

HOPE-FULL LIVING

• *Daily Devotions for Christian Seniors* •

July • August • September • 2013

Volume 2 • Number 3

Rich Bimler, Mark Zimmermann, Editors
Carol Geisler, Kasey Nugent, Editorial Assistants

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

Monday, July 1, 2013

The Taste of Freedom

Taste and see that the Lord is good.

Psalm 34:8

July has been declared National Hot Dog Month and National Ice Cream Month. Both of those bring back memories of past summers. Maybe we can still enjoy a hot dog or an ice cream cone, but there is the taste of a greater freedom that we relish even more.

This month we celebrate our freedoms as Americans: free from foreign control, free to worship our God, free to do many things that are restricted in other countries. Yes, the taste of freedom is good.

God has given us an even greater freedom still in Jesus Christ our Savior, who gave his life to win that freedom for us. We are free from foreign control of Satan. We are free to worship the true God of the Bible. We are free to live and breathe forever in his eternal love. We live in the freedom of God's love every day. Each day God forgives our sins, blesses our lives and reminds us of his eternal plans for us. And that taste of freedom is always good.

God, thanks for all the freedoms you give. Amen.

Tell: Tell someone why you are most proud to be a Christian as you celebrate being an American!

Read: Psalm 119:103; John 8:31-36

*Lonie Eatherton
Fenton, MO*

Tuesday, July 2, 2013

The Good Old Days!

Remember the wonders he has done; his miracles, and the judgments he pronounced ...

1 Chronicles 16:12

It is fun to “remember the good old days,” isn’t it? Remember the friendships in school, the crunchy snow, the swimming pool, your first date and, for some of us, even a church youth group! Memory is a gift from God that allows us to relive those pleasant past experiences.

Studies show that, for the most part, people who are happy and positive tend to have mastered the holy art of remembering the good things. It is not that there were no “bad old days”; it’s that these people have chosen to focus on how the Lord and his miracles have been with them throughout their lives.

When the present becomes difficult, even treacherous, the Lord is there to help us draw strength from the past. Remembering the Lord’s wonders from long ago empowers us to see even today as a “good new day,” in the Lord!

Lord, today is a “good new day” because you are with me. Amen.

Reflect: Tell someone a happy story of your early years, and give thanks!

Read: Psalm 71

*Rich Bimler
Bloomington, IL*

Wednesday, July 3, 2013

Safe in the Father's Arms

I am with you and will watch over you wherever you go ...

Genesis 28:15

While enjoying a stroll through the park one summer evening, I stopped to watch swimmers in the neighborhood pool. A cute little girl pranced down the sloped entry, giggling with joy as the water grew deeper. Just as she began to go under, her watchful daddy's strong arms snatched her from disaster. He placed her in water she could handle before she even noticed the danger.

Do you picture yourself as the child in that scene? We often wade through life with determination and self-confidence, unaware of God's watchful eye and strong protection. We overlook his safeguards and sure defense as we go about everyday activities. How often does he intervene without our notice?

Rejoice today in the knowledge that our Heavenly Father is always watching over us!

Lord, you have promised to bless and keep me. Make me aware of your presence and shelter as I live this day with you. Amen.

Remember: Recall times when God kept you safe in his arms.

Read: Proverbs 18:10; John 14:16-17

*Sharolyn Sander
Roselle, IL*

Thursday, July 4, 2013

Fireworks

Make a joyful noise to the Lord, all the earth; break forth into joyous song and sing praises!

Psalm 98:4

I took my youngest grandchild to the park on July 4th to see the fireworks display. We arrived while it was still daylight so we could secure a good spot. She became weary of waiting. She wanted the fireworks to start immediately, regardless of daylight or darkness, even though I had packed all kinds of good things to eat and to entertain her. When darkness fell, our wait was rewarded with a spectacular show. As the last colors faded, she cried because it was over.

We often react the same way. We wait impatiently for the glory of our eternal home even though God fills our earthly lives with all manner of good things. The good news is once we see the magnificence of heaven, we won't ever have to weep because it will never come to an end. It will last forever.

Father, teach me to enjoy the time you have given me while I wait for your eternal display of fireworks. Amen.

Thank: Give thanks to God for the gift of eternal life in Jesus.

Read: Hebrews 10:36; James 5:7-8

*Gloria Doty
Fort Wayne, IN*

Friday, July 5, 2013

Cracked Ground

And the Lord will guide you continually and satisfy your desire in scorched places ...

Isaiah 58:11

Summer days can be brutally hot and dry. The soil becomes so dried out that large cracks appear and the plants droop. But when a rain shower waters the soil, the cracks fill in and the plants perk up.

Sometimes our lives might feel like that cracked ground. Physically, we may not be able to do all the things we used to do. Maybe we feel bored, lonely or frustrated. God reassures us that he will always guide and help us. Jesus told the Samaritan woman, “Whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never be thirsty again” (John 4:14). Jesus, the living water, died and rose again to take away all our sins. Now our lives can be like a watered garden, growing and flourishing.

Lord, thank you for always guiding me, through good times and bad. Amen.

Tell: Tell someone who is going through a scorched place in their life about Jesus, the living water.

Read: Psalm 1; John 4:10-14

*Jeanette Dall
Batavia, IL*

Saturday, July 6, 2013

A Bird's Eye View

Look at the birds of the air ...

Matthew 6:26

Every morning as we sit at the breakfast table, we look out the window at the bird feeder we have lovingly filled with wild bird seed. A drama unfolds. Birds fly to the feeder from all directions—beautiful red cardinals, tiny chickadees and wrens and large blue jays. They compete with each other for food, but all seem to get their fill.

This simple bird's eye view reminds us of Jesus' words in Matthew 6:25-26: "Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink ... Look at the birds of the air ..." Despite aching bones, tired bodies and increasing wrinkles, we place our daily trust in the God who provides for birds and sends his Son to bring life and salvation through his death and resurrection—for us!

Lord, give us a bird's eye view of your life for us, now and forever. Amen.

Look: See God daily bringing life to his world in you and through you.

Read: Luke 12:22-31; 1 Peter 5:6-7

*Stephen J. Carter
Oakville, MO*

Sunday, July 7, 2013

The Aroma of Life

For we are the aroma of Christ to God among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing ...

2 Corinthians 2:15

Our family once lived in the Okanagan Valley of British Columbia, Canada. Each spring and early summer the blossoming fruit tree orchards nestled between the mountain ranges filled the valley with a buffet of fragrances. The blossoms of the fruit trees testified of the new life of spring and summer.

So, too, you and I have fallen as captives to the love of God in Christ Jesus. There is in every soul of a new birth, the fragrance of the essence of Christ. This aroma comes from him and testifies to all around us of the new life within. The aroma of Christ is detected when our demands do not have to come first, when personal recognition is surrendered to Christ's glory, when we consider others first. Jesus seeks his love to bloom in each one of us.

Lord Jesus, may those around me enjoy the fragrance of you living in me. Amen.

Ponder: Is the desire for personal gain or recognition masking the essence of Christ?

Read: 1 Corinthians 13

*Peter Ward
Ottawa, IL*

Monday, July 8, 2013

Too Dark to Hear?

If we walk in the light as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another ...

1 John 1:7

The other day I heard our granddaughter Hannah shout to her sister Sarah, “I can’t hear you—it’s too dark in here!” Now what in the world does that mean? After a while, it began to make sense. Do you ever feel that there is so much “darkness” around you—pains and problems, death and destruction—that it is hard to “hear” the love and presence of the Lord around you? Me too!

Now I am not sure that this is what these two siblings were discussing, but it became a reminder to me that the Light of the Lord is always with us, even when it is too “dark” to “hear” him. At times I fail to “hear” the Lord when I do not see the needs of people because of the darkness of sin in my own life.

Rejoice today that the Lord is walking with us through the darkness so that we can hear the joys and the needs of others.

*Lord of Light, shine in us so we can hear others.
Amen.*

Do: Listen closely today to people who may not be hearing that God loves them.

Read: John 1:1-5; John 8:12

*Rich Bimler
Bloomington, IL*

Tuesday, July 9, 2013

Pass the Bread

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

John 6:9

The meal was simple, but the memory—how exquisite! Maybe that morning Mom had packed her son's "sack" lunch of bread and fish. Neither could imagine the thousands who would share that bread because of Jesus.

Have we not passed the bread in Jesus' presence? Remember your picnic outdoors where you thanked the Creator for the beauty around you. Remember the meal where tempers flared, but then settled into a confession and forgiveness. Remember the meal with friends or family that focused on Christ's amazing grace in our lives. Remember the meal you ate by yourself, but you still prayed, for you were not alone.

In sacramental union, we are at Jesus' table. We remember our sins, and he remembers them no more. The bread is passed with the wine, and there Jesus is, again and always.

Come, Lord Jesus, be our guest, and let thy gifts to us be blessed. Amen.

Share: Use a meal as an opportunity to share what God has done.

Read: Luke 6:1-14; 1 Corinthians 11:23-26

*Harry Edenfield
Brownstown, MI*

Wednesday, July 10, 2013

Heavy Lifting

On the day I called, you answered me; my strength of soul you increased.

Psalm 138:3

Weight lifting is good exercise. It happens in a gym or physical therapy session or in the ordinary tasks of life—gardening, doing laundry and cleaning the house. Lifting weights, large or small, builds muscle and bone strength.

Weight lifting builds soul strength too. We often carry heavy burdens, the weight of trouble, worry, fear and sadness. We grow so accustomed to the weight of these problems that we find it difficult to put them down. Instead of trying to lift the problems by yourself, hand them over to God in prayer. Ask him to lift the trouble and worry and fear. The Savior who shouldered his cross and with it, the burden of your sins, knows about lifting weights. Your soul strength grows as he answers your prayers. Let God do the heavy lifting. It will build your soul strength.

Lord Jesus, strengthen my soul as you hear and answer my prayers. Amen.

Ask: Ask God to lift the burdens you carry today.

Read: Psalm 138

*Carol Geisler
Manchester, MO*

Thursday, July 11, 2013

Dreams of Family

He and all his family were devout and God-fearing.

Acts 10:2

Since we were little, some of us dreamed of the day when we would have a family. We are thankful that many have been blessed by living those childhood dreams. Our marriages have become the model for those who follow us, and our children and grandchildren have adopted the models that we received from our parents and grandparents. Thanks be to God!

But for some, their dreams were shattered early by a failed marriage, and they have had no healthy models to follow. Their dreams are not only non-existent, but their lives are sometimes broken.

For those who have shattered the possibility of dreams for others, there is forgiveness. Our loving Lord remains the God who plants dreams. And we can plant dreams in little ones dreaming of providing a lovely home someday for their family. May your home be such a model!

Thank you, Lord, for models of family life for which the little ones may dream to imitate. Amen.

Affirm: Affirm every model of the Christian home that others may dream about.

Read: Acts 10:1-8; Proverbs 31:10-31

*Vern Gundermann
Kirkwood, MO*

Friday, July 12, 2013

Putting My Hands in His

... according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being ...

Ephesians 3:16

When I put on my glasses to read, when my bones creak because of a change in the weather, when I need a cane or the arm of a chair to get to my feet, I know that my body is not what it used to be. At the same time though, I know God has something for me to do today with this body that I have. Teresa of Avila, a 16th-century Spanish Christian, put it this way, “Christ has no body now on earth but yours, no hands but yours, no feet but yours. Yours are the eyes through which Christ’s compassion is to look out to the world; yours are the feet by which he is to go about doing good and yours are the hands by which God is to bless people now.”

Show me, O God, what you would have me do for you today. Amen.

Look: Look at your hands. Reflect on the stories they could tell. Consider ways you can offer them to Jesus today.

Read: Ephesians 3:14-19; Hebrews 11:8-12

*Joe Iovino
Monument, CO*

Saturday, July 13, 2013

Life's Highway

Give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.

1 Thessalonians 5:18

Have you ever spent weeks planning a trip to head out on the open road, only to discover there is a construction zone somewhere along the way? Many times it involves delays and detours to your route. In my experience, a change of plans often is a blessing in disguise. Think: Did the delay or change lead to a positive outcome for you? Did you avoid an accident as a result of the changes or discover something along the way?

Many times our plans in life change unexpectedly. In the apostle Paul's first Letter to the Thessalonians, we are reminded to be thankful in all circumstances, even changing ones.

God, thank you for your guidance in my life. Help me see how detours or delays can be a blessing in disguise. Amen.

Think: Embrace God's detours in your life. They might be better than you planned!

Read: *1 Thessalonians 5:16-18*

*Betsy Becker Niedringhaus
Chesterfield, MO*

Sunday, July 14, 2013

Listen for the Bubbles

Pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest.

Matthew 9:38

Judy was a beautiful young mother with a beautiful little toddler, Kim. But sadly Judy was blind. Judy tells the story about having to rescue her little daughter from their pool. In desperation, she eased herself into the water and thrashed around trying to find her little girl. As she did so, she was overwhelmed by a small voice within, urging her to “listen for the bubbles.” With every ounce of self-control she quieted herself until she heard the sound of bubbles in the water. She dove toward that sound, and she pulled her little girl to safety.

There is a broader meaning for us also. Instead of thrashing around desperately trying to save our spiritually drowning neighbors, we, too, can “listen for the bubbles” and then reach them at their point of need with the Gospel of Christ.

Lord, remind me to “listen for the bubbles.” Amen.

Practice: Practice listening for the deeper need in those around you.

Read: Matthew 9

*Lionel Otto
Adelaide, Australia*

Monday, July 15, 2013

Celebrate Your Value

Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? ... You are of more value than many sparrows.

Matthew 10:29, 31

If that were all Jesus said about sparrows it would hardly be news. But he also said, “Not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father.”

We usually think of sparrows as being on their own. They hatch, learn to fly and search for food. Eventually they die, and no one cares. But God says, “I care! I am intimately involved in the life, sustenance and death of every creature that I have made.” Jesus adds, “God certainly cares for each of you.”

The ultimate sign of our value is that the Son of God died for us and rose from death that we might have life. And God invites us to celebrate our value. Our value before God cannot be diminished when time takes away our ability to do things well that we once did without a second thought. For God’s love through Jesus Christ is an eternal love. He has placed on us an eternal value.

Heavenly Father, teach us to value ourselves and every other person created by you. Amen.

To do: Talk to a friend about her or his value in the eyes of God.

Read: John 10:14-15

*Donald Becker
Oak Park, IL*

Tuesday, July 16, 2013

Canine Theology

The joy of the Lord is your strength.

Nehemiah 8:10

Before I retired for the second time, my work took me away from home, sometimes for a day or two. Each time I returned, my rescue-dog, Micah, greeted me with boundless (or should I say bounding) joy. When I feed him, he wags his thanks for the dry dog food as if it were steak. When I say, “Let’s go for a walk,” he races to get his leash.

Thus it is that our loving Father means for us to observe the creation he gave to us so bountifully, and by watching closely all things living, sense his loving care for them—and for us. He means for us to show that joy, unconditional love, patience and trust to the people and the multitude of wonders he has created around us.

As we learned from Luther: “For all these things it is my duty to thank and praise, serve and obey him.”

Heavenly Father, help us greet each day, despite physical limitations, with thankful joy evident to all around me, those I love and those hard to love. Amen.

Observe: Observe the wonders of God’s creation and give thanks.

Read: Matthew 6:25-33

*Constance Bretscher
Valparaiso, IN*

Wednesday, July 17, 2013

He Knows Your Name

Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine.

Isaiah 43:1

I found Viola in the usual spot, sleeping in her wheelchair in the community dining room where she'd undoubtedly been since breakfast. Viola had been in the nursing home since the horrific assault that had left her severely injured and her husband dead. Rarely did her children come to town for a visit. Rarely did they send a card. One day just melted into another for Viola. Who could blame her for passing the time sleeping?

I gently tapped her arm. "Viola." She awoke, recognized my face and gasped in joy. I was the weekly reminder of God's love, sent from the local Lutheran church. We read her favorite Scripture verses, prayed and sang together. When I left, she returned to sleep, hopefully to dream dreams of her Lord who knew her by name and would one day call her home.

Dear Lord, some days I am lonely and the days are long. Let me remember your love for me every day. Amen.

Remember: Remember that your Redeemer loves you, knows you by name and has not forgotten you.

Read: Isaiah 43:1-7; Psalm 25

*Terry Weber
Williamsburg, VA*

Thursday, July 18, 2013

A Circle of Friends

Let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another.

Hebrews 10:24-25

In our youth some of us sang, “It only takes a spark to get a fire going ... That’s how it is with God’s love. Once you’ve experienced it, you want to pass it on.” Both the fire and the wind that fans its flame are symbols of the Holy Spirit.

Remove a coal from the other coals at a campfire and its glow soon dies out. When a person removes himself or herself from a community that is sharing God’s Good News, his faith is in danger of dying. We are the glowing embers around which others, frost-bitten by the wintery winds of woe, can warm their hearts and rejoice with us in a gracious Savior. Each of us is an important coal in God’s caring community. His love is so great, we want to pass it on.

O gracious Spirit, blow gently into my heart as I listen again to the good news of the Father’s love for me. Amen.

Visit: Visit someone who seems to have few friends. Take someone along with you.

Read: 1 Thessalonians 4:9-11

*Leo Symmank
Seabrook, TX*

Friday, July 19, 2013

One of a Kind

For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

Ephesians 2:10

My grandfather was an engineer. Everything he did was carefully planned, organized and filled with purpose. His favorite hobby was making stained-glass lamps and windows. One Christmas, he handcrafted four stained-glass lamps—one for each of his grandchildren. They were beautiful and one of a kind, just like each grandchild. The lamps also had a purpose—to provide light.

As it says in Ephesians, we are God's "handiwork." God has specially crafted each of us with a purpose: to share his love. He has consciously made us different and gives us unique gifts to reach family, friends and other people he puts in our lives. Through our words and actions, we can share the light of Jesus with others each and every day.

Thank you, Lord, for creating me just as I am. Help me to share your love with others today. Amen.

Reflect: The next time you see a stained-glass window, reflect on how God has handcrafted you. What gifts/talents can you use to share his love?

Read: Genesis 1:27; Genesis 5:1-2

Allison Lewis
Valley Park, MO

Saturday, July 20, 2013

Bring a Smile

I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me.

Matthew 25:36

My father passed away recently. Because of the extensive care needed, he'd been living in a nursing care facility during the last five years of his life. When I visited, the halls were often quiet except for the occasional beeping of a resident call button. Eerily quiet, considering the number of residents. The elderly and infirm were there, sitting silently in hallways or alone in their rooms, prisoners of their need for care. When I would smile or say a simple "hello," a face would brighten. When I remembered their name, they would beam.

Lord, keep reminding me of the sick and the lonely. Bring to mind those in need of your love, and give me the time and the courage to share it. Amen.

Contact: Contact a nursing home to discover individuals who need visitors and what time is best for a weekly visit.

Read: Galatians 5:14; 1 John 4:20-21

*Lynne Waite Chapman
Fort Wayne, IN*

Sunday, July 21, 2013

Living in Love

Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way.

1 Corinthians 13:4-5

Read today's Bible verse substituting your name for the word *love* and the appropriate pronoun—he or she—for the word *it*. For example, "Ruth is patient and kind; Ruth does not envy or boast; she is not arrogant or rude. She does not insist on her own way." Now you do it.

Are you laughing or crying? Now read the verses again substituting the name *Jesus* for *love* and *he* for *it*. Sounds better, doesn't it? As we live renewed in Christ's love, his love compels us to be patient and kind, reminds us that we don't have to keep a record of those who hurt our feelings and fills us with hope and perseverance. Christ's perfect love will not even stop at death. His love will carry us all the way to heaven.

Jesus, thank you for loving me enough to give your life for me. Help me share your love with those around me. In your name. Amen.

Do: Write a "love" note to a fellow Christian. Tell that person how their life inspires your faith life.

Read: 1 Corinthians 13:4-12; Proverbs 10:12

*Ruth Geisler
Aliso Viejo, CA*

Monday, July 22, 2013

How Is Your “I” sight?

No eye has seen, nor ear has heard, nor the heart of man imagined, what God has prepared for those who love him.

1 Corinthians 2:9

Believe it or not, cataracts begin forming shortly after birth. But we don't know about it until they begin to challenge our eyesight. Could not the same be said about our spiritual “I” sight? We are born in the world and are of this world until the Lord calls us home. At first we believe the world revolves around us. However, it isn't long until we come up against a two-letter word: *no*.

Once we have been brought to faith, we see things differently. We know that in the middle of sin is the letter “I.” Through the eyes of the Holy Spirit working in hope-full St. Paul, we seek to “know Jesus Christ and him crucified” (1 Corinthians 2:2). Because of Christ, we see now, through the eyes of faith (perhaps a little dimly) what God promises us: heaven with him.

Holy Spirit, thank you for bringing me to see my Savior through the eyes of faith. Amen.

See: See others through the eyes of Christ today.

Read: 2 Corinthians 4:16-18; 2 Corinthians 5:6-9

*Jim Kirk
Festus, MO*

Tuesday, July 23, 2013

The Joy of Reading

Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.

Psalm 119:105

Reading and rereading classics fills the spaces of retirement with delight. Previously, such leisurely hours were sparse. Now is the moment to enjoy delayed pleasure. As eyes grow dim, technology provides audio books and other paths to the literary world.

We find new delight in new books or just sitting at the screen of our laptop reading newspapers online and other websites on every topic imaginable.

Soaking up the Scripture through the lens of literature past and present opens doors to the world we once knew pounding the streets for God and flying to yonder parts of the globe. What a great moment to be alive!

Lord, as my strength grows weak, my eyes grow dim and my mind slows down, keep me tuned in to the wonderful world of literature and news as I meditate and reflect on your Holy Word. Amen.

Peruse: As you read Scripture, take time as well to check out what God is saying in his world today.

Read: Colossians 1:1-23; Colossians 4:2-6

*Rodney Otto
Grand Rapids, MI*

Wednesday, July 24, 2013

Revive My Soul

But those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires.

Romans 8:5

Life does feel hard at times as the aging process causes problems—some call them opportunities—that make me feel downhearted. Lives change as we may have less energy, less mobility and lose family and friends. We need to find opportunities to be encouraged. In the old spiritual, “There is a Balm in Gilead,” one verse says, “But then the Holy Spirit revives my soul again.”

We need to allow the Holy Spirit’s soothing presence to heal us with God’s eternal love. Our bodies will not be young again, but our spirit can soar with the love of Jesus. We have been given the gift of life, a long life, and we have the opportunity to praise God and share his love with others for many years.

Thank you, Father, for the Holy Spirit, who lifts me up when I am down. Amen.

Tell: Tell someone today about how Christ’s love lives in us by the Holy Spirit.

Read: Romans 8:26-27

*Jean Plesko
Ballwin, MO*

Thursday, July 25, 2013

The Larger Picture

... yet our God turned the curse into a blessing.

Nehemiah 13:2

We don't always see the larger picture. How often have you heard a story where someone is delayed by some minor event, only to learn later that had they been on time they would have been involved in a disaster (as in the movie *Sliding Doors*). God is in our lives; he cares for us; he protects us. We live in a sinful world, so bad things happen, even to good people, but God is always there, seeing us to the ultimate goal—life with him in heaven. He can turn even disasters into good for his people. The Bible contains many examples, the greatest of which is Jesus' crucifixion. Look to your own life for additional instances.

Lord God, thank you for your presence in my life and for protecting me through the bad things that happen. Keep my faith strong toward eternal life with you in heaven. Amen.

Thank: Give thanks to God for his presence in the "big picture" of your life.

Read: Nehemiah 13:1-14; Luke 24

*David W. Eggebrecht
Grafton, WI*

Friday, July 26, 2013

A Blessed Calling

[Joseph of Arimathaea and Nicodemus] took the body of Jesus and bound it in linen cloths with the spices, as is the burial custom of the Jews.

John 19:40

As our birthdays mount, attending funerals and comforting survivors with hope of eternal life and joyful memories may become a calling. We are never too old to comfort. All four Gospels give us Joseph of Arimathaea as a model. Joseph, a secret follower of Jesus and a member of the Sanhedrin, bravely went to Pilate and obtained Jesus' body after his death. Nicodemus, another Sanhedrin member, brought 100 pounds of spices. Together they prepared Jesus' body for burial and placed him in Joseph's empty tomb.

Recently I saw Michelangelo's sculpture of Joseph removing Jesus' body for burial. Michelangelo was 72 when he began this work. He used his own weathered face to depict Joseph. Might our special calling make it our face too?

Dear Lord, guide me in helping those who have lost loved ones. Amen.

Contact: Write a note or phone a friend who is mourning the death of a loved one to offer comfort.

Read: Mark 15:43; Luke 23:50-51

*Patricia Rice
St. Louis, MO*

Saturday, July 27, 2013

Watch for God's Surprises

[God] is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think ...

Ephesians 3:20

God loves to surprise his people, and he is no respecter of age. Noah was about 500 when God gave him directions for a massive building project. Abraham and Sarah laughed when they became first-time parents as centenarians. Paul was amazed when prison became his last and best pulpit.

There are surprises waiting for you each day, if you have eyes to see and ears to hear. Welcome the unexpected phone call. Accept a new challenge. Learn something new from a child. Be the friend your neighbor needs. Go on a short-term mission trip. Find new friends as you serve together. Enjoy new satisfaction for a job you once disliked. Watch for an unexpected answer to prayer. Tell the next generations what Jesus means to you.

God surprised the world with the love and sacrifice of Jesus. What will he do through you?

Lord, surprise me with your plans for today, and give me the grace to enjoy them. Amen.

Look: Look for God's surprises today!

Read: Genesis 6:9-22; Genesis 21:1-7

*Sharolyn Sander
Roselle, IL*

Sunday, July 28, 2013

Change for Comfort

God had planned something better for us so that only together with us would they be made perfect.

Hebrews 11:40

During our twice-a-day dog walk, we pass a vacant lot. And each time we pass, I wonder why a pair of worn-out blue flip flops are abandoned under the ancient pine trees. Had they made the owner's feet hurt? Had the weary traveler changed into a pair of more sensible shoes and continued his or her journey with the surety that putting on the new shoes gave more comfort?

I wonder. Do we go along with our plans only to discover that our ways are harmful? When we change them and listen, we can hear God gently whisper, "I forgive you for your old ways. I love you. Stay with me; abandon your old ways. I will bring you comfort."

*Lord, help me to stay with you and continue to put on the new ways for the comfort that you offer.
Amen.*

Pray: When you pray, say, "Your will be done."

Read: Ephesians 4:22-24; Matthew 8:3-4

*Edna Jakobsky
Ft. Myers, FL*

Monday, July 29, 2013

Make Me New

... and to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.

Ephesians 4:24

When I was a new bride, I wanted to show my husband how frugal and “wifely” I could be, so when his socks developed holes in the heels or toes, I attempted to darn them, just as my mother had darned mine when I was a child. Needless to say, my darning was nothing like my mother’s. Hers were smooth and tightly formed with no hurtful knots. Her repaired socks were like new again.

Many times, our lives resemble a well-worn pair of socks. We develop thin spots and gaping holes. We wish we could throw away our troubles and be like new. We seem irreparable, but God has the power to make all things new. He lovingly stitches our lives back together and fills in the holes of sadness, pain and loss until we become like new and useful once again.

Heavenly Father, remind me how much you “mend” my broken and worn places. Thank you for loving me in every condition. Amen.

Pray: Pray for someone who feels “broken.”

Read: Isaiah 43:19; Revelation 21:5

*Gloria Doty
Fort Wayne, IN*

Tuesday, July 30, 2013

Stuff

When the days drew near for him to be taken up, he set his face to go to Jerusalem.

Luke 9:51

After 30 years in one place, we had to move. There was one problem: stuff—and lots of it. Take? Sell? Discard? Donate? It was a huge distraction from the primary objective: Move! I had become too involved with my stuff.

When Jesus “set his face” toward Jerusalem and the cross, he was unencumbered by stuff. Some folks thought they’d go along, but turned back because they had stuff issues.

The accumulations of a lifetime are weighty. It’s not just the material items. It’s the burden of long-felt guilt, losses, resentments. The Gospel of Jesus Christ propels us confidently and faithfully into the future God has in store for us. Because Jesus has borne our sins and sorrows for us, we are readied for “the eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison” (2 Corinthians 4:17).

Lord, set our faces toward following you. Amen.

Ponder: What stuff is stored in the back of your mind that weighs you down? Write it down and give it to Jesus—today.

Read: Luke 9:51-62; Isaiah 53:4-6

*Mike May
Kansas City, KS*

Wednesday, July 31, 2013

My Treasure

For where treasure is, there your heart will be also.

Matthew 6:21

What do you treasure most in life? Maybe it is time with a spouse, friends at church, a grandchild or a close friend. Perhaps you treasure fond memories of summer family vacations at the beach or gathering around the fire on camping trips years ago.

One of my greatest treasures in life is my relationship with my Heavenly Father. While I haven't talked with him face-to-face or walked with him along a beach, he has given me family and friends that I treasure more than anything I could buy in a store.

Dear Heavenly Father, thank you for the treasures you have graciously given me. Help me to recognize your presence in my life. Amen.

Ask yourself: What treasures have you been given? How can you become a treasure in someone else's life by what you say or do?

Read: Matthew 6:19-21

*Betsy Becker Niedringhaus
Chesterfield, MO*

Thursday, August 1, 2013

For Generations

... fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands.

2 Timothy 1:6

From Lois to Eunice to Timothy—that's the way faith in Christ works sometimes—passed on through the generations, and it is the greatest legacy we can leave for our children and their children. Yet each new generation requires a personal reaffirmation of that faith and a rekindling of the Spirit of God within us. That means the carriers of that faith must nurture their own faith. That's not always easy. The Christian faith has been handed down through the generations for more than 2,000 years. That's quite a track record. Yet the more the faith is handed down, there is always a danger of letting it slip away. The message passed through the generations remains constant: God sent his Son, Jesus, to save us. Let us be constant in passing that message on.

Holy Spirit, daily rekindle in me faith in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. Amen.

Thank: Give thanks for those who passed on the faith to you.

Read: 1 Timothy 1:1-14

*Steve Albers
Kirkwood, MO*

Friday, August 2, 2013

Loving “Extended Family”

For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named ...

Ephesians 3:14-15

I dreaded my annual long-distance call to my mother on Mother’s Day. “I was the only mother at church without her daughter and grandchildren. I know you had to play the organ this morning, but today I was so sad—just like every Mother’s Day.”

But one year Mom answered the phone cheerfully. “Your father and I just came home from the most delightful lunch. You know, our new organist couldn’t go home to spend the day with her mother, so we invited her to celebrate with us. After all, we are one big family, aren’t we?”

Heavenly Father, help me to love my brothers and sisters in faith as you have loved me. Amen.

Do: Instead of fretting about family members who are far away, seek out a nearby brother or sister who is sad or lonely. Invite him or her for a cup of coffee or a pleasant walk outside.

Read: Ephesians 4:1-6

*Eileen Ritter
Grand Haven, MI*

Saturday, August 3, 2013

Let's Go Home

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

2 Timothy 1:5

After such a brief visit, Grandpa would say to Grandma, “Let’s go home.” We could never understand why they were happy to see us, but always eager to get back to their home place. Now we’re there!

For many families the home place was where Great-grandfather had settled and raised a large family, all of whom moved on to set up their own homes and raise their own families. But the “home place” still brought potent memories to mind. That’s where Mom was. That’s where Dad was. That’s where God was. That’s where love was. That’s where life and dreams began. That’s where all that ultimately mattered shaped you.

Maybe it’s meant to be a taste of heaven—a way of getting us ready for his dwelling place—when we’ll be eager to say “Let’s go home!”

Lord, we thank you for our home here on earth and our home above. Amen.

Recall: Recall the joys of your home life with a brother, sister, cousin or friend.

Read: Psalm 90:1; Psalm 84

*David P. Schmidt
St. Louis, MO*

Sunday, August 4, 2013

For the Children

Let the children come to me.

Mark 10:14

The Treveys' garage was third base. As children, we played kickball in that alley many times. Mr. and Mrs. Trevey, who had no children, had only one request: Please tell us if a ball breaks the garage window. They understood our childhood energy, so no one would be in trouble, they said.

Neighborhoods change. Childhood activities are altered. Children still need loving, understanding, patient and forgiving adults around them. We can be those adults to children in our congregations, neighborhoods and extended families. We can show them the heart of Jesus who welcomed children.

My memory can quickly take me back to childhood. Sometimes childlike thoughts are more a part of me than I would expect. I, too, need a patient Father to graciously love and forgive me. What thankful hearts are ours, for God's Son, Jesus, shares his Father with us!

Dear Father, help me to remember that I am your child. Amen.

Befriend: Be a friend to a child as Jesus has befriended us.

Read: Matthew 6:6-15; 1 John 2:1

Harry Edenfield
Brownstown, MI

Monday, August 5, 2013

Monday or Moan-day?

My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.

2 Corinthians 12:9

Irish author James Joyce is credited with coming up with this perspective on the days of the week: “Moanday, Tearsday, Wailsday, Thumpsday, Fright-day and Shatterday.” I couldn’t find any reference to Sunday, so I propose we start each week as “Son-day.”

That would change the entire perspective. Left on our own, we only see aches and pains, long days and losses that are present because of the brokenness of sin. But because of Jesus Christ, his only Son, we can be assured that God’s grace will see us through every disappointment and point us to eternal hope. After all, his love changes everything ... even our perspective as our feet hit the floor each morning.

Loving Father, help me to see that your grace is sufficient for all my needs, even in times of difficulty. Through Jesus I pray. Amen.

Reminder: Make a list of all the positive things God brought your way today.

Read: Ecclesiastes 3:1-8; Psalm 77:11-12

Jane P. Wilke
Woodbury, MN

Tuesday, August 6, 2013

We Are Rich

God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that having all sufficiency in all things at all times, you may abound in every good work.

2 Corinthians 9:8

Growing up as the seventh daughter of a country pastor, I seldom had “spending money,” but I did not consider our family poor. One clique of girls would often stop for a treat after school. When I asked to go along, one of the girls said, “You can’t. You’re poor.” At home I asked my mother if we were poor. She answered, “We are not poor. We are rich.” Then she added, “And someday we’ll have money.”

Accepted just as we are, living in the “riches of his grace, which he lavished upon us” (Ephesians 1:7-8), we need not envy the world’s image of richness. Our worth as God’s children was given to us in our baptism. Let us never forget that.

Gracious Heavenly Father, whatever our physical limitations, help us daily to share our riches, given to us in your love, with joy that is evident to all whose lives we touch. Amen.

Share: Share the riches of God’s love with someone today.

Read: 2 Corinthians 9:6-15

Constance Bretscher
Valparaiso, IN

Wednesday, August 7, 2013

Musical Dreams

I will sing and make music to the Lord.

Psalm 27:6

When we were little, many of us had dreams of being a musician. We watched the church organist and were impressed by the choir. We listened to the musicians on the radio and imitated those on television.

Some of you are living your dream. You have made amazing contributions to the life of the Christian community. Your songs get sung. Your arrangements get played. You play your instrument to the delight of many. We are blessed by God through your music!

For some of us, being that kind of a musician remains a dream.

My mother, not a good musician, held on to the dream. When negative comments were made regarding her singing, she would respond: "Just wait! In heaven I will be singing solos to the praise of our God!" I have no doubt that she is experiencing her dream. That is the kind of God we have!

O God, we thank you for our dreams that include the gift of music. Amen.

Affirm: Affirm your children and grandchildren who have the gift of music to use it to glorify our God.

Read: Psalm 27

*Vern Gundermann
Kirkwood, MO*

Thursday, August 8, 2013

Judge or Encourage?

Let the wise hear and increase in learning ...

Proverbs 1:5

As we grow older, we can become judgmental about those who are younger than we are, especially teenagers. They don't do things the way that we did.

Yet, what about our own fads when we were young? Were we more sensible? And could it be that we might still learn from the young? Seasoned soldiers were certain that young David was doing everything wrong as he volunteered to battle Goliath. But David insisted that his way was better and gained a decisive victory. Today young people can be much more knowledgeable than we are, for instance, about how electronic things work. They can help us use better the new, sometimes bewildering, gadgets—if we listen to them and aren't judgmental.

Dear Lord, guide me in helping young people to use their talents in constructive and serving ways. Amen.

Do: Recognize when younger people know more than you do. Profit from their know-how and acknowledge it with thanks.

Read: 1 Samuel 17:31-40, 50; Proverbs 1:1-7

*Luther Strasen
Fort Wayne, IN*

Friday, August 9, 2013

The Reminder

I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

Galatians 2:20

I often wear a necklace with a cross. I know some people wear the cross as a piece of jewelry that looks nice or to complement the clothing that is being worn. I wear a cross because it is a reminder to me of my Savior Jesus Christ. When I am wearing the cross, does it identify me as a disciple of Jesus? Hopefully, my actions as I interact with others will show that I am his. My cross reminds me how Jesus treated others with kindness, compassion and love. It is also a symbol of how he died to save me from my sins.

Jesus' love is the example we should follow. The cross points to heaven and the arms encircle me with his love. I wear the cross to show the world my belief in my Savior and his sacrifice of love.

Thank you, Jesus, for dying for me. Amen.

Tell: When you wear your cross, tell someone what it means to you.

Read: Galatians 2:20-21; Mark 15:13

*Jean Plesko
Ballwin, MO*

Saturday, August 10, 2013

The Gift

We have different gifts, according to the grace given to each of us. If your gift is prophesying, then prophesy in accordance with your faith.

Romans 12:6

Has someone ever told you, “You have the gift of ...”? Maybe you are talented in the area of teaching or encouraging. Perhaps a friend or a close loved one often asks you for your advice. We are all given gifts from our Heavenly Father. He has given us these gifts for a purpose, and he wants us to use them.

What gifts has God given to you? Do you use them often?

Heavenly Father, thank you for the gifts you have given me. Help me to use them to the glory of your holy name. Amen.

Think: Think about the talents God has given you. How can you use your gifts to help others in your family and in your community?

Read: Romans 12:3-8

*Betsy Becker Niedringhaus
Chesterfield, MO*

Sunday, August 11, 2013

Treasured Heirlooms

These words that I command you today shall be on your heart ... teach them diligently to your children

...

Deuteronomy 6:6-7

A few years ago my aunt moved away to be closer to her sons and their families. As I helped her pack things up, she passed treasures along to me so they could stay in the family. I took them home and shared them with my brothers, sisters, cousins and nieces.

What I kept for myself was a beautiful, hand-stitched quilt that I hope to pass along someday. Every time I wrap myself in the quilt I feel the embrace of generations of love. I am reminded that we are to pass along much more than heirlooms we can touch; we are to pass along the faith so that generations to come may feel the embrace of God's never-ending love.

Heavenly Father, guide me in your truth so that the light of your love might be shared through me to others. In Christ's name, I pray. Amen.

Consider: Are there heirlooms of faith you might pass along to loved ones?

Read: Deuteronomy 6:4-9; Psalm 25:4-6

*Jane P. Wilke
Woodbury, MN*

Monday, August 12, 2013

The Age Advantage

Tell the next generation that this is God, our God forever and ever. He guides us forever.

Psalm 48:13-14

Aging is sometimes cast in a negative light. There are some who turn their reclining into whining because of their declining mind or body. But consider the age advantage!

I'm not talking about advantages of respect or senior citizen discounts. I'm talking about the advantage of life experience—your faith journey—your story of God's faithfulness throughout your lifetime.

How long has Jesus been a part of your life? What have you learned about his love for you? What insights have you gained from his Word? How have you been tested and grown stronger?

Your age advantage is your bully pulpit! Tell the next generation: "Jesus has forgiven all of my sins. He is my Savior and Lord! I am his and he is mine—forever!"

*Empower me to use my age advantage, Jesus.
Amen.*

Delight: Delight in your personal faith testimony.

Read: Joshua 24; Psalm 118

*Randy Shields
Florissant, MO*

Tuesday, August 13, 2013

Walking And Talking

Walk in wisdom toward outsiders, making the best use of the time.

Colossians 4:5

Mall walking has become a daily exercise in our retirement. Thirty to forty minutes gets the heart pumping and the joints limbered up. Then it's time for coffee and a snack.

We share plans for the day, watch the walkers and discover new friends. We visit with them about our former employment and accomplishments, our families and friends, and our significant happenings through the years.

No matter how old we are or how we feel, we still have opportunities to share our faith. We watch for the opening God gives to talk about that. It makes the walk worthwhile!

Lord Jesus, teach us to walk in love, as you did, and to share your love with others. Amen.

Pray: Pray about those you have met recently and seek an appropriate opportunity to share the Gospel with them.

Read: Psalm 145; Ephesians 6:18-19

*David P. Schmidt
St. Louis, MO*

Wednesday, August 14, 2013

Let's Get Together

Not neglecting to meet together ... but encouraging one another ...

Hebrews 10:25

“Let’s get together.” “Let’s do lunch.” “You want to play some cards?” “Are you going to the reunion?” “Please drop by to see me.” Any of these sound familiar? Why all this gathering? In gathering we talk of little babies and big jobs, last year’s weather and next year’s travel, lasting heartaches and passing fads. Face-to-face, we recognize God’s gifts in this world.

God has also commanded us to gather before him in worship. Why? Before him, we are reminded that we are not of this world. Therefore, we are bold. We love when love is not returned. We forgive when others won’t. We are friends to the friendless. We hope when all seems hopeless. We look forward when all seems behind us.

Why all the gathering? It’s practice. We are going to get together in heaven. That is why Jesus died. God desires to have his family gathered at his house.

Lord Jesus, help me to love your people and enjoy them. Amen.

Gather: Gather with someone; then gather again.

Read: Genesis 18:1-8; Revelation 7:9-12

*Harry Edenfield
Brownstown, MI*

Thursday, August 15, 2013

Rest

... and you will find rest for your souls.

Matthew 11:29

*And when my short life is ended,
By his angel host attended,
He shall fold me to his breast,
There within his arms to rest.*

—Henrietta von Hayn

When our children were young, I would sing “I Am Jesus’ Little Lamb” to them at bedtime. Our youngest daughter, Sarah, usually wanted all the verses, and one night she asked me what the last part meant: *He shall fold me to his breast, there within his arms to rest.* I put my arms around her and held her close. “Oh, boy,” she said, “that’s just the way I like it!” Don’t we all. It’s there for all of us, of course. In the evening after a day of ups and downs, triumphs and failures, we end with confession of sins and thankfulness for blessings, and we feel God wrap us in his love and forgiveness and give us rest. And what a rest we have waiting for us at the end of life! Those last two lines will take us into eternity.

*Lord, your love and forgiveness are unending.
Thank you for rest now and forever. Amen.*

Embrace: Hug someone today.

Read: Zephaniah 3:17; Hebrews 4:9-11

*Sally Beck
University City, MO*

Friday, August 16, 2013

The County Fair

I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

Philippians 3:14

Whether someone entered jars of canned food, beautifully sewn garments, flowers, vegetables or livestock, every entrant at the county fair is hoping for good comments from the judges and a prized blue ribbon for his or her work. Every exhibitor has done his or her best and brought the results to be judged by an impartial judge who does not know them.

Thankfully, our Judge does know us, intimately. He knows our strengths and our weaknesses. He knows how much or how little effort we have exerted. He knows that because of sin, none of us deserves the blue ribbon of salvation. The good news is that God does not see the imperfections when he looks at us, his creations. He looks at us through the death of his Son and because of that, we will be awarded the prize of eternal life.

Heavenly Father, help me remember I cannot earn the prize, but because Jesus died for me, I will be awarded eternal life. Amen.

Talk: Talk to someone about Jesus and the prize of eternal life he won for you.

Read: Psalm 19:7-11; Psalm 58:11

*Gloria Doty
Fort Wayne, IN*

Saturday, August 17, 2013

Glowing in the Dark

At one time you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light.

Ephesians 5:8

One night the electricity went off. As I felt my way around the house, searching for flashlights, candles and matches, I thought of God's calling to walk as children of light. Many of the people around me glow in the dark. They remind me of Christ's light in times of darkness. Thinking of them made me smile as I turned on my flashlight.

You can glow in the dark as well. Your words of greeting at church, your calls to friends in need, your loving gestures towards family, your prayers for those who are ill or lonely, and the way you thank God for his blessings and trust him for help are signs that you walk as a child of the light.

Father, thank you for calling me out of the darkness of sin and death into the light of your Son. Let me glow in the dark for anyone who could use a cheering word this week. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Do: Darken the room and light a single candle. Thank Jesus for making such a difference in your life. Plan how you will glow in the dark to help a friend in need.

Read: Ephesians 5:8-10; Matthew 5:14-16

*Ruth Geisler
Aliso Viejo, CA*

Sunday, August 18, 2013

When the Fog Lifts

Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.

Hebrews 11:1

Years ago my husband and I drove through the Blue Ridge Mountains. One morning dense fog made for tense driving. Then as we rounded a curve, green hillsides splattered with color and basking in sunshine were revealed. The fog had lifted, and not a trace of its shroud remained.

Life's a bit like that, isn't it? There are times when it seems like we are walking in a fog, not seeing where we are going and forgetting where we've been. It's at such times as these that I turn to the "Hall of Faith" as recorded in Hebrews 11. Even these patriarchs walked through times when things seemed uncertain, but they trusted that God's love would reveal beauty every time the fog lifted.

Heavenly Father, thank you for revealing your love to me through Jesus your Son, my Savior. Amen.

Reflect: Think back to a time when God revealed something new to you after the fog of life lifted.

Read: Hebrews 11; 2 Corinthians 4:16-18

*Jane P. Wilke
Woodbury, MN*

Monday, August 19, 2013

The Gift Within

The free gift of God is eternal life.

Romans 6:23

The torn wrapping paper lays on the floor. The gift is the center of attention. How like our lives. The wrapping of our miraculous bodies will someday wind up in a grave. The souls that they enclose will in Christ spend eternity with God.

God blesses us with many gifts, including our bodies and minds. Exercise and clean living help to keep the body healthy for its service to God on earth and the enjoyment of his blessings.

However, in this sin-filled world nothing is perfect; Satan is with us and tempts us to sin. But God has given us his means of grace, his holy Word and forgiveness. We repent, we ask God's forgiveness and he grants it—as often as needed.

Dear Lord, we thank you for your gift of salvation through your Son, Jesus Christ. Amen.

Ponder: Wrap your mind around each of God's gifts to you.

Read: 2 Corinthians 9:6-15; 1 Corinthians 7:6-7

*David Eggebrecht
Grafton, WI*

Tuesday, August 20, 2013

A Letter from Grandma

You yourselves are our letter of recommendation, written on our hearts, to be known and read by all.

2 Corinthians 3:2

Years ago, I preached my grandmother's funeral sermon entitled, "A Letter from Grandma Olsen." She was known for her newsy letters. So when I said I saw her faith and caring in those letters, many heads nodded in assent.

Paul fondly refers to the lives of believers in Corinth as letters of recommendation from Christ for his ministry, "written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God ... on tablets of human hearts" (2 Corinthians 3:3). How might your life in your older years be a letter from Christ to encourage others in the faith? An old-fashioned handwritten letter, a special card with a note, an e-mail or Facebook post or a spoken word and kind deed? By God's grace, heads will nod in assent about God's love in Christ through you.

Use me, Lord, as your letter of love to others.

Amen.

Write: Send a letter or note to someone this week.

Read: 1 Thessalonians 1:2-10; Ephesians 4:25-32

*Stephen J. Carter
Oakville, MO*

Wednesday, August 21, 2013

What Will You Be?

I know the plans I have for you ... plans to give you hope and a future.

Jeremiah 29:11

Is it too late to ask, “What will you be when you grow up?” Is it a question for the young or for those still in school? No. Not if you are a child of God—a daughter or son of the King. Children of the Heavenly Father are still growing up.

So, what will you be when you grow up? Think about this: Become a woman or man of hope! Jesus is the God of hope—to know and believe in him, the crucified and risen Christ, is to be saturated with hope!

You are not a speck of cosmic dust spiraling into a black hole. You are loved, forgiven and will live forever!

In this aching, breaking, quaking, shaking world, there is hope. Christians have a future, secured in Jesus!

Lord, energize my faith for hope-full living. Amen.

Give hope: Become an ambassador of hope!

Read: Romans 15:1-13

*Randy Shields
Florissant, MO*

Thursday, August 22, 2013

Press On

I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

Philippians 3:14

We remember our early spiritually immature years when we were trying to find our place in life and were tempted to be selfish to position ourselves. While we still might cringe about some of the ways we were unloving, we've matured because Jesus Christ made us his own and we've grown in our relationship with God through him. His love built up our love. In his forgiveness we can forget the past and press on to what lies ahead for us in every day we are blessed with. Our goal is perfection, and while we'll never attain it in this life, by God's grace we can enjoy being better people every day. It's a foretaste of our perfection in heaven.

Jesus, thank you for your perfection and forgiveness that empower me to press on to be more like you every day. Amen.

Credit God: When you've been complimented for doing a good deed, don't be reluctant to convey to others God's power in your life.

Read: Philippians 3:12-15; Ephesians 4:13-16

*Luther Strasen
Fort Wayne, IN*

Friday, August 23, 2013

Walk by Faith

For we walk by faith, not by sight.

2 Corinthians 5:7

The park was filled with people. Skateboarders, bicyclists and joggers cruised along the path. One woman stood out as she walked along briskly. She never ran into anyone or strayed off the path. She had a confident stride—even though she couldn't see anything. She trusted her guide dog to lead her.

In some ways, we are all blind. We are blinded by the problems, worries and fears that we face each day. We cannot “see” our glorious life in heaven that was won for us by Christ's death and resurrection. When we trust God and all his promises, we focus on our future and not on the present—on the unseen, not the seen. We live by faith, confident that God will lead us.

Lord, help me to trust you in all situations and to walk by faith. Amen.

Walk: Walk by faith today, no matter what obstacles may try to trip you up.

Read: 2 Corinthians 5:1-10

*Jeanette Dall
Batavia, IL*

Saturday, August 24, 2013

Eager Learners

Make your face shine upon your servant, and teach me your statutes.

Psalm 119:135

I stood in front of my class as a beginning teacher. My students were squirming, talking and out of order. But there was Edith, sitting quietly and looking up at me. Her eyes seemed to say, “Teach me.” When a new school year opens, I often think about Edith and other students who were “eager learners.”

The Psalmist was evidently an eager learner, for he asked God to teach him. After the familiar request for blessing, “Make your face shine upon your servant,” the Psalmist added “teach me” to his prayer. A contemporary version reads: “Smile on me and teach me how to live.” If the Lord smiles on me, that is surely a blessing, and I want to learn how to live as God’s child.

No matter how long I live, there is always something new and interesting to learn about God and how to live. Scripture is a primary textbook.

O Great Teacher, send your Spirit that I may eagerly learn the meaning of Jesus’ life, death and resurrection for my life. In Jesus’ name. Amen.

Read: Read the entire book of Romans at one sitting. (Note especially 15:14-21.)

*Eldor Kaiser
Sturgeon Bay, WI*

Sunday, August 25, 2013

Old Is New Again

Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day.

2 Corinthians 4:16

Letting go of things that have passed into history is discouraging. Seeing them return in new and glorified terms is exciting.

According to Paul, many in his congregation were getting older and feeling the pains and resentment of the passing of time. Sound familiar? We ache, we creak, we don't stand as tall, and it is a challenge to hear and to remember where we left our glasses.

Remember, even though things are old and decaying, there is a newness to celebrate. Day by day, the Lord renews our spiritual being. Seen from this point of view, it can be said that even though everything becomes old, it is truly new again through Christ.

Lord, remind me that you will always be there with the gift of newness of spirit. Even though everything gets old, you have promised to make my spirit new through the resurrection of Christ. Amen.

Refocus: Instead of focusing how the world used to be, try finding evidence of God's presence and renewal around you and celebrate.

Read: 2 Corinthians 4:16-18

Steve Sonnenberg
San Clemente, CA

Monday, August 26, 2013

In Stormy Weather

Take heart; it is I. Do not be afraid.

Matthew 14:27

One day when the disciples were caught in a storm, they saw a figure walking on the water. They cried out in fear. Jesus answered, “It is I. Do not be afraid.” He invited Peter to come to him. Peter stepped out of the boat and began to walk toward Jesus. Peter did fine until he saw a large wave rolling toward him. He took his eyes off Jesus and looked at the wave in fear. As he began to sink, Jesus reached out to rescue him and encouraged him to believe.

As we grow older, our hearts can grow fearful of the uncertainties that lie ahead. There are storms that blow into our lives. The natural response is to focus on the storm, the problem that threatens to overwhelm us. What a sinking feeling that can create! We need to take our eyes off the storm and in trust look to Jesus. “Don’t be afraid,” he says. He can quiet the storms that come into our lives with simple words, “Peace. Be still.”

Jesus, when storms blow into my life, help me keep my eyes and my trust focused on you. Amen.

Reflect: Is there a storm brewing in your life now? Can you share that concern with a good friend?

Read: Psalm 34

*Leo Symmank
Seabrook, TX*

Tuesday, August 27, 2013

Change

Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.

Hebrews 13:8

My wife and I are going through our collection of VHS tapes, as well as 8 mm tape cassettes. We view the material with mixed emotions. “Look at little Rachel!” “I actually had hair back then!” “Look how small the front yard tree was.”

Things have changed for my wife and me. Certainly we know our Savior more clearly. Through experiencing the ups and downs of our marriage, we know each other much more deeply. I don’t use my Underwood typewriter anymore. I am sitting here at my computer. Things have changed.

But our loving God hasn’t changed. He loves me now just as much as the day I was baptized. God hasn’t changed his mind concerning his promises to me, either. His promise to be with me always will forever stand the test of time.

Lord Jesus, thank you for your changeless love for me. Amen.

Meditate: Meditate and reflect on how you have changed—positively and negatively—and share what you find with someone you can trust.

Read: Luke 15:1-32

*Paul Eggold
Greendale, WI*

Wednesday, August 28, 2013

I Give Thanks for You

For this reason, because I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love toward all the saints, I do not cease to give thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers.

Ephesians 1:15-16

My visits with Ruth were always very special. Although separated in age by 40 years, we were very close sisters in Christ. She was always eager to hear another devotion about a woman from the Bible, and I was always eager to discover a new facet of her faith. Ruth proudly displayed her framed Baptismal certificate and her certificate of Confirmation (both in German) on her living room wall. We shared Confirmation verses and favorite Bible stories. Oh, Ruth loved the Lord and everything about his Word.

My ministry to Ruth was an official part of my position; her ministry to me was a pure gift of love. Such joy she brought to my life!

Dear Lord, as I approach old age, let me remember your mercies throughout my life and find a prayer partner to pass on your love to the next generation. Amen.

Find: Find a young person to share your faith with and witness to them.

Read: Romans 1:8-12

*Terry Weber
Williamsburg, VA*

Thursday, August 29, 2013

Greatest Expectations

But as for me, I watch in hope for the Lord ...

Micah 7:7

Do you know that feeling of childlike anticipation when someone is coming to visit? Recently a high school friend visited. I hadn't seen him in 35 years. The house was ready; everything was set. I kept going to the window, looking for him. Finally, he drove in the driveway! I was out the door with open arms!

I have a lot of little "fulfillments of hope" every day. My favorite time is early morning. On work-days, I get in the office when it's dark and wait for the first ray of sunshine. When it comes, I can't help but celebrate the day! What (or who) are you waiting for? How can watching in hope for the Lord be anything but joyful?

With joyful anticipation, I wait for your coming, Lord Jesus. Amen.

Meet: Have lunch with an old friend you haven't seen in a while. Experience the joy of hopeful expectation fulfilled!

Read: Psalm 62:5-7; Philippians 3:20

*K.S. Wuertz
Leslie, MO*

Friday, August 30, 2013

Time to Think

Finally ... whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure ... if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things.

Philippians 4:8

Aging joyfully is all about having the time and taking the time to THINK! It's not that we haven't thought about many things in our earlier years, but the Lord blesses us with life so that we can be more intentional now about affirming, supporting and encouraging those around us.

We have the time to e-mail a friend, hug a child, smile at a grouch, open the door for a younger person, laugh at every joke someone tells you!

The daily news shows, movies and editorials continue to drag people down and look mostly at the impure and lavish lives of the world. We are aging gracefully in order to do exactly what St. Paul says: Think about what the Lord has done for us and then share this Great News with others.

Lord, push me to think about all the good in the world because you are still in charge. Amen.

Think and do: Make a list of what is right and good and true in this world. Post it on your fridge for others to see.

Read: Psalm 24; John 3:16-17

*Rich Bimler
Bloomington, IL*

Saturday, August 31, 2013

Happy Days Are Here

Shout aloud and sing for joy ... for great is the Holy One of Israel among you.

Isaiah 12:6

The little dog chased his tail round and round. “Why?” asked the wise old dog. “I want to be happy, and I believe happiness resides in my tail.”

“Yes, it’s good to be happy, and I agree that happiness resides in my tail, but I have learned something. When I chase my tail, it runs away from me. If I go about my business, it always follows me.”

People who chase happiness will always be disappointed. The saying is true: Happiness is not a goal; it is always a by-product. Wealth, health and companionship that some chase are good things, but we must look deeper. God wants us to be happy always—even in bad times. That deeper happiness—Isaiah calls it “joy”—comes from knowing that God with his great love is among us. Knowing that brings not only joy, but also peace.

I shout aloud and sing for joy for I know you are with me, O Lord! O Holy One, let me bask in your presence and give me peace. In Jesus’ name. Amen.

Share: Send a cheerful card or make a phone call to someone who needs cheering.

Read: Isaiah 12

*Eldor Kaiser
Sturgeon Bay, WI*

Sunday, September 1, 2013

Be A Neighbor

But he, desiring to justify himself, said to Jesus, “And who is my neighbor?”

Luke 10:29

We fondly remember TV’s warm and welcoming Mr. Rogers, who sang, “Won’t you be my neighbor?” on his PBS show, *Mr. Rogers’ Neighborhood*. What is your neighborhood like today, and how did you choose it? Or did you choose it at all?

The lawyer testing Jesus about eternal life wants to choose his neighbor carefully according to rigid standards of worth: “And who is my neighbor?” Jesus tells the story of the Good Samaritan and then changes the question: “To whom can I be a neighbor?” Jesus, our Good Samaritan, welcomed tax collectors and sinners, his enemies at Calvary, a dying thief and us as neighbors in need of salvation. Wherever you now live, to whom can you be a warm and welcoming neighbor for Jesus?

Lord, make me a welcoming neighbor in your inclusive neighborhood. Amen.

Do: Reach out to one of your neighbors this week.

Read: Luke 10:25-37; Galatians 5:13-23

*Stephen J. Carter
Oakville, MO*

Monday, September 2, 2013

Will to Love Others

Love is patient and kind.

1 Corinthians 13:4

Jesus taught us to love all people. Loving others is not so hard when helping a friend face tragedy or sitting by the side of an ill friend. No, the challenges often come in the most ordinary days.

Day in and day out, it often is easier to lash out at those who dismiss us as a number, to envy those who have accomplished what we could not, to tear down those with power over us.

You know the people who try your patience and tempt you to fail at loving. Love is not just an emotion. We can will to love and be spiritually rejuvenated by that love, even when we feel miserable on a hot humid summer afternoon. We can will an attitude of love especially for those who do not pull our heartstrings. Jesus died on the cross out of love for us sinners, all sinners.

*Jesus, help me to share your love with others.
Amen.*

Love: Share love with those who dismiss you because of your age. Set an example, and shine with compassion.

Read: 1 Corinthians 13:1-13; Romans 5:5-6; John 15:13

Patricia Rice
St. Louis, MO

Tuesday, September 3, 2013

Kneeling Down

He humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.

Philippians 2:8

When I taught first grade, I often found myself in the position of kneeling down on hot pavement at recess to untangle the knots in a child's shoelace. I actually enjoyed that task. It reminded me of how God calls me to be in relationship with others—not lording it over people, but meeting their needs and showing them Jesus' love.

Jesus traded his glorious home in heaven for a smelly bed of straw. His first reaction on seeing a person in need is to ask, "What may I do for you?" He teaches us how to live, not just through words, but through the most humbling of actions—giving his life on the cross. As we study Christ's example, the Holy Spirit works an attitude of servanthood in our hearts. We pray for those in need. We take a meal to the home of a friend who suffers a loss. We give thanks for the days when we were elastic enough to kneel to tie a first-grader's shoe.

Jesus, help me to serve those around me. Amen.

Do: Act as a servant to a friend or family member today.

Read: Philippians 2:1-11; Romans 12:14-16

*Ruth Geisler
Aliso Viejo, CA*

Wednesday, September 4, 2013

Skin Games

You clothed me with skin and flesh ...

Job 10:11

Little Lisa's fingers gently touched the dark brown spots on my arm. "Will my freckles grow up like yours when I'm older, Oma?" she asked. I am "Oma"—German for Grandma—to nineteen kindergartners at our church school. To Lisa, those were not ugly signs of aging, sun damage or impending melanoma. They were simply grown-up freckles.

Was this the time for a lecture on using sunscreen? Probably not. I thought about telling Lisa the story of the ten lepers. Maybe another time. Instead, I gently touched the tiny freckles on her cheek, and we spent a kindergarten minute talking about how clever God was to cover the important "stuff" in our bodies with something as wondrous as skin.

Lord, when I vainly hide my age spots, help me remember you love me even with grown-up freckles. Amen.

Look: Look at your uncovered body today and spend a grown-up minute admiring every inch of this magnificent machine even with all its different colors and creases. (It also might provide you with a good chuckle.)

Read: Genesis 2:15-25

*Lois Scheer
San Diego, CA*

Thursday, September 5, 2013

The Phone Rang Today

My brothers, if anyone among you wanders from the truth and someone brings him back, let him know that whoever brings back a sinner from his wandering will save his soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins.

James 5:19-20

As I was preparing to retire, I asked my brother-in-law what was noticeably different about being retired. He told me the phone doesn't ring anymore!

We still receive calls, but for donations, political support or the advertising of the latest gadget. When you've retired, it's true—the phone doesn't ring anymore, at least not to request your services.

Well, the phone rang recently, and my pastor asked us to organize a contact ministry with the inactive members of our congregation. We did it, and now the phones are ringing—of those we encourage to return to worship Christ, our Lord and Savior. Try it, you'll like it and others will thank you for it!

Father, help us find those who wander so we can lead them back to you. Amen.

Call: Call a fellow Christian to encourage their involvement with the Lord and his church.

Read: Ezekiel 34:11-16; Matthew 18:12-13, 15; Luke 19:10

*David P. Schmidt
St. Louis, MO*

Friday, September 6, 2013

Taste And See

The house of Israel called its name manna ...

Exodus 16:31

I have always imagined that manna looked like sugar-frosted flakes. The word *manna* literally means “what is it?” Sugar-frosted flakes sounds like a more descriptive name! Manna tasted like a wafer made from honey.

For years, I visited a homebound lady named Aleta. Every time I visited, we had tea and Petit Burre crackers. They are really a cookie. To this day, when I see Petit Burre crackers in the store, I think fondly of Aleta and our visits over the years. The taste of those buttery cookies reminds me of fellowship with that dear Christian sister.

Holy God, thank you for the taste of honey, for the promise of manna and for keeping all your promises to me. Amen.

Consider: What memories do you have that involve taste? Do you have memories of the Lord that involve taste? What do the Lord's grace, mercy and forgiveness “taste” like to you?

Read: Psalm 105:37-45

*Don Schatz
McKinleyville, CA*

Saturday, September 7, 2013

Call, Don't Fall

Now to him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you blameless before the presence of his glory with great joy ... through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory ...

Jude 24-25

In hospital rooms we see signs to caution us: “CALL, DON'T FALL.” Call a nurse rather than risk toppling over. As we inch forward toward getting older, we're quite aware of the danger of falling. We'd all like to avoid losing our balance, taking a tumble and breaking a hip. But more dangerous than falling physically is to be tripped up by a spiritual temptation.

More helpful than our conscious attempts to watch our step, is to call on the Lord. God urges us (in Psalm 50:15) to “call upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you shall glorify me.” So, after God comes to our aid, we can sing his praises and witness to others how our Lord has been there to catch-and-rescue us precisely when we needed him.

O God, we pray in advance for that future moment when we'll need you to rescue us from a hidden danger. Amen.

Thank: Thank God for his protection.

Read: Psalm 37:23-24

*Deane Schuessler
Woodbury, MN*

Sunday, September 8, 2013

Like Paul

*I, Paul, an old man, ... appeal to you for my child,
Onesimus ...*

Philemon 1:9-10

Here we have the apostle Paul in his later years not hesitating to be in ministry for his Lord. Paul was in prison for sharing the Gospel of Jesus Christ. He appeals to his good friend Philemon to take back his runaway slave Onesimus. In spite of his age, Paul served wherever he could.

Like Paul, you and I may experience physical problems (he had a thorn in his flesh) or limited opportunities (he was in prison), but like Paul we can still reach out to others in loving and caring ways. God can use us to be his witness in word and deed. God can use us until the time comes when he calls us to be with him in heaven. We can be a “little Christ” in our later years like Paul.

Lord Jesus, send your Spirit into my life that I may serve and be a witness for you like Paul. Amen.

Watch: Keep looking for ways to serve, share and speak the Lord's message.

Read: Philemon 1:1-25

*Walter M. Schoedel
Webster Groves, MO*

Monday, September 9, 2013

Like Firemen

Father, Abraham, have pity on me and send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue, because I am in agony in this fire.

Luke 16:24

When we were little, some of us dreamed of being firemen. We fantasized about wearing the uniform or riding in those big trucks with sirens blaring. Oh, the rescues we could imagine! Of course, we were always the hero. Some lived out that dream. We are grateful for their faithfulness.

In another sense, we are all firemen. We have been called to be part of the team that is to extinguish the fires of hell. The main fire has been extinguished by our Lord! He did it by pouring his love on that fire. But it still rages too often in the lives of those we care about. It will take some heroic work on our part to do something about it. There are risks involved.

Keep your fireman dreams. Keep pouring God's love upon the fires of hell, wherever you find them burning.

O Heavenly Father, may your Spirit lead us to every fire of evil that threatens to destroy eternally. Amen.

Approach: Approach sin as a fireman on a mission.

Read: Psalm 136

*Vern Gundermann
Kirkwood, MO*

Tuesday, September 10, 2013

Inside Out

Man looks on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart.

1 Samuel 16:7

As a teenager I spent lots of time in front of the mirror. I wanted to look perfect before I went anywhere. These days, my mirror-time is greatly reduced. Now I try to cover the gray in my hair and the wrinkles on my face before I go out. I can almost hear Mom saying, “Quit fussing! It’s what’s on the inside that counts.”

Mom’s words that were true when I was seventeen are still true. Physical beauty fades with age, but inner beauty can mature with age. God sees through physical appearance into the heart. To God, real beauty comes from who we are, not what we look like.

We need to turn ourselves “inside out” so others can see God’s love, care and concern in our actions and words.

Loving Savior, help me to be beautiful in all my words and actions. Amen.

Thank: Thank someone who has brought true “beauty” to your life.

Read: 1 Peter 3:3-5

Jeanette Dall
Batavia, IL

Wednesday, September 11, 2013

Not Yet

And you will hear of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not alarmed, for this must take place, but the end is not yet.

Matthew 24:6

News reports are filled with crime and disasters and “wars and rumors of wars.” When will it end? The end will come on a day that only the Father knows, the day when Jesus returns in glory as our King. On that day we will be raised up in glory from our graves or, if still living, we will be changed, our bodies dressed in immortality. On that day wars and disasters will end, and we will live forever in the presence of our King.

Until then, remember Jesus’ words, “Not yet.” When you hear terrible news stories, pray for peace and pray for those who suffer. Do what Jesus tells us to do: “Straighten up and raise your heads, because your redemption is drawing near” (Luke 21:28).

Jesus, when I hear frightening news, help me to trust in you. Amen.

Encourage: Encourage someone who is fearful.

Read: 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18

*Carol Geisler
Manchester, MO*

Thursday, September 12, 2013

Look Where You Go

When Saul and all Israel heard these words of the Philistine, they were dismayed and greatly afraid.

1 Samuel 17:11

My car tends to go in the direction I am looking. Focus too long on the scenery and I may soon hear my tires crossing the rumble strip on the shoulder. The same is true when I try to avoid a pothole or icy patch. The best way to miss the danger is to focus on where I want to go rather than what I want to avoid.

Focus separated David from Saul as they faced the Philistines in battle. Saul, and the rest of the Israelite army, only saw Goliath. David's focus on God made Goliath a manageable difficulty. Because he was focused on God, David was able to defeat his problem.

The God that was with David is also with you. Keep your focus on him as you face the struggles of the day.

Dear Lord, help me to focus on you, even as I face the struggles of the day. Amen.

Look: When faced with a struggle today, focus on God's provision in the midst of it all.

Read: 1 Samuel 17:1-54

*Joe Iovino
Monument, CO*

Friday, September 13, 2013

The Big Game

I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own.

Philippians 3:12

Did you play a sport in high school or college? Or are you an armchair quarterback who never misses a game on television?

Paul used sports metaphors to explain the Christian life. As an athlete strives to win a prize, so the Christian strives against the devil and his own flesh to obtain the life of Christ as his own. Paul knows that he is incapable of doing this on his own; he shares in Christ's suffering, death and resurrection because Christ has made him his own.

How are your athletic endeavors proceeding today? Have you traded your cleats for loafers or bedroom slippers? Do you rely on a cane or a walker as you slowly advance toward the finish line? Through faith, press on with Paul "toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 3:14).

Thank you, Lord Jesus, for making me your own in Baptism. Amen.

Do: Study God's Word to learn about the life God intends for you.

Read: 1 Corinthians 9:24-27

*Eileen Ritter
Grand Haven, MI*

Saturday, September 14, 2013

Singing Hymns

Singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs.

Colossians 3:16

My grandmother carried her hymnbook to church. I asked her why. She answered, “I use it at home. I use it at church. It helps me express my faith. I see God in new ways. I discover and rediscover my relationship with Jesus. The music helps me remember the words of the hymn.”

My grandmother’s testimony played a very important role in her spiritual journey. I often think about what she said as I sing hymns that she might have sung. Hymns are important to the Christian pilgrim. I have noticed that the words of hymns come to mind as I face life’s issues, especially in these later years with life’s many changes.

Lord Jesus, thank you for the hymn writers and hymn composers who enrich my spiritual journey. Amen.

Sing: In your daily devotions read and/or sing a hymn. Then answer the question, “What phrase or words in this hymn touch my heart this day ... comfort, consolation, confession, peace or purpose for my daily living?”

Read: Psalm 146; Ephesians 5:15-21

*Walter M. Schoedel
Webster Groves, MO*

Sunday, September 15, 2013

Winning the Lottery!

I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me ...

Philippians 3:14

There is a story of a woman who kept praying to the Lord to help her win the lottery. One night she heard God's voice saying, "If you want me to help you win the lottery, you are first going to have to buy a ticket!"

The Good News is that we have already won the Lottery, the Big Prize, because of Christ's death and resurrection. No need to buy a ticket. No need to do anything special to win. We already are winners, through God's victory at Calvary.

As we age, we rejoice in the Prize of eternal life, which we are enjoying right now. Oh, to love life like the 88-year-old man who won a million dollars in the lottery, and instead of taking it in a lump sum, requested that he receive \$100,000 each year for the next ten years. Now that's called living in the Lord!

Lord, whenever we become whiners because of what we do not have, remind us that we are winners because of you. Amen.

Think: What would you change in your life if you did win the lottery?

Read: Colossians 1:11-14

*Rich Bimler
Bloomington, IL*

Monday, September 16, 2013

How Are You Aging?

... and your strength will equal your days.

Deuteronomy 33:25

We are all aging. No one has a choice about it. If you got up this morning, you are aging. If your day is winding down, you have aged another day. To live is to age.

But we do have a choice when it comes to the question “How are you aging?” Blazoned on the cover of this devotional are the words: Hope-Full Living. And it’s a choice.

You can live mournfully—or you can live hopefully.

You can live woefully—or you can live hopefully.

You can live slovenly—or you can live hopefully.

You can live fretfully—or you can live hopefully.

You can live despairingly—or you can live hopefully.

Jesus has chosen you to live forever! His life-saving death and resurrection invites you to embrace life, brimming with hope—now! “Strength (from the Holy Spirit) will equal your days.”

Jesus, I want to age hopefully. Amen.

Encourage: Encourage others in hope-filled living.

Read: Romans 15

*Randy Shields
Florissant, MO*

Tuesday, September 17, 2013

Dreaded Storeroom

Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth ...

Matthew 6:19

One room in our house creates more burden than any other—the dreaded storeroom. This large, unfinished space contains shelves filled to overflowing with family papers, books and travel memorabilia, not to mention a concrete floor cluttered with seasonal decorations, old sports equipment and unpacked boxes from a move 15 years ago. A dreaded storeroom indeed! We don't want to burden our children with decisions on our stuff. The burden grows.

Tangibly we understand Jesus' words about storing up treasures where moth and rust corrupt and almost hope that thieves would break in and steal to relieve our burden. Needing motivation to tackle our task, we look to treasures in heaven awaiting us because of Christ's death on the cross. We begin the storeroom cleaning as one way of "seeking first the kingdom of God and his righteousness" (Matthew 6:33).

Lord, thanks for taking our burdens on the cross so that we might reduce our worldly possessions. Amen.

Do: Begin to tackle your "dreaded storeroom."

Read: Matthew 6:19-21; Acts 3:1-10

*Stephen J. Carter
Oakville, MO*

Wednesday, September 18, 2013

Take Courage

Why are you cast down, O my soul, and why are you disquieted within me? Hope in God; for I shall again praise him, my help.

Psalm 42:5 (NRSV)

Some older translations of Psalm 42:5 put the last part of the verse as: “Take courage, my soul.” I like that better.

When we lived in a country parsonage, we were regularly visited by a young man who delivered ice cream products door-to-door. He made sure our house was at the end of his route so he could stop and visit. He was both bright and spiritual. I asked him if he had plans to go to college. “Oh, yes,” he said. “I picked out five colleges to go to right after high school—that’s five years ago now—I’m just waiting for God to tell me which one.”

Waiting for God can be a refuge during a painful time of life. But waiting for God can also be an excuse for doing nothing. Are you “waiting for God” to put something off? “Take courage!” Just do it!

Lord, give us the courage of our convictions so that we cannot only wait but also act. Amen.

Do: Do something unexpected for someone else that takes a little courage and involves a bit of risk.

Read: Romans 8; Psalm 42

*Ted Schroeder
Maple Grove, MN*

Thursday, September 19, 2013

The “Senior” Prom

I will greatly rejoice in the Lord; my soul shall exult in my God, for he has clothed me with the garments of salvation; he has covered me with the robe of righteousness ...

Isaiah 61:10

Remember the excitement with which you anticipated the senior proms of your youth? The date you longed for but hardly hoped to get, the corsage and boutonniere from the local florist and—above all—the perfect formalwear for the important occasion.

Those high school dances are ancient history. But dressing up and going someplace special still adds excitement to our lives. Even when our closets lack the latest in fancy apparel, we know we are clothed in the righteousness freely given to us by our Savior, Jesus Christ, which is ours to wear joyfully here on earth and in the celebration that awaits us in heaven.

Thank you, Lord, for clothing us in robes of righteousness, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

Celebrate: Plan a special dressed-up occasion with your friends, a foretaste of the celebration that awaits all believers in heaven.

Read: Isaiah 61

*Eileen Ritter
Grand Haven, MI*

Friday, September 20, 2013

Dreams Remembered

I tell you that in the same way there will be more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who do not need to repent.

Luke 15:7

A lot of children dream of making that last-second shot, hitting the home run or making that fantastic catch. There may even have been a special moment when the crowd, whether 5 or 50,000, was brought to their feet by your play. Praise God! It is a dream come true, a moment to remember!

But there is an even greater moment that will be remembered and celebrated again and again! It is the joy of a sinner who repents. If that sinner has been brought to that point by what you have done, by your example, by your words, you have hit the game winner, made the saving tackle, shot the winning bucket! Jesus has done all the saving work, of course. But thanks for your part too! You made an eternal difference in their lives.

Thank you, Lord, for helping me to lead people to the knowledge of the victory found in you. Amen.

Dream and act: Dream and act with those to whom you may be a spiritual hero.

Read: Luke 15:1-7

*Vern Gundermann
Kirkwood, MO*

Saturday, September 21, 2013

A Mother's Plea

The one who receives instruction in the word must share all good things with his instructor.

Galatians 6:6

My mother had been a teacher and a church organist for many years. Unfortunately, the last year of her life she suffered several strokes and lost her independence. Finally, she was forced to go into a nursing home, confined to a wheelchair. As the last blow, her speech became incoherent. Despite everything, she never lost her love of God and continually sang his praises.

During our last visit, I was telling her and my husband David about the sermon I'd heard that day in church, when she interrupted. After a few tries before we got it, she asked, "Did David go to church?"

We both shook heads no. She turned in her wheelchair and looked David in the eye. In a forceful, clear voice she said, "You should. God misses you."

Thank you, Lord, for those who willingly share their faith despite their disabilities. May their boldly faithful attitudes be forever ingrained in us. Amen.

Give thanks: Say a prayer of thanks for all those who have shared God's Word with you.

Read: Hebrews 3:12-15; Galatians 6:1-10

*Edna Jakobsky
Ft. Myers, FL*

Sunday, September 22, 2013

Spiritual Mothers

Deborah, a prophetess, ... was judging Israel ... and the people of Israel came up to her for judgment.

Judges 4:4-5

Deborah was a judge in Israel, exercising political, executive and legislative authority. She was also a prophetess. The Israelites recognized Deborah as a prophetess and judge and came to her for judgment.

Who are the women that the Lord has used in your life to bring you his Word, to direct your spiritual journey, to help you discern the Lord's direction in your life, to pray for you, to teach you, to bless you with faith, hope and love? It might be useful to make a list. It would also be a good thing (even spiritually) to thank these women, if they are still with us. While you are at it, thank the Lord for blessing you with such women of faith.

Thank you, Lord, for the women of faith in my life, past and present, and the examples they set for me. Amen.

Consider: How can you encourage young women today in their life of faith? Perhaps a story or two about the "spiritual mothers" who blessed you would be useful.

Read: Judges 4 and 5

*Don Schatz
McKinleyville, CA*

Monday, September 23, 2013

Grand ... Kids

I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made.

Psalm 139:14

Four generations later, the same silly, smirky smile reappears. Elle's photo, inserted into her great-grandmother's family picture, adorns Grandpa's office wall. The great-granddaughter could be a twin.

The miracle of family continues. The seemingly random reception of genes produce family traits designed by a Creator's hand and heart. DNA is not some roll of the dice. God imprints his image in our family tree in a very special way.

God hones infinite genetic possibilities into a unique individual. His creating hand selects each chromosome and gene to form a spiral producing the glint in the eye, the expression of the lips and the shape of the face for each person. Life is beautiful.

God, give us a new appreciation of the unique gift of our family tree. Send your Spirit upon each of our family members to know they have a Heavenly Father, as well as an earthly family. Amen.

Share: Take time to tell each grandchild how much you love them and what you like about them. If you have none of your own, adopt a few and share!

Read: Psalm 2; Ephesians 1

Rodney Otto
Grand Rapids, MI

Tuesday, September 24, 2013

Back to the Future

Man looks on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart.

1 Samuel 16:7

Remember when you found the first gray hair, wrinkle or age spot? When you lost the energy to complete your to-do list? When you just couldn't think of the word on the tip of your tongue? These symptoms of aging are startling at first, but soon become commonplace and familiar. Instead of looking back, are you setting your sights on the future?

Now is the time to "fix our eyes on Jesus." Now is the time for an internal beauty routine, centered on the fruits of God's grace and love. Our future is in heaven, where the Savior "will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body" (Philippians 3:21). Spirit-filled joy, peace, patience and self-control are far more attractive than any physical attributes.

Lord, draw our attention to the inner qualities that grow by your grace and love in our hearts. Amen.

Imagine: When you look in the mirror today, which fruits of the Spirit do you see?

Read: Hebrews 12:1-2; Romans 8:6; Galatians 5:22-23

Sharolyn Sander
Roselle, IL

Wednesday, September 25, 2013

The Trees in Our Lives

So he ran on ahead and climbed up into a sycamore tree to see him, for he was about to pass that way. And when Jesus came to the place, he looked up and said to him, “Zacchaeus, hurry and come down, for I must stay at your house today.”

Luke 19:4-5

We know that a person is saved only by God’s amazing grace (Ephesians 2:8). We are powerless to save ourselves. In Zacchaeus, we find a man in whom God was already at work: he sought out Jesus. He even used a sycamore tree as his vantage point to see Jesus. Zacchaeus gained much because of two trees in his life—the sycamore of that eventful day and the tree upon which Jesus died to take the curse that belonged to Zacchaeus, to me, to you and to all. Zacchaeus won big that day, for he came to believe in Jesus Christ. In due time, he would also eat from the Tree of Life (Revelation 2:7).

Lord, thank you for the divinely appointed trees in life. Amen.

Ask: Are you in that place where you can see Jesus?

Read: Luke 18:40-43

*Peter Ward
Ottawa, IL*

Thursday, September 26, 2013

Plant a Little Seed

Jesus said, "This is what the kingdom of God is like. A man scatters seed on the ground."

Mark 4:26

John Chapman, born September 26, 1774, originally came from Massachusetts. They called him "Johnny Appleseed" because he started apple tree nurseries throughout much of West Virginia, Pennsylvania, Ohio, Indiana and Illinois. His kind and generous ways first endeared him to people on the frontier. He then supplied them with apple seeds and started the nurseries himself. Johnny was also always quick to preach the Gospel. Those seeds of the Gospel were the most precious seeds he planted.

Do you remember the song that Johnny sang as he went on his way from place to place? It was "The Lord is good to me, and so I thank the Lord." Schoolchildren across America still learn the story of Johnny Appleseed. And every time a class sings, "The Lord is good to me," it's like little saplings of faith are springing up all over.

God, teach me to plant the seeds of your love everywhere I go. Amen.

Give: Give a child an apple. Tell the story of Johnny Appleseed and of Jesus.

Read: Matthew 13; Micah 6:6-8

Lonie Eatherton
Fenton, MO

Friday, September 27, 2013

Whistle While You Wait

But those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength.

Isaiah 40:31

I remember as a young boy wanting to learn to whistle. I spent much of my time watching my grandmother whistle in her rocking chair.

The longer we live, the more it seems we spend time waiting. Lately, I've spent time waiting for a car to be serviced. Perhaps for others it is waiting at the doctor's office. For still others it might be waiting at home for a loved one to arrive for a visit.

Perhaps we need to whistle more while we wait. As a matter of fact, I encourage it. I must say, however, my grandmother did not just whistle away her time. She would crochet some of the most beautiful doilies. She realized she could still be creative in her later years.

I like the term *active waiting*. *Active waiting* for Christians begins by sitting in the rocking chair of grace. We rock back in his grace, move forward at his pace (for us) until we see his face!

Heavenly Father, lead me to witness and even whistle while I wait. Amen.

Pray: While you wait, say a prayer for someone.

Read: Romans 5:1-5

*Jim Kirk
Festus, MO*

Saturday, September 28, 2013

Firsts

Rejoice that your names are written in heaven.

Luke 10:20

Dad lathered his face with the soap he had mixed with his brush. Even now the aroma lingers. I watched with little-boy envy. But I can't remember my first shave! Last week another little boy marched into our home and with great pride announced: "Grandpa, I bought my first deodorant today."

What "firsts" are you remembering? Driver's license? Date? Kiss? Marriage? Child?

You may not remember, but when you were but a tiny girl or boy, the words "I baptize you in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit" were surely spoken over you, and the water was poured. Your name was written in God's Book of Life (Revelation 3:5).

Baptism is our Great First! It's that moment in time when God called us out of darkness into his light. It is that Great First when our eternal life with God was made sure!

Heavenly Father, thank you for writing my name in your Book of Life. Amen.

For today's first thing: A shout of "Thanks be to God!" is appropriate!

Read: Titus 3:4-7

*Tom Zehnder
Baileys Harbor, WI*

Sunday, September 29, 2013

Sunrise ... Sunset

The day is yours, and yours also the night.

Psalm 74:16

Filling the weekly pill dispenser is often discouraging. Seems just yesterday it was full. Where did the seven days go? *Tempus fugit!* Time flies.

Every year seems shorter. Maybe so. One year at age five is one fifth of a lifetime; at seventy it's one seventieth! Maybe that's why the pill box empties fast.

What is our response to the shortening of days? Filling every sunrise and sunset with memories can displace regret of the increasing tempo of life. After all, pills are one of the blessings of life to be enjoyed, although sometimes hard to take. Celebrating the bounty of the Son's glow upon each day slows down each sunrise and sunset.

Thank you, Lord, for pills that improve health. Teach us to number our days, stretching each 24 hours to enable spending sacred time with you and our loved ones. Amen.

Reach out: With the relaxed pace of retirement, reach out to someone still in the rush of life and share a God moment with them.

Read: Psalm 90; Psalm 91

Rodney Otto
Grand Rapids, MI

Monday, September 30, 2013

What About the Flock?

May the Lord God ... appoint someone over this community to go out and come in before them, so the Lord's people will not be like sheep without a shepherd.

Numbers 27:16-17

In this passage, God tells Moses he won't enter the Promised Land. Imagine his disappointment. Instead of arguing, Moses becomes an intercessor for the people. God obliges and appoints Joshua to lead. We all wonder what will happen to our loved ones if we're gone. Will everything be O.K.? It's the ultimate gift we can give: to lead—and leave—our loved ones to God. The wonderful thing about it is that we can start today—this minute. Imagine God's joy when we let go and turn over what we love the most to him. But then, it's been his all along, hasn't it?

Lord, please watch over the sheep in my flock. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Talk: Have a private, heart-to-heart talk with your loved ones. Find a way to grow together in Christ. Maybe it's reading Scripture together daily.

Read: Micah 5:2-4; John 10:11-16

*K.S. Wuertz
Leslie, MO*

HOLY HABITS for **HOPE-FULL HEALTH**

Ideas for Remembering the Good Old Days!

Why not recapture your childhood days and provide family and friends the opportunity to remember you now and in the future? Here are some suggestions:

1. Ask someone to videotape you telling stories of the “good old days.” Simply start talking, and share highlights and lowlights of your life.
2. To add spice to the video, enlist a family member to interview you. You can even write out the questions you want to answer!
3. Plan to write a book. All it takes is to write down your experiences, feelings and faith-life. Ask a published author to assist you.
4. Get out the old photo albums and reminisce by writing notes about those photographed and by telling stories about your family, friends and trips.
5. Make a scrapbook of old newspaper articles, photos, birthday cards and other “golden oldies” you have stored in your files. What wonderful memories you can share with others in this way!

There are many other ways to share your memories and to focus on how you will leave your legacy with future generations. Speak at church groups, have a “Talk to the grandkids” evening and even start a blog. Nostalgia isn’t what it used to be, so celebrate your past life now so your faith-story will continue. It beats waiting for your eulogy to be written by someone else!

Hope-Full Praying

For Anytime

You are always there for me, listening and loving and even laughing with me. When I pray for help, thanks for helping me. When I pray to give you thanks, thanks for assuring me of your presence. When I pray just to say “Wow,” thanks for continuing to bring more and more wows into my life. For help, for thanks, for wows, I pray. Amen.

For Holidays

There are so many events to celebrate these days, Lord! We thank you for birthdays, anniversaries, weddings, Independence Day, Labor Day and so many more. As we celebrate these big occasions, help us to also remember those people who have little to celebrate—the lonely, the unemployed, those mourning death, those suffering from disease and those we remember personally in our hearts right now. We celebrate and we heal, in your name. Amen.

For Time

Lord, thanks for the time you give to me each day to relax, to sing, to visit, to read, to play, to laugh and just to do nothing! I hope it is okay, Lord, just to “do nothing,” because it reminds me that I need to “do nothing” in order for you to love and forgive me. You have done it all for me, and now that is something I want to tell others, in the time you continue to give to me. 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 (____) _____

Email _____