

# HOPE-FULL LIVING

•*Daily Devotions for Living Life to the Fullest*•

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## Hope-Full Living Mission Statement

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

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Wednesday, October 1, 2014

## Me—Vibrant?

*His disciples remembered that it is written: “Zeal for your house will consume me.”*

*John 2:17*

What words would you use to define the traits of yourself and other older adults? Let me suggest a few to ponder: zeal, lively, exciting, sparkling, fiery, energetic, vivacious, encouraging, vital, vibrant. “What, me vibrant?” you might ask.

Yes, indeed! We are all of the above, by the power and promise of our Lord. Look throughout Scripture and see all of the descriptors of being a person of “zeal”—run, go, proclaim, teach, heal and on and on. John 2:17 tells us that even Jesus’ disciples had to remind each other that the gift of zeal, of being vibrant, was theirs.

Could these words be a mission statement for each of us to remind each other of our “zeal” in the Lord: “Empowering vibrant, grace-filled living across all generations”? Me—vibrant? In Christ—indeed!

*Lord, give me the zeal today to be vibrant for you as I share my faith and my gifts with others. I am vibrant, Lord, through you. Amen.*

*Show zeal: Be zealous today in sharing Christ’s love with others.*

*Read: Romans 12:6-21*

*Rich Bimler  
Bloomington, IL*

Thursday, October 2, 2014

# Life's Colorful Seasons

*He has made everything beautiful in his time.*

*Ecclesiastes 3:11*

As we drove around Door County, the kaleidoscope of yellow-, red-, orange- and brown-leaved trees left me speechless. Color IS good, Lord! However, these trees also foreshadowed the coming seasonal change.

During the winter season, most of these colorful trees are just bare branches of beige, brown or black, awaiting the warmth of spring. As they awake, colorful blooms appear as well as leaves, reminding us of rebirth and new life. In the hot of summer, these trees are fully alive in various hues of green.

Can you envision your life seasons in color? I can. When I'm walking with my Savior, the world is full of bright colors. Excitement abounds! Life is good! When I'm walking without my Savior, the world is drab, bare. I'm in limbo. Life's a chore.

May every day be filled with color as you walk with him.

*Color IS good, Lord! Keep me close to you so colors "pop" daily. Amen.*

*Wonder: How does color affect you?*

*Read: Genesis 1; Matthew 6:25-34*

*Louise Schini Weber  
Ft. Myers, FL*

Friday, October 3, 2014

# The Autumn of Life

*While the earth remains, seedtime and harvest ... shall not cease.*

*Genesis 8:22*

How do you feel about autumn in the air? Do you embrace cooler temperatures, the glorious color of changing leaves and harvest tables? Or do you dread increasing cold, bare tree limbs and a coming bleak winter?

How do you feel about the autumn of your life? Do you embrace more leisure time after hectic work days, opportunities to appreciate God's creation and choices to fill your hours with purposeful service activities? Or do you dread the approaching winter of limitations, serious health issues and losing loved ones? In a psalm filled only with promises, the Psalmist freely offers to everyone who dwells in the shadow of the Almighty (Psalm 91:1) deliverance, protection, answers to prayers in the midst of trouble, and long life now and forever through God's saving plan in Jesus. Now that is something to rejoice in!

*Lord, help me rejoice in the autumn of my life.  
Amen.*

*Thank: Thank God for one autumn blessing.*

*Read: Psalm 91:14-16*

*Stephen J. Carter  
Oakville, MO*

Saturday, October 4, 2014

# Roots And Winds

*Therefore, as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him, rooted and built up in him ...*

*Colossians 2:6-7*

As I watch the autumn winds chase the tumbling leaves in front of my window (hopefully into the neighbor's yard), I give thanks for that wind, "the breath of God," as it bends, not breaks, my small tree. Last year when I planted it, I staked it so the gust of wind would not uproot it. This year no stakes were needed, as the roots have grown deep and strong enough to hold it upright.

God is into roots. When into our lives he sends the winds of change, trials, hardship or loss, his message is one of deep spiritual growth. With our roots deeply embedded in God's Word and promises, we can grow in his grace until his work within us is finally finished. To be strong, roots need to be nourished. Our spiritual roots are nourished by daily searching his will for us and by prayer. Thus we are to grow in God's love, as Christ's living and working examples, always opening our minds to new opportunities.

*May our roots help us to grow in love so that we may spread that love to all who need it. Amen.*

*Reflect: Reflect on what God has done for you.*

*Read: Ephesians 3:14-21; Philippians 1:6-11*

*Connie Bretscher  
Valparaiso, IN*

Sunday, October 5, 2014

# In Sight

*I have set the LORD always before me; because he is at my right hand, I shall not be shaken.*

*Psalm 16:8*

What kind of view do you have outside your window? Is it a view of a pleasant garden, a busy city street, your neighbor's kitchen or a brick wall? Your interior view of your life and circumstances can change as often as the view outside a window. Given the events of the day or your own imagined worries, you may be happy and content or fearful and confused.

The Psalmist sets before us a picture to replace the troubling scenes, real or imagined, unfolding before us: "I have set the LORD always before me." In your baptism, the Lord Jesus placed himself squarely into your life. In your thoughts, in your prayers, in your "mind's eye," keep him in sight.

*Lord Jesus, be foremost in my thoughts at all times. Amen.*

*Decorate: If you don't already have one, place a cross or portrait of Jesus where you can easily see it.*

*Read: Psalm 16; John 10:7-11*

*Carol Geisler  
Manchester, MO*

Monday, October 6, 2014

# Change of Seasons

*Behold, I am doing a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it?*

*Isaiah 43:19*

As I look out at the red and golden tones of autumn leaves, I want to stay in this moment. It makes me wonder why the colors don't stay year-round. Soon the trees will be bare, and I'll be raking leaves to the curb.

We are meant to enjoy individual moments, but not to hold on to them. Life is not stagnant. Before I know it, I will be breathing in the fresh clear air of winter and smiling as new snow clings to trees. Soon after that, I will be marveling at the first green shoots of spring. God always has a new chapter, just ahead. He doesn't want us to stagnate but to joyfully look forward to the life he has planned.

*Father, you are faithful in every season. Help me to find the joy in each transition. Amen.*

*Look and share: Look for the good things God has given you in each day. Share your joy with the first person you meet.*

*Read: Revelation 21:5; Ecclesiastes 3:1-8*

*Lynne Waite Chapman  
Fort Wayne, IN*

Tuesday, October 7, 2014

# Lifelong Learners

*Give instruction to a wise man, and he will be still wiser; teach a righteous man, and he will increase in learning.*

*Proverbs 9:9*

At a conference on leadership and missional living, I noticed the diversity of attendees. While many were in their 30s and 40s, there was one couple close to retirement. One presenter had talked about the importance of being “lifelong learners.” That couple was a wonderful example. Not content to “coast” to retirement, they were learning not only from the presenters, but from the younger people in their discussion groups. They wanted to remain active and engaged into retirement and beyond. I want to be like that too!

Learning something new can help keep your mind sharp, open the door to conversation and perhaps lead to opportunities to share God’s love. What new things are you learning?

*Father, keep me open to learn new things and to grow in knowing you. Amen.*

*Do: Learn something new this week—try a new food or a new recipe, find an unfamiliar Bible verse, learn a game.*

*Read: Psalm 90*

*Diane Bahn  
Cypress, TX*



Wednesday, October 8, 2014

# Happy “Retirement”!

*They will still bear fruit in old age, they will stay fresh and green ...*

*Psalm 92:14*

Many older adults around us are “retiring” this fall. Help them and their congregations celebrate together their service and loyalties they have provided to others. But also share with them the affirming words of Psalm 92 that remind us that “retirement” does not mean we have now turned in our keys and badges of life and can slacken the pace, off-load our responsibilities and become merely recipients and not doers of ministry.

Yes, even in our retiring “old age,” the Psalmist reaffirms in us that we are called to, prepared for and needed by those who come after us, as well as those who are around us right now. Perhaps a better term for “retirement” is “re-positioning” as we all continue to “bear fruit” and “stay fresh and green.” May it be so in us.

*Lord, you are always with us. Thanks for never retiring from your love and from forgiving us. Amen.*

*Plant: How are you staying “fresh and green” in your own life? Plant a tree or flower today, and give it your name.*

*Read: Psalm 1; Ephesians 3:14-21*

*Rich Bimler  
Bloomingdale, IL*

Thursday, October 9, 2014

# The Rock

*The LORD is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer, my God, my rock, in whom I take refuge ...*

*Psalm 18:2*

When I lived on a farm and raised livestock, it was frequently necessary to erect new fences. This required the posts to be driven several feet into the ground to prevent the animals from pushing them over. To do this, my husband welded a 16-pound head from a sledgehammer onto a length of heavy pipe. This pipe was fit over the metal fence post and dropped as many times as necessary until the post reached the required depth.

Occasionally, the post would come in contact with a large underground rock. No amount of dropping the weight would drive it any further into the soil.

Sometimes life feels like that weight to us; each new development driving us further and further down to despair. However, if we place ourselves on the Rock of God's love and his Word, Satan cannot drive us down any further, no matter how hard he tries. Our Rock keeps us strong.

*God, thank you for being our rock, so we can be unmoved by the blows of life. Amen.*

*Think: Think of God as the Rock under your feet.*

*Read: Psalm 19:14; Psalm 40:2*

*Gloria Doty  
Fort Wayne, IN*

Friday, October 10, 2014

# No Imitations

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

*Ephesians 5:1-2*

Do you remember the soft drink commercial that advertised itself as being “the real thing”? Today people are concerned about getting the “real thing” when they shop for food, clothing and everything else. We don’t want an imitation when only the genuine article will do.

By faith we come to believe that Jesus is the real thing where love, peace and hope are concerned. God’s love is no imitation because it comes to us in the form of Christ himself. And the love that is Christ Jesus extends to those who believe that by faith he now lives in them. Those redeemed by the blood of the cross are now transformed into “beloved children” of God—no imitations, the real thing.

In Christ Jesus we strive to walk in love, talk in love, hope and live in love because we have been called the “children of God.”

*Lord Jesus, let your Spirit so fill me that my love for you will always be the real thing. Amen.*

*Be real: Think of someone who could use a friend, and then BE that friend.*

*Read: Philippians 2:1-11; John 8:31-38*

*Edward Arle  
St. Charles, MO*

Saturday, October 11, 2014

# A Better Day's a Comin'

*Do not fear, for I am with you.*

*Isaiah 41:10*

In the wonderful old spiritual “In That Great Gettin’ Up Morning” one of the lines goes like this: “There’s a better day a comin’, fare thee well, fare thee well.” All of us older folks know what it’s like to get up every morning with aches and pains. Those first few steps out of bed can be pretty dicey. With a fare-thee-well attitude, every further step in our day will have purpose and meaning. A positive attitude in the face of pain, even if it’s only “gettin’ up” pain, can make all the difference for the rest of our day and our lives.

Even better, as Isaiah the prophet reminds us, God has promised to be with us in everything we do, from that first step in the morning until we fall asleep at night. And that includes our aches and pains, our joys and sorrows. We “fare very well” when we put our faith in God’s promise.

*God, be with me in every step I take this day.  
Amen.*

*Act: When you ache today, remind yourself that  
“there’s a better day a comin’.”*

*Read: John 14:18*

*Gwen Costello  
Providence Forge, VA*

Sunday, October 12, 2014

# Intercessory Prayer

*We do not know what we ought to pray for.*

*Romans 8:26*

Often when you are in despair you scurry about trying to decide which door leads to peace. Many times comfort seems out of reach. You become so tired and weary that you are at a loss for words. You fall to your knees wishing and hoping God will reach inside your soul and massage your heart, breathe life back into you and refresh your spirit.

God tells us “the Spirit helps us in our weaknesses. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words” (Romans 8:26).

Pray to God. Do not fret over your words. The Spirit of God intercedes for you and lays your every care before God. Pray, for God loves and cares for you. He will soothe your soul.

*Dear God, please hear my every word and rescue me. Amen.*

*Think: Imagine God sitting next to you as he listens to you pray.*

*Read: Revelations 5:8 and 8:3*

*Donna Comeaux  
Tulsa, OK*

Monday, October 13, 2014

# Into the Depths

*You will cast all our sins into the depths of the sea.*

*Micah 7:19*

The tragic search for a missing passenger plane, presumed lost in the Indian Ocean, highlighted the vast size and depth of the world's oceans. Planes had only a few hours of search time over the remote target area before they were forced to return to land and refuel. Sophisticated detection equipment could barely plumb the depths.

The remote vastness and impossible depths of the ocean provide a picture of God's forgiveness. Jesus suffered the penalty of death for our sins and for his sake God has "cast all our sins into the depths of the sea." An airplane lost at sea may be recovered, but your sins, washed away in the blood of Jesus, can never again accuse you. Those sins are gone, forgotten forever in the vast depths of God's forgiving love.

*Father, for the sake of Jesus, forgive my sins and cast them far from your sight. Amen.*

*Pray: Pray for those who mourn for missing loved ones.*

*Read: Micah 7:18-20; Jeremiah 31:31-34*

*Carol Geisler  
Manchester, MO*

Tuesday, October 14, 2014

# Changing Seasons

*There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under the heavens.*

*Ecclesiastes 3:1*

The browns, yellows and oranges all mix together as the leaves dangle from the trees, waiting to drift down through the cooling air to the ground. We are witnessing the beauty of God's creation at some of its best.

This is a time when it is easy to see how this year has come together. Remember those moments of panic? Remember the joys? How about the sadness? Yes, it is all there, wrapped up in a year of changes—and now the seasons are changing once again. Yet, in all of it we may look to God and see it as being blessed—both the seasons and our year on this side of heaven.

Today you are who you are because of the past. God has made you to be what you see in the mirror, and he loves what you see. Do you? There is a time for everything—even a time to see the blessing you are in Christ.

*Dear Lord, thank you for the changes I see and making me who I am today. Amen.*

*Share: Share a memory with someone today.*

*Read: Ecclesiastes 3*

*Cory A. Wielert  
Crown Point, IN*

Wednesday, October 15, 2014

# Cheer on the Hometown

*But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.*

*1 Corinthians 15:57*

Last fall my husband and I attended our high school's state football playoff game. It was exciting to watch our hometown's football team compete and capture the 6A state championship. Even though we moved away from our hometown over 27 years ago, we still felt a sense of belonging, a connection to and pride in our school. Although we did nothing but cheer in the crowd, we still felt the thrill of the victory. It is similar for us as Christians. By no power of our own, we have received victory over death through Christ Jesus.

*Dear God, thank you for school spirit and communities that come together to support their residents. Fill us with your Holy Spirit so we can reach out to others and do your will. Amen.*

*Do: Call, email or contact through Facebook an old high school friend and reminisce about school days.*

*Read: Romans 15:1-6*

*Paulette Hartmann  
Morton, IL*



Thursday, October 16, 2014

# To-Do Lists

*Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.*

*Romans 12:21*

“To-do lists” are the absolute key for an effective and productive life, particularly the more we age. It is easy to become blasé in our leisurely retirement lives where every day is a “Saturday.” As much as one may joke about “honey-do lists,” they are a very positive influence on an effective, productive and meaningful life.

Paul in Romans 12, 13 and 14 provides an exhaustive guide to living our Christian lives to the fullest. His “to-do list” is focused on the needs of others. These verses are tremendous guides to “other focused relationships.” There is no greater witness to our faith than the simple guidelines in how we are to “love our neighbor as ourselves.”

When you prioritize meeting the needs of others along with other tasks to be accomplished, you will be truly amazed at the effect it will have in your own life. Blessings will abound.

*Lord, open me up to the needs of others. Amen.*

*Write: Write a “to-do list” of service for today.*

*Read: Romans 12, 13 and 14*

*John Herzog  
Chesterfield Township, MI*

Friday, October 17, 2014

# In God's Image

*Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness ... So God created man in his own image ..."*

*Genesis 1:26-27*

Can you imagine looking in the mirror and seeing God staring back at you? Being created in God's image means we can be like God on the inside. 2 Peter 1:3-5 says God has given us the power to escape from the corruption that is in the world because of passion, and become partakers of the divine nature. As we grow older, we often long for our youthful appearance. Our inner beauty is far greater than looking young on the outside. We can be renewed in God's image every day.

*Lord, help me to grow in "godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence." Increase my desire to be more like you. Let me reflect your glory. Amen.*

*Do: Surrender yourself into the care of the God who created you.*

*Read: 2 Peter 1*

*Betty J. Gravlin  
Florissant, MO*

Saturday, October 18, 2014

# Love Is an Action Word

*Dear children, let us not love with words or tongue but with actions and in truth.*

1 John 3:18

My wife recently underwent back surgery. The surgery did indeed fix the problem, thank God. However, after surgery I was her arms and legs until she recovered sufficiently. I had little idea how much action was needed to keep everything moving around the house on schedule. But I showed love in action because I love my wife dearly.

Our dear Lord showed us what true love is. He acted out his love. He was born into this world. He lived our life and died our death. He faced the powers of evil on our behalf. Hanging on the cross with his arms spread wide, his actions said, "This is how much I love you." With his resurrection we have a living Lord who empowers us by his Holy Spirit to put love into action. Now it is our turn to reach out to those around us and show them what love is all about.

*Lord, open my eyes to see those around me who are in need of my loving actions. Amen.*

*Help: Be the "hands" and "feet" for someone who is in need today.*

*Read: 1 John 4:7-21*

Paul Eggold  
Greendale, WI

Sunday, October 19, 2014

# Adopted

*God sent forth his Son, ... to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons.*

*Galatians 4:4-5*

As a young married couple, we were eager to start a family. To our great dismay, this was not possible. Prayerfully, we applied to adopt a child. After approval, the wait began. What an exciting day when we first met our new daughter. We were filled with joy and love. She became our child, and we formed a new family.

Adoption is a legal process where a child born to another legally becomes part of a new family with all the rights and privileges of a natural-born child. We are God's adopted children, born into his family through baptism. We become his beloved and heirs of eternal life with him through the death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. What joy we will experience when we meet our Father face to face in our heavenly home.

*Heavenly Father, thank you for adopting us as your children. Amen.*

*Act: Tell a child about your baptism.*

*Read: John 3:13-16; Galatians 4*

*Ann Eissfeldt  
Ballwin, MO*

Monday, October 20, 2014

# Food for the Ears

*I will sing to the Lord ... The Lord is my strength  
and my song ...*

*Exodus 15:1-2*

The ebony baby grand piano sits next to my desk, a constant reminder of how much I'm influenced by music. When exercising, I listen to a lively beat. When stressed, soulful jazz. When writing, easy listening with no words. The announcer at SiriusXM says that the music offered there is "comfort food for the ears."

There's also wonderful "comfort food for the ears" in Scripture. Re-read "The Song of Moses" or Mary's "Magnificat." The writers of the Psalms wrote from their emotions and experiences—songs of praise, thanksgiving and confession. Often in church my eyes tear up as the words and/or music of a particular hymn or praise song express what's going through my mind. Eat your fill of this marvelous music.

*Good Father, let your Word dwell in me richly as I sing with joy and thankfulness. Amen.*

*Recall: Recall music that is food for your ears. Hum or sing a line or more.*

*Read: Exodus 15; Luke 1; Psalm 40:3; Psalm 47:1; Psalm 100:2; Psalm 149:1*

*Louise Schini Weber  
Ft. Myers, FL*

Tuesday, October 21, 2014

# Carrying Our Burdens

*For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.*

*Matthew 11:30*

Picture this: An old black-and-white movie is set in one of those grandiose multi-floor department stores. The elevator doors open and a woman carrying multiple shopping bags steps in. It becomes obvious that she is tired and the bags are heavy. The elevator operator says, “Ma’am, why don’t you put your bags on the floor and let the elevator carry them?”

Can you relate? Are you carrying burdens that Jesus has already offered to carry? Health concerns? Grief over the loss of a loved one? Worries about children and grandchildren?

Jesus says, “Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest” (Matthew 11:28). Release your burdens to the Savior in whose name we have ultimate rest.

*Lord Jesus, thank you for taking the burden of my sin to the cross. Help me look to you as my refuge and strength. Amen.*

*List: Make a list of those things weighing heavy on your heart. Give them to the Lord.*

*Read: Matthew 11:25-30; Psalm 71*

*Jane P. Wilke  
Woodbury, MN*

Wednesday, October 22, 2014

# Certain Hope

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

1 John 5:13

The word *hope* is often used. 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." Keep your hope in him.

*Heavenly Father, you are with us always. Help us to be mindful of you, trusting 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

Thursday, October 23, 2014

# Who Are You?

*I know you by name.*

*Exodus 33:17*

Hong Kong's Jade Market displayed hundreds of valuable pieces of jade. I could only afford a small cross that I thought might someday be for a granddaughter. It sat in my camphor chest for the past 25 years until the morning I got the news that our new grandbaby was born, Riley Jade. My eyes lit up! I dug out that long-ago purchase and wrote our newest-born a letter. I told her that God knew her name 25 years earlier.

What does it mean to you that God knew your name before you even existed? For me, the intimacy of naming means I'm expected, planned for and cherished. That very name was pronounced aloud before the Church and the angels on my baptism. In effect God said, "This one is mine" and "I have carved her name on the palm on my hand."

God knows your new name too. It's written in the book of life forever.

*God, thank you for always knowing my name.  
Amen.*

*Do: If you spot a white stone today, put it where you can see it and write Revelation 2:17 on it.*

*Read: Revelation 2:17; Isaiah 49:16*

*Julaine Kammrath  
Aurora, IL*



Friday, October 24, 2014

# What If ...

*Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you, casting all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you.*

*1 Peter 5:6-7*

Only the lionhearted discuss fire-drill plans with first-graders. “What if a fire starts in our room and we can’t get out?” “What if we’re on the grass and the grass catches on fire?” “What if you’re going to the bathroom and you aren’t done?” During my teaching days, I ended those discussions by saying firmly, “Don’t worry. God will keep us safe.” But don’t our own “what if’s” rival those of first-graders? What if I can’t pay my bills? What if I can’t live independently? What if the next medical test is positive?

God heals our “what if” disease by taking all the “what if’s” on himself. God stands with open arms, ready to take every worry and “what if” we bring him. He promises to deal with our problems in the best way at the best time—in his way and at his time.

*Father, when I worry “what if,” calm me with your care and presence. In Jesus’ name. Amen.*

*Do: Pray for and about each other’s worries. Then let God handle them.*

*Read: 1 Peter 5:6-11; Matthew 10:29-31*

*Ruth Geisler  
Aliso Viejo, CA*

Saturday, October 25, 2014

# Someday Is Today!

*For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven ... a time to seek and a time to lose, a time to keep and a time to cast away.*

*Ecclesiastes 3:1, 6*

While driving on the interstate recently, a billboard caught my eye with the bold words “Someday is today!” How often do we say the words “Someday I’ll do this or that,” thus prolonging what could be a worthwhile effort to address or bring closure to a situation? For instance, if there is a need for further wisdom and knowledge in your spiritual journey, if there is bitterness or hatred in your heart for any reason that needs to be removed, if there is a habit that possesses your life that needs to stop, now is the time to take care of these things.

Someday is today! Time is of the essence for the SOMEDAY suggested may be the LAST day.

*Heavenly Father, my time is in your hands. Help me to prayerfully and wisely look at my life for what must be done today and then do it. Amen.*

*Sing: Say out loud, “This is the day that the Lord has made,” then do something with it.*

*Read: Luke 23:39-43*

*Claire Kuddes  
Independence, MO*

Sunday, October 26, 2014

# Our Winning Team

*The horse is made ready for the day of battle, but the victory belongs to the Lord.*

*Proverbs 21:30-31*

Sports fans anticipate a smorgasbord of major league games in the fall. Baseball reaches its grand finale in the World Series, while football and basketball gear up with pre-season games. Whether cheering for major league, college or high school teams, fans want victory! Of course, one team must lose. Fans know all too well the classic sports line “The thrill of victory and the agony of defeat.”

Anyone who has felt the ups and downs of sports can recognize a similarity to the roller coaster of life. Some days feel like victory, others like defeat. Thankfully God is all about victory, and he has made faith in Christ the sole qualification for his winning team. Even when it feels like the world is winning, be assured that God’s team wins. God promises that on the Last Day “every knee shall bow to me” (Romans 14:11). We’re all winners through him!

*Lord, help me feel victorious today and keep me, by faith in Jesus, on your winning team. Amen.*

*Notice: Observe how God provides moments of victory, whether large or small, each day.*

*Read: 1 John 5:4-5; 1 Corinthians 15:53-58*

*Marj Maynard  
Billings, MO*

Monday, October 27, 2014

# Capturing a Moment in Time

*Blessed is the man who trusts in the LORD, whose confidence is in him.*

*Jeremiah 17:7*

I was a child when I discovered my love for photography. My interest all started with a Kodak Instamatic camera and one photo of the St. Louis Arch. I was forever changed by this moment in time.

In some ways this life-altering moment is similar to our baptismal day. We are forever changed as we become one of God's children and learn of his love for us. As we become mature in our faith, we more fully comprehend God's grace and love as we live the life he has set before us. As long as there is still breath in our lungs, he continues to shape and mold us into the person he created us to be in life. Live in the many moments he has made especially for you.

*Heavenly Father, continually remind me of your presence in my life and strengthen my faith in you. Amen.*

*Reflect: What ability has God given you? How can you use this ability to glorify God?*

*Read: Acts 17:26-28*

*Betsy Becker Niedringhaus  
Ballwin, MO*

Tuesday, October 28, 2014

# Coming Through!

*The sea looked and fled, the Jordan turned back.*

*Psalm 114:3*

There is a story about a Mexican artist who lost his right hand while working on a statue. Determined to finish the statue, he learned to chisel with his left hand. His statue was named “In Spite Of” because, in spite of his handicap, he completed his work.

Many people are driven by determination. Yet, when obstacles mount up in our lives, it is an easy thing for us to raise the white flag of surrender. The Israelites upon arriving at the Red Sea on their way out of Egypt were ready to wave the flag of surrender, but by the grace and power of God they passed through the sea on dry ground.

What is your personal “Red Sea”? What is it that is derailing you from your spiritual journey? God’s Word reminds us not to grumble in the midst of trials, but to GROW! Grow by remembering your baptism and being in the Word, in prayer and in communion with other believers. Together you can come through on the other side rejoicing.

*Lord, help me to continue to grow in you. Amen.*

*Pray: Pray for someone who is experiencing a challenging time in his or her life.*

*Read: James 1:2-4; Hebrews 13:5-6*

*Jonathan Vierkant  
Arlington Heights, IL*

Wednesday, October 29, 2014

# I Don't See It!

*The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear its sound, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit.*

*John 3:8*

Television weather reporters tell us current and forecasted wind speed and direction. What they don't include is a picture of what the wind looks like. We feel it, see it move tree branches and remove shingles from roofs, but we have no idea what wind actually looks like.

We don't see God either, but we know the certainty of God's existence. We know this from the Bible and from nature, the powerful little seed and the complicated human body. Just picture God wrapping his arms around you when you are outside, and as a gentle, warm breeze surrounds you, feel his love embrace you.

*Lord, help us to remember that you are with us always. Amen.*

*Feel: Feel God's love in the people you meet and in the creation he has made.*

*Read: John 3:1-15*

*Don Hollmann  
Ballwin, MO*

Thursday, October 30, 2014

# Saying Yes

*If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.*

*Romans 10:9*

Last evening I was involved in a rehearsal for a Confirmation service in our church. There is still something rather stirring about young women and men saying yes to the questions: Do you profess faith in Christ Jesus, reject sin and confess the faith of the Church? Do you renounce the devil and all the forces that defy God? Do you renounce the powers of this world that rebel against God?

What will saying yes to these questions mean to them as life unfolds? It takes a lifetime to know. I look at us—older, gray-haired, too often battered by this life and world—and I ask, what does saying yes to these questions mean to us?

From generation to generation we encourage one another as we continue to say yes to God.

*Lord God, help and lead us all. Amen.*

*Pray: Pray for your children and grandchildren, or for other young people, that they might grow strong in faith.*

*Read: 1 Timothy from beginning to end.*

*Jerry Groth  
Sturgeon Bay, WI*

Friday, October 31, 2014

# A Person of Faith

*But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God.*

*John 1:12*

“He’s not a very good Christian!” The remark was made about a person in the congregation whose life was being exposed as less than honorable, and in a lot of ways significantly dishonorable.

It made me wonder about that phrase. What makes a “good Christian”? In reality not one of us is totally honorable. Isn’t it true that we all have sinned and fall short before God?

John reminds us again here that what we are in the sight of God comes not from what we do, but from what God has done with us. To all who believe in Jesus, God gives the right to be children of God. In God’s eyes we are identified by faith in Jesus, not by the things we do.

*Lord, help me not to judge others. Rather, let me seek to understand what faith lies within. Amen.*

*Reflect: How does remembering how God sees things change the way I see others?*

*Read: John 1:1-18*

*Lionel Otto  
Adelaide, Australia*



Saturday, November 1, 2014

# Celebrating the Saints

*Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of his saints.*

*Psalm 116:15*

Emotions encompass me on All Saints Day as our pastor reads a selected Scripture verse for each of the faithfully departed saints. And then the bell tolls. These are my fellow believers and church family members with whom I worshiped, sang praises, prayed and supped at the Lord's Table.

But then comes joy! Today we are celebrating their heavenly sainthood where they are in the presence of Jesus, his holy angels and those saints who have gone before them. They are enjoying rest and eternal peace. Thus their joy becomes my joy when I believe with certainty that in God's time I, too, will join them. And the bell will toll. Hallelujah!

*O Christ, do thou my soul prepare for that bright home of love; that I may see thee and adore with all thy saints above. Amen.*

*Share: Share with someone the joy of knowing Jesus.*

*Read: John 14:2-3; John 3:16*

*Claire Kuddes  
Independence, MO*

Sunday, November 2, 2014

# An Extra Hour To Sleep

*And which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his span of life?*

*Matthew 6:27*

My calendar tells me that today, November 2, Daylight Savings Time ends. At last we get back the hour of sleep we lost in spring. But none of this makes much sense to me. It's like cutting one end off a blanket and attaching it to the other end because the blanket is too short.

Did Jesus have this in mind when he said, "And which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his span of life?" Perhaps not. Each day is a gift, no matter how many hours of daylight it offers. Worrying whether we have enough hours in the day to get everything done doesn't help. We simply seek to work in the light he gives us each day guided by the light he gives us in his Word.

*Father, help me to use wisely the hours you give each day for service, but remind me to stop from time to time to also smell the roses. Amen.*

*Enjoy: Sometime during this day stop to enjoy the autumn colors and the other delights the Father offers during this season.*

*Read: Matthew 6:25-34; Ephesians 5:8-21*

*Ted Zimmerman  
Napa, CA*

Monday, November 3, 2014

# God's Aloha

*I am with you always ...*

*Matthew 28:20*

Years ago I had the privilege to spend time in Hawaii. There I became acquainted with the word *aloha*. In Hawaii, the natives do not say hello or good-bye. Rather they say aloha. Aloha for them can be a welcome or a farewell. It carries with it a spirit of love and affection.

I believe that God, my heavenly Father, through his Son, Jesus, and the working of his Holy Spirit greets me with his aloha, his love and affection for me. It comes alive for me in Jesus Christ. He greets me every morning with his mercy and love (Lamentations 3:22-23). He walks with me during the day as he holds me in the palm of his hand (Isaiah 43:1-3). He offers me his peace as I live out my daily life (John 16:33). He is always with me (Matthew 28:20).

When I die, he will greet me with his aloha (John 14:2-3). I join the company of saints and live with him forever.

*Lord Jesus, help me to experience your presence of love and affection for me. Amen.*

*Talk: Talk with someone today about how the Lord greets you with his aloha.*

*Read: Psalm 23*

*Walter M. Schoedel  
Webster Groves, MO*

Tuesday, November 4, 2014

# Elected Electors

*You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit.*

*John 15:16*

Today is Election Day in the U.S. What a privilege—and responsibility—it is to elect our local, state and national leaders.

There is another election day that is of even greater importance to us. It is the day of our Baptism, when we were joined to the elect people of God, those who are being saved. We did not campaign for that office. Nor did we earn it by years of previous service. We came to this position solely by God's grace in Christ Jesus. What a privilege—and responsibility—to be numbered among the elect! May our obedience and love ever be a fitting demonstration that we are grateful to be numbered among God's elect.

*Thank you, Father, for the privilege to live in a democracy and to have a voice in choosing our leaders. Help me to exercise this privilege responsibly. Amen.*

*Prepare: Prepare to responsibly cast your ballot for future leaders in government.*

*Read: 1 Peter 1:1-25; 1 Peter 2:13-17*

*Ted Zimmerman  
Napa, CA*

Wednesday, November 5, 2014

# The 19th Man

*Therefore encourage one another and build one another up, just as you are doing.*

*1 Thessalonians 5:11*

Australia's homegrown football game, "Aussie Rules," is played with eighteen men on a side. One of the teams, however, claims it has a decided advantage, by playing the "nineteenth man." The "nineteenth man" is the power of the home crowd as they cheer and support their local football heroes. The team claims their enthusiastic support is like having a nineteenth man on the ground.

You and I can be like that for friends around us when their times are hard. As St. Paul encourages us, we can take the encouragement and strength we have received from God and bring it to those around us when their going gets tough. Our encouragement in the Lord may also help them get over the line.

*Lord, let me be an encourager to those around me and a person of hope. Amen.*

*Watch: Watch for opportunities today to be of encouragement to others.*

*Read: 2 Corinthians 1:1-11*

*Lionel Otto  
Adelaide, Australia*

Thursday, November 6, 2014

# Wabi-sabi

*I have seen a limit to all perfection, but your commandment is exceedingly broad.*

*Psalm 119:96*

*Wabi-sabi* is a term that originated in Japan and is used to describe the beauty to be found in imperfection. Artists will often leave a subtle fracture in the glaze of a vase or perhaps a rough surface on a bowl as a reminder that everything in life has imperfections.

It is human nature to want the perfect life, house, car, lawn, family and reflection in the mirror. Perhaps we should spend more time recognizing and celebrating our imperfections instead of using time, energy and resources to chase after the “perfect” we believe will make us happy.

Nothing and no one except Jesus has ever been perfect, and we will never achieve perfection until we enter heaven and are made perfect because of his death and resurrection. Keeping that in mind will keep things in perspective.

*Heavenly Father, help us to accept and rejoice in our imperfections. Amen.*

*Talk: Talk to a friend today about the term wabi-sabi, and relate what it means.*

*Read: 2 Corinthians 13:9*

*Gloria Doty  
Fort Wayne, IN*

Friday, November 7, 2014

# Unanswered Prayer

*Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.*

*John 11:21*

The words of Martha remind us of times when prayers are offered up but then seem to go unanswered. They also serve to remind us of times when God's answer to a prayer was wiser than we ever dreamed.

A friend told me once that he prayed hard that a particular girl would come around to love him. It never happened. Today he breathes a sigh of relief that her love went to someone else, while in time God gave him the "girl of God's dream."

As in the story of Lazarus, God often answers prayer in jaw-dropping fashion. We pray for one thing and God answers with something bigger and better. We pray for someone we love to recover from illness, and God's answer leads us first to the cross and then to the open tomb. All answers can be found there.

*Lord Jesus, I confess that you are the "resurrection and the life." Let this confession guide me. Amen.*

*Pray: Keep praying for those you know who need your prayers today.*

*Read: 1 Corinthians 15:42-49; John 11:17-44*

*Edward Arle  
St. Charles, MO*

Saturday, November 8, 2014

# You Are My God

*From my mother's womb you have been my God.*

*Psalm 22:10*

When we look back on all the days of our life, we begin to see a pattern and a promise. No matter what mistakes we have made, God was (and is) there to forgive. If we sometimes ignored God altogether, he was (and is) patiently waiting. If we lost our way when our children were growing up or our jobs were too hectic, God was (and still is) giving us the grace we need.

One of the great gifts of old age is the time to sit quietly with God, just resting in his love. Once there was an old man who went into the church daily and just sat there. When the pastor asked him what he was doing, he said, "I just sit here and look at God and God looks back at me." That is what we can do, too, with the one who has always been our Creator, Redeemer and Sanctifier.

*Thank you, Lord, for sticking with me through thick and thin. May I spend time today looking at you and enjoying your mysterious presence. Amen.*

*Act: Spend ten minutes today just sitting and looking at God.*

*Read: Psalm 139*

*Gwen Costello  
Providence Forge, VA*



Sunday, November 9, 2014

# God Morning!

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

*Psalm 118:24*

I recently wrote a quick email to a friend and started by saying “God morning” instead of “Good morning.” As I began to correct my mistake, it struck me that I was actually right in the first place—this is a “God morning,” and this is exactly why it will be a “Good morning” for us.

We are able to “rejoice and be glad” because we know that the Lord is with us—loving, forgiving, encouraging and probably even laughing. Someone once remarked, “To hear God laugh, tell him your plans today!”

To be sure, you and I do need to plan our days, as long as we remind ourselves and one another that it is the Lord who gives us this day for us to serve and to celebrate with others, regardless of our new aches, our worrisome families and our own daily miscues.

*Lord, help me to see this first as a “God morning,” and then let me live it as a “Good morning.” Amen.*

*Ask: What will make this a “God morning” for you? Go for it!*

*Read: Lamentations 3:22-24*

*Rich Bimler  
Bloomington, IL*

Monday, November 10, 2014

# Forget Me Not

*Take care lest you forget the LORD your God ...*

*Deuteronomy 8:11*

When you read “forget me not,” what do you think of? A flower? A certain person? Yourself? Today, November 10, is “Forget Me Not Day.” It’s a day to remember people that you may not have seen or talked to for some time. At least you can have a nice thought about them.

Wait a minute! You can do more than that. “Forget Me Not” is not taken care of with just a passing thought. If you think of that someone for a moment and then promptly forget about them again, then you’re still doing more forgetting than remembering.

That’s what we feel like when we are forgotten by friends and family. Maybe they still think of us. But unless they let us know, we still feel just as forgotten as before. God never forgets us. And he lets us know it every day in a Savior who forgives our sins and loves us always. That’s the important thing to remember.

*Dear Lord, remember me with your love and forgiveness. Help me to do the same for others. Amen.*

*Connect: Call, write or email someone today that you haven’t connected with for a long time.*

*Read: Ecclesiastes 12*

*Lonie Eatherton  
Fenton, MO*

Tuesday, November 11, 2014

# Mrs. Spenser

*Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us.*

*Hebrews 12:1*

Mrs. Spenser was my favorite Sunday school teacher. When we were in fifth grade, she invited the girls in my class to her home one Saturday afternoon to make nightgowns for babies in orphanages in Mexico. Mrs. Spenser touched my life in a way that no other Sunday school teacher had. She showed me faith in action. We didn't just talk about helping others, we did it.

The author of Hebrews tells us we are surrounded by a great cloud of witnesses, cheering us on to our victory in heaven. Mrs. Spenser is one of my witnesses. I have often asked myself, "What would Mrs. Spenser do?" With witnesses like Mrs. Spenser cheering us on, we change the lives of people around us.

*Jesus, thank you for the people you have put in my life who cheer me in the race of faith. Amen.*

*Do: Do you have a Mrs. Spenser in your life? Let that person know how you feel. If she's already in heaven, thank God for her.*

*Read: Hebrews 12:1-2; Philippians 3:12-14*

*Ruth Geisler  
Aliso Viejo, CA*

Wednesday, November 12, 2014

# Continue

*But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed ...*

*2 Timothy 3:14*

The apostle Paul has a word of warning for the young pastor Timothy. In the last days before Jesus returns “there will come times of difficulty” (2 Timothy 3:1). People will be proud, selfish, disobedient, heartless and lacking in self-control, loving pleasure instead of loving God. It’s a description of the world that is as uncomfortably familiar to us today as it no doubt was to Timothy so many centuries ago. You need only watch a news report to confirm the apostle’s warning.

What are we to do when “times of difficulty” surround us and even strike close to home? Paul has the answer, an answer you already know: “Continue in what you have learned and firmly believed.” Cling by faith to Jesus. Continue in his Word.

*Lord Jesus, help me to continue faithfully in your Word. Amen.*

*Contemplate: Read or listen to the Word today. If you are able, help someone else do the same.*

*Read: 2 Timothy 3:1-17; Philippians 3:12-17*

*Carol Geisler  
Manchester, MO*

Thursday, November 13, 2014

# Are You Busy?

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

*1 Corinthians 10:31*

On a trip from Florida to Missouri I encountered the “busy-ness” of Atlanta, the “busy-ness” of the interstate system and finally the “busy-ness” of unpacking in a new home.

Retirement is sometimes as busy as full-time employment. At least it seems that way. Yet we need to be reminded of what St. Paul writes.

Sometimes we keep busy at those things that do not glorify God. But we do have opportunities to glorify him by serving others. It may be the simple act of praying for those in need or volunteering in your community to bring love and care to others. In such activities we give glory to God, who glorified us when he sent his Son be our Savior.

*May that which consumes our time give glory to you, O Lord. Amen.*

*Ask yourself: How does your “busy-ness” glorify the Lord?*

*Read: Psalm 148*

*Richard Eissfeldt  
Ballwin, MO*

Friday, November 14, 2014

# Beautiful Feet

*How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!*

*Romans 10:15*

My baby granddaughter loves to pull off her socks and enjoy the freedom of bare feet. Her feet are soft and plump with perfect little toes. What beautiful feet! I don't show my bare feet very often because my feet show the years of walking, running and not always wearing the best-fitting shoes.

In Old Testament times, messengers ran from the scene of a battle to bring news of a defeat or victory to the king and people. When the news was of a victory, the king and people were overjoyed. When we read about "beautiful feet" in Romans 10:15, it isn't referring to messengers reporting on a battle outcome. Here it is talking about the gospel preachers, who bring the good news of victory over sin because of Jesus' death and resurrection. We all have "beautiful feet" when we tell others the Good News.

*Merciful God, thank you for the "beautiful feet" of missionaries that carry the good news of salvation to people all over the world. Amen.*

*Tell: Use your feet to carry you to announce Good News to someone.*

*Read: Isaiah 52:6-8*

*Jeanette Dall  
Batavia, IL*

Saturday, November 15, 2014

# The Resurrected Light

*From the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land until the ninth hour.*

*Matthew 27:45*

On a day when dark clouds rolled in from the west, the wind picked up and the trees outside my house bent under the weight of the wind. A branch broke and fell to the ground. A siren warned of a tornado, and I sensed a little of what the people of Jerusalem must have sensed during the hours when Jesus hung on the cross: “The earth shook, and the rocks split” (Matthew 27:51).

All this impressed a centurion, and he exclaimed, “Surely this was the Son of God” (Matthew 27:54). The centurion was right, because Jesus would rise from the darkness of the tomb in the bright light of his resurrection. Because of this, there is no winter so cold he cannot bring spring from it, no night so dark he cannot bring light from it, no desert so dry that he cannot bring a flower to bloom from it. Christ has power over everything.

*O Lord, break through the darkness of my life and bring me into your light. Amen.*

*Think: Think of a dark period in your life, and recall how God shed his light on your darkness.*

*Read: Psalm 139:11-12; Matthew 28:1-10*

*Gordon Beck  
University City, MO*

Sunday, November 16, 2014

# Connecting the Dots

*And he said to him, “Rise, and go your way. Your faith has made you well.”*

*Luke 17:19*

Jesus cleanses ten men of leprosy. One—a Samaritan, of all things—returns, praising God and giving thanks to Jesus. The point is frequently made, “So always say thank you. It’s the polite thing to do.” But this story is not about etiquette. It’s about how the Samaritan’s faith connected the dots. Of the ten, he alone saw what was really going on.

God had acted through Jesus to restore this man’s life. As a leper, this man had been cut off from his family and the village community. Now he could go home! And he took this personally. God had acted decisively, specifically for him. And he couldn’t shut up about it or fail to return to the one who accomplished it.

It’s still going on today. God is acting decisively and specifically for you through Jesus on a daily basis. Take it personally. Praise God and thank Jesus.

*Lord, let faith open my eyes to see your power at work in my life to heal and restore. Amen.*

*Look closely: Let your faith show you that God is acting specifically for you today through Jesus.*

*Read: Psalm 30; Luke 17:11-19*

*Mike May  
Kansas City, KS*



Monday, November 17, 2014

# Pull for the Shore

*Just as day was breaking, Jesus stood on the shore.*

*John 21:4*

In the days when registered nurses did the more routine chores in the hospital, “Aunt” Adele, while pulling fresh sheets tight on the patients bed, would laugh and say, “Pull for the shore!” An efficient nurse, she used her opportunities to witness to her faith. Often quietly singing a hymn as she went about her duties, she reminded her patients as we “pull for the shore” of eternity, Jesus is with us.

For some the voyage is rough; the effort to row is great. For others the seas are smoother. It is important not to drift aimlessly or make shipwreck of our faith. But the shore is there! And our Lord Jesus is waiting to greet us after a voyage on which we have not lost our way, because Jesus *is* the Way.

*Lord Jesus, speak your words of peace to still the storms of our lives. Amen.*

*Encourage: Encourage others in faith as together you “pull for the shore.”*

*Read: 1 Timothy 1:17-19*

*Joan Scheele Mueller  
Webster Groves, MO*

Tuesday, November 18, 2014

# Words of Wisdom

*Who is wise and understanding among you?*

*James 3:13*

Wisdom is a lot like a fine bottle of wine—it improves with age. Throughout our lives and experiences we gain knowledge and wisdom that not only benefit our own lives but the lives of others as well.

Throughout my life, I have been blessed with many people who shared their words of wisdom with me. My family, friends and former co-workers over the years are some that quickly come to mind. Their words of wisdom have enriched my life in many ways. Often God places people in our lives to give us the wisdom we need at that particular moment in time.

God's Word is filled with many words of wisdom. However, we have to be willing to receive them. Open the Bible and open your mind to be filled with wisdom from above. Then be willing to share what you have learned.

*Heavenly Father, thank you for imparting your wisdom through the gift of Your Word. Help me to impart your wisdom to others. Amen.*

*Reflect: Is there someone you know who could benefit from your wisdom?*

*Read: James 3:17*

*Betsy Becker Niedringhaus  
Ballwin, MO*

Wednesday, November 19, 2014

# Success Story

*The LORD was with Joseph and gave him success in whatever he did.*

*Genesis 39:23*

Once at a memorial service many non-believers attended, I shared the Dr. Seuss quote: “And will you succeed? Yes indeed, yes indeed! Ninety-eight and three-quarters percent guaranteed.” It was a way to tell everyone that we were celebrating a success story that day. Death thought it brought us to church, but it was really life in Jesus. One-hundred percent guaranteed!

You were baptized into Christ’s “success.” He is writing a success story with your life as you walk with him, love him, worship him and pray to him. Life doesn’t get any better than that. One-hundred percent guaranteed.

Joseph was in prison; God made him a success there! Do you sometimes think your life isn’t what it could be? Remember Joseph. Remember Jesus. He is working in your life every day. One-hundred percent guaranteed.

*Lord Jesus, thank you for succeeding where I could not and remembering me every day. Amen.*

*Sing: Find a hymnal and sing about the ultimate success story: “Jesus Christ Is Risen Today.”*

*Read: 1 Corinthians 15*

*Don Schatz  
Kenmore, WA*

Thursday, November 20, 2014

# The Mending Church

*[Jesus] saw two other brothers, James and John, in the boat with Zebedee their father, mending their nets, and he called them.*

*Matthew 4:21*

The same Greek word is used for *mending* in Matt. 4:21 and *equip* in Eph. 4:11 (“Equip the saints for the work of ministry.”) Medically, the word was used when setting a bone so that it might heal properly. James and John knew their nets had to be “healed” properly so they could “build up” their catch. Just so, Jesus’ gifts to his Church are for the singular purpose of mending and healing its members. Securely fastened in, they are ready “for the work of the ministry, for building up the body of Christ” (Ephesians 4:12).

As we age, we can be confident that Jesus, the master “mender,” has worked us into his building scheme so that we continue to be his powerful, healing presence in the Church and world.

*Lord Jesus, put the gifts you have given me to work as a continuing part of your plan to build up your Church. Amen.*

*Ask yourself: What are the things you have skill and passion for? Jesus will use these gifts to build up the Church.*

*Read: Matthew 4:18-22; Ephesians 4:11-17*

*Mike May  
Kansas City, KS*

Friday, November 21, 2014

# Take Your Medicine

*A joyful heart is good medicine.*

*Proverbs 17:22*

Once a week I join countless other senior citizens in a routine that keeps my body functioning smoothly. I carry half a dozen medicine bottles and a plastic pill sorter to the kitchen table and fill each of the seven segments of the sorter with the appropriate medications for that day. And I wonder, “Do I have all the medicine I need, or is there something else?”

Three thousand years ago, the writer of Proverbs prescribed the medication modern seniors may be missing. A dose of “joyful heart” helps us overcome aches and pains; it prevents future worries about the state of our health. With a good supply of “joyful heart” on hand, we can face the treatments and therapies that get us down.

Every medication has its side effects. A “joyful heart” may bring on an outbreak of smiles and laughter. Caution! These are contagious, and may affect everyone around you.

*Restore to me the joy of your salvation, and uphold me with a willing spirit (Psalm 51:12). Amen.*

*Be joyful: Find something to be joyful about today.*

*Read: Psalm 118*

*Eileen Ritter  
Grand Haven, MI*

Saturday, November 22, 2014

# Jesus Loves Me

*O Lord, you have searched me and known me!*

*Psalm 139:1*

“Jesus Loves Me” is likely one of the first songs you learned to sing—and it remains a favorite of seniors as well. The following church sign made me stop and think about its meaning in a new way: “Jesus Knows Me—This I Love!” I know Jesus loves me because the Bible tells me so, and I love the fact that nothing I am or do will ever change that. God knows me and still loves me.

Psalm 139 reminds us that God’s personal knowledge of our actions, thoughts and words is wonderful and awe-inspiring. God sees us as his dearly loved children, redeemed and forgiven by Jesus’ life, death and resurrection. So we say we with the Psalmist: “Wonderful are [his] works ... my soul knows it very well” (Psalm 139:14).

*I love you, Jesus. I trust your plan for my life, because you know me best. Amen.*

*Sing: Hum, whistle and sing “Jesus Loves Me” throughout the day.*

*Read: Psalm 139*

*Sharolyn Sander  
Lincoln, NE*

Sunday, November 23, 2014

# There's Still Time

*Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, "Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?" And I said, "Here am I. Send me!"*

*Isaiah 6:8*

We've all wondered if there's more we could have done to live out our calling, our vocation. We wonder if we've answered God's call like Samuel when he said "Here I am" and Isaiah when he added "Send me."

Few of us have experienced a dramatic call from God like Samuel or Isaiah did. But God has called each one of us. He made us his own in baptism, he redeemed us through his Son's death on the cross and he sanctified us for living a life that reflects his great love.

Our opportunities may have changed, but they are there nonetheless. Of one thing I'm certain, there is still time.

*Heavenly Father, fill me with your Spirit that I might see opportunities for being Christ to others. Amen.*

*Reflect: How might God use you today? As a listener, encourager, helper?*

*Read: 1 Samuel 3; Isaiah 6:1-8*

*Jane P. Wilke  
Woodbury, MN*

Monday, November 24, 2014

# Father's Calling

*The LORD called me from the womb ...*

*Isaiah 49:1*

When I was a boy, my dad would call me into supper by whistling. He'd put his thumb and finger on either side of his mouth and blow out a high, shrill whistle that could be heard for blocks. That sound carried an important message for me: It's time to come home.

God calls people all over the pages of Scripture. He calls Noah, Moses, the judges and the prophets. In Jesus, he calls apostles and disciples. God calls you and me. He calls us to ministry and to service; he calls us to use our talents to spread his Word and build his kingdom. He calls us to forgiveness and new life and to joy and peace in the death and resurrection of Jesus. He even calls us to his very special supper, the Lord's Supper. And one day, he will call us home.

Before that day, we can call others to God—for God. And don't worry if you can't whistle; you just need to share his Word.

*Father, thank you for calling me to your side, to your kingdom, to your home. Amen.*

*Study: Look up places in the Bible where God calls people.*

*Read: 1 Peter 3:13-16*

*Al Schenk  
St. Louis, MO*



Tuesday, November 25, 2014

# Are You Breathing?

*Let everything that has breath praise the LORD!*

*Psalm 150:6*

Did you ever have “the wind knocked out of you”? I have. It’s a scary feeling. I was trying to gulp in some air. What a relief it was when I could breathe again.

Are you breathing now? Then you are praising the Lord! Every breath for the Christian is an act of worship. We know how much God loves us. We know he created us. We know he breathed life into us to enliven our bodies and to grant us spiritual rebirth in Jesus. We breathe to praise him.

The ancient Psalmist wanted every living creature to praise the Lord when he said, “Let everything that has breath praise the Lord.” The very fact of existence is praise to God. We lend our conscious praise to creation’s litany. Breathe in deeply. Hold it for a moment and say a prayer of thanks. Exhale. Every breath is a blessing.

*Lord of life, thank you for the breath of life, given at birth and at baptism. Amen.*

*Exercise: Exercise today until you are puffing a bit. Thank God for your body and your life.*

*Read: Psalm 150*

*Don Schatz  
Kenmore, WA*

Wednesday, November 26, 2014

# Come, Lord Jesus

*I will come in to him and eat with him, and he with me.*

*Revelation 3:20*

Most of us are pretty faithful about asking the Lord's blessing before we start eating. We fold our hands, bow our heads and ask the Lord to be our guest at this meal. But do we really? How many times is this a routine gesture as we rattle off the words, our minds on the menu or on some other distraction?

What if the Lord Jesus really took a seat beside us and joined in the conversation? Perhaps we would be embarrassed and realize we had not truly invited him to be our guest. Perhaps we would suddenly be aware that we are not worthy to have the Lord honor us as our guest. Yet if we invite him, he will surely come to eat with us.

May he ever be welcome at our table and be comfortable with our conversation. As we gather at the table to give thanks, let us also invite our Lord to join us, and thank him that he does.

*Come, Lord Jesus, be our guest. Amen.*

*Welcome: Welcome the Lord as your guest at every meal.*

*Read: Revelation 3:20-22*

*Joan Scheele Mueller  
Webster Groves, MO*

Thursday, November 27, 2014

# Be the One

*Then one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, praising God with a loud voice; and he fell on his face at Jesus' feet, giving him thanks.*

*Luke 17:15-16*

In Luke's account of the ten lepers, the emphasis is more often on the nine who departed cleansed but did not return and give praise to God. There followed Jesus' question, "Where are the nine?"

We click our tongues with a "Shame on them," but I pose the question: Are we faithful like "the one"? Do we daily show gratitude for God's blessings? We have a tendency to regard God's gifts as something we deserve by our righteousness. We put God in reserve, and, if and when we need him, we call on him.

It has been said that God has a well of thanksgiving that never runs dry. We can draw from that well endlessly and, with thanksgiving, our joy will be complete. In prayer, "be the one," thanking him daily for every blessing in your life.

*Oh give thanks to the Lord for he is good, for his steadfast love endures forever. Amen.*

*Make: Make leaf cutouts and have guest at your Thanksgiving dinner write personal words of thanksgiving on them. Arrange the cutouts as a centerpiece.*

*Read: Luke 17:11-19; Psalm 106*

*Claire Kuddes  
Independence, MO*

Friday, November 28, 2014

# Bird Watching

*Look at the birds of the air: they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them.*

*Matthew 6:26*

While wintering in Florida, my husband and I spend many hours watching and photographing birds—tall herons, wood storks, tiny palm warblers and blue-headed vireos. Their magnificence in flight and their unique songs testify to the wonder of God's creation.

That's why Jesus held up the birds as an example for us. Martin Luther wrote: "He is making the birds our schoolmasters and teachers. It is a great and abiding disgrace to us that in the Gospel a helpless sparrow should become a theologian and a preacher."

Like the birds, we can depend on our heavenly Father for all of our physical needs. Our spiritual needs are met in Jesus our Savior. Through his death and resurrection he gives us new life here and forever in heaven.

*Help me, Lord, to depend on you for all I need for life here and in heaven with you. Amen.*

*Do: Get outside and watch the birds, remembering Jesus' words.*

*Read: Genesis 1*

*Eileen Ritter  
Grand Haven, MI*

Saturday, November 29, 2014

# Heaven Is for Us

*Truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in Paradise.*

*Luke 23:43*

“I just want the family to be together in heaven,” was the friend’s heartfelt longing as he recovered in the hospital. I suspect we all have such yearnings for our loved ones. We want the best for them in time and for eternity. And so does God, “who desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth” (1 Timothy 2:4).

And the truth is that just as with that repentant and believing thief on the cross, God so loves us—pleading, repentant and trusting sinners—no matter how bad we ache or look or feel. He gives his best for us. He so loves us that he has given his Son to live and die for us to bring us new life from the grave. Heaven is God’s free gift for us, to receive in faith by the work of the Holy Spirit. God wants heaven for us. Await that time with joy!

*Heavenly Father, give me joy and give me strength to share your promise of heaven with others. Amen.*

*Share: Talk to your family about your future with the Lord in his heavenly home.*

*Read: Job 19:23-27; Luke 23:33-43; John 3:1-18*

*David P. Schmidt  
St. Louis, MO*

Sunday, November 30, 2014

# Happy New Year!

*But concerning that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father only.*

*Matthew 24:36*

Happy New Year already? Yes, on the calendar of the church year, the first Sunday in Advent is “New Year’s Day” and thus the beginning of a new year for the Church.

So another year has passed, and it has been said that we are a year wiser. As you reflect on the past year, you have probably encountered some changes in your life—health issues, a change of residence, family events, possibly the death of a loved one. Ask yourself: “Have I remained in the faith, grown in my faith and lived my faith?” Depending upon your response, perhaps it is time for a New Year’s resolution, remembering that we are, indeed, closer to that coming which the Advent season celebrates.

*Come, Lord Jesus, and help me to remember that because of your goodness and mercy, every day is another day to live before you come. Amen.*

*Do: End each devotional prayer with the words “Come, Lord Jesus.”*

*Read: Matthew 24:36-44; Revelation 22:20-21*

*Claire Kuddes  
Independence, MO*

Monday, December 1, 2014

# Trusting

*Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding.*

*Proverbs 3:5*

Recently my wife and I were facing some new health issues. At breakfast one morning she said, “I wonder what God is up to?” I responded, “Well, he is at work, I am sure. He is up to something good.”

Such a conversation caused us to recall the words of King Solomon (Proverbs 3:5). We remarked, “Whatever it is, let us trust him from the bottom of our hearts and at the same moment let’s not try to figure it out on our own. God will take care of us as he always has.”

With that my wife said, “One of my favorite hymns is ‘I Am Trusting You, Lord Jesus.’” We took out our hymn book and read all six stanzas. What a powerful message for our journey every day.

*Lord Jesus, let your Spirit move us to trust you in all our ways. Amen.*

*Meditate: Take out your Bible concordance. Meditate on passages with the word trust.*

*Read: Hebrews 2:10-18*

*Walter M. Schoedel  
Webster Groves, MO*

Tuesday, December 2, 2014

# Snow Solitude

*In returning [repentance] and rest you shall be saved;  
in quietness and in trust shall be your strength.*

*Isaiah 30:15*

When you walk in rain, you hear “splish-splash.” When you walk through leaves, you hear “crackle” and “crunch.” When you walk through new-fallen snow, you usually hear little or nothing. That’s what I rediscovered as I walked on Canada’s Lake Louise. Quietness, stillness ... snow solitude.

My mind whirled as the snow swirled around me. Some Bible passages compare God or angels’ garments to snow. Others metaphorically compare snow to forgiveness. David’s words from Psalm 51 read, “Wash me and I shall be whiter than snow.” Isaiah reminded God’s people “though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow.”

The snow solitude provided the perfect atmosphere for confession. The snow itself provided the reminder that through the blood of the Lamb, I’m forgiven. Does it get any better than that?

*Good Father, thanks for the reminders from nature that I’m forgiven. Amen.*

*Reflect: What reminders in nature assure you of forgiveness?*

*Read: Daniel 7:9; Matthew 28:3; Isaiah 1:18*

*Louise Schini Weber  
Ft. Myers, FL*



Wednesday, December 3, 2014

# Jesus Loves You And So Do I!

*Just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another.*

*John 13:34*

We have a neighbor who is a pastor. A few weeks ago we received an official announcement from him that he was retiring this year. His first line read, "Jesus loves you and so do I!" When I retired from teaching in a Christian school, I left behind the same engraved message on a picture of a smiling Jesus running with children through a meadow. Isn't this the "bottom line" of all service to God and the people he created? We reach others with that loving message. Jesus will welcome us to heaven with loving arms, the same arms he outstretched on the cross as he died for us. Then he rose again to take each of us by the hand on our journey to heaven. What a beautiful picture of love to hold in our hearts and minds on a daily basis!

*Dear Jesus, help me to reflect your love to all people in all that I do and say. Amen.*

*Show others: Be a role model of God's love to all people.*

*Read: John 3:16; John 13:34-35*

*Annette Schumacher  
Muskego, WI*

Thursday, December 4, 2014

# That Perfect Gift

*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*

As a youngster, I loved everything about gift-giving—colorful paper, ribbons and especially the receiving. As an adult, I admit I still look forward to both giving and receiving. But my favorite part is finding the perfect gift and watching for the surprise as the recipient unwraps it.

Did you know that gift-giving is an inherited trait? Just take a look at the family of God. God our Father loved us enough to give his Son. The Son gave his life for our sin so that we would live. Then the Son gave us the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit gives life through power over sin.

This Advent season, enjoy all the good gifts.

*Heavenly Father, thank you for the ultimate gift—life through Jesus Christ. Amen.*

*Share: Share your knowledge of the good gifts of the Father with those you love.*

*Read: John 3:16; Galatians 1:3-4; Romans 8:11*

*Lynne Waite Chapman  
Fort Wayne, IN*

Friday, December 5, 2014

# A Perfect Life Through Christ

*May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope.*

*Romans 15:13*

We are an imperfect people living in a world of sin. We all have our share of joys and struggles. We have such good intentions, but sometimes our plans may have to take a backseat to health concerns, family activities and other obligations. As the days get colder and darkness arrives earlier, may we look forward to the celebration of the birth of our Lord, who brings light to a dark world. Through him we have hope. We can live with the faith that gets us through the rough times and be filled with the Spirit to carry in our hearts each and every day. Let us enjoy this season with the gifts that have been given to us through Christ: the forgiveness of sins, life everlasting and the joy that comes with a perfect life through Christ.

*Dear Heavenly Father, fill me with faith and the joy of Christ. Amen.*

*Share: Share the warmth of a smile with someone and reach out to those you know are struggling.*

*Read: Romans 15:1-6*

*Paulette Hartmann  
Morton, IL*

Saturday, December 6, 2014

# Lost

*For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost.*

*Luke 19:10*

Being lost is no fun. Driving down a street unsure of your location is frightening. Losing sight of a loved one in a crowd of people is alarming. Being confused about time and place destroys our equilibrium and self-confidence.

Being lost in our spiritual life is more frightening. We all go through “dry spells” when we believe God is not listening to us. Feelings of despair and darkness overwhelm us. Just remember that Jesus is the light of the world. His light shines through, even when we have trouble seeing it. Jesus is always waiting for us with open arms. Keep looking and your world will be brighter than ever. Jesus is the light that guides us. He is here. He is alive. He is risen. And he shines for you.

*Dear Jesus, help me always to see your light shining for me. Amen.*

*Find: Find your faith in Jesus when life goes awry.*

*Read: Matthew 5:16; Matthew 7:7*

*Jean Plesko  
Ballwin, MO*

Sunday, December 7, 2014

# Keep Walking ... by Faith

*We walk by faith, not by sight.*

2 Corinthians 5:7

Søren Kierkegaard, the Danish theologian, once wrote, “I have almost never had a problem that couldn’t be solved while walking.” We’ve all heard of the physical benefits of walking, but seldom of the spiritual advantages. When Kierkegaard wrote about the benefits of walking, he was really talking about faith, not just about physical fitness.

After reading Kierkegaard’s quote, nowadays when I set out on my walk-with-prayer, I’m a bit quicker to roll off my problems’ mental weight into my Lord’s capable hands. Things work out better. Our Father loves to do the caring and carrying. I found this saying printed on a card: “The cross is where you leave your burdens and walk by faith.” I can journey on with Jesus.

*Gracious Lord and Father, we acknowledge your loving readiness to come to our aid. Direct us, in future days, to see that you are truly our “Helper of First Resort.” Amen.*

*Walk: Take a walk, if you are able, and pray while you walk.*

*Read: Luke 24:13-27*

Deane Schuessler  
Woodbury, MN

Monday, December 8, 2014

# Are You Prepared?

*Be on guard! Be alert! You do not know when that time will come.*

*Mark 13:33*

This Advent I am going to be prepared. Advent is not going to sneak up and surprise me. No way!

How about you? Are you prepared? Not just for Advent, but in faith? Jesus in Mark 13 is calling for all of us to be on guard and to be alert! Your whole lives you have been hearing this call from Jesus. Today is no different.

No matter what your age, God calls us all to look to Jesus and to be watchful of the things that distract us from him—even winter.

This is why it is so very important to always have a moment in your day with our Lord. Go to him and pray for strength. Go to him and receive his mercy. Sure, we may not know when he is coming again, but we do know that he will come. Indeed, he does in his Word and sacraments. Through them we are prepared.

*Lord, thank you for preparing me for the Last Day through Jesus. Amen.*

*Witness: Witness to someone today who may not know of Jesus, perhaps a grandchild of yours.*

*Read: Mark 13*

*Cory A. Wielert  
Crown Point, IN*

Tuesday, December 9, 2014

# Words

*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.*

*John 1:1*

I love words. I like to read, write, rhyme, sing, and understand them. Unfortunately, it's easy to take the power of words for granted. Words can wound, or heal. They can bring pain, or comfort. They accuse, as well as forgive. Words have the power to bring death, or life.

John tells us that Jesus is THE WORD, the one through whom “all things were made,” the “giver of life,” the “true light which enlightens everyone.” Jesus used words to heal, teach, forgive, and comfort. He used words to condemn sin, and to point out the way to eternal life. Jesus—the Word made flesh—revealed the glory of God, “full of grace and truth.” Think about his words today and every day this Advent season.

*Fill us with your words, Lord, that we may bless others in what we say. Amen.*

*Notice: Notice your words today. Do they bring others closer to Jesus?*

*Read: John 1: 1-14; Psalm 19:14*

*Sharolyn Sander  
Lincoln, NE*

Wednesday, December 10, 2014

# Consumers of ...

*[Mary] sat at the Lord's feet listening to what he said.*

*Luke 10:39*

We are all consumers. We spend our life consuming. If we were not consumers of oxygen, we would die. The same could be said for water and food products. If we don't consume, we don't live. And then there are those whose reason for living seems to be all about consuming.

The economy depends upon us consumers. We purchase beverages. We shop for food. We buy clothes. When basic needs are met, we become consumers of travel, of entertainment and of services like lawn care. We are consumers of necessities and consumers of luxuries.

But Mary was a consumer of the Word. Are we like Mary? God's all-consuming love for us in Christ sets a different kind of table. For the sake of our spirit we need to be consumers: of priceless grace, of forgiving love, of biblical truth, of divine promises, of unending mercy. Let us always be consumers of Christ.

*Thanks, Jesus, for your consuming love. Amen.*

*Encourage: This Advent encourage others to consume the Word.*

*Read: Psalm 103*

*Randy Shields  
St. Louis, MO*



Thursday, December 11, 2014

# Lean Toward the Light

*I can do all things through him who strengthens me.*

*Philippians 4:13*

We have a plant that grew tall on our deck in the sunshine all summer and was moved to the corner of our guest room before winter. It leaned toward the light coming in the nearby window. By spring it was so large that we divided it and shared with our children for their homes.

This reads like a modern-day parable, an earthly story with a heavenly meaning: We, like the plant, grow spiritually strong in the full SONshine, Jesus the Light. In the darker times of our lives we need to “lean closer” to him through prayer, Bible study, worship and Communion. As the children in our lives grow older, they have their own homes and, hopefully, continue to lean toward Jesus, the Light of the world. What a blessing it is to continue to be enlightened by Christ.

*Dear Jesus, please strengthen us to grow spiritually. Amen.*

*Share: Be good role models of trusting Jesus to help us meet challenges in our lives.*

*Read: Matthew 28:20; 1 Corinthians 10:13*

*Annette Schumacher  
Muskego, WI*

Friday, December 12, 2014

# A Sign for You

*This will be a sign for you: you will find a baby ...*

*Luke 2:12*

The signs of Christmas are all around us—bells ring, lights glitter, cards arrive. Again comes the shepherds' message from the angel. The whole Old Testament stands behind that sign. We, like the shepherds, need no other sign for our living than that we should "find a baby." Christ's very helplessness as a baby, his humanity, his dependence upon his young and inexperienced mother—this all expresses how clearly Jesus wishes to be near and accessible to us always.

Perhaps the inhabitants of Bethlehem had an excuse for not knowing their Savior, but we who bemoan the daily saga of violence and neglect that greets our eyes in our own city and in countries afar and we who know the true sign of God's gift to us have no reason not to follow Christ's example. Let us open our hearts and eyes to seek out those who need not only earthly blessings, but the blessing of that promise "Unto you is born a Savior."

*Thank you, Lord Jesus, for your example, your living and your dying. Glory to God in the highest. Amen.*

*Watch: Watch for signs of God's love around you.*

*Read: Luke 2:1-20*

*Connie Bretscher  
Valparaiso, IN*

Saturday, December 13, 2014

# Where Does the Time Go?

*For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. If I am to live in the flesh, that means fruitful labor for me.*

*Philippians 1:21-22*

“Where does the time go?” I find myself asking often. As a child, it seemed that Christmas or my birthday would never come. Now they come and go before I am even ready for them.

“The Lord is coming very soon,” my friend said the other day. “What makes you think so?” I asked. “When you pull thread off a spool, you can pull it at the same rate. But as the thread gets close to the end, the spool turns faster and faster.” “That explains a lot,” I said. “The Lord, or at least my end, must be coming soon! And when the time comes, I’ll be ready for either!” Words to live by!

*Lord, I have many things to which I look forward. They all pale, however, compared to the delight of seeing you face to face! Amen.*

*Think: We will all have unfinished business when the end comes. But if our joy of heaven comes in the morning, is there anything in particular that I would want to wrap up today?*

*Read: Philippians 1:18-26; Revelation 22:12-21*

*Ted Zimmerman  
Napa, CA*

Sunday, December 14, 2014

# Not the Christmas Angels

*Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am foremost.*

*1 Timothy 1:15*

One Sunday morning, our children's cherub choir was lined up to process. A little cherub greeted a teacher with a friendly "high-five." As the teacher turned, the child made a not-so-angelic face at the teacher. I sat several rows away, unobserved.

Isn't that just like us? Proclaimed a saint, we remain a sinner. Even as we near the manger, the devil tugs on us. Our intent is to praise the newborn King; our nature leads us to unstable shadows.

There may be no human observer of this battle within us. But God knows. God loves. Jesus does not re-box the crèche; the cross is not removed from before our eyes; the absolution is not withheld. We again join a countless list of sinners who with Paul profess, "I am foremost of sinners, but Jesus came—to save me." A little cherub and I sing, "Thank you, Savior."

*Jesus, thank you for always forgiving me. Amen.*

*Remember: You were born for a purpose. Jesus forgives you.*

*Read: Luke 2:8-14*

*Harry Edenfield  
Brownstown, MI*

Monday, December 15, 2014

# Re-Gifting

*As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace.*

1 Peter 4:10

There has been some talk lately about re-gifting. People receive a gift that they can't use, so they give it to someone else. I admit that I haven't felt comfortable with that practice, but, recently, I've become aware of gifts that are made for re-gifting.

God the Father, the giver of every good gift, has given us treasures that are meant to be given away. We have received forgiveness so we can forgive. We have received mercy, so we can be merciful. We have received love beyond measure so we can love. The amazing thing is that we get to keep all of these gifts, too, and we see them grow in value as we give them away.

*Heavenly Father, I thank you for your perfect gifts. You give more than enough to share. Amen.*

*Share: Give someone the joy of knowing Jesus by sharing the treasures you've been given.*

*Read: John 3:27; James 1:17; 1 Corinthians 4:7*

Lynne Waite Chapman  
Fort Wayne, IN

Tuesday, December 16, 2014

## “I Can’t Wait ...”

*We wait for the blessed hope—the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ.*

*Titus 2:13*

Have you ever said “I can’t wait ... to go on the tour ... for spring to start ... to get out the golf clubs ... for Christmas to come ...”? There are many moments in our life when we exclaim, with a bit of exaggeration, “I can’t wait ...”

But we have to wait. A measure of time has to pass. Finally the waiting is over. Eager anticipation, like a wave, finally washes ashore.

Paul and Titus were waiting “for the blessed hope—the appearing of the glory” of Jesus at the end of time. What a grand moment that will be—the resurrection of the dead, Jesus coming for you and me, and the gift of everlasting life.

I’m eager and ready to meet my Savior. How about you?

*Come quickly, Lord Jesus. Amen.*

*Think: If Jesus were coming tomorrow, what would you do today?*

*Read: Psalm 130*

*Randy Shields  
St. Louis, MO*

Wednesday, December 17, 2014

# You Never Know

*Truly I tell you, anyone who gives you a cup of water in my name ...*

*Mark 9:41*

It was Christmas morning. Our bachelor neighbor was sitting on our sofa sobbing, telling us that his 93-year-old mother had died during the night. Earlier in the fall, he shared how very close he was to his mother and asked for prayers that she not yet be taken home. When he left our house, I sent along a bag filled with ham sandwiches, olives, Christmas cookies and other goodies.

About an hour later he was back at our door again with more tears in his eyes. This time it was to say thank you, but not for the sympathy, prayers, compassion or sandwiches but rather for the waxed paper the sandwiches were wrapped in! “Thank you, thank you, that’s how Mama always wrapped my sandwiches!”

Such a little gesture, but what a comforting impact. No matter how small our actions, God can put them to powerful use.

*Gracious Lord, keep kindness in our hearts and helpfulness in our hands. Amen.*

*Be kind: Keep on being kind.*

*Read: Hebrews 13:1-2; Matthew 25:35-40*

*Phyllis Otto  
Grand Rapids, MI*

Thursday, December 18, 2014

# Lighting Your Path

*This is what the Lord says—your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel: “I am the LORD your God, who teaches you what is best for you, who directs you in the way you should go.”*

*Isaiah 48:17*

The power of light is a great gift God has given us. It illuminates our way and safely guides us to our destination. Even in the midst of darkness, we have light sources such as lamps, car headlights and flashlights that light our paths.

God has also given us another light as well. One night, in Bethlehem, he placed a brilliant light in the sky, in the form of a star, which guided the Wise Men to our Savior, Jesus. The gift of his Son forever lights our paths and directs us in the way we should travel throughout our lives. Continue to be led by that light.

*Father, thank you for your Son, the light of the world. Amen.*

*Share: Share the good news of Jesus' saving light with someone today.*

*Read: Isaiah 48:12-17*

*Betsy Becker Niedringhaus  
Ballwin, MO*



Friday, December 19, 2014

# Sleep in Heavenly Peace

*And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.*

*Philippians 4:7*

I had taken the congregation's youth group to a local nursing home to sing Christmas carols. Because of poor planning on my part, when we got there, instead of the residents being in the assembly area, most were already tucked in bed! With the permission of the administrator, we sang carols as we strolled down the halls. We were singing "Silent Night," and when we got to the phrase "Sleep in heavenly peace," we heard a voice from one of the rooms, saying, "I am, I am!"

I will never forget that dear soul's testimony, especially when I am lying awake at night stewing over some problem. What a blessing to sleep in heavenly peace, knowing that our Lord is at hand and has gracious control over all that might make us anxious.

*Now I lay me down to sleep. I pray the Lord all my problems to keep. Amen.*

*Memorize: Memorize Philippians 4:4-9. The next time you can't sleep at night, recite these verses rather than counting sheep.*

*Read: Philippians 4:4-9; Psalm 4*

*Ted Zimmerman  
Napa, CA*

Saturday, December 20, 2014

# The Lamb

*He looked at Jesus as he walked by and said, "Behold, the Lamb of God!"*

*John 1:36*

A friend related a Christmas tradition that she enjoyed as a child. She and her sisters became excited when the decorations were brought out. The girls dug into each box looking for a special ornament. The finder was given the honor of placing it in a prominent place on the tree. That ornament was a small lamb that had been in the family for a long time.

When she was young, she always associated the lamb with the shepherds who were watching their sheep on the first Christmas. She thought that maybe the shepherds brought along a lamb when they went to the stable.

The lamb is a good Christmas decoration because it reminds us that baby Jesus is the Lamb of God, who took away the sins of the world by his death and resurrection. Give him a place of prominence in your lives and behold him this season.

*Father, thank you for sending your Son, the Lamb of God, as a human baby to be our Savior. Amen.*

*Talk: Talk about your family's Christmas traditions.*

*Read: John 1:28-37; Revelation 7:17*

*Jeanette Dall  
Batavia, IL*

Sunday, December 21, 2014

# Winter Comfort

*... and they will call him Immanuel—which means, “God is with us.”*

*Matthew 1:23*

It’s a quiet early winter evening. The stars aren’t out. There’s nothing I want more than to be inside. The electric candles shining in my windows are especially reassuring when I’m coming in from the yard or driving home. The lights draw me toward love, comfort and peace. In the darkness, we can lose our way. Imagine how dark the world was when God decided to send his only Son. Imagine how dark Joseph’s dreams were when he found out Mary was with child. Then the angel spoke: a light strong enough to light the world is coming—he will be called Immanuel. Finally, there will be love, comfort and peace. God is with us.

*I just need say the word Immanuel to remember you are here, Lord. Help me to remember your presence with me every day. Amen.*

*Make: Make an Advent calendar for next year. Each day include an example of how God is with you.*

*Read: John 1:1-14; Isaiah 9:6-7*

*K.S. Wuertz  
Leslie, MO*

Monday, December 22, 2014

# The Best Is Yet To Come

*Joseph also went up from Galilee, from the town of Nazareth, to Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem.*

*Luke 2:4*

When we lived in Ohio we'd look forward to snow at Christmas. The best storms seemed to lightly fall right when we were leaving Christmas Eve services.

After the children grew up, my husband and I moved to Florida. The weather was delightful. I was sad, though, because I thought Christmas Day wouldn't be the same without snow. Then I heard a radio ad saying about how Bethlehem was on approximately the same longitude as Ft. Myers. That made me feel better. We'd be celebrating Christmas with almost the same type of weather Mary and Joseph enjoyed during the birth of Jesus. But something else was missing. What was it? Then it dawned on me. I'd lost my focus on Christmas' true meaning: the birth of Christ—for everyone in every latitude and longitude on earth.

*Help me, Lord, to remember that the reason for the season is you. Amen.*

*Remember: Remember a Christmas that was especially memorable to you because of the weather.*

*Read: Luke 2:29-32*

*Edna Jakobsky  
Ft. Myers, FL*

Tuesday, December 23, 2014

# A Lifetime of Healthy Sight

*When your eye is healthy, your whole body is full of light ...*

*Luke 11:34*

It was not until after I had completed my cataract surgeries that I realized that the bathroom lights were really bright. I was in the “dark,” and I did not know it. Now I see things around me in a different light.

Are we in darkness and do not know it? “When your eye is healthy, your whole body is full of light,” the reading for day says. But the verse continues on by saying, “But when it is bad, your body is full of darkness.” Have our everyday problems darkened our eyesight this Advent season? Take the “surgery” to ask for forgiveness, listen to his absolution and dig into the Word of the Lord. Now we can begin to see with a healthy sight that will last into eternity.

*O Lord, too many times we are in the dark because we want to do it our way. Give us a lifetime of healthy sight this Christmas by letting you be our source of light. Amen.*

*See: See others with God’s light. Brighten the lives of people you see every day.*

*Read: Luke 11:33-36; Proverbs 3:5-8*

*Naomi Weslock  
Lake in the Hills, IL*

Wednesday, December 24, 2014

# A Baby!

*And she gave birth to her firstborn son ...*

*Luke 2:7*

I sat in a pew for a Christmas Eve service last year for the first time in forty years. (I had stood in the pulpit the previous forty Christmas Eves.) It was my privilege to sit directly behind a family whose youngest member was a baby boy about six weeks old. As our pastor spoke of God's gift of his Son to us, he emphasized the wrapping was not important; what was important was the gift itself. As I watched how helpless the infant in front of me was, how totally dependent he was on his family, I was awed more than I had ever been in contemplating the miracle of Jesus' birth. The eternal Son of God was "born of the Virgin Mary," born as one of us.

After the service I learned that the baby's name in the pew in front of me was Joshua—the Old Testament equivalent of Jesus. In that moment the reality of Christ's birth became deeper to me than it ever had before.

*Lord, thanks for becoming a helpless baby so you could be my eternal helper. Amen.*

*Marvel: Marvel that God's Son took on human flesh for you.*

*Read: Matthew 1:21; Luke 2:11-12*

*Jim Rogers  
Ellisville, MO*

Thursday, December 25, 2014

# Christingle

*For unto you is born ... a Savior.*

*Luke 2:11*

Customs and traditions in celebrating Christmas differ throughout the world. One in the Czech Republic is called Christingle. A Christingle is an orange to represent the world. A candle is placed on top of the orange to symbolize Christ as the light of the world. A red ribbon is wrapped around the orange to help us remember how Christ shed his blood on Calvary's cross. Four toothpicks with dried fruits are placed through the ribbon into the side of the orange representing the fruits of the earth.

Such a custom speaks a powerful message of Christ's coming into the world—to bring light to a world in darkness, to bring forgiveness to a world in sin and to bring life to a world that needs nourishment.

The Babe in Bethlehem came to bring pardon and peace, comfort and consolation. Let us adore him.

*Heavenly Father, help me to celebrate the heart of Christmas, Jesus the Savior who came for me. Amen.*

*Think: Think about your Christmas customs and traditions. How do they communicate for you the true meaning of Christmas?*

*Read: John 1:1-14*

*Walter M. Schoedel  
Webster Groves, MO*

Friday, December 26, 2014

# It's a Boy!

*God sent forth his Son, born of woman ...*

*Galatians 4:4*

We've all received a birth announcement in the mail or seen the yard signs that say, "It's a boy!" or "It's a girl!" People just naturally want to share their joy in the birth of a baby.

Jesus our Savior was born in a humble stable. No one would have known. But God sent angels to tell the shepherds. The shepherds saw the baby Jesus and told everyone they could in and around Bethlehem. Since that day, the birth announcement of this baby boy has been announced more than any other birth in history, even to all the world. And why not? He was born to be the Savior of all people in the world. It's a boy! It's our Savior! That's a joy that we still share with everyone in all the world.

*Dear God, in his wonderful birth you have given us your own Son. We worship him not only as the perfect innocent Child but as our Savior from sin and every evil. Amen.*

*Tell: Tell your child or grandchild, "I remember when you were born ..." Then talk about Jesus' birth.*

*Read: Luke 2*

*Lonie Eatherton  
Fenton, MO*



Saturday, December 27, 2014

# Time Flies

*The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God will stand forever.*

*Isaiah 40:8*

Have you ever browsed in an antique store, consignment shop or flea market? If so, you may have been startled the first time you spotted a familiar item. Maybe it was the lunch box you carried in fourth grade or the colorful juice glasses that were on your family table every morning or a vinyl record album you loved. How quickly the accessories of our childhood and youth have become collectible, vintage and even (gasp) antique.

Time flies. Life is short. These aren't just clichés but truths with a wonderful aspect for Christians. In truth, the swift passage of time and brevity of life aren't sad and cruel facts but rather a combination of blessing and grace. Blessing because God gave us life and continues to watch over us as a Father. Grace because God one day will crown our life with salvation, through the redemption of his Son, Jesus.

*Heavenly Father, thank you for the life you've given me and the promise of life eternal. Amen.*

*Reminisce: Look through your mementos or photos and recall how God has blessed your life.*

*Read: Psalm 103:1-5; Psalm 90:12*

*Marj Maynard  
Billings, MO*

Sunday, December 28, 2014

# Whose Advice?

*For to me to live is Christ ...*

*Philippians 1:21*

Want to live a better, happier, healthier life? Well, you have hundreds of people just waiting to advise you on how to do so. They offer you diet programs, exercise regimens, weekend retreats, books, articles—you name it, expert advisors can tell you just what you need. While it's true that exercising and watching what you eat is good advice for us all, we usually fall away from such good habits precisely because they're founded on "advice."

Want to live a better, happier, healthier life? That question was asked in St. Paul's day too. He answered it by saying, "For me to live is Christ." Meaning the best life comes from living by Christ and his Word. That life is not built on advice, but on a relationship with God himself. Advice is mere words, however sage. Christ is love in action, God's love in word and deed, proven to work for our eternal good on a cross and in an empty tomb.

Whose advice will you live by? For a happier, healthier, everlasting life—for me to live is Christ.

*Lord Jesus, help me hear and follow only your advice, your own holy Word. Amen.*

*Read: Philippians 1:12-30*

*Al Schenk  
St. Louis, MO*

Monday, December 29, 2014

# Lead Me, Lord

*He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out.*

*John 10:3*

Traveling to a new place is a great adventure, but it can be a bit scary if you have to find the way by yourself. Detours, construction and traffic can be formidable obstacles. Even a GPS has to “recalculate” occasionally. I’d rather travel with a companion who knows the way and personally leads me to the destination.

Jesus is that ever-present companion for life’s journey to heaven. The Good Shepherd calls us by name, gives crucial directions in his Word and reassures us when there are bumps in the road. Jesus guides us through heavy family traffic, financial recalculations and health detours. He even rescues us when we “run out of gas.” Trust him to lead you all the way home.

*Loving God, give me the wisdom to follow where you lead. Amen.*

*Map it: Recall God’s leading through the twists and turns of your life’s journey.*

*Read: Proverbs 16:9; Psalm 25:5*

*Sharolyn Sander  
Lincoln, NE*

Tuesday, December 30, 2014

# Putting It Away

*The LORD has also put away your sin.*

2 Samuel 12:13

Many people say they enjoy decorating their homes for Christmas but do not look forward to putting the decorations away after the holidays. While that is understandable, think about it. You could just leave the decorations up. But having Christmas candles out on the 4th of July might be rather embarrassing. A better option is to see putting the decorations away as a blessing. It means you have celebrated another Christmas. And the fact that you are “putting them away” (as opposed to throwing them away or giving them away) means that you expect to celebrate our Savior’s birth next year. And you will—even if you should end up celebrating it in heaven.

When King David confessed his sins before the prophet Nathan, Nathan assured him that the Lord had “put away” his sin. The same Lord puts away our sin—not to be brought out again later, but permanently.

*Lord, thanks for enabling me to celebrate your birth once again. As I put away the decorations, remind me how you have put away my sin. Amen.*

*Rejoice: Rejoice that God has permanently put away your sin.*

*Read: 2 Samuel 12:1-20*

Jim Rogers  
Ellisville, MO

Wednesday, December 31, 2014

# Settled Dust

*By grace ... saved through faith... not your own doing.*

*Ephesians 2:8*

Remember the dusty roads in our younger years? Young hands at the wheel loved to “kick up” a cloud. It wasn’t so safe for people who followed, though.

At times, you and I have thoughtlessly smothered the air for others. It may have been a word or look that lacked Jesus’ love. Maybe it was an opportunity God gave and we dropped. Maybe it was an opportunity the devil gave and we held it closely. What a dusty storm it caused! Was it foolish judgment we passed on another? Was it a circle of friends chosen for the wrong reasons? Time has given us a pause to look back and wonder if the dust has settled.

The Apostle Paul saw clouds in his past. He took comfort. The damning dust settled in Jesus’ blood. The guilt was drowned in the baptismal water. We are leaving 2014 behind. It’s time for the dust and guilt to completely settle.

*Jesus, you have forgiven us; help us to forgive ourselves. Amen.*

*Contemplate: Grace means unconditional, undeserved love.*

*Read: Ephesians 2:1-10*

*Harry Edenfield  
Brownstown, MI*

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

When you hear the term *living vibrantly*, what Holy Habits come to mind? Since living vibrantly is the theme of this issue, we focus on practical ways that we can live out this energizing lifestyle:

V—Vigor. Vigor brings positive energies, spirit, zeal and excitement to an event, a class, a meal and even to just cleaning the house.

I—Intentional. We do not just “talk” about doing something sometime, but we actually DO whatever it is that needs doing. Do it. Do it new. Do it now.

B—Baptism. God promises us that he will always be faithful to us. Baptism is what connects all of us together as one Holy Huddle.

R—Remember. Remember God’s grace for you, even before you “hop” out of bed each morning.

A—Affirm. EncourAGEMENT goes a long way to bring vibrant living to others of all ages.

N—Knowledge (!) Keep learning, mentoring and sharing your experiences.

T—Trust. We trust the Lord who enables us to reach out to touch and trust others.

May living vibrantly each day be your source of health and hope, in the Lord!

# Hope-Full Praying

## *Christmas Memories*

Help us, Lord, to remember that you are the best Christmas memory of all! Through your birth, we, too, are birthed with the love of family, friends and flocks of shepherds who guard and protect us. Thanks also for the Wise Men and women you put into our lives, and how can we ever forget the angels that you send to bring “glad tidings” to us. Amen.

## *Family Time*

Time is such a precious gift, Lord. Today we thank you for all of the time you have given us with our family. Sometimes it seems too short and sometimes it might even seem too long, but we are grateful for those opportunities to celebrate as your family. Thanks for time to connect with our loved ones, whether it is in person, through emails or phone calls, and, always, through prayer. Amen.

## *Gratitude*

Lord, we thank you for an attitude of gratitude! Thanks for rhyming these words so we can remember them better. We especially love you because we know that even when we are not grateful to you or to others, you continue to be gracious and graceful to us, because of your death and resurrection. Amen.

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