

# HOPE-FULL LIVING

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

July • August • September • 2015

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## Hope-Full Living Mission Statement

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

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Wednesday, July 1, 2015

# Thank God for Summer

*Seedtime and harvest ... shall not cease.*

*Genesis 8:22*

A farmer turned over a page of the calendar on the wall and announced, “July—the busy month—our wheat harvest.” While he was thinking of harvest, somewhere others were planting peas. The wonderful gift of seasons and different climatic zones makes it possible for us to eat grapes while snow is piling up in our yards.

As I swelter in the heat in mid-America, I remember that this summer weather is due to God’s wisdom in tilting the earth at exactly 23½ degrees. If the earth were tilted one-half degree more or less, it would be uninhabitable. That thought doesn’t cool me off, but it does cause me to say with the psalmist, “O Lord my God, you are very great!” (Psalm 104:1).

Isn’t it amazing that we can see the majesty of God in the seasons—such ordinary things that I seldom think of them as great gifts from God? Perhaps the hot days of July will help me remember the grace of God and the creative power of the Almighty.

*Dear God, thank you for your creation. Amen.*

*Do: Thank God night and day.*

*Read: Psalm 104:1-9*

*Eldor Kaiser  
Lenexa, KS*

Thursday, July 2, 2015

# God Camp

*The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us ...*

*John 1:14*

July reminds me of camping. Our family spent many summers tent camping. Did you ever sleep in a tent?

The word *dwelling* in today's verse literally means "tented." God lived in a tent with Israel—the Tabernacle. In Jesus, God set up his tent among us. Where God's tent is, God is. The Temple replaced the Tabernacle, but still it was where God lived among his people. Look around your home today. God lives here with you.

In 1 Corinthians 3:16, Paul says that we are God's temple. God's tent is set up in your heart. Where you live, God lives. In Matthew, Jesus reminds us that he is always with us. He hasn't moved his tent. He won't do it. We are never alone.

*Lord Jesus Christ, thank you for camping out in my life. Amen.*

*Remember: Remember, in detail, one vacation. How was the Lord with you?*

*Read: Acts 18:1-11*

*Don Schatz  
Kenmore, WA*

Friday, July 3, 2015

# The Light of Freedom

*You, Lord, keep my lamp burning; my God turns my darkness into light.*

*Psalm 18:28*

As an American, I'm reminded daily of the freedoms we have fought for and now hold in this great country. The United States flag is a proud symbol of these freedoms. The Statue of Liberty is another symbol of freedom and democracy in our country. To many immigrants, her uplifted torch was a symbol of the newfound light in life they would now have in America.

As Christians, we were given freedom from eternal death by the light of Jesus, our Savior. God sent his only Son Jesus to take away our sins, so that we might have eternal life with him in heaven. Today, joyfully live by the light of his love and share his good news.

*Dear God, help me always live by the light of your Son, Jesus. Amen.*

*Celebrate: Celebrate Independence Day by sharing God's good news of his Son Jesus.*

*Read: Psalm 112*

*Betsy Becker Niedringhaus  
Ballwin, MO*

Saturday, July 4, 2015

# Fireworks

*My times are in your hand.*

*Psalm 31:15*

From the Eastern Hemisphere to the Western, fireworks often put the “bang” into special occasions. How I remember early July’s grand finales at the park in my boyhood hometown! The earth became a gigantic popcorn popper; I was a kernel “popping” vigorously. The situation seemed hopelessly chaotic! But bursts of light in the darkness revealed the silhouettes of family and friends. I was safe.

In 2015 the earth can still tremble with life’s chaos and blessings. Now we adults are God’s hand for each other: in times of loneliness and heartbreak, in times of hope and celebration, in times of fear and despair, in times of worship’s rejoicing and in times of confession and absolution. Jesus is the Light of the world. These are divine fireworks. Safety ... in his hand.

*Jesus, help my hand to offer yours to others. Amen.*

*Befriend: Take time to know others, to reach out to them, to be their friend, their family in Christ.*

*Read: Psalm 31:1-15; Matthew 14:28-33*

*Harry Edenfield  
Brownstown, MI*

Sunday, July 5, 2015

# Light From Darkness

*God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.*

*1 John 1:5*

Yesterday I took a book from my library and something written on the cover jumped out at me with an incredible freshness. It was not something new, but maybe it was something I needed to hear again at that particular moment. There on the cover were these words: “It is God who calls the light forth from the darkness.”

Maybe I was feeling a little bit down at that moment. But those words were a glad reminder that, in whatever darkness enters our lives, God can break through and bring us into his light. It reminded me of creation and how God separated the light from the darkness. Most of all, it reminded me of Jesus in whom there is no darkness at all.

We all have times we feel the darkness around. But in Jesus we can feel the light shine through.

*Lord Jesus, in my dark moments let your light shine through. Amen.*

*Seek: In times of darkness seek a word of Jesus that brings you into the light.*

*Read: 1 John 1*

*Lionel Otto  
Adelaide, Australia*

Monday, July 6, 2015

# The Love Apple

*But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.*

*Galatians 5:22-23*

One of my greatest passions here on earth is gardening. I love to till the soil, plant those little, seemingly lifeless, seeds, and then wait in anticipation. I confess that the one harvest that I long for more than any is that first ripe, juicy tomato. No wonder it is often called the “love apple.”

As much as I look forward to that tasty treat, I also anticipate the day when the Lord comes back to present a whole feast of goodness in heaven. But in the meantime, there is “gardening” work to be done. That’s where the tilling, planting and nurturing come in. They are acted out through the fruits of the Spirit. Pick some of those nine listed above and get growing. God’s good soil will yield a wondrous return.

*Father, your gifts from the soil are so grand. Show us how to gift your produce of grace to those you place before us as we share the fruits of the Spirit. Amen.*

*Grow: Get a small pot, plant a seed and watch it produce good fruit.*

*Read: Ecclesiastes 2:5; Acts 14:17*

*Don Luepke  
Fremont, IN*

Tuesday, July 7, 2015

# God Knows Your Name

*He brings out the starry host one by one and calls them each by name.*

*Isaiah 40:26*

Last summer we vacationed with our children and grandchildren. One night our son, daughter-in-law and I went to the resort's planetarium. It was a gorgeous, clear evening and the Milky Way was splashed across the heavens.

We looked through a dozen telescopes, each pointed at a unique element of the night sky. We had a laser-guided tour of the stars; and the Lord calls them each by name. All of them!

The Lord also calls you by name! Isaiah tells us that as well: "I have called you by name, you are mine" (Isaiah 43:1). Your name is more important to him than the stars.

*Pray: God of Creation, thank you for the beauty of the universe and the wonder of the night sky. May it always remind me of how much you love me. Amen.*

*Look: Look at the night sky tonight. Remember God knows your name.*

*Read: Psalm 89:5-15*

*Don Schatz  
Kenmore, WA*



Wednesday, July 8, 2015

# God Is Still Speaking

*Then the Lord called Samuel ...*

*1 Samuel 3:4*

The young man Samuel heard a voice calling to him in the night. He assumed it was his mentor, the priest Eli. But it wasn't. The experience repeated itself. Ultimately, the priest concluded that the voice Samuel heard must be God's. It was with this knowledge that the lad returned to his bed, trusting that the next voice he would hear would be that of God. And it was.

Is God still speaking? Most of us assume that all God has to say is recorded on the pages of Scripture. Could it be we limit God because we share the same ambivalence and fear that probably gripped Samuel? Do we really want to hear God's voice?

Hopefully, "Yes." "Yes," because we can be certain that the message we will receive by the Spirit of God has been filtered through the cross and empty tomb of our Lord, guaranteeing us a message of grace.

*Dear God, give me the faith to listen for and recognize your voice. Amen.*

*Listen: Listen for God calling you to action.*

*Read: 1 Samuel 3*

*Bill Hoerger  
Niles, MI*

Thursday, July 9, 2015

# Aging Well

*To whom much has been given, much is required.*

*Luke 12:48*

These Scripture verses have often been used to remind each of us of how we were to use our gifts and abilities as we were growing up. Do you recall moms and teachers and neighbors saying things like, “If you can sing well, sing! If you can play baseball well, play! If you can cook well, cook!”?

Sure, they meant well, and many of us went on to sing and play and cook and do lots of other things well! But in these days, perhaps you and I need to see a different focus on this verse. Perhaps the Lord is suggesting to us that he continues to require “much of us” because we have been given many years of living. We indeed have been given the great gift of aging. Let’s continue to use it well!

*Lord, aging is a gift from you. Thanks for giving it to us. Now inspire us to use it well. Amen.*

*Encourage: Use the gift of aging well today by encouraging those younger than you to use their gifts well!*

*Read: Titus 2:1-15*

*Rich Bimler  
Bloomington, IL*

Friday, July 10, 2015

# Upright

*For me it is good to be near God.*

*Psalm 73:28*

“My feet had almost stumbled, my steps had nearly slipped” (Psalm 73:2). You probably know the feeling. The psalmist didn’t trip on an uneven sidewalk or a rumpled carpet. He stumbled over something that trips us all up—envy. Wicked people have it all. They are proud and violent, dismissive of God—and still their wealth and power increase! “All in vain,” we lament with the psalmist, “have I kept my heart clean” (Psalm 73:13).

But then, feet firmly planted in the Word, we find the answer. The wicked will fall, but we will not. Redeemed by the blood of Jesus, we are upheld by his mighty hand. We will live in his presence for all eternity. What more could we want? “Whom have I in heaven but you? And there is nothing on earth that I desire besides you” (Psalm 73:25).

*Lord Jesus, when I stumble in faith because of the evil I see in the world, uphold me with your Word. Amen.*

*Walk: When envy trips you up, let the Word steady your steps.*

*Read: Psalm 73; 1 Corinthians 3:18-23*

*Carol Geisler  
Manchester, MO*

Saturday, July 11, 2015

# Walking

*Walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him.*

*Colossians 1:10*

Summer is a wonderful time to walk with someone: You have the gift of movement, and there is a kinship with the one you accompany. God walked in the Garden of Eden. Enoch walked with God. David walked in death's valley with his Shepherd. God's Word lights our steps. Jesus healed, so that a person could walk.

When Jesus led his disciples, he walked. He got out among the people to talk with them, laugh with them, teach them, heal them, love them and tell them about himself.

Most of us do not walk as briskly as we once did. Your next walk may be an independent venture. It may be an assisted excursion. Whatever the case, accompany someone. Show them the Jesus who has and will always walk with you.

*Dear Jesus, thank you for walking with your people. Amen.*

*Invite: Invite someone to walk with you—and Jesus.*

*Read: Ephesians 5:15-21; Luke 24:13-31*

*Harry Edenfield  
Brownstown, MI*

Sunday, July 12, 2015

# Retreaded

*Even to your old age I am he.*

*Isaiah 46:4*

“Congratulations! You’ve retired!” Did anyone ever say that to you? Chances are they did. At the time, you undoubtedly felt elated at having reached such an accomplishment. Retirement is something to be proud of.

I had a friend who preferred to refer himself as “retreaded” instead of “retired.” Curious, isn’t it? However, he may have been on to something. By definition, the word *retired* means “withdrawn from one’s position or occupation.” It seems to imply that we have withdrawn from society and are no longer useful now that our career has ended. While the word *retreaded* means “to make over as if new.” For Christians, that definition seems very fitting because it’s exactly what God has done for us (2 Corinthians 5:17)! In Christ, we have become new. Our possibilities are now countless—and everlasting!

*Dear Father, help me to tell others about your eternal benefits. Amen.*

*Speak: Tell others about God and the impact he has had on your life.*

*Read: Isaiah 46:3-13; 2 Corinthians 5:17-21; Lamentations 3:22-26*

*Celeste Cummins  
Storm Lake, IA*

Monday, July 13, 2015

# Now I Get It!

*Then he opened their minds ...*

*Luke 24:45*

Coming of age in the 20th and 21st centuries has been a tumultuous and sometime bewildering experience. More brand-new things made their way into our world in the last hundred years than over the past thousand. The learning curve in our lifetime has been steep and demanding. That must have been how the disciples on the way to Emmaus felt that first Easter evening as Jesus explained to them what the cross and his resurrection meant both for them and for everyone.

One of the exciting truths woven into the first Easter evening story is that the same divine power that opened the minds of two disciples then is at work in us today. He continues to open minds and plant faith in the hearts of those who are his. The signal that he has done this in us is our cry of faith, "Now I get it!"

*How dark the darkness is when we try to make our way without your life-changing power, O Lord. Keep working in those who are yours. Amen.*

*Look: Where do you see God opening minds to see and accept the wonder of his works today? Look in your mirror first.*

*Read: Luke 24; Psalm 51:10*

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

Tuesday, July 14, 2015

# Sun and Moon

*You established the sun and the moon.*

*Psalm 74:16*

Late last evening my wife and I gazed through a skylight in our home at a beautiful moon. This morning at our breakfast table we watched a spectacular sunrise with a soft pink on the horizon changing to orange and then the bright globe of the sun. We thanked God for the sun in the morning and the moon at night to help us overcome the personal and global struggles of daily life.

The psalmist in Babylonian captivity cries out to God with “why” questions about the destruction of Jerusalem and enemies mocking God’s chosen people, just like in today’s world. But then he remembers God as Savior through the Red Sea and Creator of the regularity of day and night, sun and moon. That same God sent his only Son Jesus to live obediently day by day, suffer and die on a dark Good Friday and rise with the sun on Easter morning. He is our Savior ushering in a new creation.

*Lord, thanks for the sun and moon as evidence of your creation and salvation. Amen.*

*Remember: Describe memorable sunrises and beautiful moons.*

*Read: Psalm 74*

*Stephen J. Carter  
Oakville, MO*

Wednesday, July 15, 2015

# New and Old Treasures

*And he said to them, “Therefore every scribe who has been trained for the kingdom of heaven is like a master of a house, who brings out of his treasure what is new and what is old.”*

*Matthew 13:52*

A recent renovation spurred me to go through some old boxes, some of which I hadn't opened for years. In the process, I discovered some wonderful old treasures—mementos of precious times I had nearly forgotten; some things that were no longer treasures to me, but might be useful to someone else; and some things that were simply relegated to the trash.

Savoring old treasures alongside my “new” space led me to thank God for his blessing in my life. Giving away some items gave me joy in thinking how others may benefit. What are your “old” and “new” treasures—friends, favorite Scriptures, beloved hymns, special items? Revisit them and pass some along for others to enjoy!

*Father, thank you for all my “treasures”—especially my Savior. Amen.*

*Share: Share a treasured Bible verse with someone today.*

*Read: Matthew 13*

*Diane Bahn  
Cypress, TX*



Thursday, July 16, 2015

# Do Unto Others

*So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you.*

*Matthew 7:12*

We all learned the Golden Rule as children. For many of us it became a model for our lives. But at some point we learn that keeping the rule is more than just avoiding bad behavior. It's also looking for the good you can do for others.

“If God so loved us, we ought to love one another.” So think of what you would like someone to do for you, and do it for someone else!

I sure wish someone would call me and talk for a while. (Call someone and talk!) It sure would be nice to get a card or note sometime. (Make the effort. You can do it.) I wonder if anyone will notice my new scarf (tie)? (Compliment someone on how they look.) God loves us in the big way—sending Jesus to be our Savior! Loving others in small ways is a great reminder of God's great love for all of us.

*Dear God, help me to think of others and do the loving thing for them. Amen.*

*Say: Say to someone what you wish someone would say to you.*

*Read: 1 Corinthians 13; 1 John 1*

*Lonie Eatherton  
Fenton, MO*

Friday, July 17, 2015

# Come Clean

*Turn, O Lord, deliver my life, save me for the sake of your steadfast love.*

*Psalm 6:4*

Washing your hands with liquid soap without turning on the water is like trying to live your life without Christ. You have to add water to get rid of the dirty soap mix. We need Christ in our life to guide us along our way and forgive our sins.

All too often we want to keep doing our own things. We try to live life our way. Eventually we start feeling remorse; our conscience bothers us.

Why? We've done it again. We have forgotten to turn our life and our will over to the care of God. Our hands didn't come clean without turning on the water nor will our life give us contentment until Christ enters into it. When we beg his forgiveness and pray to him constantly, he will guide us with his tender loving care.

*Lord, may I always remember you have created me to accomplish your plans, not mine. Amen.*

*Wash: Wash your hands today, using both soap and water, and remember that in Jesus you are cleansed from sin.*

*Read: Hebrews 2:1-4; 1 Thessalonians 5:16-19*

*Edna Jakobsky  
Fort Myers, FL*

Saturday, July 18, 2015

# The Holy Name

*Hallowed be thy name.*

*Matthew 6:9*

I asked my mother once why they chose my name for me. She was silent for a long time, but finally concluded that it must have been “the name at the time.”

I am waiting for our children to ask why we chose the names we did for them. I do remember that we gave it a lot of attention. We prayed about it. We practiced saying it. We consulted some books. What we did not do was check with other people.

Most of us have great peace with the names we have. We know our name is known by our Creator. When we do something that honors him, serves his people or brings honor to his Church, he is glad to call it out! On those occasions that we mess up, behave badly and recognize our failure, he assures us by name that he forgives us.

That is because his is the name that is above every name, and he joined us to his name in our baptism.

*Thank you, Jesus, for joining your holy name to ours! Amen.*

*Reflect: Reflect upon a friend's name, and share with them how they have honored that name.*

*Read: Philippians 2:1-11; Hebrews 2:9*

*Vern Gundermann  
St. Louis, MO*

Sunday, July 19, 2015

# Grateful Friendship

*We give thanks to God always for all of you, constantly mentioning you in our prayers.*

*1 Thessalonians 1:2*

Almost all of St. Paul's letters start with invoking a blessing upon and offering thanks to those to whom he was writing. We are afforded the same opportunity on a daily basis. Call it an act of common courtesy. Call it an expression of sincere loving friendship. It can be both.

Think of a time when someone offered you a deeply sincere blessing and how it felt to receive it. Think of a time when someone was deeply grateful to know you and to have you in their life. Think of people toward whom you have those feelings. God is smack dab in the middle of all of these relationships and feelings.

*Gracious God, as you invite me into friendship with you, may I courageously share my gratitude for the people you put into my life. Amen.*

*Risk: Invite God to speak through you and take the risk of sharing your appreciation for someone in your life this day.*

*Read: Romans 12:9-18*

*Clarence Heller  
Manchester, MO*

Monday, July 20, 2015

## A Gift

*If there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things.*

*Philippians 4:8*

The mother who bakes cookies with her little girl or the dad who helps with his son's Little League team are making beautiful memories for their children to think about as they become adults. Parents who celebrate the birthday, who attend a school function or play a simple game of catch show love in a way that will never be forgotten.

The Lord has given us the gift of memory, not to recall real or imagined slights, but to think upon the good gifts he has given us. Among those gifts are Christian parents and faithful pastors who made sure that we were well grounded in the Christian faith. Teach little ones the Lord's Prayer and help them memorize simple Bible verses. Help older children with Confirmation class assignments. These remembered lessons will be of great comfort when that child becomes an older adult, even if their mental faculties are no longer sharp. Memory—it is another of God's gifts!

*Thank you for all the memories I have. Amen.*

*Remember: Recall a special memory today.*

*Read: Philippians 4:4-9*

*Joan Scheele Mueller  
Webster Groves, MO*

Tuesday, July 21, 2015

# The Perennial Perennial

*Train up a child in the way he should go; even when he is old he will not depart from it.*

*Proverbs 22:6*

I have a peony bush that blooms every year. This bush began in the late 1800s when my grandmother planted it in her garden. When my parents bought their home, Grandma gave a cutting of that bush to Mom. Mom in turn gave a cutting to me and I gave a cutting to my son and his wife. The beauty of this peony has gone through four generations of the family.

Each time a cutting is passed on, the story is told of its beginning. It makes me think of a much more important thing that we are to pass on to the younger generations—the truths found in the Bible. Future generations need to learn about God and the forgiveness he offers us through Jesus' death and resurrection.

*Lord, help me to tell younger generations about your love and forgiveness. Amen.*

*Share: Tell or read a Bible story to a young child.*

*Read: Psalm 78:5-6; 2 Timothy 3:14-15*

*Jeanette Dall  
Batavia, IL*

Wednesday, July 22, 2015

# Forgiven Runaways

*If the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed.*

*John 8:36*

Onesimus had been enslaved for quite a while. He had worked hard for his master Philemon. But now he was dreaming of freedom, even though it meant he would have to run away. In Roman times, running from slavery was a capital offense. But Onesimus took a chance, winding up with St. Paul. He relied on Paul's mercy and the apostle did not let him down. The letter to Philemon tells us how St. Paul tactfully interceded for the repentant runaway and urged Philemon to take Onesimus back, no longer as a slave but as a brother in the Lord.

Aren't we all repeat runaways from our heavenly Lord and Master? Yet he mercifully takes us back—every day—and restores us as his forgiven children. This glorious liberty is ours forever!

*Thank you, Lord, for your merciful kindness, which continually surrounds me with forgiving love. Amen.*

*Restore: Heal a broken relationship through mutual forgiveness.*

*Read: The Letter to Philemon*

*Don Hoeferkamp  
St. Louis, MO*

Thursday, July 23, 2015

# God Is Good

*I have set my bow in the cloud.*

*Genesis 9:13*

A blinding, noisy summer storm can stimulate thoughts of Noah and the Flood. Maybe that is why we are quickly prompted to look for a rainbow in the heavens. The just consequences of human sin rain down around us. In that cloudy darkness, we anticipate the bright rainbow of God's goodness.

In major ways, we Christians see God's goodness in the empty cross, the empty tomb and the emptied Communion cup. In more subtle ways, we see God's goodness in the flight of a ball thrown by a laughing child. We marvel at the hawk floating effortlessly in the wind. We hear the neighbor's lawn mower manicuring God's yard. We witness the infinite antics of clouds. We are clothed with summer sun's warmth. And, yes, we count the colors of the rainbow.

*Holy Spirit, help us to share with others that in major ways, and more subtle ways, God is good.  
Amen.*

*See: See God's "rainbows" in all of their forms.*

*Read: Genesis 9:8-17; Psalm 126*

*Harry Edenfield  
Brownstown, MI*



Friday, July 24, 2015

# Well Pleased

*This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased.*

*Matthew 3:17*

Generally speaking, we like to be praised for something we have done. We may be properly humble about it, but we like it. It's nice to know that people appreciate our accomplishments.

The Father spoke from heaven at Jesus' baptism, expressing his pleasure in his beloved Son. This is the beloved Son who humbled himself, "becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross" (Philippians 2:8), the redeeming death that won forgiveness and eternal life for us. This is the beloved Son whose humble life of obedience covers our sinful lives, "for as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ" (Galatians 3:27). God is pleased with you, not because of anything you have done, but because of what his Son has done for you. Baptized into Christ, you are God's beloved child, with whom he is well pleased.

*Heavenly Father, thank you for the gift of your beloved Son, my Savior. Amen.*

*Appreciate: Express your appreciation for someone.*

*Read: Matthew 3:13-17; Galatians 3:27-29*

*Carol Geisler  
Manchester, MO*

Saturday, July 25, 2015

# The Journey With Jesus

*[The disciples] were on the road ... Jesus was going before them ... and began to tell them what was going to happen to him.*

Mark 10:32

When Jesus predicted he was becoming the most high King, two disciples submitting their bid for favors: “When you set up your kingdom, can we two have the executive offices next to your throne room?”

Jesus was disappointed and patiently explained: “In the kingdom of God, the highest-ranking office will be servers.”

Christians claim to be on a journey in our time—with Jesus in the lead. To follow him is to follow the Christ who stated clearly that his ultimate role was not to be served but to be the servant of all.

We look to him on our life journey as followers who give themselves to love and care for those who need God’s company of travelers in this world.

*Lord, help me to see the needs and cares of people who walk with me, that together we may be servers in your world. Amen.*

*Talk: Talk about the possibilities that increase as we grow older and mature as travelers following our Lord.*

*Read: Mark 10:35-45*

Karl E. Lutze  
Valparaiso, IN

Sunday, July 26, 2015

# What Is Man?

*What is man that you are mindful of him, and the son of man that you care for him?*

*Psalm 8:4*

One way to define anything is to point to what it is not. The psalmist was aware of this method when he strove to understand the significance of a human being. Without the Hubble Telescope, he explores what human beings are not—we are not the heavens created and set in place by the finger of God.

Now we know much more about the heavens than the psalmist did. For example, we know that the sun is a medium-size star with a diameter of 864,000 miles, that its surface temperature is 9,939 degrees Fahrenheit, and that it is 93 million miles away from our planet Earth. Compare all that to what a human being is: a mere 5 to 6 feet tall, weighing around 190 pounds. Yet it was not a sun, nor the moon, nor a star that God's Son became, but a human being, to save us who dwell in a measureless, fallen universe.

*O Jesus, help us to sense the immensity of your reign and the intimacy of your love for us. Amen.*

*Reflect: Drive out in the country on a cloudless night to gaze at the stars and the moon and ask, "What am I?"*

*Read: Psalm 8; Acts 17:22-31*

*Gordon A. Beck  
Williamsburg, VA*

Monday, July 27, 2015

# A Good Mystery

*This is how one should regard us, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God.*

1 Corinthians 4:1

When it comes to books, movies or TV shows, a lot of us love a good mystery. Writers who create plots that keep us guessing to the very end supply us with hours of enjoyment and mental exercise.

The Apostle Paul wrote often about the mysteries of God in his letters to New Testament churches. Check out 1 Corinthians 15:51-52, 1 Timothy 3:16, Ephesians 3:6 and 5:31-32. Now consider—did Paul call the plans of God mysteries because God wants to baffle us? No, Paul simply recognized what God had revealed to Isaiah, “For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts” (Isaiah 55:9). God’s designs are on a spiritual plane far beyond our minds. We study the clues in his Word, but we ultimately acknowledge God’s wisdom and trust that one day every good mystery will be revealed.

*Almighty God, your designs are beyond my comprehension, but all your plans are good. Amen.*

*List: Write down or highlight the mysteries of God found in the verses mentioned in this devotion.*

*Read: Romans 16:25-27*

Marj Maynard  
Billings, MO

Tuesday, July 28, 2015

# All Shook Up

*Though the mountains be shaken and the hills be removed, yet my unfailing love for you will not be shaken nor my covenant of peace be removed, says the Lord, who has compassion on you.*

*Isaiah 54:10*

In Jesus' day the temple was the symbol of Jewish national and religious identity. With dazzling white stone walls and so much gold that the sun's reflection blinded onlookers, the temple stood for blessing and prosperity. Here's the problem: the temple was ultimately destroyed with all the rest of Jerusalem. In these days when our own country seems to be all shook up, God's promise still comes to us. It is recorded in Isaiah 54:10.

When I lived in Florida, I used to sail. A key piece of hardware was the anchor; even in rough weather the anchor held.

In spite of our trials and tribulations, our God sent his Son to be our anchor and carry us through the storms of life.

*Lord Jesus, be my secure anchor in life's storms.  
Amen.*

*Stand firm: Listen to the troubles of others and comfort them with the anchoring love of Jesus.*

*Read: Hebrews 6:13-20*

*Richard Eissfeldt  
Ballwin, MO*

Wednesday, July 29, 2015

# Moving Day

*By faith [Abraham] went to live in the land of promise, as in a foreign land ... for he was looking forward to the city that had foundations, whose designer and builder is God.*

*Hebrews 11:9-10*

Have you lived in the same house for most of your life, or have you experienced many moves? As you grow older, you may choose to move to a warmer climate or another city to be closer to family members or friends. If you have lived in an isolated setting, you may want to move to an apartment or condo where you will have neighbors and social activities. Changing health conditions may dictate a move to an assisted living center or a nursing home.

No matter where you live now, you can be confident that God is with you. The heavenly Father who feeds the birds and clothes the lilies of the field holds you in the palm of his hand. And because you have been redeemed through Jesus' death and resurrection, he waits for you in your eternal home in heaven.

*You, Lord, never change. Be with us through the changes in our lives. Amen.*

*Think about: Will your current residence meet your future needs? What changes may be necessary?*

*Read: Psalm 90*

*Eileen Ritter  
Byron Center, MI*

Thursday, July 30, 2015

# Fishing?

*Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.*

*Matthew 4:19*

Since retiring, I love to go fishing. It's only a mile to the dam in center city. Forty trips, one fish. My wife doubts my fishing. But I always have a fish story, just not the aquatic kind.

The greatest joy is not fishing fish. The shore is a great place to fish for people. No trip is wasted. Usually a conversation with a fisherman or homeless person ends up in sharing the love of God in this beautiful setting. Sometimes it leads to witness or counsel on the spot, at other times to friendships that blossom into Gospel moments.

Even if no one is there, prayer time prevails. God speaks at the edge of a bubbling river. Our conversation is fulfilling and fruitful. What a catch!

*Lord Jesus, thanks for the sanctuary in the city and the refreshment of water. Give us moments of your abundant grace as we enjoy your wonderful world. Amen.*

*Reflect: Enjoy the home altar you have or consider finding a special place to meet God.*

*Read: Mark 1:35; Psalm 121*

*Rodney Otto  
Grand Rapids, MI*

Friday, July 31, 2015

# Rest

*On the seventh day God finished his work ... and he rested.*

*Genesis 2:2*

“Summertime ... and the livin’ is easy.” Gershwin’s words and melody speak of God’s wonderful gift of rest. Summer days seem perfect for a nap in the hammock or some lemonade in the shade. God set the pattern for us when he ended the work of creation on the seventh day.

Some seniors find it hard to rest and relax; others feel they’ve earned endless leisure days. God’s Word teaches us to seek balance between work and rest. We need regular respite for meditation on God’s faithfulness. Worship renews body, mind and soul for our most important vocation: to seek God’s will, to witness and to serve others.

God finished the “work” of salvation at the cross and empty tomb! So, relax and enjoy the “rest” God provides today.

*Thank you, Lord, for times of rest and renewal.  
Amen.*

*Refresh: Take short breaks throughout the day:  
read Scripture, give thanks, pray.*

*Read: Exodus 20:11, Isaiah 40:28-31*

*Sharolyn Sander  
Lincoln, NE*



Saturday, August 1, 2015

# We Are Family

*So we, though many, are one body in Christ.*

*Romans 12:5*

This summer, we will again load the RV for our summer vacation. We plan to go east to visit with family members and good friends. It will be a joy to be with people we have not seen in a long time. We “catch up” on our news quickly and enjoy our time together—even when we don’t agree. It seems like we have never been apart. What’s exciting is that we are all different; however, we share the bond of family.

Perhaps this is also a picture of God’s family. As children of the same Father, we are brought into his family by baptism. Yet we have our own strengths, weaknesses and experiences. In God’s family, we don’t always agree on important points; however, we are his, loved by our Father through the saving work of his Son. What a glorious and exciting reunion to anticipate!

*Help us to love and appreciate the differences we share as members of your body, the Church. Amen.*

*Do: Listen attentively when sharing differences of opinion.*

*Read: Romans 12*

*Ann Eissfeldt  
Ballwin, MO*

Sunday, August 2, 2015

# No Better Time

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

*Psalm 116:15*

Just about the whole family was there for the funeral. “I haven’t seen you in years. I wish it wasn’t at a time like this.” “Why, there’s no better time!” was the unexpected reply.

It’s in times of sadness and loss that we need the love and support of our family. Even long-lost relatives come together and remind us of years gone by, the blessings of God and the love of family. In the midst of all the missing and the tears, you also see the smiles of recognition light up the faces. You share the stories from the past. You hear the laughter of kindred spirits.

“Uncle George was a good old guy!” “Yes, but he knew he was a sinner, and he knew his Savior too!” The faith is shared. The family bonds are strengthened once again. It’s a good time. Together we thank God for life here and life hereafter.

*Dear God, thank you for my family when I need them most. Amen.*

*Create: Create a memory. Call someone you haven’t seen in years.*

*Read: Psalm 91; 1 Corinthians 12*

*Lonie Eatherton  
Fenton, MO*

Monday, August 3, 2015

# Wisdom

*The wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits.*

*James 3:17*

The saying is that wisdom comes with age. I find that sometimes age comes alone. We are speaking of wisdom—not smarts, not degrees or knowledge. Especially at our age, we have important decisions to make concerning health, family and location. Do we need wisdom? You'd better believe it. Where do we get it? Sometimes from family, friends or physicians, but the real wisdom is “from above.”

Solomon had wisdom, not from academics, but from God. He asked God for an understanding mind “that I may discern what is good or evil” (1 Kings 3:9). We, too, are to talk to our gracious Father about our choices, but, like Solomon, we do not always make the correct ones. The good news is that our Lord can work through our mistakes with his heavenly wisdom just like he can work through our good decisions.

*Dear God, let us put your will first in all that we decide to do. Amen.*

*Ask: Ask God for the wisdom you need when facing decisions.*

*Read: James 3:13; 1 Corinthians 1:24-25*

*Connie Bretscher  
Valparaiso, IN*

Tuesday, August 4, 2015

# Incomparable

*I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever.*

*Psalm 23:6*

Where I live we have four distinct seasons. So I play this game: when I'm dissolving in the heat doing yardwork in the summer, I try to imagine the experience of shoveling snow in single-digit temperatures. When I'm standing in snow in deep subfreezing temps, I try to imagine the sweat-inducing, breath-stealing sear of hot air in the summer. I can't do it. The heat in summer seems to be the only reality. The cold in winter seems to be the only reality.

“The sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us” (Romans 8:18). That, to God, we are creatures meant for glory is unimaginable when we are experiencing some of the reversals that aging brings. But this is not the reality that defines us. God's glorious destination for you is not worthy of comparison to anything you are experiencing right now.

*Lord, help me in faith to fasten upon your future rather than my present. Amen.*

*Ponder anew: what the Almighty can do, who with his love does befriend you.*

*Read: Psalm 27; Romans 8:18-39*

*Mike May  
Kansas City, KS*

Wednesday, August 5, 2015

# Tomato Vine

*I am not worthy ... of all the deeds of steadfast love and all the faithfulness that you have shown to your servant.*

Genesis 32:10

The tomato vine  
overshoots its pole and bends back  
to look at its roots.

I saw myself in that tomato vine: Clumsy, reaching out in many directions, laden with droopy shoots, and curving back over the stake toward the root. I can't tell where the ripe tomatoes were picked, but it's easy to spy the shriveled leaves and damaged vines.

My life is like that vine with all its scars, but age has given me perspective. I see where God's Word has kept me on his path. He has taught me patiently, informed my senses and quelled my rebellions. Looking back reveals God's hand in the whole picture.

*Our Father in heaven, teach us, that we may tell others how you enable us. Walk with us and bless those we meet on our way. Amen.*

*Reflect: Our lives are all lessons we can use for ourselves and our families.*

*Read: Lamentations 3:19-24*

Judy Scherr  
Lemay, MO

Thursday, August 6, 2015

# Here Today ...

*What is your life? For you are a mist that appears for a little time and then vanishes.*

*James 4:14*

An auctioneer expanded my vocabulary when he used the word *ephemera* to describe a box of my parents' mementos he was evaluating. *Ephemera*, as I learned, is a collector's term for printed materials that were not meant to have lasting value. To the right collector, for example, my parents' Valentines from the 1920s or tickets to the 1967 baseball All-Star Game have value now because they were saved.

Those bits of paper that originally were meant to be discarded are like our lives without God. Look at some words describing our original human condition: *weak and worthless* (Galatians 4:9), *dead in trespasses* (Ephesians 2:1), *alienated* (Colossians 1:21). We were hopeless until God's love sent Jesus to save us and make us his sons and daughters, redeemed and holy. Earthly life may be ephemeral, but eternal life with God is permanent and priceless.

*Heavenly Father, thank you for giving my life lasting value through your Son, Jesus. Amen.*

*Display: Frame a few pieces of ephemera as a reminder of how God's love gives your life value.*

*Read: Romans 5:6-11; Psalm 103:1-5*

*Marj Maynard  
Billings, MO*

Friday, August 7, 2015

# Two Are Better Than One!

*Two are better than one because they have a good return for their work. If one falls down, his friend can help him up.*

*Ecclesiastes 4:9-10*

So who is the “other one” who makes us better than ourselves? Who is “the one” who picks us up when we fall? Some of us might say our spouse, or good friend, or neighbor or grandchild. And we give thanks for those support people around us!

But let us also rejoice in the fact that you and I are never alone, even when we are lonely and feel alone. The “other” friend we always have with us is the Lord himself! And what a friend he is! He is with us now and will be forever. What a friend we have in Jesus, and what a Jesus we have in friends!

*Lord, thanks for being with us always, to pick us up when we are down and to keep us up when we might waver. Amen.*

*Find: Seek out a friend today whom you can pick up in mind, body and spirit and who can do the same to you.*

*Read: John 16:12-17; Psalm 37:23-24*

*Rich Bimler  
Bloomington, IL*

Saturday, August 8, 2015

# Go and Let God

*Turn, O Lord, deliver my life. Save me for the sake of your steadfast love.*

*Psalm 6:4*

Not long ago a television reporter was interviewing a pretty young woman. She'd been a runner, but her leg had been severely wounded when a bomb went off. Unfortunately, the surgeon's attempts to remedy the damage weren't working. A decision had to be made on what to do next. A smile wreathed the woman's face when she said to the reporter, "I finally told the doctor to amputate my leg. That was the best decision I've ever made." Her smile got brighter as she reached down, pulled up her pant leg, displaying her prostheses. "I can walk again." Will she ever run again? Only time will tell.

Would we have the type of courage shown by the young athlete? In times of trouble, put your trust in God. He will bestow on you the courage to face life's obstacles and make the proper decisions.

*Lord, we thank you for always being there for us and guiding us to make proper decisions for each of life's trials. Amen.*

*Pray: Pray about something that is bothering you.*

*Read: Psalm 69:13-18*

*Edna Jakobsky  
Fort Myers, FL*



Sunday, August 9, 2015

# A Sparkling Diamond

*Ask, and it will be given to you.*

*Matthew 7:7*

Like an exquisite diamond ring, the Sermon on the Mount has many facets. Jesus spoke of God's care. He told us how to treat others and warned about false teachers. One brightly sparkling facet is the Lord's teaching on prayer.

What is there about God that we should pray to him? Why should we ask God for anything? First of all, we must realize that God in heaven acts in ways far better than an earthly father who wants to satisfy his children and give them whatever they ask. Jesus tells us to ask, seek and knock. In other words, the Lord teaches us to be persistent in prayer, certain that our Father in heaven loves us dearly. He would never give us anything that would harm us. He gives us only what is good, and he has given us forgiveness and life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

*Lord Jesus, teach me to pray. Amen.*

*Ask: Bring your needs and worries before the Lord in prayer. You can be certain that he will hear and answer.*

*Read: Matthew 7:7-11; Psalm 95*

*Harlan Limmer  
Spring, TX*

Monday, August 10, 2015

# Our Role in the Family

*When Jesus saw his mother and the disciple whom he loved standing nearby, he said to his mother, “Woman, behold, your son!” Then he said to the disciple, “Behold, your mother!”*

*John 19:26-27*

The tie between Jesus and his mother must have been particularly strong—and Scriptures suggest that our Lord’s bond with John was so obvious that the disciple is particularly identified as “the disciple whom Jesus loved.”

Each of us—even though it is not the Lenten season or Good Friday—would do well to look up at the thorns on his head, the nail-pierced hands and feet, and apply Christ’s gracious word to ourselves, to hear his words addressed to us who are to look around us and notice others who have been at that awesome scene and to see one another as blood relatives of a very special kind—embracing each one with genuine love as members of God’s family.

*Gracious Lord, you count me as a member of your holy family. Help me, I pray, to be a genuine and generous blood sibling to the very special kinfolk God have given me. Amen.*

*Visit: Visit someone who needs a friend.*

*Read: Matthew 25:34-40; Ephesians 4:32*

*Karl E. Lutze  
Valparaiso, IN*

Tuesday, August 11, 2015

# Reunions

*Behold, I have engraved you on the palms of my hands.*

*Isaiah 49:16*

We are in the season of life when there are lots of reunions. One of the most important ingredients at a reunion is name tags! You are in a gathering and you see someone walking toward you. You know you should know her, but you can't recall her name. The thought goes through your mind, "Oh, please let me be able to read her name tag!" It happens to all of us.

We as Christians take comfort in knowing that there is One who always knows our name. In the Gospel of John, Jesus reminds us, "My sheep hear my voice, I know them, and they follow me" (John 10:27). Because we are children of God and we have been baptized into his name, we have an identity like no other. God knows each and every one of us because we belong to him. Our name tag forever reads, "Child of God."

*Heavenly Father, thank you for calling us by name and giving us a special identity as your child. Amen.*

*Recall: Recall how many people you have called by name this week.*

*Read: Isaiah 49:15-16*

*Margaret Hinchey  
Englewood, CO*

Wednesday, August 12, 2015

# Never!

*Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you.*

*Hebrews 13:5*

Growing up, we were cautioned about using the word *never*, because we didn't know the future. But God does! Only he knows the future. It is in his hands. These words are a strong guarantee to bolster our faith and provide hope in the most difficult times of life. All of us have tasted the bitter pain of illness, the death of loved ones, strained family relationships, financial difficulties, depression and hopelessness. In these gut-wrenching times, we need to hear the bold words of Scripture. God tells us, "Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you." The verses go on to reassure us with these hope-full words, "So we say with confidence, 'The Lord is my helper; I will not be afraid. What can man do to me?'"

My prayer is that you start using the word *never*, knowing beyond all doubt that God is telling you, "Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you." With the Lord as our helper, we need never ever be afraid.

*Help me, Lord, to never let go of your love. Amen.*

*Stop: Try not saying the word never today.*

*Read: Hebrews 13*

*John Herzog  
Chesterfield Township, MI*

Thursday, August 13, 2015

# Seeing

*Right away the man could see, and he went down the road with Jesus.*

*Mark 10:52*

The story of Jesus and blind Bartimaeus bears a second look. For years the miraculous healing of Jesus and the persistent faith of Bartimaeus drew all of my attention. Then, one day, I wondered about the last verse in the story.

I imagined the conversation between Jesus and Bartimaeus as they walked. I imagine the sighted man bubbling over with excitement, promising faithfulness. I see Jesus, on the other hand, lovingly suggesting that there are many miracles of God's love in the world—the sun rising each morning, flowers blooming, newborn babies, fields of wheat. He may have told him to look for the miracle of compassion in those caring for the sick, the homeless, the lonely. I'm guessing he encouraged Bartimaeus to see the miracle of God's mercy in the world in all things—especially people.

*Open my eyes, Lord, that I may see your love in this world. Amen.*

*See: Look for a miracle today.*

*Read: Mark 10:46-52*

*Lael Hoerger  
Niles, MI*

Friday, August 14, 2015

# A Moose of Many Colors

*We give thanks to God always for all of you.*

*1 Thessalonians 1:2*

Near our home is an oddity—a tree with a growth shaped like the head of a moose, antlers and all. For years it has been a tradition for local youth to paint the moose various colors: gold, silver, red, blue, yellow, green. Within a month, competing artists will apply their color scheme. People drive by regularly to see the changes.

Now the old tree will be cut down to make room for houses. Neighbors not ordinarily in support of youthful tagging are leading the fight to save the tree so the tradition can continue. It is too deeply ingrained in our identity as a neighborhood.

God has placed our family (and our congregation) in a particular neighborhood for a purpose. What values would be missing if we (or it) were no longer present?

*Lord, make me an instrument of your purpose to enrich the lives of others. Amen.*

*List: Make a list in response to the question posed in the last paragraph.*

*Read: Colossians 3:12-17; 1 Thessalonians 1:1-10*

*Ted Zimmerman  
Napa, CA*

Saturday, August 15, 2015

# Showing True Humility

*In humility count others more significant than yourselves.*

*Philippians 2:3*

The church calendar names August 15 as a day to honor Mary, mother of our Lord. “She should be the foremost example of the grace of God to invite the entire world to trust in this grace and to love and praise it,” wrote Martin Luther.

Mary’s role focuses primarily on being God’s vessel through which he gave us our Savior Jesus. Mary is also an example in humility to us, accepting the role of nurturing the life of God himself in her womb and never acting like James and John asking to sit on the right hand of Jesus in heaven.

When God calls us to do some humble task, like Mary, we can say, “Yes.” Christ lives in the womb of our heart, and not for just nine months. Our calling is to give Christ to the world. Jesus was Mary’s Savior. She was his humble servant. And so are we all!

*O Holy Spirit, nurture the life of Jesus in my heart and keep me humble. Amen.*

*Support: As Mary visited Elizabeth to support her, so humbly bring support to someone.*

*Read: Luke 1:46-58*

*Leo Symmank  
Seabrook, TX*

Sunday, August 16, 2015

# Peace, Fully

*The fever left her and she began to serve them.*

Mark 1:31

*Shalom*, usually interpreted simply as peace, has a much fuller meaning. “May it be with you as God intends” unpacks it better. That’s what we see happening here when Jesus heals Peter’s mother-in-law.

People disagree regarding the nature of afflictions and illnesses in Jesus’ day. But there is no misunderstanding about Jesus’ activity of healing. Whether the illness be physical, psychological, emotional, psychic or spiritual, Jesus took care of it. The person was restored. The person was now able to resume their life and their calling as they understood it. So Peter’s mother-in-law got up and went about doing what she believed God wanted her to do.

Maybe this is a good time for us to revisit the old song “Let There Be Peace on Earth” with the fuller understanding of *shalom* and our calling to be peace-makers.

*Lord, we beg you to keep your promise and bring peace. Amen.*

*Be at peace: Have a moment of shalom with the Lord.*

*Read: Mark 1:29-34; Matthew 5:9*

Bill Hoerger  
Niles, MI



Monday, August 17, 2015

# Seashore Sightings

*As Jesus walked beside the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting a net into the lake.*

*Mark 1:16*

As we grow older, we often have more time to enjoy lakes and seashores. Recently I walked a path to the Gulf of Mexico, anticipating the surf and sun, sand and seashells—personal relaxation and reflection time. Then I noticed a child running through the surf, his parents several yards behind, sunbathers dotting the beach and many walkers—people everywhere for whom Christ died.

Jesus also walked beside the Sea of Galilee, no doubt experiencing the sun and water. But his seashore sighting converted fishermen casting nets as part of the landscape into a laser focus on Simon and Andrew, then James and John as his first disciples to become fishers of men. Called as Jesus' disciples, how might we touch people for Christ, even at the seashore?

*Lord, give us your eyes to see people in need, even on vacation, and reach out to them. Amen.*

*Expect: Expect witness opportunities at the seashore.*

*Read: Mark 1:14-20*

*Stephen J. Carter  
Oakville, MO*

Tuesday, August 18, 2015

# Enlarged Family

*“My mother ... my brothers?”*

*Matthew 12:48*

A good many families have spent long hours tracing their family trees to learn about relatives long gone and often quite forgotten.

Jesus’ care for people goes beyond discovering “blood relations.” When he was told that some of his family relatives were outside, relatives who had hoped to see him when he was on a teaching tour near his home, he did more than acknowledge the blood ties. Gesturing with a sweep of his arm toward the crowd who’d gathered, he said, “These are my family—my brothers and sisters and mother.”

He had turned the session into a teaching class. This was his teaching moment. This Son of God the Father was making it clear that those who would follow Jesus were brother and sisters—adopted into the family of God.

*Lord, help us remember our family responsibilities, to please and honor our Father and to care for our siblings. Amen.*

*Discuss: Discuss with friends the role of Christians as members of the family of God.*

*Read: Matthew 12:46-50*

*Karl E. Lutze  
Valparaiso, IN*

Wednesday, August 19, 2015

# Absolutely Amazing

*God saw all that he had made, and behold, it was very good. And there was evening, and there was morning—the sixth day.*

*Genesis 1:31*

As I was growing up, my mother would say, “Stop and smell the roses.” This was used often when I felt things weren’t going my way. Not really understanding the saying when I was younger, it became clearer as I was getting older. Now when it’s not going my way, I begin taking inventory of what God has made: beautiful sunrises, birds flying and chirping, autumn leaves, grass growing, my parents, my wife, my family, my children, my grandchildren. The list is endless with all that God has made for us.

As we age, feeling the effect of aging on our bodies, “Stop and smell the roses.” God made everything for a purpose with you and me in mind.

*Almighty God, keep us mindful of what you have done for us. We are here for your purpose. May we trust you in all circumstances. Amen.*

*Always remember: God put us here at this place and time for a purpose.*

*Read: Genesis 1*

*Don Hollmann  
Ballwin, MO*

Thursday, August 20, 2015

# Daylight Ahead

*And night will be no more.*

*Revelation 22:5*

Night is often a time of quietness, peace and restful sleep. We look forward to that kind of night after a long and busy day. But sometimes night is scary, filled with real or imagined fears. Night can be a time of shadowy places and criminal acts. Night can mean hours of lonely darkness.

Daylight is coming, not just the welcome light of the morning sun or the long hours of summer daylight, but the eternal daylight of life in our Savior's presence. In that bright, forever day there will be no more death or illness, no more grief or pain or sadness. There will be no more shadows of doubt or fear. We will need no lamp or sun—no flashlight or night-light—because God himself will be our Light. And night will be no more!

*Lord Jesus, be my Light, night and day, until that eternal day dawns. Amen.*

*Watch: When you cannot sleep, turn on a light, read God's Word and banish the darkness.*

*Read: Revelation 22:1-5; 1 Thessalonians 5:1-11; Psalm 139:7-12*

*Carol Geisler  
Manchester, MO*

Friday, August 21, 2015

# Blessed Are the Infirm

*Lift your drooping hands and strengthen your weak knees.*

*Hebrews 12:12*

Our congregation is aging. The view from the last pew is a veritable sea of grey and white heads. So we had an unusual service last Sunday. Some of our seniors are reluctant to accept the help of wheelchair or cane, so it was time to remind us that help—mechanical or human—is a gift from God. During the service, all those who used walking aids—including the arms of relatives or friends—were invited to come to the altar for a special blessing. One by one, our pastor touched each wheelchair, walker, cane, hearing aid, relative or friend of the infirm—and the infirm!—reassuring them of the love and care of our Lord even until the end of their days. They seemed to return to their pews with renewed strength—and a smile.

*Lord, teach us to accept help—mechanical or human—when needed. Amen.*

*Suggest: Encourage someone who needs a cane or walker.*

*Read: Psalm 119:1-8*

*Lois Scheer  
San Diego, CA*

Saturday, August 22, 2015

# Park Bench

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

*Matthew 28:20*

Usually a welcome sight, a park bench makes me think of how we use it. Sitting alone on a park bench in solace—listening to birds, inhaling fresh air, watching the squirrels or letting the mind roam—is a real pleasure. Sitting alone, however, with aching limbs, wearied breathing and the need for a companion makes the park bench a lonely place. It needs to be shared.

The park bench doesn't change. The person sitting there determines if it is a place of solace or sharing. I believe God gives us both types of places, and in both instances, he also gives us the Holy Spirit, the constant companion. He is always there.

*Lord, help me remember you are the companion on the park bench or in any other circumstance I may encounter. Amen.*

*Do: Sit with someone on a park bench, or go by yourself and invite Jesus to sit with you.*

*Read: Psalm 121; John 14:25-27*

*Judy Scherr  
Lemay, MO*

Sunday, August 23, 2015

# House or Home?

*By wisdom a house is built ... through knowledge its rooms are filled with rare and beautiful treasures.*

*Proverbs 24:3-4*

One night my wife had a dream about the first house her parents owned after living in an apartment for years. She especially remembered her spacious room with windows to the street and choosing wall-paper with pink and blue flowers. What houses do you remember in your lifetime—as a child, an adult with or without children, in various communities? In your older years, where do you live now? Do you struggle with your circumstances or feel at home?

In Proverbs God gives wisdom to those who trust in him for life and salvation. With his presence as builder, every house or apartment becomes a home filled with rare and beautiful treasures of his love and forgiveness. And because of Christ, our Savior, we anticipate “an eternal house in heaven,” where we will live forever “at home with the Lord” (2 Corinthians 5:1, 8).

*Lord, make my current house your home until I experience my eternal home in heaven. Amen.*

*Reflect: Reflect on God’s presence in the houses of your lifetime.*

*Read: 2 Corinthians 5:1-10*

*Stephen J. Carter  
Oakville, MO*

Monday, August 24, 2015

# School Days

*Teach me your way, O Lord, that I may walk in your truth.*

*Psalm 86:11*

I've been in school most of my life—as a student, a teacher, and now as a mentor. I still love the intoxicating aroma of crayons, markers, notebooks and pencils. I can't resist a stroll down the “school supplies” aisle or freshly waxed school hallways. A new school year has always been the real “happy new year” for me, a time of excitement, new resolutions and abounding hope.

How amazing to be a student in God's classroom! He explains life lessons and eternal truths with his Word. He listens when we don't understand, and he is patient when we try our own ideas. He loves and forgives and encourages us every day. He completed our assignment to live perfectly, took our sins to the cross and has recorded our “A+” in the grade book of heaven.

*Lord, open my heart to learn from you and walk in your truth. Amen.*

*Teach: Share God's ways with a new “student.”*

*Read: Ephesians 4:11-16; 1 Peter 3:15*

*Sharolyn Sander  
Lincoln, NE*



Tuesday, August 25, 2015

# Paper Towels

*A glad heart makes a cheerful face.*

*Proverbs 15:13*

Paper towels today are not only more absorbent, but some even have words of wisdom on them. The last roll I bought had butterflies and several axioms: “A good laugh is sunshine in a home.” So true, even for seniors. “There’s a whole lot to be thankful for if you take the time to look.” As seniors, we have more time to count our blessings. “Learn from yesterday, live for today, and hope for tomorrow.” That’s good advice for any age. As seniors, we can learn a lot from many yesterdays. *Carpe diem* (seize the day) is the name of our pontoon boat. In Wisconsin, boaters must seize the day often because our summers are short. Seriously, “hope for tomorrow” is the best advice for any Christian. We hope for heaven in one of our tomorrows!

*Dear Lord, thank you for the lessons of yesterday, the gladness of today and the hope of tomorrow. Amen.*

*Do: Look for the blessing in everything, even in paper towels.*

*Read: Psalm 126:2; Matthew 6:25-34*

*Annette Schumacher  
Muskego, WI*

Wednesday, August 26, 2015

# Hugs and Kisses

*Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus.*

*John 11:5*

Family reunions, visits from friends, greetings and farewells, sending a son or daughter off to college, comforting the suffering—what do all have in common? All are likely times for hugs—and sometimes kisses—signs of love and affection.

Jesus had a human family. Jesus had friends. He visited in their homes, walked with them, worked with them.

Ever wonder how Jesus showed his love? He told the story of a father who felt compassion for a prodigal son, ran, embraced him and kissed him. Jesus allowed a forgiven woman to kiss his feet. He took children up in his arms. Physical affection comes naturally when we love one another. And surely, no one loved more than Jesus loved. Surely Jesus passed out many hugs.

When we imitate God like beloved children, we love as Jesus loved.

*Lord Jesus, open my arms to embrace those who need an expression of my love today. Amen.*

*Hug: Share a hug with someone today.*

*Read: Luke 7:41-48; Luke 15:20; Mark 10:13-16*

*Donna J. Streufert  
South Bend, IN*

Thursday, August 27, 2015

# Same Old, Same Old!

*God our Father ... comforts us in all of our troubles.*

*2 Corinthians 1:3-4*

I asked her how she was doing. With a heavy sadness in her eyes, she said: “Same old, same old.”

A broken hip, surgery, physical therapy, now the Care Center—ninety-plus years of life behind her—she was weary and worn. She had lost her spark. The will to live was waning. She felt like her life had been reduced to “same old, same old.”

It was a moment of grief. I cried inside for her. She was hurting. I could not perk her up, but I offered comfort.

“Elva, remember, your same old Jesus. He will not leave or forsake you. Claim his promise!”

“Elva, remember his same old love for you. He died for your sins and rose again. Claim his love!”

“Elva, remember his same old gift, ‘I will give you the crown of life.’ Claim his gift!”

As I said these words to her, I inserted my own name and the names of my loved ones. We all need to remember it is a good thing that the “same old” Jesus is always with us.

*Jesus, comfort all who are hurting. Amen.*

*Consider: How can I be used as a comforter?*

*Read: Psalm 86; Hebrews 13:8*

*Randy Shields  
St. Louis, MO*

Friday, August 28, 2015

# Yes, Jesus Loves Me!

*For I know the plans I have for you ... plans for welfare and not for evil.*

*Jeremiah 29:11*

Some time ago I heard about one gentleman who, during the Great Depression, could recall hearing his mother sing “Jesus Loves Me” while she prepared meals in the kitchen. I also heard about another gentleman who sang the song “Jesus Loves Me” to himself, and had others sing the song along with him, as he lay in his hospital bed preparing for his eventual homecoming in heaven.

Jesus loves you! Do you know this to be true? There may be days in which you feel unloved and forgotten. However, God reminds you over and over again in the Bible that his love for you knows no measure.

How do we know for sure that we have a caring God who hears us, who loves us and who saves us? Because the Bible tells us so!

*Lord, remind me daily about your love for me and strengthen me for each new day. Amen.*

*List: List the many ways in which God has displayed his love for you.*

*Read: John 3:16; Hebrews 4:16*

*Jonathan Vierkant  
Arlington Heights, IL*

Saturday, August 29, 2015

# Using Words

*He who restrains his lips is wise.*

*Proverbs 10:19*

“Think twice before you speak!” I still can hear my mother saying these wise words.

Recently I read this little poem:

A wise old owl sat in an oak,  
The more he saw the less he spoke,  
The less he spoke the more he heard;  
Why can't we be like that wise old bird?

In the Book of Proverbs, the writer makes this observation: “In the multitude of words sin is not lacking, but he who restrains his lips is wise.”

Sometimes as we age, we talk too much. It is still wise to be careful what we say and what we do not say.

*Lord Jesus, help us to be careful in our daily conversations. Amen.*

*Exercise: At the close of the day recall your conversations and see how wise you were. Ask Jesus to forgive your lack of wisdom.*

*Read: James 1:19-27*

*Walter M. Schoedel  
Webster Groves, MO*

Sunday, August 30, 2015

# Speak Up

*We have believed, and have come to know, that you are the Holy One of God.*

*John 6:69*

“You are the Holy One of God.” That was Peter’s beautiful response to the Lord’s question, “Do you want to go away as well?” Peter’s acknowledgment of Christ’s divinity is one of the finest testimonials ever given. We can even image Judas Iscariot nodding his head in silent agreement as Peter spoke, although the Lord knew what was in Judas’ heart.

Perhaps we, too, nod in agreement with witnessing Christians in worship and in our daily lives. But do we also give a clear and forthright testimony to those around us with our words and actions? Are there times when we fail to speak up against wrong, or hold back evidence of our beliefs, fearing embarrassment? The Lord said, “Everyone who acknowledges me before man, I also will acknowledge before my Father who is in heaven” (Matthew 10:32). May those words fill us with the desire and courage to speak up and witness to our Lord.

*Lord Jesus, fill me with courage as I witness for you. Amen.*

*Speak up: Share your faith with someone.*

*Read: John 6:60-69*

*Joan Scheele Mueller  
Webster Groves, MO*

Monday, August 31, 2015

# Free to Be

*For freedom Christ has set us free.*

*Galatians 5:1*

My favorite refrigerator magnet features a little caterpillar with the words “Be patient; God isn’t finished with me yet.” That earth-bound caterpillar is by no means free. He munches leaves and is confined to crawling along the ground. Yet we know what future God has in store for him.

St. Paul could relate to that caterpillar. “I have the desire to do what is right, but not the ability to carry it out. For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I keep on doing” (Romans 7:18-19). Paul was not free from sin, but he knew the future God had in store for him. “The law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death” (Romans 8:2).

If you’re feeling like a caterpillar, earthbound by your sin, remember, Jesus died to set you free. He said, “If the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed” (John 8:36).

*Forgive my sins, Lord, and set me free to live for you. Amen.*

*Reflect: Confess your sins and receive God’s forgiveness.*

*Read: Romans 7:7-25*

*Eileen Ritter  
Byron Center, MI*

Tuesday, September 1, 2015

# Lost and Alone

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

*Luke 19:10*

I have felt lost many times in my life: while driving, on the first day of school, looking for an address in an unfamiliar area. None of these compare to a time when I was 4 years old.

I accompanied my mother to our local grocery. It was nothing like today's megastores; there were six aisles, one checkout counter and very few customers. It may sound idyllic, but to me who suddenly couldn't find my mother, it was terrifying. I can remember it vividly: the absolute panic and fear, my heart pounding and the tears about to spill down my cheeks.

That is the desolate feeling of not being close to Jesus. We feel as though we will never be safe again and will be lost forever. Pure joy and relief flood over us when we realize our Savior is always there for us and will never leave us, just as I felt when my mother found me.

*Father, when we feel lost, help us know you are always by our side. Amen.*

*Recall: Recall times you were lost and then found.*

*Read: Luke 15:24; Luke 15:4-7*

*Gloria Doty  
Fort Wayne, IN*



Wednesday, September 2, 2015

# Open Your Ears

*On the seventh day some of the people went out to gather, but they found none. And the Lord said to Moses, "How long will you refuse to keep my commandments and my laws?"*

*Exodus 16:27-28*

It must have been an eye opener for the Israelites to go out on the Sabbath and find no manna. The Lord clearly told them what to do: "Don't try to gather manna on the Sabbath." They didn't listen.

When I read to the preschoolers here at church I tell them to turn their mouths off and turn their ears on. Maybe we should ask God to help us do the same thing as adults. Open our ears, Lord, and help us to listen.

*Lord God, I am so sorry for not trusting you as I should. Make me truly listen to you and do what you say. Amen.*

*Do: Go to a quiet place. Pray for ears to hear and a heart to listen. Then get up and listen.*

*Read: Jeremiah 26:1-5; Matthew 17:5*

*Jeremy Klaustermeier  
Warrenton, MO*

Thursday, September 3, 2015

# Chosen to Clap and Cheer

*But as it is, God arranged the members of the body, each one of them, as he chose.*

*1 Corinthians 12:18*

A child was trying out for a role in the school play. His mother knew he had his heart set on being in the play, but feared he would not be chosen. When she picked up him after school, he ran up to her with excitement written all over him. “Guess what, Mom, I’m in the play! I have been chosen to clap and cheer!”

In God’s great scheme of things, not many are chosen for lead roles. Most will play supporting roles. No role is insignificant, even if it is only to clap and cheer! Many who bear the weight of responsibility in church and society draw strength from our words of encouragement or displays of appreciation. Be among those who clap and cheer for others today.

*Thank you, Father, for choosing us to play a role in your great work of redemption. Amen.*

*Encourage: Choose a church leader who could benefit from your words of appreciation or encouragement, then act on it.*

*Read: 1 Corinthians 12:12-31; 1 Peter 4:10-11*

*Ted Zimmerman  
Napa, CA*

Friday, September 4, 2015

# Let Your Light Shine

*In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.*

*Matthew 5:16*

First it was reading glasses; then it was the dim light! Even reading glasses are not much help in dim light. We finally caved in and put ceiling lights in our living room. Voila! We can see again!

The Bible is full of references to light and darkness. Darkness is often used as a metaphor for sinful living. The world is full of darkness and dim light. Jesus declared that we, his followers, are “the light of the world.” We let his light shine in us when we live according to his will, letting the fruit of his Spirit show in our lives through our joy, patience, gentleness and kindness.

*Father, let your light shine in me and through me to others, for your glory. Amen.*

*Do: Brighten someone's day with a smile or kind deed or word.*

*Read: Matthew 5:13-16; Galatians 5:22-23*

*Diane Bahn  
Cypress, TX*

Saturday, September 5, 2015

# Jesus Is the Answer

*Call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.*

*Matthew 1:21*

In school chapel, the kids have a “go to” answer for all of my questions. “What season is it?” “Jesus!” “Who knows why we now have banners with crowns on them?” “Jesus!” “Why do we have the color green on the altar?” “Jesus!”

We can smile at “Jesus” being the answer to every question, yet we all would agree that “Jesus” IS the answer to every question! His name means forgiveness and salvation for us all.

“Who’s going to strengthen us today?” Jesus. “How will we face troubles and sickness and heartache and any other earthly problem?” Jesus. “Who guides us and supports us and calls us his own?” “Who blesses us and tells us to fear no more forever?” The answer is Jesus!

Jesus tells us that to enter his kingdom, we must become like little children. Now we know why! They had the right answer all along!

*Jesus, you are my answer to all things. Amen.*

*Answer: Whenever you are asked a question today, think “Jesus”!*

*Read: Philippians 2:5-11*

*Al Schenk  
St. Louis, MO*

Sunday, September 6, 2015

# Birds of the Air

*Even the sparrow finds a home, and the swallow a nest for herself ... at your altars, O Lord.*

*Psalm 84:3*

I looked through a glass wall at a courtyard with benches, fountains, bamboo, cascades of petunias and people. This was a surgical waiting area, and it was a busy day. Not three feet from me, a fluffed-up robin sat on her nest in a sapling, undisturbed by the people around her. In the two or three hours I was there, I watched her peck around the nest and leave to sit on the edge of a fountain. The nest looked like most birds' nests, but I couldn't help noticing a sheet of office paper along the bottom. The robin had not only built her nest in the midst of people, but she used what she could find. God provided what the robin needed.

*Lord of all things, help us know that you provide and will help us work out the challenges in our lives. Amen.*

*Remember: God gives us ways to cope.*

*Read: Matthew 6:25-34*

*Judy Scherr  
Lemay, MO*

Monday, September 7, 2015

# Who, Or Do?

*Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.*

*Romans 8:1*

What a great way to start the day, or whatever time of day it is for you, to hear once again that the Lord loves and forgives us for WHO we are and not for what we DO. It is all about the WHO and not about the DO.

It's a good thing, isn't it, especially as we find ourselves not being able to DO everything we used to do? We are WHO we are, God's forgiven people, because of what he has DONE through the cross and the empty tomb. And the Lord continues to enable and encourage us to DO things for others, as our energies and opportunities provide, as we live out our WHOness in him.

No need to grumble about what we are not able to DO today. Instead, we rejoice in knowing WHO and WHOSE we are.

*Lord, keep me from feeling useless and worthless today because you have already made me WHO I am, and I am glad. Amen.*

*Talk: Share your WHOness with someone and talk about what you are going to DO about it today.*

*Read: 1 Corinthians 1:26-31; 1 John 3:1-3*

*Rich Bimler  
Bloomington, IL*

Tuesday, September 8, 2015

# Write It Down

*Write down for the coming generation what the Lord has done.*

*Psalm 102:18*

Several years ago, my wife and I were reading Psalm 102. Reading verse 18 prompted us to sit down and write our autobiographies for our children and grandchildren.

Our goal was to record our journey of faith through good and bad days. We wanted our family to see how God touched our lives, encouraged us to seek his will and discover and rediscover his grace in Christ Jesus. We didn't hesitate to tell it like it was.

The fruit of the pudding came when several grandchildren said to us, "Thank you so much for sharing your life's faith story. It will help us in our journey. Now we have a better idea of what went on during the Great Depression and World War II." How humbling it was to know how our stories could enhance the stories of our loved ones' lives.

*Lord Jesus, help us share our faith life in words, in deeds, even in our writings. Amen.*

*Write: Take time NOW and write your autobiography or at least put it on tape for your family.*

*Read: Jeremiah 36:1-3; John 20:30-31; John 21:25*

*Walter M. Schoedel  
Webster Groves, MO*

Wednesday, September 9, 2015

# The Visible Man

*In him was life, and the life was the light of men.  
The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness  
has not overcome it.*

*John 1:4-5*

Remember the Visible Man, the human figure with transparent plastic flesh and all the organs, veins, arteries, etc., available to see? It could even be taken apart so that one could see how it was all put together. It was a great way to become acquainted with the biblical truth that we are “fearfully and wonderfully made” (Psalm 139:14). Scripture teaches that “God is light and in him is no darkness at all” (1 John 1:5). Just as important, it says, “If we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another” (1 John 1:7). In God’s pure light, we become known for what we are. But it also makes possible the miracle of fellowship: that miracle of understanding. That fellowship does not diminish but grows richer with age. And it is the precious residue of the memories we carry with us.

*Lord, help me to walk in the light as you are in the light and live in fellowship with others. Amen.*

*Bond: Let your life take on some visibility with someone today and rejoice in fellowship with them.*

*Read: 1 John 1:1-2; 1 Corinthians 1:9-10*

*Mike May  
Kansas City, KS*



Thursday, September 10, 2015

# Faith That Trusts God

*There is a greater power with us than with them.*

*2 Chronicles 32:7*

There is a great story in 2 Chronicles 32:1-8. Trapped inside and unable to escape, King Hezekiah and his people appeared to be doomed. But even though he didn't know from where help might come, King Hezekiah believed that the God in whom he trusted was more powerful than the enemy he faced. He believed God would deliver them, and said as much. Some people call that "blind faith."

The truth is that all faith by its very nature is blind. Faith doesn't have private information about how the future will pan out, but it is sure that God has everything under his control. People of faith link themselves to the long list of people of faith in the past that is catalogued in Hebrews 11. Those who trust in him pen their name to that list. You can add your name there too. Consider today what your story of "blind faith" might be and be encouraged by that memory.

*By your Spirit and through your Word, create in me a faith that trusts that you are more powerful than any challenge I face. Amen.*

*Write: Write down your story of "blind faith."*

*Read: 2 Corinthians 5:7; Hebrews 11:1-14*

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

Friday, September 11, 2015

# I Remember Grandma

*Trust in the Lord with all your heart.*

*Proverbs 3:5*

I still have it after all these years. It's not the most expensive gift I ever got. But it's precious to me. It's a silver dollar my grandma gave me when I was a kid.

The American eagle is on one side. Lady Liberty is on the other, with the fading words surrounding her, "In God We Trust." That reminds me of an even greater gift Grandma gave me—her faith in God. That never faded through all her years. I can still hear her singing "Rock of Ages." Her faith still encourages me today. I pray I'll be able to pass such a precious gift on to my grandchildren.

Your grandchildren or other children you know probably already have plenty of this world's treasures. Give them a treasure that will last all their lives. Write a note. Sing your favorite hymn. Share your faith in the God who loves you forever. It's your forever gift to them.

*Dear God, let my song inspire my grandchildren to know your love and love you too. Amen.*

*Give: Give a small memento from your life (and the story that goes with it) to a grandchild or a child in your church or neighborhood.*

*Read: Psalm 78; Psalm 128*

*Lonie Eatherton  
Fenton, MO*

Saturday, September 12, 2015

# May I Hold Your Hand?

*My soul clings to you; your right hand upholds me.*

*Psalm 63:8*

Hand-holding is a universal sign of compassion, caring and respect in our society. We shake hands upon meeting a stranger. Couples and family members of all ages walk hand-in-hand as a sign of tenderness. It is only natural to grasp and stroke the hand of a loved one in the hospital.

Holding hands is a good reminder of our relationship with our Heavenly Father. David certainly knew the strength of God's right hand holding him up in times of danger, sin and celebration. He felt God's hand steady his as he slung a stone at Goliath. He clung to God's hand as the Lord led him to victory over Israel's enemies. He felt the heavy hand of God's law and the merciful hand of forgiveness after he killed Uriah to take Bathsheba as his wife. We place our hand in God's as we trust his in his mercy and compassion in times of doubt and sorrow. When we ask, "May I hold your hand?" his answer is, "I am already holding yours."

*Father, thank you for firmly grasping my hand in yours. In Jesus' name. Amen.*

*Do: Give someone's hand a squeeze today.*

*Read: Psalm 63; Psalm 41*

*Ruth Geisler  
Aliso Viejo, CA*

Sunday, September 13, 2015

# Grandparents Day

*God gave Solomon wisdom and very great insight, and a breadth of understanding as measureless as the sand on the seashore.*

1 Kings 4:29

In 1978, the United States passed legislation proclaiming the first Sunday after Labor Day as National Grandparents Day. The month of September was chosen for the holiday to signify the “autumn years” of life. The proclamation was signed by President Jimmy Carter.

When I look back upon my life, especially during my childhood and teen years, I realize how much wisdom and guidance I was given by God through my grandparents. However, I was also blessed to have some surrogate grandparents throughout my life as well. They all had such an impact on the person whom I’ve become today.

Whether you are a biological or a surrogate grandparent, know that God has given you wisdom that can make a positive contribution in the lives of others.

*Dear God, help me to impart my wisdom to others. Amen.*

*Consider: What wisdom can you impart today?*

*Read: Deuteronomy 4:6*

Betsy Becker Niedringhaus  
Ballwin, MO

Monday, September 14, 2015

# From Self to Help

*For the love of Christ controls us, because we have concluded this: that one has died for all, therefore all have died.*

*2 Corinthians 5:14*

The “selfie”—taking a self-portrait with a smart-phone—has captured the attention of many. While it may be useful for some, I sense it may put too much focus on self rather than on others.

Those who focus on others prefer to take Christ’s picture and then show that picture to those around them because they want to see Christ’s love develop in the lives of others.

It’s about shifting our lives from satisfying ourselves to helping others. It’s about the Spirit helping us and then us helping those who are in need.

He redeemed us to bless others, so that we no longer live for ourselves, but for the whole body of believers. It’s not about me, it’s about us—all of us united by faith in Jesus Christ to bless and help every sister and brother.

*Make me a blessing to someone today, dear Jesus.  
Amen.*

*Help: Help someone today with a simple task.*

*Read: 1 John 2:1-2; Galatians 2:20*

*David P. Schmidt  
St. Louis, MO*

Tuesday, September 15, 2015

# Don't Look Back

*But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, where righteousness dwells.*

2 Peter 3:13

When it was time to learn to drive, I attended a professional driving school. I remember the instructor stating many rules and regulations, but one thing he said stood out to me as possibly the best piece of advice: “Don’t spend so much time looking in the rearview mirror; you forget to look where you are going and will undoubtedly crash into something.”

That is good advice for our lives also. Of course, there are times when we need to look back to learn from past experiences or recall wonderful memories. However, if we spend so much time looking at and lamenting our past, we will crash headlong into daily obstacles and never know the joy of anticipating our future here on earth and, ultimately, in heaven.

*Jesus, keep our eyes on you every day so we can continue to move forward toward the future you promise us with you. Amen.*

*Make: Make a list of all the things you might miss if you only looked back.*

*Read: Genesis 19:26; Deuteronomy 4:29*

Gloria Doty  
Fort Wayne, IN

Wednesday, September 16, 2015

# Believe As a Child

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

*Proverbs 3:5*

We have a children's message before the sermon at our worship services, and the children run down all the aisles to hear it. The pastor usually has a visual aid to get their attention, and he always asks questions to keep them engaged. The children are so eager to hear and discuss the message. Their answers are sometimes simple and often times insightful. The pastor always closes with an "echo prayer" as the children repeat his phrases. It's so wonderful to hear young children discuss and pray so openly and sincerely, accepting the simple truths of God's Word. We adults could all learn from their example. Are we always eager to hear God's Word? Do we always accept God's will or do we sometimes question it? We need to surrender to his will and trust his awesome wisdom in all situations.

*Dear Father, help me to believe as your child.  
Amen.*

*Trust: Trust God's will and listen to his Word.*

*Read: Proverbs 3:5-6; Mark 9:24; Luke 18:17*

*Annette Schumacher  
Muskego, WI*

Thursday, September 17, 2015

# Paradise Now

*Today you will be with me in Paradise.*

*Luke 23:43*

The thief on the cross knew his time was short. Jesus promised him that “today” they would be together in the presence of God—in Paradise. Like the thief, we look forward to living in God’s presence when we die because of Jesus’ death on the cross in our place.

But Jesus said, “Today.” Because Jesus rose from the dead and gives us new life through faith, we live in God’s presence today. Having been buried with Christ by baptism into death, we are raised with him to walk in newness of life—life in the presence of God.

Does your life look like Paradise today? Failing health, financial issues, loneliness and broken relationships may plague you. But Jesus has promised Paradise—life in God’s presence today, even in the midst of your troubles—because of his death and resurrection. And he promises eternal Paradise in heaven when we die.

*Lord, let me experience the joy of Paradise today.  
Amen.*

*Think about: How will living in God’s presence bring joy to your life today?*

*Read: Psalm 16*

*Eileen Ritter  
Byron Center, MI*



Friday, September 18, 2015

# T.G.I.F.!

*You received without paying; give without pay.*

*Matthew 10:8*

T.G.I.F. “Thank God It’s Friday!” It’s the cheer many give after a long week at work or school. But we can cheer with new meaning even after the school years and work years: “Thank God I’m Forgiven!” and “Thank God I’m Forgiving!” We have a God who loves us unconditionally. The Bible promises, “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins” (1 John 1:9).

Jesus charged his disciples to give as they had received. And God helps us, who have been forgiven, to forgive others.

The next time you hear “T.G.I.F.,” think, “Thank God I’m Forgiven!” and “Thank God I’m Forgiving!” Because you are—and you can be—by God’s power!

*Thank you, Lord, for forgiving me. Help me to be a forgiving person. Amen.*

*Act: Pray the Lord’s Prayer with renewed appreciation for the words, “Forgive us ... as we forgive ...” By God’s power, practice being a forgiven “forgiver.”*

*Read: Psalm 32; Matthew 10:5-13*

*Steve Hess  
Fort Myers, FL*

Saturday, September 19, 2015

# Comforting Others

*... so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction.*

*2 Corinthians 1:4*

When I am going through a problem, it is comforting to be able to talk to someone else who has experienced that same issue. They have struggled with the same feelings, fears, doubts and questions that I have. That gives me courage and strength that I will be able come out with a stronger faith too.

Everyone who is reading this has been through unique trials of many kinds. At one point, these seemed like insurmountable problems to you, but with work, patience and lots of faith in God, you were able to persevere. Now God can use you as his voice to share with others who are struggling that wisdom, that comfort, which you received.

*Lord, help me to share my experiences with others so that they can be comforted when they are going through a problem. Amen.*

*Share: Tell someone about a challenge, problem or temptation that God helped you overcome.*

*Read: 2 Corinthians 1:3-11; Psalm 119:76; Isaiah 49:13*

*Celeste Cummins  
Storm Lake, IA*

Sunday, September 20, 2015

# The Worst Call

*This means that it is not the children of the flesh who are the children of God, but the children of the promise are counted as offspring.*

Romans 9:8

It's football season again. Do you remember how the Super Bowl ended last February? In the closing seconds of that crucial game, Seattle Seahawks Coach Pete Carroll chose a very short pass instead of a run. But the pass was intercepted and the game was over! Many thought it was the worst call ever.

Coach Carroll admitted he had misjudged the play. But he held his head high and said they were moving on. That's the way it is for us as Christians. We fumble the ball, we make an error in judgment or we let others down. However, because of our baptism into Christ we know that we can move on. God forgives us and accepts us as we are—flawed sinners. Even when we make “the worst call,” God makes “the best call” by promising that we are his forgiven children. Thanks be to God!

*Gracious God, help us to hold our heads high as your forgiven and redeemed children. Amen.*

*Think: Think about times God forgave you when you have “fumbled the ball” and let others down.*

*Read: Romans 6:1-4*

Margaret Hinchey  
Englewood, CO

Monday, September 21, 2015

## Q & A With Jesus

*Call to me and I will answer you, and will tell you great and hidden things that you have not known.*

*Jeremiah 33:3*

Sitting at my desk, starting the day with devotions and prayer, I sometimes glance at the small sofa beside the window and wish that Jesus were sitting there. I have so many questions! Even if he could stay for just 15 minutes, I could ask enough questions and get enough answers to settle my heart for a long time.

Before Jesus left the earth, his disciples had a lot of questions too. To settle their hearts, Jesus promised to send the Holy Spirit to “teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you” (John 14:26). God sends us that same Spirit to be our Comforter and Counselor and to help us find answers in the Word and through prayer. We may not find every answer—Where did I leave my keys?—but God provides answers to all the most important questions about this life on earth and the one ahead in heaven.

*Triune God, guide me to ask the important questions and to seek answers in your Word. Amen.*

*Ask: Bring all your questions to God in prayer, knowing that he will provide the answers you need.*

*Read: John 14:25-27; John 16:29-33*

*Marj Maynard  
Billings, MO*

Tuesday, September 22, 2015

# Kingdom Citizenship

*Thy kingdom come.*

*Matthew 6:10*

As I write this devotion, one king has died and another king has been overthrown. The changes in those kingdoms have left local citizens concerned and have caused far-reaching implications globally. In our world, kingdoms come and go.

Not so the kingdom that we pray about in the Lord's Prayer. That kingdom has a long history and we have the assurance that it will not change and it will not end. That is wonderful news for us. Our King is the same yesterday, today and forever. And what a king! He is loving, caring, forgiving, renewing, empowering.

We are members of his kingdom. Our citizenship was confirmed in our baptism. It is a citizenship we will enjoy forever. Even when we behave badly, we remain, by his grace, citizens of this kingdom. That is the reason so many want to behave well—to glorify the King and build up our fellow citizens.

*Heavenly Father, continue to bless our citizenship in your kingdom. Amen.*

*Greet: Greet warmly many fellow citizens in our Lord's kingdom this day.*

*Read: Revelation 7:9-17*

*Vern Gundermann  
Saint Louis, MO*

Wednesday, September 23, 2015

# Change—Who? Me?

*For the gifts and call of God are irrevocable.*

*Romans 11:29*

We welcome autumn with its leaves changing from summer's green to many rich colors. The incredible consistency of the changing seasons reminds us of God's Word: "The grass withers, the flowers fade, but the word of the Lord endures forever" (1 Peter 1:24). We joyfully remember his promises. But he still calls us, changed though we may be, as we age.

He calls us to accept the help we need gratefully; to offer words of cheer to those who help us; to pray for courage, acceptance for ourselves and for those with whom we come in contact; to let our world know that we feel the presence of our Lord and Savior. He is not done with you yet. You may not see it now, but he values you as his servant.

He will not change his mind. The Lord who redeemed you, died, rose and lives for you, who calls you by name in his baptism, will never be done with you.

As our life changes, as the seasons change, let our prayer be in the words of Henry F. Lyte:

*O thou who changest not, abide with me. Amen.*

*Change: Consider one thing to change in your life.*

*Read: Hebrews 7:17-19*

*Connie Bretscher  
Valparaiso, IN*

Thursday, September 24, 2015

# What To Wear?

*For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.*

*Galatians 3:27*

I wonder why it is necessary for television and radio news broadcasts to tell us what to wear when the weather turns cold or warm. Wear cap and gloves when it's cold, we're told. Wear something lighter when it's hot. Aren't we smart enough to figure that out for ourselves? But then we need to remember the poor. They may know what to wear in the face of weather situations, but they may not be able to afford necessary clothing.

And so we remember that God is good. We remember that God is with us in times of stress and sadness. We remember that God is with us in good times too. We remember that God gives us opportunities—lots of opportunities—to serve others. We remember that God gave up his own Son in order to make us his people. We are dressed in the righteousness of Jesus.

*Jesus, thank you for being my Savior. Clothed in you, I am ready for every opportunity for service. Amen.*

*Give: Donate clothing for those in need.*

*Read: Galatians 3:26-28; 2 Corinthians 5:18-21*

*Jerry Groth  
Sturgeon Bay, WI*

Friday, September 25, 2015

# Climb the Ladder

*We love because he first loved us.*

*1 John 4:19*

Recently there was a ladder in our chancel for week-end services. This visual aid reminded us to climb the ladder of generosity by sharing our time, money and, most importantly, JESUS, with others in our church, community and the world. One of our senior pastors, at the age of 67, still plays softball and told us in his sermon that people ask him, “Don’t your bones and muscles ache?” He replies, “Sure, but they ache even when I don’t play, so I might as well play.” So it is with positive, sometimes sacrificial living and giving for seniors. We “stay in the game” by continuing to be generous with our time and money instead of accumulating more “stuff.” I talked with a senior friend after the service who said she plans to “downsize” and move to a smaller home so she can be more generous in her giving.

*Dear Generous God, thank you for everything you give us in love. Amen.*

*Do: Follow God’s example of generosity by helping others.*

*Read: Matthew 22:36-40; Luke 19:1-10; Galatians 5:14*

*Annette Schumacher  
Muskego, WI*



Saturday, September 26, 2015

# The Long Way Around

*When Pharaoh let the people go, God did not lead them on the road through the Philistine country, though it was shorter. For God said, "If they face war, they might change their minds and return to Egypt."*

*Exodus 13:17-18*

As you get wiser, you realize that the long way is often the best way. Shortcuts often result in getting lost, starting over or just completely failing all together.

The problem for the Israelites was that the short way meant going through the Philistines. If the Israelites encountered them, there would certainly be war, and they would rather be slaves in Egypt than fight the Philistines.

God sometimes takes the long way with us. He doesn't want us to turn from him, and so he gently guides us through life to keep us from those things that will cause us to lose faith.

*Lord, lead me the long way gently through life that I may live forever in you. Amen.*

*Do: Take a long drive or a long walk. Remember that God takes his time with you.*

*Read: 2 Peter 3:9-10*

*Jeremy Klaustermeier  
Warrenton, MO*

Sunday, September 27, 2015

# Look to the Source!

*And they all ate and were satisfied.*

*Luke 9:17*

Would you consider yourself today to be a glass half empty or glass half full type of person? Jesus' disciples would display a spirit of pessimism in that they would sometimes focus too much on seemingly impossible situations. For instance, when faced with a hungry crowd of 5,000-plus people, and being instructed by Jesus to feed them, the disciples would shout, "Impossible!"

Yet here Jesus teaches his disciples not to get so caught up on the seemingly impossible nature of a situation, but rather to look to the source, Jesus himself, through whom all things are possible.

Perhaps you are facing a difficult journey ahead of you. Remember these words from Philippians 4:13: "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me." Christ has already overcome the greatest need for you by giving his life as a ransom for your sins. He will also provide for your smaller needs as well.

*Lord, grant me faith in your ability to change an impossible situation. Amen.*

*Share: Discuss with others how God has provided for you in seemingly impossible circumstances.*

*Read: Isaiah 66:1-2; Ephesians 6:11*

*Jonathan Vierkant  
Arlington Heights, IL*

Monday, September 28, 2015

# Reading the Bible—Now

*The Word of the Lord is upright.*

*Psalm 33:4*

The words of Scripture speak to me as I age in new and wondrous ways. The Book of Jonah was a funny fish story when I was young. Now I hear the Lord saying to me, much like he did to Jonah, “You still have time to call on the sick. Get up and go!” The heaven of Revelation was a beautiful painting of a land far away in my early years. Now I’m making plans to move in. How old were Sarah and Elizabeth when God told them they would give birth to special sons? I would weep loudly with that news now. Jesus healed Peter’s mother-in-law, ill with fever, and she “began to serve them.” Right away? At her age? Along with reading Scripture in new ways, there are the comforts of memorized Psalms, and Luke’s “It came to pass in those days ...” and the Confirmation verse: “I am with you always ...” Let the Bible speak to where you are now. You might be surprised by what you discover.

*Thank you, Lord, for your steadfast Word for all ages. Amen.*

*Share: Read a story from Scripture with a young child and share your different views.*

*Read: Acts 9:30-42*

*Lois Scheer  
San Diego, CA*

Tuesday, September 29, 2015

# A Peace that Lasts

*Oh, give thanks to the Lord ... for his steadfast love endures forever!*

*Psalm 106:1*

It's been said that most of us operate on the echo principle: when things go well, we feel good; when things go bad, we feel bad. When life is going smoothly, we have peace with God; when trouble comes, we think God's peace has left us.

But the message of Jesus is "My peace I leave with you." Jesus gives lasting peace and hope even when the world says, "There is no lasting hope, so how can there be lasting peace?"

The angels' song at Christmas proclaimed "Peace on earth." The peace they sang about is the peace we have in Jesus Christ. Jesus came to be our peace. Jesus came to be our hope, our great joy and God's Good News in all of life's twists and turns.

And so we say with the psalmist: "Oh, give thanks to the Lord."

*Lord Jesus, thank you for bringing peace to my heart. Amen.*

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

*Read: Numbers 6:22-27; John 14:25-29*

*Edward Arle  
St. Charles, MO*

Wednesday, September 30, 2015

# Celebrating His Presence

*For what great nation is there that has a god so near to it as the Lord our God is to us, whenever we call upon him?*

*Deuteronomy 4:7*

It was a great speech before one of the greatest moments in their lives, as Moses prepared them for the final stage of their journey into the Promised Land. But more than his words, something transformed that moment into an unforgettable experience. It was the sense of the very presence of God in their midst. It set them apart from every other nation on earth.

Sometimes I think we can lose sight of that. What makes us different from all other people on this earth is the amazing wonder that we are the people in the presence of God. God became one of us in Christ and has never taken his presence away from us. As we read his Word, gather in worship and join in fellowship, God nurtures us in his presence. That reality transforms those moments into blessings.

*Dear Lord, bless me with the sense of your presence and let me consciously carry your presence to those around me. Amen.*

*Prepare: Each time you read God's Word, light a candle to remind you of his presence.*

*Read: John 14:15-23*

*Lionel Otto  
Adelaide, Australia*

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

Here are 12 ideas to try out each week of this quarter. Post this page and check it regularly:

## *July*

- Spend time visiting with your neighbors, especially any new folks in your neighborhood.
- Invite a friend over to show off your new flowers, photos or something new to them.
- Listen to the birds sing and say a special prayer thanking God for his gift of creation.
- Do something in your home that needs to be done this summer that you've been putting off.

## *August*

- Plan to send birthday cards to 5 or more people to remind them that aging is a gift.
- Limit yourself to 1 hour or less of watching TV. (Cubs' games do not count!)
- Buy school supplies for special children in your life and offer to help them get ready for a new school year.
- Eat as much ice cream as you can.

## *September*

- Contact an old friend, just to say hi.
- Pray for those in special need of God's grace.
- Bake some cookies and give them to a teacher of a grandchild or neighbor this new school year.
- Thank the Lord for another summer of blessings, surprises and hope-full living.

# Hope-Full Praying

## *On Vacation*

Bless us, Lord, during these vacation days. Whether our vacations take us to faraway lands, to the state nearby, to the beach or mountains, or only to our friends and family close at hand, give us safe travel, warm hearts, and plenty of pleasant memories when we return. Amen.

## *For Our Nation*

Lord of all nations, remind me that you are the Lord of ALL nations. Bring peace and hope to people everywhere, starting with me. Where there is hatred, bring your love; where there is prejudice, bring understanding. Help me to remember the people I'd rather forget. Bring hope to others, Lord, through me, as only you can do. Amen.

## *For Health*

For the gifts of body, mind and spirit, Lord, we thank you. Even when the body aches, the mind forgets and the spirit drags, you continue to bless us with health through your love and grace and forgiveness. Keep mending us, molding us and moving us as your mercy motivates us to share our holy health to those around us. Amen.

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