

Five Days to Steady Your Soul

BY WELL-WATERED WOMEN



Dear Sister,

Most buildings in America aren't built to last forever—a fire, hurricane, tornado, or other natural disaster could easily destroy them. So on a recent trip to Washington, D.C., I was struck by the permanence of the buildings. All the essential government buildings, the national monuments, the White House, and even most of the museums are made of stone. As I walked their white marble corridors, I felt a sense of peace. Many disasters could befall these buildings, and they would still stand firm.

But if you've ever visited Washington, D.C., you know that some important building is always undergoing restoration. The buildings are solid and would be steadfast in a disaster, yet the normal weather patterns and people patterns slowly but surely create wear in the stone. They require regular maintenance. Keeping the buildings and monuments in top condition requires effort. So the government invests regularly in restoring the worn-down areas to keep these valued, essential buildings in their best shape.

So it is with our faith. God and his unchanging Word are firm foundations. But if we want our faith in them to stand firm, especially in the face of change, we must do some regular maintenance. We can't just go to church on Sundays and forget about God the rest of the week and assume our faith will be able to withstand the storms of life. We must place our feet on the solid rock of the Word every day.

But we also must not neglect applying God's Word to our lives. At the end of his Sermon on the Mount, Jesus insists that those who listen to his words but don't do them are foolish, building a house on the sand that can easily be swept away by storms (Matt. 7:26–27). But the wise person both listens to Jesus' words and is changed by them, building a house on the rock that will withstand the disasters that are natural to life on this earth (Matt. 7:24–25). God and his Word are always available as the firm foundation of our faith, but we must not forget to make the effort to place our feet firmly on them every day.

I pray this devotional will help you establish a daily habit of standing firm in faith on the unchanging Word of God. Take time every day to really read each passage of Scripture in the **Firm Foundation** section. Then, cultivate steadfast faith in God's faithfulness with the wisdom shared in the **Stand Firm in Truth** section. Finally, make space to complete the **Hold Fast to Hope** section by answering the application question and practicing the biblical meditation suggested at the end of each entry.

May you sense the peace and safety of your Savior's unfailing love as your heart becomes steadfast in him through every season.

Steadfast in Christ,

Maggie Combs

General Editor of 5 Days to Steady Your Soul

What to Expect from Five Days to Steady Your Soul

- Five days of devotionals to help you cultivate steadfast faith in God's faithfulness
- Daily Scripture readings in the **Firm Foundation** section, encouraging you to spend time in God's Word before diving into the wisdom shared in the **Stand Firm in Truth** section
- A **Hold Fast to Hope** section with daily application questions and prompts to help you practice biblical meditation on Scripture

At the end of five days, we hope you'll find yourself encouraged and you will continue standing firm in faith on the unchanging Word of God.



Day 1 | I am steadfast because God's promises are Yes in Jesus Christ

BY MAGGIE COMBS

FIRM FOUNDATION | 2 CORINTHIANS 1:20-22

For all the promises of God find their Yes in him. That is why it is through him that we utter our Amen to God for his glory. And it is God who establishes us with you in Christ, and has anointed us, and who has also put his seal on us and given us his Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee.

STAND FIRM IN TRUTH

My neighbors cut down several massive trees that lined both their driveway and the road, and every time I drive past, my eyes are drawn to the strange expanse of sky that once was hidden behind their winding branches. It's just like that time I got bangs (a mistake, as always), and for days they were all I could think about. My temples ached with their unusual presence.

Change often steals our focus. The sudden lack of the old or presence of the new draws our attention over and over. Like an errant tongue after a dental procedure, our thoughts keep heading back to the change, and we feel untethered by it. *How did this new thing come about and suddenly set everything about me adrift?*

This constant awareness is uncomfortable. In the face of change, I change into a totally chaotic person. I'm flustered and frightened and frantic because my focus is centered directly on me. I want to be dependable and unflappable. I want to be the source of my own security. I want to be the anchor in the waves. But of course, I'm the opposite of all these things.

The apostle Paul was no stranger to change, especially when it came to his travel plans. A change in travel itinerary is the context for 2 Corinthians 1:18-22, so Paul reminds the Corinthians that despite his inability to visit them when they expected, they can depend on the sovereignty of their unchangeable God.

First, Paul reminds them to focus on the faithfulness of God (v. 18). God's attributes never change because he never changes. He is always limitless, all-powerful, all-knowing, wise, loving, holy, and so much more. And this unchanging God is always present in your life. No matter what monumental or mundane changes happen in your life today, God will not change. No matter how you respond to those changes, God will not change. He is always faithful to his character, to his people, and to his promises.

In verse 20, Paul reminds the Corinthians to focus on their position in Christ. If you are in Christ, not only do you experience God's faithfulness in the form of his steadfast love, but all the promises of God are Yes to you in Jesus Christ. There is no question if these promises apply to you if you are in Christ.

His life, death, and resurrection fulfilled God's prophecies and also purchased your admittance into God's promises. If the changes in your life look bleak or feel like a door slammed shut in your face, remember: God is always saying Yes to you in Jesus Christ.

But if we are to experience God's Yes in Jesus, we must be secure in Jesus. Read verses 21–22 again: “And it is God who establishes us with you in Christ, and has anointed us, and who has also put his seal on us and given us his Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee.” *Established, anointed, sealed, guaranteed.* These are unchangeable things. They aren't dependent upon us. God is the One who establishes us in Christ, and it is the Spirit in our hearts that serves as a guarantee.

God knew that we would need his indwelling Spirit in our hearts. Because left to our own devices and faced with the uncertain, ever-changing circumstances of this broken world, we don't remember the faithfulness of God or the promises that are Yes in Jesus Christ. It is the Holy Spirit that helps us cling to this firm foundation. He teaches our hearts to hold firmly to the truth of the Bible. He reminds us of the work of our Savior on our behalf. He reveals God through his Word. The Spirit uses all our changing circumstances to change us into women who are steadfast—not in our unflappable self-assuredness, but in our steadfast Savior.

But even on the days when you fail to put your faith in God's promises, he is still faithful. You aren't adrift in a sea of the unfamiliar. Everything hasn't changed. It's just that your focus has been drawn away from the anchor of your soul. Next time you feel lost in the waves of transition, focusing on your ever-shifting circumstances, fix your eyes on your unchangeable God. Then, as you trust in God's unchanging promises, you will be changed. God may have one thousand intricate and indecipherable reasons for bringing change into your life, but one of those reasons is always to change you.

HOLD FAST TO HOPE

What promise of God do you tend to doubt when faced with change? What truth from today's devotional helps you put your faith in God's promises?

If you really believe this truth, how does it change your attitude right now? Make a plan to ask yourself this question multiple times today.

Day 2 | I am steadfast because God is my keeper

BY TAYLOR CAGE

FIRM FOUNDATION | PSALM 121

I lift up my eyes to the hills. From where does my help come? My help comes from the LORD, who made heaven and earth. He will not let your foot be moved; he who keeps you will not slumber. Behold, he who keeps Israel will neither slumber nor sleep. The LORD is your keeper; the LORD is your shade on your right hand. The sun shall not strike you by day, nor the moon by night. The LORD will keep you from all evil; he will keep your life. The LORD will keep your going out and your coming in from this time forth and forevermore.

STAND FIRM IN TRUTH

“Can you keep him today?” I text my husband at his new job as I survey the boxes stacked high in my kitchen. From the corner of my eye, I catch a glimpse of my son toddling toward the stairs and quickly scoop him up before he can get hurt. I let out an exasperated sigh as I set him back down, and he immediately starts toward the box marked *FRAGILE*. I know my husband’s ability to keep him at work is a long shot, but I also know there is no way I can get any unpacking done with this rambunctious little guy next to me. Keeping him requires constant vigilance, especially now that he’s learning to walk.

Ever since my son started taking steps, I spend my days keeping up with him. As he hobbles around on his chunky, unstable legs, I walk with him, always ready to catch him when he stumbles or guide him in a different direction when he’s headed for danger. Learning to walk is a big change for him, and I know it’s my job to keep him safe and help him navigate the world on his two little feet.

And while I technically learned to walk a long time ago, as I sit on the floor of my new home, in a new city once again, I can’t help but feel like I’m learning to walk again too. The change of another cross-country move has left me feeling unsteady and unsure in an unfamiliar reality. Not only do I need help simply finding the grocery store (praise God for Google Maps), but I also need help navigating new friendships and integrating into a new church community. Though exciting at times, this change is often disorienting and overwhelming. Thankfully, in the moments I feel wobbly, I know that I’m not alone. Much like I walk with my son as he takes new and unfamiliar steps, I know that God is walking with me too. And even in the uncertainty of life’s biggest changes, I can be steadfast because God is my keeper.

As children of God, when change leaves us unsteady, we can rest assured that God is with us in every step we take. Whether we’re learning to live without a loved one, stepping into

a new season of life, or navigating a move to a new city, we never have to take those first shaky steps alone. God, our keeper, is waiting to catch us when we stumble and redirect our steps when we're headed the wrong way. He is always vigilant, never sleeping or otherwise distracted from our cries for help. His steadfast love and kindness orient us in even the most uncertain circumstances. He is a good Father, and even when everything in our lives is turned upside down, he keeps us in the palm of his steady hand.

This is good news when the changes of life take us over rocky terrain. Our Good Shepherd not only strolls with us by still waters but also guides us as we hike mountains and trek through valleys, ensuring that our feet never slip from his capable hands (Ps. 23:1–4). He goes before us, preparing the way, providing and equipping at every turn. And though that doesn't mean we never experience the dangers of this world, it means we're safe with our protector, the keeper of life on earth and in eternity forevermore.

While keeping a toddler who's learning to walk is often exhausting, it's all worth it when my son reaches up his little hands for me whenever the path is too much for him. My heart melts with compassion as I pick him up and carry him in my arms until he's ready to explore again. It's easy to imagine that this is how our heavenly Father feels when we reach up to him, trusting in the security and steadfast strength of his arms to carry us when our feet can't.

So whenever change starts to leave you feeling unsteady, uncertain, or even just a little wobbly, lift up your eyes to your keeper, sister. Raise your hands to your heavenly Father and allow him to pick you up and carry you in the palm of his hand. Trust that he is watching over every step you take, instilling within you a sure-footed faith in his steadfast nature. Day and night, going out and coming in, through the highs and lows and every transition of life, your help comes from God alone, and your steps are steadfast when you're walking with him. No matter how shaky your changing circumstances may be, in God, you are always kept.

HOLD FAST TO HOPE

What kind of season are you walking in? How does being kept by God in this season help you walk through it?

Write Psalm 121 in your own words and apply it to your current circumstances.

Day 3 | I am steadfast when I encourage others

BY GRETCHEN SAFFLES

FIRM FOUNDATION | HEBREWS 10:24-25

And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.

STAND FIRM IN TRUTH

My friend who's walking through an excruciating season of waiting sends me a text asking for prayer because her faith in God is on the brink of disintegrating. I quickly text back reminders of the countless ways God has been faithful to her, to me, and to his people since the dawn of time. My fingers type each word with fervor, adding verses I've been reading lately and the truths about God I'm currently learning, and the moment I click send, I realize I just preached a much-needed message to my own weary soul. It's pretty much a guarantee—the words I use to encourage others are the ones I desperately need to hear myself.

These soul-bolstering exchanges happen in ordinary places, over cups of coffee, through email and handwritten letters, while lingering in the church pews at the end of service to ask how the other person is doing. We swap stories with friends, and if we're brave or broken enough, we share the hard transitions we're navigating, the heavy burdens we're carrying, the heartache we're experiencing. Word by life-giving word, our bone-dry cups are filled again, giving us strength and fortitude to keep going, keep trusting God, keep holding on to eternal hope in the midst of life's constant changes. Because the truth is, when we are faithful to encourage others in the Lord, our own souls are reinforced with supernatural strength to face what lies before us.

Life often feels like one long, unrelenting transition. The moment we become comfortable where we are, our circumstances change and we have to shimmy our way into a new stage of life. After giving birth to my first child, I was flabbergasted by the all-encompassing impact that this tiny human had on my life. Not only did my entire schedule and lifestyle change, my body changed too. A few months postpartum, I developed a thyroid disease I have to monitor and treat with the help of doctors and medication for the rest of my life. Along with this disease came postpartum depression, a darkness I wasn't expecting to encounter in a season that was supposed to be brimming with joy.

In the midst of this life-altering transition, when I was grasping at straws for hope, I reached out to women who'd gone before me, women who'd endured pain, navigated hardship, and lived to tell the truth of God's steadfast love. Though these women weren't in my current season of life, their words of encouragement shone a flashlight of hope into the darkness.

I remember sitting on my couch one day, completely inundated with lies and fear and unable to muster the courage to attend church where my husband was on staff. Weeping and embarrassed at my frail state, I texted my mentor asking for prayer, and the next thing I knew, she was standing on my doorstep with her Bible and chicken noodle soup. The language of encouragement transcends life stage, occupation, and location. Just as my mentor encouraged me that Sunday morning with the unchanging Word of God and nourished my starved soul with her own testimony of God's goodness, I've been able to encourage friends with those same truths I learned that day in later seasons.

At some point or another, we all need to be reminded that God is who he says he is and does what he says he will do. Whether we're aching for a positive pregnancy test, checking email constantly as we wait for an acceptance or rejection letter, wading through the murky waters of grief, or searching for a place to call home, the same gospel of grace prevails and holds us fast.

The author of Hebrews writes, "And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near" (Heb. 10:24–25). A steadfast commitment to encouraging one another in the Lord stems from the final and finishing work of Jesus Christ on the cross (Heb. 10:19–22). Encouraging others both reveals what we hold to be true and valuable and reinforces in our souls what we long to truly believe. Many times, I've encouraged a friend with words I was struggling to hold fast to myself. As Christ followers, we speak encouragement not as women who never doubt or falter but who know the One who sustains us with truth that never changes.

Gospel-centered encouragement is like a boomerang—the words we speak to build up others and refresh weary hearts return right back to us. So, sister, linger with your hurting friends and listen to them share their pain, frustrations, and questions. As the Holy Spirit leads you, speak encouragement from Scripture to them, equipping them to remain steadfast in the Word of God. And if you're struggling to believe that the words you're saying are true in your own life, remember: God will give you the strength to remain steadfast when you encourage others in Christ, not because you don't struggle yourself, but because God's unchanging truths are always changing us.

HOLD FAST TO HOPE

If a friend called you right now asking for prayer and encouragement as she navigates a season of transition, what would you say to her? Write it down and consider sending this encouragement to a friend today.

Reflect on the truth you wrote down and consider how it applies to your own life. Then consider: What wrong thoughts and actions do you have when you forget this truth?

Day 4 | I am steadfast when I take refuge in God

BY ABBEY WYSOCKI

FIRM FOUNDATION | PSALM 57:1-3

Be merciful to me, O God, be merciful to me, for in you my soul takes refuge; in the shadow of your wings I will take refuge, till the storms of destruction pass by. I cry out to God Most High, to God who fulfills his purpose for me. He will send from heaven and save me; he will put to shame him who tramples on me. God will send out his steadfast love and his faithfulness!

STAND FIRM IN TRUTH

I packed my duffel bag with only a few t-shirts and pairs of shorts, some pajamas, and a small toiletry bag—everything I'd need for a week, maybe two, of staying with my mom to help her recover from a simple outpatient surgery. But just hours before she was due in the operating room, her situation went from routine and low-risk to complex and emergent because of compounding and unforeseen complications. Rather than simply driving my mom home that same day to administer ice packs and pain meds, I was signing the dotted line of an advance directive as *primary medical caretaker*. After a grueling week-long hospital stay, I faced months of uncertainty as I moved in with my mom to help her recover.

As is often the case with abrupt change, I was disoriented and overwhelmed. Maybe you've experienced it as a result of job loss, a broken relationship, a chronic diagnosis, or the betrayal of a loved one, but I'm guessing you know that feeling of stumbling groggily in the aftermath, grappling with a new and unpredictable reality. Suddenly you're faced with problems that seem to have no solutions, crippling despair, and the notion that if you could just make it out of the trial, the grief, the season of instability, all would be well. But some seasons of change have no end in sight.

How do we continue when there are no obvious next steps? When the uncertainty we face stretches on and seeps into every part of our daily lives? We can look to God's Word, especially to King David's response to his own dire, indefinite circumstances. When he wrote Psalm 57, David was being hunted by King Saul. Jealous of his increasing military success and afraid of him because of his favor with God, Saul tried to kill David on more than one occasion, sending David on the run for his life (1 Sam. 18–20).

In the midst of this manhunt, David took physical refuge in a cave and penned this opening verse: "Be merciful to me, O God, be merciful to me, for in you my soul takes refuge; in the shadow of your wings I take refuge, till the storms of destruction pass by" (v. 1). David could have used this time under cover to strategize his next move, take a rest, or throw himself a pity party. Instead,

he “[cried] out to God Most High, to God who fulfills his purpose for [him]” (v. 2). David wasn’t primarily concerned with asking God for safety or for some miraculous rescue or even for a specific revelation of when this would all be over. No, David knew that what he needed most was refuge for his soul in God.

But finding refuge for our souls in God can feel ambiguous in the face of very real trial. It’s easier to seek refuge in more tangible ways—in devising an end to our hard circumstances, in answers from other people, in our own power. In the early days of caring for my mom, I often tried to identify a date that I could point to and say, “This is when she will be better, when she can live on her own again.” I looked for direction from medical professionals, my siblings, anyone who could tell me what to do next. I toiled in my own strength to attend all the follow-up appointments, put a home-cooked meal on the table every night, and keep up with my job, pridefully embracing the lie that everything depended on me. But looking to these other places for refuge only left me weary, full of doubt and disappointment.

When we do the harder work of turning to God for refuge for our souls, we find that this isn’t just good advice from the Bible—it’s a promise God actually keeps. We don’t have to look to the future to find hope or comfort; we can experience it right now because God sends out his steadfast love and faithfulness to meet us right in the middle of our own storms of destruction. It may look like playing worship music while driving to that scary appointment or praying that God would use this circumstance to deepen your dependence on him, then believing that he will. It may look like keeping verse cards by the kitchen sink to recite out loud each time you wash dishes or clinging to the encouraging words texted to you by a friend on a particularly hard day.

During that unexpected nine-month stay with my mom, refuge for my soul most often looked like walking the tree-lined streets of her neighborhood with Scripture on repeat in my AirPods. The shadows of the trees’ branches reminded me of the shadow of God’s wings. I’d make a beeline for the shaded portion along my route, leaning into relief from the scorching sun. There’s no escaping the discomfort of a hot Georgia afternoon, but under the shadows, my walk became more bearable. The path was still tiring, but I experienced moments of reprieve under the trees’ cover, protected from the direct line of rays and extreme heat. I could walk farther, endure longer. This is the gift God offers us when we take refuge for our souls in him.

HOLD FAST TO HOPE

Where are you seeking refuge from the storms of life right now?

What would it look like to seek refuge for your soul in God? Make a list of practical ways to do so this week.

Day 5 | I am steadfast because God is with me

BY LAUREN WEIR

FIRM FOUNDATION | ISAIAH 41:10

Fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God; I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.

STAND FIRM IN TRUTH

Right, left, right, left, one foot in front of the other. Hand clutching my phone, ears tuned in to the truth, I breathed in these lyrics: *Fear not, I am with thee, O be not dismayed, for I am thy God and will still give thee aid; I'll strengthen thee, help thee, and cause thee to stand, upheld by my righteous, omnipotent hand.* The hymn “How Firm a Foundation” formed me each weekend as I circled the neighborhood, desperate for these steps to propel me into another week with three young children, responsibilities at work, and a husband who kissed me goodbye before traveling every week for his new job.

I was keenly aware of my husband's absence. I noticed it when filling lunch boxes and preparing dinners. I noticed it after the evening's activities when I realized I'd failed to eat dinner myself. I resented it when answering the continual cries of anxious children who couldn't fall asleep. My commentary in every hard moment held some variation of this: *And of course, my husband's not here.*

The Spirit began finishing my sentences: *But I am.* The words of Isaiah 41 would come rushing to mind: “Fear not, for I am with you....” I was afraid. I was dismayed that these circumstances forced me to die to myself over and over again. I was afraid I couldn't do it alone, without help, and that my breakdown would leave my children to fend for themselves. I marched around the neighborhood, needing the words of “How Firm a Foundation,” because in the swirling of all this transition, fear paralyzed me. And when I became afraid, I clutched tightly to my idol of security—if my husband were here, then it wouldn't be this hard, this exhausting, this exposing.

In Isaiah 41:10, God's command to “Fear not” tethers to the truth I found so comforting in my first days of motherhood: “for I am with you.” That new sense of aloneness gave way to the comforting presence of my Father, always seeing, always near. So when the Spirit began pressing in this same truth again in this season, I was tempted to shrug it off, quite sure that what I needed was not to be watched but to be helped. Yet in the verses that precede Isaiah 41:10, God's presence doesn't comfort but sends the nations trembling, scrambling, fearing for their very lives. They muster every bit of human strength to build up their defenses, band

together to protect themselves, and secure their idols in place before the coming of the Lord (vv. 5–7). His presence evokes fear among the nations, so much so that to Israel, his covenant people, God repeats the command to fear not three times in five verses (vv. 10–14).

In this new season of my husband being less present and fear being more constant, it was not just the comfort of God's presence but the power of it that drove out my fear. The same God who draws near to his people also causes the nations to tremble. The Judge of all the earth fills the hearts of his children to overrule any contending masters. The Warrior who tramples kings underfoot upholds his servants with his righteous right hand.

Flip through the pages of the Old Testament and see: when God shows up, the people fall on their faces. He speaks from a fiery bush (Ex. 3), his thunderous presence surrounds Mount Sinai in flames (Ex. 20:18–21), his glory descends on the tabernacle (Ex. 40:34–38), and all those near tremble. No one could come casually to God. Without a sacrifice to save them, God's holy presence consumed sinners.

So God came to us in a form we could touch without dying—Jesus walked the earth as fully God and fully man. The demons trembled before him, and so did death. When Jesus died and entered the tomb, death gripped tight, but God raised him up, his incredible power making even death melt like wax before him.

The truth that God is with me did more than comfort me—it actually kindled a purifying fire. The awareness of God's presence highlighted my idolatrous fears that produced impatience and bitterness in me. By being forced to depend on God's divine strength, I saw how my dependence on the human strength and nearness of my husband often led to record-keeping and arrogance. My awareness of God's presence produced a new kind of fear, one of reverence and awe, that weeded out sin and idolatry in my heart. Not only did his nearness give me hope, but it also made me holy.

As I circled the neighborhood week after week, I found my breath less shallow and my footing less shaky. In seasons past, I needed the comfort of being pulled in and held close, but in this season of change, God caused me to stand, upholding me by his righteous and powerful hand.

HOLD FAST TO HOPE

What fears are being exposed by your current circumstances?

How does knowing that God is with you affect those fears?