

Amazed

30 DAYS OF GROWING
IN AWE OF GOD



CAROLYN LACEY

“The devotions in *Amazed* pack God-sized theology into digestible daily doses. By offering Christ-centered devotional thoughts in a conversational tone, Carolyn Lacey invites us to stand in awe of God through peering at some of his attributes. The beautiful format mirrors the beautiful prose!”

AIMEE JOSEPH, *Bible Teacher; Author, Look, Listen, Live: Cultivating Attention in a Distracted Culture*

“The more I study God’s true character, the more I realize how much there is to learn—and I want more! That’s why I’m so thankful for Carolyn Lacey’s new book. In *Amazed*, she does a wonderful job of both exploring God’s attributes through Scripture and leading readers to respond to the Lord in faith. I highly recommend this devotional!”

KATIE FARIS, *Author, Every Hour I Need You: 30 Meditations for Moms on the Character of God*

“I always appreciate Carolyn’s writing and, with characteristic depth and clarity, Carolyn has given us a gift in these devotions as she gently invites us to slow down and take stock of how glorious our God is, and how worthy he is of our awe. Wonderfully though, she doesn’t stop there. Grounded in the contours of everyday life, this is a winsome invitation that will stir you both to awe and prayerful action, as she leads you to consider how growing in your knowledge of the truth then leads to godliness.”

SARAH DARGUE, *Co-Host, Two Sisters and a Cup of Tea podcast*

“Carolyn has collected well-known Bible verses and woven them together in a fresh way to lift our eyes from ourselves to see the greatness of our God. Wholesome, hope-filled and helpful, this book is a great gift to us and will make a great gift for others.”

LINDA ALLCOCK, *Author, Deeper Still; Ministry Leader, The Globe Church, London*

“I love these God-centred meditations from Carolyn. She writes beautifully, with theological depth, and handles the narrative of Scripture skilfully. You will find in her a real kindred spirit, as she feeds your soul with the glories of our triune God. Moving you to worship with wonder and love and awe.”

NATALIE BRAND, *Bible Teacher; Author, Priscilla, Where Are You? A Call to Joyful Theology*

“Humbling and awe-inspiring. Carolyn Lacey captures the wonder and lovingkindness of God—reminding us that he is both mighty and merciful.”

JUSTINE ORDWAY, *Host, Going Deeper podcast*

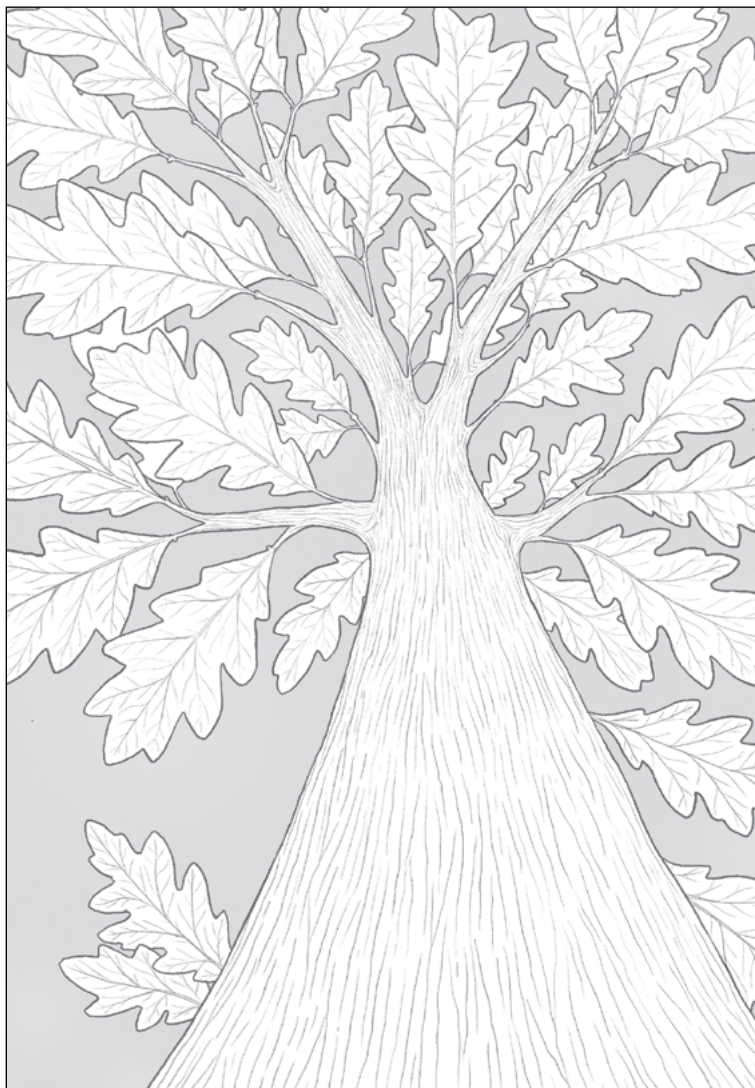
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30 Days of Growing in Awe of God

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For Tiana

May you gaze on the beauty of the Lord all the days of your life.

May you delight in all his perfections.

May you seek his face always.

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His Glory



GAZING AT GOD'S HOLINESS

1

Longing for More

“The LORD, the LORD, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin.”

EXODUS 34:6-7



Read Exodus 33:12-23

What are the sights, sounds, tastes and experiences that have left you longing for more?

As a child, I can remember the exhilarating swoosh of the playground swing as it carried me up into the sky. I kept on asking for more pushes so I could swing higher than I'd dared to fly before. A brave 4-year-old, I was no longer afraid of falling—I just wanted *more*.

Is this how you feel about the Lord? When it comes to knowing him, I know I'm barely scratching the surface, but I've found that the more I do know, the more amazed I am—and the more I want to know. Not just to satisfy my intellectual

curiosity, but because greater knowledge of him leads to greater awe—and being in awe of God changes everything.

It's when our hearts are amazed by him that everything else is put into its rightful place. We don't feel the need to seek satisfaction and peace in people or experiences that can never measure up—we find them in him. We are freed from needless anxiety, endless comparison and misdirected worship. We stop pursuing our own glory—and learn to delight in his.

In Exodus 33, Moses makes a bold request of the Lord:

Show me your glory. (v 18)

I read those words hundreds of times before the thought struck me—*hasn't Moses already experienced God's glory?*

This episode in the ancient prophet's life follows his surprise encounter with the burning bush, his front-row seat to the miraculous signs performed in Egypt, his safe deliverance through the middle of the Red Sea, and his intimate conversations with the Lord in the tent of meeting, enshrouded by a pillar of cloud—not to mention the terrifying experience of the presence of the Lord as he descended on Mount Sinai, accompanied by thunder, lightning, smoke, fire and the sound of a trumpet! Moses has already seen so much of God's glory, but the cry of his heart is for more.

You see, glimpses of glory are not enough. God's glory is an unstoppable fountain of delight—an ocean of wonder whose depths cannot be sufficiently plumbed. Moses has tasted this glory, and he is left longing for more.

But God does not respond to Moses' request as he might expect. Moses cannot bear a full unveiling of the radiance and splendour of the Holy One—he (and any other human) cannot see God's face and live (v 20). But God will reveal more of himself to Moses through the proclamation of his name and character. He places Moses in the cleft of a rock and covers him with his hand until he has passed by. He shields

him from glory he cannot bear, and graciously unveils his inner self—his heart for the people he calls his own:

The LORD, the LORD, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin. (34:6-7)

It's as though he's saying to Moses, *If you want to see me, if you want to really know me, understand this: I am full of compassion, grace and patience. I am eternally loving, ever-faithful, brimming with mercy and forgiveness.*

When Moses prays, "Show me your glory", he is asking, *Show me who you are.* Before he continues to the Promised Land (with people who are sinful, rebellious and faithless) he needs to know more of the one who promises to go with him.

Maybe you feel like that too. If you are to continue trusting the Lord to lead you through the twists and turns of this life and safely through death into eternity with him, you want to know more of who he is. You need to know that you really can trust him.

Perhaps, like me, you read Old Testament accounts of God's glory being revealed, and long to witness these awe-inspiring sights and sounds yourself. God's answer to Moses shows that what we most need is a revelation of God's being, his nature, his heart. Like Moses, we could not cope with witnessing the fullness of God's glory. But in his kindness, he has wrapped his glory into human form in the Lord Jesus—so that we may know him intimately. The brightest reflection of God's glory is seen in the gospel of Jesus Christ:

For God, who said, 'Let light shine out of darkness,' made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of God's glory displayed in the face of Christ.

(2 Corinthians 4:6)

We can look at Jesus—his perfect life, his sacrificial love, his triumph over death—and know that we are seeing *God himself*. Like Moses, we can ask God to show us even more of his glory. And we can be confident that, though it may look different than we anticipate, he *will* answer.

Cultivate

Consider how you have experienced glimpses of God's glory in your own life. Have these experiences left you longing for more, or have you begun to forget the wonder of compassion and grace, mercy and forgiveness towards sinners? Like Moses, don't be content with what you already know of the Lord; boldly ask for more.

Pray

Write your own prayer asking the Lord to reveal more of his character to you as you read his word, contemplate his works and spend time with his people. Pray it regularly throughout this 30 days of growing in awe, and note any specific ways in which the Lord answers you.

2

Glimpses of Glory

*“Holy, holy, holy is the LORD Almighty;
the whole earth is full of his glory.”*

ISAIAH 6:3

Have you ever thought about what it is that makes God
... *God?*

Perhaps you’ve pondered this kind of question a lot or maybe you think the answer is obvious: *he just is!*

We sometimes forget quite how different God is to you and me. Often, what we think about him is more likely to be based on our experience than on what he reveals about himself in his word and in our world. That’s why I wanted us to first focus on God’s glory—the display of his nature that reveals his total “otherness” or “God-ness”. In other words, what it is that makes him God.

The prophet Isaiah was an ordinary human being like you and me. But he was given an extraordinary vision of God’s glory.



Read Isaiah 6:1-5

*I saw the Lord, high and exalted, seated on a throne; and
the train of his robe filled the temple. (v 1)*

Judah's king, Uzziah, has died, verse 1 tells us; but the Lord is very much alive. He is immortal—reigning high on his throne, exalted above the earth and heavens.

Centuries earlier, God had told Moses, “No one may see me and live” (Exodus 33:20). And that is still true—Isaiah cannot see God's face (or even his back or his feet). All he sees is the hem of his garment *filling* the temple.

As a little girl, I remember watching the wedding of Charles and Diana, Prince and Princess of Wales, and being mesmerised by Diana's dress with its 25-foot train trailing behind her as she walked up the aisle of St Paul's Cathedral. But imagine the train of God's robe alone filling the magnificent temple Solomon had built 200 years earlier. If just the hem of his robe is too great to envisage, how glorious the Lord himself must be!

It's not only Isaiah who cannot look at this glorious God. The seraphim who attend him hide their faces, shielding their eyes from glory too great to behold. Seraphim means “burning ones”—these are not humans; they are heavenly creatures who stand in God's presence and serve him. The unveiled glory of God is so breathtakingly bright that no created being can gaze on it and remain standing—not even angelic beings who we might think would be used to it!

The seraphim call to one another:

*Holy, holy, holy is the LORD Almighty;
the whole earth is full of his glory. (Isaiah 6:3)*

There's a link here between God's holiness and God's glory. God's holiness is more than his moral purity—it's what sets him apart from every other creature. His holiness is his uniqueness; his divine essence; his supreme power, matchless

beauty and absolute perfection; his incomprehensible and incomparable worth.

God cannot be compared to anyone or anything because he is in a class of his own—there is none like him (Isaiah 40:25; 1 Samuel 2:2; Hosea 11:9). And his glory is the outward display of his holiness—the revelation of who he really is. When God showcases his holiness, we see his glory.

As the seraphim proclaim God’s holiness, the foundations of the doorways shake and the temple is filled with smoke. How petrifying this would be! For Isaiah, this is not a warm worship experience but a feeling of intense terror. God’s glory is overwhelming, overpowering, awesome.

Isaiah falls on his face, undone. He realises he’s in the presence of supreme holiness, and he is intensely conscious of his sin. A holy God inspires holy fear.

This must be our response too. As we glimpse true glory, we should be humbled and bow in reverent fear. His holiness exposes our sinfulness. The splendour of his glory exposes the hollowness of all the other things we trust in. But we don’t need to stay on our faces, because the vision of his majestic glory also inspires deeper trust in his goodness and greater hope in his mercy. So we can lift our heads, our hands and our voices in joyful praise.

As we become more and more amazed by our gloriously holy God, we cannot help but worship.

Cultivate

Spend a few minutes contemplating God’s holiness. How might a growing appreciation of his “otherness” impact your day-to-day life?

Listen to the song “Nothing Left to Say” by Davy Flowers.

Pray

Lord God, you are holy, holy, holy—the earth is full of your glory. As I glimpse your glory, I am aware of my smallness. As I contemplate your holiness, I am aware of my sinfulness. How amazing it is that one so magnificent cares about someone so insignificant. I am in awe of your perfection. I am humbled by your desire to be known by sinful people. Teach me to raise my voice and join the angels in praising and adoring you, because you alone are worthy. You alone are holy. Amen.

3

Indescribable Beauty

“High above on the throne was a figure like that of a man ... Like the appearance of a rainbow in the clouds on a rainy day, so was the radiance around him. This was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the LORD. When I saw it, I fell face down.”

EZEKIEL 1:26-28

There's something about a rainbow that stops me in my tracks. No matter how familiar the sight, I still gasp with delight at the sight of a jewel-coloured arc beaming through a rainy sky.

The 16th-century theologian John Calvin once said:

There is no colour in this world that is not intended to make men rejoice.

If that is true (and I think it is!), a rainbow does its job exceptionally well! But it isn't just the beautiful colours shimmering amid raindrops that charm me. As I gaze at hazy yet distinct rings of red and gold, green and violet, the dark clouds seem less prominent and a promise of incoming brightness lifts my spirit.

Perhaps you feel the same. Rainbows are not simply a physical wonder to enjoy in the moment; they rekindle our longing for greater joys to come. So it seems fitting that in describing the radiant glory he sees surrounding the Lord, the prophet Ezekiel uses rainbow-language.



Read Ezekiel 1:22-28

God's people have been banished from their land because of their sin. Only the very poor are left in Judah; everyone else has been captured by the Babylonians and taken into captivity. While they are in exile by the Babylonian River Kebar, Ezekiel sees a spectacular vision of the glory of God. It starts with a storm cloud, flashing with lightning and fire. In the centre of the fire something gleams like amber, and as the cloud approaches, Ezekiel sees living creatures—like humans but with bronze legs, hooved feet and wings. He later realises they are cherubim (Ezekiel 10:1). Above the cherubim is a sparkling expanse of sky, glittering like crystal. And above this expanse is a throne of lapis lazuli occupied by a man-like figure of fire and metal.

Ezekiel sees the glory that Moses and Isaiah saw, but in a more up-close and personal way. He experiences more than fire and lightning, and he sees more than the hem of the Lord's garment. Ezekiel is given a glimpse into God's throne room as the heavens are opened (v 1). He sees through the shimmering expanse separating earth and heaven, beyond the startling blue throne, to the image of the one seated there.

It is a breathtaking scene and totally transcendent. Ezekiel is able to describe everything below the expanse—he offers vivid depictions of the creatures and directional details about the wheels accompanying them. But when he tries to convey what is above the expanse, his words falter. "What looked like ... like that of ... what appeared to be ... as if

... like the appearance of” is the best he can offer, because it is not possible to describe the indescribable. He even hesitates to declare that he has seen the glory of the Lord, more tentatively suggesting, “This was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the LORD” (v 28). Like Isaiah’s vision in the temple, this incredible sight is just a glimpse of God’s immense glory.

Have you ever been so awestruck by something you’ve seen that you haven’t been able to find the words to adequately explain it to someone else? This is how Ezekiel feels after his vision.

It would be easy to think that God had totally abandoned his people—after all, they are in exile because they had abandoned him. But in this vision the Lord enters exile, riding on the wings of cherubim, showing Ezekiel that he is not only in heaven but also with his people. Despite their sin against him, he has not left them for ever. One day, he will gather his people back from exile, and give them “an undivided heart and ... a new spirit” so that they will obey him and live as his people again (Ezekiel 11:17-20).

I don’t know what dark clouds or bleak days you may be facing right now, but I know there is hope of a brighter day to come. Whether you are experiencing loneliness, illness, anxiety, fear or just the weariness of daily life in a fallen world, the Lord has not abandoned you. He is with you—radiant in glory, mighty to deliver.

Brilliant light surrounds him, like the appearance of a rainbow in the clouds on a rainy day—a radiant symbol of promise and kindness. He will open the heavens and come to us again. There is hope of a brighter day.

Cultivate

Like Isaiah, Ezekiel fell on his face stunned when he saw a vision of God’s glory. We are often casual in our approach to

him. Is it possible that you have lost sight of the grandeur of the glory of God?

When you next see a rainbow, as well as remembering God's faithfulness to keep his promises, remember Ezekiel's vision and stop to praise him for his radiant glory. What else might serve as a physical reminder of his transcendence?

Pray

Today, if you are able, kneel to pray. Or perhaps try bowing your face to the ground like Ezekiel and Isaiah did. Ask the Lord to give you a greater sense of wonder at his other-worldly glory. Pray that you will grow in reverence as you experience more of him.

4

Radiant Beams

“As he was praying, the appearance of his face changed, and his clothes became as bright as a flash of lightning.”

LUKE 9:29



Read Luke 9:18-36

It is possible to know something without really *knowing* it. The friends had talked together, travelled together, eaten together, weathered turbulent storms together and finally come to the realisation that the man they followed was God’s promised Messiah—the one who they hoped would overthrow Israel’s enemies, gather God’s people, and establish his kingdom on earth. But while they knew this intellectually, they hadn’t fully grasped the reality.

Eight days after Peter’s confession that Jesus is the Messiah, Jesus takes him, along with James and John, up a mountainside to pray. While they are on the mountaintop, Jesus is suddenly transformed. His face begins to shine like the sun (Matthew 17:2) and his clothes become dazzling white. For a few moments,

the radiance and glory of his divine nature breaks through his human form, and his closest friends get to witness it.

Centuries earlier, during the times when God's glory descended on the tent of meeting in the wilderness, Moses would enter the tent to speak with the Lord—and when Moses came out, his face would be radiant (Exodus 34:30, 35). It reflected the brightness of God's glory, just as the moon reflects the sun's beaming light. But on this mountain, Jesus is not simply reflecting God's glory—he *is* the glory! Glory does not descend on him from above; it beams directly out of him. His face, body and clothes radiate light. He is the source of glory—the glorious God himself.

As if this sight isn't enough, Moses and Elijah suddenly appear alongside him "in glorious splendour" (v 30). Don't rush past this moment. Moses has been dead for over 1,400 years, Elijah for over 900, but here they stand on a mountaintop in gloriously restored bodies, talking with Jesus. Both men had previously spoken with God on mountains and seen glimpses of his glory, but here they *share* his glory. In this holy moment, Peter, James and John glimpse a foretaste of what Jesus will do in the future—when he will transform the bodies of all who have believed in him to become like his glorious body (Philippians 3:21). This includes you if you are trusting in Jesus. One day, your body will be renewed and restored so that it resembles something of our risen Lord's glory. What an incredible thought!

How might you have reacted to this revelation of Jesus' splendour? I imagine myself stunned into silence, but Peter is more practical. As Moses and Elijah are leaving, he offers to put up shelters for them and for Jesus. It may have seemed like a noble idea to Peter, but he fails to grasp two important points.

Firstly, Jesus has been talking with Moses and Elijah about "his departure, which he was about to bring to fulfilment at Jerusalem" (Luke 9:31). This is Jesus' death and

resurrection—planned from eternity—through which he would secure salvation for his people. Jesus and his disciples must leave the mountaintop if this plan is to be fulfilled. They can't stay there, basking in glory, for ever.

But secondly, Jesus is not simply one more in a long line of prophets speaking God's word to his people. He *is* the Word. The three men can't be grouped together like the presidents on Mount Rushmore because there is no comparison between them. Moses and Elijah had significant roles in Israel's history, but Jesus is the one to whom *all* history points. He is superior in every way. Despite his confession that Jesus is God's Messiah (v 20), Peter doesn't yet *know* this in the depths of his soul. I wonder if you do? Have you really grasped the truth that Jesus is God himself—from eternity to eternity, without beginning or end; supremely glorious, just and true, Lord of lords and King of kings? Why not take a moment now and ask the Holy Spirit to help you understand just how glorious Jesus is.

While Peter is speaking, a cloud envelops the friends and they hear the voice of God the Father:

This is my Son, whom I have chosen; listen to him. (v 35)

There is now no doubt that Jesus is the beloved Son of God, his chosen King (Psalm 2:6-7). And the only right response to this glorious revelation is to listen to what he says. His is the only voice that should captivate us, the only voice we should unequivocally obey. Jesus still speaks to us today through his word and by his Spirit. When we spend time reading the Bible, we are listening to him speak to us through it. We will know him more fully and love him more deeply as we spend time with Jesus and see more of his glory.

Cultivate

When do you find it hard to recognise Jesus as Lord over everything in your life? What other voices sometimes seem

louder or more captivating to you than his? Take time to pray about each one, asking the Holy Spirit to help you find Jesus more precious and more worthy of attention than anything or anyone else.

Pray

Lord Jesus, I know you are the true and only Son of God. You are the only one worthy of my wholehearted devotion and unwavering obedience. Please help me see you as you truly are—glorious and majestic—and please help me to love and listen to you. I want to grow in awe of you. Amen.

5

Come Closer

“But you have come to Mount Zion, to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem ... to Jesus the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel.”

HEBREWS 12:22-24

Imagine attending a formal dinner at a mansion house. Picture the crisp linen and polished silver; the overwhelming selection of cutlery and glasses that you don't know when to use; fabulously dressed guests; and an austere host who appears to sneer at anyone who doesn't look quite right.

Now contrast that with a casual party at a friend's home. Everyone is relaxed, a pizza slice in one hand and a can of soda in the other. Music is playing; people are chatting and laughing; your friend is beaming, unfazed by noise or mess. You know you are welcome—and feel at home.

As we've been thinking about God's glory, I hope you have been awestruck at the sheer “otherness” of God—his transcendent splendour, the vastness of his being, the unrivalled beauty of his character. But I wonder if the vivid

depictions of his greatness and majesty have left you feeling uncertain about your own standing before him. Perhaps you think, *If God is so glorious that even seraphim can't look at him, how can I possibly draw near?*

My hope is that by meditating on the nature of God we will be led to greater awe, not deeper anxiety. Our final passage in this section shows how this is possible. God is more glorious than we can imagine, but he is more approachable than we may think.



Read Hebrews 12:18-24

Do you see the contrast between the way Israel approached God at Mount Sinai and how we now approach him at Mount Zion—the heavenly city where God dwells? You may not have thought about approaching God at Mount Zion before, but this is what we do whenever we pray or sing to him.

When the law was given at Sinai, it was accompanied by such an awesome display of God's glory that the people were terrified (Exodus 19:16-19). They saw a thick cloud shot through with lightning, smoke billowing as if from a fiery furnace. They heard roars of thunder, trumpet blasts, and the voice of God himself. The mountain trembled as he descended—and the people trembled with fear. The sights, sounds and smells of Sinai were terrifying. It was a place of darkness, gloom and storm (Hebrews 12:18).

Mount Zion could not be more different. Although Zion itself was a physical place (the hill Jerusalem was built on), its purpose was always to point to the heavenly city of God—his perfect, permanent dwelling place. Now, Mount Zion is not “a mountain that can be touched” (v 18), but a spiritual mountain that we approach by grace, through faith.

It is not a place of gloom and terror, but a joyful gathering of thousands of angels—and the spirits of believers who have

gone ahead of us, now made perfect for ever. Our names are written on the heavenly register with theirs—a reminder that we too will be there one day.

Moses, the mediator of the old covenant, trembled with fear as he approached God at Sinai. But through Jesus, the mediator of the new covenant, we can draw near with joyful confidence. He took our judgment on himself and shed his blood for our forgiveness. The blood of Abel cries out for justice (Genesis 4:10), but Jesus' blood cries for mercy—forgiveness and peace with God for those who trust in him.

While there may be something appealing about the idea of approaching a physical place where we can meet with God, our reality is far greater. We can come close to him in prayer, at any time, confident that he will never turn us away. There is no fear. No dread. No “Please Stand Back!” sign warning us to keep our distance. Rather, we receive a warm welcome from a heavenly Father who loves us.

What is it that keeps you from approaching God with confidence and joy? Perhaps it's an awareness of your sin and unworthiness? At Mount Zion, we are reminded that we have been made perfect through Jesus' sacrifice. Maybe it's doubt that he wants you to draw near? At Mount Zion, we remember he sent his Son to shed his blood and open the way for us to come to him. Maybe it's fear that he is too terrifying to approach? At Mount Zion, we recall the festive crowd of angels and the believers who have gone before us, gathered in joyful celebration without worry or fear.

We may not always be conscious of our hesitation in approaching God, so it's worth pausing to think about it. It is possible to believe these truths in our heads, but deep down to lack the assurance that we really are accepted. But you and I have nothing to fear. Our God is glorious. And he is our Father.

Cultivate

What has most struck you as we have considered God's glory over the last few days? What will help you remember both his "otherness" and our freedom to approach him without fear? Is there a verse you could display somewhere to remind you of his glory?

Pray

Glorious God, you are infinitely superior to me in every way. You are magnificent, splendid, beyond comparison with anything or anyone else in this world. Thank you for revealing yourself to me through your word. And thank you that I do not need to be afraid, but can draw near knowing that you welcome me because of Jesus. Please show me more of your glory as I draw near to you. And, like Moses, help me reflect something of your glory to those around me—that they may worship you too. Amen.