

HOPE-FULL LIVING

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

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Rich Bimler, Mark Zimmermann, Editors

Carol Geisler, Kasey Nugent, Editorial Assistants

Hope-Full Living Mission Statement

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

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Saturday, July 1, 2017

Symbol

*You have set up a banner for those who fear you,
that they may flee to it.*

Psalm 60:4

“And the rockets’ red glare, the bombs bursting in air, gave proof through the night that our flag was still there.” Our national anthem first celebrated the welcome sight of the flag waving over embattled Fort McHenry during the War of 1812.

Centuries earlier, another battle took place at an execution site near Jerusalem. There were no rockets, just darkness settling over three crosses. No flag waved proudly over the dying victim on the center cross. Yet on the third day after Jesus’ death, the “dawn’s early light” revealed his empty tomb. Through his death and resurrection, Jesus destroyed the powers of sin, death and the devil. His victory is our victory. Look to the “star-spangled banner” and celebrate our nation. Look to the cross and rejoice in the forgiveness and life that are yours through faith in Jesus’ name.

Lord Jesus, thank you for the victory that you won for us. Amen.

*Celebrate: Sing our national anthem with pride.
When you see a cross, rejoice in Jesus’ victory.*

Read: Hebrews 2:14-18; Galatians 6:14-18

*Carol Geisler
Manchester, MO*

Sunday, July 2, 2017

Sparklers

Like the jewels of a crown they shall shine on his land. For how great is his goodness, and how great his beauty!

Zechariah 9:16-17

With all the lights of populated areas, it's often difficult seeing a star-filled sky. So, we city-dwellers relish pulling out the sparklers. These hand-held "showers of stars" bring great delight.

When the Lord appears, Zechariah describes an arrow flashing, a trumpet sounding and his chosen people sparkling like jewels in a crown. No need for sparklers here! We are his sparklers.

In Matthew's gospel, Jesus says we are the lights of the world. We are to shine, to sparkle, and through the Spirit's power, share the good news of salvation. As folks around us see and hear our joy in the Lord, we boldly ask God's Spirit to touch their lives with his mighty power so they, too, confess Jesus as Savior and praise our Father in heaven.

Good Father, may our lives mirror our love for you and may we always walk as children of the light. Amen.

Today: Sparkle! Share the good news of salvation.

Read: Matthew 5:14-16; Acts 13:46-49; Ephesians 5:8-21

*Louise Schini Weber
Fort Myers, FL*

Monday, July 3, 2017

Stars and Stripes Forever

Shine like stars.

Philippians 2:15

Returning to America in 1896, John Philip Sousa, upon hearing of the death of his friend and band manager, composed “Stars and Stripes Forever,” which became his most famous march. What a fitting tribute to his friend and to the country they both loved. At the death of someone near to us, we remember how short life is. We look to things that will last forever. Yes, we pray that God will bless our nation in the years to come. But our nation, as much as we love it, is not the “forever” of our lives.

People die. Nations fall. Our strength fails. But Jesus Christ our Savior is the same yesterday and today and forever (Hebrews 13:8). The Word of our God stands forever (Isaiah 40:8). Give thanks to the Lord for he is good. His love endures forever (Psalm 106:1). And finally, we will dwell in the house of the Lord ... forever! (Psalm 23).

Almighty God, thank you for making it possible for us to forever shine like stars for you. Amen.

Share: Use your freedoms of speech and religion today to share your faith in God.

Read: Psalm 23; Hebrews 13

*Lonie Eatherton
Fenton, MO*

Tuesday, July 4, 2017

Captive or Free?

The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the LORD has anointed me ... to proclaim liberty to the captives.

Isaiah 61:1

On July 4th the United States celebrates the birth of our nation and independence from foreign rule. However, my independence is diminishing. Not because of any national events or political agenda, but, as my body ages, my ability to do things for myself becomes more limited.

The liberty Isaiah proclaims is not freedom in my body or for a nation. It is freedom for my soul. Because the Almighty God has laid the punishment for my sin on his Son, I do not fear his judgment. When Jesus comes, I'll enjoy the full freedom he has won for me both in my spirit and my body.

Lord, help me to bear my growing limitations with grace, knowing that you have made me truly free through the blood of Jesus. May I rejoice in a freedom of spirit that never diminishes. Amen.

Think: How can you join Isaiah in proclaiming liberty to those who are still captive to sin?

Read: Acts 26:24-29

*Jan Schmidt
Florissant, CO*

Wednesday, July 5, 2017

Light up the Sky

*The crash of your thunder was in the whirlwind;
your lightnings lighted up the world; the earth trem-
bled and shook.*

Psalm 77:18

We Americans love to celebrate with our pyrotechnics. In Williamsburg, we have two main celebrations each year in which we light up the skies with fireworks. One is the Fourth of July and the other is the Grand Illumination on the first Sunday in December. Whether standing in front of the old colonial Governor's Palace in the heat and humidity of July or huddled in the same location around a fire to chase the away the winter chill, the skies burst into color and the thunderous explosions shake the ground beneath our feet.

In either case, I am reminded of today's verse. We are children of an awesome God. His power is earth-shaking. And his love is never ending. May we light up the lives of those around us with that good news.

Almighty God, your power is seen in the thunder and lightning. May your love be seen in the lives of your people. Amen.

Rejoice: Burst into praise for your Creator and light up the sky around you with his love!

Read: Psalm 77:17-19

*Terry Weber
Williamsburg, VA*

Thursday, July 6, 2017

Liberty Bell

Now the Lord is that Spirit: and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.

2 Corinthians 3:17 KJV

Since the 1700s, the Liberty Bell has been treasured in America as a symbol of the liberty we enjoy under representative government. Because of its inscription, “Proclaim Liberty throughout all the Land unto all the Inhabitants thereof,” taken from Leviticus 25:10 KJV, it became an inspiration for abolitionists, women’s suffrage advocates and civil rights leaders—all those working for their particular cause of freedom.

But the Liberty Bell itself was never perfect. It cracked at its first ringing, and was never repaired to satisfaction. We are blessed, because there is one perfect freedom—with no cracks. This liberty is available to every believer of salvation through Jesus Christ.

Thank you, Lord Jesus, for the liberty we have in you. Freedom from the bondage of sin covers it all. Amen.

Write: List the freedoms you have in America. Thank God for each one.

Read: Galatians 5:1; John 8:36; Romans 8:2

*Lynne Waite Chapman
Fort Wayne, IN*

Friday, July 7, 2017

Polaris

Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.

John 8:12

Perhaps the most recognizable constellation in the sky is the Big Dipper. If you follow the outermost two stars in the pan, it will point to the final star in the handle of the Little Dipper. That star is known as Polaris, or the North Star. It is located directly over the earth's polar axis and while other stars' apparent positions in the sky change throughout the night, Polaris remains virtually fixed. This makes it especially useful for navigation.

Jesus is our "Polaris." Everything revolves around him, and our world must be God-centered. Just like travelers look to the North Star, as we look to Christ we are able to navigate through all of the trials, tribulations and challenges, as well as the joys, of life. Indeed, Jesus is "the light of life."

*Lord, let my eyes be fixed on you; guide my path.
Amen.*

Watch: Invite God to go outside tonight; it's time for the two of you to go stargazing.

Read: Numbers 24:17, Matthew 2:2

*Don Luepke
Fremont, IN*

Saturday, July 8, 2017

For God And Country

We love because he first loved us.

1 John 4:19

I still thrill at the words of President John Kennedy, “Ask not what your country can do for you, ask what you can do for your country.” I agree. God has blessed us with a great country. I then tried applying these words to my relationship with God. They would read, “Ask not what God can do for you, ask what you can do for God.” Those words frighten me. I know that it is not what I can do for God, but what God has done, and still does, for me. Out of his great love, God sent his Son Jesus to take all my sins upon himself, dying on the cross for me so that I might live before him as God’s forgiven saint. By his resurrection from the dead he made the way for my resurrection and promised me life with him forever.

I thank God that I live in the United States. I will serve my country, but all service to others begins with my response to God, who first loved me.

Thank you, Lord, that you first loved me. Help me to love people as you love them. Amen.

Tell: Share your faith with another person.

Read: 1 John 4:7-21

*Leo Symmank
Seabrook, TX*

Sunday, July 9, 2017

A Star in the Eyes

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

Matthew 2:2

Stars have a special meaning for Americans. Our flag has 50 of them. One star, long ago, led magi to Jesus. The magi saw it shining, knew that it heralded the long-awaited King of the Jews and followed the light to worship Jesus. The shining star of Matthew is too often reserved only to illuminate Christmas and Epiphany. That's a shame. The message of that star shining is for July as well, and every other month of the year.

The star still shines. It shines in you. It shines through you. It still leads others to follow and worship Jesus. You might think that at your age the light isn't shining very brightly. Wrong! The star that shines in you is the Light of Christ. Jesus said, "You are the light of the world!" Shine with Christ's love and grace today.

*Holy Jesus, may I shine with your Light today.
Amen.*

Gaze: Look at the stars tonight and be reminded of Christ.

Read: Psalm 4:5-8

*Don Schatz
Kenmore, WA*

Monday, July 10, 2017

Who's Crazy?

The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you.

2 Peter 3:9

Decades ago, when I shuttled between schools with my children, I saw a “crazy old man” in a straw hat walk behind a mower on a piece of ground as large as a park. Now the “crazy old man” is us, my husband and I, doing the same thing on our oversized lawn. Strangely enough, it doesn't feel crazy. It is good exercise, a job that needs to be done and is perhaps God's gift to keep us healthy.

It took me decades to learn that. From Eden to judgment, from embryo to our last days, God knows all the lessons we need to learn. It is we who need to remember he is the gracious God who sent Jesus, who came to seek and to save the lost.

Dear God, grant us patience that we may see your patience toward us. Amen.

Think: Look again at something you've forgotten or dismissed, and see if God is sending a lesson.

Read: Exodus 34:6; 2 Peter 3:8-9

*Judy Scherr
Lemay, MO*

Tuesday, July 11, 2017

We Are All Stars

He determines the number of the stars; he gives to all of them their names.

Psalm 147:4

I asked my friend Siri, “How many stars are in the universe?” She stated, “3 times 10 to the power of 23”! I have no idea how many that is, but it is way too many for me to even grasp.

Just think: The Lord knows how many that is, and he has even named them all. We can take great comfort in knowing that God has not only created and named the stars, but, even more miraculously, he has sent Jesus to live, die and rise for us. Christ has even named us in our Baptism.

We all are on the Lord’s All-Star Team—young and old, rich and poor, black and white, friend and foe. So let us do what stars are supposed to do. Let us shine out brightly and brilliantly to those around us, and tell others that Christ is the Light of the world.

Lord, you have named us as your stars. Now let us go out and twinkle for all of the world to see. Amen.

Shine: Who needs a twinkle from you today?

Read: Genesis 1:14-19; Daniel 12:2-3

*Rich Bimler
Bloomingdale, IL*

Wednesday, July 12, 2017

You Are Being Followed

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

Luke 19:10

Did you know Jesus was seeking you? Following you? Do you feel his nearness? He is there in the song of a bird on a dismal morning, in a kind word from a friend, perhaps even a stranger, in the unexpected call from a relative you thought had forgotten you. As we live in his presence, our trials and disappointments become less burdensome. We can walk *through* the valley, not just *into* it.

He is there in your early morning prayer to help you plan your day according to his will—to guide your steps even if they are slower than they once were. He is there in your weakness, reminding us that we are held tenderly in the everlasting arms of his strength. Sometimes spiritual blessings come wrapped in trials. Remember singing “Jesus Loves Me”? “I am weak but he is strong,” it says. Live it today!

*Jesus, be present with me throughout my day.
Amen.*

Consider: At the end of your day, think of all the ways Jesus has stood at your side—then give thanks.

Read: Nehemiah 8:10; Psalm 46:1; Psalm 71:9

*Connie Bretscher
Valparaiso, IN*

Thursday, July 13, 2017

Trust in the Lord

But Joseph said to them, “Do not fear ... you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive.

Genesis 50:19-20

A change of plans is often difficult to handle or understand. Perhaps, you planned a special vacation this summer, but weather prevents your plane from taking off. At a routine doctor's checkup, a report comes back with bad news. Oh, the best laid plans! When this happens, we may become scared, fret or complain. Imagine how Joseph felt when his brothers threw him in a pit and then sold him to traders from Egypt. How could this happen? He was his father's favorite and their sibling.

Have you ever felt this way? God, it isn't fair! I was planning on this event. Why did this happen to me? When change happens, what do we do? Often, like Joseph, we don't understand or like God's plans. Pray to understand his will and trust in him to bring about good.

Heavenly Father, work in my life for my good and for your glory, through Jesus my Savior. Amen.

Comfort: Encourage someone who is worried or disappointed when plans change.

Read: Genesis 50; Matthew 26:36-45

*Ann Eissfeldt
Ballwin, MO*

Friday, July 14, 2017

Shining Stars, Praise Him!

Praise him, sun and moon, praise him, all you shining stars!

Psalm 148:3

Our church youth group held a retreat in North Carolina. We gathered for a devotion under the stars one night. I had never seen so many stars in the sky as I did that night. All of creation gave praise to God, including shining stars!

The psalmist wrote, “The heavens declare the glory of God” (Psalm 19:1). God has created our world with signs of his presence. The stars point us to Jesus, the true Light of the world. John writes, “In him was life, and that life was the light of men” (John 1:4). We can join the stars in praising our God. We can thank him for creating us, for sending Jesus to save us and for bringing us to faith in Jesus.

Thank you, Father, for placing stars in the sky to praise you. Help us to praise you always. Amen.

Pray: Thank God for all his blessings.

Read: John 1:1-9; Psalm 148

*Steve Hess
Ft. Myers, FL*

Saturday, July 15, 2017

Sure And Certain

Which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his span of life?

Matthew 6:27

If we could add hours to our life span through anxiety, each of us would probably have about a million years stored up by now. From the standpoint of physical health, anxiety has exactly the opposite effect. Our Lord knows that.

“Do not be anxious,” Jesus tells us. Birds don’t plant crops, but God provides food for them. Flowers cannot weave cloth, yet their Creator dresses them in bright colors. The whole world worries about these kinds of things. Don’t join in. Your heavenly Father, who cares so well for the birds and flowers, knows what you need. If you really want to be anxious about something, worry about the kingdom of God. Then again, you don’t have to worry about that. Through faith in Jesus our Savior, the kingdom is already yours.

Heavenly Father, when I try to extend my life through worrying, remind me that I have eternal life in Jesus. Amen.

Search: When you are tempted to worry, turn instead to the Word.

Read: Matthew 6:25-34; Colossians 1:11-14

*Carol Geisler
Manchester, MO*

Sunday, July 16, 2017

Be Flexible

Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.

Matthew 5:7

I recently purchased a mattress and box spring. My house is nearly one hundred years old, and although the steps leading to the upper level are wide, there is a landing halfway up. The mattress was a tight fit but because of a bit of flexibility, it made the journey to the bedroom. However, despite the efforts of three strong men, there was no way that box spring was going around the landing. They tried various positions and plans, but due to the rigidity, it had to enter through a second story door.

Often, our lives are that rigid. We don't want to accept advice, especially from a younger person, we don't like a change to our normal home or church routine and we refuse to try or accept something or someone new. God asks us to be a bit more flexible in our approach to new music, new ideas and especially new believers. We can do those things without compromising our beliefs.

Lord, we ask for your help to bend in our attitudes. Amen.

Practice: Think of something you are rigid about and practice being flexible.

Read: 2 Peter 1:5-9

*Gloria Doty
Ft. Wayne, IN*

Monday, July 17, 2017

Context Consolation

He remembers that we are dust.

Psalm 103:14

You've noticed it, too. Sometimes the "dark" moment blinds us to the pleasures of the day. A sorrowful thought erases joyful memories. A pain-filled muscle captures a scrapbook of youthful summers. Beauty can be quickly lost when a sentence is removed from context.

Even God's sentences can suffer in our human hands. We are dust. Don't remind us! God, we do not need a history lesson from Genesis.

God encourages a broader look at Psalm 103. He loves this dust that we are. He removes our sin as far as east is from west (v. 12). As a father shows compassion for his children, the Lord has compassion on us (v. 13). Our days are like grass; God's love is everlasting (vv. 15, 17). Some moments I feel a little "dusty." I need consolation, context consolation. Then I join David in singing, "Bless the Lord, O my soul!"

*Dear Jesus, capture all of my day, every moment.
Amen.*

Encourage: Share with another how Psalm 103 helps in life's difficult moments.

Read: Psalm 103

*Harry Edenfield
Brownstown, MI*

Tuesday, July 18, 2017

Do the Math

Lord, how often will my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? As many as seven times?

Matthew 18:21

Peter undoubtedly thought he was being generous. However, Jesus raises the ante considerably—seventy-seven times! In other words, forgiveness has no limits. He continues by telling a story. A servant owed his master the equivalent of the national debt, and was amazingly forgiven. Nevertheless, he could not find it in his heart to forgive his fellow servant the equivalent of three months' salary.

Impossible! We can't go that far with forgiveness, can we? Yet God does. We do the math and place limits. He chooses not to do the math, and has forgiven us countless times. Our debt was cancelled in its entirety when Jesus cried from the cross, "It is finished!" That's the equivalent of a bill being marked, "Paid in Full."

Thank you, Father, that for Jesus' sake, you choose not to place limits on your forgiveness. Amen.

Pardon: Is there someone you need to release from debt ... for his sake and for yours?

Read: Matthew 18:15-35, Psalm 103:7-19

*Ted Zimmerman
Napa, CA*

Wednesday, July 19, 2017

Cataract Surgery Insight

He saw everything clearly.

Mark 8:25

I have always been intrigued by the way Jesus restored sight to the blind man of Bethsaida in Mark 8. Jesus spit on his eyes and laid hands on him and asked, “Did you see anything?” The man answered, “I see men, but they look like trees, walking.” Then Jesus laid his hands on the man’s eyes again. The man opened his eyes and saw everything clearly. What does this mean?

Over several months cataracts dimmed my vision. My eyes strained to see at a distance and to read up close. I had eye surgery, first on the right eye for distance and then on my left eye for reading. By God’s grace and the doctor’s skill, I see everything clearly without glasses. A whole new world of color and beauty has opened up to my wondering eyes. In Mark’s gospel, this physical miracle clearly points to the cloudy spiritual vision of the Pharisees and the disciples. It prepares us for Peter’s confession of faith: “You are the Christ.”

Open my eyes, Lord. I want to see Jesus. Amen.

Watch: Help someone this week to see Jesus clearly.

Read: Mark 8:22-29

*Stephen J. Carter
Oakville, MO*

Thursday, July 20, 2017

I Can't Believe My Eyes

Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.

Hebrews 11:1

On July 20, 1969, millions were marveling at the fuzzy black-and-white TV images of Neil Armstrong stepping onto the moon's surface. But not all believed what they were seeing. My husband's grandma was positive the scenes on TV were from Arizona. Maybe it sounds silly, but Grandma might have been ahead of her time. Flash forward to today, an era of computer-generated images. Seeing isn't believing anymore!

Believing goes beyond seeing for Christians. "For we walk by faith, not by sight" (2 Corinthians 5:7). Our hope rests on faith in God's promises. We read them, believe them and receive them. Faith provides the conviction of things not seen. More certain and awesome than any computer-generated image, faith gives hope for today and joyful anticipation of the time when all of God's promises will be fulfilled.

Father, be my companion today as I walk by faith through the power of your Holy Spirit. Amen.

Compare: When you see an edited image, remember that God's promises are truthful and certain.

Read: Romans 8:24-25; John 20:26-31

*Marj Maynard
Billings, MO*

Friday, July 21, 2017

Night Lights

You will do well to pay attention [to God's Word], as to a light shining in a dark place.

2 Peter 1:19

When we are traveling, we take night lights with us. We put them in our sleeping room and bathroom. A light shining in a dark place offers comfort and safety.

Our world is filled with the frightening darkness of sin and evil. In addition, dark clouds of illness or pain or loss may overcast our lives and leave us feeling worried and afraid. However, God's Word guides and sustains us like a light shining in the darkness. Peter assures us that God's Word is trustworthy and true, because the message of the prophets and apostles comes to us from men who "spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit" (2 Peter 1:21). As we read, hear and take to heart God's inspired truths, the Holy Spirit enlightens our life and gives us hope to carry on, no matter what may come our way.

Holy Spirit, fill us anew each day with light and comfort and hope from God's Word. Amen.

Read: Search the Scriptures daily for God's light for your life.

Read: 2 Peter 1:16-21

*Gil Duchow
Hilliard, OH*

Saturday, July 22, 2017

ACTS Prayer

Whatever you ask in prayer, you will receive, if you have faith.

Matthew 21:22

As a teacher in a Christian school, I often had the children lead the class in prayer. Many times their prayers were just lists of wants. Knowing how to pray or for whom to pray didn't come easily for them. Prayer doesn't always come easily for adults either, and we may find ourselves in a rut of saying the same thing over and over. One idea that helped my students with their prayers is called the ACTS prayer. It is a simple acronym that reminds us of various things to include in our prayers.

Adoration: Praise God for loving you and sending a Savior to give you forgiveness and eternal life.

Confession: Admit your sinful thoughts, hurtful words and unkind acts.

Thanksgiving: Thank God for the blessings he showers on you each day.

Supplication: Make requests for yourself and others.

Heavenly Father, thank you for loving me and hearing my prayers. Amen.

Pray: Use the ACTS prayer in your next prayer time.

Read: 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18

*Jeanette Dall
Batavia, IL*

Sunday, July 23, 2017

Not Done Yet

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

Psalm 71:18

“I’m not done yet!” I said to my high school creative writing teacher as she collected assignments. I was tasked to write a poem for a state contest, but, unsatisfied with my work, I begged for more time. Because of contest entry deadlines, I expected my request to be denied. Surprisingly, my teacher examined my composition thus far and said, “Keep working. You have until the end of the day.”

God assigned each of us his story to tell. He gave us unique gifts and creativity for the task. Yet older adults may believe they’ve passed the deadline for making a difference. Whether worn out from years of service, unsatisfied with past results or changes in abilities, we assume our opportunity has passed. God tells us to keep working until the end of our days. Like my poem, which won the contest and was published, our witness will impact the next generation.

Jesus, do not forsake me. I’m not done yet! Amen.

Create: Work this week on a new way to share your testimony of Jesus’ love.

Read: Philippians 1:1-6; Psalm 92:12-15

*Sandi Geis
St. Louis, MO*

Monday, July 24, 2017

No Chickens

[Cast] all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you.

1 Peter 5:7

When I was two years old, we called half of our new backyard the chicken yard. The former owners had raised chickens. Since the chickens were no longer there, I assumed they had gone under my bed. Every night I checked under my bed and proclaimed, “No chickies there!”

You probably don’t worry about chickens under the bed, but you may worry about the next medical test, living alone, paying the bills and any number of things. It is in these times that God asks us to give our anxiety to him in prayer and worry no more. Then he fills us with peace beyond our understanding (Philippians 4:7). It is the peace belonging to us who know our sins are forgiven through Christ’s redeeming work. We know that God’s peace and heaven are ours.

Father, take the worries out of my mind and fill my heart with peace. In Jesus’ name. Amen.

Do: Write down or think about the things that worry you. Give each worry to God in prayer and focus on the peace he gives you.

Read: 1 Peter 5:1-11; Philippians 4:4-9; Psalm 37

Ruth Geisler
Aliso Viejo, CA

Tuesday, July 25, 2017

Christmas in July

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

John 1:14

July is often hot and humid and sometimes we dream of cooler weather. Perhaps not snow and singing Christmas carols, but it is a good time to remember our Advent preparations and the joy at the celebration of Christ's birth. What does Christ's birth mean for us now? Can we state loudly from the hymn, "Christ was born to save"?

God came to dwell with us at all times, not only during the Christmas season. He called us his beloved at our Baptism. We live in him always. As his children, we've received our inheritance—now and in all eternity. What joy there is in our future!

Thank you, dear triune God, for being with us from the beginning. May we ever sing your praises, in all seasons of our lives. Amen.

Praise: Sing or pray a favorite carol and wish your family and friends the joy that comes through the Word who became flesh.

Read: John 1:1-14

*Ann Eissfeldt
Ballwin, MO*

Wednesday, July 26, 2017

The Morning Star

Until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts.

2 Peter 1:19

When the planet Venus is on the opposite side of the sun, it leads the sun traveling across the sky. Venus, that bright gem, will rise in the morning a few hours before the sun. Then as the sun rises, the sky brightens and Venus fades away. This is Venus, the morning star.

The morning star gives most of its light just before the break of dawn. Throughout the Bible Christ is referred to as the Morning Star. He is the one who fills the darkness of the world with his light. He is one who will come a second time to usher in the new day, the day of resurrection. He is the one whose light is about to shine forever, making all wrongs right, with the creation of the new heaven and new earth.

Brightest and best of the stars of the morning, dawn on our darkness and lend us your aid. Amen.

Rise: Go outside before dawn, watch the morning star rise, and think of the coming of Christ.

Read: Job 38:4-7; Revelation 22:16

Don Luepke
Fremont, IN

Thursday, July 27, 2017

Free as a Bird!

Do not be anxious about your life ... Look at the birds.

Matthew 6:25-26

My husband and I love to watch birds. Last summer we set out a camera that makes movies of the birds as they come and go and bathe. The hummingbirds that come to our feeder are also a source of much amusement with their “sword fights” and aerial antics.

Jesus encouraged his disciples to imitate the birds’ carefree way of life. They eat what is provided for them each day; they drink the available water and then fly off to sing in a tree. Our heavenly Father feeds them and Jesus asks rhetorically, “Are you not of more value than they?” (Matthew 6:26). Of course we are! The message of the birds is: Don’t be anxious; you are in good hands!

Lord Jesus, when worry about tomorrow creeps into my thoughts, help me to remember that just as you care for the birds, you will care for me. Amen.

Observe: Watch the birds and soak up their joy.

Read: Matthew 6:25-34

*Jan Schmidt
Florissant, CO*

Friday, July 28, 2017

I Love Wrinkles

But God, who comforts the downcast, comforted us by the coming of Titus ... so that I rejoiced still more.

2 Corinthians 7:6-7

We all need daily encouragement. St. Paul knew this as he wrote to his friends in Corinth. We know this also as we bring words of comfort and hope to those around us. It happened recently when an older woman heard a young boy say that he “hated his freckles.” She replied, “Well, I love freckles and always wanted some.” “Really?” said the little guy. “Indeed,” she responded, and then added, “You just name me one thing prettier than freckles.” The little boy thought for a moment and then looked at the woman’s face and said, “Wrinkles!”

Titus’ presence and words changed Paul’s mindset towards life. He was an encourager. And so are we!

Lord, thanks for encouraging us through the Scriptures and through other people, young and old. Help me to use my experiences of aging to be a real encourAGER today. Amen.

Help: Look for ways to compliment and to encourage other people today, even for their wrinkles.

Read: 2 Corinthians 1:3-7; 1 Thessalonians 1:2-10

*Rich Bimler
Bloomington, IL*

Saturday, July 29, 2017

Letting Go

Fear not, therefore.

Matthew 10:31

If you've ever bounced in ocean waves, you probably feel like a kid and can't get enough. You may also know that it gets even better when you take your feet off the bottom and let the waves carry you—frightening and exhilarating at the same time. It's a little like the leap of faith. Yes, it's fine going to Sunday worship, volunteering now and then, and maybe even attending a Bible study. Jesus, however, wants more. He wants us to take our feet off the bottom and follow him. He wants all, and that too is frightening and exhilarating at the same time. When he sent the disciples out without even a "bag for your journey," what was going through their minds? They had received instructions and the assurance that they need not fear. And that was enough.

*O God, give me trust to follow you without fear.
Amen.*

Recall: When you are frightened, remember Jesus' words, "Fear not!"

Read: Matthew 10:1-42

*Sally Beck
Williamsburg, VA*

Sunday, July 30, 2017

Invisible? No!

May the Lord make his face to shine upon you.

Numbers 6:25

A tear slipped down the little girl's nose. "Grandma, she just looked at the present for two seconds and tossed it on the pile!" Ann had spent her own money on her sister's birthday gift and worked several hours to crayon all the sides of the gift box. Her generosity apparently went unnoticed.

"God sees," Grandma said. "There are stars whose light hasn't even gotten here yet, but God has seen them streaming out starshine for years and years. Flowers growing through the mountain snow bloom where no people go. Still God delights in the burst of color. Ann, God saw all the good will in your heart for your sister and you have made God smile."

It is no small thing to gladden the heart of God. You do this too.

Lord, how marvelous that you notice any act of love that your Spirit empowers me to do. I am so small. You are so big. Yet you see me and rejoice. You are amazing. Amen.

Reflect: What must God be like to rejoice when you generously give? How does God's joy make you feel?

Read: 1 Samuel 16:7; Matthew 6:3-4

*Julaine Kammrath
Aurora, IL*

Monday, July 31, 2017

Are We Lost Yet?

And they woke him and said to him, "Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing?"

Mark 4:38

Children on a road trip often ask, "Are we there yet?" My wife often asks, "Are we lost yet?" She really means, "Are we lost enough to ask for help?" Like many men, I don't like to ask for directions.

How long do you think the disciples waited before they woke Jesus? Some were fishermen and knew how to handle a boat in a storm. When the wind and waves began to build up, they perhaps thought, "We can handle this." Not until they thought they were going to drown did they wake Jesus and ask for help.

How much we are like them. We don't want to "bother" God with little things that we think God doesn't care about. But we know God does care. We know God is there for us always. So let us trust and praise him.

Are we lost yet? Without Jesus we surely are lost. With him in the boat, we are never lost.

Lord, thank you for your faithfulness. Help us to trust in you always. Amen.

Pray: Ask your Lord for help with any little thing bothering you now.

Read: Mark 4:35-41

*Eldor Kaiser
Lenexa, KS*

Tuesday, August 1, 2017

One Size Fits All

Put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires.

Romans 13:14

I have a friend who truly believes that the words of the song, “Put on a happy face,” can actually change a person’s mood from gloomy to glad. St. Paul would say that “putting on Jesus” can do more than change a person’s mood, it can change a person’s entire life starting on the inside and working out. Paul knew that most of life’s troubles come from thoughts and actions that come out of one’s personal longing to gratify the self. As one man told me, “I believe in the Hereafter. I’m here after everything I can get.

When one’s focus becomes Jesus rather than the self, one’s whole perspective on life begins to change, and often how we look at everything else begins to change with it. The love of Jesus fits all—perfectly.

Lord, create in me a clean heart and a whole new, loving attitude. Amen.

Smile: Put a smile on your face and see what it does to others.

Read: Romans 13:11-14

*Edward Arle
St Charles, MO*

Wednesday, August 2, 2017

God's Stars

And God made ... the greater light to rule the day and the lesser light to rule the night—and the stars.

Genesis 1:16

Before the clock was invented, people woke up with the sun and stopped working at nightfall. Outside, their nights were lit by the moon and the stars, lights created by God. Today, our artificial lights obscure the night sky.

Too often, we do the same thing in our daily living. We let everyday concerns outweigh God's grace. We forget; we are too busy putting things in order; we see the man-made lights and not God's stars. We've also used the word *star* to represent our earthly aspirations—prominence, celebrity, winning. May we stop often to remember that a star is a God-given light.

Lord, you gave us everything we need on this earth, including our hope in Jesus. Shine in our lives that we may always see Jesus, who shines brighter than the stars. Amen.

Look: If you can get away from the city lights, revisit the wonders of God's sky.

Read: Job 38:31-35; John 1:1-5; John 8:12

*Judy Scherr
Lemay, MO*

Thursday, August 3, 2017

The Future Present

I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams.

Acts 2:17

Our fallen human wisdom orders the genders and generations this way: sons and daughters maintain a respectful silence; young men dream about the future; old men live in the visions of their past. But at Pentecost, Peter saw and preached a new order.

The resurrection of Jesus has come. It is the “end” of history, its goal. History is complete. Now God writes the future in the present and re-orders things according to his wisdom: sons and daughters prophesy; young men have visions; old men dream dreams. Our children speak God’s will; young men see the will of God for their lives; the aged dare to dream of a greater future! Today we can grasp the promise of eternal life as a guarantee that this day will be overflowing with the abundant life of God in his resurrected Son Jesus.

Lord, dream a little dream in me today, that I may glimpse your realized promises. Amen.

Promise: Today I live each moment as it arrives.

Read: Acts 2:14-39

*Mike May
Kansas City, KS*

Friday, August 4, 2017

Who Lights You Up?

I am the light of the world; he who follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.

John 8:12

“You light up my life!” Sound familiar? That was a popular song back in the ’70s. That being said, who lights you up? My 100-year-old blind mother lives in total darkness, yet she is one of the brightest people I know. And why is that? Jesus is her Source of Light. He fills her with his love and grace; his brightness radiates through her to others.

Maybe you’re thinking—how can I be a beacon? Here’s how: stay in the Word (Psalm 119:105); be in prayer (1 John 5:14); hold tight to Jesus (John 8:12); surround yourself with godly people (Proverbs 12:26). The next time you find yourself in the shadows of life, think about the Light of the world and ask him to bathe you in his glory.

Lord, help me to stay in your Light. I want to be illuminated by your glory. Amen.

Try this: During your quiet time, find passages that talk about light.

Read: Psalm 27:1; Psalm 119:130

*Jan Bathke
Neenah, WI*

Saturday, August 5, 2017

Vacation Destination

Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?

John 14:5

Summer is family vacation time. You may have fond (or not so fond) memories of road trips with your parents and siblings or later with your own children. You also may remember those olden days before Google Maps and GPS, when travelers would stop to ask for directions. A store clerk or gas station attendant would rattle off the turns and landmarks, cheerfully concluding, “You can’t miss it!”

Jesus talks about going away in John 13, but his disciples are like a lost family on vacation. Peter asks in verse 36, “Lord, where are you going?” When the disciples ask Jesus for directions, his answer is one for the ages. “I am the way,” says Jesus. “No one comes to the Father except through me” (John 14:6). Just follow Jesus to his—and your—destination. When you follow him, you can’t miss it!

Jesus, keep me from being distracted by wrong routes to heaven. You are the Way. Amen.

Reminisce: Enjoy looking back on past vacations as you look ahead to the best destination ever.

Read: John 14:1-7; Isaiah 35:8-10

*Marj Maynard
Billings, MO*

Sunday, August 6, 2017

Star Compliment

Those who turn many to righteousness [shine] like the stars.

Daniel 12:3

To pay the highest compliment we look to the night sky. We will never touch God's heavenly stars, but we like to use the word *star*. She is a movie star; he is a sports star.

The designers of our American flag saw 13 stars. They saw in the United States a new constellation. They believed that this new nation was birthed by the One who had birthed the stars above. The highest of compliments! This nation was to be recognized as "endowed by the Creator."

You and I influence others to righteousness. The highest compliment is given: we shine like the stars. We shine Jesus who created light, is the Light and gives us the light of his Word. We show others that the best way to travel life's winding roads is with the Light of the world (John 8:12).

Dear God, thank you for embracing us in your light. Amen.

Show: Gently show others that Jesus is the Light of the world.

Read: Psalm 147:1-5; Daniel 12:2-3; Revelation 22:16

*Harry Edenfield
Brownstown, MI*

Monday, August 7, 2017

When I Grow Up

To all ... who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God.

John 1:12

“What you are is God’s gift to you. What you will be is your gift to God.” Those are the words on a plaque someone gave me as a child. They go along with the question often asked of children at family reunions: “What do you want to be when you grow up?” In those moments the proper response might be: “I really don’t know just yet.”

But the apostle John has this to say by way of encouragement: “We are God’s children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when [Jesus] appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is” (1 John 3:2). What will you be when you grow up? To be like Christ and see him as he is may just be the best answer a child of God could give.

Lord Jesus, thank you for calling me into the family of faith. Amen.

Shine: Get your identity as a child of God out where others can see it.

Read: John 1:1-12; Galatians 2:17-21

*Edward Arle
St. Charles, MO*

Tuesday, August 8, 2017

Found

We wish to see Jesus.

John 12:21

Shepherds hurried from the fields to find the infant Savior in a manger. The wise men, after a few wrong turns, found the holy Child in Bethlehem. Jesus' frantic parents found him in the Jerusalem temple. Andrew, the brother of Simon Peter, found the Lamb of God at the Jordan River. Zacchaeus climbed a tree to find Jesus, but instead the Savior found him!

Where will you find Jesus? The Holy Spirit points to him. With eyes of faith you will see him in the Word that bears witness to him (John 5:39). You will find him as he comes to you in the bread and wine that are his body and blood (1 Corinthians 10:16). You will find him wherever his disciples are gathered (Matthew 18:20). Jesus will be found, unrecognized, in "the least of these" who receive your love and service (Matthew 25:40). You will find Jesus because he has already found you.

Jesus, thank you for finding me. Help me to find you in my service to others. Amen.

Help: Let others see Jesus in your acts of kindness.

Read: John 10:14-18; John 12:20-26

*Carol Geisler
Manchester, MO*

Wednesday, August 9, 2017

Light Up My Life

I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.

John 8:12

When visiting Europe, I was awestruck by the magnificent churches and cathedrals. I spent hours looking at the ornate stained glass windows that gave life to Bible stories with their luminous color. As the sunlight shone in, the windows glowed and beckoned. But after dark when the sunlight faded, the stained glass looked like any ordinary window—lost in the dark of night.

People can be like stained glass windows too. When the sun is shining and life is good, they glow and prosper. However, when we walk with God, even when the sun disappears and darkness sets in, God continues to shine through us, warming our hearts and lighting our way. Regardless of our circumstances, God lights us up from the inside as a reflection of his Spirit within.

Lord, please make your light shine brighter within me with each passing day. Amen.

Shine: Let the light of Jesus shine through you today in your words and actions.

Read: Ephesians 5:7-14; Micah 7:8

*Kerry Osborne
Sydney, Australia*

Thursday, August 10, 2017

Needs vs. Wants

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

Philippians 4:19

We spend a great deal of time trying to fulfill our needs and desires. Indeed, much time is spent trying to teach children the difference between needs and wants. Some would argue that we need water, food and shelter, while we may want toys, designer jeans and fancy tennis shoes.

Have you ever thought that our needs are much more simple than that? We really only have one need and that is to know Jesus as our Savior. The hymn "Great Is Thy Faithfulness" expresses it so well when the chorus states, "All I have needed thy hand hath provided." Yes, everything we need and everything we have has been provided by God, but the only thing that is necessary is Jesus.

Dear Father, thank you for providing all that I have needed in the person of your Son Jesus. Amen.

Praise: Ponder the words of the hymn "Great Is Thy Faithfulness."

Read: Lamentations 3:22-26; Luke 10:38-42

*Celeste Cummins
Storm Lake, IA*

Friday, August 11, 2017

Spittin' Image

So God created man in his own image.

Genesis 1:27

My oldest grandson is the spittin' image of his dad. And they say that my son takes after me. I don't see it, but I do see the same spunk in my grandson that my son had when he was that age.

I remember hearing a pastor say once that "spittin' image" was really the combination of the words *spirit* and *image*. An individual not only looks similar to a relative, but the spirit is also the same. The Bible tells us that we are created in the image of God. I hope I am really the "spittin' image" of God. I want to have the same spirit of love, forgiveness, kindness and goodness that we all know from our relationship with God. There are times in my life that I know I have not shown a kind and loving spirit to those around me. I ask God daily to "renew a right spirit within me" (Psalm 51:10).

Lord God, help me to live a life that shows your Spirit is alive and well in me. Amen.

Consider: Think about people you know who really are the "spittin' image" of God in their actions.

Read: Genesis 1:26-27

*Margaret Hinchey
Englewood, CO*

Saturday, August 12, 2017

Was It Better?

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

Psalm 90:1

My friends and I—now of a certain age—sometimes talk about whether life was better when we were growing up. We reminisce about days when we weren't tied to cellphones, when the news didn't inundate us with violence, when we played outside (even after dark) and rode our bikes all over town. We generally conclude that, even though we miss those things, it probably wasn't better, and it probably doesn't matter. God in his mercy has placed each of us in a time and place and calls us to be his people in every situation. We are to follow Jesus, serve our neighbors, proclaim the Gospel and stay faithful unto death. When life gets complicated, and our grandchildren have to show us how to do simple maneuvers on our iPads, we know that God has been faithful throughout all generations, and it's OK.

*Lord, keep us faithful to you throughout the years.
Amen.*

Do: When life is complicated, remember the steadfast faithfulness of God.

Read: Psalm 90

*Sally Beck
Williamsburg, VA*

Sunday, August 13, 2017

Let Go And Let God!

Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Philippians 4:6-7

This quote by Corrie ten Boom caught my attention: “Worrying doesn’t empty tomorrow of its sorrow, it empties today of its strength.” Powerful words!

Some days or nights, life weighs on me. Worry sets in; it negatively affects me. I smile less. I overeat. I sleep poorly. Corrie’s words spoke to me. I reflected on her life, especially all the day-to-day events that should have zapped life from her. They didn’t. Because, in her own words, we should “never be afraid to trust an unknown future to a known God.” She did! So, worry no more ... Let go and let God!

Good Father, strengthen me daily to trust you more and more. Amen.

Do: Today and every day, let go and let God be in charge!

Read: Matthew 6:25-34; Psalm 37:3-4; Philippians 4:12; Hebrews 13:20

*Louise Schini Weber
Fort Myers, FL*

Monday, August 14, 2017

Fruit

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.

Galatians 5:22-23

Did you notice the first words of this Bible verse? Paul had just finished itemizing a long list of sins, like idolatry and envy, acts that are contrary to God's Law. Then he adds, "But the fruit ..." That's singular, not plural.

A piece of fruit has multiple characteristics such as the peel, juice, meat, seeds, and core. Collectively they are that piece of fruit. Paul itemizes nine (count them) actions against which there is no law. He reminds us that a Spirit-filled Christian displays some or all nine of these traits. There is no law against these, so practice them daily.

Lord, thank you for reminding me how I can demonstrate your love for me in my daily life. Forgive me when I fail to do so. Amen.

Practice: Select a characteristic that is difficult for you to put into action. Pray for courage to demonstrate that more often.

Read: Joshua 1:1-8

*David Ebeling
Bloomington, IN*

Tuesday, August 15, 2017

The Holy Spirit Is Present

The earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters.

Genesis 1:2

My sister and I were driving through fog. She said fog makes her think of the Holy Spirit because you can't see the Holy Spirit, but you know he is present. Air is always around us but we can't usually see air. But when it's foggy, we become aware that it's there.

God bestows the Spirit on us through the waters of Baptism. He saves us not because of our righteousness but by his mercy. When you are caught in fog, remember that God is as close as the air we breathe. May fog always remind us that the Spirit equips us to share God's love and mercy with those who need to hear the good news of Jesus.

Dear Holy Spirit, create in me a clean heart and renew a right Spirit within me. Give me healing words of peace for others. Amen.

Remember: Caught in fog? Recall your Baptism and the Spirit's presence. Thank God for the joy of your salvation!

Read: Isaiah 57:15, John 14:16-17, Titus 3:5-7

*Nancy Rapp
St. Louis, MO*

Wednesday, August 16, 2017

Reap What You Sow

Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows bountifully will also reap bountifully.

2 Corinthians 9:6

I have always loved planting a vegetable garden. One year when the soil warmed, I gathered my packets of seeds and began my labor of love. Planting was interrupted for a few minutes, but when I returned, I finished the task, feeling satisfied that soon tiny green shoots would emerge. But when those growing sprouts became discernible, I realized there were no carrots growing among the other plants. I checked my chart. Yes, I had written “carrots” on the paper. So what happened, I wondered.

I told this curious tale to my neighbor who then handed me a package of carrot seeds. “I found these blown into my yard. You can’t reap what you don’t sow, you know,” she laughingly told me. That is exactly what the Bible tells us. We can’t expect to see the results of planting seeds of God’s love if we never actually plant them.

Father, help us to plant your Word every day, in some way. Amen.

Grow: Plant a few seeds in a container today.

Read: Matthew 13

*Gloria Doty
Ft. Wayne, IN*

Thursday, August 17, 2017

Creative Solutions

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

Imagine the shock the Israelites felt when God parted the Red Sea! They had been praying to be rescued, but how could they have imagined this miraculous path? Then think about how astonished the disciples were when Jesus multiplied 5 loaves and 2 fish to feed 5,000!

Has God ever located a lost item for you in an improbable place? Have you ever been anxious about how to get somewhere, petitioned God, then ended up with a surprise ride? Isn't it exciting to experience God's creativity?

Let God know your simple concerns so that he can show you his higher ways. You, too, can experience his amazing solutions.

Lord, thank you for working creatively in my daily life. Help me to notice and to point it out to others. Amen.

Ask: Ask someone about a time they have experienced an unexpected answer to prayer.

Read: Exodus 14:21-22; Mark 6:35-44

*Lisa Heule
Littleton, CO*

Friday, August 18, 2017

Star Light, Star Bright

The sky was made at the Lord's command. By the breath from his mouth, he made all the stars.

Psalm 33:6

How exciting it is as the day turns to night, when you see the first visible star. Perhaps as a child you learned, as I did, to make a wish and say this poem:

Star light, star bright,
First star I see tonight,
I wish I may, I wish I might,
Have this wish I wish tonight.

As followers of Jesus we do not have to make wishes on stars. Instead, we can talk in prayer directly to the One who made stars and put them into place in the universe simply by his command. We can ask or tell God anything and everything. No wishes necessary! Stars are a beautiful reminder that God is the Creator and is still in control.

Lord God, thank you for the stars that light the night sky. Amen

Look: Go outside as day turns to night and marvel at the beauty of the stars that God has made. Then give God praise.

Read: Psalm 147:1-5

*Glen VanderKloot
Springfield, IL*

Saturday, August 19, 2017

Rhythm

Your laws endure to this day, for all things serve you.

Psalm 119:91

It's not that I don't have enough to do in retirement, but with time on my hands I am challenged to bring about some pattern and rhythm to my daily life. Psalm 119 helps. If we slowly read the psalm, between the lines of the 22 sections (named after the 22 consonants in the Hebrew alphabet), it seems to say, "Slow down, meditate, for the Lord's ways cover all of life. Remember, you're not on an interstate. You're on the path that is the Way of the Lord. Follow it, learn to love it, and you will find you enjoy the life the Lord gave you even more (Psalm 119:111).

Jesus lived each moment to the fullest. With each encounter he was fully aware of his Father's will to save us, until his glorious death on the cross and the saving light of the open tomb.

O Lord Jesus, slow me down to meditate upon your commands that I may more fully experience the life you lived. Amen.

Learn: Read Psalm 119 slowly three times this week. Read Psalm 19 in comparison; look for insights as you read.

Read: Psalm 119; Psalm 19

Gordon Beck
Williamsburg, VA

Sunday, August 20, 2017

Life After Tomatoes

So we do not lose heart. Though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day.

2 Corinthians 4:16

August is the time for an abundant harvest of vine-ripened tomatoes, but what comes next in the garden? By this point, deer have often eaten most of the hosta leaves and summer perennials have spent flowers. Take heart! There are shrubs yet to blaze with red or yellow and late-blooming perennials, new stars in the garden.

In our lives too, there is always a reason to be hopeful. Thank God for blessing us with time to develop unused talents. Our skin may wrinkle, but youthful enthusiasm doesn't when we accept that God still wants us to serve him and enjoy life. Let's use our late-blooming gifts and go out with a bang!

Thank you, Lord, for helping me still feel valuable to others. Amen.

Plan: Start planning fun events for the fall; discover your late-blooming gifts. You might serve God through photography, writing or organizing a church fair.

Read: 2 Corinthians 4:8-10

Catherine A. Welch
Southbury, CT

Monday, August 21, 2017

A “BE” Attitude

Be joyful in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer.

Romans 12:12

Life in God’s kingdom is more about who we are than about what we accomplish. Even in retirement, it is easy to get wrapped up in “to do” lists. And that’s not exactly a negative. We are called and encouraged to go, tell and serve others. Daily tasks in the home give us purpose and satisfaction. Volunteering at church and in the community benefits the needy and witnesses to God’s love. We enjoy the resulting feelings of accomplishment and service.

But sometimes we sacrifice God’s gift of a “to be” attitude in the process. Simply enjoy his presence and peace. Open yourself to his direction. Appreciate the gifts he alone can produce in your heart. His gifts of joy, hope, patience and faithfulness are treasures to savor and appreciate, a constant witness to God’s abundant love and faithfulness.

Lord, help us to balance “being” and “doing,” that we might reflect your love and grace today. Amen.

Be: Notice your “be-attitudes” today, and give thanks for each one.

Read: Matthew 5:3-11; Psalm 100

*Sharolyn Sander
Lincoln, NE*

Tuesday, August 22, 2017

Lift Up Your Eyes

I lift up my eyes to the hills.

Psalm 121:1

I have no lower field of vision. I look down so I won't trip. When I'm sure the next few steps are clear, I look up to see what God has in store for me. As the Mother Superior told Maria (soon to be von Trapp), "I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills."

Imagine if John the Baptist had not been looking up and been able to tell Andrew and John, "Behold, the Lamb of God!" (John 1:36). They may have retained their discipleship with John and not turned to follow Jesus. John became a loving disciple of Jesus and tells us, "For this is the will of my Father, that everyone who looks on the Son and believes in him should have eternal life" (John 6:40). Keep looking up. One day you will see Jesus in all his glory coming to take you home.

Father, keep my eyes focused on your Son, my help in every need and the joy of my salvation. In his name. Amen.

Do: Look down at your own troubles. Pick up your Bible and look to the Lord. See how the view changes?

Read: Psalm 121; Psalm 123; John 6:25-59

*Ruth Geisler
Aliso Viejo, CA*

Wednesday, August 23, 2017

Shine, Jesus, Shine

The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

John 1:5

On many clear, summer nights in Chicago it is difficult to see the stars sparkling away. They are up there for sure, but man-made signs and neon billboards erase the sparkling gems of God's creation. We know those stars have not gone away because we have seen them sparkling before, but alas, where are they when we need them?

Isn't life like that also, sometimes more often than we wish? Lord, Light of the world, where are you when we are dealing with our doubts, despair and dead ends and when darkness seems to surround us? It is at these very times when the light of Christ shines on us through God's Word and his people who surround us. At these times, you and I shine out to others who are in the depths of darkness.

Lord, help us to sing and live out our faith by shining out to others who are in the darkness of despair. Amen.

Share: Sing "Shine, Jesus, Shine" to yourself and to others this day, and help to "set our hearts on fire."

Read: John 8:12; 1 Thessalonians 5:1-5

*Rich Bimler
Bloomingdale, IL*

Thursday, August 24, 2017

Mouth And Heart

Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in your sight, O LORD, my rock and my redeemer.

Psalm 19:14

We usually do not think much about the anatomical connection between our mouth and heart. The psalmist might have said, “Let my words and my thoughts be acceptable to you, O Lord.”

Whatever our age or abilities, we have the gifts of being able to speak and to think. God knows what we think; God and anyone in our space hears what we say. The temptation often is to speak our minds, especially when things irritate us. After all, we’re aging and we have things to say.

When the meditation of our hearts is God-pleasing, the words from our lips will also be God-pleasing. Those words can bring comfort, joy and encouragement to our family, neighbors and even caregivers.

O Lord, may my thoughts and my words be a blessing to those around me. Amen.

Speak: Resolve to say words of comfort or encouragement to someone today.

Read: Psalm 19

*David Ebeling
Bloomington, IN*

Friday, August 25, 2017

Light-Years

I will cause your name to be remembered in all generations.

Psalm 45:17

I love stargazing. It gives me a sense of the vastness of God's creation, both in terms of space and time. It fascinates me that, depending on how many light-years away it is, a star could take generations for its light to reach the earth. Today, a star could be born 100 light-years away, and it would take 100 years for anyone on earth to see it.

Jesus calls us to be his witnesses—to shine like stars, reflecting his light in the world. Sometimes we see the results of our work right away, but often we may wonder if we really make a difference. Yet, like the stars in the universe, the vastness of what God can do through our witness transcends time and space. We leave behind a faith legacy (our “Light years”) by our faithful example and testimony of Jesus' love that will shine through the next generation.

Jesus, increase my Light years. Bless my witness, that it may shine bright for generations. Amen.

Write: Write to a friend or family member, telling the story of Jesus as the Light of your life.

Read: Psalm 78:1-8; Matthew 26:6-13

*Sandi Geis
St. Louis, MO*

Saturday, August 26, 2017

Aquila And Priscilla

Aquila and Priscilla greet you warmly in the Lord, and so does the church that meets at their house.

1 Corinthians 16:19

Aquila and Priscilla are mentioned at least four times in the New Testament. They must have been the quintessential meet-and-greet team every church longs for. They even encouraged people to stay in their home while they learned about Christ at the feet of St. Paul.

My sister moved into a “senior home” a couple years ago where she knew no one. She is very fond of people but is not the kind to meet and greet with great gusto. It was the first time she had been alone in her living quarters in many years, and it became just a bit too quiet. Enter Aquila and Priscilla, two beautiful blue-and-white parakeets. The word got out, and visitors began to stop by. She has great fun explaining the source of their names.

Lord, help us learn from your faithful followers in Scripture how to share the joy of knowing our Savior. Amen.

Name: New puppy? Need a name? How about Abraham?

Read: 1 Corinthians 16

*Lois Simon Scheer
San Diego, CA*

Sunday, August 27, 2017

Contentment

In any and every circumstance, I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and need.

Philippians 4:12

“Having all we could want” is not a realistic recipe for contentment. For our human heart “enough” is “never enough.” No matter how much we possess, how much we achieve, there is always one more thing to desire, one more goal we wish we’d achieved, one more ache or pain that will not go away.

The secret of contentment begins with our faith-connection to our loving heavenly Father. Jesus is that link, for he died and rose again to bring us into the forever family of the Father. His Word and promise satisfy our deepest need, calm our most severe anxieties, forgive our most grievous faults. We can trust him to bring us through the worst of times into the eternal best of times. Through faith in Jesus you can say: “I trust my Lord. He has me in his hands. That is enough ... I am content.”

Lord Jesus, I am content in your care. Amen.

Share: Comfort someone today with the promise of Jesus’ presence. Amen.

Read: Philippians 4:10-13

*Paul Scheidt
Chesterfield, MO*

Monday, August 28, 2017

Repetition

Every day I will bless you and praise your name forever and ever.

Psalm 145:2

Science tells us that initial learning will last when our brain experiences repetition throughout our lives. That tells me to repeat in song, in prayer, in reading the Scriptures what I was taught about Jesus growing up. Here are a few statements that I keep repeating:

God is good, gracious, generous.

God is caring, comforting, consoling.

God is listening, looking, loving.

God is sharing, supporting, sending.

God is kind, knows all and keeps faithful forever.

I affirm these truths daily. I praise God daily. Daily I look to Jesus, my Savior and Lord. Daily I listen to the voice of the Holy Spirit. Won't you join me?

Lord Jesus, let a song, a prayer, a verse from Scripture affirm your faithfulness and love. Amen.

Time: Every day reflect on who God is and what he has done for you in Jesus Christ through the working of the Holy Spirit.

Read: Psalm 145; Psalm 146

*Walter M. Schoedel
Webster Groves, MO*

Tuesday, August 29, 2017

Gleaning

So [Ruth] set out and went and gleaned after the reapers ... [in] the field belonging to Boaz.

Ruth 2:3

Gleaning was common at that time. Jewish law required landowners to allow poor people to pick up leftover grain at harvest time. The law even required that some grain be deliberately left for gleaners.

In a way, we are all gleaners. We may not be going out into grain fields, but we are gleaners of learning, picking up bits here and there. The important thing is that throughout our lives, we glean knowledge of God, for it is bit by bit that we grow in trust and love for God. We do that as we hear and study God's Word. We grow in our love little by little as we experience God's goodness and forgiveness. Let's cherish those experiences, for they are food for our souls, just as grain gleaned from the fields is food for the body.

Lord Jesus, help us continue to learn of you and love and befriend those in need. Amen.

Reflect: Think of some things you have gathered up in your life that you could share with people in need.

Read: Ruth 1:22 to 2:16

*Eldor Kaiser
Lenexa, KS*

Wednesday, August 30, 2017

Your Life Path

For I know the plans I have for you, declares the LORD.

Jeremiah 29:11

I'm sure you have played *Candy Land* at some time, either as a child or with your own children and grandchildren. The goal of reaching the “finish” space is constantly thwarted by setbacks—falling in Lollipop Lagoon or another player who knocks someone off their space and makes them retrace their path. Children only look at the space in front of them, while we can watch the progress from above the board and see the entire journey.

God knows our paths, also. There isn't one person who escapes the treacherous things in this world. Occasionally, there are setbacks, unexpected disasters or individuals who seek to keep us from finishing the course. Often, we concentrate on the immediate problem, but God knows the entire route and wants to direct us to the finish line, which is eternal life.

Lord, we don't know what awaits us on a daily basis. Help us remember you are in charge of every situation and will lead us home. Amen.

Enjoy: Play a game of Candy Land and think of life.

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

*Gloria Doty
Ft. Wayne, IN*

Thursday, August 31, 2017

Are You Ready?

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

Mark 13:32

Almost any sports enthusiast, Cub fan or not, had to be thrilled when the Chicago Cubs won the 2016 World Series. It had been 108 years since the last time they accomplished that. Such excitement! I wished my deceased husband, born and raised in Chicago and a dedicated Cubs fan, could have been alive to experience that moment.

It's been almost 2,000 years since Jesus left this earth and promised to return. Generations of Christians have awaited that day, wondering if it might be in their lifetime. He will come again, but only the Father knows that day and hour. It could be tomorrow. Are you ready? Is there some task undone, someone with whom you've meant to share salvation's story? Don't put it off. Do it now!

Dear Jesus, help us to be always ready for your return. Amen.

Share: If you have a friend or acquaintance who doesn't know Jesus as our Savior, tell him or her today.

Read: Acts 1:11; John 14:2-3

*Harriet Stennfeld
Fort Wayne, IN*

Friday, September 1, 2017

Old Books

These [signs] are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God.

John 20:31

I love rereading favorite books. The characters are friends. The words are familiar, often memorized. But there is a difference when I reread the 66 books of God's Word. Many of the characters are friends, but Jesus is my best friend. The words are familiar, often memorized. But because God's Spirit works through them, the words bring different comfort at different times.

In the challenge of trading teaching for going on disability, Jeremiah 29:11 told me that God had good in mind for me, that the future held hope. Now that I have embraced retirement and found joy in new ministry the same words tell me that God always keeps his promises. He wrote his book so that I could know my future, and yours, contains the promise of eternal life.

Father, thank you for the gift of being able to read and reread your Word. Amen.

Do: Reread some of your favorite Bible verses. What comfort do they bring you today?

Read: John 20:30 to 21:25; Jeremiah 29:10-14; 1 John 5; Revelation 22:6-21

*Ruth Geisler
Aliso Viejo, CA*

Saturday, September 2, 2017

Psalms And Hymns

[Sing] psalms and hymns and spiritual songs.

Colossians 3:16

As I join you in aging, I invite you to remember that we have a hymnbook at the very center of our Bible. We call it the Book of Psalms. Hymns have a way of touching our lives. We seem to be wired for music. Some of my friends speak of the psalms as “folk songs of faith.” Years ago I read a devotional booklet entitled *Old Songs for a New Journey: A Reflection on the Psalms*. The psalmists’ hymns help us work through our sorrows and complaints, our moods and convictions, our hopes and fears, our response in praise and thanksgiving.

No wonder the apostle Paul offers guidelines for Christian living by writing “[sing] psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God.” Not only does Paul send this message to the church at Colossae and Ephesus (Ephesians 5:19), but also to you and me.

Lord Jesus, accept our songs of praise and thanksgiving. Amen.

Consider: Meditate on Psalm 145 and join the psalmist in praising God for his mighty works. Note carefully verses 4 and 5.

Read: Colossians 3:12-17; Ephesians 5:15-20

*Walter M. Schoedel
Webster Groves, MO*

Sunday, September 3, 2017

Who Are You?

I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me.

Galatians 2:20

Auntie, Grandpa, Neighbor, Widow, Patient, Disabled. What do people call you? Do you identify with the label they've given you? Sometimes we welcome the name. Other times we are reluctant.

God has given each of us believers an identity we can fully embrace. He has called you to be his child. He has redeemed you through his own Son. And, he has prepared a life for you to live out that identity. Your life as God's child is lived out through your family, your work, your hobbies, your physical abilities and your location. Let us not be completely defined by those things. They do not give us value or take it away. Our value is in Christ. We express our identity as Christ's children and followers as we live our everyday lives in our own unique ways.

Heavenly Father, remind me that no matter the roles I take on today, I am yours. Amen.

Say: Say "I am God's child" to yourself every time you live out life as a mom, customer, volunteer, widower, etc.

Read: Isaiah 43:1; Ephesians 2:8-10

*Stephenie Hovland
Portage, WI*

Monday, September 4, 2017

Lifelong Labor Day

For the people had a mind to work.

Nehemiah 4:6

America seems focused on putting people back to work, an appropriate emphasis on Labor Day, unifying both labor and management. Under Nehemiah's leadership despite great obstacles, God's remnant people in Judah rebuilt the destroyed city walls to half its height in a short period of time. How? We are told, "For the people had a mind to work." Why? God's plan of salvation through the coming Messiah required a rebuilt temple and city walls.

How do older adults "labor" after leaving the work force? God uses our gifts and energy as God's chosen people throughout our lives to serve others and witness to Jesus, whether we get paid or not. In that sense we thankfully celebrate a "Lifelong Labor Day," contributing to both church and nation.

Lord, bless our daily work to your glory so that we may bear witness to your saving love. Amen.

Give thanks: Thank God this week for specific work opportunities.

Read: Nehemiah 4:1-6; Nehemiah 6:15-16

*Stephen J. Carter
Oakville, MO*

Tuesday, September 5, 2017

A Fresh Start

If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation.

2 Corinthians 5:17

Remember the first day of school? New pencils, books, and a new teacher too! It was always so good to have a fresh start at the beginning of a new school year. It all came with a newfound energy to do your best and be all that God made you to be!

When school days are long past, we easily get into the same old routine. Our energy and enthusiasm may seldom be sparked. But in Christ our Savior, God gives us a new beginning every day. You were taught, the Bible reminds us, “to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness” (Ephesians 4:22-24).

You don’t need a teacher to tell you how to do things anymore. Each bright morning is a day to make a fresh new start, being and becoming all God made you to be in Christ your Savior.

Almighty God of our school days past, bless and preserve and use us in these days of our lives. Spark our energy to look to the needs of others and do good things for you. Amen.

Connect: Call a grandchild and ask about the first day of school. Then say: “When I was your age ...”

Read: Psalm 96; Colossians 3:10

*Lonie Eatherton
Fenton, MO*

Wednesday, September 6, 2017

Witnessing for our Lord

Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, and the conviction of things not seen.

Hebrews 11:1

While on his vicarage assignment in Florida, my son John spent time playing sports with a young Vietnamese college student, often witnessing to him about his faith. He could never tell though, if Tommy Nguyen took it to heart. A year later, by coincidence (God-incidence) they happened to meet in the Atlanta airport and found themselves seated next to each other on the plane. During the flight, there was some violent turbulence and Tommy voiced fear that they might die. John replied, "So be it. I know where I would be." The plane landed safely and they went their separate ways. Again, time passed and one day Tommy called John to tell him he was now a Christian, partly crediting that fact to their conversation on the plane. Tommy said he wanted that same assurance of "where he would be." So should each of us be ready at all times to share that certain and blessed hope.

Lord Jesus, help me to witness boldly. Amen.

Speak: Always be ready to share and defend your faith.

Read: 1 Peter 3:15

*Harriet Stennfeld
Fort Wayne, IN*

Thursday, September 7, 2017

Handprints

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

Isaiah 49:16

At the end of a wonderful visit with me, two-year-old Gretchen climbed on a chair and pushed her small sticky hand onto the glass of my front window. “Aunt Margaret, I’m going to put my handprint on your window, so you won’t be so lonesome for me when I leave.” It would remain there for almost a year until I sold that condo and was forced to wash the window.

There are people throughout our lives who leave their imprint on us. It may be something they said that you will never forget or even a random act of kindness from a stranger. God puts people in our lives to remind us of his ongoing love and care for us. They leave their mark on us just as God marked us with his cross at Baptism and reminded us that we would be God’s forever.

Thank you, Lord, for reminding me of your presence in my life through both friend and stranger. Amen.

Write: Make a list of people who have left their imprint on your life.

Read: James 2:14-17

*Margaret Hinchey
Englewood, CO*

Friday, September 8, 2017

Homework Assignment for Older Adults

*O God, do not forsake me, until I proclaim your
might to another generation.*

Psalm 71:18

Across our land young people are returning to school. Believe it or not, God has a homework assignment for us older adults as well.

The psalmist reflects on how God has taught him from his youth and then suggests that even to old age and gray hair, he desires to proclaim God's wondrous deeds to another generation. Your assignment: What has God been teaching you over the years about his love through Jesus? How can you share that with grandchildren and other children in your schools and community? Phone or texting conversations; sharing Christian books or Bible quotes; tutoring as a volunteer, using your talents and experience; taking time for conversation with a child. The list goes on.

*Lord, help me use a new school year to proclaim
your love to students of all ages. Amen.*

*Write: Make a list of opportunities to touch young
people.*

Read: Psalm 71:17-18

*Stephen J. Carter
Oakville, MO*

Saturday, September 9, 2017

The Fabric of Our Lives

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

Ephesians 2:10

Ever since I was a child, I have been fascinated with quilts. Traditionally, during Colonial times, they were constructed using blocks of fabric from worn clothing. There are a multitude of patterns and often there is a story behind the fabric.

In a way, our lives resemble patchwork quilts. The people we meet during our journey contribute to who we ultimately become. Throughout our lifetime, God introduces us to many people who create the fabric of our lives. Each of us has purpose in God's plan. As Christians, we all have one thread in common, our Savior Jesus. He was brought into our lives through the waters of Holy Baptism. Because of his saving grace, we are forever cloaked in the warmth and light of his love.

Dear God, help me to be a blessing to others I meet along my journey. Amen.

Reflect: Who has contributed to the fabric of your life?

Read: Ephesians 2:1-10

*Betsy Becker Niedringhaus
Ballwin, MO*

Sunday, September 10, 2017

Restored

The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want ... He restores my soul.

Psalm 23:1, 3

My friend, Sylvia, tells how she discovered an old drop-leaf table in her basement. Abandoned and forgotten, it was a sorry sight. Sylvia was determined to restore the table. Her husband was skeptical. To him, it seemed worthless. Nevertheless, with patience, love and expertise, a workman stripped and sanded, sealed and stained that table, restoring it to glorious life again. Now it stands gleaming in Sylvia's beautiful living room.

Sometimes we may feel like that old table—useless, scarred, spiritually low. It is our Shepherd who knows just what we need. Jesus comes to us in his precious Word to reassure us of his love. Immersed in God's Word, by faith we are set free, restored, in fellowship with him once again.

Good Shepherd, your word of love and forgiveness heals my sinful scars and restores my joy. All praise and thanks to you, dear Savior. Amen.

Learn: Spend time in God's Word today. Meditate on Psalm 51:10-12.

Read: John 10:10-17; John 14:1-4

*Donna J. Streufert
South Bend, IN*

Monday, September 11, 2017

Yoked to Christ

Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.

Matthew 11:29

I wish life in this world was better—that it wasn't so hard for so many, that there was less suffering and more kindness. We yearn for what will make a difference. Jesus reminds us that with him is a better way.

Being yoked to Jesus changes everything, or as Jesus says, "You will find rest for your souls." Being yoked to Jesus is not just about getting through tough times. It is about finding life in God's kingdom, where you learn of Jesus and his gentle ways. Yoked to Jesus, you share his way of life. You find peace for your heart and the assurance of a good future.

Lord, thank you for opening the life of your kingdom to me. May that reality refresh my life each day. Amen.

Practice: At the beginning of each day, remind yourself of the life of God's kingdom that is also yours to enjoy.

Read: Matthew 11:25-30

*Lionel Otto
Adelaide, Australia*

Tuesday, September 12, 2017

Crowned

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

Psalm 8:4

Filled with awe by the glowing moon and the twinkling stars, David the psalmist wondered why the Lord would remember insignificant human beings.

As we read Psalm 8, we see that human beings are the crown of creation. We may accomplish great things, but we are also vulnerable to sin, sickness, sadness and death. Yet we are made to rule over all that the Lord has made—all flocks and herds, beasts of the field, birds of the air and fish of the sea. The Lord became a human being, not a moon or a star. Jesus was born in the flesh. He was vulnerable to human sin and evil when he died on the cross. He rose from the tomb and into the heavens. He rules over all and blesses us in the work assigned to us.

O Lord Jesus, remember that we need your grace and wisdom in all that we do. Amen.

Observe: Look into the skies some night when there are no clouds and think of how wonderfully the Lord has made our universe.

Read: Genesis 1:1—2:4

Gordon Beck
Williamsburg, VA

Wednesday, September 13, 2017

Look to the Rock

Look to the rock from which you were hewn.

Isaiah 51:1

The prophet encourages Israel to look to their forefather, Abraham, and consider the outcome of his faith and obedience. He was but one when God called him. Abraham believed and obeyed, and God made of him a nation. A rock hewn from a larger stone should share the same characteristics.

Who are the rocks from which we have been hewn? Besides those listed in Hebrews 11, I could list my godly parents, the people of the congregation where I was raised, the pastors who served it, my Christian teachers and professors, and mentors in ministry along the way. All these not only taught me Christian faith and righteousness; they modelled it for me. I am so blessed!

Thank you for the many “rocks” of faith from which I am hewn, and their influence on my faith and life. Amen.

List: Make a list of the “rocks” of faith from which you were hewn. Thank God for each of them, and where possible, thank them.

Read: Isaiah 51:1-3, Hebrews 11

*Ted Zimmerman
Napa, CA*

Thursday, September 14, 2017

Beautiful Tree

He is like a tree planted by streams of water.

Psalm 1:3

“Arbor Day!” said the teacher, “Time to plant some trees!” Many of us did. Years later we returned to see the trees we’d planted. Some had died, some were cut down, many had grown tall, beautiful even.

Trees are signs of hope—one in particular. It was planted by Roman soldiers on Good Friday. It was not beautiful. It offered no shade. What it offered was, and is, eternal life. Jesus hung on that Tree. Maybe you’ve hung that “Tree” around your neck or placed it upon a wall somewhere. Every time you feel it or see it, it’s a sign of hope, a message from the Lord himself: “Your life goes forward; I will plant you like a tree by the river of (eternal) life” (Matthew 13:43, Revelation 22:2-3).

Heavenly Father, thank you for placing me under the Tree of the Cross. I love the shade here! Amen.

Share: How might you offer a “sign” of hope to another human being this week?

Read: Revelation 22:1-5

*David Boyd
Staunton, VA*

Friday, September 15, 2017

Sharing the Gift

Every good and perfect gift is from above.

James 1:17

As master naturalists, my wife and I sometimes cut a double cactus leaf off our cactus plant or a limb off a plumeria tree in our garden and give it to our friends to plant in their garden. We enjoy sharing. As Christians, we are called to share the Jesus who lives in our hearts with the hearts of those who may not yet believe. This may happen by simply telling them how Christ enriches our lives with forgiveness, love and a peace that passes all understanding.

In gardens and hearts God is at work. God the Creator gives life to the plants in our garden. God the Holy Spirit works to create and strengthen faith in the hearts of people with whom we share God's Good News. We who share and those who receive are both blessed by God.

Thank you, dear Father, for the joy we receive from sharing gifts, especially the gift of your Son and our Savior. Amen.

Appreciate: Thank a friend for the gift she or he is to you.

Read: 1 Peter 4:10-11

*Leo Symmank
Seabrook, TX*

Saturday, September 16, 2017

The Best Lasts

Everyone also to whom God has given wealth and possessions and power to enjoy them, and to accept his lot and rejoice in his work—this is the gift of God.

Ecclesiastes 5:19

Not long ago we passed by the “home place”—the farm where my grandparents had lived, worked and raised a family of seven. The house was nearly gone, covered over with trees and bushes. They had worked hard to build a two-story home with every modern convenience for five women. And now it lies in ruins. Yet, the best lasts—the joy of work and faith in God.

After lamenting over the meaninglessness of many things, including the accumulation of things, Solomon acknowledges that man’s mad pursuit of things and of wealth is all “meaningless, and a chasing after the wind.” But faith teaches us that God has ordered all things for his own purposes. We are to accept them and patiently enjoy them as gifts of God in our time.

*Lord, thank you for allowing me to work for you.
Amen.*

Privilege: Thank God for the privilege of work.

Read: Genesis 2:1-2; Exodus 23:10-12; Psalm 103

*David P. Schmidt
St. Louis, MO*

Sunday, September 17, 2017

What Do You Need?

The eyes of all look to you, and you give them their food in due season. You open your hand; you satisfy the desire of every living thing.

Psalm 145:15-16

My husband is partially disabled as the result of an accident. He often has trouble keeping his balance or reaching things. So when I hear or see him struggling, I ask, "What do you need?" Maybe I need to get a book or DVD from a high shelf or perhaps I need to carry a bowl of ice cream to the table for him. But he has to tell me what he needs before I can help him.

We don't have to tell God what we need. He always knows exactly what we need and takes care of it. He knows all about our physical needs but more importantly, he knows about our spiritual needs. Jesus' death and resurrection covers those needs. Aren't you glad God is all-knowing?

Lord, thanks for always knowing what I need, even before I know it myself. Amen.

Help: Lend a hand to someone who needs help with everyday tasks.

Read: 1 Kings 17

*Jeanette Dall
Batavia, IL*

Monday, September 18, 2017

Carrying Burdens

I can do all things through him who strengthens me.

Philippians 4:13

We would all agree that it's easier to carry things when weight is balanced: same weight in each arm. So it is with burdens: A good balance is to carry our own burdens and also help carry the burdens of others. However, there are occasional exceptions, especially for seniors: If we carry a heavy package going up stairs, we need to hold on to a railing. So also a "heavy" senior challenge requires us to hang on to God in prayers for strength. This is especially true for caregivers who must take care of loved ones. My husband has been diagnosed with Alzheimer's and I'm attending a support group for caregivers at our church. At the first meeting I attended we were reminded to take care of ourselves so we are able to take good care of our loved ones. We hang on to Christ for strength.

Dear Christ, please give your strength to all caregivers. Amen.

Share: Remind caregivers you know to also take care of themselves.

Read: Psalm 55:22; Matthew 11:28-30; 1 Peter 5:6-7

*Annette Schumacher
Muskego, WI*

Tuesday, September 19, 2017

Compassion

With great compassion I will gather you ... with everlasting love I will have compassion on you.

Isaiah 54:7-8

Compassion—a powerful word. It literally means “suffering with another.” Scripture frequently speaks about God being compassionate, that is, he forgives us (Micah 7:18-20). Jesus showed compassion as he fed 5000 people (Mark 6:30-44). As he walked the dusty roads of Palestine, he never hesitated to reach out and care for those in the midst of their sufferings.

We too follow in his footsteps with a compassionate spirit. This we do when we listen to someone as they share their burdens with us. This we do as we care for a loved one with cancer. This we do as we mentor a troubled youth. This we do as we forgive someone who has hurt us. This we do as we identify with the poor and needy, the forsaken and forgotten. May it be said of us as it was said of Jesus, “He had compassion” (Mark 6:34).

Lord Jesus, as you show compassion toward me, help me to be a compassionate person. Amen.

Share: Seek ways to show compassion toward those whose lives you touch.

Read: Luke 15:11-32

*Walter M. Schoedel
Webster Groves, MO*

Wednesday, September 20, 2017

May I Come In?

And when Jesus came to the place, he looked up and said to him, “Zacchaeus, hurry and come down, for I must stay at your house today.”

Luke 19:5

Zacchaeus was surprised when Jesus saw him up in a tree. Jesus even wanted to stay in his home! Like Zacchaeus, we sometimes feel unworthy of God’s company. Do you even sometimes feel like Jesus might not see you? What if you allow him to meet you eye to eye? Might God be asking to come into the place where you live?

Look for Jesus approaching. Expect to see him. Welcome him in. He knows you well and chooses to visit you. He is Friend, Counselor, Father, Healer and an awesome guest.

Lord, raise me up so that I can see you looking at me and asking to stay with me. Amen.

Invite: Greet a neighbor, family member or even stranger who looks at you. Ask about their day, or even ask them in for a visit.

Read: Isaiah 9:6; Luke 12:7

*Lisa Heule
Littleton, CO*

Thursday, September 21, 2017

Stardom

Commit your work to the LORD, and your plans will be established.

Proverbs 16:3

My daughter was a dance major at a renowned dance school. She was headed for a successful career on Broadway. She had what it took to be successful. That is, until a tumor in her ankle crushed her hopes for stardom. However, Jesus set the stage for her to shine in new ways. He turned her mourning into dancing for him, leading her to a ministry that transformed an inner-city neighborhood.

As we age, we may find our dreams, skills and talents sidelined due to retirement, health issues or because those with more talent or fresh ideas take our place. We question our purpose. But as long as we live, God doesn't turn off the lights on our stage. He just changes the set, giving us new ways to be his star witnesses. As his disciples, we always have the spotlight.

Jesus, give me a stage to proclaim your name and an audience to hear my testimony! Amen.

Take a bow: Bow to Jesus and let him choreograph your next moves.

Read: 2 Corinthians 4:6-12; Psalm 40:1-3

*Sandi Geis
St. Louis, MO*

Friday, September 22, 2017

Heroes And Saints

Peter and the other apostles replied: “We must obey God rather than men!

Acts 5:29

Most heroes are just like the rest of us—they are flawed. Yet in a decisive moment, they overcome their flaws and run into burning buildings and put themselves in danger for the sake of others. In that moment they shine like stars in the sky!

Saints are sinners who fall and get back up and try again because they know that God is with them and God loves them. Saints stand up for what is right regardless of the consequences. Saints speak truth when it is not popular. Saints work for justice when others seek to deny justice. Saints love when others hate. Saints deny their own wills to do the will of God. And in that moment they shine like stars in the sky!

Lord God, I know I often fail, but help me to keep getting back up and serving you and your people. Amen.

Give: Seek to do God’s will in your community as it is done in heaven.

Read: Acts 5:17-32

*Glen VanderKloot
Springfield, IL*

Saturday, September 23, 2017

The Power of Mud

He said to them, “He put mud on my eyes, and I washed, and I see.”

John 9:15

We took our final overseas trip a few months ago, which was highlighted by a three-day stay in the Holy Land. We visited the Dead Sea and were encouraged to plunge in and cover ourselves with the medicinal muddy waters. There were folks who applied mud from top to toe. Then there was us. A bit here, a bit there. My good husband slipped and was unable to stand. A huge man who was there to tend to slipping husbands gently picked him up and deposited him on the sand. He then proceeded to apply the “good” mud to all the right places. His words were kind and spirit-filled. We spoke with each other afterwards about Jesus healing the blind man by applying mud. No, my husband couldn’t leap for joy, but we were both touched by the remembrance of our Great Healer who once walked by that same sea.

Dear Jesus, touch our sore spots with your healing hand and help us always to look to you for comfort. Amen.

Remember: A gentle touch and kind words can heal many aches and pains.

Read: John 9

*Lois Siemon Scheer
San Diego, CA*

Sunday, September 24, 2017

Armor

Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil.

Ephesians 6:11

Every morning I awake and, as I start my day, I do the same routine. I get dressed and bend over and put on my shoes. I also remember the words of the hymn “Stand Up, Stand Up for Jesus.” I reach for my walker, the last portion of putting on my daily armor. I have added a tray to the front of it to be able to carry objects. My trusty cane is my aid for negotiating the stairs.

When David went against Goliath, he rejected Saul’s armor. His armor was his faith. Paul tells us that righteousness is our breastplate of armor. Faith is our shield. Salvation is our helmet. We carry the sword of the Spirit as we go out into the sinful world and battle temptations. Your shoes are the readiness of the Gospel!

Lord, thank you for providing your armor for our daily protection. Amen.

Tomorrow: Hum or sing “Stand Up, Stand Up for Jesus” as you get dressed and get ready to meet the new day.

Read: Ephesians 6:10-20; Romans 13:11-14; 1 Samuel 17:36-39

*Jim Wiedman
Lombard, IL*

Monday, September 25, 2017

Out of the Dumps

Out of the depths I cry to you, O LORD!

Psalm 130:1

A holiday celebration, the birth of a grandchild, the beginning of your retirement—these joyous occasions should leave us feeling on top of the world. But instead we may find ourselves down in the dumps. Elijah knew the feeling. After his astonishing triumph over the prophets of Baal, he ran away to Beersheba and asked that he might die.

When we find ourselves in the dumps, we would do well to follow Elijah's steps. He rested. He ate and drank the cakes and water provided by the angel and journeyed to Mt. Horeb to seek God. On the mountain Elijah was confronted by a mighty wind, an earthquake and fire. But God came to him in a still, small voice, as he comes to us in the cry of a baby in a manger and the triumphant shout of the Savior on the cross.

Lift us, Lord, when we find ourselves in the dumps. Help us to minister in Jesus' name to others in their times of trouble. Amen.

Encourage: Reassure someone who is "in the dumps" of God's love and your love.

Read: 1 Kings 19:1-18

*Eileen Ritter
Byron Center, MI*

Tuesday, September 26, 2017

A Letter from Christ

You show that you are a letter from Christ delivered by us, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts.

2 Corinthians 3:3

What kind of person, what kind of letter are you? A form letter? A complaint letter? An advertisement? An uplifting letter? Paul wants us to be warm, personal letters. He invites us to be a “letter from Christ.” He expects us to be people who are moved by the “Spirit of the living God” (2 Corinthians 3:3). Yes, Paul expects us to be uplifting, positive, personal letters!

Our tendency is to be the complaint letter. But with the inspiration of the Holy Spirit we can “write” a different letter. Instead of complaints, there can be compliments. Instead of listing our disappointments, we can give thanks. Instead of viewing the world as negative or fearsome, we could tell the positive stories of life. What kind of letter will you write today?

Lord, let me be a letter of hope and love. Amen.

Think: What kind of letter are you?

Read: 2 Corinthians 3:1-3

*Neal A. Orabka
Las Vegas, NV*

Wednesday, September 27, 2017

Enjoy the Journey

Which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his span of life?

Matthew 6:27

Is it just me, or does time seem to speed up as we age? Wouldn't it be nice to push a pause button and savor those special moments spent with family and friends?

Recently, I saw a school marquis that read, "Enjoy the Journey." Often we fail to enjoy the everyday moments in life because we are worried about the journey that is ahead. In the process, we fail to recognize the blessings that are already in our lives, as well as the opportunities to reach out to others and share our faith. In Scripture we are reminded to place our trust in God. He already knows our needs before they arise. What a comfort to know that our future is securely in his hands!

Dear God, help me to rejoice in the blessings you have given me and remind me that you hold my future in your hands. Amen.

Tell: Share with others how God has guided your life.

Read: Matthew 6:25-34

*Betsy Becker Niedringhaus
Ballwin, MO*

Thursday, September 28, 2017

Losing and Finding Myself

Whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.

Matthew 10:39

When I neared retirement, I looked forward to having less schedule pressure in my life and more freedom to devote myself to pursuits that bring me pleasure. For a while, that was fun. Then a friend invited me to join him at the congregation's Mission Farm. There they raised fresh fruits and vegetables for the local food bank to help feed hungry, cash-strapped families.

It was a nice change of pace working with my hands after I had spent my whole career working with my head and voice. Then it became a passion. First one morning a week, now four. I've lost myself in giving and serving others. Or did I find myself? Either way, I am very happy and fulfilled, living for others and my Lord.

Thank you, Lord, for the happiness that comes from blessing others in your name. Amen.

Find: There are lots of opportunities for volunteer service in the church and community. Explore and find one that blesses you while you bless others.

Read: Matthew 10:38-42; Galatians 5:13-14

*Ted Zimmerman
Napa, CA*

Friday, September 29, 2017

Thank God for Angels

He will command his angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways.

Psalm 91:11-12

St. Michael and All Angels Day on September 29 is not widely celebrated. Yet angels play an important role in God's work among us every day. In Scripture we read, "Are they not all ministering spirits sent out to serve for the sake of those who are to inherit salvation?" (Hebrews 1:14). Jesus speaks of little children being served by angels. At every age God's angels serve us.

We are the receivers of the care of God's angels. God's Word tells us, "Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares" (Hebrews 13:2). So you never know when or where you might meet an angel. When you show care and love to others, they may still say, "You are an angel." Let every day include thanking God for giving us angels to watch over us.

Thank you, Lord, for sending your holy angels to watch over me. Guide and bless me as I reach out to show love and care to others. Amen.

Help: Join an angel in caring for someone in need.

Read: Psalm 91

*Leo Symmank
Seabrook, TX*

Saturday, September 30, 2017

Ready, Set, Do!

Be ready for every good work.

Titus 3:1

The apostle Paul speaks a familiar word for us seniors. We know how to be ready. We like to plan ahead. We set the table way before the guests arrive. We lay out our clothing for worship before Sunday morning. We allow time for our appointments. We are “at the door” if someone is picking us up. We plan to have our affairs in order. We get ready for Jesus’ arrival.

In Christ, we’re ready for good works. Our days of foolishness, useless quarreling, sinful pleasures, envy and disobedience are in the past. According to our Savior’s mercy, we now display confidence as heirs of heaven. We have the realized hope of eternal life. We have it all—all that God won for us. We do not clutch tightly the materials of life. We are free to give of ourselves, and we do. We are ready for every good work.

Dear Jesus, thank you for your good work among us. Amen.

Remember: Freed of sinful distractions, we actively pursue helping others.

Read: Titus 3:1-8

*Harry Edenfield
Brownstown, MI*

HOLY HABITS for **HOPE-FULL HEALTH**

Shine Like Stars—In Your Constellation

We are called to “shine like STARS” in our constellations of life—our home, our church, our community, and the world. Here are some STARtling ways to shine the Light of Jesus to those around you:

- S Continue to use your SKILLS to help and support people.
- T Take the TIME to talk to people and encourage them to share their joys and struggles with you. Pray with and for them. Time is such a gift from the Lord. Take time out for your own needs as well.
- A AFFIRM people by pointing out the joys and blessings that surround them. Try catching them “doing something right,” and tell them what blessings they are to others!
- R Resurrection RESOURCES are what we all are, because of Christ! Share words and actions of hope and peace to people young and old.
- S Watch each day for a SURPRISE from the Lord—perhaps a new friend, a new opportunity to serve, a chance to comfort someone who is struggling, a joyful story that makes you smile.

Enjoy each day in the Lord, as we SHINE LIKE STARS...because that is what STARS do, in the Lord!

Hope-Full Praying

Our Nation

I pray for my country today, Lord. I pray for people young and old, rich and poor, black and white, working and repositioned. May the “stars and stripes” that we celebrate be centered in the fact that you have called us to shine like stars to others with your love, and teach us that it is by your stripes we are healed. Amen.

Our Family

Dear Father in heaven, as we pray each day, keep reminding us that you indeed are our Father, not only in heaven but also right where we are right now. You have linked us together through your death and resurrection, and that bond will never end. Thanks for being our Father so we know each day that we indeed are your children. Amen.

Our Work

Lord, I have work to do today. Whether I am getting paid for it or not is not the point. What matters is that I am serving others with the talents and gifts that you have provided me. I cannot do everything, Lord, but you have given me enough gifts to do what others need today. So, it is “off to work I go,” in your name. Amen.

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