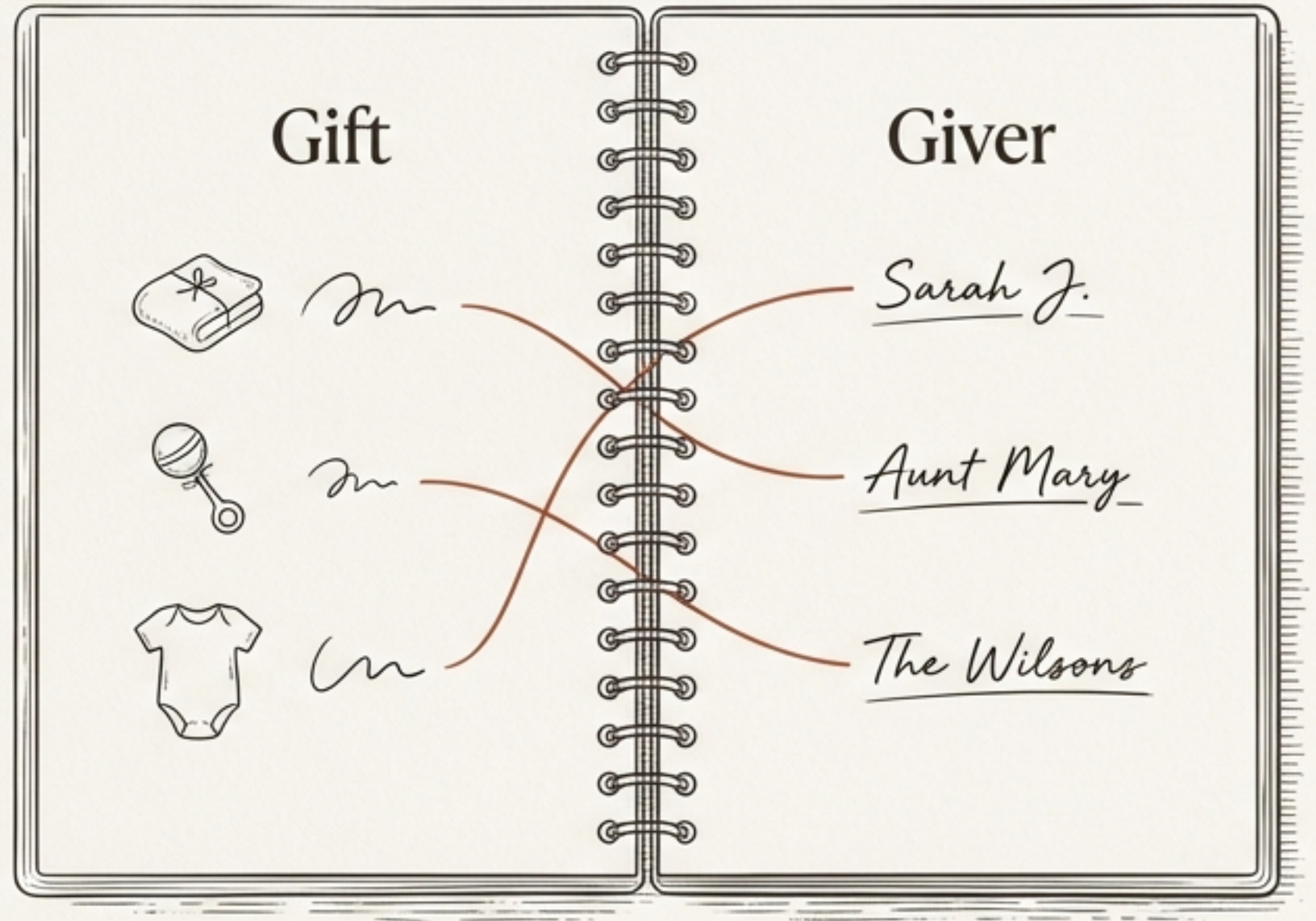


# The Gift, The Giver, and The Notebook

At a baby shower, a simple spiral-bound notebook serves a crucial purpose. Someone sits beside the mother-to-be, meticulously writing down each gift and who gave it. This isn't just for record-keeping. It's to ensure an appropriate note of thanksgiving can be written later. The entire ritual is designed to intentionally connect the gift back to the giver.

“You have something you didn't have, you didn't buy, something you didn't earn... you want to not only acknowledge the gift, you want to appropriately acknowledge the giver.”





# Cultivating a Buoyant, Joyous Sense of Crowded Kindness

What do you do when someone has been good to you? Hopefully, in place of entitlement, there is a sense of gratitude. Gratitude is the internal heart issue; the giving of thanks is its verbal or written articulation. This is about acknowledging that the blessings of life have come to us from a source beyond ourselves. The challenge is to live with a constant awareness of this.

**“Seek to cultivate a buoyant, joyous sense of the crowded kindnesses of God in your daily life.”**

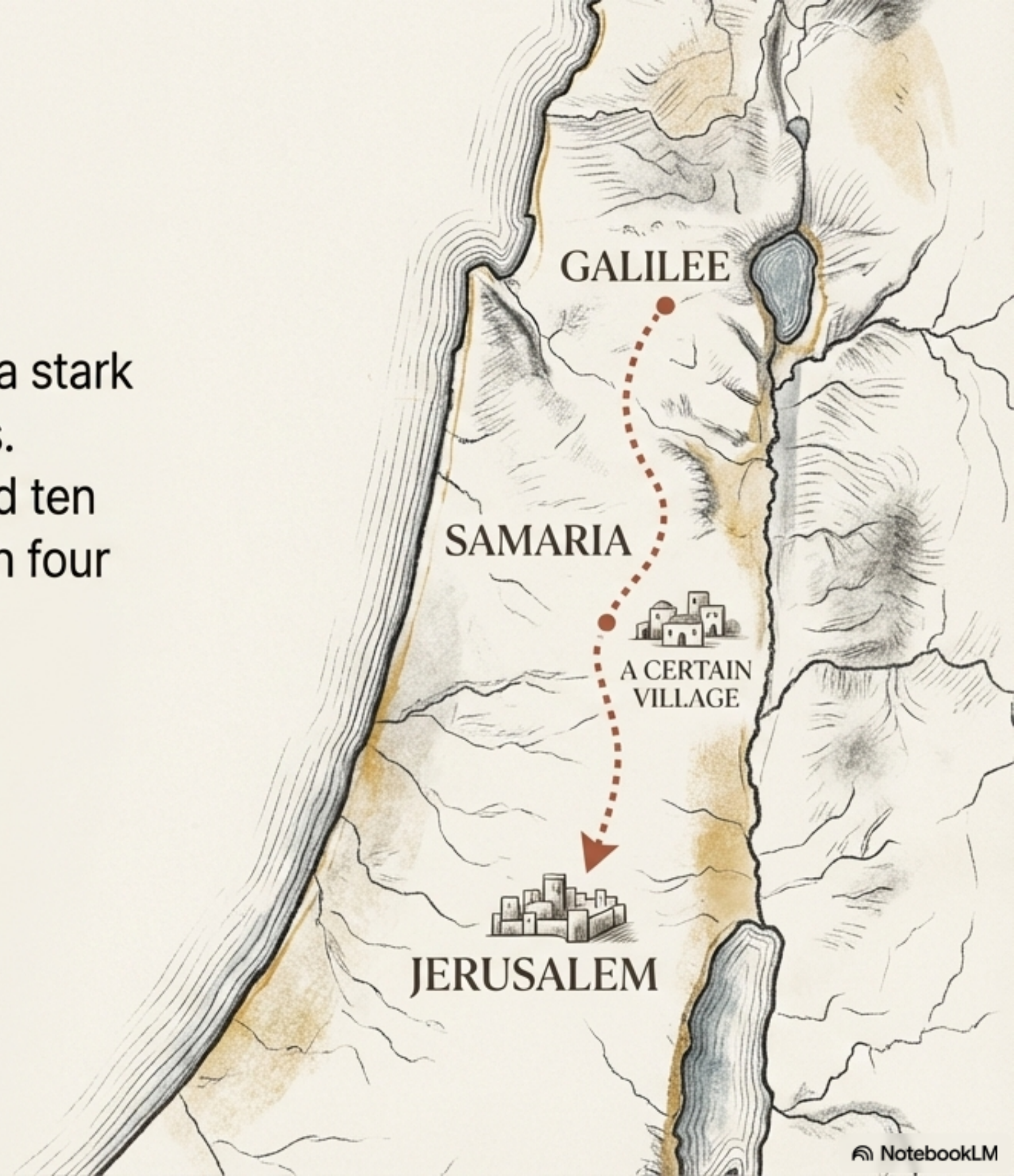
- Alexander McLaren



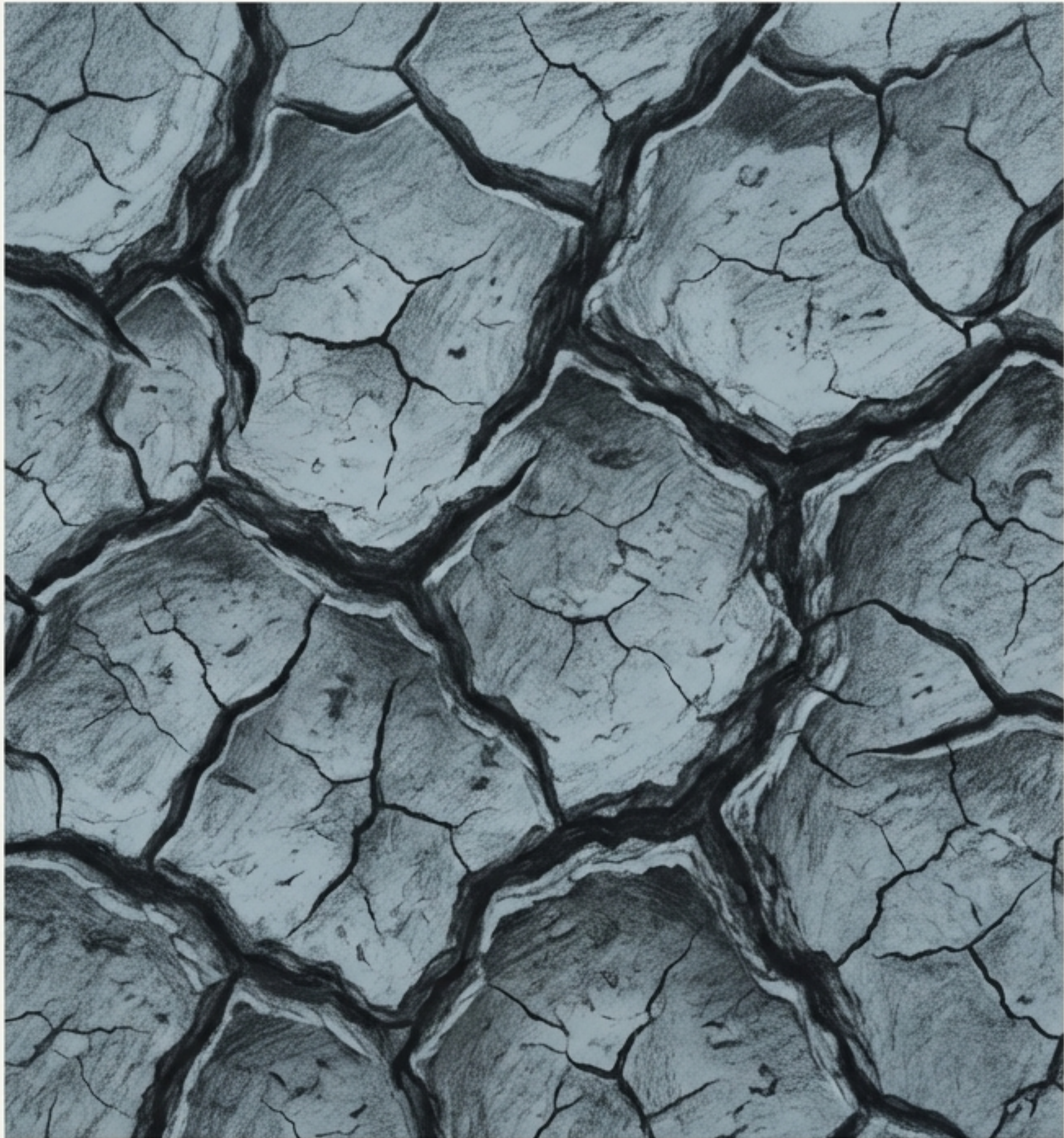
# An Ancient Story of Grace: The One and The Nine

An event recorded in Luke chapter 17 provides a stark illustration of how we respond to profound gifts. As Jesus traveled to Jerusalem, he encountered ten men afflicted with leprosy. Their story unfolds in four distinct stages:

1. The Need for Grace
2. The Hope-Filled Seeking of Grace
3. The Provision of Grace
4. The Responses to Grace







# The Need for Grace: A Living Death

Leprosy was more than a physical disease; it was a comprehensive state of decay and isolation.



**Physical:** The disease began with specks on the skin, spreading to create white scales, sores, and swelling. It would eat its way inward to the bones, “rotting the whole body piecemeal.”



**Social:** Lepers were forbidden from living in walled cities. They had to wear torn outer garments, go bareheaded, and cover their beards in a state of constant lamentation.



**Relational:** They were required to cry out ‘Unclean, unclean!’ to warn others away. They could not speak to anyone or even return a greeting, severing all basic human contact.





# Leprosy as a Parable for the Human Condition

In the biblical worldview, leprosy was seen as an outward, visible sign of an inner, spiritual corruption. It was an apt symbol for the nature of sin:

- It begins small.
- It spreads gradually.
- It causes internal disfigurement.
- It results in the dissolution of the whole body.

This condition rendered a person unfit to enter the presence of a holy God, leading to a profound religious isolation on top of the social exile. They were barred from congregational life and the house of God.



# Seeking the Lord While He May Be Found

The news that Jesus of Nazareth was entering their village brought hope to the hopeless. They did the one thing they could do: call out for help.

They stood “afar off” and lifted their voices in a unified cry: **“Jesus, Master, have mercy on us.”**

**Jesus:** A name meaning “Savior.”

**Master:** A rare word meaning “overseer” or “ruler”—an acknowledgement of His authority over all things, including their disease.

Their cry was not a question of His ability or willingness, but a desperate, hope-filled plea to the only one who could help.



**“Seek the Lord while he may be found; call upon him while he is near.” – Isaiah 55:6**



# The Provision of Grace: A Healing in Motion

Jesus's response was not an immediate touch or a dramatic pronouncement. He gave them a command that required faith: **"Go, show yourselves to the priests."**

This instruction was rooted in the law of Leviticus 13, where the priest officially verified a healing. To obey, the men had to believe they *would be* healed by the time they arrived. It was a verifiable act, not a vague claim.

The text reveals the critical detail: **"And so it was that as they went, they were cleansed."** The healing was activated by their obedience.





# The Moment of Realization

Imagine the scene as they walked. One man looks at another and sees his forehead is clear. He tells him to pull down his scarf—the whiteness and scaliness are gone. They pull off their torn garments and look at their arms, hands, and legs. Where the disease had ravaged their bodies, their skin is now renewed, like **“the skin of a baby.”**

Perhaps they simply realized they hadn’t felt the chronic itch in a while.

All ten saw it. All ten felt it. All ten were cleansed. The Bible says there must have been celebration, perhaps **“jumping and leaping and praising God.”**





# Ten Were Healed. One Returned.

All ten men received the same miracle. They were all given their lives back. But their responses diverged dramatically.

Nine continued on their way, healed and restored, but without turning back to the source of their healing.

**One**, when he saw he was healed, did three things:

1. **Returned** to Jesus.
2. **With a loud voice glorified God.** (The same loud voice he used to ask for mercy).
3. **Fell down** on his face at Jesus' feet, **giving him thanks.**





# The Gratitude of the Foreigner

The Gospel writer, Luke, adds a crucial detail intended to both shame and give hope: **“And he was a Samaritan.”**

To a Jewish audience, Samaritans were looked down upon as “half-breeds” and religious **outsiders**. Jesus healed all ten without prejudice, but the only one to return with proper thanks was the one society considered **“double unclean.”**

This detail serves as a powerful rebuke to those who feel entitled to God’s grace and a profound message of hope to any who feel like an outsider. God’s goodness is for the world.





Where Are the Nine?

*Were not ten cleansed?  
But where are the nine?  
Were there not any found who  
returned to give glory to God  
except this foreigner?*

The ratio of gratitude was 1 in 10. A question that prompts us to consider our own responses to the unnumbered gifts we receive.





# Weighed Down with Blessings, But Silent

It's easy to assume we would be the one. But consider a modern life. The speaker reflects on his own past: "For 14, 15 years of my life, I never once said thank you to God for a single thing that went into my mouth... for the breath in my lungs... for my father or my mother."

It is possible to be weighed down with blessings—health, family, food, freedom—and yet never trace them back to their source. We feel the sunbeam but fail to see the sun. We enjoy the gifts, but forget the Giver.



# The Complaint Department vs. The Thanks Department

Imagine if there were two lines in the world. Which line would be longer? Businesses have complaint departments, but rarely a “thank you department.” We are quick to notice the minor hardship, the slow traffic light, the delayed package. The enemy of gratitude is entitlement—the feeling that we are owed these good things. But in light of your life’s blessings versus its hardships, does God hear more thanks or more groans?

## Complaints



## Thanks

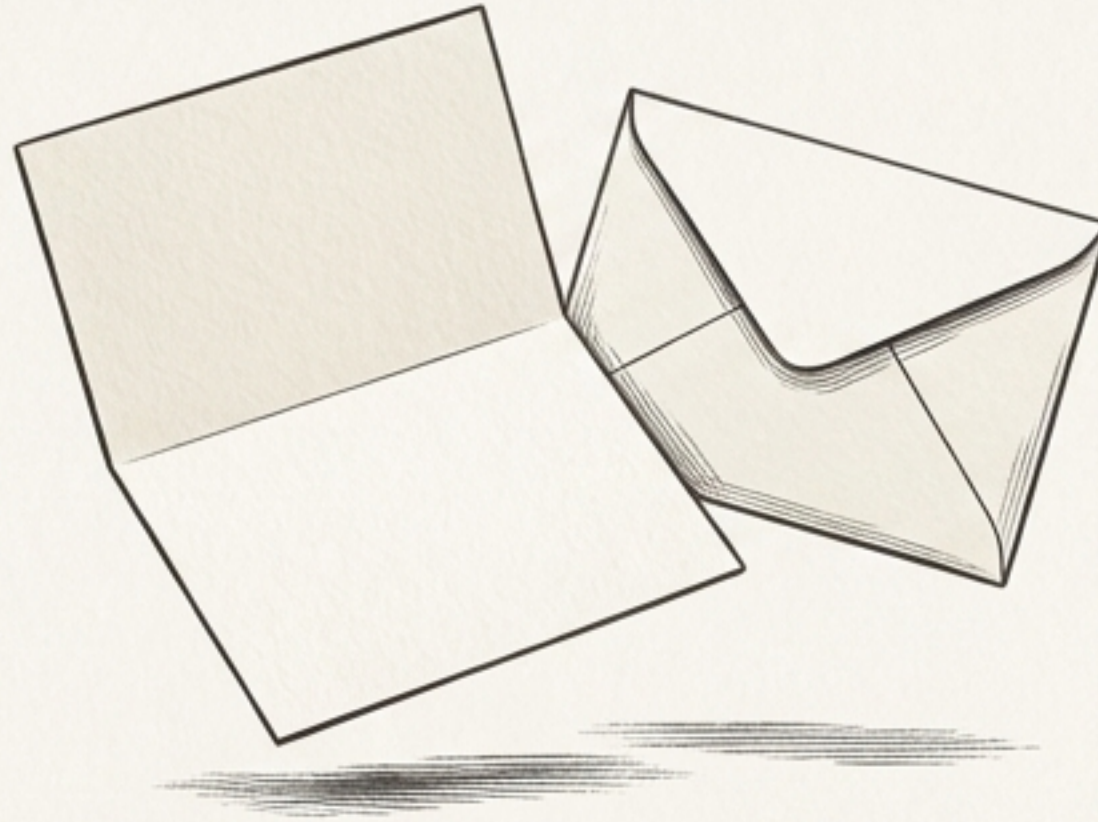




# The Agnostic's Dilemma: Where to Send the Card?

Even secular writers have noted the power of Thanksgiving. One agnostic author, who loves the holiday, struggles with the language. Can you feel “blessed” if you don’t believe in a Blessor?

He feels the gratitude, but he doesn’t know where to send the thank-you card.



This reveals a profound truth. Gratitude that doesn’t connect back to the Giver remains incomplete. It’s like holding the notebook from the baby shower, filled with a list of gifts, but with no name in the ‘Giver’ column.

“Unnumbered comforts to my soul, thy tender care bestowed, before my infant heart  
conceived from whom those blessings flowed.”



# Let the Redeemed of the Lord Say So

The story of the ten lepers isn't just a historical account; it's a mirror. God is the giver of every good and perfect gift, from life and breath to the greatest gift of His Son. The question remains for each of us.

It's possible to receive the greatest benefits and yet, our souls can forget. The psalmist, aware of this tendency, gives himself a command that we can adopt as our own.

“Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless His holy name!  
Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits.” – Psalm 103:1-2