

HOPE-FULL LIVING

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

April • May • June • 2015

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

Hope-Full Living Mission Statement

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

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Wednesday, April 1, 2015

He Died for All

He died for all, that those who live might no longer live for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised.

2 Corinthians 5:15

Today's instant media overpowers our psyche with suffering. Helpless, innocent families and individuals die before our eyes. Refugees await release to safe havens. Our hearts are broken.

We know God's heart is broken as well. He stirs us to righteous action whether that person is on the other side of the world or next door. He relies on us not only to share the Good News, but also to be his hands of love in the world.

We glimpse God's perspective in Genesis 3 spoken to Eve and in chapter 12 spoken to Abraham. During this Holy Week, we remember their seed, Jesus, will bless all people. Therefore we live not only for ourselves, but for Christ and his Kingdom works of love.

Dear Jesus, thank you for giving us a part in loving all people and never forgetting a single individual you place in our path. Amen.

Pray: Pray for and/or witness to someone who has not met Jesus. Give a helping hand as well.

Read: Genesis 3:15; Genesis 12:1-3; 2 Corinthians 5:14—6:2

Rodney Otto
Grand Rapids, MI

Thursday, April 2, 2015

Maundy Thursday

When they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives.

Matthew 26:30

It is in the nature of bread that it must be broken to be eaten. So Jesus blessed the bread and broke it and said, “This is my body.” Unbroken bread looks good, it smells good—it might even win a baking contest. But, unbroken, it’s not food, just a loaf of bread.

A cup of wine has aroma, weight, taste, texture, acidity, even finish—but pour it and just admire it and it’s a waste. One must leave a lip-print on the glass.

Bread and Body, broken for you; Cup and Blood shed for you. Eat it—it’s good for you. Drink it—it’s life for you. Then find a hilltop somewhere and sing to the Lord!

Lord Jesus Christ, broken for me, feed me; I am in need of real spiritual food. Give me to drink of your Spirit. Today I sing to you, even if it’s not on a hilltop. Amen.

Stand: Sing a song to the Lord.

Read: Luke 26:26-30

*Don Schatz
Kenmore, WA*

Friday, April 3, 2015

The Line of Beauty

There they crucified him, and with him two others, one on either side, and Jesus between them.

John 19:18

Do you think beautiful things have something in common with each other? Eighteenth-century artist William Hogarth did. He believed that a line of beauty, a gentle S-curve, could be found in beautiful objects and in successful artistic compositions. Think of ponies and egrets, ocean waves and fern leaves. And think of the human figure. The line of beauty guides the eye and excites the senses. But what about straight lines? Not so interesting. Nowhere is that contrast more evident than on a crucifix: the hard, cold lines of the cross next to the tragic but beautiful body of Christ. God has filled our world with beautiful things, but none more beautiful than our Savior's gift to us on the cross.

Thank you, God, for surrounding us with beauty, and for the beauty of salvation in our Savior's death and resurrection. Amen.

See: Watch for the line of beauty in the world God created. Look at a cross or crucifix and see there the love of our beautiful Savior.

Read: Psalm 27:4; Psalm 96:1-6

*Sally Beck
White Stone, VA*

Saturday, April 4, 2015

Surprise!

But the angel said to the women, “He is not here, for he has risen.”

Matthew 28:5-6

I live by a pond that has plants growing on the banks. In the summer these plants are covered with flowers and edible seeds. But in early spring, everything is brown and looks dead, so the maintenance crew burns it off. Now it really looks bad—a black burned-out landscape. But in a few weeks, green shoots poke up through the ashes and soon the banks are covered with beautiful plants once more.

On Good Friday, Jesus died and was buried. On Holy Saturday his followers were dismayed. Everything looked bleak and “burned out.” But on Easter, when some women came to put the final touches on Jesus’ dead body, what a surprise they had! Jesus wasn’t in the tomb; he had risen from the dead. Now we know that we will also rise from the dead and live forever with Jesus.

Jesus Christ is risen! Alleluia!

Thank you, Jesus, for dying for my sins and for rising from the dead. Amen.

Tell: Share the Easter story with someone.

Read: Matthew 28:1-10

*Jeanette Dall
Batavia, IL*

Sunday, April 5, 2015

Celebrating Easter

He is not here, for he has risen, as he said.

Matthew 28:6

When I was growing up, our family celebrated Easter by going to church, saying to each other, “He is risen! He is risen, indeed!”

We also decorated Easter eggs, coloring them deep red, the color of Christ’s blood. Our grandparents sent us Easter cards. My mother created an Easter tree with colorful eggs hanging on it. She told us, “Christ died on a tree. And the colorful eggs represent his resurrection.” She also baked a cake in the shape of a lamb to remind us that Jesus, the Lamb of God, was sacrificed to take away our sins.

What do you remember about your customs and family traditions to celebrate Easter? Share them with your family. To celebrate means to relive events of the past and do it with feeling, to celebrate our Lord’s life and our own life.

Lord Jesus, help us celebrate Easter by focusing our attention on your resurrection with our worship and our witness, our customs and traditions. Amen.

Talk: Talk to your family about the meaning of Easter in your life.

Read: Matthew 28:1-10; Luke 24:1-12

*Walter M. Schoedel
Webster Groves, MO*

Monday, April 6, 2015

The Resurrection Route!

He has risen from the dead, and behold, he is going before you to Galilee.

Matthew 28:7

Jesus is always going ahead of us into Galilee! That is what the Easter message is all about! Our “Galilee” might be a place, an event, a health issue, a broken relationship, the challenges of aging, or _____ (add your Galilee here!)

Our role is to live in those “Galilees” and, as we do, to continue to “go and tell” the news of the resurrection to those around us.

Watch for the Lord in your “Galilees.” His hope might come through a nurse, a neighbor, a child, an email, a reunion and even at one’s death bed. “Now I have told you,” Jesus says. And now we go and tell others.

Have a blessed Easter Monday in your Galilee today!

Lord, thanks for your presence on the cross and your actions of the empty tomb. Show me the hope you have placed in me as you live through me. Amen.

Watch: Look for “God sightings” today. Tell someone else about them.

Read: Matthew 28:1-10; Luke 24:36-49

*Rich Bimler
Bloomington, IL*

Tuesday, April 7, 2015

Follow Me

The LORD will keep your going out and your coming in from this time forth and forevermore.

Psalm 121:8

Peter once vainly boasted that he would die with Jesus, but instead the disciple denied his Lord. Yet after a seaside breakfast, the risen Savior commanded his forgiven disciple to feed his lambs and tend his sheep. The day would come when Peter would die for his Lord and Jesus showed Peter “by what kind of death he was to glorify God.” Then Jesus told him, “Follow me!” (John 21:19). Peter followed Jesus—in life, through death and into eternal life.

Jesus gives us the same command: “Follow me!” Each day by faith and by the help of the Holy Spirit, we follow our Savior. We listen to his Word and receive his forgiveness. We share his love as we serve others and, when the right time comes, we will follow Jesus through death into eternal life.

*Jesus, help me to follow you today and always.
Amen.*

Remember: Each morning and evening, think of Jesus’ command: “Follow me!”

*Read: John 21:15-25; 1 Corinthians 15:20-28;
Psalm 121*

*Carol Geisler
Manchester, MO*

Wednesday, April 8, 2015

The Easter Story

Thomas answered him, "My Lord and my God!"

John 20:28

The Easter account has all the elements of a great story: intrigue, betrayal, mystery, fear and other strong emotions. Any writer would be proud to claim it as his own. But the meaning of the story is very deep. Perhaps it is simplistic to say it is all about assurance, but think what the Easter story does: We are assured of forgiveness. Our sins are erased. Jesus' suffering and death are enough. Our trust is validated. When we, along with Thomas, say, "My Lord and my God," our doubts are overcome. We are assured that God's promises are true.

We are assured that life conquers death. Because Jesus lives, we shall live also. We are assured of our hope. Despair is overcome. Finally, the Easter story assures us that God loves us. We know it is true: "God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life." Blessed assurance, Jesus lives!

Lord, assure me daily of your great love and the truth of all your promises. Amen.

Rejoice: Sing or read the hymn "Blessed Assurance," thinking of the Easter story.

Read: John 20

*Eldor Kaiser
Lenexa, KS*

Thursday, April 9, 2015

Peter Went a-Fishing

Simon Peter saith unto them, I go a fishing.

John 21:3 (KJV)

Peter couldn't comprehend what had happened. Jesus died and rose from the dead. What now? Back to the beginning. Simon was fishing when Jesus called him. He went from simple fisherman to the one who confessed Jesus as the Christ, then denied knowing him. Now Jesus had risen from the dead. Confused, Peter went back to what he knew.

Our homes, jobs, hobbies, friends, a favorite place or a favorite snack—we need familiar things to ease sadness or confusion. Like Peter, we need something to hold on to, but that is not the whole story. Scripture tells us Jesus called to the disciples, and beckoned them ashore to have breakfast with him.

God has given us our earthly pursuits because we need them. He has given us Jesus to be the ultimate replacement for our losses.

Heavenly Father, thank you for all our familiar things. Amen.

Do: Pursue a hobby and remember who's on the shore with breakfast.

Read: John 21:1-14

*Judy Scherr
Lemay, MO*

Friday, April 10, 2015

Go Ahead—Do It!

Jesus himself stood among them and said to them, “Peace be with you.” They were startled and terrified.

Luke 24:36-37

When Jesus came to his disciples after the resurrection, they were dumbfounded, even terrified. His words to them were always the same: “Peace be with you.” Then he invited them to be part of his mission to the world. Jesus’ call frequently startled his followers, gave them pause and sometimes made them fearful. So it is with us whenever we experience an unexpected new opportunity to be engaged in life.

We may be afraid of taking up a new challenge even as we age. Opportunities to re-engage with life come when we least expect them and make us wonder whether we should take the plunge. Jesus is there with his hand extended, welcoming us back into the fray, giving us a new start and sustaining us as we work into the future he has designed for us.

Lord Jesus, help me respond joyfully to your invitation to spread your life to the world. Amen.

Comfort: Realize that all of what God has led you through has prepared you for your next task in life.

Read: Luke 24:36-48

*Mike May
Kansas City, KS*

Saturday, April 11, 2015

Spring

The flowers appear on the earth, the time of singing has come.

Song of Solomon 2:12

Spring is my favorite season. Purple crocuses peek through a crusty snow bank. Buds on trees follow. My family makes sure to announce when we've each seen our first robin. We celebrate new life!

As we age, we enter that winter season of our lives. Aches and pains. Fatigue. The dulling of eyes and minds. It can feel like a long winter.

Let's look forward to the time when our bodies are made new. We will have a perfect springtime in heaven! We can imagine the life that will surround us and fill us with comfort, energy and clear thinking.

God gives us glimpses of heaven, not unlike spotting that first robin or seeing the buds on the trees. Notice newborn babies and young love. Watch baptisms and hear children recite Bible verses. The world around us gives us insight into the glory that will come. Enjoy it.

Father of all seasons, remind me that you have a purpose for my life no matter my age. Amen.

Watch: Keep track of every sign of new life around you. Notice everything!

Read: Psalm 8; Revelation 22:1-5

*Stephenie Hovland
Green Bay, WI*

Sunday, April 12, 2015

The Resurrection Guarantee

Jesus said to [Martha], “I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die.”

John 11:25-26

We purchase items of necessity, often requesting a guarantee of workmanship and duration of use. We may even consult a Consumer's Guide to answer our many questions before deciding to make the purchase. We of the faith, however, have been given a guarantee that endures eternally, the guarantee of our resurrection. Believing in the resurrection of the body is stronger than death itself. Death is but the gateway to the full and perfect life and the certainty of the resurrection that is assured in the victory of Jesus' resurrection. The promise is from Jesus himself. We need not consult further as to the validity of the offering. It is ours to claim and proclaim. Alleluia and amen!

Lord Jesus, I rejoice in the promise of life and resurrection through faith in your name! Amen.

Share: Rejoice in the validity of Jesus' promise of eternal life. Share that joy with someone today.

Read: 1 Corinthians 15:20-22

*Claire Kuddes
Independence, MO*

Monday, April 13, 2015

Blessings from Above

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

Psalm 107:1

We often forget that the many people and things that we have in life are blessings from above. Our health, family, job and home are all blessings from God. Too often, we take for granted the gifts in our life. It isn't until a dramatic change occurs that we realize what we once had. But when life takes a turn we don't expect, how do we react?

In today's modern world, change is inevitable. It is how we deal with the change in our life that matters most. Sometimes a change can help us see a different perspective in life that may not have been possible before. I believe that God has a purpose for everything, no matter how minor. With his guidance, we can rest assured that we are blessed.

Dear heavenly Father, thank you for the many blessings in life you have given me. Amen.

Reflect: How do you honor God with the blessings he has given you?

Read: Psalm 107

*Betsy Becker Niedringhaus
Ballwin, MO*

Tuesday, April 14, 2015

Our Creator's Trees

He is like a tree planted by water.

Jeremiah 17:8

In the above Bible verse, God is speaking of “the man who trusts in the Lord.” This tree is not “anxious in the year of drought” but continues to bear fruit. As I look out of my window, I see God working his springtime miracles again. My old, bare maple tree has tiny green leaves once more. It has survived the blasts of winter.

Is this my time of drought? Is my strength waning? Am I anxious? Or can I still bear fruit? I can, because my roots have grown deep in the waters of baptism, nourished by the living water Jesus offers. We are strong and blessed to find ways, perhaps different than before, to love and serve our Lord—to bear fruit.

Because of our connection to Christ, our actions will bear the fruit of his love. Though my hair is white, my spirit is still green and growing.

Lord, help me to drink freely of that never-ending flow of living water I find in your Word and in your example. Amen.

Do: Give the joy in your springtime soul to all whom God has given you to touch.

Read: Psalm 1; Jeremiah 17:7-8; John 4

*Connie Bretscher
Valparaiso, IN*

Wednesday, April 15, 2015

Payment

Therefore render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's.

Matthew 22:21

People of Jesus' day didn't like to pay taxes any more than we do, but they knew trouble would follow if they didn't pay. So Jesus' enemies tried to "entangle him" in his words, asking, "Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar or not?" Jesus did not answer as his enemies hoped. Since the coins for the tax bore Caesar's image and inscription, they rightly belonged to Caesar.

We give "Caesar" his due and we give "to God the things that are God's." The coin in Jesus' hand bore the image of Caesar. We, who are held in our Savior's hand, bear the image of God. It is an image corrupted and lost in sin, but now renewed in Christ (Colossians 3:10). A certain percentage of your income necessarily belongs to the government, but you—each part, word, thought and breath—belong to God.

Lord Jesus, renew me daily in your image. Amen.

Consider: As you think about tax payments, remember the price paid for your salvation.

Read: Matthew 22:15-22; Colossians 3:1-17

*Carol Geisler
Manchester, MO*

Thursday, April 16, 2015

Necessities of Life

And my God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus.

Philippians 4:19

I love the lyrics, “I got the sun in the morning and the moon at night,” from the play *Annie Get Your Gun*. We often get so wrapped up in material things we don’t even realize the difference between what we want and what we need. This spring season it’s time to clean and simplify. We can gain so much by setting aside the extras in our lives, by uncluttering and freeing up ourselves. I would love to have more time to count my blessings and marvel at the new life bursting forth this spring. Above all, I want to give thanks for the gift of everlasting life through Christ Jesus.

Heavenly Father, thank you for this spring season and for supplying our needs. Thank you for new growth, for longer days and especially for the gift of your Son to brighten our world and provide us with the ultimate necessity of eternal life in Christ. Amen.

Do: Enjoy a spring day by looking for signs of new life and/or clean out a closet and donate useful items to those less fortunate.

Read: Matthew 6:25-33

*Paulette Hartmann
Morton, IL*

Friday, April 17, 2015

Avoiding Potholes

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

Psalm 32:7

In the spring, after most of the snow has melted, the bane of every driver is potholes. Regardless of how you try to avoid them, it isn't always possible. Hitting one at any speed is dangerous, but if you are driving a normal speed, it can destroy a wheel, tire or undercarriage. The street department makes a valiant attempt to keep them patched, but often to no avail.

How are the potholes in your life? Sickness, financial worries, death of a loved one, having to move—these can all do major damage to our lives. Just like the street potholes, it isn't always possible to avoid these things.

Fortunately for us, God is the “patcher” in our lives and he fills the holes. Unlike the material used by the street department, the material God uses—his love, his Word and prayer—doesn't come back out. It sticks and we can be assured of the repair.

Lord, thank you for being the patch in the potholes in my life. Amen.

Pray: Each time you encounter a pothole, say a prayer for someone who is having a difficult time.

Read: Romans 8:18-39; Ephesians 3:14-19

*Gloria Doty
Fort Wayne, IN*

Saturday, April 18, 2015

A Miracle Can Happen Today

Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life.

Psalm 23:6

God is so good and so miraculous! While working at a Chicago suburban library, I was anxious about not having the items necessary to fill the gift bags that the library dispensed yearly to its homebound and nursing home residents.

I gave my anxiety to the Lord, and on the very day that I contacted the library director for assistance, he received a phone call from a resident who made a very generous donation to cover the need I had. Miracles performed by Jesus at the wedding feast and the healing of the leper occurred in biblical times. God's care and concern for his people are alive and active in our lives today as well. God is so good!

Dear Father in heaven, bless me with the wisdom to see the miracles you perform in my life today. Thank you for your care and concern for your people. Amen.

Sing: Sing the song "God Is So Good"

Read: Psalm 23

*Gloria Elder
Crystal Lake, IL*

Sunday, April 19, 2015

Teachers of Faith

When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I gave up childish ways.

1 Corinthians 13:11

Most Christians probably don't recall when in their lives they learned to speak the Lord's Prayer or sing "Jesus Loves Me." Probably our earliest first learning of things about God may have occurred when some older brother or sister or elder relative patiently took the time to respond to the endless string of questions we would raise.

These days, books, films and lectures may have largely replaced the one-on-one method of learning. Paul, however, does not discredit the child's desire to learn. He tells a young man who is launching his career as a pastor not to belittle nor disparage the learning of childhood. He honors by name Timothy's grandmother, Lois, and his mother, Eunice, who introduced him to the Gospel. Paul urged Timothy not to abandon but to build on what he had learned from them about the kingdom of God.

Lord, help me to keep learning about you. Amen.

Thank: Speak a prayer of thanksgiving for your teachers of the faith.

Read: 2 Timothy 1:1-5; 1 Corinthians 13:11-13

*Karl E. Lutze
Valparaiso, IN*

Monday, April 20, 2015

Remember Who You Are

For in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God.

Galatians 3:26

There is a beautiful line in the musical *The Lion King* that is so baptismal. The son of the lion king has turned his back on his people. His father has been killed by an evil uncle and the son has been deceived into believing that he was responsible for his father's death. He is in abject misery. Then the father's voice comes to him from lion heaven with this beautiful and haunting word: "You have forgotten who you are, and, therefore, you have forgotten me!"

We all struggle with forgetfulness in various degrees. But to forget who and whose we are is the saddest of all forgetfulness. For then I forget that I am that precious child of our heavenly Father, who brought me into his family through baptism. To forget who we are in Christ is to forget whose we are.

Dear Father, may I always remember that I am your dear child because of Jesus. Amen.

Celebrate: Celebrate baptism with your family and celebrate who and whose they are in Christ.

Read: Galatians 3:23-29

*Lionel Otto
Adelaide Australia*

Tuesday, April 21, 2015

Keeping a Promise

Even to your old age ... I will carry and will save.

Isaiah 46:4

When you were a child, you confessed, “Growing up will take forever!” When you were a young adult, you might have said, “I have lots of time to finish this project.” When you turned 50, you remarked, “Time is sure passing quickly.” Today I hear older adults wonder, “Where did all the time go?”

In the midst of these observations, I invite you to ponder the promise spoken by our Lord to the children of Israel, but also to you and me: “Listen to me, family of Jacob and Israel, I’ve been carrying you on my back from the day that you were born, and I will keep carrying you when you are old ... I have done it and will keep doing it, carrying you on my back, saving you.” (Isaiah 46:3-4 MSG).

Lord Jesus, help me always to cling to your promise of taking care of me. Amen.

Tell: Let family and friends and even strangers know how God has kept his promise to you throughout your life.

Read: Isaiah 46:9-13; Hebrews 13:7-8

*Walter M. Schoedel
Webster Groves, MO*

Wednesday, April 22, 2015

Be Silent and Listen

He was still speaking when, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them, and a voice from the cloud said, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased; listen to him."

Matthew 17:5

In our Bible class this morning, a friend pointed out that the words *silent* and *listen* are spelled with the same letters. What a good reminder that we need to be silent in order to listen! Our world is often noisy with televisions, cell phones, traffic ... you know the list. We have so many distractions in our daily lives.

Listening, really giving someone else our undivided attention, has become a lost art. Let's have quiet times with family, friends and neighbors, as well as with less fortunate people we may not know well. Most of all, we need quiet times with our God, who is always ready to listen to us. We need to listen to him too.

Dear Lord, thank you for always listening to us. Help us to listen to others, especially you, as we read the Bible and pray. Amen.

Listen: Let's be silent and listen when others talk to us.

Read: Psalm 46:10; Proverbs 19:20

*Annette Schumacher
Muskego, WI*

Thursday, April 23, 2015

Priceless Inheritance

So that being justified by his grace we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life.

Titus 3:7

Estate planning may be a term that makes our eyes glaze over, but it becomes a priority during retirement years. Whether our estate value is seven figures or five or three, we still want the proceeds to be distributed to the heirs whom we designate.

Preparing estate documents is a reminder for Christians of two great privileges. Not only are we able to name the heirs for our earthly estate, but we have the greater privilege of being named heirs of a glorious inheritance in heaven. When we were born again through water and the Word in Baptism, we became God's children and heirs. As our loving Father, God is preparing "an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled and unfading, kept in heaven for you" (1 Peter 1:4). Our future is secure. Through faith in Christ we have a priceless inheritance.

Father, thank you for sending Jesus, so that through his poverty I might become rich. Amen.

Treasure: Regard the Bible as an estate planning document written by your heavenly Father.

Read: 1 Peter 1:3-9; Psalm 16:5-6

*Marj Maynard
Billings, MO*

Friday, April 24, 2015

Call Me “Lucky”!

We rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope.

Romans 5:3-4

A recent “Lost and Found” ad stated: “Lost dog. Three legs, broken tail, droopy ear, blind in one eye. Answers to the name ‘Lucky’!”

Ever feel that way? Me too! As soon as someone says to us, “Cheer up, things could be worse,” we cheer up and, sure enough, things get worse! It’s called life.

But St. Paul in Romans 8 shares a much better picture of what real life is all about. In the midst of our worries, woes and whimpers, we know in faith that the Lord continues to pour out his love on us! We know this because of the Cross and the Resurrection! When problems and pains pounce on us, we know that through these issues comes hope, in the Lord!

Lord, help us to see all of life through your death and resurrection and thanks for calling us “Lucky” in you. Amen.

Go ahead: Call some people “Lucky” today and then tell them why!

Read: Romans 5:1-5; Romans 8:18-25

*Rich Bimler
Bloomington, IL*

Saturday, April 25, 2015

The Blessing of a Timely Blessing

Bless, for to this you were called.

1 Peter 3:9

The word *blessing* comes from two Greek words *eu* (well) and *logos* (word): to speak well of. That's where we get our word *eulogy*. The most common place for a eulogy is at a funeral, to speak well of a person's life after he or she is gone. I have often wished the person could have heard the eulogy while alive. What if we could work up the courage to tell them while they are still with us what a difference their gifts and character are making in our lives?

We have all experienced the power of a compliment or a word of affirmation. It encouraged us to keep on doing that which blesses others. We have the power to encourage others as well so that they will keep on being a blessing. With such God-given power, let us look for opportunities to employ it.

Lord Jesus, you have blessed me with your love. Help me to be a blessing to others. Amen.

Watch: Look for an opportunity today to brighten someone's life with an honest compliment or affirmation.

Read: Hebrews 10:24-25; Ephesians 4:29-32

Ted Zimmerman
Napa, CA

Sunday, April 26, 2015

Talk to the Shepherd

The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.

Psalm 23:1

Unable to sleep, I should have heeded the advice I once gave my aging, widowed godmother. She had no children and often called me after she lost her beloved husband. Many a night she was unable to get to sleep. I was thrilled when I ran across a plaque which read, “When you can’t sleep, don’t count sheep—talk to the Shepherd.” I sent it to her. She hung it right beside her bed. Many a time she thanked me for those words. Talking to the Shepherd is such a blessed gift because we can be certain he is listening.

How often we try to take life into our own hands! The next time you are unable to sleep or have some other need or challenge, remember to turn again to the Shepherd, who handles all we place into his hands.

Thank you, dear Shepherd, for always being there for us. Amen.

Pass it on: The words on the plaque provide a wonderful quote. Do share it with others. It is a catchy way to remember what we so often forget.

Read: Matthew 28:20; Psalm 91:11-12; 1 Thessalonians 5:17

*Phyllis Otto
Grand Rapids, MI*

Monday, April 27, 2015

Fly to Jesus

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

Luke 23:43

I'm writing this on a plane from Milwaukee to Seattle. Our daughter and I are flying to visit my sister (and family) whom we haven't seen for more than two years. We'll meet her second granddaughter for the first time and visit our 86-year-old aunt, who lives on Mt. Hood in Oregon. When we took off, we flew over the beautiful Lake Michigan shoreline and then headed west and up over the clouds to the equally beautiful blue sky. As we flew upward, I thought of the song "Fly to Jesus." A good friend of ours flew to Jesus unexpectedly a couple weeks ago. We visited her the night before she died. She was demonstrating her new battery-operated wheelchair, "dancing" around their living room. The next morning she was dancing in heaven, without the wheelchair!

Dear God of all creation, thank you for your beautiful world and for the gift of your Son so we may fly to heaven someday. Amen.

Do: Try to imagine flying to Jesus.

Read: Psalm 116:15; Luke 23:39-43

*Annette Schumacher
Muskego, WI*

Tuesday, April 28, 2015

He Is Good

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

Psalm 107:1

What mealtime prayer do you say? When I was a child, at the end of our supper we would say the above verse. It always reminded us of the goodness of God that lasts well after the meal is done.

Even if everything is going wrong and we are in utter pain and frustration, the Lord is good and his love endures forever. Even if we have sinned and our guilt is overwhelming us to the point that we just want to give up the fight, he is good and his love endures forever. And yes, even when everything is going well and you don't have a care in the world, he is good and his love endures forever!

Thank you, O Lord. You are good and your love endures forever. Amen.

Rest: Rest today in the Lord! He is good and his love endures forever!

Read: Psalm 100; Psalm 106

*Jeremy Klaustermeier
Warrenton, MO*

Wednesday, April 29, 2015

Keep Looking Up!

You will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.

Acts 1:8

Once there was a guy who was always looking up. Some people thought he was stuck-up. Others thought he had a crick in his neck and couldn't straighten it out. Some thought he liked to study cloud formations by day and constellations at night. Finally someone asked him, "Excuse me, sir, why are you always looking up?" "I want to be the first one to see Jesus coming back for us," he answered.

It's not a bad attitude for a Christian. But along with looking up, Christ has commanded that we do something of great importance while we wait for his return. You can share the Good News of salvation with the people you interact with as you go about your daily activities and to the whole world as you support international mission projects. So keep reading God's Word. Keep your head bowed in prayer. But remember to look up too. You could be the first one to see Jesus coming back.

Father, keep me looking up to your Son in my attitude and in my life of faith. Amen.

Do: Visit with someone who is "looking down."

Read: Acts 1:6-8; Luke 24:44-53

*Ruth Geisler
Aliso Viejo, CA*

Thursday, April 30, 2015

Be Still

The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. He makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside still waters.

Psalm 23:1-2

What is it about those words that get the attention of so many? We don't get tired of them. We've heard them often, but the repetition doesn't seem to bother us. Maybe it's because they are so down-to-earth. Shepherd! Green pastures! Still waters! Those words soothe us like nothing else. But perhaps they also bring the Lord God to our level, to us, to where we live. Maybe that's it!

The words bring God to us. And that, above all else, is what we need. We need God to be with us in our lives. We need God to be with us in our speech. We need God to guide and direct us more. We need to know what precisely is going on with us. We need to know more about God's presence with us. We need to know more, much more, about God's endless and eternal love for us all.

Lord God, be close to us always. Amen.

Rest: Morning and evening and every hour in between, remember that your Shepherd cares for you.

Read: Psalm 23; John 10:7-30

*Jerry Groth
Sturgeon Bay, WI*

Friday, May 1, 2015

Gifts

Since you are eager for manifestations of the Spirit, strive to excel in building up the church.

1 Corinthians 14:12

“Here, Grandpa, let me show you how this program works on your computer.” “Cassie, would you please enter these names and cell phone numbers in my cell phone?”

What wonderful gifts our grandchildren have! It is mind-boggling to see how quickly young children can adapt to using computers and other electronic devices. I’m just happy that our grandchildren are willing to use their gifts to help other people, especially me.

Speaking of gifts, what are our gifts? Being retired doesn’t mean sitting in the grandstand of life. We can still be out on the playing field and contributing and giving of ourselves for the welfare of others. It was after I retired that I discovered my gift for writing. What you are reading at this moment is the product of my newly discovered gift.

Lord, take my moments and my days; let them flow in ceaseless praise. Amen.

Look closely: What are your gifts?

Read: 1 Corinthians 12

Paul Eggold
Greendale, WI

Saturday, May 2, 2015

Finish the Race

I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.

2 Timothy 4:7

In our younger years many of us may have run in some kind of race. But as we grew older, we probably didn't think much about running in races. The Bible pictures life here on earth as a race. The finish line is not death, but eternal life in Christ Jesus. We are to live on this earth in faith, knowing that Jesus died for our sins and rose from the dead to give us the assurance of eternal life.

God wants us to finish the race of life here on earth in faith and service. The apostle Paul said that he is finishing his life in faith in the Lord Jesus, whatever his circumstances. Your race of life here on earth will be of a different length than the races of others. But no matter how many years we live on earth, through Jesus Christ we will finish strong in faith.

Father, thank you for giving me the faith to believe in Jesus as my Savior from sin. Thank you for giving me your Spirit, who enables me to finish strong in faith and service. Amen.

Pause: Remember the words of Jesus on the cross, "It is finished." Jesus finished his purpose here on earth for us.

Read: Hebrews 12:1-3; Psalm 90

*Kenneth Holdorf
Carrollton, TX*

Sunday, May 3, 2015

Handicapped Parking

Strengthen the feeble hands, steady the knees that give way, say to those with fearful hearts, “Be strong, do not fear, your God will come.”

Isaiah 35:3-4

It’s a blue sign. An occupied wheelchair is outlined in white. It’s the handicapped parking sign, reserving space for folks with limitations. It represents a social contract to show consideration for folks that need help getting around.

At the deepest human level, everyone is handicapped—feeble in mind, body or spirit, knees giving way as we age, and fear creeping in as we face the unknown. So where do we park?

Jesus, the man for all seasons and the God for all ages, has come to be our parking place. He forgives our sin, bears our burdens and bids us to be strong in him. His perfect love casts out fear.

Human weaknesses can overwhelm us. Let Jesus overwhelm you with his compassion. He saves the crushed in spirit.

*Lord, shelter me in the shadow of your cross.
Amen.*

Share: Share your parking space with a hurting friend.

Read: Mark 5

*Randy Shields
Spanish Lake, MO*

Monday, May 4, 2015

I Can't Fix It!

And my God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus. To our God and Father be glory forever and ever. Amen.

Philippians 4:19-20

I never was the world's best handyman, able to fix everything broken around the house. But I enjoyed fixing what I could. Yet the older I get, the more I hear myself saying, "I can't fix it, dear."

While there are moments of regret about that, the older I get and the more I mature in the faith the happier I am in saying, "I can't fix it." Maybe I can still fix a few minor things, but what deep joy it is to know that all the ultimate questions of life and living, of death and the future are taken care of in the grace-filled hands of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Father, there so many things in this world we just can't fix. We trust in your wisdom and strength to do it for us and in us, forgiving our wrongdoing and loving us with your peace, comfort and direction, through Jesus Christ, our Savior, Brother and Lord. Amen.

Give thanks: Thank those who help fix the little things that bother you, and thank God who will always fix the big ones that really matter.

Read: Philippians 4:4-20

*David P. Schmidt
St. Louis, MO*

Tuesday, May 5, 2015

More and More

We ask and urge you in the Lord Jesus, that as you received from us how you ought to walk and to please God, just as you are doing, that you do so more and more.

1 Thessalonians 4:1

Paul reminds the Thessalonians that he taught them how to walk with the Lord and how to please God. And then he tells them to keep on doing it more and more. Our work in the Lord is never done this side of heaven.

Where it might be easy for us to seek rest from witnessing to our faith, where it might be easy for us to grow weary in serving others, where it might be tiresome to continue to encourage others in their faith, Paul reminds us to keep on doing what we've been instructed to do and to do it more and more.

God himself is our model. While we are sinners, through Jesus Christ our Lord God's grace is poured out in abundance toward us.

Lord, just as you pour more and more grace on me, let me serve you more and more. Amen.

Continue: Share the love of Jesus more and more by serving others and witnessing to his grace.

Read: 1 Thessalonians 4:1-12; Romans 5:20

*Terry Weber
Williamsburg, VA*

Wednesday, May 6, 2015

Front Page News

For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us.

Romans 8:18

Newspapers have a certain typeface used for astounding events called “Second Coming” type. These are large, heavy letters used for the most stupendous, front page news. It was used to announce the bombing of Pearl Harbor and mark the end of World War II. It jumps out at you and says, “Read me!” Why is it called Second Coming type? Because no event will ever occur that is larger than Jesus’ return.

Even in times of hardship, we keep in mind that nothing we experience now can compare with the glory that one day is to be revealed to us in Christ.

We are not looking for the undertaker, but for the “Upper-taker.” We keep our eyes toward heaven as we await the future reunion in heaven, and we keep our hearts and minds connected to God’s Word.

Lord God, grant that we may be ready to receive Christ when he comes in glory. Amen.

Look closely: Remember how Christ’s return will make today’s inconveniences forgotten.

Read: 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18; Romans 8:18-25

*Jonathan Vierkant
Lake Zurich, IL*

Thursday, May 7, 2015

A Lacuna

You will go out in joy.

Isaiah 55:12

When our church's organ pipes were being restored, their absence left a giant black hole that filled our vision whenever we entered the sanctuary. That blank space, called a lacuna, towered over the chancel. Appropriately, a lacuna can be a musical term, too, meaning "an extended silence in a piece of music." That's what it was—literally. That black hole served as a gigantic visual for all the other things that may go missing in our worship lives. A joyful spirit that has disappeared because of worry, piety that has dissolved into duty, praise that has been disintegrated by distractions become lacunas in the soul. But the pipes came back, restored and sounding beautiful, and God takes the spaces that have gone empty for a time and refills them that we may go forth rejoicing.

O God, only you can refill the spiritual holes in my life that I might have wholeness in you. For this I thank you. Amen.

Fill: Filled with the Spirit of God, look for ways to fill with Jesus' love the sad or lonely places in the lives of others.

Read: Romans 15:13; Colossians 1:9-14

*Sally Beck
White Stone, VA*

Friday, May 8, 2015

Our Best Friend

Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends.

John 15:13

We have no greater friend than Jesus. What an encourager he is! In the gospels we see Jesus, reaching out to us with love. Jesus invites us to come to him and assures us he will never cast us out. He will give us needed rest. So often in Scripture Jesus says, “Take heart. Do not fear.”

We are safe with him. Our sins are forgiven. Jesus gave his life on the cross for his friends. He assures us he lives victorious over sin and death. He sends us to go and tell others.

Jesus quiets our anxious hearts when our own death nears. “Let not your hearts be troubled,” he tells us. “Believe in God; believe also in me” (John 14:1). He prepares a home for us in heaven and will take us to be with him always. What a friend we have in Jesus. He is our best friend forever.

Jesus, thank you for your loving friendship and encouragement. Amen.

Remember: Recall all the times you experienced the encouragement Jesus offers.

Read: John 14

*Donna J. Streufert
South Bend, IN*

Saturday, May 9, 2015

Falling

Now to him who is able to keep you from falling ...

Jude 24

My friend, nearly 70 years old, began taking balance classes with a physical therapist last year. She intends to avoid the all-too-common experience of “elder falls” since learning that one in three adults age 65 or older falls each year, often leading to serious injury.

The epistle of Jude alerts us to avoid another kind of falling. One of the shortest books of the Bible, Jude is filled with impassioned encouragement not to fall from faithful vigilance. The epistle is also filled with the assurance of the love of God in Jesus. Jude reminds us that God is able to keep us from spiritually falling into doubt, fear and falsehood. God will hold us in love even as we look forward to “the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ that leads to eternal life” (Jude 21).

God of love and strength, you love me fully despite my weaknesses. Give me a steady faith to live more completely in your grace and love. Amen.

Steady yourself: Stand confident today, knowing that God will hold you up even if you feel unsteady in your faith.

Read: Psalm 139:9-12; Psalm 23:2-3

*Paul Metzler
Shrewsbury, MO*

Sunday, May 10, 2015

A Loving Home

Six days before the Passover, Jesus therefore came to Bethany ... they gave a dinner for him there. Martha served.

John 12:1-2

One day recently our ten-year-old granddaughter Kara piped up, “Nana, when you get ready to sell this house, I want to buy it.” Nice idea, sweetie, but not very realistic.

But what was Kara really saying? “I love to be here in your home. Think of all the good times that my family and I have had here within these four walls.”

These four walls and a roof are more than a house; they have been and are a home where love dwells, where Jesus lives, where folks, relatives and others are always welcome. It is also a place where less than loving words and actions were sometimes on display, but where words of contrition, repentance and forgiveness were also spoken. Is it any wonder why our ten-year-old granddaughter wants to be in this home?

Lord, open my heart and home to others. Amen.

Ponder: What can I do today to make my house a home where love resides?

Read: Proverbs 11:23-26

*Paul Eggold
Greendale, WI*

Monday, May 11, 2015

The Joy of Jesus

These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy will be full.

John 15:11

The very word *joy* is exhilarating and inspirational. We read it in Scripture and hear it often in our hymns and in worship. We listen to our children sing, “I have the joy, joy, joy, joy down in my heart” and they sing it with joy!

Where is your joy today? Are you recovering from an illness or other recent confinement? Are you anticipating a visit from family members or a dear friend? Is Jesus your joy for the promises of love, mercy and forgiveness he has given you? Just as Jesus enjoyed his intimate communion and relationship with his heavenly Father, in love doing his Father’s will, he passed this joy to his disciples and to us. Begin each day with the determination to define a joy in your life—ever so big or ever so small—and you will smile all the rest of the day.

Thank you, Lord Jesus, for the many moments of joy you bring to us each and every day. Amen.

Write: At the end of the day, write down at least one experience in which you found joy.

Read: Psalm 16:11; Matthew 25:21

*Claire Kuddes
Independence, MO*

Tuesday, May 12, 2015

It's All About God

It is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.

Philippians 2:13

“It’s not about you.” That phrase cuts to the heart of what we believe, say and do. Life is not about what we do. Life is all about God. God creates. God calls. God loves and forgives.

God is at work in our lives today. God comforts. God teaches and inspires. God is always present. God delights in us. The God of heaven rescued us from sin and now waits for us with an eternal embrace.

Trust God to lead the way. He will enable you to “work for his good pleasure,” sharing what you believe with others.

Thank you, Lord, for who you are, and for your work in me each day! Keep me focused on a life that’s all about you. Amen.

Refocus: Catch the self-focus in ads and media. Rephrase slogans to spotlight God’s truth.

Read: 1 Thessalonians 2:1-13; Ephesians 1:3-14

*Sharolyn Sander
Lincoln, NE*

Wednesday, May 13, 2015

The Best Construction

Even a child makes himself known by his acts, by whether his conduct is pure and right.

Proverbs 20:11

As a child, I was taught to put the best construction on everything. In our everyday relationships with others, do we follow this advice? Think for a minute. How many times do you complain about a family member, in-law, friend or co-worker, and really don't give an accurate portrayal of that person?

All too often, our attitudes toward others affect our spiritual health, as well as the health of the relationships with those around us. Often we fail to realize that our complaints eventually can destroy the relationships we have or could have in our lives. It is through our Savior, Jesus, that we are reminded of how we ought to treat one another.

Dear heavenly Father, help me always to treat others with kindness and respect. Amen.

Reflect: Think of the current relationships in your life. Can you do anything to improve these relationships?

Read: Proverbs 20:1-12

*Betsy Becker Niedringhaus
Ballwin, MO*

Thursday, May 14, 2015

Known

Before I formed you in the womb, I knew you.

Jeremiah 1:5

Miles from here, Mrs. K. died. Over a long tenure, her husband had been our church's organist, choir director and our school's principal and teacher. But I could easily forgive the misspelling of her last name in the email from church. The sender was separated by almost two generations from the deceased. They had not known each other. It is hard when a retirement or years or miles cause our name to be lost from the minds of others.

I remember my wife's grandmother. She remembered us (and many others) with correspondence, small gifts of stamps and money. Her letters always included an encouragement not to forget Jesus. Why? Gram believed deeply that God always knows us. Gram is now in heaven. Her legacy of remembering others and reminding us that God always knows us lives on.

With the thief on the cross, we confidently pray: "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom" (Luke 23:42). Amen.

Recall: In some small way, remind another that he or she is not forgotten by Jesus—or by you.

Read: Luke 23:39-43

*Harry Edenfield
Brownstown, MI*

Friday, May 15, 2015

The Practice of the Better

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

Romans 12:21

Sure, easy for you to say, St. Paul! You aren't living in these hectic and hurtful days.

As we struggle with daily death and destruction around us, it is easy to shout (or at least murmur), "Okay, enough already!" But it only seems like things are becoming worse. It is then that I am reminded of how the Lord dealt with this: He overcame evil with good. A poster states, "The best criticism of the bad is the practice of the better." How might this apply to us? We can listen with love, lend a hand to someone, share a meal, speak an affirming word and share the hope that is within us.

Who knows? Maybe, just maybe, someone else will be inspired to "practice the better"! And we know that we do not *have to* do it, but rather we *get to* do it!

Lord, thanks for overcoming evil through your life, death and resurrection. Now make it happen through us. Amen.

Do: Carry out one act of kindness each day this week, starting today. Pray that it becomes a habit.

Read: Romans 12:9-21; Ephesians 5:1-2

*Rich Bimler
Bloomington, IL*

Saturday, May 16, 2015

Light and Color

The Lord is my light and my salvation.

Psalm 27:1

Sky and sea met in a gray haze. Waves rippled to shore and disappeared again into the colorless distance. Now and then, a gull broke the sheet of gray. The next day, the sun shone through. Blue sky met the glistening water. Flecks of light caught the tips of waves and threw sparks back and forth. The water was blue, then green, then shades of both.

We are that lackluster canvas; we are also that jeweled landscape. Gray ocean one day, sunlit the next; no day without night, no rejoicing without sorrow.

Without Jesus, we travel a gray canvas. With Jesus, we will catch his light. Our routines will glisten, and like the changing colors of the water, reflect his message.

Father in heaven, enshrine us with your light and bless us with the knowledge that only you can make us shine. Amen.

Do: Notice how our perspectives change when we let Jesus' light into our daily tasks.

Read: John 1:1-9, John 8:12; Isaiah 60:19-20

*Judy Scherr
Lemay, MO*

Sunday, May 17, 2015

Finely Woven, New Fabric

No one puts a piece of unshrunk cloth on an old garment, for the patch tears away from the garment, and a worse tear is made. Neither is new wine put into old wineskins.

Matthew 9:16-17

The point Jesus makes in this passage is this—match your attitudes with your new life in Christ. Trying to just add Christ to your old, used-up thoughts and perspectives won't work.

Three weeks ago I received a new hip. The surgeon explained that, when he went in, he found that my bone structure was incompatible for firmly seating the new prosthetic joint. So he painstakingly reconfigured part of the hip housing. I thanked him for his thoroughness and silently praised God for remaking my body to work like a fresh wineskin or a piece of newly patched cloth.

Lord Jesus, thank you for reconfiguring us spiritually into new persons who reflect your love. Amen.

Attitude check: For purposes of contrast, pull up from your memory bank one specific attitude you used to have, but now are glad that it's gone. Thank Jesus heartily.

Read: 2 Corinthians 5:17-21

*Deane Schuessler
Woodbury, MN*

Monday, May 18, 2015

Wish Lists

Beloved, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared.

1 John 3:2

Throughout our lives, we all make “wish lists.” We wish for material things. We have wishes for birthdays, Christmas and anniversaries, as well as for our careers, our families and our lives.

God also has a wish list for us. From the beginning, God has known us intimately and holds us in the palm of his hand. We are his children and, day by day, we discover anew his gifts for us. May we realize all that God intends for us in Christ our Savior.

Creator God, reveal to me all that you intend me to be. Help me to share the good news of your love with others. Amen.

List: Give thanks for all the blessings God has given to you in Christ Jesus.

Read: 1 John 3:1-3; Psalm 139

Matthew Smucker
Chicago, IL

Tuesday, May 19, 2015

What to Wear?

The blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin.

1 John 1:7

I was invited to the wedding of a friend's son. The reception was being held at an exclusive country club so I knew this called for fancy clothing. I scanned the clothes in my closet but nothing seemed suitable for such a grand affair. What to wear?

We have all been invited to the important wedding feast for Jesus and his bride, the Church. It is a splendid celebration in heaven. What can you possibly wear to such a glorious occasion? "All our righteous deeds are like a polluted garment" (Isaiah 64:6).

We need not worry. God supplies us with the perfect wedding attire. All who believe in Jesus as their Savior are covered with the robe of righteousness given to them at their baptism. Wearing that, we can enjoy the heavenly wedding feast forever.

Thank you, Lord, for covering my sins with your righteousness. Amen.

Ask: Invite someone to the heavenly wedding feast by telling them about Jesus, their Savior.

Read: Matthew 22:1-14

*Jeanette Dall
Batavia, IL*

Wednesday, May 20, 2015

In Jesus

I, John, your brother and partner in the tribulation and the kingdom and the patient endurance that are in Jesus, was on the island called Patmos.

Revelation 1:9

As we grow older, we have opportunities to practice patient endurance—maybe even more opportunities than we would really like to have.

The apostle John, exiled because of his faith to the island of Patmos, calls himself our brother and partner in these things—the tribulation, the kingdom and the patient endurance. But we do not face these daily, often trying, sometimes joyful, experiences alone. The tribulation of this earthly life, the joy of the kingdom now, the longing for its fullness yet to come and the daily, patient endurance are all wrapped up, for John and for us—in Jesus.

Jesus, you have brought me into your kingdom. Help me to patiently endure any trouble that comes my way. Amen.

Help: Encourage someone you may know who is in need of “patient endurance” in Jesus.

Read: Revelation 1:9-20; Hebrews 12:1-2; Romans 5:1-5

*Carol Geisler
Manchester, MO*

Thursday, May 21, 2015

Judge Not

Judge not, that you be not judged.

Matthew 7:1

“The neighbor’s lawn looks terrible; he ought to mow his grass.” “That woman should have sneezed into her sleeve or bent elbow.” “That driver is driving way too fast!” “Why doesn’t that mother discipline her child?” Sound familiar? Judging others seems to come naturally to us.

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus Christ warns about judging others. Judging can easily be turned back on the “judger.” He points out that when we judge or are overly critical of others, our own weaknesses, faults and sins will be noticed.

Jesus says that seeing the faults in others but not our own faults is hypocritical. We are to get rid our own faults before we try to correct or point out the faults of others.

Dear Lord, help us to be quick to love, not judge. Amen.

Love: Reach out in love this week to someone you normally judge.

Read: Philippians 4:7-9

*Harlan L. Limmer
Spring, TX*

Friday, May 22, 2015

The High Ground!

Lead me to the rock that is higher than I.

Psalm 61:2

There is a flash flood. Residents are urged to evacuate: get to high ground!

Where is your high ground? When the flood waters swell, when it feels like worry, stress and personal loss are sweeping you away, where is your high ground? When you feel threatened and insecure and your plans seem to be in disarray, where is your high ground?

The psalmist prayed, "Lead me to the rock that is higher than I." Are you willing to be led? Surrender in prayer, using the words of the gospel song: "Precious Lord, take my hand, lead me on, let me stand, I am tired, I am weak, I am worn."

Do you know who the Rock is? Jesus, God's Son, your Savior from sin, is the Rock that is higher than you. So pray every day as sung in the song, "Through the storm, through the night, lead me on to the light, precious Lord, take my hand, lead me home."

Jesus, lead me to the High Ground, your cross and resurrection. Amen.

Point out: Point others to Jesus, the Rock.

Read: Psalm 40

*Randy Shields
Spanish Lake, MO*

Saturday, May 23, 2015

God's Surprises

Then Abraham fell on his face and laughed and said to himself, "Shall a child be born to a man who is a hundred years old? Shall Sarah, who is ninety years old, bear a child?"

Genesis 17:17

My phone buzzed with a text message from my "bestest" childhood friend! "Call me when you get this." My heart fluttered; my mind reeled. The last time I'd received a similar call, it was to tell me that her husband had incurable cancer.

"Are you sitting down, Louise?" was the question after our initial greetings. "Do I need to?" I responded. "Well, you might!" she responded. I detected joy and stood my ground ... "I'm getting married again!" Oh my! What a surprise!

Through the years, we'd had many hours of conversation about the future. The underlying theme was to remain always open to God's surprises—and she did!

Good Father, thanks for continually blessing me with your surprises. Thanks for "bestest" friends too. Amen.

Reflect: Reflect on a surprise from God that changed your life.

Read: Genesis 18:9-12; Genesis 21:1-7

*Louise Schini Weber
Ft. Myers, FL*

Sunday, May 24, 2015

Chosen, Holy, Beloved

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

Colossians 3:12

Five words in the verse above describe godly traits we are encouraged to “put on”—compassion, kindness, humility, meekness and patience. Those are wonderful traits, but focusing on them first creates a cart-before-the-horse dilemma.

The power to put on godly traits is found in the first part of the verse, which describes us as chosen by God, holy and beloved. What an incredible description! It's what we are through faith in Jesus. “For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ” (Galatians 3:27). When we put on Christ, by being baptized and believing in his redemption, we receive the Holy Spirit. The Spirit gives us gifts, including godly traits. The power to be compassionate, kind, humble, meek and patient begins with being chosen, holy and beloved by God.

Dear Father, my life is so blessed because you chose me and regard me as holy and beloved. Amen.

Share: Use kindness and compassion as a way to open doors for sharing the Good News of Jesus.

Read: Galatians 5:22-25

*Marj Maynard
Billings, MO*

Monday, May 25, 2015

Called to Humble Service

Walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called.

Ephesians 4:1

The SS Washington was launched in 1933 as a luxury liner. In 1941 she was called into service by the U.S. Navy, stripped of all her luxury appointments and served as a troop carrier until 1947, when she again became a liner, humbled to only one deck restored to anything like its former glory.

You and I have been called into service by our Lord. At times that service is so ordinary, so humble, that it hardly seems to be a calling from God. Paul tells us that the calling includes gentleness and patience, bearing with each other in love (Ephesians 4:2). That's not very glamorous. It doesn't sound like fun and it's not always easy. But we are challenged by our loving Lord Jesus to strip ourselves of pride, give up on glamor and glory, and live worthy of his calling.

Loving Lord Jesus, strengthen us to live with gentleness and patience, humbly serving one another. Amen.

Be patient: When you find yourself needing to be patient today, think of it as a calling.

Read: Ephesians 4:1-6

*Eldor Kaiser
Lenexa, KS*

Tuesday, May 26, 2015

For Better or For Worse

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

Romans 5:8

When I was thinking about getting married, I wanted to be very thorough. I read through the vows and tried to picture each instance. I imagined him richer, then poorer. I pictured him healthy and sick, even paralyzed or with a terminal illness. I wasn't sure what better and worse really meant, but I could imagine his best and worst traits coming out.

Now, I think about my relationship with God. He accepts me no matter my financial status. He loves me through strength and weakness. He knows my every thought and intention. Through the death of Jesus, my best and worst have nothing to do with my relationship with him. I look forward to growing older with my Savior. Our relationship grows over the years, just as my marriage does.

Christ, thank you for your sacrifice on the cross—that which redeems me. Amen.

Reflect: How is your relationship with God like and unlike a marriage?

Read: 1 Corinthians 13; Romans 5:1-11

*Stephenie Hovland
Green Bay, WI*

Wednesday, May 27, 2015

Getting Closer to God

And because of him you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, righteousness and sanctification and redemption.

1 Corinthians 1:30

The disciple Philip once asked Jesus, “Show us the Father and we shall be satisfied.” We have all wanted that assurance at one time or another.

Jesus’ answer to Philip was, “He who has seen me has seen the Father.” In that answer Jesus is telling us that God is closest to us when we believe Jesus died for us. God blesses us with his presence when through faith in Christ we live in his forgiveness. No technique or practice will bring us closer to God.

When I have times of sickness and pain, when despair overtakes me, when I enter the realm of death and mourning, faith in Christ is my only assurance that God is close to me. That is his promise.

Dear Lord, let me never doubt your closeness to me in Christ. Thank you for removing everything that separates us, through Jesus’ death and resurrection. Amen.

Remind: Remind yourself and those you love of God’s presence in Christ. You cannot get closer than that.

Read: 1 Corinthians 1:18-31; John 14:1-11

*Lionel Otto
Adelaide Australia*

Thursday, May 28, 2015

Useless? Or Useful?

And coming up at that very hour [Anna] began to give thanks to God and to speak of him to all who were waiting for the redemption of Jerusalem.

Luke 2:38

One of my favorite old movies from the 1940s stars Lana Turner as an army nurse pitted against Clark Gable, playing an army doctor. Their relationship starts out adversarial, with spunky Turner teasing Gable, nicknaming him “Useless!”

It’s funny in the movie. But feeling useless as we grow older is not so funny. The next time you are feeling useless, think of Anna, who recognizes the infant Jesus as her Savior and goes to work! She thanks God for the gift of Jesus and tells everyone about him. God knew Anna would be useful to him.

God has plans for us, too. “For we are God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do” (Ephesians 2:10).

Useless? Never!

Lord, open my eyes to see how I might be useful to you today.

Tell: Like Anna, share the good news of Jesus with someone today.

Read: Luke 2:22-38

*Donna J. Streufert
South Bend, IN*

Friday, May 29, 2015

The Spirit Ain't Broke!

But we have this treasure in jars of clay, to show that the surpassing power belongs to God.

2 Corinthians 4:7

Our daughter faces daily physical and developmental challenges. She lives in a group home and attends programs for persons with special needs. She will likely never live independently.

Yet she is a bold witness to her faith and a powerful prayer warrior. People love to watch her worship as she enthusiastically joins in the hymns. She is an encourager to her friends when they are sick or facing challenges peculiar to them. As a friend says, "The Spirit ain't broke!"

As we grow older, we may lament the loss of certain physical and mental assets we once enjoyed. However, our faith and use of spiritual gifts need not be limited by this. Indeed, it is against the background of such human weakness that the strength of the Spirit is often best displayed.

Lord, display your perfect strength in my weakness. Amen.

Seek: Look for ways to put the gifts of the Spirit to use in your life.

Read: 1 Peter 4:10-11; 2 Corinthians 4:7-18

*Ted Zimmerman
Napa, CA*

Saturday, May 30, 2015

The Visitor

Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him, and he with me.

Revelation 3:20

There are many passages in the Scriptures that portray Jesus as one who is knocking at the door of our hearts, seeking to make his home in us—all the time. Jesus is well aware of the changes in our life situations and doesn't make our different situations or mood swings the factor that determines the condition or degree of welcome we have for his coming to us. He tells us, "If anyone loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him" (John 14:23).

Where he is, there is peace and embracing hands with nail prints and a soft voice that says, "I am with you always." What other needs could I possibly desire?

God of love and patience, welcome into my heart, my home, my every moment, waking or sleeping. Gracious Savior, be with me. Amen.

Encourage: Encourage some person today to welcome Christ into their life.

Read: John 14:23-24; Hebrews 13:1-3; Matthew 25:34-40

*Karl Lutze
Valparaiso, IN*

Sunday, May 31, 2015

The Oak and the Willow

They may be called oaks of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that he may be glorified.

Isaiah 61:3

When we see the towering oak, God wants us to remember the strength we receive from his words of forgiveness and love: “The joy of the Lord is your strength” (Nehemiah 8:10). Now consider the willow. Compared to the oak, it is rather short-lived. It is mentioned only eight times in the Bible, compared to the twenty-three times the oak is mentioned.

“The voice of the Lord makes the oaks to whirl” (Psalm 29:9) as the trees bend and twist in the wind. Willow leaves gently whisper. Gentleness is one of the fruits of the Spirit. It keeps company with love (1 Corinthians 4:21) and with meekness in the gentleness of Christ (2 Corinthians 10:1). The wind, the breath of God, lifts the tree branches outside my window, saying, “Walk with me in the strength of the oak and the gentleness of the willow.”

Lord Jesus, uphold me with your strength and gentleness. Amen.

Do: Praise the Creator, who gives us the oak and the willow and all good things, teaching us to walk in strong and gentle servanthood.

Read: Galatians 5:22-23; Isaiah 61:1-3

*Connie Bretscher
Valparaiso, IN*

Monday, June 1, 2015

Celebrate Good Times

They shall pour forth the fame of your abundant goodness and shall sing aloud of your righteousness.

Psalm 145:7

Oh, the lazy days of summer. Who said that? Between graduations, weddings, family reunions, class reunions and other commitments you can find yourself coming and going. Sometimes distance and illness can keep us from taking part in some of these activities. We may not feel as comfortable traveling as we once did. If we don't make the extra effort or spend the extra resources to make plans for a visit, sometimes we regret it down the road. So, on the good days, we need to push ourselves on to reunite and reconnect with family and friends giving thanks and celebrating in his name.

God, thank you for celebrations, music and good times spent with family and friends. Amen.

Do: If you are unable to get out, reminisce about a favorite vacation or ask family members to send pictures of important milestones.

Read: Romans 12:9-13

*Paulette Hartmann
Morton, IL*

Tuesday, June 2, 2015

1 ... 2 ... 3 ... Smile!

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

Ephesians 3:14-15

Family photos are a wonderful way to reflect on your upbringing and the passage of time until the present. I especially love the photos that are not staged, where the people in the pictures are not posed and appear as we normally see them. Pictures that are not staged provide a truer reflection of the personalities of everyone.

Imagine God as the photographer. You can be certain that the picture would not be staged. Just show up and stand there! God wants you just as you are, because he loves you—no matter what.

Father, thank you for sending your Son for our salvation. Keep us mindful of the comfort that knowledge brings us. Amen.

Remember: You are in God's family picture. Take comfort in that and let others know of that comfort.

Read: Matthew 11:28-30

*Don Hollmann
Ballwin, MO*

Wednesday, June 3, 2015

My Dancing Soul

You have turned for me my mourning into dancing.

Psalm 30:11

At the recent wedding of a dear nephew, the bride and groom did not do their traditional first dance, but held out their hands to the whole wedding party and, forming a circle, danced with everyone to a song of praise.

My knees may hurt—even walking is difficult. My body may not be able to move like it used to, but my soul can dance. The psalmist says of the assembly of the faithful, “Let them praise his name with dancing” (Psalm 149:3). In the midst of loneliness, neglect or pain, there is still joy in my soul, for my Lord says in his comforting word, “I have loved you with an everlasting love; therefore I have continued my faithfulness to you” (Jeremiah 31:3).

When we consider God’s everlasting love for us, no matter what our condition, our souls are free to rejoice and dance. As we remember our blessings, may our lives reflect the joy in our souls.

*Lord, restore to me the joy of your salvation.
Amen.*

Do: Share your inner joy with all who need such comfort in their lives.

Read: Psalm 30; Ecclesiastes 3:4; Jeremiah 31:2-4

*Connie Bretscher
Valparaiso, IN*

Thursday, June 4, 2015

Remember When ... ?

And they remembered his words ... he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures.

Luke 24:8, 45

On the way to a family gathering, my wife started a conversation with: “Do you remember when we took our first vacation trip?” Our children chimed in with their fondest memories of days gone by. They talked about the things they did together and even admitted to things they should never have done together—things we thought we’d never hear.

Jesus told his disciples that he would be crucified, but on the third day be raised again. They didn’t understand or believe him. Then he was crucified, dead and buried, and they were overwhelmed with grief. But on the third day he rose from the dead and appeared to them. Finally, “they remembered his words.”

His words of forgiveness, life and salvation are our greatest joy and treasure. He is risen! He is risen indeed!

Thank you, Lord Jesus, for the joys of life and the joy of faith we have in you. Amen.

Remember: Share your greatest joys with others.

Read: Luke 24

*David P. Schmidt
St. Louis, MO*

Friday, June 5, 2015

Earthquake!

God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear though the earth gives way.

Psalm 46:1-2

On August 24, 2014, at 3:20 a.m., Napa, California, was hit by a 6.0 earthquake. This rearrangement of the landscape did considerable damage to local homes and businesses—not to mention the inner landscape of many of Napa’s citizens. In the days and weeks after that, many had trouble sleeping at night and, in general, had trouble getting on with life.

For a geologist, earthquakes are a reminder that we live on a dynamic planet. For Christians, earthquakes are a reminder that *terra firma* and its treasures are destined to pass away. All the terrors and troubles of life—they, too, shall pass. Our security rests in God and in him alone. He is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. We need only be still under the shelter of his grace.

Lord and God, you are my refuge and strength, my present help in every time of trouble. Amen.

Consider: Think of a time when for you God was a “very present help in trouble.”

Read: Psalm 46; Matthew 24:1-35

*Ted Zimmerman
Napa, CA*

Saturday, June 6, 2015

Hope in the Lord

Those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint.

Isaiah 40:31

One definition of hope is “to look forward to with desire.” What things do you look forward to each day? Often, when people get older, they lose hope. They feel there is nothing left for them to look forward to. But what does God’s Word tell us?

If we “look forward to” the Lord, we are promised four things in this verse from Isaiah: Our strength will be renewed, we will soar like the eagles, we will run without getting worn out and we will walk without feeling like we’re going to faint. Oh, to be young again so our bodies could do those things! But they will be! Our bodies will be restored to us in heaven. There our hope will be fulfilled in the Lord.

Dear Father, I hope in you and wait for your healing. Amen.

Remember: Recall your favorite activities to do as a child.

Read: Isaiah 40:27-31; 1 Corinthians 15:35-58

*Celeste Cummins
Storm Lake, IA*

Sunday, June 7, 2015

Teeter-Totter

The LORD is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The Lord is the stronghold of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?

Psalm 27:1

As a child, I was always frightened of the teeter-totter. It seemed the person on the other end took delight in keeping me up in the air for long periods of time. I didn't like my feet dangling and being helpless to come back down.

Sometimes we feel like we are still on one of those teeter-totters. Life is exciting and fun until we get "stuck" in a bad situation and are totally helpless to fix it. Occasionally, we are up in the air due to our own bad decisions and, at other times, it is the result of life situations.

The good news is that just like the teacher who would come rescue me on the playground, God promises to rescue us. He knows our situations and hears our cries for help.

Father, thank you for rescuing me when I feel helpless. Amen.

Remember: Recall a time when you were frightened and could not help yourself. Share that with a grandchild.

Read: Psalm 46:1-2; Psalm 42:8

*Gloria Doty
Fort Wayne, IN*

Monday, June 8, 2015

Alive and Well

Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord. Therefore encourage one another with these words.

1 Thessalonians 4:17-18

An auto with a rear window sticker that read “ALIVE AND WELL” caused me to consider what the meaning could be. “ALIVE” is obvious, but “WELL” can mean many things, such as health or wealth.

To a believer in Jesus it is easy. We are ALIVE AND WELL, knowing what Jesus did for us through his suffering, death and resurrection. Whatever we are experiencing in this sinful world, through faith in our Savior we know we will be ALIVE AND WELL forever in heaven.

Heavenly Father, may we always have comfort, knowing what your Son Jesus did for us sinners and knowing we are ALIVE AND WELL. Amen.

Witness: Use all opportunities to tell others of God’s love, encouraging those who are experiencing hardships.

Read: John 14:1-4

*Don Hollmann
Ballwin, MO*

Tuesday, June 9, 2015

Be Our Guest!

Jesus then took the loaves, and when he had given thanks, he distributed them to those who were seated. So also the fish, as much as they wanted.

John 6:11

“Come, Lord Jesus, be our guest.” That’s a good prayer. But if I were sitting on a hillside in the Holy Land with 4,999 others who had gathered to hear a great preacher named Jesus of Nazareth, and his assistants were preparing a free meal for everyone in the audience—I would have wondered, “Who is the host and who is the guest?”

I have begun saying, “Welcome, Lord Jesus” when I say my table prayers. I know that my Lord is already here and I welcome having him here with me no matter how messy my house is, because he has already “cleaned up our mess” for us, on that other hillside outside of Jerusalem.

So, yes, come be with us—welcome!—Lord Jesus. Your very presence is the best nourishment for whatever my needs are on my journey through life.

Come, Lord Jesus, be my guest, and be my companion and strength for my journey. Amen.

List: Make a list of your companions on your life journey.

Read: John 6:1-15; Genesis 18:1-8

*Karl Lutze
Valparaiso, IN*

Wednesday, June 10, 2015

How Old Do You Feel?

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

Psalm 71:18

A recent survey on aging found that 85% of respondents felt they were “not old yet.” Interestingly the survey included nearly two thousand persons ranging in age from 40 to 90! Even those in the upper age ranges did not feel old yet.

Many seniors have said what the survey revealed: that adding years does not by itself make one feel or act old. It may be more accurate to say that when we stop growing in the Lord, then we are old. Psalm 71 reminds me that from my youth, even until today, God is holding me and doing great things in my life. The words of this psalm encourage me to sing the praise of God who in Jesus Christ redeems and sustains me. I can shout for joy, no matter what my age or the color of my hair!

God of love, deepen my awareness of your wonderful deeds throughout my life. Let my lips and my life shout for joy. Amen.

Announce: Proclaim your joy in God's love by what you say and how you act today.

Read: John 1:1-18

*Paul Metzler
Shrewsbury, MO*

Thursday, June 11, 2015

Morning Has Broken

Oh sing to the Lord a new song, for he has done marvelous things!

Psalm 98:1

It's a given. If you stay overnight in our home, the strains of the hymn "Morning Has Broken" will break forth from the piano as your wake-up call. It has been a tradition for many years now. What a way to start the day! Returning guests have come to expect it.

Martin Luther said to begin your day with the sign of the cross. Hearing strains from a piano may be a new twist on Luther's suggestion, but it is a great way to begin with our Lord and Savior. He truly has done marvelous things for us. Praising him first thing each morning puts a new song into our hearts for the day!

We praise you, dear Lord, for the blessing of each new day. Amen.

Give it a try: If you haven't already, find your own theme song of praise for starting your day.

Read: Lamentations 3:22-23, Psalm 5:1-3, Psalm 33:3, 2 Samuel 23:1-4

*Phyllis Otto
Grand Rapids, MI*

Friday, June 12, 2015

Yoked

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

Matthew 11:30

Imagine two oxen side by side, yoked together, pulling. All my life, I've focused on the burden. Recently, during a ladies' Bible class, my mental image took a turn.

Walking together, the pair of oxen is kept on a path by the yoke so that their efforts are not wasted. No wonder Jesus said his burden is light. The lightness comes from being guided and led, and you couldn't pull in different directions. My mental picture is still the same, but the idea behind it has expanded. Two oxen, one yoke, one path, but the yoke is about guidance, not restriction. Yoked to the Savior, there are no wasted steps, no deviations from the path. He is keeping me on the path to heaven.

Lord, your burden is indeed light when you are with me. Be my partner and keep me on the straight road.

Do: Read God's Word and let it strengthen that partnership.

Read: Matthew 11:28-30; Psalm 119:129-136

*Judy Scherr
Lemay, MO*

Saturday, June 13, 2015

Live For Today

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

Matthew 6:21

Jesus commanded us to stop setting our hearts on earthly things. Treasures ought to be heavenly ones.

If we are honest, we must admit that we spend way too much time worrying about our life, our food and our bodies. How much money is spent to help us live “happy and healthy”? Why does it become a chore to make a list of groceries? How many times do our stomachs churn when we shop for clothes or buy a house?

Jesus drew attention to the birds, lilies and grass. The heavenly Father feeds the birds. They do not rent storage sheds or build barns to store food. Flowers and grasses do not work either, but they wear beautiful “clothes.” They do not worry about tomorrow either. They live for today. We do the same through Christ living in us.

Lord Jesus, help us to keep our hearts set on you, our priceless treasure. Amen.

See: “Look at the birds of the air ... consider the lilies of the field” and see how God cares for them. Remember how much more he cares for you.

Read: Philippians 4:4-9; Revelation 7:14

*Harlan L. Limmer
Spring, TX*

Sunday, June 14, 2015

Effortless? Yes!

For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works.

Ephesians 2:8-9

The sales pitch made me smile: “Effortless body toning. Just 20 minutes twice a week on the Power Plate!” As I moved toward the Power Plate, the trainer explained what I must *do* to increase my chances of strengthening and toning my body. With great emphasis, I noted, “Your promotional material says ‘effortless.’” “Well, as you know, nothing’s really effortless, is it?” he quickly quipped.

Oh, but there is! However, he’s not a “nothing.” He’s my Savior, Jesus Christ! By his effort of love, my eternal life is guaranteed. It is effortless on my part. What delightful conversations I have at the gym, at times, about this Savior, as I exercise with effort!

Good Father, help me to take advantage of all the opportunities you give me to share the good news of salvation. Amen.

Consider: Share the joy of salvation through Jesus Christ with someone today, maybe at the gym.

Read: Colossians 4:2-6; Ephesians 2: 1-10; Titus 3:4-7

*Louise Schini Weber
Ft. Myers, FL*

Monday, June 15, 2015

What's for Dinner?

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

1 Corinthians 2:9

In the wilderness, God's people never had to ask, "What's for dinner?" The answer never changed. Manna. Day after day for forty years God provided the same mysterious menu. Regardless of grumbling or thankfulness, they received nourishment for the journey ahead.

Events in our lives are also hard to comprehend: an illness, an accident, an unexpected failure or disappointment. But God can be trusted even when circumstances are hard to bear.

Our heavenly Father sets the table for us each day. Be nourished with his Word. Be satisfied with his presence. Be filled with his peace. Anticipate the eternal banquet.

Thank you, Lord, for abundant grace and the faith to trust your plan. Amen.

Accept: Accept today's events as God's sustenance for your journey.

Read: 1 Corinthians 2; Deuteronomy 8:3

*Sharolyn Sander
Lincoln, NE*

Tuesday, June 16, 2015

The Keys

In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus and of the elect angels I charge you to keep these rules without prejudging, doing nothing from partiality.

1 Timothy 5:21

It's easy to rent a car in England. But I think they should offer a training period so you are prepared enough to drive on the “wrong” side of the road!

St. Paul understood the need for training when he wrote to Timothy. Apostleship itself is a gift from the risen Christ, who gave himself to us as a gift. St. Paul knew this, but he urged Timothy not to be too eager about being an apostle without remembering “the rules of the road.” The entire first letter to Timothy was an instruction letter about how a believer in Christ should conduct himself if he desired to be a leader, even as Jesus graciously did when he talked to his disciples in the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5—7).

O Jesus, open our hearts and minds to the training you want to give to the leaders of your people, who have been given the keys of your kingdom. Amen.

Choose: Pick out one instruction in 1 Timothy 3 that you would be willing to work on in order to be a mature worker for your Lord.

Read: Psalm 39; 1 Timothy 4

*Gordon Beck
White Stone, VA*

Wednesday, June 17, 2015

Fill 'Er Up

Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God.

Colossians 3:16

My car developed a water leak. Initially, it wasn't a problem, but as time passed, it became a big problem. I had to carry a gallon jug of water with me at all times. I would pour it into the radiator before I left the driveway. When I was ready to leave my destination, I would refill so I would be able to make it home. Needless to say, I only made very short trips.

We are not vehicles, but we can draw some similarities. If we allow life's circumstances to drain us of God's comfort and promises, our lives will soon be dry and useless, like my radiator. We need to constantly refill our spiritual tanks with study, church attendance and prayer time. Through faith in Jesus Christ, we will reach our ultimate destination.

Heavenly Father, keep me aware of any cracks and leaks in my life and keep me filled up with your Word. Amen.

Fill 'er up: Remember to refill your life with God's Word.

Read: Psalm 32:8; Isaiah 41:10

*Gloria Doty
Fort Wayne, IN*

Thursday, June 18, 2015

Peace for Life's Storms

[Jesus] awoke and rebuked the wind and said to the sea, "Peace! Be still!" And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm.

Mark 4:39

Storms challenge our lives. Storms are often unexpected, intense and unsettling. Usually, they are short-lived. Once gone, we see sunshine and experience peace.

Jesus and his disciples encounter an unexpected storm while sailing. Jesus is tired and falls asleep. The storm rocks their boat and causes the disciples to be afraid. They wake Jesus, thinking he doesn't care. Jesus calms the wind and the sea with the words, "Peace! Be still!"

In life's storms, God's love can overcome our fear and give us peace. It helps stormy situations to pass. The peace of Christ can sustain and calm us through any difficulty. Don't be afraid. Remember, Jesus says to you, "Peace! Be still!"

Powerful God, show us your peace during the storms of our life. Amen.

Think: List times in your life when God's peace has helped you through storms.

Read: Mark 4:35-41, Psalm 9:9-20

*Matthew Smucker
Chicago, IL*

Friday, June 19, 2015

Who Is Waiting for Your Call?

Like cold water to a thirsty soul, so is good news from a far country.

Proverbs 25:25

In her later years, my mother had a coy way of encouraging her children to keep phoning her. She would end each phone conversation by saying, “Thanks for calling. I really appreciate it.”

Our Father feels the same way about prayers from us. When we acknowledge through our prayers his place in our life, we are doing what he has asked us to do.

I can no longer call my mother or many others who were once on my speed dial. They are in heaven. But I make sure I regularly phone, write or send a note to others just to ask how they are doing. I let them know that they are as important to me now as ever.

Help me recognize how important my prayers are to you, O Lord, and how important hearing from me is to family and friends far and near. Amen.

Ponder: Who would be blessed by a letter, a phone call or an email from you? Why keep them waiting?

Read: Isaiah 65:24

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

Saturday, June 20, 2015

Who Me? Yes, You!

The Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost.

Luke 19:10

“Are you saved?” Have you ever had someone come to your door and ask that question? Very often questions about salvation or being “born again” catch us off guard and cause us to wonder, “Am I really saved? I try to live a good life. Oh sure, I may not be perfect, but I’m certainly no worse than anyone else.”

But then that question can also lead us to the place that holds the answer: Holy Scripture. The Word of God wants all people everywhere to know and believe that God’s answer to the question “Am I saved?” is a resounding “Yes!” You are saved through faith in God’s Son, Jesus Christ. St. Paul writes: “There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus” (Romans 8:1). Question asked and question answered.

Lord Jesus, thank you for calling me into your kingdom by faith. Amen.

Remember: Live each day in the joyful knowledge that you are a child of God.

Read: Mark 16:14-20; John 10:1-9

*Edward Arle
St. Charles, MO*

Sunday, June 21, 2015

Leaving a Legacy

I am reminded of your sincere faith.

2 Timothy 1:5

A legacy is defined as “money, property or anything of worth willed or handed down to someone.” Scripture speaks of leaving a legacy, of handing down the faith, the belief that Jesus is the Savior from sin and the Lord of eternal life. This legacy of faith is a priceless gift—purchased by the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross. This gift is a legacy that no money can buy.

Paul tells Timothy, “You, however, have followed my teaching, my conduct, my aim in life, my faith, my patience, my love, my steadfastness” (2 Timothy 3:10). God worked in Paul’s life to leave a legacy of faith to others by his teaching, his way of life, his purpose, his faith in Jesus and the gifts of patience and endurance even in difficult times. We, too, can leave a legacy of faith in those same ways. What will be your legacy of faith to others?

Father, enable and empower me to leave this legacy of faith to others. Amen.

Pause: Stop and think of the many different ways that you can leave a legacy of faith to your family, friends and others.

Read: 2 Timothy 4:17-18; Colossians 1:24-29

*Ken Holdorf
Carrollton, TX*

Monday, June 22, 2015

Never Give Up

The righteous falls seven times, and rises again.

Proverbs 24:16

When delivering a commencement address, Winston Churchill rose from his seat, stepped to the podium, looked his student audience in the eye and said, “Never, never, never give up.” With that he returned to his seat and sat down. Enough said.

Giving up is a choice everyone faces many, many times in life, whether trying to master basic skills for life (like riding a bicycle or spelling) or dealing with life issues (like change) as we grow older.

Churchill wasn’t the first to encourage what the Japanese proverb summarized as, “Six times down, seven times up.” The book of Proverbs, long before, outlined how God’s people deal with challenging life issues. When righteous people fall, they get up again. How? They let the Lord, who gives them his own righteousness through faith, give them his hand.

Lord when I feel weary and worn down, give me a lift. Amen.

Ask: Identify where you need help. Ask him for a lift.

Read: Psalm 91:9-12; Psalm 37:23-24

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

Tuesday, June 23, 2015

Son-shine

But for you who fear my name, the sun of righteousness shall rise with healing in its wings.

Malachi 4:2

When I was 4 years old, parents and relatives, with a sly smile, would beg me to sing, “You Are My Sunshine.” I learned the popular song and enjoyed performing it to their delight. The message of the song probably eluded me. Not many “grey skies” for 4-year-olds, after all.

Later, as an adult, another song about sunshine, a hymn, took on greater meaning for me:

“In thee is gladness,
Amid all sadness,
Jesus, sunshine of my heart.”

Every life sees some grey skies and sad days, too—some more than others. Yet Jesus is our Sunshine and Son-shine. He loves us and rescues us. He soothes our sadness and calms our fears. He inspires our praise and thanksgiving and moves us to love and serve one another.

Jesus, you are my Lord and Savior, my Sun of Righteousness. My trust is in you, the Sunshine of my heart. Amen.

Give: Share a little sunshine with others today.

Read: Psalm 30

*Donna J. Streufert
South Bend, IN*

Wednesday, June 24, 2015

Daily Exercises

If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you.

John 15:7

How do you renew yourself every day? Eat right? Exercise? Get enough sleep? Some would say that's how to do it—not bad advice. Dietrich Bonhoeffer had a different idea. He wrote: “Prayer at an early hour decides the day.” Then he lists a group of negative thoughts that frequently have their root in neglecting prayer in the morning. Prayer is an activity we engage in to renew ourselves every day.

Ask, seek and knock can be viewed as commands. But they are really invitations from a gracious Father. It is as though he were saying to us, “Let me know what concerns you so that I can come alongside and help you on your way.” It's a fact that we are not to pray for an easy life, but for the strength to endure a life's challenges by God's grace.

Thank you, Lord, for the gift of being able to talk with you. Amen.

Ask: Bring your worries before the Lord in prayer.

Read: John 15:9-17

*Richard Eissfeldt
Ballwin, MO*

Thursday, June 25, 2015

Waiting

I wait for the Lord, my soul waits, and in his Word I hope.

Psalm 130:5

I go to the doctor's office. I wait. The nurse finally ushers me into an examining room. I wait. Waiting exhausts me! Now I have discovered what to do while waiting.

I think about the psalmist's words, "I wait for the Lord." That causes me to focus my attention upon God and his helping hand. I thank God for the skills he has given to my doctor. I am grateful to the Lord in the way he works through the medical profession. The waiting time gives me an opportunity to rest my life in the hands of my gracious Father. I can spend time praying for the doctor's other patients who are also waiting.

Waiting is a time to reflect upon the healing ministry of Jesus that gives hope.

Lord Jesus, help me to wait for what you want to say and do for me. Amen.

Ponder: Waiting is a part of life. What does it say about your patience? Think about how patient the Lord is with you.

Read: Psalm 130

*Walter M. Schoedel
Webster Groves, MO*

Friday, June 26, 2015

Please Pass the Salt

You are the salt of the earth.

Matthew 5:13

When we hear Jesus say, “You are the salt of the earth,” we know he is motivating us to think of its life-giving properties and be zealous in sharing the Good News of Jesus with everyone around us. Salty Christians greet friends by saying, “Have a great day in Jesus.” Salty Christians notice when friends and neighbors are upset and say, “May I pray with you?” Salty Christians worship at church and at home and invite friends to join them.

Today we know that salt must be used in moderation. But the salt that Jesus compares us to is the life-saving, zesty gift of salvation. Use all you want, all you can!

Father, let my words and actions be flavorful and life-giving as I interact with everyone around me. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Do: Each time you reach for the saltshaker today (or miss the salt that used to flavor your food before the salt-free diet) pray for the people around you. Ask God to help them receive the Good News of salvation in Jesus with ready hearts.

Read: Matthew 5:13-16; Isaiah 55:1-3

Ruth Geisler
Aliso Viejo, CA

Saturday, June 27, 2015

I Want to Be a ...

Think over what I say, for the Lord will give you understanding in everything.

2 Timothy 2:7

Paul gave Timothy three examples to illustrate faithfulness in life and ministry: a soldier, an athlete and a farmer. Did you want to be any of those three when you grew up?

Paul uses these three because each one carries with it a characteristic of the way in which God wants us to live in faith and service as a believer in Jesus. A Christian is a soldier of Jesus who endures hardship and lives to please God, the commanding officer. A Christian is an athlete who competes in the race of life according to God's plan and rules. A Christian is a farmer who works hard and depends on God for his provisions. May you be blessed in these roles.

Dear God, as I receive your grace in Christ Jesus and serve him as my Savior and Lord, give me your guidance and strength to be able to endure hardships, finish the race and trust in the Lord to supply my every need. Amen.

Consider: Ponder how you are like a soldier, an athlete and a farmer in your life in Christ.

Read: 2 Timothy 2:3-7; 2 Timothy 2:14-26; Romans 12

Ken Holdorf
Carrollton, TX

Sunday, June 28, 2015

God Is My Guide

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

Matthew 28: 20

Smartphones are part of our lives. I use mine every day. It provides music, news and weather. It connects with family and friends. It comforts me when I am troubled. It helps me when I am lost. It guides me through my day.

However, when smartphones become a focal point, we rely less on God. It can hinder our relationship with Jesus Christ. It may interfere with the work of the Holy Spirit. Remember God's spiritual resources are with us daily. These heavenly gifts guide our lives. Jesus' words and deeds are truths that direct us daily. His wisdom and grace is our ultimate gift that leads us home.

God, thank you for the daily guidance you give me. Help me to rely on you. May I remember you are my guide. Amen.

Think: Take time each day to put down your phone and ask God to guide you.

Read: Matthew 28:16-20; Psalm 8

*Matthew Smucker
Chicago, IL*

Monday, June 29, 2015

In His Time

He has made everything beautiful in its time.

Ecclesiastes 3:11

How will you use God's gift of time today? Try opening "the present" gradually, one moment at a time. Slow down. Notice the surprises around you: a ray of sunshine, a burst of laughter, a kind gesture, the satisfaction of small tasks completed. Hear the steady rhythm of your heartbeat and breath. Wherever you are, whatever you do, be fully there. You will be filled with gratitude and praise, knowing that God makes everything beautiful in his perfect timing and for his special purpose.

As the Bible says, "There is nothing better ... than to be joyful and do good as long as [we] live ... Eat, drink and take pleasure in all [your] toil—this is God's gift to man" (Ecclesiastes 3:12-13).

Lord, open my eyes to appreciate your presents—and your presence—today. Amen.

Make a list: Jot down each gift you notice today, and say a prayer of thanks and praise.

Read: Ecclesiastes 3:1-13; Psalm 103

*Sharolyn Sander
Lincoln, NE*

Tuesday, June 30, 2015

May God Bless

May God give you of the dew of heaven and of the fatness of the earth and plenty of grain and wine.

Genesis 27:28

In the above verse, Isaac mistakenly gave Jacob the blessing meant for his firstborn Esau. Even though it was given through Jacob's deception, there was truth in the blessing. God is the giver of all good things. He provides for all of our needs.

Take time to read Psalms 66 and 67 for a review of some of his provisions for his children. The God who parted the Red Sea for the children of Israel continues to bless you with sunshine, rain, food and shelter. Through Jesus he gives you forgiveness of sins, hope and peace.

Spend a few minutes contemplating all of the gifts he has given you. Lift your heart in praise for the many blessings he generously bestows on you.

Generous Lord, you pour out your abundant love on us. We praise your holy name. Amen.

Offer: Praise the Lord to others to remind them of his marvelous provision.

Read: Psalm 66; Psalm 67

*Terry Weber
Williamsburg, VA*

HOLY HABITS for **HOPE-FULL HEALTH**

We have a choice to make each day. We can:

1. Take the High Road—We start each day knowing that it is a gift from God. We encourage ourselves and others to see life as an opportunity to celebrate and share with others. We look for the blessings we have and the opportunities to be blessings to others. We know that this is “the day the Lord has made,” and we are glad. We sense God’s grace even before we open the corn flakes and pop our pills. We look in the mirror and ... smile!

2. Take the Low Road—We start to worry about all the “stuff” in life, even before our feet hit the floor. We turn on the TV to hear all of the bad news of the day. We plant seeds for negative energy to take over our thoughts. We know this will not be a very good day. We dramatize setbacks and turn them into disasters. We feel hopeless and sap energy from others. We look in the mirror ... and say, “Blah!”

What’s your choice this day? It is a choice that makes things better or worse. It is the choice that energizes or contaminates. It is the choice that focuses us on God’s blessings or locks us into life’s burdens. And here’s the Good News: The Lord has already DONE everything for us to make this a great day! Our only task now is to DO this day for him, and to look in the mirror and say, “Yes!”

Hope-Full Praying

For Graduates

As we celebrate graduations and accomplishments of others, enable me to also continue to grow in your love and teachings. As the tassels are tossed from one side of the head to the other, help me to celebrate the joy of learning more about you each day. Thanks, Lord, for educators and students, for books and exams, and for the joy of learning, with you as my teacher. Amen.

For the Blessings of Nature

You have made such a wonderful world, Lord! You give us flowers and rain and squirrels and even ants. You bless us with colors and wind and grass that grows, sometimes even too quickly. Help my eyes to glimpse your gifts of nature. Help my ears to hear the robin, my nose to smell the marigold and my attitude to be positive, even in the midst of mosquito bites and spiders. In your name we celebrate nature. Amen.

For Those Who Are Lonely

I pray today, Lord, for the lonely. Please bring your hope and love and forgiveness to them, through me. Change this prayer, Lord, from words to actions as I contact people in my life who are lonely and lost and lingering with little hope. Enable me to touch them today with your love and presence. Amen.

For Those Who are Hospitalized

So many people are in hospitals today, Lord. Whether I know them or not, please bring your healing hand to them through the doctors and nurses and volunteers you send to them with your healing touch. I especially think of _____ (insert names of your friends) today, Lord, who continue to wait for your healing. Bring them health, hope and healing, all in your name. Amen.

For Faithful Friends

Lord, today I think of all of my faithful friends you have given me as gifts through these years. Some of them already bask in the glory of heaven. Others you have kept around me here on earth because you know how much I need them to encourage, support and to laugh and cry with me. Thanks for friends who know me and who still love me, just like you. Amen.

For Memories of the Past

It is hard to be nostalgic, Lord, if we can't remember anything. But today I do remember those marvelous moments of the past. Today let me bask in the "good times" of past years. But as I do this, Lord, point me also to the "good times" I celebrate this very day. To remember the past is fine, but to celebrate your presence today is even better, not to mention the glorious days ahead in my future in heaven. Amen.

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