

HOPE-FULL LIVING

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

January • February • March • 2019

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Hope-Full Living Mission Statement

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

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Tuesday, January 1, 2019

A New Year, A New You

I will remember the deeds of the Lord; yes, I will remember your miracles of long ago.

Psalm 77:11

Happy New Year! Happy New You! Psalm 77 is the message from our Lord on this day in this new year. There will be changes ahead for all of us. There will be joys as well as hardships. There will be good days and not-so-good days. But there is one thing that we know for sure. The Lord is with us and will always be with us, in spite of our pains, problems and pouts.

As we begin this new year, let us surrender to what is, let go of what was, and have faith in what will be—in the Lord! And through it all, let us remind each other that sharing the gospel of Christ is not our job. It is our joy!

Lord, in this new year, help us not just to count the days, but rather help us to make each day count as we share your love and joy. Amen.

Enjoy: Discuss this quote with a friend, through your eyes of faith: “There are moments when everything goes well. Don’t be afraid, it won’t last!”

Read: Psalm 77

*Rich Bimler
Bloomington, IL*

Wednesday, January 2, 2019

Safe and Sound

The Lord is the stronghold of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?

Psalm 27:1

In his first inaugural address in 1933, Franklin D. Roosevelt asserted his belief that, “The only thing we have to fear is fear itself.” He spoke those words, which endure to this day, to encourage the American people as they struggled through the Depression. Those hard times are long past, but all nations and people continue to struggle with ever-changing problems and fears, large and small.

Now in January 2019, we may be tempted to fear what the new year will bring. But Scripture assures us over and over that God’s love is the opposite of and the antidote for fear. “Perfect love casts out fear” (1 John 4:18). “I sought the Lord, and he answered me and delivered me from all my fears” (Psalm 34:4). “The Lord is my helper; I will not fear” (Hebrews 13:6). This year, and for as many more years as we live, God’s loving care calms all our fears.

By your Spirit, Father, move me from fear to faith, to a spirit of power, love and self-control. Amen.

List: Keep a handy list of verses that fight fear.

Read: 2 Timothy 1:6-7; Romans 8:15-17

*Marj Maynard
Pipe Creek, TX*

Thursday, January 3, 2019

Whiter Than Snow

Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.

Psalm 51:7

I like snow. I know that's unusual; often older people don't like snow. But snow is quiet. Only a small covering of snow muffles the roar of automobiles, especially the one I'm in. A blanket of snow in the woods makes the quiet palpable. I also like the clean whiteness of snow. New snow covers dirt and grime and even trash. Four places in the Bible use the word *snow*, and every time it is in the phrase "whiter than snow." This refers to being clean and pure, washed clean through forgiveness (Psalm 51:7). We are forgiven, not just in part, but completely forgiven of all the dirt of sin, washed "whiter than snow." Rejoice and be glad!

Dear Lord Jesus, your great gift is full and complete forgiveness, so that we stand before the throne of God clean, pure and whiter than snow. We praise and thank you. Amen.

See: The next time you see snow, think of the color change. Washed in the red blood of Jesus, we are whiter than snow.

Read: Psalm 51

*Eldor Kaiser
Lenexa, KS*

Friday, January 4, 2019

Take Care

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

1 Peter 5:6-7

Have you ever noticed how many times in one day you hear someone say, “Take care!”? Yesterday I had the privilege of lunching with a senior friend who uses a walker. As we left the restaurant, no less than five servers and managers shared the words, “Take care!” with us! Later in the day I caught myself saying those words at least a half-dozen times to others as well.

“Take care” is a show of concern. It is a warning to be careful. But it is a benediction of sorts also. For those of us who are Christians, it is a way of reminding us that God does take care of us each and every day, wherever we are. Those words remind us that we should take care of each other as well, following the example of Christ, the great Caregiver. The Lord bless you and keep you this day, and do “take care!”

*O great and gracious Caregiver, help us daily to take care of each other, following your example.
Amen.*

Number: Count how many times you say “take care” to others today!

Read: Galatians 6:10

*Margaret Rickers Hinchey
Englewood, CO*

Saturday, January 5, 2019

It's January; Who Cares?

[God] comforts us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.

2 Corinthians 1:4

Apparently a lot of people care, even in January, and they don't just care about themselves. They care about others. For example, the first successful heart transplant was performed on January 2, 1988. The first appendectomy was on January 4, 1885. Penicillin was first used at St. Mary's Hospital in London on January 9, 1920. On January 11, 1922, insulin was first used to treat diabetes. God cares!

In every case, God used people to care for other people. Isn't that wonderful? But God personally took care of his greatest, caring gift. He so cared for us that he sent his own Son Jesus to take all our hurts and sins and agonies on himself on the cross. What a caring God we have! What a joy to serve him by caring for others!

Dear God, thank you for taking care! Let me show your care to others. Amen.

Speak: Speak a caring word to someone who doesn't expect it.

Read: 2 Corinthians 1:1-7; Psalm 121

*Lonie Eatherton
Fenton, MO*

Sunday, January 6, 2019

Light

I am the light of the world.

John 8:12

Our sun is a natural source of light created by God. The sun warms our seas, allows us to see and causes plants to grow and make food. In today's verse Jesus boldly proclaimed that he is "the light of the world." Jesus is the only source of light that the world needs. All believers need Jesus as the light. Christ is the image of the invisible God. Everything looks different in the light because of Jesus. The Savior allows us to be in the light and not to live in the darkness of sin. Jesus' light will never go out.

There are benefits of Jesus being the light of the world: seniors have his presence, his protection and his guidance. Our response as believers is to follow and trust him. Our response as seniors is to point others to Jesus. Our response as Christians is to boldly proclaim that Jesus is the Savior.

Father, allow my light to witness for you. Amen

Praise: Sing "This Little Gospel Light of Mine."

Read: Matthew 5:14-16

*David Bever
Las Vegas, NV*

Monday, January 7, 2019

Rescued

See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are.

1 John 3:1

Born with multiple, severe physical disabilities, an infant boy had been abandoned by his birth parents. Rescued and adopted by a young couple, the child now has a loving home. Recently visiting with the family, I watched as the adoptive father cradled this fragile child. Sipping water into a straw, he slowly and carefully dripped the water into the child's mouth. This selfless act of patient love and care brings to mind the extraordinary love of our heavenly Father. Born sinners, we have been rescued and given life-sustaining grace found in Jesus through the waters of Baptism. Placed in the loving arms of our gracious God, we are cradled there now and for eternity.

Heavenly Father, thank you for rescuing me from the brokenness of sin through sacrificial love found in Jesus. Amen.

Rejoice: Send cards to newly baptized children and adults. Celebrate Baptism birthdays.

Read: Luke 2:25-38

*Judith Christian
St. Louis, MO*

Tuesday, January 8, 2019

No More Terror

You will not fear the terror of the night, nor the arrow that flies by day, nor the pestilence that stalks in darkness, nor the destruction that wastes at noon-day.

Psalm 91:5-6

I had nightmares as a child. I always wanted the night to go away because fear overwhelmed me. I tried to keep my eyes open as I waited for morning. Near my bed was the familiar picture of an angel guarding children as they crossed a bridge. That image reminded me that God was near and bigger than my fears.

I believe God is my ever-present help each day and night. His holy Word repeatedly tells me that I need not fear nightmares, arrows or pestilence because he is by my side. He is my strength to handle earthly problems. My heavenly Father shields me under his wings.

Dear heavenly Father, help me trust in your protection at all times. Amen.

See: What events cause you to be afraid? Visualize yourself as a little lamb being protected by Jesus, the mighty Shepherd, who has defeated Satan.

Read: Psalm 91

MaryAnn Sundby
Castle Rock, CO

Wednesday, January 9, 2019

Don't Be Discouraged

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

1 Peter 5:7

Many times in our lives we are discouraged because we don't think God cares for us. We may even say, "God, don't you see the trouble I'm in? Don't you care?" Once again, the tool that is so important here is God's Word. Listen to a few passages: "[Cast] all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you" (1 Peter 5:7). "He gives strength to the weary and increases the power of the weak" (Isaiah 40:29). As Christians, we must remember how God cares for us in the death and resurrection of Jesus. He showed that he cares by giving his life that you and I might have life. Live today in the care of Jesus and cast your troubles on him.

Lord, thank you for your love. Help me remember that love when I become discouraged. Amen.

Be encouraged: Make a list of all that God has done for you.

Read: Isaiah 40; 1 Peter 5

*Mike Lutz
Shelby Township, MI*

Thursday, January 10, 2019

Sacred Expectation

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

Matthew 28:20

How often do I find myself going about a tedious chore, with my mind set on finishing it quickly so I can get on to the next? God is with me always, so why am I reserving my Lord's presence for special occasions such as church, Bible study or morning devotions? God is with me in the dishwashing, the house cleaning and in the yard work as well.

Psalm 139 tells me that all the days ordained for me were written in his book long before I was born. Romans 8:28 assures me that my Lord is working in all things. And he causes events to work together for my good. With sacred expectation, I live each day in God's presence.

Lord, thank you for being with me every minute of the day. Help me to recognize your presence in the small things as well as the big. Amen.

Expect: In every event today, look for God's presence.

Read: Proverbs 16:9; Psalm 37:23; Psalm 23:6

*Lynne Waite Chapman
Fort Wayne, IN*

Friday, January 11, 2019

Let Caregiving Flow!

And he ... rebuked the fever ... and immediately she rose and began to serve them.

Luke 4:39

Observe one small incident in Jesus' dynamic ministry of teaching, preaching and healing. After an exhausting morning in the synagogue, Jesus enters Simon's house for rest and refreshment. But the caregiver, Simon's mother-in-law, is ill with a high fever. Without hesitation Jesus rebukes "the fever and it left her." He loves, cares for and heals her. Remarkably, she immediately rises and begins to serve them. Jesus ignores his need to receive care and provides healing. Thankful for his healing, she becomes a caregiver for the disciples and Jesus by serving their needs.

How well does your caregiving flow to those around you? What might stand in your way? When falling short, do you first turn to Jesus for healing and forgiveness? Watch his caregiving flow through you to others today!

Lord Jesus, my Caregiver, help me pass your care on to others. Amen.

Reach: Touch one person this week with Jesus' care.

Read: Luke 4:38-44

*Stephen J. Carter
Oakville, MO*

Saturday, January 12, 2019

Words, Words, Words

Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful.

Ephesians 4:29

A recent news article asked a pertinent question, “Where Has Civility Gone?” Today’s Scripture chimes in with the way God’s people can respond. Words are meant to “build up” rather than “tear down,” to affirm one another rather than to defame. We also show politeness and courtesy in behavior and speech when we point out our own faults and foibles in humorous ways. For example, a recent study stated that women speak 30,000 words a day, whereas men use 15,000 words. Researchers also pointed out that another study affirmed that women need to repeat everything to men! One male researcher responded by saying, “What?”

Lord, may the words of our mouths be acceptable to you, O Lord, our Strength and Redeemer. Amen.

List: Survey the kinds of words and thoughts you use to talk and share with others. How might we use our words to build people up and fill our conversations with God’s grace and love?

Read: Ephesians 4:29-32; Galatians 4:6

*Rich Bimler
Bloomingdale, IL*

Sunday, January 13, 2019

Thank God for iPads

Each one was hearing them speak in his own language.

Acts 2:6

For over a month we hosted a Chinese family that spoke no English. We speak no Chinese. So we found fantastic translation apps for our iPads. We could communicate! We passed our three iPads around like a deck of cards. God blessed us with this new-fangled technology. We did not always get the words right and some things still got lost in translation, but we could show God's love through our actions. We pray that our new friends saw God's love through us.

We have the greatest app of all, the Bible. We read it so that we may believe through the power of the Holy Spirit. Just like all the features on my iPad, I may not understand all of it, but I know the Word works! Thanks, God, for all the apps.

Thank you, heavenly Father, for all the technology of our day. Help us to use it to know you better and to bring others to know you as their Savior. Amen.

Tackle: Learn how to do a new task on your computer, laptop, iPad or phone.

Read: Acts 2:1-11; Isaiah 55:10-11

*Bill Lubben
Livingston, TX*

Monday, January 14, 2019

Are You It?

And who knows whether you have not come to the kingdom for such a time as this?

Esther 4:14

Children running around the park shouting, “You’re it!” made me smile. I haven’t played tag since grade school, but a few days ago, I had an opportunity to be “it.” My friend Judy took her husband to the ER and a series of medical tests left them exhausted. Following a good report, Ron was discharged. I texted Judy and offered to pick up salads and meet them at home. I was “it.”

The orphan Esther was sent to a palace as part of a search for a queen. God orchestrated events for her to be “it” and speak to the king. Her courage saved the Jews. We are positioned to care for those around us. “It” may be a meal, help with repairs, sharing expertise, hanging pictures, an uplifting conversation or prayer. Just as he positioned Esther, God places us in our church, neighborhood and organizations. We have the privilege of caring for each other.

*Lord, put me in the right place to serve others.
Amen.*

Tag: Look and see how you can be “it” for others.

Read: The Book of Esther

*Marilyn Nutter
Greer, SC*

Tuesday, January 15, 2019

Little Jumps

Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares.

Hebrews 13:2

I love nothing more than watching a horse and rider immersed in show jumping, soaring over tall fences. As a girl, I longed to ride like that, leaping into the sky on a majestic steed. When I finally attempted jumping, my horse was more interested in chewing grass than soaring skyward. Eventually we learned to jump small fences and jumping was joyful, just not quite as impressive as I'd envisioned.

My days of jumping horses are long over, but they remind me that the joy of jumping was never about the height of the fences. Sometimes the acts of kindness God uses to help and heal aren't the biggest or the boldest. A genuine smile, a kind word, a warm meal or a gentle hug have helped me in times of grief far more than any attempt to fix my situation or offer solutions. God uses our little jumps, our everyday acts of kindness, to bring about his glory.

Lord, help me to make those little jumps of kindness toward others. Amen.

Reflect: When has a small act of kindness helped in a big way?

Read: 1 Corinthians 13

*Kerry Osborne
Sydney, Australia*

Wednesday, January 16, 2019

Going Somewhere

Yet it was kind of you to share my trouble.

Philippians 4:14

In winter, you can skate a straight two miles across the surface of Vermont's Lake Morey in minutes. Just snap on long, rugged Nordic blades and you'll glide over bumps and cracks without catching a tip. Imagine the joy of zipping along the ice trail—going somewhere!

Every day God wants us to go somewhere, keeping him close and caring for others. Some days, God calls us to comfort someone who is ill. Sure, we may not always know how to help that person feel better physically. But our compassionate listening, kind words and uplifting humor can help that person feel God's presence. When we snap on Christ's loving guidance, we can carry that person over bumps and cracks. Imagine zipping along with Jesus and taking someone from a place of weakness and worry to a place of hope and peace.

Jesus, help me feel closer to you as I care for others. Amen.

Move: Get outside and go somewhere, praying for the strength and joy to help someone.

Read: Proverbs 3:27-28

*Catherine A. Welch
Southbury, CT*

Thursday, January 17, 2019

Hospitality

Walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us.

Ephesians 5:2

There's a difference between generosity and hospitality. Generosity is centered on giving things; hospitality is centered on giving self.

Jesus was outrageously generous. The wedding comes to mind, also the field kitchen he set up for the thousands. Yet Jesus' mission was not centered on generosity, but on hospitality.

Many of us find it easier to be generous than hospitable. Often we'd rather write a check than invite someone into our messy homes or rooms for supper or a chat. Both invitations require the giving of ourselves to the invited one.

Had Jesus been merely generous that would have been good, but not good enough. To secure us for eternal life, Jesus held nothing back, but gave himself unto death, even death on a cross.

Lord Jesus, thank you for giving yourself for me. Help me learn what it means to be truly hospitable. Amen.

Share: Look around; notice someone who might need part of what you have to give—yourself.

Read: Philippians 2:5-8

*David Boyd
Staunton, VA*

Friday, January 18, 2019

The Unique You

You created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb.

Psalm 139:13

Knitting is a renewed passion of mine. While working with the yarn, I remember Psalm 139:13: "For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb." God's knitting and my knitting are definitely not the same thing, not by any stretch of the imagination. For one thing, I need a pattern to follow. He did not. He created and knitted or formed each one of us individually, uniquely and with a special design in mind.

We acknowledge the awesome work of our Creator, but we still sometimes fall victim to the earth's troubles: doubt, depression, despair, and discouragement. Jeremiah 29:11 tells us, "I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future." Through our Savior Jesus Christ, we know that God has knit together a wonderful future for us!

Lord, I praise you for your gifts and for your care for me. Amen.

Practice: Take up a new hobby or teach someone skills you already know.

Read: Psalm 139

*Connie Streich
Montello, WI*

Saturday, January 19, 2019

Do Good

Trust in the Lord, and do good, dwell in the land and befriend faithfulness.

Psalm 37:3

It's all about me. People stand in line and wait and become upset because it takes too long. People often ask, "What's in it for me?" Often problems develop in a relationship because one or the other is just thinking of themselves and what they can get out of the relationship. I believe that we could go on and on about situations where individuals, even we, just think about ourselves.

Yet the purpose of our life is far greater than our own personal fulfillment, our peace of mind or even our happiness. If we want to know why we were placed on this planet, we must begin with God. We were born by his purpose and for his purpose. We are incomplete when we live just for ourselves. We are meant to live beyond ourselves. We are meant to do good.

*Lord, show me how to care for those around me.
Amen.*

Care: Look for ways to demonstrate that it is all about others.

Read: Psalm 37

*Mike Lutz
Shelby Township, Michigan*

Sunday, January 20, 2019

Jubilant Thanks

Make a joyful noise to the Lord, all the earth!

Psalm 100:1

One of my favorite choir anthems reminds me that God deserves jubilant thanks. Not half-hearted or lukewarm thanks, but triumphant, joyful, jubilant thanks! Thanks for technicolor sunsets, a pond smooth as glass, the tiny slip of green struggling up through a crack in the concrete, the magic of bud bursting into flower. Thanks for the softness of a kitten's fur, the rough bark of a towering tree, a gentle breeze, the hug of a child. Thanks for birdsong at dawn, the first cry of a newborn baby, thunder and rain, a loved one's words.

As we lived through our busy lives—working, raising a family, contributing to our community, pursuing hobbies, dealing with triumph and tragedy—it was easy to ignore all the blessings that surround us. But now that we are older, let's take time to recapture the wonder and magic of childhood. Take a fresh look at God's creation and give jubilant thanks!

May I begin every day, Lord, with a rousing thank you for your blessings! Amen.

Rejoice: Give thanks today for even the smallest blessings.

Read: Job 38 and 39

*Nancy J. Clark
Niles, MI*

Monday, January 21, 2019

Great Gettin' Up Mornin'

*This is the day the Lord has made. We will rejoice
and be glad in it.*

Psalm 118:24

“Well, in that great gettin’ up mornin’ ... Fare ye well, fare ye well. Lord, in that great gettin’ up mornin’... Fare ye well, fare ye well.”

The words of that rousing Gospel song popped into my head this morning. I think it had to do with my grandchildren. As soon as the sun comes up, they rise to meet the day with a wonder and joy that I find mystifying. It causes me to think: Was I ever that excited to get up in the morning?

Perhaps they are a living witness to these words of the psalm: “This is the day the Lord has made; let us be glad and rejoice in it.” I love these children, and together with them I will rejoice and be glad in one more day.

*Lord Jesus, help me to wake up every morning
ready to make the most of the day for your sake.
Amen.*

*Shine: Let the joy of the Lord burst through you to
others this day!*

Read: Matthew 5:13-16

*Edward Arle
St Charles, MO*

Tuesday, January 22, 2019

The Ultimate Caregiver

The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.

Psalm 23:1

If anyone needed a caregiver at that time, it was David. He was in pain: body, mind and soul. Absalom, his son, rebelled against him. David cried out that the Lord is his shepherd, his caregiver. David's faith is so mature that he affirmed God's abundant healing of his troubles even as he fled for his life.

What faith!

We have discovered that same comforting and empowering truth. Jesus, our Good Shepherd, steps into our pains and leads us to the oasis of hope. Somehow, he sends you a loving individual who puts everything aside to care for you. He speaks comfort to us through his life-giving Word. Confidently we echo David, declaring, "Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life" (Psalm 23:6).

Lord, in my times of stress and pain, anoint my head with your oil of merciful care. Amen.

Research: Check your past desk diaries (or your memory), recalling former times of trouble. Then recall the Lord's caregiving acts.

Read: John 10:11; Hebrews 13:20-21

*David Bernthal
Juliette, GA*

Wednesday, January 23, 2019

Not Yet

This must take place, but the end is not yet.

Mark 13:7

“It’s not the end of the world.” Perhaps you have said that to comfort someone who was anxious over a small mistake. Or maybe someone said that to you, to ease your worry over a minor mishap. It is a problem, but really, it’s not the end of the world.

Terrifying events and disasters reported on the news or taking place in our own communities lead us to think that it really is the end of the world. Jesus warned of fearful events and signs, false messiahs and “wars and rumors of wars.” Then he adds, “Do not be alarmed. This must take place, but the end is not yet.” We are living in the “not yet” and we can be certain that Jesus is coming back. With the help of the Holy Spirit, we remain faithful. We keep watch. When Jesus returns, we will know it, and with joy we will move from the “not yet” to the endless “Today!” of eternal life in his presence.

Come, Lord Jesus! Amen.

Encourage: Remind those who worry that Jesus is coming back, just as he promised.

Read: Mark 13:3-13; Luke 21:25-28

*Carol Geisler
Manchester, MO*

Thursday, January 24, 2019

Touching Jesus

And all the crowd sought to touch him, for power came out from him and healed them all.

Luke 6:19

Right after calling his disciples to follow him in humble service to others, Jesus gathers the crowds to teach them about the kingdom of God. In the process, they sought to touch him, bringing all their infirmities to him for healing. They soon discover the results of touching Jesus: 1) Healed—physically, emotionally and spiritually, whether poor, hungry or weeping, they are blessed to receive the kingdom (Luke 6:20-21); 2) Humbled—all of these undeserved blessings come from Jesus who loves them; 3) Helping—called as his disciples, they reach out with his love to others, even when persecuted “on account of the Son of Man” (Luke 6:22). These are the joyful results of touching Jesus—for them and for us!

Thank you, Lord, for touching me this day. Amen.

Touch: Share the results of touching Jesus in your life this week as one who is healed, humbled and helping.

Read: Luke 6:17-26

*Stephen J. Carter
Oakville, MO*

Friday, January 25, 2019

Caring for Each Other

God has so composed the body ... that the members may have the same care for one another.

1 Corinthians 12:24-25

Mom lived for eight years after Dad died, and most of those years she enjoyed pretty good health. In our Sunday evening phone chats, Mom often ended the call by saying to my husband and me, “Take good care of each other.” I always found that touching.

“Take good care of each other” is more than just a loving mom’s advice. It’s a loving God’s plan for Christian living. As followers of Christ, we are all members of his Body, the Church. Each member has a role and, in a healthy body, all parts function together smoothly. All members “have the same care for one another,” as we read above. Christ provides the key to this healthy, functioning body in John 13:34, “Just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another.”

Loving God, let your love for me overflow, leading me to care for and encourage others. Amen.

Watch: Listen to and observe people, and watch for ways to show them love and care.

Read: 2 Corinthians 13:11-14; 1 Thessalonians 5:11

*Marj Maynard
Pipe Creek, TX*

Saturday, January 26, 2019

Abundance!

There is a boy here who has five barley loaves and two fish.

John 6:9

Five thousand people. Time stood still for five thousand people listening to Jesus' eternal life-changing words, while their hungry stomachs called for food. Did I mention that count didn't include the women and children?

"Where are we to buy bread?" Jesus asked. After the skimpy available resources were presented by a little boy, Andrew, one of the disciples, looked to Jesus, asking hopelessly: "But what are they for so many?"

Perhaps that question resonates as you view your life offering, similar to meager barley loaves and small fish. It's just not that much. How could it ever be a blessing? Take heart! Look what Jesus can do. He works with the gift he has given you to bring abundance to others.

Jesus, what I have, I have received from you and give back to you. Bless it and multiply it to satisfy needs for your honor and glory. Amen.

Look: Watch and see how Jesus will be a blessing to others through you!

Read: John 6:1-13; John 10:10

*Cathy Twito
Ames, Iowa*

Sunday, January 27, 2019

Who Cares?

For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me.

Matthew 25:35

Have you ever felt out of place, rejected or treated as if you don't belong? It is an uncomfortable feeling, causing us to literally or figuratively back out of a room. Jesus repeatedly challenged discriminatory practices, welcoming children to himself, engaging with tax collectors, the disabled and others scorned by society—the last, the lost and the least—sinners—us! Jesus' loving care is for all! How can we do less? Be less? Who needs to receive Christ's care through you? Let us follow Jesus, serving and caring for others without bias or prejudice. Let us be his instruments in establishing a new world. It's possible! We can do all things in Christ!

Savior Jesus, open my eyes, ears and heart to the needs of others. Guide me to do what I can to provide for their needs, according to your will. Amen.

Encourage: Engage in simple acts of kindness and service. Identify individuals who need encouragement, assistance or support. Involve others.

Read: Matthew 25:31-46

*Judith Christian
St. Louis, MO*

Monday, January 28, 2019

Robbed

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

Matthew 11:28

I was robbed last night! I was robbed of something precious and valuable to me—my sleep. I tossed and turned and fretted. Will my granddaughter get into college? Are we making the right decision about future housing plans? What about the current state of the economy?

Jesus addresses such needless fretting when he says, “Take no thought for tomorrow for tomorrow will take care of itself” (Matthew 6:34). What comfort to know that our earthly concerns are in the arms of our loving and gracious Lord! Our measly human efforts at solving problems and fretting about issues in our daily life are completely erased by our Lord, who walks with us daily through the hills and valleys of life. He lifts us up and carries us along the right path, so we no longer need to lean on ourselves. We can put our complete trust in the Lord who is also our Savior. What a precious gift!

Good and gracious Lord, thank you for lifting the burdens of my sleepless nights. Amen.

Take: Take your worries to the Lord in prayer.

Read: Matthew 6:25-34

*Margaret Rickers Hinchey
Englewood, CO*

Tuesday, January 29, 2019

From Darkness into Light

*Then shall your light break forth like the dawn ...
your righteousness shall go before you; the glory of
the Lord shall be your rear guard.*

Isaiah 58:8

Last summer twelve Thai boys and their coach were rescued from a dark, flooded cavern. It took a cast of thousands eighteen days, much courage and great ingenuity to save them. The boys had to be led through flooded passages. They had no experience with diving gear; few knew how to swim. Each lad was fitted with a mask and hooked to an air supply. While one diver towed him to safety, a second followed as insurance.

The prophet uses a similar picture to convey God's deliverance of his people when they face dark dilemmas. God, their Righteous and Glorious One, both leads the way to safety and follows as their rear guard. Restoration is made doubly certain.

Thank you, Lord, for entering our darkness to bring us to the light of salvation. Amen.

Help: Who are you leading (or encouraging) toward the Light?

Read: Isaiah 60:1-3; 1 Peter 2:9-10

*Ted Zimmerman
Napa, CA*

Wednesday, January 30, 2019

God's Little Pencil

Blessed is the man who remains steadfast under trial.

James 1:12

Mother Teresa wrote, "I am a little pencil in God's hands. He does everything and sometimes it is really hard because it is a broken pencil and he has to sharpen it a little more."

As God's little pencils, we acknowledge that the message we are to proclaim is not our own; it is his. We are simply instruments in his hand. But selfishness, pride and concern about what others think of us cause us to be broken pencils, incapable of conveying God's message fully. So God sharpens us to make us more effective. Sickness may make us more sensitive to the health problems experienced by others; our own battles with temptation help us understand the temptations that confront others. Financial worries make us aware of the necessity of sharing with those in need. Sharpened by trials, God's forgiven children convey his message of love to the world.

Sharpen me, Lord, to be an instrument of your love to those around me. Amen.

Reflect: What is the message God wants to write with you?

Read: Romans 5:1-11

*Eileen Ritter
Byron Center, MI*

Thursday, January 31, 2019

Equal Measure

Give, and it will be given to you. Good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap. For with the measure you use it will be measured back to you.

Luke 6:38

Our God is a God who provides for us, who longs to fill our every need. He blesses us in ways big and small. Then we can pass on those blessings to others!

Blessings like a cheerful spirit, a grateful heart or a forgiving nature are just a few of God's gifts to us that we can easily share. Like a boomerang that keeps coming back to where it started, whenever we spread joy, gratitude or forgiveness, we in turn receive those gifts again many times over.

Loving God, help me to approach the world with open hands and an open heart, so that the blessings I receive from you I can then give to others. Amen.

Count: How has God blessed you today?

Read: Philippians 2:1-9

*Sally Macke
St. Louis, MO*

Friday, February 1, 2019

Some Things Don't Last

Like the grass they will soon wither; like green plants they will soon die away.

Psalm 37:2

One time when it snowed while my grandchildren were visiting, they wanted to build a fort using bricks of snow. I found some rectangular containers. They packed them with the fresh snow and waited until the frigid temperatures froze them into bricks. Their fort was an engineer's delight.

They left for a few days to visit other relatives. When they returned, the temperatures had risen and the fort collapsed. The children were devastated. "I wanted it to last forever," the youngest child cried.

While that seems foolish to us, I believe we do the same thing. We amass large quantities of possessions and build earthly empires (forts), only to discover they collapse or fade away with time. God tells us to invest in things that will last ... telling others the story of salvation, kindness and helpfulness.

Father, you are the maker and preserver of all things. Show us the important things in this life. Amen.

Reflect: The next time you're looking at the snow, remember it will not stay forever.

Read: James 1:11; 1 Peter 1:24-25

*Gloria Doty
Fort Wayne, IN*

Saturday, February 2, 2019

“Grand Hug” Day

How many times I wanted to put my arms around all you people, just as a hen gathers her chicks under the shadow of her wings.

Matthew 23:37

Today, many seem to be interested in the shadow of a ground hog. Shadows are really rather clinging associates. Your shadow follows you wherever you may venture. It mimics what you do and who you are. I often wonder about my Jesus shadow. That shadow will be visible only if I allow my life to be illuminated by the Son of Light himself.

Each of us is called to have the shadow of Jesus follow us everywhere and those shadow arms are open wide. Hmmm, maybe not Ground Hog Day, but Grand Hug Day. The hug that Jesus gives to you is strong and sure and continuous. May your life be one where his shadow is clearly seen.

Lord, let me walk in your light that my “Jesus shadow” will be clear, sharp and focused, pointing others to the joy, peace and comfort in your hug for them. Amen.

Praise: Sing “Shine Jesus, Shine.”

Read: Psalm 17:8; Song of Solomon 8:3

*Don Luepke
Fremont, IN*

Sunday, February 3, 2019

He Cares, We Care

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

1 Peter 5:6-7

There often is a period in our lives, perhaps when we become empty-nesters or retire, that the cares of life seem to diminish for a while. But as we age, our worries and anxieties increase again, gradually or with a sudden jolt.

Loved ones and friends may ease our burdens and cares, but usually we don't want to trouble them. However, it's no trouble to God. That's his job—to care for us. He cared enough to send his Son to bear our burdens and carry our sorrows.

As we lean on the Lord, through prayer and Scripture, we are moved by his love and care for us to reach out with kindness and concern to those who are anxious and troubled. Instead of simply greeting them with, "Take care," we should take time to listen with a caring heart and help lighten their burdens.

Gracious Lord, help me cast my cares on you, so I can freely care for others. Amen.

Listen: Ask people who seem anxious or burdened how they are really doing and do what you can to help them.

Read: 1 Peter 5:6-11

*Gil Duchow
Muskego, WI*

Monday, February 4, 2019

Safe in His Arms

The eternal God is your dwelling place, and underneath are the everlasting arms.

Deuteronomy 33:27

As a child, my recurring nightmare was of falling. When the nightmare ended, I would “land” in my bed and wake up. I think that is why Deuteronomy 33:27 has always been a favorite verse for me.

Recently while traveling I suffered an illness that kept me resting in bed more than I intended. It was frustrating to be unable to join my family in activities. I like to be part of what is going on!

God brought this verse to mind. First it gave me peace to think of resting in his arms. Then it gave me pause—was I truly finding my dwelling place, my peace and rest, with my eternal God? Was I wanting to dwell in the busyness of family activities, travel and excitement, apart from time with God? I thank God that he used that illness to draw me back to him!

*Lord, work in my life to draw me to yourself.
Amen.*

Rest: Take time today to sit or rest in God's presence. Tell him what is on your heart and delight that he holds you close.

Read: Psalm 139

*Diane Bahn
Cypress, TX*

Tuesday, February 5, 2019

A Mother's Care

We were gentle among you, like a nursing mother taking care of her own children.

1 Thessalonians 2:7

When I was 4 years old, I was afraid of dying. My mother cared for her little child. She comforted me with words about Jesus and about eternal life. Her embrace made me feel secure. A Christian mother cares for the eternal well-being of her children. That memory has been a precious comfort for over 60 years!

Paul and his friends cared about the Christians they nurtured. So it must still be in God's Church. As they loved their Christian brothers and sisters, a mother's love was the inspiration for Paul and his companions. That same love can be our example today.

Jesus cared so much for Jerusalem that he longed to gather her children as a hen (yes, a mother!) under her wings (Luke 13:34). Jesus has done just that for you. He loves you and protects you. He uses you to care for others.

Caring Christ, thank you for caring for me. Amen.

Reach out: Practice care by reaching out in love to someone today.

Read: Psalm 18:25-36

*Don Schatz
Kenmore, WA*

Wednesday, February 6, 2019

Recognition

They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads.

Revelation 22:4

I should have asked my parents more questions, like, “What name goes with this face in the family photograph?” With my parents now in heaven, recognition remains a mystery. It pains me that identification is lost not only to me, but also for my children and theirs.

Before God, faces are known. Though we have no photograph of him, we can recognize Jesus across a hundred generations. He is still the Shepherd who laid down his life for the sheep. He still calms troubled waters. He is still the body and blood with the bread and wine. He is still the resurrected Lord. He is the One preparing a place for us. Most importantly, God knows us. He has numbered the hairs on our heads (Matthew 10:30). Our names are engraved on the palms of his hands (Isaiah 49:16). The recognition is eternal. God cares that much for us.

Jesus, thank you for never leaving me as an unidentified person. Amen.

Comfort: Share Jesus' timeless personhood and the comfort of being known by God.

Read: Psalm 145

*Harry Edenfield
Brownstown, MI*

Thursday, February 7, 2019

Waiting Well

I wait for the Lord, my soul waits, and in his word I hope; my soul waits for the Lord more than watchmen for the morning, more than watchmen for the morning.

Psalm 130:5-6

As the days of February continue to provide less light and more darkness, perhaps we can keep watch for the light, like the watchmen stationed on an ancient city's walls. When we put our hope in the Lord and stay close to him in his Word, waiting is more peaceful. As we wait for the Lord with hopeful expectation, our trust in him grows.

As we are facing "dark days" in our lives, we can wait patiently for God's coming light. His Word holds promise of a new day dawning.

Lord Jesus, thank you for making all things new. Help me wait with hope as I put my trust in you. Amen.

Pray: Ask God to shine some light on your "dark days."

Read: Psalm 27:14; Psalm 37:7

*Sarah Geringer
Jackson, MO*

Friday, February 8, 2019

Wasting Time with God

*But I trust in you, O LORD; I say, "You are my God."
My times are in your hand.*

Psalm 31:14-15

“Wasting time.” What an interesting expression. It assumes that time is a commodity, like food or clothing, and that if it’s not constantly filled with activity, it’s “wasted.” Is prayer “wasting time”? A pastor friend will often encourage silence before the worship service, not with the traditional, “We prepare our hearts for worship,” but “Let’s waste some time with God.” Then there is silence in church.

“My times are in your hand,” the psalmist sings, and knowing that, we see time as a gift to be used, certainly, but also to be returned to time’s Giver. In prayer we suspend time and like a child climbing into the parent’s lap, we “waste” our time delightfully by placing it into God’s hands.

*Lord of time, let me place my moments and my days into your hands, wasting time for your glory.
Amen.*

Do: Save a few minutes each day for “wasting time with God.”

Read: Matthew 6:6; 1 Thessalonians 5:17

*Don Hinchey
Englewood, CO*

Saturday, February 9, 2019

Say the Word

But say the word, and let my servant be healed.

Luke 7:7

The centurion felt unworthy to have Jesus enter his home, but the officer understood a few things about words and authority. Jesus need only say the word and the sick servant would be healed, and so he was.

The Word of God has power. What God says, happens. “God said, ‘Let there be light,’ and there was light” (Genesis 1:3). Just like that. Jesus said, “Recover your sight,” and a blind man could see (Luke 18:42-43). Just like that. The “word of the cross,” the good news of Jesus’ death and resurrection, is for us “the power of God” (1 Corinthians 1:18). The Gospel Word is a message and a promise. It delivers what it offers, and what it offers is the forgiveness of sins and the hope of eternal life. What God says, happens. He declares, “Your sins are forgiven for the sake of my Son,” and your sins are forgiven. Just like that.

Our God and Savior, thank you for the living power and promise of your Word. Amen.

Hold: When you are troubled by guilt and fear, cling to the promises of God’s Word.

Read: 1 Peter 1:22-25; Romans 1:16-17

*Carol Geisler
Manchester, MO*

Sunday, February 10, 2019

Praise God

*Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me,
bless his holy name.*

Psalm 103:1

Psalm 103 is a psalm of praise. Who should praise God? Should you, who have experienced the loss of a loved one, praise God, even as you grieve? Yes! Surely God has blessed you, perhaps for many years, through the presence of that special child of God.

Are you in a desperate situation? Can you praise God even when life is crumbling about you? Yes, you can! You have a God who is merciful and gracious (Psalm 103:8), even when life hasn't been. What about you who feel guilty over something said or done? Can you praise God? Yes! Your God does not deal with you according to your sins (Psalm 103:10). You are forgiven!

What if none of the above paragraphs fit you? You've had a lifetime of blessings! You definitely have reason to praise God. The steadfast love of the Lord is upon you—forever (Psalm 103:11).

Bless the Lord, all his works, in all places of his dominion. Bless the Lord, O my soul (Psalm 103:22)! Amen.

Reflect: Why should I praise God?

Read: Psalm 103

Neal A. Orabka
N. Las Vegas, NV

Monday, February 11, 2019

Changing Times

Every good gift and every perfect gift is ... from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows.

James 1:17

When we visit our daughter and her family in Texas from Indiana in the winter, we board the plane wearing sweaters and parkas. A few hours later, we disembark to the heat of the South. No matter how prepared we think we are for the extreme change in temperature, it's still a shock.

Our entire lives are composed of changes. There seem to be more of them and they come faster as we age. The death of a spouse, the need to downsize, less mobility, not being able to drive, and more medical issues threaten to overwhelm us. These are inevitable changes and no matter how well we believe we have prepared for them, they still shock us. Thankfully, our God, who never changes, understands how difficult it is to adjust and promises to be with us and comfort us.

Remind us, Lord, of your constant presence with us. Amen.

Write: Make a list of changes in your life, then pray about them.

Read: Hebrews 13:8; Psalm 55:19

*Gloria Doty
Fort Wayne, IN*

Tuesday, February 12, 2019

Take Care and Share

Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.

Galatians 6:2

In the days when heavy lifting was done by horse power, wise workers knew that two animals hitched together could do much more work for a longer time than two animals working separately. Burdens shared are burdens eased!

It makes sense for the burdens we carry in life. Not only that, it also “fulfills the law of Christ,” the Savior who willingly accepted the burden of our sin and death and shared the gift of life and salvation with us. That law invites and enables us to live by the same principle of caring for others and sharing their burdens. Give thanks today for those people God has given to care for you. Ask yourself how you can share their burdens in response to God’s gracious care for you. Jesus is sharing God’s care for you. Pay it forward by sharing the burdens of those around you.

Loving Lord, thank you for daily caring so deeply for me. Fill me to share that care with others. Amen.

Help: Seek today to share the burdens and cares of someone who is suffering.

Read: Matthew 11:28-30

*Paul Scheidt
Chesterfield, MO*

Wednesday, February 13, 2019

Our Personal Paperboy

If anyone gives even a cup of cold water to one of these little ones because he is my disciple, I tell you the truth, he will certainly not lose his reward.

Matthew 10:42

A few years ago, my wife and I moved into a different community. Every day our neighbor picks up our morning paper from our driveway and deposits it at our front door. This small act of neighborly kindness is especially appreciated in the winter months.

The Lord encourages us to do good to others, but he also wants us to be open to receive acts of kindness from others. There were times when Jesus blessed others with his words of forgiveness or his healing touch. There were other times when he allowed others to do good things for him: Mary, Martha and Lazarus provided a place for him at their home in Bethany; a woman anointed his feet with precious ointment and Simon carried his cross.

Do you have a personal paperboy?

Gracious Lord, for everything there is a season. There is a time to give. There is a time to receive. Help us to properly discern the times. Amen.

Give thanks: Thank God for the person who is doing a neighborly act of kindness for you.

Read: Matthew 25:31-46

*Jerrold Lloyd Nichols
Fort Wayne, IN*

Thursday, February 14, 2019

God's Image

As for me, I am poor and needy, but the Lord takes thought for me.

Psalm 40:17

I thought about God's mercy and I felt unworthy. Then I read this passage and thought about God thinking about me. Why should God care about me? I am a speck in the universe. Those around me notice and care about me, but why does God care? Because I am created in his image. What is God's image?

As a small child I sang, "God is love, God is love." If God is love and I am created in his image, then I am also part of this love. He thinks about me. Amazing! I can sing "Amazing Grace"—about being a wretch and lost—yet he loved me and still loves me.

Another favorite song says, "In the morning when I rise, give me Jesus." Can I dismiss that mercy? I can't. God has given himself to me in Jesus. Amazing!

*My Lord and my God. Thank you thinking of me.
Amen.*

Sing: Think of the songs in your life that remind you of God's love.

Read: Psalm 16

*Gail Lutze
Valparaiso, IN*

Friday, February 15, 2019

Attentive

Pray without ceasing.

1 Thessalonians 5:17

If you look around just about anywhere, you will likely see people with their heads bent over their smartphones, reading texts and tweets, returning messages and taking and sharing pictures. They are fully, ceaselessly engaged, entranced by the handy electronic device in their hands, absorbing every image and every word.

What if we prayed like that? Would we be fully, ceaselessly engaged, “texting” and “tweeting” our Lord in unending silent or spoken prayer as we go about our daily work? We are told, after all, to “pray without ceasing.” Perhaps when you notice others busy with their phones, or when you are busy with your own phone, offer up a prayer. We easily become distracted, frustrated or forgetful, but even our most fitful prayers are heard. Our heavenly Father, for the sake our crucified and risen Lord, is fully, ceaselessly engaged in listening, waiting to hear our every word.

Heavenly Father, thank you for listening to our prayers. Amen.

Send: Send up a prayer with each phone use.

Read: 1 Thessalonians 5:12-18; Romans 8:26-30

*Carol Geisler
Manchester, MO*

Saturday, February 16, 2019

Help Requested, Received

Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.

Philippians 4:6

Feeling extremely tired and coughing badly, I reached the point to seek a doctor. Calling, but not expecting to get an appointment for days, I was informed to come in the next day. An evaluation was made and it was determined that immediate hospitalization was needed. When I arrived at the hospital, my primary doctor quickly met me and admitted me for treatment. Four days later I went home.

Conclusion: God heard my plea for help and I was blessed to receive quick assistance. There are times when we feel our plea to God is taking too long or is not heard and feel God doesn't care. Faith and trust are needed. God's plan is not our plan. He knows when it is the right time. Trust is a must. He hears us.

Father God, you know what is best for us. You give us total faith to trust in you. Amen.

Trust: Be comforted. God hears our prayer requests.

Read: James 1:6; Psalm 9:10

*Don Hollmann
Ballwin, MO*

Sunday, February 17, 2019

Friend to Friend

How very good and pleasant it is when kindred live together in unity!

Psalm 133:1

The house and yard were too much for them to care for. It was time to move to assisted living. However, what were they to do with their beloved dog? Pets weren't allowed in the new place and family could not help either. Dropping him off at the animal shelter would be devastating. A friend from church became their answer to prayer. She had just recently lost her own dog and, living alone in the country, needed a new companion. The move was made, toys and all, along with sharing of stories about his likes and dislikes. What a relief it was to know that their Poncho had a new, loving home!

How many times do we have the opportunity to reach out to friends and strangers with the gift of caring? Every day God sends opportunities to meet the needs of others, whether it be something as small as a smile or as big as taking in a pet.

Open my heart, O Lord, to the needs of others around me and push me to act in love. Amen.

Help: Do something special for a friend to show you care.

Read: 2 Corinthians 1:3-7

*Nancy J. Clark
Niles, MI*

Monday, February 18, 2019

Complaining the Right Way

I pour out my complaint before him; I tell my trouble before him.

Psalm 142:2

Is complaining part of your everyday talk? For many people, complaining seems to come naturally, without even thinking. When life is tough, it's easier to complain than to show thanks. Here's a surprise: The Bible actually encourages us to complain! However, we must complain upward, not outward. Unlike complaining to other people, our complaints to God don't spread negativity. He wants us to pour out our complaints to him so that we turn to him in our troubles.

The next time you are tempted to complain, vent vertically instead of horizontally, and God will draw you closer in relationship to him.

Lord Jesus, thank you for allowing me to complain to you alone. Help me turn to you first in my trials. Amen.

Complain: For the next 24 hours, complain only to God, not others.

Read: Psalm 55:2, 17

Sarah Geringer
Jackson, MO

Tuesday, February 19, 2019

It's Time to Go

Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations.

Matthew 28:19

Fifty-one years ago, we left our first parish in Houston to accept a call to Kansas City. As a farewell gift, the Houston folks presented us with a beautiful grandfather clock. To this day, we enjoy hearing it chime every 15 minutes. It brings back great memories of our Texas days. Recently, however, we chuckled as we thought that perhaps this gift was a gracious way of telling us, “Hey, it’s time to go!”

We are all called to go and share the good news of Christ to all people, wherever we are. We can get stuck, however, in a habit of “Get ready, get set, get set, get set” ... but never go! There is no need to move to another location to serve the Lord. Look for opportunities to share Christ with those around you. Yes, it’s time to go—now!

Lord, thanks for moving us in our love for you to go and tell others what you have already done for us. Amen.

Go: Share with a friend how you are living a “ready, set, and go!” life in the Lord!

Read: Matthew 28:16-20; Acts 8:1-4

*Rich Bimler
Bloomington, IL*

Wednesday, February 20, 2019

Restore

He restores my soul.

Psalm 23:3

What do you do to get refreshed? It is not selfish to take good care of yourself. You need to take time to fill yourself back up. If you find that your energy is low, do something that brings you enjoyment. Could you make a change in your schedule and do something special that you enjoy?

Consider spending your time in silence, prayer, walking in nature, reading, crafting or resting. I know it seems counter-productive, but remember Jesus as your model, who often went away to pray by himself. If Jesus needed that time of refreshment in prayer, you need it, too. Plan time to be renewed by the Lord, and then the other things you need to get done become a bit easier. Let the Lord restore your soul.

Dear Lord, I am in need of your restoration; please help me. Amen.

Reflect: Recall a time when you felt refreshed by the Lord.

Read: Psalm 51:10; Ephesians 4:20-24

*Annette L. Sherwood
St. Louis, MO*

Thursday, February 21, 2019

Care and Carry

Bear one another's burdens and so fulfill the law of Christ.

Galatians 6:2

Reading these words from the apostle Paul brings to mind a familiar illustration. Here, a group of people form a line, one after another, each with a heavy load balanced on their shoulders. They use one hand to steady their own burden. They use their other hand to help carry the burden of the person directly in front of them. The implication is clear. They all succeed when they share each other's burdens.

This illustration reveals how Christians care for one another. No one in the group runs ahead alone or walks on by when a fellow traveler is struggling. Each cares for the others. It is this way in our Christian community. Our physical strength may be limited, but we can surely listen sympathetically, ask simple questions, show interest and ask for updates. Worries, pain or troubles are burdens halved when shared with a Christian friend.

Lord, make me a burden-bearer for others. Amen.

Ask: What does "fulfill the law of Christ" mean to you?

Read: 1 Peter 3:8

*Donna J. Streufert
South Bend, IN*

Friday, February 22, 2019

Kindness and Mercy

And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity.

1 Corinthians 13:13

My father once mentioned that he preferred the King James translation of 1 Corinthians 13:13 because he thought “being charitable” gave more specific direction than “being loving.” Surprised, I looked up the definition for *charitable*. The dictionary listed three definitions for the word: 1) Full of love for and goodwill toward others; benevolent; 2) Liberal in benefactions to the needy; generous; and 3) Merciful or kind in judging others; lenient.

I always associated benevolence and generosity with this passage, but the idea of mercy and kindness in judging others was new, and yet what better way to show love for others than to give them the benefit of the doubt or, as the catechism instructs us, to “put the best construction on everything.”

Lord God, thank you for your kindness and mercy in dealing with me. Through your Holy Spirit work within me a spirit of benevolence, generosity and lenience toward my neighbor. Amen.

Be charitable: Give the benefit of doubt to someone whose actions you are tempted to judge harshly.

Read: Lamentations 3:22-23

Katherine Hussmann Klempe
St. Paul, MN

Saturday, February 23, 2019

A New Hiding Place

You are my hiding place and my shield; I hope in your word.

Psalm 119:114

Do you remember playing hide-and-seek? If you found a good hiding place, you could wait with eager expectation of being found. The best hiding places help us feel secure. Now that you're an adult, you don't need a literal hiding place. But we all need hiding places when our hearts are hurting. God is our new hiding place.

God's love and forgiveness surround us, providing a perfect hiding place from fear and worry. In his Word we learn the good news, the hope and promise of eternal life in Christ. Safely hidden in God's love, we can feel secure.

Lord Jesus, I praise you for serving as my hiding place. Help me find hope and security with you. Amen.

Pray: Ask God to serve as your hiding place in a current struggle.

Read: Psalm 32:7; Psalm 17:8

*Sarah Geringer
Jackson, MO*

Sunday, February 24, 2019

Being Available

When he went ashore he saw a great crowd, and he had compassion on them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd.

Mark 6:34

Jesus and the disciples were tired. They had been ministering to the crowds. They were so busy they did not even have time to eat. They needed to get away for some rest and rejuvenation. So they got in a boat to get away from the crowd, but the crowd followed after them. It wasn't convenient. The disciples were tired. They needed rest, but Jesus was their guide. He had compassion on the crowd. He taught them, ministered to them and even fed them.

I have learned over the years that being available when others call is often the best care I can give. It isn't always convenient. We may have other plans. But as Jesus modeled for us, the best care we can often give is being available to those who need us.

Lord, help me to care enough to be available when others need me. Amen.

Be present: Intentionally choose to be available when someone needs you.

Read: Mark 6:30-44

*Glen VanderKloot
Springfield, IL*

Monday, February 25, 2019

Complete Perfection

In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.

Genesis 1:1

There are many different elements within a painting or photograph. The use of light and color, along with the depth of field, including the foreground and background are all components that form the completed work of art.

God created the heavens and the earth and everything in it. He is the artist and we are his creation. As Christians, we are a work in progress. He continues to add to all of his artwork until he declares it is complete. While we aim to please him, we are incapable of doing so, due to the sinful nature we inherited from the fall of Adam and Eve. Our Father knows what needs to be changed in his work of art, and he has created us anew in Christ. We will achieve complete perfection the day we meet him face-to-face and receive the crown of eternal life.

Heavenly Father, remind me that I always need your guidance in my life. Amen.

Reflect: How does God continue to work in your life?

Read: Genesis 1:1-31; Ephesians 2:4-10

*Betsy Becker Niedringhaus
Ballwin, MO*

Tuesday, February 26, 2019

God Hears

He inclined his ear to me.

Psalm 116:2

As my hearing declines, I notice I must “incline my ear” in order to hear clearly what someone is saying to me. Likewise, when I see someone incline their ear toward me, I realize they really want to know what I am saying. Your heavenly Father constantly has his ear turned toward you regarding every complaint, joy, thanksgiving and praise. God longs to hear from you. He has commanded that you bring your needs to him constantly. You will hear him speak to you in his Word, finding his loving direction for your life today. There is no greater joy than knowing your heavenly Father hears you.

Heavenly Father, thank you that you hear my pleas(e) and thank you's, today and always. Amen.

Pray: Praise God. Thank God. Ask God. Incline your ear toward him.

Read: Psalm 116

*Mike May
Kansas City, KS*

Wednesday, February 27, 2019

Letting Go, Letting God

My heart and my flesh may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever.

Psalm 73:26

Letting go can be tricky. In aging, it happens, ready or not. It is letting go of perfect eyesight and hunting down cheaters whenever the print is too tiny to see. It is letting go of children who grow up and have their own lives and families. It may be letting go of the dream to have a bigger house, the perfect job or that dream trip.

But this may be God's design to guide us into letting go of the things we depend upon and taking hold of our sure and faithful Father in heaven. Letting go, we can say, "Yet I am always with you, you hold me by my right hand. You guide me with your counsel, and afterwards you will take me into glory. Whom have I in heaven but you? And earth has nothing I desire beside you" (Psalm 73:23-25).

Dear Lord, please help me know the difference between things I can change and things I can't. Please be my strength and help me let it go. Amen.

Ask: What are you afraid to let God handle? Pray about it to God.

Read: Proverbs 3:5-6; Psalm 91

*Nancy Rapp
St. Louis, MO*

Thursday, February 28, 2019

Waiting on the Lord

They who wait for the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles; they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint.

Isaiah 40:31

Waiting is never easy. Whether it's a call from the doctor, the safe arrival of loved ones or illusive sleep, minutes slowly become hours. Life in today's world is geared for efficiency: fast food, instant connections and constant news. We are unaccustomed to waiting. Even as we come to God in prayer, it's difficult to let go and trust his timing, his purpose and his solution.

Isaiah encourages us to remember God's promise of renewed strength, energy and stamina for whatever lies ahead. Continue to do what the Lord has already commanded: Praise him. Trust him. Be thankful. Love and serve others. God will always be with you!

Lord of wisdom and strength, guide us into your loving arms when we are afraid. Amen.

Breathe: Ask God for strength as you breathe in and peace as you breathe out. Repeat as needed.

Read: Romans 12:12; Proverbs 3:5-6

*Sharolyn Sander
Lincoln, NE*

Friday, March 1, 2019

Taking Turns

But all things should be done decently and in order.

1 Corinthians 14:40

A friend's 10th-floor apartment overlooks a busy, multi-layer intersection. I am familiar with the feeling of chaos on the streets below. Traffic is loud. Motorcycles, trucks and pedestrians are all in a hurry. From this height, however, people look quite orderly. Cars flow in a coordinated pattern. Drivers allow each other to move in turn. Vehicles stop for those in the crosswalk. A bicyclist may be waved ahead. It's quite an amazing system!

It strikes me that although God's plan may seem confusing to us, his creation is operating according to his loving design. As we generously wait, others move through green lights. We rejoice, knowing our turn will come!

God, teach us to trust your infinite order, giving others a turn. Amen.

Imagine: Picture a distant peaceful scene, such as the view from the top of a skyscraper, mountain or tower. Feel our Lord's all-knowing comfort.

Read: Ecclesiastes 3:1-8

Lisa Heule
Littleton, CO

Saturday, March 2, 2019

The Connection

There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call.

Ephesians 4:4

Did you know ecologists discovered that trees communicate with one another? In a forest there is an underground web of fungal threads that send nutrients, carbon and water to smaller or weaker plants, depending upon their need. Removing one larger tree seems to injure others because each plant has a purpose in the forest.

We aren't a forest. We are the body of Christ. And we are told each member of the body has a purpose. We are connected to all other believers by the Holy Spirit, who sends us to nourish those in need. We're designed to be in community and of service to others, nourished and guided through the Holy Spirit.

Thank you, God and Father of all, that we are not alone. You have placed us in a family of believers, bonded together by your love. Amen.

Help: Pray for a specific acquaintance. Ask the Spirit how you may help that person, then follow the Spirit's leading.

Read: Ephesians 4:4-6; Galatians 5:13; 2 Corinthians 4:5

*Lynne Waite Chapman
Fort Wayne, IN*

Sunday, March 3, 2019

Holy Wow!

The appearance of [Jesus'] face was altered, and his clothing became dazzling white.

Luke 9:29

One time while praying on a mountaintop with Jesus, three disciples saw him in his full resurrection glory. Stunned, they could make no sense of it. After Moses and Elijah showed up in glory for a consultation, the event concluded, and they saw only the “regular” Jesus. But, no! The glorified Jesus was still present with them. They just couldn’t see it and didn’t get it. Aging bodies don’t look or feel gloriously resurrected, but they are. Baptism promises that we are not just bits of breathing clay, but blessed bodies through whom pulses daily all the vibrancy and glory of the resurrection of Jesus. He invites us to claim that new life each day. Holy wow!

Jesus, fill me today with the joy and eagerness of your eternally present resurrected life. Amen.

Rejoice: Live today—gloriously!

Read: Read Luke 9:28-36; Romans 6:3-5

*Mike May
Kansas City, KS*

Monday, March 4, 2019

Made for the Valleys

Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil for you are with me.

Psalm 23:4

For so many, the life of faith is lived on the mountaintops of religious experience. How did you feel when you left church? How stirring was the pastor's sermon? Did the choir's anthem give you goosebumps?

For the psalmist, the life of faith is the day-to-day walk through the valley of the shadow. It's sometimes slow, plodding and uphill, but it's in the valley that God calls us to live daily lives of unexceptional faithfulness. Jesus meets us in the valley to bring us to the ultimate mountaintop of life everlasting.

Lord of the journey, meet me, I pray, in today's common places. I am made for the valleys, for it is there that I shall encounter you. Thank you for your presence. Amen.

Reflect: Where are the common valley places of your life? How does Jesus find you there?

Read: Matthew 11:28; John 14:27

*Don Hinchey
Englewood, CO*

Tuesday, March 5, 2019

Sacred Space

You made room for me in my distress.

Psalm 4:1

Our Bible class members were challenged to memorize a psalm, and I chose Psalm 4. Because I don't like tight places, I found myself pondering the first verse, "You made room for me in my distress." I discovered that same space idea when I read about Viktor Frankl, the writer, psychiatrist and Holocaust survivor. "I called to the Lord from my narrow prison and he answered me in the freedom of space," Frankl said, quoting Psalm 118:5. God raised him up from the horror of his surroundings and gave him space to cry, despair and finally rejoice. The psalmist also knew despair and praised God for giving him a place to take his grief and loss. In small ways, too, God offers us that space. Remember that time you were late for an event, arrived looking lost, and someone said, "Here, come sit by me." She was holding a space for you. In your brief panic, someone gave you a place.

Dear Lord, you make room for me in my pain. Help me provide a place for someone else who is hurting. Amen.

Pray: When you are in distress, pray, knowing that God has made room for you.

Read: Hebrews 4:14-16

*Sally Beck
Williamsburg, VA*

Wednesday, March 6, 2019

Like Jonah

Jonah obeyed the word of the Lord.

Jonah 3:3

The story of Jonah describes us regardless of our stage in life. In chapter one Jonah says “No” to God. He runs the other way. In chapter two he cries for help from the whale’s belly and promises to do what God wants. In chapter three, he follows through. In chapter four, he is resentful because God shows mercy to the Ninevites, yet thankful for the shade plant that protects him. Then Jonah becomes critical of God when the plant dies.

Jonah is what I would call a no-yes person. Sound familiar? Now is the time when we enter the holy season of Lent to ponder our life’s journey and guard against being like Jonah. Cling firmly to God’s grace. Listen to the passion story again and make Jesus the Savior your guiding light through Lent.

Lord Jesus, when we are like Jonah, forgive us, and be our Savior, our Refuge and our Strength. Amen.

Create: Write your own no-yes story.

Read: The Book of Jonah

*Walter M. Schoedel
Webster Groves, MO*

Thursday, March 7, 2019

Remember

Remember the wondrous works that he has done.

1 Chronicles 16:12

The celebration was a feast for the senses. After festive dancing, rich food and burnt offerings, David and the Israelites praised God with instruments and sang a new song. “Remember,” they sang, “remember the wondrous works that he has done.” Remember his covenant promises to our fathers, his protection in their desert wanderings and battles with kings. “Sing to the Lord,” they urged. “Tell of his salvation from day to day.”

“Remember,” we hear again as we observe Lent. Remember his wondrous works—his incarnation, his suffering and his excruciating death in our place. Remember his victory over sin, death and the power of the devil. Rejoice in his gifts of himself in the bread and wine of the Lord’s Supper. “Sing to the Lord ... Tell of his salvation from day to day.”

Lord, your wondrous works saved us from all of our enemies. Help us share the story of salvation with others. Amen.

Remember: Share the story of God’s wondrous works in your life with a friend or neighbor.

Read: 1 Chronicles 16:1-36

Eileen Ritter
Byron Center, MI

Friday, March 8, 2019

Caring about Others

By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.

John 13:35

Caring for others is so important and simple to do in daily life. There are many opportunities to share God's love with them. A fellow teacher at work could tell when I felt discouraged. "You look like you need a faith lift," she would say. She would then share words of advice or tell me that I could succeed. She inspired me to keep believing in God and myself. She also reminded me of the power of a kind word to give someone hope.

Whenever we parted, she would say, "Keep up your faith." She reminded me that I needed to develop it for it to grow. Like a garden, faith requires tending.

Lord, help me to share your love with others, especially those most in need of it. Amen.

Be kind: Be kind to everyone you meet.

Read: 2 Corinthians 13:11; Mark 12:31

*Jan Kilby
San Antonio, TX*

Saturday, March 9, 2019

God Remembers You

God remembered Noah.

Genesis 8:1

Today I need to remember to call the doctor for an appointment. I need to remember to bake the cake for my grandson's birthday. I need to remember to take today's medication. Remembering things is important. In today's story God remembered Noah and his family on the ark. Those in the ark were preserved by God's hand. The purpose of the Flood had been accomplished. Noah's physical survival was assured by God's grace, and life would resume on the earth.

God is aware of all things in your life. He is aware of your financial situation. God knows about the test results that you are waiting to hear about. He knows about the crime in your neighborhood. God will remember to hear your prayers. It is good and right for us to remember God. Develop a walk with God, develop a deep personal knowledge of God and develop a ministry for serving. Remind yourself daily to remember God.

God, help me to remember you. Amen.

Learn: Remember to read your devotions for today.

Read: Genesis 9:15

*David Bever
Las Vegas, NV*

Sunday, March 10, 2019

Removed

Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

John 1:29

Just inside the front door we have a white bench with an imperfection in the seat's upper left-hand corner. We placed a potted plant over the imperfection, and no one knows it is there! Sometimes we try to cover up life's imperfections. We might deny they are morally wrong. We might blame others for our sins. We might do all these things so no one knows they are there. However, there is one who sees right through our best efforts at cover-ups.

How does God deal with our not-so-perfect lives? Jesus did not just cover up our sins; no, he completely removed our sins by absorbing all of them unto himself on the cross. To truly see what took place at Calvary for you, you must see it all through the cross.

Dearest Jesus, how can I possibly thank you enough for all your grace and your forgiveness that you have granted to me freely? I can say, "Thank you!" Amen.

Share: Who in your circle of family or friends would welcome the thought that their sins are removed as far as the east is from the west?

Read: Isaiah 53

*Jerrold Lloyd Nichols
Fort Wayne, IN*

Monday, March 11, 2019

Promises, Promises

For the LORD your God will bless you, as he promised you.

Deuteronomy 15:6

For the past five years our pastors have led us periodically through the Pentateuch, the first five books of the Bible: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy. Currently, we are finishing Deuteronomy, the words of Moses meant to encourage the Israelites as they prepared to enter the Promised Land. Moses would not be going with them, but he wanted to remember God's promises.

What a loving thing to do, to remind others of God's promises. There are many times when those around us are frightened, discouraged, hurt and even angry. That would be just the right time to remind them of God's promises. No matter what someone is going through, we can remind them that "neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers ... nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 8:38-39).

Heavenly Father, teach me to reach out to others with the promises of your love. Amen.

Reflect: What is your favorite promise of God?

Read: Psalm 119:58; 1 Peter 4:8-11

*Jane Wilke
Woodbury, MN*

Tuesday, March 12, 2019

Move-in Ready

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

1 Corinthians 2:9

A dear friend once gave me a plaque painted with these words: “In my Father’s house are many mansions. I hope yours is next to mine!” The words always make me smile—even more so now that my dear friend already lives in her heavenly mansion.

Jesus speaks about his Father’s house to the disciples and reassures them, “If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you?” (John 14:2). With Jesus preparing the place, we can be sure it will be move-in ready. How can we be sure we are ready to move in? We can be like the wise virgins in the parable. They kept their lamps and oil supplies full, always prepared to meet the bridegroom. With faith like a lamp held high, we too will be ready to see Jesus, the Bridegroom, welcome us home.

Thank you, Jesus, for preparing your Father’s house for me, while I wait here by faith. Amen.

Prepare: Keep your lamp of faith burning bright through Bible study, worship and prayer.

Read: Matthew 25:1-13; Romans 1:16-17

Marj Maynard
Pipe Creek, TX

Wednesday, March 13, 2019

Visiting

He came to a village where a woman named Martha opened her home to him.

Luke 10:38

In my childhood, Friday evenings or Sunday afternoons were often spent visiting the homes of relatives. It was always a pleasant outing: a time to catch up on family happenings and discussions about many subjects. We don't seem to visit any longer. I stop by my adult children's homes long enough to pick something up or drop something off, never staying to actually visit. There are many reasons for this: busyness, using social media instead and often people aren't home.

Jesus wasn't always teaching or healing. Occasionally, he visited Mary and Martha. He went to homes for dinner and relaxing. Perhaps we should reinstitute the fine art of visiting. We can also visit with our heavenly Father when we pray. Not every prayer has to be asking or imploring. We can spend time just talking and sharing our day with him. He already knows the facts but will enjoy the time spent with us.

Jesus, my Friend, remind me to simply visit with you. Amen.

Talk: Have a friendly chat with Jesus.

Read: Luke 19:5; Luke 24:28-29

*Gloria Doty
Fort Wayne, IN*

Thursday, March 14, 2019

Kleenex Brand

What is man ... that you care for him?

Psalm 8:4

I noticed it recently on a Kleenex box top. Next to a stylized green heart were the words, "Take care." Tissues help "take care" of tears shed in joy and in sorrow. We have all appreciated the offer of a Kleenex when our emotions get the best of us.

King David reminds us that the Creator of the universe does not neglect us. He sees our tears. We are not to turn away from each other's tears. There are tears shed when a relationship or life is lost. There are tears shed at the birth of a baby or when an idea or a love realization arrives. There are tears shed in the midst of a hymn, or confession or a spoken absolution. We offer each other a tissue from Kleenex brand, and the care that is God's brand of love.

Triune God, thank you for caring at the rising of the sun, at the raising of the cross and at the rising of the Son. Amen.

Give: Don't hide; offer yourself to those around you.

Read: Psalm 8; 1 John 4:7-21

*Harry Edenfield
Brownstown, MI*

Friday, March 15, 2019

Welcome!

I was a stranger and you welcomed me.

Matthew 25:35

We moved just before our son Adam's sophomore year in high school. He later told us that he sat by himself in the lunchroom the first week at his new school. Classmates finally welcomed him to their table once they got to know "the new kid." He learned the importance of feeling welcome.

Jesus in Matthew 25 describes us when he says "Come, you who are blessed by my Father" (v. 34). God freely welcomes us who were strangers into his kingdom to receive the ultimate blessing, eternal life (v. 46). God calls us to care for each other by welcoming the stranger as he welcomed us.

Thank you, Father, for welcoming me in love, because of Jesus. Help me to share your love with others, today and always. Amen.

Greet: Introduce yourself to a new neighbor and make them feel welcome.

Read: Matthew 25:31-46; Romans 15:5-7

*Steve Hess
Ft. Myers, FL*

Saturday, March 16, 2019

Worship, Work and Win!

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

1 Peter 4:10

Do you watch March Madness? If so, you must be a college basketball fan like me. In March 2018, Loyola University-Chicago men's team made it to the Final Four. Their 98-year-old chaplain Sister Jean "scored big" with the nation. They even made a bobblehead of her, which my husband gave me for Mother's Day!

"Worship, Work and Win!" is Sister Jean's motto for her team and could also be a motto for all seniors serving God. We worship and pray for God to help us work in his kingdom, using the gifts he has given us. With guidance from God we can help win others for Christ!

Dear God, strengthen us to serve you, according to your will. Amen.

Encourage: Share the motto "Worship, Work and Win!" with others and encourage them to follow it!

Read: 1 Peter 4:10-11; Matthew 7:12; Luke 6:31

*Annette Schumacher
Muskego, WI*

Sunday, March 17, 2019

Precious

But we have this treasure in jars of clay.

2 Corinthians 4:7

We can consider the word *fragile* as a positive or a negative. Fragile things can be easily broken or physically weak. We may also think of things that are fragile as being valuable and precious, things that need special attention or care.

If we are feeling fragile, God takes tender care of us. Life can take its toll on us. Once in a while, we feel weak and broken. We can pray and ask God to help us in our weakness. God knows how to care for us in just the right way. Tender loving care is God's specialty. We are precious to him.

Dear God, I am feeling fragile and need your tender loving care. Thank you for your help. Amen.

Find: Look around and find a small object that is valuable to you. Think of God caring for you with greater care than you have for this object.

Read: Psalm 19:10

Annette L. Sherwood
St. Louis, MO

Monday, March 18, 2019

Car Keys

I will never leave you nor forsake you.

Hebrews 13:5

Has the time come in our lives when we have decided to give up certain things? Have we decided to give up our car keys and no longer drive our vehicles? Have we decided to give up the house we have lived in for years and move into a smaller residence?

There are other things we will never give up! We will never decide to abandon our faith in a loving God. We will never decide to give up precious memories of God-at-work in our lives. We will never decide to cease praying, especially for our loved ones. We will never decide to stop giving thanks for those dear people who now care for us every day. And God will never decide to leave or forsake us.

Precious Savior, the changes of life challenge us to make good decisions as to what we will give up and what we will keep. The day will come when we will give up all earthly matters. Thank you for your constant care of our bodies and souls. Amen.

Ask: What is there in your life that you are ready, willing and able to give up?

Read: Psalm 46

*Jerrold Lloyd Nichols
Fort Wayne, IN*

Tuesday, March 19, 2019

We Are Family

*As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you.
Abide in my love.*

John 15:9

I head out to the dance floor at almost every wedding I attend as soon as I hear the first notes of “We Are Family.” Of course, I can’t move like I used to, but I still enjoy the enthusiasm of young and old who move and groove to the music. And for that moment, we all feel like family.

Shouldn’t we always treat others as family? The greatest example we can find for how to do that is Jesus. He tells us that as God the Father loved him, so are we to love each other. Sinners though we be, God our Father loved us so much he sent his only Son to be our Brother, our Savior. He didn’t care what we looked like, where we lived or who we knew. He loved us; now we get to love others.

Lord Jesus, forgive me for those times when I do not love as you love me. Amen.

Reflect: Who can you draw into your circle and treat more like family?

Read: Ephesians 2:1-10; Colossians 3:12-17

*Jane Wilke
Woodbury, MN*

Wednesday, March 20, 2019

Who Am I?

[Jesus] said to them, "But who do you say that I am?"

Matthew 16:15

Some years ago, a former seminary classmate wrote devotions for the aging pilgrim. One of his comments has touched my heart: "Life narrows down and crises come. Suddenly, only one thing matters, and there, in the narrow place, stands Jesus."

One time, Jesus asked his disciples to respond to the question, "Who do you say that I am?" Peter answered, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." As we age, we can respond as Peter and my classmate did. That means that we place Jesus at the very center of our life's journey—his ministry, his message, his cross, his resurrection, his coming again to take us to heaven.

Lord Jesus, may we see you at our side as we face life's daily issues. Amen.

Answer: Spend time reflecting on the conversation that Jesus had with his disciples. Answer the questions, "Who is Jesus? Who am I? What does Jesus do? What do I do?"

Read: 2 Timothy 1:8-12

*Walter M. Schoedel
Webster Groves, MO*

Thursday, March 21, 2019

Wear Your Armor

Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes.

Ephesians 6:11

There was once a knight so proud of his shining armor that he kept it hidden in a closet so it would not be scratched. He appeared in battle without it saying, "I don't want it to be damaged." How foolish!

Every senior citizen must do battle with Satan's schemes: doubt, anxiety, fear, shame, apathy, worry and more. God provides armor to protect us: truth, righteousness, faith, salvation and the sword of the Spirit. These weapons can provide excellent protection when they are worn. There's no need to protect the armor. It will protect you! When the battle is fierce, God dresses you in his armor. Pray for protection and your Lord will defend you, strengthen you and enable you to win a victory over the worst of the devil's schemes.

Gracious Lord, protect me through the battle I must wage today. Amen.

Suit up: Take stock of the inventory of your God-given armor and be sure to wear it.

Read: Ephesians 6:10-18

*Paul Scheidt
Chesterfield, MO*

Friday, March 22, 2019

Martha, Martha

I will bless the LORD at all times; his praise shall continually be in my mouth.

Psalm 34:1

It was an early-spring church cleanup day, and I was intent on my weeding responsibilities: head down, single-minded, claiming a small victory every time the whole root came up. I would do my job and head home. One of the other volunteers, whose ancient knees prevented him from weeding, walked over and asked quietly, “Did you see the red flower?” There in the middle of the weeds on that cold March morning was a flower, a miracle, really, a message from God to savor the moment, and I had missed it. Those Mary/Martha moments occur way too often in my life. When will I slow down, “choose the good portion” and experience God’s joy—right now?

Dear Lord, you grace my life with joys large and small. Don’t let me miss those gifts as I race through the day. Amen.

Watch: Notice three small things today that God blesses you with. Do it again tomorrow.

Read: James 1:17; Psalm 148

*Sally Beck
Williamsburg, VA*

Saturday, March 23, 2019

Fishing at Our Age?

Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord.

Luke 5:8

Do you ever find new meaning in a familiar Bible story when you grow older? I remember getting excited as a young man about the miraculous catch of fish. I stood ready to join the fishermen disciples and reach out to the world with the good news of Jesus as Savior. Now in my older years, I relate more to Simon Peter's awestruck words: "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord." Am I too old to fish physically or to catch people with God's saving love? A good friend of mine, slightly older than I, recently took two of his adult children on a fishing expedition in Alaska, much to their delight. He also continues leadership training worldwide helping pastors of many cultures connect people to Jesus. Forgiven and strengthened by Jesus, we continue to fish with joy until God calls us home.

Amazed at your power and love, Lord, help me fish for people where I am. Amen.

Go: Anticipate a fishing expedition this week.

Read: Luke 5:1-11

*Stephen J. Carter
Oakville, MO*

Sunday, March 24, 2019

Mirror, Mirror

And kneeling before him, they mocked him ... and they spit on him ... and led him away to crucify him.

Matthew 27:29-31

I came across a quote years ago that has stayed with me: “How you make others feel about themselves says a lot about you.” I don’t know to whom I should attribute these words, but I do know they’ve made me realize that how I treat others should make me look at myself, much like I look in the mirror. In a culture where name-calling, ridicule and rudeness seem to have become the norm, what does it say about us when we follow suit? If I choose to tear others down, what does that say about me?

It’s easy to stand in judgment of those who mocked Jesus, but what about the times we tear others down instead of lifting them up? Thanks be to God we are forgiven because Jesus took these sins and all others to the cross.

Dear Savior, help me reflect your love in the way I treat others today. Amen.

Ask: Is there a way I’ve been treating others that needs to change?

Read: 1 Thessalonians 5:11; James 3:1-18

*Jane Wilke
Woodbury, MN*

Monday, March 25, 2019

Host or Guest

Jesus ... said to him, "Zacchaeus ... I must stay at your house today."

Luke 19:5

Jesus accepted many invitations. But when Jesus entered a home, a dramatic shift took place. He became the host, giving them what they needed instead of the other way around. Remarkable! In one case Jesus didn't wait to be invited. He invited himself. Zacchaeus didn't seem to mind being invited to his own home!

Is it a wonder to you, that Jesus didn't wait for you to invite him in, but that he came to you uninvited, knowing that it was he who had everything to offer you? There is wonder in that: a gracious God who didn't wait for us to get our homes in order, but came to us with an invitation, "Come to me, all who ... are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Matthew 11:28).

Lord Jesus, you're the host, I am your guest. Thank you for inviting me in. Amen.

Consider: Find someone in your church who might be lonely and in need of an invitation.

Read: Matthew 11:25-30

*David Boyd
Staunton, VA*

Tuesday, March 26, 2019

Burned Out and Cared Out

The God of all grace ... will himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you.

1 Peter 5:10

We know what it means to be burned out. But have you ever been cared out? You spent a lot of time and energy caring for a person and you got to the point when you just didn't have any more care to give. You were cared out. What can you do about it? Celebrate care with these three steps: 1) Know that you have a God who cares for you. If you are cared out, God can and will replenish you with his care through Jesus, your caring Redeemer and Lord; 2) Receive his care by faith. Your cared-out situation will be restored by Jesus, who cares for you; 3) Having received the care from God, you are then enabled to move from being cared out to being a caregiver to others.

Lord, when I am tired, restore me so that I might care for others. Amen.

Refresh: When you are "cared out," be restored through God's Word and the care of others.

Read: Psalm 8

*Ken Holdorf
Frisco, TX*

Wednesday, March 27, 2019

You're a Priest

You also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood.

1 Peter 2:5

The phrase “the priesthood of all believers” emphasizes that we are all called to convey God’s grace in Christ to others.

Every day we have opportunities to meet others. It may be the check-out clerk at the supermarket. Have you thought of a kind word you could say to that clerk on a busy day? How about the mail carrier who delivers your mail and places your packages at your front door? How about the family member who has trouble getting up in the morning because she doesn’t want to face the difficult responsibilities of her job? We are empowered to be priests because Christ, our high priest, bore our sin of lethargy upon the cross, enabling us to do far more than we can ask or imagine.

O Lord Jesus, help me to sense the needs of others even before they tell me about them. Amen.

Reflect: Pray over three people you meet today who need God’s grace in Jesus.

Read: Ephesians 3:14-21

Gordon Beck
Williamsburg, VA

Thursday, March 28, 2019

Our Hands

Even there your hand shall lead me, and your right hand shall hold me.

Psalm 139:10

My husband Karl and I held hands often, as we walked, watched movies or talked. Shortly after Karl died, one of his sons, assisting me walking over rocky ground, took my hand and held it as we walked along. I had missed this special contact. Handholding is special—more than a hug or a pat on the shoulder. It is a connection.

As we age, there are fewer of these connections around, and the most intimate ones may be gone, but reaching out to friends who are lonely or grieving can help us feel connected. Quietly holding a friend's hand as we visit may give more comfort than words. There is comfort in the hands of Christ. I remember the old hymn, "Precious Lord, take my hand." That's good handholding!

*My Lord, thank you for your comforting hand.
Make me your hands for others. Amen.*

Discuss: Talk with your friends about how they keep their connections with others.

Read: Psalm 139

*Gail Lutze
Valparaiso, IN*

Friday, March 29, 2019

God's Refrigerator

You are members of the household of God, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone.

Ephesians 2:19-20

Have you ever thought about what God's refrigerator might look like? Our refrigerator is covered with photos of people who are precious to us, invitations to upcoming events and reminders that will make life easier when we read them.

Our all-loving, all-caring God has your photo and mine on his refrigerator. As members of the family of God, we have a special place in the photo gallery alongside other family members and friends and even people we don't know. God's refrigerator also has an invitation for all who see it to accept the gracious gift of eternal life that comes from faith in our great God! What a comfort and blessing it is to be part of the family of God!

All-loving God, thank you for making us your children and blessing us with the gift of eternal life. Amen.

Pray: Go to your refrigerator and pray for the people in the photos there.

Read: 1 John 3:1

*Margaret Rickers Hinchey
Englewood, CO*

Saturday, March 30, 2019

Fishers of Men

Follow me and I will make you fishers of men.

Matthew 4:19

Jesus offers a beautiful picture of being one of his disciples. Good fishermen go where the fish are. Good disciples go where people are living.

Good fishermen mend their nets. Good disciples practice a daily evaluation of how they touch the lives of people.

Good fishermen accept the fact that there will be days when the nets are full and days when the nets are empty. Good disciples accept the fact that not all witnessing will be fruitful.

Good fishermen do not fish alone. Good disciples join with others in witnessing for the Lord Jesus.

Good fishermen, even in their old age, find themselves fishing. Good disciples keep on sharing their faith in their later years.

Lord Jesus, may we follow in your footsteps, calling people into your kingdom. Amen.

Fish: Spend time bringing people to Christ and Christ to people.

Read: Romans 10:9-18; Matthew 4:18-22

*Walter M. Schoedel
Webster Groves, MO*

Sunday, March 31, 2019

Nostalgia

Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever.

Hebrews 13:8

Have you ever attended your class reunion? What was it like for you? Did you spend hours with old friends sharing memories?

Such times can be awash in nostalgia. The word comes from the Greek—*nostos*, a return, and *algos*, pain or grief. A dictionary defines *nostalgia* as “homesickness, a longing to go back to one’s home, hometown or homeland.” Nostalgia’s temptation is always to take up residence in the past, forgetting that God calls us to use those warm memories to grow and live firmly planted in the present, anticipating the future in hope.

The writer to the Hebrews says it well. In spite of our longing for the past, Jesus Christ is with us “yesterday, today and forever.” The past is a nice place to visit, but we need not live there.

Lord of the ages, as grateful as I am for the past, show me your presence with me this day and point me to a future with you forever. Amen.

Reflect: Take some time with a photo album. What lessons might you learn from your memories?

Read: 2 Timothy 1:5-7; Revelation 21:3-5

*Don Hinchey
Englewood, CO*

HOLY HABITS for **HOPE-FULL HEALTH**

Being a caregiver as well as being a care receiver are powerful and significant ways of “taking care” of each other! Whether we are on the “giving” end or the “receiving” end of care, we first of all need to intentionally take care of ourselves.

Here are some specific ways to “give care” and to “take care”:

1. Do not be afraid or hesitant about asking for help when you need it.
2. Spend time with friends.
3. Take breaks every day to rest and relax.
4. Keep up with special hobbies and interests.
5. Make yourself a priority to be cared for.
6. Look around you to see and sense people who may need your help but are afraid to ask.
7. To “give care” to others is a powerful way to “take care” of yourself, as you look beyond your limitations and focus on the needs of others.
8. Do not wait to be asked for help. Offer your time, energies and talents to others, even though they have not asked.
9. “Care” often happens in very small ways—through a smile, a hug, a question, a phone call, a simple offer to help and assist.
10. Keep those prayers and devotional times flowing!

Hope-Full Praying

A Listening Ear

Why is it, Lord, that so many people, including myself, do not listen well to other people? Why is it that I would rather talk and tell my story rather than to listen to their journeys of sadness and gladness? Push me, O Lord, to listen and to learn from others, and help me always to remember that there must be a reason that you gave us two ears and only one mouth. Amen.

Praying for Others

What a gift prayer is, Lord! Keep me focused on people around me who are in special need of your healing and presence. Keep sending me opportunities to reach out to them, through my prayers and by my presence. Keep me praying to you, Lord, so that I can be your vessel of hope and health to others in need. Amen.

Finding Joy

Lord, I need help in keeping the joy in my journey through life. I am too often drained by my own problems and pains and pressures. Remind me that I do not need to look for joy because you have already given it to me by your death and resurrection. Let me continue to sing “Joy to the World” every day throughout this new year. Amen.

Hope-Full Praying

Having Patience

Lord, one of the many gifts you did not give to me is ... patience! I pray that you will bless me by letting me discover this newfound gift, sometime, somehow! In the meantime, please help others to accept me as I am, as I continue to push and nudge them to be on time, to keep on moving, and still, somehow, to keep on loving me, in spite of my impatience. That's all I have time for now, Lord. Amen.

Keeping Hope Alive

It is hard to be hopeful in this world of ours, Lord. There is too much bantering, bickering and bad-mouthing. Please help me to continue to cling to the hope that I know in faith is there because of your life, death and resurrection. Help me to remember that hope in you is knowing that even when there is "no hope," there is hope, because of you. Amen.

Keeping in the Word

Your Word is a lamp unto our feet, Lord, as you continue to give us direction and hope in life. Continue to bring the Good News to us through the Scriptures in order that we may continue to share this Word with those you put around us. Make us good translators so that we may light your lamp for others. Amen.

Hope-Full Praying

For Those Who Are Sick

Lord, while I am praying now, someone is dying. While I am feeling well, many more are headed to the emergency room. While I celebrate life, so many others are too sick to care. Help the sick and the well to continue to celebrate in this dying world. Keep us all celebrating to the end, and then give us the greatest celebration ever. Amen.

Seeking Help

Lord, I remember the Beatles song, “Help, I need somebody!” It seems like everyone is looking for help these days—young and old, rich and poor. In you, Lord, is our only hope! Help me to be more helpful in pointing the helpless to you. Just when the caterpillar thought the world was ending, you turned him into a butterfly. Help us to do the same. Amen.

For Those in Need

For the lonely, the lost, the least, the little, the long-ing, the laborers and the last, bring health and hope. Help us to stop building walls and start building bridges so that all people in need may be connected with your loving grace and forgiveness. We are all in need, Lord. Bring healing right now. Amen.

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