

# Are You Hungry?

Our bread of life



by Marja Bergen





*Are You Hungry? Our Bread of Life.*

Copyright © 2020 Marja Bergen

All rights reserved. Neither this publication nor any part of this publication may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording or any information storage and retrieval system, without permission in writing from the author.

All photography by Marja Bergen.

All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise indicated, are taken from the Holy Bible, New International Version®, NIV®. Copyright ©1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc.™ Used by permission of Zondervan. All rights reserved worldwide. [www.zondervan.com](http://www.zondervan.com)  
The “NIV” and “New International Version” are trademarks registered in the United States Patent and Trademark Office by Biblica, Inc.™

Scripture quotations marked (NLT) are taken from the Holy Bible, New Living Translation, copyright ©1996, 2004, 2015 by Tyndale House Foundation. Used by permission of Tyndale House Publishers, a Division of Tyndale House Ministries, Carol Stream, Illinois 60188. All rights reserved.

Marja Bergen  
[www.marjabergen.com](http://www.marjabergen.com)



Our bread of life

Are You Hungry?

marja bergen



## ARE YOU HUNGRY?

*Then Jesus declared, "I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never go hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty."*

John 6:35

Many people would think I was daft if I said that I like the word "hungry" and that it has positive connotations for me. But picture "hungry" when you've been waiting for a good meal for a long while and know you'll soon be fed. "Hungry" is a good way to be if you're going to fully enjoy a meal.

On the other hand, many live with hunger for food that's not available to them. Many starve. That's not a good hungry.

We need to realize there is a spiritual dimension which differs from the physical in that you can't touch it with your hands or see it with your eyes. And yet it's real. Trouble is, many don't understand that they have a spiritual self, a part of themselves they haven't discovered yet.

"Hunger" can have such a spiritual dimension. In the same way our stomach hungers for food, our heart and soul hunger for sustenance of a different kind. We feel a spiritual hunger when we're lonely, anxious or hurting. We feel it whenever we long for something greater than ourselves to fill needs for which there seem to be no other answers.

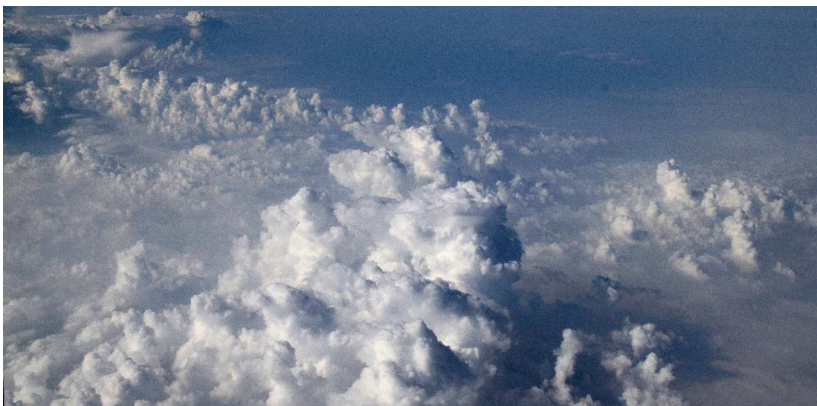
Personally, at the age of forty-two, I realized my need for something greater than myself when I could no longer cope with the mental turmoil that was often part of my life. I tried many coping skills, took the medication I was given, but eventually got to the point where I could no longer carry on without God. When I found him and believed, my life improved greatly.

The bread we buy at the bakery will fill us for awhile, until we get hungry again. What we hunger for is something much deeper than ordinary bread. In the scripture above, Jesus speaks about himself being the bread of life. He is the spiritual bread that will nourish us and strengthen us.

Those who believe in Jesus and are strong in their faith, are helped to survive the trials of life that befall them. They might suffer like everyone else, but they have someone to trust. They trust that God will be with them and uphold them. This trust is not dissimilar to how a child might trust a father who loves them. But God, our *heavenly* Father is ever so much more trustworthy than any earthly human being could be. There's no comparison. Trouble is, many don't believe, not having been in touch with that part of themselves.

We all have a spiritual hunger, though we may not know it.

Exploring the truths in the Bible can start you on the road to feeding that hunger. Every time we find things in the Bible that really speak to us, we are fed. When we feed like this on this Word—which is Jesus, the bread of life—our spiritual hunger is satisfied. We will grow spiritually.



## LETTING GO AND LETTING GOD

*Trust in the Lord with all your heart  
and lean not on your own understanding.*

Proverbs 3:5

Picture this: You're a child and you have your back towards your father who's standing a couple of feet away. Playfully he tells you to fall backwards, promising he would catch you. Would you trust him? Or would you be afraid?

This is what it was like when I was prompted to surrender myself to God for the first time. At first I wasn't sure he could be trusted. How could I trust someone I couldn't see? It took a while before I was ready.

I think many of us are a bit like the small child in the story—afraid to let go and trust someone. Even our father. Even our heavenly Father.

Pride will keep us from surrendering ourselves to God. It takes humility to realize we can't do it all on our own. It takes humility to let go and let God. Jesus is our ultimate example of humility. He humbled himself in obedience to God, to the point of dying on the cross. (Phil 2:8) The apostle Paul talks to you and me:

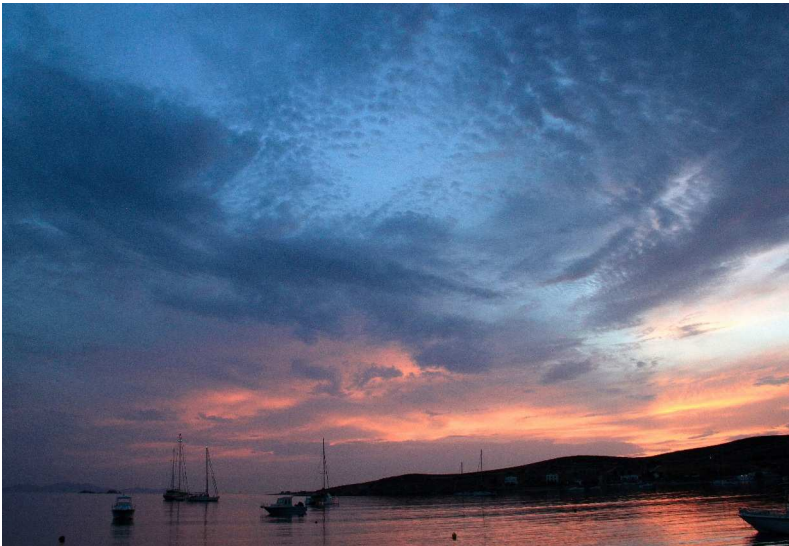
*“You must have the same attitude that Christ Jesus had. though he was God, he did not think of equality with God as something to cling to.”* (Philippians 2:5-6 NLT)

When you face a tough situation you might find yourself ready to believe in Someone greater than yourself. You may have come to the point of really *longing* for Someone you can trust to help you let go of the fear, the worries, and feelings of inadequacy. God can be trusted. He can help reduce your stress. He can bring peace.

How to start? Surrendering to God will happen when you read his Word, the Bible. If you open yourself to Scripture, reading with a receptive heart and mind, you will “hear” God speak to you. You’ll learn to trust him.

In Paul’s letter to the Philippians, he encourages them—and us—to shed their anxiety and to look to God in prayer. He will be there.

*Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. (Philippians 4:6-7)*



## COME TO ME

*“Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.”*

Matthew 11:28-30

When I began my journey with Jesus, this invitation gave me great comfort. I had for many years dealt with mental health issues. As a new Christian, Jesus’ words brought me close to him. I felt his presence--welcomed it. Through these verses Jesus gave me what I had been needing. I didn’t have to be alone with my struggles. He promised to be with me, no matter how hard life might become. And he would give me the peace I longed for.

While I was weary and needing more than the world could offer, Jesus humbly bent down to me and called me to himself. What comfort when you’re feeling lost! What comfort when you need to know that you belong to Someone!

It was a relief!

At the time of Jesus, the Jewish people were under the authority of the Mosaic Law, said to be yoked (submitting to) Moses. They were yoked to the Pharisees, religious authorities who upheld that law. The Pharisees had developed a system of 613 laws and called for those to be strictly adhered to. But Jesus said that if they truly knew God and understood what mattered to him, they would not overemphasize rules so much.

As I came to know Jesus and to appreciate his message, the invitation to accept his yoke by submitting to him lit a flame in

me. I wanted to learn from him and to follow his example by working for the good of others the way he did. Jesus promised this work wouldn't be heavy because he would be right beside me to help me carry it.

I wanted to serve, and I needed rest for my soul as well. Jesus assured me I would have both.

Have you heard such a call from Jesus?

## HE TURNED THE WORLD UPSIDE DOWN

*Whoever says he abides in him ought to walk in the same way in which he walked.*

1 John 2:6 ESV

When we decide to follow Jesus, we are called to be like him. To do what he would do. To say the kinds of things he would say. To love as he loved.

But how could we possibly emulate a person as remarkable as Jesus? Many of us feel inferior to others, feeling unable to grow beyond who we are. But Jesus does not think of us that way. He accepts us as those who could become his spiritual brothers and sisters. In fact, the Bible says “*Both the one who makes people holy and those who are made holy are of the same family. So Jesus is not ashamed to call them brothers and sisters.*” (Hebrews 2:11).

When we spend time with Jesus, reading about him in our Bibles, walking with him and talking with him—each in our



own way—we'll gradually get to know him. And as we get to know him, we'll start taking on some of his characteristics.

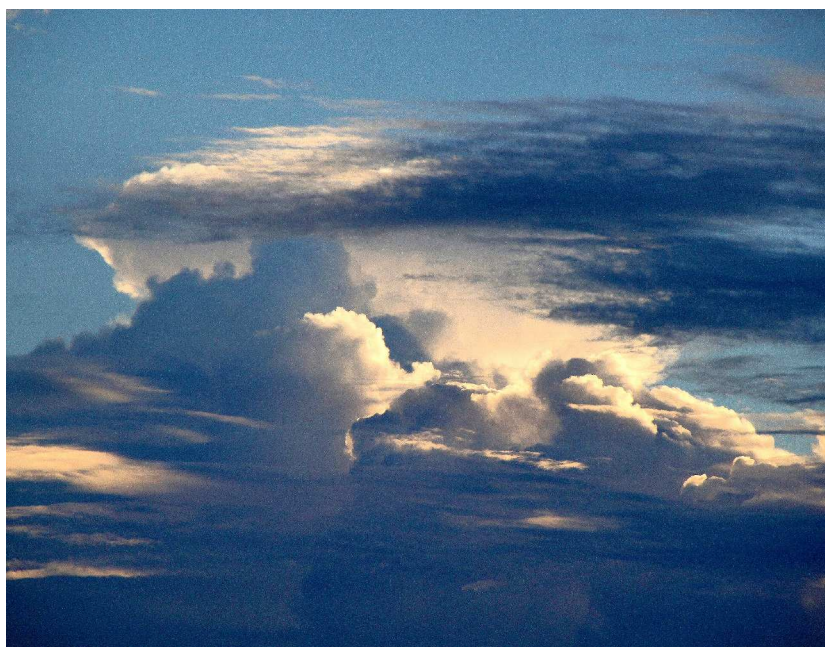
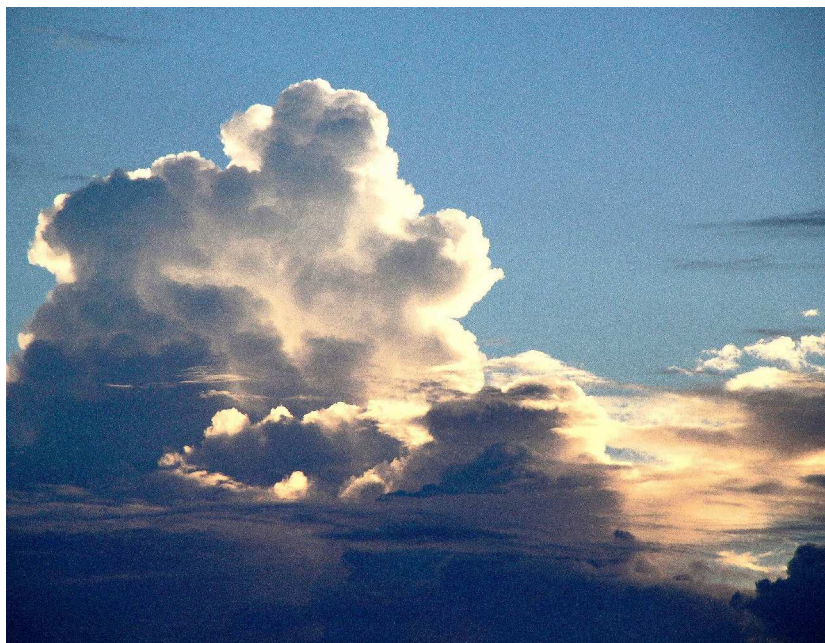
Jesus was known for his kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. (Colossians 3:12). He calls us to love in the way he did by caring for the sick and providing the lonely with friendship.

But Jesus had a lot more than those qualities alone. He was a complex individual with traits that seem contradictory. Jesus was a radical social activist, dying as he fought for justice and the common good. Through his efforts to change the status quo, he became probably the most revolutionary person who ever lived. That's a drastically different way of seeing Jesus than the gentle person described above.

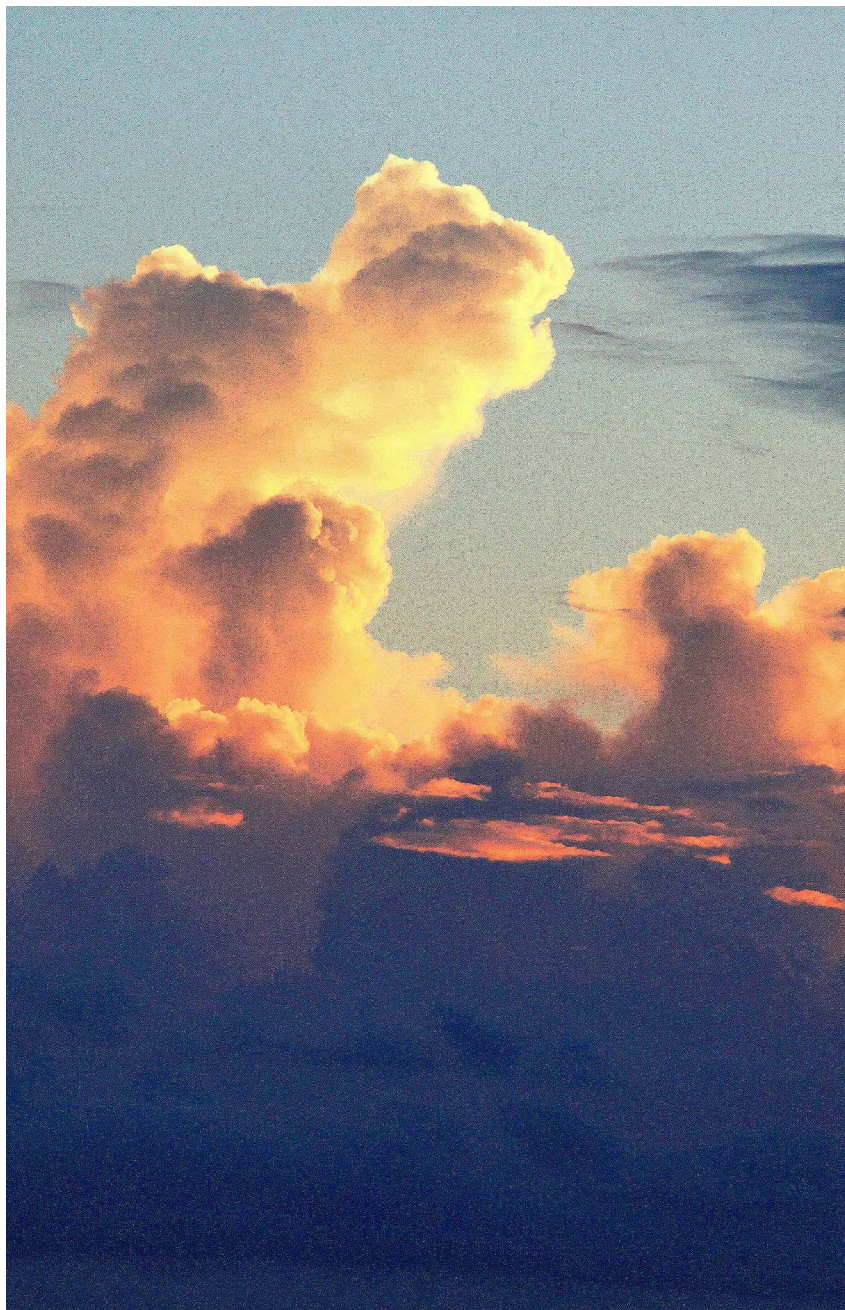
During Jesus' three year ministry, he challenged everything about the world's way of thinking. He boldly faced injustice turning the moral standards of the world's values upside down with his Beatitudes. He promoted the importance of love, compassion, peace, and justice. The changes he brought to the world differed from anything that had gone before.

Yes, Jesus was a man with many diverse features. But I believe all of them were wrapped in one overriding factor. They were all part of his great and boundless love. With this love Jesus fought the injustice that was so prevalent. The world is a different place because of his ministry two thousand years ago. And today we are still inspired to follow his teachings and his example.

Jesus blessed us with the greatest love possible. As his followers we can take that love and pass it on to others. There is no better way to follow his example.







## WHAT A BEAUTIFUL NAME!

*Therefore God exalted him to the highest place  
and gave him the name that is above every name,  
that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow,  
in heaven and on earth and under the earth,  
and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord,  
to the glory of God the Father.*

Philippians 2:9-11

Some people coming to the faith only find themselves able to believe in God at first, not Jesus. I'm just assuming that because that's how it was for me. If I remember correctly, I put my trust in God and felt his love before I could believe and understand about Jesus. When I did start believing what the Bible says about him, it took a while longer before I could say his name out loud.

Strange, I know. How could I believe in Jesus, but feel awkward—even afraid—to say his name?

It may be because, at that point of my life, the use of his name that most stood out for me was when it was used in ways it should never be used—in cursing. I wasn't one to swear and yet, as the unchurched individual I was at the time, I had heard Jesus' name used too often in this way. More often than the name that was given to the One who died for us, More often than the name that was given to the One who deserved to be worshiped.

Is it this way for others? Are there others who are slow understanding the beauty in the name of Jesus? Others who find it hard to talk about him?

My prayer is that they will come to know him as I have come to know him. No one has greater love for us. He gave his all for us. Remember how he was persecuted, abandoned, and crucified—

though he had loved so much? All his suffering was for us, so that we won't have to live with perpetual sin. All so that we're freed to live a better, more meaningful, life. An everlasting life.

The Bible says, *“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.”* (John 3:16)

Today, so many years later, Jesus' name has become precious to me. More and more so. I love thinking about him, writing about him, talking about him. I love saying his name out loud.

## HE OVERCAME INJUSTICE WITH LOVE

*Learn to do right; seek justice.  
Defend the oppressed.  
Take up the cause of the fatherless;  
plead the case of the widow.*  
Isaiah 1:17

The radical changes Jesus brought into the world could only have been possible through his great love. In fact, generally speaking, probably the greater the love, the greater will be the justice that can be brought about.

Is creating a just society even possible without love?

A key part of being a Christian is to represent Jesus by bringing his love to hurting people. Jesus said, *“My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you.”* (John 15:12) When we follow Jesus,

we won't find it hard to love the people around us. And I have found that when I feel God's love inside me, I can't help sharing it with others.

Here is an extraordinary phenomenon: The best way to experience God's love is to share it with others. When you give to others, you will receive as well. The giving and the receiving happen as if in one single motion.

But it's easy to see hurting individuals, and ignore them. So often we'd rather stay within the safety of our own comforts. When we follow Jesus' example, responding to others' needs becomes easier. When we follow Jesus we will find we're not thinking about ourselves so much.

As we fight injustice, Jesus will give us the sensitivity and love we need to feel the pain of others as he does. Jesus looks at a hurting person, sees their suffering, and enters into it with them. When Jesus saw a woman weeping over her dead son *"his heart went out to her and he said, 'Don't cry.'"* (Luke 7:13)

Look around you and identify the injustices in our world as Jesus might. Which of them frustrates you the most? Which do you feel most drawn to change? How could you do so?

Each of us has gifts that could help bring about a more just society. In God's world all of us have equal worth and our gifts have equal value. Every one of us can make contributions in our own unique way. Think how meaningful life could become when we serve in this way!

Some causes you take on might seem overwhelming. But don't let that hold you back. As Jesus said, *"With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible."* (Matthew 19:26)

...and God is always with us—always in charge.





## OUR COUNSELLOR – ALWAYS WITH US

*“The Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you.”*

John 14:26

Have you ever felt mysteriously, but unmistakably, led to do something in a way you didn’t expect? And, when you look back, you realize that what happened couldn’t have come from yourself alone. It was far better than you could possibly have done on your own. I have often experienced that when I write. That’s why I always say that it was God’s doing. The only credit I could accept would be the obedience of carrying out what I felt led to do.

Have you ever felt that way about things you do when:

- talking to a person who is sick or in trouble?
- singing or playing an instrument?
- creating artwork?

As Jesus prepared to leave this earth, he told his disciples that God would send another Counselor, a Helper like himself—the Holy Spirit—the Spirit of truth. Although Jesus would no longer be with them in person, this Holy Spirit would live inside them, reminding them of him.

When we develop a relationship with Jesus, God will give us the Holy Spirit, as he did for his disciples. He will guide us, and lead us, and teach as Jesus taught. Although we did not experience Jesus in person the way the disciples did, we have the Bible that tells his story.

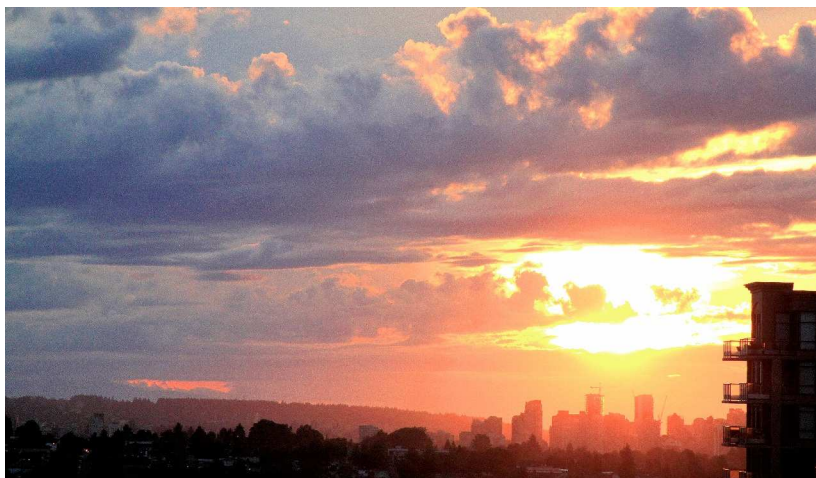


Through God's Word, we learn what he was like, the things he did and the things he said. Through the Holy Spirit we will remember. This Spirit will always be with us, always ready to help guide us to do as Jesus would have us do.

Through the Holy Spirit, we will always remember how Jesus invited us to come to him. We will remember how he called us to accept his love and the peace he gives. We will remember his invitation to join him in being there for others in the way he was.

We can trust the Holy Spirit to be our Advocate and Counselor, our Teacher and Instructor, our Helper in times of trouble.

He will always be with us.





## HE WAS DESPISED

He was despised and rejected by mankind,  
a man of suffering, and familiar with pain.  
Like one from whom people hide their faces  
he was despised, and we held him in low esteem.

Isaiah 53:3

Most of us have had experience with rejection—some more than others. But look at the Scripture above, describing what Jesus went through.

Jesus. He who loved us so deeply that he died a torturous death for us. He who travelled around throughout his ministry, healing the sick, spending time with outcasts, and passing along his radical teachings to a world that needed to hear. Jesus was the least deserving of rejection. And yet, look how he suffered!

When we read how Jesus was despised and rejected, we can be assured that he understands us when we experience such pain. We will know that he suffers with us if we will let him help us carry our pain. He invites us to share our struggles with him.

Though others may reject us, Jesus never will. His love will always be there for our sustenance

.

Here's something to think about:

In his book *Soul Cravings*, Erwin McManus talks about how awful it feels when we love someone but our love is not returned. "...if God's love is immeasurable and unending, as the Hebrews describe him, how deep and profound must be his sense of sorrow and rejection. If anyone knows the pain of a love unreturned, it must be God."

God knows all about it.

## MAKING OUR HOME IN JESUS

Jesus said, *“If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you will, and it shall be done for you.”*

John 15:7 RSV

“Abide in me,” Jesus said to his disciples. He says the same to us. There’s something beautiful in the word “abide.” It’s related to the word abode, or home. To me abiding in Jesus is to find my home in his presence, in his love and his security, in his care and safety. Home is for most of us a place close to family, close to God. It’s a warm place.

In John 15:4 (RSV) Jesus says, *“Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me.”*

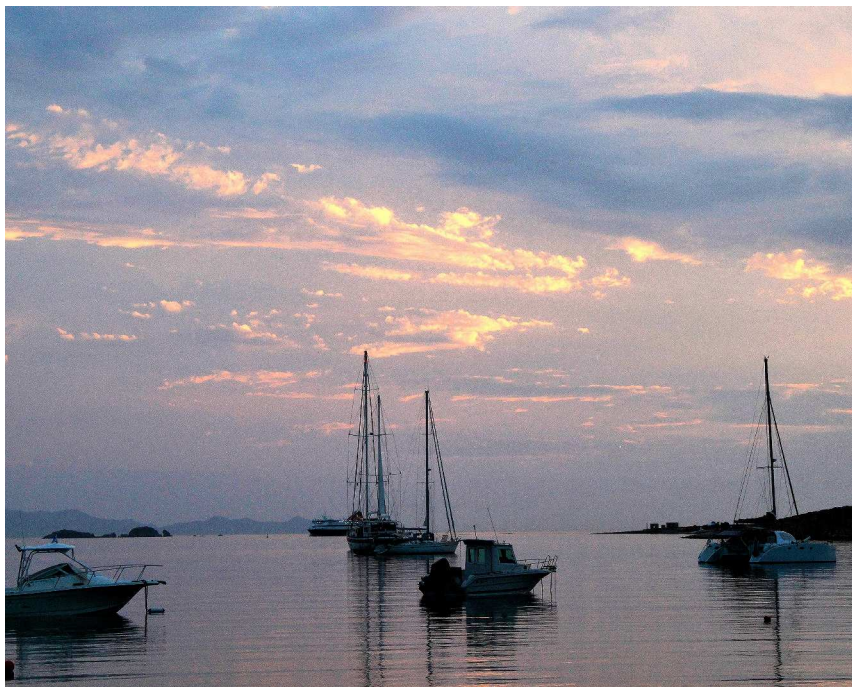
Are you going through some tough times? If so—more than ever—Jesus is calling you to abide in him. To stay and make your home in him. For the sake of your *spiritual* well-being, it’s at such a time that you need to draw close to the comfort and safety Jesus offers.

Jesus tells us that you can *“ask whatever you will, and it shall be done for you.”* Does that sound too good to be true? But don’t forget the little word “if.” He said *“If you abide in me, and my words abide in you...”* If you abide in Jesus by spending time with him, reading your Bible, talking to him, and praying...If you do this you will know what’s in line with his will for you. You will know what to ask for. You will know what prayers God might want to answer.

When Jesus called us he said, *“Come to me.”* (Matthew 11:28) Today, as we continue with him, he tells us to *“abide in me.”* How

welcoming it is to hear this invitation—this invitation to stay close and draw life from him, as a branch draws life from the vine.

My prayer for you is that you too will have that longing to draw close to Jesus. And I pray that you will be able to go through the complexities of life, reassured that his presence will always be with you.



## About Marja

Marja Bergen loves to write about Jesus, helping readers come to know him in the way she has come to know him. She hopes you will be filled, as she was, with his love and healing.

Marja has been writing for hungry people since 2013, with joy including her photography—a gift from God.

She has published full-length books as well as gift books.

<http://marjabergen.com/books>





# Have you met Jesus?

“Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.”

Matthew 11:28-30

Those who believe in Jesus and are strong in their faith, are helped to survive the trials of life that befall them. They might suffer like everyone else, but they have someone to trust. They trust that God will be with them and uphold them. This trust is not dissimilar to how a child might trust a father who loves them. But God, our *heavenly* Father is ever so much more trustworthy than any earthly human being could be. There's no comparison. Trouble is, many don't believe, not having been in touch with that part of themselves.