

HOPE-FULL LIVING

• *Daily Devotions for Christian Seniors* •

January • February • March • 2013

Volume 2 • Number 1

Rich Bimler, Mark Zimmermann, Editors

Kasey Nugent, Editorial Assistant

Hope-Full Living Mission Statement

To inspire God's seniors with the assurance that "This very day, I have a body, a mind, a spirit and a message—God's rejuvenating Gospel message to and through me—to share with my world, my friends and my Lord."

Hope-Full Living (ISSN pending) is published quarterly in January, April, July and October by Creative Communications for the Parish, 1564 Fencorp Drive, Fenton, MO 63026. Subscription rates: 1 year, \$14 (Canada \$16); single copy, \$3.75 (Canada \$5.50). Periodicals postage paid at St. Louis, MO. Canada GST# is 84231 1870RT. Printed in the USA. Individual subscriptions: (855) 325-4673; 5 or more: (800) 325-9414. Website: www.hope-fulldevos.com

POSTMASTER: Send individual address changes to *Hope-Full Living*, P.O. Box 291847, Kettering, OH 45429-0847. Send bulk address changes to *Hope-Full Living*, 1564 Fencorp Dr., Fenton, MO 63026-2942.

Cover Design: Paul Berkbigler, Madison, WI

Tuesday, January 1, 2013

God Is Good ... Always

We know that for those who love God all things work together for good ...

Romans 8:28

As we enter a new year, we look back to the past year. We recall things we wish we had not said or done. Or times we failed to help a person in need. Do not linger in that darkness. Trust God's promise: "The blood of Jesus Christ cleanses us from all sin" (1 John 1:7). St. Paul says, "One thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on" (Philippians 3:13).

We do not know what the future holds, but we do know that God holds the future. There might be sickness, sorrow and disappointment. There will be good times too. We do know that Jesus walks with us in the afterglow of Easter as he did with the Emmaus disciples. Even the dark days become days to sing alleluias. Every day with Jesus is a good day.

Lord, take my hand. Through the shadows of death to life eternal, walk with me, Jesus. Dance with me, Jesus, as we sing our alleluias. Amen.

Plan: Plan time together with a friend. Talk about the good times. Then together thank God for these times.

Read: Romans 8:31-39

*Leo Symmank
Seabrook, TX*

Wednesday, January 2, 2013

What Kind of Day?

... you do not know what a day may bring forth.

Proverbs 27:1

In *The Sound of Music*, Maria leaves the convent to care for Captain von Trapp's children. She starts down the road, musing to herself, "What will this day be like (stepping into the unknown), I wonder."

Do you wonder what today/tomorrow, will be like? You have some routines (and think you're in control). There are some predictable moments (the comfort zone). But what about the unknowns, the unexpected disruption, the unplanned crisis—"I wonder what will happen today?"

No one can script their day. There is fear, boredom, surprise, hope. Left to ourselves, the future would be frightening. But remember this great truth: Jesus loves you, Jesus died for you and Jesus rose again for you!

He knows you—his Spirit is with you—and the gift (this day) belongs to him!

It's you and me, Lord. Bless our day! Amen.

Pray: Pray your way joyfully through this day.

Read: Psalm 118

*Randy Shields
Florissant, MO*

Thursday, January 3, 2013

Not Too Old

Know that the Lord, he is God! It is he who made us, and we are his; we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture.

Psalms 100:3

Cruise ships set up staterooms with one bed by combining two twin beds with a king-size sheet and blankets, offering to separate the beds if so requested. As we headed toward our room, my wife and I heard a couple asking the steward to divide their beds because “We’re old people.” Maybe because of sleep restlessness or physical disabilities, we commented to each other, but not just because of being old!

Abraham and Sarah, obviously, still cuddled together in their old age. My wife and I also treasure touching—holding hands, neck rubs, spontaneous hugs, lying together. The gift of intimacy should be a reflection of God’s continuous loving contact with us through Jesus, keeping us close to him. Old age doesn’t stop you from demonstrating it.

Heavenly Father, thank you for your warm embrace that assures me of your care and forgiveness every day of my life. Amen.

Do: Give and accept appropriate gestures of love to those about you. Touch others with your love.

Read: Genesis 18:9-15; 21:1-7; Psalm 100

*Luther Strasen
Fort Wayne, IN*

Friday, January 4, 2013

Retire? Me? No Way!

Then he said to his disciples, “The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest.”

Matthew 9:37-38

How often have you heard (or used) the following phrase: “I’ve done my duty. It’s time for some of the younger church members to take that on!” Now there are certainly physical activities we may not do as well as we age and perhaps those are better done by someone else. But aging is not an excuse for early retirement from the Lord’s work.

As long as the good Lord leaves us on this earth, he has a purpose for our lives. Every church needs each member to volunteer in some way. If our physical abilities are such that we cannot drive or even walk, we can still reflect God’s love and patience and pray for others.

Lord, when all I can do to serve you is through prayer for others, let me pray passionately! Amen.

Do: Put away the notion of retiring from the Lord’s work. Volunteer at church; witness to a neighbor; pray for the saints.

Read: Luke 10:1-12; Luke 4:31-37

*Terry Weber
Williamsburg, VA*

Saturday, January 5, 2013

Joy Is in the Receiving!

Rejoice always; pray continually; give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.

1 Thessalonians 5:16-18

Joy is a many-splendored thing! Especially during these holy days, there are opportunities to celebrate with others, reminisce about our past joys and focus on all of our circumstances to see where those hidden joys may be. Our joys also come with sadnesses. We recall joy-filled times with a loved one who has died. We recall smiles and laughter of family, even though dysfunction continues to cause havoc in our homes.

As long as our joy is seen as being the gift from God that it is, in Christ Jesus, we really are able to “be joyful always” because we continue to receive his joy, through both our sadnesses and our gladnesses! Joy is knowing how it all turns out. One may even suggest that in Christ we have “ever-laughing life!”

Lord, help us to treasure the special moments in our lives, both our past joys as well as those you gift to us in the days ahead. Amen.

Share: Tell others this week about some of your special joys through your life. And do not forget to reveal your sadnesses while sharing your gladnesses!

Read: Psalm 100

*Rich Bimler
Bloomington, IL*

Sunday, January 6, 2013

The Gift of Welcome

Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels ...

Hebrews 13:2

On this Epiphany Day, we remember how Mary welcomed the strangers, the Wise Men, to see her infant son. Most North Americans are descendants of immigrants, foreigners like the exotic Magi were. Our ancestors came here either willing or under the whip of indentured servitude or slavery. Like the Magi, most of us are Gentiles, non-Jewish “immigrants” to Christianity. Paul defended the Gentiles’ right to baptism without becoming Jewish first.

Today we see immigrants around us. Many ease our lives in low-paid jobs in landscaping and as housekeepers in hotels and nursing facilities. Many contribute as doctors, scientists and technology inventors. Let us present Christ to them and to all!

Lord, remind me of Mary’s welcoming smile when I see an apparent immigrant. Amen.

Do: If there is an occasion for conversation, warmly encourage a new immigrant with the story of one of your immigrant ancestor’s early challenges to make a life for the family in a new land.

Read: Leviticus 19:33-34; Hebrews 11:8-18; Matthew 2:11-12

*Patricia Rice
St. Louis, MO*

Monday, January 7, 2013

Salt: The God Flavor

You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again?

Matthew 5:13

In chemistry class, I always loved the days when we got to take pure sodium and place it into a bowl with water. Immediately it would begin sparking and flames would erupt. It was neat to see how the water mixed with the sodium caused this type of reaction, thus making a bright light.

Some have said that salt is a “God flavor.” This “God flavor” stems from the very Word of God. Jesus, the Word, makes us bright with light. As the Word is spoken over us and combined with the visible element of water, we are ignited with his Light—a light that does not lose its flicker in faith but instead shines ever more brightly out into the world.

Help me, Father, to be made bright with the Light of Jesus. Amen.

Brighten: Brighten someone’s day by sharing Jesus with them.

Read: Matthew 5:13-16

*Cory A. Wielert
Crown Point, IN*

Tuesday, January 8, 2013

Sleepless Nights

My eyes are awake before the watches of the night ...

Psalm 119:148

Do you lie awake at night? Do you wonder what is coming next? Sometimes do you start worrying about what is happening to your health, family, friends? Your sins and shortcomings and failures are troubling you. You are puzzled about all the changes that are taking place in your extended years of living.

The psalmist David had similar experiences ... sleepless nights. However, he gives us good advice as we wrestle with sleepless nights. He confesses, "I meditate on your Word, O Lord. I hope in your Word. I think of your promises."

Sleepless nights call on us to concentrate our thoughts on God's Word and promises. He is the one who can calm our hearts and quiet our minds. He is the one who is always ready to hear our prayers. In him alone, we can find peace and hope. His hands are there to lift our troubled spirit.

Lord Jesus, help me cling to your promises that provide pardon and peace, comfort and hope even when I have trouble sleeping. Amen.

Practice: Make a list of God's promises as you lie awake.

Read: Psalm 119:137-152

*Walter M. Schoedel
Webster Groves, MO*

Wednesday, January 9, 2013

Never Too Old!

[Anna] was advanced in years ... She began to give thanks to God and to speak of him to all who were waiting for the redemption of Jerusalem.

Luke 2:36, 38

The brief paragraph in Luke describing Anna tells us she was always at the temple, worshiping, fasting and praying. What it does not tell us is the depth of her grief as a young widow and what the pain of loneliness was like for her. We simply know that in her old age she was devoted to God. And what a blessing she received! She saw the Messiah—the baby Jesus! Then she spoke of him to others.

God knows our grief and pain. As we faithfully worship and pray, he will meet us, too, blessing us with his presence. And, like Anna, we're never too old to speak of him to others!

Lord, help me to share the comfort and grace I find in Jesus. Amen.

Be aware: For what do you thank God today? Tell someone!

Read: Luke 2:36-38

*Diane Bahn
Cypress, TX*

Thursday, January 10, 2013

Carried Along

Be their shepherd and carry them forever.

Psalm 28:9

Sometimes it's easy to feel as if you are being left out of the discussions or left out of the planning for just about everything in your life. Friends and family members, nurses and doctors may discuss what you should or should not be doing—and they don't even consult with you!

You may not be happy being carried along with the plans and decisions of others, but you can be confident that Jesus your Good Shepherd carries you along each and every day. He is the one who guides and directs the plans that are made and he shelters you with his loving care. He died on the cross and rose from the dead so that you will live in his presence forever. When you feel swept along by circumstances, remember that you are safe in your Shepherd's arms.

Thank you, loving Shepherd, for carrying me through this life and into life eternal. Amen.

Encourage: Encourage someone who feels swept along by life.

Read: Psalm 28

*Carol Geisler
Manchester, MO*

Friday, January 11, 2013

Fifty-one and Counting

*You are light in the Lord. Live as children of light
(for the fruit of light consists in all goodness ...)*

Ephesians 5:8-9

St. Paul has some good words for us. Where does it say that this doesn't apply to folks over age 65? The Holy Spirit turned on the light of faith in me at my baptism. I want "this little light of mine" to continue to shine as long as the Lord gives me breath.

Fifty-one years ago I was privileged to be ordained into the holy ministry. I have been retired from full-time service in the church for eleven years, but not from ministry. God has given me reasonably good health. He has given me opportunities to continue to serve him and his people. I need a daily calendar to keep track of places to be at and people to serve. God-willing I plan to wear out, not rust out.

What are your talents? Who is asking you for help? How and where can you give of yourself? As the saying goes, "The secret of living is giving."

Lord, I want to be an active member of your body, the Church. Show me how. Please give me the strength, wisdom and courage I need. Amen.

Assess: Truthfully assess your talents and abilities. Ask God for opportunities to help others.

Read: Ephesians 5

*Paul Eggold
Greendale, WI*

Saturday, January 12, 2013

A Long History

I have been young, and now am old ...

Psalm 37:25

There's an "old saw": the older I get, the better I used to be. That's true, at least physically! I remember when I could play all day and not grow tired. I could run, jump, ride my bike and be ready to do it all again. Now, my best sport seems to be napping!

While our bodies may not be what they used to be, one thing we have over youth is a long history of seeing God at work in our lives. When I attend a funeral of someone older than I, I am always inspired by the thought that this lifelong Christian has had a faith relationship with Jesus longer than I have been alive!

King David, in his old age, wrote the words above, which continue: "yet I have not seen the righteous forsaken." David's long life let him look back on many years of God guiding him, strengthening him and loving him, despite all his sins. He had a living journal of events through which he saw God bless him and others. That's a perspective unique to us seniors.

*Lord, thank you for being in my long, long life!
Amen.*

Share: Cherish and share your history with God.

Read: Psalm 71

*Al Schenk
Jennings, MO*

Sunday, January 13, 2013

No Hurry

The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance.

2 Peter 3:9

We humans are an impatient bunch. Modern technology has made us more impatient and hurried. Young people in particular want immediate results and often become impatient with their elders, who move, think and talk a little slower. Yet even as we age, we become frustrated when medical technology is slow to keep up with our latest aches and pains.

What a blessing that God is patient with us! When he seems slow to answer our prayers, perhaps he is demonstrating his patience so that more people will turn to him in repentance and faith. We wait on him and trust his word. His time is the right time.

Lord, help me trust you when I grow impatient. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Pray: In your times of waiting, say prayers of praise, thanks and petitions for others.

Read: 2 Peter 3:8-9; Psalm 130

*Diane Bahn
Cypress, TX*

Monday, January 14, 2013

Always Listening

Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you.

Luke 11:9

My husband wears a hearing aid. He explained to our three-year-old granddaughter, “My ears don’t hear everything and this helps me hear you better.” One day Madeline was chattering on and on about all the important things she was doing. Suddenly, she stopped. Grandpa wasn’t responding. She stood in front of Grandpa and said, “Papa, you got your ear on?”

Everyone needs someone who really listens—someone who hears them and responds. Unfortunately, with our busy lives, it’s often hard to find that person. But God is never too busy to hear our prayers and he always responds. Tell God about all your cares, troubles and everyday events. Talk about your joys, worries and boring days. He’s always “got his ear on.”

Dear God, thanks for always listening to my prayers and for answering them. Amen.

List: Make a prayer list of your needs and things you are thankful for.

Read: Matthew 7:7-12; Mark 11:24, 25

*Jeanette Dall
Batavia, IL*

Tuesday, January 15, 2013

Serving God at Any Age

So Abram went, as the Lord had told him, and Lot went with him. Abram was seventy-five years old when he departed from Haran.

Genesis 12:4

Abram was 75 years old when he began his journey of blessing from the Lord. His wife was 65 when she traveled with him to Haran. Abram served the Lord another 100 years before he died. Sarah lived and served the Lord from 65 to 127 years. Story after story, not just in Genesis, but throughout Scriptures tell of the wonderful work of children of God, whom we now call seniors. For some of them it took that long for them to mature in their faith and respond with their gifts to God's calling. All of them had an important role to play in the proclamation of God's promises to people and God's plan of salvation.

"Well, times were different then," many say. But, then times are always different in every culture and each generation. The point of the Bible is that this is about God, whose grace and mercy and call to servanthood is the same in every age.

God, the Rock of Ages, continue to give me the strength and spirit to serve you every day. Amen.

Think: Write a thank you note to a special senior.

Read: Hebrews 11:8-12

*Dick Hardel
Columbia, MT*

Wednesday, January 16, 2013

A Change of Scenery

Go therefore and make disciples of all nations ...

Matthew 28:19

I'm a bit of a homebody. I like routine. But there are times when a break from the norm can make a big difference. Our energy level can be elevated, our stress reduced, our creativity enhanced. New experiences energize us. I believe this is why so many of us like to travel. A change of scenery can give us an entirely new perspective.

Maybe this is why God so often called his people to go. Abraham was called to move from Ur to a land God promises to give him and his descendants. The Israelites were called to go from Egypt into the desert. Ruth went with her mother-in-law Naomi to a new land. Even Jesus, after his baptism, went out into the wilderness. All were changed by their going.

At the end of his earthly ministry Jesus continued this history of sending by telling his disciples to "Go." We, too, need to break our routines and go to be the people of God in new places.

Thank you, God, for my routine. Remind me to periodically break it for new scenery. Amen.

Go: Break your routine today. Go someplace you have never been and ask God to speak to you.

Read: Matthew 28:16-20

*Joe Iovino
Monument, CO*

Thursday, January 17, 2013

Not Fair!

They did not believe ... [God's] saving power ... Yet ... he sent them food in abundance.

Psalm 78:22, 25b

People often say, "That's not fair!" or "How can they do that!" or "There ought to be a law."

We all want fair treatment. We want to be given what we deserve. Until we have done wrong! Then we want compassion. And mercy. We certainly don't want what we deserve.

Thankfully, our God is a God of compassion and mercy. The Israelites rebelled against God, yet were showered with "food in abundance." We, too, rebel against God, yet are fed, forgiven and never forgotten. Why? Because we have a Savior who lived and died that we might share his holiness. For his sake we are called children of God. For his sake God has mercy on us, cares for us and promises us life. For Jesus' sake, we are not treated fairly. Thank God for that!

Merciful God, thank you for not being fair. We are grateful that you care for us and forgive us for Jesus' sake. Amen.

Think: Think of some mercy you have received from God today.

Read: Psalm 78:22-29

*Eldor Kaiser
Lenexa, KS*

Friday, January 18, 2013

Entering, Not Retreating

The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest.

Matthew 9:37-38

This instruction to pray comes after Jesus has seen “the crowds, harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd” (9:36). News coverage today provides many images of crowds that look just like that. It’s natural to recoil from such settings, to avoid them at all costs. Not Jesus. Such scenes draw his compassion. He sees not a disaster but God’s harvest; he sees not a place we should flee but a place we should enter.

I am comforted to know that when Jesus sees us driven and helpless, he does not blame us or run the other way, but enters in with his own life, his own suffering and death, his own resurrection so that our life and direction are restored.

I am challenged to envision Jesus gazing directly at me as he talks about laborers entering the harvest.

Holy Spirit, stir up the compassion of Jesus within me and lead me into the harvest. Amen.

Look: Watch and listen for Jesus to show you both “the harvest” and the way into it.

Read: Psalm 78:1-4, 13-30; Matthew 9:35-38

*Mike May
Kansas City, KS*

Saturday, January 19, 2013

All Dressed Up

But put on the Lord Jesus Christ ...

Romans 13:14

When I was young, we teased anyone decked out in fancy clothes for no apparent reason as “all dressed up with no place to go.” Some of them, wanting others to think they had a busy social schedule, would then head downtown to stand around on the corner for a while, then come back home.

Paul talked about Christians getting dressed up in life, but with this difference: we have a place to go. We are heading home for a real shindig with the Father. More than that, with every sunrise we are a day closer to that grand event “than when we first believed” (Romans 13:11). But what are we to wear?

In Paul’s opinion nothing looks better on us than Jesus Christ. He is, as it were, borrowed finery which we don by receiving the Sacraments and putting ourselves under his Word. Then, there we are: all decked out, invitation in hand, with a special place to go.

God, you have honored us by asking us to be with you. And you sent your Son to make sure we get there safely, all dressed up, fit to live—forever. Amen.

Question: What of Christ are you putting on today? Forgiveness? Love? Joy? Peace? Patience?

Read: John 14:1-3

Charles S. Mueller, Sr.
Bloomington, IL

Sunday, January 20, 2013

Gaining Wisdom

So teach us to number our days that we may gain a heart of wisdom.

Psalm 90:12

Someone said to me recently, “When you get old, you know how things are.” It reminded me of the words of an ancient Jewish philosopher, Solomon Ben Gabirol, who said: “To seek wisdom in old age is like a mark in the sand; to seek wisdom in youth is like an inscription on stone.” The psalmist also understood those things as he reflected on his life.

People with life experiences behind them are valuable. As we share our lives with younger ones through regular interaction, God uses who we have become, in him to form his image within them also. By being with us, they can enter a similar discipling process which Jesus offered to his followers. Older people understand that it is not just telling, but being with another person that most of all is the helping influence.

Lord, thank you for my life and the richness of that journey. Help me to be a wise and kind influence to those around me, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

Remember: Remember what a precious gift you are to the young ones in your family and relationships.

Read: Psalm 90

*Lionel Otto
Adelaide, Australia*

Monday, January 21, 2013

Freedom

Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.

Matthew 22:37

Abraham Heschel wrote: “The opposite of freedom is not determinism, but hardness of heart.” Heschel is speaking of spiritual freedom. Being able to do what I want should be what freedom means, shouldn’t it? In this definition, the loss of freedom will usually be someone else’s fault. Aging itself can feel like a pre-determined enemy! Being indignant, even angry about “loss of freedoms” can infect our spiritual life.

Heschel says (and we agree!) that any loss of freedom, spiritually, is our own doing. It is a “hardening of the heart.” True freedom in biblical terms lies in being open to God and his purposes in our lives.

Freedom is not humankind’s natural condition. Freedom is God’s gracious gift in Jesus Christ. Whatever you are feeling today about “constraints” on your freedom, remember the Lord and his freeing, loving grace for you. We are truly free at last in him.

God, help me to live freely for you and others in Christ’s love. Amen.

Thank: Give thanks to God for the freedom you have in Christ.

Read: Romans 6:1-7

*Don Schatz
McKinleyville, CA*

Tuesday, January 22, 2013

It's Always Something!

I have loved you with an everlasting love.

Jeremiah 31:3

One of my mom's favorite sayings was "It's always something!" Whether it was sitting at the kitchen table as I spilled my milk or when my dad was ill or when our furnace stopped working one winter's night. "It's always something!" Mom was right. There were problems, pressures and pains when you and I were growing up. Now, often it is more than "spilled milk."

She would be right again! Worries, woes and wars continue to bombard us as we continue to age. How much "good news" do we hear on the evening news? And what about in our own lives when we hear of Lil's death, Karl's accident or Bobbie's cancer? Yet in the midst of it all, hear what Jeremiah exclaims about our God: "I have loved you with an everlasting love!" The BIG "always something" in each of our lives is that God in Christ always loves us! See, Mom was right after all. Thanks, Lord!

Lord, thanks for always loving us, even when we do not feel, act or look like we are loved. Amen.

Share: Share an "always something" story with a friend. Ask your friend to share also.

Read: Romans 8:38-39

*Rich Bimler
Bloomington, IL*

Wednesday, January 23, 2013

Golden Faith

Now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials.

1 Peter 1:6

You may be experiencing troubles—problems with aging or illness, family difficulties or grief and loss. Trials are nothing new. You’ve experienced such things throughout life. Sometimes you can see the hand of God in difficult times, but at other times there seems to be no purpose or reason in what you suffer.

Such trials, the apostle Peter tells us, do serve a purpose. Just as gold is tested and purified by fire, so faith is tested and purified in the fires of suffering. Such tested, genuine, golden faith will result in “praise and glory and honor” when Christ returns. On that great day, you will give all praise and glory and honor to the one to whom your faith clings—in good times and bad times—Jesus Christ your Savior.

Lord, help me to give you praise and glory and honor right now, even in the midst of trials. Amen.

Pray: Pray with someone who is currently suffering trials of any kind.

Read: 1 Peter 1:1-9

Carol Geisler
Manchester, MO

Thursday, January 24, 2013

Almost Lost Everything

This is how it will be with anyone who stores up things for themselves but is not rich toward God.

Luke 12:21

That is what our friends said after wildfires swept through portions of Colorado. All that was left of their home was the cement foundation. We had seen other wildfires on the news. This was different. We personally knew folks affected. They saved whatever they could cram in their car. Thankfully, their lives were spared, and they are working through their grief because of their strong connection with their Lord Jesus and support from fellow church members.

That got my wife and me thinking. What would we do under such circumstances? Why are we saving all this “stuff”? What is REALLY important? It is not things. It is our relationship with our Savior, Jesus Christ. It is our relationship with our family members. It is the time we spend giving of ourselves to others and sharing with them the Good News of God’s love in Jesus Christ.

Lord, forgive us our selfishness. Fill us with the spirit of sharing, especially the Good News. Amen.

Evaluate: Prayerfully evaluate who and what is important in your life.

Read: Luke 12:16-21

Paul Eggold
Greendale, WI

Friday, January 25, 2013

My Name in Heaven

Do not rejoice that the spirits submit to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven.

Luke 10:20

Years ago, autograph books were popular in schools. Maybe you can recall the name of someone who autographed your book with a little poem. Here's an example: Though rocks and hills divide us,
/ And your face no more I see, / Remember that it was Emma Leona / Who wrote these lines to thee.

If seeing or writing your name in such a treasured book was cool, how much more wonderful it is to know that your name is written in heaven! That's a promise Jesus made to some followers who thought earthly highs were mind-blowing. The figurative saying "to be written in heaven" means to be certain of God's guarantee of joy with him forever—a much higher high!

Father, I'm glad you know my name and it is engraved on the palms of your hands. When I am in distress, remind me that because of Jesus' loving offering on the cross, my name is written in your book of life as a guarantee of eternal salvation. Amen.

Draw: Draw a gravestone with your own name on it, with the words "written in heaven."

Read: Luke 10:17-20; Isaiah 49:13-18

Don Hoeferkamp
St. Louis, MO

Saturday, January 26, 2013

Been There, Done That

May you be strengthened with all power, according to his glorious might, for all endurance and patience with joy, giving thanks to the Father.

Colossians 1:11-12

“Been there, done that” is a modern-day slogan of experienced people who have lived through something and don’t wish to repeat it. We may have said it when the grandkids needed their diapers changed or when they wanted us to teach Sunday school—again.

When faced with these situations, we really have two positive choices. We can fully embrace the situation and share our expertise, or we can let someone else step in.

When we step up and share our knowledge in a humble way, we can mentor others to become better volunteers. If we decline, we need to let them know that someone else is capable to take the task set before them. This is their chance to learn and grow. We may offer to pray for their guidance and be a coach.

Lord, help me to not begrudge those who ask me for guidance. Help me mentor them and lift them up to better serve you. Amen.

Pray: Offer prayers for the volunteers in your church. Let them know you are supporting them.

Read: Colossians 1:24-29; Hebrews 12:1

*Stephenie Hovland
Green Bay, WI*

Sunday, January 27, 2013

Rusting or Renewed?

Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day.

2 Corinthians 4:16

Comedian Billy Crystal once said, “By the time a person is wise enough to watch his step, he’s too tired to go anywhere!” I can relate to that, can’t you? Many of us live in a state of constant fatigue. We take a nap before we go to bed. We get bone-weary from the inside out. Are our bodies rusting out?

St. Paul confirms to us that our physical bodies are not what they were. However, St. Paul is setting us up for the Good News, in Christ, that his Word and Sacraments bring renewal to us daily, beginning with our baptism! Our rusting bodies are renewed through support of special friends, silence that centers us on our faith and solitude that allows us to hear and sense God’s love and forgiveness of us. Now that’s what I call renewal!

Lord, thanks for renewing us each day with your Word and Sacraments. As my rusting is renewed in you, let me help those people around me who also need renewing of their rust. Amen.

Tell: Renew a friend or two this day by telling your story of Jesus and his love for all!

Read: Romans 12:1-2

Rich Bimler
Bloomington, IL

Monday, January 28, 2013

Today Is the Day

Behold, now is the favorable time: behold, now is the day of salvation.

2 Corinthians 6:2

Many times before I actually get out of bed, I think of the day ahead. “Today is the day I clean the attic, today is the day I start exercising, etc.” Then my feet hit the floor, and other things crowd into my day. Good intentions fly out the window and I put things off “until tomorrow.”

Carpe diem is a Latin phrase meaning “seize the day”—or “make the most of the present circumstances.” Time keeps marching on and we need to make the most of each day. We need to “seize the day” in our spiritual life too. We need to take time to have daily Bible reading and meditation. We can pray for ourselves and others. We can talk to others about Christ.

Carpe diem!

Heavenly Father, help me to use each day to serve you. Amen.

Practice: Live this day in a way that honors and glorifies God.

Read: 2 Corinthians 6:1-13

Jeanette Dall
Batavia, IL

Tuesday, January 29, 2013

Children of God

Do not withhold discipline from a child ...

Proverbs 23:13

There's a humorous saying that goes: "If I'd known how much fun my grandchildren would be, I would've skipped my children." Immediate responsibility has a lot to do with that. But whether children or grandchildren, there is a special bond that God has placed in families and the love that goes with it. He has set the example for us in proclaiming us as his children.

While children can bring great joy, they can also bring heartache. But, God says, "Train up a child in the way he should go; even when he is old he will not depart from it." This is a relationship built on love. Part of this loving relationship includes the need for authority and discipline. Once again, God is the perfect example—he shows his love in countless ways, but also disciplines when necessary.

Dear Lord, help me to use your love as a guide for my life. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Consider: Look at the role discipline has in your life and see it as a helpful guide.

Read: Deuteronomy 8:3-5; Job 5:17

*David Eggebrecht
Grafton, WI*

Wednesday, January 30, 2013

I Would Be Happy *If* ...

My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as you will.

Matthew 26:39

Living in the Midwest means a lot of snow during the winter months. When people would complain about it, my father would jokingly say, “I wouldn’t mind snow at all *if* it accumulated everywhere but the streets and sidewalks.”

I sound the same way about many things. “I wouldn’t mind having aches and pains *if* they were minor” or “I would willingly give up my car keys *if* I had someone to take me everywhere” or “I would be completely happy *if* everything went my way.”

That small word, *if*, gets in our way and keeps us from trusting God. Jesus could have said, “I will die for all people *if* they promise to believe in me and keep all the commandments.” Of course, he did not say that. He died for us because he loves us, and there is no *if* involved.

Heavenly Father, help me to accept things as they are and not always put conditions on my happiness. Amen.

List: Make a list of all the things you are thankful for, without conditions.

Read: 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18

*Gloria Doty
Fort Wayne, IN*

Thursday, January 31, 2013

To Tell the Truth

I am the way, the truth, and the life.

John 14:6

Remember the old TV show *To Tell the Truth*? Contestants and viewers tried to identify which of three people was telling the truth about their identity. Explanations and mannerisms usually exposed both the false and authentic personalities.

Jesus often said, “I tell you the truth,” as he shared his Godly identity. Many doubted he was the Messiah. Others were offended when sins were revealed. Jesus did not mince words. He spoke clearly and directly to unbelievers, disciples and church leaders. No one can meet God’s standard of perfection. Salvation requires submission, faith and trust in Jesus’ life, death and resurrection. Only his truth will set you free.

So, tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but God’s truth! That will mean Jesus is in your words and actions. “[He is] the way, the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through [him.]”

*Lord, give us words and actions to tell your truth.
Amen.*

Ask: Ask a friend to hold you accountable for God’s truth in word and deed.

Read: Ephesians 2:1-10, Romans 12:2

Sharolyn Sander
Roselle, IL

Friday, February 1, 2013

Are We There Yet?

O God, from my youth you have taught me, and I still proclaim your wondrous deeds. So even to old age and gray hairs, O God, do not forsake me, until I proclaim your might to another generation ...

Psalm 71:17-18

Remember traveling with children? Five miles into the trip came the inevitable question: “Are we there yet?” Looking back on your journey as a Christian, you may be asking the same question. You have studied God’s Word and attended worship. You chaired the Ladies’ Aid rummage sales and served food in the soup kitchen. You supported the church through your offerings and even rang doorbells on evangelism calls. Now you’re asking, “Are we there yet?”

Evidently not. You are still here, surrounded by hungry mouths to feed, lonely people to visit and mourners to comfort. Another generation needs to hear the Good News that Jesus died to save them from sin, death and the power of the devil.

Since it is your will that we are still here, Lord, give us the strength to proclaim your might to another generation until you call us home. Amen.

Tell: Tell a younger person what a difference knowing Jesus as your Savior makes in your life.

Read: Psalm 71

*Eileen Ritter
Grand Haven, MI*

Saturday, February 2, 2013

Maintaining the Temple

Do you not know that you are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in you?

1 Corinthians 3:16

As a mature adult, you understand your own responsibility for your health and safety, to maintain that temple of the Holy Spirit. You may be conscientious in exercising daily and avoiding certain foods. But we can be stubborn about other dangers. We proudly assume we can do what we've always done. We might climb a ladder to the roof to inspect a gutter, shovel snow or walk on icy sidewalks. Or, in warmer climates, we might assume invincibility and refuse to seek air-conditioned shelter.

Pride in being tough and superior to "weaklings" just might crack that temple of the Holy Spirit. Certainly it will try the nerves of our loved ones. Remember all the good you do and how some opportunities for that might be diminished if you don't cherish your temple of the Holy Spirit.

Dear God, help me to be more aware of hazards that might limit my efforts to be independent and more able to serve others. Amen.

Do: Make a habit of leaving nothing on the floor that might trip you up and lead to injury.

Read: 3 John 1-2; Matthew 6:34; Luke 21:34

Patricia Rice
St. Louis, MO

Sunday, February 3, 2013

Christ the Rock

Everyone then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock.

Matthew 7:24

Some days my three boys begin their day with *The Three Little Pigs*, which is an interesting beginning to the day. Do you remember the story of *The Three Little Pigs*? Do you remember which house was the best? The one made of brick. Yes, indeed, the one made of brick or rock. We, too, have a house of rock. We have Christ.

When you consider that we live in Christ, who is the Rock, it is hard to worry or to let the world defeat you. It is hard, when living in the Rock, to be taken over and eaten—in a sense—by the “big bad wolf” that is sin, death and the devil. For, when living in Christ the Rock, you are protected, preserved and pointed through the cross into life everlasting. That, my friends, is awesome.

Lord, thank you for being the rock of my salvation. Amen.

Sing: Sing “On Christ the solid rock I stand; all other ground is sinking sand.”

Read: Matthew 7:24-27

*Cory A. Wielert
Crown Point, IN*

Monday, February 4, 2013

New Every Morning

The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases; his mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness.

Lamentations 3:22-23

My elderly aunt resides in an assisted living complex several states away. She has Alzheimer's, and although she still remembers people, she doesn't remember things that happened an hour ago. I frequently send her a card. When I told her daughter that I should send one more often, she replied, "It's okay. Mom opens it each day and believes it is a new card because she doesn't remember reading it yesterday."

While I chuckled over that, I also thought about me and my devotion time. Do I open God's Word each day as though it is new and exciting? Do I regard it as a new message to delight me every day? Is it something new to learn every time I open my Bible or do I think of it as being old and boring because I've read it so many times?

Father, help me read my Bible as though I've never read it before and the words are new. Amen.

Explore: Explore the Bible together with a friend and discuss the passages.

Read: John 20:30-31

*Gloria Doty
Fort Wayne, IN*

Tuesday, February 5, 2013

With New Eyes

... having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you.

Ephesians 1:18

The Church of Our Savior of Spilled Blood in St. Petersburg, Russia, has intricate mosaic depictions of saints and biblical stories. My wife and I overheard another tourist ask, “Is that wallpaper?” It could be said that he was looking through “old eyes.” He was having trouble adjusting to his experience and took it for granted. If he had persisted, he wouldn’t have fully experienced the splendor of the artistry.

We can lapse into viewing God’s blessings through “old eyes.” For years we’ve asked God for his gracious protection, and now could take it for granted. We hear the pastor forgive us our sins in the name of Jesus and might hardly give a thought to the spiritual beauty of what has been said. Despite our sometimes old eyes, the love, forgiveness and care of God are of old, but they are new every day.

Holy Spirit, refresh my spiritual eyes daily. Fill my heart and kindle in me the fire of your love. Amen.

Do: Take time to meditate, close your eyes and consider God’s love anew.

Read: Psalm 108:1-6

*Luther Strasen
Fort Wayne, IN*

Wednesday, February 6, 2013

Don't See Everything

Good sense makes a man slow to anger, and it is to his glory to overlook an offense.

Proverbs 19:11

Some of the best advice I ever received came from a veteran teacher who said, "Don't see everything." Those words have served me well as a friend, husband, parent and teacher. She meant that many good and bad things happen and not all are of equal importance. It's not possible to respond to everything in the moment. Her suggestion was to handle what needs immediate attention. File the rest away or throw them in the trash. Pope John XXIII, quoting an ancient church father, put it this way: "See everything. Overlook a great deal. Change a little."

That's not all that hard to do if we view things through the lens of Christian love. We can view a given situation, consider the people involved, pause, take a deep breath and then turn our head looking for a better time to be a friend.

Renew a right and proper spirit in me, O Lord, so that I can both honor your Word and be a blessing to others. Amen.

Think: Read and think through Matthew 5:1-26. Anything there to help you be a better child of God?

Read: 1 Peter 4:7-11

*Charles S. Mueller, Sr.
Bloomington, IL*

Thursday, February 7, 2013

Who Am I?

See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God.

1 John 3:1

Sometimes as I look in the mirror, it is hard to believe that the older, smiling woman looking at me is really me. The changes of aging can be quite surprising. Time goes by so quickly, and I continue to age. But no matter my age in years, I am still me: a little girl, a student, a wife, a mother, a teacher, an animal lover, a grandmother, a friend and a dedicated Christian. Time changes my outward appearance, but I am still me inside.

Thankfully, no matter our age, we remain children of God. Unlike us, God never changes and at all times cares for us. Growing old causes us to look and act differently, but we are the same children God created and loves forever.

Dear Lord, I thank and praise you for always loving and caring for me. Amen.

Remind: Remind someone today that we are all children of God.

Read: Matthew 10:29-31

*Jean Plesko
Ballwin, MO*

Friday, February 8, 2013

A Grandmother's Legacy

I am reminded of your sincere faith, a faith that dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and in your mother Eunice and now ... dwells in you as well.

2 Timothy 1:5

In 1989, I traveled with a choir on a concert tour in East Germany. Our audiences responded enthusiastically to a program of classical and modern sacred music. Our encore, “*Müde bin ich, geh zur Ruh,*” (the bedtime hymn “Now the Light Has Gone Away”), however, prompted a different reaction. This hymn, learned by every German toddler at his grandmother’s knee, brought a look of surprise, followed by tears of recognition. Although most of our listeners had been brought up as atheists, they had never forgotten what their grandmothers had taught them.

Timothy remembered the lessons of Lois, and he grew in the teachings he learned from his grandmother and mother. What will your children and grandchildren remember?

Lord, you’ve given us an awesome responsibility in the persons of our children and grandchildren. Help us share our faith by word and example. Amen.

Write: Write a letter to a grandchild or other youngster, encouraging them in their walk with Jesus.

Read: Psalm 145

Eileen Ritter
Grand Haven, MI

Saturday, February 9, 2013

A Real Happy Meal

(They) filled twelve baskets with the pieces of the five barley loaves left over by those who had eaten.

John 6:13

Jesus had a problem. How in the world was he going to feed all of those people? No pizza delivery, not even the Golden Arches with a “Happy Meal”! The lad’s lunch was hardly enough to feed himself, but he gave it to the Lord, and did he use it miraculously!

There must be a lesson here for us older adults. Perhaps the Lord is telling us that the things we keep for ourselves will never grow—not our money or memories or knickknacks or faith or even our love. But the things we give away to others will be touched by his grace and multiplied abundantly!

Give it a try. Go ahead and give away those gifts we have to those around us! Even if we say, “I just don’t have that much to share,” hear the Lord remind us that he has enabled us to not focus on the problem, but rather to see Christ’s promise right with us.

Lord, we give thee but thine own, whate’er the gift may be; all that we have is thine alone, a trust, O Lord, from thee. Amen.

Give: How you can give away your barley loaves and small fish? Give a “Happy Meal” to someone.

Read: 2 Corinthians 9:6-12

*Rich Bimler
Bloomington, IL*

Sunday, February 10, 2013

Solitude

He went up on the mountainside to pray.

Mark 6:46

In the midst of feeding five thousand people and walking on water, Jesus sought intimacy with God. It was not during his morning prayer time. It was not before a meal, as he paused to give thanks. It was not at a time of extreme distress, as in Gethsemane. And he did not stop for just a minute, to breathe a quick one-sentence prayer. No, “he went up on the mountainside to pray.” He made a conscious decision to leave the scene, climb to a special place and connect with the Father.

We need time alone to hear God’s voice. Seek his presence during the day. Sit quietly with the God who relentlessly pursues, loves and forgives you. Acknowledge worries, admit mistakes, ask for strength and remember the redemption Jesus secured on Calvary. Then go on with his peace in your soul. God-centered solitude will enrich your life.

Thank you, Lord, for being so near; open my ears your voice to hear. Amen.

Pray: Seek God on your own “mountainside,” for special prayer time today.

Read: Psalm 46:10; Proverbs 8:17

Sharolyn Sander
Roselle, IL

Monday, February 11, 2013

The Rest of the Story

There is a boy here who has five barley loaves and two fish ...

John 6:9

You know the story of Jesus feeding the five thousand. But did you ever try to imagine the rest of the story? The boy seems to have come alone. Who fixed his lunch? His mother? Or father? If the mother, then she, too, plays a part in that she helped provide the ingredients for this miracle. Instead of the disciples' suggestion of using money, Jesus chose the boy's lunch. I am glad he did.

Think of the difference it made this boy's life. Maybe years later when faced with a challenge, he said, "If Jesus could use my lunch to feed thousands, he can surely use my lunch pail of talents to serve others through me today." God has given us talents too. Sometimes, as in the case of the boy's parent, our service may be indirect. We may never know the role we played, but Jesus does. And Jesus has blessed someone through the use of our gift of service.

Jesus, take my basket of talents to enrich the life of another this week. Amen.

Involve another: Do as Jesus did. Involve a child in helping you as you serve others.

Read: John 6:4-14

*Leo Symmank
Seabrook, TX*

Tuesday, February 12, 2013

Deeds of Power

Where did this man get this wisdom and these deeds of power?

Matthew 13:54

These were Jesus' hometown folks. A couple verses later, these people are rejecting Jesus. They won't listen. The listener has tremendous power, even when the speaker is Jesus! When you stop to listen, your grandchildren's faces glow. When you put down your paper and listen, your spouse is loved.

How much more is this true than when we hear Jesus speak? Read through the Sermon on the Mount, Matthew 5-7. Jesus is speaking. Pray before you begin. Pray that the Holy Spirit would help you really listen to the voice of your Lord in his Word. Read the verses out loud, so that your ears are involved. Read these chapters without pausing.

Grow in such practice of listening to Jesus. Always accompany this practice with the discipline of prayer. Grow in your practice of really listening to others. You will put a smile on their soul. You will be Jesus to them.

Holy Spirit, open my ears. Open me to the voice of my Lord and my neighbor. Amen.

Listen: Listen to someone's worries today.

Read: Matthew 5-7

*Don Schatz
McKinleyville, CA*

Wednesday, February 13, 2013

Wearing the Cross

As many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.

Galatians 3:27

Many Christians begin the journey through Lent by wearing a cross of ashes. It signals a time of reflection and repentance, the outward expression of an inner reality. We are sinful. We are in constant need of God's forgiveness.

A similar sign was made on our baptism day, to "mark [us] as one[s] redeemed by Christ the crucified." This washing signified our new identity, our new reality. We became God's own dear children, covered with his robe of righteousness.

Consciously "put on Christ" each day. Remember your baptism. Reflect on his suffering and death. Rejoice in your salvation. Humbly ask God to clothe you with his love and empower you with his Spirit. He will give you the "belt of truth," "the shield of faith" and the "helmet of salvation." YOU have what everyone needs. Bless them by sharing it!

Forgive my sin, Lord, and wash me clean. Amen.

Wash: Make the sign of the cross on your forehead as you wash your face each morning.

Read: Romans 6:4; Ephesians 6:10-20

*Sharolyn Sander
Roselle, IL*

Thursday, February 14, 2013

Box Full of Hearts?

Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience ...

Colossians 3:12

I remember when I was in elementary school, everyone decorated a box for the other children to fill with cards on Valentine's Day. I would always worry. What if my box was empty? What if no one made a card for me? It never happened; there were cards in everyone's box. But each year, I would be afraid my box might be empty.

As an adult, there are times when I still feel like that little girl. What if no one likes me? What if my box of friends is empty? God tells us not to worry. His love is always with us. He fills our Valentine boxes to overflowing with his love for us. He also tells us to have compassionate hearts for others.

Lord, help me to fill others' heart boxes with love and compassion. Amen.

Think: Think of someone you can surprise with a note full of love.

Read: Romans 8:31

*Gloria Doty
Fort Wayne, IN*

Friday, February 15, 2013

A Heart Set Free

Then the people rejoiced because they had given willingly, for with a whole heart they had offered freely to the Lord.

1 Chronicles 29:9

Many of us have been trained through experience to hold tightly to our things. God teaches us differently: “For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life” (John 3:16). This is the benchmark of love and giving. Everything else is measured against the exhibition at Calvary’s cross. Someone can only give after having received God’s love in Christ. What a joy rises among God’s people when we give willingly and with abandon toward the Lord’s work. The measure of a heart set free in Christ desires to give without any more incentive than to know it is for Jesus’ work. May you know that kind of joy.

Lord Jesus, help me to take in more of your love that I might know the joy of your giving. Amen.

Consider: How tight is your grip on what is temporal?

Read: 1 Chronicles 29:5b

*Peter Ward
Ottawa, IL*

Saturday, February 16, 2013

Paraklete

But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.

1 John 2:1

The Greek word *paraklete* in 1 John 2:1 is often translated “advocate.” It comes from root words that actually mean “one who comes (and stays) alongside.” Sometimes the word is translated “comforter.” The word pictures not just one who comes alongside to speak for another, but also a loving friend or parent coming alongside one who is feeling down.

This reading calls us to do the same. We are the ones who give evidence of our faith by “walking as he walked” (verse 6). We who claim that walk are still called to “come alongside”—to speak for those who have no voice, to wipe the tears of those who weep, to put hands under the heads of those who have lost the will to live and to feed those who are too weak to put food to their mouths. Our ministry of faithful response to the one who comes alongside us pictures us with dirty hands, wrinkled clothing, baggy eyes, empty pockets and weary feet.

Lord, send me out with the spirit to be there for others. Amen.

Be: Come alongside someone who is sad today.

Read: 1 John 2:1-6; John 14:15-17

Ted Schroeder
Maple Grove, MN

Sunday, February 17, 2013

No One Is Watching

Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.

Matthew 4:4

It's been said that integrity is what you do when no one is watching. It is easy to do the right thing when your grandchildren are present. But when they aren't around, it can be tempting to look for a shortcut.

This was one of the very temptations with which Jesus was confronted. Certainly God would want him to eat, and turning stones to bread would get that accomplished. Surely the angels would care for him if he were about to be injured. God wants all the kingdoms of the world to be under the reign of Jesus, and Satan was offering a way of making that happen right away. Each temptation is a shortcut to a desired result. That's what makes them so tempting. Jesus knew better and refused to take shortcuts. We are to follow his example, to be people of integrity who do the right thing, even when no one's watching.

Remind me, God, that you are not the God of the shortcut, but the God who calls me to journey with integrity. Amen.

Walk: Take a walk around your neighborhood without cutting any corners.

Read: Matthew 4:1-11

*Joe Iovino
Monument, CO*

Monday, February 18, 2013

Trust God

*I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race,
I have kept the faith.*

2 Timothy 4:7

In George Washington's final will is his testimony of faith: "Being heartily sorry from the bottom of my heart for my sins past, most humbly desiring forgiveness of the same from Almighty God, my Savior and Redeemer in whom and by the merits of Jesus Christ I trust and believe assuredly to be saved and to have full remission of all my sins."

We don't idolize our leaders, living or dead. Nor do we covet political power. We do remember with thanks to God those who, like Washington, willingly humble themselves before God. We all are accountable to the One who sent his Son as our Savior, the Savior of all in every nation. God is so worthy for us to humble ourselves to and to repent of our sins, trusting him to forgive us "by the merits of Jesus Christ," as President Washington truthfully confessed.

We pray for leaders of our country, God, But we are loyal to you above all others. Amen.

Engage: Engage in a conversation with someone about what it means to be a faithful citizen.

Read: Romans 13:1-7

*Deane Schuessler
Woodbury, MN*

Tuesday, February 19, 2013

Seeking Him

If you seek it like silver and search for it as for hidden treasures, then you will understand the fear of the Lord ...

Proverbs 2:4-5

Busy King Solomon understood that God came first. By seeking wisdom as more precious than silver or hidden treasures, he was learning to understand the fear of the Lord. And Proverbs 8 identifies the coming Messiah as the Wisdom of God: “Then I was beside him, like a master [worker], and I was daily his delight, rejoicing before him always ... and delighting in the [human race]” (Proverbs 8:30-31). Paul proclaims Christ crucified to be “Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God” (1 Corinthians 1:24). Seeking Christ first as the Wisdom of God unlocks God’s practical wisdom for our daily time decisions in his service. The hidden treasures that come as a result are a release from sin and fear, a newfound peace that our lives are in God’s hands, and a reason for getting up in the morning to continue our mission for Christ.

Lord, help us seek your will first all the way to heaven. Amen.

Seek: Seek the wisdom of God today in prayer.

Read: Matthew 6:25-33

*Stephen J. Carter
Oakville, MO*

Wednesday, February 20, 2013

The Disciples' Prayer

Lord, teach us to pray, just as John taught his disciples.

Luke 11:1

As I live out my life in these later years, I admit to my lifelong struggle with prayer. In his life, Jesus doesn't hesitate to make prayer a part of his daily living. That's why his disciples did not hesitate to ask him to teach them to pray. They saw that prayer was at the heart of his life and ministry. They also witnessed that John the Baptist taught his disciples to pray.

Jesus responds with what we call "The Lord's Prayer." I believe we have misnamed it. Perhaps we ought to name it "The Disciples' Prayer." That idea has helped me in my prayer life. Jesus' response gives me an outline for my prayer journey: It reminds me to think about my God and my relationship with him, about what he does and how I respond. I have the privilege to communicate and commune with my Father because Jesus has made me his child.

*Lord Jesus, help me in my conversations with you.
Amen.*

Write: Take time to write out an outline of the Lord's Prayer to guide your own prayer life

Read: Luke 11:1-4; Matthew 6:5-15

*Walter M. Schoedel
Webster Groves, MO*

Thursday, February 21, 2013

Serving Christ

Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward.

Colossians 3:23, 24

Throughout my mother's life, serving others in the name of Jesus was her lifestyle. She experienced personal joy meeting the needs of others through loving and encouraging words and deeds performed for God's glory and honor. Even with a diagnosis of multi-focal dementia, I am confident that God will continue to use my mother as a vessel for his purposes and that his Spirit will be poured into her daily as a blessing to all who are touched by her life. Though her impact may no longer be as obvious or appear as fruitful, I trust that God will achieve his purposes and be glorified through her.

Even in our weakness, God can accomplish his mighty works through us.

Dear Father, let your Spirit work through me and provide me with all I need to serve you with a full heart all my life long. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Move forward: Never allow disability, weakness or fears to discourage you from a willingness to be used by God for his glorious purposes.

Read: Galatians 5:13

*Kathy Graumann
Tomball, TX*

Friday, February 22, 2013

'Tis the Season

For I the Lord do not change.

Malachi 3:6

I love the changing of the seasons. Every year it's the same: winter, spring, summer and fall. I find a certain comfort in the repetition of this cycle because with each new season I am reminded of God's faithfulness—that even though changes happen to me through the seasons of my life, God will never change.

The seasons of the church year also bring reminders of God's faithfulness. As we journey through Lent, we come face-to-face with our own sin and the need for a Savior. And then we are once again reminded that “while we were still sinners, Christ died for us” (Romans 5:8).

'Tis the season to remember ... God in his love remains faithful forever.

Gracious God, grant that these days may be a time of renewal and repentance as I am daily reminded of your never-changing love for me in Christ. Amen.

List: Make a list of the changes you've seen over the years, and then remember God's faithfulness through them all.

Read: Ecclesiastes 3:1-8; Romans 5:1-11

*Jane P. Wilke
Woodbury, MN*

Saturday, February 23, 2013

Give Up!

Cast your burden on the Lord, and he will sustain you; he will never permit the righteous to be moved.

Psalms 55:22

Growing older can be a series of giving up things. We give up the agility of youth. We give up pepperoni for Pepto-Bismol. We give up watching TV from across the room. We give up our mobility, our independence. Sometimes we have to give up our car and our home.

God wants us to give up some things too. He wants us to give up our burdens. Cast them to him and let him carry them! Give up those worries and fears, those doubts and thoughts that confuse and paralyze you. Just cast them into God's hands and heave a sigh of relief that they are all now the responsibility of someone who can handle them much better than you! Someone who cares for you! Someone who will never let you wither under your burdens ever again!

Lord, help me give up to you all that keeps me from the abundant life you gave me! Amen.

Commit: Commit one burden to God.

Read: Psalm 27

*Al Schenk
Jennings, MO*

Sunday, February 24, 2013

The Good Ol' Way

Thus says the Lord, "Stand by the roads, and look, and ask for the ancient paths, where the good way is; and walk in it, and find rest for your souls."

Jeremiah 6:16

We've all had our successes and failures when attempting to try the "new and improved." Every generation believes it has a better way of living over that of our parents or grandparents. Old-fashioned ways are cast off for the new and better. That's fine when applied to such things as blue leisure suits with gold stitching, but not the ways of the Lord. There is no way we can improve upon God's "old way." The ancient path is where the good way is: the way of rest and peace that is safe for life's journey. It is the narrow way that leads to the narrow gate to eternal life.

Lord Jesus, lead us in the way everlasting. May we follow the pathway found in your Word. Amen.

Follow: If you have wandered from the ancient path of God's good way, the voice of Jesus calls out, "Come, follow me."

Read: Matthew 7:13-14; 2 Samuel 22:31-34

*Peter Ward
Ottawa, IL*

Monday, February 25, 2013

You are Correct, Anna!

If God is for us, who can be against us?

Romans 8:31

One of my main duties as parish nurse was to visit the homebound. Although wheelchair bound and virtually blind, Anna's faith was strong. She remained a vibrant ambassador for Christ. We enjoyed Christian fellowship, sharing faith moments and prayer during our visits. Hardly a visit went by without Anna sharing her favorite phrase of faith with me. "If God is on your side, the devil doesn't stand a chance."

How true! Satan, our enemy, is always trying to distract us: aches and pains, declining mobility, too much idle time. To live with a joyful purpose, no matter our circumstances, we must keep our eyes fixed on Jesus. Despite her failing strength and health, Anna knew the secret to a happy, hope-filled life. The God of Creation was on her side! The devil could take a hike!

Lord, we all need the encouragement of fellow Christians. Let me be like Anna in someone's life, reassuring them of your love and power and victory over Satan. Amen.

Share: Share your favorite statement of faith with someone today.

Read: Romans 8:18-39; 1 Peter 5:5-11

*Terry Weber
Williamsburg, VA*

Tuesday, February 26, 2013

Just As If I'd Died

For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast.

Ephesians 2:8-9

If you can recall your confirmation class of many years ago, you probably remember being taught about justification by faith alone—that salvation is a gift of God's grace through Christ.

I had learned this as well, but it became even more personal recently when I heard a pastor tell his confirmation class that to be justified means that it was “just as if I'd died on the cross.” All of a sudden I realized what a powerful gift of grace justification actually is.

During these days of Lent we stand at the foot of the cross. Doesn't Christ's death take on new meaning when we realize that it was our sins of yesterday, today and tomorrow that he took to the cross?

Lord Jesus, I do not deserve the depth of your love for me. Renew me today through the power of your forgiveness. Amen.

Respond: Spend some quiet time in reflection today, thinking of the many ways God has revealed his grace to you time and time again.

Read: Colossians 2:6-15; Galatians 2:15-20

*Jane P. Wilke
Woodbury, MN*

Wednesday, February 27, 2013

Consider This ...

And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds ...

Hebrews 10:24

Driving home from town this morning, I met a man in a truck going into town. As is customary in our part of the country, he waved. I returned the wave. Instantly, I felt better. At home, I found a bag of tomatoes hanging on my door, left by a neighbor I've just recently met. Some acts of kindness take "considered effort"—like picking tomatoes, bagging them and bringing them to a neighbor. Other acts of kindness are effortless—like waving to a passing stranger. These selflessly-given gifts spur the receiver upward and onward through life. Kindness is a gift that's too good to keep; receivers naturally pass it on. And as the author of Hebrews knew, it's a great way to live!

Lord, help me to remember that with kindness I can't go wrong.

Act: Give two acts of kindness today: one to a friend, another to a stranger.

Read: Proverbs 21:2; Romans 12:9-21

*K.S. Wuertz
Leslie, MO*

Thursday, February 28, 2013

Still Tasty!

Oh, taste and see that the Lord is good! Blessed is the man who takes refuge in him!

Psalm 34:8

For some people, one frustration of aging is the gradual loss of the senses of taste and smell. Foods that once delighted the palate seem bland. The joy of cooking and of eating is diminished when everything tastes the same.

Yet we never lose our taste for the Lord and his Word. The psalmist invites us to “taste and see that the Lord is good!” and later exclaims, “How sweet are your words to my taste, sweeter than honey to my mouth!”

When we flavor our days with God and his Word, we will find greater delight than in a bite of strawberry shortcake. Because of Jesus, God’s promises bring joy and comfort to satisfy our souls’ hunger.

Father, feed me daily on the Bread of Life—my Lord Jesus and his Word! Amen.

Think: As you read God’s Word today, savor each thought as though it were a favorite morsel.

Read: Psalm 34:1-10; Psalm 119:103

*Diane Bahn
Cypress, TX*

Friday, March 1, 2013

100 Years

Do not cast me off in the time of old age; forsake me not when my strength is spent.

Psalm 71:9

We celebrated Trudi's 100th birthday party with music, speeches and food. Trudi was surrounded by her family and friends, and she thoroughly enjoyed her special day. But the next day she asked, "What are all these cards and flowers doing in my room?"

Trudi's short-term memory is almost nonexistent. Even though Trudi forgets most things, she remembers God's love and care and that Jesus died for her sins. She prays each day, sings favorite hymns and is looking forward to heaven.

Our minds grow old and we forget. But God remembers. He knew and loved us before we were born and keeps right on caring for us until our last breath. God also forgets—he forgets our sins and forgives us because of Jesus' death in our place.

Dear Lord, help me to trust, love and serve you to the end of my life. Amen.

Visit: Visit with an elderly person who may be alone and lonely.

Read: Isaiah 49:15-16; Matthew 28:20

*Jeanette Dall
Batavia, IL*

Saturday, March 2, 2013

We're Being Made New

And he who was seated on the throne said, "Behold, I am making all things new."

Revelation 21:5

I admire those who do restorations. I attend car shows to see vehicles I remember from my youth, looking and running as they did when they were new. I have friends who like to tour old homes that have been restored to their original beauty. A good restorer leaves no part of the project untouched. Every bolt in the car is cleaned and refinished. Every inch of molding and trim in the home is sanded and stained or painted.

Today's verse reminds us God is a master restorer. All things, including you and me, are being restored, made new. In the midst of the brokenness in the world around us, God has a plan for each of us that he is bringing to completion, even today. Like a good restorer, God is examining, molding and shaping every aspect of your life to become more and more the person he created you to be. Let him restore you.

Remind me, O God, that you have a plan for me today, tomorrow and always. Amen.

Restore: Polish the silverware, clean a neglected closet, find something you can make new today.

Read: Revelation 21:1-5

*Joe Iovino
Monument, CO*

Sunday, March 3, 2013

What an Inheritance!

[God has given us] an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade.

1 Peter 1:4

When my mother was over 90, I noticed her hands. Her fingers were long, thin and bent with arthritis. The veins on the back of her hands stood out, all purple and puffy. I thought her hands were beautiful and took a picture of them. Now my hands look very much like that, but I don't see them as beautiful. I'm sure I inherited my hands from my mother, and, like it or not, I can never change the way they look.

Through Christ, we have received son-ship and daughter-ship in the family of God. We are children of our heavenly Father. That puts us first in line to receive the inheritance. That inheritance is not simply physical characteristics. It is the whole of the promise: forgiveness and life with God—now and forever. I can hardly believe it! I rejoice that that inheritance cannot perish, spoil or fade. It is guaranteed!

Father, thank you for accepting me as a member of your family and giving me the certainty of an imperishable inheritance, through Jesus, my Savior. Amen.

List: Write down some of the things that your family will inherit from you. Include intangible items.

Read: Romans 8:15-17

Eldor Kaiser
Lenexa, Kansas

Monday, March 4, 2013

Worn Out or Wound Up?

And when it grew late, the disciples said ... “the hour is now late. Send them away to ... buy themselves something to eat.” But [Jesus] answered them, “You give them something to eat.”

Mark 6:35-37

The disciples had just completed a successful but exhausting mission expedition. Jesus had invited them on a much needed retreat. Still, the crowds pressed in. Jesus had kindly provided an encore lecture. Well and good. But enough was enough. Any reasonable person could see it was time to get these folks on their way. Jesus was having none of it.

Vince Lombardi, famed Green Bay Packers football coach, once famously said, “Fatigue makes cowards of us all.” His tough workouts prepared the team to continue performing at near peak levels for the entire game to achieve victory.

The hour is now “late” in life; it would be easy to give in to being “worn out.” But Jesus winds us up to finish his work in our lives, to bring it to completion.

Lord, do the whole job in my life, and fit me for the work you have for me serving others. Amen.

Exercise: As much as it is possible for you, do some sort of physical exercise today.

Read: Mark 6:7-13; Philippians 1:3-6

*Mike May
Kansas City, KS*

Tuesday, March 5, 2013

Friendship

Wealth brings many new friends, but a poor man is deserted by his friends.

Proverbs 19:4

You'd think that making friends would be easy for people with money to burn. Some of my moneyed acquaintances say that's not true. It is hard to distinguish between those who like them for who they are from those who like them because they pick up the tab. Maybe that's why they are careful about displaying signs of prosperity. They've seen how dollars-in/friends-in and dollars-out/friends-gone works.

That's not how friendship plays out with Jesus. Incredibly rich as he is in all things, he makes all the friendship moves on us and does so in total disregard of what we have to offer in return or for fear we might use him. When life is stormy some cry out, "Please, please." When the sun is shining, then what? Some ask, "Jesus who?" Sad. But surprise! The Son of God doesn't deal with us that way. Even when we fail him, what a friend we have in Jesus. Always.

Lord Jesus, be my friend in my need and help me know it. Amen.

Do: Do a friendly thing for Jesus today. How about another friendly thing for someone who is near you?

Read: Hebrews 13:5-8

*Charles S. Mueller, Sr.
Bloomington, IL*

Wednesday, March 6, 2013

Call Grandmother!

But let all who take refuge in you rejoice; let them ever sing for joy, and spread your protection over them ...

Psalm 5:11

There is an Italian proverb that goes, “If nothing is going well, call your grandmother.” How right that is! When our daughter was grieving the death of her husband, in times of deepest sorrow, she would call her grandmother. There was consolation, understanding, shelter. Grandmothers spread protection over us.

Grandmothers are precious gifts of God to families. They reflect the image that Jesus once used of himself—of a hen gathering her chickens under her wings (Matthew 23:37). They remind us of God and of Jesus. For God has revealed himself in Jesus as one in whom we can take refuge, one who spreads protection over us.

Sorry, Granddad, but there is no one quite like a grandmother. But we granddads know that anyway.

Thank you, Lord, for grandmothers and for the blessing they are and the shelter they bring. Thank you that you have made them like you. Amen.

Talk: Share your experiences of grandmothers and of their influence for Jesus.

Read: Psalm 5:1-3, 11-12

*Lionel Otto
Adelaide, Australia*

Thursday, March 7, 2013

Heart-to-Heart

Search me, O God, and know my heart! Try me and know my thoughts! And see if there is any grievous way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.

Psalm 139:23-24

Lent is a time for the ultimate heart-to-heart talk. I don't mean a heart-to-heart with your spouse or daughter or friend, but a heart-to-heart with God.

Just because we can hide our sins from others doesn't mean they are hidden from our Father, our Creator. We are reminded through the words of Psalm 139 that the God who made us also knows our every thought and our every deed. Nothing is hidden from him.

While that might seem frightening, it doesn't have to be. Because at the same time, God's Son, our Savior, opened his arms on the cross, pulled us close to his own heart and granted us the ultimate gift of forgiveness and life everlasting.

Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me! Amen.

Do: Have your own heart-to-heart with God today, confessing your deepest, most personal sins and accepting his forgiveness.

Read: Psalm 51; Psalm 139

*Jane P. Wilke
Woodbury, MN*

Friday, March 8, 2013

Oceans of Understanding

May [you] have power, together with all the Lord's holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ ...

Ephesians 3:18-19

Whenever I visit the seashore, I'm struck by two things: the never-ending sound of the waves and the wave that washes barely to the tips of my toes, tickling me with white foamy water. That water is part of the currents flowing through long ocean canyons. It flows around high ocean mountains that are too deep to ever be touched by currents of air. There's a gentleness that touches my toes, but it's merely the edge of a massive, unimaginable power. Christ is so much more. Together, with all the saints, we've been brought into his kingdom. It began with a gentle touch of love, offered by an eternally powerful, unimaginable force. For us to simply grasp Christ's love is like counting the drops of water in the ocean. Can you ever imagine understanding it?

Lord, I offer thanksgiving for Christ's love—wide and long, high and deep. Amen.

Write: Write a note to a child about Jesus' love for them.

Read: Psalm 89:9; John 6:16-21

*K.S. Wuertz
Leslie, MO*

Saturday, March 9, 2013

I Want To Be Like Iris

Serve the Lord with gladness! Come into his presence with singing!

Psalm 100:2

Pastor Rogers looked out over the congregation and saw the ladies sitting in their usual spot. Dear Iris never failed to bring Ida and Tillie to church. The trio enjoyed worshipping the Lord every Sunday with their large-print bulletins. Had it not been for Iris's generous taxi service, both Ida and Tillie would have been homebound.

The following Thursday, while the birthday cake for a neighbor cooled on her kitchen counter, Iris drove to the grocery store to get the final ingredient for the frosting. She was found slumped over her steering wheel, the confectioner's sugar still waiting in the grocery sack. God called her home right in the middle of one of her acts of service. Iris spent her life, literally to the very end, in service to her Lord and in service to others.

Lord, may I be like Iris. May I seek out others in need and joyfully serve them as my service to you. Amen.

Follow: Follow Iris's example today. Bake a cake for someone. Offer a ride to worship.

Read: Psalm 100

*Terry Weber
Williamsburg, VA*

Sunday, March 10, 2013

Help!

God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.

Psalm 46:1

My poor son! I call him every time my computer needs exorcising, my DVD player acts up or I forget which remote works which technological wonder adorning my living room. He always comes, pushes a few buttons and leaves five minutes later with everything working as it should.

I believe God moved him close to me so that I could call him when I needed him. It recently occurred to me that God moved him close to me so that I could “practice” asking for help. That’s not something I do well. I’m a good “helper”; being a “helpee” doesn’t come naturally to me.

We know that God helps us. While my son and all other people will reach a point beyond which they cannot help, God can always help, no matter what! God also wants us to ask him for his help. We probably need to practice that too.

Lord, you are our constant and best help! Help me to ask for your help each day! Amen.

Practice: Practice asking someone for help.

Read: Psalm 46

*Al Schenk
Jennings, MO*

Monday, March 11, 2013

Tell Me a Story

Let this be recorded for a generation to come, so that a people yet to be created may praise the Lord.

Psalm 102:18

Invariably, one of my six precious grandchildren will ask what life was like for me when I was a child. I treasure these moments because they give me the opportunity to share with them God's watchful care throughout my life.

To recount the mighty works of God with my grandchildren is a high priority for me, for it is a high priority for God. During these sacred moments of remembering how God has faithfully intervened in my life and has kept his promises to me, faith in God is nurtured in my grandchildren and confidence for their future is strengthened. I am reminded of Psalm 77:11, which says, "I will remember the deeds of the Lord; yes, I will remember your wonders of old."

Father, thank you for your faithfulness that endures to all generations, for your steadfast love that never ceases and for your mercies that never end. Help me convey these stories to others so that they may be connected more closely to you. Amen.

Share: Share with a young person a personal story that demonstrates God's faithfulness to you.

Read: Psalm 71:18, 19; Deuteronomy 32:7

*Kathy Graumann
Tomball, TX*

Tuesday, March 12, 2013

Strong to the End

This God is our God forever and ever; he will be our guide even to the end.

Psalm 48:14

My former missionary colleague Jim was ill with cancer. After the doctor diagnosed Jim's condition as late-stage cancer, he prescribed two or three hours of physical therapy a day. The doctor's rationale was that Jim would need all the stamina he could muster for when he would be in hospice care and so he could communicate as well as possible with his loved ones. Jim worked hard in therapy. He remained lucid, speaking clearly with his loved ones until very shortly before he died.

I ask myself, rather than buckling under perceptions that I'm getting older, do I need to crank up receiving God's gifts of strength, so I can interact and communicate with my loved ones to the best of my ability, the way Jim did?

Instill in me faith to receive your gifts of strength for each day that you grant me, O Lord, and not resign myself to weak thoughts about aging. Amen.

Acknowledge: God is ready and willing to resupply our energies from his storehouse of grace.

Read: Deuteronomy 31:6; Revelation 3:10

*Deane Schuessler
Woodbury, MN*

Wednesday, March 13, 2013

The Middle of Nowhere

In this desert your bodies will fall ...

Numbers 14:29

Traveling through a desolate region, swallowed up by a crowd in unfamiliar surroundings, a person might lament: “I’m in the middle of nowhere!”

Maybe that’s how Israel felt. Trapped by their own rebelliousness, they would wander in the desert for 40 years before entering the Promised Land. All adults 20 years and older, would never get there, except for Joshua and Caleb, who had urged the fearful to trust the Lord.

Do you ever feel like your life has become a stumbling-along or a muddling-through experience? Do you say things like, “I don’t like getting old: more prescription drugs, more limitations, more friends dying. I feel trapped in the middle of nowhere.”

In the midst of your desert, Jesus is your water of life. In the midst of darkness, Jesus is the light. He’s always there in our nowhere!

Strengthen me, Lord, day by day, with your everywhere presence. Amen

Share: Share how you feel with an understanding friend.

Read: Psalm 139

*Randy Shields
Florissant, MO*

Thursday, March 14, 2013

Communication

Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.

1 Thessalonians 5:16-18

Have you ever gotten into your car, realized you forgot your cell phone and went back into your house to get it? Or do you maintain that when there were only land-phones one didn't always need a phone nearby? If you're of the latter mind, you're probably amused by so many young people walking through malls talking or tweeting on their cell phones—incessantly communicating.

But that's exactly what God calls you to do. He wants you to stay in constant communication with him. He speaks to you through his Word and wants to hear back from you. It's not that he doesn't know what's on your mind, but having him in your thoughts and regularly voicing them acknowledges that you always need him and rely on him, through Jesus, for joy, peace and thanksgiving.

Hear me, O Lord my God, for Jesus' sake. I need you every passing moment. Amen.

Do: Rejoice that God accepts your prayer thoughts, hears and acts on them. Send them to him all day.

Read: Philippians 4:4-7

*Luther Strasen
Fort Wayne, IN*

Friday, March 15, 2013

Old Age and Gray Hairs

O God, from my youth you have taught me, and I still proclaim your wondrous deeds. So even to old age and gray hairs, O God, do not forsake me, until I proclaim your might to another generation, and your power to all those to come.

Psalm 71:17-18

When Ron and Linda retired from the military, they demonstrated the above verses with their lives. They head the senior ministry at our church, which involves planning monthly luncheon events, arranging speakers and cooking. Linda volunteers time by being actively involved in the women's group. Ron uses his gift of woodworking to create everything from cabinets to podiums to Christmas ornaments for each family in the congregation. Their service continues within the community at an agency dedicated to feeding the poor. How can *you* serve today?

Almighty and righteous God, I, too, want to proclaim your wondrous deeds, even to old age and gray hairs. Help me to do so gladly. Amen.

Pray: Pray that God will raise up more dedicated servants to fervently proclaim his power to future generations. Take up the challenge to use your own gift or hobby in service to God's kingdom.

Read: Psalm 71:17-19; Psalm 92:11-15

*Terry Weber
Williamsburg, VA*

Saturday, March 16, 2013

Bit by Bit

Is not wisdom found among the aged? Does not long life bring understanding?

Job 12:12

I have a young friend who has started a local newspaper. When I heard about her plans, I wanted to support her venture. I offered her the benefit of my knowledge and experience. Still, I always tried to remember I have one mouth—and two ears.

We hope that Job's words are true: as we age, we gain understanding about life and develop some wisdom. So I appreciate my young friend's enthusiasm and adventurous spirit, make myself available when she requests help and listen, listen, listen! And still, I probably offer too much advice. It takes a lot of living to gain a little wisdom—maybe that's why it's best given in small doses.

Lord, help me to speak with wisdom, understanding and a loving heart. Amen.

Check: Check yourself today. Talk half as much; listen twice as much.

Read: Proverbs 1:1-7; James 3:1-18

*K.S. Wuertz
Leslie, MO*

Sunday, March 17, 2013

Blueberries

I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.

John 15:5

Kerplink, kerplunk ... the sound of blueberries dropping into an aluminum pail means summer in west Michigan. Fruit so ripe that it nearly falls off the bush carries the promise of pies and cobblers. Some berries will appear again as jam on winter mornings. But blueberries never ripen on their own. Without the bush on which the tiny blossoms are pollinated and the fruit develops, there would be no berries.

Like blueberries, we cannot blossom and bear fruit apart from the True Vine who gives us life. In Christ, we are watered through Holy Baptism and nourished with the bread and wine of the Lord's Supper. As the farmer expects his bushes to bear fruit, so God expects the fruits of faith from Christians. In response to Christ's redeeming love for us, we love and serve one another.

We thank you, Jesus, for the life you have given us. Help us to bear fruits of love and service. Amen.

Share: Share a treat of fresh berries with someone who needs to experience the joy of Jesus' love.

Read: John 15:1-11; Galatians 5:22-23

*Eileen Ritter
Grand Haven, MI*

Monday, March 18, 2013

Watchers

For he will command his angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways.

Psalm 91:11

“Big Brother is watching” is a statement that brought fear to the hearts of many in the novel *1984*. No one wants to be watched all the time; it would be nerve-racking for many reasons, not the least of which is our propensity to sin. But we know that God watches over us and sends his angels to watch as well.

God knows his children live in a sinful and dangerous world, but he is with us and protects us from Satan and always has our best interests at heart. He sends his angels to watch over us to keep us from the clutches of the evil one. What a comfort to know that God is watching—24/7.

Dear Lord, we thank you for your care for us and for the gift of your angels in our lives. Be with us and keep us safe from the evil foe, Satan. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Comfort: Comfort someone who worries by reminding them of God's ever-present love.

Read: Psalms 112, 116, 125, 144

*David Eggebrecht
Grafton, WI*

Tuesday, March 19, 2013

No Loss

I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord.

Philippians 3:8

Businesses “down-size” during bad economic times and employees find themselves out of work. As we find it necessary to move to smaller apartments or care facilities, we do some down-sizing too. We sell and donate possessions and hand on family heirlooms. We are no longer surrounded by the precious items we treasured for so long.

The apostle Paul did some down-sizing too. His birthright as an Israelite, his life as a zealous Pharisee, his mistaken persecution of the Church and his self-created righteousness—he wrote it all off as a loss. He found something better, or rather, something better and more precious found him. The risen Savior appeared to the zealous Pharisee and claimed Paul as his own. You, too, belong to Jesus Christ, and no earthly possession is worth more than that!

Lord Jesus, nothing I own or used to own can compare to knowing you. Amen.

Encourage: Encourage a friend who is saddened by the loss of once-prized possessions.

Read: Philippians 3:1-11

*Carol Geisler
Manchester, MO*

Wednesday, March 20, 2013

An Ark on the Flood

The waters rose and increased greatly on the earth, and the ark floated on the surface of the water.

Genesis 7:18

Determined to destroy this corrupt and violent earth, God looked upon Noah and his family with a covenant of promise. In response, Noah built an ark and preserved his family and animal life. On this catastrophic flood, the ark floated safely, and a pilgrim people survived to fulfill God's covenant purpose.

What is your ark in the midst of a generation of scoffers? Maybe it is a loved one. Maybe it is the memory of a time when God rescued you. Maybe it is a special Bible verse. In the end it is Christ who is our ultimate Second Ark who will never abandon us when we are suffering or let us sink back into sinning when we are weak. Through his life, death and resurrection and the waters of Holy Baptism, Christ saves us and helps us to reach out to others who have not yet come aboard the lifeboat of faith.

Lord, thank you for giving us a second chance at life, and help us to offer the hand of rescue to others as much as we can. Amen.

Reach out: Reach out to someone who is "sinking" in worry or fear.

Read: 1 Peter 3:17-22

*Stephen J. Carter
Oakville, MO*

Thursday, March 21, 2013

God's Creation

God saw everything that he had made ...

Genesis 1:31

My boyhood hero was my grandfather. He was a farmer with many acres of fruit trees. His property was on a hill that overlooked Lake Michigan. I remember him saying time and time again, "Look at the amazing sunset. Look at the beauty of the cherry trees in blossom. God created this scenic landscape for us to enjoy. That's why I thank God for his wonderful gift."

The psalmist had the same experience. He confessed as he reflected upon God as creator and provider, "I will sing to the Lord as long as I live. I will sing praises to my God while I have my being" (Psalm 104:33).

As my wife and I walk each day, we seek to listen and observe God's handiwork. It inspires us to worship, praise and thank him. We sense his presence and share our thoughts with our grandchildren as my grandfather did. Won't you join us?

Lord Jesus, help us see you at work in your creation. Amen.

Opportunity: Take a walk or look at a scenic picture. See God at work.

Read: Psalm 104; Psalm 19:1-9

*Walter M. Schoedel
Webster Groves, MO*

Friday, March 22, 2013

Recycle

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.

2 Corinthians 5:17

Lots of things are recyclable today: cardboard, bottles, cans, paper—even old batteries and used oil. Those who have the equipment can make something new out of the old, including us. Indeed, gray hair can be made dark again, bald heads can sprout new growth, sagging skin can be tightened and baggy eyes can be given a whole new look.

But one failing is common to all of these renewal gimmicks—they depend on our ability to pull ourselves up by our bootstraps. Often that escapes us.

Then what? Then God does the recycling. “God is faithful and just to forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9). Ultimately the recycling of our lives is God’s work. We are renewed by the power of the Spirit as we “daily drown” our old selves and are made new in Jesus.

Lord, thanks for making us new today and every day in Jesus Christ. Amen.

Celebrate: Celebrate the new you today by sharing laughter and joy with someone else.

Read: 1 John 1:1-10; Ezekiel 36:26

*Ted Schroeder
Maple Grove, MN*

Saturday, March 23, 2013

Healthy Bones

Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin!

Psalm 51:2

Psalm 51 is David's plea for forgiveness after the prophet Nathan confronted him with his sin with Bathsheba. David prayed, "Let me hear joy and gladness; let the bones you have crushed rejoice." He acknowledged that carrying the weight of guilt is like having crushed bones. Solomon later wrote: "Fear the Lord and shun evil. This will bring health to your body and nourishment to your bones."

Not every ailment is either directly caused by a sin or relieved by confession. However, a burden of guilt can literally make us sick. Is a load of guilt from your past weighing you down and "crushing your bones"? Do you need forgiveness or do you need to forgive someone else?

To forgive us is why Jesus lived and died.

Father, forgive me for Jesus' sake. Restore my joy, and help me to forgive others. Amen.

Pray: Ask God to search your heart. Confess your sins and receive his forgiveness.

Read: Psalm 51; Proverbs 3:7-8

*Diane Bahn
Cypress, TX*

Sunday, March 24, 2013

Chalking It Up As Joy

Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.

James 1:2-4

I know what you might be thinking after that reading: “Right, nothing like suffering a few trials to make me happy.” James presents a different view toward suffering found in Jesus, “who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross.” The Lord teaches us that in matters of faith, joy is not found in the event but in the outcome of what is produced. Trials produce steadfastness in faith. For the Christian, this is as much a sought-after medallion as the gold medal by an Olympian.

Lord Jesus, help us to see beyond the trials and to anticipate what is to come from them instead. Amen.

Reconsider: Do you need to reconsider your approach to trials in light of Jesus and the work he produces in you through them?

Read: 2 Corinthians 12:9-10

*Peter Ward
Ottawa, IL*

Monday, March 25, 2013

Waiting in Hope

Be strong, and let your heart take courage, all you who wait for the Lord.

Psalm 31:24

It was Holy Week and the medical team stated that Dorothy's heart was racing faster and faster and in the next day or two her heart would simply give out. Even though Dorothy was not conscious, she was living to love and God was at work in her teaching us. Much like Jesus' disciples following the resurrection, I think we were waiting in fear. Dorothy was waiting in the certain hope of the resurrection. And her rapidly beating heart of love did not stop until the week after Easter, giving us more time to learn how to wait in hope with her. Waiting in hope with Dorothy, we sang hymns that she knew, told favorite Bible stories, prayed familiar and new prayers. The Holy Spirit kept us strong in faith, filled our hearts with courage, and comforted us as we waited in hope.

Almighty God, send your Comforter to me in every moment that I find myself waiting. Amen.

Think: Make a list of the moments in a day that you find yourself waiting. How might waiting in hope bring a positive change as you wait?

Read: Psalm 130:4-6

*Dick Hardel
Columbia, MT*

Tuesday, March 26, 2013

Remember Me, Jesus

He said, "Jesus, remember me ... "

Luke 23:42

Perfectly, without fail, Jesus remembers! Jesus doesn't have a "senior moment." No "pregnant pauses." Jesus doesn't struggle with memory lapse or memory loss. Jesus doesn't fumble around for a name to go with the face or leave a sentence unfinished. No, not at all. But with memories fading with time and the familiar slipping away in your own life, you may begin to wonder, "Will anyone remember me?"

The thief on the cross asked Jesus to remember him when Jesus came into his kingdom. And he did! "You will be with me in paradise," Jesus said, "today."

Jesus does not remember your sins. How forgiving he is! How graced you are! But he will always and forever remember you. You are loved!

Good times or sad—hard times or glad—Jesus remembers you! His Spirit lives in you. One day you will live with him! Lodged in his memory, you can live with hope!

Hear my prayer, Jesus. Remember me! Amen.

Share: Share your memories of life with Jesus.

Read: Psalm 63

*Randy Shields
Florissant, MO*

Wednesday, March 27, 2013

Broken Pieces

I said, “O Lord, be gracious to me; heal me, for I have sinned against you!”

Psalm 41:4

A bomb shattered the beautiful stained glass window in the Rheims Cathedral during World War II. The people of the congregation picked up all the small glass fragments of the window. After the war, they hired skilled workmen to rebuild the window with the fragments saved. Today the rose window of the Rheims Cathedral is more beautiful than ever.

God can take our shattered dreams and broken hearts and shape them into a life that is holy and beautiful. God, who loved us enough to send his Son to die for us, cares for us also in the daily things in our lives. It is Christ's death and resurrection that, like a magnet, draws all the sin-smashed pieces of our lives into a whole new way of living. Jesus promised, “I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself” (John 12:32). In drawing us to himself, he heals us and makes us whole.

O Christ, you are all I want. Raise the fallen, cheer the faint, cure the sick and heal the blind. Amen.

Recall: Thank God for a person who helped you “pick up the pieces” at some point in your life.

Read: Psalm 139:13-18

*Leo Symmank
Seabrook, TX*

Thursday, March 28, 2013

More Than Stale Toast

Do not work for the food that perishes, but for the food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give to you.

John 6:27

On the day he married Princess Diana, Prince Charles left a piece of toast on his breakfast tray at Buckingham Palace. A cleaning lady tucked it away for 31 years. It recently sold at auction for \$361! The new owner now has a tangible link, a form of communion with Prince Charles. But it's still just stale toast.

How blessed we are to receive the “bread of God ... who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world” (John 6:33). That never goes stale. With his own self Jesus gives us the full benefit of his suffering, death and resurrection. But it's more than a memento, it's a power at work within us. We are now fresh bread, warm from the oven of God's grace and mercy in Jesus Christ, ready to be served up for the nourishment of a world starved for the presence of God.

Lord, fill us with your own life that we may continue to feed our world with your presence. Amen.

Envision: See yourself now “served” to the world.

Read: John 6:25-40; Matthew 5:13-16

*Mike May
Kansas City, KS*

Friday, March 29, 2013

Seismic Shocks

You have made the land to quake; you have torn it open; repair its breaches, for it totters.

Psalm 60:2

Earthquakes strike fear in our hearts. After we saw images of the devastation in Haiti and Chile in 2010, our hearts went out to the victims. In the Bible, David experienced an earthquake of another sort when he was going through the upheaval of a defeat in battle. He compared his situation to a quaking land.

What has shaken your world recently? Maybe it's a natural disaster, the sudden death of a loved one, a divorce or a health scare. With David we pray, "Answer us, so that those whom you love may be rescued" (Psalm 60:5). It is in these very moments of uneasiness that God calls to mind for our comfort the earthquake on Good Friday when "the earth shook, and the rocks were split" as Jesus breathed his last to keep our lives from splitting apart forever because of the presence of sin in the world.

Lord, use seismic shocks to point us to your undeserved rescue of us on the cross. Amen.

Comfort: Comfort someone who may be experiencing one of life's "earthquakes."

Read: Psalm 60; Matthew 27:51

*Stephen J. Carter
Oakville, MO*

Saturday, March 30, 2013

Apples to Amazing Grace!

Keep me as the apple of your eye.

Psalm 17:8

Have you heard of Johnny Appleseed? He's remembered as a pioneer nurseryman who went around planting apple trees on the frontier in the 1800s. Maybe you know his song: "The Lord is good to me, and so I thank the Lord, for giving me the things I need, the sun and the rain and the apple seed, the Lord is good to me."

But there's another version of this song, sweeter than an apple: "The Lord is good to me and so I thank the Lord, for giving me his only Son, who gave his life, now the work is done, the Lord is good to me!" In the death of Jesus on Good Friday and his resurrection which we celebrate tomorrow, God's saving work for you is finished: the forgiveness of sin and the resurrection of the body are yours in Christ. You might say that Jesus has taken us from the apples of the Garden of Eden, where sin entered the world, to the amazing grace of Easter, where new life begins!

Thanks, Jesus, for your grace! Amen

Enjoy: Eat an apple—relish God's grace!

Read: Colossians 1:15-23

*Randy Shields
Florissant, MO*

Sunday, March 31, 2013

Sunrise, Sunset

Thus says the Lord ... "From the rising of the sun and from the west, there is no one besides me."

Isaiah 45:1, 6

"Sunrise, Sunset," a familiar song from the musical *Fiddler on the Roof*, captures the daily blessing of God at work. I remember one day in Key West, Florida, when I viewed the sunrise over the ocean on the east side and later the spectacular sunset from the west side of the island.

The prophet Isaiah used the spectacle of the rising and setting sun to try to convince King Cyrus that God had chosen him to save the Israelites from exile in Babylon. But Cyrus was so mired in his own world that he did not see the one true God in the rising and setting of the sun. What a shame for him and for the many today who don't take the time to stand in awe of the sun once in a while. For us as Christians, the rising sun, of course, is also evidence of God's saving activity through the rising of another Son, God's Son, Jesus! By this Risen Son, the rays of God's love will brighten our world this Easter and always. Alleluia!

Lord, open my eyes to see your salvation in every sunrise and sunset. Amen.

Thank: Give thanks to God for the rising Son.

Read: Malachi 4:2-3; Psalm 8

*Stephen J. Carter
Oakville, MO*

HOLY HABITS for **HOPE-FULL HEALTH**

Seven Strategies for Staying Connected as We Age

1. Wake up every morning with a purpose for life, affirming that “every day is a day to give away!”
2. Stay connected to the Scriptures through daily devotions, Bible reading and sharing the story of Jesus with others.
3. Phone and e-mail people every day, just to say hi and to keep in touch!
4. Visit the homebound in your church and community. If you are homebound, ask people to come and visit you!
5. Meet regularly with a friend, or three, or join a small group to learn and listen. Why not even check out the nearest coffee shop for a friendly place to chat?
6. Read a book, magazine or journal to keep connected to the world. Watch TV also, but not too much!
7. Prohibit pity parties! When you feel alone and “down,” push yourself to connect with someone through the ideas above. Think of other ways to connect as well.

FREE One: The Lord is always connected with us! He will never leave us alone, and that’s his promise in Baptism! He is, and he is here—the signs are all around us! Look for him!

Hope-Full Praying

The New Year

Thanks, Lord, for giving me a brand-new year of 2013! Lucky number or not, I know it will be a lucky year for me, because you have called me “lucky” in my Baptism. Through the joys and the sorrows which this new year will bring, I am always yours because of your love and forgiveness. Now that is something to celebrate each day in this new year. Amen.

Valentine’s Day

Lord, I know that Good Friday and Easter are the best Valentine’s Days of all, because you shared your love for us on those days through your death and resurrection. Today, as I celebrate your love with others, may my life be a Valentine’s greeting to everyone I meet. Grant me a hearty heap of heart-sharing today, in your name. Amen.

Keeping Busy

Today I pray, Lord, that you keep me focused on your promise and not on my problems. Keep me busy doing and thinking of the right things. Help me worry, not about my struggles, but, rather, if I need to worry, focus me on worrying about those in the world who are lost, lonely, least and let down. Keep me busy thanking you and serving others. And if we can do that together, I will really have a busy day today! Amen.

For those Celebrating Birthdays

Lord, thanks for birthdays, regardless of how old we are! Help us to celebrate another year as a blessing instead of as a burden. A birthday is a strong reminder that you still have something for us to do in this life because you have not yet called us home. Help me to “birth” some joy and hope into someone who is celebrating a birthday today. Amen.

For Those Celebrating Anniversaries

I pray today, Lord, for anniversaries. Anniversaries bring hope to our days, joy to our eyes, peace in the night and memories that last forever. Whether I am celebrating marriages that continue or relationships that have ended through death and separation, give me a grateful heart and a thankful mind in knowing that you are always lifting me up, forever. Amen.

For Those Who Are Homebound

Lord of life, you have placed us in many different situations throughout our lives ... together in families, surrounded by friends, and even alone and separated from loved ones. Today I pray for the homebound. I pray that you bring hope to the homebound in knowing that we are never alone, because you are always with us. Lord, help me to realize also that we are all homebound, as we anticipate eternal life in heaven with you! Amen.

For the Blessings of Each Day

For the blessings of each day, for the joy that comes my way; for the love that binds us all, for the Church that heeds your call; for the gifts we use and give, so that all may truly live; for your grace that gives us life, and takes away our storms and strife; for all of this we thank and pray, for the blessings of each day. Amen.

For Healthcare Workers

Lord, great is your healing touch. As you walked this earth, you healed people and touched people with your love. You made sick people well; you made dead people alive. Today we thank you that you are still walking this earth through people like doctors, nurses, volunteers and all those who bring healing to others, including me. Keep us well, dear Lord. Amen.

For New Beginnings

Help us, Lord, to see that the changes in our lives are really only new beginnings. As we change through the aging process and as our friends and surroundings change, we ask for your special grace to see all of these experiences as new beginnings, rather than as endings. We thank you for the past and we are ready for the new beginnings of our days ahead, because you are already there with us. Amen.

Individual Subscription (U.S. and Canada only)

1 Year Subscription (Quarterly)	_____	U.S. Rate \$14	Canada Rate _____ \$16
------------------------------------	-------	--------------------------	----------------------------------

Mail: Hope-Full Living

P.O. Box 291847

Kettering, OH 45429-0847

Toll-Free

855-325-4673

(HOPE)

* An Individual Subscription requires payment with order.

Quarterly Bulk Subscription

	Quarterly Bulk Rate	Quantity
5-9 Copies	\$1.85 each	_____
10-19 Copies	\$1.75 each	_____
20+ Copies	\$1.65 each	_____

Mail: Hope-Full Living Bulk

1564 Fencorp Dr.

Fenton, MO 63026

Toll-Free

800-325-9414

* Bulk Subscriptions are billed each quarter with an invoice in the package. Bulk Subscriptions are sent to one address (no P.O. Box). **Shipping charges will be added.** Bulk subscriptions will continue each quarter unless you notify us of a change. **Payment must be in U.S. funds drawn on a U.S. bank.**

Send to _____

Attention _____

Street Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Daytime Phone (_____) _____