

HOPE-FULL LIVING

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

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Rich Bimler, Mark Zimmermann, Editors

Carol Geisler, Kasey Nugent, Editorial Assistants

Hope-Full Living Mission Statement

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

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Monday, July 1, 2019

Brushing Shoulders

How good and pleasant it is when brothers dwell in unity!

Psalm 133:1

Did you know that “keep in touch” originated with the military? Every soldier in an 18th-century military drill had to brush arms with fellow soldiers when marching in formation. With whom does God have you brushing shoulders lately? The nurse at the doctor’s office? The person who wheels you to meals? The people with whom you play cards? A visitor? Email friends? A store clerk?

As the body of Christ, Jesus cares for others through us each day. Even as we pray alone, we reach across time and space to brush the hearts of those God nudges us to lift up. We participate in the unity of the Spirit as we connect God’s peace to those deliberately placed in our path every day.

Lord of the Church, stir up your Spirit in me each day to make eye contact with every person you cause to pass by. Amen.

Reflect: Whom did God put into your day? Consider including their names in your bedtime prayer.

Read: Philippians 1:27; Romans 15:5-6

*Julaine Kammrath
Aurora, IL*

Tuesday, July 2, 2019

Can You Hear Me?

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

Revelation 3:20

We spend time daily in either face to face or distance communication. I speak, you listen, or vice versa. Modern technology (cell phones, the internet, email, chat rooms) has provided many new ways to communicate. The danger is allowing it to become excessive as it takes over more and more of our time. Don't let all this communication drown out the most important voice we need to hear. Don't let it take priority over the quiet times in which God can speak to us in his Word.

Spend more time with God. The more we are with him, the more we hear his voice. He speaks, we listen. We will hear his knock and open the door.

God, I am listening. Speak to me through your holy Word. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Listen: Read God's Word during your quiet times.

Read: Matthew 13:16; John 10:27

*Barbara Arnold
Irvine, CA*

Wednesday, July 3, 2019

Independence

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

Philippians 2:13

Just like the American colonists who opposed high taxes by the English crown, I am independent and try to avoid overbearing burdens or demands placed on me by others.

As a child of God, I realize my independence often blinds me to my need for God's guidance and governance. It's been a lifelong process to trust that God is working in me to do his bidding and changing me to be more like him. The Holy Spirit interweaves through my thoughts and actions to bring about his good pleasure. God's presence is evident in my daily activities even if my independent mind might resist his rule and loving ways. God knows what is right for me; therefore, I lean on him even when doubts surface. As I grow older, I understand that hope and satisfaction come from following God's direction.

Dear heavenly Father, thank you for working in and through me to bring about your good pleasure. Guide me toward your good will in all I say and do. Amen.

Follow: Follow God's Word to learn about his will.

Read: Psalm 56; Proverbs 3:5-8

*MaryAnn Sundby
Castle Rock, CO*

Thursday, July 4, 2019

Freedom to Fail

Do not be afraid or dismayed; for the Lord God ... is with you. He will not fail you or forsake you.

1 Chronicles 28:20

We have many precious freedoms in our nation to be treasured and preserved, including our freedom to worship. In God's kingdom, we treasure the priceless freedoms God has given us, especially that he has freed us from our sin and guilt through Christ's atoning sacrifice on the cross. As a result, we have the freedom to fail, a freedom not always granted us in our daily life.

We all experience failures in life. We may sometimes feel like a failure. We especially lament the countless times we have failed God. But we are not a failure to God. All of our flaws and faults and failures have been forgiven and forgotten by our gracious God (Jeremiah 31:34). No matter how many times we may fail him, he promises that he will never fail us or forsake us.

Merciful God, thank you for the freedom to fail, knowing you always forgive us. Amen.

Assured: Be certain that no matter how many times you fail God, he will never fail or forsake you.

Read: Hebrews 10:11-18

*Gil Duchow
Muskego, WI*

Friday, July 5, 2019

Loving Others

A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another.

John 13:34

To aspire to love others as Jesus loves us is no small thing. After all, he poured out his whole life for us. We are humbled and grateful for Jesus' immense, unconditional love for each and every one of us. As we soak up Jesus' love for us, we are inspired to reach out to others in love. Whether it be a phone call to someone who is struggling, a note of thanks to a dear one, or just a friendly smile and hello, all of us are called to love one another.

Jesus uses us as instruments of his love! He counts on us to carry out his mission of furthering love in the world. When we focus on the positive in others, when we treat others with kindness and good cheer, we are building up the body of Christ.

Dear Jesus, teach me to love others as you love me. Amen.

Give: Look for ways to serve others in love.

Read: 1 Thessalonians 5:11

*Sally Macke
St. Louis, MO*

Saturday, July 6, 2019

Connections

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

Colossians 3:16

To a lot of people, having connections means enjoying an edge over others. Perhaps getting a better job, better tickets to an event or some kind of preferential treatment. This all may sound great, but Christians have much better connections. Our faith connects us to Christ and, through him, to each other.

The apostle Paul writes eloquently in his letter to the Colossians, addressing them (and us) as God's chosen ones. To "let the word of Christ dwell in you richly" (Colossians 3:16) is the best possible way to keep in touch with Christ and with each other. By believing the Word, we receive forgiveness, love and the peace of Christ. Through this faith, we are united with Christ and with all believers, his Body, the Church. These spiritual connections are the most precious of all. They keep us in touch with Christ and with all believers now and into eternity.

Dwell in us, Lord, through your Word. Amen.

Connect: Follow Paul's words to the Colossians.

Read: Colossians 3:12-17; Hebrews 10:23-25

*Marj Maynard
Pipe Creek, TX*

Sunday, July 7, 2019

Forbearance

This was to show God's righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins.

Romans 3:25

Recently I read about a gentleman who makes the sign of the cross whenever someone cuts in front of him in traffic. It reminds him that as Jesus forgives us, so we forgive others. That takes a great deal of forbearance, don't you think?

Forbearance isn't a word we use very often, but perhaps we should. By definition, it means patient self-control, restraint and tolerance. Our world needs such self-control and it needs to start with us, those of us who believe that God our Father "passed over former sins." He didn't ignore them; he sent his Son to pay the price. Perhaps serving others comes through loving them with forbearance, not in striking back, but in showing mercy—just as God has shown mercy to us in Christ.

Dear Father, guide me in serving by showing mercy to others. Amen.

Reflect: When might you make the sign of the cross in response to the actions of others?

Read: Matthew 5:38-42; Colossians 3:12-17

*Jane Wilke
Woodbury, MN*

Monday, July 8, 2019

Come for Healing

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

Matthew 11:28

Can you believe they let sick people into hospitals? Of course they do! That's where healing happens, where medical professionals diagnose and treat life-threatening ailments. Can you believe they let sinners into churches? Of course they do! That's where forgiveness is granted to the guilty, where new life is promised and delivered to all who come to Jesus.

"Come to me ... I will give you rest." Jesus' invitation and promise have no expiration date. He is there for you when life becomes too much, when problems pile up, when guilt crushes and when strength and energy fail. Keep in touch with people of faith who can share a word of hope with you and with those who need a word of hope from you. That's how Jesus provides healing and hope to and through us to each other.

Give me rest, Lord Jesus, and let me be your touch of mercy to someone close to me. Amen.

Watch: Look for opportunities to offer a healing word of hope and peace to someone who is worried or fearful.

Read: Matthew 7:7-11

*Paul Scheidt
Chesterfield, MO*

Tuesday, July 9, 2019

Very, Very Good to Me

Those who turn many to righteousness [shall shine] like the stars forever and ever.

Daniel 12:3

Today the very best of the National and American Baseball leagues gather for the annual All-Star Game. Although it probably was said earlier, White Sox legend Minnie Minoso, an eight-time All-Star, reported, "Baseball has been very, very good to me." It was good to him and to many all-stars.

Although it was nothing of our doing, the manager (our heavenly Father) has named you and me to his All-Star team. Through his love in Christ Jesus we have been made saints as we come up to bat in the game of life. And whether he calls on us to make a sacrifice bunt or a home run, he uses us to light his world. Indeed, the grace of our Father has been very, very good to me and you!

Lord, thank you for choosing me for your All-Star team. Amen.

Remember: Think back to when you attended a baseball game and how it now feels to be an active player on God's team.

Read: Psalm 136:7-9; Isaiah 60:1-2

*Don Luepke
Fremont, IN*

Wednesday, July 10, 2019

Friendship Comfort Zone

But when you give a feast, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, and you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you. For you will be repaid at the resurrection of the just.

Luke 14:13-14

When seeking friends, we often look for those similar to us; those with similar backgrounds, interests and outlooks. Lasting friendships are often sustained by give and take, by helping one another. Jesus challenges us in his parable of the dinner party to see that greater blessings may be found when we dare to look outside our usual friendship comfort zone.

Imagine the richness and diversity God can bring into our lives when we allow those of different backgrounds, ages and ways of thinking into our hearts. Although we may long for absent friends, God calls us to love those who are here right now.

Lord, fill me with your love so that I might reach out to others. Amen.

Reflect: Ask God to open your eyes to a new friend, perhaps somebody outside of your usual friendship comfort zone.

Read: Luke 14:12-24

*Kerry Osborne
Sydney, Australia*

Thursday, July 11, 2019

Love as Christ Loves

A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another.

John 13:34

Christ's command to love calls us to move beyond self-interest to total selfless love. We should not be concerned about how our love will be accepted or how our love will be repaid. We simply are to show the love of God to others in the way that Christ has first shown it to us. His love is a selfless love. It is this selfless love that unites us as the people of God, and it is also this continuing love that draws us together as one.

We must never fold our arms across our chest and confidently proclaim, "I have now fulfilled Christ's command to show love. I have completed what is required of me." Love always calls us to think of others.

Most gracious heavenly Father, show me how to love as Christ loves me. Amen.

Give: Look for ways to show unconditional love to those around you.

Read: 1 Corinthians 13

*Mike Lutz
Shelby Township, MI*

Friday, July 12, 2019

Paperwork

I will make a new covenant.

Jeremiah 31:31

There seems to be a lot of paperwork involved in aging. There are medical records and Medicare forms to be filled out. There are legal papers, property records and financial forms to set in order. On paper and online, we fill in the blanks, sign the forms and submit them to the proper agencies. It is frustrating and time-consuming, but necessary.

God has made an agreement, a covenant, with us. There are no forms to fill out, no papers to sign. It is a one-sided agreement. God set the terms, and he fulfilled them. The covenant is signed and sealed, not in ink on paper, but in our Savior's blood shed on the cross. You can read the agreement. The terms apply to you, and it's all right there in print, word for word: "I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more" (Jeremiah 31:34).

Lord, thank you for your covenant gift of forgiveness. Amen.

Help: As you have opportunity, help someone in filling out forms, or offer a ride to the post office to mail necessary paperwork.

Read: Jeremiah 31:31-34

*Carol Geisler
Manchester, MO*

Saturday, July 13, 2019

Songs of Praise

*Let everything that has breath praise the Lord!
Praise the Lord!*

Psalm 150:6

Summer is a delightful season. The sun praises God with its warmth, while the trees and flowers praise God with their stunning shapes and colors. A variety of summer birds migrate hundreds of miles to spend the summer with us. They don't complain about the journey. They sing praise to God with their beautiful songs. God is worthy of our praise for these summer gifts that our bodies sense anew each year.

We praise God with each breath and with each thought of gratitude for every new day he gives us. Our hearts and our voices sing songs of praise in gratitude for his daily goodness to each of us and for the gift of his Son, Jesus Christ our Savior.

Heavenly Father, thank you for the summer sun, your beautiful flora and fauna and the sweet songs of so many cheerful birds. Amen.

Rejoice: Sing one of your favorite hymns today with your heart or with your voice.

Read: Psalm 146:1-2

*Pat Shopland
Marchfield, MA*

Sunday, July 14, 2019

How Long, O Lord?

O Lord, all my longing is before you.

Psalm 38:9

Someone said God does his best work on us when we are waiting, not when we've arrived or accomplished the goal or landed the job. It's when we're waiting. Old Testament people waited centuries for the promise given in the garden, Abraham and Sarah's baby didn't arrive until they were ancient, Joseph endured years in prison before God rescued him. This is what I learned yesterday when my promised wait of ten minutes turned into two hours. All I wanted was an oil change, but the delivery of the air filter from the auto parts store took forever. Or so it seemed. The mechanic was also waiting and was doing a better job than I was. He was a young man with a long story, I found out. As I waited, I learned. When we think we've been inconvenienced, think again. God is giving us a chance to listen, to demonstrate patience, and then perhaps to tell a lonely person about him.

*I have a lot of learning to do, Lord. Help me.
Amen.*

Hear: When you find yourself waiting, take time to listen.

Read: Proverbs 20:12; James 1:19-21

*Sally Beck
Williamsburg, VA*

Monday, July 15, 2019

God's Guidance

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

Matthew 28:20

My sister recently sent me some letters I had written to her when I was in college. Reading just a few from my freshman year transported me back to a time when I was preoccupied with big questions about who I was, what career I would choose and whom I would marry (if anyone).

Looking back now, I can see that the answers unfolded over a number of years. And God's plans weren't always what I expected. In fact, they were even better than anything I could have imagined myself! God was in control of my life, and his guidance ended up deepening my faith and giving me countless ways to serve him. Look back over your own life for ways that God has been guiding you and shaping you into the person you are.

How can I thank you enough, God, for your presence in my life? I am your own creation and ready to keep serving you as long as I live. Amen.

Think: Spend some quiet time remembering when you have felt God's guidance in your life.

Read: Psalm 48:14; Deuteronomy 31:8

*Nancy J. Clark
Niles, MI*

Tuesday, July 16, 2019

First Things First

[Jesus] said to him, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind."

Matthew 22:37

I remember a Kansas farmer in my first church who gave me much to think about when it came to putting first things first. It was harvest time and I was told many times that when harvest time comes I should not expect to see many farmers in church on Sunday morning. That was because the weather was always in question. If the sun was shining, the crop was calling, and farmers had to heed the call.

One farmer, Erhart, thought differently. He believed that if the crop was ready for harvest during church, it would be ready after church. Erhart is gone now, but I've never forgotten what he said. It reminded me of something Martin Luther once said: "If I find myself feeling too busy for God, I spend two more hours in prayer."

Dear Lord Jesus, never let me become so busy in my daily routines that I forget you. Amen.

Schedule: Always plan to put God's Word on your daily "to do" list.

Read: Matthew 22:34-39; Matthew 4:1-11

*Edward Arle
St. Charles, MO*

Wednesday, July 17, 2019

Let the Sun Shine

Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father.

Matthew 13:43

There is a shop in Florida that sells various items of clothing with pictures printed on them. These pictures are objects outlined with black lines only, until the wearer walks into the sunshine. Then the beautiful colors appear. It seems like magic. When the wearer leaves the sunshine, the brilliant colors slowly fade and disappear again.

We can imagine our lives like the clothing. We're pretty boring until we step into the love and compassion of the Son of God. This allows us to become the person God created us to be. There is no magic involved, only the brilliance of God's love for us and the transformation of our lives when we live in the Sonshine. If we step back into the darkness, our lives change again, just like the clothing. Stay in the warmth and light of the Son.

Heavenly Father, help us stay in the light of your Son and feel the warmth of your love. Amen.

Remember: When you step outside, feel the warmth on your face and remember God's love for you.

Read: Luke 1:78; 1 Corinthians 15:41

*Gloria Doty
Fort Wayne, IN*

Thursday, July 18, 2019

Jesus' Touch

Jesus laid his hands on his eyes again, and ... his sight was restored.

Mark 8:25

Jesus often touched people. He stretched out his hand and touched a leper (Matthew 8:3). Jesus touched Peter's mother-in-law when she was sick (Matthew 8:15). People brought little children to Jesus and he took them in his arms (Mark 10:16).

We might say, "Oh, how great it would be to experience the touch of Jesus." But remember this: Jesus has touched the world with his birth. He has touched people with the gift of forgiveness of sins through his sacrifice on the cross and with his victory over death. He has touched people with the gift to believe. You have been touched by Jesus! His touch of grace and love is a gift to us as we live each day in the assurance of Jesus' touch.

Oh, give thanks to the Lord for he is good and his touch of love lasts forever. Oh, give thanks to the Lord for touching me with his love, faith, trust, strength, comfort and hope. Oh, give thanks for the touch of Jesus. Amen.

Remember: The touch of Jesus is not just a wish. His touch is real.

Read: Luke 24:36-49

*Ken Holdorf
Frisco, TX*

Friday, July 19, 2019

Precious Thoughts

How precious to me are your thoughts, O God! How vast is the sum of them!

Psalm 139:17

During the late afternoon, a table by my west facing window gathers an inordinate amount of dust! Isn't it amazing how the angle of the sun can highlight those frustrating little dust particles? Sometimes I wonder why God allows dust to build up inside our homes, just so we must repeatedly clean it up.

Wiping away dust or table crumbs can remind us that we need to maintain our spiritual as well as physical housekeeping. Every time we lift a dust cloth or cleaning rag we can acknowledge any thoughts that separate us from God. As we clean, we can also wipe away unhealthy cravings or fears. Let's provide a clean surface for God's precious and vast thoughts to land!

My God, help me to wipe out unwanted thoughts and shine with your precious knowledge. Amen.

Wipe: When you clean a tabletop or counter today, think of which undesirable thought God is wiping from your mind.

Read: Titus 3:5; Jeremiah 4:14

*Lisa Heule
Littleton, CO*

Saturday, July 20, 2019

The Summer Sun

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

Psalm 148:3

A creative way to start a summer morning is to look at the shining sun and imagine hearing the Lord say, “Good morning! This is just a reminder to you that this is the day that I have made. I am with you all the way. Let’s keep in touch, okay?”

We keep in touch with the Lord by doing just what Jesus did—by hugging the hurting, by loving the lonely, by celebrating as we serve others. What a joy to know that even if the sun is not shining, the Son is always in touch with us as we reach out and touch others. Here comes the Son! Ready or not, he will bless us with opportunities to serve and to celebrate his love.

Lord of life, thanks for reminding us that you are always with us, shining on us and moving us to serve others, rain or shine. Amen.

Rest: At bedtime tonight, look for the moon and hear the Lord say, “I’m still here! Rest well!”

Read: Psalm 148

*Rich Bimler
Bloomington, IL*

Sunday, July 21, 2019

Family

He is not ashamed to call them brothers.

Hebrews 2:11

If your family gets together from time to time, you know what a special time a reunion is, for reconnecting, storytelling, laughter, meals and worship. As baptized children of our heavenly Father, we have been adopted into a larger family. “For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For all of you were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ” (Galatians 3:26-27). Because of Jesus’ death and resurrection, and as members of his family, an inheritance has been bequeathed to us which is “imperishable, undefiled and unfading, kept in heaven for you” (1 Peter 1:4). How blest we are!

Family members care, help, pray and encourage one another. May we gratefully do the same for both our biological and our spiritual families.

Heavenly Father, thank you for adopting me into your eternal family, through your Son, Jesus Christ. Amen.

Give: Offer a word of encouragement today to a family member.

Read: Ephesians 3:14-21

*Fred Boettcher
Menomonee Falls, WI*

Monday, July 22, 2019

Join Us

For he satisfies the longing soul, and the hungry soul he fills with good things.

Psalm 107:9

In a summer issue of the magazine *Maine*, there's a restaurant ad that beckons readers with a lobster platter, a view of docked boats and the words, "Join Us on the Deck." How wonderful to share a meal with others and refresh the body and mind!

Christ beckons us to join him too—each day—to refresh our souls. He calls us to share a peaceful moment with him. There's no need to recall past sins or worries about the future. We can simply get in touch with Christ as we would with a friend—just to say hello and keep the relationship alive. "Delight yourself in the LORD" (Psalm 37:4). Let Christ fill your hungry soul with the energy of joy and hope that will keep you going.

Jesus, help me be still and aware of your presence. Amen.

Share: With Christ's peace in your heart, get out the lawn chairs and share a cool drink with a neighbor.

Read: Ecclesiastes 4:9-10

*Catherine A. Welch
Southbury, CT*

Tuesday, July 23, 2019

My Father's Hands

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

Isaiah 49:16

I remember the rough cracks in my dad's hands. He worked hard every day on our family farm. Those hands also taught me how to hit a baseball, shoot a basketball and land a fish. We saw those hands folded at the table to pray. He sometimes had to discipline us with those hands, but Dad's hands always embraced us with love.

Our heavenly Father has promised, "I have engraved you on the palms of my hands." And Jesus our Good Shepherd promises concerning his sheep, "No one will snatch them out of my hand" (John 10:28). Our loving Father gave his Son to save us. He will watch over and guide us. He's got us, and the whole world, in his hands.

Thank you, Father, for guiding me each day. Remind me today that you hold me in your hands. Amen.

Comfort: Assure someone this day that we are in God's hands.

Read: Psalm 91; John 10:27-30

*Steve Hess
Ft. Myers, FL*

Wednesday, July 24, 2019

Connections with God

You shall be my people, and I will be your God.

Jeremiah 30:22

Comedian Lily Tomlin will always be remembered for her role as a switchboard operator named Ernestine. Her line, “Is this the party to whom I am speaking?” brought smiles to all the viewers.

Thankfully, our connections with God do not require an operator like Ernestine. God’s connections are always available, correct and clear. He connected with us at our Baptism, where we became his child. He connects with us as we receive forgiveness of our sins during Holy Communion. Every time we read his Word in the Bible another connection is made. He connects with us as he hears and answers our prayers.

“You shall be my people and I will be your God” (Jeremiah 30:22), assures us that we never have to question (like Ernestine) to whom we are connected. Instead we can boldly say, “This is God to whom I am connected!”

*Lord, help me to always stay connected with you.
Amen.*

Connect: Start using one of God’s connections that you have been neglecting.

Read: Matthew 28:19; Jeremiah 29:12

*Stan Tordsen
Stewartville, MN*

Thursday, July 25, 2019

Christmas in July

Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body. And be thankful.

Colossians 3:15

I had an interesting but enlightening worship experience in church one Sunday. The theme of the day was Christmas in July. The congregation is on a campaign to assemble gift boxes to give to children in Africa who are less fortunate than we are. But in the service, we were also encouraged to remember that while Jesus' birth was celebrated in December at Christmastime, we must never forget to celebrate Jesus all year round.

Some years ago, in Yellowstone National Park, the park officials also celebrated Christmas in July. That was many years ago and I suspect things have changed quite a bit in Yellowstone over the years. But still, the fact that people might be drawn to celebrate God's Son Jesus in the middle of summer is something to pray, praise and thank God about.

Lord Jesus, help me to celebrate your birth all year round and invite others to do the same. Amen.

Share: Wish people a Merry Christmas at any time of the year. Give them a reason to celebrate!

Read: Isaiah 9:6-7

*Edward Arle
St. Charles, MO*

Friday, July 26, 2019

Armed

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

Ephesians 6:11

Baling hay and straw is a summer activity on many farms. If you are the person stacking the bales on the moving wagon, it's not a job for the faint of heart. It's usually very hot and the hay or straw is quite heavy and prickly.

One of my teenagers' friends came to help with the baling. Despite the warning to wear a long-sleeved shirt, he decided to remove his shirt entirely, due to the heat. He soon learned why it was better to be uncomfortable from the heat than to be painfully scratched.

We're cautioned by God to put on the armor (shirt) of God's Word so we don't suffer the consequences of Satan's deceptions. If we think we know best and don't study God's Word, we suffer the consequences, scratches and injuries, to our lives and our souls. Put on your armor!

*Father, you are the healer of all our scratches.
Keep us mindful of wearing the armor of your Word.
Amen.*

Share: Discuss modern-day armor with a friend.

Read: Ephesians 6:10-18

*Gloria Doty
Fort Wayne, IN*

Saturday, July 27, 2019

Slower Can Be Better

Within God's house we walked in the throng.

Psalm 55:14

I now spend more time in the lobby (narthex) at church: a slower gait does that. Those faster than I catch up with me; those slower than I are fewer in number. This can be a good thing. In worship, God talks with us and we with God. Before and after worship, we can visit with the Shepherd's sheep.

There is no fire; don't run for an exit. At a slower pace, we share items for prayer. We can shake hands, even hug. Listening happens. We can catch a smile or a tear. We can sit and visit in the narthex for heavier subjects. We can encourage someone to join us in Bible study.

Jesus began the calling of disciples "while walking by the Sea of Galilee" (Matthew 4:18). Jesus did not travel on a swift steed. He did not enter our history behind the wheel of a sports car. I believe Jesus thought that slower can be better.

Good Shepherd, encourage your sheep to walk and talk together. Amen.

Consider: Slow down and meet your fellow sheep.

Read: Ephesians 5:1-21.

*Harry Edenfield
Brownstown, MI*

Sunday, July 28, 2019

Christ's Healing Touch

Jesus went throughout Galilee, teaching ... preaching the good news of the kingdom, and healing every disease ... among the people.

Matthew 4:23

We as God's people keep in touch with the Lord, not by trying so hard to be like him, but rather by knowing in faith that we are already in touch with him because of his life, death and resurrection for us. Because of our Baptism, we now go about teaching, preaching and healing others in the name of Jesus because his touch of love and forgiveness is working in and through us.

Keeping in touch with the Lord is not a command. It is an affirmation of how the Lord works through us even when we do not feel like it or act like it or look like it. So, what are we waiting for? Celebrate Christ's presence today by bringing his healing touch to those around you in word and deed!

Lord, thanks for keeping in touch with us so that we may touch others with your love. Amen.

Touch: Our Galilees may look more like Chicago or St. Louis or Omaha, but that is where the Lord has sent us to touch others with his love.

Read: Matthew 4:23-25; Galatians 6:1-10

*Rich Bimler
Bloomington, IL*

Monday, July 29, 2019

Loved

I thank my God always when I remember you in my prayers.

Philemon 4

I was helping my wife sort through books on the shelves in our study. We found a large box on the bottom shelf, filled with cards and letters we had saved. Some were birthday cards and thank-you notes from family and friends. Others were notes of encouragement during difficult days. We laughed and cried our way through a few dozen before deciding we would save the rest for another day.

The letter to Philemon is a short note from the apostle Paul to his fellow worker. Paul, first of all, lets Philemon know how much his friendship means; he thanks God for Philemon. The apostle adds, “I have derived much joy and comfort from your love” (Philemon 7). We can let those who have encouraged us know how much we love and appreciate them.

Thank you, Father, for the love and encouragement we receive from friends. Help us to share your love with a friend today. Amen.

Write: Mail a handwritten note to a friend, telling them how much they mean to you.

Read: Philemon 1-7; 2 Thessalonians 1:3-4

*Steve Hess
Ft. Myers, FL*

Tuesday, July 30, 2019

Grand Opportunities

If anyone gives even a cup of cold water to one of these little ones who is my disciple, truly I tell you, that person will certainly not lose their reward.

Matthew 10:42

When my kids were growing up, they were blessed with lots of “grandparents.” Not only biological ones, but several surrogate grandparents—members of our church who loved my girls and served as faith mentors for them. Even now that they’re grown, they’ve stayed connected to those grandparents and still turn to them for prayer and counsel.

At a time when many older adults are thinking about who will take care of their needs as they age, it’s important to remember we still have God’s call to care for others, including children. Whether biological grandchildren or kids in our neighborhoods and churches, as older adults, we have “grand” opportunities to connect, love, guide and, most importantly, point children to Jesus. Like a cup of cold water (or a cookie!), grandparenting can refresh a child’s soul.

Jesus, connect me to children who need my love, so that I may point them to you. Amen.

Pour: Find a child that needs you to pour your love and faith stories into their lives.

Read: Matthew 18:1-5; Psalm 145:3-7

*Sandi Geis
St. Louis, MO*

Wednesday, July 31, 2019

The Tender Touch

And he took them in his arms and blessed them, laying his hands upon them.

Mark 10:16

Out of curiosity, I checked on some synonyms for *touch* and discovered that the word *contact* was one of them. At first, I thought that the physical aspect of contact was the only definition for that word. But then it occurred to me that it can also mean staying in touch with someone.

If we look to Scripture, we will learn some important lessons from the Master. How does our Lord gently touch us? He heals (Matthew 8:15), he protects (Psalm 18:30) and he blesses (Mark 10:16). When Jesus touched someone, they were healed. We are touched by his promises. We have the tender picture of Jesus gathering the children to himself. We have the comfort of carrying these images of Jesus' touch with us throughout the day.

Lord, thank you for your many tender touches. Amen.

Serve: Be aware of the people around you who would benefit from a tender touch from you—a meal, a prayer, a phone call. Let the Lord use you in your community.

Read: Acts 9:36-42; 1 Peter 4:8-11

Jan Bathke
Neenah, WI

Thursday, August 1, 2019

Summer Fruit

I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.

John 15:5

Gardens are bearing fruit. Berries and fruit trees are providing a bounty. What is true for nature is true for us, God's children. Indeed, we can bear fruit all year round!

We are grafted into the true vine, Jesus Christ our Lord. We draw our life-blood through him. In this spiritual grafting, we become one with the true vine. We are "in the Lord Jesus" so we cannot help but bear fruit: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control (Galatians 5:22-23). As you enjoy the fresh fruit of creation, enjoy today the fruit that the Spirit is producing in you. And remember—friends, family and neighbors can be blessed by God's fruit through you.

Lord Jesus, may your Spirit work in me today that I may bear much fruit. Amen.

Examine: Examine the fruit of Galatians 5 in your life today.

Read: John 15:1-17

*Don Schatz
Kenmore, WA*

Friday, August 2, 2019

Hanging On

Thus says the Lord God ... “If you are not firm in faith, you will not be firm at all.”

Isaiah 7:7, 9

Climbers who scale gym walls or rock faces need strong fingertips, especially when they’re hanging on to micro-thin edges or a nub of stone. Some climbers strengthen their fingers by doing pull-ups with hang boards.

We Christians are climbers and do faith pull-ups each day. Instead of despairing that our aging bodies are in decline, we accept God’s plan for us. We pray constantly and keep hope alive, finding joy in small accomplishments and thanking God for days we feel well. Sometimes, aches, pains and disappointments test our faith, but we know these challenges make us stronger and grow in faith. We keep climbing, even if it means sometimes hanging on by a nub.

Lord, help me keep active and growing in faith each day. Amen.

Exercise: Accept God’s grace and challenge yourself physically—walking or doing armchair exercises for an extra 10 minutes.

Read: Psalm 105:4

*Catherine A. Welch
Southbury, CT*

Saturday, August 3, 2019

A Touch of Honey

Gracious words are like a honeycomb, sweetness to the soul and health to the body.

Proverbs 16:24

We all have sung it many times: “What a friend we have in Jesus, all our sins and griefs to bear. What a privilege to carry everything to God in prayer.” To have Jesus as our personal friend is just simply exuberant joy! It is a touch of honey, true sweetness. As Winnie the Pooh said, “A day without a friend is like a pot without a single drop of honey inside.”

But to have a friend reach out and touch you with a honey cookie, a kind word or simply a smile brings warmth and joy to your heart. And that’s what each of us is called to do, to be an encourager and deliverer of God’s grace and goodness.

Father, teach me to touch those you set before me with the sweetness of your love. Amen.

Share: Today, share the wondrous fragrance of Christ’s words with a friend.

Read: Exodus 33:11; John 15:13; Psalm 119:103

*Don Luepke
Fremont, IN*

Sunday, August 4, 2019

Choose Me, Choose Me

For we know, brothers loved by God, that he has chosen you.

1 Thessalonians 1:4

I accompanied my young grandson to a Summer League baseball game. In this league, there are no superstars; everyone gets to play. Sitting in my lawn chair, I recalled the games of ball played at recess when I attended a small elementary school. There were two team captains: always older boys who took turns choosing who they each wanted on their team. Not being the fastest runner or the best hitter, I was usually one of the last chosen. I remember thinking in my head, “Choose me, please choose me.”

Isn't it comforting to know that we've been chosen by the Lord? Our salvation isn't dependent on our talents or skills and it doesn't matter if we are first or last. God sent his Son to die for us, despite our faults and inabilities. We can rest assured we are on the winning team and will be welcomed into heaven when we cross home plate.

Thank you, Father, for choosing me. Amen.

Encourage: Discuss being chosen by God with someone who feels inadequate.

Read: Colossians 3:12; James 2:15

*Gloria Doty
Fort Wayne, IN*

Monday, August 5, 2019

No Lone Ranger

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

Matthew 28:20

In days gone by the Lone Ranger was a major hero for many of us. Riding on a big white horse, he came to the rescue of people in distress. Then he rode off, leaving people wondering, “Who was that masked man?”

Our Savior is different. From his cross we know who he is and what he has done to rescue us. And although he has visibly left us, we know he is still with us always, to the very end of time. There will be days when we feel forsaken or forgotten, but he has assured us that’s not so. He is only a prayer away, and we can keep in touch through a Bible verse, a memory of our Baptism, a hymn verse and the Lord’s Supper. His Spirit is in our hearts, keeping us in touch with our ever-present Savior.

Touch me again, Lord, with your promised presence and blessing. Amen.

Listen: Keep in touch with your Savior through prayer and the study of his Word.

Read: John 14:25-27

*Paul Scheidt
Chesterfield, MO*

Tuesday, August 6, 2019

Win or Lose?

There is one God, the Father, from whom are all things and for whom we exist, and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things and through whom we exist.

1 Corinthians 8:6

When I play board games with my grandchildren, I notice that they really want to win. Come to think about it, so do I, even though I let them win—sometimes.

Our Savior, Jesus Christ, didn't lose, even though it seemed like he did when he died on the cross. He won salvation for us by defeating the devil, the world and our sinful flesh through his death and his resurrection from the dead. It wasn't a game for him or his Father, but it was a matter of life or death. Praise the Lord for his victory!

Thank you, Father, for sending your Son to be our Savior. Amen.

Reflect: Remember the good news of Jesus' resurrection today by reading the story in Scripture.

Read: John 20; Matthew 28:1-10; Mark 16:1-8; Luke 24:1-12

*Ken Schilf
New Haven, IN*

Wednesday, August 7, 2019

Intentional Moments

They have no wine.

John 2:3

We may invite friends to share a meal or visit someone in the hospital. We're intentional about what we do, hoping that our moments matter.

When Jesus turned water into wine at the wedding at Cana, we see a sequence of intentional moments. Mary informed Jesus there was no more wine. Jesus told the servants to fill the great stone jars and take the wine to the master. When the master tasted it, he commented it was the best wine of the party.

As I recently read the passage with fresh eyes, new thoughts unfolded. It became more than Jesus' first miracle. Mary knew who to go to with her concern. She submitted to Jesus to do things his way. What followed was great blessing—a miracle and the best-tasting wine. Intentional living involves that very same pattern: going to Jesus with our concerns, submitting to him to work in his way and trusting that he will give us his very best.

Lord, lead me to trust you in every moment. Amen.

Reflect: How can you be intentional this week? What water are you asking Jesus to turn into wine for you?

Read: John 2:1-11

*Marilyn Nutter
Greer, SC*

Thursday, August 8, 2019

Being Grateful

You are my God, and I will give thanks to you.

Psalm 118:28

When you read the Psalms, frequently you hear the psalmists express their thanks to God. As we age, it is well for us to ask questions about a grateful heart.

Do we thank God for the use of our hands, eyes, speech and hearing?

Do we thank God for these extra years of living?

Do we thank God for the care and support of our family?

Do we thank God for our faith and Christian fellowship?

Do we thank God for opportunities to worship and witness?

Or do we take all of these blessings for granted? Do we find ourselves spending time mumbling and grumbling and complaining and feeling sorry for ourselves? Think about your answers to these questions. Pray about them. Pursue grateful hearts. Ponder thankful ways.

Give me a grateful heart, O Lord, for all your blessings. Amen.

Meditate: Ponder the confession of the psalmist in Psalm 118.

Read: Colossians 1:3-14

Walter M. Schoedel
Webster Groves, MO

Friday, August 9, 2019

Wake Up

Sufficient for the day is its own trouble.

Matthew 6:34

My two teenaged sons love to sleep until midday in the summer, if I let them. I hate to see them wasting their days, but when I wake them earlier, they seem to sleepwalk through the morning. There are times in my life when I too feel like I'm sleepwalking. Sometimes I walk right by a friend in the supermarket, not seeing them or I miss important opportunities due to the clutter in my mind. Although physically present, mentally and emotionally I am somewhere else, often reliving the past or worrying about the future.

God reminds us not to worry about the past or the future, but to live consciously in today. He invites us to wake up and see what is happening right now and to embrace the people and circumstances he has placed in our lives right now.

Lord, help me to be filled with your love and alert to the world around me. Amen.

Reflect: Are you holding onto the past or worrying about the future? Can you think of three good things in your life today for which to thank God?

Read: Matthew 6:31-34; 1 Peter 5:8

*Kerry Osborne
Sydney, Australia*

Saturday, August 10, 2019

Inheritance

Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you.

Matthew 25:34

A wealthy young man knelt before Jesus and asked, “Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?” He was asking a flawed question, but at least he was asking the right person. “What must I do to inherit?” An heir really doesn’t have to do anything to inherit. Someone else must die. Only then do the heirs receive the possessions and wealth of the family. The young man received the ultimate answer to his question. “Follow me,” Jesus said. Follow the one who will die so that you will inherit the kingdom.

Sadly enough, the young man was not willing to give up his earthly wealth to inherit true treasure. No earthly wealth can compare to the rich, eternal treasure, “imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven” (1 Peter 1:4), that is waiting for us. Follow Jesus.

Thank you, Lord, for your death and resurrection, which guarantee for us your kingdom. Amen.

Walk: The kingdom is yours. Follow Jesus today in all that you do and say.

Read: Mark 10:17-27; 1 Peter 1:3-9

*Carol Geisler
Manchester, MO*

Sunday, August 11, 2019

Stepping Out

Zacchaeus, hurry and come down, for I must stay at your house today.

Luke 19:5

Small of stature, Zacchaeus “stepped out” by climbing a tree to view Jesus. Jesus “stepped out” into the home of this rich tax collector. Jesus announced concerning himself, “The Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost” (Luke 19:10).

Our God calls us to step out. Confined to a room, our stepping out may be a prayer for someone outside our window. Stepping out may be attending a July 4th celebration, a family reunion or a Labor Day picnic. It may mean a stroll or wheelchair roll to talk with a neighbor. “Stepping out” may be uncomfortable. It probably was for Zacchaeus and Jesus. But stepping out is usually rewarding, as it was for Zacchaeus and Jesus. In stepping out, we have a summertime opportunity to say God created this day. In stepping out, others learn we have troubles and challenges, too. In stepping out, we demonstrate that we, as Zacchaeus, have been found.

Holy Spirit, help us overcome apathy and step out. Amen.

Seek: Step out.

Read: Luke 19:1-10

*Harry Edenfield
Brownstown, MI*

Monday, August 12, 2019

They Will Know

I thank my God through Jesus Christ for all of you, because your faith is proclaimed in all the world.

Romans 1:8

When we walk into a Christian church, we know it is a church by the cross, the altar and usually pews with hymnals. When we walk into a library, we know it is a library by the books and other media on the shelves. When we walk into a school, we know it is school by the students and desks and bulletin boards.

When we walk into any of these places, how do people know we are Christians? We don't have signs that say "Christian" on our foreheads, although some do wear a cross as jewelry. Our Christianity needs to show in other ways—through our words and actions. Jesus told his disciples, "By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another" (John 13:35). As his children, God loves us beyond measure. Be a reflection of God today in all you say and do.

Holy God, help me to wear my Christianity well today. Amen.

Consider: Think about how the things you do and the words you speak reflect who you are.

Read: John 13:31-35

*Margaret Rickers Hinchey
Englewood, CO*

Tuesday, August 13, 2019

Relaxing

Build houses and live in them; plant gardens and eat their produce.

Jeremiah 29:5

The 4-H Club occupied a huge portion of my pre-teen years through high school graduation. Through 4-H, I learned the basics of baking and knitting. Because my mom was an avid gardener, I also learned the joys of weeding as well as harvesting and canning the produce. My mother's gardens were a sight to behold! She heeded Jeremiah's advice to plant gardens and eat what they produce. She had multiple vegetable gardens and fruit orchards, along with flower areas near the driveway, the house and the garage. The gardens were her passion and relaxation.

God, through Jeremiah, encouraged settling down, planting roots of stability, and enjoying the fruits of the harvest. Plucking the weeds from the plants encourages us to repent, plucking out our sin and receiving Jesus' forgiveness as we, like the garden, grow in faith.

Lord, thank you for gardens and for all the gifts of your creation. Amen.

Tend: Enjoy God's creation, through a garden or even a small potted plant.

Read: Psalm 104:10-16

*Connie Streich
Montello, WI*

Wednesday, August 14, 2019

Two-Way Street

Be still, and know that I am God.

Psalm 46:10

Conversation with our Lord is a two-way street. We listen to God and we speak to God. Have you noticed that often we do most of the talking? Perhaps we should practice meditative prayer in which we hear God speak through his Word.

Our Lord informs us that our first step is to be still. Then we should discover a place which is conducive to that instruction. My favorite spot is the woods near a fishing pond. We concentrate on God's Word pertaining to our current situation and discover marvelous results. As David experienced, our soul is quieted like a weaned child with its mother (Psalm 131:2). Contentment is ours! David continues, stating that when he meditates upon his Lord God, his soul finds both rest and hope (Psalm 62:5). Let's not short-change ourselves when we pray to our Lord. Let's listen as well as speak.

Father, open our ears and our hearts as you calm our anxious souls. Amen.

Resolve: Listen to God in his Word before you speak.

Read: Psalm 4:4

*David Bernthal
Juliette, GA*

Thursday, August 15, 2019

Passing It On

Let the one who has taught the word share all good things with the one who teaches.

Galatians 6:6

I spent many years in classrooms sharing God's Word with students. Now through a mentoring program I have the privilege of sharing all good things with two college students who aspire to become Christian teachers.

God's not done with me yet. Neither is he done with you, since you're reading this devotion! As older adults, we have both the privilege and responsibility to share good things with those who follow us. Those followers are the people God brings to us. What do we share? We have life experiences and the knowledge about experiences that are special to us. Most of all, we share the love of Jesus through our words and actions. It's a blessing to be able to share all good things.

Lord, thank you for opportunities you give me to share your Word. Help me be ready to share today and tomorrow. Amen.

Share: Be ready to share all those good things God has showered on you with those who will grow from hearing about his gifts.

Read: Galatians 6:1-10

*Bill Lubben
Livingston, TX*

Friday, August 16, 2019

Benefits

Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits.

Psalm 103:2

When you applied for your first major job, what were you thinking? You wanted to know what your salary would be. Would the work give you personal satisfaction? Would it make a difference in society? You probably considered the benefits. Did they offer health insurance, a life insurance plan or a pension plan? The benefits are almost as important as the job itself.

When we “sign up” to serve the Lord, we are guaranteed outstanding benefits. Psalm 103 graphically spells them out. What does our Lord promise? He forgives all your sins. He heals all your diseases. He crowns you with love and compassion. He satisfies your desires with good things, so that you will be renewed like an eagle. All this comes about through our Lord Jesus. His power is made known through all these benefits that come from him through his death on the cross and his powerful resurrection.

Lord Jesus Christ, make your benefits known to me that I may live today according to them. Amen.

Engage: Talk about Jesus' benefits with others.

Read: Psalm 103

*Gordon Beck
Williamsburg, VA*

Saturday, August 17, 2019

Building Project

You will be called Repairer of Broken Walls, Restorer of Streets with Dwellings.

Isaiah 58:12

Isaiah prophesied of God's plan for the Church: to bring restoration to shattered lives with the hope of Jesus. But where do we begin? There is so much devastation. How can we repair anything when our own lives are compromised by sin?

We can because our strength is in Jesus—the Cornerstone that connects us as his Church. He is our firm foundation where we stand forgiven. He sends us as builders in his kingdom, to pick up the pieces one at a time: unconditional love can break down a wall of hostility; God's truth spoken in love can lead someone to repentance; forgiveness can mend a relationship; an act of mercy can give hope; the message of Jesus' saving power can fortify the faith of someone on shaky ground. So, put on your hard hat! Jesus has work for you today.

Jesus, strengthen your Church! Help us bring restoration with your Word of truth and hope. Amen.

*Look: Where is brokenness within your reach?
Start building!*

Read: 1 Peter 2

*Sandi Geis
St. Louis, MO*

Sunday, August 18, 2019

I Am His Own

You were ransomed ... not with perishable things such as silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ.

1 Peter 1:18-19

At a recent Florida auction, a rare 1943 penny was sold for \$200,000. It's amazing to think someone was willing to pay that much for a small piece of metal. But here's something infinitely more amazing! Jesus willingly emptied himself of all his divine rights as the Son of God and paid a stunning price so we might belong to him. The price? His own self-sacrificing love, extended to us, once for all, on a Roman cross. "God shows his love toward us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8). We are reminded, "You are not your own, for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body" (1 Corinthians 6:19-20). For this we give thanks to God and serve others as we have been served.

Heavenly Father, thanks for the comfort of knowing that you own, forgive, provide and preserve me now and forever. Amen.

Reflect: What personal gifts do you use to glorify God and serve others?

Read: 1 Peter 1:13-21

*Fred Boettcher
Menomonee Falls, WI*

Monday, August 19, 2019

A Perfect Recipe

May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Romans 15:13

I like to read recipes: handwritten cards from my mom and newspaper clippings from my grandmother. This Bible verse reads like one of those no-fail recipes with pleasing results. First, the Master Chef fills a pot (me) with joy and peace. Next, he stirs his Spirit into the pot. He places it into the oven of life and, after some baking, the pot overflows with hope.

This verse assures me that God, who abounds with hope, generously fills me with joy and peace, because he claims me as his own. I trust and lean on him as he shapes me to be more like him. With the power of the Holy Spirit, God pours divine hope into me.

Dear heavenly Father, I thank you for your gifts of joy, peace and hope. Help me use these to glorify you every day. Amen.

Reflect: How has God filled you with hope today? Do others see that hope in you?

Read: Romans 15:1-7

*MaryAnn Sundby
Castle Rock, CO*

Tuesday, August 20, 2019

Connecting

But when Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they took him and explained to him the way of God more accurately.

Acts 18:26

Last Sunday, I saw a familiar face from a neighboring church who serves a Christian organization. He was there to honor a retiring jail ministry chaplain. I introduced my friend to a recent widower in my Wednesday men's Bible class. Then I engaged two young husbands, former members of our Tuesday evening couples' group. After the service we talked with dear friends in the same Tuesday class soon on their way to Arizona. Connecting, at our age!

In Acts 18, Paul preaches about Jesus Christ in Corinth and meets a couple fleeing persecution from Rome. The apostle joins them in tent making and takes them along as he sails on, leaving them in Ephesus. When Apollos, a dynamic Jewish convert, starts preaching in Ephesus and needs instruction, Priscilla and Aquila help him understand the way of God more accurately. Then Apollos is sent to preach in Corinth! Connections are made for Christ!

Lord, lead us to connect others to Jesus. Amen.

Act: Seek a connection this week.

Read: Acts 18:1-3, 18-21, 24-28

*Stephen J. Carter
Oakville, MO*

Wednesday, August 21, 2019

Time for Service

Through love serve one another.

Galatians 5:13

When I was growing up, we called the first Sunday morning service “first church” and the second simply “second church.” Now I add the time, calling them the 8 a.m. service and the 11 a.m. service.

What strikes me, though, is how often I use the word “service” to mean “first church” or “second church.” Shouldn’t I think of service first as the act of serving others instead of defining it as going to church? The answer to the question, “What time is the service?” should be, “All day, every day.” We only need to look around to see many opportunities to lighten the load of others. Some might be one-time experiences while others might involve multiple interactions. Either way, my time for service becomes more than being fed spiritually. Service is a time to feed the needs of others.

Dear Jesus, help me to ask what I can do, so that I can serve you by serving others. Amen.

Watch: Look for at least three new ways to serve the needs of others.

Read: 1 Corinthians 12:4-11; 1 Peter 4:8-11

*Jane Wilke
Woodbury, MN*

Thursday, August 22, 2019

In Touch with Christ

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

1 Thessalonians 5:11

One way to help others is to keep them in touch with Christ by expressing our care for them. By doing so, we follow Christ's loving example. We can compliment them on their faithfulness. If they're parents educating their children in the faith, we can commend them. When they exhibit Christian virtues, we can praise them.

Finally, we can be a spiritual companion who encourages them. This is especially important in their times of difficulty or doubt. When they feel God has forgotten them, we can remind them of the psalm verse, "The Lord is near to the brokenhearted and saves the crushed spirit" (Psalm 34:18). We might not feel like we have extraordinary gifts, but we can keep others in touch with the gift who is Jesus Christ.

*Lord, let me help others stay connected to you.
Amen.*

Recall: Always remind others of the goodness of God.

Read: Romans 12:12; Matthew 5:4

*Jan Kilby
San Antonio, TX*

Friday, August 23, 2019

Thirsty? Got Jesus!

On the last day of the feast, the great day, Jesus stood up and cried out, "If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink."

John 7:37

I'm trying to remember to drink more water, because the benefits, according to experts, are many. A smartphone app delivers reminders to drink more water. Jesus spoke several times of spiritual thirst. In the waters of Baptism, we receive the forgiveness of sins and the gift of the Holy Spirit. So, whenever the app reminds me it's time to take a drink of water, that refreshing drink can remind me of the living water of the Holy Spirit. Jesus provides refreshment for body and spirit!

Lord Jesus, quench my thirst with the living water of the Spirit. Amen.

Refresh: The next time you share a glass of water with a friend or family member, share what the waters of Baptism mean to you.

Read: John 4:10-15; John 15:5-7; Acts 2:38

*Nancy Rapp
St. Louis, MO*

Saturday, August 24, 2019

Calming Down

You will keep in perfect peace him whose mind is steadfast because he trusts in you.

Isaiah 26:3

Perfect peace. Most of us can name a time when we felt a sense of contentment so complete that nothing entered the moment to spoil it for us: holding a sleeping baby, conversing with friends around a campfire or savoring a job well done.

We treasure those times. Did you ever stop to think that peace can be ours in every situation and at all times? Isaiah tells us that perfect peace is ours when we keep our minds steadfastly centered on Jesus, the Prince of Peace, trusting in him for all our needs. Remember that promise of God for you, and your chaotic, unsettled, fretful self can be transformed into a person who is unflappable, contented and calm. Perfect peace.

Heavenly Father, I look to you for all my needs and trust you to keep me calm and unafraid in all the ups and downs of life because of Jesus, your dear Son. Amen.

Share: Recall a time of perfect peace and share it with a friend.

Read: Psalm 23

*Katherine Klemp
St. Paul, MN*

Sunday, August 25, 2019

Christian Meditation

On his law he meditates day and night.

Psalm 1:2

“Mindfulness” apps and groups are popping up everywhere. People are taking up this activity in order to achieve some degree of calm.

Christian meditation is not new. Whereas mindfulness emphasizes separating oneself mentally from one’s surroundings to find inner peace, Christian meditation focuses on some aspect of God’s nature or being. Meditating on God’s Word is one way in which Christians can feel connected and closer to God. Such meditation can be done by selecting small portions of Scripture to read or pray thoughtfully. As we read and linger over a psalm or promise, we know that the Holy Spirit speaks to us through the Word.

Father, your Word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path. By it, I can stay connected and feel close to you. Amen.

Learn: Invite family and friends to join you in meditating on the Word of God. Spend time in quiet meditation on a particular passage. Afterward, take time to share with one another.

Read: Psalm 1; Psalm 119:105

*Cheryl-Ann Lewis
North Ridgeville, OH*

Monday, August 26, 2019

God Answers

Answer me when I call, O God of my righteousness.

Psalm 4:1

Have you ever thought about how telephones have changed since they were invented? Crank phones. Land lines. Dial phones. Cordless phones. Cell phones. Whatever their style, they are all designed to do one thing: help us communicate with others. When the phone rings, you answer it. However, features such as caller ID make it easy for the person you are calling to ignore the call.

Although we can't be sure if our friends, neighbors or relatives will answer the phone when we call them, we can be assured that God always answers us when we call on him. We can call on God anytime, anywhere in prayer and he will never ignore our call. He is always ready and available to answer every petition that comes his way.

Dear Father in heaven, I am so thankful that you are never too busy to answer me when I call on you in prayer. Amen.

Write: Keep a prayer journal and see how God answers your requests.

Read: Psalm 50:15; Psalm 91:15

*Celeste Cummins
Storm Lake, IA*

Tuesday, August 27, 2019

Object Lessons

Walk in wisdom ... making the best use of the time.

Colossians 4:5

One afternoon I decided to organize the bins in my attic. I found dated receipts, greeting cards, newspaper clippings, sewing patterns and thank-you notes. I recalled the experiences, people and events associated with them. I thanked God for friends and family who sent cards. A newspaper clipping told me about a life that mattered, and the sewing patterns I used for my children brought a smile to my face. The thank-you notes were heartwarming. Anyone else would have tossed them into trash bags, but I savored each piece. For me they were extraordinary treasures, disguised as objects during an ordinary and tiring day.

The apostle Paul reminds us to make the most of every opportunity. Today it was sorting and gratitude for relationships. Tomorrow it could be in a conversation with a friend or quiet moments of reflection and prayer as I sit on my patio drinking a cup of coffee.

Lord Jesus, thank you for the gift of ordinary things and the memories they bring. Amen.

Reflect: How will you savor today's moments and memories, even in an ordinary day?

Read: Colossians 4:2-6

*Marilyn Nutter
Greer, SC*

Wednesday, August 28, 2019

Better Than Shrink Wrap

He will cover you with his pinions, and under his wings you will find refuge; his faithfulness is a shield and buckler.

Psalm 91:4

With summer ending, we prepare for upcoming stormy days of wind, rain and snow. It's time to protect patio furniture, air conditioning units and boats. But how? Some people are afraid that tarps will easily fly off so they shrink wrap everything.

We Christian seniors prepare for stormy days ahead too, but we don't shrink wrap ourselves. We know that God has us covered. We don't physically withdraw from life, endure troubles alone or live in fear. We support each other, share concerns and keep living each day, open-hearted, hugging and laughing. We can be at peace because we know the tarp of God's almighty love and protection will never fly off.

Loving Father, you are always with me and your Word comforts me. Amen.

Help: After drawing strength from today's readings, get in touch with someone who needs your support.

Read: 1 Thessalonians 5:16-19

*Catherine A. Welch
Southbury, CT*

Thursday, August 29, 2019

Stir Up

And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works.

Hebrews 10:24

How do we follow this command? How do we stir up someone? The Amplified Bible puts it this way: “Let us consider [thoughtfully] how we may encourage one another to love and to do good deeds,” The New Living Translation says, “Let us think of ways to motivate one another to acts of love and good works.”

The Lord intends for us to be thinking of others, to do more than pray for them, but also to connect with them. We are to thoughtfully consider ways to motivate them to love and good deeds. Has the Lord put someone on your mind? Perhaps you might share a verse from Scripture with them. Look for ways to encourage them to love and good works.

Heavenly Father, thank you for the connection we have with our brothers and sisters in Christ. Amen.

Connect: Text a verse to a friend, send it in a card or pick up the phone to tell them you're thinking of them.

Read: Hebrews 3:13; Psalm 133:1

*Lynne Waite Chapman
Fort Wayne, IN*

Friday, August 30, 2019

Quiet Time

This is my beloved Son ... listen to him.

Matthew 17:5

To listen to our Lord, we need quiet time. Of course, the silence and stillness of quiet time can make us feel lonely, thereby causing the need for distractions. However, distractions can draw us away from God, creating an emptiness that only can be filled by our Lord's grace and love, which brings us back to quiet time.

We should not fear the silence and stillness in our lives; rather we can use this quiet time to draw nearer to our Lord, particularly when we pray. Truth be told, our prayers don't have to be filled with many words because God knows what we need before we ask him. So let us embrace the silence and stillness in quiet time to read and listen to the living Word. May God's grace draw us close to him as we seek to live our lives according to his will.

*Lord, please fill my soul with your loving grace.
Amen.*

Sweep: Clear away distractions that keep you from drawing closer to the Lord.

Read: Luke 12:22-34; Matthew 6:1-15

*Carol Monaco
Chevy Chase, MD*

Saturday, August 31, 2019

A Peaceful Dwelling

He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High will abide in the shadow of the Almighty.

Psalm 91:1

How many places have you called home? Some of us have had many homes; others of us have lived in the same place for most of our lives. Consider how God protected you in your past dwelling places. He may have protected you from storms, floods and fires. He may also have made your dwelling place a haven from life's trials.

Wherever you dwell now, God himself is your shelter. God dwells with you, making your heart his home. His almighty power protects you and the shadow of his loving presence gives you peace.

Lord Jesus, thank you for dwelling with me all my life. Protect me from life's storms and grant me your perfect peace. Amen.

Rejoice: Thank God for all the ways he has protected you in your dwelling places.

Read: Psalm 90:1; John 14:16-17

*Sarah Geringer
Jackson, MO*

Sunday, September 1, 2019

BFF

A man of many companions may come to ruin, but there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother.

Proverbs 18:24

Surely, you remember those BFF days. Who was your best friend forever in grade school? High school? Do you have one now? And here is a sticky question: How forever was (is?) forever?

Our verse from Proverbs offers interesting observations on friendships. It may seem good to have many friends—and often it is. But friends also influence us—for better or for worse. (You have stories, don't you?) Your truest BFF knew you long before your first friends—or even your parents. Your BFF has never forsaken you, even when you weren't a very good friend in return. Your BFF not only stands willing to forgive you, but he also provided that forgiveness through his own suffering and death—and all this after moving out of the greatest neighborhood to live with you.

Jesus, thank you for being my BFF! Amen.

Consider: Whose BFF are you? What imperils such relationships?

Read: Ecclesiastes 4:9-12

*Ed Grube
Addison, IL*

Monday, September 2, 2019

Labor for the Lord

Be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain.

1 Corinthians 15:58

Labor Day has been a national holiday in the United States since 1894. For many people, it's a farewell to summer. The real purpose of Labor Day is to pay tribute to ordinary workers, who are the backbone of our nation's strength.

Likewise, it is ordinary Christians who are the backbone of Christ's Church and his mission on earth. Our labor for the Lord may change as we age. But with our vast experience and free time, we can use our time, abilities and resources in creative ways to further Christ's mission and to encourage those who are filling our former roles. No matter how you may serve the Lord now, perhaps through a ministry of prayer, caring and encouragement, be steadfast in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor for the Lord is not in vain.

Faithful Lord, help me faithfully to use my time, gifts and resources for your glory and service. Amen.

Seek: Find a new way to serve the Lord with gladness.

Read: 1 Corinthians 15:54-58

*Gil Duchow
Muskego, WI*

Tuesday, September 3, 2019

Back to School

Fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God; I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.

Isaiah 41:10

When I attended elementary school, the first day of a new school year was frightening. I was anxious about meeting the new teacher, apprehensive of their rules and nervous about the expectations of starting a new grade.

The promise of Isaiah 41:10 offers the powerful and comforting medicine I needed when I was a youngster. Though a budding Christian, I didn't understand that the almighty God was beside me, guiding me through each school day. Through the years, I've learned those words are trustworthy. He strengthens me, helps me and upholds me with his right hand. His promise drives away fear and timidity.

Dear heavenly Father, thank you for holding me close every day. Fill me with your strength and love as you lift me up. Amen.

Trust: Read Isaiah 41:10 again with the assurance that God want us to know. How is he upholding you today?

Read: Romans 8:31-39

*MaryAnn Sundby
Castle Rock, CO*

Wednesday, September 4, 2019

On the Team

There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

Galatians 3:28

Back at school I hated sports days. I was the child who was picked last for the team and dreaded my turn to bat, bowl or run to the next base. Born with faulty hips, I walked with a limp and ran with difficulty. Sports days reminded me that I was different and not quite good enough. Sometimes I was bullied, but even when no words were spoken, the exclusion from the team was enough to sting.

What a joy it is to know that God accepts and loves us, despite our flaws, disabilities and differences. He embraces our uniqueness, invites us in and never leaves us or forsakes us. He always picks us for his team! There is power in the simple act of inclusion. Inviting an outsider to join your group for a cup of tea or watch a movie can be a very Christ-like kindness.

Lord, help me to serve others as a member of your team. Amen.

Invite: Reach out to a new friend today.

Read: 1 Corinthians 12:12-27

*Kerry Osborne
Sydney, Australia*

Thursday, September 5, 2019

A Little Child Shall Lead

You shall love your neighbor as yourself.

Matthew 22:39

In my years as education consultant, I was always inspired by a certain kindergarten teacher. As I walked into her classroom, I heard her reprimanding a five-year-old who had obviously disturbed the class many times: “Joe, you will need to be at your desk during recess and we will talk about how Jesus wants us to learn.” It was a warm, sunny day, just beckoning the children to come outside. A hand went up in the back row and a child’s voice said, “Mrs. Jones, I will stay in for Joe so he can go out.” Jesus’ loving atonement had been well taught here.

Perhaps we should spell that word at-one-ment—being one with our Lord as he bore our sins, taking our place. These children show us that even though such sacrificial love is hard to understand, we accept it by faith and live according to it.

*Lord Jesus, help me to love others as you love me.
Amen.*

Love: When you encounter someone whose actions or words are unkind, show your love for that person.

Read: John 13:34-35; 1 John 3:1

*Constance Bretscher
Valparaiso, IN*

Friday, September 6, 2019

He Knows Not How

The kingdom of God is as if a man should scatter seed on the ground ... and the seed sprouts and grows, he knows not how.

Mark 4:26-27

Watching plants grow is fascinating. In moist soil, the small, dry seed swells, breaks open, sends roots down and a stem up, using itself as food, giving of itself. How does a seed know to send roots down and a stem up? Every plant is a miracle.

Jesus says the kingdom of God is like that. A seed—a few words, such as, “God loves you,” “Jesus is Lord” or “In Jesus all sins can be forgiven”—sprouts and grows and we “know not how.” The kingdom of God is a miracle, and our small acts of kindness or a few words spoken in love are seeds the Spirit uses to grow the kingdom. We don’t know how this happens, but small seeds can bring forth great things.

O Holy Spirit, make me a sower of seeds in the kingdom. Bless even the seeds that I unknowingly sow. In Jesus’ name. Amen.

See: Think of the miracle that grew a great tree from a tiny seed.

Read: Mark 4:12-20

Eldor Kaiser
Lenexa KS

Saturday, September 7, 2019

A Joyful Heart

A joyful heart is good medicine.

Proverbs 17:22

Here I am again, sorting pills into my weekly organizer. It must be Saturday again! When I first retired, I found my pill organizer more helpful than my day timer for orientation. Sometimes I feel like throwing away all these pills! But that would be a mistake. Medicines do help keep our bodies in a healthy balance. A healthy lifestyle is also important for body and spirit. And as the text says, keeping a cheerful disposition is also good medicine.

Where do I find a good dose of this medicine? Not in “spirits.” Look for it in your relationship to God. Joy is a fruit of his Spirit dwelling in you: a relaxed and peaceful spirit as he fills you with hope. Assurance of forgiveness puts a smile in the heart and on the face. Exercising the Spirit’s gifts in ministry to others can also bring joy.

*God of hope, fill me with your joy and peace.
Amen.*

Ask: Who needs a touch a joy I can bring?

*Read: Galatians 5:22-24; Philippians 4:4-9;
Romans 15:13*

*Ted Zimmerman
Napa, CA*

Sunday, September 8, 2019

Earning vs. Learning

God's grace ... was given me for you.

Ephesians 3:2

How do you value your earning power? By your education or life experiences? Through what you have accomplished? By whom you know?

In Paul's thoughts, earning power means nothing. It makes no difference who you know, what you've done, where you're from—they're all insignificant, meaningless factors that mean nothing, zilch, nada. There's no connection between earthly earning power and divine salvation. Only one factor matters when it comes to salvation: God's undeserved love shown in Jesus' forgiving death and life-giving resurrection. Jesus used his power and his riches to earn your salvation. The apostle Paul values learning power. Learn of the forgiving love of Jesus Christ. Learn not to rely on yourself and your abilities. Learn to trust the Savior for life, forgiveness and salvation. You don't need earning power. You must have learning power!

*I am rich because you earned my salvation.
Thanks be to you, Lord God. Amen.*

Think: Do I have more earning power or learning power?

Read: Ephesians 2:1-10

*Neal A. Orabka
N. Las Vegas, NV*

Monday, September 9, 2019

God Does It Better

I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be my people.

Jeremiah 31:33

I am fortunate to exchange emails with my college roommate, my friend for more than 50 years. We've advanced with technology, though sometimes reluctantly, from letters and phone calls to emails. We thank God for our friendship. I also have my phone that makes every message instant. Wonderful, but whatever our phones can do, God has already done better.

First, he talked to his people directly (Noah, Abraham and Moses, for example), then he sent prophets to warn and encourage, but it wasn't enough. Finally, he sent his Son to save us and then sent the Holy Spirit. We also have his Word in our Bibles available to us all the time. We can keep in touch with God because he keeps in touch with us.

Our gracious God, forgive the lapses we have and stay with us. Amen.

Write: Think of someone you haven't heard from in a while and write a letter or send a card.

Read: Ephesians 3:14-19; Psalm 119:16, 160

*Judy Scherr
Lemay, MO*

Tuesday, September 10, 2019

Touching Moments

But Jesus came and touched them, saying, "Rise, and have no fear."

Matthew 17:7

A study at the Cleveland Clinic has revealed information about the importance of touch for newborn babies. Compared with babies who are swaddled or kept in a crib, skin-to-skin babies (those put on their mother's chest after birth) stay warmer and calmer, cry less and have a healthier blood sugar count. Benefits of skin-to-skin care during infancy may persist for years, including enhanced child mental development and mother-child unity.

Touch was important in Jesus' time as well. The Gospels are full of examples of Jesus' touch healing those in need. Jesus knew the importance of touch to his followers. He had a life-giving bond with those he touched and healed. And he has a life-giving bond with all of us who are Jesus' followers. Because Jesus has touched our lives, we have eternal life with him.

Lord, thank you for touching me with your love and mercy. Help me to touch the lives of others today. Amen.

Greet: Take time to (appropriately) touch a friend or neighbor today when you greet them.

Read: Matthew 8:1-3; Mark 7:33-35

*Margaret Rickers Hinchey
Englewood, CO*

Wednesday, September 11, 2019

Lifted Up

But Moses' hands grew weary.

Exodus 17:12

When we were younger, we thought, “I can do it myself!” We know better now. We need others. God’s people were attacked in the desert. Moses sent Joshua to stop the enemy. Moses knew he must encourage the troops as they fought. He climbed a hill with Aaron and Hur. There Moses lifted his arms high above his head. The troops saw Moses, his arms lifted high. They fought hard. But Moses got tired. Aaron and Hur then did what Moses couldn’t do alone—lift his arms high. God’s people were people saved that day.

When we seem to be losing the battle, it’s Jesus we need to see, his hands lifted high in victory over our last enemy—death. He won that victory for us when he was lifted high upon the cross.

Jesus, when I seem to be losing the battle, show me your arms lifted up! Help me to fight on. Amen.

Help: Lift up someone who seems to be losing the battle.

Read: John 3:1-36

*David A. Boyd
Staunton, VA*

Thursday, September 12, 2019

Just Show Up

For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven ... a time to keep silence, and a time to speak.

Ecclesiastes 3:1, 7

For everything there is a season. As we age, we realize the truth of these words. Looking back, we see how God's faithfulness has brought hope in the various seasons of change. One of the seasons we seem to encounter more and more is loss—loss of loved ones, health and independence.

Let's not forget that those around us are having the same experiences. What can we do to be of help to others when they are feeling the pain of loss? Our first inclination is to offer words of comfort, yet sometimes our words fall short. What should we do instead? Just show up. With a loaf of home-baked bread or simply a shoulder to cry on, just show up and just listen.

Loving Savior, you showed up for me when it mattered most. Help me to show up for others. Amen.

Reflect: Who needs me to show up and just listen today?

Read: Ecclesiastes 3:1-8; 1 Corinthians 13:4-7

*Jane Wilke
Woodbury, MN*

Friday, September 13, 2019

The Eyes Have It

Jesus had compassion on them and touched their eyes. Immediately they received sight and followed him.

Matthew 20:34

The Lord has taught us all how to look at life cross-eyed. That is, we see life differently now because of his death on the cross and his resurrection for each of us. Our eyes and lives are now open to celebrate the blessings of the Lord and to reach out to others to share these blessings of joy and hope and peace in him. What an eye-opening experience this is.

Who around us are blind to the forgiveness and love of the Lord? We are called to go to connect them and keep them in touch with the Lord's blessings and salvation. We do this through prayer, worship, listening, supporting one another and serving and celebrating our faith. What an eye-opening experience this is, for us and for others!

Lord, here am I, send me. My eyes have seen the glory of your coming. Aye Aye, sir, and Amen.

Share: Ask people today if they are cross-eyed and pray for a lively conversation to begin!

Read: Matthew 20:29-34

*Rich Bimler
Bloomington, IL*

Saturday, September 14, 2019

The Cross

What is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ.

Ephesians 3:18-19

Many Christians make the sign of the cross when worshipping. Some do it when stepping into the baptist's box. When we make the sign of the cross in worship, what does this signify? I once heard a pastor explain it this way: We begin by touching our heads. God wills that we should know him and comprehend the depth of his love for us in Jesus Christ. We touch our hearts. God wills that we should love him with all our heart, soul and mind. We touch both shoulders. God wills that we be willing to shoulder one another's burdens in love.

Or think of it in terms of the text above. The sign of the cross reminds us of the "breadth and length and height and depth" of God's love for us in Christ.

Lord, hold your cross before my eyes. Amen.

Sign: If you wish, make the sign of the cross a part of your practice in worship.

Read: Ephesians 3:14-21; Matthew 22:34-40

*Ted Zimmerman
Napa, CA*

Sunday, September 15, 2019

Designer Clothes

From now on let no one cause me trouble, for I bear on my body the marks of Jesus.

Galatians 6:17

Designer jeans were introduced when I was a teenager. Suddenly, the way kids were labeled depended on the mark they bore on their back pocket! But designer jeans were not in my family's budget, so I was marked a reject by my peers. Then my pastor pointed out the value of my current wardrobe. I was clothed with Christ! Jesus redeemed me from a life marked by sin and gave me a new label: child of God. I didn't need designer jeans; I bore the marks of Jesus! Those marks gave me unique popularity among my classmates. I wasn't invited to their parties, but, knowing my faith, many invited me into their personal struggles, giving me opportunities to share the hope found in Jesus.

I'm older now, but my clothes still fit. The marks of Jesus never go out of style. It's a fashion trend that can change the world! Join me in modeling them today.

Jesus, thanks for bearing the marks of suffering for me. Help me bear your name proudly. Amen.

Style: How can you best model Jesus' love today?

Read: Galatians 3:26-29; 2 Corinthians 5:1-5

*Sandi Geis
St. Louis, MO*

Monday, September 16, 2019

It's All Good

For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks it will be opened.

Matthew 7:8

“Ask, and it will be given to you” are familiar words from Matthew 7:7. Here Jesus is teaching you to look to the Father for everything. Ask, seek, knock, and expect your Father to answer.

Jesus' words offer a great reassurance and resource. It's interesting that he doesn't say you will receive exactly what you ask for or find exactly what you are looking for. What Jesus says is even better. Jesus assures that whatever your Father gives will be good. Always. He never gives anything that would hinder your faith in Jesus your Savior, which is the greatest gift of all. So go ahead—knock on heaven's door. It has already been opened by the blood of the Lamb. Go ahead—ask what's on your heart. God always will give you what's best. It's all good.

Father, all good gifts come from above. Amen.

Recall: Think of a time God answered your prayer in a better way than you had expected.

Read: Matthew 7:7-11; 1 John 5:13-15

*Marj Maynard
Pipe Creek, TX*

Tuesday, September 17, 2019

Majesty

Glorious are you, more majestic than the mountains full of prey.

Psalm 76:4

We recently hiked a path north of Sedona, Arizona. At times it was breathtaking. Standing in the valley and looking up at trees hundreds of feet tall, climbing up on the huge boulders that had broken off from the mountain, seeing the color gradation of the mountains and crossing over the flowing streams by stepping from rock to rock reminded us that God's creation is awe-inspiring and majestic.

But the majesty of God is even far greater than anything in his creation. God's majesty is far greater than the most beautiful sunrise or sunset. His majesty is far greater than the most beautiful flower and the most powerful animal. God's majesty shines brighter than the sun and the stars. All of creation only dimly reflects the glorious majesty of God. There is none like him.

Lord, your creation reflects your wisdom and majesty. Lead me daily to rejoice in you. Amen.

Watch: Look for beauty in nature and let it lead you to keep in touch with God with praise and thanksgiving.

Read: Exodus 15:11

*Glen VanderKloot
Springfield, IL*

Wednesday, September 18, 2019

Crystal Clear Reflections

Be still, and know that I am God.

Psalm 46:10

Last week as I drove past a lake, the sight was stunning. It looked artificial, as if it were a still-life painting. The lake had no movement and the reflection of the trees was perfect, accented by sunshine. Complete stillness, perfect reflection, no waves, only beauty.

Like that still lake, God in Christ has brought us into a perfect relationship with himself. Yes, we have anxious waves, troubled waters of circumstances, and disappointments that reflect a distorted picture of life. But stillness allows us to see the reflection of who God is. Trials may linger and hurts may continue, but in God, there are no waves. He is bigger than the problem. He is bigger than the hurt and has a purpose in challenging situations. Looking at his reflection will give you a real picture. And it is perfect.

Father, as I look to you, may I exchange my impatience for your presence, my anxiety for your peace and my concerns for confidence in you. Amen.

Reflect: What reflection do you need to “see” today? God’s peace, his strength, his patience? Cling to His character.

Read: Psalm 46

*Marilyn Nutter
Greer, SC*

Thursday, September 19, 2019

A New Creation

If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold the new has come.

2 Corinthians 5:17

As “old timers,” we may need a new body part—a knee, a hip or maybe an internal organ. As we age and parts wear out and break down, we may even wish to trade in the old model for a whole new one.

Our Savior has replaced the old self, crippled by sin and Satan, with a new self, shaped and molded by the Holy Spirit. The old self, however, has not completely disappeared. It still tries to take over our thoughts and actions. Our daily struggle, the Bible says, is to drown the old self so that the new self emerges to live by the Spirit. Live today as the new creation you are in Christ, forgiven and made new, with grateful hope in Christ, by the power and guiding of his Spirit. You are a new creation.

Empower me, precious Lord, to be what your Spirit has made me to be in Christ. Amen.

Confess: Daily confess your sins and arise, forgiven and new, to serve Christ!

Read: Psalm 51:7-12

*Paul Scheidt
Chesterfield, MO*

Friday, September 20, 2019

Intentional

Ruth said, “Do not urge me to leave you.”

Ruth 1:16

The kindest person in the Bible? Ruth, maybe. When Naomi’s husband and two sons died, Naomi was left with nothing—no family, no status, no support. Her only hope? Returning to her homeland. She pleaded with daughter-in-law Ruth to stay. “Find a husband, live a life.” In a heart-rending scene, Ruth said, “I’m not leaving you. Where you go, I go, where you live, I live, where you die, I die!” But what did Ruth have to gain? Nothing! That’s the point. True kindness is intentional and never asks, “What shall I gain from this?”

Knowing this, we know the kindest Person who ever lived was Jesus. He saw our condition, that we were without hope in the world. What did he have to gain by going to the cross? Nothing. But by going, we gained everything: status, a new land, a crown—a new life.

Jesus, your kindness overwhelms me. I want to be like you! Amen.

Act: Consider committing an act of intentional kindness today.

Read: The Book of Ruth

*David A. Boyd
Staunton, VA*

Saturday, September 21, 2019

Meet Matthew

[Jesus] said to [Matthew], "Follow me." And he rose and followed him.

Matthew 9:9

Today the church celebrates the life of Matthew, our Lord's apostle and evangelist. We commemorate his life to help open our eyes to our calling as disciples of Jesus in the 21st century. We can learn a lesson from his weakness. We can learn what Jesus did for him and what Jesus can do for us.

Matthew loved money. He charged too much as a tax collector and kept the money for himself. That all changed when he accepted Jesus' invitation to follow him. He caught the vision of Christ's kingdom. He suffered much for the sake of the Gospel. He wrote the Gospel that bears his name as a witness to his faith that Jesus was indeed the promised Messiah. As we read his Gospel, do not be a spectator, but a participant, meeting the living Lord.

*Lord Jesus, help me meet Matthew so that I may grow stronger in my role as a disciple of Jesus.
Amen.*

Learn: Read Matthew's Gospel this week. Identify with the message for your discipleship life.

Read: Matthew 6:24-25; Matthew 16:26

*Walter M. Schoedel
Webster Groves, MO*

Sunday, September 22, 2019

Near You

The word of the LORD was rare in those days.

1 Samuel 3:1

When the prophet Samuel was young, the word of the Lord was rarely heard in Israel, until that night when the Lord called Samuel's name and the boy answered, "Speak, for your servant hears" (1 Samuel 3:10).

By the grace of God, his Word is not rare in our day. It is quite close at hand. "The word is near, in your mouth and in your heart" (Romans 10:8). We have the gift of Holy Scripture, the divinely inspired writings of the apostles and prophets. We have the good news of our Lord Jesus, proclaimed and in writing, so that we may believe that he is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing we "may have life in his name" (John 20:31). When you hear and read the Word, when the good news of salvation in Jesus is proclaimed, answer in faith as Samuel did, "Speak, for your servant hears!"

Speak, Lord, through your Word, for your servant is listening. Amen.

Learn: Study the Scriptures. Hear and see the Word of the Lord that is so near to you.

Read: 1 Samuel 3:1-14; Romans 10:5-13

Carol Geisler
Manchester, MO

Monday, September 23, 2019

The Power of Joy

The joy of the Lord is your strength.

Nehemiah 8:10

Remember Popeye the Sailor Man? His strength came from eating spinach. Oh, if that was only so easy for us when we need strength! We could pile a plate high with dark greens and feel strong as soon as we digested them.

God's Word reveals a different source for strength. It tells us that taking joy in the Lord gives us strength to face the punches life throws at us. When we take joy in the Lord, we refuse to let our circumstances dictate our attitudes. By intentionally rejoicing in God's holy attributes, the joy we experience will strengthen our faith. We may not ever be as physically strong as Popeye, but spiritually, we will have super strength, thanks to the joy of the Lord!

Lord Jesus, I want to be joyful for your glory. Give me strength through the joy you provide. Amen.

Rejoice: List three things about God that bring you joy and rejoice in him today.

Read: 1 Chronicles 16:27; Psalm 16:11

*Sarah Geringer
Jackson, MO*

Tuesday, September 24, 2019

Earthly Possessions

Now if we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.

Romans 8:17

As we age, we have accumulated possessions from parents and relatives, and things we ourselves obtained, many of which have special memories. We may want to leave these possessions to specific people or organizations, so we have a choice of revocable or irrevocable legal documents to ensure that our wishes are carried out. A revocable document allows us to change our minds.

God's Word tells us of his choice that never will change. It is irrevocable, as Romans 11:29 tells us so plainly: "For the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable." God's all-encompassing forever plan of love provides total comfort for our soul.

Father in heaven, may we always be mindful of your love for us, confident that you will never, ever, change your love. Amen.

Reflect: God's love for us will never change.

Read: Philippians 4:19

*Don Hollmann
Ballwin, MO*

Wednesday, September 25, 2019

A Better Way

Therefore, if you have any encouragement from being united with Christ ... make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in Spirit and of one mind.

Philippians 2:1-2

Truth be told, most of us are self-centered. We are concerned about what we can receive and few of us are concerned about what we can give. We want to be independent and don't like being dependent on anyone. We think happiness is making it on our own. And yet many of us are anything but happy. Paul, in our text, shares with us a better way to live.

He tells us that the better way is to be united with Christ. He suggests that this better way brings encouragement, comfort, fellowship, tenderness and compassion as we live our lives each day. Here is the foundation for any meaningful life. Being united with Christ brings genuine hope and peace.

Lord, let me rely upon you for everything and let me care as you care. Amen.

Search: Look for ways to genuinely care for those around you.

Read: Philippians 2:1-11

*Mike Lutz
Shelby Township, MI*

Thursday, September 26, 2019

Encouragement

Encourage one another and build one another up.

1 Thessalonians 5:11

Among the preachers of the New Testament, Peter, Paul, James and Apollos, to name a few, Barnabas is barely mentioned. Barnabas means “son of encouragement” (Acts 4:36). Traveling with Paul, he lived up to his name. Encouragement is a quiet, necessary ministry we can all do. By a cheering phone call to a friend with a chronic illness, a friendly word to a checkout clerk dealing with a long line of impatient customers, or a comforting note to the bereaved, we can share the joy we have as Christ’s beloved children.

Where do we get that cheer when we may be dealing with our own trials? “Turn back, that your sins may be blotted out, that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord” (Acts 3:19-20). We, who are refreshed by God’s presence, can offer words of encouragement to those who are struggling.

Lord, let me be one who carries comfort and love to those whose lives need your strength. Amen.

Help: Offer kind words of encouragement to people you meet today.

Read: 1 Corinthians 15:58; 1 Corinthians 16:13

*Constance Bretscher
Valparaiso, IN*

Friday, September 27, 2019

Opportunity Knocks

Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. Put on the whole armor of God.

Ephesians 6:10-11

Opportunity arrives in endless forms. Often it's an opportunity to show Christian love. Other times it's just the opposite, a tempting opening for unkind words and actions. Remember how Jesus spent 40 days in the wilderness being tempted: "And when the devil had ended every temptation, he departed from him until an opportune time" (Luke 4:13).

Even though opportunity may arrive in a negative form, our mighty Father provides us with the means to respond in a positive way. When opportunity knocks, positive or negative, we can answer boldly, wearing the full armor of God. This spiritual equipment provides everything we need to meet any event or challenge. Life brings opportunities daily, and we can meet them all head-on with the truth of God's Word, righteousness through faith, the gospel of salvation and the power of the Holy Spirit.

Mighty Father, help me meet today's opportunities head-on, boldly dressed in your whole armor. Amen.

Imagine: Picture yourself in God's whole armor.

Read: Ephesians 6:10-20; 2 Timothy 1:7

*Marj Maynard
Pipe Creek, TX*

Saturday, September 28, 2019

A Jesus Kind of Love

And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony.

Colossians 3:14

According to the Urban Dictionary, love is what is most important to life. It is putting your needs second to the one you love. People who met Jesus felt that from him. In every story of the Savior, people from all walks of life were accepted and welcomed, treated as family. Who do you know that shows a Jesus kind of love?

A visitor to church said to me, “Everyone is so friendly. I feel right at home here.” Isn’t this because, as children of Christ, we share his bond of love through the Holy Spirit? He resides in every believer. In your church or neighborhood, you are the one God has chosen to be the face of Jesus.

Lord Jesus, you have shown such love to me. Fill me with the desire to share that love with those I meet. Amen.

Meet: Be the face of Jesus this week. Meet three new people at church. Keep a notepad with you to record names.

Read: John 13:34-35; John 15:12

*Lynne Waite Chapman
Fort Wayne, IN*

Sunday, September 29, 2019

Touching Circumstances

Do not harm yourself, for we are all here.

Acts 16:28

Have you ever considered the power of circumstances to touch someone's life with Jesus? In Acts 16, Luke tells a dramatic story of Paul and Silas in prison, singing hymns at midnight (setting an example). Then comes a powerful earthquake (the circumstance), followed by a despairing jailer, ready to take his own life (a need to be touched). Paul and Silas touch him: "Do not harm yourself, for we are all here." Their words lead him to ask, "What must I do to be saved?" Their response, "Believe in the Lord Jesus and you will be saved," leads to an invitation to his home for teaching and baptisms.

While perhaps less dramatic, what circumstances in your life give you opportunity to touch someone's life with Jesus? Sending a daily Bible verse to a friend in need? Mailing an appropriate card for illness, grief or encouragement? How has Jesus touched you through such circumstances?

Thanks, Lord, for touching circumstances in my life. Amen.

See: Open your eyes this week to see and touch someone with Jesus.

Read: Acts 16:25-34

*Stephen J. Carter
Oakville, MO*

Monday, September 30, 2019

Pure Spiritual Milk

Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation, now that you have tasted that the Lord is good.

1 Peter 2:2-3

I wasn't born yesterday. How many times have you said that in your lifetime? Strangely, when it comes to our desire for a deeper understanding of salvation, St. Peter encourages us to become like hungry newborn babies. Crave pure spiritual milk, he says. Don't rely on your current understanding. Thirst for the Word. Desire more. Grow in your knowledge of salvation.

At my age, I am rarely told to "grow up" anymore, but God is never done with us. He always seeks a closer relationship with us. And we, in turn, never stop wanting to know and love him even more, once we have "tasted that the Lord is good."

Heavenly Father, you have been faithful and gracious to us throughout our lives. Thank you for the pure spiritual milk of Word and Sacrament. May we ever hunger and thirst to know you and Jesus Christ whom you have sent. Amen.

Thirst: Quench your spiritual thirst daily.

Read: 1 Peter 2:1-3

*Katherine Klemp
St. Paul, MN*

HOLY HABITS for **HOPE-FULL HEALTH**

Consider these simple ways to “Keep in Touch”:

- T Take the time to call 5 people on the phone each week, just to say hi and to tell them you are praying for them. Prayer is a powerful way to “keep in touch”!
- O Opportunities are all around us to make special efforts to act out our faith and our feelings towards others, at church and in our community, by simply saying “Hi,” smiling at a child and sharing a “good job” to someone who has just served you in a commendable way.
- U Use your gifts to “keep in touch” by volunteering as a mentor, by visiting a homebound person and by making a hospital call.
- C Consider how others “keep in touch” with you in positive ways and then duplicate them by doing the same activities with others—like taking someone out for a “St. Arbucks” drink, by bringing flowers to a friend or by offering to drive a friend to an appointment.
- H Habits develop when specific actions become a regular routine for 26 days in a row. Make it a habit to develop some specific “keep in touch” habits, which will bless you, and others, as the Lord “keeps in touch” with us through his presence, in us and through others to us!

Thanks for reading! Let’s do “Keep in Touch”!

Hope-Full Praying

The Joys of Summer

Keep me, oh keep me, Lord, celebrating the gifts of summer! If I complain about the heat, forgive me and bring me a blast of your cool presence. If I murmur that I need a vacation from my daily routines, point me to others with whom I can visit and celebrate this day. If I run out of things to do, send me into your Scriptures and into the lives of your people, who can refresh and renew my spirit. Amen.

The Blessings of our Nation

Lord of all nations, we thank you for the gift of this country. Keep us focused on this land of liberty. At times we can become weary and worried about injustices and conflicts. Let your compassion for all flourish in and through us. Bless us as we stride towards sharing your love, forgiveness and peace to those near and far. Remind us again that this is your country and you have gifted us to live here. Amen.

The Love of Family and Friends

Lord, a sign in our home simply says, "My greatest blessings call me Grandma!" What a grand way to thank you for the gift of family and friends! Thanks for putting people into our lives who love and forgive us, in spite of what we may say and do. Whether our families and friends are near or far, thanks for these special gifts you continue to provide for us. Amen.

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