



# Seeing Providence

**A four-week Journey**  
**small group and sermon series,**  
*October 30 through November 20, 2022.*



**Bryn Athyn**  
**Church**

# Welcome

*The workings of divine providence for our salvation start with our birth and last to the end of our life and then on to eternity. Divine Providence 331*

*From infancy to old age, every age has its delights that introduce a person to the next stage, and finally to the delight of intelligence and wisdom. Secrets of Heaven 4063*

**Thank you for taking time to reflect on and share with others your experience of divine providence.** No matter how old we are and wherever we are in our lives, the Lord has provided for every detail that brings us to his very moment. In the coming four weeks, we will see if we can find that truth illustrated throughout our lives.

**Training ourselves to look for the good has great rewards.** Humans are hard-wired to notice the danger, problems, and struggles, which has helped us all to survive. However, if we take the time to look for the Lord's love and blessings, we begin to see the good side of life more and more – a glorious sunrise, healthy digestion, all green lights when we are running late, meaningful work, a supportive family, the kindness of a stranger. Might all these

blessings be part of providence caring for us? This perspective does not negate life's challenges, but helps to counterbalance them.

**It is not always easy to see the workings of providence.**

*Divine Providence 187* tells us: "We are allowed to see divine providence from behind but not face to face, and when in a spiritual state, not in a materialistic one." During this Journey series, we will reflect back on our lives, and the lives of loved ones, to find some of the amazing details of God's providence. As we see this loving care in our past, can we count on the same to be true for our future? One goal of this series is to help us to put past, present and future challenges into the perspective of eternity.

**The value of reflection:** Swedenborg writes "I was just conversing with spirits and angels about reflection, saying I do not know whether people pay enough attention to it. If they do, they will discover more secrets in the doctrine of reflection than in any other."

*Spiritual Experiences 733*

Starting with inspiration from Donnette Alfelt's many efforts to help us feel and see the Lord's love and guidance, this series was created by Nina Dewees, Derek & Gay Elphick, Mary Grubb, and Malcolm Smith.

# Participating *in a* Small Group

For each meeting, bring this handout, and perhaps a journal/paper and pencil. Come a few minutes early so that you have time for fellowship with others in your group before starting.



With your group, decide on the time frame for your weekly meetings. We suggest 60 – 90 minutes. It is good to schedule your meeting after the first worship service of the Journey program. That way you will have a good introduction to the material before covering it in your group. This is a four-week series, but feel free to keep meeting beyond that time!

Each week's group meeting is planned out for you, including prayers, readings, activities and tasks for the coming week, but adjust it to work for your group! You can offer your own prayers, or use the ones provided. You might want to start with a brief "How are you?" check-in, or go right to the icebreaker to hear from everyone. You can read some or all of the passages together, or on your own before group time. Pick a couple of the discussion questions that seem interesting, or choose to take more time for the activity. Perhaps group members can take turns facilitating each week, or participating in different parts of the meeting, such as offering a prayer or bringing refreshments.

Some passages are abbreviated to highlight the "gem" portion, but of course you can look up the entire number if you like to see the larger context, or learn more. There are also resources at the end of these materials for a deeper dive.



**Small Group Guidelines**  
The following suggested guidelines help create a safe, supportive environment for everyone to get the most out of your time together:

- 1** Avoid interrupting or giving unsolicited advice.
- 2** Speak only for ourselves.
- 3** Avoid using names when sharing.
- 4** Keep confidentiality.
- 5** Seek to stay within time limits so everyone has a chance to share.
- 6** There is always the option to "pass."

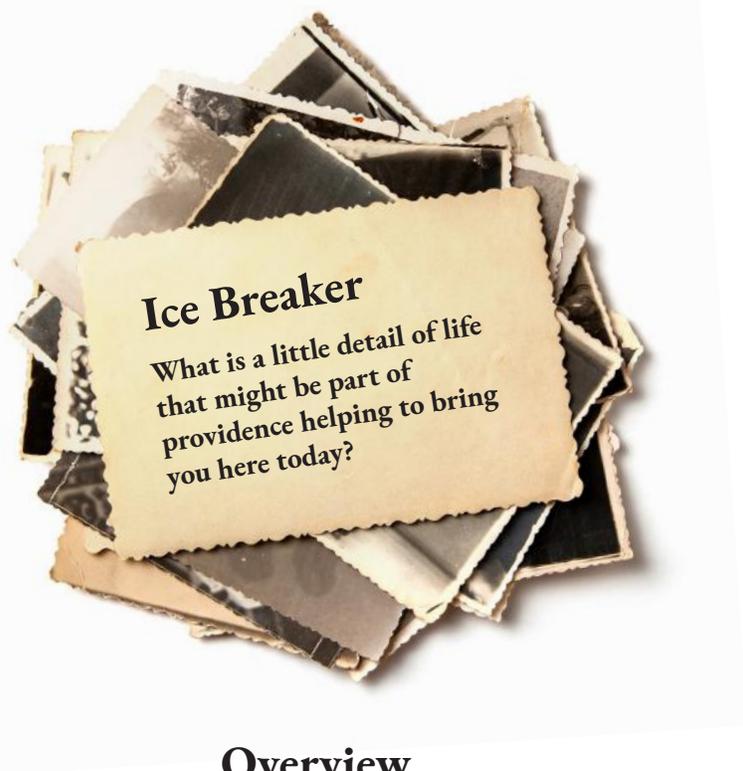
May you enjoy this four-week journey as we explore providence.



# Seeing Providence: Providence Throughout Our Lives - Week 1

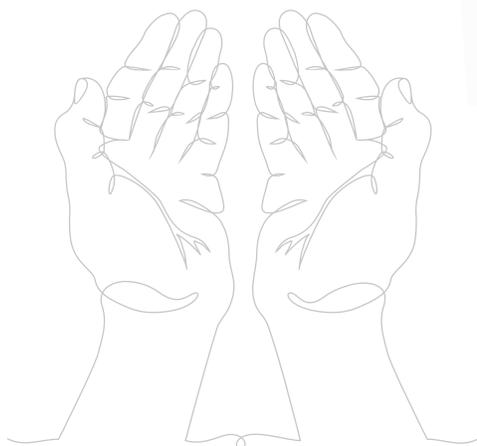
## Opening Prayer

*Dear Lord, thank You for providing that each of us is able to gather today, to take this opportunity to look for You in our life journey. Help us to use this time together for developing friendship, building trust, learning, and reflecting on Your loving guidance throughout our lives. We know that where two or three are gathered together in Your name, You are there in the midst of them. Please bless our time together. Amen*



## Ice Breaker

What is a little detail of life that might be part of providence helping to bring you here today?



## Overview

“Seeing Providence” – is it even possible? The writings of Emanuel Swedenborg suggest that we can only see it when we look back on our life, but not necessarily in the present moment. At the same time, the scriptures and writings are full of messages of hope and promises of peace for the future. Does that indicate that we can trust that providence will be providing for us in the future, even though we can only “see it from behind?” This week, we will explore some teachings about providence.

## Passages from the Word

Lord, You have been our dwelling  
place in all generations.  
Before the mountains were brought forth,  
Or ever You had formed the earth and the world,  
Even from everlasting to everlasting, You are God.  
The days of our lives are seventy years;  
And if by reason of strength they are eighty years,  
Yet their boast is only labor and sorrow;  
For it is soon cut off, and we fly away.  
So teach us to number our days,  
That we may gain a heart of wisdom.  
Let Your work appear to Your servants,  
And Your glory to their children.  
And let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us,  
And establish the work of our hands for us;  
Yes, establish the work of our hands.  
Psalm 90:1, 2, 10, 12, 16, 17

(When Joseph spoke to his brothers in Egypt): But as for you, you meant evil against me; but God meant it for good. . . . Genesis 50:20.

**For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the Lord, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope.** Then you will call upon Me and go and pray to Me, and I will listen to you. And you will seek Me and find Me, when you search for Me with all your heart. I will be found by you, says the Lord, and I will bring you back from your captivity. . . . Jeremiah 29:11-14

“And Jehovah saw” . . . this signifies the Lord’s foresight and providence. . . .The Lord has not only provided means by which people may be turned from hell and led to heaven, but also from providence He continually turns and leads them. The Lord also foresaw that it would be impossible for any good to be rooted in people except in their freedom, for whatever is not rooted in freedom is dissipated on the first approach of evil and temptation. This the Lord foresaw, and also that people of themselves, or from their freedom, would incline toward the deepest hell; and therefore the Lord provides that if people should not allow themselves to be led in freedom to heaven, they may

still be bent toward a milder hell; but that if they should allow themselves to be led in freedom to good, they may be led to heaven. . . .The Lord’s foresight and providence are present within the tiniest details of all the smallest individual things with a person, and in details so tiny that it is impossible to comprehend in any manner of thought one in many millions of them. For every smallest fraction of a moment of a person’s life entails a chain of consequences extending into eternity. Indeed every one is like a new beginning to those that follow.

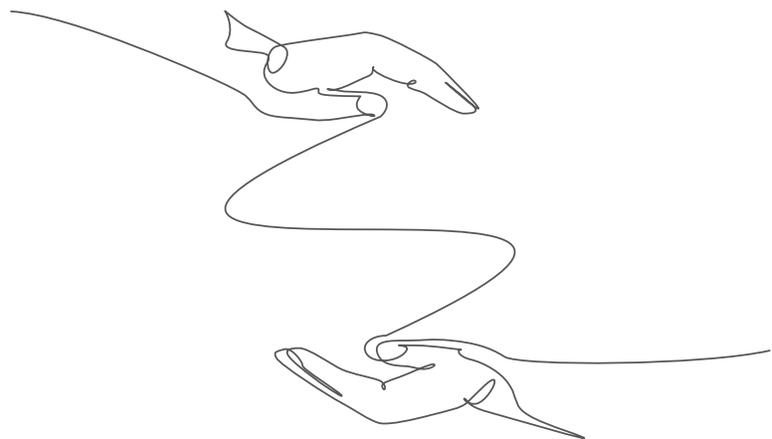
*Secrets of Heaven 3854:1-3*

**Nothing is permitted unless some good may come of it.** *Secrets of Heaven 6574*

**The Lord’s providence is in the minutest things of all, from the first thread of a person’s life even to the last, and afterwards to eternity.** *Secrets of Heaven 5894*

As long as our trials continue, we think the Lord is absent, . . . sometimes to the point where despair almost prevents us from believing God exists at all. But the Lord is closer than we can possibly believe. *Secrets of Heaven 840*

It should be recognized that Divine providence is overall, that is, it is present within the smallest details of all, and that people in the stream of providence are being carried along constantly towards happier things, whatever appearance the means may present. . . . Also, that to the extent that anyone is in the stream of providence they are in a state of peace. *Secrets of Heaven 6486:4*





*Never to suffer would have  
been never to have been  
blessed. - Edgar Allan Poe*

*What a wonderful gift -  
this ability to doubt. God  
is all-powerful and yet He  
leaves us in freedom to  
love and believe what we  
choose. - Donnette Alfelt*

*Be patient and tough; one  
day this pain will be useful  
to you. - Ovid*

*The gem cannot be polished  
without friction, nor man  
perfected without trials.  
- Confucius*

## Discussion Questions

Which quotes stood out to you and why?

How do you hold on to the idea of providence working for your eternal happiness in the midst of facing hard life challenges?

Any thoughts about the connection between providence and our freedom?

Are there ways in which you can anticipate providence acting in your future?

## Activity

Write a timeline of significant events of both grief and blessings. Mark the span of your years of life so far on the timeline. Fill in some of the significant milestones, both of joy and grief, through the years. See example.

In pairs, groups of 3-4 or with your whole group, share some of what you noticed. (This timeline will help with other activities throughout this series.)

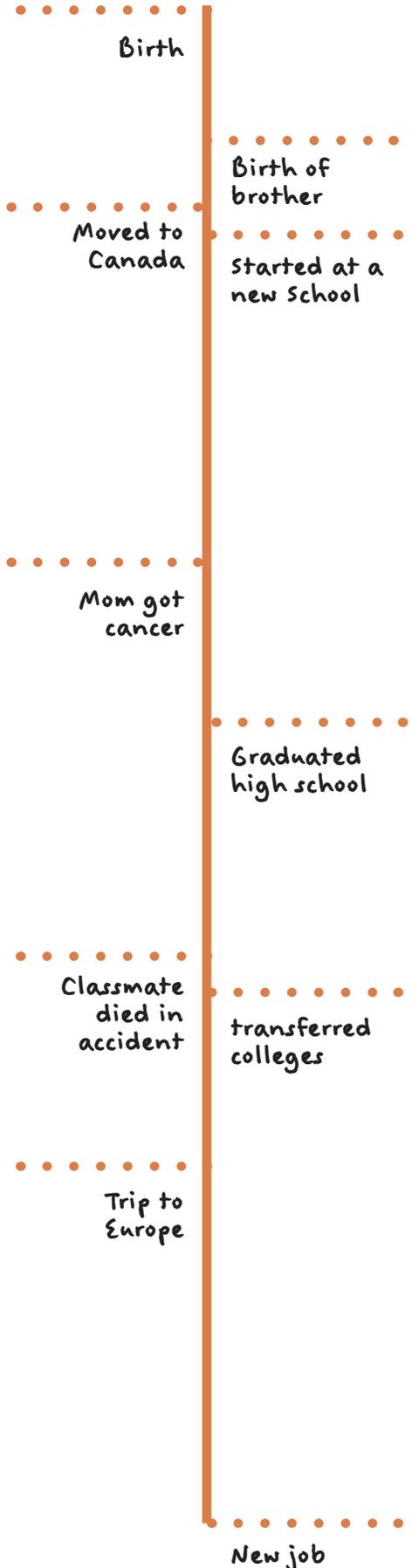
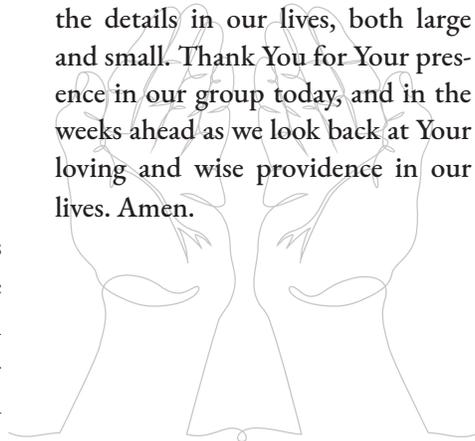
## Week 1 Task/Challenge

“Look for the good.” Notice and write down three blessings each day or keep a gratitude journal for this week. Pay attention to the things you start to notice.

## Closing Thoughts & Intentions

### Closing Prayer

Thank You, Lord, for the reminder that You are paying attention to all the details in our lives, both large and small. Thank You for Your presence in our group today, and in the weeks ahead as we look back at Your loving and wise providence in our lives. Amen.



**Note:** Turn to page 20 - 21 for example and to fill in your own time line step by step throughout the weeks.

Seeing Providence:

# The Early Years - Week 2

## Opening Prayer

*Good morning/afternoon/  
evening, Lord. Be with us  
today as we look back at our  
early years with curiosity and  
gratitude. As we find  
challenging or sad parts of  
our journey, help us to open  
our hearts to Your healing  
comfort. Open our eyes to see  
the truths and love that have  
sustained us and formed a  
foundation for our natural  
and spiritual development.  
Bless our time together, Lord.  
Amen.*

## Ice Breaker

What is an aspect of life in your  
childhood or youth that  
contributed to a solid  
foundation for you?  
How did last week's task go?

## Overview

There are many characters in the Word whose lives clearly illustrate providence in action, in order for their lives to serve the Lord's purposes. For this series we have chosen the life of Moses. His story starts when he is born at a time when babies' lives were threatened, but the Lord provides for his protection in amazing ways. This week we are looking at the first two decades of our lives – the foundational years.



## Passages from the Word

And a man of the house of Levi went and took as wife a daughter of Levi. So the woman conceived and bore a son. And when she saw that he was a beautiful child, she hid him three months. But when she could no longer hide him, she took an ark of bulrushes for him, daubed it with asphalt and pitch, put the child in it, and laid it in the reeds by the river's bank. And his sister stood afar off, to know what would be done to him.

Then the daughter of Pharaoh came down to bathe at the river. . . and when she saw the ark among the reeds, she sent her maid to get it. And when she opened it, she saw the child, and behold, the baby wept. So she had compassion on him, and said, "This is one of the Hebrews' children."

Then his sister said to Pharaoh's daughter, "Shall I go and call a nurse for you from the Hebrew women, that she may nurse the child for you?"

And Pharaoh's daughter said to her, "Go." So the maiden went and called the child's mother. Then Pharaoh's daughter said to her, "Take this child away and nurse him for me, and I will give you your wages." So the woman took the child and nursed him. And the child grew, and she brought him to Pharaoh's daughter, and he became her son. So she called his name Moses, saying, "Because I drew him out of the water." Exodus 2:1-10

**As soon as anyone is born they are brought into a state of innocence. This state then serves as the basis of all other states and is the inner core of them all. . . .**  
*Secrets of Heaven 3183*

**Angels from the Lord. . . lead and protect a person, doing so every instant and fraction of an instant.**  
*Secrets of Heaven 5992.3*

From the beginning of infancy to the end of old age we go through many internal stages, and these stages are states of understanding and wisdom. The first stage lasts from birth to age five. This stage is a state of ignorance and of innocence within that ignorance and is called early childhood. The second stage lasts from age five to twenty. This stage is a state of instruction and knowledge and is called youth. The third stage lasts from age twenty to sixty. It is a state of understanding and is called adulthood and maturity. The fourth and final stage lasts from age sixty on.

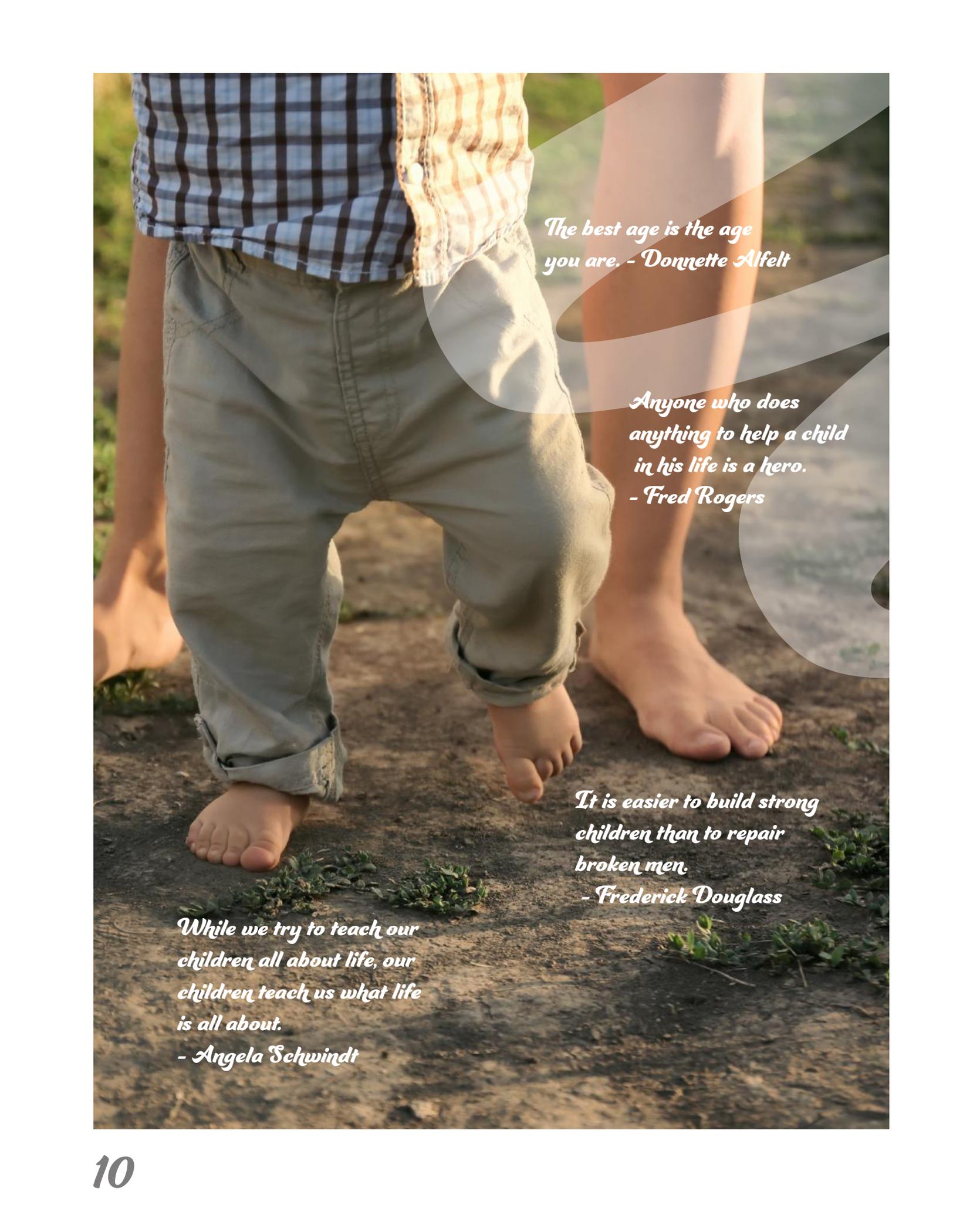
This stage is a state of wisdom and of innocence within that wisdom.

Our first stage [birth to age 5] is clearly a state of ignorance and of innocence within that ignorance. For the entire length of this stage, our inner levels are being formed for their [future] role and are therefore inaccessible. Only our most superficial levels, the levels of our sensory self, lie open. When only these levels lie open, we are ignorant, because understanding and perception always come from within. So it also stands to reason that the innocence then existing, which is called childhood innocence, is quite shallow.

Equally clear is the fact that our second stage [age five to twenty] is a state of instruction and knowledge. This stage is not yet a state of real understanding, because young people do not then draw their own conclusions. Neither can they tell one kind of truth from another—even truth from falsity—on their own, only on the authority of others. What they think and say is based solely on the contents of their memory and accordingly on facts alone. They cannot see or perceive whether the ideas are valid except on the assurance of a teacher and consequently on someone else's say-so. *Secrets of Heaven 10225:1, 3, 4*

'And there are still five years' means the duration of that state until remnants [or "remains"] shine forth. . . . Remnants are the truths and forms of good stored away by the Lord in a person's interior. At this point the remnants are recognitions of and affections for truth, before good reveals itself. They shine forth together with that good; but until then, they are taken out of store in the measure that they can contribute to some useful purpose in life. Such is the nature of the Lord's providential care, indeed His constant care, though a person may know nothing at all about it and does not even have a wish to know. For people refuse to recognize the existence of providence in every detail of life, when in fact it exists in the smallest details of all from the earliest stage of a person's life through to the last, and for evermore after that. The streams of providence coming together at any one point in each person's life are more than any conceivable number. This I know from heaven. *Secrets of Heaven 5894.*

**I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. I will give to those who thirst of the fountain of the water of life freely. Revelation 21:6**



*The best age is the age  
you are. - Donnette Alfelt*

*Anyone who does  
anything to help a child  
in his life is a hero.  
- Fred Rogers*

*It is easier to build strong  
children than to repair  
broken men.  
- Frederick Douglass*

*While we try to teach our  
children all about life, our  
children teach us what life  
is all about.  
- Angela Schwindt*

## Discussion Questions

Which quotes stood out to you and why?

What are ways that you were protected, or provided for, in your childhood?

Who is someone who had compassion on you? How did that help you?

What are some people, schools, institutions or life circumstances that led to a solid foundation in your childhood and youth?

What do you consider some of your precious remains/remnants?

In looking at your own childhood, are there things you want to create for children that are in your life now?

## Activity

Take a few minutes to review the first twenty years of your timeline. Perhaps you will remember more. Breaking it into 5 year periods, write about a significant person or event in each of those 5 year spans. How might they be part of divine providence's operation? Share in pairs or with your group.

## Week 2

### Task/Challenge

Take some time to thank someone, face to face or with a note, for what they contributed to your early years. Reflect on blessings from your early years that perhaps you took for granted in the past.

### *Closing Thoughts & Intentions*

### Closing Prayer

Dear Lord, thank You for this time together to reflect about our childhood years. It is amazing to witness how You have tenderly led each one of us on our unique journeys. Help us to see and remember Your many blessings. Amen.

Seeing Providence:

# Adulthood - Week 3

## Opening Prayer

*Lord God Jesus Christ, be with us today, as You are every day, as we explore Your loving guidance evident in our adult years. Whether we are newly facing adulthood, or well into this stage of life, open our eyes and hearts to the many pathways You offer for a fulfilling and useful life. Give us the willingness to have You flow through us in all the ways we are able to love and serve our neighbor. Amen.*

## Ice Breaker

Describe a time in your life that was a trial, but that led to a better state of mind or situation.

## Overview

After completing our education, and perhaps moving out of our childhood home, there are many big life chapters ahead in adulthood: beginning a use/job/career; developing important relationships in our work and personal life; possibly getting married; maybe raising a family; volunteering in meaningful ways in society; continuing to learn; developing our individual faith, etc. That is a lot of reflection material!

Moses was called to do a very important job. So are each of us. The way the Lord works through each of us can be considered "holy ground." Through every detail of life, He is trying to lead us to the promised land.

## Passages from the Word

Now Moses was tending the flock of Jethro his father-in-law, the priest of Midian. And he led the flock to the back of the desert, and came to Horeb, the mountain of God. And the Angel of the Lord appeared to him in a flame of fire from the midst of a bush. So he looked, and behold, the bush was burning with fire, but the bush was not consumed. Then Moses said, "I will now turn aside and see this great sight, why the bush does not burn."

So when the Lord saw that he turned aside to look, God called to him from the midst of the bush and said, "Moses, Moses!"

And he said, "Here I am."

Then He said, "Do not draw near this place. Take your sandals off your feet, for the place where you stand is holy ground." Moreover He said, "I am the God of your father—the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." And Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look upon God.

And the Lord said: "I have surely seen the oppression of My people who are in Egypt, and have heard their cry because of their taskmasters, for I know their sorrows. So I have come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians, and to bring them up from that land to a good and large land, to a land flowing with milk and honey. . . . Come now, therefore, and I will send you to Pharaoh that you may bring My people, the children of Israel, out of Egypt."

But Moses said to God, "Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh, and that I should bring the children of Israel out of Egypt?"

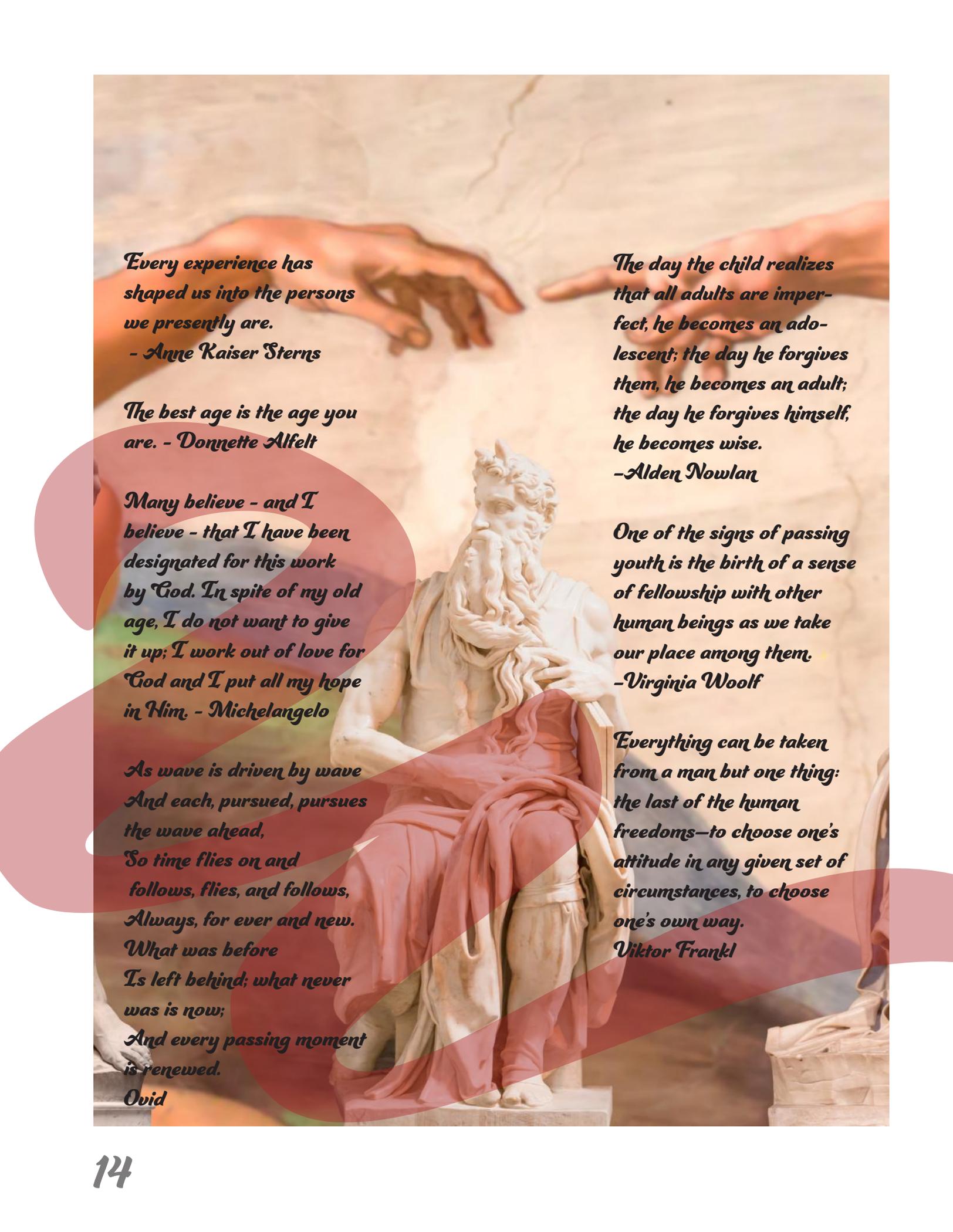
So He said, "I will certainly be with you. And this shall be a sign to you that I have sent you: When you have brought the people out of Egypt, you shall serve God on this mountain." Exodus 3:1-12

During the third stage however, if we are among such people as are able to be regenerated, we start to think about use, and in that case to reflect on what we read in the Word and absorb from doctrine for the sake of the use these serve. While we are passing through this state order is reversed; that is to say, truth is no longer placed first quite so much. *Secrets of Heaven 3603:3*

The third stage [age 20 to 60] is being called a state of understanding because we do then think for ourselves, make distinctions, and draw conclusions; and the conclusions we then draw are ours, not the next person's. It is at this time that faith commences, because faith is not our own until we have confirmed our beliefs by means of our own thoughts and ideas. Prior to that, our faith is not ours, it is someones else's faith present in us, because we have believed not in the beliefs themselves but in a person. From these considerations you can see that a state of understanding does not commence in us till we think for ourselves instead of being guided by a teacher. This first happens when our inner depths are laid open to heaven. It is important to realize that our outer levels exist in the material world and our inner levels in heaven, and that the greater the amount of light flowing from heaven into the worldly influences on us, the more understanding and wisdom we have. The inflow of light depends on the extent and degree to which our inner planes are open, which in turn depends on the extent to which we live for heaven rather than for worldly success.

*Secrets of Heaven 10225:5*

If we think about it, we can also see that each period has its delights, which gradually introduce us into the pleasures of the next stage and help us reach that stage. Eventually they help us attain the delight of understanding and wisdom in old age. *Secrets of Heaven 4063:4*



*Every experience has  
shaped us into the persons  
we presently are.*

*- Anne Kaiser Sterns*

*The best age is the age you  
are. - Donnette Alfelt*

*Many believe - and I  
believe - that I have been  
designated for this work  
by God. In spite of my old  
age, I do not want to give  
it up; I work out of love for  
God and I put all my hope  
in Him. - Michelangelo*

*As wave is driven by wave  
And each, pursued, pursues  
the wave ahead,  
So time flies on and  
follows, flies, and follows,  
Always, for ever and new.  
What was before  
Is left behind; what never  
was is now;  
And every passing moment  
is renewed.*

*Ovid*

*The day the child realizes  
that all adults are imper-  
fect, he becomes an ado-  
lescent; the day he forgives  
them, he becomes an adult;  
the day he forgives himself,  
he becomes wise.*

*-Alden Nowlan*

*One of the signs of passing  
youth is the birth of a sense  
of fellowship with other  
human beings as we take  
our place among them.*

*-Virginia Woolf*

*Everything can be taken  
from a man but one thing:  
the last of the human  
freedoms—to choose one's  
attitude in any given set of  
circumstances, to choose  
one's own way.*

*Viktor Frankl*

## Discussion Questions

Which quotes stood out to you and why?

Where and when have you noticed “standing on holy ground?”

How did the Lord call you to your use?

Moses asked “Who am I . . . ?”

What are some of your doubts in your roles and relationships that you have worked through with the Lord?

In your adult life, how have you “served God on this mountain?”

What is an example of something from your past that you can now see as providence leading you?

### Activity

Bob Merrell once delivered a powerful address at an ANC Graduation. You can listen to it here: <https://newchurchaudio.org/event>.

He told the story of two men – one whose life was a series of frustrations, challenges and failure; another whose life was blessed with success, meaning and joy in innumerable ways. At the end of the talk, he confessed that these were the same man

– it was two different perspectives on his own life. This can be a good exercise for us:

Take ten minutes to briefly write two comparative life stories – one of challenge and hardship, one of blessings and joy. Perhaps you can refer to your timeline from week one. Share some of that process, or what you learned with the group.

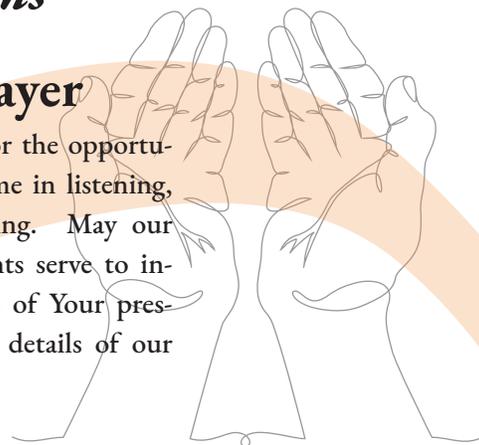
## Week 3 Task/Challenge

Reflect further to develop your two comparative life stories. Are there parts of your life story that you have outgrown or that you are now able and willing to see from a new perspective? Share some of your thoughts with a trusted friend.

### *Closing Thoughts & Intentions*

#### Closing Prayer

Thank You, Lord, for the opportunity to share this time in listening, reflecting and learning. May our memories and insights serve to increase our awareness of Your presence in the smallest details of our lives. Amen.



# Seeing Providence: Old Age Week 4

## Opening Prayer

*Dear Lord, as we gather for our final week of this Journey group, bless the time that we've had and the time we spend together today. As we look toward old age, either our own experience or that of loved ones, help us to recognize that Your care does not wane, even as some of our physical abilities do. As we deal with loss and physical challenge, open our hearts and minds to what new blessings are surrounding us now and yet to come. Amen.*

## Ice Breaker

In what ways have your life challenges made you a more compassionate person?

## Overview

Old age is a time to both look back and look ahead. Moses had the chance to do this from Mount Nebo, just before the children of Israel crossed into the Promised Land. From this mountaintop, we can see struggles as well as joys in our past. While we experience challenges connected with physical decline, we can also look for the Lord's leading and preparation of our spirit for the next chapter of life – in the spiritual world.

If you have not yet reached old age, perhaps you can reflect about your loved ones who have, or set intentions for your path to old age.



## Passages from the Word

Moses said to them, “Take to heart all these words I testify among you today, so that you may command your children to carefully follow all the words of this law. For they are not idle words to you, because they are your life, and by them you will live long in the land that you are crossing the Jordan to possess.” On that same day the Lord said to Moses, “Go up. . . to Mount Nebo, . . . and view the land of Canaan, which I am giving to the Israelites as their own possession. And there on the mountain that you climb, you will die and be gathered to your people. . . . Although you shall see from a distance the land that I am giving the Israelites, you shall not enter it.” Deuteronomy 32:46-52

Then Moses went up from the plains of Moab to Mount Nebo. . . . And the Lord showed him the whole land.

And the Lord said to him, “This is the land that I swore to give Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob when I said, ‘I will give it to your descendants.’ I have let you see it with your own eyes, but you will not cross into it.”

So Moses the servant of the Lord died there in the land of Moab, as the Lord had said. . . .

Moses was a hundred and twenty years old when he died, yet his eyes were not weak, and his vitality had not diminished. Deuteronomy 34:1-12

The symbolism on an inner level of old age is shedding the old and putting on the new.

The reason it is newness or a new stage that old age symbolizes on an inner level is that angels have no idea of time. So they know nothing of time-related concepts such as the different eras of a person’s life - childhood, youth, young adulthood, full adulthood, and old age. Instead they replace them all with the idea of states. For the period of childhood they picture an innocent state; for the period of youth and young adulthood, a state of desire for goodness and truth; for full adulthood, a state of understanding; and for old age, a state of wisdom. In old age we pass from temporal concerns to the concerns of timeless

life and therefore put on a new state. As a result, old age symbolizes newness. *Secrets of Heaven* 3254.

The final stage is a state of wisdom and of innocence within that wisdom. We reach this stage when we no longer put effort into understanding what is true and good but rather into willing it and living by it. To do this is to be wise. The degree to which we are able to will what is true and good and live by it depends on the degree to which we cultivate innocence. That is, it depends on the degree to which we believe that we have no wisdom of our own, that any wisdom we do have comes from the Lord, and on the degree to which we love the fact that this is so. That is why this stage is also a state of innocence within wisdom. To anyone who has wisdom, the sequence of these states shows the wonders of divine providence. One marvel is the fact that an earlier stage provides a foundation for subsequent stages, over and over. Another is that the opening or unfolding of our inner depths proceeds gradually from outermost to innermost levels until finally the very superficial qualities we started with—ignorance and innocence—become the very deep qualities we end with. After all, people who know that on their own they are totally ignorant and that whatever they do know comes from the Lord possess the ignorance and the innocence of wisdom. *Secrets of Heaven* 10225:6,7

People who have become spiritual by virtue of their recognition of God, and have become wise by casting off their sense of self-importance, see divine providence in the whole world and in every least part of it. They see it if they look at natural events, . . . civic events, . . . spiritual events, in the way things coincide and the way they follow in sequence, in purposes and means and results, in useful events, in forms, in things great and things small. They see it especially in our salvation, in the fact that Jehovah gave us the Word that tells us about God, heaven, hell, and eternal life, and that He Himself came into the world to redeem and save us. All this and much more, and the divine providence within it all, people see from spiritual light within earthly light. *Divine Providence* 189.

**For human life, from infancy to old age, is nothing else than a progression from the world to heaven; and the last age, which is death, is the transition itself.**

*Secrets of Heaven 3016*

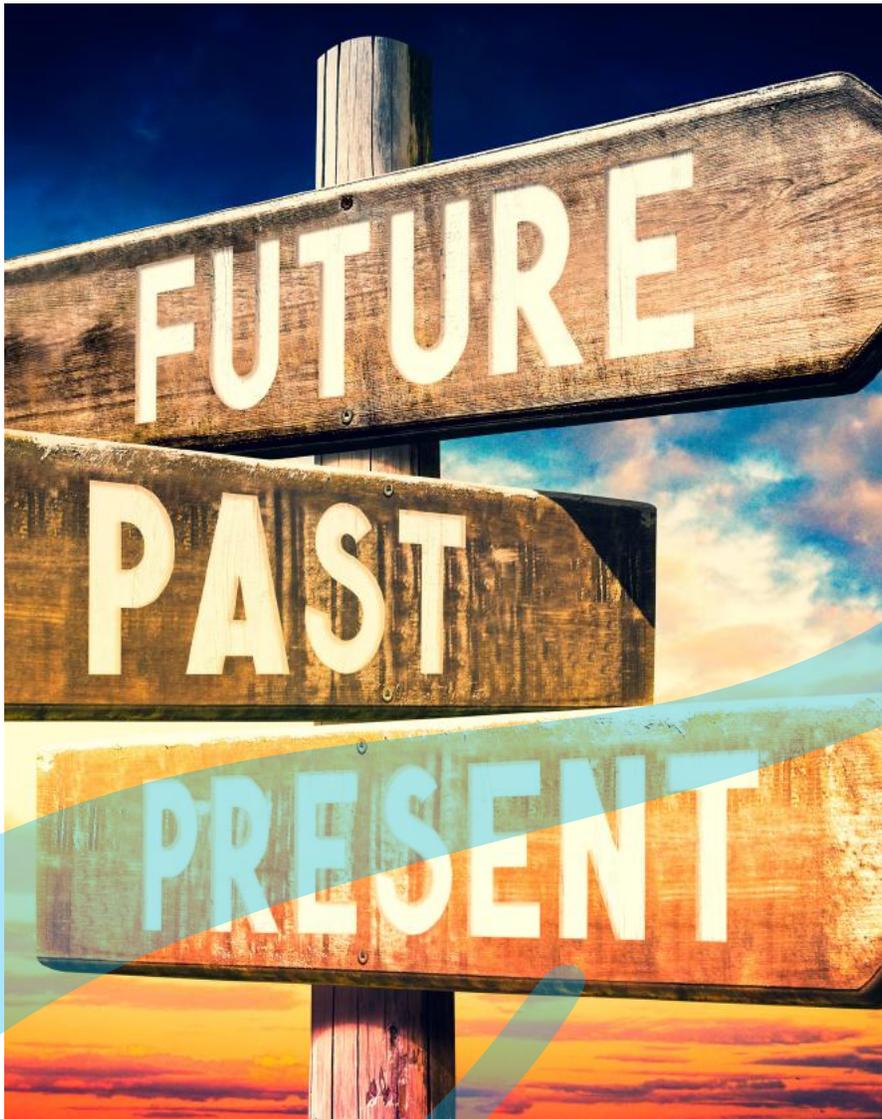
**Death is a continuation of life.**

*Divine Providence 277*

**Human beings have been created in such a way that their inner self cannot die.** *Secrets of Heaven 10591*

**The Lord's heaven is never shut, and is so vast as to surpass all belief.** *Secrets of Heaven 3631*

**To grow old in heaven is to grown young.** *Heaven and Hell 414*



### *Additional Quotes*

When we are no longer able to change a situation, we are challenged to change ourselves. - Viktor Frankel

I don't know anyone in my age group who, looking back at their lives, would say that it was pretty much as they expected it would be. I look at the yardstick [life span] and marvel at what my life has been. It was worse and much better than I expected. I can understand why we aren't permitted to see into the future; we would surely try to avoid the hard parts which, in retrospect for me, turned out to be the growing parts. – Donnette Alfelt

One of the many pleasures of old age is giving things up.  
-Malcolm Muggeridge

Those who love deeply never grow old; they may die of old age, but they die young.  
-Dorothy Canfield Fisher

## Discussion Questions

Which quotes stood out to you and why?

What can you see from the mountain top? Where have you come from, where are you going?

What are some of your thoughts that you want to share with the younger people in your life as Moses suggests? “They are your life. . . .”

In what way might you experience that “your eyes will not be weak and your vitality will not be diminished?”

While we can't all be Moses, perhaps there are things that you have uniquely been able to do in your life. What signs and wonders did the Lord send you to do in the land of Egypt – this earthly life?

What are some fears you have about old age? Can you hand those concerns over to the Lord?

## Activity

The chapters of your life story. Look back at the timeline that you made in the first week. Choosing aspects of your life, in whatever time span or topic, take five or ten minutes to write CHAPTER TITLES for each of the chapters of your book of life. You may not have time to complete all the chapter names in that time, but you can get a start, and perhaps you would like to reflect on this further on your own time.

Take a few minutes to read the chapter names aloud to your group, and

share a couple of sentences about one life chapter, as time allows.

## Week 4 Task/Challenge

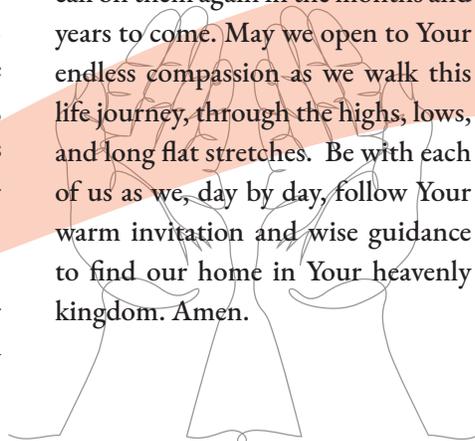
Keep an eye out throughout each day for goodness, which may be signs of divine providence. It may be unexpected – like a burning bush! Share what you witness with the people in your life.

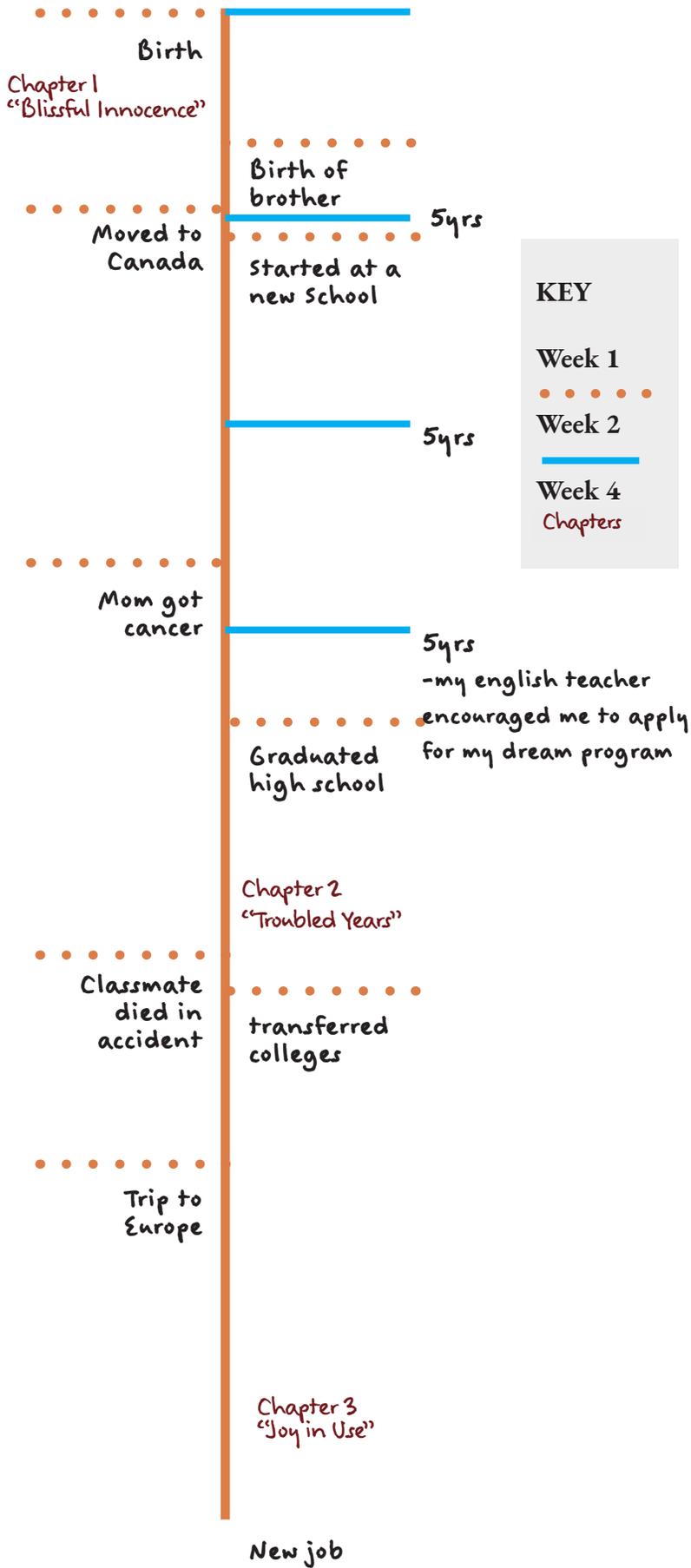
## *Closing Thoughts & Intentions*

You might want to discuss with your group if you'd like to continue meeting or touch base again after this last meeting.

## Closing Prayer

Thank You, Lord, for these rich four weeks together with our group. Thank You for opening our hearts and minds as we shared our perspectives on Your loving care. As we wrap up our time together, help us to remember the deep connections we have made, and know that we can call on them again in the months and years to come. May we open to Your endless compassion as we walk this life journey, through the highs, lows, and long flat stretches. Be with each of us as we, day by day, follow Your warm invitation and wise guidance to find our home in Your heavenly kingdom. Amen.





**KEY**

- Week 1
- Week 2
- Week 4
- Chapters

## Your Timeline



## *Your Timeline*

# Resources

If you'd like to learn more about providence throughout our lives, try the resources below. You can find all the clickable links at [brynathynchurch.org/journeyresources](https://brynathynchurch.org/journeyresources)

Short video about the stream of Providence

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QPbzb2XnJb8>

*Living Gratefully* – a Journey book and small group series exploring the five laws or gifts of God's providence.

<https://www.newchristianresources.org/Living-Gratefully>

A recording of Donnette Alfelt's GC Assembly talk "Your Book of Life"

<https://newchurchaudio.org/event.php?event=24165>

An extensive series about our stages of life

<https://www.kemptonnewchurch.org/Classes/StudyGroups/GrowUp/index>.

Videos from Off the Left Eye:

"Divine Providence is Active in Your Life"

(about 4 minutes) - taken from the longer episode

<https://youtu.be/ilvnRaYNngk>.

"Does God Control Good Luck?" (about 39 mins)

-- [https://youtu.be/ytRBlidr\\_uQ](https://youtu.be/ytRBlidr_uQ)

"7 Laws of Divine Providence" (1hr 18min)

<https://youtu.be/yCwj4YotzHA>.

"Divine Providence" (1hr 8min)

<https://youtu.be/wFuGb3G2ZVw>.

*Divine Providence* – Emanuel Swedenborg

If you would like to get involved in other New Church small groups, contact [nina.dewees@brynathynchurch.org](mailto:nina.dewees@brynathynchurch.org) or explore <https://groups.newchurch.org/>