

HOPE-FULL LIVING

▪ Daily Devotions for Living Life to the Fullest ▪

January ▪ February ▪ March ▪ 2020

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Hope-Full Living Mission Statement

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

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WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 1, 2020

Anno Domini

Sing praises to God, sing praises! Sing praises to our King, sing praises!

Psalm 47:6

January 1 begins another “year of our Lord.” Through song and action, I intend to lift praises to the Lord each day because I’m grateful this year belongs to him. I pray 2020 does not descend into a year fixated on me. Sometimes in years past, my worries darkened my outlook. When I sing praises to God above, I am more aware of his goodness, mercy and promises. Singing hymns uplifts my heart. I release my worries or concerns.

We Christians just celebrated Jesus’ birth and heard in Luke 2 how the angels came to earth and sang praises to the newborn king. We can follow their example and sing praises to our Lord.

*MaryAnn Sundby
Castle Rock, CO*

Dear Almighty God, thank you for this new year. Help me sing praises all year long. Amen.

Rejoice: Offer praise to God throughout the day today.

Read: Psalm 47

THURSDAY, JANUARY 2, 2020

Amen

Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever.

Hebrews 13:8

No. I am not confused. This is the beginning of a new year and not the end. To regard “amen” merely as a sign that the prayer is ended is an error. Jesus began many of his sayings with this word which may be translated as “Truly, truly.”

So what are we saying when we greet this new year with “Amen”? We are confirming that God truly, truly gives us a new year complete with his everlasting love and support. We are affirming with emphasis that “God is faithful.” Amen to that!

*Connie Bretscher
Valparaiso, IN*

Eternal and all-powerful God, we thank you for one more chance to live according to your will and walk in your ways, come what may. Amen.

Share: Show all whom God sends your way that you are being loved and led by your gracious God.

Read: Matthew 28:20



FRIDAY, JANUARY 3, 2020

An Open Door

At the same time, pray also for us, that God may open to us a door for the word, to declare the mystery of Christ.

Colossians 4:3

I just learned something new: January is named after Janus, the Roman god of doors, because this month is the gateway to the year. This fact underscores the concept that January offers a golden opportunity to learn and grow.

But honestly, sometimes I get tired of learning. During the aging process, I've discovered that learning can be exhausting. It's tiring to figure out new ways to do what I've always done. Learning can be hard, too. It's tough when my body signals, "You can't do that anymore." However, it's January. A door has opened. Even though I'll soon be another year older, God has opened a door to the promise of new beginnings.

*Mary Manz Simon
Ft. Myers, FL*

Thank you, Lord, for opening the gate to fresh beginnings. Amen.

Read: Jeremiah 29:10-12; Proverbs 19:20-21

Resolve: Rediscover the joy that accompanies learning.

SATURDAY, JANUARY 4, 2020

Cooped Up

A joyful heart is good medicine.

Proverbs 17:22

Growing up on a farm, I remember going out to gather eggs from the chicken coop. The coop had a small amount of space with many chickens confined to it. Hence the term “cooped up” was used.

As we grow older and downsize our living space from a house to an apartment or a care center room, like the chickens, we may feel cooped up too. This is especially true in the winter when the temperature drops and the snow piles up.

So on those days when you're feeling down and “cooped up,” fill your heart with joy by: singing a song of praise, making or doing something special for someone else, saying a prayer of thanksgiving for your blessings, and remembering that Jesus loves you and was willing to die for you.

*Stan Torsen
Stewartville MN*

Lord, give me a joyful heart. Amen.

Share: Share your joy!

Read: Psalm 118:24



SUNDAY, JANUARY 5, 2020

Epiphany Wonders

“O LORD, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth!”

Psalm 8:1

On many dark, early mornings as I walk outside, I pause and gaze at the astronomical display before my eyes. Clear skies allow me to follow the big dipper in its rotation around the North Star, to watch as the moon dances with the bright morning stars. My heart and my voice sing out to the Lord! My wonder at the night sky brings worship and honor to the Lord almighty!”

I wonder if the wise men marveled as the psalmist did at the astronomical display before their eyes? They were moved by the Spirit of God to seek out the child born “King of the Jews,” to seek him out for worship and adoration and sacrifice!

*Jim Elsner
Auburn, IN*

Open my eyes, Lord, that I may see you. Amen.

Learn: With the Epiphany wise men, are you seeing afresh the wonders of God in nature?

Read: Psalm 8; Isaiah 60:1-6

MONDAY, JANUARY 6, 2020

Epiphany Baby

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

Matthew 2:2

Our son's birthday is January 6. As he was born on Epiphany and blessed with a large smile, we gave him the nickname "Beam-O." He brings brightness into our family.

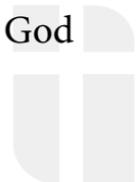
Today we celebrate the bright star that led the wise men to the Light of the world, Jesus. In that Light, we see the blessing of our blood-bought eternity. In that Jesus, we also see the everyday blessings of life. A brightened moment may be a newborn, a hug at worship, a mug of hot chocolate, a pet's affection, a helpful neighbor, an afghan's softness, a Christmas hymn, the taste of the Sacrament, a phone call or text, or a fresh look at the Gospel of amazing grace. God's first recorded words are, "Let there be light" (Genesis 1:3). We celebrate the view of all his wonderful gifts. God has given us so much to see!

*Harry Edenfield
Brownstown, MI*

Lord, thank you for brightening my day. Amen.

Share: Gently share the brighter sights that God gives us with a person having a gloomy day.

Read: Matthew 2:1-12; 2 Corinthians 4:1-6



TUESDAY, JANUARY 7, 2020

2020 Vision

“I know the plans I have for you”, declares the Lord, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future ...”

Jeremiah 29:11

“What do you vision doing today?” asked the wife. The husband answered, “I don’t see myself doing much of anything today!” What do you vision yourself doing today, may I ask? Will it be just “another day” or how might the Lord want to use you and me in serving and celebrating our faith with others?

We all have 2020 vision, not just this year, but every day because of Christ’s death and resurrection. Too often we can get so caught up in our “agendas” that we fail to see the big picture vision of the Lord. Remember the story of the spouse who bought her husband new glasses, but he returned them because he refused to see things her way? The Lord has great plans for us today as we see things his way!

*Rich Bimler
Bloomington, IL*

Lord of today and tomorrow, thanks for giving us “2020 vision” to see through you! Amen.

Try: Ask a few friends what their vision is today—and then enjoy the dialogue!

Read: Jeremiah 29

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 8, 2020

Always Close By

I will never leave you or forsake you.

Hebrews 13:5

The landscape looks stripped bare. Days can seem to be one long stretch of darkness and gloom. Nature itself seems lifeless and barren. Samuel Longfellow, an American minister once penned these lines:

“’Tis winter now; the fallen snow has left the heav’ns
all coldly clear;

through leafless boughs the sharp winds blow, and all
the earth lies dead and drear.

And yet God’s love is not withdrawn; his life within
the keen air breathes;

his beauty paints the crimson dawn, and clothes the
boughs with glittering wreaths.”

Christians know that the warmth of God’s presence
always enwraps us like a favorite sweater.

*Barry Bobb
Carmel, IN*

Show me, Lord, your presence in winter’s outdoor
beauty. Amen.

Learn: Explore the beauty of winter scenes around
the world.

Read: Psalm 23:4; 1 John 4:13



THURSDAY, JANUARY 9, 2020

I Love to Tell the Story

The shepherds spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child.

Luke 2:17

So what's your story?

If you were to begin telling your story, you might start with your earliest memory, because that's when you begin to remember things. Up to that starting point we're pretty much a bundle of feelings and nerve endings crying out to be fed or comforted. It's when we start noticing the world outside ourselves that things get interesting. That's when we start to see how God is working within our life experiences to reveal his love to us in Jesus. When that happens, *that* is when your life becomes a story of promise with a happy ending—because of Jesus. So, go ahead; tell your story. Someone's listening.

*Ed Arle
St. Charles, MO*

Lord, it's hard for me to believe that anyone would be interested in hearing my story. Help me to tell it anyway; especially the part about Jesus. Amen.

Ask: Invite a friend to share their memories.

Read: Acts 9:26-31; Matthew 28:20

FRIDAY, JANUARY 10, 2020

The Light of Joy

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

Psalm 27:1

The dawn of a New Year carries the hope and promise of light in the face of darkness. Somehow things will be better this time around. But soon reality snuffs out such hopes and the usual clouds of difficulty, danger and disaster darken our days.

The presence of Jesus, of his life and his cross, are a light that brings joy in the midst of the deepest darkness. He has defeated all that destroys joy; his promises inject hope into every day of our lives. The world may turn its back on this light of joy, but you and I can turn our face to the light that cannot be extinguished even by death. Today we can be confident and joyful in the reality of the love of God in Christ Jesus, our Lord.

*Paul Scheidt
Chesterfield, MO*

Lord Jesus, every day of my life, you are my joy.
Amen.

Give: If you find someone in the darkness of worry or fear, share the joy of Jesus.

Read: Psalm 27



SATURDAY, JANUARY 11, 2020

God Is Shining

For the LORD God is a sun ...

Psalm 84:11

I was flying into the airport in Seattle one cloudy, rainy January day. As we approached the airport, we broke through the clouds and there was the sun—shining warm and glorious! It lifted my spirits and put a smile on my face.

Jesus, the Light of the world, is the shining love of God. His compassion, his hope, his joy and his peace are always shining down on you. He loves you so much. The Lord God is shining on you today. He shines on us at night as well, and during the times and events that feel like night in our lives. The days have started to get longer in nature, but the Lord God is a sun, and he is shining on you.

*Don Schatz
Lynnwood, WA*

O Lord, shine on me each day. Amen.

Shine: Shine on someone with God's love today.

Read: Psalm 84

SUNDAY, JANUARY 12, 2020

Morning People

Weeping may stay for the night, but rejoicing comes in the morning.

Psalm 30:5

I am a morning person. That's when I feel most rested and productive.

Not everyone shares my enthusiasm for the early hours of the day, but actually, all Christians can be morning people. That's because we all have the certain hope that no matter how long and difficult the night may be, God promises that we will not be overcome by this world's trials because Jesus has overcome the world. No matter what tears this life may bring, Jesus will wipe them away and give us joy. Our faith allows us to rest in him and experience the refreshment he provides in this life. And, it gives us the hopeful perspective that life is eternal and we live all our days in the light of Jesus, the "bright Morning Star."

*Sandi Geis
St. Louis, MO*

Jesus, shine your light in my darkness and give me everlasting joy. Amen.

Rise and shine: Rejoice in the Lord each morning and let his Light give perspective to your day.

Read: Lamentations 3:19-26; Psalm 5:1-3



MONDAY, JANUARY 13, 2020

Embrace Grace!

You crown the year with your bounty.

Psalms 65:11

There is a beloved Slovak hymn which contains the refrain: “Rejoice! With thanks embrace another year of grace!” What a startling and helpful suggestion!

The new year is often depicted as a baby. As you look at the coming months, imagine yourself embracing a newborn baby in a blanket. Imagine those feelings—a beaming smile on your face, a quiet sense of wonder and awe, the joyous expectations of what this new start in life might bring, and thankfulness for the opportunity to experience it. That thankful part is important. The song is talking about both meanings of grace—all the blessings which God showers on us each day in his divine providence and also his chief act of grace—the giving of his only Son, a baby in a manger, for the forgiveness of all my wrongdoings and failures.

Amazing grace ... embrace it!

*Barry Bobb
Carmel, IN*

Show me Lord, how to embrace this new year with a smile on my face. Amen.

Learn: Explore art and photography which celebrate new life.

Read: Luke 2:12; Ephesians 3:20-21

TUESDAY, JANUARY 14, 2020

Is That Real Joy?

And we are writing these things so that our joy may be complete.

1 John 1:4

Each year, on social media, I see the same image of one family's struggle to achieve a beautiful family photo. The three young children are dressed in their holiday finery, each one holding a large white alphabet letter. J, O and Y are the letters. It sounds perfect, doesn't it? The only thing wrong is all three children are obviously unhappy and crying wildly, their faces showing their misery.

I have that photo on my refrigerator all year long. It makes me smile, but it also makes me think. Do I proclaim the "joy" of a relationship with Christ all the while showing the world my misery?

If we have the true joy which comes from knowing our Lord and Savior, our lives and our faces need to show it.

*Gloria Doty
Fort Wayne, IN*

Jesus, help us realize the need to share our JOY with others. Amen.

Sing: "I've Got the Joy, Joy, Joy, Joy Down in My Heart."

Read: Galatians 5:22; Psalm 16:11



WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 15, 2020

Two Big Dates

For me to live is Christ and to die is gain.

Philippians 1:21

I heard a pastor recently say this: “The two most important dates in a person’s life are the day they were born and the day they understood *why* they were born.” We can understand why the day we were born is important, but many live their lives questioning their reason for being.

Think of Jesus. While no one knows precisely the date when he was born, we continue to celebrate the fact that he was born for you and me. Jesus knew what his life purpose was: To seek and to save the lost, or, as Jesus himself said, “The Son of Man came ... to give his life as a ransom for many” (Mark 10:45). It all boils down to this: Jesus’ reason for being was you and me. Now our reason for being is *Jesus*.

*Edward Arle
St. Charles, MO*

Lord God, I thank you for giving me life and, even more important, thank you for giving me a reason to live: Jesus. Amen.

Share: Encourage others in finding their purpose in life.

Read: Mark 10:35-45

THURSDAY, JANUARY 16, 2020

Power Source

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

Matthew 28:20

We feel cut off when our cell phone or remote control dies. We are so dependent on these devices, we feel the loss when they are not up for us. This is also true when we fail to plug in to our spiritual power source, the Word of God.

We can't do it on our own; we need power to keep going. This is especially true in times of loss, health issues, relationships or job problems. It is then we are awakened to our great need to plug in to our power source, the power of the Holy Spirit. God's Word tells us, "After you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, confirm, strengthen and establish you" (1 Peter 5:10). He has the power forever.

*Pat Howe
Brea, CA*

Lord, by the power of your Spirit, lead us to study your Word and grow in grace. Amen.

Plug in: Draw from your power source—the Word of God.

Read: 2 Peter 1:16-21



FRIDAY, JANUARY 17, 2020

Joyful Anticipation

You are the God of my salvation; for you I wait all the day long.

Psalm 25:5

Picking up a dear friend or family member from the airport can be a mix of delay and delight. The delight finally comes when, after watching throngs of people pass by, you catch a glimpse of the one face you've been waiting to see.

Picture elderly Simeon at the temple in Jerusalem. Through the years, Simeon had watched throngs of people come and go, hundreds of babies carried in by parents to be dedicated. Finally one day he sees the one face he had been waiting to see—the infant Jesus. Moved by the Spirit, Simeon declares, “My eyes have seen your salvation” (Luke 2:30). Imagine Simeon’s joy, gazing down at the baby born to save the world. Imagine our joy, gazing up one day and seeing our Savior face to face. Until that day, we live and wait and watch in joyful anticipation of our salvation.

*Marj Maynard
Pipe Creek, TX*

By your Spirit, Lord, fill me with joy today. Amen.

Anticipate: Live, wait, and watch with daily joy.

Read: Psalm 27:13-14; Isaiah 52:7-10

SATURDAY, JANUARY 18, 2020

Joy

For you, O LORD, have made me glad by your work; at the works of your hands I sing for joy.

Psalm 92:4

Scientists tell us that playing word puzzles is especially beneficial for older adults. Even a brief mental exercise, like making a simple word into an acrostic, can strengthen the neural connections in our brain. For example, think of faith-related or biblical words using the letters of January, like this: **J**esus - **A**tonement - **N**azareth - **U**nleavened - **A**postle - **R**esurrection - **Y**ahweh.

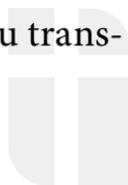
An even shorter Christian acrostic is based on the word joy: **J**esus **O**ur **Y**eshua. In this new year, we can look for unexpected opportunities to share with others the joy we have in Jesus (Yeshua), our Savior.

*Mary Manz Simon
Ft. Myers, FL*

Open my heart, Lord, to celebrate moments of joy in this new year. Amen.

Learn: Consult a Bible dictionary to help you transform any word into a faith-related acrostic.

Read: Psalm 92; Isaiah 35:1-2



SUNDAY, JANUARY 19, 2020

A Joy-filled New Day

May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope.

Romans 15:13

Cold, dark January mornings have always been difficult for me. It's not just the lure of the warm, comfortable covers. Darkness can bring fears and anxiety about the coming day. The world's darkness can creep into my thoughts. Can I face the known and unknown challenges? How can I handle the pressures of "what if ..."?

Paul reminds us, "May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing." Our Lord has promised to be with us. We know we can trust him to help us with every difficulty. He is stronger than any fear our anxious minds can conjure up. He will give us the strength to meet our daily challenges. We can live each new day radiating his joy to those around us. Even the coldest, darkest days become joy-filled new days in the Lord.

*Donna Bobb
Carmel, IN*

Lord, fill me with your strength. Amen.

Learn: Reflect on times in your life when the Lord was with you as you faced trials.

Read: Proverbs 3:5; 1 Peter 5:7

MONDAY, JANUARY 20, 2020

Hummingbirds

Look at the birds of the air: they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them.

Matthew 6:26

On cold, blustery winter days (yes, even we in the Southeastern states experience such weather) it is most enjoyable to anticipate sunny summer days. The hummingbirds will return to entertain and delight us with their aerial gymnastic shows. We remember how these little birds encircle the feeder hanging from our deck eager to nourish themselves with the sweet liquid. Their behavior not only puts a smile on our faces but a smile within our hearts. Jesus informs us that as the heavenly Father cares for the birds of the air, he certainly cares for us, his beloved children. First, we are to seek God's kingdom and his righteousness, and then our Lord will provide us with all our earthly needs! What a gracious God! He fills us with the warmth of his love!

*David Bernthal
Juliette, GA*

Lord, we anticipate both the joys of your creation yet to come as well as the present blessings. Amen.

Prepare: Secure a feeder and anticipate enjoying God's wondrous creation.

Read: Matthew 6:25-34; Psalm 84:1-4



TUESDAY, JANUARY 21, 2020

The Price of Joy

My lips will shout for joy, when I sing praises to you; my soul also, which you have redeemed.

Psalm 71:23

Our golden retriever brings us great joy, but it comes at a price. A small yard and a 100-pound flower-munching dog is not a great combination. Then there is the cost of food, medical treatment, training, grooming, time for togetherness and treat trips to Starbucks. (Yes! Our dog scents Starbucks stores!)

In Jesus we have joy, which comes at an immense price. Jesus gave his life to gift us with eternal life. Reflecting on what is past and looking to the future, let us daily celebrate lives lived in the joy of God's grace whatever our circumstance. Let us dedicate ourselves to beginning and ending each day with gratitude!

*Judith Christian
St. Louis, MO*

Savior Jesus, you paid the price for our eternal joy with you. Your life you gave, your people saved. Thank you for your gift of grace. Amen.

Do: Begin each day with thanksgiving and end the day with gratitude for a day lived in the joy of God's grace.

Read: Psalm 71

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 22, 2020

The Perspective of Years

When he calls to me, I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble; I will rescue him and honor him.

Psalm 91:15

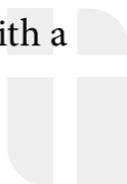
Sometimes it seems that “youth” is glorified in today’s world. But something you can’t get without living some number of years is perspective; the ability to see things in relevance to former things. David and the writers of Psalms may have trouble; but they write their way around to God’s provision. Sometimes long lists of history bolster faith in a God who promises and always fulfills these promises. Spend some time in the Psalms this week. Enjoy the faith-strengthening words the Holy Spirit sends and pray them back to him who loves you and keeps his promises.

*Nancy Rapp
St. Louis, MO*

Dear Savior, fill our hearts with the love of your Word, and through it create in us the saving knowledge of Jesus Christ. Amen.

Share: Share your favorite Psalm or verse with a young friend.

Read: Psalm 37; Psalm 63



THURSDAY, JANUARY 23, 2020

Loyalty and Love

The soul of Jonathan was knit to the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul.

1 Samuel 18:1

Jonathan has always been one of my favorite Old Testament personalities. The friendship between him and David was a truly beautiful one. Jonathan exhibited a steadfast love for David along with unswerving loyalty, even though he was aware that David was destined to one day sit upon the throne that should have rightfully been his. He showed no jealousy or envy. David returned the loyalty with a covenant between them regarding their offspring. Do you have a “Jonathan” friend, one that “sticks closer than a brother”? Are you such a friend to another?

*Harriet Stennfeld
Fort Wayne, IN*

Dear Father, thank you for the dear friends who are always there for me. Help me be such a loyal and loving friend to others. Amen.

Do: Tell someone how much you value his or her friendship.

Read: 1 Samuel 20:17, 42; 1 Samuel 23:17-18

FRIDAY, JANUARY 24, 2020

Twice as Much

On the sixth day they gathered twice as much bread.

Exodus 16:22

When the Lord provided manna for the Israelites, each family had just the amount needed. Those who “gathered much had nothing left over, and whoever gathered little had no lack” (Exodus 16:18). Since the people could not gather manna on the Sabbath, God provided twice as much bread on the sixth day.

This same providing Lord taught us to pray, “Give us this day our daily bread.” We are to pray for daily bread, for the food and earthly goods needed to sustain our bodies and lives. Our generous God hears our prayer and provides much more, more than twice as much. He gave us Jesus, the Bread of life, who promises, “Whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst ... and I will raise him up on the last day” (John 6:35, 40). The Lord provides—enough for this life and enough for the eternal Sabbath yet to come.

*Carol Geisler
Orange, CA*

Lord, lead us to trust in your provision. Amen.

Give: As you are able, look for ways to provide food for those in need.

Read: Exodus 16:13-26; John 6:35-40



SATURDAY, JANUARY 25, 2020

Morning Coffee

And rising very early in the morning ... he prayed.

Mark 1:35

What a blessing that morning cup of coffee is. My wife and I enjoy the quiet time together as we consider God's gift of the new day, its possibilities as well as its demands. With that cup of coffee, we partake of breakfast and then thankfully seize the meditative moments to go to our Lord in prayer. A cup of morning coffee is the prelude to conversing with the Savior.

Our Lord Jesus himself took full advantage of the morning hours. Privately he conversed with the Heavenly Father. He prepared a breakfast feast for the disciples upon the Galilean shore and then extended his forgiveness to Peter, who had denied him three times. Without doubt, Peter rejoiced in every subsequent breakfast!

Enjoy your morning cup of coffee or tea, knowing that Jesus is present.

*David Bernthal
Juliette, GA*

Lord, accept our thanks for your presence at our every meal; in fact, in every moment of our life. Amen.

Participate: Join your congregation's prayer breakfast or help to organize a prayer breakfast.

Read: John 21:4-14; Mark 1:35-39

SUNDAY, JANUARY 26, 2020

The Lifter

But you, O LORD, are a shield about me, my glory, and the lifter of my head.

Psalm 3:3

I lower my eyes when I am sad. My body language displays a downcast spirit and I don't notice God's glory all around me. My inward focus blocks out his goodness and splendor. I slip into displaying a gloomy attitude.

As this verse declares, the LORD is a shield about me and lifts up my head. Suddenly I see God's glory, truth and beauty. His presence buffers me from being a grouch. With an uplifted head, I see God's magnificence in sunrises, sunsets, joy and people. The assurance of Psalm 3:3, that God shields me and uplifts me, is a display of his love.

*MaryAnn Sundby
Castle Rock, CO*

Dear Lifter of my Head, thank you for shielding me against despair. Thank you for raising my head toward you. Amen.

Reflect: Think about how God shields you right now. As he lifts your head, do you see his goodness?

Read: Psalm 3

MONDAY, JANUARY 27, 2020

An Anchor Is Needed

And fearing that we might run on the rocks, they let down four anchors from the stern and prayed.

Acts 27:29

I received a large framed painting as a gift from friends. I could hardly wait to choose a spot to display it.

I found the perfect place. There was just one problem. It was extremely heavy. The man at the hardware store explained I would need an anchor in the wall first or the weight of the picture would pull the hooks out of the plaster, causing the entire thing to crash to the floor.

I understood the concept and with help from a friend, the picture was successfully hung on the wall and has remained there for several years.

I often think about my life in correlation to that picture. At times, situations become so heavy, if it were not for being anchored in God's Word, I would surely fall to the ground and shatter.

*Gloria Doty
Ft. Wayne, IN*

Heavenly Father, thank you for being my anchor.
Amen.

Remember: Remember to be securely attached to God.

Read: Hebrews 6:19

TUESDAY, JANUARY 28, 2020

Shock Absorbers

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

Galatians 6:2

One of the blessings of having extended family in the form of a faith community is that we can be each other's "shock absorber." I can help you when you need transportation, helpful information, child care, a listening ear or someone to pray with you. You can do the same for me.

It is not always convenient or easy to put your schedule on hold to help another. Then we remember the pains Jesus went through to bear the burden of our sins and our need for redemption. However, I find that it is even harder for me to let another be my servant. Perhaps it's my pride. Perhaps I simply don't want to be a bother. Don't deny your brother or sister in Christ the privilege to be your fellow servant and to delight in fulfilling the law of Christ.

*Ted Zimmerman
Napa, CA*

Lord, help me to learn to swallow pride and accept the help of others when in need. Amen.

Reflect: When I ask God for help today, who can I ask to be Christ's servant to help me bear that burden?

Read: Galatians 6:1-5; 1 Corinthians 13:4-7

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 29, 2020

Your Lions

I will not fail you nor forsake you.

Joshua 1:5

Defying King Darius' command that all should worship him only, Daniel prayed bravely and openly to God. Anyone who disobeyed should be fed to hungry lions. So we find Daniel in the lions' den.

My childish fear was that the lions would be destroyed in order to save Daniel. But God sent an angel to shut the lions' mouths and God *himself* came and stood beside Daniel!

When we face our lions—the trials that come with age, such as change, loneliness, and pain—we, like Daniel, pray for help. Though our trials (lions) may not be taken away, our loving God, true to his promise, will stand beside us.

*Constance Bretscher
Valparaiso, IN*

Faithful God, bless us with strength and courage to realize that you stand beside us, come what may. Amen.

Share: Witness that strength—even joy—to all who need it.

Read: Daniel 6:10-22

THURSDAY, JANUARY 30, 2020

Songs of Joy

Shout to God with loud songs of joy.

Psalm 47:1

I enjoy singing “How Great Thou Art” and “Amazing Grace.” When I sing those songs, I feel spiritually uplifted. Psalm 47 is a prophecy of Christ that foretells that he will be King over the entire world with shouts, songs and trumpet calls. What does a loud song sound like for God? It is a loud, forceful song that proclaims Jesus as our Lord and Savior. It is a joyous song that announces that Jesus is the Author of salvation. It is a beautiful song that exclaims with trumpets that we are saved by grace through faith in the risen Lord.

Sing a song to the Lord for good news about recent test results. Shout a song to the Savior for physical and spiritual blessings. Sing a song to the Messiah for enjoyment of retirement years. God will bless your loud songs of joy with peace in your heart.

*David Bever
Las Vegas, NV*

Jesus, help me to sing songs of joy with enthusiasm for you. Amen.

Sing: Sing a song or hymn today that confesses your faith in Jesus.

Read: Psalm 47



FRIDAY, JANUARY 31, 2020

Yet

Yet I will rejoice in the LORD; I will take joy in the God of my salvation.

Habakkuk 3:18

Failed crops, empty barn, empty stomach; this was the plight of Habakkuk when he uttered one of the most faith-inspired words in the entire book of the Bible attributed to him: “Yet.” In spite of loss and dismal circumstances, Habakkuk experienced joy because he treasured above all his relationship with God, which could never be taken away from him.

We all face trials that threaten to rob us of joy. It’s easy to fixate on a crisis at hand, *yet* no trouble or fear is too great for Jesus, in whom we have refuge. He can calm a storm, feed the hungry, provide all things for our enjoyment and best of all, forgive our sins and secure for us eternal life with him. We will certainly face much hardship in this life. *Yet*, with our focus always on Jesus, we will discover true joy.

*Sandi Geis
St. Louis, MO*

Jesus, give me faith in the midst of trials to say with confidence, “*yet* I will take joy in God.” Amen.

Shift: When trouble strikes, shift your focus from your fear to your faith and rejoice in Jesus.

Read: Habakkuk 3:17-19; 2 Corinthians 4:8-18

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 1, 2020

Heart Healthy

A joyful heart is good medicine, but a crushed spirit dries up the bones.

Proverbs 17:22

February is American Heart Month. In 1963, the annual celebration began in an effort to raise awareness and encourage Americans to join the battle against heart disease. Through proper diet and exercise, we can protect our heart health and lead fulfilling lives, glorifying God.

However, we also need to care for the spiritual needs of our hearts as well. When we fail to nurture this part of our lives, our spiritual and physical health often suffer. Through regular worship and fellowship with our brothers and sisters in Christ, we nurture this spiritual need we all have in life. Live a joyful and heart healthy life today!

*Betsy Becker Niedringhaus
Ballwin, MO*

Dear Heavenly Father, help me to live a heart healthy life, both physically and spiritually so I may glorify you in all that I say and do. Amen.

Care: Care for your heart today through regular worship, as well as diet and exercise!

Read: Proverbs 16:1-3



SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 2, 2020

Groundhog Day

My eyes have seen your salvation.

Luke 2:30

February 2 is known as “Groundhog Day.” A popular film reinforced the superstition that the length of winter depends on whether groundhogs see their shadow on this day.

On the Christian calendar, February 2 is known as “The Presentation of our Lord.” Forty days after Jesus’ birth, Mary and Joseph traveled to the temple in Jerusalem to fulfill the requirements of the law (Exodus 13:2; Leviticus 12:2-8), dedicating their firstborn son to the Lord. Guided by the Holy Spirit, aged Simeon was blessed that day to see the promised Messiah with his own eyes.

The Holy Spirit has revealed to us also that Jesus is the Savior of the world. We are blessed to see him with “the eyes of faith.”

*Gil Duchow
Muskego, WI*

Holy Spirit, help us keep our eyes on you, and not on the groundhog. Amen.

Give: Send a card or gift to your grandchildren on their baptism birthday.

Read: Luke 2:22-35

MONDAY, FEBRUARY 3, 2020

Doing Joy

I rejoice in your promise, like one who finds great spoil.

Psalm 119:162

“Rejoice” is the verbal form, the necessary other half of the noun, joy. So, to rejoice is to do joy. Having joy without expressing it is almost an oxymoron. It certainly is a spiritual oxymoron. We just can’t help ourselves!

I don’t know about great spoil, but I do know that we have “the pearl of great price”—life as the children of God’s promise. Nothing separates us from God’s love and nothing separates us from the joy God’s love gives us. Nothing separates us from doing joy. Not life, not death, not sorrow, not sickness, not youth, not age; nothing can prevent God’s children from doing joy. Rather, in all things we rejoice, because we are children of God’s promise. Do joy today.

*Don Schatz
Lynnwood, WA*

Lord, you are the joy of my heart and my soul’s desire.
Amen.

Do joy: Speak, sing, whisper or shout your joy in the Lord today.

Read: Jude 24-25



TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 4, 2020

Joy in the Journey!

My lips will shout for joy when I sing praise to you—I whom you have redeemed.

Psalm 71:23

We are encouraged throughout scriptures to share and celebrate the joy we have in the Lord as we age each day. However, if you are like I am, we allow too many obstacles to get in the way of sharing this joy on our journey through life. Too many disappointments, another pain, a broken relationship, more funerals and too much “bad news” bombarding us daily.

Remember that camp song, “I got the joy of Jesus down in my heart”? Perhaps it’s about time we get that “joy of Jesus” out of our hearts and into the conversations and actions.

Our words, actions and peace of mind we share with others each day will not only fuel our journey through life, but it sure will make a big difference in those around us as well!

*Rich Bimler
Bloomingdale, IL*

Lord, allow us to get our joy in you out of our hearts and into our actions. Amen.

Ponder: “If you love Jesus, why don’t you tell your face about it?”

Read: Psalm 71

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 5, 2020

Walking on Ice

Thou hast enlarged my steps under me, that my feet did not slip.

Psalm 18:36

Weather forecasters warn us about icy conditions; we know how easily we can slip; but accidents still happen. Slipping can happen not only on ice, and I remind myself of that constantly because I have copied Psalm 18:36 and taped it by my keyboard. My original intent was to remember how God's care has preserved me from many slips in life, as in being led astray in thought and action or close calls on the highway.

Daily, every second of our lives, one slip could lead to major catastrophe. We could consume ourselves with worry and fear, but we are blessed with a God who watches over us (Psalm 121:3). Scripture is filled with the assurance that God watches our every step from the time he created us to sending Jesus to reconcile us. Jesus also assures us of that constant care for he is devoted and faithful as our shepherd (John 10:11).

*Judy Scherr
Lemay, MO*

Father, thank you for your love and care. Amen.

Look: Consult the concordance and find all the references for the word *slip*. Thank God for protection.

Read: Psalm 121; John 10:7-15

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 6, 2020

The Gift of Our Bodies

Present yourselves to God ... and offer parts of your bodies to God as instruments of righteousness.

Romans 6:13

Through the years I have been puzzled by what God is saying to me in a particular verse of Scripture. Romans 6:13 is one of those passages. Recently today's text prompted me to hear God telling me that I am to use my tongue to speak with my neighbor; I am to use my hands to offer comfort to those in need; I am to use my eyes to see the beauty of God's creation; I am to use my feet to walk in the paths of my Savior, Jesus Christ; I am to use this body of mine, watching what I say or do, to share the good news of God's love. What a marvelous gift—my body!

*Walt Schoedel
Webster Groves, MO*

Lord Jesus, help me to be a faithful steward of this gift, my body. Amen.

Time out: Seek out a passage of Scripture that puzzles you and ask the Spirit to give you an understanding.

Read: Romans 6:1-14; 1 Corinthians 6:19-20

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 7, 2020

You Can Bank on It

If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

1 John 1:9

Banking has changed. We have progressed from waiting in line for the teller to stopping at the drive-through window to using the ATM. Now many of us handle our deposits and withdrawals electronically from our phones or laptops. But the basic process hasn't changed. We deposit from what we have and we withdraw from what the bank has.

Confession and absolution are something like that bank. We deposit our sins, along with our guilt over what we have done and failed to do. For the sake of Jesus and his death in our place, we withdraw forgiveness, peace and joy.

*Eileen Ritter
Byron Center, MI*

Lord Jesus, I lay my sins on you, the spotless Lamb of God. You bear them all and free me from the accursed load. Amen.

Bank on it: Deposit what is troubling you, and rest assured of God's forgiveness for Jesus' sake.

Read: Psalm 51



SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 8, 2020

Stuff

I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content.

Philippians 4:12

Use it up. Wear it out. Make it do. Do without. Right? I love that philosophy. I just haven't been able to do it. At this stage in our lives we talk about down-sizing. But here's the problem: all the stuff that once seemed so important is now hard to even give away! By contrast the Bible is filled people who have very little: the widow at Zarephath, Ruth and Naomi, the widow in the temple, and our Lord himself—to name a few. God uses their situations to let us know how he cares for us. And St. Paul, who knew both plenty and to be in want, knew that God was in charge of his well-being—always.

*Sally Beck
Williamsburg, VA*

Lord, help me keep my possessions in a right perspective. Amen.

Share: Now what do we do with the stuff? We can find others in need who can enjoy it now.

Read: 2 Corinthians 8:8-15

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 9, 2020

What Time Is It?

For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven: a time to be born, and a time to die, a time to plant, and a time to pluck up what is planted.

Ecclesiastes 3:1-2

Solomon, the writer of Ecclesiastes, gave us God's words, describing life immediately beginning after man abandoned God in the Garden of Eden. Our eternally perfect life with God in his world has changed.

Until Christ returns, every one of us will be confronted with ups and downs. Handling life's situations can be difficult when we try to go it alone. Swallowing our pride means seeking and accepting help. God has given us many opportunities to seek help from family, friends, neighbors, pastors and medical professionals. It is up to us to seek help, starting with constant prayer to our heavenly Father. Start now!

*Don Hollmann
Ballwin, MO*

Father God, we need your loving help in our lives at all times. Guide us always to reach out to you in prayer and trust your guidance. Amen.

Trust: God knows our needs.

Read: 1 Peter 5:7



MONDAY, FEBRUARY 10, 2020

Hard to Imagine

Above all, keep loving one another earnestly, since love covers a multitude of sins.

1 Peter 4:8

My husband and I are fortunate to spend some winter months in Florida, rather than snowy, icy Indiana. When friends post pictures on social media of the latest winter blast to hit their area, it doesn't seem real. Likewise, when I show sunny days, palm trees and the blue pool waters, they have a hard time imagining we are on the same planet.

I often feel those emotions when I read about someone else's trials. Since I personally am not experiencing their troubles, it's easy to dismiss them and forget about it. That doesn't make their situation any less real.

While I may not always be able to put myself in others' circumstances and cannot fix everyone's problems, I can certainly pray about them and that is the attitude God expects from me.

*Gloria Doty
Fort Wayne, IN*

Father, never let me forget that other people's situations are very real. Amen.

Prayer: Spend time in prayer for someone.

Read: 1 Thessalonians 3:12-13

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 11, 2020

Faces of Joy

Convinced of this, I know that I will remain and continue with you all, for your progress and joy in the faith...

Philippians 1:25

I recall a few days last summer when the Carter family from Minnesota and Texas stayed in our home as we met our great-grandson for the first time. A poignant picture appears on our Facebook wall of four generations connected and smiling—son Mark, grandson Brendan, 6-month-old great-grandson Landon and me—“faces of joy” for winter encouragement.

Paul writes from prison to Philippian believers where he faces possible death. He holds their “faces of joy” close to his heart and desires to share his joy in Christ the Savior with them for their “progress and joy in the faith.” In what practical ways might you share the joy of your faith with others from your isolation?

*Stephen J. Carter
Oakville, MO*

Lord, fill my winter prison with your joy to share with others. Amen.

Touch: Touch “faces of joy” this week with communication and prayer.

Read: Philippians 1:18-30



WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 12, 2020

A Forever Home

I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you.

John 14:18

Our eight-year-old grandson Solomon was delighted to meet a man from Tanzania. Solomon was proud to say he had been born in Ethiopia, a neighboring country in Africa. Not to be outdone, his three-year-old brother, Elijah, said, “Me, too.” We explained that Elijah had been adopted from Georgia.

I’m delighted both boys are in the Simon family, but I’m downright giddy that our grandsons have also been adopted by God. Just as incredible is the fact that God intentionally chose each of us. He’s not letting us go, either, even though our hands are dotted with age spots and our energy has dwindled. There’s no discrimination of any kind with God. Hearts of both young and old can overflow with joy to have a forever home.

*Mary Manz Simon
Ft. Myers, FL*

Thank you, Lord, for the many ways you bless me as your child. Amen.

Learn: Consider what it means to be adopted by God.

Read: John 14:12-21; Isaiah 43:1

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 13, 2020

Joy and Peace

May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing.

Romans 15:13

What brings you joy and peace? Are these things on your list—a good night's rest, a morning walk, time spent in the garden or taking a trip? Those items bring joy and peace because they fill our lives with purpose. You look forward to seeing or touching such things as they bring instant pleasure to your life. Paul tells us in this verse that God will fill our lives with spiritual blessings beyond our comprehension. God has sent Jesus to fill our lives with hope that brings joy and peace.

Only Jesus will give us joy and peace in our lives. As believers we need peace when a loved one has passed away. We need peace that will bring comfort to our souls. As seniors we need peace when concerned about our health care plan. As members of God's kingdom we need peace knowing that we are saved because of Jesus.

*David Bever
Las Vegas, NV*

Lord, help me to be filled with joy and peace from you. Amen.

Count: Take time today to count those things that bring you joy, peace and hope.

Read: Romans 5:1-5



FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 14, 2020

Joyful in Hope

Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer.

Romans 12:12

Happiness and joy are widely different. Happiness is an emotional elevator, going up or down with the weather, our health and even our attitude toward what's happening at the moment. Joy is more like a solid rock, linked closely to the cross of Jesus Christ and his unchanging promises.

Joy is based on facts that do not change, not on feelings that fluctuate frequently. The cross of Jesus is a fact to which our faith is tied, faith anchored in the Gospel's promises of forgiveness, life and salvation. The cross gives us hope in the worst of circumstances, and joy even in the hour of death. In good times and bad, be "faithful in prayer."

*Paul Scheidt
Chesterfield, MO*

Remind me, Lord, on this Valentine's Day, of your unfailing promise, presence, and love for me and all people. Amen.

Ask: Pray for those who need hope in difficult times.

Read: Romans 8:28-39

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 15, 2020

Right Place, Right Time

The heart of man plans his way, but the Lord establishes his steps.

Proverbs 16:9

I serve on our denominational prayer team. We travel around the country conducting renewal services and prayer vigils.

One time we were in North Carolina for renewal services and workshops. However, at a picnic preceding the services, I struck up a conversation with a man sitting in a wheelchair on the porch. I learned that he was fighting a rare form of deadly skin cancer. I had fought that same fight with that same cancer. I shared my story with him and he finally no longer felt alone in his struggle. It wasn't an accident or coincidence. It was a holy moment, a God-arranged moment. I was in the right place at the right time and, in this case, with the right disease to minister to this gentleman.

*Glen VanderKloot
Springfield, IL*

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

Ask: Pray for eyes of faith to discover why God has placed you where you are.

Read: Isaiah 6:1-8



SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 16, 2020

Jumping in Puddles

Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances.

1 Thessalonians 5:16-18

In videos and in person, I have watched my four-year-old grandson jumping in puddles. His parents dress him for the occasion with a jacket and rain boots, but he manages to soak himself. The idea is to whoop and jump hard, the higher the splash the better. It is a magnified version of me enjoying a walk in the rain.

We lose spontaneity with age, perhaps through the repetitiousness of everyday life, and having less energy. *Been there, done that*, we think. What would Jesus say? If we ground our lives in the love of Jesus, knowing that he lives in us (John 15:11, 16:24), that our joy is given by the Holy Spirit (1 Thessalonians 1:6), joy is our permanent state. We may not jump in puddles for fun, but we have God's grace to make us whole.

*Judy Scherr
Lemay, MO*

Dwell in us, Lord of our lives, and may we sing you praises for the beauty of your creation. Amen.

Plan: The next time it rains, get your raincoat (or not) and go for a walk.

Read: Psalm 95:1-7a; 1 Thessalonians 5:14-19

MONDAY, FEBRUARY 17, 2020

Whodunnit?

Come see what God has done.

Psalm 66:5

Mystery or miracle? As I look back over my 87 years of pilgrimage on this earth, I recall several times when I was confronted with seemingly insurmountable obstacles. At the time, it was a mystery to me as to how I would overcome such trials and tribulations. My faith was being tested!

Then, when I emerged triumphant, I wondered how I did that. I had felt so weak and afraid in the face of danger, but surprisingly, I made it through okay. It ceased to be a mystery when I consulted God's Word. In Ephesians 3:16, the apostle Paul, who survived countless tragedies, says to us, "God grants you to be strengthened with the might through his spirit to the inner man." That's it! It's not a mystery ... it's a miracle! Yes, God still performs miracles in our weak lives. "Come see what God has done!"

*Chuck Conner
Festus, MO*

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

Share: Use Christ's strength in your life to help someone who is weaker.

Read: 2 Corinthians 12:9-10; Isaiah 40:28-31



TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 18, 2020

God's Image!

God made man in his own image.

Genesis 1:27

Sometimes I look at my image in a mirror and think, “Where did that old guy come from?” Does that ever happen to you? I try to say it with a touch of wry humor!

You are made in God's image! Read that sentence again and emphasize the exclamation point. A couple things follow from today's Bible verse. One, you are not an accident. God made you, and he did so on purpose. Two, the sin-tarnished image of God was restored—burnished and new—through Jesus, who is the very image of the invisible God. You are in Christ, and so you are a new creation. That image in the mirror reflects the image of God.

*Don Schatz
Lynnwood, WA*

God, you are the artist, I am the clay. You made me just right. Amen.

Look: Look in the mirror. Remind yourself that you are made in God's image.

Read: Psalm 103

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 19, 2020

Older and Bolder

For what you are to say will be given to you in that hour.

Matthew 10:19

Queen Esther in the Persian court, Daniel in the lions' den, the apostles martyred one after another: they exemplify bravery and willingness to face danger. Next to them, I am the mouse in the corner, hesitant and afraid. What if I say the wrong thing, or they don't like me, or I offend someone? Fortunately, God has helped me overcome some of these what-ifs.

Not only are imagined consequences way down the scale from the biblical examples, but they most probably are wrong. We can't read another person's reactions. Why worry? Get thicker skinned! Narrowing down the issue to speaking up concerning my faith, I've found it much easier to be bold. We have an ever-faithful assistant in the Holy Spirit! I realize now that I've depended on the Holy Spirit without knowing it, for God is faithful even when we falter.

*Judy Scherr
Lemay, MO*

Dear Lord, forgive us when we make excuses, and embolden us to declare your word. Amen.

Try it: Push aside those imagined scenarios and let the Lord lead.

Read: Exodus 4:10-17; Matthew 10:17-20



THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 20, 2020

Count on It

In Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them.

2 Corinthians 5:19

Many people picture God as a divine scorekeeper, recording every sin committed by each person on earth. This view of God leads only to hopelessness, because our sinful human nature cannot keep from sinning. And no amount of good that we do can make up for our sins.

But the Gospel brings us good news of forgiveness, hope and peace. The God who counts the stars in the sky and the hairs on your head does not count your sins. Because Jesus paid for those sins on the cross, they are removed forever. God counts them forgiven and counts you righteous.

*Eileen Ritter
Byron Center, MI*

Thank you, Lord, for forgiving me for Jesus' sake. Help me to forgive others as you have forgiven me. Amen.

Forgive: Instead of counting someone else's sins against you, forgive as you have been forgiven.

Read: Matthew 18:21-35

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 21, 2020

A Fragrance of Joy

And through us spreads the fragrance of the knowledge of him everywhere.

2 Corinthians 2:14

In our life, we have participated in many things we recognized as our unique “ministry” to others. The Holy Spirit gifts and uses each one according to his purposes. But there’s one ministry shared by everyone: scattering seeds of joy throughout our small and big world; making Christ known through the joy we possess. It may not be the same with everyone or everywhere we go. For some, it will be a smile. For another, a sincere compliment for service given or their beautiful attitude. For still others, offering an uplifting or positive message that inspires and refreshes. If we partner with the Spirit each day, he will guide us in our ministry of joy and even lead us to those who most need to experience some joy in their day.

*Cheryl-Ann Lewis
North Ridgeville, Ohio*

Spirit, each day you are my guide and confidence as I set out to spread joy to everyone I cross paths with. Amen.

Make: Make a physical list of the ways spreading joy to others comes naturally for you.

Read: Psalm 92:1-4; Acts 13:48-52



SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 22, 2020

The Gift

Look carefully then how you walk ... making the best use of the time.

Ephesians 5:15-16

From 1955 to 1960 Americans tuned in to CBS to watch a television series called “The Millionaire.” In each episode an anonymous wealthy benefactor gifted a recipient with \$1,000,000. The dramas revealed how each gift was used for good or for evil.

Each day we are given a valuable gift by our heavenly Father—24 hours to use as we see fit, for good or for evil. Will your minutes be spent in gossip and complaining, or will you speak words of encouragement and witness? Will your hands lie idle, or will they be occupied caring for others? Will your mind waste hours in worrying or confidently trust in your Father’s care? Yesterday is history; tomorrow is a mystery. Today is a gift. Maybe that’s why we call it the present.

*Eileen Ritter
Byron Center, MI*

Heavenly Father, help us use every minute and hour to your glory. Amen.

Evaluate: How will you use your time to glorify God?

Read: Psalm 90:12-17

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 23, 2020

Finding God

And after the earthquake a fire, but the LORD was not in the fire. And after the fire the sound of a low whisper.

1 Kings 19:12

Another ear-splitting boom shook our eardrums as my husband and I looked skyward during an air show and marveled at the fighter jets zooming past. What potential for destruction these planes had!

Then a tiny movement in front of me caught my eye. A spider, no bigger than my thumbnail, was dangling in mid-air on a single thread. Oblivious to all that noise, the spider was quietly building its web, swinging from one nearly invisible strand to another according to its own intricate pattern.

The stark contrast made me wonder about my relationship with God. Do I most often look for God's help only in the spectacular events of life—those filled with noise and chaos and confusion? If so, how often do I miss the “low whisper” of God's presence even in the mundane tasks of daily living?

*Nancy J. Clark
Niles, MI*

Help me, Lord, to hear your voice always. Amen.

Do: Stop and listen for God.

Read: I Kings 19:9-18



MONDAY, FEBRUARY 24, 2020

Washing

Then he poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet.

John 13:5

You were just in swimming at a sandy beach and before you get in the car, you wash your feet. Are you planning to do likewise with others' feet? You would if they are your children. Jesus washed the feet of his disciples for they were his children. He was setting an example for them to do likewise. Remember that in his time, people had no paved streets and their feet became dirty. Many houses had a slave do this washing.

Although we no longer have the opportunities to wash the feet of others, we have the opportunity to do good to others in many ways. We could help others by cleaning the houses of the needy, giving them rides, mowing their lawn and many such deeds.

*Jim Wiedman
Lombard, IL*

Even as I have grown old, Lord, I have the opportunities to do good to so many others in my life. Please show me how. Amen.

Try: Will you wash the feet of someone today?

Read: John 8:48-56

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 25, 2020

Your Purpose

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

Proverbs 16:3

As we become older and often contend with the daily challenges of aging, it is easy to feel we lack a purpose in life. During this season in life, we can begin to feel like we don't have anything of value to contribute to this world. However, this mindset couldn't be further from the truth!

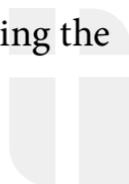
Kathie Lee Gifford, the well-known talk show host, summed it up well when she said, "Every day if I have a pulse, I have a purpose." God has a plan for all of our lives. As long as our hearts are still beating, and there is breath in our lungs, we have purpose and something to contribute to society. Discover and follow his plan for your life today!

*Betsy Becker Niedringhaus
Ballwin, MO*

Dear Heavenly Father, help me discover your purpose for this season in my life. Amen.

Do: Follow God's purpose for your life by using the abilities you're given.

Read: Proverbs 16:1-3



WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 26, 2020

Step into Lent

The faithful love of the Lord never ends! ... His mercies begin afresh each morning.

Lamentations 3:22-23

Here are five thoughts for the Lenten season:

- Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus. He humbled himself—he became obedient to death, even death on a cross. (Philippians 2:5, 8)
- Jesus came to bring abundant life. (John 10:10)
- My soul finds rest in God alone, my salvation comes from him. (Psalm 62:1)
- Pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance, and godliness; fight the good fight of faith. (1 Timothy 6:11-12)
- Come, Lord Jesus, come! (Revelation 22:20)

*Walter M. Schoedel
Webster Groves, MO*

Lord Jesus, help me make Lent count for my spiritual growth. Amen.

Lenten time: Pause now, ponder now and pursue a Christ-like life this Lent.

Read: Philippians 2:1-11

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 27, 2020

Fear Not

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

Matthew 28:20

Do you remember those moments as a child when something in the dark scared you awake from a sound sleep? In the night when all is dark and you are alone, it's easy to feel afraid. That's when it's time to call for someone to come and shine a light on your fear and remind you that you are safe; there's nothing to be afraid of.

But think now of Jesus in the last hours before the soldiers came to take him away to suffer and die. In the dark of that night, he knew there was good reason to be afraid. He even prayed that perhaps his Father in heaven might provide a way out of the torment waiting for him. Think now of this—because Jesus went and faced the horrors of that dark night, we can trust him when he tells us, “Do not fear. Only believe” (Mark 5:36).

*Edward Arle
St. Charles, MO*

Lord, when I am afraid, help me to remember you are never far away. Amen.

Help: Encourage others to trust Jesus in difficult times.

Read: Isaiah 41:10; Romans 8:31



FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 28, 2020

The Right Time

While we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly.

Romans 5:6

Members of the armed forces selflessly serve us all and, if the need arises, willingly sacrifice their lives to save their fellow warriors. First responders rush into situations at the risk of their own lives to save people they do not know.

The Lord Jesus did not lay down his life to save strangers. “While we were still sinners, Christ died for us” (Romans 5:8). Jesus died to save people he knew very well. He “knew what was in man” (John 2:25), and what is in man, in all of us, is not good. “From within, out of the heart of man, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, coveting, wickedness, deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride, foolishness” (Mark 7:21-22). Jesus knew, and still he gave his life to save us.

*Carol Geisler
Orange, CA*

Lord Jesus, watch over all those who save others at the risk of their own lives. Amen.

Share: Express your thanks to first responders and to those who serve in the armed forces.

Read: Romans 5:1-11

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 29, 2020

The Lord Has Done It!

The Lord has done great things for us; we are glad.

Psalms 126:3

I wish that this would had been my confirmation verse, instead of the one I was given, “Be gone, Satan!” Too often, we give the impression that the Lord has not yet risen from the grave! We get stuck on the Good Fridays in our lives and fail to rejoice and celebrate Easter, knowing in faith that after every Good Friday, there is always an Easter!

Let us encourage each other daily to realize that sharing the joy of the Lord is not our job—it’s our joy!

Regardless of how this day goes for us, rejoice that the Lord continues to love and forgive as we love and forgive others. Let us all be “reverse paranoids”—people who are convinced that everyone is out to make us happy, in the Lord!

*Rich Bimler
Bloomingdale, IL*

Lord, thanks for loving us, not for what we do but for what you have already done for us! Amen.

Smile: Smile and laugh more today and see how people react around you!

Read: Psalm 126



SUNDAY, MARCH 1, 2020

March Sadness

I will turn their mourning into ... gladness.

Jeremiah 31:13

“March Madness” captures the attention of many people this month, as 68 college basketball teams compete to win the NCAA tournament. But most teams will finish with a sense of sadness.

During this Lenten season, we may feel a sense of “March sadness,” as our worship and devotional life focus on the suffering that Jesus endured for us. He not only experienced excruciating physical suffering, but also bore the brunt of our sin and guilt, in order to win for us the ultimate prize of eternal life.

After 40 days, however, our March sadness turns into April gladness. We can't wait to join the faithful women at the empty tomb on Easter morning and join in the glad refrain, “Christ is risen! He is risen indeed!” We rejoice, knowing that one day our victorious Savior will welcome us into the winner's circle in heaven.

*Gil Duchow
Muskego, WI*

Lord Jesus, I praise you for winning salvation for me on the cross, so I can stand with you. Amen.

Tell: Share with someone that Jesus transforms our sadness into eternal gladness.

Read: Jeremiah 31:10-17

MONDAY, MARCH 2, 2020

My Way or His Way?

For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will but the will of him who sent me.

John 6:38

“I did it my way” is a long-time popular sentiment embraced by lots of people. Certainly God wants us to live with firm conviction, courage and bold action. We can see this in the way Jesus lived—a life we hold as a perfect example. Yet Jesus’ words and actions reveal a life lived not his own way but his Father’s way.

Jesus says, “For I have not spoken on my own authority, but the Father who sent me has himself given me a commandment—what to say and what to speak” (John 12:49). Again, “I seek not my own will but the will of him who sent me” (John 5:30). Then as his earthly life nears its end, Jesus faces suffering and death with these words to his Father, “Nevertheless, not my will, but yours, be done” (Luke 22:42). Because Jesus lived his life the Father’s way, we now live by faith in him and joyfully receive the gift of eternal life.

*Marj Maynard
Pipe Creek, TX*

Father, thank you for sending Jesus. Amen.

Reflect: Think about Jesus living his life for you.

Read: John 7:14-18; John 12:44-50



TUESDAY, MARCH 3, 2020

Living a Parable

Do not neglect to do good and to share what you have, for such sacrifices are pleasing to God.

Hebrews 13:16

Only two seats remained on the Canal Streetcar. We took them and immediately the young man next to us showed us the contents of his paper grocery sack. It was filled with party goods and fireworks for the evening's Fourth of July celebration he was sharing with friends. We expressed delight in his sharing. When we stood to depart, the young man reached inside the bag and gave us a string of those famous New Orleans beads. The beaming young man wouldn't take "No" for an answer.

We felt like we were living one of our Savior's parables. Rejoicing in the young man's happiness and unselfish sharing, we were reminded that Christians are to rejoice always and to share what they possess.

*David Bernthal
Juliette, GA*

Lord, joyfully you shared your love for us in sacrificial manner. Remove our selfishness and fear that we may freely share your love. Amen.

Practice: Privately, practice presenting your love of Jesus. Publicly, be prepared to share the Savior.

Read: 1 Timothy 6:18; Psalm 118:24

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 4, 2020

Picture God's Love

I will extend peace to her like a river ... You shall be carried upon her hip ... as one whom his mother comforts, so I will comfort you.

Isaiah 66:12-13

Picture yourself standing on the promontory at West Point, New York, high above the Hudson River, flowing peacefully below. Now imagine a young mother with her laughing, bouncing baby on her hip. Isaiah picks two of the most beautiful—and yet totally different—images I can think of to describe God's love for us. Isaiah's images of what will happen to the ungodly are graphic, and we watch in horror. But then he offers pictures of our loving God who restores his people: God is like parents who delight in their children, who provide for and comfort them, and he's like a singing, flowing river that offers us a quiet peace. Metaphors of loving parents and peaceful bodies of water remind us that we are his and his love will endure forever.

*Sally Beck
Williamsburg, VA*

Thank you, Lord, for all the word pictures that show me I am yours. Amen.

Imagine: What images do you have to understand God's love for you?

Read: Isaiah 49:14-16



THURSDAY, MARCH 5, 2020

A Deaf Ear?

You have given me an open ear.

Psalm 40:6

I have a hearing problem. My wife maintains I have a listening problem. She says I hear what I want to hear.

God desires from his people more than acts of piety. He wants willing obedience. This is especially important for one who is a leader. David affirms that as king, “I will delight to do your will, O my God, your law is within my heart” (Psalm 40:8). God had given him an open ear to receive his Word. Now, to do what God’s Word says. David meant well but did not always live up to it. Neither do we. Thank God he sent Jesus to fulfill his will perfectly in our stead, being obedient even unto death on the cross. For Jesus’ sake, God now declares us righteous. Grateful for his mercy, we join David in seeking to gladly hear his Word and then gladly do it!

*Ted Zimmerman
Napa, CA*

Dear Lord, open our ears to hear you speak to encourage and guide us, and then gladly do what you command! Amen.

Ask: What is God saying to me through this devotion? What am I going to do about it?

Read: Psalm 40:1-10; Hebrews 10:1-10

FRIDAY, MARCH 6, 2020

Humility

Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will exalt you.

James 4:10

“It ain’t easy being humble, when you are as great as I am!” sang the old country music star, with a sense of humor. Am I like the Pharisee, standing up in the temple bragging about his self-righteousness? Or am I like the tax collector, who knelt and prayed, “Lord, be merciful to me, a sinner!”? God loves the humble, repentant sinner.

God demonstrated the greatest act of humility when he humbled himself and became a human being in our world, the God-Man Jesus Christ. Jesus knelt in the upper room and washed his disciples’ dirty feet. He died in our place on the cross to give us eternal life. Jesus is the perfect model of humility. Our heavenly Father teaches us humility as we become older and weaker. We confess that we depend on God and we pray, “Lord, have mercy, forgive us. Grant us your peace and keep us in Christ Jesus now and forever. Amen.”

*Chuck Conner
Festus, MO*

Lord, make me contrite and humble. Amen.

Witness: Show others that you are a humble, happy Christian, serving Christ and your neighbors.

Read: Psalm 51; Mark 10:42-45

SATURDAY, MARCH 7, 2020

Light from Light

He was a burning and shining lamp, and you were willing to rejoice for a while in his light.

John 5:35

The Israelites experienced long dark times. Job suffered many dark years. How dark it was for Jonah inside a whale! It was into this type of despair that John the Baptist spoke when he introduced Jesus to the crowd: “Behold, the Lamb of God!”

Imagine how excited the Israelites felt when they first met their Savior! John assured them that this is the Christ, the one who would light their way. After testing Job, God lifted him out of the pit, spotlighting his faith. Jonah’s dim wait inside the whale was finally over when God miraculously freed him onto dry land.

All of these believers recognized Christ as their light in the wilderness. God’s glory is truly worth celebrating!

*Lisa Heule
Littleton, CO*

Lamb of God, you light up my life. I praise you for making me radiant! Amen.

Shine: Turn your face to the light and rejoice in the glory of your Savior!

Read: Habakkuk 3:17-18; Revelation 21:22-26

SUNDAY, MARCH 8, 2020

Planning Ahead

The LORD of hosts has sworn: "As I have planned, so shall it be."

Isaiah 14:24

When we were young, we liked to dream big dreams and make big plans for our future. We planned on having a family, buying a home, investing in a retirement plan and providing security for our loved ones with life insurance. We paid astronomical rates for hospital and medical plans. We soon learned that not all of our plans worked out as we planned.

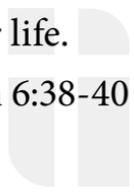
But how about God's plan for us? Yes, God has a plan for each and every one of us. We must consider God's will in our life. Quakers are known for their practice of prefixing every plan with, "Lord willing." Good point! We will say, "Lord willing, I plan to do this or that." Our Lord taught us to pray to our Father in heaven, "Thy will be done." God's plan for us is that we know Jesus Christ, his Son, as our personal Lord and Savior.

*Chuck Conner
Festus, MO*

Lord God, bless my plans according to your will.
Amen.

Tell: Tell others that God has a plan for their life.

Read: Jeremiah 29:11-13; James 4:13-15; John 6:38-40



MONDAY, MARCH 9, 2020

Gratitude Made Generous

You will be enriched in every way to be generous in every way.

2 Corinthians 9:11

On a magazine page, there are the words, “Gratitude Made Gorgeous” and a basket overflowing with flowers—large, showy pink peonies. Is this how we express gratitude to God and others—generously, joyfully? Or is our gratitude more like a single dry twig in a paper cup?

Why hold back? There’s joy in expressing gratitude in large showy ways, with heartfelt prayers to God for his blessings and gushing thank-you notes to those who help us. We are called to show gratitude generously, not taking God’s love and others’ kindness for granted. Our gratitude should be overflowing with humility, not withered by pride. We can make our expressions of gratitude simply gorgeous!

*Catherine A. Welch
Southbury, CT*

Loving God, help me be humble and generous in every way. Amen.

Reflect: Think of ways to more joyfully express gratitude to God and others.

Read: Psalm 150; Psalm 9:1-2

TUESDAY, MARCH 10, 2020

Walking Together

For I am the LORD your God who takes hold of your right hand and says to you, do not fear; I will help you.

Isaiah 41:13

The aging process is one where each of us have different, and sometimes unique, situations or challenges in our lives. An active life without any physical restrictions is a blessing. Life changes resulting in restrictions that arise suddenly can lead to anxiety about what is happening. You wonder, “What do I do now?” Acceptance of situations in our lives requires us to seek others for help and guidance. Isaiah communicates so clearly the Word of the Lord: “Do not fear, I will help you.” God provides individuals and resources for all of us; we need to use what he does provide. Reach out your hands in prayer. He is wanting to hear from you.

*Don Hollmann
Ballwin, MO*

Blessed Savior, when difficulties appear, may we always remember your love and know that you are always waiting for us to ask for help. Amen.

Reflect: Remember, you are never alone.

Read: Deuteronomy 31:6



WEDNESDAY, MARCH 11, 2020

Protection

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

Ephesians 6:11

At the end of our study of Ephesians, I asked the class to share their favorite verse. One member, a 93-year-old woman, explained that she liked the image of the whole armor of God because it made her feel safe. What a fitting choice for all of us who are older citizens!

When every day brings unexpected challenges to our health and well-being, we need the shield of faith to protect us from yielding to despair. When friends and loved ones die, we need the helmet of salvation to remind us that life on earth is not the end. And when we lose direction, we need the sword of the Spirit to point us to the Bible, God's Word, where we will continue to find new insights into how God wants us to live.

*Nancy J. Clark
Niles, MI*

Thank you, Lord, for protecting us through all the changes in life. Amen.

Do: Tell someone about how you feel protected by God's armor.

Read: Ephesians 6:10-20; Psalm 119:105-116

THURSDAY, MARCH 12, 2020

Joy in Persecution

Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

Matthew 5:12

Jesus begins his Sermon on the Mount in Matthew with the familiar Beatitudes. A contemporary hymn, entitled “Blest Are They,” includes a refrain after every Beatitude verse: “Rejoice and be glad! Blessed are you, holy are you. Rejoice and be glad! Yours is the kingdom of God!” Because of Christ’s saving life, death, and resurrection, every believer can humbly reach out to our world with his love. That includes being “persecuted for righteousness’ sake.” Could God be bringing you into his kingdom for such a time as this? Like the prophets before, you rejoice and be glad in the face of persecution. By God’s grace, yours is the kingdom of God now and eternally.

*Stephen J. Carter
Oakville, MO*

Persecuted Lord, make me bold to share your saving love with others. Amen.

Share: Joyfully share Christ’s love with someone this week.

Read: Matthew 5:1-12



FRIDAY, MARCH 13, 2020

Relics of the Past?

The righteous ... still bear fruit in old age.

Psalm 92:12, 14

The picture on my train calendar shows the Union Pacific Challenger 3810 pulling freight under a full head of steam. I relate to that steam engine. I served as pastor for 40 years. In my day, I pulled my weight and delivered the goods. Even in retirement, I am still regularly preaching. Yet I sense that I belong more to the past than to the contemporary scene in many congregations today. Am I still serviceable in God's business plan?

Lay people also face the same issue as their work world changes, or they adjust to retirement. How serviceable are we? The psalmist suggests that we can still deliver God's goods! Filled with the vitality of his Spirit, we can produce fruit of Christian character, be good examples to others and deliver a load of wisdom and services! We're "Little Engines" that still can do!

*Ted Zimmerman
Napa, CA*

Lord, pour on the coal of your Spirit so we can deliver your goods! Amen.

Ask: Who most needs a load of my love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, encouragement, or wisdom today?

Read: Psalm 92:12-15; Galatians 5:22—6:10

SATURDAY, MARCH 14, 2020

Walk Like This

Whoever says he abides in him ought to walk in the same way in which he walked.

1 John 2:6

I recently took a character trait assessment. Have you ever done that? Yes, you have. Every follower of Jesus is assessed, but not by the Lord! We are followers of Jesus by the pure and awesome grace of God! His grace makes each of us a new creation and that new creation is alive in Jesus. He came that we “may have life in his name” (John 20:31).

You are alive in Jesus! You are God’s new creation. You walk as Jesus did. You walk mercy into the lives of others. You walk love. You walk forgiveness. You walk joy. You walk hope. You walk life. What a blessing that God has created and called you to walk as Jesus did!

*Don Schatz
Kenmore, WA*

Holy God, I am the feet of Jesus today. Help me to walk as he did. Please, come walk with me. Amen.

Follow: Purposefully walk in Christ’s love today in the life of at least one other person.

Read: 1 John 2:28 to 3:10



SUNDAY, MARCH 15, 2020

Beware the Ides of March

Watch and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees.

Matthew 16:6

“Have no fear. It’s only a play.” Shakespeare wrote this line about fearing the Ides of March into his play, *Julius Caesar*, and it has become famous.

We have no reason to fear the Ides of March, but Jesus says to beware the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees. You say, “There aren’t any Pharisees or Sadducees around here.” Of course there are, and their “leaven” rises within all of us. We become sure that our goodness makes us right with God. The leaven of the Pharisees says, “I had something to do with it.” We must not forget that faith is entirely a gift. Jesus took our sins to the cross so that we can be forgiven.

*Eldor Kaiser
Lenexa, KS*

O Lord, thank you for your gifts of faith and forgiveness. Quell and forgive my pride and self-righteousness. Amen.

Rejoice: Each morning, thank God for the gift of faith.

Read: Matthew 15:1-10

MONDAY, MARCH 16, 2020

Out of Service

I know your works—your love, faith, service, and patient endurance.

Revelation 2:19

I glanced back at the bus to see its destination. But the sign read, “out of service.” It passed by the people at the bus stop.

Thankfully, our faithful Lord is never out of service. He is always available when we call on him, 24/7. We can count on him for help and hope, for strength and guidance, no matter what challenging situations we may face.

In gratitude for God’s forgiving love and faithfulness, we should never be out of service to him. Because aging is a gift given to us by our Lord, we still have so much experience, encouragement, and time to share with others. Let’s continue our service to the younger and older among us.

*Gil Duchow
Muskego, WI*

Faithful Lord, show me ways I can serve you and other people, no matter what my situation in life is. Amen.

Ask: Talk to your pastor about a ministry you can be involved in or begin at your church.

Read: 1 Corinthians 12:4-7



TUESDAY, MARCH 17, 2020

New Every Morning

The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases; his mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness.

Lamentations 3:22-23

In this life we're used to things that don't last. Clothes, shoes and household goods wear thin and wear out. That's why we have weekly trash collection.

The Bible assures us that God's love never runs thin or wears out. His love is steadfast. It is dependable and reliable. We can count on it. The Lord's mercies are in unlimited supply. They are new every morning. That means that each day my mistakes are washed away and God sees me as his precious child, as if for the first time. This is hard to comprehend in our throw-away world. but it is true.

*Lynne Waite Chapman
Fort Wayne, IN*

Heavenly Father, thank you for the blessing of love that never changes. I am humbled by your mercy that is new every morning. Great is your faithfulness. Amen.

Copy: Imitate Jesus and show someone steadfast love and unending mercy today.

Read: Hebrews 4:16; Romans 3:23-24

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 18, 2020

Life's Road

I have become all things to all people, that by all means, I might save some.

1 Corinthians 9:22

The apostle Paul knew Jesus and knew himself. The self-righteousness that once fed his pride was now counted to his shame. Paul sensed the depth of his sin. Jesus had knocked him from his pedestal to the Damascus road (Acts 9). Molded to be the Holy Spirit's tool, Paul was unafraid to approach anyone. Paul desired damnation for neither friend nor foe.

My friend, you and I have traveled many miles of life's road. We have been removed from prideful pedestals. We have learned the difference between our conceited opinions and God's desires. The Spirit has molded us. We desire hell for neither friend nor foe. It is always the year of Christ's cross. We are bowed down; we are lifted up by his gracious nail-pierced hand.

*Harry Edenfield
Brownstown, MI*

Remind me, Lord: you are the Potter; I am your clay.
Amen.

Meditate: Think about what the Spirit has equipped you to be.

Read: Acts 9:1-22; 1 Corinthians 9:19-23



THURSDAY, MARCH 19, 2020

Garbage In, Garbage Out

Whatever is pure, whatever is lovely ... if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things.

Philippians 4:8

You've likely heard the phrase, "garbage in, garbage out." Often associated with the computing world (but applicable in many spheres of life!), the phrase means that if you have bad quality data going in, you will have poor quality information coming out.

At a most basic level, that is how our minds work as well. What we watch, read, hear and see has a huge impact on what we think and say and do. No surprise that Paul would say, "Think about these things," because he had just reminded us that "the peace of God ... will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 4:7).

*Mark Schoepp
Yuba City, CA*

Jesus, guard my heart. Help me to think on excellent and praiseworthy things. Amen.

Ask: What influences your thinking each day? Try to boost the positive and limit the negative influences.

Read: Philippians 4:4-9

FRIDAY, MARCH 20, 2020

The Living God

Shall I fall down before a block of wood?

Isaiah 44:19

The prophet Isaiah mocks the foolishness of idol worship, describing a craftsman who cuts down a tree and uses part of wood to build a fire and cook his dinner. The rest of the wood he shapes into an idol, praying to the wooden figure, “Deliver me, for you are my god!” (Isaiah 44:17).

Surely, we think, the craftsman must realize what he is doing. But then we remember some of the people and things that tempt *our* hearts to false worship—earthly wealth and possessions, athletes and entertainers, power and popularity. But the Holy Spirit has called us by the Gospel, and the veil of unbelief has been lifted from our hearts and minds. We do not worship a false god crafted from a tree. We worship the living God, who *created* trees, the living God who sent his Son to die on a tree to save us.

*Carol Geisler
Orange, CA*

Lord Jesus, lead us to reach out in love to those still lost in the darkness of unbelief. Amen.

Ask: Pray for missionaries who carry the good news of Jesus into the world.

Read: Isaiah 44:1-22; 2 Corinthians 3:12-18



SATURDAY, MARCH 21, 2020

Faith in Bloom

They are planted in the house of the LORD; they flourish in the courts of our God.

Psalm 92:13

Spring is one of my favorite seasons of the year. After a long winter filled with dreary, cold days, I welcome the longer daylight hours and the colorful budding trees and flowers of the new season. It feels as if life has been renewed and restored once again.

As deciduous trees become dormant during the winter, sometimes our faith can fall into a similar state. The pressures and stresses of life can drag us down and leave us feeling empty. Just as gardens need weeding and trees need pruning, we, too, need to actively nurture our Christian faith if we are to bloom where God has planted us. Tend to your faith every day and watch your life be forever in bloom!

*Betsy Becker Niedringhaus
Ballwin, MO*

Dear Heavenly Father, keep us planted in you.
Amen.

Do: Watch your life blossom through regular worship, fellowship and prayer.

Read: Psalm 92:12-15; Mark 4:30-34

SUNDAY, MARCH 22, 2020

Grow in the Dark

O LORD ... even the darkness is not dark to you; the night is bright as the day, for darkness is as light with you.

Psalm 139:1, 12

Some garden plants need full sunlight, while many houseplants can thrive in low-light rooms. Amazingly, even a few plants can grow in heavy shade cast by tall buildings. It's all part of God's plan.

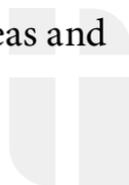
As Christians, we can grow in all light conditions, but sometimes we grow the most in heavy shade. Here, we may talk to God more often. We cling to God. We become humble. In dark times of sickness, sorrow or overwhelming changes, we are not concerned about impressing anyone. We just want to survive the challenge and find peace again. Like plants that rise through cement cracks on a city sidewalk, we stretch upward toward God, the source of all light and joy. We are still in the shade, but we can see the sky—hope—which is always part of God's plan.

*Catherine A. Welch
Southbury, CT*

Thank you, God, for hope. It keeps me going. Amen.

See: Look outside. Find plants in shaded areas and accept hope.

Read: Psalm 139:9-10; Luke 11:33-36



MONDAY, MARCH 23, 2020

God's Chosen Ones

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

Colossians 3:12

I am part of God's marvelous handiwork and there will never be another person exactly like me. This is worth celebrating! I am unique and gifted, beloved and called by God to use my gifts in the service of others. God has clothed me with compassion so I am open to the needs of those around me. I have all that I need to be an instrument of God's loving purpose. On the days I forget God has called me, God reminds me I am special and I am needed.

*Sally Macke
St. Louis, MO*

Thank you, God, for helping me to give to others and thus allowing me to fulfill your purpose for me. Help me to always remember I am your chosen one and that you love me. Please place the people in my path whom I am called to serve. Amen.

Reflect: What are 2 or 3 talents or skills I can use to help others?

Read: Matthew 25:31-46

TUESDAY, MARCH 24, 2020

More Tigger, Less Eeyore

With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation.

Isaiah 12:3

A bumper sticker reads, “More Tigger. Less Eeyore.” In the children’s classic, *Winnie the Pooh*, we hear Eeyore say, “End of the road. Nothing to do, and no hope of things getting better.” And he finds no joy in birthdays: “After all, what are birthdays? Here today and gone tomorrow.” Meanwhile, Tigger exclaims, “Say, I’m so happy I feel like bouncing!”

Our God has saved us through his Son’s payment for sin and his victory over death and the grave. Nothing can separate us from God’s saving love in Jesus Christ. We can echo these joyful words of Isaiah: “The LORD GOD is my strength and my song, and he has become my salvation” (Isaiah 12:2).

*Steve Hess
Ft. Myers, FL*

Thank you, Father, for giving us a reason to rejoice today because of your Son’s salvation. Empower us today and always to bounce with joy in this Good News. Amen.

Affirm: Be a joyful Tigger today by shining a positive light on someone having an Eeyore day.

Read: Psalm 126; Isaiah 12:1-6



WEDNESDAY, MARCH 25, 2020

The Source of Joy

...in your presence there is fullness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures forevermore.

Psalm 16:11

Joy is a feeling of happiness or of being elated. With that in mind, what brings you joy? That answer can change depending on your circumstances. Certainly, it is different for all of us too. Some may say their grandchildren bring them joy. Others may say an old-fashioned home-cooked meal would bring them joy. If you have been ill for a length of time, a clean bill of health would bring you joy.

There is one answer that brings everyone joy. It is not a situation or an occasion. In other words, it is not *what* that brings us joy, but *who*! Ultimately, our joy comes from the Lord. In him, we find out joy. His death and resurrection have saved us and that will bring us joy—here on earth and also in eternity!

*Celeste Cummins
Storm Lake, IA*

Thank you, Lord, for the joy that you bring to my life each day. Amen.

Spend: Spend some time today doing something that brings you joy.

Read: Romans 15:8-13; Galatians 5:16-26

THURSDAY, MARCH 26, 2020

Deposits vs. Withdrawals

Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature ... clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience.

Colossians 3:5, 12

Think of interactions with others in terms of a bank account. Those who encourage and lift you up make deposits; those who are consistently negative or bring you down make withdrawals. If people are making more withdrawals than deposits, you'll soon be out of balance. If that's the case, it might be time to release them, or at the very least to release their hold on you and your emotions.

We live in a sinful world and it's easier to get caught up in the negative by-products of sin than to live by the fruit of the Spirit. That's why we can't accomplish this on our own; only through the gift of discernment can we know if it's time to let go.

*Jane Wilke
Woodbury, MN*

Lord, surround me with others who live in the light of your love. Amen.

Think: Who is a source of joy? Who is not? What can be your prayer on behalf of those who are not?

Read: 1 Corinthians 13:1-13; Ephesians 4:1-6

FRIDAY, MARCH 27, 2020

Sing for Joy

Sing for joy, O heavens, and exult, O earth ... For the LORD has comforted his people and will have compassion on his afflicted.

Isaiah 49:13

Let us count our blessings; we are surrounded by divine love. From the birds in the sky to the grass on the ground, we see God's loving creations, culminating with his creation of humanity. And God so loves us that "he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life" (John 3:16).

Through Jesus Christ, we are embraced by God's loving compassion in our joys, our works and especially in our sorrows so that we never lose heart. "And which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his span of life?" (Matthew 6:27). With Christ, we have the strength of mind and spirit to come together in faith, hope and charity to preserve the best of what our world has to offer, enabling us to see God's loving compassion at work. Let us rejoice!

*Carol Monaco
Bethesda, MD*

Dear Lord, help me to see your love each day. Amen.

Encounter: Let each moment of the day touch you as an encounter with our Lord.

Read: Matthew 6:25-34; John 3:16-21

SATURDAY, MARCH 28, 2020

The Lord Is My Strength

Do not be grieved, for the joy of the LORD is your strength.

Nehemiah 8:10

Recalling the song “Jesus Loves Me This I Know” first learned in childhood, the phrase, “I am weak, but he is strong” has taken on a new meaning. As I age, I find that I no longer have the physical strength of my youth. Opening the unforgiving lid of a tightly secured jar (without a spill) now requires a master-minded strategy.

Yet, as we age, strength can indeed be claimed, proclaimed and celebrated! Greater than physical strength, we find our strength in the breadth and depth of God’s love.

We have been gifted with forgiveness through the sacrificial love of Jesus, Son of God, sent to be our Savior. So let us live strong in the knowledge and assurance of God’s grace and the bounty of never-ending love.

*Judith Christian
St. Louis, MO*

God of mercy, thank you for your saving grace in Jesus. Fill me with the strength of your love and the power of your forgiveness. Amen.

Sing: Sing the song “Jesus Loves Me, This I Know.”

Read: Isaiah 40:28-31



SUNDAY, MARCH 29, 2020

Rejoice Always?

Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances, for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.

Thessalonians 5:16-18

Thirty high school students stood on stage singing, “These are a few of my favorite things,” from the musical *The Sound of Music*. They sang about raindrops on roses and warm woolen mittens—some of the things we take for granted. These are the simple things in their lives which are cluttered with Instagram and Facebook, schoolwork, fear and trepidation. The smiles on their faces showed that they would prefer to find joy in these favorite things rather than the burdens that accompany their lives.

Our lives are that way too. Most days, we forget to thank God for the most basic things—the sunrise, the food in our refrigerator, the neighbor who stops by. We fail to give thanks “in all circumstances,” as Paul reminds us. It’s a challenge, but we are up for it!

*Margaret Hinchey
Englewood, CO*

Gracious God, give me a grateful heart. Amen.

Rejoice: Rejoice in the “favorite things” which are part of your daily life

Read: Romans 12:12; 1 Timothy 6:17

MONDAY, MARCH 30, 2020

Pistachios, Pinochle and People

You also were included in Christ when you heard the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation.

Ephesians 1:13

With pistachios, you definitely want to separate the empty shells, the discards, from the rest of the pile. The card game pinochle has a discard pile. It is important to keep those separate as well. That works for pistachios and pinochle. It doesn't work as well with people. Sometimes we discard people, perhaps because they are different from us. We keep them at a distance so we feel safe. Or we may even feel like we are being discarded, forgotten and neglected. We think, "No one is interested in what I have to say anymore."

Good news! God picks us up from the discard pile and loves us. God includes us in his kingdom because he loves us!

*Mark Schoepp
Yuba City, CA*

Lord, thank you for including me in your family. Give me your eyes to see and include others too. Amen.

Consider: Think of people you know who need to hear that God loves them. Find a way to tell them.

Read: Ephesians 1:3-10; 1 Corinthians 6:9-11

TUESDAY, MARCH 31, 2020

Fruit Salad

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

Galatians 5:22-23

Every time I need to come up with something to bring for potluck, I always seem to choose fruit salad.

Now that I think about it, that's my life every day ... a concoction of mixed-up fruit of the Spirit. Or at least it ought to be. I admit to often failing when interruptions should result in patience, anger should be replaced with kindness, or worry should be traded for peace.

On my own, I'm a complete and utter failure, which makes sense because our sinful nature desires what is contrary to the Spirit and vice versa (Galatians 5:17). But because Christ overcame sin, I can now live in step with the Spirit, producing fruit. And that's ever so sweet!

*Jane Wilke
Woodbury, MN*

Lord, help me to live by the Spirit so that my life might reflect your love. Amen.

Consider: Which fruit of the Spirit do you find to be easier or more difficult than others?

Read: Psalm 143:1-12; Galatians 5:16-26

HOLY HABITS for HOPE-FULL HEALTH

100 WAYS OF CELEBRATING THE JOY OF THE LORD!

1. RE-fresh your body with sound sleep and good eats.
2. RE-new acquaintances with habits of health and hope.
3. RE-view your past bumps and lumps and know that you are forgiven.
4. RE-vive your faith through Word and sacrament.
5. RE-focus on all of the good gifts the Lord has given you.
6. RE-member those special people around you—and tell them how special they are!
7. RE-deemed—Know that you are loved forever in the Lord!
8. RE-store unto me a clean heart, O God!
9. RE-late the importance of your faith by telling others the Good News!
10. RE-joice—He is risen—indeed, for you and for me!

And now RE-peat—each of the 10 items 9 more times as Resurrection Resources!

Hope-Full Praying For the Sick

Bring health, hope and healing to people who are struggling with physical and emotional issues, Lord. Move us to bring the Good News of wellness to those who are ill around us. Guide doctors and nurses and parents and educators to reach out to heal the struggling and bring hope and comfort to all afflicted in body, mind, and spirit. Heal those we name before you right now _____. Amen

In Bad Weather

During times of storms and wind and floods, remind us, Lord, that if it does not get cloudy and windy in our lives, it will never get clear and sunny either. Thank you for those who protect us and guard us against all disasters and storms of life—the first responders, our friends, police officers, and neighbors. Equip each of us, Lord, to reach out to others through prayer, words of comfort and hugs. Amen.

New Beginnings

It's a new year, Lord, with new opportunities, surprises and challenges. Help us reflect on the past year, rely on you in this New Year, and bring health and hope to those in need, as you do to all of us. We do not know what the future holds, Lord, but we do know that you hold the future, and all of us, in your hands with love and hope. And that's good enough for us! Amen.

Hope-Full Praying Thanks for Family

Lord, you have placed us in families in order to love and care for each other. Keep coming to each of us with your forgiveness, patience and understanding, through the good and the bad of family living. And remind us that when our arms cannot reach family members who are far from us, that we can always hug them with our prayers to you. Amen.

The Gift of Prayer

Thanks for the prayers my grandpa prayed, Lord. He called them “Grand Pause” prayers. When in doubt, pause. When angry, pause. When tired, pause. When stressed, pause. And when you pause, pray! It worked for him, Lord; help it work for us as well. Amen.

For Hobbies

I once heard that a hobby is something we love to do but receive no payment for doing it, but I think you had more in mind than that, Lord, when you created hobbies! You gave us hobbies to be able to use the special gifts and interests you created in us. You gave us hobbies to stay out of other people’s way! You gave us hobbies to marvel at your creativity in this marvelous world you gave to us. Thanks, Lord, for hobbies. Amen.

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