

HOPE-FULL LIVING

•Daily Devotions for Living Life to the Fullest•

July • August • September • 2014

Volume 3 • Number 3

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

Hope-Full Living Mission Statement

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

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

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

Cover Design: Paul Berkbigler, Madison, WI

Tuesday, July 1, 2014

Free to Be

For freedom Christ has set us free; stand firm therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery.

Galatians 5:1

“You need to lose weight.” “You need to be more active.” “You’re losing your hair.” “You need to dress for success.”

We live in a “free country,” but how can a person FEEL free when voices around us hammer out the message: “You aren’t measuring up.”

St. Paul knew what it meant to live under the Law, to seek to be “perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect” (Matthew 5:48). But he learned that living under the Law only leads to fear of judgment and death. Living under Christ leads to life, love and true freedom—the freedom to be all God has meant for us to be: forgiven sinners transformed into forgiving saints in the power and love of Jesus Christ.

“For you were called to freedom ... the whole law is fulfilled in one word: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself’” (Galatians 5:13-14).

Lord Jesus, let your Spirit live freely in me. Amen.

Speak: Speak to friends about the freedom you have found in Jesus.

Read: John 8:31-38; 1 Corinthians 16:13-16

*Edward Arle
St. Charles, MO*

Wednesday, July 2, 2014

Rock of Independence

For they drank from the spiritual Rock that followed them, and the Rock was Christ.

1 Corinthians 10:4

Last summer I visited Independence Rock in south-central Wyoming, along the historic California Trail. The reason for the name is in dispute, but there is no mistaking its significance for the pioneers. It was a marker of progress in their journey. If the wagon train arrived before July 4, chances were good they could cross the Sierra-Nevada range before snow began to fly.

We have various markers on life's journey: graduation, wedding, births, promotions, perhaps retirement. We have three spiritual markers: baptism, confirmation and times of spiritual renewal. The first launched the journey; the second strengthened us for its duration; the third refreshes us in the way. Is there a marker that indicates whether we will surely arrive at our destination? Look again to your Baptism into Christ. He is your Rock of Independence!

Jesus, thank you for being our Rock along the way. Amen.

Celebrate: Gather as much information as you can about the day of your Baptism. Celebrate it!

Read: 1 Corinthians 10:1-13; 1 Peter 3:13-22

*Ted Zimmerman
Napa, CA*

Thursday, July 3, 2014

The Stars in Their Courses

The heavens proclaim his righteousness, and all people see his glory.

Psalm 97:6

Walking my dog one moonless night, the stars fired the sky with their brilliance. I recalled learning to navigate by those very same stars when I was a naval officer on the Pacific Ocean in 1953. The star tables we were using could project the exact position of those stars as far ahead as ... even 2014!

The 20-foot moon-driven tides at Inchon, Korea, were predicted to within minutes to time boat landings. Years later I stood on the dry sea bed at St. Ives, England, watching an older couple with their picnic basket and bottle of wine sitting in their grounded, leaning sailboat waiting confidently for the sure tide to float them within the hour for their evening sail.

Amidst all our uncertainties, God's constants run through life and proclaim his faithfulness. Even more than the stars and tides, we can count on God.

Lord, help me look up, look about and trust your sure hand. Amen.

Look: Look up at the stars at night and remember that God has your life, like the movements of the stars, in perfect order.

Read: Genesis 1:1-31; Psalm 19

*Robert Hereth
Grayslake, IL*

Friday, July 4, 2014

Let Freedom Ring

Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom.

2 Corinthians 3:17

The older I become in life, the more I appreciate freedom. We live in a country that allows us the freedom to choose where we live, work and worship. Our country's forefathers fought for the freedoms that we enjoy today. What a blessing we have graciously been given!

In addition to our earthly freedoms, our Heavenly Father has given us eternal freedom with him, through the gift of his Son, Jesus. May we all demonstrate our gratitude for the freedoms we have so graciously been given.

Dear Heavenly Father, thank you for the many freedoms in life you have given me. Amen.

Reflect: What freedoms in life are you thankful for? How can you demonstrate your gratitude for the freedom you have been given in life? Thank God for the blessing of freedom.

Read: 2 Corinthians 3:4-6

*Betsy Becker Niedringhaus
Ballwin, MO*

Saturday, July 5, 2014

Holy Sweat

By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread ...

Genesis 3:19

Sweat is a sign of life. This natural coolant lowers body temperature when you are working hard. The adrenaline rush of working on a project of any kind combined with streams of sweat on the brow can be satisfying. Yet it is a reminder of the curse of sin upon humanity. We feel the pain of running errands on simmering summer days, riding in the car in mid-day heat or taking a walk on humid evenings, plus a myriad of other daily tasks under the rays of the sun.

Headbands protect eyes from the sting of sweat. A cool shower or swim refreshes body and soul after a hard day's work. These are reminders of the grace of God promising new life, in spite of sin's curse.

Thank you, God, for the joy of work and our baptismal calling to serve, empowered by the refreshing washing of rebirth. Amen.

Consider: Thank God for miraculous sweat glands cooling our bodies, God's remedy for the curse of a fallen world turning drudgery into service.

Read: Ecclesiastes 1:2-4; Titus 3:4-8

Rodney Otto
Grand Rapids, MI

Sunday, July 6, 2014

For the Birds

Those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles.

Isaiah 40:31

It is thrilling to watch birds of all colors, shapes and sizes come to our bird feeder. They nibble, play, jostle and soar. Then they fly away to wherever birds hang out these days.

The Church is “for the birds”! That is to say, the Church is a “bird feeder,” where the birds, you and me, young and old, come to feed on the Word, be strengthened by the Sacraments and then go on our way as the called-out community, the Church. Birds do not stay and live in the bird feeder, nor do we. Our role is to soar out to meet the needs of people as we serve and celebrate our faith, on wings like eagles!

As you live out this day as the Church, look for the birds and the bird feeders, and think of how great God is to give us birds, bird feeders and the Church—and then soar!

Lord, thanks for birds, bird feeders and the Church, for seeds of faith and life, for all the sparrows and saints around us. Amen.

Decide: As you are fed this week, what plans do you have to “soar like an eagle”?

Read: Isaiah 40:28-31; Psalm 84

*Rich Bimler
Bloomington, IL*

Monday, July 7, 2014

Family Tree

Is not this the carpenter's son?

Matthew 13:55

How much do you know about your family tree? There may be famous names or honored war veterans in your genealogy, or there might be a cousin or two the family would rather not claim.

Jesus' hometown of Nazareth imagined that he was merely the local carpenter's son, but Jesus is the Son of God, born as a human being, with a genealogy to match. His family tree lists patriarchs and kings, but not every ancestor of our Lord had a proud record. Rahab was a prostitute, David committed murder and adultery and through Adam sin entered the world. Yet, as with these saints, your past record of sin is erased in Jesus' blood. By faith, you are grafted into the family tree of our Savior, the Son of God and Mary's son.

Lord Jesus, help me to share your love so that others will come to know you as Brother and Lord. Amen.

Pray: Pray for your family and give thanks for past saints who rest now with the Lord.

Read: Matthew 1:1-17; Mark 3:31-35

*Carol Geisler
Manchester, MO*

Tuesday, July 8, 2014

Thoughts from the Raspberry Patch

Let us run with endurance ... looking to Jesus ...

Hebrews 12:1-2

I have a raspberry patch in my garden. Picking those red beauties is often a challenge. The best ones usually hang down below the leaves where you can't see them from a standing position. I have found that you have to get down on your knees and look up to get all of the berries hanging under the greenery.

As we “pick” our way through life, it is certainly most important that we get down on our knees and look up to our gracious Lord and talk with him and listen to his voice. The reward of “getting down and looking up” in the raspberry patch is a wondrous topping on a dish of ice cream. Absolutely heaven! But the reward of doing those things in God's realm is even more heavenly! Listening to his voice and heeding his call in the raspberry patch of life brings joy that is truly immeasurable.

Jesus, teach me to kneel down so that I might look up to you in all of life. Amen.

Look: Look up to the Lord in prayer as you begin each day.

Read: Hebrews 12:1-2; Colossians 4:2-6

*Don Luepke
Fremont, IN*

Wednesday, July 9, 2014

Sharing Changes History

There is a boy here who has five barley loaves and two fish, but what are they for so many?

John 6:9

Ernest Hamwi's willingness to share changed history. The Syrian concessionaire at the 1904 St. Louis World's Fair decided to roll up some of his crisp, waffle-like pastries to help out a neighboring ice cream vendor who had plenty of ice cream, but had run out of dishes. The result was the origin of the ice cream cone.

Many centuries before, a nameless boy's willingness to share also changed history. A large crowd had gathered to hear Jesus. When they grew hungry, a boy who had five barley loaves and two fish shared what he had with Jesus. The result was not the origin of the fish sandwich, but the now-famous feeding of the 5,000.

Good things happen when people share!

Lord, even as you fed 5,000, you give us our daily bread. Help us share our blessings with others. Amen.

Share: Tell the story of the origin of the ice cream cone, mentioning the sharing that made it possible.

Read: John 6:1-15

*Jim Rogers
Ellisville, MO*

Thursday, July 10, 2014

The Joke's On Me

A time to weep and a time to laugh.

Ecclesiastes 3:4

God often answers prayers with a yes, no or wait awhile.

One Friday night I was feeling sorry for myself and prayed for a companion. The weekend passed with no answer. Monday morning I decided to stop by the Human Society. In one of the cages a small black dog was wagging her tail enthusiastically. She seemed to be saying, "Pick me, pick me."

I was told she was a Papillon. I'd never heard of the breed, but she was so sweet. As I played with her, it didn't take long before I decided to take her home. After I had her settled in her new surrounding, it was off to the computer to learn about the breed. In the second paragraph I began laughing. "Papillons are excellent companion dogs," it said. God had answered my prayer with a sense of humor. I hadn't specified whether I wanted a two- or a four-legged companion. But God knew what I needed.

Thank you, God, for wonderful companions, and for answering our prayers.

Share time: Be a companion to someone today.

Read: Ecclesiastes 3:1-8

*Edna Shilling
Ft Myers, Fl.*

Friday, July 11, 2014

Deep Roots

You shall be like a watered garden, like a spring of water, whose waters do not fail.

Isaiah 58:11

I was carrying water to my garden when I noticed a weed growing in an empty bed. The drought had been severe, and I wondered how it continued to grow. It must have had very deep roots, tapping into some unknown water supply. One day a flower head formed on that weed, and I saw it was a sunflower. Then one morning it tipped back its head at the rising sun and opened all of its vivid yellow petals for the first time. It was a glorious sight, standing straight and tall, all by itself, without having received any care from me.

We all experience droughts in life, but since we have roots firmly planted in Jesus Christ, we have a constant flow of living water. Because of our hope, we can bloom even in the hardest times.

Lord, thank you for being a constant source of strength in the hard times as well as the good. Amen.

Share: Share the hope you have in Christ, the source of living water.

Read: Isaiah 55:10-13; Colossians 2:6-7

*Lynne Waite Chapman
Fort Wayne, IN*

Saturday, July 12, 2014

Sunscreen Protection

Because he holds fast to me in love, I will deliver him; I will protect him, because he knows my name.

Psalm 91:14

We are advised to always apply sunscreen when going outdoors, whether it is a trip to the beach, working in our gardens or just sitting on the lawn visiting. Just having it on hand doesn't protect us; we need to apply it liberally, even on cloudy days when we feel as though the sun's rays can't harm us.

It is good to think of God's Word as our sunscreen. Sometimes we know we are going into dangerous territory, as far as the world is concerned, so we use God's Word as our protection. Then there are circumstances when we think we don't need to cover ourselves with God's Word because we are "safe" in the shade.

However, it is necessary to apply it to our minds and hearts every day. We need God's protection in all circumstances.

Heavenly Father, help me to always remember to apply your words to my heart and mind daily. Amen.

Ask: Ask for God's protection for people you know, as you apply sunscreen to your body.

Read: Isaiah 41:10; Psalm 12:7

*Gloria Doty
Ft. Wayne, IN*

Sunday, July 13, 2014

Never Too Old!

And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.

Acts 2:42

Virginia is well into her 80s. Recently she broke her hip. She has had surgery to repair it and is now in rehab, hoping to walk again. While that process is slow and difficult, she carries on with what she believes is far more important.

She shares Christ with everyone she meets and has already enlisted eighteen newfound friends to join her in reading and studying the Bible together.

When we visited her, it didn't take long and she had us involved in Bible reading, study and prayer. Age surely has nothing to do with sharing the Word of God with others. What an inspiration she is to all of us. We're never too old to do the same!

Heavenly Father, inspire in me a hunger for your Word and the discipline to read, study and apply it to my life. Then move me to invite others to do the same. Amen.

Invite: Ask others to join you in the reading and study of Scripture.

Read: 2 Timothy 3:14-17; Psalm 119:105; Luke 11:28

*David P. Schmidt
St. Louis, MO*

Monday, July 14, 2014

Time for Some Golf

*For all those who exalt themselves will be humbled,
and those who humble themselves will be exalted.*

Luke 14:11

It is that time of year when I see plenty of friends, family and colleagues in their golf clothes, gearing up to go out to be humbled. Yes, there is nothing like playing a round of golf to get a person to realize there is no room for pride in life!

Jesus talked many times about those that puff themselves up with pride. He even said they were receiving their reward right then and there. Our reward isn't the pride. Our reward isn't winning or making the hole in one. No, our reward comes through Jesus. He helps us to be humbled—humbled to the point of realizing the need for God's grace that comes to us through Jesus.

Sometimes, golf—albeit it not a “church” activity—is the tool to help me realize I need to be humbled. I am thankful, too, because not only do I get exercise, I also revel in the grace of God.

*Heavenly Father, help me not to be full of pride,
but receive your grace with a humble heart. Amen.*

*Go: Get some exercise, maybe even play some golf,
and reflect on being humbled.*

Read: Luke 14:1-23

*Cory A. Wielert
Crown Point, IN*

Tuesday, July 15, 2014

Anniversary Witness

Lord, you have been our dwelling place in all generations.

Psalm 90:1

As we celebrate our 50th wedding anniversary this summer, Gail and I reflect on opportunities to share our faith through this event. We affirm the Lord as our dwelling place in all generations. We are led to number our days that we may get a heart of wisdom. His steadfast love moves us to consider other anniversaries for witness: birthdays, remembering those who have died in the Lord, baptisms, confirmations, graduations and gatherings for Thanksgiving, Christmas and Easter. His steadfast love helps us rejoice and be glad all our days.

Ways to bring an anniversary witness include telling stories of faith, gathering with family and friends, offering special gifts such as contributions to faith-based organizations, a family trip, listening to children and grandchildren. Take the time to witness!

Lord, use anniversaries to remind us of your salvation so that we might touch others with your love. Amen.

Consider: Choose an anniversary to plan your special witness.

Read: Psalm 90:1, 10, 14-17

*Stephen J. Carter
Oakville, MO*

Wednesday, July 16, 2014

Heavenly Fragrance

Walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

Ephesians 5:2

Lavender is an aromatic herb with beautiful purple spikes. Years ago I planted lavender along my driveway. Each time I walked by the lavender, I couldn't resist rubbing the leaves to release the sweet, spicy fragrance. On sunny days, the aroma filled the air and was noticeable to anyone passing by.

We need to be like the lavender plant, giving off a heavenly fragrance. I'm not suggesting that we drench ourselves in perfume. But God wants us to be a pleasing aroma in the world. In 2 Corinthians 2:14, Paul writes, "But thanks be to God, who in Christ always leads us in triumphal procession, and through us spreads the fragrance of the knowledge of him everywhere."

Lord, help me to spread the heavenly fragrance of your love and forgiveness to others. Amen.

Talk: Talk to someone who needs to know about God's love and forgiveness.

Read: 2 Corinthians 2:14-16

*Jeanette Dall
Batavia, IL*

Thursday, July 17, 2014

The Butterfly Lady

He has given us new birth in a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead ...

1 Peter 1:3

Marie was the butterfly lady. Wherever she went, a butterfly was always with her—on her coat, on her dress, always there, somewhere. But more than that, Marie not only wore a butterfly, the symbol of Christ's resurrection, but she also walked and talked the language of butterfly people. Her smile, her energy, her persistence, her passion were all about living the butterfly life.

Marie died a few months ago. Her resurrection service was full of hope and joy and sadness too, but the focus of the service was on Christ's Resurrection. Butterflies adorned the sanctuary as bunches of other butterfly people gathered to give thanks and praise to the Risen One, the One to whom Marie's butterfly symbol always pointed!

Whether we wear butterfly pins or not, we, too, are butterfly people, because of the risen Christ!

Lord, help us to fly this day as your butterflies in the love and hope of your presence. Amen.

Wing it: Think about a butterfly person like Marie who soars around you, and give thanks!

Read: 1 Corinthians 15:20-23; Colossians 3:1-4

*Rich Bimler
Bloomington, IL*

Friday, July 18, 2014

Miracle Stories

So she went out, entered a field and began to glean behind the harvesters.

Ruth 2:3

When were you a gleaner? Ruth gleaned for left-over grain to feed herself and Naomi. At her lowest, Ruth is seen and admired. Boaz knows of Ruth's kindness to her mother-in-law. He lifts her up—the rest is history. Whether you've been poor in body, spirit or purse—all of us have gleaned at some time in our lives. As we toiled through our troubles, we were watched. Then suddenly, dramatically, by God's hand, we were lifted up! Our story is Ruth's story, just rewritten by circumstances. It is the stuff miracles are made of.

I remember my times as a gleaner, Lord, and now I speak of your salvation. Praise be to you! Amen.

Lift up: Who are the gleaners in your world? Take action to lift up just one of them this week.

Read: Deuteronomy 15:1-11; Mark 12:41-44

*K.S. Wuertz
Leslie, MO*

Saturday, July 19, 2014

Pain Leading to Healing

Everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock.

Matthew 7:24

After my total knee replacement, I did exercise therapies daily for about 5 weeks. Then I figured it would be okay to let up a little, then more and more as the days wore on. Then one morning I awoke to a strange pain. I began to fret, “Has the surgery gone bad? Did an infection develop?” Though it seemed counter-intuitive, I decided to try one of the old therapy exercises. At first it hurt. Then, gradually, the knee felt better. And voila! The pain ceased!

Sure enough, this body God created was speaking truth to me. And this truth applies in other areas of our lives as well. Namely, it's safer and more productive to do a necessary action, even though it may feel painful at first. Often putting into practice those acts that God wants us to do builds strength and health better than passively waiting for pain to subside.

Gracious God, thank you for helping me to work through pain to reach your goals for me. Amen.

Imagine: Imagine yourself as the foundation of a building that gives strength to the whole structure.

Read: Philippians 4:7-9

Deane Schuessler
Woodbury, MN

Sunday, July 20, 2014

The Main Thing

For to me, living is Christ, and dying is gain.

Philippians 1:21

The other day I read, “The main thing in life is to keep the main thing the main thing.” Who said it, I know not. But it is worth repeating again.

What is the main thing in my life as I age? I am a child of God. My baptism affirms that. I have a purpose for living because I am still alive. I still make mistakes (my sins), but I have Jesus who forgives me. That enables me to love and forgive others. I am on a journey with Jesus at my side. I face many changes in my life, but Jesus is there. My destiny is to be with him in heaven. That’s the main thing in my life. What about your life?

Lord Jesus, help me make you the main thing in my life. Amen.

Look up: Take time and read about the main thing in the Apostle Paul’s life. Listen carefully to his confession in chapter one of his letter to the Philippians.

Read: Galatians 2:20

*Walter M. Schoedel
Webster Groves, MO*

Monday, July 21, 2014

Gospel 9-1-1

[Jesus] welcomed them and spoke to them about the kingdom of God, and healed those who needed healing.

Luke 9:11

Call 9-1-1! A voice promises, “Help is coming!” If it’s a life-or-death emergency, help can’t arrive too soon. Lives have been saved, short term, simply by punching 9-1-1.

But when it comes to long term, as in eternal life or death, we need more. We need GOSPEL 9-1-1!

There was going to be a food emergency, then Jesus turned a boy’s lunch into a meal for thousands. But before taking care of the short-term need, he “welcomed ... spoke about the kingdom of God ... and healed.”

This is GOSPEL 9-1-1. Jesus, King of the kingdom, has come to embrace us and to heal our sin-broken lives. Jesus is our only way out. His death and resurrection rescue us. Whoever believes in him will be saved!

Jesus, thank you for the gospel. Amen.

Consider this definition of G-O-S-P-E-L: God’s Only Son Purchased Eternal Life!

Read: 1 Corinthians 15

*Randy Shields
St. Louis, MO*

Tuesday, July 22, 2014

Walking Together

It has given me great joy to find some of your children walking in the truth, just as the Father commanded us.

2 John 1:4,5

My wife and I belong to an exercise class. The main exercise is to walk as a group counterclockwise around the floor of a gymnasium. What makes the exercise enjoyable (if, indeed, exercising can be called enjoyable) is the fact that the ten of us do it together. Since there are times when I can easily find all kinds of excuses not to exercise, I go nonetheless. I would miss chatting with our friends as we walk. A strong bond has developed between us.

Since retiring, my wife and I also cherish the friendships we have with a variety of other people, especially those who also love the Lord Jesus. We “walk together” regularly and share mutual encouragement as well as many hearty laughs. My wife and I would never think of trying to “go it alone” in life without our friends.

Dear Holy Spirit, keep opening my eyes and inspiring me to be a friend wherever possible, that I may also always have a friend. Amen.

Walk: Take a walk with a friend, if you are able.

Read: 1 John 1:1-13

Paul Eggold
Greendale, WI

Wednesday, July 23, 2014

The Be-Attitudes

Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

Matthew 11:28

The opposite of a be-attitude is a do-attitude—a characteristic that happens when we live out who we are: beloved sons and daughters of God. A prime example of someone with a do-attitude was Charlotte Elliott (1789-1871), a gifted portrait artist and author of humorous verse. A serious illness left her disturbed and distressed. Dr. Milan of Switzerland, a noted minister, asked her to find peace with God. She replied that she wanted to clean up some things in her life before becoming a Christian. His reply, “Come as you are.” Those words stayed with her, and fourteen years later she wrote the beloved hymn “Just As I Am.”

How great to be loved just as we are, warts and all!

Forgiving Father, let us never forget to walk thankfully in that unconditional love, remembering that we are loved, not for what we do, but who we are—beloved children of our Heavenly Father. Amen.

Do: Love others just as they are.

Read: The hymn “Just As I Am”

*Connie Bretscher
Valparaiso, IN*

Thursday, July 24, 2014

Acting Like a Kid

Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children.

Ephesians 5:1

When I was a child, I loved to play “dress-up.” I put on my mother’s high heels and paraded around the house. I called those shoes “click-clocks.” I loved pretending and imitating my mother.

God our Father calls us not to pretend, but to be like him, to know him so well, to be so filled with his Holy Spirit that his nature permeates ours. Then we will live a life of love, forgiving others as God has forgiven us. Forgiveness brings to others what we have received from God. Forgiveness reflects his nature best. In forgiving others we imitate our Heavenly Father.

Father, make me more like you, kind, tenderhearted, patient and forgiving. Amen.

Think: Think of words that describe God. Jot them down. Then ask God to work his nature in you.

Read: 1 Peter 1:13-16; Matthew 18:1-4

*Donna J. Streufert
South Bend, IN*

Friday, July 25, 2014

The Lighthouse

You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden.

Matthew 5:14

Driving down the coast of north Florida along the Atlantic Ocean near St. Augustine, my fellow traveler said, “Look at that lighthouse. It seems to have moved so far from shore. Do you think it can still be effective as a lighthouse?” We watched and waited.

In fact, the lighthouse had not moved, but the shoreline had changed with time and age. However, as we traveled further south on the coast, we received our answer. Indeed, the light from that tower beamed for several miles to come. It continued to do its job, despite the changes it had experienced.

As we sometimes think our light is fading, as we begin to doubt our usefulness, as we move further away from our positions of the past, God reminds us that we can continue to let our light shine for him in all that we do. God lifts us up “on a hill” for others to see as we let our light shine for him.

Lord God, help me to continue to let my light shine for you in all I say and do. Amen.

Think: Think of ways you have let your light shine for God in the past week.

Read: Matthew 5:14-15

*Margaret Hinchey
Englewood, CO*

Saturday, July 26, 2014

Sing Out Loud

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

Psalm 100:2

I used to sing to my grandchildren. I don't have a singing voice and can't carry a tune, but each child was happy to hear me sing—until they reached the age of five or six. From that time on, they were more discerning and would only put up with my singing in church, as my voice mingled with those of the rest of the congregation. It's nice to know that although my grandchildren are critics, God still enjoys my singing. There is no eye-rolling or "Oh, Grandma" coming from the heavenly throne. He can distinguish my voice from all the others, and he loves it as I praise his name.

Heavenly Father, I thank you that I don't have to have perfect pitch to sing your praise. You hear my heart and it is a sweet sound to you. Amen.

Sing: Sing out loud!

Read: Psalm 104:33; Psalm 92:1

*Lynne Waite Chapman
Fort Wayne, IN*

Sunday, July 27, 2014

Road Test

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

Psalm 119:105

In Illinois, every driver over a “certain age” needs to take a road test in order to renew a driver’s license. My husband and I both had reached that age. I had not taken a road test since I got my first license at the age of sixteen—and that was decades ago. The thought of having someone grading me as I drove made me nervous.

My husband took the test first and told me exactly what to expect. What a relief that was!

Life is kind of like a road test when we don’t know what to do or expect. That’s when we can turn to God’s Word and find the answers. It is “a light to my path.”

Hooray! I passed the road test easily.

Lord, thanks for your Word that guides me in all areas of my life. Amen.

Help: Help someone who is anxious or worried about something.

Read: Psalm 119:97-106

*Jeanette Dall
Batavia, IL*

Monday, July 28, 2014

The Clock

At the right time Christ died for the ungodly.

Romans 5:6

It was the right gift! When I retired, my secretary gave me a fine clock. On the hour it plays hymns, Christmas carols or classics. Consistently, it catches my attention. Its face puts a smile on mine. I am reminded of a person who was punctual, used her time well and always had a moment for people.

“At the right time, Christ died for [me].” My times in this earthly tent are in his hands. For all the world, Jesus will come a second time. Frequently, we may speak of time as our enemy. It does not need to be. When Jesus enters our time, fear flees. The time with Christian friends brings blessed moments. Time is the place where God’s love is shown to us, for us and through us.

Risen Savior, Eternal One, thank you for entering our time. Amen.

Be encouraged: It is in time where Love is given ... and received.

Read: Romans 5:6-11; Ecclesiastes 3:11-12

*Harry Edenfield
Brownstown, MI*

Tuesday, July 29, 2014

The Wise Son

A wise son brings joy to his father ...

Proverbs 10:1

So many of us have been blessed with “the wise child.” So many of us are grateful that our children give us such joy. They are true gifts from God. We are grateful!

We are tempted to take some credit for the way our children have turned out. Perhaps that credit is appropriate. But we all know parents who did a lot of things like us, or even better, and their children caused them a lot of grief. Our well-behaved and caring children are indeed a gift of God.

And then when our children’s children also turn out in such a way that we can only be proud of them, we understand that we are doubly blessed. So we keep on doing what we have done. We model as best we can, we pray for them, we keep interested in what they are doing, we affirm whenever we can and we commend them to our Lord. He does the rest.

We commend our children into your care. Hold them close. Amen.

Affirm: Affirm your children.

Read: Ephesians 6:1-4; Mark 10:13-16

*Vern Gundermann
St. Louis, MO*

Wednesday, July 30, 2014

The Hanover Gang

Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it.

1 Corinthians 12:27

Seven farm families growing up in a country church and school gathered three times a year: 4th of July, Halloween and New Year's Eve. Lifetime friendships lasted, though some had moved away from their roots in Hanover, Iowa.

All were cousins with intertwining family trees, so fellowship never waned. Kids played the nights away while adults square-danced in freshly swept barns. Lightning bugs on hot July nights, "kick the can" late into the night and familiar New Year's Eve worship at the mother church are vivid memories, even though most have passed on to glory.

How precious are the memories of good Christian friends playing together through the years!

Thank you, Lord Jesus, for gathering us into your one body where we enjoy your Father's love and care as sisters and brothers in faith. Amen.

Remember: Take a moment to get in touch with a precious friend from your old gang and renew friendships.

Read: Philippians 1:1-6; Ephesians 4:1-16

Rodney Otto
Grand Rapids, MI

Thursday, July 31, 2014

I Love a Mystery

Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit ...

Matthew 28:19

Back when radio was the main source of entertainment, my favorite program was *I Love a Mystery*. I still love a good mystery story. Sometimes I'm successful in figuring out who the culprit is before the end. Mystery solved by an armchair detective!

There is a Trinitarian mystery that I will never solve. It involves a beautiful world created by God, a lost people saved from destruction by Jesus and a gift of the Holy Spirit sent to live in us. Inexplicable!

It is God who creates and saves me, then fills me with the assurance of God's love and holds on to me. Thanks be to God! I truly love this mystery. In faith, I walk hand in hand with God.

Precious Lord, take my hand and lead me today and always. Amen.

Search: Find your baptismal certificate and read it.

Read: Psalm 23

*Lael Hoerger
Niles, MI*

Friday, August 1, 2014

Eyes and Ears

The eye never has enough of seeing, nor the ear its fill of hearing.

Ecclesiastes 1:8

I have a theory. It goes like this: The reason I sometimes forget something is because my brain is full of information, and when a new piece of information comes my way, my brain, being full, has to discard something to make room for the new information. What I forgot was what had been discarded.

Of course, that's not the way our brain works. So how does our brain work? I have no idea. Neither did Solomon. In Solomon's day they had no concept of "brain." Nevertheless, he marvels at our eyes and ears. Our eyes keep on seeing, and our ears keep on hearing our entire life—even if we live to be one hundred and ten. Maybe we cannot see or hear as well as we used to, but our eyes and ears still work. In fact, as Solomon observes, "the eye never has enough of seeing, nor the ear its fill of hearing." What a marvelous creation the human body is!

Lord, I praise you that I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Amen.

Imagine: How many words do you hear each day? (Radio and TV count!)

Read: Psalm 139:1-16 (especially verses 13-16)

*Jim Rogers
Ellisville, MO*

Saturday, August 2, 2014

Grandma's Necklace

I am with you always, to the end of the age.

Matthew 28:20

In August of 2004 we had a family vacation in the Rocky Mountains of Colorado. Our granddaughter had been born there in June, so our family from Wisconsin met her for the first time. While we were there, I celebrated my birthday, and my five grandkids gave me a beautiful necklace with five charms representing our four grandsons and one granddaughter. Since then I've worn it over my heart almost every day, taking my grandkids with me wherever I go.

I also have Jesus with me in my heart wherever I go, which is so comforting when I have doctor appointments, visit family and friends in the hospital and especially when I attend funerals. He entered my heart when I was born into a Christian family and baptized. He's been there since, and he promises to be with me always. What a blessing his presence is!

Dear Jesus, thank you for your comforting presence in my heart always. Amen.

Do: Share the comforting words of Jesus' promise in Matthew 28:20 with someone today.

Read: Psalm 119:76; 2 Thessalonians 2:16-17

*Annette Schumacher
Muskego, WI*

Sunday, August 3, 2014

Certain Hope

I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God that you may know you have eternal life.

1 John 5:13

We use the word *hope* often. As we age, hope for good health is on our minds, or if ill, we accept discomfort and hope we will get better. Earthly hopes have no guarantee, do they?

Through faith in Christ our Savior we have hope that is certain, a Rock to which our lives are anchored. We have the certainty of eternal life. Hardships can cause us to doubt that Christ is with us. Resist the devil's work, pray and trust Jesus to see you through. Words from a familiar hymn say it best: "My hope is built on nothing less than Jesus' blood and righteousness; no merit of my own I claim but wholly lean on Jesus' name."

Heavenly Father, you are with us always. Help us to be mindful of you, trusting in a hope that is certain. Amen.

Remember: Jesus has each of us in his arms and will carry us home.

Read: Matthew 7:24-27; Revelation 22:3-7

Don Hollmann
Ballwin, MO

Monday, August 4, 2014

Look at the Stars

He determines the number of the stars and calls them each by name.

Psalm 147:4

On a clear night in Mequon, Wisconsin, where I went to college, just over the edge of a bluff I could see countless stars. It was amazing to be away from the city lights there and see shooting stars and formations I had never dreamed of seeing before.

God really has created some wonderful things. Certainly the stars are some of those wonderful things. Remember though, like the stars, he has created you. You are his creation too. You are seen, through Christ, as good. You may not feel that way as arthritis and other ailments rear their ugly heads, but it is true. As the psalmist says, “He heals the broken-hearted and binds up their wounds. He determines the number of the stars and calls them each by name. Great is our Lord and mighty in power; his understanding has no limit” (Psalm 147:3-5). Enjoy being a part of his creation.

Dear Lord of heaven and earth, thank you for the gift of your creation. Amen.

Share: Share a moment with a grandchild or friend, and show him or her some constellations.

Read: Psalm 147

*Cory A. Wielert
Crown Point, IN*

Tuesday, August 5, 2014

Wonderfully Made?

But who are you, O man, to answer back to God? Will what is molded say to its molder, “Why have you made me like this?”

Romans 9:20

Imagine a newly formed vase being lifted from a potter’s wheel. As the artist admires her work, the clay begins to speak, asking, “Why have you made me like this?” Maybe the vase would point out some flaws—a lopsided area here, a place where the potter’s finger left an indentation over there.

When I’m taking my medication, putting on my reading glasses or trying to fall asleep with my CPAP, I want to squawk like the lump of clay in Romans 9, “Why have you made me like this?”

Often the best way to be reminded of how wonderfully we have been made is to glorify God by serving someone else. When we pray for our loved ones, spend time with our grandchildren or phone a friend on a dreary day, we are living into the very purpose for which we were created.

Remind me, O God, even on difficult days, how you have made me to glorify you. Amen.

Serve: Live into God’s purpose for your life by doing something for someone else.

Read: Romans 9:19-24; Psalm 139:13-16

Joe Iovino
Monument, CO

Wednesday, August 6, 2014

Gray Hair

I have upheld [you] since your birth ... even to your old age and gray hairs ...

Isaiah 46:3-4

Nowadays, every birthday gifts me with another candle to blow out as well as more gray hairs. Memories fade a little more, joints and hips ache a bit longer, hearing fades and life is fuzzier. What's so special about birthdays? Bah humbug!

Not so for the person God carries to old age! Years of trust have built faith muscles. When you need to ask, you know Jesus will carry you—carry you through scary doctor visits, carry you over family crises, carry you past sleepless nights. Over the years you have spent lots of time in his arms. Those arms that stretched out to gather the whole world to himself carry you right by his heart. It's your spot. You and Jesus are old friends.

Jesus, you have carried me since before I was born, like a shepherd carries his lamb. Surely goodness and mercy will follow me all the days of my life. Amen.

Recite: Psalm 23 at least once each day this week. Don't have it by heart? That's your new challenge!

Read: Psalm 55:22; 2 Timothy 4:6-8

*Julaine Kammrath
Aurora, IL*

Thursday, August 7, 2014

Do You Do Windows?

But whoever would be great among you must be your servant.

Matthew 20:26

My dad did windows. He also cleaned screens and walls and floors and wallpaper. That was just simply his nature—to be of service. To anyone. At any time.

In his last days on earth Jesus wanted to do something for his disciples more than just tell them; he wanted to show them what their lives were to be about. And so he got up from the table, took off his outer garment, tied a towel around his waist, filled a basin with water and began to wash their feet.

He came to each of them, got down on his knees and gently washed the dirt from their feet and ultimately from their lives. His message was clear. Their definitive tool in bringing others to follow Jesus would not be the “bully pulpit,” but rather “the towel and the basin.” You will be his disciples as you do what he does.

Show me, Jesus, whose feet you want me to wash this day. Amen.

Serve: Find ways to serve and help others today. In prayer, ask God to help them too.

Read: John 13:1-20; Galatians 5:13-14

Don Luepke
Fremont, IN

Friday, August 8, 2014

Earthly Props

*For you, O Lord, are my hope, my trust, O Lord,
from my youth.*

Psalm 71:5

“When every earthly prop gives way, he then is all my hope and stay.” This line from the hymn “My Hope is Built on Nothing Less” really hits home as we age. With each passing year, earthly props keep vanishing.

From childhood through adulthood, our main props are often people. You may already have lost your first earthly props, your parents, and perhaps siblings, spouse or friends. Other things you’ve always depended on such as health, strength, mental agility and financial stability may be declining too. While this might seem sad, the inevitable process of losing earthly props actually leads us to the eternal truth, “He then is all my hope and stay.” Rather than despair, remember that God is separating you from earthly props for your eternal good.

Gracious God, you are my eternal hope. Amen.

Reflect: Remember with thanksgiving the earthly props you’ve loved but lost.

Read: Romans 12:12; Psalm 39:7; Habakkuk 3:17-19

*Marj Maynard
Billings, MO*

Saturday, August 9, 2014

A Growing Opportunity

*With the mighty deeds of the Lord God I will come;
I will remind them of your righteousness, yours
alone.*

Psalm 71:16

I remember reading a long time ago that the “Boomer Generation” would be one of the greatest mission opportunities the Church has ever experienced. I was reminded of that recently as I watched a musical concert. In the middle of the program, unexpectedly, the musicians played the hymn “Nearer My God To Thee.” The tears that welled in the eyes of those mainly Baby Boomer people, the quietness that fell upon them and the looks upon their faces told so much about their hearts at that moment. They still remember the Lord and have a longing for him.

We may worry about our churches growing older. And there is some rightful concern in that. But the possibility to also fill them with a growing older generation increases every day.

Lord, keep me alert to the opportunities to share your love among my own generation. Amen.

Observe: Do you know someone whom you can remind gently of the Lord’s love and righteousness?

Read: Psalm 71

*Lionel Otto
Adelaide, Australia*

Sunday, August 10, 2014

The Triple-A Formula

[He is] able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to his power at work within us ...

Ephesians 3:20

Several tragic accidents left Will Mitchell with disfiguring burns, missing fingers and wheelchair confinement. Understandably depressed, he listened to a friend's reminder: "What happens to you matters less than what you decide to do about it." So Mitchell adopted a formula that could help most of us:

Accept what has happened, so you won't live in denial, resentment or self-pity.

Appreciate what you can learn as God makes you wiser and stronger.

Adapt to the new opportunities this experience presents.

Nothing you are facing today is too big for God. He can turn it around through his power and love.

Lord, grant us grace to see your almighty power in our weakness. Amen.

Apply: Apply the Triple-A Formula in your life today.

Read: Ephesians 3:14-20

*Sharolyn Sander
Lincoln, NE*

Monday, August 11, 2014

Renewable Energy

For I am fearfully and wonderfully made.

Psalm 139:14

Sometimes we find ourselves saying, “My get-up-and-go got up and went.” Others say, “I am so tired of being tired.” Still others declare that there is no vacation time long enough to recover an imagined previous energy.

How can we frame the question of energy in such a way as to be gentle to our fatigue while also combatting it? Can we be both tired and renewable, even long after we don’t believe in our own renewal?

I believe yes. The answer is prayer. Prayer is not as big an item as people imagine it to be. Prayer is more like a pause than anything else. It is a blessed reflection that follows excessive action.

Like solar and wind energy, prayer is a source of renewable energy, reminding us that we are fearfully and wonderfully made.

Renewing God, when we are too tired to pray, let us just pause, and in the pause, fill us up with your energy. Amen.

Imagine: Imagine renewal. Let the imagining be a form of renewal. Picture yourself as fearfully and wonderfully made.

Read: 1 Thessalonians 5:12-35; Psalm 69:29-33

*Donna Schaper
New York, NY*

Tuesday, August 12, 2014

Peace!

Live in peace with each other.

1 Thessalonians 5:13

This seems like a no-brainer for Christians, doesn't it? Live in peace with each other. What else do we know? Jesus breathed upon his disciples and said, "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you." Christ is the Prince of Peace. Through Christ we have peace with God. Are you sensing a common theme?

Today is not about peace-making. Today is about "peace-living." Live peaceably. Breathe in Christ's peace-breath. No, really, breathe in right now, deeply. Hold your breath just a moment. As you hold it, thank Jesus for his peace. Now breathe out and as you do, let go of any "not-at-peace" feelings you may have. Do it again if you need to. Let your breathing be Christ's peace in you.

But you aren't done! Greet at least one person today with the words "The peace of Christ be with you." Live in peace today. Practice Christ's peace today.

Jesus, Prince of Peace, thank you for your peace. May it lead me today. Amen.

Share: Share the peace of the Lord with everyone you meet today.

Read: 2 Corinthians 13:11-14

*Don Schatz
Arcata, CA*

Wednesday, August 13, 2014

With Healing in Its Wings

Bless the Lord ... who heals all your diseases.

Psalm 103:2-3

Whenever we Christians feel bad, we can read Psalm 103. There, near the top of the list of many ways that God shows his love to us, is this: He “forgives all your iniquity and heals all your diseases.” What great love, and what a promise!

But then, why do I get sick? Why is my hearing so poor? Why do so many of us suffer from arthritis? Nearly every time older people get together, we hear “organ recitals” as we share all that is wrong with us.

God makes some astonishing promises about healing. Someone once suggested that if God healed us just the way we want, God wouldn't be God—we would be God. God wants us to know that all healing comes from God. We are to trust and pray for healing.

In the Book of Malachi we read: “The sun of righteousness shall rise with healing in its wings” (Malachi 4:2). Knowing that heals our hearts, heals our spirits and can even bring healing to our bodies.

O Lord, heal me body and soul. Amen.

Pray: Pray for healing for yourself or someone you know who is sick.

Read: Psalm 103

*Eldor Kaiser
Lenexa, KS*

Thursday, August 14, 2014

Our Shared Dignity

So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him, male and female he created them.

Genesis 1:27

There is something special about every human being. No other creature has our rational powers, the gift of a vivid memory or the keen awareness of future possibilities. Many, however, do not accept this assumption today. Each of us has dignity. We need it, too, for sin manifests itself when we degrade others who are created in God's image. To restore our dignity and rightful place in the created order, the Son of God did not become a moon or a star or another sun. He became a human being, like the very ones who destroyed the dignity God once bestowed upon us. Jesus is the very image of the invisible God (Colossians 1:15). He suffered the indignity of the cross and broke forth from the dark tomb, filling all of our undignified circumstances with his grace.

O Holy Spirit, convince us again that whatever our circumstance, we are valuable in your sight through what Jesus did for us. Amen.

Do: Intentionally do something constructive today for someone others have overlooked.

Read: Colossians 1:15-23

*Gordon Beck
University City, MO*

Friday, August 15, 2014

Grands

Do not forget the things your eyes have seen or let them slip from your heart as long as you live. Teach them to your children and to their children after them.

Deuteronomy 4:9

I love the smell of cinnamon, especially on a roll or in a doughnut! So purchasing Pillsbury Grands from the refrigerated section of the grocery store makes my day! As I open the tube and begin laying the dough on a baking sheet, I'm reminded of my other Grands who were part of my life growing up.

I knew my grandfathers and my grandmothers well. We saw them all on a weekly basis—at church, for a Sunday night supper or a trip to the grocery store. I learned how to help without smothering and how to listen without advising.

My Grands didn't give me a lot of "things." What they did give me was their love and their time. They weren't rich in resources. They were rich in giving of themselves. What Grand examples they were!

Good Father, help me be a Grand example for someone in my family, church or community. Amen.

Connect: Connect with someone today.

Read: Psalm 92:14-15; Psalm 103:17; Proverbs 16:31; Proverbs 17:6

*Louise Schini Weber
Fort Myers, FL*

Saturday, August 16, 2014

What a Drink!

The water I give them will become in them a spring of water welling up to eternal life.

John 4:14

There is a quiet place of reflection where my parents are buried. A statue of Jesus and the woman at the well challenges my thoughts. The grace of God is depicted in this moving story. Jesus extends acceptance to a nameless woman. He speaks of a life-giving water that will quench her thirst forever. What a drink!

Our bodies cannot live without water. Our souls cannot thrive without the living water of Jesus. This spring of water never dries up. It's there for all of us. Like Niagara Falls, gushing endlessly, it flows with healing and wholeness. Let's drink deeply!

Thank you, Lord, for refreshing me through your life-giving water. Amen.

Be reminded: Remember God's love for you while you shower, swim or walk in the rain.

Read: John 4:1-30

*Lael Hoerger
Niles, MI*

Sunday, August 17, 2014

Was She an Angel?

The angel of the Lord encamps around those who fear him, and delivers them.

Psalm 34:7

Do you believe you can see angels here on earth? I do. I believe God sends them down to us in times of trial to comfort us with their love.

It was a beautiful day when I was walking up a hill and tripped. Before I knew what happened, I was lying on the pavement. I'm not sure where the woman came from, but suddenly she was there. "Your head shouldn't be on the hard pavement," she said. She sat and put my head in her lap. "You're going to be all right." A blissfully calm feeling washed over me as she talk softly until the ambulance came.

Was she just someone who happened to be right there when I fell? Or was she really an angel sent from heaven? I'll never know—but I do know her caring love is a gift I will always treasure. And I do know it is recorded throughout the Bible that God sent angels to help do his bidding on earth.

Thank you, God, for the love you give every day and for the stranger's love during my times of trial. Amen.

Help: Be an "angel" to someone today.

Read: 1 Corinthians 13

*Edna Shilling
Ft. Myers, FL*

Monday, August 18, 2014

Forever Changing

Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change.

James 1:17

When we first moved to the St. Louis area, the locals would tell us: “If you don’t like the weather, stick around awhile, it’ll change.” And it did!

The same could be said of life—it is forever changing. Teen years and college times soon give way to a budding career, a happy marriage, family life, grandkids and even great grandchildren. Before you know it, you’re retired. You can’t imagine where the time has gone!

Yet in the Lord we find one who never changes, who is forever the same—powerful, compassionate, forgiving, sustaining, comforting—and ever present with us in the good times and the bad to make strong our confidence and trust in him, and to renew our hope for the future where his love will forever sustain us.

Father, thanks for your changeless love. Amen.

Thank: Thank God for the things in your life that have not changed.

Read: Psalm 90:1-2; Psalm 91; Hebrews 13:8

*David P. Schmidt
St. Louis, MO*

Tuesday, August 19, 2014

Looking

Looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith ...

Hebrews 12:2

Living each day as an aging pilgrim challenges us to spend time “looking.” Looking where?

We look backward and see Jesus dying on the cross for our sins. We look upward and see Jesus pleading our case before the throne of God. We look inward, experiencing the peace that comes through Jesus’ forgiveness. We look outward searching for opportunities to tell others the story of Jesus’ love. We look forward to the time when Jesus shall return to receive us into his eternal home.

Looking to Jesus is the way to live as we “grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ” (2 Peter 3:18).

Lord Jesus, as we look to you, open our eyes to see you as our Savior and Lord. Amen.

Ponder: Spend time reflecting on the prayer of the psalmist, “Turn my eyes from looking at worthless things and give me life in your ways” (Psalm 119:37).

Read: Psalm 121; Isaiah 66:1-2

Walter M. Schoedel
Webster Groves, MO

Wednesday, August 20, 2014

We All Need Help

I was pushed hard, so that I was falling, but the Lord helped me.

Psalm 118:13

A familiar commercial featured a senior who had fallen in her home. She could not get up on her own. She was weak and probably injured. She called for help.

David cried out for help when he was in trouble.

The paralytic in Capernaum needed help from his four friends who lowered him from a roof so he could get near Jesus.

The apostle Paul needed help and support in his ministry. He asked for help from his friends. He commended Phoebe, a servant in the church, and asked his friends to help her also.

We all need help. God sets us in families, in circles of friends, alongside neighbors. Often God helps others through his people. Whatever the need, let's do it together.

Lord, give me courage, both to ask for help and to offer help. Amen.

Watch: Watch for opportunities to help others today. Share what motivates you to offer help.

Read: Psalm 118; Isaiah 41:6-7; Romans 16:1-16

*Donna J. Streufert
South Bend, IN*

Thursday, August 21, 2014

A Special Wrapping

For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.

Galatians 3:26-27

Near the garbage dump in Guatemala City, when baby Alexander's mother carried him to the front of the drab cement block room for him to receive the waters of baptism, she had him beautifully wrapped in a lace window curtain. My eyes looked twice. My heart smiled. This mother knew it was going to be a special moment for her little son.

For each of us that water and Word carried an extremely special impact. As we go about daily living, what a blessing to be covered with the work of the Holy Spirit. We may not have been wrapped in lace, but what joy to have been wrapped in God's exceptional love.

Thank you, dear Savior, for clothing me with the special waters of baptism. Amen.

Do: Share your joy of rebirth in baptism with someone who has not received the gift.

Read: Titus 3:4-7; Romans 6:3-7

*Phyllis Otto
Grand Rapids, MI*

Friday, August 22, 2014

Keep Going

Now Moses was eighty years old, and Aaron eighty-three years old, when they spoke to Pharaoh.

Exodus 7:7

As children we imagine what our adult lives will be like. We dream about where we might live, what college to attend, and where we will work. As adults our dreams for the future change. Our focus is now on planning for retirement and “slowing down.” We may move to a smaller house or an apartment.

We don't know what God has in mind. Moses was eighty years old when the Lord called him to begin to work for him. He spent the next forty years, the rest of his life, leading God's people. Whatever your age, God has called you into his service. Whatever your age, keep going. God has called you to be his own child in Christ Jesus every day of your life.

My Lord and God, may we labor for you regardless of our age. Amen.

Be ready: Be ready whenever the Lord calls you.

Read: Exodus 3:1-22: Deuteronomy 34:1-12

*Darla Panbaker
Breezy Point, MN*

Saturday, August 23, 2014

Keys

I died, and behold, I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of Death and Hades.

Revelation 1:18

A preschooler wisely announced what she had observed as the most obvious symbol of authority. The person in charge always had the key ring with the most keys. Classrooms, offices, restrooms, kitchen, house, car—one individual could open all those doors.

Jesus our Savior was crucified, buried and raised to life. He lives forever and he holds the keys of death and hell. Sin, death and Satan no longer have authority over us. When guilt overwhelms you, when you struggle with the fear and sorrow over illness or death, remember Jesus' words, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me" (Matthew 28:18). Jesus is in charge and he is holding all the keys.

Lord Jesus, comfort me with the knowledge that all authority in heaven and on earth is yours. Amen.

Count: Count your keys. If you don't have any, remember that Jesus has the ones you need.

Read: Revelation 1:12-20; Matthew 9:1-7

*Carol Geisler
Manchester, MO*

Sunday, August 24, 2014

What Comes Naturally

But Moses said, "Lord, please send someone else."

Exodus 4:13

Long before Annie Oakley sang about "doing what comes naturally" in the 1946 stage hit, Moses demonstrated what that would look like in his life. It sometimes looks the same way in mine.

Remember the Old Testament story in which Moses and God met at a burning bush? God asked Moses to rescue the children of Israel from Pharaoh's control. Moses' response? "Please send someone else." That didn't work. God had chosen Moses long before to do this job.

God is still in the equipping business. Starting with their baptism, God equips all his people for what he wants them to do. He continues his preparation of them for his service, providing them with multiple gifts of the Spirit. Do you think he skipped you in the process, making your excuses credible? Better think again.

Father, send your Spirit that I may say yes to what you want me to do. Amen.

Identify: Identify at least one opportunity for Moses-like service God has prepared you for and do it.

Read: Luke 11:29-37

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

Monday, August 25, 2014

I Love to Hear the Story

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

As a grade-schooler I loved *The Lone Ranger* series. The plot never changed: a) The Lone Ranger and Tonto entered a town; b) there was trouble of some sort; c) Tonto went to investigate, usually getting beat up in the process; d) together the Lone Ranger and Tonto acted decisively, got rid of the bad guy(s) and restored justice. I knew the formula. But it never bored me because I didn't just watch it—I was in it!

“I love to *tell* the story,” proclaims the iconic gospel hymn. And that is good. But I love to *hear* the story repeatedly even though I know the plot: Jesus has come, acted decisively, triumphed through suffering over the devil, the world and my sinful flesh. He has restored God's own justice. It's a story that still pulls me in and never gets old.

Lord Jesus, thank you for your old, old story of your boundless love for us. Amen.

Notice: As you read from Acts, notice how the simple facts of the Gospel powerfully move people's hearts and lives.

Read: Acts 2:22-37; Acts 10:34-48

*Mike May
Kansas City, KS*

Tuesday, August 26, 2014

God's Forgiveness Path

Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.

Ephesians 4:32

As we get older, doctors recommend walking as an important physical exercise. For spiritual exercise, nothing is more important than walking God's forgiveness trail. When I was young, I spent nights confessing wrongs that I had done. I promised I would never do it again, but I did. It was a hopeless road. Behind my acts of sin lay the real problem. My whole nature was in rebellion against God.

The good news is that God's forgiveness reaches into every fiber of our being. It is as ever-present as our breathing. We are always 100% sinner, and we are always 100% saint through Christ's death and resurrection. Daily we walk the road of the prodigal son. It is the road home and leads into the arms of our forgiving Father.

Dear Father, it is your forgiveness that brings hope and joy into my life each day. Thank you, Father. Thank you, Jesus. Thank you, Holy Spirit. Amen.

Forgive: Is there someone you need to forgive? Do it today. It is God's forgiveness that empowers us all to forgive.

Read: Luke 15:11-32

*Leo Symmank
Seabrook, TX*

Wednesday, August 27, 2014

Tada! I'm Here

This is the day that the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it.

Psalm 118:24

Recently an aide of my granddaughter's preschool related this story that happened over twenty years ago: Every morning my granddaughter would hop over the threshold and announce with her outstretched arms, "Tada! I'm here." What if we greeted each morning with that much enthusiasm? Some of us feel just lucky to get out of bed, but God has set before us a new day to serve him. Our "tada" can be these words: "Satisfy us in the morning with your steadfast love that we may rejoice and be glad all our days" (Psalm 90:14).

O Lord, help me to greet each day with the enthusiasm of a child. You have set before me ways to serve you each day. May my joy in the morning reflect your love. Amen.

Look: Look for ways to make your mornings joyful. Begin a prayer or sing a song of praise or, like me, listen to CDs with songs of praise.

Read: Psalm 40:16

*Naomi Weslock
Lake in the Hills, IL*

Thursday, August 28, 2014

He Knows Your Name

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

Isaiah 43:1

The inability to remember names often catches me off-guard. Though I've tried various tricks to help, the name usually pops into my mind when I least expect it.

God will never forget your name. We are his—loved, redeemed and precious in his sight. He promises to be by our side. He walks with us through the fires of life, not allowing them to consume us. As Joshua reminds us, “The Lord your God is with you wherever you go” (Joshua 1:9). Then, as the Lord himself says to us later in Isaiah, “Behold, I have engraved you on the palms of my hands” (Isaiah 49:16). And finally, as Jesus says in Luke, “Rejoice that your names are written in heaven” (Luke 10:20).

When you can't recall a name, know that God will never forget!

Father, thank you for the privilege to call you my Savior and Lord. Amen.

Pray: Pray by name (or face) for your friends through the years.

Read: Isaiah 43:1-13; John 10:1-3

*Sharolyn Sander
Lincoln, NE*

Friday, August 29, 2014

The Chaff

The wicked are not so, but are like chaff that the wind drives away.

Psalm 1:4

My parents grew popcorn and sold it as a small side business. They would plant a special kind of corn that produced small, white kernels. The popcorn was in great demand by the people at my father's place of work. A lot of work was required before it could be bagged and sold. It needed to be picked, then dried and shelled.

There was one more step. My mother would pour the kernels from one container to another, in front of an electric fan or outside if there was a strong breeze. Tiny, lightweight particles of chaff would be blown out and the clean popcorn could then be bagged.

We often have a lot of chaff in our lives. We hang on to doubts, worries, hurts, unhappiness and all sorts of things we need to "blow away" so we can be useful in God's kingdom. Let all "chaff" be gone!

Creator of all things, help me separate the chaff from my life and let the "wind" of your love blow it away. Amen.

Share: Have popcorn with a friend, and discuss the chaff in every life.

Read: Psalm 35:5; Matthew 3:11-12

*Gloria Doty
Ft. Wayne, IN*

Saturday, August 30, 2014

Unity

Behold, how good and pleasant it is when brothers dwell in unity! ... For there the Lord has commanded the blessing, life forevermore.

Psalm 133:1, 3

Remember The Smothers Brothers comedy team? When the conversation was getting a little out of hand, one or the other would declare, “Mom always liked me best!” The two brothers were constantly competing for status and rank. It is not unusual for siblings within a family to challenge each other for attention and affection.

Most families find ways to get over the conflict and move on to a constructive, cooperative way of living. King David makes the point that there is great value in unity. To live in relationships that are good and pleasant can take some effort. To strive for unity suggests commitment to seeking connection, cooperation, collaboration, coordination, clarification and, most of all, communication. That is a lot of C words! All of these words suggest ways that contribute to living in the valued state of unity. May unity rule!

Lord, help me to live in unity with those around me. Amen.

Reflect: Reflect on what you can do to build unity.

Read: Ephesians 4:25-32

*Steve Sonnenberg
San Clemente, CA*

Sunday, August 31, 2014

When God Is Silent

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

Psalm 35:22

A man prays. He waits. He prays again. He waits. There seemingly is no reply. What does one do when God is silent?

We look to Jesus, and we follow his example. On the cross Jesus cried out, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” But there was only a stony, grey silence.

What did Jesus do? He prayed, “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.

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*

Monday, September 1, 2014

This Is the Day

This is the day that the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it.

Psalm 118:24

We've all had days when we can say, "This just isn't my day!" No, it truly isn't. Today, like any other day, is *God's* day. It can bring disappointment, loss of a loved one, discouragement or disillusionment. We cannot change that. But we do not have to fear it. We can talk to God, help of the helpless, the Rock on which we build.

What shall we do with this day God has made? It comes to us as a gift, undeserved. These 24 hours are ours to live—to correct yesterday's errors, to receive and offer God's forgiveness, to find time for growth in God's Word and to receive the empowerment and joy in the promises we find there.

What shall we do with this day? With our Lord, who is gracious and merciful, beside us we will—we *will*—rejoice and be glad in it.

God, help us to be thankful for each day, receiving your grace and love and sharing them with all who need it. Amen.

Celebrate: Give thanks for today.

Read: Psalm 118

*Connie Bretcher
Valparaiso, IN*

Tuesday, September 2, 2014

What a Lot of “t’s”

For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.

1 Corinthians 1:18

The principal of our day school was showing a new preschool student around our church and school. “You guys sure have a lot of “t’s” around here,” the little boy said. That gave Mrs. Sims a chance to explain that those letter “t’s” stood for the cross of Jesus, who died to save us.

How many crosses and pictures or symbols of Jesus do you have in your home? They make a wonderful starting place to witness our faith. How sad if someone thought the “t” in our home or on our necklace or ring was just a foolish symbol. The power of God’s Holy Spirit gives us the words we need to use to witness to those around us about the saving love Jesus poured out for us in his death on the cross.

Jesus, give me the words I need to witness your saving love to the people around me. In your name. Amen.

Do: Place a cross in a prominent place in your home or room. Use it as a conversation starter about your faith when people visit.

Read: 1 Corinthians 1:18-25; Romans 1:16-17

Ruth Geisler
Aliso Viejo, CA

Wednesday, September 3, 2014

Remember

I remember you constantly in my prayers night and day.

2 Timothy 1:3

Maybe you have heard the sound of “Taps” at gravesides. It stirs the soul no matter how many times you’ve heard it. It is a song that makes us remember the good times, the hard times, the gentle times, the rough times.

As Christians, we remember there is always the One who walks with us through the “shadow of death.” There is One who gives comfort to the loved ones of those who have sacrificed their lives for others and for our country. We can never forget them.

And we remember, above all, there is One who gave his life on a cross, surrounded by those who hated him and by those who loved him, by those who lived by the power of the sword and those who lived meek and lowly lives, so that we might live eternally with him. That is worth remembering today and every day.

O Lord, we remember those who lived before us and those who gave their lives for others. Help us to remember the death you died to give us life. Amen.

Remember: Remember a loved one who has died.

Read: Psalm 23; John 14:1-6

Jerry Groth
Sturgeon Bay, WI

Thursday, September 4, 2014

O God, Our Help

The years of our life are seventy, or even by reason of strength eighty.

Psalm 90:10

Most of my friends are in their eighties. So am I. It's humorous to think that we are the "strong" ones. What makes it even more laughable is the fantasy that we've made it this far by virtue of our own efforts, diet, genes, piety or mineral supplements.

For years we've said that each day is a gift; now we're experiencing that truth. Each day is a gift from God to be opened to whatever blessing or burden, whatever confusion or comfort is in store for us.

We are the living testimony to God's grace. We may have difficulty hearing, seeing, walking or remembering, but we know for certain that we have been embraced each day as children created, adopted and kept by the love of God in Christ Jesus.

Lord, teach us to number our days that we may be wise enough to see this one also as a day full of grace. Amen.

Sing: Sing "O God, Our Help in Ages Past."

Read: Psalm 90

*Bill Hoerger
Niles, MI*

Friday, September 5, 2014

Still Alive

I came that they may have life and have it abundantly.

John 10:10

I recently watched one of those Pixar movies. It was about a caveman family. Every morning, they'd peek out of their cave, look all around for danger, and finding none, together shout joyously, "Still alive!"

It made me ask myself when I did that last. I can remember the last time I griped about the weather. I remember needing books with bigger print. I remember when the TV volume wasn't so loud. I remember standing with my feet together and my legs not forming a parenthesis. Paying attention to my aging body somehow distracted me from being happy I have one.

Now I remember with joy that I'm still here to see and experience the seasons. I have a great TV. My legs still dance. I've got more blessings than complaints! The best one is that I'm still alive!

And so are you!

Lord, thank you for life, here and in eternity, through Jesus Christ. Amen.

Action: Rejoice! You're still alive!

Read: Philippians 4:4-5; Colossians 1:11-12

*Al Schenk
St. Louis, MO*

Saturday, September 6, 2014

God's Promises Change Us

Whenever the rainbow appears in the clouds, I will see it and remember the everlasting covenant between God and all living creatures of every kind on the earth.

Genesis 9:16-17

Ever get into a grumpy mood? Everyone does, especially when our circumstances aren't quite what we want or the sin in our lives is weighing us down. Yet it doesn't even have to be about circumstances. Some people are just naturally that way.

When we see a passage like the one today we can't help but have our mood changed, even just a little bit. God changes our mood with his promises.

Every time God sees a rainbow he is reminded of his covenant to his people. Imagine all of the rainbows God sees from his throne on high every day. He is constantly reminded of his promises!

You can trust in God's promises because history has proven that he ALWAYS keeps them!

Lord God, help me to be reminded of your promises, because your promises give me peace, comfort, joy and hope. Amen.

Draw: Draw a picture of a rainbow today.

Read: Psalms 45 and 66

*Jeremy Klaustermeier
Warrenton, MO*

Sunday, September 7, 2014

Happy Grandparents Day

So even to old age and gray hairs, O God, do not forsake me, until I proclaim your might to another generation, your power to all those to come.

Psalm 71:18

In 1978 the United States Congress passed legislation proclaiming the first Sunday after Labor Day as National Grandparents Day. The purpose of the day is to honor grandparents, to give them an opportunity to show love for their children's children and to help children become aware of the strength, information and guidance older people can offer.

The psalmist had it right. He recognized the importance of his role to witness to the glory and the grace of God to future generations. This influence is invaluable.

O God, thank you for the blessing of grandparents and grandparenting. Amen.

Consider: What opportunity will Grandparents Day bring to show love for your children's children?

Read: Psalm 71; 2 Timothy 1:1-7

*Ted Zimmerman
Napa, CA*

Monday, September 8, 2014

Caring Less

... casting all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you.

1 Peter 5:7

How often have you heard someone say “I couldn’t care less” and you took it to mean they were insensitive and indifferent? You may have been right in that person’s case. But what if another person said: “Because God cares for me I have come to care more for him and others.”

As a person grows older, the cares of this world can become almost overwhelming. Someone asks “How are you?” and we catch ourselves wanting to rattle off a litany of ills: “My blood sugar’s too high; my good cholesterol’s too low; my children are distant and my friends are dying off.” The list goes on.

St. Paul’s response to whatever ails us is: “Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything ... let your requests be made known to God” (Phil. 4:6).

That’s Paul’s way of saying “You *can* care less, because your God cares more.”

Lord Jesus, help me to fear, love and trust in you above all things. Amen.

Pray: When a friend asks for your prayers in difficult times, promise to pray and then DO.

Read: Luke 10:38-42; Matthew 6:25

Edward Arle
St. Charles, MO

Tuesday, September 9, 2014

Searched and Known

O Lord, you have searched me and known me!

Psalm 139:1

Recently, the media is full of reports about spying carried out by our government or other governments across the globe. Whatever your opinion is about spying by governments, how different it is to know that God searches us and knows our every move out of love. A prayer book from the 11th century uses these words: “Almighty God, to you all hearts are open, all desires known, and from you no secrets are hid.” God fully knows us already, so we do not need to be afraid. We can find comfort that the God who searches for us will cleanse our heart, our desires and our secrets. As we grow older, Psalm 139 provides great consolation to us who know that God tracks us in order to bring us into a loving embrace in Jesus Christ.

Holy God, I realize that you know me fully and love me despite my failures. Help me to love you fully in return. Amen.

Open: Find a new way today to open your heart even more completely to God’s grace and love.

Read: Jeremiah 17:10; Romans 8:26-27

*Paul Metzler
St. Louis, MO*

Wednesday, September 10, 2014

Joy in the World

But now I am coming to you, and these things I speak in the world, that they may have my joy fulfilled in themselves.

John 17:13

At Christmas we sing, “Joy to the world, the Lord has come ...” And now, for the rest of the year, we rejoice in the fact that he has come.

We live in a dangerous world corrupted by sin and beset by Satan, yet it is significant that Jesus said in a prayer to his Father, “I do not ask that you take them out of the world, but that you keep them from the evil one” (John 17:15). What a comfort to know that God is our constant companion and protector, that regardless of our circumstances at any given moment—he protects us.

Dear Lord, I thank you for your presence; continue to bless me and protect me in your loving care. Amen.

Share: Share with at least three others your joy at knowing that Jesus is a part of your world and your daily life.

Read: John 17:13-26; Acts 20:32-35

*David W. Eggebrecht
Grafton, WI*

Thursday, September 11, 2014

God Is My Strength

The Sovereign Lord is my strength ...

Habakkuk 3:19

After experiencing hardship and the evil workings of others, there are days you sit and wonder if God will ever right the wrongs. You cry out for his deliverance, but long waits make you weary and discouraged.

Maybe you've questioned God, asking: "How long, O Lord, must I call for help, but you do not listen? Or cry out to you, 'Violence!' but you do not save?" (Habakkuk 1:1-2).

Don't be discouraged. Have confidence in knowing God cares for you. During your weakest moments, God manifests his deep love for you and will not abandon you.

No matter what trials you have been through, God is faithful. He will deliver you! So wait upon the Lord and he will renew your strength.

Dear Lord, open my eyes and help me see your goodness, feel you and know all my help comes from you. Amen.

Think: List the people God has used to help you this week. Shout praises to him.

Read: Habakkuk 1-3; Isaiah 40:28-29

*Donna Comeaux
Tulsa, OK*

Friday, September 12, 2014

NSA—Security, Now and Always

*Lord, you alone are my portion and my cup; you
make my lot secure.*

Psalm 16:5

Think of the many forms of security we strive for: personal safety, national security, social security, financial security, health security, password security and more. Security is the name of the game, especially for persons in the later stages of life (perhaps you even wear a security button for safety).

Where does our security come from, and how do we get it? “Some trust in chariots,” says Psalm 20:7, “and some in horses. But we trust in the name of the Lord, our God.” So trust is the key element in security. And where better to find it than in our mighty, sovereign Lord? Our hope in his mercy and love is an anchor for our soul, secure and firm. Deuteronomy 33:12 proclaims: “Let the beloved of the Lord rest secure in him.” What a blessing that is!

Gracious God, help me build my confidence and security on the rock of your promises. Amen.

Trust: Trust in the Lord forever, for the Lord is our Rock eternal.

Read: Psalm 16; Hebrews 6:16-20

*Don Hoeferkamp
Sr. Louis, MO*

Saturday, September 13, 2014

What's Your Goliath?

God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble.

Psalm 46:1

I was always fascinated with the story of David and Goliath. Perhaps it was the little boy facing the huge giant, or the simplicity of using a sling and five smooth stones. Maybe it was that he simply trusted that God would be his strength.

I continue to be fascinated. Now, however, it's because of the many giants God has helped me face—some of my own doing and others brought on by others or the circumstances of living in a world of sin.

Nonetheless, God has been my refuge and strength, my very present help in trouble. After all, didn't he slay the ultimate giant of sin, death and the power of the devil through the death and resurrection of his very own beloved Son?

Dear Father, give me strength to face the giants I'm facing today. Through your Son, my Savior. Amen.

Wonder: What Goliaths are you facing? Loneliness, depression, failing health? Put them all in God's hands.

Read: 1 Samuel 17; Psalm 46

*Jane P. Wilke
Woodbury, MN*

Sunday, September 14, 2014

Far, Far Away

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

Psalm 103:12

I saw Tom at church today. His last night's sleep had been filled with bad dreams: many of his sinful deeds had come back to haunt him. We were reminded that night can be a "devilish" time, but our sins are freely forgiven. What a comfort for Christian friends to share.

Tom was refreshed. The solace of Jesus' forgiveness was received. My longtime friend knowingly replied that he had done enough misdeeds to haunt him for a couple more nights. We smiled.

I am getting older; Tom has gotten older. We who have had many years do have many sins. But how great our joy! The devil, the night, the sin does not have a death grip on us. Jesus holds us—and there is life!

Dear Father, thank you for viewing us through your Son's blood. Amen.

Let go: Let go of the guilt that Christ has removed.

Read: Psalm 103

*Harry Edenfield
Brownstown, MI*

Monday, September 15, 2014

Strong Arms

Peter got out of the boat and walked on the water and came to Jesus. But when he saw the wind, he was afraid, and beginning to sink he cried out, "Lord, save me." Jesus immediately reached out his hand and took hold of him ...

Matthew 14:29-31

During halftime of a grade-school girls basketball game, I paid a dollar to try my luck at sinking a half-court basket. I still "have it," I said to myself. As I stood at center court, I couldn't believe how far away the basket appeared. I took the shot, but the ball fell woefully, embarrassingly short. What happened to my strong arms?

Peter experienced the strong arms of Jesus. They saved him from certain death. Jesus let his strong arms be pinned to a cross to save us from eternal death. I thank Jesus continually from pulling me out of messes in my life that I got myself into. And the good news is he promises to hold me in his powerful arms for the rest of my life and carry me when I stumble and fall.

Lord Jesus, let me feel your strong arms around me always. Amen.

Reach out: Reach out to someone today.

Read: Matthew 14:22-33

*Paul Eggold
Greendale, WI*

Tuesday, September 16, 2014

Pay It Forward

... but tell to the coming generation the glorious deeds of the Lord ...

Psalm 78:4

Currently our society trumpets the slogan: Pay it forward! It's a positive encouragement to philanthropy and service to those in need. The psalmist goes beyond this slogan to encourage people of faith, "Tell the coming generation the glorious deeds of the Lord." Pay it forward with your generosity so that your children and grandchildren will trust in Jesus.

In what practical financial ways do you tell your children and grandchildren about the Lord? What financial blessings do you share with them now and reserve for them in your estate as a witness? How might they participate in your current charitable giving and through your estate? Do you help them participate in mission trips and servant events? How do you connect your financial decisions to God's love through Christ who paid it forward through his death for the sins of the world?

Lord, use my life to tell the next generation about your saving love. Amen.

Consider: Inventory your financial planning for witness opportunities.

Read: Psalm 78:1-8

*Stephen J. Carter
Oakville, MO*

Wednesday, September 17, 2014

Stay In Touch

The Lord God said, “It is not good for the man to be alone.”

Genesis 2:18

We live in a high tech society with ever less human interaction. Texting, tweeting and e-mail (for us seniors) have replaced face-to-face and voice communication. Families rarely see each other in our excessively busy lifestyles, and relationships suffer.

Already in the Garden of Eden (in paradise before sin), God wanted mankind to be in relationships—with him and with each other. In his love for mankind he created a companion and helper for Adam.

Need a cure for your loneliness? Ask the Lord to help you reach out to others, to get involved and to care for someone other than yourself. He will give you the words to say and bless your developing relationships along the way. For it is in giving that we will receive far more than we ever expect.

O Lord, help me to stay in touch with friends and family in any way I can. Amen.

Remember: With all the blessings of a “high-tech” society, never forget or downplay the necessity, the need or the joy of being “high touch.”

Read: Genesis 2:1-24, Galatians 6:1-10

*John Herzog
Chesterfield Township, MI*

Thursday, September 18, 2014

I Knew You Could Do It

Our Father in heaven ...

Matthew 6:9

When I was three, my mom and dad taught me to say the Lord's Prayer. By the time I was four, I was speaking all the words to the Lord's Prayer loudly each Sunday morning as it was prayed in worship. When I was fourteen, Lydia, who had sat behind my family every Sunday for the past fifteen years, came to my confirmation questioning. Afterwards, Lydia told me, "I knew you could do it. I remember that you knew the Lord's Prayer when you were three!"

Today as I stand beside my daughter in the pew, I am reminded of Lydia's encouragement. My daughter can do it too—we taught her to say the Lord's Prayer when she was three as well. And, God willing, she will teach her children to say it also. And each time we say the words to the Lord's Prayer we will remember the encouragement that Lydia provided from generation to generation.

God, grant us the wisdom to say words of faith and live them. Amen.

Encourage: Encourage a younger person in their faith walk today.

Read: Matthew 6:7-13

*Margaret Hinchey
Englewood, CO*

Friday, September 19, 2014

Deep and Wide

And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power ... to grasp how wide and long and deep is the love of Christ ...

Ephesians 3:17-18

Remember the rough-and-tumble play of childhood? My four siblings and I grew up on a farm just down the road from our nine cousins. We'd escape into the woods to play. I remember well the log we used to cross over the "ravine." I'd look down into the deep, hoping I wouldn't fall. But if I were to visit that spot today, I'd likely see that the log was probably only a few feet above the creek.

I'm reminded how deep God's love is for us. I daily face the danger of stumbling into the deep ravine of sin. But because of the death and resurrection of Christ, I know his love for me will catch me when I fall.

Dear Lord, as I daily struggle with sin, help me to see your arms stretched out upon the cross for me, keeping me safe. Amen.

Consider: What comes to mind when you consider Christ's sacrifice on the cross?

Read: Job 11:1-9; Ephesians 1:17-19

*Jane P. Wilke
Woodbury, MN*

Saturday, September 20, 2014

Learning from Manna

He humbled you, causing you to hunger, then feeding you with manna ... to teach you that man does not live by bread alone ...

Deuteronomy 8:3

I've never been hungry in my lifetime. Oh, as a teenager, I may have said "I'm starving" an hour after eating a big meal. But since I have never really been hungry like the Israelites in the desert, I have had to learn from their experience. Manna came directly from God's hand every day, to teach them to look to the Lord for all good things.

I see two lessons for me: First, I should give thanks every day for food and all the necessities of life. Second, I have a responsibility for helping to feed the hungry people of today. I have observed that God has not dropped any manna lately, but uses ordinary means, like me, to feed people who are hungry. You and I can be "manna deliverers" in today's world. And it all starts with gratitude.

Dear Lord, teach me to be grateful for all your gifts. Amen.

Think: As you say a table prayer today, pause to think of all the gifts food symbolizes—a roof overhead, friends and safety.

Read: Deuteronomy 8:1-8

*Eldor Kaiser
Lenexa, KS*

Sunday, September 21, 2014

What's Your Age-enda?

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

Philippians 1:21

Isn't it encourAGEing to see the word AGE pop up in so many words and sentences? There must be a messAGE there someplace! Could it be that the Lord is helping us to engAGE as AGEnts of the faith to see more clearly how we AGE-ing folks can point others to the joy and hope we all have in the Lord?

St. Paul reminds us that whether we live or die, we are the Lord's! Now that is something to tell others about as we AGE, in the Lord, one day at a time!

How can we be AGEnts of affirmation to our neighbor? How can we make sure our AGEnda today is to point others to our Lord in a winsome way? Christ has given us another day to live, so let us join together as we act our AGE by being sAGEs of love and hope to others!

Lord, give us courAGE to live in you today and also to die in you someday. Amen.

Consider: Be an encourAGEing word to someone today!

Read: Philippians 1:19-26; Psalm 27

*Rich Bimler
Bloomington, IL*

Monday, September 22, 2014

Majestic Witness

A body, though one, has many parts, but all its many parts form one body, so it is with Christ.

1 Corinthians 12:12

The lighthouse stands majestically on Kauai's north shore. Its lens is so fascinating! It's made with prisms that look like various geometric shapes.

God made each of us unique and blessed us with spiritual gifts. We are unified as one Body through his Spirit, and use our gifts to build up the Body. We need one another, just as several prisms are needed to send light.

As members of Christ's Body, we are also called to be lights. Jesus says, "You are the light of the world ... Let your light shine before men and women, that they may see your good deeds and praise your father in heaven" (Matthew 5:14, 16).

So, stand majestically like the Kauai lighthouse and shine for him!

Good Father, use me continually to help build up your Church on earth. Help me always to shine for you in all I do or say. Amen.

Think: What other majestic, natural or human-made items remind you of the Body of Christ or of your witness for Christ?

Read: 1 Corinthians 12; Ephesians 4:1-7, 15-16

*Louise Schini Weber
Fort Myers, FL*

Tuesday, September 23, 2014

Requesting the Right Way

And whatever you ask in prayer, you will receive, if you have faith.

Matthew 21:22

Wherever Jesus went, many people, even his disciples, made requests. Disciples James and John once asked Jesus for a favor. He graciously responded, “What do you want me to do for you?” They asked for places of honor in heaven, but Jesus would not grant their request. Shortly afterwards a blind man named Bartimaeus called out to Jesus. Again Jesus responded, “What do you want me to do for you?” Bartimaeus asked for his sight. This time Jesus replied, “Go your way; your faith has made you well.”

James and John requested out of selfish ambition. Bartimaeus requested in faith. Faith is the key to requesting the right way, and Bartimaeus made a faithful request.

Gracious Lord, forgive my selfish ambition and increase my faith. Amen.

Recall: Remember a faith-filled request that God granted.

Read: Mark 10:35-52

*Marj Maynard
Billings, MO*

Wednesday, September 24, 2014

Living By His Schedule

In your book were written, every one of them, the days that were formed for me, when as yet there was none of them.

Psalm 139:16

With God in charge of everyone's personal calendar, life never comes to a surprising end. We enter life as from his hand and at a time of his choosing we will return to him again. Jesus once called the transition "sleeping" (Matthew 9:24). Paul repeatedly said that what looks like an end is actually a new beginning. Those who believe that are not fearful about an uncertain future but treasure each new day as one more gift, or as Alice Morse Earle put it, "the present."

So whether we believe it or not, God has us on a timetable of his making. I happily acknowledge this because in and through Jesus Christ not only is my time on earth fully in his hands, but my time in eternity as well. Father knows best. All is well.

Lord Jesus, teach me to pray with you, "Father, into your hands I commend my spirit." Amen.

Ask yourself: Knowing how our story ends, what's a good thing (or two) to do today?

Read: 2 Peter 3:8-9; 1 Thessalonians 4:16

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

Thursday, September 25, 2014

Recharged!

... let us run with endurance the race that is set before us ...

Hebrews 12:1

We have chargers for all of our electronic devices like cell phones and cameras. When the batteries run low, they have to be recharged. My body recharges during my sleep at night or during daytime naps. How do we “run with endurance the race” God sets before us? Does retirement mean we can let others run the race? Our bodies may not allow us to run, but God has a purpose for us. There are ways to be recharged: prayers, daily devotion, small group Bible studies, Bible classes and worship services. Perhaps God is leading you to be the leader or facilitator of Bible classes, an encourager of others or a volunteer for activities. Though we may have to limit our activities, there are ways to share responsibilities with a friend and be involved.

Holy Spirit, empower us with energy to run with endurance to fulfill the goals you have set before us. Recharge and restore us. Amen.

Recharge: Look for ways to serve the Lord with joy.

Read: 2 Timothy 4:7; Romans 15:4-7

*Naomi Weslock
Lake in the Hills, IL*

Friday, September 26, 2014

A Bringer of Happiness

But the steadfast love of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting on those who fear him, and his righteousness to children's children ...

Psalm 103:17

I had just picked up my 10-year-old grandson from his first day of a new school year. He told me he had to bring something that makes him happy to school the next day. Then he looked at me and said, "Granddad, maybe I can bring you!"

I marvel at the joy and blessing that so often and so surprisingly come our way as we invest our lives in the lives of our grandchildren!

Our circle of influence may diminish as we grow older. But the influence we have through the generations of our own family is a most precious gift of God.

Father, thank you for my family, down through generations. They are such a blessing. Help us to always be a blessing to them. Amen.

Plan: Plan how you will use opportunities with each family member to bless him or her.

Read: Psalm 103

*Lionel Otto
Adelaide, Australia*

Saturday, September 27, 2014

Sun Room? Son Room!

I only ask one thing from the Lord. This is what I want: let me live in the Lord's house all of my life.

Psalm 27:4

Growing up, I was intrigued when we would visit friends who had a “Florida” room—a room with lots of windows to catch the sun’s warmth. Well, I’m in Florida now, sitting in a sun-filled lanai! Warm memories fill my thoughts about my childhood home—a house of two stories, covered in off-white stucco. Across the entire front was a delightful porch that held countless neighborhood friends as we turned it into a house, a schoolroom, a store. It was here that we shared our hopes and dreams as we played together.

The words from Psalm 23 and 27 come to mind. How blessed am I, knowing that through Jesus’ death and resurrection, I will live in God’s house and share his Son’s warmth forever!

Thanks, good Father, for the precious memories of my childhood home. And thanks for preparing a room for me eternally. Amen.

Reflect and Tell: Enjoy the warmth of the sun! Share the good news of forever warmth in God’s house with family or friends today.

Read: Psalm 23:6; John 14:1-4, 23

*Louise Schini Weber
Fort Myers, FL*

Sunday, September 28, 2014

Rock of Ages

Be a rock of refuge for me, a strong fortress to save me!

Psalm 31:2

Carl Bonitz was Sunday school superintendent at Immanuel Lutheran Church in Mellen, Wisconsin, when I was a child. Dressed in a black suit, white shirt and tie, he stood ramrod straight. One Sunday we sang “Rock of Ages” in the Sunday school opening, and Mr. Bonitz sang with tears running down his cheeks. It was his favorite hymn. These many years later, I never sing it without thinking of him.

I was surprised to see him cry, and then I was filled with wonder. I am certain Mr. Bonitz knew today’s verse. Jesus was his rock! His tears and the sound of his bass voice singing were a powerful testimony of faith and love that day. His testimony blesses me and reminds me that Jesus is MY rock! He is your rock too!

Is there a Mr. Bonitz in your life? Why not thank him or her today?

*Holy Jesus, Rock of Ages, I praise and love you.
Amen.*

Sing: Sing or read the words of a favorite hymn.

Read: Psalm 31

*Don Schatz
Arcata, CA*

Monday, September 29, 2014

Straighten Up!

There was a woman who had a disabling spirit for eighteen years. She was bent over and could not fully straighten herself.

Luke 13:11

Doesn't your heart just go out to this poor woman? I can only imagine her intense joy when she was finally able to stand straight again. She glorified God for his compassion and power to heal her. I identify with her because I have worn a brace on my ankle for eight years now and, short of a miracle from the Lord, will wear it until the day I die. But instead of feeling sorry for myself, I thank God for that brace because it helps me to walk.

Perhaps you, too, have an area that needs straightening in your life. Maybe it's a physical healing that will only come with a new glorified body in heaven. Or maybe it's an attitude that needs adjusting. Ask the Lord for his help and healing. He has the power to straighten things out.

Lord, I, too, am disabled, by my thoughts and fears. Heal me to straighten up, Lord, and use me in your service. Amen.

Discover: Discover the disabling spirit in your own life: Seek the Lord's healing.

Read: Luke 13:10-17

*Terry Weber
Williamsburg, VA*

Tuesday, September 30, 2014

The Path to Heaven

Enter by the narrow gate.

Matthew 7:13

A teacher friend of mine likes to show the back of a hand-stitched picture to his Sunday school class. The back of the canvas is a mass of confused lines of yarn, crisscrossing each other and ending in knots. "This is how life looks to many people," Guy says. Then Guy turns the picture around to show his students the beautifully stitched verse, "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).

The letters are plain and the message is simple. At the end of the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus tells us to enter heaven by the narrow gate. The narrow gate is the door Jesus opened by giving his life on the cross. One day we will look back at our life and see, not confused, crisscrossed paths, but a simple road leading to the narrow gate that Jesus holds open for us.

Jesus, thank you for leading me through the narrow gate to your cross. In your name. Amen.

Think: Think of someone you can help stay on the way of the cross.

Read: Matthew 7:13-29; John 3:16-21

*Ruth Geisler
Aliso Viejo, CA*

HOLY HABITS for **HOPE-FULL HEALTH**

Holy habits are formed through positive attitudes. Aging is a blessing to be celebrated rather than a burden to be endured! Check out the commercials around you. Many of them still portray the attitude that aging is a problem and not a perk. For example:

How to stay young forever!

Get rid of those wrinkles!

Old as in mold!

Be 39 forever!

Feel young, smell young, look young!

Enter the concept *salutogenesis*, from the Latin and Greek, which means “the origin of health.” This is an exciting concept in the study of healthy aging. It shifts attention from a negative attitude of what causes disease to the positive approach of what it is that supports health and well-being.

Yes, holy habits are all about attitude. Many multiple holy habits support healthy and grace-filled aging, including multi-generational relationships, support groups, faith communities, learning, serving others and even laughing, especially at yourself!

During these months, write down the holy habits you experience. Stick them on the refrigerator, and compare your list with your friends’ lists. May each day be filled with holy habits!

Hope-Full Praying

Our Nation

Lord, as we celebrate our independence as a country, help us to also see and sense our dependence on you. You bless us with so many freedoms. Allow us never to take freedom for granted, especially the freedom you have won for us through your death and resurrection. Amen.

Summer Memories

Memories are what summer is all about, especially for those of us who remember the “good old days.” Help us also to remember these “good new days,” of family time and friendships and photo albums and picnics. And even though we might not be able to do as much as we once did, help us to remember the love, hugs, handshakes and opportunities you still give to us during these lazy days of summer. Amen.

Caring for Loved Ones

You are our Physician and Healer, Lord. Thanks for bringing people into our lives who care and comfort those of us who are struggling with pain and disease. Empower both the giver and the receiver of your love to know that it is your love and touch that heal us all and that you are caring for us through the people you have put into our lives. Bless those who give care and bless those who receive care, all in the healing name of you, dear Jesus. Amen.

Individual Subscription (U.S. and Canada only)

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

| | |
|--|--|
| Mail: Hope-Full Living P.O. Box 291847 Kettering, OH 45429-0847 | Toll-Free 855-325-4673 (HOPE) |
|--|--|

* An Individual Subscription requires payment with order.

Quarterly Bulk Subscription

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

| | |
|--|----------------------------------|
| Mail: Hope-Full Living Bulk 1564 Fencorp Dr. Fenton, MO 63026 | Toll-Free 800-325-9414 |
|--|----------------------------------|

* Bulk Subscriptions are billed each quarter with an invoice in the package. Bulk Subscriptions are sent to one address (P.O. Box OK). **Shipping charges will be added.** Bulk subscriptions will continue each quarter unless you notify us of a change. **Payment must be in U.S. funds drawn on a U.S. bank.**

Send to _____

Attention _____

Street Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Daytime Phone (____) _____

Email _____

Begin with (circle one) JAN APR JULY OCT