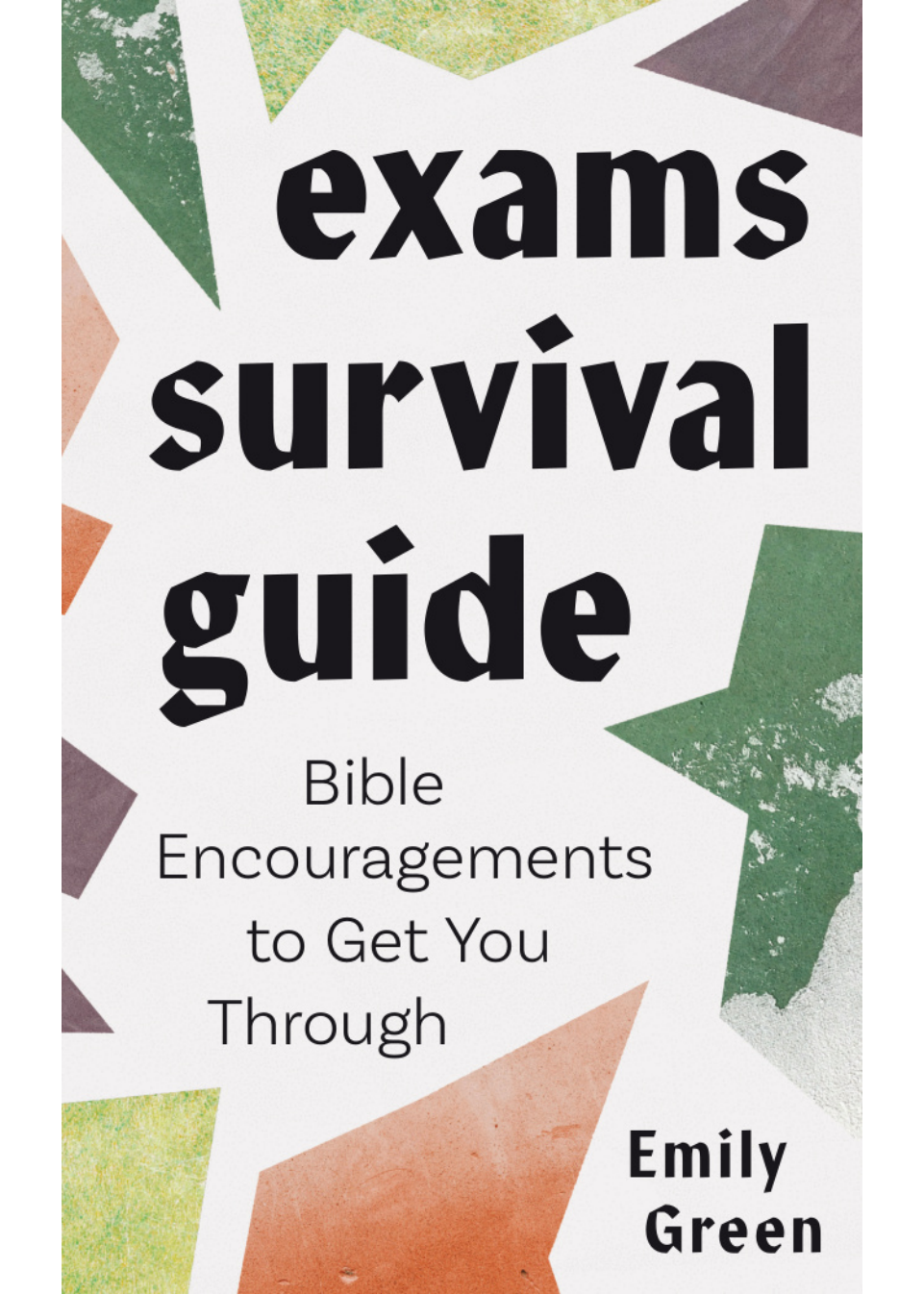




exams survival guide

Bible
Encouragements
to Get You
Through

**Emily
Green**

"*Exams Survival Guide* is about much more than surviving and getting through the exam season... It's about thriving through it! For any student preparing for exams, this book is as important as a revision timetable and exam stationery."

ANDY HUTCHINSON, Head of Chaplaincy,
Monkton Combe School

"This devotional is so important. Whether or not you perform how you want, and whether or not you secure the future you want, Emily Green encourages you to see some unshakeable truths: God is good, he has a plan and he loves you no matter what."

CHRIS CIPOLLONE, Founding Director, Life to the Full;
Author, *Down Not Out* and *Here to Love*

"This clear, concise book will not just equip you to cope with exams but also help you learn to look to God through his word whenever you face stress or pressure. As a mother of boys facing exams, I also found it helped me!"

LINDA ALLCOCK, Author, *Deeper Still*

"This book is packed with biblical wisdom, wonderful prompts for prayer and practical help for navigating the rollercoaster of exam stress. Most of all, it helps you to see what it means to belong to Jesus and why that changes everything as you approach exams... and life! Parents, pastors, youth workers, buy this book for your young people!"

PETER WRIGHT, Assistant Director, Growing Young Disciples

"This is a book to make your other books easier. It can't guarantee you top grades, but *Exams Survival Guide* will help you come out the other side having given it your best shot and with the joy and peace that only God can give. Each chapter blends the Bible, prayer and insightful tips to get you through this busy period one day at a time."

ALEX GREAVES, Team Leader, LDN Holidays

"Short, practical and packed with wisdom, this book will help Christian students approach exams with a hopeful perspective and with confidence in the Lord's presence, care and commitment to them."

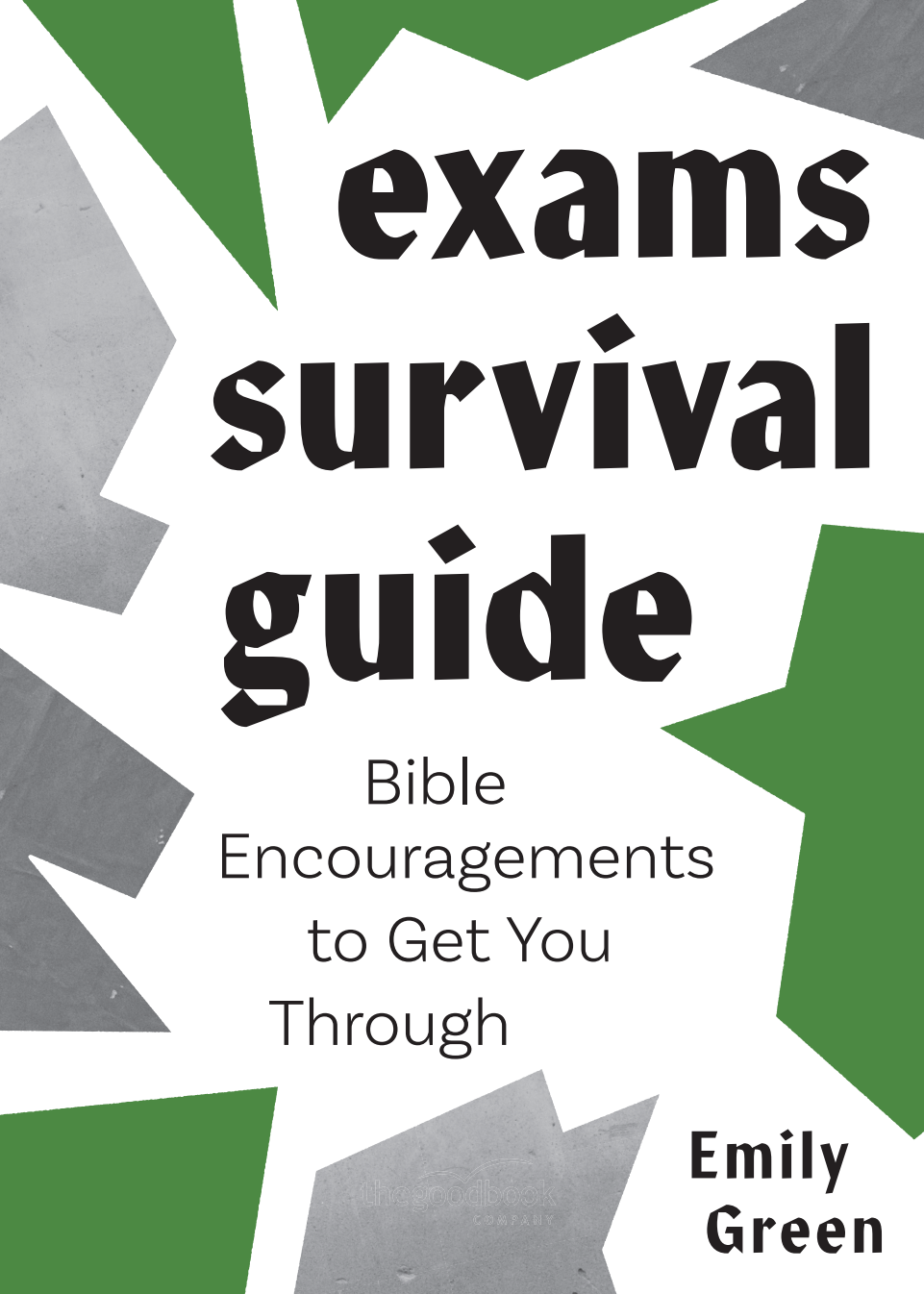
CAROLYN LACEY, Author, *Amazed: 30 Days of Growing in Awe of God*

"Emily's experience in youth work and education means she is wonderfully placed to speak words of real encouragement to those heading into exams. She in no way minimises the challenges the exam period can bring; and yet, with gentleness, humour and clarity, she points you to wonderful truths that take you right into the arms of Christ."

SCOTT BAMBER, Youth Worker, Christ Church Cambridge

"Plenty of books will tell you how to study effectively, but very few will tell you how to do it as a follower of Jesus. Enter *Exams Survival Guide*. Thoughtful and practical, these devotions are short enough to be incorporated into the busiest schedules, and deep enough to help you experience the comfort, care and peace Jesus offers on a daily basis."

NATHAN LEE, school chaplain, Sydney



exams survival guide

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to Get You
Through

the goodbook
company

**Emily
Green**

Exams Survival Guide

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Introduction

Thank you for taking the time to pick up this book—I know you’ve got a lot going on right now! Even as you flick through these pages, you might be wondering what on earth Christianity has to do with how you tackle revision and exams. Perhaps you see your faith and your schoolwork as two circles that would never overlap on a Venn diagram. And it’s true that the Bible doesn’t mention exams. But Colossians 3:17 tells us that whatever we do, we can do it all in Christ’s name. That means that, as followers of Jesus, we should expect our faith to impact how we revise and how we face exams. In fact, it’s my belief that being a Christian gives you a better way to revise and a better way to face exams. Don’t believe me? Well, read on and see if you change your mind.

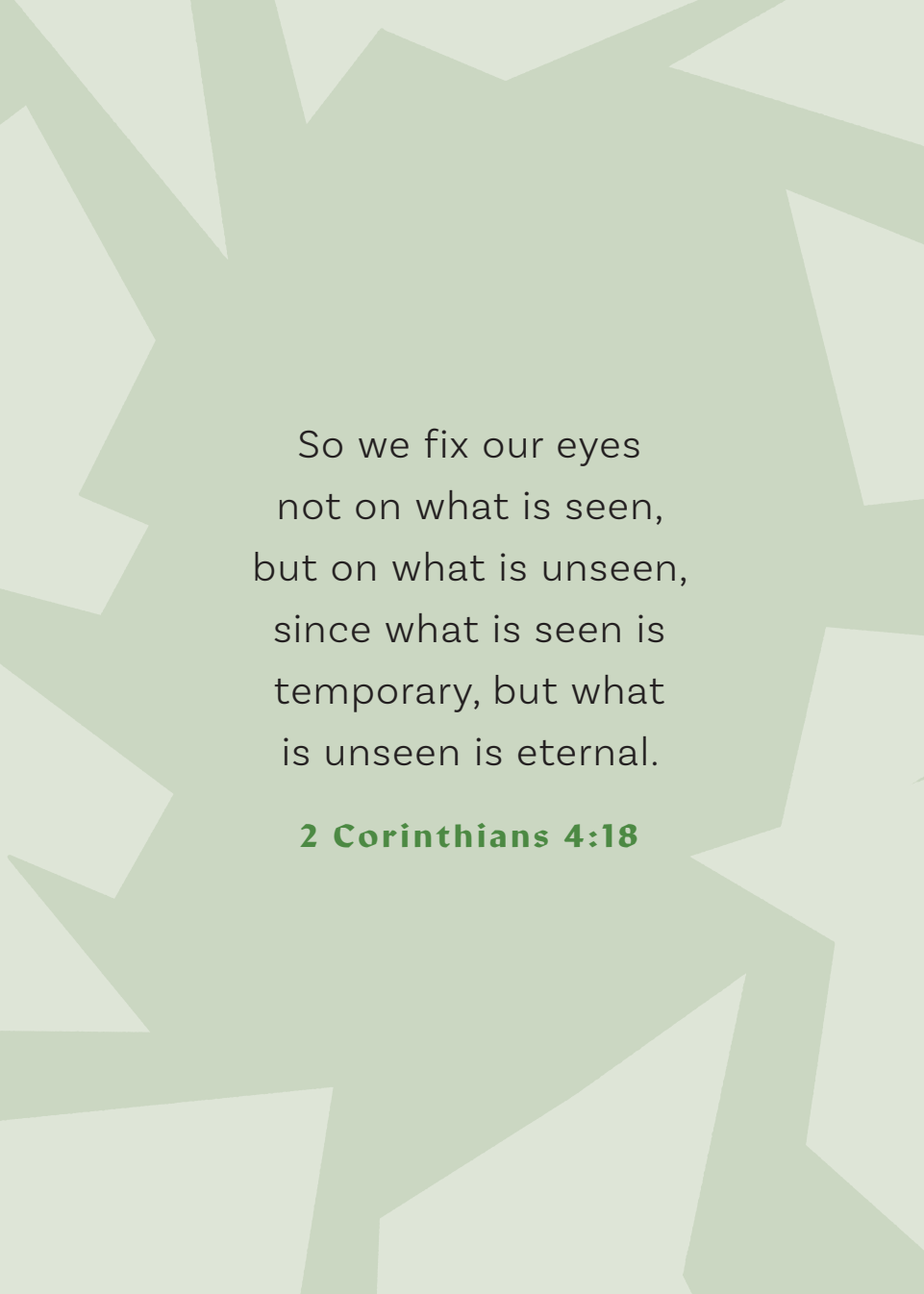
To help you see how God speaks into exams, each day in this book will have a short thought based on a Bible verse, along with some guidance on how you might pray. There are also lots of practical tips to help you de-stress and find joy in

what I know can be a hard season. Whether you're a natural overworker or you struggle to be motivated, I promise there'll be something here for you! Here's how to get the most out of reading it.

- The idea is that you can read one short chapter every weekday and then one at the weekend, but you can go slower if you want to or pick whichever chapter seems like it might be most relevant each day.
- Try to set aside a consistent time each day when you can sit down to read and pray without any distractions. But don't worry if you miss a day—just pick up again from where you left off.
- Before you start reading, spend a moment praying, asking God to help you understand what you're about to read.
- Make sure that you have a Bible or Bible app to hand, as we'll be looking at other bits around the key verses that are printed in this book.
- Then you're ready to go! Have a read of the verse and the text that follows, and use the prayer suggestion to guide you in speaking to God afterwards.

- With the practical tips, remember that God made us all differently, so different readers will find different ones helpful. But even if you're not sure something is for you, do give it a try. I use some of them daily even now!

So, enjoy reading this book, and discovering just what facing revision and exams as a Christian can look like, and all the wonderful ways that God is helping and supporting you through it.



So we fix our eyes
not on what is seen,
but on what is unseen,
since what is seen is
temporary, but what
is unseen is eternal.

2 Corinthians 4:18

1. Perspective

Zoom Out

On long-haul flights you can set the screen in front of you to show a mini version of your plane travelling along the flight path. When it's all zoomed in, it can sometimes feel like you're over an endless sea of blue ocean, not moving anywhere, with no destination in sight. Perhaps you feel that in your own life sometimes? You become so focused on an exam, a friendship issue or an important sports fixture that you can only think about the here and the now and you've lost sight of everything else. But in 2 Corinthians 4:18, Paul challenges us to zoom out, widen our gaze and see beyond the present to the journey God is taking us on and the eternal destination he is bringing us to.

How does this help? First, it allows us to get our perspective right. Earlier in the chapter, Paul describes himself as being "hard pressed on every side", "persecuted", "struck down". But then, in verse 17, he is able to describe these things

as “light and momentary troubles” because he can see the “eternal glory that far outweighs them all”.

We’ve all heard people say that struggles won’t last and things will get better. The truth is, lots of the good stuff won’t last either. Top grades, scoring the goal that wins the tournament, universal popularity—all of these are temporary too. No matter how hard we’ve worked to gain them, they will all fade away. But these are not the destination Paul is looking forward to. God’s work of gradually growing us to be more like Christ—a work that he’s doing now and will complete in the next life—really is going to last for ever. That’s the perspective we need.

Second, knowing that God is working in unseen ways is an incredible comfort. I’ve had times in my life when I thought I was heading in a certain direction, only to discover that I didn’t make the grades I needed or my planned career was actually miserable. I’m sure there will be times in your life when you change course too. But God is not surprised by any of these apparent flight-path deviations—no matter how huge and drastic they seem when we’re zoomed in. Zoom out, and you’ll see that God is still bringing you on exactly the course he has plotted for you to reach eternal life with him.

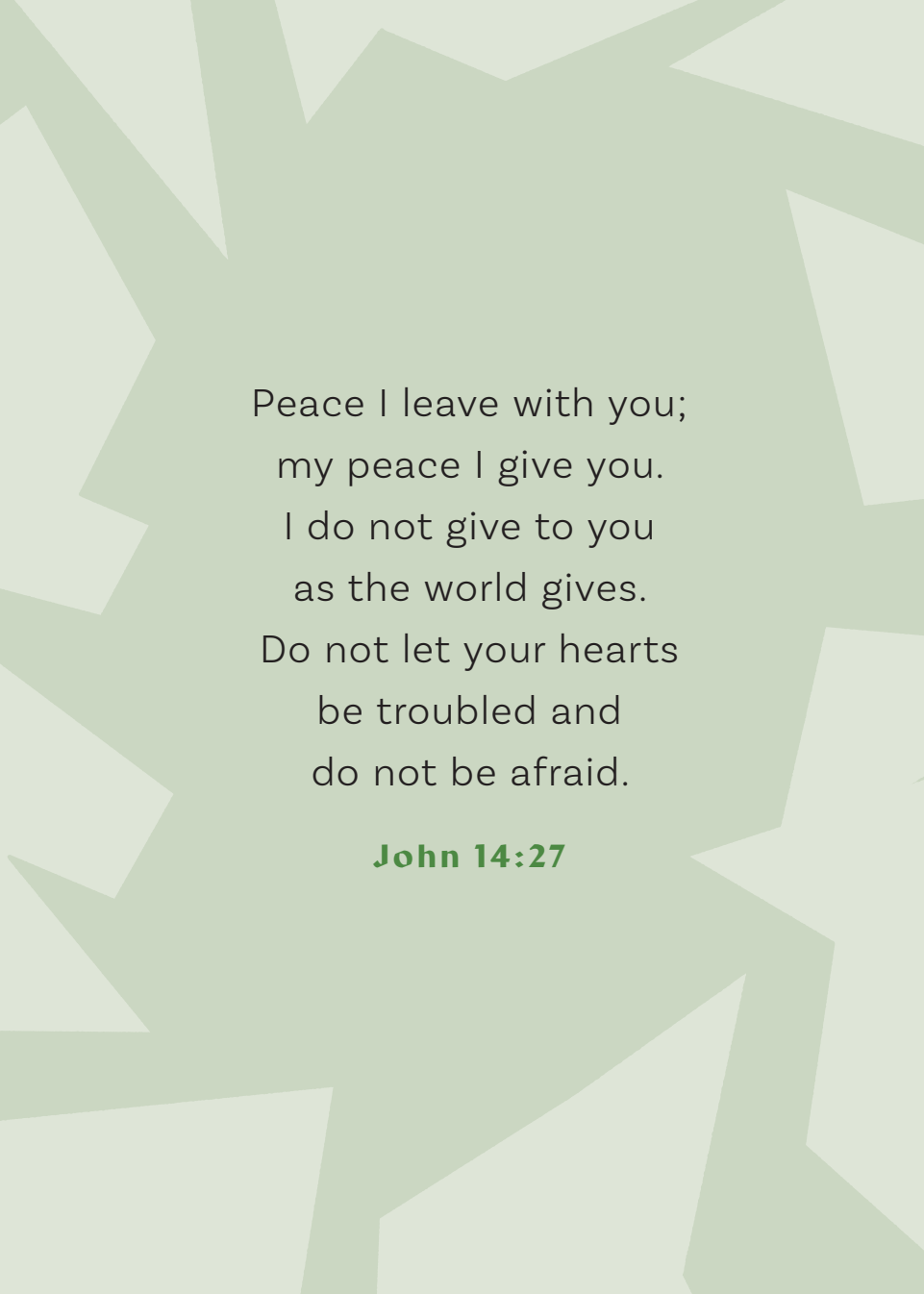
So, do what Paul says: fix your eyes on the unseen and enjoy living life with God’s eternal perspective.

Prayer Prompt

Ask God to help you to zoom out and fix your eyes on eternity.

Practical Tip

I once saw someone go through their brand-new diary and write, “Jesus could be coming back today” on random pages. Sometimes we need that glaring reminder of our ultimate destination to help us keep perspective and fix our eyes on it. So why not grab a few post-it notes or flashcards, write yourself reminders about heaven (such as today’s verse) and slip them into your textbooks and workbooks? When you find them later, you can remind yourself of just how wonderful—and how certain—our eternal future is.



Peace I leave with you;
my peace I give you.
I do not give to you
as the world gives.
Do not let your hearts
be troubled and
do not be afraid.

John 14:27

2. Worry

Peace Is Possible

Maybe you read that verse and laugh at the idea of not being troubled right now. Or perhaps you're feeling totally relaxed—but you know that the panic will hit when you're in the exam room. Whatever your current anxiety levels, pause for a second, pick up your Bible and look at where this verse comes in Jesus' life. Jesus is speaking to his disciples shortly before he is arrested and taken away to be crucified. Why does this matter? Because the natural response of the disciples to those events would be fear. Peace would have seemed impossible.

However, peace is exactly what Jesus is offering them here as a gift, and it's what God offers to us too. The word for peace in this verse is connected to the Hebrew idea of *shalom*. *Shalom* peace is the state of being complete or whole or safe, including in our relationship with God. Jews in Jesus' day would wish one another *shalom* as a way of saying

goodbye—a way to wish the person peace. But Jesus doesn't simply wish his disciples peace; he gives it. How? By taking the punishment our sins deserve on the cross. That means that if we are trusting Jesus as our Lord and Saviour, our peace with God is secure.

That's why Jesus can say, "Do not let your hearts be troubled". Often worries arise because the future seems uncertain or because we are expecting things to go wrong. It's true that with exams things may indeed go wrong, and our planned future might be dependent on our results. However, the peace that comes from being in right relationship with God means that *our ultimate future is certain*, because Jesus is coming back to bring us to live with God (as he says in verse 28). And it means that *earthly things going wrong can't separate us from God*, because Jesus sends his Spirit to live in us (as he promises in verse 26).

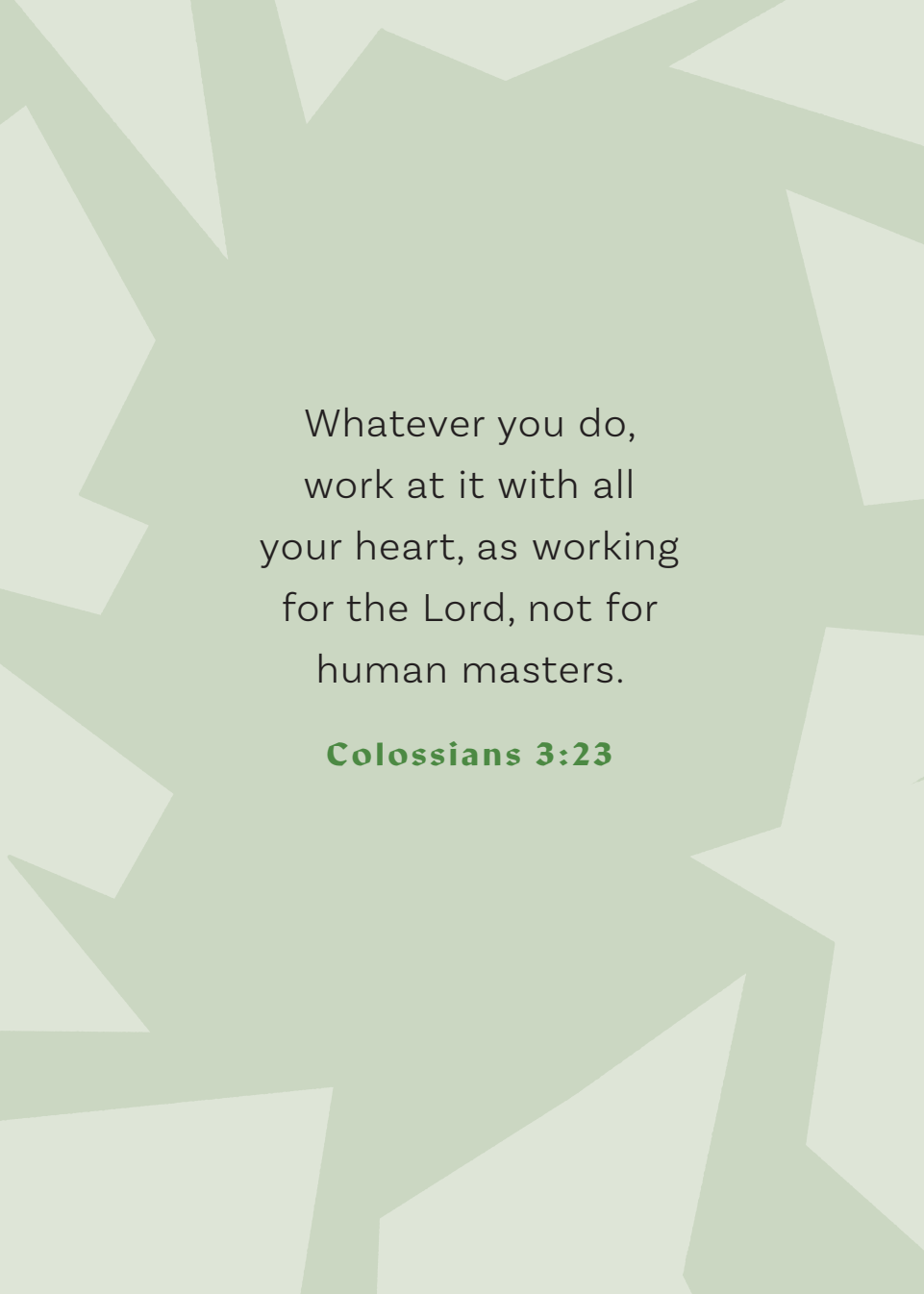
So, when we are troubled or afraid by the exams in front of us, we can enjoy the peace that flows from these truths. It may take time at first, but turning from our worries to the certainty God offers is the only way we can find true peace.

Prayer Prompt

Praise God that his peace is possible even in times of anxiety, and ask for help to remember the truth of *shalom* when you are next worried.

Practical Tip

One reason why worries build up within us is because we constantly keep coming back to them. Instead, try having a set time of day (maximum 10 minutes) when you write down all your worries into a journal. This can really help you to limit the amount of worrying and catastrophising you do. Then, pray to God to ask for his peace and for anything more specific you want in relation to your worries. Finally, put the notebook away, leaving your worries there in the capable hands of the God who loves you.



Whatever you do,
work at it with all
your heart, as working
for the Lord, not for
human masters.

Colossians 3:23

3. Procrastination

Working for God

Procrastination means deliberately putting off something that needs to be done. One common reason for procrastinating is that we aren't interested in the subject, so we leave the work till the last minute (if we do it at all!). We figure that it doesn't really matter—all we'll do is annoy a teacher and get a bad grade in a subject we don't really care about. But what if I told you that when you do that work, you're working not for a teacher, or even for yourself, but for God?

It's an odd concept, isn't it—the idea that the quadratic formula, coastal erosion and the poetry of Sylvia Plath can all be studied for God? However, that's just what Colossians 3:23 says. No matter the subject or the job you might have—whatever the task in front of you—you can work as though you are working for the Lord. This is a marvellous truth, because it means that even work that feels pointless, worthless or mind-numbingly boring actually has a purpose:

it's an opportunity to serve God and bring glory to him. It's worth noting here that the verse doesn't say, *Whatever you do, succeed at it and be better than everyone else*. Working for God is not about being the best or achieving the most here on earth. In fact, our reward comes in the form of an inheritance in heaven (v 24). That's far better than any number of "Good Job!" stickers.

How, then, can we work for God? The verse spells it out: it's by working at something with "all your heart". It is shown in our attitude: being grateful to God for the work; seeking his reward, not earthly rewards; and putting in effort because we want to please our heavenly master. It's about doing *our* best because we know that Jesus is *the* best.

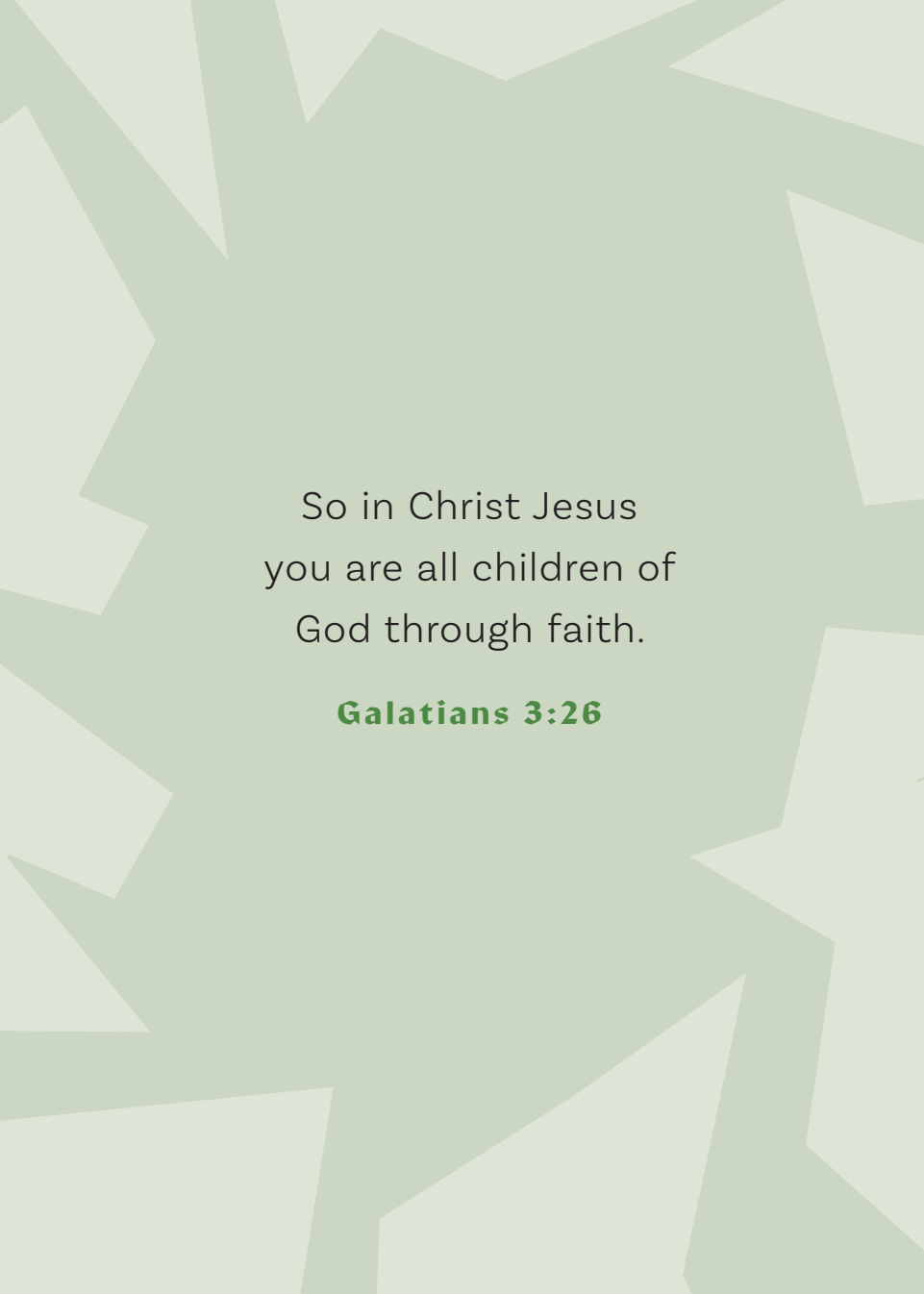
So, when you get that urge to pick up your phone and start scrolling instead of working, remind yourself that no matter how you feel about the subject or the importance of the result, this work is for God.

Prayer Prompt

Ask God to help you see all your work as an opportunity to work for him.

Practical Tip

When our revision timetable only lists subjects, we can see the word “English” (for example) and end up wasting a lot of time figuring out what bit of English to revise. Instead, create a separate list for each subject, broken down into smaller topics and subtopics that you can tick off. Then, when you go to revise that subject, you’ll know exactly what you are working on next. Perhaps even start by saying to yourself, “Thank you, God, that I can study [insert topic here] for you”. That reminds you of *who* you’re doing it for, and that you can be *grateful* for God’s work.



So in Christ Jesus
you are all children of
God through faith.

Galatians 3:26

4. Identity

Loved No Matter What

When I was seventeen, I was convinced that I was going to study history at university. Everyone knew my plans, and it became part of my identity: “Emily, future history student”. Except, when I got a D in my history exams that year, suddenly I wasn’t “Emily, future history student” anymore. If we build our identity on our academics, or any other type of achievement, it can all too easily be taken away! However, Galatians 3:26 says that if you are trusting in Christ, there’s something true about you that can never change: you are a child of God.

But notice how Paul is talking to a group of people here: he says, “You are *all* children of God”. When you become a child of God, you’re welcomed into a huge family made up of every single Christian there is. That means that when you go to church or youth group or Christian Union, you’re sitting there among brothers and sisters.

In many families, siblings are often locked in a permanent battle to be the best. That's not the case with God's family. Look down to verse 28, and you'll see that all the things that people may have thought would make themselves better or more valuable no longer signify. It tells us that no matter who we are, we are all equal in Christ. This means we don't need to compete against one another to prove that we're the best.

Your identity as a child of God cannot be improved by getting top grades, having tons of friends or helping out at church. Nor can it be lost by re-sitting a year, finding it hard to talk to new people or already being really behind on this devotional. That identity is locked in, solid, unshakeable.

So when you're struggling, you don't have to pretend to be on top of things. Tell people how you really feel. Your heavenly Father and your Christian family are not going to love you any less because of it.

Prayer Prompt

Thank God for welcoming you into his family, and thank him for some of your Christian brothers and sisters who support you.

Practical Tip

I'm going to guess that you are closer to the members of your family who you see regularly than you are to the distant cousins who you've met twice in your life. I'm also guessing it's the family you know well who are best able to help and support you.

Right now, it may seem logical to decide not to go to church or other Christian groups and instead spend the time studying. But when you do that, you risk distancing yourself from a family who cares and can help. Instead, when you make your revision timetable, immediately add in those times you spend with God's family. Be ready to both support them and be supported by them!



Rejoice in the Lord always.
I will say it again: rejoice!

Philippians 4:4

5. Stress

Reasons to Rejoice

There are some days when you may read this verse and just want to roll your eyes. *How on earth am I supposed to rejoice when I'm running late for school, I've dropped my phone and cracked the screen—oh, and everyone's reminding me that it's not long until exams start?!* But Paul, when he wrote Philippians 4:4, didn't say, *Rejoice when everything in life is going well*, or *Rejoice when you feel like rejoicing*. No, he tells us to rejoice *always*.

How is this possible? Well, look at what he says to rejoice in: the Lord. We know that Jesus never changes—he is *always* loving and caring and good. We know that he welcomes us into his family, offers us his peace and has our eternal future secure. There are endless aspects of God's character, things God has done and promises he has made that give us reasons to rejoice. These truths don't suddenly stop being true just because we're having a bad day. Plus, there are also

the wonders of creation he's surrounded us with. The fluffy dog you always see on the way to school—God created it! The delicious apple crumble you ate for pudding—God designed those juicy apples! When you look around, there is never *not* a reason to rejoice, thanks to God.

Does this mean we have to be all fake and cheery and happy all the time? Of course not. It's okay to feel sad and miserable. (Just look at Psalm 88!) With the Spirit's help, Christians are able to admit that we're going through a really tough time and feel sad, and yet still find reasons to rejoice.

Rejoicing in the Lord is not dependent on everything going perfectly in life. Plus, once you start looking for reasons to rejoice, you might be surprised by how many you find, even on the bad days. They may not be big, they may not be new, and they may not be clever—but I promise you, they are there.

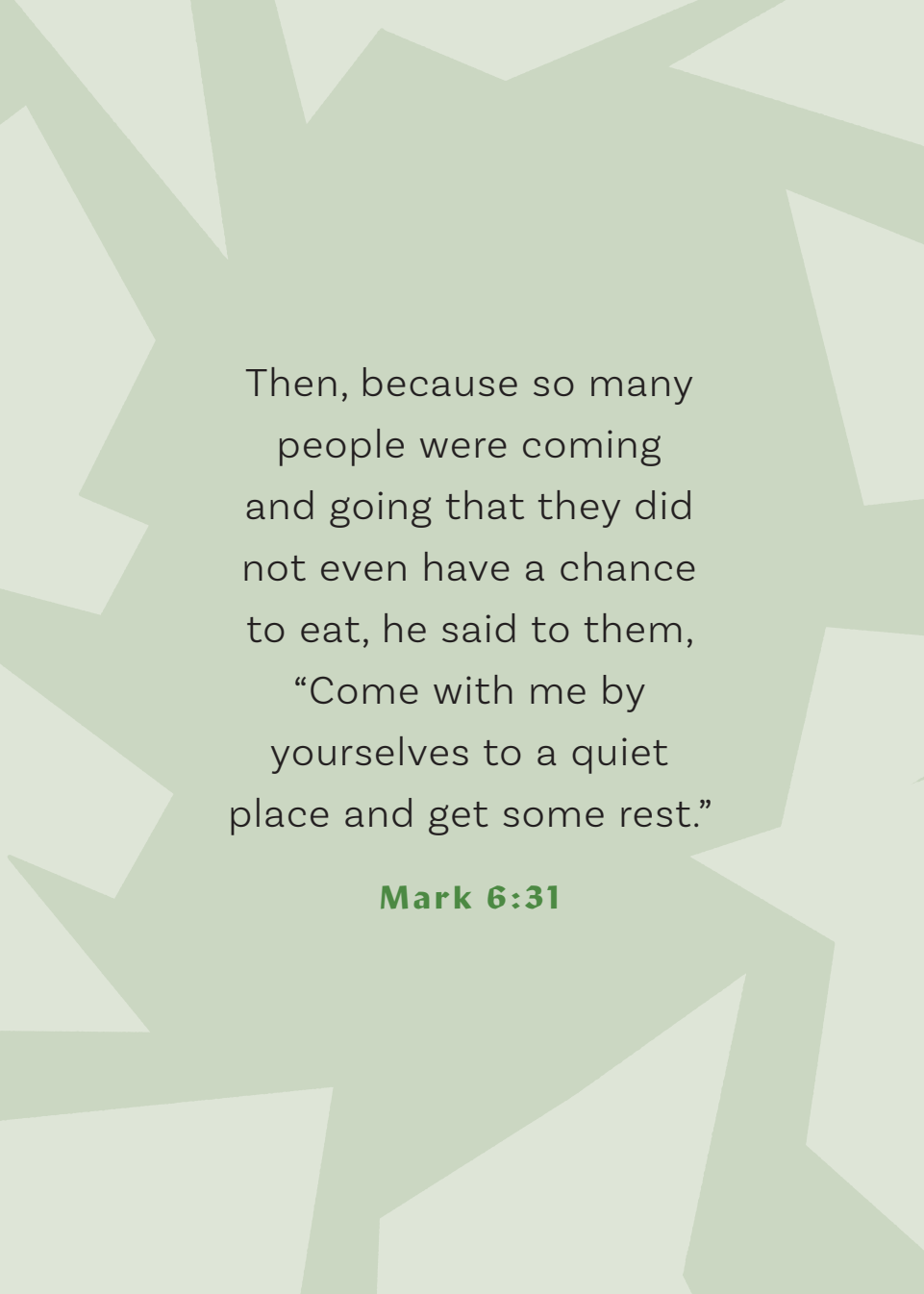
Prayer Prompt

Turn and praise God for one aspect of his character, one promise he has made you and one thing that he has created that makes you want to rejoice.

Practical Tip

A gratitude journal is a great way to train our brain to think more positively. (Seriously, science backs this up!) Every day, write down at least three things you're grateful for. Then praise God for those gifts and blessings. If you write them in a notebook, you'll be surprised by how quickly it fills up!

And don't forget, even if your day has been truly dreadful, you can always be grateful that God has been there with you, that he knows what you're going through, and that in heaven there will not be a single bad day. Three things: done!



Then, because so many
people were coming
and going that they did
not even have a chance
to eat, he said to them,
“Come with me by
yourselves to a quiet
place and get some rest.”

Mark 6:31