

## The Monday Cup

**“Return [Abraham’s] wife . . . and he will pray for you”**  
(Genesis 20:7).

**Scripture:** Genesis 20:1-7, 14-16

**Song:** “Spirit of God, Descend upon My Heart”

One of the mugs that stands out in my collection is my “Monday cup.” I call it that because on some Mondays I need its message: “DON’T QUIT.”

After Abraham prayed for God to spare Sodom and Gomorrah (Genesis 18:16-33) and God’s merciful response in saving Lot and his family (19:29), Abraham moved to Gerar, in Philistine territory (20:1). From the start, he opened a door for trouble when he was less than fully honest with Abimelek, his new pagan neighbor (v. 2). But God intervened to prevent a bad situation from becoming worse and told Abimelek to return Sarah to her husband (v. 3). And with the instruction was God’s declaration that Abraham was a praying man who wouldn’t quit. He had prayed that God would spare the sinners in Sodom and Gomorrah, and Abraham would pray for Abimelek to be spared God’s judgment as well.

We should never quit praying for our neighbors, even when other parts of our testimony fail. In this world we can’t really move away from unbelievers, so we don’t have a reason to stop praying for our neighbors—especially those who do not yet know and love God.

**Father,** thank You for Your great mercy that is available to all. Help me to not quit praying for people who need You. In Jesus’ name, amen.

---

November 22–28. **Harold Comings** is a retired senior pastor who lives with his wife, Judy, in Florida.

## Awe Laced with Fear

**Cornelius . . . and all his family were devout and God-fearing** (Acts 10:1-2).

**Scripture:** Acts 10:1-8

**Song:** “Great God of Wonders”

Standing at the rim of the Grand Canyon, Judy and I needed to see more, so we bought tickets for a helicopter ride. Airborne, we watched in the distance a narrow strip of sunbathed red and orange rock that divided the earth from the sky. Moments later, like a stone from a sling, we were hurled over the gorge. Ahead of us two other helicopters mirrored our vulnerability. What had been awe at the canyon’s edge now became awe laced with fear.

In our text, Cornelius, a military man who knew the brutality of Rome and the terror of warfare, is described as “devout.” The word means “good awe.” I describe it as awe for that which is truly awesome. It is sometimes translated “godliness” or “piety.” When coupled with fear, it has to do with being awed to the point of reverent vigilance. Such was the character of the Roman centurion who encountered a messenger from Heaven with a history-making assignment.

If someone asks you for a prayer request, ask for your life to be more deeply awed by the breathtaking awesomeness of God. Similarly, if you want to know God’s will for some feature of your life, do an awe-detection checkup. And don’t forget to look to your minister and teachers, who can help you sharpen your awe for God in your walk with Him.

**Father**, help us to be awed by the depth, height, and expanse of who You are. In Jesus’ name, amen.

## Unplanned Routes

**While Peter was still thinking about the vision, the Spirit said to him, “Simon, three men are looking for you” (Acts 10:19).**

**Scripture:** Acts 10:9-22

**Song:** “Follow You”

It’s unsettling when my navigation device directs me to unexpected exits and unfamiliar routes to my destination. I know the GPS is directing me around problems on the path I planned, but I still lack confidence to follow it. I want to check a map and consider my options.

God suddenly redirected Peter onto a different path than he’d planned. By way of a trance (Acts 10:10), God showed Peter three times that he was to set aside the law’s ceremonial requirement to not eat certain meats. He was thinking about what this meant for him when he was interrupted with God’s instructions to welcome three unexpected guests who would ask Peter to go with them to a Gentile’s home. Applying what God told him, Peter was ready to follow God’s new direction and go into a Gentile home. Peter had full confidence in God’s redirecting activity.

We too might find ourselves thinking about our response to instructions in God’s Word, and we might see His new direction for ourselves. It might not be a matter of obedience or disobedience but maybe simply different. When it is a time to trust God and follow His new direction onto a new route, then we can do so with confidence trusting God fully.

**Father**, when You are changing my typical routes, help me to trust You and acknowledge Your unerring wisdom. In Jesus’ name, amen.

## When the Landscape Changes

**When the queen of Sheba saw all . . . , she was overwhelmed** (1 Kings 10:4-5).

**Scripture:** 1 Kings 10:1-9

**Song:** “O the Deep, Deep Love of Jesus”

Have you watched a tsunami overwhelm a vulnerable community? By contrast, have you seen testimonies of poor families overwhelmed because they have been given a new home by a charitable ministry? Each story, in its own way, illustrates the character of the word *overwhelmed*. The *King James Version* gives it to us as: “there was no more spirit in her” (1 Kings 10:5).

Matthew (12:42) and Luke (11:31) speak of the queen of Sheba as the “Queen of the South.” Jesus says she, who was overwhelmed by Solomon, will condemn the generation that failed to recognize the one greater than Solomon. John does not mention her, but he cannot say enough about Jesus’ greatness in grace and truth (John 1:14). Each Gospel serves its God-ordained purpose, but I sense an overwhelmed character in the apostle John.

Awe is a reaction that rises within us, rivets our attention for a moment, and sends us away with a memory. Being overwhelmed does all that; and in the process it changes the landscape of our lives. This is the impact of the gospel. With the tsunami of conviction, Jesus tears away our self-righteousness—and with the divine working of His Spirit, He builds newness of life into our souls (2 Corinthians 5:17).

**Father,** You are an awesome God! I open Your Word and trust Your Spirit to give me life-changing encounters with the overwhelming grace of Jesus. In Jesus’ name, amen.

## What Did Sock Do?

**Jesus . . . was amazed** (Luke 7:9).

**Scripture:** Luke 7:1-10

**Song:** “Lord, Listen to Your Children Praying”

Writing for *USA Today* online, correspondent Nate Scott covered a tennis match between American Jack Sock and Australian Lleyton Hewitt. He ended the article by commenting that he probably would not remember the score or even that Hewitt won the match. But he would remember what Sock did. When the chair umpire made a wrong call, Jack Sock recommended that Hewitt challenge it! In so doing, he gave Hewitt the point. Video of the umpire and Hewitt shows their almost bewildered amazement.

The Gospels record that Jesus was amazed by the unbelief of the people in His hometown (Mark 6:6). And in today’s Scripture, we read that Jesus was amazed by irony. A Gentile military commander expressed faith that was remarkably missing among God’s own people. The commander demonstrated integrity. He was aware that, by the Jewish law, Jesus might compromise His standing by coming to a Gentile’s home. He was also a man of thought. He understood analogy and applied it wisely to the moment. As the military commander had authority to send others to do his bidding, even so Jesus, the Son of God, could command healing without being personally present.

May God grant to you and me that kind of amazing integrity so that asking according to Jesus’ will becomes synonymous with our asking according to His character. May our thought lives be so clear that we can present our requests with wisdom.

**Father**, please teach us to approach You with faith and integrity. In Jesus’ name, amen.

## Protocol of Worship

**Cornelius met [Peter] and fell at his feet in reverence. But Peter made him get up** (Acts 10:26).

**Scripture:** Acts 10:23-33

**Song:** “We Bow Down”

In Tolkien’s *Lord of the Rings*, each of the heroic characters take turns in the spotlight until the coronation of Aragorn. Then, as the king and his bride process through the bowing crowd, they meet four Hobbits who, unsure of themselves, bow before their now elevated friend and compatriot. However, the king interrupts them. He will not have them bowing to him, or anyone.

The secular world has instinctive cultural protocols of respect. These may not include falling to the ground in reverence and awe—as with Cornelius in our text—but they do show up in other ways. Like Cornelius, we may be forgiven for not knowing that some acts are clearly acts of worship reserved for God himself. Nevertheless, the centurion’s mistake was not to be overlooked. Peter immediately told Cornelius to stand because he, Peter, was “only a man” (Acts 10:26).

Among those of us who are surrendered to Jesus, this worship may be seen in the ways we pay homage to our spiritual heroes. It is important that we not mislead young disciples of Jesus into becoming worshippers of other disciples of Jesus. And if, by God’s grace, someone looks up to us with an uncomfortable reverence, we must make it plain (with grace, not rudeness) that we too are mortals.

**Father**, thank You for praiseworthy spiritual leaders in our own lives. Help us to honor them by the way we fall before You. In Jesus’ name, amen.

## God Did What?

**The circumcised believers who had come with Peter were astonished** (Acts 10:45).

**Scripture:** Acts 10:34-47

**Song:** “Oh, It Is Wonderful”

Ours was the only car among a dozen gas pumps. My wife and four sons watched from inside our Toyota as a gang of motorcyclists roared up to the other pumps. I could see concern on my boys' faces. However, as I scanned the arrivals, I recognized a distinctive pair of flags. “Hi, Josh!” I called. “Hey, hi preacher!” a bearded fellow replied. The wide eyes staring out my car windows foreshadowed questions to come.

Astonishment can be our response to something unexpected and can raise questions. Peter probably already fielded questions as he led his uncomfortable companions to a Roman centurion's home. Although the man was devoted to Israel's God, he was still a Gentile. That made him and his home unclean. Yet as Peter explained the good news of Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit crashed the scene with a replay of Pentecost. It was a signal event. Gentiles were to be included among the body of Jesus' disciples!

When it comes to the salvation of souls, God can do astonishing things—and when He does, we may find ourselves wondering how we are to respond. God does not “save” sin, but He does save sinners. Sinners bring baggage—and their baggage may reveal things that need to change in our own lives.

**Father**, please astonish us with the salvation of souls and equip us with Your wisdom to serve them. In Jesus' name, amen.