

THE RED THREAD

THE GIFT OF SALVATION

Acknowledge to yourself and to God that you have sinned (Romans 3:23).

In sorrow for your sins, turn from them to God and ask His forgiveness (Isaiah 55:7).

By faith receive the Lord Jesus Christ as your Savior, believing that He died in your place on the cross (John 3:16).

BETWEEN TIMES

PSALM 18
BIBLE STUDY

Day 1—Psalm 18

Day 2—Verses 1-3

Day 3—Verses 3-6

Day 4—Verses 7-12

Day 5—Verses 13-15

Day 6—Verses 16-19

Day 7—Verses 20-24

Day 8—Verses 24-30

Day 9—Verses 31-45

Day 10—Verses 46-50

LECTIO DIVINA -
30 MINUTE STUDY

10 MIN READING

5 MIN MEDITATING

10 MIN PRAYING

5 MIN PERSONAL APPLICATION

WHY & HOW

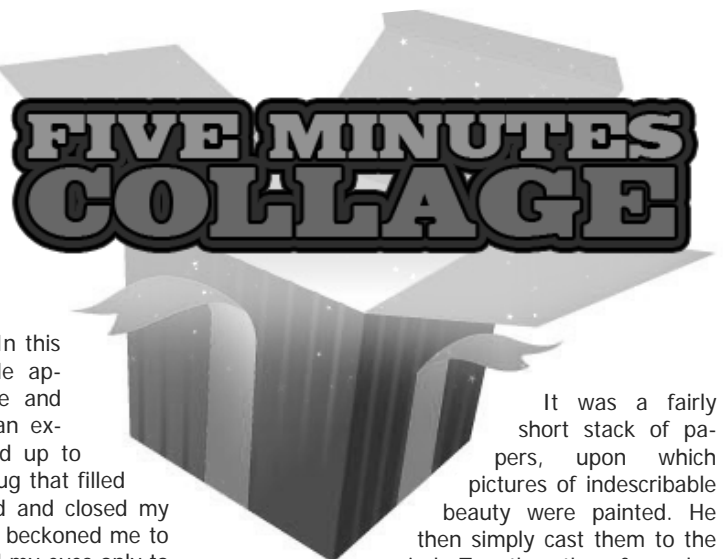
THE RED THREAD exists to be an encouragement to the men and women currently separated from family and friends in correctional institutions. It is published on 2nd and 4th Wednesdays by **Crimson House Ministries** at 1616 North Robberson, Springfield, Missouri, 65803. Please send all correspondence to that address. Subscription information is available online at: <http://readingroom.crimsonhouseministries.org/>

Someone told me that God was going to judge me in the end for all the times during each day that I chose not to spend with Him. I carried that with me for years and actually I feel that it made me want to do my own thing.

Then one night I had a dream. In this dream I stood before the Lord. He approached me with an excited smile and carried with Him a small gift with an extravagant bow attached. He stepped up to me and gave me a heart-warming hug that filled my every want, fulfilled me. I stood and closed my eyes as the invitation to take it all in beckoned me to soak it in as long as I liked. I opened my eyes only to realize He'd been studying my face much like the satisfaction you'd see on a father who's been desperately waiting to see His son for quite some time. A grand smile emerged and stretched across His face. "My Son," He said with a sigh. "Thank you sooo much," He added, holding up the gift. He looked deeply into my eyes and with a sudden wet, glossy film over His, He whispered, "For eternity I'll cherish these."

I was a little shocked to believe that I could have given anything to the God of the universe that would draw such a response. He started to open it. I watched as he began to untie the bow by pulling on the end of one lace. The bow slowly released its grip and fell tenderly to the ground like a gliding feather. The wrapping was immaculate. He slid His fingers under the seam and popped the bonding carefully as if to keep the wrapping as much intact as possible.

I looked at His face and wondered why it was I who was exhibiting the anticipation. The wrapping unfolded and what lay before me rather surprised me.



It was a fairly short stack of papers, upon which pictures of indescribable beauty were painted. He then simply cast them to the wind. Together they formed a gorgeous collage and each one produced its own individual instrumental set of notes. It truly was breath-taking. After a few moments it began to dawn on me that I recognized something within each of the paintings. Every one captured a 5 minute moment with which I spent somehow pursuing Him, my Lord. He looked at me as if ready to burst with excitement and said, "I sincerely relish every possible moment with you. Oh, how I love you. I just don't know if you'll ever really know."

I awoke quietly that night with my head resting comfortably into my favorite pillow. The image of the collage and His response to it remained fresh in my mind for hours. I finally fell asleep again feeling refreshed and renewed with a single thought lingering, I can't wait to meet with You tomorrow. Sometime during the night's peaceful rest I drifted toward the edged of my slumber for just a moment when I heard myself say, "My next gift is going to need a big bow."

—Bryon Obenour
Springfield, Missouri



THE ORIGINAL DESIGNER

Like a paint-and-body man, God repairs the wreck we make of our lives.

My father was the best paint-and-body man I knew. No wreck was too big for him to fix. I always marveled at the way he repaired a demolished vehicle. Meticulously, he hammered and shaped the metal back to the exact specifications of the original designer.

The painting process was the most tedious and time-consuming part of restoring the cars to their former brilliance. Layer upon layer of fiberglass, putty, and primer had to be applied to the specific areas of damage. The paint had to be measured and mixed with specificity. Each coat of paint had to be sprayed on with precision, then rubbed and polished to perfection.

In the same way, God is repairing and restoring the wreck I've made of my life. He is hammering, shap-

ing, and polishing me into the image of His Son so that I can reflect His glory. The trials I face daily, like layers upon layers of fiberglass, are repairing and restoring the damage that keeps me from fulfilling His purpose.

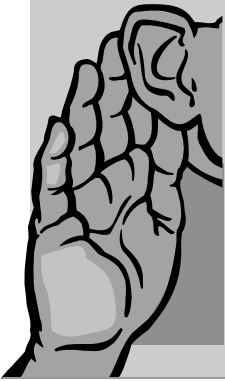
The Bible, like the putty that fills the holes, fills my heart and mind with truth. The truth sets me free from the compromising lies that keep me bound to a life of sin, separated from God's blessings.

Sometimes I wonder why God allows me to suffer and my prayers seem to go unanswered. However, as time passes, the plight of my affliction begins to unravel, and I understand the purpose of my anguish.

(Continued on page 2)

LET'S HEAR FROM YOU...

BELIEVE



In times of darkness,
In times of despair,
If my belief runs true,
Jesus, my Lord, will come,
Jesus, my Lord, will come to see me through.

In times of darkness,
In times of despair,
If my belief runs true,
Jesus, my Lord, will have someone come,
Jesus, my Lord, will have someone come to see me through.

—Carl Marsh, inmate
Monroe, TX

MAY YOU

May you live a long life full of gladness and health,
With a pocket of gold as the least of your wealth.
May the dreams you hold dearest be those which come true,
And the kindness you spread keep returning to you.
May the friendships you make be those which endure,
And all of your grey clouds be small ones for sure.
And trusting in Him to Whom we all pray,
May a song fill your heart every step of the way.

—Kenneth Gardner
Bowling Green, FL

*We love hearing from you and so do our readers. Please send your articles, poems, praise reports, testimonies, etc..., to **The Red Thread, Crimson House Ministries, 1616 North Robberson, Springfield, MO, 65803.***

(Continued from page 1)

It's a process, like the painting process. It takes time to mold me and remake me into the kind of man He can use. Before that can happen, He has to get rid of the pride and the selfish attitudes that keep me from being the best I can be. I frequently forget Who is in control of the rebuilding process. Fortunately, He repeatedly reminds me.

His specifications are precise; they tell me He has a purpose and a plan for my life. In spite of the circumstances, He says, "Trust Me." His plan will paint my life with joy when I seek to serve and obey Him. Nothing and no one can prevent God's plan from being fulfilled in my life except my decision to give up on that plan.

When I took a good look at myself, I realized a lot of my problems were my own fault. The things I wanted only brought temporary satisfaction, while the Original Designer's methods bring everlasting achievements.

We pay a high price for the choices we make in this life. Yet, when we follow His instructions and let the manual He provides pave the way, the mixtures it produces, like fresh paint, will restore the original beauty.

I don't understand why the Original Designer allows tragedies to happen and why good people sometimes suffer from bad things. What I must ask myself is: Do I trust Him with the unseen and unknowable things that happen in my life and the world around me? Am I allowing Him to hammer and shape my life, or am I hindering the process? Do my praises flow like sweet perfume, thanking Him in spite of circumstances? Or is my heart filled with complaints?

I can say with total honesty that I have found true freedom in the only place it can be found—Jesus Christ. He set me free from the things that wrecked my life and caused me to crash and fall flat on my face. He set me free to find meaning and purpose in serving and obeying Him.

—Roy Borges, inmate
Chipley, FL

PASTOR'S DEVOTION

For the next ten days (see *Between Times*, page 1, column 1) we will be reading, meditating, and praying David's first Psalm of deliverance. While the shepherd king wrote this song on the day the Lord rescued him from all of his enemies, we will sing this Psalm in faith believing the Lord will destroy our enemies in the days ahead!

As you familiarize yourself with the Psalm's divisions and themes, it is very interesting to note that David, though king (cf. v. 50) keeps perspective by describing himself as "the servant of the Lord" (v. 1).

Regardless of our life's stature or place, we must always maintain our perspective and position as bond slaves to the King of Kings. The New Testament apostles Paul, John, Peter, and epistle writers James and Jude all list themselves as "servants" even though the first three were personally called by the Lord and the latter shared the same mother. Thus neither position nor natural bloodline superseded their main vocation as servants.

In defining "slave" Thayer writes, "devoted to another to the disregard of one's own interests." As the Holy Spirit reveals in the coming days those influences around us who try and attach themselves to any of our carnal interests—those interests we need deliverance from—begin this fortnight by praying a consecrated prayer devoting yourself to the Lord.

The *Between Times* passages are designed to be utilized in a *Lectio Divinia* practice. By way of remembrance, *Lectio Divinia* has a suggested 30 minute format: 10 minutes to read the Scripture (aloud if possible); 5 to meditate on it; 10 to pray it; and the final 5 minutes to make personal application. Enjoy your time with our Father!



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