

Creation

I L L U S T R A T E D

YOUR COMPANION ...



IN NATURE




IN SCRIPTURE



IN LIVING

SUMMER 2025 VOL 32 NO 2 US \$4.99



A close-up photograph of an orangutan's arm and shoulder, showing its reddish-brown fur. The orangutan is positioned on the right side of the frame, with its arm extending towards the left. The background is a dense, out-of-focus green forest with sunlight filtering through the leaves, creating a bokeh effect. The text is overlaid on the left side of the image.

*“Test all things.
Hold on to what
is good.”*

– 1 Thessalonians 5:21, CSB



Our Why

Some may not realize it, but each issue of this publication is divided into three sections—*Creation Illustrated* in nature, in Scripture, and in living—which has been the intentional design of every edition since the magazine's inception thirty-two years ago.

These three sections minister to vital aspects of balanced living and personal development by addressing the mental, spiritual, and physical needs we all have. The Creator wants all of His children to “prosper in all things and be in health, just as your soul prospers” (3 John 1:2).

In the first section, *Creation Illustrated* in nature, we provide uplifting, character-building object lessons found in God's creation including from creatures, plants, inanimate objects, and outdoor adventures. The articles and photos inspire readers to get outdoors and reap the mental benefits of exercise, fresh air, and sunshine while drawing close to our Creator God.

The second section, *Creation Illustrated* in Scripture, addresses one day of the Creation week in each issue so we can better understand the Bible and the Creation story and find assurance in a biblical worldview that bolsters our faith in His faithfulness, design, and plan for our lives.

The third section, *Creation Illustrated* in living, inspires creativity in the garden, kitchen, photography, and various outdoor activities like hiking. Since we are made in the image of God (Genesis 1:27), and the first element of His character revealed in the Bible is His creative power, we need to develop that aspect of God's character in our own lives.

In fact, the ability to express our creativity is deeply significant in God's design for humanity. No other creature in all Creation has the ability to be endlessly creative like humans. Art and creativity are celebrated throughout Scripture. Exodus 35:31–33 describes how God filled Bezalel “with the Spirit of God, with skill, with intelligence, with knowledge, and with all craftsmanship, to devise artistic designs” (ESV). This passage shows that artistic talents are gifts from God to be used for His glory.

Isaiah 64:8 beautifully illustrates God's role as the divine artist. “But now, O Lord, you are our Father; we are the clay, and you are our potter; we are all the work of your hand” (ESV). This verse reminds us that just as God shapes us and the rest of His creation, humans also have been given the ability to create, shape, and contribute to this world through various forms of art, writing, craftsmanship, technology, and other creative skills.

Embracing our creativity and developing it affords an essential aspects of human existence by reflecting God's nature and purpose. Through creative expression we mirror His character. This gift should be cherished and used to honor Him, serve others, and bring delight into the world. That's why.

The Publishers



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Creation

I L L U S T R A T E D

Vol. 32, No. 2

Our Purpose . . .

is to share the wonders of God's creation. By revealing fresh insights of His infinite wisdom, gentle touch, undeniable justice, redeeming love, and flawless design, pure truth shall bring renewed peace. Each part of this publication is offered as a reprieve from the daily rigors of life so that all can look to the future with unbridled gratitude and hope.

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Like us:



IN NATURE

Our Why	2
Giving Thanks	4
Sharing Our Mail	5
Re-Creation Outdoors	6
Lens on Creation	12
Creation Up Close	14 ▶
The Elusive Albatross	20



... IN SCRIPTURE



◀ 28	Creation Day 6, Part 1 The Creation of Animals and Creeping Things
38	Creation Highlights
39	Creation Stewardship

... IN LIVING

My Walk With God	40
Gardens From Eden	44
Genesis Cuisine	50 ▶
Children's Story	52
Character Lesson	58
Contests	60
Study Guide	62



The cover photo is of a macaw was taken by Mircea Rosca of Romania.



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Vastness

By definition, *vastness* implies *immensity*. When something appears boundless, we can hardly comprehend its scope with our finite minds. So, we simply label it as *vast*.

Like the thousands upon thousands of open acres of land in Montana that stretch almost unobstructed to the horizon and beyond with the boundless sky above justifies the moniker "Big Sky Country." Join a group of Michiganders who ride horses into this vast wilderness and discover a golden truth about the body of Christ in this issue's "Re-creation and Restoration Outdoors" feature called "Montana Ranch Revelations."

The countless head of cattle raised by ranchers in the region point to the relationship God designed on Creation day six when the wild beasts, domestic animals, and creeping things became a vital part of the Creation story as told in the Creation week article. Domestic creatures form only a small portion of the vast 6.5 million species of land animals, yet God ordained their mutually beneficial relationship with humans.

He also created the *creeping things* as part of the balance of life orchestrated into various ecosystems throughout Creation. Among the immense 5.5 million species of insects, even the unique praying mantis displays its capacity to massively reproduce with around two hundred praying mantis nymphs hatching from a single egg pod formed on a twig by the female. Discover more unusual facts in the children's story in this edition called "Praying Mantis Surprise."

Such ecosystems include the vital function of pollinating insects that vast farmlands rely upon in order to produce bountiful crops. The author of this issue's "Creation Up Close" story can hardly contain herself when pondering the immense fields of sunflowers that follow the sun's trajectory over the summer sky. Their vibrant yellow faces dazzle even the casual observer, and anyone who attempts to ponder the countless number of sunflower seeds or gallons of oil they produce could never fully fathom such vast productivity.

As we trudge through daily demands or even struggle to hike up a mountain, our challenges turn seemingly insignificant upon reaching the summit to gasp at the expansive view. Such a gift was granted the author of "Your Reward Awaits" when she could see for miles from atop a California coastal-range trail. On a clear day the vast Pacific Ocean stretches the horizon into a distant blur that blends with the sky.

Such immense oceanic expanses remain almost incomprehensible, yet "The Elusive Albatross" article will take you into the Antarctic Sea where these avian anomalies stretch their twelve-foot wingspan and endlessly soar without touching land for years. Such boundless capabilities point to the limitless designs found in the Creator's handiwork.

Each of these examples of mind-boggling creations cannot come close to the vastness of God's boundless love, selfless sacrifice, endless mercy, and limitless hope He offers to all His creation. The whole universe is watching for our unfettered surrender to accept His unfathomable gift of eternal life—a concept so vast that we will be studying it throughout perpetuity and find no end.



Tom Ish, editor/publisher



The vast ocean and sky don't begin to compare with the immensity of God's grace.

Surprise gift . . .

Your surprise gift of sharing a digital copy of a recent issue of your *Creation Illustrated* magazine is much appreciated. Thank you! I once subscribed to your publication, although I needed to let it go due to overwhelming workloads and insufficient income. Your magazine's layout and sense of quality encourage readers to appreciate the hard work of presenting beautiful photographs, combined with first-class writers input helps encourage readers to want more issues.

Your free issue arrived at a challenging time in my life after setbacks. I plan to resubscribe once life turns around as the natural beauty, stellar articles, and your advertisers' sense of quality all add up to a unique publication worthy of sharing with others. One of my privately held beliefs is to showcase worthy articles, websites, and messages at no cost on social media without informing businesses and ministries beforehand. In your case, I may share your free offer by next weekend with my Facebook friends to encourage them to sign up. It is the least I can do to share your family's love of showcasing beautiful photographs and articles of *Creation* in digital and print formats.

Keep up the excellent work. Your publication layout is attractive with no distractions that most magazines do not offer. Also, the high-quality color printing creates images ready to jump off the page right into the viewer's mind as the next best option to

experiencing the same scenes in person. It is a treat to enjoy viewing your work that helps readers raise their minds to a higher plane.

J. Meador
Flora, Indiana

My children . . .

I received a copy of your *Creation Illustrated* magazine with my Christmas care package here at the Dixon Prison. I read through it and sent it home to my children. They loved it. I am asking if you could send me more issues with animals so I can read them and then mail them home to my children. This would be great for our bond, separation problems, and helping them with a better knowledge of God. Their ages are seven through twelve—a total of ten children.

Ricky F.
Dixon, Illinois

Digital copy . . .

Thank you again for the beautiful magazine you continue to create. What a blessing! I ordered one for my friend in Massachusetts, and she loves it. Do you still

give out a free digital subscription with a printed copy? How could I access a digital copy? I cannot afford a printed subscription for myself. God bless.

C. Weaver
Lancaster,
Massachusetts

Editor's Note: We do offer a free digital subscription with each paid print subscription. Get a free digital issue on our website: creationillustrated.com.

Living color . . .

Thank you so much for your faithful loving ministries. God bless you in all you do, and thank you for helping us to spread the good news of the gospel in living color!

S. Cochran
Goldendale,
Washington

Your cousin . . .

Good morning from Vermont! My wife and I appreciate your magazine and for years have felt a special connection because your cousin spent a summer here at our farm. You have a ministry that is affecting many unreached people. God bless!

Paul Miller
Vernon, Vermont

Dear Friends:

*We appreciate hearing from our readers. Please let us know how you are using *Creation Illustrated*.*

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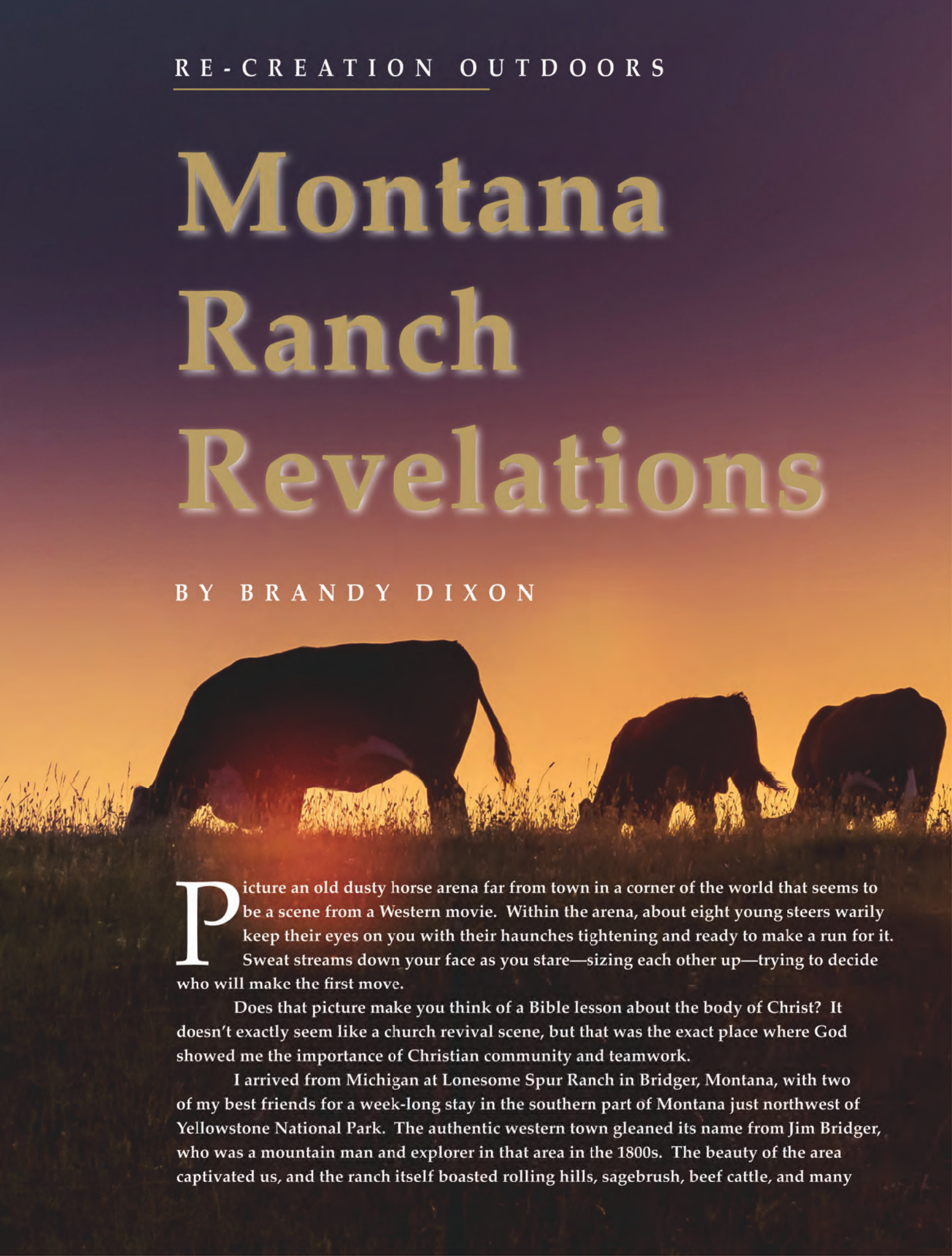
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RE - CREATION OUTDOORS

Montana Ranch Revelations

BY BRANDY DIXON

The background of the entire page is a photograph of three cows grazing in a field at sunset. The cows are silhouetted against a bright orange and yellow sky. The grass is dark and textured. The overall mood is peaceful and rustic.

Picture an old dusty horse arena far from town in a corner of the world that seems to be a scene from a Western movie. Within the arena, about eight young steers warily keep their eyes on you with their haunches tightening and ready to make a run for it. Sweat streams down your face as you stare—sizing each other up—trying to decide who will make the first move.

Does that picture make you think of a Bible lesson about the body of Christ? It doesn't exactly seem like a church revival scene, but that was the exact place where God showed me the importance of Christian community and teamwork.

I arrived from Michigan at Lonesome Spur Ranch in Bridger, Montana, with two of my best friends for a week-long stay in the southern part of Montana just northwest of Yellowstone National Park. The authentic western town gleaned its name from Jim Bridger, who was a mountain man and explorer in that area in the 1800s. The beauty of the area captivated us, and the ranch itself boasted rolling hills, sagebrush, beef cattle, and many



gorgeous, friendly horses. The Lonesome Spur, owned and operated by husband and wife Lonnie and Elaine Schwend, started welcoming guests in 1993 yet has remained a working cattle ranch for five generations.

The next day we each got partnered up with one of those majestic equine creatures that roamed the historic property. It took awhile to get me matched with the perfect fit, as I went through three different horses before I ended up with a medium-sized bay horse named Ben—a foreshadow of learning vital lessons of teamwork from God in the days ahead.

That week Ben and I spent time becoming connected, and when the Schwend family took us into the Pryor Mountains on an overnight camping and trail-riding trip, Ben and I felt ready to take on the adventure. The Pryor region actually holds a wild mustang population of around a hundred thirty animals, and although I never saw the wild horses, it was exciting to be riding in their territory.

We explored the range with a real cowboy, Lonnie Schwend, and learned how to check



The author (left) and best friends, Vickie and Lori, ride the open expanses of Montana.

Brandy Dixon

HORSES NECESSARY

on the beef cattle spending the summer in remote pastures. With 2.5 million head of cattle in Montana, that's almost three cows to every person in the state. Family ranches like Lonesome Spur generate about one billion dollars a year or around half of the state's agricultural revenue.

We rode for hours each day through the wild country within part of the Crow Indian Reservation—the largest in Montana spanning about two and a quarter million acres. The tribe was originally named *Apsalooke*, which means “children of the large-beaked bird,” but they were mistakenly called *Crow* by non-natives who misinterpreted the phrase. The tribe's last traditional leader, Chief Plenty Coups, died in 1932 and left the land to the Crow people. We visited the Chief Plenty Coups museum and homestead, which gave us Michiganders a sense of awe at the history of the land.

The spectacular mountains covered miles of untouched wilderness where I realized that horses provide a necessary mode of transportation for ranchers. Rocks, ditches, cliffs, and trees made roads impossible amid the terrain that appeared untouched except for the long fences that cowboys had painstakingly erected years ago. My soul was at ease in those mountains far away from civilization and technology. Time did not seem to exist in the vast, quiet unbroken wilderness, save the occasional *moo* of a grazing cow. I finally understood the admonition in Psalm 46:10 where we are urged to “Be still, and know that I am God.”

As ranching novices, we could enjoy our horses with much more freedom than an ordinary single-file trail ride. We could race to our heart's content and go wherever we pleased as long as we remained in sight. No better feeling exists for a horse-riding enthusiast like me than to run on horseback through clear mountain air, listening to the music of the pounding



Cattle graze the countless acres of Big Sky country.

Lonesome Spur



A ride to camp in the Pryor Mountains

Brandy Dixon

“Be still, and know that I am God.”

earth beneath a horse’s feet. This elation lasted throughout our time at Lonesome Spur as the wildness of that area seeped into our veins.

Grasping a clearer view of our heavenly Father from those mountain trails came easy as the vastness spoke of His incomprehensible grandeur. During our time back at the ranch, however, we learned a down-to-earth lesson on valuing the body of Christ. After our camping trip, we spent our days in an arena with some small roping steers. The corral was set up as a practice ring for Lonnie and Elaine as rodeo competitors. A past champion for bareback bronc riding and bull riding, Lonnie could stay atop those bucking animals for at least eight seconds.

We watched Lonnie compete in team roping where a calf is let out of a chute and two people on horseback chase and rope it. One person ropes the head, and the other rider ropes the back legs. The fastest team wins. Safety measures ensure the calf isn’t hurt during the event. Elaine competed in barrel racing aimed at riding a galloping horse around a three-barrel cloverleaf pattern in the fastest time.

Because our trip out west was not during the cattle-drive season, Lonnie taught us *team penning*—an actual sport where a team of three on horses try to separate specific cattle from a herd and guide them into a smaller pen in less than sixty seconds. The sport celebrates athleticism, horsemanship, and the ability for man and beast to sense how cattle respond to different cues—an illustration of God’s call for Christians to work together. It takes speed and precision to move cattle into different pens—especially without even touching the animals themselves.

Our task was to herd the eight or so young steers from the larger arena into a smaller



Ranch hands work together to herd and corral hundreds of cattle.

Lonesome Spur



Penning uncooperative

ASSERT OUR AUTHORITY

pen. Five of us amateur ranch guests quickly spread out across the dirt arena and tentatively started to take a few steps forward on our horses. But the cattle were too smart for us. They quickly realized our attempt to assert our authority over them and quickly darted away showing us tourists that we really had no control over their actions, even if we felt totally authentic wearing our cowboy hats. God didn't create cattle to be so easily fooled.

We soon realized that team penning would be more difficult than we thought, so we regrouped. This time we moved toward the cattle in a long line. Orchestrating five people, five horses, and eight cows (a total of 62 different legs) in a specific pattern became a cacophony rather than a symphony. When one of us was out of place, the cattle would sense a hole and run through it. We would then have to start the entire process over again. This happened many times, and at one point we had cattle going every direction, which baffled a group of very frustrated wanna-be cowgirls.

We took turns being the lead, switching positions in line, and eventually learning to communicate. We discovered how far to be from each other, how fast the lead horse needed to move, and how to *read* the cattle to anticipate their moves. We finally found a method that worked, and we all cheered as the petulant young animals entered the small pen. By the end of our stay, we had the thrill of herding cattle at running speeds.

It was in this training arena where I learned the most important lesson from my dude-ranch stay. A section in first Corinthians illustrates what we experienced quite well. The metaphor uses the human body, yet it applies well to us amateur cowgirls chasing cattle around an arena. It says, "But now indeed there are many members, yet one body. And the eye cannot



cattle requires tricky teamwork.

Brandy Dixon



Rancher Lonnie Schwend surveys the vast Montana landscape.

Brandy Dixon

“Many members, yet one body.”

say to the hand, ‘I have no need of you,’ nor again the head to the feet, ‘I have no need of you.’ No, much rather, those members of the body which seem to be weaker are necessary” (1 Corinthians 12:20–22). Think of the obscure elbow that must bend in order to feed ourselves.

Just as the three of us could not say one was more important than another, Christians cannot consider their gifts superior to others. All gifts that God gives are deemed important and even *necessary* as Scripture states. Just as humans need eyes and hands, cattle drives need people in the front and the back.

All of God’s people must work together to accomplish the goal of spreading the gospel to the world. A Christian school teacher is no more or no less important than a church secretary. A pastor would be ineffective without the people who attend his church. One person might be good at writing while someone else might be gifted at preaching God’s message and starting a revival. We are called to serve others with the gifts we have been given.

Without working together at the ranch, we could accomplish nothing. My cowgirl friends and I couldn’t say to one another, “I have no need of you,” and neither can any Christian because God designed us to be a community—to be the body of Christ. I came home from that trip renewed because I was able to experience an application of the interdependent body firsthand in an uncommon part of God’s creation—an old dusty arena in Montana filled with cattle. **C**

Brandy Dixon writes from Monroe, Michigan, where she continues to study God’s plan and design in accomplishing His will for our lives. Learn more about the ranch at: <https://www.lonesomespur.net>.

Des Lacs National

A L E N S O N C R E A T I O N



Bobby Harrison

A flock of American white pelicans gather at Des Lacs.

“**A**nd it shall come to pass, that every thing that liveth, which moveth, whithersoever the rivers shall come, shall live: and there shall be a very great multitude of fish, because these waters shall come

thither: for they shall be healed; and every thing shall live whither the river cometh” (Ezekiel 47:9, KJV).

Just south of the Canadian border in northwest North Dakota, the meandering Des Lacs River weaves together the 10,500 acres

of the Des Lacs National Wildlife Refuge. Des Lacs (French for *of the lakes*) offers an oasis for abundant life. Its marshes, lakes, prairies, and wooded coulees provide bountiful wildlife habitat and some of the best birding in North Dakota. It has been officially designated as one of America’s top 500 Globally Important Bird Areas.

More than two hundred fifty species of birds have been observed on the refuge with more than a hundred fifty of these species nesting there. Early spring and fall are the best times to see migrating waterfowl. During the fall migration, up to three hundred thousand snow geese descend on the refuge’s marshes and grain fields as the massive flocks head southward.

As spring arrives an abundance of waterbirds and shorebirds flood the refuge on their northward journey. Birds such as the American white pelican, marbled godwit, willet, long-billed curlew, and Wilson’s snipe remain and breed at the refuge.

Three roads within the refuge allows visitors to explore the various habitats of the preserve. Old Lake Road, a state-designated scenic byway, extends along the east side of the lower refuge. Looking over the vast flat grasslands, the splendor of God’s creation fills the senses. In the grassland paradise, Swainson’s hawks, sharp-tailed grouse, upland



Bobby Harrison

A rose-breasted grosbeak

Wildlife Refuge

B Y B O B B Y H A R R I S O N

sandpipers, Sprague's pipits, as well as grasshopper and Baird's sparrows, breed during the short spring and summer seasons.

The woodlands along Tasker's Coulee road is the best place in the refuge to see God's winged jewels like the red-eyed vireo, warbling vireo, ovenbird, American redstart, black-and-white warbler, veery, along with rose-breasted and black-headed grosbeaks.

Along the woodlands and prairie's edge habitat, eastern kingbirds, common yellowthroats, western meadowlarks, savannah sparrows, and clay-colored sparrows abound. Target species that draw birders from all over the country are the Sprague's pipit and the Baird's, LeConte's, Henslow's, and Nelson's sharp-tailed sparrows.

Boat Dock Road follows the west side on an extensive wet meadow and the Upper Lake of the refuge. A drive along this road gives visitors exceptional views of meadows, lakes, and woodland habitats. This area of Des Lacs affords birding enthusiasts the opportunity to see sedge wrens, marsh wrens, northern harriers, and my favorites, eared and western grebes.


Des Lac National Wildlife Refuge remains a hidden gem amid the lonesome plains of North Dakota—a refuge for a myriad of God's amazing winged creatures.



Bobby Harrison

A western grebe watches over its nest.

Through God's gift of nature, I am constantly reminded of the refuge that we each can find in God. We all need to take solace in words of the psalmist, "But let all those rejoice who put their trust in You; let them ever shout for joy, because You defend them; let those also

who love Your name be joyful in You" (Psalm 5:11). 

Bobby Harrison writes from Huntsville, Alabama, as a retired associate professor of photography. Explore more of his amazing work at: www.bobbyharrison.blogspot.com



Bobby Harrison

A sharp-tail grouse

Sunflower

C R E A T I O N U P C L O S E,



The symmetry and brightness of sunflowers dazzle even casual observers.

A sea of yellow stretches

Over the years, clumsy, overbearing sunflowers proved an enigma for me. While florists and grocery stores peddle a smaller variety, most towering sunflowers I encountered exceeded my petite five-foot frame. At local fairs, blue, red, and green ribbons adorned the largest sunflower heads—some up to two feet in diameter. Yet, they held no charm or beauty for me. That was until a recent

discovery revealed a secret joy held deep within these gentle botanical giants.

At times monotonous, my daily commute offered little in the way of inspiration. Through my car window I saw endless farmlands whisk by filled with commercial rows of corn and soybeans as far as the horizon. On occasion unexpected sights greeted me—like the morning surprise of a peacock in all its splendor sauntering out of a wheat field or the

Secrets

B Y D O N N A B U C H E R



for countless acres.

Farm Bureau



Bryan Reynolds

Attracting pollinators is a major function of sunflowers.

shocking glimpse by the roadside of a fiery red fox eating corn from a pilfered cob. Then, once again I smiled as farm fields transformed a mundane commute by astounding me with the largest fields of sunflowers imaginable.

As vehicles sped by riveted on their destination, two miles of stunning sunflowers captured my gaze, slowed my pace, and invited me into their secret lessons from the Creator's

hand. Over acres upon acres a bright yellow carpet of sunflowers filled my view in every direction. Seemingly unnoticed by some passersby, the spectacle remained undiminished in its joyful existence.

Stopping my car for a better look, I leaned on the guard rail surveying the expansive field and felt utterly astonished at the uniformity of the flowers. Unlike fields of wildflowers or even

cultivated blooms, all the sunflowers stood tall with their symmetrical heads facing east like a well-ordered regiment of golden soldiers. I later learned that a steep decline of pollinator bees (due to the heavy pesticide usage in our area) required creative intervention resulting in the massive sunflower fields.

Intrigued, my busy mind began a foray into the science of sunflowers in search of their secret joy from the Creator's perspective. Uncovering these stunning facts infused such awe into my soul that I stopped yet another day to pause in worship of the Creator.

My discoveries revealed the sunflower stands as a true wonder of His handiwork and illustrates its divine design in a unique way. Marvel, as I did, at the following fascinating attributes of the sunflower.

- Budding sunflowers move in *solar synchronicity* following the sun from east to west every day then return overnight to an eastward posture. A scientific experiment out of

the University of California, Davis grew fields of sunflowers in enclosed warehouses lighted with electric lights 24 hours each day. The sunflower plants still moved east to west tracking the sun even though it was out of their view and could not physically sense it. Scientists concluded this behavior was embedded in the plant's DNA.

- Sunflowers require six to eight hours of sunlight every day that warms the blooms, facilitating easier pollination.

- Sunflower seeds follow an intricate spiral that curves in a predictable pattern. The spiral is based on the Fibonacci Sequence (named for the thirteenth century mathematician), which is a series of numbers, starting with 0 and 1, where each succeeding number is the sum of the two preceding numbers. A typical sequence is 1, 2, 3, 5, 8, 13, 21, 34, 55, 89, 144, etc. By using these numbers as the width of adjoining squares and connecting opposing corners with arcs, a spiral emerges that can be found throughout nature. Sunflower heads have two seed



The spiral seed pattern follows a common formula found throughout Creation.



Sunflower seed oil production is

spirals—one moving in a clockwise direction while the other moves counterclockwise, which ensures the seeds are packed together in the most efficient way with no wasted space.

- The outer edge of the spirals hosts more than two thousand individual flowers against the petals of the plant. The bright yellow petals draw pollinators to the tiny flowers.

- The entire sunflower plant is edible from the root to the petals and provides over twenty-five different medicinal benefits.

- A record 1.32 million acres of sunflowers are projected for the 2025 harvest in the US.

- Ninety percent of sunflowers are an oilseed variety; the remainder being edible sunflower seeds.

Learning so many facts about sunflowers inspired my second visit to the fields with my thoughts attuned toward these sunflower secrets. My cheery sunflower friends continued to share lessons through the wonder of the Creator's handiwork that never ceases.

The one fact that intrigued me more than any other was the sunflower following the sun from east to west, returning to its eastward position during the night to be prepared for the new day. Then finally, as a mature bloom, remaining in an eastward gaze for the rest of its life.

God set the sun following the east to west pattern from the beginning of creation of the earth's rotation and uses this pattern to teach us some of the following important biblical insights.

- The wise men saw Christ's Star from the east, followed it, and found Him. (See Matthew 2:2.)

- Jesus warned His disciples of false prophets in the end times deceiving the people of His coming, and He indicated that He would be coming from the east and every eye would see Him. (See Matthew 24:25–27.)

- David penned a glorious metaphor in Psalm 19:4–6, comparing the sun's rising to that of a bridegroom emerging from his chamber. This



a big agribusiness.

Repeat visits to the sunflower fields inspires spiritual reflection.



Birds feast on massive sunflower seed heads.



Hundreds of tiny flowers border the seeds of a sunflower.

prophetic utterance reminds us to fix our eyes on the east to watch for the Bridegroom, Jesus, coming for His bride—the church.

Now, more than ever, this valuable illustration from the sunflower teaches us to live prepared for Christ's return. As you arise in the morning, are your first thoughts focused on Jesus? Throughout the day, do you seek to follow Him? In the evening, is your last gaze turned toward Him? Do you long for the Bridegroom? “That people may know, from the rising of the sun and from the west, that there is none besides me; I am the Lord, and there is no other” (Isaiah 45:6, ESV).

Another unique aspect of sunflowers standing in the field that bedazzled me was their uniformity. As far as my eyes could see, their huge heads each stood tall on a single stalk. Each one facing east, they remained as if unified in one focus and one purpose undeterred by the highway noise.

God takes pleasure in His children when they dwell in unity of mind and purpose in this troubled

world. “How good and pleasant it is when God’s people live together in unity!” (Psalm 133:1, NIV). Paul exhorted the Philippians to be of one spirit and one mind: sharing the same love and purpose; fleeing selfishness, and esteeming others more highly than themselves. (See Philippians 2:2, 3.) And in John 17:22, 23 Jesus in His high priestly prayer before His death, shared His full desire for complete unity so that “the world [will] know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me” (NIV). Like the dazzling field of sunflowers drawing me in, the world will stop and see His people and His love for them when the body of Christ is unified.

The more time I spend in nature—even simple times in my backyard garden—the more God reveals His character woven into His creation. From the myriad blades of grass under my bare feet producing the air I breathe through a complex process of photosynthesis to the regal sunflowers eagerly facing eastward, all speak of His wisdom, design, and plan of salvation.

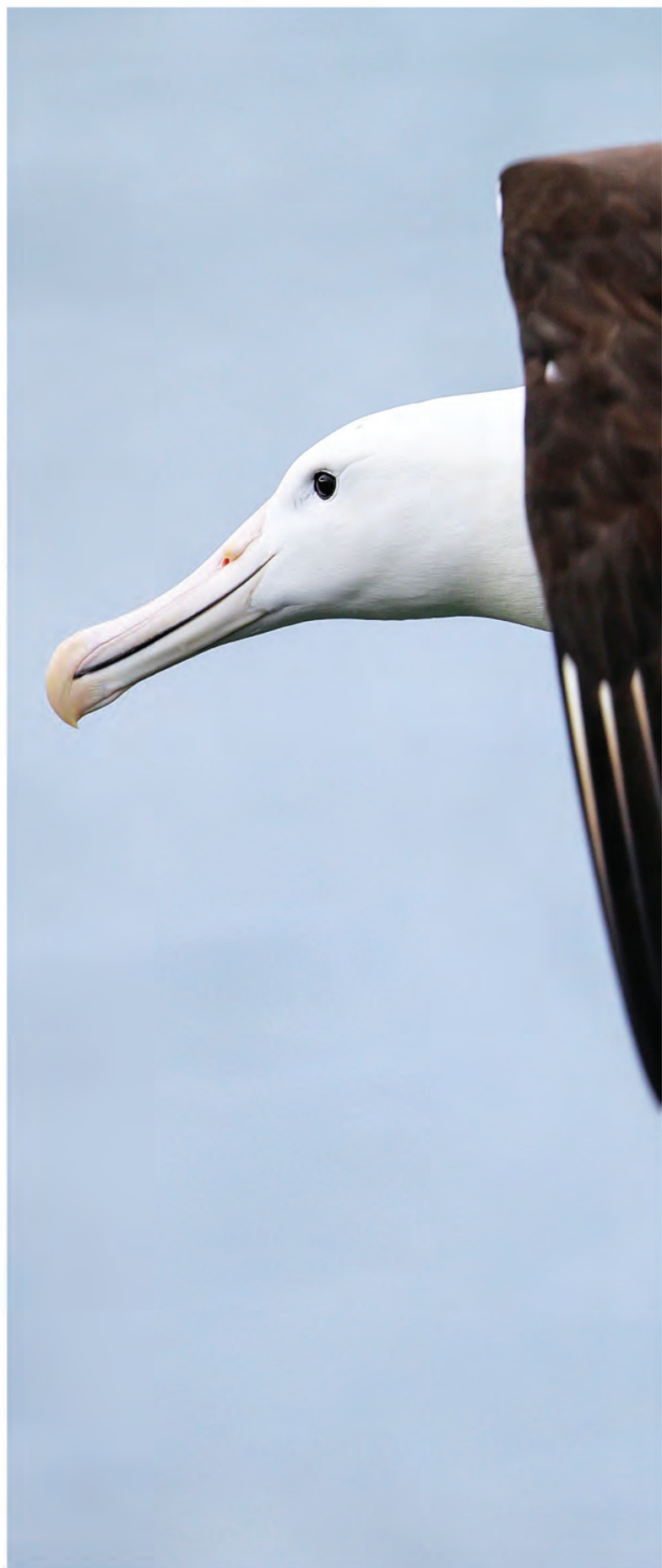


Mature sunflowers remain facing east rather than following the sun from east to west.

Scanning the field of gold, I loathe this visual feast and spiritual encounter coming to an end. I remained transfixed, because now I could see the secret joy of sunflowers arrayed before me—Christ’s character and object lessons interwoven into the tapestry and knowledge that “All things were created through Him and for Him” (Colossians 1:16). **C**

Donna Bucher of Manheim, Pennsylvania, is a creative writer, poet, speaker, retired missionary, experienced counselor, and a hospice and palliative care-support personnel. Founder of the Serenity in Suffering blog and author of the Serenity in Suffering newsletter, she shares articles, resources, and counseling designed to help readers grow personally, find spiritual intimacy with Christ, and ultimately discover purpose in the trials they face. Her writings have appeared in various online sites, literary journals, digital and print magazines, and published devotional journals. Learn more at <https://serenityinsuffering.com> and <https://serenityinsuffering.substack.com>.

The Elusive Albatross



I caught a glimpse of a wandering albatross. No, it hadn't flown from its Antarctic climate to relatively warm Pennsylvania where I live. In fact, I've never actually laid eyes on this enormously inspiring seabird. But I happened to study enough to picture in my mind's eye this creature that flies over the southern oceans for years without touching land. I soon became astounded!

The Creator must have steered this winged wonder my way to lift me up because, although the Bible repeatedly states that "the just shall live by faith" (Romans 1:17 and Galatians 3:11), I was being held back by my own negative thoughts such as: *I'm afraid. I don't know what to do. Why is this happening? I don't understand.*

By Sandy Mayle





The wingspan of a black browed albatross (left) can extend up to twelve feet across with a tendon that locks the outstretched wings in place. The birds typically mate for life (above) and come ashore to feed their young (below) after searching the sea for food.



“Look at the birds of
the air.”

—Matthew 6:26, ESV

How kind of the Lord to invite me to “look at the birds of the air” (Matthew 6:26, ESV) to learn to let my faith soar! Soon I became consumed by everything albatross, and to his credit my husband didn’t object when I bought the huge and expensive book called *Albatross: Their World, Their Ways*. Reading it, I realized there were amazing similarities between the life of the wandering albatross and the lives of those who have trusted that Jesus Himself “bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness” (1 Peter 2:24, ESV).

The Latin word *exsulans* means “exile or wanderer,” and these birds are appropriately nicknamed “nomads of the oceans.” Like the albatross, believers in Jesus are “sojourners and exiles” (1 Peter 2:11, ESV) whose “citizenship is in heaven” (Philippians 3:20, ESV). These elusive and somewhat mysterious birds spend more than ninety percent of their lives in the air, with the typical albatross traveling four million miles or more in its lifetime. That’s equal to eight round-trips to the moon!

The albatross has an unusual life cycle. At around seven to ten years of age, a male and a female pair up for life. Every two years they build a nest on a sub-Antarctic island, and the female lays one egg. In about eleven weeks the chick emerges to spend eight to ten months sitting on its nest. It’s left mostly alone as the parents comb far-off waters for food and occasionally return to feed their chick. Finally one day the young albatross stretches its wings and glides out over the ocean for six or more years never touching land and in some cases not even coming within sight of land. Amazingly, an albatross named *Wisdom* (first banded in 1956) is believed to be at least 74 years old

and continues to lay eggs and successfully raised chicks making her the oldest known bird to do so.

These enduring creatures will swoop down to feed from the ocean, float on the swells, and perhaps briefly sleep. Many scientists believe these avian anomalies also sleep while flying. Just as the albatross must get its food from the vast ocean, believers must also feed on God’s bountiful Word, as did the prophet Jeremiah: “Your words were found, and I ate them, and your words became to me a joy and the delight of my heart” (Jeremiah 15:16, ESV). Those who rest in faith on its promises declare with the psalmist, “Oh how I love your law! It is my meditation all the day” (Psalm 119:97, ESV).

Yet, the gracefully gliding albatross is sometimes called a *gooney bird*, meaning *foolish*, because although they appear flawless in flight, they are prone to crash landings and awkwardly maneuver on land. Sometimes we, too, make foolish and clumsy choices by succumbing to peer pressure, Satan’s lies, pride, and selfishness to the point that our lives approach the predicament of a crash landing.

A familiar yet seldom understood expression “an albatross around his neck” comes from Samuel Taylor Coleridge’s 1798 poem “The Rime of the Ancient Mariner” where a man shoots an albatross—a bird considered good luck by sailors. As punishment, the seafarer is forced to wear the dead bird around his neck symbolizing the burden of guilt he must carry for his transgression. Fortunately, we have a Saviour who is “the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!” (John 1:29), lifts our burdens, and carries the full guilt and punishment for our sins and all the transgressions that ever were or ever will be. That’s

“They shall mount up with wings like eagles.”

—Isaiah 40:31, ESV

why the Word urges, “If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God” (Colossians 3:1–3, ESV).

Although the albatross has the longest wingspan designed for soaring—up to twelve feet across—of any living bird, its narrow wings don’t have many muscles, which makes it difficult for the avian to take off or land. But God gave the albatross a special tendon that locks their outspread wings into position; so, much less effort is needed to keep them extended. We, too, have little strength in ourselves. But “God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong” (1 Corinthians 1:27, ESV). What is our special *lock* to remain soaring in a Christlike life? 1 John 5:4 assures us, “This is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith” (ESV).

With a reputation as the ultimate avian soaring machine, the albatross uses a technique that takes advantage of ocean winds to provide lift while weaving S patterns over wave tops and troughs to perform *dynamic soaring*. The believer is similarly lifted by the wind of the Spirit. “They who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles” (Isaiah 40:31, ESV).

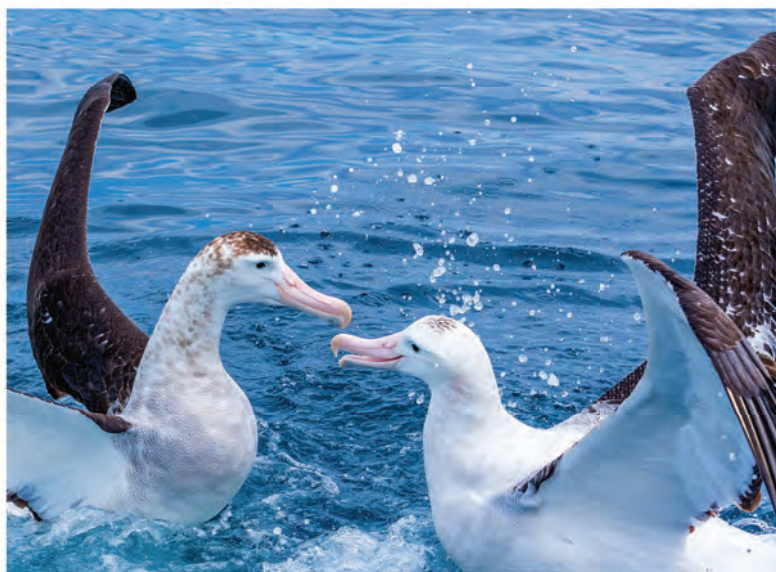
The wandering albatross seldom flaps its wings even when flying amid dangerous cyclones. It glides through the storms using often imperceptible wing adjustments. World-renowned wildlife photographer, Tui do Roy, tells of watching an albatross draw near the icebreaker he was aboard during a South Atlantic gale. “All around, the

maelstrom rages,” he wrote. “Huge swells curl and break. Waves crash and collide. . . . In contrast with this bewildering tumult, the great bird is completely serene as he passes. Where everything around him is chaos, he seems to hang almost motionless for long instants . . . his entire body a perfection of aerodynamics . . . [he circles] our paralyzed ship with surreal serenity, seeming oblivious to the shrieking, spume-filled gusts.”

In fact, the albatross’ heart beats as slowly (some say slower) while soaring as when sitting on the water. The great bird actually rests while flying! Had the psalmist David lived closer to the Antarctic, he might have written, “Oh, that I had the wings of an albatross—I would fly away and be at rest!” (See Psalm 55:6).

We, too, find that it takes more energy to worry and doubt than to soar with faith and courage. Paul comforted all by assuring, “Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 4:6, 7, ESV).

As I investigated these fascinating birds, the Lord showed me there is a sort of rookery (a gathering of nesting birds) of faith-filled wanderers in the Bible. It can be found in Hebrews 11, where we swing our binoculars from Noah (who was warned of things not yet seen) to Abraham (who obeyed and went without knowing his destination) to nameless believers “of whom the world was not worthy” (Hebrews 11:38, ESV). I felt the Spirit leading me to delve into the lives



Gliding over the choppy ocean (left) does not phase the birds even in severe storms. Southern royal albatross (above) are found in New Zealand. An albatross rookery (below) welcomes many albatross to the Falkland Islands.



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Albatross display their skill as an ideal soaring wonder (above). The birds raise only one offspring a year (left). Seldom seen on land, albatross have been known to sleep while floating (below) or flying.



*“Now faith is confidence in
what we hope for.”*

—Hebrews 11:1, NIV

of each of these wanderers in order to more closely understand them, and, with His help, imitate their faith.

“Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see” (Hebrews 11:1, NIV). Faith is grasping reality through our spiritual senses rather than our physical ones as we pray, “‘Lord, let our eyes be opened’” (Matthew 20:33, ESV), and then “look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen” (2 Corinthians 4:18, ESV).


So, morning after morning I turned back to the Old Testament account of the biblical *albatrosses* I was studying from Hebrews and pondered: *What did the Lord ask of Noah? How did he respond? How did God test Abraham? What did Joseph do as tempest followed tempest? How did Moses rely on God? What did God commend each of them for? And how can I be more like them?*

As I fed from the teeming ocean of the Word, more frequently my thoughts ran along these lines: *I will just trust You with all this. I don't know, but You do, and that is enough. I'm going to quit racking my brain and instead let You figure this out.*

More and more, I can say with Paul, “The life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me” (Galatians 2:20, ESV). Although very much still a work in progress, I’m learning, by God’s grace, to trust the Lord with all my heart and not lean on my own understanding as instructed in Proverbs 3:5.

Today is my day to fly, and it can be yours too. Fortunately, we will not forever have to navigate storms while reaching for the One who cannot be

seen. Someday the darkness will vanish, the storms will cease, and we will see face to face and fully know as we are fully known according to the promise in 1 Corinthians 13:12.

Today, filled with peril and pressure, provides our opportunity to offer God the faith He longs to see in us. We must look forward (like the wanderers of Hebrews 11) to a place where “God is not ashamed to be called their God” (Hebrews 11:16, ESV) and where we can soar effortlessly and endlessly like the wandering albatross. 

Sandy Mayle writes from Erie, Pennsylvania, where she explores and studies God's creation near Lake Erie, from her family's camp in the nearby Allegheny foothills, and in the wonders He provides throughout the world.



Beasts adapt to their environment and threats.

*"Then God said,
'Let the earth bring
forth the living
creature according to
its kind: . . .*

CREATION DAY 6 PART ONE

■ BY CHARLENE TRINO

Editor's Note: This article is the seventh in our thirteenth series of features that focus on the Creation week. Some days are divided into segments, and next time we will explore Creation day six part two when God created humans. Each series of stories varies with new writers and fresh images. We hope you enjoy this closer look at God's handiwork aimed at inspiring you to study His Word in depth.

The Creation of Animals and Creeping Things



Bryan Reynolds

Domesticated animals are designed to serve humans.

“**T**hen God said, ‘Let the earth bring forth the living creature according to its kind: cattle and creeping thing and beast of the earth, each according to its kind’; and it was so. And God made the beast of the earth according to its kind, cattle according to its kind, and everything that creeps on the earth according to its kind. And God saw that it was good” (Genesis 1:24, 25).

As the Creation week reached its peak on day six, God revealed His incredible creative power as the land teemed with all kinds of animals—big impressive beasts, helpful farm animals, and fascinating little critters—followed by His masterpiece of humans. This key moment in earth’s past tells us a lot about God’s desires and His character, which

still impacts how we bond with animals and relate to people.

When God said, “‘bring forth the living creatures,’” He stuck to a plan He set up during Creation week. The Hebrew words for living creature (*nephesh chayyah*) shows that these land animals, as well as the sea creatures He made the previous day, are alive and moving. But Scripture reveals that God sorted His land creatures into three clear groups: beasts of the earth (wild animals), cattle (farm animals), and creeping things (small insects, lizards, snakes, etc).

This careful grouping wasn’t random; it showed God’s plan for how these creatures would interact with humans. Farm animals would provide food, clothes, and friendship while wild animals would reveal some of God’s



Powerful creatures still form strong familial bonds.

raw power and glory. And the tiny critters would prove He cared about even the littlest parts of life. “O Lord, how manifold are Your works! In wisdom You have made them all. The earth is full of Your possessions” (Psalm 104:24). Think about how this order shows God’s nature. He’s a God who loves variety, who provides so all needs are met, who loves beauty by making creatures amaze and please us with how they look, act, and interrelate.

However, the animals God made on day six were quite different from what we see today. Before sin came into the world, all creatures lived in perfect peace and harmony with each other. Isaiah gives us a peek at how this may have been when he talks about what to anticipate in the future. “The wolf also shall dwell with

the lamb, the leopard shall lie down with the young goat, the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them” (Isaiah 11:6).

In God’s initial design, predation, suffering, and death were absent. All animals were vegetarian as stated in Genesis 1:30. “Also, to every beast of the earth, to every bird of the air, and to everything that creeps on the earth, in which there is life, I have given every green herb for food.” Only after the Fall and the Flood did major changes occur in animal behaviors, distributions, physical characteristics, predation, and consumption.

This early peaceful state reminds us that the current natural order, with its predator/prey conflicts and survival struggles wasn’t God’s ideal plan. When

*cattle and creeping
thing and beast of the
earth, each according
to its kind’;
and it was so. . . .*



Renee Smith

Cheetahs are the fastest land animals on earth.

we look at nature today, we see both remnants of God’s perfect creation and the effects of the curse.

The land animals created on day six demonstrate God’s unmatched creative genius. For example, the cheetah with its body built for incredible bursts of speed (up to 70 miles-per-hour) highlights God’s engineering mastery as the cat’s bendy spine, big heart, special foot pads, and unique breathing system all work together. Then the elephant, the biggest land animal, shows God’s focus on strength and kindness as the beast’s amazing trunk has more than forty thousand muscles and performs many jobs like breathing, lifting, eating, communicating, and showing care within a strong familial bond.

Creeping things like tiny ants

interact in complex social groups and display incredible strength as they carry things fifty times their weight. Proverbs 6:6–8 firmly admonishes, “Go to the ant, you sluggard! Consider her ways and be wise, which . . . provides her supplies in the summer, and gathers her food in the harvest.”

Every animal came with instincts and the genetic makeup to reproduce while allowing for the huge variety within its created kind. This built-in adaptability has allowed animals to diversify within ecological niches across the globe while staying within their created limits.

The biblical Creation idea of *kinds* is different from our current *taxonomic* groupings. While modern science identifies 6.5 million species of land animals by their ability to breed,



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Bryan Reynolds

*And God made the
beast of the earth
according to its kind,
cattle according
to its kind, . . .*

Grasshoppers are similar to locusts mentioned in Proverbs.

the biblical *kind* often matches more with the 6,000 *families* of animals in taxonomy, making room for big differences within each created kind. This sheds light on how Noah could fit representatives of all land animals on the ark and how diversity after the Flood could lead to the variety of creatures we see now. God built amazing genetic potential into each original type, allowing them to adapt to different settings and conditions without turning into new kinds of animals.

This difference helps us value both the biblical account and what science shows us. Adaptation within created kinds isn't evolution of one creature becoming a different kind. Instead, it shows God's wisdom in designing creatures with the genetic makeup to adapt and flourish.

God designed animals, not just for practical purposes but as living parables and object lessons that teach us about Himself and His character. "'But now ask the beasts, and they will teach you; and the birds of the air, and they will tell you; or speak to the earth, and it will teach you; and the fish of the sea will explain to you. Who among all these does not know that the hand of the Lord has done this?'" (Job 12:7–9).

Consider a few of these lessons offered by the Creator:

- Diligence—the ant demonstrates industrious preparation found in Proverbs 6:6–8.
- Strength in community—"The locusts have no king, yet they all advance in ranks" (Proverbs 30:27).
- Wisdom—"There are four things



Humans are to care for God's creatures.

which are little on the earth, but they are exceedingly wise" (Proverbs 30:24).

- Trust—Jesus pointed to the birds to teach about trusting God's provision. "Look at the birds of the air, for they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feeds them" (Matthew 6:26).

As the crowning part of Creation day six, humans were given dominion over the animals. This wasn't permission for exploitation but a sacred responsibility of stewardship. Adam's first task—naming the animals—established the proper relationship between humans and creatures. God expects us to treat animals with respect and kindness while recognizing the distinction between human and animal life. "A righteous man regards the life of his animal, but

the tender mercies of the wicked are cruel" (Proverbs 12:10). Humans alone bear God's image; yet, our treatment of animals reveals much about our character. After the Fall, this relationship changed dramatically. Animals began to fear humans. (See Genesis 9:2.) Eventually God permitted humans to eat animals; yet, even then He established guidelines for humane treatment.

Today's ecological and environmental challenges remind us of this stewardship mandate. As Christians, we should lead the way in ethical treatment of animals and conservation efforts—not out of pantheistic reverence for nature but from respect for the Creator and His benevolent works. The vast diversity of land animals points unmistakably to a Designer. From



Impalas display graceful attributes and stunning markings.

the microscopic intricacies of cellular machinery to the grand ecosystems where countless species interact in balanced harmony, animal life defies explanations of random chance.

Romans 1:20 affirms that God's "invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse." The animal kingdom provides some of the most compelling evidence of this truth. When we observe the perfect adaptations of animals to their environments, the intricately coordinated systems within each creature, and the precise ecological and interdependent relationships between species and their surroundings, we glimpse the masterful mind of our Creator.

To better appreciate this aspect of

Creation, observe animals in their natural habitats, noting their specific adaptations and behaviors that showcase God's design; research the amazing capabilities of different animal groups from the mighty mammals to the minutest insects; consider how animals model various character qualities God desires to develop in us; practice responsible stewardship by supporting conservation efforts that protect God's creatures; thank God for specific ways animals enhance human life through companionship, service, and resources; share with children the wonder of animals to inspire appreciation of the Creator. As instructed in Job 12:7-9, "Ask the animals, and they will teach you, or the birds in the sky, and they will tell you; or speak to the earth, and it will teach you, or let the fish in the sea inform you.

*and everything that
creeps on the earth
according to its kind.
And God saw that it
was good"*

– Genesis 1:24, 25



Renee Smith

Giraffes are among God's most unique creatures.

Which of all these does not know that the hand of the Lord has done this?" (NIV).

The sixth day of Creation reveals God's inventiveness, care, and overall plan for a harmonious heaven on earth. By making land animals, God didn't just get earth ready for humans to inhabit; He also gave us living examples of His nature, intelligence, and love for all life so that we can better understand His will for our eternal well-being. **C**

Charlene Trino writes from Bergenfield, New Jersey, where she studies biblical creation with a deep appreciation for the intricate design and purpose behind God's work while exploring the profound connections between the natural world and spiritual truths in order to inspire readers to see the Creator's hand in every detail of life.

CREATION HIGHLIGHTS

Providing capsules of research on Creation to encourage the pursuit of Bible-based convictions.

Canines Pollinate Flowers

Wild dogs known as Ethiopian wolves living in the Bale Mountains of southern Ethiopia have been observed licking the nectar of flowers. Following anecdotal reports, scientists followed six wolves from three different packs and observed them foraging among patches of flowers. The wolves appear to enjoy the nectar and deliberately move from one plant to another licking up the nectar and getting their muzzles covered in pollen.

According to Oxford University News, “There was also some evidence of social learning, with juveniles being brought to the flower fields along with adults.” The article goes on to comment: “This novel behavior is perhaps the first known plant-pollinator interaction involving a large predator, as well as the only large meat-eating predator ever to be observed feeding on nectar.”

Here at Creation Research, we believe it is unlikely that the nectar from these flowers contributes much to the nutrition of these wolves, but it is a reminder that wolves and other canines can and do eat plant foods. It is interesting that wolves were even interested in licking flowers if they were really obligate carnivores.

In the beginning when God created whole functioning ecosystems, all animals ate plants, and in doing so they would have helped pollinate plants and disperse seeds. After the world was devastated by Noah’s flood, animals moved into tough environments such as the Ethiopian highlands where plant foods would not sustain them. The Bible also tells us that in the new heaven and earth the wolf and the lamb shall graze together (Isaiah 65:25). Maybe flower nectar will be a sweet additive to the diet of both of them.

Condensed from an article in *Creation Research News*, December 2024, www.creationresearch.net

Horses Designed For Riding

A recently published article in the *Answers Research Journal* examines if horses were designed to be ridden. Some articles claim that horses are poorly designed for riding because they can manifest

pain, irritability, and spine issues. But the last book of the Bible gives special insight into this question. Revelation describes the glorious return of the King in Revelation 19. Here we read that the apostle John prophesizes that Christ will return to earth on a white horse, along with the armies of heaven also on white horses, which could be considered literal and symbolic simultaneously.

Revelation 19:11–14 demonstrates that horses were designed by God to be ridden. For example, if horses were not designed to be ridden, then the Holy Spirit would not inspire John to write a passage that shows the Creator Jesus misusing His own creation.

Furthermore, if horses were designed to be ridden, then a Designer exists, and man owes accountability to that Designer. Horses have made an incredible impact in human history due to their rideability. And even though other animals have been utilized for the same purpose, none have compared to the horse–human relationship.

While horses do at times experience complications, the issues that arise are often human caused. Signs of pain or irritability don’t prove that horses were not designed to be ridden. Even a specific condition such as *Kissing Spines* do not prove this either as it is debated what exactly causes the disease.

Scripture is the final authority on all matters of life, including the benefit of a horse’s rideability. An aspect of the King’s return is that He, along with His heavenly armies, will be riding on horses. This event will take place in fulfillment of prophecy and demonstrate the horse was indeed designed to carry a rider.

Condensed from “Were Horses Designed to Be Ridden?” by Caleb Harrier, in *Answers Research Journal*, 2025, www.answersresearchjournal.org.



CREATION STEWARDSHIP

Providing helpful suggestions on how to better care for God's Creation.

Flood Facts and Figures

Our planet's land masses are covered with an average of three feet of topsoil. Quite simply, this layer of dirt provides the nutrients for producing our food. However, research shows a third of the world's soil is now moderately to highly degraded. Some studies calculated that at the current rate of loss and degradation, there are about sixty years of topsoil left.

Historically, prairie grasslands covered nearly one-third of North America, stretching from Illinois to the Rocky Mountains and from Canada down into Texas. With the invention of better farming machinery, over thirty million acres of prairie land had been plowed up for wheat fields by the 1920s. Combined with a severe drought in the 1930's, this led to the devastating Dust Bowl. Soil loss due to erosion is still estimated at five tons per acre per year largely on cultivated lands that contribute to 90 percent of soil erosion. The highest erosion rates are seen on corn, soybean, and wheat farms.

To address this crisis of topsoil loss, *regenerative* farming practices offer an alternative approach to modern industrial agriculture that prioritizes conserving and rehabilitating the land and topsoil. Environmental benefits include *carbons sequestration*, which can increase soil organic matter by one to two percent annually. This helps to store carbon in the land and mitigate excessive carbon in the atmosphere that can impact the climate.

Farmers using regenerative practices can cut synthetic fertilizer and pesticide costs by twenty-five to fifty percent over time. Lower pesticide use means less chemical residue in food and a benefit to consumer health. Higher microbial activity in the soil leads to healthier ecosystems and nutrient-dense food that contains higher levels of vitamins and minerals compared to conventionally farmed crops.

Tips for Simple Living

Families can support regenerative farms by buying their produce at farmers' markets, Community Supported Agriculture projects, and farm-to-table restaurants and monthly produce memberships.

Many companies prioritize soil health and regenerative practices and need support.

Even small backyard gardens can use regenerative techniques like composting, cover crops, and no-till gardening to improve soil health and reduce synthetic fertilizers.

Minimizing waste by composting food scraps helps create nutrient-rich soil, reduces landfill waste, and promotes regenerative practices in communities.

Teaching children about sustainable farming and supporting public policies that promote regenerative agriculture help prolong regenerative practices while learning to be good stewards of God's creation. Attending farm tours or workshops can help increase knowledge and encourage greater participation.



Biblical Stewardship

The Bible contains many verses that align with the principles of regenerative farming by emphasizing stewardship, care for the land, and sustainable agriculture. God has given us a mind to understand and a heart to care for His creation.

For example, Genesis 2:15 highlights humanity's responsibility to nurture and protect the land. "The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it" (ESV). Leviticus 25:4 instructs that the land needs to rest. "But in the seventh year there shall be a Sabbath of solemn rest for the land, a Sabbath to the Lord. You shall not sow your field or prune your vineyard" (ESV).

God promises abundance to those who farm in Deuteronomy 28:12. "The Lord will open to you his good treasury, the heavens, to give the rain to your land in its season and to bless all the work of your hands" (ESV). Psalm 24:1 reminds us that "The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof, the world and those who dwell therein" (ESV) which inspires respect for His sovereignty and ownership.

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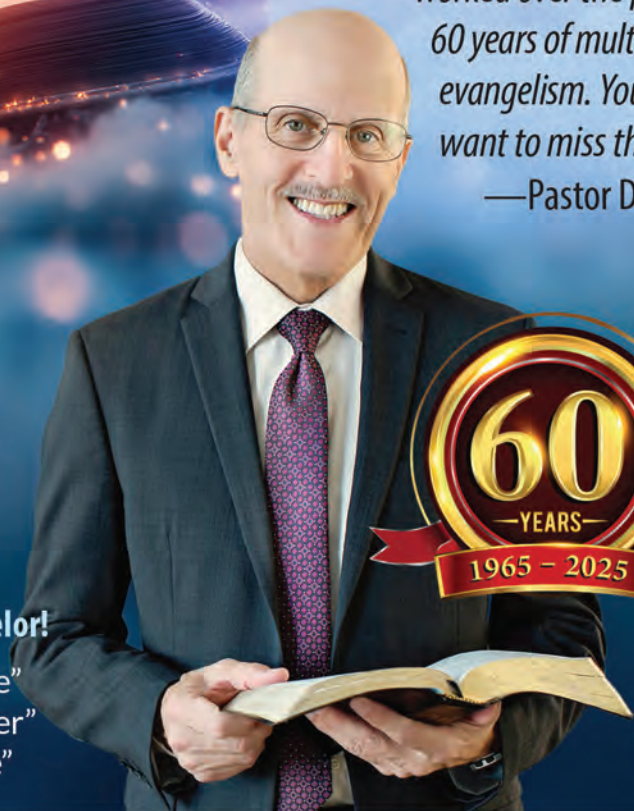
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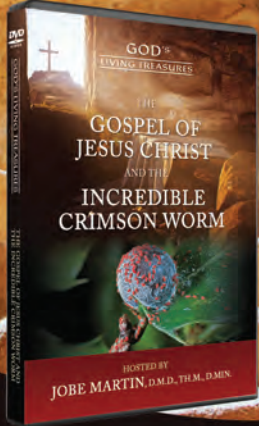
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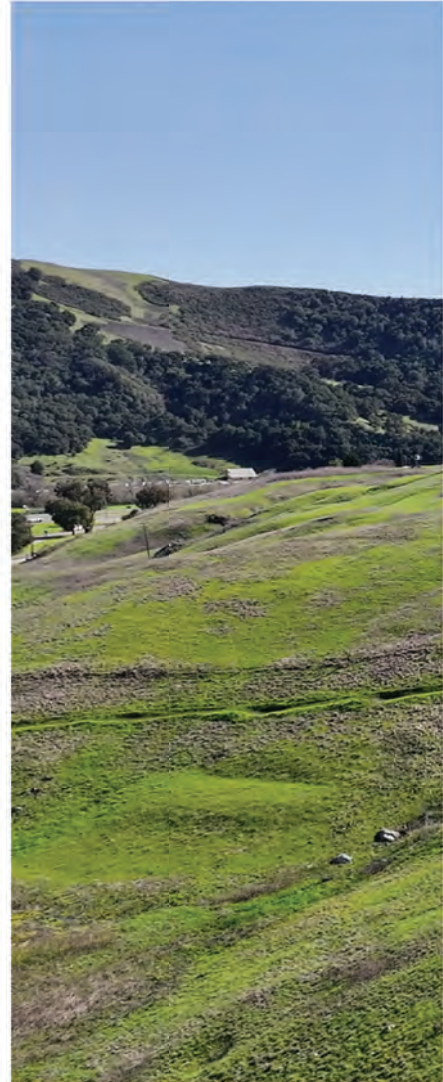
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Your Reward Awaits



My legs screamed for relief from the steady climb up the mountain as we hiked the Johnson Loop trail near San Luis Obispo, California, on the gorgeous California coast. Trudging upward amid the rich green scenery, we remained inspired to reach the top that overlooked the whole valley below.

At first the walk seemed easy. But as we slowly climbed



Basile Inman

The Johnson Loop trail includes a climb up California's coastal range mountains.

upward, I noticed I could hardly talk without puffing like a steam engine. I started feeling tired and overly winded about three miles into the five-mile trek and slowly became aware that I might not make it to the top. I even considered turning around. But my determination would not allow me to give up the majestic view I knew I would encounter at the summit. I felt I had to prove to myself I could do it.

So, keeping my head down

watching my steps, I kept going—one foot in front of the other. At one point I lost my balance and was on an incline where I could have toppled down. I envisioned my body rolling over and over through the green grass all the way to the bottom. But it didn't happen. I caught myself before I fell and was able to steady my gait.

Onward and upward I went. But just before reaching the top I thought I wasn't going to make it. I felt so tired. My back

hurt. My muscles ached. But I noticed that I had passed some sort of threshold in my breathing, and I wasn't huffing like a steam engine anymore. So, I kept going.

When we reached the top, we were stunned with the spectacle. Our trail had turned into sort of a mystical scene. Huge oak trees with branches that stretched way out made the once adventurous little girl in me want to climb them, but I quickly talked myself out of that thought.

Looking down from the summit we could see for miles in all directions, and I experienced the thrill of my reward for staying on course and not listening to my weakness of wanting to quit.

As we began the descent a while after exploring the top, I began to think about the spiritual application that so plainly ran parallel to what I had just endured. When advancing into a trial that requires great faith, at first I am so full of positive energy that God is more than able to see me through whatever I am facing. So, I begin to move forward believing He is with me. I'm grateful for the fact I have no fear. With God by my side, I believe I can do this. I can even enjoy the challenge. The goal is waiting, and who knows what joy may result from my perseverance.



Basilie Inman

The city maintained trail is part of the Johnson Ranch that is available for visitors to enjoy the inviting scenery, wildflowers, birds, and wildlife.



Basilie Inman

But as the going gets rougher and my spiritual energy becomes laborious, I think, *Uh oh, I'm not going to make it. My faith will not get me through this time.* I start looking at the enormity of challenge, and doubt creeps in. I don't want to go any further.

"Surely you will die," my adversary whispers. "God will not come through for you this time. As a matter of fact, you have missed God all together." At some point I seem to lose my balance in believing God due to the amount of strength it takes to remain steadfast. I feel off and wobbly. And just like when I thought I would topple down the mountain that day, I think of the same demise in a spiritual trial.

What will people think when I give up? I am going to be seen as a failure. Recognizing the enemy's ploy gives me strength to press on. I figure if he wants me to quit, there must be a great blessing ahead.

Just as Paul faced unimaginable trials, he inspires, "I press on to reach the end of the race and receive the heavenly prize for which God, through Christ Jesus, is calling us" (Philippians 3:14, NLT). So, I keep pressing on, one foot in front of the other, up that hill of faith. Oh, my soul aches, but my spirit is willing to move forward. So, I do.

Pretty soon I can feel the wind beneath my feet, and I catch my breath. I can sense a victory over the challenge even before I succeed. And then there it is! I am victorious! I can see far in the distance, and it all becomes

so much clearer to me that His promises are true. "But those who trust in the Lord will find new strength. They will soar high on wings like eagles. They will run and not grow weary. They will walk and not faint" (Isaiah 40:31, NLT).

If we never had any mountains to climb or challenges to face, our faith would not grow. Our spiritual muscles would grow weak. We would have a defeated life. So, when faced with tribulations, we must follow James' admonition to "count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing" (James 1:2-4). Without such tests we miss an opportunity to soar with the eagles.

"So be truly glad. There is wonderful joy ahead, even though you must endure many trials for a little while. These trials will show that your faith is genuine. It is being tested as fire tests and purifies gold—though your faith is far more precious than mere gold. So when your faith remains strong through many trials, it will bring you much praise and glory and honor on the day when Jesus Christ is revealed to the whole world" (1Peter 1:6, 7, NLT). The end of the trail may be closer than we think. **C**

Dixie Diamanti writes from Santa Maria, California, where she enjoys exploring the wonders of Creation to glean meaningful experiences and insights worth sharing. Discover more at: <https://reflectionsofgracehome.wordpress.com> or in her book, Climbing Out of the Box.



Basile Inman

The view from the top of the trail affords persevering hikers an expansive view of the region.



The home at Dawn Gardens overlooks the property and surrounding foothills (right).



a landscaper's

I was always good with numbers, and I loved working with them that resulted in getting A's in math on my report cards all during high school. I thought I would do well with a career in math, science, or computers, but I didn't ask God about it.

So, I went ahead and enrolled at the University of California at Berkeley majoring in math. In my second year of calculus I had to do *triple integration*, and I began to see that this line of study wasn't a joy for me anymore. So, I went to my pastor for his counsel and prayer. He reminded me of the verse in Proverbs 3:5, 6 about God's guidance in our lives. "Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight" (NIV).

gardens from eden



Barry Friesen

Stairs and a rock wall create interest amid flourishing Japanese forest grass.

garden

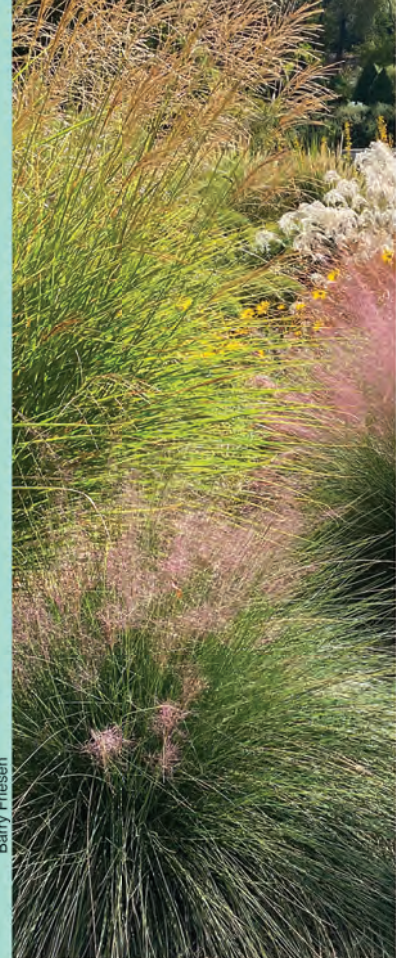
My pastor knew that I had a hobby of growing plants, and he suggested that I consider going into horticulture or landscaping. I told him that I loved plants, but I didn't think I could make a living from them. He told me to pray about it, and I did. I became convinced that God's will for my life was not math but something to do with His botanical wonders even if it didn't seem financially feasible at the time.

So, I switched my major from mathematics to landscape architecture, and my whole life changed. After graduating in 1969, I got a job as a landscape draftsman for one of my professors. Following two years in Vietnam, I got a job as a gardener at a hospital, and I loved it. I eventually became a landscape contractor and launched my *Dawn Landscaping* business in 1982.

by barry friesen



An aerial view of Dawn Gardens shows labyrinth of winding trails and vegetation patterns.



Barry Friesen

For most of my career I earned more than two or three times what a mathematician was making.

God was definitely blessing my life, and I was having a lot more fun than working on triple integration. “‘For I know the plans I have for you,’ declares the Lord, ‘plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you. You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart’” (Jeremiah 29:11–13, NIV).

As a result of a successful landscaping business, I eventually bought twelve acres of land near Grass Valley, California, to build a demonstration garden so my clients could come and see a variety of plants, water features, and examples of landscape design on the property that I named *Dawn Gardens*. As I planted more varieties of ornamental vegetation, I became increasingly aware of God’s amazing design in His creation including the stunning colors and iridescence of flowers. I could also see God’s handiwork in creating plants with the ability to handle any kind of environment. For example, the bald cypress can grow in swamps as well as in my bog garden by sending up *knees* from the roots to get oxygen that they could not get underwater.

The changing seasons display an amazing show of God’s masterpieces within His creation of plants. I try to design color into my garden so that some appears every month of the year. I have over three thousand species and cultivars of plants that spread out their blooms over all twelve months. In fact, the month of November offers the most beautiful array of hues at Dawn Gardens because the fall leaf colors outshine the flowers. “Consider how the wild flowers grow. They do not labor or spin. Yet I tell you, not even Solomon in all his splendor was



Barry Friesen

Weeping flowering trees adorn a grass-lined water feature.

dressed like one of these. If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today, and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, how much more will he clothe you—you of little faith!” (Luke 12:27, 28, NIV).

Even in the winter the Creator designed beauty in the bark and branch structure of bare trees along with seed pods and occasional flowers. February and March erupt with more flowers than any season because of the 50,000 daffodils planted in the garden. These golden gems are God’s gift to gardeners because the bulbs don’t need any water other than rain. They don’t even need good soil or fertilizer, and they are resistant to deer and gophers.

In creating a myriad of vegetation, God provided within their DNA a way for them to *hybridize* with related species to produce new flower colors, new shapes, and new leaf colors. An example of this is the Japanese maple, which has over ten thousand cultivars (or plant varieties that have been produced through selective breeding). There are trees that can get to thirty feet tall and some dwarfs that only reach one foot in height. Some have green leaves; others have red, pink, yellow, orange, or variegated leaves. With more than twenty thousand different cultivars of roses, five thousand different rhododendrons, and ten thousand different lilies, a gardener can never get bored.

Grasses provide another amazing group of plants that show God’s diversity throughout His horticultural handiwork. Most people don’t pay much attention to grasses, but gardeners realize that the swaying movement of tall stands of grass in the wind can generate interest, character, and a calming effect. Miscanthus and Calamagrostis grass flowers can reach eight feet high and can catch any breeze to create a moving object in a garden. They are so beautiful that



Some of the 50,000 daffodils at Dawn Gardens accentuate flowering trees and greenery.



I leave them alone most of the winter and don't cut them back until mid-February. As another gift from God to gardeners, many species of grasses don't need good soil or watering. They will even survive California's lack of rain for six months each year and still produce flowers and a spectacle for onlookers to enjoy. But a well-designed garden is not just about flowers, trees, and grasses. Water features, walkways, rock walls, bridges, boulders, benches, archways, and stairs help provide inviting elements of intrigue and character that make each outdoor space unique.

Now retired from my landscaping business that once employed eight to ten people, I still keep busy full time in my garden and on smaller projects for friends. Twice a year, in the spring and fall, I host an open house event so visitors, church groups, and former clients can come and tour Dawn Gardens. With more time to travel, I've enjoyed touring gardens through the years in New England, the Pacific Northwest, England, Japan, Thailand, South Africa, Australia, New Zealand, along with visits to 20 other countries (but not necessarily to tour gardens). Of all the places I've been, New Zealand was the most beautiful country. The dramatic mountains, rolling hills, pristine lakes, and cascading waterfalls brought me closer to God everywhere I went. I have tried to bring the natural beauty and character of the New Zealand landscapes home to Dawn Gardens.

As I look back on my life, I realize that if I didn't ask for God's guidance when I was in college, my life would not have been nearly as rewarding and exciting. I praise Him for leading me every step of the way as promised in Psalm 139:9, 10. "If I rise on the wings of the dawn, if I settle on the far side of the sea, even there your hand will guide me, your right hand will hold me fast" (NIV). A lifelong career of gardening has also made my body and mind healthy



Although retired from landscaping, Barry Friesen manages to keep busy tending to his gardens.

because of the sunshine, exercise, and fresh air all around me as I embraced the joy of knowing God's creation in His plant kingdom. **C**

Barry Friesen writes from Grass Valley, California, where Dawn Gardens and his home are now for sale. For a closer look, seasonal video tours of Dawn Gardens, and a viewing of his photo gallery, go to: <https://dawn-gardens.com/>. For a list of his blogs full of gardening insights and international garden tours go to: inthegardenaroundtheworld.blog.

Genesis Cuisine

Summer Soups

A vibrant still life featuring various fresh vegetables like corn, potatoes, cucumbers, and tomatoes, along with prepared soups and breads on a blue textured cloth. The scene includes a basket of fresh produce, a bowl of yellow soup, a bowl of green soup with cucumber slices, a bowl of red soup with a dollop of white cream, and several breads topped with avocado, pickles, and cucumbers. Small purple flowers are scattered throughout the arrangement.

“‘See, I have given you every herb
that yields seed which is on the
face of all the earth,
and every tree whose fruit yields
seed; to you it shall be for food.’”

“‘And you shall eat the herb of the field.’”

—Genesis 1:29, 3:18



Cool Cucumber Soup

- | | |
|--------------------------------------------|--------------------------|
| 2 large English cucumbers, peeled | 1/2-1 C. water |
| 1 jalapeno pepper, de-seeded | 3 garlic cloves |
| 1 small avocado | 1 lemon, juiced |
| 1/3-1 C. fresh cilantro or mint (to taste) | 1 tsp. salt, or to taste |
| 1 C. nondairy yogurt | 1 tsp. onion powder |

Place all ingredients except garnish in a blender or food processor and blend until smooth. Add diced cucumbers to the soup if desired. Chill for 30 min. Garnish with cucumber and red pepper slices, a sprinkle of chopped cilantro or mint, and a drizzle of extra virgin olive oil. Serve with rustic bread and heirloom tomato slices or your favorite crackers and spreads.



Cold Beet Soup – Chlodnik

- | | |
|------------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| 3 sm. beets, baked | 2 C. extra creamy nondairy milk |
| 5 radishes | 2 Tb. lemon juice |
| 2 dill pickles | 1 C. nondairy yogurt |
| 4 Tb. chives or scallions, chopped | 1/2 C. pickle juice or to taste |
| 3 Tb. dill weed, chopped | 1 tsp. coconut sugar, optional |
| 1 garlic clove, minced | salt to taste |

Bake beets until tender. Mix lemon juice into nondairy milk as a buttermilk substitute. Coarsely grate cooled beets, radishes, and pickles into a large mixing bowl, and add the chopped chives, dill weed, and garlic. Stir in the milk mixture, yogurt, and pickle juice. Add optional coconut sugar and salt to taste. Chill and garnish with pickle slices, a dollop of nondairy yogurt, and a sprig of dill weed. Serve with marbled rye or pumpernickel bread, vegan cream cheese, and cucumber slices.



Chilled Corn Chowder

- | | |
|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| 2 ears sweet corn, de-kerneled | 1 C. nondairy milk |
| 1 potato, cooked, peeled, chopped | 1 tsp. turmeric powder |
| 1/2 onion, chopped | 1 tsp. avocado oil |
| 2 garlic cloves, minced | 1/8 tsp. cayenne pepper or to taste |
| 1 can coconut milk | 1 lime, juiced |
| 1 C. vegetable broth, or water | 1 tsp. salt or to taste |

Place avocado oil in a sauce pan over medium heat and add chopped onion, minced garlic, and seasonings. Saute until slightly caramelized. Add water or broth to deglaze the pan. Add corn, potato, and coconut milk; stir until thoroughly mixed. Chill and add the lime juice. Garnish with slices of avocado and a drizzle of Sriracha or chili sauce. Serve with avocado toast topped with quick-pickled red onions.

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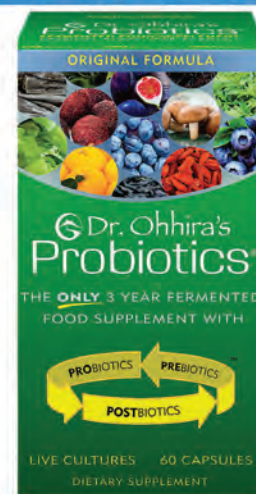
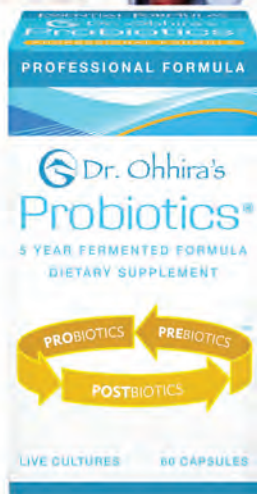


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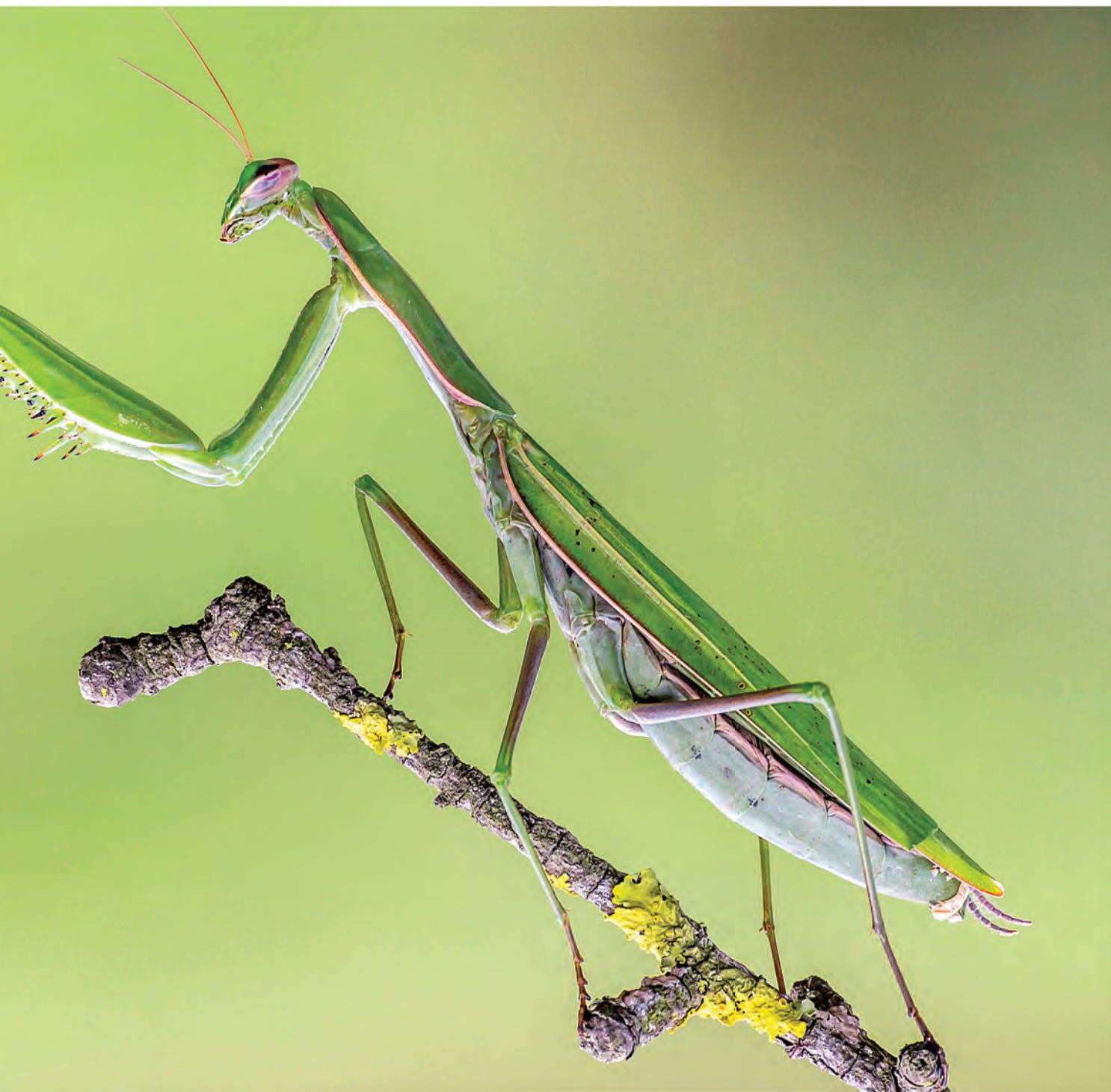
Look at this large bump on the stem of this plant," I said to my husband, Gary, as we cleaned out a flower bed.

"It looks like a praying mantis egg sack," he said. "Clip the stem several inches away from either side of it so we can show it to the grandkids."

A few days later our eight-year-old grandson, Henry, was at our house. When my husband showed him the stem, Henry said, "I've seen something like that on a nature program, and they said it held praying mantis eggs."

"That's what I thought too," Gary said. "Let's see if we can find something to put it in."

B Y K A T H Y P I E R S O N



They headed to our barn, returned with an extra-large jar, placed the stem inside, and secured the lid in which my husband had punched several air holes.

We have seen adult mantises occasionally on our property, and we were always intrigued by their appearance. When we looked for information about

them, we learned that the female has special glands in her stomach that produce a frothy substance. The mother mantis lays her eggs and covers them with the froth that quickly hardens into a pod for protection until the eggs hatch.

We also discovered that their triangular head can turn 180 degrees, and their jointed neck gives

flexibility to help quickly catch prey. Not only that, mantises have five eyes! A large compound eye on each side of their head gives them binocular vision to help perceive distance and spot movement so they can avoid enemies, stalk prey, and capture food. The three smaller eyes (that detect light to help orient the creature) form a triangle between the larger eyes. After praying mantises molt their outer covering (or exoskeleton), their elongated body can change colors to help them blend into their environment.

The Bible tells us in Genesis 1:24, 25 that these intriguing insects got their start on the sixth day of the Creation week. "Then God said, 'Let the earth bring forth the living creature according to its kind: cattle and creeping thing' . . . and it was so. And God made . . . everything that creeps on the earth according to its kind. And God saw that it was good."

Genesis 2:19 explains that God "brought them to Adam to see what he would call them. And whatever Adam called each living creature, that



Bryan Reynolds

Two bulging eyes on the side and three eyes in the middle help the praying mantis maneuver.

was its name." Do you think when Adam saw their forelegs folded in front of them that he named them *praying* mantises? Actually, their handy spiked legs are used to catch, grip, and eat their prey that is a lot less kind and more for survival than praying and looking religious.

My husband thought the nymphs (babies) would hatch in the spring, and since the egg pod would normally be out all winter, we left the jar on our back porch counter. Over the next few months our three grandchildren often looked in the jar and commented on how cool it would be if the eggs hatched. Near the middle of April our nine-year-old granddaughter, Willa, visited and said, "I don't think those eggs are ever going to hatch."

Although I was beginning to think the same thing, we left the pod right where it was in the jar. Later I read that the nymphs usually hatch mid-June to early July because they require ten days of continuous temperatures of fifty degrees or warmer. Imagine my surprise when on April 24 my husband rushed into our house carrying the jar and announced, "The praying mantises hatched!"

Our warm North Carolina spring had hastened the creatures' entry into the world. When I peered into the jar, I saw hundreds of half-inch mantises crawling all over inside! Many still hung from the egg pod. At first this looked kind of creepy, but I returned to the



Jim Still-Pepper

Praying mantis nymphs emerge from an egg pod.

jar over and over because they were so fascinating to watch.

Did you know praying mantises were likely on the ark? In Genesis 6:19, 20 God told Noah, ““And of every living thing of all flesh you shall bring two of every sort into the ark, to keep them alive with you; they shall be male and female . . . of every creeping thing of the earth after its kind, two of every kind will come to you to keep them alive.”” So, even insects were important enough to God to preserve them during the Flood.

The next day I picked up our four-year-old grandson at preschool. We couldn’t wait to show Charlie the baby mantises. He was totally enthralled at the sight, as were his father, older brother, and sister when they came to our house that afternoon. We took turns reaching our hand into the jar to let one of these docile creatures climb onto our fingers.

After observing these intricate, perfectly formed, miniature mantises, I reminded our grandchildren, “For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible. . . . All things were created through Him and for Him” (Colossians 1:16). We all agreed the praying mantises were one of the most fascinating insects God had made.



Kathy Pierson



Kathy Pierson

Tiny praying mantis nymphs fill the jar (top). A lone praying mantis (above) begins to explore its new world.



Attacking its prey with its praying hands is part of the mantis's life.

Together we decided the babies should be released so they could learn to hunt for their food. As difficult as it was to let the nymphs go, we knew it was the best thing for them. We scattered several around different sections of our flower beds and made sure a few were placed on the plant where their story first began. Our grandchildren took the jar home to also release some in their yard. Since these creatures' lifespan is no longer than a year, it was important to

give these nymphs the best opportunity to continue reproducing after their kind.

At the beginning of July my husband called me outside to see a small praying mantis on the ceiling of our back porch. Since it was less than two inches long, we chose to believe it was one of the nymphs we helped enter the world.

In mid-September, while outside with Henry, he noticed a fully grown mantis on our back porch. Henry scooped it onto a piece of corn stalk and placed it on a table near a stink bug. When the bug moved, the mantis quickly gripped the bug with its forelegs and consumed it. We assumed the mantis must not have a sense of smell, but later we read they use their antennae to find food and detect odor. It also ate a second stink bug we offered it!

We hoped that it would make its own egg-pod in the fall so we could continue to observe these extraordinary insects on our property. Since then we have been thrilled to see several praying mantises in our yard. If you are fortunate to find a similar egg pod, we hope you can do as we did and be blessed to experience watching the life cycle of these amazing insects that God created. "'You are worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power; for You created all things, and by Your will they exist and were created'" (Revelation 4:11). **C**

Kathy Pierson is a freelance writer from Hendersonville, North Carolina, where she enjoys exploring Creation with her grandchildren and whose stories have appeared in Nature Friend and a number of other periodicals.





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Pruning

Blackberry vines are like all vines; they have to be pruned. Vines keep growing until they are useless. It is the same with human nature. Jesus said in John 15:5, “I am the vine ye are the branches: he that abides in Me and I in him, the same brings forth much fruit.” “My Father is the husbandman...and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit” (John 15:1). He loves us too much to let our selfish natures grow out of control. And where does this pruner work? In any area that grows beyond the six sides, or six limits, of love as are found in the last six of the Ten Commandments.

Having this truth in mind, let us by faith gladly learn to accept the reproofs

of life. Then we will not dread or avoid them, but welcome them as friends.

He trims back our selfish growth. While we give up what we think we love, in the end we reap what we really do love: the loving character of God. “Humble yourself in the sight of the Lord and He will lift you up” (James 4:10). He never takes away one thing that if we could see from His perspective, we would not gladly part with. “All scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable for doctrine, *for reproof, for correction* [emphasis added], for instruction in righteousness that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works” (2 Timothy 3:16,17).



PRACTICAL PROJECT

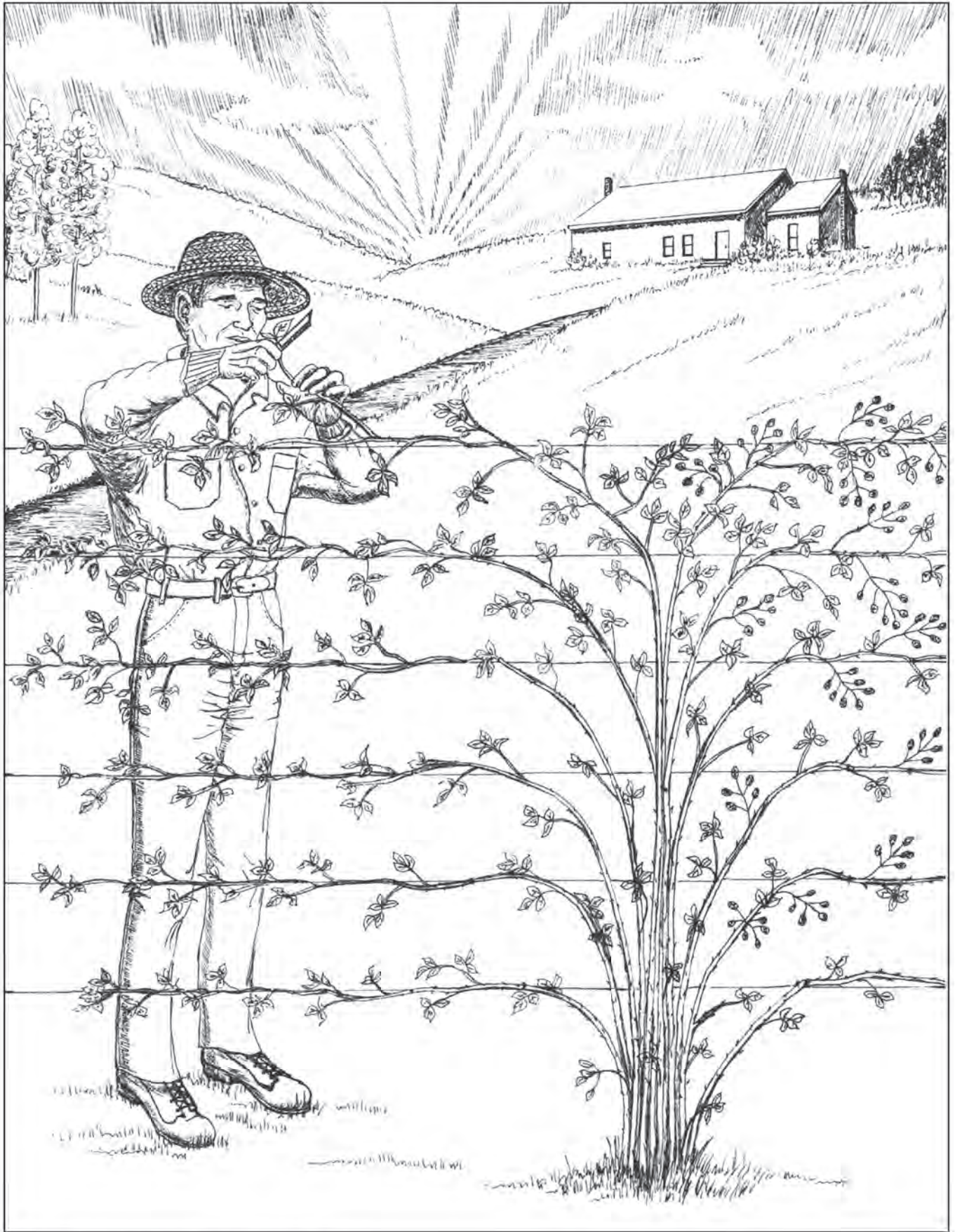
If we can learn to love reproof, there is no end to what we can learn. As a student, my teacher reproofed my writing assignment. By heeding his reproof and corrections, he made a winner out of me, making my project a winner three years straight! The reproofs of his corrections were not pleasant, but winning was!

As a family, share when you suffered a great loss and in the end it turned out a blessing. Keep a record of these in your family record scrap book. Live your life with the end in mind. What do you want the harvest of life to be? God “declares the end from the beginning” (Isaiah 46:10). We need this same Wisdom in order to love reproof. If we can’t handle reproof, school just ended for us. We are now going to learn the hard way. “*The way of the transgressors is hard*” (Proverbs 13:15).



This character-building lesson was excerpted from ***The Gospel According to a Thornless Blackberry*** book by Terry and Jean McComb. To order the complete book and others in their series, go to: www.CreationIllustrated.com.





Summer 2025 Coloring Contest First Name: _____ Last Initial: _____ Age: _____
(deadline & details on page 60) City: _____ State/Prov. _____

Creation Illustrated Coloring Contest



First Place, ages 6–11
Dawson S., age 9,
Montpelier, North Dakota



First Place, ages 19+
Dorothy T., age 92,
Siloam Springs, Arizona



First Place, ages 12–18
Olivia N., age 12,
Hollister, California

Here's how to enter the **Creation Illustrated Coloring Contest for ALL Ages!** Color in the picture on the previous page from the Character-Building Lesson. You can even add other creatures, clouds, sky, etc. Then scan or photograph your work (maximum one per quarter) and email an attached jpeg to: coloring@creationillustrated.com, Subject Line: Coloring Contest. Each entry **MUST** include your name, age, mailing address, phone number, and email address. The **DEADLINE for summer 2025 entries is August 15, 2025.** Your work will be uploaded to our Web site where you and others can vote for any favorites. (No last names or contact information will be included in any postings.) Winners in age groups 6–11, 12 –18, 19 and older will be chosen the first week of September from summer-edition pictures, the first week of December from fall-edition pictures, the first week of March from winter-edition pictures, and the first week of June from spring-edition pictures. First-place winners will receive \$25, have their entry posted on our Web site until the next edition is printed, and *may* be published in *Creation Illustrated* as space allows. For more details go to: www.CreationIllustrated.com

Creation Illustrated Photo Contest

Winners From Spring 2025 Submissions



First Place, ages 6–11 (left)

Benjamin C., age 6, of Coeburn, Virginia, took this picture.

First Place, ages 12–18 (right)

Timothy D., age 16, of Jacksonville, Florida, wrote: "This gorgeous pileated woodpecker is a great reminder of how truly mighty are His wonders. 'How great are His signs, and how mighty His wonders! His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and His dominion is from generation to generation' (Daniel 4:3)."



First Place, ages 19+ (left)

Randi S., age 37, of Montpelier, North Dakota, wrote: "The butterfly's transformation from a caterpillar to a majestic winged creature offers a profound and inspiring allegory for the believer's spiritual journey, illuminating the potential for remarkable growth and renewal."

Here's how to enter the **Creation Illustrated Photo Contest for ALL Ages!** Get creative with your camera in nature and email an attached jpeg (maximum one per quarter) to: photos@creationillustrated.com, Subject Line: Photo Contest. Each entry **MUST** include your name, age, mailing address, phone number, and email address and one or two sentences on what your photo says about our Creator. The **DEADLINE for summer 2025 entries is August 15, 2025**. Your work will be uploaded to our Web site where you and others can vote for any favorites. (No last names or contact information will be included in any postings.) Winners in age groups 6–11, 12–18, 19 and older will be chosen the first week of September from summer submissions, the first week of December from fall submissions, the first week of March from winter submissions, and the first week of June from spring submissions. First-place winners will receive \$25, have their entry posted on our Web site until the next edition is printed, and *may* be published in *Creation Illustrated* as space allows. For more details go to: www.CreationIllustrated.com



STUDY GUIDE

for *Creation Illustrated*, Summer 2025 Edition, Vol. 32, No. 2

This instructional guide is designed to help readers of all ages integrate practical spiritual lessons available through the study of God's handiwork. Studying nature will help lead individuals to a personal, awe-inspiring relationship with Jesus Christ, the Author of Creation.

I. Re-Creation Outdoors—"Montana Ranch Revelations" story, pages 6–11

1. Where is the Lonesome Spur Ranch located? What mountain range is in this area? pp. 6, 7
2. How many head of cattle does Montana hold? What is the agricultural revenue value of them? p. 8
3. What Native American reservation did the guests ride horses on? How many acres is the reservation? p. 8
4. Describe why horses are so vital for ranchers. p. 8
5. Describe the most important lesson that was learned at the ranch's training arena. pp. 10, 11

II. Creation Up Close—"Sunflower Secrets" story, pages 14–19

1. Explain the solar synchronicity of sunflowers. Where is it embedded? p. 16
2. How many hours of sunlight do sunflowers need to best facilitate pollination? p. 16
3. In what pattern do sunflower seeds grow to produce the most seeds with no wasted space? pp. 16, 17
4. How many different parts of a sunflower are edible? What are the main uses of sunflower seeds? p. 17
5. What Bible lessons relate to sunflowers following the sun? List some associated Scripture texts. pp. 17, 18
6. What spiritual lessons are learned from the sunflower's uniformity? List some related Scripture texts. p. 18

III. Creatures Near and Dear to Us—"The Elusive Albatross" story, pages 20–27

1. What helped in discovering similarities between the albatross and those who trust in Jesus? p. 23
2. What is the nickname for the albatross? p. 23
3. What are believers of Jesus called in 1 Peter 2:11 and Philippians 3:20? p. 23
4. What percentage of the albatross' life is spent in the air? How many miles can they travel in their lifetime? What is this distance equal to? p. 23
5. Explain the meaning of the phrase "an albatross around his neck" from a 1798 poem. How does John 1:29 and Colossians 3:1–3 help resolve this burden? pp. 23, 24
6. What unique design did the Creator give to the albatross' wings to help the creature soar? p. 24

IV. The Creation Week—"Creation Day 6, Part 1—The Creation of Animals and Insects" story, pages 28–37

1. List the three groups of animals that were created on day six. How does this order show God's nature? pp. 29, 30
2. List some major changes in animals that were not present during their original state before the Fall. p. 30
3. Explain how *kinds* and taxonomic groupings differ. How does this relate to Noah fitting all of the creatures on the ark? pp. 31, 34
4. What did God build into each creature He created? How does this allow us to value both the biblical account and what science shows us? p. 34
5. How does God use his created creatures to teach us lessons? Give some examples. pp. 34, 35
6. Explain dominion and stewardship. How do these two God-appointed duties reveal one's character and teach us compelling truths? pp. 35, 36

Summertime Family Fun Activities

Keeping a nature journal is a wonderful way to slow down and to better appreciate the world around us. It helps develop observation skills, boosts creativity, and encourages scientific thinking. Additionally, nature journals can act as long-term records of experiences, events, and changes in nature.

Nature Journaling is a good way to incorporate some family fun summer learning. Here are some suggestions that will help you and your family learn about nature in a rewarding way. Start by visiting your local library or researching online to become inspired by works of famous explorers, artists, and nature-journal writers such as John Audubon, Lewis and Clark, Alexander Von Humboldt, John Muir, Beatrix Potter, Edith Holden, etc.

Have each family member design their own nature journal. Use art supplies, pens, and pencils to decorate the cover as well as to illustrate your observations. In a day pack, place some of the art supplies, binoculars, mini-microscope, guidebooks, a mini plant press, bug spray, sunscreen, and plastic bags for specimen collection.

Create a list of nearby natural areas to visit such as national and state parks, wildlife refuges, bird sanctuaries, forests, botanical gardens, wetlands, green spaces, prairie and grassland reserves, beaches, lakes, and even your own backyard. You can seek guidance from your local library, the state department of natural resources, local outdoor groups, birding clubs, etc.

Enjoy drawing, collecting samples, and recording your observations of your nature outings. At the end of the summer, enjoy doing a show and tell by sharing your journaling and important lessons you learned about the Creator with your family, friends, and classmates.



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WORD SEARCH PUZZLE

The puzzle at the left contains words that are associated with this edition of *Creation Illustrated*. Simply find the words listed below and circle them. They can be spelled backward, forward, up, down, or diagonally. When you are finished, try to find the story or other part of the magazine from which each word came.

- | | |
|--------------|---------------|
| 1. ALBATROSS | 11. PRUNE |
| 2. ANIMALS | 12. RANCH |
| 3. CATTLE | 13. REFUGE |
| 4. GARDENS | 14. SOAR |
| 5. GLIDES | 15. SPECIES |
| 6. HORSE | 16. SPIRAL |
| 7. KINDS | 17. SUNFLOWER |
| 8. NYMPHS | 18. TRAILS |
| 9. PLANTS | 19. WILD |
| 10. PRAYING | 20. WINGS |



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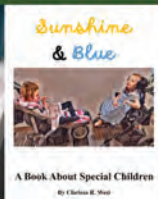
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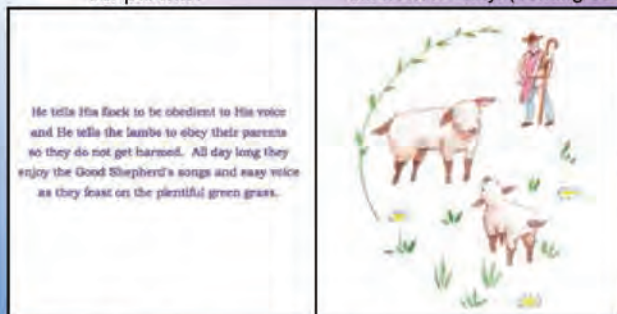
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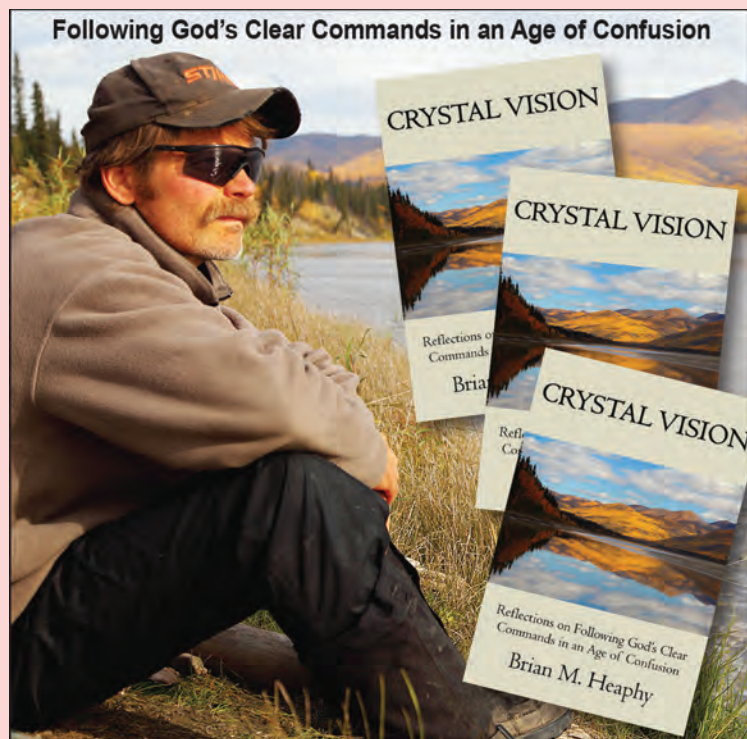


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Main Verse: _____

Other Verses:

Big Idea (or) Main Point

Words I don't know:

My Notes from Church

Name: _____ Date: _____

The Sermon Text is: _____

This is from (circle one): Old Testament / New Testament

What was the sermon about?

Who is speaking about God?

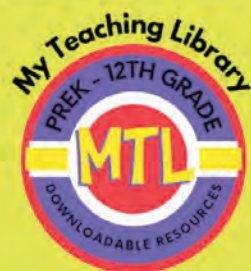
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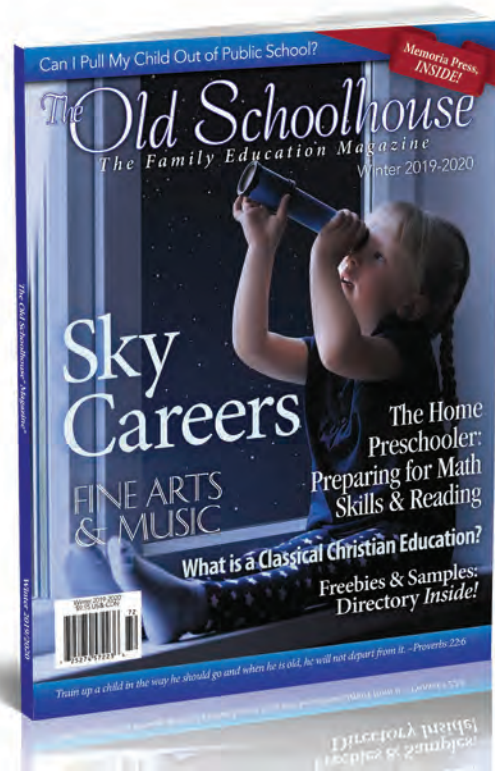
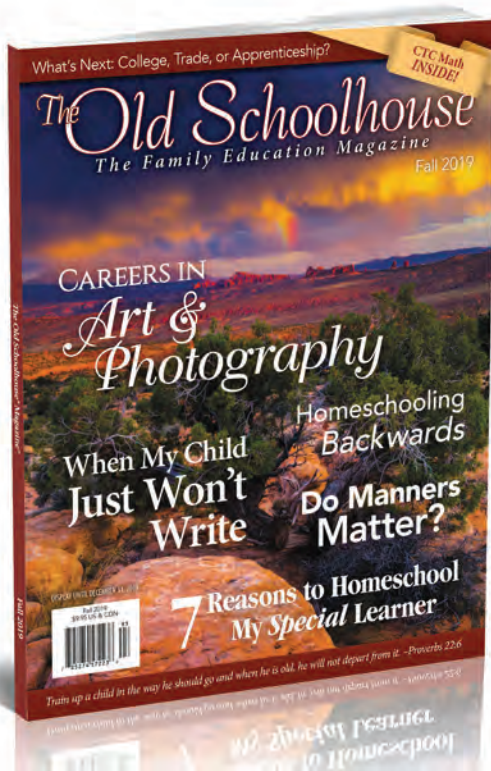
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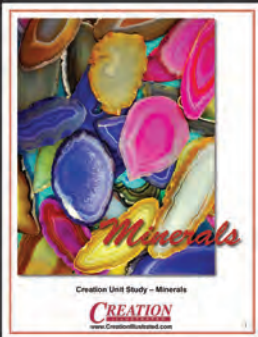
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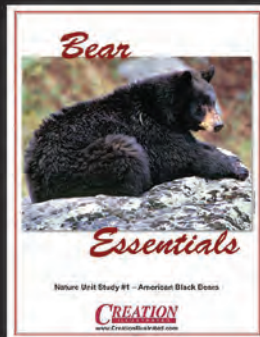


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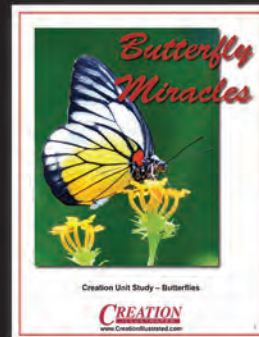
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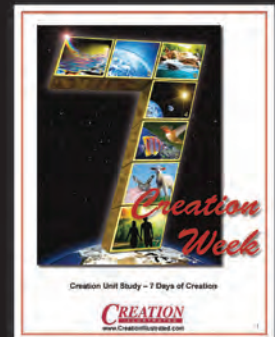
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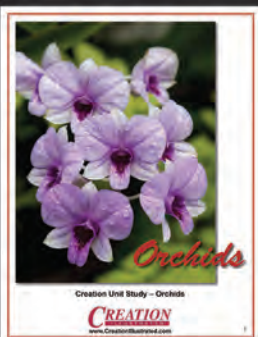
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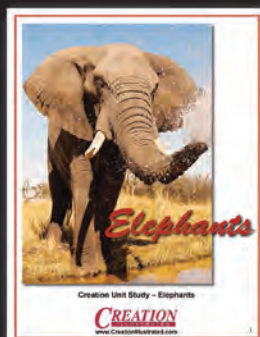
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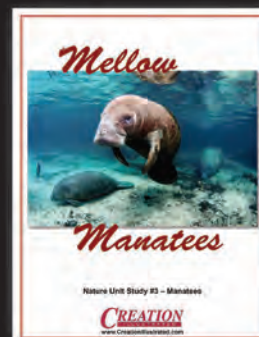
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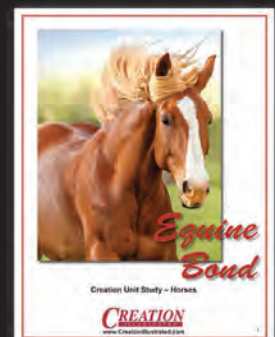
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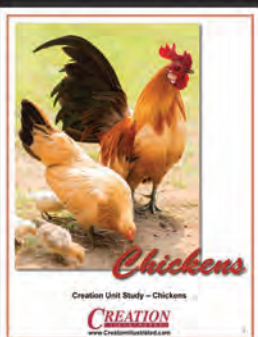
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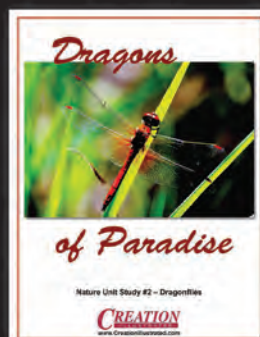
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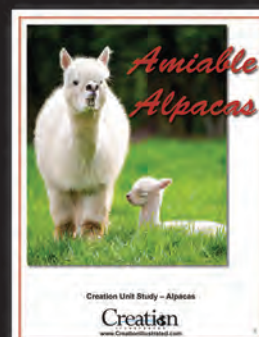
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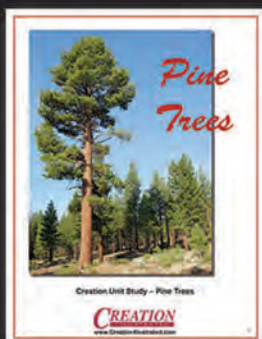
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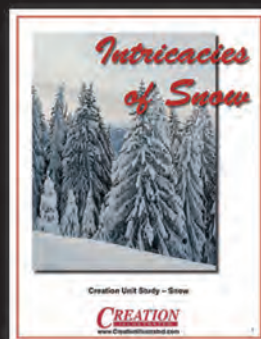
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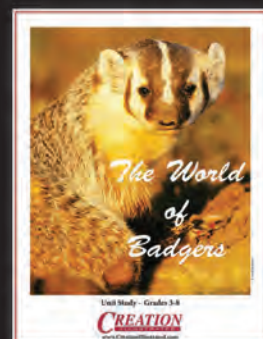
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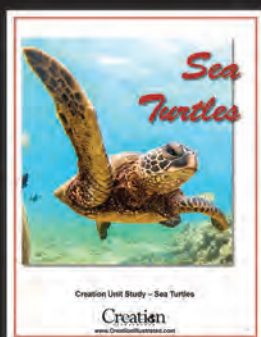
Pine Trees



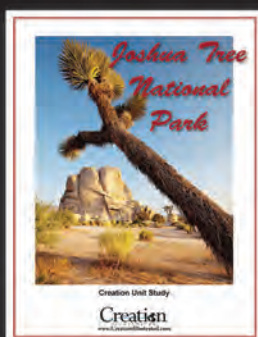
Snow



Badgers



Sea Turtles



Joshua Tree
National Park



Octopus

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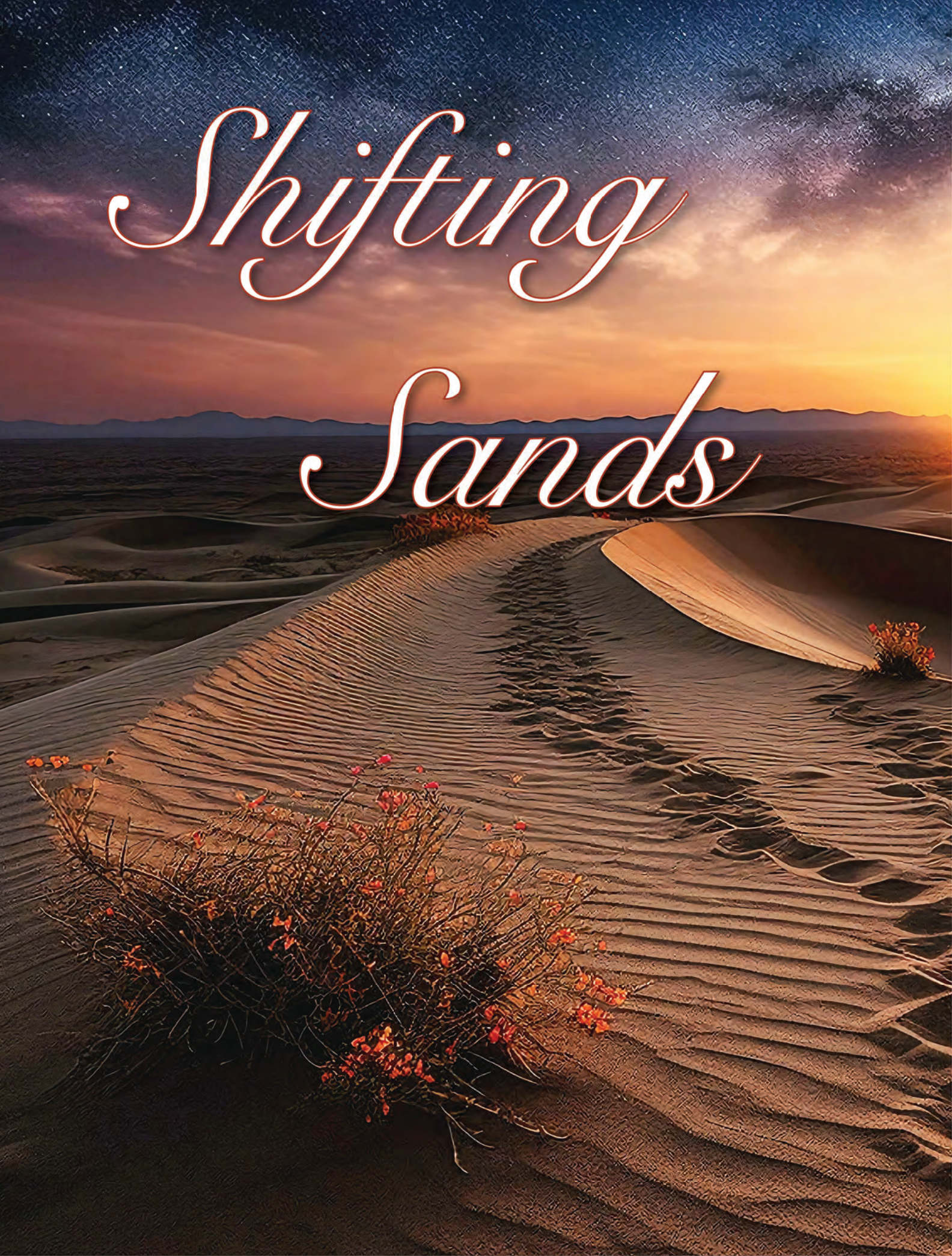
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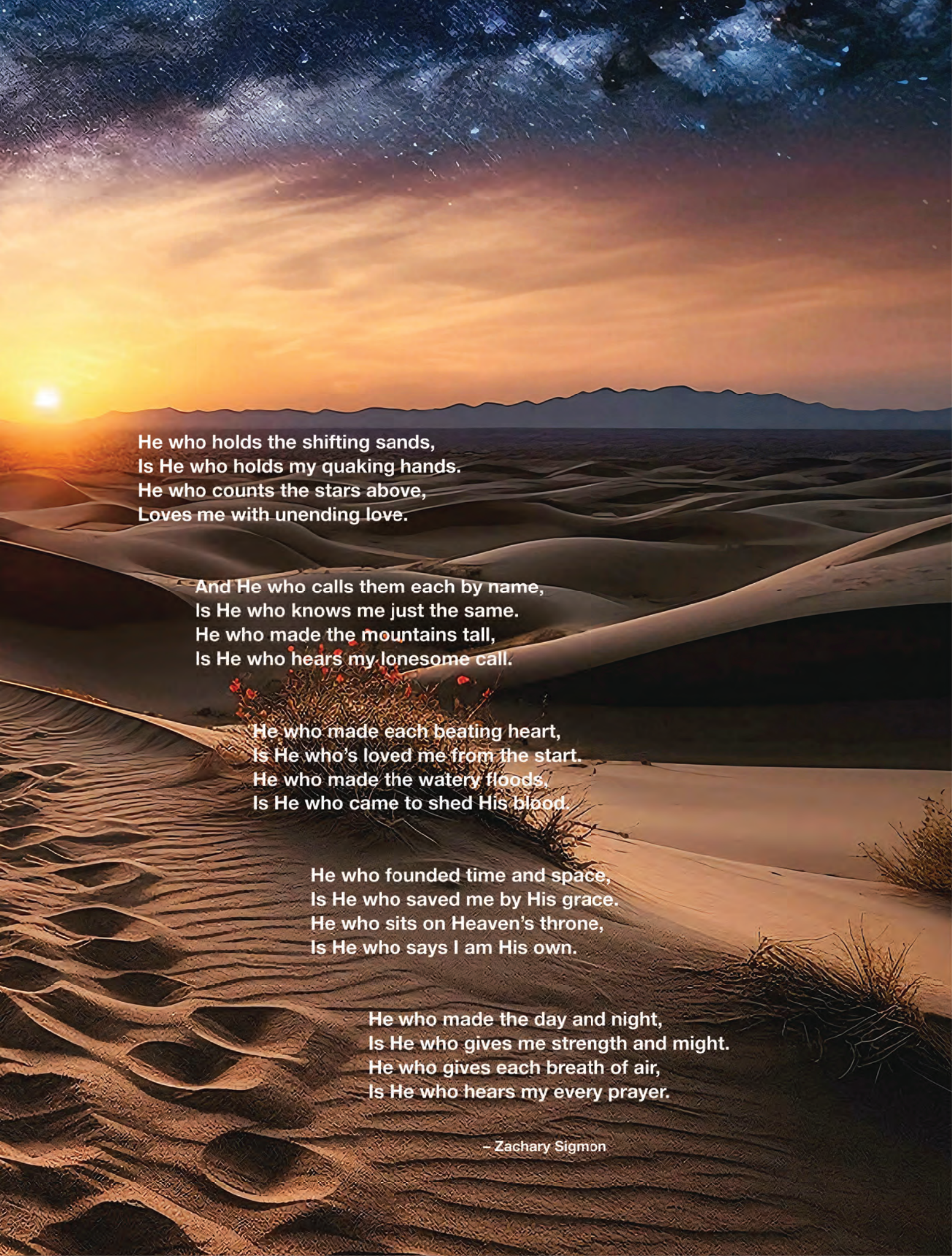


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your cell phone camera!

Shifting

Sands



A full-page background image of a desert landscape at sunset. The sun is low on the left horizon, casting a warm orange glow. The sky transitions from orange near the horizon to a deep blue with visible stars and constellations. In the foreground, there are rolling sand dunes with some small, dry bushes. The overall mood is serene and contemplative.

He who holds the shifting sands,
Is He who holds my quaking hands.
He who counts the stars above,
Loves me with unending love.

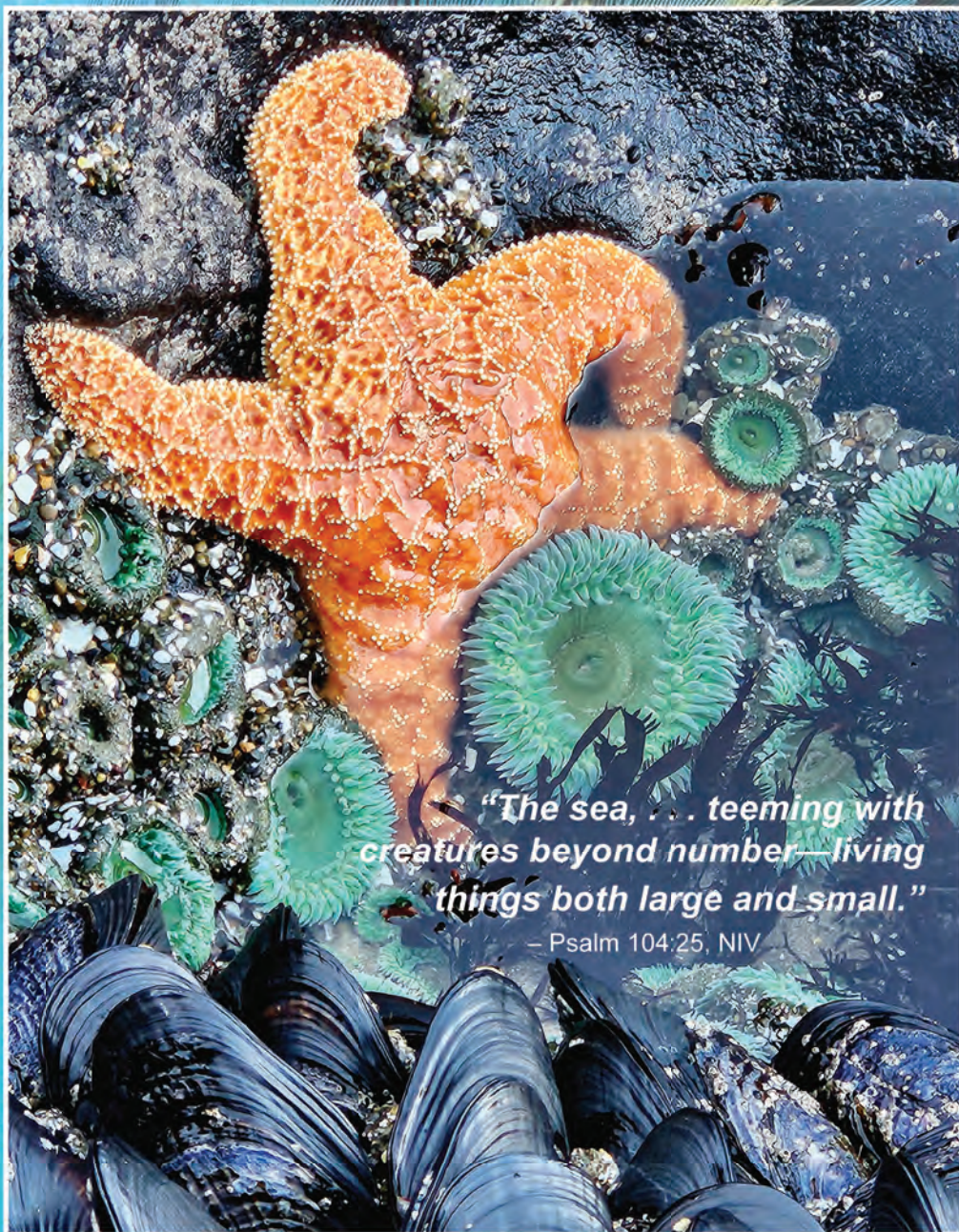
And He who calls them each by name,
Is He who knows me just the same.
He who made the mountains tall,
Is He who hears my lonesome call.

He who made each beating heart,
Is He who's loved me from the start.
He who made the watery floods,
Is He who came to shed His blood.

He who founded time and space,
Is He who saved me by His grace.
He who sits on Heaven's throne,
Is He who says I am His own.

He who made the day and night,
Is He who gives me strength and might.
He who gives each breath of air,
Is He who hears my every prayer.

– Zachary Sigmon



Jeremy Ventura

*"The sea, . . . teeming with
creatures beyond number—living
things both large and small."*

— Psalm 104:25, NIV

Creation

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