

# SOUL FOOD *with Spice*

from Pastor's Menu



## AN ABUNDANCE OF GIFTS

In 2022, people set some amazing Guinness World Records. A Nebraska man paddled more than 37 miles in a hollowed-out pumpkin boat. A Vermont teen wearing 4-inch heels walked more than 600 feet across a tightrope. And an Oregon man found and alphabetized all 26 letters in a can of alphabet soup in 2 minutes and 8.6 seconds. (The toughest part, he says, is distinguishing subtle differences between letters such as M and W.)

Your talents might not earn you any world records, but they certainly can grow faith and change lives. Whether you're good at teaching, singing, writing, cooking or accounting, the church can put those skills to productive use. Romans 12 lists many more qualities you may not realize are spiritual gifts: graciousness, serving, generosity, acts of mercy, loving and honoring others, extending hospitality, rejoicing and weeping with people, making peace.

You might not be able to outperform the alphabet soup record. But God abundantly blesses each of us to "outdo one another in showing honor" (Romans 12:10, ESV) and in sharing his love.

—Stephanie Martin

## Keep trying

In *The God Who Stays*, contemporary Christian musician Matthew West writes about the pandemic's fear-filled early days. After his concert tour was abruptly canceled in March 2020, he rode to an airport "feeling utterly hopeless about a world that was spinning out of control."

Then Arthur, his ride-share driver, began singing along to the radio — and the song happened to be West's "The God Who Stays." West joined in, jokingly asking how he sounded. "Not so good," Arthur replied, not knowing West's identity. "You keep trying."

The driver shared how those lyrics uplifted him during life's difficulties, and West later recalled that conversation during lockdown, while wondering where God was. The musician realized he had "settled for a socially distant relationship with the One who is nearer than I dare to believe, closer than the air I breathe." But West pictured "God running toward me with open arms like the prodigal's father," and he resolved to keep trying — and to grow closer to the God who always stays.

# PUZZLE

## SEPARATION FROM SIN

David praises God for his love and compassion.  
What does God do for people who fear him?

*Directions: Using each grid pattern marked below, find the word that appears in all three of those squares. Write the words in the spaces below to complete Psalm 103:12, NIV.*

|                            |                     |                         |                 |                         |                        |
|----------------------------|---------------------|-------------------------|-----------------|-------------------------|------------------------|
| FROM<br>as<br>can          | is<br>South<br>AS   | NORTH<br>from<br>far    | at<br>do<br>far | the<br>this<br>up<br>as | at the<br>EAST<br>FROM |
| WEST<br>THAT<br>is<br>East | far<br>down<br>WEST | THE<br>be<br>AS<br>West |                 |                         |                        |



**Puzzle Solution: AS FAR AS THE EAST IS FROM THE WEST**

... so far has he removed our transgressions from us.

PSALM 103:12, NIV