

Virtue

INTRODUCTION



Three Hundred Men Face a Mighty Army

God is powerful! He manifests His power so that the world will know that He is God. He loves to make His power known through those who believe in Him and receive His Holy Spirit. One certain evidence of God's power in your life is a change in your desires. God empowers you to say "yes" to Him and "no" to your own selfish desires. Strong, virtuous men and women are forged through testing and adversity. They are valuable to the Kingdom of God, but they are not easy to find. They are the few who trust God, finding courage and building endurance in difficulty. Others who do wickedly will be corrupted "... but the people that do know their God shall be strong, and do exploits" (Daniel 11:32). Virtue is formed as we know God and receive His power!

VIRTUE

The moral excellence and purity of spirit that radiate from my life as I obey God's Word

Virtue Overview

What Is Virtue?

Read aloud and discuss what virtue means and how it applies to life.

The operational definition of *virtue* is “the moral excellence and purity of spirit that radiate from my life as I obey God’s Word.” *Moral excellence* means choosing to do what is right and rejecting what is wrong according to God’s Word. In the Bible, the word *virtuous* means “power” or “valor.” A virtuous Christian receives God’s power to live in obedience to God and bravely confront evil. In God’s strength, he can overcome temptation and pursue righteousness. Because he loves God, the virtuous Christian seeks to be pure and clean in his words, thoughts, and deeds



A life that receives Christ’s righteousness to walk in purity will refresh many and glorify God.

according to God’s Word. God has saved him and given him new desires to do what is right, even when no one is watching. The opposite of *virtue* is *impurity*. An impure person is spiritually weak, so he does not resist ungodly thoughts or desires. He easily gives in to temptation and makes poor choices rather than rely on God’s strength to do right. He may sin openly or try to hide his sin. Yet God sees his heart and knows everything. If the impure person sins repeatedly, his conscience may become dull, meaning he may not think his sin is too bad. He may even think his sin is acceptable, especially if others are doing it too. This immoral person may

not experience consequences immediately or consider the harm caused to others. However, he needs to realize that one day God will call every person to give an account of his life. The good news is that impurity can be overcome by receiving God’s forgiveness, casting off sin, and “putting on” the Lord Jesus! (See Romans 13:12–14.)

How do you “put on Christ” and “add to your faith virtue” (II Peter 1:5)?

When you repent of your sins and place your faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, He gives you His Spirit and

imparts His righteousness to you. (See Ephesians 1:13, II Corinthians 5:20–21.) As you yield to the Holy Spirit, He gives you the moral strength to do what is right and to be a Godly influence on others. Christians grow in virtue by knowing God, claiming His powerful promises, and obeying His Word. “According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue: Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust” (II Peter 1:3–4).



A life that is polluted with sin is contaminated and cannot offer pure spiritual refreshment to others.

Virtue in Scripture

As you read and study God's Word, see Who He is, and allow Him to work in you, your life will become a radiant expression of Him. God will be glorified as His character is seen in you.

VIRTUE KEY VERSE

“According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue . . .
And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge.” II PETER 1:3, 5

The Character of God

We see examples of virtue in God's character in the following ways:

- **God's very being and His work are entirely pure, holy, and excellent.**
(See Deuteronomy 32:4, Isaiah 6:3, Revelation 15:4.)
- **God the Father anointed Jesus His Son with the Holy Spirit and power to do good and to heal.**
(See Acts 10:38.)
- **Jesus' virtue was clearly evident as He healed multitudes who sought Him.**
(See Luke 6:19.)
- **Jesus was tempted yet remained pure and sinless.**
(See Hebrews 4:15.)
- **Jesus taught in the power of the Holy Spirit.**
(See Luke 4:14–15.)
- **The Holy Spirit enables believers to live virtuously instead of succumbing to fleshly desires.**
(See Romans 8:13.)
- **The Holy Spirit is the mighty Presence that Jesus promised to send His disciples.**
(See Luke 24:49.)

Virtue in My Life

Now let's examine some ways God wants us to live out virtue daily.

- **What is my only hope of living the Christian life?**
(See John 15:4, Galatians 2:20.)
- **Rather than trying to be like the world, how can I discern the will of God?**
(See Romans 12:1–2.)
- **Why should I guard my heart?**
(See Proverbs 4:23, Galatians 5:13.)
- **What thoughts will keep my heart pure and peaceful?**
(See Philippians 4:8, Isaiah 26:3.)
- **What is the result of choosing the wrong friends?**
(See Proverbs 13:20, I Corinthians 15:33.)
- **How can I valiantly withstand the attacks of the enemy?**
(See Ephesians 6:10–18.)
- **What results from the power God gives me to live a virtuous life?**
(See II Peter 1:3–8, Proverbs 31:10–12, Titus 3:8.)

Bible Story

Three Hundred Men Face a Mighty Army

The glowing campfires of the enemy's enormous army filled the valley below. Flickering lights stretched across the vast land, illuminating the countless number of Midianite soldiers awaiting daylight to attack and conquer the Israelites. The Israelites' commander, Gideon, gazed at the sight below. The scene may have appeared overwhelming to Gideon but not to God. Not long before, Gideon had been hiding from the Midianites when an angel of the LORD appeared to him with these words: "The LORD is with thee, thou mighty man of valour. . . . thou shalt save Israel from the hand of the Midianites: have not I sent thee?" Although Gideon felt very unqualified,

God's strength was all that he needed. After this timid man obeyed God and tore down the altar of Baal, God's Spirit came upon Gideon. Israel was to know that victory would be from God alone. So God directed Gideon to send all the soldiers home except for three hundred men! By faith, Gideon obeyed God's instructions and sent the majority of men back home. Now, only a tiny Israelite army would face the enemy. How could so few men defeat this massive army? Would Gideon continue to receive courage and power from God to lead his men? What would God do?

Let's read the Bible story in Judges 7:9–25 and then discuss the following questions.

- 1. What did God tell Gideon to do that night? Whom could Gideon take with him?**
(See Judges 7:9–10.)
How do you receive God's power when you feel like giving up? (See Isaiah 40:31.)
How can a friend help when you are fearful?
(See Proverbs 17:17.)
- 2. How would God strengthen Gideon to face the enemy? (See Judges 7:11.) What did Gideon overhear? (See Judges 7:13–14.)**
What promises from God can bring you strength and peace? (See Joshua 1:9, John 16:33.)
- 3. When he overheard Midianite warriors discussing a dream and its meaning, what did Gideon immediately do? What did he confidently tell his army? (See Judges 7:15.)**
Why should you worship God? (See Revelation 4:11.)
When have you thanked Him before you saw His answer?
- 4. How many of Gideon's men were in each group?**

Instead of traditional weapons, what did the men carry? (See Judges 7:16.)

Share a time your family obeyed God, even though it meant doing something unusual. Why did your family believe God was leading in this way?

- 5. What instructions did Gideon give the men? (See Judges 7:17–18.) Did they act on what God told them to do? (See Judges 7:19.)**
What does God empower you to do in your Christian walk? (See II Peter 1:3–8.)
- 6. Who stood in place as the Midianite army fled? (See Judges 7:21.)**
How does God enable you to stand firm in faith? (See Ephesians 6:13.) Has God promised to give Christians power over the world, the flesh, and the devil? (See James 4:7, I John 5:4.)
- 7. How was God's power manifested through Gideon and his small army? (See Judges 7:22, 8:28.)**
When have you received God's power in a time of adversity?

Memory Verse

II Peter 1:3

“According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue.”

II PETER 1:3

Memory Verse Game: Category Stand-ups

Call out a category. Here are some examples of categories: everyone who likes cars, everyone who has gone on vacation this year, or everyone who enjoys eating popcorn.

When a category is called, those who fit the description should stand up and say the verse together. Continue to play until each person can say the verse from memory.

Doers of the Word: II Peter 1:3

In the blank below, write how this verse could be applied in your life, e.g., “receive Your power to live for You,” “spend time with You daily,” or “thank You for calling me to glory and virtue.”

“Dear Lord, I yield to You and am willing to apply this verse. Help me to _____

I ask that You would develop virtue in my life. In Jesus’ name, Amen.”

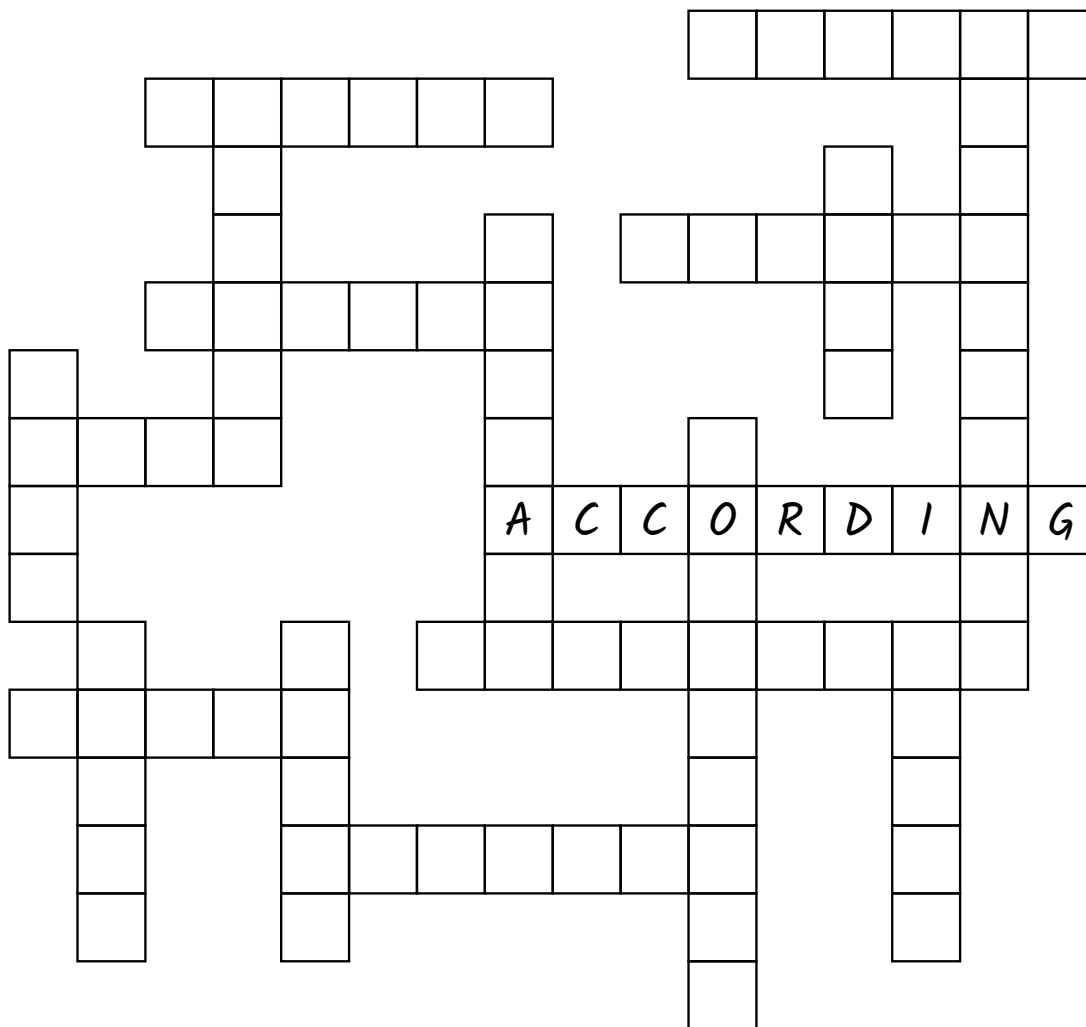
When the Lord gives you an opportunity to apply this verse, write it in your journal to later recall God’s working in your life.

Word Puzzle

Crossword Puzzle

Instructions

Enjoy meditating on and thinking about the words of the virtue key verse and definition as you fill in the crossword puzzle below. *Italicized* words fit horizontally and underlined words fit vertically. One word is already done for you. (Answers can be found on page 12.)



II Peter 1:3

“*According* as his *divine* power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the *knowledge* of him that hath *called* us to glory and virtue.”

Virtue

The *moral* excellence and purity of *spirit* that *radiate* from my life as I *obey* God’s Word

Activity

In the World but Not of the World

Introduction

During this character study, we are asking the Lord to develop virtue in our lives. What a privilege to respond to the work He is doing to change us into the image of His Son! Today we are going to do an experiment to illustrate how we are to be *in* the world but not *of* the world.

Supplies:

- A small glass jar with a lid, half-filled with water
- ¼ cup cooking oil

Instructions

Set the jar of water where the children can all see it.

Jesus prayed and asked His Father to keep, or protect, His disciples, including those who would believe in Him in the future. He asked that His followers not be taken out of the world, but that God would keep them from the world's evil influences. (See John 17:14–15.)

Watch as I pour the oil into the water in this jar. The oil represents Christians. The water represents the world. Look!

The oil and water aren't mixing, even though they are in the same jar! Similarly, Christ has sent us into the world to live radiant, Godly lives for Him because people need to see Christ in us. We are to interact with people, which is being "in



the world," but we are not to become *like* the world, which would be accepting or approving sinful ways. We are not to participate in the ungodly things that we see and hear others doing. We are not to use words or agree with ideas that are not right according to God's Word. As Christians, we are called to keep our hearts separate from the world.

In II Corinthians 6:16–18, 7:1 we read: "As God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you. And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty. . . . Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God."

Even when you are in the world, remain set apart unto the God Who loves you and gave Himself for you. Let God's Word guide what you decide to see, hear, think, say, and do. (See I Corinthians 3:16–17, 6:9–11, 19–20.)

Discussion Questions from I John:

- What motivates a Christian to live a pure life? (See I John 3:1–3.)
- Can you love God and worldly pursuits at the same time? (See I John 2:15–16.)
- What causes someone to love God? (See I John 4:16, 19.)
- How is it possible to overcome the world? (See I John 5:4.)

Explaining Salvation to a Child

Christ Our Righteousness

You will need the following items: sticky notes, pen, and a white bed sheet.

The Bible tells us about God. He is the Creator of the universe and He is holy. God loves us and created us to have fellowship with Him. (See [Revelation 4:11](#).)

Select a volunteer who would not mind standing to represent the sin of all people. Romans 3:23 says, “For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.” Sin is anything we think, say, or do that breaks God’s Law. Can you name some examples of sin? As the children answer, write their examples on sticky notes and place them onto the volunteer’s clothing (e.g., speaking unkind words, stealing, disobeying, doing good with wrong motives).

Because we have all sinned, and God is holy, we are eternally separated from Him. However, because God loves us so much, He sent His Son, Jesus, Who died on the cross to pay for our sin and Who rose again to conquer death! Now we can have fellowship with God forever

through Christ. (See [John 17:3](#).) If we accept God’s gift of salvation, Christ’s blood cleanses us from sin, and His righteousness is put upon us! (See [II Corinthians 5:21](#).)

Remove the sticky notes and wrap the white sheet around the volunteer to represent Jesus’ robe of righteousness.

Isaiah 31:10 describes what has happened this way: “My soul shall be joyful in my God; for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness. . . .” In Romans 10:9–10, we are told how we can accept this gift: “That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.”

Are you trusting in Jesus Christ for your salvation? If so, your sins are forgiven and Christ is living in you!

Your new, inward identity is one of righteousness in God’s eyes. The more you realize that you are a new creature in Christ and walk in the Spirit, the more your outward actions will demonstrate Christ living in you. Just as the Apostle Paul wrote in Galatians 2:20, you can also say, “I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.” God gives us eternal life—sweet constant fellowship in the Spirit with our Savior—and then His righteousness is seen in us for His glory. (See [John 15:4–10](#).)

In a Nutshell

1. God created all things ([Colossians 1:16](#)). God is holy ([Leviticus 19:2](#)). God loves us ([John 3:16](#)).
2. Our sin separates us from God ([Romans 3:23](#)).
3. God sent His Son, Jesus, to provide the way for our sins to be forgiven and for fellowship with Him to be restored ([Ephesians 1:6–7](#)). Jesus accomplished our salvation through His crucifixion on the cross, His burial, and His glorious resurrection ([I Corinthians 15:3–4](#)).
4. We can do nothing to earn salvation. It is a free gift from God that we receive by faith ([Ephesians 2:8–9](#)).
5. We receive that gift of salvation by confessing with our mouth that Jesus is Lord and believing in our heart that God has raised Him from the dead ([Romans 10:9–10](#)).

Hymn History

“A Mighty Fortress Is Our God”

Sing “A Mighty Fortress Is Our God” and read about the virtue proclaimed by the hymn writer, Martin Luther.

The October wind whipped about, chilling passersby in Wittenberg, Germany. Seemingly unaware of the bitter cold, a short man stood before the massive doors of the town’s church. Steadily, he nailed a long paper to the wooden doors where other



Martin Luther (1483–1546)

public announcements were displayed. Soon his public proclamation would gain attention throughout the world for years to come!

A priest and university professor, Martin Luther boldly posted his ninety-five theses—statements for public debate—on the Wittenberg Church doors.

This historic event occurred

on October 31, 1517. Dr. Luther’s proclamation was a result of his salvation. Before his salvation, as an extremely pious monk, Dr. Luther had spent many hours in prayer and solitude. He had even starved and beaten himself physically, desperately trying to appease God’s just wrath for his sin. However, his efforts yielded him no peace. Then, God began to reveal His truth to Dr. Luther. Gradually, the despondent monk began to grasp what the Bible meant by “the just shall live by faith.” Upon realizing that salvation is not by works, but by faith in Jesus Christ alone, Dr. Luther trusted Christ’s full payment for his sin and began sharing this important truth with others.

His ninety-five theses publicly proclaimed salvation

by faith alone, which opposed the teaching that salvation was by human effort. Dr. Luther’s revolutionary post sparked the Protestant Reformation. Four years later, government authorities and Roman Catholic church leaders demanded that he recant. Despite the threat of death, he resolutely responded: “I cannot and will not recant. Here I stand, so help me God, Amen.” The Roman Catholic church excommunicated Dr. Luther. His friends hid him, fearing he would be killed. While in hiding, Martin Luther translated parts of the Bible into German so that people could read God’s Word for themselves.

Twelve years after his Wittenberg door post, Dr. Luther wrote “A Mighty Fortress Is Our God.” He composed the hymn the night before a court battle regarding his teaching of God’s truth.

*Did we in our own strength confide,
Our striving would be losing;
Were not the right Man on our side,
The Man of God’s own choosing:
Dost ask who that may be?
Christ Jesus it is He . . . And He must win the battle.*

Martin Luther understood that a virtuous, holy life is based on knowing Christ and upholding His pure doctrine. Virtue is “the moral excellence and purity of spirit that radiates from my life as I obey God’s Word.” Dr. Luther submitted to God’s Word as his final authority. His unwavering courage and powerful words provided truth for others. May we also walk in truth and obedience so that Christ’s virtue in us will shine to a world that needs to know Him!

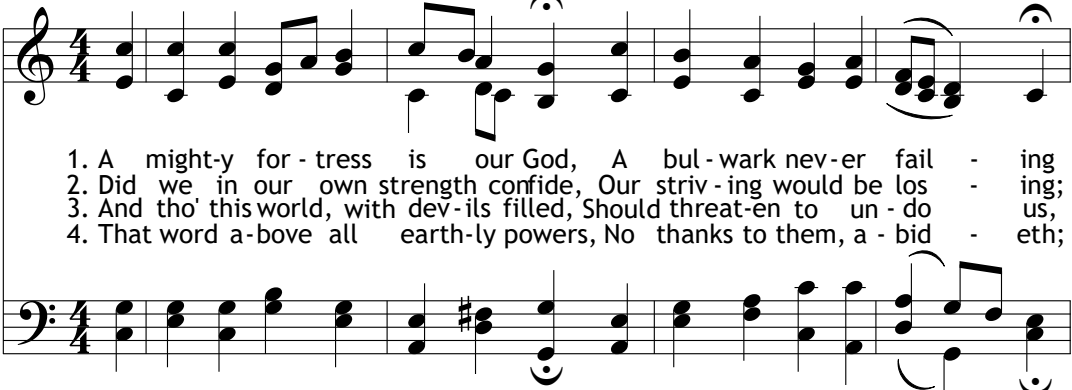
Hymn Sheet Music

A Mighty Fortress Is Our God

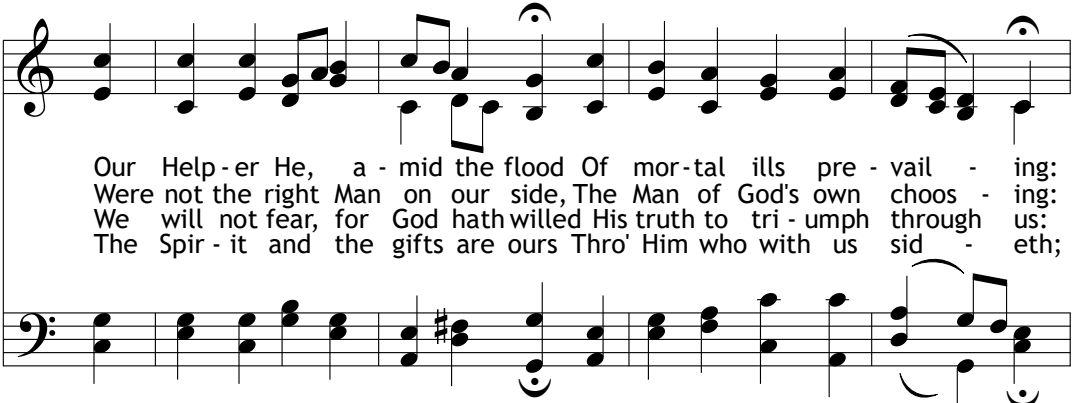
Martin Luther (1483–1546)

Martin Luther (1483–1546)

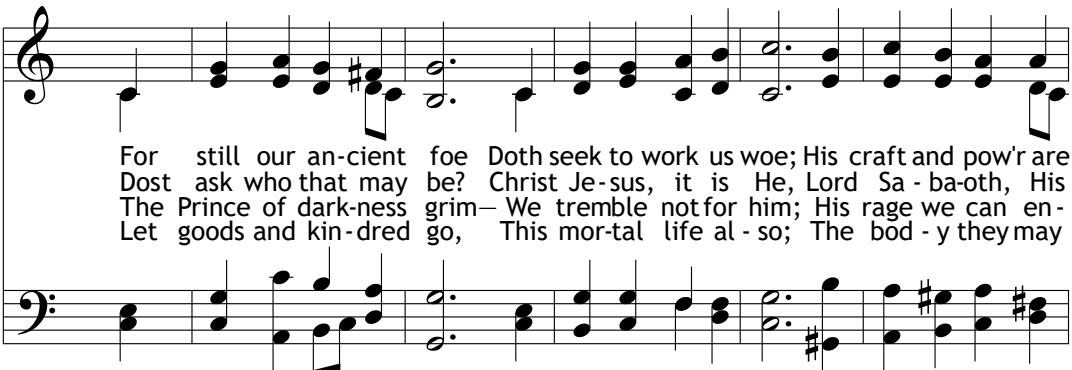
Translated: Fredrick H. Hedge (1805–1890) Harmony: Johann S. Bach (1685–1750)



1. A might-y for - tress is our God, A bul - wark nev - er fail - ing
2. Did we in our own strength confide, Our striv - ing would be los - ing;
3. And tho' this world, with dev - ils filled, Should threat - en to un - do us,
4. That word a - bove all earth - ly powers, No thanks to them, a - bid - eth;



Our Help - er He, a - mid the flood Of mor - tal ills pre - vail - ing:
Were not the right Man on our side, The Man of God's own choos - ing:
We will not fear, for God hath willed His truth to tri - umph through us:
The Spir - it and the gifts are ours Thro' Him who with us sid - eth;



For still our an - cient foe Doth seek to work us woe; His craft and pow'r are
Dost ask who that may be? Christ Je - sus, it is He, Lord Sa - ba - oth, His
The Prince of dark - ness grim - We tremble not for him; His rage we can en -
Let goods and kin - dred go, This mor - tal life al - so; The bod - y they may



great, And, armed with cru - el hate, On earth is not his e - qual.
name, From age to age the same, And He must win the bat - tle.
dure, For lo, his doom is sure, One lit - tle word shall fell him.
kill: God's truth a - bid - eth still, His king - dom is for - ev - er.

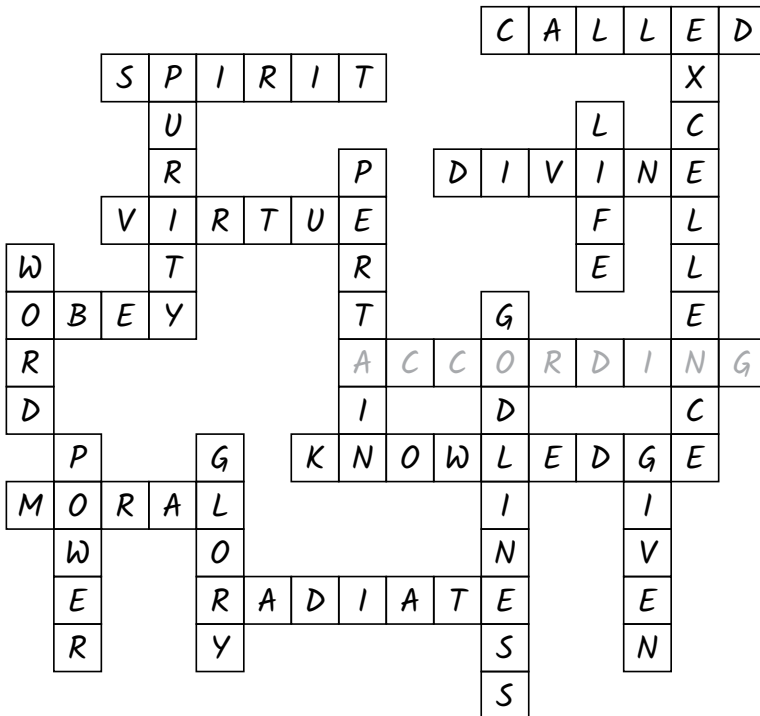
Three Hundred Men Face a Mighty Army

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“And [Gideon] said unto them, Look on me, and do likewise When I blow with a trumpet, I and all that are with me, then blow ye the trumpets also on every side of all the camp, and say, The sword of the LORD, and of Gideon” (Judges 7:17-18).

Crossword Puzzle Answer Key



Hymn History Bibliography

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Robinson, Charles S., *Annotations Upon Popular Hymns*, Volume 1, Forgotten Books, London, 2012, p. 143.

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Recommended Resources

- *2021 Biblical Character Illustrated Calendar*
- *Hymns for the Family CDs* (“A Mighty Fortress Is Our God” is sung to piano accompaniment on Volume 2.)
- *The Power for True Success*
- *Understanding Spiritual Gifts*
- Character Cards
- Character Cards Memory Game
- *Character Sketches*, Volumes I–III
- *Achieving True Success*
- *Believing God for His Best* by Bill Thrasher
- “The Most Important Activity in Your Life” (message by Jim Sammons, available at embassymedia.com)
- “The Centrality of Christ in the Life of a Believer” (message by Jerry Benjamin, available at embassymedia.com)

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