

# HOPE-FULL LIVING

• *Daily Devotions for Christian Seniors* •

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## 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."

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Wednesday, January 1, 2014

# New Beginnings

*You have made known to me the paths of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence.*

*Acts 2:28*

The new year often causes us to reflect on the previous year and to form resolutions for the upcoming year. Sometimes we determine we will set out on a new path in life such as a new job or possibly retirement. Maybe you are eagerly anticipating the birth of your first grandchild and your new role as a grandparent. Perhaps you are planning to take a long-anticipated trip with your family or spouse.

Whatever your circumstances may be in life, trust in the Lord and follow the path he sets before you. While our plans for the year may change, God's love for us is certain. As Christians, we know that our path will eventually lead home to our Heavenly Father.

*Dear God, in an ever-changing world remind me that your love for me never changes. Amen.*

*Do: Thank God for the blessings in your life.*

*Read: Proverbs 3:5-6*

*Betsy Becker Niedringhaus  
Ballwin, MO*

Thursday, January 2, 2014

# In the Midst of Winter

*... continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed ...*

2 Timothy 3:14

Do New Year's resolutions mean new beginnings for you? Do you have good intentions about changes you want to make? I hope all goes well for you. But how strange it is, isn't it, to begin again in the midst of winter—when it is cold, dark and depressing?

Paul in the winter of his life, nearing execution as a prisoner of the Lord, takes a different approach with young pastor Timothy, facing the winter of his own challenges: "Continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed" (2 Timothy 3:14). He is referring to "the sacred writings which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus" (3:15). God-breathed, these Scriptures make us "complete, equipped for every good work" (3:17) in the New Year through the One born in the midst of winter to die on a dark Good Friday. Continue—don't just begin—in that hope for the New Year.

*Lord, refresh me in the New Year as I continue to trust the hopeful promises of your Word. Amen.*

*List: List God's continuing promises as you begin a new year.*

*Read: 2 Timothy 3:10-17*

Stephen J. Carter  
Oakville, MO

Friday, January 3, 2014

# The Season of Christ

*For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.*

*Luke 2:11*

As you read this, the Christmas decorations in the stores have been removed and replaced with signs boasting of slashed prices and bargains. In your homes, most of you have also removed the Christmas decorations. The stockings “hung with care” are now placed in a storage container for the next eleven months or so.

The Christmas season as we know it is over. The obvious, outward signs that Christ was born are as neatly tucked away as the holiday decorations. As followers of Christ, we need not let this season end when we throw away last year’s calendar and replace it with a new 2014 model.

God does not put a time limit on remembering and announcing the amazing things he has done for us.

*Dearest Lord, may the lines of communication be open so I can share the good news of your birth. Amen.*

*Celebrate: Celebrate the miracle of our God becoming flesh. Proclaim it every month every year.*

*Read: Matthew 1:18-25*

*Darla Panabaker  
Breezy Point, MN*

Saturday, January 4, 2014

# Numbering Our Days

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

*Psalm 90:12*

What are you counting on this year? Do you speculate about the days ahead? God will not be surprised by anything that happens throughout the year! Psalm 139:16 declares that “all the days ordained for me were written in [God’s] book before one of them came to be.”

God knows everything about us—our thoughts and words, likes and dislikes. He knows the pains and heartbreaks, as well as the joys and blessings that may be in our future. Nothing will happen by coincidence. Our loving Father is in control.

God alone knows the number of our days, and he has promised to be with us and provide for us each day. “My God will supply every need ... according to his riches ... in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 4:19). Make each day count, by devoting it to God and his kingdom!

*Make us wise for salvation, O Lord, through faith in Christ Jesus. Amen.*

*Count: Add up God’s blessings as you go through the day.*

*Read: Psalm 139; Psalm 37*

*Sharolyn Sander  
Lincoln, NE*

Sunday, January 5, 2014

# I'll Be Around

*I will not forget you.*

*Isaiah 49:15*

I like the music of the 1950s and 1960s. Recently, I was listening as the TV played “I’ll Be Around,” a vintage recording of the Spinners. Ironically, one of the Spinners died at a young age. He’s no longer around, unfortunately.

Don’t we all want to sing “I’ll be around”? No one wants to be forgotten. No one wants to be hidden away. We do want others to know that we are around. Yet sometimes it feels as if loved ones, and even God, have forgotten that we exist. We fear our absence—from all whom we know and all who know us.

God challenges that fear of absence with his presence. This is a special time—these months between Christmas and Easter. Jesus’ birth at Bethlehem is about God’s presence for us in this world’s time. Jesus’ resurrection is about God’s presence for us in heaven’s eternity. God’s song is truly “I’ll Be Around.” He is always around, and we are never forgotten.

*Dear Lord God, remind me daily that you are with me. Amen.*

*Remember: God’s presence casts out fear.*

*Read: Isaiah 49:14-16; Matthew 28:16-20*

*Harry Edenfield  
Brownstown, MI*

Monday, January 6, 2014

# Star Geezers

*We saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him.*

*Matthew 2:2*

Epiphany is a great time of the Church Year to be a stargazer! What a joy to be like the Wise Men who followed that Star of Bethlehem on their search for the Savior. How wise we are to continue to follow that Star, the Christ Child, who grew up to live, suffer, die and rise for each of us.

How appropriate for us to live each day in order to point out to others the joy of following our Lord in and through our lives. Because of the gift of aging, you and I may be more like “star geezers” than stargazers, but the result is still the same—the Babe of Bethlehem was born for us so that we may live forever, through him! We can also be called “star geezers” as we erupt with joy because of the Christmas message! Regardless of age, we continue to seek and to see him!

*Lord, continue your epiphany in us as we gaze at that Star of Bethlehem. Amen.*

*Gaze: Check over the Christmas cards you received, and pray each day this week for 3 or 5 of the families that shared the message of the Star with you.*

*Read: Matthew 2:1-12*

*Rich Bimler  
Bloomington, IL*

Tuesday, January 7, 2014

# Three Kind Men

*Be kind to one another, tenderhearted ...*

*Ephesians 4:32*

We again heard the story of the three Wise Men of Epiphany; I'd like to tell you about three kind men in our church. The first is one of our retired pastors who continues to serve part-time. His gift from God is one-to-one visitation. When my husband had surgery, he came, listened and prayed with us. The second kind man is our retired music director who also continues to serve as organist. You can see the love of God in his face! The third kind man, in our senior Bible class, is a retired teacher and coach. He has an athletic field named after him, but this soft-spoken man often speaks of God's love and grace. All three kind men humbly share their gifts to God's glory, as the three Wise Men did with the Christ Child many years ago!

*Dear Christ, help me kindly share my gifts with others to your glory. Amen.*

*Resolve: Humbly do kind deeds in the new year.*

*Read: 1 Corinthians 13:4-7; Matthew 5:7-9*

*Annette Schumacher  
Muskego, WI*



Wednesday, January 8, 2014

## By Faith ...

*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*

Our pastor challenges members to become faith moms and dads by continually sharing the Good News of Jesus with the younger generation.

As the New Year begins, may I encourage you to reread Hebrews 11 and fill in the blanks with your own “family” members:

By faith, Carl and Esther brought me to the baptismal font.

By faith, Carl and Esther brought me to Sunday School regularly.

By faith, Carl and Esther shared the Word of God with me through nightly devotions and daily prayer.

You get the idea. “Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses ... let us run with endurance the race that is set before us” (Hebrews 12:1-2).

*Good Father, I give you thanks for my parents and other “family” who have and continue to encourage me in my faith walk with you. Amen.*

*Think: How can I be a faith mom or dad today?*

*Read: Hebrews 11 and 12*

*Louise Schini Weber  
Ft. Myers, FL*

Thursday, January 9, 2014

# No Ordinary Days

*Jesus said to them, “Come and have breakfast.”*

*John 21:12*

Jesus’ disciples experienced extraordinary events. Their Master was betrayed, condemned, crucified and buried. Then he rose from the dead! They saw him alive! Perhaps, after all the excitement, the disciples just wanted to do something ordinary—so they went fishing. At dawn, Jesus appeared again and greeted them from the shore. At his direction the disciples pulled in a large catch of fish, and Jesus invited them to breakfast. The disciples’ very ordinary day suddenly became extraordinary in the presence of their crucified and risen Lord.

In the night, at breakfast and all through even your most ordinary days, Jesus is with you. He promised, “I am with you always” (Matthew 28:20). The most ordinary stuff of life is no longer ordinary, because Jesus—the crucified and risen Son of God—is with you every minute of every day. That’s extraordinary!

*Lord Jesus, be with me all through my ordinary day. Amen.*

*Remember: Go about your ordinary day. You are not alone!*

*Read: John 21:1-14*

*Carol Geisler  
Manchester, MO*

Friday, January 10, 2014

# A Winter Getaway

*I went away into Arabia, and returned again to Damascus.*

*Galatians 1:17*

Many living in cold climates seek a winter getaway in sunny Florida or desert Arizona—not just a getaway from the cold, but a time of refreshing and escape from work or boring routine. So what is your “winter getaway,” your time away from things?

The apostle Paul met Jesus on the Damascus road and was called to a worldwide mission to Gentiles and Jews alike. But first he needed time away for spiritual growth and preparation. God sent him into the Arabian desert before the apostle returned to Damascus. Refreshed and strengthened, Paul began his daunting task. How is God using you where you are? How can God help you use a “winter getaway,” whatever that may mean for you, both to grow in your faith and reach out to new friends? In what ways can you return refreshed?

*Lord, thanks for winter getaways as opportunities to be refreshed in body and spirit for ongoing witness and service. Amen.*

*Think: Consider maximizing your winter getaway time for the Lord.*

*Read: Galatians 1:11-24*

*Stephen J. Carter  
Oakville, MO*

Saturday, January 11, 2014

# Hang on to the Rope

*You are a hiding place for me; you preserve me from trouble; you surround me with shouts of deliverance.*

*Psalm 32:7*

In 1978, a severe blizzard struck northern Indiana and lasted for days. We had livestock that needed to be cared for regardless of the weather. The barn was quite a distance from the house, although I couldn't see it due to the blowing snow. I knew it was possible for a person to become disoriented in a whiteout and lose his or her way. I tied a very long piece of rope to a tree outside the back door. Then I headed in the direction of the barn. When I finally reached it, I tied the rope securely on that end. For four days, I hung onto that rope each time I made the trip to the barn.

We spend most of our lives in a blizzard of some kind, unable to see where we are going. The only thing that assures that we reach our destination safely is to hang on to God's Word and his promises.

*Father, keep us safe on our life journey and bring us safely home. Amen.*

*Remind: Remind someone to "hang on" to God.*

*Read: Isaiah 41:10*

*Gloria Doty  
Fort Wayne, IN*

Sunday, January 12, 2014

# Aging Assurance

*Be strong and courageous ... for it is the Lord your God who goes with you.*

*Deuteronomy 31:6*

Moses spoke these words to his people as they were about to enter the land promised. They didn't know what to expect in this new land. But Moses told them, "Be strong and courageous." Why? "Because the Lord will go with you."

Growing old is a little like entering a new land. It's unknown territory, and we don't know what to expect. We may lose things—our waistlines, our hair, even our car keys. We may feel alone and useless. The very real threat of sickness and death can cloud the joys of growing older. Art Linkletter reminded us long ago, "Old age ain't for sissies."

Wow! That's depressing and doesn't belong in "Hope-Full Living." If growing older were a walk in the rose garden, no HOPE would be needed. The threats and dangers are real. But HOPE is in Moses' words. If the Lord is with us, who can be against us?

*Dear Lord, quiet my fears, for I know you are with me. In Jesus' name. Amen.*

*Pray: Pray for an older person who is going through a dangerous time.*

*Read: Psalm 46*

*Eldor Kaiser  
Lenexa, KS*

Monday, January 13, 2014

# Keepsakes

*Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.*

*Matthew 24:35*

What do you consider a keepsake? A visit with a 93-year-old began with a recollection of little angels given to her by her late husband. Almost all of us have at least one keepsake that brings fond memories of the past.

One of the greatest keepsakes we are blessed with in this world is the keepsake of God's Word. Before our Lord was crucified, he assured his disciples, and us, that his words would never pass away.

What keepsake of his Word do you need today?

"Come to me all who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest" (Matthew 11:28).

"Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in me" (John 14:1).

"In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world" (John 16:33).

May God *keep* you safe for the *sake* of Christ!

*Lord Jesus Christ, keep us steadfast in your Word.  
Amen.*

*Tell: Tell someone about a "treasured keepsake" from God's Word.*

*Read: Psalm 119:105; John 8:31-32*

*Jim Kirk  
Festus, MO*

Tuesday, January 14, 2014

# Abiding

*Let what you heard from the beginning abide in you. If what you heard from the beginning abides in you, then you will abide in the Son and in the Father. And this is the promise that he made to us—eternal life.*

1 John 2:24-25

It is hard to get rid of things. Today I heard it is called *disposaphobia*. Some people refer to it as hoarding. I prefer to think of it as cherishing things with special meaning.

The reality is that, wherever I am, I know that God is there “abiding” with me, whether or not I have all the “stuff” I have cherished over the years. I may not be able to “touch” God’s promises like I can touch that afghan my godmother made for me, but the warm feeling I get knowing that God is with me is just as good as having that afghan wrapped around me!

*Wrap me in your love, O Lord, as I trust in your promise to abide with me through all of my days. Amen.*

*Discard: Throw out at least three things today that are just part of the “stuff” of life.*

*Read: John 15:5-10*

Margaret Rickers Hinchey  
Gainesville, FL

Wednesday, January 15, 2014

# A Child's Imagination

*From the lips of children you have ordained praise.*

*Psalm 8:2*

I was riding in a car with my 5-year-old grandson, Aaron, when he asked, “Grandpa, is God one person?”

“Ah, no, he is three persons but one God.”

“I don’t understand that.”

“Neither do I, but I believe it. It is something like water. It can be a liquid, like when you drink it; it can be steam, like when you boil it; and it can be ice, like when you put it in your soda, but it is still water.”

The next day Aaron asked, “Grandpa, did God die?”

“Ah, God sent his Son, Jesus, who was fully God and fully man, to die for our sins and rise again. I don’t understand that fully either, but I believe it.”

The next day the non-swimmer Aaron announced while standing beside a pool. “I can walk on jellyfish, and I can walk on water—just like Jesus did.”

*O Lord, fill us with the wonder of your ways that we may be filled with praises of all that you have done. Amen.*

*Remember: What insightful things have you heard a child say lately?*

*Read: Psalm 8; Matthew 18:1-4*

*Gordon Beck  
University City, MO*



Thursday, January 16, 2014

# Saints

*To those sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints ...*

*1 Corinthians 1:2*

Extensive repair work on the ceiling of our sanctuary required us to worship in the congregation's school gymnasium for a few weeks. One Sunday I could not help but notice the banners on the gym wall. The banners displayed the names of the nearby Lutheran schools in the basketball league. Each banner listed a school and its mascot. Mascots included "Bobcats," "Wildcats," "Cougars," and "Lions." Sports teams like to compare themselves to strong, fast, even ferocious animals.

In the center was the banner for the host school: "St. Paul's Saints." To be called a "saint" does not conjure up speed, power or fear. But St. Paul reminds us that all Christians are saints. And it has nothing to do with our behavior! We are saints because we have been sanctified—made holy—by Christ himself. We are saints because our sin has been forgiven.

*Dear Heavenly Father, thanks for making me a saint through the forgiveness that is mine in Christ. Amen.*

*Rejoice: Praise God that you are a forgiven sinner—a saint!*

*Read: 1 Corinthians 1:1-9*

*Jim Rogers  
Ellisville, MO*

Friday, January 17, 2014

# I Can See!

*I was blind, now I see.*

*John 9:25*

Benjamin Franklin was born on January 17, 1706. He was an amazing person. He is best remembered as a founding father of our nation, having signed both the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution. He was also a printer, postmaster and inventor. One of his inventions to benefit mankind was bifocal glasses. Many of us need help seeing the small print. We have Ben (and God, of course) to thank.

We need help seeing God too. “Amazing Grace” reminds each of us, I “was blind, but now I see.” God used someone in your life, like bifocals, to help you see what you couldn’t have seen otherwise. Jesus died to take your sins away. Was it a parent, a pastor or a friend who helped you see that amazing grace of God for you? Thank God for each one.

*Dear God, thank you for those who taught me about you. Thank you for using me to help others to see your amazing grace. Amen.*

*Tell: Tell a grandchild about why you need glasses and why you need Jesus.*

*Read: Mark 10:46-52*

*Lonie Eatherton  
Fenton, MO*

Saturday, January 18, 2014

# Times with the “Kids”

*There is a friend who sticks closer than a brother.*

*Proverbs 18:24*

After the death of my father, my mother resided in a care facility. I noticed her upbeat mood as soon as she answered my Sunday-night phone call. “The kids were here today,” she explained, “and we had such a good time.”

“The kids?” I asked. “You mean your grandchildren? The school children from your congregation?”

“No, no,” she answered. “The kids from Walther League.” She had spent her afternoon with octogenarians like herself with whom she had worshipped, served and enjoyed fellowship decades before. Even more than their shared memories, their shared faith in Christ and his abiding love provided a bond that made them closer than brothers and sisters, a bond that withstood graying hair, failing eyesight and aching joints. In faith they supported each other through the loss of spouses and friends, looking forward to a joyful reunion with all God’s “kids” in heaven.

*Thank you, Lord, for Christian friends throughout our lives. Amen.*

*Do: Contact a Christian friend from your youth—in person, by phone, by mail or even by email.*

*Read: 2 Corinthians 4:13-14*

*Eileen Ritter  
Grand Haven, MI*

Sunday, January 19, 2014

# See You in Heaven

*For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.*

*Philippians 1:21*

“If I don’t see you again, I’ll see you in heaven.” That’s the way Grandpa would say goodbye as we would leave his farm. Then he would say, “I have to tend to my bees!”

We never knew when the Lord would call him to his eternal home. He had suffered a stroke and was on various heart medications to help him with his pain and discomfort. But that didn’t keep him from taking care of his beloved bees.

And now that we’re older, we, too, take our daily pills to keep the body going, and we, too, need to share that heavenly perspective with family and friends. It’s always time to do the daily chores, and it’s always timely to remind one another: “If I don’t see you again, I’ll see you in heaven!”

*Comfort us with your promised heaven, dear Father, and strengthen us still to pursue our daily tasks with enthusiasm and joy. Amen.*

*Thank: Thank spouses, relatives and friends who help you get ready for heaven while daily, in the name of Christ, you’re being helpful to all you greet.*

*Read: John 14:1-3; 1 Peter 1:3-9; 1 Thessalonians 1:2-10*

*David P. Schmidt  
St. Louis, MO*

Monday, January 20, 2014

# Boast? Not Me

*For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.*

*Ephesians 2:10*

I learned long ago never to think “Well, this is going rather well” while playing a piece of organ music during a church service. That thought was invariably followed by a major mistake in the next measure. It’s a good reminder that the things I do well are a gift of God’s grace.

I look back on the many years I spent teaching God’s children and know that their spontaneous joy in learning about Jesus and the world around them had nothing to do with me. It was a gift of God’s grace. I think about the enjoyment I still feel when writing about God’s love, and I know it is his Spirit working through me that helps the words to flow. Take a minute to thank God and give him the credit for the great joys in your life.

*Father, thank you for your loving grace that saved me in Jesus. Let me boast only of him. Amen.*

*Do: What has gone especially well during your day today? Thank God for letting you live in Christ.*

*Read: Ephesians 2:8-10; Romans 3:27-28*

*Ruth Geisler  
Aliso Viejo, CA*

Tuesday, January 21, 2014

# Christian Reminders

*This is the day that the Lord has made.*

*Psalm 118:24*

When our kids were teenagers, they walked to their nearby high school ... sometimes they ran. My husband and I were teachers and often hurried out the front door too. That paneled door had a space at eye level where we placed our favorite wood plaque: "Slow me down, Lord; let me not be so busy that I overlook the beauty of each day." That prayer stayed on the door until Gordy and I retired and moved to our smaller home. We're not quite so busy now, but the plaque is still on our kitchen desk.

A few years ago, I found a plaque that's appropriate for any age, so I bought one for each of our kids and grandkids and one for us to put on our kitchen desk: "Good morning! This is God. I will be handling all your problems today!"

*Dear God, thank you for being our wise and faithful friend. Amen.*

*Do: Post your favorite reminder where you can read it every day.*

*Read: Psalm 55:22; 1 Peter 5:7*

*Annette Schumacher  
Muskego, WI*

Wednesday, January 22, 2014

# The Spirit Makes the Difference

*The Spirit helps us in our weakness.*

Romans 8:26

You are alive. But there is more to life than air in the lungs, more than recuperating and recovering. There is more to life than just being alive.

Christians are alive in the Spirit—God the Holy Spirit! Alive in the Spirit means you have saving faith in Jesus as your Savior from sin. Alive in the Spirit means you were spiritually dead, but now you have new life in Christ. The Spirit connected you to Christ in your baptism and now he lives in you.

The Spirit makes the difference. The humdrum, routine, ordinary days of life are anything but that when we live in the Spirit. He stirs the stagnant water, and there is joy. He lifts the troubled heart, and there is hope. He navigates us through troubled times, and we press on. When we are weak, he is strong!

*Holy Spirit, help me in my weakness. Amen.*

*Make a difference: Make “the Spirit difference” in someone else’s life.*

*Read: Romans 8*

Randy Shields  
Florissant, MO

Thursday, January 23, 2014

# No Ordinary Tree

*So that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith ... being rooted and grounded in love.*

*Ephesians 3:17*

Consider the tenacious juniper tree. Strong winds fail to uproot it. Its roots dig deep into the crevices of the rocks below and entwine themselves there.

As with the juniper tree, so the Christian sinks his or her roots in faith to Christ, the “Rock of Ages.” Listen to his Word and dig your believing hearts into his promises. Do you feel guilty over past wrongs? Listen to God’s promise, “Though your sins be like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow” (Isaiah 1:18). Are you worried about something? Listen to his Word, “Come to me, and I will give you rest” (Matthew 11:28). Are you lonely and afraid? Then hear him say to you, “Behold I am with you always, to the end of the age” (Matthew 28:20).

These are (pardon the pun) tree-mendous promises! It was on the tree of the cross that Christ made our relationship with God rock-solid for all eternity.

***Rock of Ages, let me hide myself in you. Amen.***

***Reflect:*** *Reflect on times when your trust in God has helped keep you rooted in a special kind of peace and joy.*

***Read:*** *Ephesians 3: 14-19; Psalm 1*

*Leo Symmank  
Seabrook, TX*



Friday, January 24, 2014

# Life Is ...

*Then Jesus said his disciples: “Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life.”*

*Luke 12:22*

The old song says, “Life is just a bowl of cherries.” That’s just one of numerous comparisons through which people have tried to describe what life is really like. Life is a game, life is a play on a stage, and so on. Perhaps the best analogy is that life is a gift from God—to be appreciated and enjoyed.

Life is to be used to thank God for his blessings, to show appreciation and to serve as an example to others of how life reflects God and his precious Son, who came to earth to be sacrificed for the sins of all people.

Each day offers more opportunities to interact with others as a Christian, to demonstrate how God is in our lives and reflected in our lives, as we love others as he loved us.

*Thank you, Lord, for the many opportunities to give thanks to you for your precious gifts. Amen.*

*Look: Look for ways to reflect the love of God in your life today.*

*Read: Matthew 6:25-33*

*David W. Eggebrecht  
Grafton, WI*

Saturday, January 25, 2014

# The Smile in the Sky

*It will be established forever like the moon, the faithful witness in the sky.*

*Psalm 89:37*

A grandson was looking up in the sky with his grandpa one evening and, when Matt saw the crescent moon, he shouted, “Look, Gramps, it’s a smile in the sky!”

And Matt was right. Psalm 89:37 reminds us again that God’s love and faithfulness are always ours. To prove it, God has placed the moon above us as a visible reminder that Christ continues to love and forgive even when we don’t look, act or feel forgiven—and, yes, even when the clouds and the storms of life seem to take away the sight of his love.

Look around you today for other signs of God’s love and promise—perhaps in a smiling child, a person who needs a smile, a lonely person, a friendly neighbor or an old friend who just calls to say, “Hi!”

*Lord, thanks for your smiling love. Amen.*

*Do: Take a look at all the “smiles” around you this week—above you, next to you, beside you—and give thanks!*

*Read: Psalm 136*

*Rich Bimler  
Bloomington, IL*

Sunday, January 26, 2014

# The Long View

*My peace I give to you.*

*John 14:27*

Hillside Avenue, the street that the police blocked off for sledding, was the steepest thing I'd ever seen. Every descent seemed life threatening. (But of course we slid down anyway.) When I return to my old Ft. Wayne neighborhood and look at the hill, I see now it hardly has a grade and I wonder what my fear was!

You can probably remember situations that look a lot different to you as an adult than they did when you were young. It's pretty hard to have the long view as a child, but as an adult, I try to remember that problems that seem insurmountable are usually solved in time—in God's time. Jesus promises his peace and tells us not to trouble our hearts. Whether it's a fractured relationship, a major mistake at work, a financial crisis—disasters all, from which recovery seems impossible—God's forgiveness and mercy are constants, offering us peace in our hearts.

*Dear Lord, no matter the situation, in your time my heart will have peace. Thank you. Amen.*

*Recall: Recall a situation from childhood that once looked like a disaster, but in time resolved itself. Use that to remind you of God's promise of peace.*

*Read: Philippians 4:4-7*

*Sally Beck  
University City, MO*

Monday, January 27, 2014

# A Proper Craving

*Jesus, knowing that they intended to come and make him king by force, withdrew again to a mountain by himself.*

*John 6:15*

Cravings. We all have cravings. Some of them are very wholesome. Some are not. Some we are unaware of until our appetites are stimulated.

Those 5,000 gathered about Jesus in John 6 may not have been craving food. But when Jesus fed them so generously with the loaves and fishes, they suddenly had a craving for a king so they would always have enough to eat—and they would not even have to work for it!

Jesus was a king all right. And he wanted them to crave his kingdom. But they did not understand all he had to offer. He wanted them to crave what he had to offer—love, forgiveness of sin, protection over the evil one, victory over death.

Our King Jesus does give us what we need. He does give us what we need to crave.

*O Holy Spirit, refresh our craving for our King and the gifts he brings. Amen.*

*Stimulate: Stimulate another's "craving" for Jesus, the Bread of life.*

*Read: John 6*

*Vernon D. Gundermann  
St. Louis, MO*

Tuesday, January 28, 2014

# Hollyhock Dolls

*We live by faith, not by sight.*

2 Corinthians 5:7

When I was a little girl I loved to make Hollyhock flower dolls. These dolls had beautiful dresses of layered flower petals in many colors. I would dream of my doll's life of happiness in an exotic world that I did not know. It was the Depression, and though I knew little of the outside world, I could dream.

Today my world is more realistic, as I know of wars, hunger, abuse, terror and many other tragedies. With all the sin in the world, I would sometimes like to escape back to my world of Hollyhock dolls. Thanks to Jesus Christ, I will someday be in the perfect world of heaven. The Holy Spirit assures my place in heaven, where I may not play with Hollyhock dolls, but I will have eternal love, joy and peace being with God.

*Thank you, dear God, for the grace you give to me. Amen.*

*Reminisce: Reminisce with a friend about your childhood dreams and your faith in the future.*

*Read: Romans 8:22-25*

Jean Plesko  
Ballwin, MO

Wednesday, January 29, 2014

# Clay in the Potter's Hands

*Behold, like the clay in the potter's hand, so are you in my hand, O house of Israel.*

*Jeremiah 18:6*

In high school I had a ceramics class. I loved it. I could get my hands dirty and actually form something out of a wet lump. I had many visions of what it could be as I worked that clay, but none of my projects turned out exactly the way I wanted. Still the art teacher would exclaim, "Spectacular!"

You may think you are all done being formed, that you have gone through the kiln of life and are set as stone. You also may not have turned out exactly the way you wanted. Take heart, God is still molding and forming you into his image, and no matter what, in the end he is going to say "Spectacular!" because he has made you perfect by his Son.

*Lord God, help me to realize that you continue to mold me. Amen.*

*Make: Make something today to remind yourself that God is still making you.*

*Read: Genesis 2:7-10; Isaiah 45:9-13*

*Jeremy Klaustermeier  
Warrenton, MO*

Thursday, January 30, 2014

# Music to My Ears

*Make a joyful noise to the Lord ...*

*Psalms 100:1*

God gives his children many different talents. One of the greatest is the talent he gives composers to create beautiful music. Studies have shown music is an enjoyable therapy. Its results can reduce agitation and elevate moods.

When my hyperactive son was little, this proved to be very true. There were times when he would become belligerent or overstimulated. To calm him we would play symphony music after he was sitting in my lap or in his favorite chair. By the time he was ready for kindergarten he would often come to me and request his favorite composer by stating seriously, "I need Rachmaninoff." His love for calming music never left him even when he reached adulthood.

*Thank you, God, for the talents you have given each of us. May they always be used for your glory to help enhance your plans for us during our earthly lives. Amen.*

*Do: Relax and dream along with some of your favorite music.*

*Read: Psalm 81:1-3; Psalm 98:4-6*

*Edna Jakobsky  
Ft. Myers, FL*

Friday, January 31, 2014

# Passing on the Faith

*One generation shall commend your works to another, and shall declare your mighty acts.*

*Psalm 145:4*

I spent my summers on my grandparents' farm. I always have a desire to share my experiences with my grandchildren. I want to tell them of watching a calf being born and how my grandparents shared their faith in talking about God at work in the wonders of nature.

Last summer I sat in the church pew where I sat with my family growing up. Words cannot begin to describe my feelings of connection and kinship with this past as I seek to share what that meant for me in my spiritual maturation.

Today I hear the psalmist describing my role in life. I declare God's mighty acts and works to the next generation. Won't you join me in telling stories of God's mighty deeds as they come alive in his creation, in his holy Word and in the activities of his Holy Spirit.

*Lord Jesus, move me always to tell your stories as I tell my stories with my grandchildren. Amen.*

*Look: Look for opportunities to share your faith stories by what you say and by what you do.*

*Read: Psalm 145*

*Walter M. Schoedel  
Webster Groves, MO*



Saturday, February 1, 2014

# Insight Out

*This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh.*

*Genesis 2:23*

Remember the first time you thought you were in love? You could not take your mind off that other person. If you can remember being that deeply in love, then you have something in common with Adam as he looked at Eve for the first time and knew she was the girl for him.

The song “I Only Have Eyes for You” reminds us of that time before sin when there were no mirrors, when Adam and Eve lost themselves in the love of the other. Instead of “insight,” there was only “out-sight” with each one looking out for the good of the other. And that’s the way of Christ.

Christ Jesus came to show the world a “cross-giving” love that gives up everything, even life, for those whom God loves. It is that kind of love that moves the heart to confess: “This at last is the Savior I’ve been waiting for.”

*Lord Jesus, Help me to love you as you love me.  
Amen.*

*See: Strive to see others as God sees them.*

*Read: Luke 10:25-37*

*Edward Arle  
St. Charles, MO*

Sunday, February 2, 2014

# Read the Directions

*All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness.*

2 Timothy 3:16

Often I buy an item that requires assembly. I ignore the warning on the packaging: “Read ALL the instructions before assembling.” About halfway in the assembly, I discover that I missed a crucial step! Then I have to disassemble and reassemble.

Often I approach life’s decisions that way as well. I do not ask God’s guidance. I do not crack the Book. I do not seek godly counsel. I wing it on my own. Then when things don’t work out, I have only myself to blame. That’s why our first parents in the Garden needed a Savior. That’s why I need one too. Thank God we have a Savior, Jesus, and through him, we have forgiveness and a chance to begin anew.

*Lord, thank you for Jesus and for your Word. Make the Bible an open book to us, and keep us receptive to its guidance. Amen.*

*Resolve: When facing a life decision, resolve to do your homework first. Read God’s Word. Seek godly counsel. Pray. Walk in the light God gives you.*

*Read: 2 Timothy 3:10-17; Psalm 119:105-112*

*Ted Zimmerman  
Napa, CA*

Monday, February 3, 2014

# Hear And See

*And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.*

*John 1:14*

“Go and tell John what you hear and see,” says Jesus when John’s emissaries ask if Jesus is “the one who is to come” (Matthew 11:3-4). God wants us to use all our senses and receptors to take in what his Son, Jesus, is doing right now to bring the light of salvation to the world. But hearing and seeing must be informed by faith. And Jesus never tires of explaining himself to his sometimes puzzled followers. Even the disciples on the way to Emmaus could not recognize their risen Lord right in front of them until Jesus himself interpreted the Scriptures and broke bread with them (Luke 24:27-31).

As a Spirit-instructed hearer and see-er, you now become a guide and mentor to those around you.

*Lord, keep me alert always to your gracious self-revealing that’s going on all around me. Amen.*

*Look and listen: Spot and report a salvation event to someone you know.*

*Read: Luke 24:13-27, 44-45; Matthew 11:2-6*

*Mike May  
Kansas City, KS*

Tuesday, February 4, 2014

# To God Be the Glory

*So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.*

*1 Corinthians 10:31*

My grandmother could always be heard singing or humming her favorite hymns as she went about her chores. She told me it gave her mind an opportunity to remember her many blessings from the past. It was her time to quietly (well, sort of quietly) glorify the Lord and recall the times in her life that she felt his presence. She always did a good job at whatever task was at hand, but on those days it seemed the dishes sparkled a little brighter and the clothes smelled a little fresher.

Doing things to the glory of God not only enhances our own efforts but impacts those around us. Life has a way of looking brighter, fresher for everyone when we do things to God's glory.

*Remind me, Lord, to focus on making today different, by glorifying you at every opportunity. Amen.*

*Reflect: If you decided to do something today with the intent to "glorify the Lord," what would it be? How would that activity be different from the way you have done it in the past?*

*Read: Ephesians 3:14-21*

*Steve Sonnenberg  
San Clemente, CA*

Wednesday, February 5, 2014

# Same Old, Same Old

*[God's mercies] are new every morning; great is your faithfulness.*

*Lamentations 3:23*

The older I get, the more I do the same things over and over. Sometimes that's a good thing—it helps me remember where I put my keys or glasses. I can also go through my morning routine on autopilot. Often I sigh as I think, “Same old, same old.”

In our spiritual life we can turn that around and rejoice in the “same old, same old” message of the Bible. God the Father is the creator of the whole world and of everything in it. God the Son died and rose again for the sins of the world. God the Holy Spirit brings us to faith and keeps us in that saving faith. That “same old, same old” blessing of love and forgiveness is ours every minute of our lives.

*Dear Lord, help me to praise you for your mercies. Amen.*

*Tell: Tell someone about the unchanging message of salvation.*

*Read: Isaiah 33:2*

*Jeanette Dall  
Batavia, IL*

Thursday, February 6, 2014

# The Magic Slate

*As far as the east is from the west, so far does he remove our transgressions from us.*

*Psalm 103:12*

When I was a child, one of my favorite toys was a slate with a black waxy surface covered by an opaque piece of plastic. It came with a stylus which was used to write on the plastic sheet. I would write notes, draw pictures and just doodle. If I made a mistake, I could lift the plastic very carefully and erase just that portion, or if I lifted the entire sheet, everything would magically disappear. I would, in fact, have a clean slate.

Forgiveness is not magic and it is not a toy, but when we ask God to forgive our mistakes, they instantly disappear, never to be mentioned again by him. Christ took on all of our mistakes and erased them for us with his death on the cross.

*Thank you, Jesus, for erasing my many mistakes.  
Amen.*

*Discuss: Consider discussing with a friend how God erases our sins when we ask.*

*Read: Psalm 51:1-2*

*Gloria Doty  
Fort Wayne, IN*

Friday, February 7, 2014

# Prodigal Me

*And the son said to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you."*

*Luke 15:21*

In the story of the prodigal son and his family, I always more closely identify with the dutiful son who stayed home and helped his father. Throughout the years I have tried to do what I discerned God wanted me to do with my life. As I grow older, I realize that I am also like the prodigal son. I may not be living a wild life, but I commit flagrant sins, as did the prodigal.

This parable that Jesus taught identifies all of us as sinners, whatever lifestyle we choose. No matter our situation, smug child or selfish wanderer, we need God's forgiveness and grace. Thanks be to Jesus for telling us parables and for our eternal salvation.

*Thank you, dear Lord, for your continual grace as I grow in my faith. Amen.*

*Identify: Read this parable again and identify the way in which you relate to each son.*

*Read: Luke 15:11-32*

*Jean Plesko  
Ballwin, MO*

Saturday, February 8, 2014

# The Fruit of Our Labor

*You shall eat the fruit of the labor of your hand; you shall be blessed, and it shall be well with you.*

*Psalm 128:2*

Last summer we ate homegrown tomatoes and peppers. These were the fruits of our labor (mostly my husband's) that were grown in pots on our deck. He planted and tended; God provided the water and the sunshine. We reaped and ate the harvest. This passage makes me think of other kinds of seeds we sow and the other kinds of fruit of our labor that we enjoy. For example, our three precious sons have become wonderful, responsible young men. We sow seeds of kindness and enjoy close, lifelong friendships. My husband enjoys help and support from friends he's made in our local Model A Club. Yes, the Lord has truly blessed us in a multitude of ways and it is well with us.

*Heavenly Father, I thank you for your provision. You bless me beyond measure! Amen.*

*Remember: Remember God's faithfulness to you. Thank him for one special blessing of today.*

*Read: Psalm 128*

*Terry Weber  
Williamsburg, VA*



Sunday, February 9, 2014

# Hear Me Out

*Give ear and come to me; listen, that you may live.*

*Isaiah 55:3*

Who doesn't want to be heard? Years ago during a workshop, I stood in the middle of a circle, listening as everyone commented on my team leadership. I could only listen, then repeat what I'd heard. What a wake-up call! It changed me personally and professionally. The act of listening is so simple. Our open mouths don't change our lives. But when we lend our open ears, we change our hearts—and souls.

*Lord, help me to listen more to others and to listen more to you. Amen.*

*Listen: Give someone you love the gift of your full attention. Listen to that person until he or she has nothing left to say. Then repeat his or her words and ask questions. What changes between you?*

*Read: Proverbs 4:1-4; John 18:37; Hebrews 2:1*

*K.S. Wuertz  
Leslie, MO*

Monday, February 10, 2014

# Wearing Your Crown

*[He] crowns you with steadfast love and mercy ...*

*Psalm 103:4*

On our heads, where the hair is now gray and somewhat thinner, and on our lives, though we feel a bit less than royal at times, God places his promised crown. It's very different from the crown of thorns forced upon our Jesus. That crown was a symbol of mock royalty. Our crown, given to us by our gracious Lord, received by us, his sons and daughters, is true royalty. We are to display it proudly by sharing that "steadfast love and mercy" with those for whom we care and those who care for us.

It is a crown of freedom and victory over sin, death and, yes, even pain. It is the creative force of this promise, the work of the Holy Spirit in us that prompts us to "greatly rejoice" even in our weakness. "I will greatly rejoice in the Lord ... for he has clothed me with garments of salvation ... covered me with the robe of righteousness" (Isaiah 61:10). We do not just rejoice, but we *greatly* rejoice!

*Gracious Lord, make me strong in pointing to my Savior and what he has done for me. Help me to greatly rejoice. Amen.*

*Rejoice: Find joy in something today.*

*Read: Psalm 103*

*Constance Bretscher  
Valparaiso, IN*

Tuesday, February 11, 2014

# Process

*“For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the Lord, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.”*

*Jeremiah 29:11*

With my grandfather there was always a process to everything. From the least of things to the greatest, he had a routine. For instance, he would have a plan for the best way to slice a grapefruit. He would make sure it would be cut just right, then he would pour sugar on both halves and before eating it, he would cut around the edges.

Now and then those plans wouldn't go so well, either because of a bad piece of fruit or because one of us grandkids would take the other half.

Things may not always go the way we want them to go. It may be flat out frustrating. But from the least of things to the greatest, God is with us. We are enfolded into his plans, so that no matter what plans we have that may at times fail, his plan of salvation in Christ endures forever.

*Heavenly Father, help us to recall the plans you have for us in Jesus. Amen.*

*Share: Read about God's plan for you in Christ, and if you are able, share that plan with others.*

*Read: Jeremiah 29:4-14; Jeremiah 1*

*Cory A. Wielert  
Crown Point, IN*

Wednesday, February 12, 2014

# Getting Together

*... not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.*

*Hebrews 10:25*

Almost every Wednesday evening for sixteen years nine pastors' wives have gathered at each others' homes for supper, Bible study, mutual support and prayer. We have wept and cheered into eternity many parents, four precious husbands and two dear children. We have prayed for hips and knees, x-rays and cardiograms. We have consumed tubs of salad, flocks of chicken and "a little wine for the sake of [our] stomachs" (1 Timothy 5:23). Jello and tuna casseroles are forbidden—too many church potlucks.

A year ago we took New York City by storm. We celebrated our first 80th birthday last year. But mostly we pray, study and talk about the Word, laugh, bear each others' burdens, hug and pray. Our love for each other and our Lord grows stronger every Wednesday evening.

*Thank you, Lord, for helping us ease into old age with Christian friends. Help us reach out to those who may be growing old alone. Amen.*

*Gather together: Gather weekly with friends.*

*Read: Ephesians 4:1-16*

*Lois Scheer  
San Diego, CA*

Thursday, February 13, 2014

# Grace-Filled Love

*They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts ...*

*Acts 2:46*

I recall a Valentine's dinner that taught me grace. Meals were sacred times at our house. An extended out-of-town meeting and impromptu counseling session made me especially late for our evening meal, so the Valentine's meal was kept warm in the oven. When I arrived home, out came the heart-shaped meatloaf, cinnamon heart-candy-infused applesauce and fluffy pink mashed potatoes, along with the traditional sweetheart cake. All four hungry boys were already seated. The grace of that moment was deeply engraved on my heart.

Years before, my creative wife had placed a cartoon on the back door after too many late meals: "Love is ... calling if you are going to be late."

The candlelight family meal was etched in everyone's memory as a sacrament of love.

*Lord Jesus, continue to provide the forgiveness and love we need at your table. Amen.*

*Dine: Invite someone to dine with you on Valentine's Day.*

*Read: Acts 2:42-47; 1 Corinthians 11:17-34*

*Rodney Otto  
Grand Rapids, MI*

Friday, February 14, 2014

# A Love Letter

*[Love] always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.*

*1 Corinthians 13:7*

The word *love* has numerous meanings, depending upon your perspective in life. *Webster's New World Dictionary* states one definition as "a deep love and tender feeling of affection for or attachment or devotion to a person or persons." There are also theological definitions: a) God's benevolent concern for mankind; b) man's devout attachment to God.

God's concern for mankind is evident in the apostle Paul's letter to the church in Corinth. In it, he states how we are to love one another as children of God's family. Through Paul, God reveals his concern for mankind. This letter further reveals God's plan for his gift of love. It is his love letter to us.

*Dear God, help me to show the love of Christ to others according to your plan. Amen.*

*Reflect: How can you show God's love to others in your family, church or community?*

*Read: 1 Corinthians 13:1-13*

*Betsy Becker Niedringhaus  
Ballwin, MO*

Saturday, February 15, 2014

# We Grow in Love

*Love one another as I have loved you.*

*John 15:12*

It's mystifying isn't it, this whole concept of love? How can you explain it or really understand the way it impacts and changes your life?

Remember when that second child came along, and you wondered if you could ever love it as much as you loved your first child. Wouldn't you love one more than the other?

But it didn't happen. Somehow love just expanded to embrace and draw to your heart this new little one without ever endangering your love for the other. Maybe the unconditional love that we experience from the little one has something to do with this.

It is the unconditional love that we receive from Jesus that empowers us to reach out to those around us in love. His love changes us.

*Lord Jesus, may your love continue to enlarge my life, my love and my acceptance of others. Amen.*

*Share: Celebrate with others how they have enriched your life with their love.*

*Read: John 15:1-17*

*Lionel Otto  
Adelaide, Australia*

Sunday, February 16, 2014

# Grandma's Legacy

*And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you walk by the way ...*

*Deuteronomy 6:6-7*

Last summer my cousin gave me our grandmother's Bible. Since it's written in Swedish, I can't read it, but its condition tells me a lot. The cover is falling off and will need to be rebound. The pages are faded and dog-eared. I, therefore, know one thing about my grandmother firsthand: she read her Bible. My husband and I have been blessed to know our grandchildren, to spend time together and to make memories that we share already. But I want them to know, like I know, that their grandma read her Bible. I also have opportunities to tell them of Jesus' love—when we eat fruit bars on the deck, when we create with watercolors, when we go kayaking ... when we “walk by the way.”

*O God, you give us opportunities to share your saving grace. Don't let us miss them. Amen.*

*Share: Share your love for God's Word with children or adults. Tell them about a favorite Bible verse.*

*Read: Psalm 1*

*Sally Beck  
University City, MO*



Monday, February 17, 2014

# Distractions

*But Martha was distracted with much serving.*

Luke 10:40

Selma sat in her favorite recliner. Stacked beside the chair were the morning paper, her Bible, a crossword puzzle book, a favorite novel, the TV guide, the latest grocery store ads and fashion flyers. Which will she reach for first?

Both critical “needs” and trifling “wants” can distract us from what we need most—a close relationship with Jesus, our Savior. When we are deep in his Word, Jesus claims our attention and our heart. Without distractions, we see and hear him clearly. Then all things fall into their proper places.

*Lord Jesus, shield me from distractions and keep me focused on you. Amen.*

*Take: Take someone with you into God’s Word today. Share a verse, a thought, an insight. Expect a blessing!*

*Read: Luke 10:38-42; Matthew 6:19-34*

*Donna J. Streufert  
South Bend, IN*

Tuesday, February 18, 2014

# Be Stewards

*Everything comes from you, and we have given you only what comes from your hand.*

*1 Chronicles 29:14*

A 12-year-old boy collected food for his neighbors after their house was foreclosed on. What started as a small stand grew into a warehouse of food that's collected and distributed year-round. Because of his great accomplishments and young age, the media interviewed him. All he spoke about was how his celebrity would bring in more food to help more people. He knows we're merely temporary stewards of God's gifts. Giving it all to God can be a freeing and frightening idea. But unless we lay down what we "own," how can we follow Jesus?

*Thank you, Lord, for all you have given me. As a good steward, I will pass on your gifts to others. Amen.*

*Give:* Choose something from your home to give a person in need. Write on the gift tag, "Know you needed this. Love, God."

*Read:* Genesis 22:1-18; Matthew 4:18-22

*K.S. Wuertz  
Leslie, MO*

Wednesday, February 19, 2014

# I Think I Can, I Know He Can!

*Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.*

*Hebrews 13:8*

Do you remember the children's book about the little blue engine? A number of engines were asked to pull a heavy load over a mountain. All the bigger engines said, "I can't." The little blue engine said, "I think I can, I think I can." He repeated those words over and over again, and he succeeded. According to some, this book was written to instill optimism in the lives of children.

Regardless of our age, we who believe in Jesus Christ have learned to say to ourselves, "I know he can, I know he can!" He has carried us through trials and tribulations. He encourages us even now to put our hope and trust in him.

*Lord Jesus Christ, we praise your name for you are the same yesterday, today and forever. Amen.*

*Share: Seek to help someone carry his or her heavy load by sharing Hebrews 13:8 with them and explaining what it means to you.*

*Read: Romans 8:38-39*

*Jim Kirk  
Festus, MO*

Thursday, February 20, 2014

# God Likes To Talk

*And God Said, "Let there be light," and there was light.*

*Genesis 1:3*

The words *God said* occur ten times in the first chapter of Genesis. Throughout the Bible, God talks. He speaks directly, as in Genesis 1. God talks through prophets. Finally, he speaks through his Son, Jesus. Jesus is the Word of God made flesh.

God's Word is powerful, creatively powerful. When God speaks, things happen! As the prophet Isaiah said: "So shall my word be that goes out from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and succeed in the thing for which I sent it" (Isaiah 55:11).

Do you need God to speak to you today? Open your Bible. Do you need God to act today? Open your Bible. Read the passages suggested below. God never stops speaking to you in Christ.

*Lord, open my ears to hear your Word, my heart to love your Word, my mind to know your Word, my soul to live your Word in the name of Jesus. Amen.*

*Open: Open your Bible today to read God's Word.*

*Read: John 1:1-18; Hebrews 11:1-14*

*Don Schatz  
McKinleyville, CA*

Friday, February 21, 2014

# Tell It Again, Grandpa

*Truly, I say to you, unless you turn and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Whoever humbles himself like this child is greatest in the kingdom of heaven.*

*Matthew 18:3-4*

When little kids hear you tell a story that tickles them, they say, “Tell it again, Grandpa.” You hardly get the words out of your mouth before the child prompts you to say it again. It seems they never get enough of hearing it.

Their request to repeat a story they love is clear evidence of how hungry they are to hear words and scenarios that please them. Hearing them feeds their emotions and their souls.

We’re no longer children. But Jesus tells us to emulate the little ones in their openness to hear words their souls savor. Let us savor today the delicious taste of the Gospel story and invigorate our desire to hear it again and again.

*O Holy Spirit, help us to drink deeply of the ever-fresh words of the Gospel and respond with joy.  
Amen.*

*Read: Read a story to someone today.*

*Read: Mark 10:13-16*

*Deane Schuessler  
Woodbury, MN*

Saturday, February 22, 2014

# Look Forward

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

*John 14:6*

Aren't you glad the windshield is larger than the rearview mirror? Though looking behind you is useful and necessary at times, it would be difficult to use the rearview mirror long-term. It offers a limited and distorted view.

We're not made to look backward at life either. Spending too much time in the past distorts our vision and limits our awareness of present blessings. While we can learn from past successes and failures, God has fresh new plans for us each day.

St. Paul writes that he is "forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead ... toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 3:13). So look forward to what lies ahead, because we are on the road to heaven! Watch for God's signs along the way.

*Thank you, Lord, for safety and direction as I travel home to you. Amen.*

*Write: Make a list of Bible verses that "keep your eyes on the road."*

*Read: Philippians 3:12-21; Matthew 7:14*

*Sharolyn Sander  
Lincoln, NE*

Sunday, February 23, 2014

# Leave All Doubt Behind

*I believe; help my unbelief.*

Mark 9:24

I regularly visit a local fitness center, making use of the “Silver Sneaker” benefit of my health insurance. I am intrigued by the signs on the walls. “Push your limits” is the encouragement near the free weights. “Make a difference” is a sign near the aerobics class. “Find your inspiration,” it says over the treadmills. Frankly, I find more perspiration than inspiration on the treadmill! The sign over the locker room entrance says, “Leave all doubt behind.” Don’t you wish you could leave all doubt behind?

Jesus told the father of a young man who had an unclean spirit, “All things are possible for one who believes.” “I believe,” said the man; “help my unbelief.”

Most of us can relate to him, can’t we? We believe. But sometimes we have doubts. Especially during difficult times. That’s OK; God understands. Best of all, the day he takes us to heaven, we will indeed leave all doubt behind!

*I believe, Lord; help my unbelief. Amen.*

*Share: Share your doubts with a spouse or a close friend.*

*Read: Mark 9:14-27*

Jim Rogers  
Ellisville, MO

Monday, February 24, 2014

# Who Is My Neighbor?

*The one who showed him mercy.*

*Luke 10:37*

Folks on my street, friends at church, my community, the world—all are neighbors. One day I dropped by a nursing home and asked if there was anyone who needed a visit. I pictured a nice little old lady, much like me. Instead, I was introduced to a woman young enough to be my daughter. She was quadriplegic. She was not very receptive, but said I could come again if I wanted to. This was not the neighbor I had in mind.

That was three years ago. Through weekly visits, I have grown to know and love someone whose lifestyle and background were totally different from mine. She is no longer neighbor, but friend. My heart aches for her. I cannot cure her, but I can care. Jesus encourages us to show mercy, to care. He will handle the rest.

*Lord, open my eyes to see people as you do. Amen.*

*Look: Look around for a new opportunity to be a neighbor.*

*Read: Luke 10:25-37*

*Lael Hoerger  
Niles, MI*



Tuesday, February 25, 2014

# Minimum or Maximum?

*For where two or three are gathered in my name,  
there am I among them.*

*Matthew 18:20*

Our home group faced a difficult decision recently. We had the best time together. But we were too large a group. People were finding it difficult to share things close to their hearts. We divided the group and immediately noticed a greater freedom in sharing.

For as long as I can remember, the words of Jesus about two or three gathering together were applied to small groups gathering for worship or study. Even if there are only two or three present, Jesus is with us.

Then a dear friend suggested that just maybe Jesus was speaking here about maximum not minimum. The context of Jesus' words was a ministry of care. And such ministry best happens in the compassionate relationships of just two or three.

*Dear Lord, thank you for those two or three special people who hold me close to their hearts. Amen.*

*Share: Share with your two or three special people how their care blesses you.*

*Read: Matthew 18:10-20*

*Lionel Otto  
Adelaide, Australia*

Wednesday, February 26, 2014

# You Look Like ...

*Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children.  
And walk in love, as Christ loved us ...*

*Ephesians 5:1-2*

“She looks just like her father, doesn’t she?” cooed friends and relatives who had come to see the new baby. I wondered if the same could be said of each of us. When people look at you, do they see that you resemble your Heavenly Father?

From birth we bear the features of our earthly father, Adam, and his disobedience to God. We are powerless to erase the marks of sin by our own efforts. But in Baptism God has washed away that sin, remaking us in his image through the life, death and resurrection of Christ.

Do your words and actions reflect God’s love for you? Paul encourages us to “be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you” (Ephesians 4:32). Let us follow that direction daily.

*Help me, Lord, to imitate you in my words and actions, that others may experience your love through me. Amen.*

*Do: Love, serve, forgive someone today as Christ has loved, served and forgiven you.*

*Read: Ephesians 4:17-5:21*

*Eileen Ritter  
Grand Haven, MI*

Thursday, February 27, 2014

# Sowing God's Seed

*The seed is the Word of God*

Luke 8:11

Years ago, in the late winter, I looked forward to receiving a package in the mail. I ordered seed packages for my flower and vegetable gardens. I marveled how God would use dry, shriveled seeds to bring beautiful flowers to bloom and vegetables to harvest.

However, such seeds are not the only seeds that touch my life. God is growing another seed in my heart. He calls it the seed of the Word of God.

Today I no longer cultivate a garden in my backyard. But I do let God sow his seed (his Word) in my heart. That's why I spend time in prayer and meditation, in Bible reading, in worshipping in his house, in partaking of his Holy Supper.

*O Lord, keep planting your seed in my heart. May it bring forth fruit in my daily living. Amen.*

*Sow: Wherever you go, sow the seed of God's Word. Celebrate its abundant blessings wherever you live.*

*Read: Luke 8:4-15*

Walter M. Schoedel  
Webster Groves, MO

Friday, February 28, 2014

# Reunited

*While he was still a long way off, his father saw him and felt compassion, and ran and embraced him and kissed him.*

*Luke 15:20*

I received a call from someone I had not had contact with for 17 years. There was no particular reason for our separation—growing families, jobs, moving, etc., all just got in the way of our close friendship. The moment I heard her voice, I could see her face. We made plans to meet. Our conversation started right where we left it so many years before. It was a wonderful reunion.

Sometimes life, with activities and worries, gets in the way of our friendship with God. Probably the most well-known story of two people being reunited is the parable of the lost son who comes home to his father. Like the father in the story, we can be assured that our Father is waiting to hear from us and to welcome us back into a relationship with him regardless of how long we have been gone.

*Father, thank you for welcoming me back when I stray. Amen.*

*Contact: Contact someone you have not seen for a long time.*

*Read: Luke 15:11-31*

*Gloria Doty  
Fort Wayne, IN*

Saturday, March 1, 2014

# Our Book of Life

*You yourselves are our letter, written on our hearts, known and read by everyone. You show that you are a letter from Christ, the result of our ministry ...*

*2 Corinthians 3:2-3*

This month is a good time to read a new book. Go ahead; give it a try. It is also a good time to remember that our own lives are “open books” that people read each and every day. There’s no need for them to head to a bookstore. They can just watch and listen and digest everything you and I are saying and doing.

That makes me wonder what kind of message my book is giving to those around me. Is it a comedy, a mystery or a boring old story? Regardless of our past stories, rejoice that our Lord writes into the pages of our days his love and forgiveness through Christ for others to see. Trust in the Lord that he completes each chapter of our lives with the hope and gift of forgiveness. After all, he really is the Author!

*Lord, make my life a “best seller,” filled with hope and joy and forgiveness. Amen.*

*Read: Decide to read a book a week, to enjoy, of course, but also to remember that people are reading your “book of hope in the Lord” each day.*

*Read: Philippians 4:8-9; 2 Corinthians 4:14-17*

*Rich Bimler  
Bloomington, IL*

Sunday, March 2, 2014

# Walking And Talking

*While they were talking and discussing together, Jesus himself drew near and went with them.*

*Luke 24:15*

At a retreat center, my husband and I participated in the required work activities along with the other guests. We noticed that we got to know the others better when we walked with or alongside them than when we had more formal face-to-face conversations.

One evening my husband washed dishes beside a young woman whom he engaged in conversation. As she talked, he sensed a troubled and hurting spirit. When he shared the Good News that Jesus loves her, she began to weep. It was as if Jesus himself had come alongside them.

Jesus often walked alongside people and engaged them in conversation. As you walk and talk alongside a neighbor or coworker, pay attention to the conversation. Perhaps you will see an opening to bring Jesus' words of life and hope.

*Lord, guide my walking and talking today.*

*Walk: "Walk with" someone today; ask an opening question and pay attention!*

*Read: Luke 24:13-27; John 4:7-15*

*Diane Bahn  
Cypress, TX*

Monday, March 3, 2014

# Take a Look

*Great are the works of the Lord.*

*Psalm 111:2*

Where is your life-observation spot? On the sofa, by the kitchen sink, at your desk, in your recliner? From that place, with eyes open and mind reflecting, we take a look.

We see the framed photos, the precious knick-knacks, the ever-changing clouds, the birds at the feeder, the devotion book on the table and the cross on the wall. God has truly made us a part of a world larger than ourselves.

I hope you have a mirror hanging nearby. In that mirror is the image of a person redeemed by Jesus' death. That person has been made whole by the work of the Holy Spirit. That person has been washed clean in the baptismal waters. That person's hunger has been fed at the Lord's Table. We—you and I—are truly God's workmanship. Go ahead; take a look.

*Jesus, I am the work of your hands. Thank you.  
Amen.*

*Observe: Look in a mirror and remember that you are God's work.*

*Read: Ephesians 2:1-10; Psalm 111*

*Harry Edenfield  
Brownstown, MI*

Tuesday, March 4, 2014

# Life-Giving Mud

*... then the Lord God formed the man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living creature.*

*Genesis 2:7*

We'd just watched a spring training game that weekend. A tiny article in the Sunday *USA Weekend* caught my eye. Entitled "Magic Mud," it noted that as "dictated by Major League Baseball regulations, umpires rub all baseballs before a game with mud to remove the sheen. The mud? Lena Blackburne Baseball Rubbing Mud, which is harvested along the banks of the Delaware River."

My mind pictured our Creator's hands gently gathering mud, forming Adam and lovingly giving him life. It was not magic mud, but life-giving mud! We, too, are his creations, just not formed in the same way as Adam or Eve. However, because of his great love for us, he rebirths us through the life-giving waters of baptism. We celebrate the miracles of creation and re-creation today.

*Good and Gracious Father, thanks for lovingly creating me and making me your child. Amen.*

*Think: What are you most thankful about today?*

*Read: Psalm 8; Isaiah 64:8; 1 Timothy 4:4; Colossians 1:16*

*Louise Schini Weber  
Ft. Myers, FL*



Wednesday, March 5, 2014

# The Last Sacrifice

*But he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his wounds we are healed.*

*Isaiah 53:5*

Lent is a time of reflection on Christ's suffering and death on the cross for our sins. As we embark on this six-week journey, we should remember and meditate on the great sacrifice that was made on our behalf. Invite others to gather with you in midweek Lenten services that yearly repeat the story of Christ's sacrifice. This may be the first time they hear about our Lord and Savior's love for them.

Read your Bible. Retrace the sorrow, the pain and agony, the betrayal that Christ endured. Remember and share his great love for you.

*My Savior, provide me with the strength to endure trials I encounter because of my belief in you. Amen.*

*Share: Today and every day, share the story of Christ with someone new.*

*Read: Isaiah 52:13—53:12*

*Darla Panabaker  
Breezy Point, MN*

Thursday, March 6, 2014

# Cotton-Mouth Christianity

*Jesus said, "I am thirsty."*

*John 19:28*

When do you remember being “cotton-mouthed”? It could have been when you were in the middle of a very exciting moment—like batting with the bases loaded! Or it could have been when you were faced with a big challenge—a “make-or-break” presentation for your company. Or it could have been when under a great threat—like a storm coming through.

Jesus seems to have gotten “cotton mouth” on the cross. It is no wonder. It was a most threatening time. He calls for something to drink. They give him sour wine. It hardly quenched his thirst.

But he would quench the thirst of others with “cotton mouth.” We may be under great threat and temptation. We may have “cotton mouth.” He does not leave us thirsty. He refreshes us with himself—the Living Water!

*Lord, continue to relieve us of our “cotton mouth.”  
Amen.*

*Relieve: Relieve another’s “cotton mouth” with a physical drink and with a sip from the Living Water.*

*Read: John 19:28-30; John 2:1-11*

*Vern Gundermann  
St. Louis, MO*

Friday, March 7, 2014

# I Don't Understand

*Jesus said, "Do not fear. Only believe."*

*Mark 5:36*

You know that Google is the name of a search engine with which you can learn about almost anything. Originally the word *google* named a number. You know that the word *thousand* refers to a 1 with three zeros behind it, and the word *million* means it has six zeros after the 1. Well, google is the numeral 1 with 100 zeros behind it! I can't begin to grasp what that number means. In fact, I have only a vague understanding of billion and trillion.

When Jairus learned his daughter was dead, Jesus said, "Do not fear. Only believe." When I think of my lack of being able to grasp Jesus' virgin birth, his rising from the dead, being with everyone at the same time, caring about a google of prayers, and on and on, I think of his words: "Do not fear. Only believe."

I don't understand why God loves me. But I hold on to that fact. The message is clear: Don't be afraid. Only believe.

*Lord, help me to simply believe those things I don't fully understand. Amen.*

*Tell: Tell someone about things you don't understand yet believe.*

*Read: Mark 5:35-43*

*Eldor Kaiser  
Lenexa, KS*

Saturday, March 8, 2014

# Promises, Promises

*The days are coming, declares the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah.*

*Jeremiah 31:31*

God likes to make promises. Did you ever know someone who made promises, but then always broke them? God doesn't do that—ever. God keeps all his promises.

Our relationship with God doesn't depend on our promises, kept or not. Our relationship with God is by grace—it depends on God keeping his promise. God's New Covenant was fulfilled in Jesus Christ. God made the promise and he kept it for us.

That is the power of grace—of receiving something without earning it. Each day of our lives is about appreciating God's promise to make you his child, to treasure you as his child, to dote on you as his child.

*Father, thank you for your promise fulfilled in Jesus. Make me a living promise in Christ to my family and friends. Amen.*

*Look:* As you read God's Word, look for his promises.

*Read:* Psalm 119:41-56

*Don Schatz  
McKinleyville, CA*

Sunday, March 9, 2014

# Welcome Home

*Greet one another with a holy kiss.*

*1 Corinthians 16:20*

Okay, I didn't get holy kisses, but I got a whole bunch of hugs! I went back to a former congregation for their 75th anniversary after thirty years away. It was like going home! I've never had such a crowd of people so happy to see me. For an entire weekend, I felt like a celebrity!

As loving as that welcome was, it cannot compare to the welcome we will receive one day in heaven. We will be greeted by loved ones not seen for years. Most joyously, we'll be greeted by Jesus, who'll lead us to our mansion, prepared by his death and resurrection!

I'm not quite sure what that welcome will look like exactly, but I always imagine Jesus greeting me by name, with a big smile and a big hug. And, maybe, a truly holy kiss.

*Father, thank you that for Jesus' sake, you will welcome me one day into your eternal home in heaven. Amen.*

*Think: How do you welcome folks into your home?*

*Read: John 14:1-3; Revelation 21:1-4*

*Al Schenk  
Jennings, MO*

Monday, March 10, 2014

# Everything Fits

*No one comes to the Father except through me.*

*John 14:6*

I enjoy doing all kinds of puzzles, but I especially like crosswords and Sudoku. There's a great deal of satisfaction when everything fits and the puzzle is complete. Of course, there's also frustration when one word or one number is wrong and nothing fits.

Our lives may be puzzling at times but the one thing that is never a puzzle is God's plan of salvation. The Bible tells us that our sins are forgiven by Jesus' death and resurrection. "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life" (John 3:16).

Puzzle no more—everything fits!

*Lord, thank you for revealing yourself and your plan of salvation through your Word—the Bible.  
Amen.*

*Do: Do some puzzles with a friend or family member.*

*Read: John 3:16-21*

*Jeanette Dall  
Batavia, IL*

Tuesday, March 11, 2014

# Forgotten by God?

*Are not five sparrows sold for two pennies? And not one of them is forgotten before God. Why, even the hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not; you are of more value than many sparrows.*

*Luke 12:6-7*

Flying down the highway, I nearly missed seeing the sign. Right in front of a private home, nestled among the trees, it read in large bold letters: I WILL NEVER FORGET.

Forget what? I wondered. A departed loved one? A deep hurt? A personal tragedy? Surely, it must be some person or event very important to the people in that home.

Flying down the road of daily life, how easily we forget others—especially the lonely, the grieving, the harried, the condemned, the broken. Jesus assures us he doesn't forget. Each of us, no matter what, is of such great value to him that he never forgets us.

*Lord, help me remember you love me. Help me remind others you never forget them too. Amen.*

*Ask: Who is God calling you to remember today? Seek them out. Share his love.*

*Read: Luke 23:42-43*

*Donna J. Streufert  
South Bend, IN*

Wednesday, March 12, 2014

# Impatient Patient

*Let us not grow weary of doing good ...*

*Galatians 6:9*

We usually designate people who are sidelined by illness, physical limitations, surgery, medical observation and similar disruption of normal functionings as patients.

In recalling our own experiences as patients of one kind or other, we recapture our discomfort, the sharp pain, the persistent aching we were made to endure, our resentment at loss of time (hours, days and even more), our boredom and possibly our anger. It is easy for such patients to become impatient.

We do well when we, in the spirit and style of Jesus, offer our selves and our time as companions to patients, as they in their impatience yearn for healing and relief.

*Lord, don't let me get tired of sharing Christ's love with others. Amen.*

*List: Make a list of patients you know—both young and old—who have been “patients” a long time. Make another list of patients you've only recently come to know. Offer your support by phone contact, cards, notes or visits.*

*Read: Galatians 6:9-10*

*Karl Lutze  
Valparaiso, IN*



Thursday, March 13, 2014

# I Am a CFO!

*Christ is ... far above all rule and authority ... and above every name that is named ...*

*Ephesians 1:21*

Some of us have been labeled through the years with a title or position in life. We may have been a CEO, a teacher, a principal, a doctor or a bus driver. Today's Scripture suggests that all human titles mean very little as we continue to age, except for the one prominent title of CFO!

This title has been given to us by Christ at our baptism. This title is not dependent on a contract, a job well done or on how many hours we work. It is totally dependent on God's promise of his love for us always. We really need nothing else but the title Christ died and rose again to obtain for us.

Let us celebrate today our title as CFO—Chief Forgiveness Officer!

*Lord, we have no need for any other titles in life because you have forgiven us and called us to forgive others, in your name. Amen.*

*Test: Test out this title of CFO with others today, and enjoy the discussion!*

*Read: Ephesians 4:31-32*

*Rich Bimler  
Bloomington, IL*

Friday, March 14, 2014

# Strong Faith

*Unless I see in his hands the mark of the nails, and place my finger into the mark of the nails, and place my hand into his side, I will never believe.*

*John 20:25*

Do you believe that Henry VIII once ruled England? Why do you believe this is true? Probably you believe because the history books tell us all about Henry VIII and his long reign centuries ago.

You have faith that the history books are correct. Faith helps us better understand the world. Faith is not always easy, though. Especially in this modern world, we want to see proof. We want to see with our own eyes. We act a lot like Thomas, who confessed his doubts about the resurrected Christ. Thomas told the other disciples that unless he could see the nail marks in Jesus' hands, he would not believe.

Our great challenge is to keep our faith strong. We can do that by going to church, reading the Bible and praying to our Lord. Jesus tells us, "Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed."

*Dear God, please give me the faith I need to follow your Word. Amen.*

*Attend: Sign up for a Bible study at church as a way to increase your faith.*

*Read: Acts 17:10-12; John 20:30-31*

*Glen Sparks  
St. Louis, MO*

Saturday, March 15, 2014

# When God Is Silent

*O Lord, be not silent! O Lord, be not far from me!*

*Psalms 35:22*

When God is silent, then what does one do?

On the cross Jesus cried out, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” God sent no angels to strengthen him as he did in the Garden of Gethsemane. There was only a stony, grey silence.

What did Jesus do in response? He prayed to his silent Father, “Father, into your hands I commit my spirit.” He trusted God and completed his assignment. His suffering and death reconciled us to God. On the third day, his Father raised him from the dead and guaranteed our resurrection.

When God is silent, it does not mean that he has stopped caring for us. We can trust our Heavenly Father, who gave his Son into death for our sins, to see us through whatever it is that we face. He will not fail us. Trust him.

*Lord, even in your silence, may your Holy Spirit touch my spirit to trust in your unfailing love and mercy. Amen.*

*Do: In your quiet spirit, perform an act of kindness for someone.*

*Read: Matthew 27:46; Luke 23:46; Matthew 15:21-28*

*Leo Symmank  
Seabrook, TX*

Sunday, March 16, 2014

# Up and At 'Em

*Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one receives the prize? So run that you may obtain it. Every athlete exercises self-control in all things. They do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable.*

*1 Corinthians 9:24-25*

We are told that to remain healthy we need to exercise. Even a ten-minute walk a day is supposed to make a huge difference. The same is true of our spiritual muscles, which need exercise as well.

My spiritual warm-up involves prayers, which help focus my reading. Once I'm warmed up, I try to read at least two chapters a day in the Bible. After I complete my "workout" for the day, I cool down with more prayers related to my plans and needs for the day.

Beginning the day with God has become a happy habit. It's a reminder that God is always there to guide and to protect and to provide his strength and comfort. God is always there 24/7 for every one of his children.

*God, help me in my spiritual workout. Amen.*

*Warm up: Warm up with prayer before your daily Bible reading today.*

*Read: 2 Timothy 4:1-8*

*David W. Eggebrecht  
Grafton, WI*

Monday, March 17, 2014

# A Different View

*Walk in love, as Christ loved us.*

*Ephesians 5:2*

The bus was full of teenagers. It had been a long ride and by now their voices were somewhat subdued. Suddenly one of the livelier fellows called out, “Look over there on the right—the big cemetery! People were dying to get in there!” And all his fellow passengers burst into laughter.

As we get into our senior years, the subject becomes less and less a laughing matter. The reminders of life’s brevity and death’s certainty abound. Insurance companies, by magazines and phone calls, offer help in planning future days. And by increased physical limitations and diminishing health, we and those dear to us experience our own vulnerability. And that’s nothing to laugh about.

Now in our later years, when we may be limited in our location and our association with others, can we also find ways to imitate Christ in the way he lived in his last hours before leaving the earth?

*Lord Jesus, lead us to imitate you. Amen.*

*Pray: Pray for grandchildren or other young people, asking that they grow up to imitate Jesus.*

*Read: Philippians 2:5; John 19:26-27; note Jesus’ response in his last hours in Luke 23:39-43.*

*Karl Lutze  
Valparaiso, IN*

Tuesday, March 18, 2014

# Pillar of the Community

*If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself.*

*John 14:3*

Sometimes we may feel unwanted or out of place, or as if we don't belong—anywhere! But even on those long days we know by faith that we have a welcome waiting. There are many rooms in our Father's house and Jesus promised to prepare a place for us there. When the time is right, he will return and take us to be with him forever.

Our home with Jesus is sure and certain. In fact, we'll be built right in: "The one who conquers, I will make him a pillar in the temple of my God. Never shall he go out if it" (Revelation 3:12). No downsizing, no garage sales, no moving to a smaller apartment or a nursing facility—just a welcome home, because Jesus will be there and he wants us to be there with him—forever.

*Lord Jesus, I look forward to the day when you will welcome me home. Amen.*

*Talk: Talk to someone who may feel out of place or unwanted. Talk about Jesus' welcoming love.*

*Read: John 14:1-6; Revelation 3:7-13*

*Carol Geisler  
Manchester, MO*

Wednesday, March 19, 2014

# Mini-Mission Trip

*Be filled with the Spirit, addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart ...*

*Ephesians 5:18-19*

My friend confided that she was disheartened. She lived alone, widowed, with no one to care for. She prayed that God would show her his purpose for her. So far, she hadn't found her mission. Yet I watched her as she chatted with friends, acquaintances, even store clerks. She always had a smile for everyone and often made people laugh with her anecdotes. She seemed to be fulfilling God's current purpose without realizing it.

I think that God puts miniature mission trips in front of us every day. It may be kind words for a casual acquaintance—words that may be just the tonic needed at that moment. It may be a smile for a stranger—a smile that may be the only one he receives that day.

*Lord, if your purpose for me today is simply to brighten someone's day, let me do it with all my might. Amen.*

*Brighten: Make it your mission to brighten someone's day.*

*Read: Colossians 3:23; Ephesians 5:18-20*

*Lynne Waite Chapman  
Fort Wayne, IN*

Thursday, March 20, 2014

# All God's Precious People

*Love one another. As I have loved you ...*

*John 13:34*

When my children were little, they loved to sing with great gusto: "Jesus loves the little children, all the children of the world!"

"Just think, Mom," my son remarked with a grin, "that includes everyone in the whole wide world." Then he thought for a minute and looked puzzled. "But you and Daddy grew up. Does that mean Jesus doesn't love you anymore like a little child?"

"We are all God's little children; we just get taller and grow older," I assured him with a big hug.

The children were adults when this song took on a whole new meaning for our family. My husband and I moved to an ethnically diverse neighborhood. We quickly discovered some people fear people of different nationalities other than their own. All too often we hear the question, "Aren't you afraid to live among those people?" We remember that "Jesus loves the little children, all the children of the world!"

*Dear God, help me to patiently remind those who don't understand that, as God's children, we are all loved by our Savior. Amen.*

*Pray: Pray for all the children of the world today.*

*Read: 1 John 4:7-21; Galatians 5:22-23*

*Edna Jakobksy  
Ft. Myers, FL*



Friday, March 21, 2014

# Spring Cleaning

*The night is far gone; the day is at hand. So then let us cast off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light.*

Romans 13:12

As we grow older, stuff that used to seem critically important, especially material things, may seem like just clutter now. Closets, workbenches and collections of things we never got around to reading instructions for may need paring down.

More importantly there might be gripes and other “junk” in our hearts to clear out. Forgiveness is good for the forgiven. It’s balm for the forgiver, too, because it lightens dark sinfulness from the heart.

*Dear Lord, thank you for the reminder of hope in new life as we observe the first of small signs of spring. Help me do spring cleaning of my heart. And cleanse me with your forgiveness for the eternal spring of everlasting life. Amen.*

*Reach out:* Today, by phone, note or email, reach out to someone who drives you nuts and be his or her cheerful, well-wishing friend. Remind this person you pray for him or her. Recycle extra material stuff in good condition at a drive for the needy.

*Read:* John 8:1-12; Ephesians 6:10-17; Hebrews 9:11-14

Patricia Rice  
St. Louis, MO

Saturday, March 22, 2014

# Tents And Houses

*In this tent we groan ...*

2 Corinthians 5:2

At age 6, I slept out in our backyard in a small tent. It was fun! At age 26, I slept in a tent with my wife. It was exciting (thunder, hail, lightning and wind added to the excitement). At age 36, my son and I camped in the Ozarks. Our tent was hot and uncomfortable. Now at age 66, I have no desire to spend time in a tent. As we age, tents become less desirable and houses more appreciated.

St. Paul was a tentmaker. But even he knew the limits of tents. He compares our earthly life to living in a tent and looks forward to “a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.”

Tents are OK when we are young, but as we grow older, they become less and less comfortable. Praise God that he is preparing a house for us, where we will live comfortably with him forever!

*Lord, thanks for the eternal dwelling you are preparing for me. Amen.*

*Thank: Thank the Lord for the place where you live.*

*Read: 2 Corinthians 5:1-10*

*Jim Rogers  
Ellisville, MO*

Sunday, March 23, 2014

# A Heart of Wisdom

*Teach us to number our days that we may get a heart of wisdom.*

*Psalm 90:12*

Have you heard that wisdom comes with age? Perhaps you have found, as I have, that sometimes age comes by itself. We study, perhaps get degrees, but is that wisdom?

“Christ is the power of God and the wisdom of God” (1 Corinthians 1:24). How do we get that wisdom? The heart of our God, merciful and gracious, reveals his wisdom to our hearts and minds through his Spirit. By that power, we can leave behind this world with its doubts and fears and enter into the new world of God—his kingdom—now, today and always. In his kingdom we are free. The mind of Christ, no less, is ours.

When we pray, “Teach us to number our days,” we are not just asking to live each day as our last, but asking help to focus on all the wonderful things God has put into our lives now.

*God, give us that true wisdom, in our minds and our hearts. Let us share it in our thoughts, words and actions. Amen.*

*Share: Share a bit of wisdom with someone today.*

*Read: Philippians 2:5; James 1:2-8*

*Constance Bretscher  
Valparaiso, IN*

Monday, March 24, 2014

# Identification

*God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.*

*Romans 5:8*

“Can I see your ID, please?” When have you heard that? At the checkout line? When a policeman pulled you over? Or maybe at the DMV? It’s usually not a very pleasant experience when you hear those words.

In our verse for today we hear that we were once identified by our sin. Talk about unpleasant. Now, since Jesus died and rose again, the Father no longer identifies us by our sin, age, weight, or social status. The Father identifies us by his Son, who lives in us.

Thank God that your identity is in Christ. You live in him! Live his life to the fullest today!

*Jesus, thank you for dwelling in us and changing our identity. Amen.*

*Think: Think of all the “identities” you have in Christ—a father, mother, grandfather, volunteer, singer—and how you can use them to honor God.*

*Read: Romans 5:6-11; Psalm 51:16-17*

*Jeremy Klaustermeier  
Warrenton, MO*

Tuesday, March 25, 2014

# Sunflowers

*I dwell in the high and holy place, and also with him who is of a contrite and lowly spirit, to revive the spirit of the lowly and to revive the heart of the contrite.*

*Isaiah 57:15*

One of my favorite flowers is the sunflower. You can almost see them lifting their heads, smiling at the sun. They always bring a smile to my face and cheer to my heart. They seem to show pure delight in serving their Creator by growing so tall and strong. I'd like to be like those sunflowers to the people around me. I'd like to bring cheer to others and let God use my strength to serve him by serving others. Sometimes my spirit is low and I am broken by life's stress and demands. So it's good for me to remember that my Lord, who lives in heaven, sends his Holy Spirit to revive and refresh my spirit. His loving heart renews my heart. I rejoice!

*Refreshing Spirit, when I am feeling down, you lift me up. I am a sunflower seeking your sun. Amen.*

*Discover: Discover one way in which the Lord has revived you this week.*

*Read: Psalm 23:1-3*

*Terry Weber  
Williamsburg, VA*

Wednesday, March 26, 2014

# Let Us Pray

*And when you pray ...*

*Matthew 6:5*

Will there be kneelers in the new church? That was a recurring question when the congregation built a new sanctuary in 1990. For twenty years, worship services had been held in the gymnasium. It was agreed; there would be kneelers.

Today the kneelers are no longer used. Liturgies have changed. Many of those who made the decision over twenty years ago no longer have knees that bend and unbend easily.

But there are still “kneelers” in the church. Now the worshipers pray with hearts bent by God and by others. The thanksgivings, the intercessions and the pleas are still offered. The confidence of faith is not dependent on physical posture, but on the grace of God in Jesus Christ, just like it was when we used kneelers.

*Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer. Amen.*

*Pray: Kneeling, sitting or standing, pray the Lord's Prayer.*

*Read: Matthew 6:5-14*

*Bill Hoerger  
Niles, MI*

Thursday, March 27, 2014

# Nostalgia

*I remember the days of old; I meditate on all that you have done; I ponder the work of your hands.*

*Psalm 143:5*

The word *nostalgia* comes from two Greek words: *nostos*, meaning “to return home,” and *algia*, meaning “pain.” The word then comes to mean “the pain of home.” Since it includes the notion of pain and we live in a culture that avoids pain, some have labeled people who spend time recalling the past as having an abnormality or something that should be avoided. Life should move on, right? Yet there is much in the Bible that recalls God’s mighty and merciful acts of the past. The prophets and the psalmists constantly recall the mighty deeds of God.

Others have thought of people who engage in nostalgia as people who seek to connect with others in a warm and meaningful way. Class reunions offer this, as do wedding anniversaries. These give us the opportunity to connect with people about our faith. So be nostalgic today and every day.

*O Jesus, encourage us to remember with fondness your moments of grace in the past. Amen.*

*Think: Think of a song that makes you nostalgic. Play or sing it with friends.*

*Read: Psalm 105; Psalm 136; Luke 15:11-24*

*Gordon Beck  
University City, MO*

Friday, March 28, 2014

# Late Bloomers

*Moses was 120 years old when he died. His eye was undimmed, and his vigor unabated*

*Deuteronomy 34:7*

In our yard stands a light-purple crab apple tree. It was planted 28 years ago, when we moved in. The tree was small. Several times we seriously considered replacing it.

This spring it was different. The blossoms were lush and colorful, just what we had hoped for all those years. It reminded us of Jesus' parable of the fig tree. "Cut it down," ordered the vineyard owner. But the vineyard foreman pleaded for patience: "Sir, let it alone this year also, until I dig around it and put on manure. Then if it should bear fruit next year, well and good; but if not, you can cut it down" (Luke 13:6-9).

Could it be that your best years in Christian growth and fruit-bearing are still ahead of you? Only God knows. Ask him to direct, empower and give you appropriate opportunities.

*Lord God, help us to continue to bloom for you and your kingdom. Amen.*

*Bloom: Consider what you can do today to "bloom where you are planted."*

*Read: Deuteronomy 34:1-12*

*Deane Schuessler  
Woodbury, MN*



Saturday, March 29, 2014

# Joy in Jesus

*You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart ...*

*Deuteronomy 6:5*

Our son Paul flew to Italy on business, taking me along. In Rome he and I walked where Paul in the Bible may have walked in this beautiful old city.

One day I took a train to Cinque Terre, five small villages on the Mediterranean Sea. After exploring one of the towns, I walked on a path to the mountains where I met an elderly Italian lady resting on a bench. I sat with her for a while, and we began “talking” in sign language. She pointed to the sky and then to her heart and asked, “Jesu?” I nodded, also pointed to heaven and my heart, and answered “Jesus!” We both had Jesus in our hearts and hugged with joy!

*Dear Jesus, thank you for helping us share the simple joy of your salvation in any circumstance. Amen.*

*Do: With God’s help, break down a barrier in sharing joy in Jesus today!*

*Read: Matthew 22:37-39; Romans 10:10-13*

*Annette Schumacher  
Muskego, WI*

Sunday, March 30, 2014

# That Sinking Sensation

*When they [Jesus and Peter] got into the boat, the wind ceased.*

*Matthew 14:32*

Peter and other disciples were trying to cross the lake in their boat when an unanticipated storm came crashing down on them from out of nowhere, much like how things unexpectedly go awry in life.

Where was Jesus as the disciples felt like they were losing their battle for survival? He was walking their way on the water. To calm them he said, “Don’t be afraid; it’s me.”

We don’t know what his words did for the others, but they encouraged Peter to invite himself to join Jesus—on the water. Peter stepped out of the boat and started walking toward the Lord. But he became afraid, and a sinking sensation overwhelmed him. That’s when Jesus acted. He took Peter’s hand and helped him out of the water and back into the boat.

The same thing is true today. When Jesus is in our boat, we are safe, no matter how stormy the sea.

*Lord, whenever I get “that sinking sensation,” remind me that I am always safe with you. Amen.*

*Ask: What kind of “storms” do you feel threatening your boat today? Invite Jesus on board.*

*Read: Psalm 145:18; John 2:1-2*

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

Monday, March 31, 2014

# Always Hope

*Blessed is the man who trusts in the Lord ...*

*Jeremiah 17:7*

The house was condemned. The windows and doors had been replaced with plywood. The upstairs windows were just shards of glass. The yard had weeds knee-high. Yet all along the front of the house were beautiful clumps of flowers. White ones, red ones, pink ones, shoulder to shoulder, gorgeous, blooming as if they didn't know they shouldn't be!

I was reminded of hope. Hope puts beauty among the ugly. It tells us life isn't only full of cracked windows and overgrown weeds. There are also flowers, real and symbolic. Hope says there are smiles among frowns, ice cream among liver, joy in the midst of sadness, life in the midst of death.

That life is from God. He is hope, and we are blessed to know him. In God, hope isn't an occasional thing; it's constant for all his people. There is always hope. Always grace. Always Jesus.

*Lord, help us never lose hope, but always to hope in you. Amen.*

*List: Write a list of things that give you hope.*

*Read: 1 Peter 1:3-9; Romans 8:18-25*

*Al Schenk  
Jennings, MO*

# HOLY HABITS for **HOPE-FULL HEALTH**

## *Living Well—Aging Well!*

Recent studies are showing similar and significant traits that are found in persons living to be 100 years and older. Check these out to see what attributes you recognize in yourself and in those other older adults around you:

- A strong spiritual life—regular at prayer, devotional times, worship opportunities.
- Meaningful relationships with family and friends; taking opportunities to talk, listen, share and play with others.
- A good sense of humor, the ability to laugh at themselves and to see humor as the “sixth sense” in life!
- A positive outlook on life. Ability to accept life as a gift from God instead of a burden to overcome.
- Staying active in life, both physically and mentally, through walking, reading, walking, learning, walking, exercising and ... did I mention walking?

How are you doing in these five areas of life? Why not focus on one or two of these attributes in the coming weeks and see what happens and how you feel? Share this list with others as well. It just might be helpful to them, as well as to you!

In our next issue, we will look at five more “Holy Habits” that are common in people aging well and aging gracefully, in the Lord!

# Hope-Full Praying

## *For the New Year*

Help us not only to remember that this is a new year of 2014, but inspire us also to remember those who start this year feeling lonely and lost and left behind. As we shout “Happy New Year” to family and friends, empower us to shout out your love and forgiveness to those who have little to shout about at all. Come, make this a Blessed New Year to all. Amen.

## *For Health and Healing*

God of life, there are days when the burdens we carry are overwhelming. They wear us down. They break our spirit. We feel forgotten. When our road seems dreary and endless, the skies gray and threatening, bring us again to see your Promise that we sometimes cannot see. Assure us that behind every cloud and storm, there you are, shining and surprising us with your grace. Amen.

## *For Safety*

Lord of time and travel, protect those who are en route these holidays. Lord of planes and pilots, bless the airlines these days. God of cars and cabooses, keep the highways clear and drivers careful. Protector of those on buses and bikes, provide safe roadways in the journeys ahead. Amen.

### *Valentine's Day*

Lord, do you ever receive a valentine? It seems ironic that all of our sending of cards and buying of flowers are focused on the special people around us, instead of on you. Thanks for the people who love us and care for us. They are special gifts from you. And help us to realize that the ways we care and love them do, in a sense, become valentines for you, the giver of love and devotion. Amen.

### *For Those Celebrating Birthdays*

Lord, this is the Age of Aging! Thank you for the gift of aging to all those celebrating life in you. You know that there are 10,000 people having birthdays this day, Lord, in the U.S.A. Bless each one of them that they may know you, the Lord and giver of life. And bless those people in my life who celebrate their natal day this day as well, as I name them for you. In Jesus' name. Amen.

### *Winter Blahs*

Lord, you hear our prayers whether they are full of compliments or complaints. Forgive us for heaping our winter blahs on you, but we must talk to someone about it! Please, Lord, make winter depart and spring arrive with all its gusto! We yearn for the songs of the sparrows and the delight of the ducklings. Remove the blahs, and bring us some yeahs! Amen.

### *For the Start of Spring*

It is spring, Lord, the time of year that you remind us that you are the Creator of all living things. Bless all of the new growth around us, whether it is the greening grass, the dandy dandelions or the swinging squirrels. Spring us to action, Lord, as we get renewed life in you through Word and Sacraments. Help us to grow in you, Lord, along with the trees and all of the trimmings of life. Amen.

### *For the Blessings of Community*

Lord, affirm in us that the communion of saints is also our *community* of saints! We too often take the people in our families and neighborhoods for granted. We pause this day to thank you for them—for the little children who make us laugh, for the older adults who give us encouragement, for the younger couples with so much enthusiasm. We pray, too, Lord, for those who are aching for a place to belong. Help us to open our caring communities to them. Amen.

### *For Family Near and Far*

Lord, your family stretches all over the earth. You are the Lord of all! We especially pray this day for our own little family within your big community, the Church. Watch over those who are many miles from us. Safeguard those who are struggling with health and hope. Do not let us take our families for granted, Lord, whether near or far. We love them all, as you love us all, forever. Amen.

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