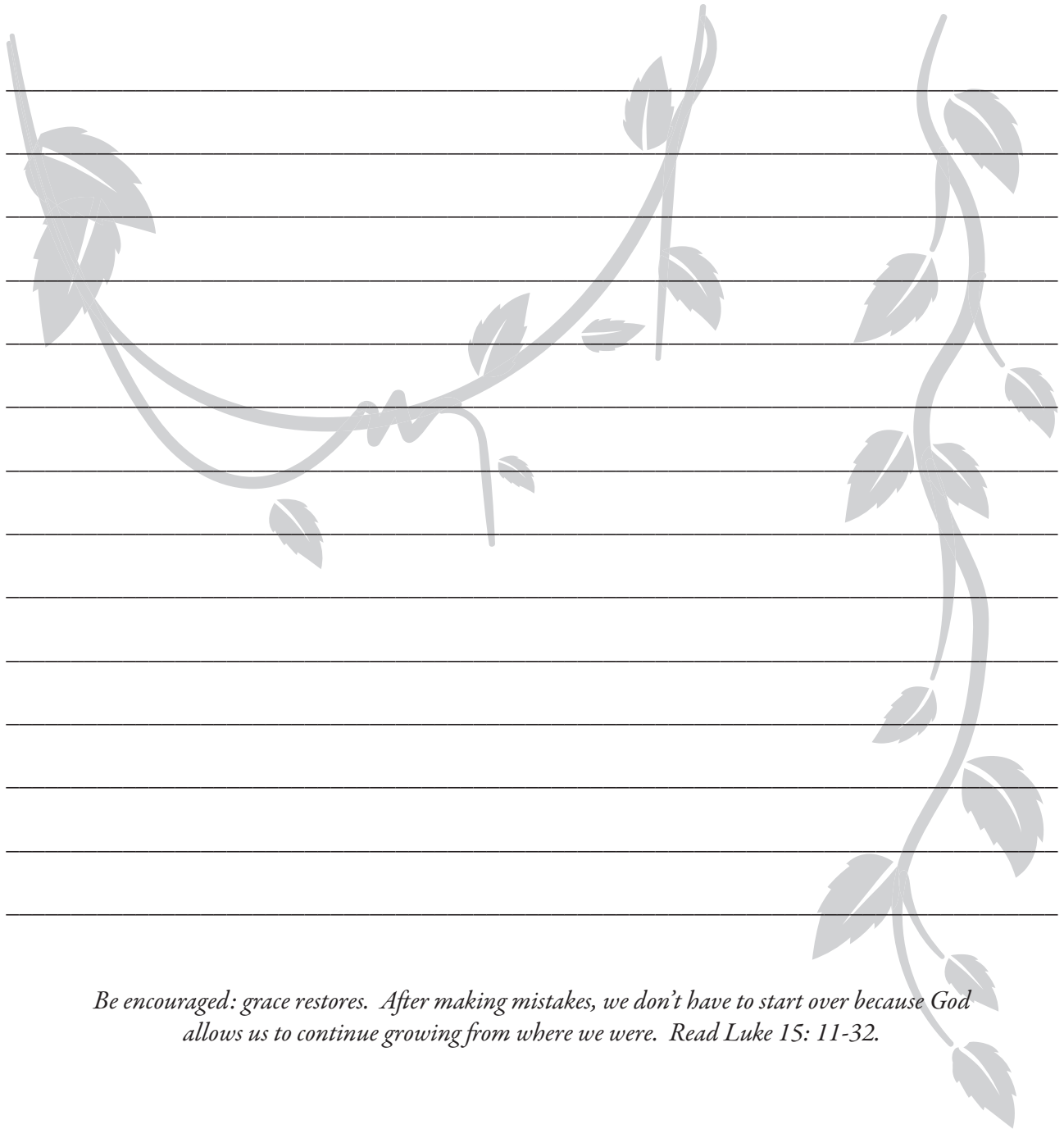
## DAY 4

# RESTORATION

*“So he returned home to his father. And while he was still a long way off, his father saw him coming. Filled with love and compassion, he ran to his son, embraced him, and kissed him. His son said to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against both heaven and you, and I am no longer worthy of being called your son.’ But his father said to the servants, ‘Quick! Bring the finest robe in the house and put it on him. Get a ring for his finger and sandals for his feet. And kill the calf we have been fattening. We must celebrate with a feast, for this son of mine was dead and has now returned to life. He was lost, but now he is found.’ So the party began.”*

Luke 15: 20-24

Being a fan of Home and Garden Television (HGTV), I have learned that renovating and remodeling homes is hard work. In virtually all instances, these projects require significant investments of time, money, and sweat equity. And while newly constructed homes have their appeal, some of my favorite episodes are those that have chronicled the restoration of abandoned and seemingly worthless properties. As difficult as it was, especially problem solving the almost inevitable unexpected complications that happen along the way, the end result is always worth it. Although the portion of the parable that is presented above offers a positive perspective on restoration, it’s also a process. But just like vintage homes that are filled with character from centuries past, the restoration of relationships is worth it because of the inherent value of people. Despite the son being away from his father, there was more worth saving than abandoning. And although the son enjoyed a new beginning when he returned home, this didn’t require him to start from the beginning. The same can happen for you and your relationships.



*Be encouraged: grace restores. After making mistakes, we don't have to start over because God allows us to continue growing from where we were. Read Luke 15: 11-32.*