

January—April 2026



Day by Day with God

Rooting women's lives in the Bible

FEATURING SANDRA WHEATLEY, GEORGIE TENNANT AND LYNDALL BYWATER

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Rooting women's lives in the Bible



Ministries



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Day by Day with God

Edited by **Jackie Harris**

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Welcome



It hardly seems a year since I introduced the first issue of 2025, and yet here we are at the beginning of another year! So much has happened in between – things we could never have imagined – and what lies ahead is unknown and unpredictable. How wonderful to know that we don't face the future alone. We can know God with us as we walk in faith and daily prayer.

We hope that these notes will help you to focus on the one who holds all things in his hands – indeed, one of our themes in this issue is all about time and what it means to entrust our times to God. We begin by thinking about what we might need to let go of in 2026, then we turn our attention to prayer before digging into Haggai's prophecy of hope for the future.

In February we focus on knowing God's love and the aforementioned study on time. We begin March with a detailed study on Isaiah 43, explore what the Bible says about tears and learn how to recognise idols in our lives. As we move into April, we consider what Jesus' description of himself as 'gentle and lowly' means for us, before reminding ourselves of how God transformed the lives of some familiar Old Testament characters. We end this issue with a study of Galatians and how we can avoid falling into the trap that was hampering the growth of the early church. This study is written by Georgie Tennant, a new contributor to *Day by Day with God*. Georgie won *The Upper Room* writing competition in 2023–24 run by BRF Ministries and says she loves writing, especially devotional articles and studies.

As I have read through this issue, I've found it fascinating to see how two or three of the same Bible passages are used in different studies. It's a reminder of how rich God's word is and how the same passage can keep revealing new truths to us.

Do let us know what you find helpful as this will guide our future planning, and please recommend *Day by Day with God* to your friends. It's lovely to hear that many people discover the notes through friends suggesting them, passing on a copy or giving them as gifts.

Let's be ready to share the hope we have and to step boldly into 2026, trusting that when God is with us, circumstances become opportunities.

Jackie

Jackie Harris, Editor

What the Bible says about tears



Jenny Sanders writes...

One day, when I was about six or seven years old, the happy thought came to me: 'I don't think I've cried at all today.' Tears must have featured regularly for me to have felt the lack of them so profoundly. Maybe I was a cry-baby; as the youngest of three, I was regularly thwarted trying to keep up with my sisters, so crying was an effective way to express my frustration.

Why do we cry? What's the point of tears?

Science says we have three different types of tears: basal tears, reflex tears and emotional tears. The water/salt fluid comes from lacrimal glands above our eyes, and the oily part from the meibomian glands along our eyelash line. Blinking washes the solution across our eye, helping lubricate it, healing any damage on the surface and ensuring that light refracts correctly so we can see clearly. Tears drain away down our tear ducts. So far, so scientific; but tears do more than serve a physiological purpose.

Tears can be cathartic, signifying grief, fear, guilt, anger or shame. Tears can be an expression of joy and happiness, of attachment and overwhelm, of compassion and a broken heart, or of conviction – as the Holy Spirit speaks to us – and repentance. They can come out of deep prayer from our heart (intercession). Tears can be healing, since they contain both oxytocin and endorphins – feel-good chemicals that ease physical and emotional pain, bringing us a sense of calm. However, tears can also be self-indulgent, sentimental or manipulative; a reaction to not getting our own way. Tears can be many things, but they are God-given – an expression of the heart.

Matthew 5:4 promises that we will be comforted in mourning and grief. Ecclesiastes 3:4 tells us that there is 'a time to weep and a time to laugh, a time to mourn and a time to dance' (NIV). We can simultaneously feel strong yet opposing emotions, which is exhausting. I lost a dear friend recently, yet amid weeping I found myself laughing as I remembered some of her amusing character traits.

Why do we feel embarrassed by our tears? In the west, crying in public is frowned on, yet we live in a world where God allows us to weep. Sometimes crying is highly appropriate. Over the next fortnight, we're going to explore this topic and connect with some biblical characters who were very familiar with tears. Trust me, it won't be miserable!

God sees our tears

As she sat there, she began to sob. God heard the boy crying, and the angel of God called to Hagar from heaven and said to her, 'What is the matter, Hagar? Do not be afraid; God has heard the boy crying as he lies there.' (vv. 16-17, NIV)

Have you ever been so overwhelmed that you've literally lain down and cried? Not a few leaked tears trickling down your cheeks, but earth-shattering, body-shuddering, breath-stopping sobbing? I hope not, but you won't be alone if you have. Life can strike some bitter blows.

When things seem dark, desperate and hopeless, it's natural to feel overwhelmed. Our bodies can flood with adrenaline and the emotional part of our brain (limbic) overrides the analytical, logical, interpretive part (the frontal cortex), leaving us feeling foggy and struggling to join our thoughts up to make any sense. Tears can serve as a pressure valve in stressful moments, a way to clean up and process our experience.

For Hagar, whom Abram's wife Sarai had volunteered as a surrogate, life as she knew it had ground to a halt. Far from being the answer to the old couple's problem, once Isaac – the child of promise – was born, she and her son became inconvenient irritants to her mistress. Eventually Sarai demanded that Hagar be banished from the family. She was sent off into the desert with Ishmael and with limited supplies for their survival.

Her situation was pitiful. Hagar's tears were probably a mix of desperation and frustrated despair; a reaction to the injustice and ignominy of her drastic change of circumstances. With no solution on her limited horizon, she assumed that they would both die in the wilderness.

However, God saw her as he had once before (Genesis 16:15), heard her son crying and responded to them, supplying their needs and leading them on into his promises (16:12; 21:18). Ishmael's name means 'God hears' – a permanent reminder of God's kindness.

In the same way, God not only sees our tears but also comes to wipe them away and bring us hope.

Loving heavenly Father, thank you that you don't just observe my tears from afar; you come close and bring your kindness and consolation to me in the midst of sorrow. Help me to be aware of your closeness today. Amen.

JENNY SANDERS

Message in a bottle

You keep track of all my sorrows. You have collected all my tears in your bottle. You have recorded each one in your book. (Psalm 56:8, NLT)

I wonder what prompted King David to write Psalm 6. It's a mixture of deep sorrow and penitence. Perhaps it's an expression of heartbreak over his son Absalom's treachery and death (2 Samuel 15–18) or his own sin with Bathsheba (2 Samuel 11). Either way, his heart and mind are so burdened that he feels it even in his bones (v. 2).

In Psalm 56, David asks God for mercy, shoring up his faith by declaring that he will choose to continue to trust God in the face of fear. While he asks God to deal with his enemies, David requests that he 'list my tears on your scroll' (v. 8, NIV) or note them down in a book.

Why would God do that? Here are two possible reasons. I like the image of God collecting and keeping our tears in a bottle (NLT, above). It evokes ship-wrecked Robinson Crusoe sealing a written message in a bottle and hurling it out to sea in the desperate hope that a rescuer will find it and respond. Second, bottles are still used by cooks in the summer months to preserve fruit for use during the long, cold European winters.

God is both our rescuer and our preserver. To keep a record of our tears, or even to store racks of them on metaphorical shelves, is a powerful picture of someone who deems the contents to be special. Because we're precious to God, so are our tears. Honest outpourings of what lies in our hearts carry unquantifiable value to him. Tears carry meaning that words can't always express.

In parallel with knowing how many hairs are on my head (Matthew 10:30), keeping my tears as an act of compassionate remembrance tells me that God is the God of detail and infinite love.

Thank you for the reminder today that you care for me far more deeply than I am usually aware. Thank you for knowing every detail of my life in both sorrow and joy, and for being consistently for me. Amen.

JENNY SANDERS

Esau's tears

See that no one is sexually immoral, or is godless like Esau, who for a single meal sold his inheritance rights as the oldest son. Afterwards, as you know, when he wanted to inherit this blessing, he was rejected. Even though he sought the blessing with tears, he could not change what he had done. (Hebrews 12:16-17, NIV)

The sibling rivalry between twins Esau and Jacob began early. Genesis 25:22 says 'the babies jostled each other' inside Rebekah's womb. We probably sympathise: vastly pregnant and deeply uncomfortable, she brought her pain to God. He told her that, against cultural tradition, her older son would serve the younger. Conflict was inevitable.

The boys were of different appearances and temperaments, but Esau's tears came years later. He made a foolish blunder when he sold his precious birthright to his brother for the price of a bowl of stew. Carelessly casting it off indicated a lack of respect or understanding for his position in the family. Rather than enjoy the long-term, inherent benefits of the first-born son, Esau opted for the short-term pleasure of a quick meal.

Later still, his father Isaac wanted to bless Esau before he passed away. Sneaky Jacob, with help from his mother (who shows us the perils of favouritism), disguised himself as Esau, fooled his father and stole the blessing which was rightfully his brother's (Genesis 27:28-29). When Esau realised the trick, his frustration at this second loss brought him to furious tears (Genesis 27:34-38). Esau despised his inheritance but wanted the blessing. Do we do the same?

As children of God, our birthright includes being part of God's family. We have intrinsic significance, forgiveness, new life, the Holy Spirit inside us and access to all the resources of heaven. What a privilege! But, constantly craving warm feelings from the attention or affirmation of others, personal 'words', material possessions or self-centred priorities, can make us undervalue the lavish kindness of God in what we've already been given. Let's rejoice in his generosity and goodness today.

Lord Jesus, please forgive me for the times I've behaved like Esau. Thank you, Holy Spirit, that I can enjoy both birthright and blessing in my heavenly Father's house each day. Amen.

Tears of loss

‘My face is red with weeping, dark shadows ring my eyes... my eyes pour out tears to God.’ (vv. 16, 20, NIV)

Even in the secular world, Job is the epitome of personal devastation – the man who lost everything, including his health. Only his bitter wife remained, exacerbating his misery with her cruel words (Job 1:9–10). The phrase ‘Job’s comforters’ describes those who fail to show compassion or empathy. Perhaps you’ve met them? Job’s pain was emotional, physical and spiritual, yet he remained aware of God.

Crying for what we’ve lost is the healthy way to navigate grief. God remains in charge, still works all things together for the good of those who love him (Romans 8:28) and so on, but, inevitably, we wrestle with these truths in dark times. They serve as a crucible for growing our spiritual muscle as we choose to lean into God’s promises.

Being told your loved one has gone ‘somewhere better’ may be theologically correct, but in a place of raw pain it can sound hollow. Acknowledging injustice, loss, the breaking up of relationships and deaths that mark the end of a life-chapter is important. The tears we shed are cathartic, an important part of the grieving process. They allow us to honour those people, recognising the impact and place they have had in our lives.

Job experienced spiritual pain too. He was baffled by God’s apparent absence, confused by his suffering and questioned why disaster had come to his door. Appealing to his own integrity, he went through a crisis of faith.

No words could ease this, but the path of sorrow led to an encounter with God that changed Job’s relationship with him from cognitive and distant to personal and real (Job 42:5). Despite never receiving an answer for why any of these tragedies had happened, Job realised that rather than rely on his own track record of integrity, he could have a personal relationship with God.

Father, I am grateful that because of Jesus, I can know you for myself rather than just know about you. Help me to trust you in times of trial as my faith grows and your name is glorified. Amen.

JENNY SANDERS

Tears of heartache

**In her deep anguish Hannah prayed to the Lord, weeping bitterly.
(v. 10, NIV)**

Hannah's grief came not from something that had happened but from something which hadn't happened. The uneasy role of second wife was made more miserable as Peninnah gloated over her own fruitfulness, provoking Hannah with snide remarks and jibes that caused deep hurt. We can understand Hannah's tears.

Consumed with grief over her inability to conceive, Hannah wisely took her sorrow to God in prayer during an annual visit to Shiloh. She wasn't there to make a scene but to express the anguished overflow of her bruised heart. This was an issue between her and God. The agony of it rendered her speechless. While her lips moved, it was Hannah's heart that cried out to God even as her tears fell.

Here is authentic heartache. Hannah's distress before God held nothing back and was thoroughly misinterpreted by Eli, the priest.

I believe that God is looking for authenticity in every part of our lives, whether we're celebrating, sobbing, wrestling through issues, building relationships, filled with regret or flat on our face aching for our circumstances to change. Since we can't hide from God, opening our hearts to him in transparent honesty is the best thing we can do.

What do you grieve for? A parent, a partner, your children, a career, an opportunity? Perhaps the enemy has stolen something from you which has altered your life trajectory. God may not give you the answer you want, but he promises to be with you in the struggle.

Hannah's yearning for a child was answered with baby Samuel, who became one of Israel's greatest prophetic leaders, ushering in the era of monarchy. Bitter rivalry was transformed into something beautiful. Not only that, but Hannah went on to have three more sons and two daughters (1 Samuel 2:21) bringing both comfort and consolation.

Gracious Father, you know me inside out; I can't even hide my thoughts from you. Thank you that you know and care about the things that bother me. Give me courage to always talk to you. Amen.

JENNY SANDERS

Tears of exhaustion

When David and his men reached Ziklag, they found it destroyed by fire and their wives and sons and daughters taken captive. So David and his men wept aloud until they had no strength left to weep. (vv. 3-4, NIV)

There's a backstory here. David and his 600 men had sheltered with Achish, the King of Gath, in Philistine territory for 16 months – respite from being pursued by King Saul. Achish provided the town of Ziklag so they could settle. It was all going smoothly until the Philistines joined together for a military excursion. They objected to David's entourage, fearing a double-cross was afoot and they'd be betrayed in the midst of battle.

Thoroughly fed up, David was ordered to take his men and leave – a humiliating exit. A three-day journey took them home, only to find that the Amalekites had burned Ziklag to the ground and captured all the people: their wives, sons and daughters. A brutal body-blow, so soon after the first disappointment and on top of physical exhaustion, fed into unbridled rage, despair and an outpouring of tears.

David's men were so angry they threatened to stone him. What could he do? Verse 6 says: 'David found strength in the Lord his God.' I once heard this explained as: 'David introduced himself to himself.' Despite feeling completely wrung out, David chose to reconnect, or plug back into, God – his source of strength and hope. He reminded himself of the faithfulness and promises of God and his own calling. While he had no physical or emotional strength left, he spoke truth to his soul.

Consequently, under the guidance of another godly man, David became convinced that God had further plans which didn't end in the ashes of Ziklag. Regrouping his men, they pursued the Amalekites and subsequently rescued every person who had been taken.

Are you overwhelmed by disappointment today? Perhaps you have cried yourself to a place of exhaustion and can see no hope for the future. Like David, take your hurt to God in prayer.

Remind yourself today of the truths God has highlighted. Reflect on his promises again and allow the Holy Spirit to give you strength for the next step. Trust him for the journey, from weeping in the ashes to unshakeable joy.

JENNY SANDERS

The language of lament

My eyes fail from weeping, I am in torment within; my heart is poured out on the ground because my people are destroyed, because children and infants faint in the streets of the city. (Lamentations 2:11, NIV)

Lament features heavily in the Bible. An entire book is given over to this form of sorrow-filled prayer, compiled by Jeremiah ('the weeping prophet') to chronicle the pain and heartbreak of Israel after the Babylonian destruction of Jerusalem in 586BC. Despite prophetic warnings, God's people had consistently refused to listen to his correction and sought their pleasures elsewhere, including in indulging in idol worship. Jeremiah was tasked with the fruitless job of calling them back to God.

Some psalms were written as laments too: personal (e.g. 77, 142) and corporate (e.g. 44, 74, 80); all of them call on God to act. The writers express their heartache for immediate circumstances which are far from those which would please God. There's a sense of mourning and regret; a yearning to return to life lived under God's blessing and protection, whether for an individual or a nation. Reading them, we feel a spiritual heaviness; dismay that things are seriously out of joint with how they were designed to be.

Lament is as relevant as ever. We can usefully incorporate it into our walk with God. Who doesn't feel sorrow when we see the fractured world around us? Our hearts break when we witness the deliberate abandonment of God's ways among people we love and the consequent pain that brings to themselves, as well as to us. There's not a person alive who doesn't want to know real love, joy, peace and affirmation. It grieves us when we see people turn to anything except towards God to find it and then watch their hope shatter in long-term disappointment.

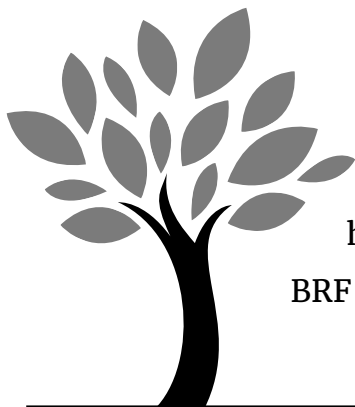
Lament can help us to unburden ourselves; to pray intentionally; to intercede for our world, nation, town and family; and to see circumstances from God's perspective and cry out for his mercy and love.

Hope is the antidote to despair: 'May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit' (Romans 15:13).



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