

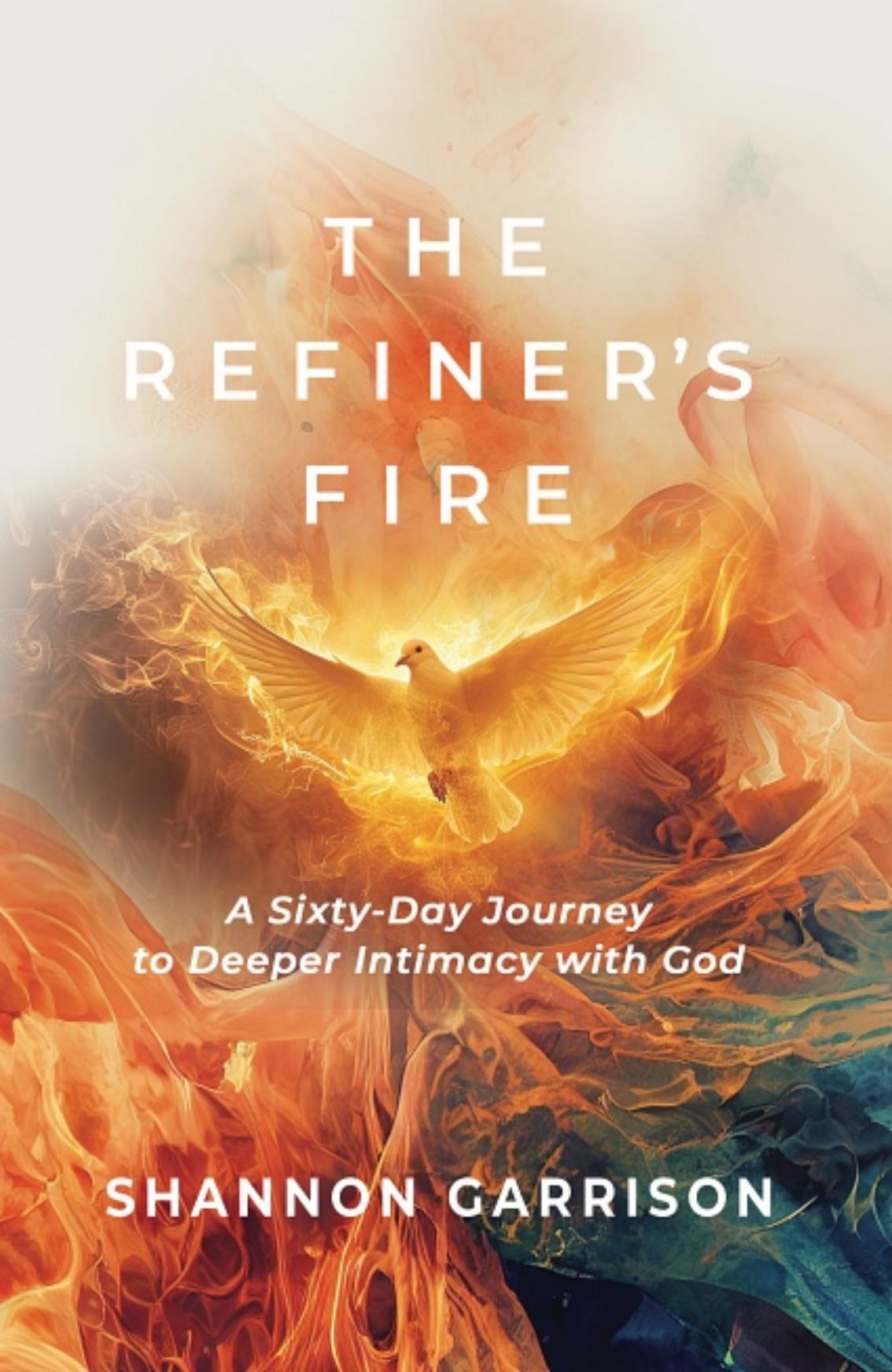
The Refiner's Fire is a daily invitation to a deeper, more intimate walk with God. As you embrace the refinement process, transformation becomes a reality, drawing you closer to God and fortifying your connection with Christ.

**The Refiner's Fire:
A Sixty-Day Journey to Deeper Intimacy with God**
By Shannon Garrison

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THE REFINER'S FIRE

*A Sixty-Day Journey
to Deeper Intimacy with God*

SHANNON GARRISON

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Day 30: The Bigger Picture

I remember my affliction and my wandering,
the bitterness and the gall.

I well remember them,
and my soul is downcast within me.

Yet this I call to mind
and therefore I have hope:

Because of the Lord's great love we are not consumed,
for his compassions never fail.

They are new every morning;
great is your faithfulness.

I say to myself, "The Lord is my portion;
therefore I will wait for him."

Lamentations 3:19–24 (NIV)

Today's Truth

Gratitude shifts your perspective to see God's goodness.

Today's Devotional

We all experience heartbreak and relational difficulties. To keep our souls from being crushed during these times, it is essential to keep our perspective aligned with the Father's heart. In Lamentations, we are reminded that despite the heaviness of our experience, God's love keeps us from being consumed by the pain. Thus, when sorrow overwhelms us, we must shift our focus to God's goodness and view our situation as he does.

The best way to accomplish this is to cultivate a heart of gratitude. Despite the pain we are experiencing, it is essential to recognize God's

faithfulness in our lives and stand firm on his promises. Then, express our gratitude to God as we become increasingly aware of his goodness.

While gratitude is an essential component of daily life for God's children, maintaining this heart posture is not always easy. Life presents its fair share of painful experiences—betrayal by a friend, slander from a co-worker, or rejection by someone we love. When we are hit hard, it is natural to dwell on the negativity of our situation. However, when we focus on our painful circumstances, we only perceive what is happening inside our own experience, and our view is very limited.

Think of life as a puzzle, with each experience representing a piece of a much larger picture. You may have recently experienced rejection, betrayal, and loss. The puzzle piece in your hand might be a solid, dark piece. If you try to imagine what the rest of the picture looks like based on this particular piece, you might assume the entire image is just one enormous black cloud. This creates an issue as you cannot really know what the puzzle will look like without taking into account the other pieces.

Similarly, when you focus on your circumstances, your spiritual perception is hindered from recognizing God's goodness within your experience. Living with this limited perspective will weigh your heart down and prevent you from experiencing joy, hope, or peace. However, when you are willing to examine all the pieces of life's puzzle you have acquired, you might notice the picture is not what you expected. As you assemble the puzzle, you can see it for what it truly is: a beautiful landscape where one small piece is part of a majestic mountain reflecting the sunlight.

Likewise, when you look beyond your current situation, your perspective starts to shift, and your view of your circumstances expands significantly. As your perspective broadens, you view the entirety of life's puzzle from God's point of view. This is where gratitude helps you shift your focus from past and present pain to God's faithfulness in all things, which produces hope for your future. It also keeps you from being overcome with disappointment and bitterness that will eventually destroy you if you cannot see God's heart for you in the midst of your struggle. Gratitude is rooted in faith

and opens the eyes of your heart to see a heavenly reality—even though your pain is real. You are reminded that God has always been faithful in the past, and if he was then, he will be now and in the future!

As you walk in these revelations, you gain the strength to pull yourself out of the muck and shake off all the heaviness that weighs you down. Then, you can emerge from the shadows and begin climbing the mountain of faith to reach the summit and stand in victory.

Today's Reflection

- Do you focus more on your difficulties or on God's faithfulness when navigating challenging or painful situations? Read Psalm 77 (NLT). Pay attention to the Psalmist's words. What was his initial focus? In verses 11–12, how does he change his approach? How does the narrative evolve throughout the rest of the chapter?
- Read Ephesians 1:16–18 (GNT). Paul expresses gratitude to the Ephesians and desires for God to broaden their perspective to see his provision and faithfulness. Consider the political climate and the experiences of the first-century church as they faced persecution from the Roman Empire and rejection from their Jewish brothers and sisters who would not accept Christ. Why do you think Paul desired for the Ephesians to understand God's faithfulness in a greater way? Rejection and persecution are part of our faith journey. Even though we may face these challenges, we can find joy, peace, and hope, regardless of our circumstances. When Paul wrote Ephesians 1, he was in prison, yet he expresses deep gratitude to God and to the Ephesians. Why do you think this was possible? How do you think Paul cultivated gratitude during hardships? How does this challenge you when dealing with pain and persecution?
- Consider the puzzle analogy. A puzzle always includes a picture of the finished product. This picture serves as a reference point that offers perspective as you connect the pieces and work toward the right outcome. As a Christian, the final picture produced from the pieces of your life should

always reflect the redemptive work of the Cross. In understanding this, how does it affect your perspective? The next time you encounter pain and difficulty, would it be helpful to bring that image to mind? How does this change your perspective and lead you toward hope, joy, and peace?

Today's Challenge

Gratitude shifts our eyes from an earthly perspective to a heavenly one. It redirects our focus from our lack to God's abundant provision. A grateful heart serves as a reminder that even on our worst days, God remains faithful. To cultivate gratitude, we must intentionally reflect on what God has done and stand firm on the faithful promises in his Word. Consider this Scripture:

He will cover you with his feathers. He will shelter you with his wings. His faithful promises are your armor and protection.

(Psalm 91:4, NLT)

We are reminded that when we meditate on his faithfulness and express our gratitude to God, his promises will guard our hearts and minds. Gratitude protects us from the onslaught of lies and negativity that seek to crush us and lead to hopelessness.

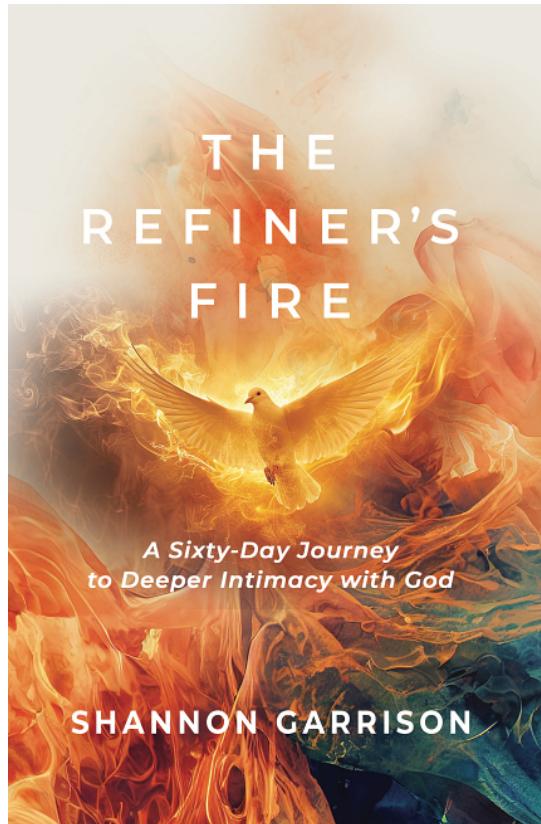
Take time to create a list of things you are grateful for and verbally express your gratitude to God. Make sure your list includes testimonies and promises, acknowledging what God has done and the promises from Scripture for his children. Incorporate gratitude into your daily routine and observe how your outlook on life improves, no matter your circumstances.

Because you can see God's goodness in the pain, you also create space in your heart to love and pray for those who have wronged you. Go to the Lord in prayer and thank him for his goodness in the struggle. Pray for those who have hurt you and thank God that he is using the pain for your good and his glory. Commit to cultivating a lifestyle of gratitude, and as you do, you will broaden your perspective, resulting in true joy, peace, and hope as God works on your behalf to bring about redemption.

Going Deeper

Dig into these verses about the need for gratitude as God's children:

- Psalm 118:24 (ESV)
- Psalm 100:1–5 (NLT)
- Ephesians 5:18–21 (GNT)



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