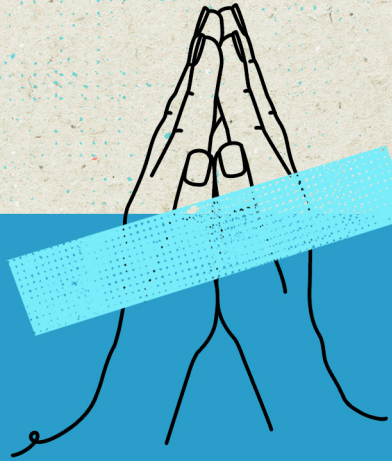




ASK THE
CHRISTIAN
COUNSELOR



I PRAYED AND NOTHING CHANGED

WHAT GOD IS UP TO
IN THE SILENCE

STE CASEY

“Honest about struggle, unafraid of tough questions, realistic about life’s challenges, and yet hope-saturated, Ste Casey fights to help us see more of Christ, even when we feel like he’s silent.”

Amy Smith, Resource writer; podcast host, *Faith in Kids*

“Here is strong encouragement for when we experience that most heartbreaking of issues—seemingly unanswered prayer—from someone who knows this experience very well. I wish I had read this before tragedy struck in my life and God didn’t answer my desperate prayers in the way I wanted.”

Marcus Honeysett, Director, Living Leadership; author of *Powerful Leaders: When Church Leadership Goes Wrong and How to Prevent It*

“It seems so unnatural and unfair to us to embrace weakness and sit in suffering, trying to believe that God is hearing you and doing something in the silence of unanswered prayer. However, in this book, Ste wonderfully shows us through personal experience and biblical rigor that God is working in the waiting—he is giving grace in the suffering and he is strength in our weakness. A wonderful, thoughtful, and hopeful book for all who pray and feel like nothing is changing.”

Steve Robinson, Senior Pastor, Cornerstone Church, Liverpool, UK; director, Cornerstone Collective; dean, Grimké Europe; author of *Serve: Loving Your Church with Your Heart, Time, and Gifts*

“This book deals with a vital but overlooked topic. Drawing on his years of pastoral experience, his own story of suffering, and the apostle Paul’s account of his thorn in the flesh, Ste has given us a wise, warm, and easy-to-read resource that transforms our perspective and turns lives around. I am so glad I read it and I want others to do the same.”

Andy Robinson, Training Director, Living Out; training director, South Central Gospel Partnership, UK; former pastor

“In this succinct but powerful book, longtime pastor Ste Casey tackles head-on the experience of disorientation and disillusionment we often face in the wake of persistently unanswered

prayer. What is God up to amid our weakness and waiting? Written with pastoral warmth and rich biblical insight, *I Prayed and Nothing Changed* points the reader repeatedly toward the sufficient grace of Jesus Christ at work transforming us in our darkest and most hopeless places.”

Michael R. Emler, Faculty and Counselor, Christian Counseling & Educational Foundation (CCEF); author of *Saints, Sufferers, and Sinners: Loving Others as God Loves Us*

“In the agonizing experience of unanswered prayer, we long for a wise and compassionate companion to walk with us. Filled with honesty, drenched in grace, and so powerfully personal, this book is that companion. It will be a blessing to many, particularly because in regard to unanswered prayer, Ste Casey is not just a faithful guide but also a fellow traveler.”

Steve Midgley, Executive Director, Biblical Counselling UK

“This book is powerful and practical, making a very helpful contribution to a common human experience. Ste helps us to see what we don’t always want to see about who God is and what he is up to when it seems as though he is doing nothing. This book is gritty, honest, and relentlessly practical. I highly recommend it.”

Peter Sondergeld, Lead Pastor, Restoration Church, Too-woomba, Australia; pastoral and counseling supervisor; author of *Becoming You: Becoming the Person God Made You to Be*

“This precious book answers an often-asked question, but it does so much more than that. Ste draws us into the kind, loving, sovereign heart of a heavenly Father, a selfless Savior, and an all-able Spirit. He grounds this counsel deeply in Scripture and connects it to the messiness of life that we all see and feel. I’m better off for reading it—better in myself and better equipped to serve others who are telling me, ‘I prayed and nothing changed.’”

Adrian Reynolds, Pastor and Head of National Ministries, Fellowship of Independent Evangelical Churches, UK; author

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Ste Casey



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*For my younger brother, Andrew,
for whom we prayed and nothing changed.
We miss you.*

*To my six precious daughters:
when you are weak, then you will be strong.*

CONTENTS

Chapter 1: He Works.....	1
Chapter 2: He Keeps	19
Chapter 3: He Gives.....	34
Chapter 4: He Hears.....	52
Chapter 5: He Speaks	66
Chapter 6: He Supplies	85
Chapter 7: He Abides	101
Chapter 8: I Prayed and Everything Changed	117
Acknowledgments.....	131
Endnotes	134

Chapter 1

HE WORKS

“**G**od is a distant stranger to me right now,” Derek said as he wiped a tear from his face. His assessment of his relationship with God came after a long discussion of what was troubling him. A likable young man in his twenties, Derek was struggling. He remembered a time when the motivation for simple tasks was easy and enjoying church and worshipping Christ came naturally.

But since facing the big disappointment of a relationship ending suddenly, he didn't feel able to apply himself to anything. The life he had hoped for was slipping away before his eyes, and the God he had trusted seemed asleep at the wheel. My heart went out to him as I saw the confusion and sadness that were wearing him down. He didn't want to feel so spiritually forsaken. Yet here he was, facing unwanted circumstances and hurts that were crowding out any sense of the Lord's goodness and grace. Hearing the name of Jesus, rather than lighting him up and lifting his burdens, left him feeling dejected, forgotten, and guilty.

As he finished explaining his struggles, I offered to pray that the Lord might help him find a breakthrough.

It's an instinctive and loving thing to do—to expect in faith that the Lord will be present and working, even at the bleakest times. After all, Christ came into the world to seek and to save the lost. We all come into his kingdom when we are most aware of our need of the Savior. He meets us with grace, working behind the scenes with mysterious providence, preparing our hearts to accept his personal grace toward us.

But I'll never forget the look on Derek's face and the change in his posture when I offered to pray. His shoulders dropped and, with disappointment written all over his face, he simply said, "I've prayed and nothing changed." A strange mix of despair, confusion, resentment, and dying hope were heavy upon us both in that moment. Circumstances had come upon him and experiences had marked him, jolting him into a painful awareness of his weakness and producing an unwanted, soul-unsettling state of intense vulnerability. Yet when he cried out for relief, help, anything—silence. It only compounded his pain.

You know how he feels, don't you? While you might not have said it to me, you've probably felt something similar, haven't you? You've been at that point where something you were desperately wanting—urgently pursuing—is slipping away from you or is not coming into your life. Something precious—a relationship, your health, the health of a loved one, a career, a dream—is slipping away. Everything is falling apart. You can't see the future, and you've said, "Lord, I do love you, but if you're going to show up, now is the time to do it." You prayed and you prayed, and you prayed and you prayed. You said, "Lord, I'll do anything; just change this."

A week goes by, a month goes by, and a year goes by . . . still nothing seems to change.

A few months ago, I had a very honest conversation with a pastor friend. He'd been through some very difficult circumstances, and more stuff was coming at him—trouble that had been brewing for years. I asked, "How is this seemingly unchangeable struggle, which seems to be getting worse, affecting you spiritually?" He said, "Ste, I never thought I would say this, but it's affecting my ability to pray about everything." He didn't want to stay hopeless, but his experiences and the lack of answers were doing something between him and the living God. He didn't like it!

I've spoken with countless people recently who are wondering whether the change they desperately want will ever come. A mother desperately praying for a change in the diagnosis of her terminally ill son. A teenager passionately praying that fickle friends won't leave him sitting alone during his lunch break again. An exhausted wife earnestly praying that the Lord would save her marriage. An addict praying for release from the slavery of needing just one more. A husband pleading for the soul of his unconverted wife. A depressed retiree longing that the Lord would restore to him the joy of his salvation. So often the change we think we need, so clearly defined in our mind, so reasonable a thing to ask, seems far away from us. It hurts, it leaves us with questions, and we wonder whether God cares. Why won't he give us the change that we seek and feel we need?

Have you ever been there? I suspect you have. It's a strange double sorrow. Not only have you not received the change that would deliver you to a better place, but

also you feel let down, even abandoned, by the living God. If this is your present reality, I realize how painful the encouragement to reach out again in faith and hope might be to you.

Perhaps you can identify with the brutally honest words of C. S. Lewis as he reflected on the emotional roller coaster he and his wife Joy experienced, as they tried to face her cancer diagnosis with faith and hope.

What chokes every prayer and every hope is the memory of all the prayers offered and all the false hopes we had. Not hopes raised merely by our own wishful thinking, hopes encouraged, even forced upon us, by false diagnosis, by X-ray photographs, by strange remissions, by one temporary recovery that might have ranked as a miracle. Step by step we were led up the garden path. Time after time, when He seemed most gracious, He was really preparing for the next torture.¹

When we open Scripture, we find that C. S. Lewis was not alone in experiencing intense periods of loss and questioning. This experience is echoed and amplified throughout the Bible. Wow, God is even admitting to us that unanswered prayer is a real thing!

- We all know the tragedy and atrocities that overwhelmed and crushed Job. He spent days pouring out his complaint, in desperate faith, seeking understanding and renewed hope in the Lord. But he never got the change or answers he longed for.
- The psalms, where we process the best and worst realities of life before the covenant-keeping God,

are jam-packed with rich, joyful communion with God. Yet, as Tim Keller points out, “There are, however, even more psalms of complaint, cries for help, and calls for God to exercise his power in the world. There are also stark expressions of the experience that God is absent.”²

- Of course there’s the most famous unanswered prayer, coming from the lips of the Lord Jesus Christ himself, as he knelt in Gethsemane crying out to his Father that the horrors awaiting him would pass from him—asking if there was some other way (Matthew 26:39, 42). Three times (Mark 14:35–41) the agonizing plea was sent heavenward to his Father, the same Father who had earlier in the Gospel declared, “This is my Son, whom I love” (Matthew 3:17; 17:5; Mark 1:11). Yet, on first glance, it would seem that God the Son himself knows what it means to pray and find heaven unyielding.
- And then there is the pleading of Paul that the thorn in his flesh would be removed. Rather than the answer he wanted, he got the exact opposite. The thorn remained, ensuring that he walked with a limp for the rest of his life.

Scripture speaks with vivid, personal stories that, on first glance, appear to offer us nothing more than the conclusion that the living God has sold us fake news about himself. Rather than being gracious and powerful, he is unwilling or incapable of answering our prayers. End of story. God is not working.

Sadly, that was the sentiment of my friend Derek. When he uttered the words, “I prayed but nothing

changed,” it was more than a statement of fact; it was a disappointment-laden declaration about the character and power of God. He isn’t powerful, he isn’t present, and he can’t be trusted with the precious things of my life. End of story; God is not working. But is that really the case?

PAIN AND DISAPPOINTMENT NARROW OUR GAZE AND SHRINK OUR WORLD

On a recent vacation, traveling through the French Alps, my usually tech-addicted daughters had all in unison laid down their devices in order to squash their faces against the minivan windows to catch a glimpse of the staggering vista that was opening up before them as we descended the mountain pass. Audible gasps, followed by cries of “Look at that, Daddy, it’s beautiful” and “You’ve got to see this” filled the car. They were caught up with a vision of the grandeur and awe-inspiring beauty that surrounded them. But not me. I didn’t have the capacity to focus on anything other than the terrifying problem that had unexpectedly become an urgent concern.

The steering wheel in my hands was beginning to shake violently with each attempt to turn at the next steep hairpin bend. With ten more miles of steep winding descents ahead of us, it seemed that the brakes were overheating and failing fast! As adrenaline kicked in, my mind could focus on nothing but the problem. Minutes earlier I had been planning our next stop, thinking about what we would be doing the next day. That was gone. Moments earlier I had been joining the girls in enjoying the beauty of what surrounded us. That was gone. The only things I could see, think about, and feel were the calamity coming at us around the next bend, my powerlessness in the midst

of our current situation, and the near impossibility of surviving the next few minutes.

Given that you are now reading my account of our journey, it goes without saying that we made it through and got the mechanical assistance we needed to continue safely. Though I could bore you with the details, I would rather let you in on what I have reflected upon many times since that experience—that unwanted and intrusive circumstances have a way of so hijacking our attention, emotions, and focus that the larger vista gets crowded out. When we struggle with unanswered prayer, it's easy to become so preoccupied with what God isn't changing that we lose connection with the gracious ways he is present and powerfully at work in those unwanted and painful seasons in life.

Pain and disappointment have the ability to narrow our gaze and shrink our world to the size of what's bothering or interrupting us the most. In our weakness, we're blinded to anything other than relief. Fixing what is wrong so dominates our thinking that we are prone to miss what's right in front of us, especially the often intangible realities of the always-present grace of God. It is in him that we live and move and have our being (Acts 17:28). He is the biggest player in any given moment, yet he drops out of our spectrum of vision. This is not to minimize the duration or intensity of your struggle but simply to point out that when our bandwidth is jammed up with merely getting through the day, it can be difficult to see the bigger story that will actually help us get through the day.

Author and pastor Jason Meyer presses this even further when he contends that the Christian life is primarily

a fight for sight—a fight to be able to see beyond the current moment and all the questions it brings to a God who is bigger and doing bigger things than we can often see. He says, “We lose heart when we buy into the lie that our difficulties are bigger than God; we lose the fight for sight when we fail to see God correctly. When perception and reality don’t align properly, it is easy to become discouraged.”³

If Meyer is right, and I think he is, then that changes the way that we face the moments when it seems that our prayers are not changing anything, that it is the end of the story, and that God isn’t working.

Think about how Meyer’s perspective causes us to reconsider again each of the scriptural examples of unanswered prayers. On first glance, regardless of the specific person involved—Job, the psalmist, Paul, or even Christ himself—and taken in isolation from the story that they were a part of, they seem hopeless. Yet not only was it by no means the end of the story for any of these praying people, but also it was a hugely significant part of the story. Even saying that isn’t quite strong enough or shocking enough. The experience of “I prayed and nothing changed,” as unsettling and unwanted as it seems to be, is a vital part of the Lord’s dealings with his people. It brings discoveries of grace and mighty revelations of God’s goodness to his people.

FIGHTING FOR SIGHT

Outrageous as it may sound, we need to consider the possibility that unanswered prayer, and our experiences of it, may be a vital part of God’s gracious dealings with

us—even a doorway to some new experience of his grace and glory. Yes, it's shocking and terrifying, I know.

For that reason, as Derek dwelt in despair, I was cautiously smiling on the inside. Not with some sadistic glee at his misery, but because I could see that rather than this being the breaking of him and his faith, in the organized plan of a gracious God who meets us in the middle of all our struggles to redeem and renew, things were about to get exciting. My task was to walk with him to help him lean into the Lord as he experienced all the things the Lord *was* doing at a time when it seemed like the Lord was doing nothing. This was going to be a fight for sight—a fight to see that while he was waiting, God was working.

Unsurprisingly, Derek was going to take some convincing. Perhaps you know how he feels. Could there be a place in Scripture where one of the Lord's people was so assailed by a life-dominating loss and weakness, which was casting a dark shadow over every moment and every future possibility, that he despaired even of life? Could it be that he pleaded and pleaded for it to be removed, yet nothing changed? And could it be that as he looked back upon the experience, even boasting about it to others, rather than it breaking him, through the Lord's grace it was making him? Well, there is such a story. And this will be our focus as we fight for sight to see things the Lord is doing at the moments we most fear he isn't doing anything.

Therefore, in order to keep me from becoming conceited, I was given a thorn in my flesh, a

messenger of Satan, to torment me. Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me. But he said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.” Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ’s power may rest on me. That is why, for Christ’s sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong. (2 Corinthians 12:7–10)

The second letter to the Corinthians is the most personal of Paul’s writings, and, for me, the most difficult to come to terms with. I’m glad I’m not alone in thinking this. A pastor recently whispered to me in hushed tones that of all the books of the Bible, it was the one he least wanted to believe and follow. It is where all the seeming paradoxes of Scripture are concentrated and let loose. We learn from Paul that in the kingdom of the crucified and risen Lord, surrender is success, weakness is strength, and humility is greatness. There is no joy without pain, no victory without wounds, and no wealth without loss. It is where the great apostle, who wrote one-third of the New Testament and was arguably used more for the cause of Christ than anyone else in history, is the most honest about his weaknesses and frailty. It’s not easy reading, particularly for someone like me who is highly committed to having a self-sufficient and comfortable life.

Paul shares, with brutal honesty, his struggles. He talks about how he prayed three times. We’re not talking about once at breakfast, once at lunchtime, and once at dinner. No, we’re talking about a prolonged period of

time because of agony that has lasted fourteen years. That word he uses, “thorn,” is closer in meaning to “spike” or “javelin.” It is something that was so excruciating and so debilitated his life that he wasn’t sure whether he could go on. It pierced deeper than his body, into his very sense of who he was, how he was going to live, and what he was going to face. Day after day it weighed him down. It wore him out. It exposed his limits. It literally crippled him. It affected him physically, emotionally, and spiritually.

People have debated for centuries what this “thorn” was. We don’t know exactly what it was, but we do know that it floored him. Christians throughout church history have taken up and used the motif of a thorn in the flesh to put words on circumstances and situations that have afflicted them and exposed limited prospects of overcoming these situations. We do know for sure that it made Paul weak. This is the great apostle! He prayed and he pleaded, and I wonder whether his heart sank, like Derek’s, when it happened for a second prolonged period. I wonder whether he began to ask questions like “Is the Lord really good? I’m working for you here, Lord; if you fixed this one thing, I would be able to serve you better . . .”

Yet, as he recounts these struggles to the comfortable and power-obsessed new believers in Corinth, what echoes even more loudly is an unshakable confidence in the work of God for his people in, and through, regular disappointment and pain.

THE PROMISE OF ALL GOD’S WORKING

More than thirty years ago, freshly having come to know Christ as my Lord and Savior, I learned my first Bible

verse. In it the apostle Paul speaks of the magnitude of a change that the living God is working in his people: “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!” (2 Corinthians 5:17). Paul wanted to reinforce to the church in Corinth that God’s redeeming love in Christ changes everything.

Paul’s own story demonstrates this. Raised in an intensely religious tradition, he used the name of God, while in reality he worshipped at the altar of strength and self-righteousness. As he traded on the name of the living God without actually knowing him, Paul made himself an enemy of God. Paul’s pride and spiritual presumption led him to rationalize all kinds of cruelty to Christians, leaving Paul feeling smug in his self-sufficiency and worshipping at the altar of his own importance. It was spiritual treason of the highest order that left him, however ignorant, dead in his sins.

But because of God’s great mercy, Paul was literally stopped in his tracks. Three times in the book of Acts the story is recorded. The living God invaded his life with the person of Christ, who had paid the penalty for his treasonous sin, and broke the power of death at work within him. Paul was a new creation “in Christ.” He had a new identity—as God’s child—that trumped all others. He had a new purpose—to live to the glory of the God who had called him. He had a new command—to give himself away for the sake of others being brought to Christ for the glory of Jesus’s name amongst the nations. He was a new creation—all God’s doing and all a gift of grace. All of this was achieved not by the worth of Paul but in the life, death, and resurrection of the Redeemer Jesus Christ on Paul’s behalf to the glory of God. Or in the words of Paul

in 2 Corinthians, “All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ . . . not counting people’s sins against them” (2 Corinthians 5:18–19).

When Paul entered the Christian life, he came with nothing, he came needy, and he came helpless in need of grace. This is the only way any of us can receive grace. God gives his redemption to those who are willing to admit they need it. This is the gospel hope that Christians bet their lives upon.

But the grace was not over; the grace continued through the process of God working to make Paul into what he was already in Christ. This is the difference between being and becoming. What Paul now was (being)—by the grace of Christ a new creation—the Lord promises to work out in Paul’s life (becoming). Jerry Sittser explains this better than I can:

Redemption promises to transform us—completely so. Once broken, we become whole again; once selfish and insecure, we become stately and serene and self-giving; once rabid sinners, we become glorious saints. In short, God purposes to claim us as his own—no matter how far we are from him, how fallen into sin, how lost and lonely. He wants to restore us to right relationship with him and to remake us according to the image of Jesus Christ, which will ultimately lead to the renewal of the whole world.⁴

What a vision—a Redeemer for everyone who will come! This is the promised work of redemption that the Lord was tirelessly accomplishing in the life of Paul. Paul’s

part was to trust and receive, to believe and pray, as his redemption and renewing played out in his life.

THE PROCESS OF ALL GOD'S WORKING

More than thirty years after first memorizing that verse, I am beginning to come to terms with what it really means for me to be going through a redemption process. I remember praying that verse, asking that the Lord would work out the fullness of its promise in me. Maybe you have prayed similar Bible verses for personal change and usefulness in the service of King Jesus. You too have longed to get from A to B, if A is a new creation in Christ, and B is the full-grown version of it. But I hadn't grasped the discomfort of the journey from A to B. It is a long journey of walking with the Lord, sometimes on the mountaintops, but often through dark valleys. That process is littered with pain. I want the fullness of the promise—I want the payoff—but fight him all the way on the process. So many of my prayers are pleas that the Lord would deliver me from the process. “Lord, give me relief from this thing that you are doing in my life! Change this now!” Yet the process is the whole point.

Though I may be surprised that pain and struggle are part of his process, the apostle doesn't seem to be at all.

We do not want you to be uninformed, brothers and sisters, about the troubles we experienced in the province of Asia. We were under great pressure, far beyond our ability to endure, so that we despaired of life itself. Indeed, we felt we had received the sentence of death. But this happened

that we might not rely on ourselves but on God,
who raises the dead. (2 Corinthians 1:8–9)

We rightly see a horrifying diagnosis, a debilitating accident, a wayward and self-destructive child, or a relationship going south as a terrible affliction or obstacle, but in God's hands these things are another occasion to enjoy deeper fellowship with and dependence upon him. If redemption promises personal happiness or the good life as we imagine it to be, then we have a right to be angry and disappointed with God, for he will have failed us. But redemption promises a new heart and holiness, which are much more enduring than worldly happiness.

His redemptive work is not just to rescue us *from* something, but to rescue us *to* himself. As C. S. Lewis observed,

God designed the human machine to run on himself. He himself is the fuel our spirits were designed to burn, or food our spirits were designed to feed on. . . . God cannot give us happiness and peace apart from Himself, because it is not there. There is no such thing.⁵

My tendency, because of my love of ease and my sick heart, is to fight God all the way on this. But as life comes at Paul and flattens him, he sees it not as an assault of a callous and indifferent God, but as a time of expectancy. While he is waiting, the Lord is working. Paul expects that the Lord will be working, and has already been working, for a deliverance within him greater than he could ever imagine—a moment to refocus his hope

on the redemption that was being worked out for him by the Lord.

Today, I worked with a rake on my lawn. It would have been easier to leave it alone, given the mess that it makes and the distress that it causes to the grass. Yet, I do it because I know what unseen terrors are hiding below the surface seeking to sap away its life. I'm talking about weeds. Though I may be tempted to rip the lawn out and replace it with artificial grass, I instead chose to work patiently, often gently and sometimes with more vigor, to rid my lawn of all that would rob it of life and steal its intended glory. As I labored, it occurred to me that my heart is much like that lawn. My sinful tendencies toward self-sufficiency and self-righteousness run deep, robbing me of the life Jesus has won for me and the glory that is due to him. My heart needs a gardener to work it—patiently, often gently, but on occasion in such a fashion as to force a showdown with the sinful weeds that dwell inside of me. The promise of his work is that I will be remade into the image of Jesus by his Father the gardener (John 15:1–4). To this end he works, personally and patiently. But on occasion the process might require some raking.

Even as I type that, I feel terribly torn. I love the promise, but everything within me recoils from the process. Perhaps that reveals how much I find the precious words of the Lord to Paul in his time of need so difficult to truly believe for myself: “My grace is sufficient for you.” So tender and monumental, yet just not what I want to hear. When you feel stuck and alone in the process, the promise feels far away and, dare I say it, even unimportant.

But the high point of faith for your soul, when it struggles, will be to cling by the tips of your fingers to that hope—hope that your unanswered prayers, rather than being the end of the story, are a vital part of the story that the Lord is working in your life. As I once again invited Derek to turn with me toward this active God in prayer, I knew that the invitation wouldn't answer all his questions or solve all his problems. The pain, doubt, struggle, and temptation to unbelief would not disappear in an instant, but his prayer would be a fight for sight—to see past the current pain and disappointment to One who was present and working. In vulnerability, could he risk shifting the focus of his prayer from a prayer for doing or getting to something much closer to his Father's heart—a prayer for being and becoming?

I'd like to invite you to do the same as we journey with the apostle through his own personal experience of "I prayed but nothing changed." Perhaps right now you can see nothing but darkness and feel nothing but despair. Behind the veil of sorrow and confusion, through the experience of waiting, there is a God of sufficient grace. Will you ask him for sight, not mere understanding, but to see him in a way that changes your heart in the midst of your struggle? An enormous shift in a soul can happen in an instant as you stand in his presence. Rather than measuring God's faithfulness and grace by what he does for you, you begin to cherish what he is doing in you. Through his Son he is available to you right now. It is certainly true that while you are waiting, he is working. But he is also waiting, waiting for you to come to him for grace for today.

A DAILY PRAYER FOR SIGHT

Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, I confess that your grace doesn't feel sufficient for me today. My sight, my mind, and my eyes are clouded by my troubles. I'm worn down with all the unanswered prayers. Would you do what I can't do, and give me grace to sustain me and those I love this day? Would you give me eyes to see even a glimpse of what you are doing in the midst of my disappointment and powerlessness? I want to believe that while I am waiting, you are working, even if I can't see it right now. Teach me to pray and to not lose heart. I ask these things in Jesus's name. Amen.