

HOPE-FULL LIVING

▪ Daily Devotions for Living Life to the Fullest ▪

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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, APRIL 1, 2020

The Best Exercise

Glorify God in your body.

1 Corinthians 6:20

Our list of health concerns grows as we age. Facing cardiovascular issues. Living with a chronic illness. Discovering problems in our family health history.

That's why we work hard to stay strong and active. Even a brisk daily walk contributes to our level of wellness. When we carry bags of groceries or squat to plant a spring garden, little activities add up to big benefits.

But the most valuable exercise isn't listed on a medical chart. We stay spiritually fit when we walk daily with God. "Popcorn" prayers fit easily into a fitness routine. What starts as a brief, one-sentence message to God often evolves into a genuine conversation with him. Saying a psalm we've memorized can (almost) make time fly on the treadmill.

Want to be healthier? Try adding a spiritual layer to physical routines.

*Mary Manz Simon
Ft. Myers, FL*

Dear Lord, help me build spiritual strength while I use my body to honor you. Amen.

Activity: Identify ways to build spiritual muscle into fitness routines.

Read: 1 Timothy 4:8

THURSDAY, APRIL 2, 2020

A Goal for Living

Follow God’s example, therefore, as dearly loved children, and walk in the way of love.

Ephesians 5:1-2 NIV

In the fifth chapter of Ephesians, Paul gives us a clear picture of the way followers of Christ will live. He says we will “live as children of light” and will “find out what pleases the Lord.” We will be very careful how we live, making the most of every opportunity to serve him. “Understand what the Lord’s will is” he encourages us, and “be filled with the Spirit.” He tells us that Christians will “speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs,” and sing and make music in our hearts to the Lord, always remembering to give thanks.

What a wonderful way to live! Open your hearts to the Spirit’s leading. And let the joy of the Lord shine in your hearts and minds and spill into the lives of others.

*Katherine Klemp Krueger
St. Paul, MN*

Heavenly Father, restore to me the joy of your salvation. Amen.

Do: Speak to someone about your favorite psalm.

Read: Ephesians 5:1-20



FRIDAY, APRIL 3, 2020

Real Love

By this we know love, that he laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers.

1 John 3:16

During my children's growing-up years, my husband, at some point, gave each of them a copy of *The Velveteen Rabbit*. This book, as many readers know, is the story of a stuffed rabbit who became real when loved by a child.

Each of us became real by the love of God, at the moment of conception. Later, we became a real citizen in God's Kingdom when we were baptized. God's love created us and sustains us. It is also his love that sent his son to the cross to die for a world of lost sinners, you and me included. Now, in appreciation, we can reach out to others in love every day as we serve and do for them.

*Harriet Stennfeld
Fort Wayne, IN*

Lord, may we always love others as we bask in your love for us. Amen.

Give: Purchase a copy of *The Velveteen Rabbit* and give it to a child.

Read: Psalms 13:5; John 11:35-36

SATURDAY, APRIL 4, 2020

It's Not about Me

All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself.

2 Corinthians 5:18-19

A few weeks ago I took a friend, who does not drive, out for breakfast. While we were eating, he began listing all the places he wanted me to take him after we ate. When he paused, I looked at him with a disapproving look. He said, “Well it is all about me, isn’t it?”

He laughed and shared an insight: “Whenever I begin to think that it’s all about me, God puts me in my place.”

It’s not all about me. It’s not all about you. It’s all about Jesus—always has been and always will be.

We cannot save ourselves. We cannot grab ahold of God. We cannot trust our own abilities or good works. We simply trust God to love us, forgive us, save us and to hold onto us for all eternity.

*Glen VanderKloot
Springfield, IL*

Lord, thank you for your grace that covers all my sin. Help me always to remember that it is not about me; it is all about Jesus. Amen.

Act: Start and end each day with the sign of the cross, saying, “It’s not about me. It’s all about Jesus!”

Read: Ephesians 2:7-9

SUNDAY, APRIL 5, 2020

Occupied with the Word

When Silas and Timothy arrived from Macedonia, Paul was occupied with the word.

Acts 18:5

Besides being an apostle, Paul had a more ordinary occupation. He was a tentmaker. On a visit to Corinth, Paul stayed with Aquila and Priscilla, also tentmakers. Acts 18:3 describes Paul working alongside the couple in their shared occupation. Then Acts 18:5 adds this to the picture: “Paul was occupied with the word.”

What a great phrase—occupied with the Word. It speaks to folks who are retired and no longer have an occupation to identify with. Instead of letting that cause regret, rejoice in the blessing of more time to be occupied with the Word. Let God bless your life as you read, hear, study and share his Word. Ecclesiastes 5:20 affirms the person who lives life God’s way: “For he will not much remember the days of his life because God keeps him occupied with joy in his heart.”

*Marj Maynard
Pipe Creek, TX*

Gracious Father, keep my heart, my mind and my life always occupied with your Word. Amen.

Reap the benefits: Enjoy the blessings of spending time occupied with the Word.

Read: Acts 18:1-11; Psalm 119:10-16

MONDAY, APRIL 6, 2020

Journey with Jesus

On your feet! Let's go to Zion, go to meet our God.

Jeremiah 31:6 MSG

In his ministry Jesus was often on the move. He traveled. Mostly he walked. He set one foot in front of the other. Perhaps the only time he rode was on a donkey on that journey to Jerusalem that we recently celebrated. His feet “loved the street.” He got out and met people where they were. To heal them. To hone them. To hug them.

If we are really to journey with Jesus, our feet need to “love the street” as well. We must get up, get on our feet, and go and meet the people in need of his love. That doesn't necessarily mean a hike across the country. Our “street” might just be the porch of our home as neighbors walk by. It may be the hallway of our nursing home. Or even the aisle of our church. But Jesus always challenges us to be in ministry to his people.

*Don Luepke
Fremont, IN*

Lord, you have shown us how; motivate us to do so.
Amen.

On your feet: Today find a way to journey with Jesus as you share his love and grace.

Read: Psalm 119:105; Romans 10:15



TUESDAY, APRIL 7, 2020

Three Paths

All the paths of the LORD are steadfast love and faithfulness.

Psalm 25:10

In the countryside, many people love the smell of freshly cut alfalfa. After the cut alfalfa (hay) dries, a hay rake windrows the hay into a straight path. Following that path, the farmer guides the baler. When the bales are all stacked, the hay gives off a new, beautiful aroma.

The life of Christ is very similar. As Jesus entered Jerusalem, people cut palm branches and waved them. They loved him. Then Judas betrayed him. He was arrested and put on trial before Pontius Pilate, and the crowds turned against him. These events windrow him in a straight path to his crucifixion. Because of his steadfast love for sinners, he continued on that path all the way to his death and his beautiful resurrection.

In the Bible, God windrows a path for our lives too. Thanks to Jesus, this path leads to eternal life. Ask for guidance to follow it.

*Stan Tordsen
Stewartville MN*

Lord, help me follow the path you have given me. Amen.

Do: Smell some freshly cut hay.

Read: John 12:12-15; John 18

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 8, 2020

The Road Ahead

Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me.

John 14:1

Facing the unknown can lead to a troubled heart—unless you trust the person in charge.

As a child, my parents would sometimes load the family into the car to go on a trip. Beyond the simplest explanation, they didn't share their plans with me. I had no map. I was expected to trust them, and I did. I blissfully went along for the journey.

As an adult, I'm still on a journey into the unknown. It's easy to be troubled, not knowing where life is taking me. I don't have all the answers. What I do have is the promise. Jesus promised to always be with me. He promised to take me to the place he has prepared for me and I trust him.


Trusting in Jesus calms a troubled heart.

*Lynne Waite Chapman
Fort Wayne, IN*

Heavenly Father, I trust you and I'm excited to see what you have prepared for me. Amen.

Journal: Record the promises you find in John 14.

Read: Matthew 28:18-20; Deuteronomy 31:8



THURSDAY, APRIL 9, 2020

His Way

He recovered his sight and followed him on the way.

Mark 10:52

The beggar was blind, but he had a voice. Hearing that Jesus was passing by, Bartimaeus cried out to the Savior for help. Told to be quiet, the blind man called out even more loudly, “Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!” (Mark 10:47). The Son of David had mercy, restored the man’s sight and told him, “Go your way; your faith has made you well” (Mark 10:52). But Bartimaeus did not go his way. Clearly seeing the path before him, the newly sighted beggar followed in Jesus’ way.

Jesus healed us from the deceitful blindness of sin. Through his death and resurrection, we are “delivered from the domain of darkness” and transferred into his kingdom (Colossians 1:13). In the power of the Holy Spirit, we go but not on our own self-centered way. Like Bartimaeus, we follow Jesus on the way—his way.

*Carol Geisler
Orange, CA*

Lord Jesus, lead us to walk in your footsteps, bringing the light of your love to those still lost in the darkness of sin. Amen.

See: Walk in Jesus’ way and look for those who need the Savior’s help and healing.

Read: Mark 10:46-52; 2 Corinthians 5:6-7

FRIDAY, APRIL 10, 2020

Good Friday Joy

My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?

Matthew 27:46

It may be true with you as well. As I grow older, I have become acquainted with more and different forms of pain. Possibly that is why our Lord's suffering on our behalf has become a focal point in my life. Throughout his ministry, Jesus suffered various forms of pain. On Good Friday, he experienced the ultimate pain ... the absence of the Heavenly Father. That truly is hell. The writer to the Hebrews informs us that Jesus "endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the [Father]" because of the joy of our salvation (Hebrews 12:2).

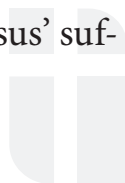
Frankly, I am not a fan of pain; however, it serves as a reminder that our Lord willingly gave his life for our salvation. Good Friday truly becomes a good day, a day of eternal joy!

*David Bernthal
Juliette, GA*

Lord Jesus, with thanksgiving I worship you, the One who suffered all to grant me the gift of life, perfect and eternal. Amen.

Contemplate: Meditate on the results of Jesus' suffering for you.

Read: Luke 23:44-47; Hebrews 12:2



SATURDAY, APRIL 11, 2020

The State of Our Soul

For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world and forfeit his soul?

Mark 8:36

What we achieve is not as important as what we become. At life's end, God will not care about our material success. God will be more interested in the state of our soul. This is why we need to develop virtues that serve us and others. Having a relationship with God can help us achieve spiritual and moral maturity.

We are pilgrims on a journey to our eternal home. Seniors are especially aware of this reality. They have seen how fleeting fame and fortune can be. Christ said, "Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away," as Matthew 24:35 reminds us.

*Jan Kilby
San Antonio TX*

Dear Lord, help me become the person you want me to be. Amen.

Think about: Take steps to enrich your spiritual life.

Read: John 3:15; John 18:36

SUNDAY, APRIL 12, 2020

Snapdragons

But if it dies, it produces many seeds.

John 12:24 NIV

I bought a few snapdragon plants knowing they wouldn't survive the winter. Imagine my surprise when I saw snapdragon plants pushing through the ground the next spring. Those plants have come back every year, but now they've appeared in various locations: in the front of the house, around my mailbox, near the driveway. I know the wind and the birds helped spread the seed, but the fact the seeds even survived is a miracle.

Perhaps, like the snapdragons, we've been told some things aren't possible or our efforts won't survive. Never underestimate the miracles God has in store for us. He makes all things possible, even spreading snapdragon seeds and preserving them through the winter.

When I see the beautiful flowers, I'm reminded of how Jesus' body was placed in the ground, with no one expecting to see him again. What a glorious surprise we celebrate on Easter morning!

*Gloria Doty
Fort Wayne, IN*

Jesus, bless our faith and forgive our doubts. Amen.

Enjoy: When you enjoy blooming flowers, remember God's Word blooming in others' hearts.

Read: Psalm 118:24



MONDAY, APRIL 13, 2020

Exhale and Get Moving

In him we live and move and have our being.

Acts 17:28

Whew! We survived another winter, and spring is here. No more holding our breath with each impending storm. No more doing things halfheartedly or not at all, waiting for better days. We can exhale and get moving again.

Wait a minute! We're Christians. We don't need to hold our breath, fearful of something that may or may not happen. We trust that at challenging moments, God will give us the grace we need. We keep moving forward with Jesus, choosing hope-filled activities and rejecting hand-wringing, which saps our energy. We put ourselves in God's hands and use our hands in creative ways that open our minds to peace and joy. Faith keeps us moving, and moving with Jesus keeps us growing in faith.

*Catherine A. Welch
Southbury, CT*

Jesus, help me remember you are always with me and will take care of me. Help me live each moment with peace and complete trust in you. Amen.

Move: Today, if you start worrying, exhale! Pray, "Jesus, you are with me." Then get busy with your hands.

Read: Psalm 34:4; Proverbs 16:20

TUESDAY, APRIL 14, 2020

Resurrection Living

If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God.

Colossians 3:1

Easter Sunday may be past, but its impact lasts forever. This joyous festival extends far beyond one day of church attendance, new outfits, egg hunts and breakfast. Easter is the beginning of resurrection living.

Resurrection living encompasses all of God's blessings for believers resulting from Jesus' rising. For example, "Just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life" (Romans 6:4). And, he "who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you" (Romans 8:11). Jesus himself says, "Because I live, you also will live" (John 14:19). Resurrection living lifts us and gifts us today, blesses our tomorrows and leads to life eternal.

*Marj Maynard
Pipe Creek, TX*

Risen Savior, all praise to you for the gift of new life today and assurance of the life to come. Amen.

Explore: Look for more Bible verses that describe the impact of Christ's death and resurrection.

Read: John 11:21-27; Romans 6:5-11



WEDNESDAY, APRIL 15, 2020

Jesus Lights Our Way

Jesus spoke to them, saying, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life."

John 8:12

Hallelujah! Christ is risen! He lights our way by the grace of his resurrected Spirit so we can walk with sure and steady steps, never fearing the path before us.

Just as a plant facing sunlight flourishes and grows, so do we, Jesus' followers, flourish and grow as we turn toward his light. He provides the assurance we need to face life's daily challenges.

After all, Jesus tells us, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life" (John 14:6). He invites us, over and over again, to embrace the fullness of life that only he can bring.

*Sally Macke
St. Louis, MO*

Shine in our hearts, Lord Jesus, so we can shine your light to others who seek You. Make us, your people who search for you, know you are with us always. We ask this in your name. Amen.

Do: Read a story to a child.

Read: Psalm 119:105

THURSDAY, APRIL 16, 2020

Sudden Return Path

And they rose that same hour and returned to Jerusalem.

Luke 24:33

Where does your path from Holy Week and Easter services lead? An ongoing path of sadness, loneliness, depression? Or a surprising path of joyful witness?

The story of the two disciples on the road to Emmaus usually describes their journey home as starting with deep sadness because their Messiah is dead and their hopes dashed. When the stranger joins them with his challenging questions and scriptural witness, they want more until he reveals himself as their Savior in the breaking of the bread. What happens next when he disappears? Are they praying: Teach me your paths, O Lord? Surprisingly and spontaneously, these weary travelers take a sudden return path to Jerusalem to tell the disciples their story. In the process, they join in the appearance of Jesus with his nail-pierced hands. Will you rush to share the Easter story with fellow believers this week?

*Stephen J. Carter
Oakville, MO*

Lord, teach me your return path of joyful witness. Amen.

Share: Return to share your Easter story with other believers now!

Read: Luke 24:13-35



FRIDAY, APRIL 17, 2020

Easter Parade

Thanks be to God, who in Christ always leads us in triumphal procession, and through us spreads the fragrance of the knowledge of him everywhere.

2 Corinthians 2:14

Don't you love a parade? Boisterous bands, fantastic floats, costumed characters and proud politicians, all with a skill, a message or an identity to endorse as they make their way down streets lined with cheerful people.

Jesus loves a parade too. Although, he first marched alone, on a road lined with angry mobs, to a cross where he died for our sins. Now, risen and victorious over sin and death, he leads all believers in a triumphal procession—an Easter parade—through the streets of this world, equipped with his gifts, the message of salvation and our identity in Christ to endorse. Though we may not always be met with cheerfulness, we are always called to be advocates of God's love and mercy, revealing the way for others to follow Jesus.

*Sandi Geis
St. Louis, MO*

Jesus, give me joy in my step as I follow you and spread your Word. Amen.

Wave: Take notice of those around you. Consider how you can share the joy of Jesus.

Read: Ephesians 5:1-2; Psalm 47

SATURDAY, APRIL 18, 2020

Selective Memory

I will remember their sins no more.

Hebrews 8:12

We tend to remember good things while filtering out the bad—but not always. At times, we can't seem to filter out the memories of the hurts someone inflicted or the ones we inflicted on others.

God is omniscient. He's incapable of forgetting anything. But we stand in speechless joy when Jeremiah, in chapter 31:34, tells us that the Lord would choose to forget—not us, but our sin!

Since Good Friday, God's memory has been selective—remembering us while remembering our sin no more.

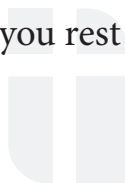
When some of our memories rise up to haunt us, this might help: “Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? ... Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—[he] indeed is interceding for us” (Romans 8:33-34).

*David A. Boyd
Staunton, VA*

Lord, thank you for remembering me and “forgetting” my sin. Amen.

Consider: Remember your sins no more as you rest in Christ's “forgetting” work on the cross.

Read: Romans 8



SUNDAY, APRIL 19, 2020

Hope

And now, O Lord, for what do I wait? My hope is in you.

Psalm 39:7

A fourth-grade student was tasked with reading the Pandora myth in which a forbidden box gets opened and all the chaos and evils of the world get out. Pandora doesn't realize there was one thing remaining inside the box—she thought it was empty. The one thing remaining was hope. The fourth-grader didn't get it; she actually asked, "What is hope?" Like the myth, we are full of nothing good apart from God, but with God, we are forgiven and eternal creatures. We are full of hope in God, our Savior.

Thankfully, *hope* is mentioned 129 times in the Bible in 121 verses. And hope is always attached to the God of hope. God is so big, so strong and so mighty, there's nothing that our God cannot do.

*Nancy Rapp
St. Louis, MO*

Dear God of hope, fill me with all joy and peace as I trust in you. Amen.

Do: Fill a box—your own box full of hope—with your favorite Bible verses.

Read: Romans 15:13; Psalm 147:11

MONDAY, APRIL 20, 2020

Consider

I will meditate on your precepts and fix my eyes on your ways.

Psalm 119:15

In life, we all need to seek out a way. I have heard guiding messages from family, teachers, pastors, coaches, friends, neighbors. They wanted the best for me; I wanted the best for myself. Maybe loving my neighbor less than myself is best. Maybe self-promotion is more important than Jesus-promotion.

I've realized this self-promoting way of thinking goes nowhere. I had an older Christian friend who says quite succinctly, "Self-praise stinks." It does.

Joyfully, I consider God's ways. His biblical contract is flawless. His love punctuates life daily. Jesus humbly approaches our sin-filled cross. Miraculous simplicity penetrates Holy Communion and Baptism. Christ's resurrection accomplishes ours. Heaven is his home and ours. Our best Promoter is ... Jesus!

*Harry Edenfield
Brownstown, MI*

Jesus, forgive my self-promotion. I am secure in your love. Amen.

Consider: Count the times and places in life where the Triune God expressed his best interests for you.

Read: Genesis 50:15-21; Ephesians 1:3-14

TUESDAY, APRIL 21, 2020

Fog Advisory

Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see.

Hebrews 11:1 NIV

Leaving home, I was abruptly greeted by fog. Fifty yards was all I could see, but each time I moved fifty yards, I could see the next fifty.

If you've ever driven in fog, you know how it works. But how often have you connected fog with faith? How often have you encountered a faith advisory?

In our foggy moments, faith is our "confidence in what we hope for" as our verse reminds us. More significantly, the writer reminds us that faith is the assurance of what we cannot see. It's what prompts and motivates us to take the next step into the fog, convinced God will unveil the next fifty yards or five steps.

That foggy morning, I realized that we can learn an incredible faith lesson from a simple fog advisory.

*Randal Jeppesen
Medford, WI*

Father, in life's foggy moments, teach me confidence and the assurance that you will show me the next step as I move boldly forward. Amen.

Activity: Begin your day singing or saying, "I am trusting you, Lord Jesus, trusting only you."

Read: Hebrews 11:8-12; Daniel 6:20-22

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 22, 2020

Light-Hearted

Did not our hearts burn within us while he talked to us on the road, while he opened to us the Scriptures?

Luke 24:32

The road to Emmaus must have seemed endless. After the death of their teacher and friend, two of Jesus' followers walked with heavy hearts, their faith shaken, their future dark. Then, someone walked alongside them. Though the men didn't recognize him, a light of hope burned in their hearts as he revealed God's Word—not merely the written Word, but the Word Made Flesh. The man was Jesus, risen from the dead. Jesus showed them the way to eternal life and he would be the Light to their path that day and forever.

When you encounter a difficult journey, remember, you are Light-hearted, burning with hope because the Word of God lights your way. Not merely words on a page, but Jesus himself, the Word of God incarnate, alive and walking with you always.

*Sandi Geis
St. Louis, MO*

Jesus, when my heart is heavy, be the Light within me and show me your way. Amen.

Light up: Note ways your heart burns with hope when you talk to Jesus and read Scripture.

Read: Luke 24:13-35; John 1:1-14



THURSDAY, APRIL 23, 2020

His Word Heals Us

He sent out his word and healed them; he rescued them from the grave. Let them give thanks to the LORD for his unfailing love.

Psalm 107:20-21 NIV

In times of sickness and distress we rightly pray for healing and relief; our loving Father knows our need and hears our prayers. Could it be that our deepest need is for healing of soul and spirit, and our most fervent prayer should be for patience and peace as we deal with difficulty?

Our Father has sent the answer to such a prayer: his name is Jesus. The Gospel promise of his cross is the ultimate answer to our most fundamental need, offering final relief from all guilt and pain, as well as daily healing, peace and patience as we await that final fulfillment.

*Paul Scheidt
Chesterfield, MO*

Lord, I give you thanks for your healing Word. Grant me peace and patience as I await your final gift of life. Amen.

Help: Help your congregation remember the home-bound in prayer and visitations.

Read: Psalm 84

FRIDAY, APRIL 24, 2020

A Forever Light

And the city has no need of sun or moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and its lamp is the Lamb.

Revelation 21:23

“That’s a forever light,” groaned our grandson Josh as we pulled up to a busy intersection. “It takes forever.”

I smiled at Josh’s use of the term *forever* because, actually, that word does describe a long time. The dictionary definition is “for always. For all future time.”

How wonderful—no, how glorious!—that one day we will be in a place with a forever light. The holy writer says that the glory of God, through Jesus, will be dazzling. God’s glory will be so radiant, no other illumination will be needed in heaven. Shadows will never cast ghostly shapes. Darkness will never creep in at the edge of day. What a wonder to anticipate: a true forever light!

*Mary Manz Simon
Ft. Myers FL*

Faithful Lord, let your light shine through me today.
Amen.

Activity: During life’s dark moments, look for signs of God’s light.

Read: Revelation 21



SATURDAY, APRIL 25, 2020

God's Way Is Grace

O LORD, you have searched me and know me ... If I say, "Surely the darkness will hide me" ... even the darkness will not be dark to you.

Psalm 139:1, 11-12 NIV

God knows absolutely everything about me. Even the ugly stuff I try so hard to keep hidden from others, I cannot hide from God. Thankfully, his way is grace, not condemnation. (Jesus has much to do with that!)

That's the way God is with us because of Jesus. As we follow our Lord, we will want to share what we have been given so freely. Our response to the ugliness, which bubbles to the surface in others (meanness, nastiness, even cruelty) ought to be grace, not judgment. God's way can be—should be—our way as well.

This way is not easy; the easy way is Satan's. Pray for God's Spirit to inspire and enable you to follow the way of life in Christ.

*Paul Scheidt
Chesterfield, MO*

Heavenly Father, in this new day, guide my every thought, word and deed for Jesus' sake. Amen.

Write: Journal your thoughts to the Lord, and then let go of the results.

Read: Psalm 139:23-24

SUNDAY, APRIL 26, 2020

Come as You Are

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

Matthew 11:28

The message sign in front of the small church invited drivers along the busy street: “Come as you are. You can change inside.” We know we cannot change ourselves. But by the power of the Holy Spirit, God works astonishing changes in our lives.

“Come as you are,” Jesus invites us, “and I will give you rest” (Matthew 11:28, paraphrased). Come, tormented by guilt, and receive forgiveness. Come, weary with despair, and find hope. Come, filled with doubt, and find faith. Come, driven by hate, and find love. Transformed by Jesus’ redeeming love, we bear no resemblance to our former selves. In Jesus, we are a new creation.

*Eileen Ritter
Byron Center, MI*

Change my heart, O God. May I be like you. Amen.

Reflect: What about your new life in Jesus will surprise your friends and neighbors?

Read: 2 Corinthians 5:16-21



MONDAY, APRIL 27, 2020

All the Way Home!

Show me your ways, LORD, teach me your paths. Guide me in your truth and teach me.

Psalm 25:4-5 NIV

What a joy to realize every day that the Lord has set a path for each of us to heaven! Regardless of our faults, sins and mess-ups, he continues to respond to us with his love, forgiveness and grace. Wow, what a Lord!

If at times we feel lost and alone like Zacchaeus, like a “wee little man,” the Lord lifts us up with his forgiveness. On good days, when we connect with family and friends, there is a “WE-ness” that builds and supports us as his Church. When loved ones near and far die and leave us, we rejoice in their homeward journey to heaven.

We are bold to proclaim and exclaim that the Lord shows us his way—through the good times and the bad times—and in other words, he shows us his way, “Wee, We, Whee—all the way home!”

*Rich Bimler
Bloomingdale, IL*

Thanks, Lord, for showing us the way “All the Way Home.” Amen!

Reflect: Reflect with others on the times you have experienced the Wee, We and Whee’s in your life.

Read: Psalm 25; Psalm 119:105

TUESDAY, APRIL 28, 2020

Living and Walking

If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit.

Galatians 5:25 NASB

On Saturday mornings, I enjoy walking around our neighborhood. It's a peaceful time for exercise. In today's verse, Paul is encouraging believers to live and walk by the Spirit. The Spirit is the source of strength for our spiritual walk. Walking by the Spirit is something that the Spirit enables us to do in order to serve and follow Jesus. Living by the Spirit produces fruits of the Spirit. Walking by the Spirit enables seniors to set Christ-like examples. Living by the Spirit allows us to bear fruit in our Christian lives. Walking with the Spirit enables believers to keep in step with the words of Jesus.

Let the Spirit direct your steps in serving Jesus. Let your thoughts, words and actions reflect the love of Jesus. Allow the Spirit help you to find ways to follow Christ's examples of serving. Let the Spirit encourage, guide and motivate you to live and walk by the Spirit.

*David Bever
Las Vegas, NV*

Father, allow your Spirit to move me to serve and help others. Amen.

Pray: Pray for the Spirit to help you find ways to keep in step with the Spirit.

Read: Galatians 5:16-25



WEDNESDAY, APRIL 29, 2020

Disappointments

Hope does not disappoint us.

Romans 5:5 GNT

In my youth, I was crushed when I was cut from my Little League team the night before our first game. But I never gave up. Now, 68 years later, I play in two senior softball leagues.

Not all of our disappointments in life have happy endings. But God promises that our hope in Christ will never disappoint us “because God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit” (Romans 5:5 ESV). And God’s love never fails us.

Our Christ-centered hope is not just wishful thinking. It is sure and certain, because it depends completely on Christ and what he accomplished for us on the cross. We can even rejoice in our sufferings, St. Paul says, because by God’s grace and strength, “suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope” (Romans 5:3-4).

*Gil Duchow
Muskego, WI*

Faithful God, fill me with trust and hope in Christ, now and forever. Amen.

Share: Reach out with hope-full compassion to people experiencing disappointments in their life.

Read: Romans 5:1-5

THURSDAY, APRIL 30, 2020

Bearing Burdens

Cast your burden on the LORD, and he will sustain you; he will never permit the righteous to be moved.

Psalm 55:22

“You can’t put weight on your left leg for four weeks,” my doctor said after total ankle replacement. At first that didn’t seem too bad, but as the days went on the burden of “non-weight-bearing” became very challenging.

Although my burden was physical, I was reminded of how difficult the load is for so many who have emotional, financial, spiritual AND physical concerns each and every day. The psalmist encourages us, “Cast your burden on the LORD, and he will sustain you; he will never permit the righteous to be moved” (Psalm 55:22).

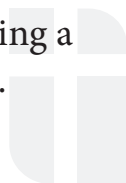
A three-wheeled scooter became my trusted “burden-bearer” in my ankle recuperation. When concerns of life wear you down, lay those burdens at the feet of Jesus. He CAN and he will carry them for you as he has promised. Let Jesus be your “scooter”!

*Margaret Rickers Hinchey
Englewood, CO*

Help me to trust in you, Jesus, to lift my burdens and carry my load as I move through these days. Amen.

Do: Call someone today who has been carrying a heavy load lately; offer to pray for him or her.

Read: 1 Peter 5:7; Proverbs 16:3



FRIDAY, MAY 1, 2020

Knowing the Way

And I will instruct you in the good and the right way.

1 Samuel 12:23

There was a time when I was easily impressed by a stirring speech or a motivational writing. Now I tend to hold back because I doubt the truth behind the words. Are they empty promises, altruistic mumblings or impossible scenarios? Have I grown cynical or wiser?

Prayerfully, the answer is wiser. We should measure people's words against God's and fall back on Samuel's words to the Israelites when they asked for a king. Although this was against God's intentions for Israel, Samuel said the Lord would not abandon them, and Samuel as their prophet would continue to speak God's Word and show them the way. God, in his grace, revealed his way from the days before Samuel to the present time. We now have our Bibles, ready and brimming with God's way.

*Judy Scherr
Lemay, MO*

Our God, lead us to your Word whenever we waiver, and strengthen in us the knowledge that you are the Way. Amen.

Recall: What famous speaker impressed you? Measure those words against the way that Jesus shows us.

Read: 1 Samuel 12:20-25; 2 Timothy 2:10-16

SATURDAY, MAY 2, 2020

Leading by Example

[Jesus said,] "If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet."

John 13:14

Last words have an impact. Jesus' disciples surely took seriously what Jesus told them as they sat together at the Last Supper. Yet his example may have had an even more powerful influence on all of them.

Removing well-worn sandals and washing dusty feet, wiping them dry, was servant work. Yet the Lord of heaven and earth knelt in lowly service to teach by example the importance of serving others. Jesus shows us the way: Be aware of what's needed. Serve with a loving heart. Share what motivates your service. Your example may inspire someone else to serve as Jesus did.

*Donna J. Streufert
South Bend, IN*

Lord, by your perfect life lived for me, by your death on the cross, by your glorious resurrection you have redeemed me, making me yours forever. Fill me with your Spirit. Shape me to serve as you served. Amen.

Act: This week, phone the lonely, cheer the suffering, encourage the struggling. Pray for all. Follow Jesus.

Read: John 13:12-17; Titus 3:1-7

SUNDAY, MAY 3, 2020

Fresh Bread

Jesus said to them, “I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst.”

John 6:35

A dear memory is walking into my grandma’s house and being met by the aroma of freshly baked bread. I savored it. While other kids had store-bought bread in a plastic wrapper, I enjoyed the real thing.

In the Gospels, Jesus reveals himself visibly by feeding 5,000 people with a boy’s lunch. He also used a parable to describe “the real thing”—who he is and what he offers. He says he is the bread of life, the spiritual bread to nourish and sustain us.

We need renewed strength and a healthy daily diet, but we also need spiritual direction and stamina to trust God and live faithfully. Jesus provides nourishment by the reading of his Word and the replenishment we receive in prayer. He is the real bread that satisfies.

*Marilyn Nutter
Greer, SC*

Lord, Thank you for sustaining me with your bread that never runs out. Amen.

Learn: Study the Scriptures to see other ways Jesus describes himself to nourish and satisfy us.

Read: John 6

MONDAY, MAY 4, 2020

Show Me

Show me the way I should go, for to you I entrust my life.

Psalm 143:8 NIV

While traveling, I often use my phone for directions. Before I became totally familiar with my new phone, all I could find were the audible directions. In my frustration, I often made the wrong turn or took the wrong route. I could be heard muttering, “If it would show me, I could follow the directions so much more easily.”

With help from a grandson, I discovered how to be able to see the routes and highways and where to turn. That made everything simpler.

Many times, we ask God to show us the directions we need to follow in our lives. There are many ways God chooses to do that: reading his Word, prayer time, attending church services and listening to godly people he places in our lives. Like my phone directions, none of those will work until I actually look and listen to what God is showing me.

*Gloria Doty
Fort Wayne, IN*

Heavenly Father, guide me and show me your directions for my life. Amen.

Think: Remember God’s map when you use a phone map.

Read: Psalm 25:4



TUESDAY, MAY 5, 2020

Let's Clap for God

Clap your hands, all peoples!

Psalm 47:1

While my husband was resting from his rehab exercises, I often visited other patients. As I walked past the activity room, I saw many patients waiting for their leader to direct their activity. I also saw a piano, so I sat down and played for a while. As I got up to leave, the patients clapped.

“Don’t clap for me,” I said. “I am just thankful that God still lets me enjoy my music.” A voice came from the back of the group, “Then let’s clap for God!”

Clap for God, indeed! Instead of giving in to our inabilities or weaknesses, let us praise him for what he still enables us to do.

*Constance Bretscher
Valparaiso, IN*

Great Physician, loving Father, help us look for anyone in need of your love and healing and use the skills we still have, however small we may think they are. Perhaps not music, just caring words in a note or phone call bring cheer where it is needed. Remind us to pray for or with them. Amen.

Do: Look for all the reasons we have to be thankful, and then share them.

Read: Isaiah 55:12; Psalm 47

WEDNESDAY, MAY 6, 2020

Life Happens Outside

I believe that I shall look upon the goodness of the LORD in the land of the living!

Psalm 27:13

A “Life Happens Outside” festival in Maine encourages teens to hike, camp, bike, paddle and climb. What exciting, refreshing ways of experiencing God’s creation—his wonders and goodness!

Life happens outside for seniors too. We clear our stale thoughts and come alive outdoors, even if it’s only to walk, sit and catch a breeze. And life happens when we look outside ourselves, reaching out to God and others. We’re lifted up with hope when we share challenges, sorrow and prayers with friends, neighbors and our congregation. We revive our souls when we celebrate happy times with loved ones, laughing ourselves silly. Indoors, our souls are restless. Outside, we experience God’s presence in special ways, finding peace and a future.

*Catherine A. Welch
Southbury, CT*

Loving God, you know how I get when I stay inside too long. Keep nudging me outside. Help me be open to your presence and the fullness of life. Amen.

Go outside: Give your body, mind and soul a good airing! If you meet someone, have a lively chat.

Read: Philippians 2:4; Hebrews 13:16

THURSDAY, MAY 7, 2020

Life Is Complicated

He will be the stability of your times, abundance of salvation, wisdom, and knowledge; the fear of the LORD is Zion's treasure.

Isaiah 33:6

Sometimes we're happy with the company of grandchildren or friends. Other days, we receive disappointing news or we're lonely. Life has complicated turns. How do we navigate?

Scripture shows us complicated lives. David, a shepherd, was also a warrior and king. Mary, a virgin teen, was told she'd have a baby. Paul persecuted the church and later wrote much of the New Testament. Each knew the Lord as his or her foundation.

Despite rocky paths or exhaustion from climbing, we can have stable ground too. Seek God in prayer and look for his truth and guidance whether your days are difficult or steady. He is trustworthy in all days and seasons.

*Marilyn Nutter
Greer, SC*

Lord, thank you for the stability you bring to my life through your truth. Amen.

Learn: Study the lives of biblical characters to see trusting God in life-changing experiences.

Read: Daniel 3:17-18; Luke 2; Acts 9

FRIDAY, MAY 8, 2020

Good Shepherd

I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.

John 10:11

I like the picture of Jesus with a lamb on his shoulders, holding its feet gently with his hands. There is a marvelous smile on his face. How well that smile captures the joy of Jesus, our Good Shepherd. How he delights in finding us.

Too often we read Psalm 23 only at funerals. Jesus is our Good Shepherd today, as we live and breathe to his glory. Hear it loud and clear today, Child of God. Jesus, your Good Shepherd, loves you. He sought you out, called you by name and made you his own. Jesus, Lord of lords, rejoices that you are a child of God.

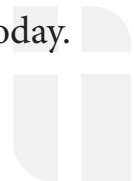
Today is a day for remembering how precious you are to the Lord. Trust in that truth and be glad.

*Don Schatz
Lynnwood, WA*

Jesus, Good Shepherd, thank you for seeking me, finding me, saving me and loving me. Amen.

Smile: Smile back at your Good Shepherd today.

Read: Psalm 23; John 10:11-18



SATURDAY, MAY 9, 2020

No Condemnation

For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world.

John 3:17

We know the familiar words of John 3:16, “For God so loved the world . . .” God loved the world he created—this fallen, rebellious world that is so often very unlovely. Acting in that love, God sent his Son into the world. We had done nothing to earn God’s love and favor. All we deserved was God’s just condemnation for our sins.

Yet the words from John’s Gospel continue. God did not send his Son to condemn the world—however well-deserved that condemnation would be. Jesus came to be condemned on behalf of the world. Jesus took the sins of the world onto himself and carried that sin to the cross. There at the cross, God in Christ reconciled the fallen world to himself (2 Corinthians 5:19), and for those who believe in the crucified and risen Savior, “there is therefore now no condemnation” (Romans 8:1).

*Carol Geisler
Orange, CA*

Thank you, Lord, for taking onto yourself the condemnation we deserved. Amen.

Give: Share the good news that in Christ Jesus we have been declared, “Not guilty!”

Read: John 3:16-21; Romans 8:1-4

SUNDAY, MAY 10, 2020

How to Hug!

Prize her highly, and she will exalt you; she will honor you if you embrace her.

Proverbs 4:8

Mother's Day is a great time to thank the Lord for mothers, as well as for other women who have loved, taught and forgiven us in the Lord. How blessed we all have been through women who have been "mothers, grandmothers and daughters" to each of us.

A young man went to buy a book to help him relate to his mother. As he looked through the shelves, he saw one titled "How to Hug." He bought it and went home to start practicing. Only then did he notice that he had just bought Volume 8 of the encyclopedia!

Hugging is one positive way to show our love and appreciation to others. Try it out often! Prayers and phone calls and visits are other ways to say "Thanks" to all of the "Moms" the Lord has provided us.

*Rich Bimler
Bloomington, IL*

Lord, thanks for mothers, our own as well as all of the other moms and daughters who have cared and loved us through these years. Amen!

Take action: Treat a special "Mom" of yours to a meal this week, or buy her a cup of coffee or tea!

Read: John 17:20-26



MONDAY, MAY 11, 2020

Who Is Your Thomas?

So the other disciples told him, "We have seen the Lord."

John 20:25

Thomas missed the first appearance of the risen Christ. Usually we focus on him with his doubts about Jesus' resurrection, perhaps identifying with him.

How about identifying with the other disciples who reached out to Thomas with a bold witness: "We have seen the Lord"? Even better, identify with John, who in the very next section (John 20:31) writes: "These are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name." Then, we are faced with the question, "Who is your Thomas?" Can you identify someone in your circle of family and friends who might be like Thomas? Are you praying for that person? Are you gently sharing the risen Christ with him or her? Are you enlisting others to help? The Holy Spirit may lead your "Thomas" to confess, "My Lord and my God!"

*Stephen J. Carter
Oakville, MO*

Risen Christ, thank you for your nail-pierced hands, extended with love for my "Thomas." Amen.

Witness: Begin your prayerful witness to your "Thomas" this week.

Read: John 20:24-31

TUESDAY, MAY 12, 2020

Notes from Upstairs

For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven
... so shall my word.

Isaiah 55:10-11

Upstairs in our grandparents' old farmhouse, my younger sister and I discovered that we could remove a decorative grate in the floor and look directly downstairs. We began sending notes down and up to each other using a string and paper clip. To us, it seemed like a fascinating way to communicate.

God communicates to his children from above. Far better than string and paper clip, God communicates through his holy Word. And far from being nothing special, God's notes are life affirming and personal: "I have called you by name, you are mine" (Isaiah 43:1). "I will take you by the hand and keep you" (Isaiah 42:6). "You are precious in my eyes, and honored, and I love you" (Isaiah 43:4). Treasure God's notes as affirmation of his love and saving grace.

*Marj Maynard
Pipe Creek, TX*

Father, your words from above are a lifeline, showing me the way to live now and forever. Amen.

Reach up: Grab onto those words from heaven and hold them close to your heart today.

Read: Isaiah 55:10-11; Romans 10:5-13



WEDNESDAY, MAY 13, 2020

Go, Return on Your Way

And the LORD said to him, "Go, return on your way to the wilderness of Damascus."

1 Kings 19:15

Elijah: what a faithful, courageous follower of the Lord God. While we admire his ministry, we may also identify with him in his weakness. After noteworthy victories over the false prophets, Elijah fled in fear. He believed he was the only believer left on planet Earth, until the Lord spoke to him in a still, small voice.

It is amazing how fear enters our hearts, even after we faithfully commit our life to Jesus. Even more amazing is the fact that Jesus lovingly speaks to us in his low whisper through the pages of Scripture. He prompts us to rise from our trepidation and travel our own desert roads. In the Spirit's power, we faithfully minister as our Lord directs. Don't worry, our age does not diminish his call to serve Him. He empowers us to action!

*David Bernthal
Juliette, GA*

Lord, remove our fear, and instill in us the joyful power of faithful commitment to you. Amen.

Recognize: Amid your weakness, discover how God strengthens you. Use Scripture to guide you.

Read: Mark 5:14-20; Luke 19:1-10

THURSDAY, MAY 14, 2020

A Fixed Point

Let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith.

Hebrews 12:1-2

The odd thing about rowing a boat is that you're facing backward while rowing forward. The key to arriving where you want is selecting a fixed point and keeping your eyes on it. Take your eyes off that fixed point, and you begin to curl away from your destination.

The Christian life might be likened to that paradox. As we move through life, we must keep our eyes on a fixed point while always going forward. That fixed point is, of course, Jesus himself. He's the fixed point because nothing will move him, shake him or change him. In an unstable world, we need the One whose love and mercy are immovable, unchangeable.

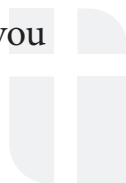
And keeping our eyes on Jesus, our fixed point, we come to understand that the further we "row" forward in this life, the closer we come to him.

*David A. Boyd
Staunton, VA*

Lord Jesus, in this life, everything seems to change all the time. Thank you for being my fixed point! Amen.

Consider: How you might direct someone you know to the unchangeable Jesus?

Read: Hebrews 6:13-20



FRIDAY, MAY 15, 2020

Light for Our Path

Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.

Psalm 119:105

Light. It's a pretty miraculous thing. It was created on the first day. Initially, the only source of light was the sun. Imagine that. Since you needed light to see and to work, your time of productivity was limited. Over time, humans discovered other sources of light, such as fire, oil lamps, candles, gas lights and now electric lights. All these sources of light helped humans immensely because light is a key component of our existence.

The Bible points out a different kind of light that we do not often think about. Psalm 119:105 calls God's Word a light. Have you thought of it that way? How often do we struggle with something and when we turn to God's Word, the decision becomes clear, like it's magnified by a powerfully bright light? That's God showing us the way so that we are able to follow along his path.

*Celeste Cummins
Storm Lake, IA*

Thank you, Heavenly Father, for the light that illumines our lives and, most importantly, for the light of your Word. Amen.

Think: How have your favorite Bible verses served as a light for your path through life?

Read: Psalm 27:1; 1 John 1:5-10

SATURDAY, MAY 16, 2020

Revealing Secrets

So have no fear of them, for nothing is covered that will not be revealed, or hidden that will not be known.

Matthew 10:26

I'm still amazed when my microwave cooks popcorn so easily, in just 90 seconds! The benefit of applying microwave power to cooking was discovered accidentally when a scientist walking by a microwave generator noticed a chocolate bar melting in his pocket!

Because of its benefits, we generate microwave power for our use. Microwave technology has for some time been used in weather forecasting and nautical navigation. More recently it transmits cell phone and Wi-Fi signals. How did this invisible force become so prevalent in facilitating conveniences in our daily lives?

As researchers constantly seek to understand mysteries in nature, God reveals more about his creation. Our Creator encourages discoveries that trigger inventions we never thought possible.

*Lisa Huele
Littleton, CO*

Lord, thank you for increasing knowledge about natural phenomena that provoke our creativity. Amen.

Celebrate: Marvel while using a household tool based on a discovery made during your lifetime.

Read: Genesis 1:1-4; Psalm 8:3-4

SUNDAY, MAY 17, 2020

Challenging Changes

Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.

Hebrews 13:8

All of us have experienced major changes in our lives. They are especially challenging in our senior years. It can be disheartening to give up our home, downsize, and move to a senior-living or assisted-living residence, even if it is called “Pleasant Acres.” It’s even harder if we have to move far away to be near our children.

But in the midst of all of the changes and challenges of life, we live with the assurance that we have an unchanging Guardian and Guide for our life. “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever” (Hebrews 13:8). His loving care for us never changes.

And when our pathway in life takes an unexpected or unwelcome detour, our Lord leads us and guides on his new pathway until that blessed day when we will join him in his home forever.

*Gil Duchow
Muskego, WI*

Lord of life, help me adjust to the changes in my life. And give me compassion for those who are facing challenging changes in their lives. Amen.

Care: Reach out to seniors in your church or senior residence who are experiencing changes in their life.

Read: Hebrews 13:5-8

MONDAY, MAY 18, 2020

Dive into His Word

He says, "Be still, and know that I am God. I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth!"

Psalm 46:10

Recently, I moved my husband to an assisted-living care center. His medical issues were exacerbated by Alzheimer's, and I couldn't fully care for him. I am thankful that the care community is now meeting his needs.

Later, I read an article based on Psalm 46:10: "Sit quietly in my Presence, breathing in my Peace, and I will give you rest." I taped it to my bathroom mirror.

My pastor encourages us to "dive into the Word." That Word, according to John 1:1-2, is Jesus! Diving into the Word is like jumping into the loving arms of Jesus. The Word also needs to flow out of our hearts, hands and mouths in all that we do and say and sing.

During this difficult transition, my husband and I find peace in the Word of God. You can, too, as Jesus is waiting patiently with open arms.

Word of Life, help us find peace and rest in you. Amen.

*Annette Schumacher
Muskego, WI*

Do: Dive into the Word daily to find comfort and peace in difficult times.

Read: John 1:1-2; Colossians 3:16-17



TUESDAY, MAY 19, 2020

Be Ready for Joy

Bless the LORD, ... who satisfies you with good so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's.

Psalm 103:2, 5

A magazine ad for a day school shows a wide-eyed child making a huge bubble with a hoop. Superimposed are the words “Be ready for joy.” Children—they’re curious and find joy through discovery and new challenges. They’re quick to jump for joy.

God calls us to jump for joy too. Why not! We praise God when we rejoice with grateful hearts. We’re never too old to be wide-eyed and surprised by events, a kindness, or good news. God calls us to remain childlike, excited about discovery, trying new things with our aging minds and bodies, as best we can. There’s no age limit for youthful thinking, looking on the bright side, finding humor in everyday happenings. Sure, grim times may come, but let’s not look for grim. Let’s be ready for God’s gift of joy. It keeps us going.

*Catherine A. Welch
Southbury, CT*

Loving God, help me be ready for all the joy you send my way. Amen.

Be curious: Search for good news in Scripture or a newspaper, then rejoice with God and others.

Read: Philippians 2:17-18; Proverbs 25:25

WEDNESDAY, MAY 20, 2020

Make Melody

My heart is steadfast, O God, my heart is steadfast! I will sing and make melody!

Psalm 57:7

As a child, I wanted to earn money. My father offered to pay me for hoeing weeds out of the vegetable fields. I wholeheartedly went out with dedication to accomplish my goal, even on the hottest days of summer. As I walked in from the fields, I would sing just like Julie Andrews did atop the Swiss Alps in *The Sound of Music*. I was happy as I believed my father's promise to pay me for my labors.

What is a steadfast heart toward God? It is not careless or halfhearted. It is dedicated and dutiful. As I cling to God, my heart sings to him because of who he is.

*MaryAnn Sundby
Castle Rock, CO*

Dear Protector of my soul, provide a faithful willingness for me to cling to your promises. Let my heart sing for joy. Amen.

Sing: Sing the Doxology with a happy heart.

Read: Psalm 100



THURSDAY, MAY 21, 2020

Never Alone

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

Matthew 28:20

Jesus' parting words to the disciples were mysterious ... how could he be with them when he was ascending into the clouds? His command to make disciples of all nations through baptism and the Word was equally daunting. But he had promised to be with them always, and they knew the Lord was faithful. So, the disciples "worshiped him and returned to Jerusalem with great joy" (Luke 24:52)!

When you feel lonely or afraid, ask God to open your eyes! Continue turning to God's Word for the answers you need. Remember the joy of his constant love and faithfulness. Then, as God leads you, seek others who need your friendship and love! Support and encourage your neighbors. Call a childhood friend or distant relative. Share favorite promises from his Word of Life! God is always with you!

*Sharolyn Sander
Lincoln, NE*

Lord, help me to discover the treasures in your Word. Deepen my relationship with you each day. Amen.

Pass it on: Send an encouraging text or note to brighten someone's day!

Read: Isaiah 41:10

FRIDAY, MAY 22, 2020

Jesus Teach Me

Make me to know your ways, O LORD; teach me your paths.

Psalm 25:4

Caretaking. It sometimes gets harder the longer you do it. In the midst of this struggle, I found myself losing sight of God's help. So, I taped a paraphrased prayer from Psalm 25:4 on a 4 x 5 card, "God, show me your ways and teach me," inside my bathroom cabinet; it's been there for years. I see it every time I get my toothbrush. It is new each day.

God is answering this prayer each day for each of us as we take the next step. It reminds us to be teachable and to look for what he is showing us. Jesus shows his love for us in that he gave his life in our stead. May we never lose sight of this life-giving love.

*Nancy Rapp
St. Louis, MO*

Dear Jesus, your way is full of love. Fill my heart to overflowing that I may share your love with others. Amen.

Be teachable: Learn something new and share Jesus' love with new friends.

Read: 2 Peter 1:3-7; 1 John 3:16



SATURDAY, MAY 23, 2020

Go, and Do Likewise

But a Samaritan, as he journeyed, came to where he was, and when he saw him, he had compassion.

Luke 10:33

Have you noticed how fast everyone seems to be talking and moving in today's society? Even the flow of TV programming is exceedingly fast paced. People are walking faster as they bow their heads to read text messages. So many people appear to be self-absorbed.

The words of Jesus make it clear that walking God's path of righteousness requires that we take the time to notice others on our path. Just as Jesus used his personal time to do miracles to heal others and raise Lazarus from death to life, he expects us to take the time to help others we encounter on our life path. As followers of Christ, we are each able to share Christ's love with those in need. We need only to take the time to see others on our path and reach out to them with a simple greeting and open heart to listen.

*Pat Shopland
Marshfield, MA*

Father, help us to see and listen to those on our daily path who need the love of Jesus. Amen.

Pray: Take time every day to pray for those on your life path who may need the love of Christ.

Read: Luke 10:30-37

SUNDAY, MAY 24, 2020

Our Words Matter

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

1 Thessalonians 5:11

As a youngster, my parents taught me this limerick: “Sticks and stones can break my bones, but names can never hurt me.” Experience quickly taught me that was not true. Words can and do hurt. But instead, as Christ’s followers we can use our words to encourage, to build up and to inspire others. Our words matter.


Every day we have opportunities to offer others encouragement. Simple but honest compliments build up. A sincere “Thank you” lets others know that you appreciate what they did or said and encourages them to keep doing it. Words of encouragement can give a person the strength he or she needs to persevere in difficult situations and times. A heartfelt “You are a blessing” just might be the highlight of a person’s day. Use your words to be a blessing to others.

*Glen VanderKloot
Springfield, IL*

Lord, help me to use my words to honor you and to encourage others. Amen.

Act: Look for opportunities today and every day to encourage others with your kind words.

Read: Proverbs 16:24; 1 Thessalonians 5:11



MONDAY, MAY 25, 2020

God Lights Our Path

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

John 8:12

Our path in life can grow rather dim at times. As seniors, our regrets and losses over a lifetime and over current problems can overwhelm us. We forget that God is bigger than any problem. We sometimes feel we don't deserve God's forgiveness, but we do.

God promised to be the light on our path. Through his example, we learn how to obtain happiness and peace. When we need hope, we should praise him for what he's already done for us. We should also pray for God's blessings in the future. As Matthew 21:22 reminds us, Christ said, "Whatever you ask in prayer, you will receive, if you have faith."

*Jan Kilby
San Antonio TX*

Dear Lord, help me to seek your light. Amen.

Reach out: Be God's light to those in need of it.

Read: Proverbs 25:20; Psalm 119:105

TUESDAY, MAY 26, 2020

Following Him

Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.

Hebrews 13:8

I've seen some bizarre fashions over the years. Do you remember beehive hairstyles in the 1960s or leg warmers in the 1980s?

Christians are not immune to fads and fashion. You may notice a flamboyant preaching style or popular phrase repeated often in prayer. Even in church, we can be tempted to imitate others and try to keep up with the crowd.

What a relief it is to remember that God isn't concerned with the latest trends. He simply asks us to follow him and to walk in humility, with a servant's heart. Jesus is the Way, the Truth and the Life—the authentic Friend we long for, who loves us just as we are, without striving, conforming or impressing.

*Kerry Osborne
Sydney, Australia*

Dear Jesus, unlike fashion trends, you remain the same—yesterday, today and forever. Thank you! Amen.

Think: Reminisce about how fashions have changed over the years. Thank God for staying the same.

Read: 1 Samuel 16:7; 1 Peter 3:3-4

WEDNESDAY, MAY 27, 2020

Rest

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

Matthew 11:28

Have you ever been shopping for a new mattress? You spend hours looking and then finally pick one that will give you the most comfort. Sometimes though, after you get it home, you find things wrong with it. Maybe it's too firm, or maybe it holds body heat too much.

When we go to Christ, we get true comfort and true rest for our souls. Unlike that wrong mattress, we will never find his grace uncomfortable. It will always be just right. When life gets too hot for us, his grace cools us off. When we are weary and burdened, we can fall into his arms and get real and lasting rest.

Instead of searching through all of the world's imperfect and often costly remedies for relief and rest, find your way to Christ today and rest!

*Jeremy Klaustermeier
Warrenton, MO*

Thank you, Lord, for always providing the comfort and rest I need. Amen.

Sit: Go to church on a day when there is no worship, and just sit in Christ's grace.

Read: Jeremiah 6:16; Hebrews 4:1-13

THURSDAY, MAY 28, 2020

Five Ways of Living

All of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus ... might walk in newness of life.

Romans 6:3-4

Today as I travel down the road of life, I find myself coming closer to the end of my journey. Yet I still have time to be

- a worshipping, witnessing, working pilgrim.
- a nurturing, nourishing, negotiating pilgrim.
- a giving, growing, glowing pilgrim.
- a caring, consoling, confirming pilgrim.
- a sharing, serving, supporting pilgrim.

This is possible as I cling to my Savior, Jesus Christ. In my Baptism, God put his mark on me and gave me the gift of new life. I share in Christ's death and resurrection so that I can "walk in newness of life" through practicing five important lifestyles—five ways of living.

*Walter M. Schoedel
Webster Groves, MO*

Lord Jesus, through the working of the Holy Spirit, help me daily to live out my baptismal covenant. Amen.

Ponder carefully: How can you follow Paul's guidance for holy living in Colossians 3:12-17?

Read: Colossians 2:6-12



FRIDAY, MAY 29, 2020

Shout for Joy!

Shout for joy to the LORD, all the earth.

Psalm 100:1 NIV

Our three-year-old grandson occasionally walks out onto the back deck of his house and lets loose a long, high-pitched scream into the woods. He turns around with a joyful, beatific smile on his face and walks back into the house.

Springtime—the joyous rebirth of nature! Creation itself shouts with joy to the Lord. It is the joy of spring-green tree leaves, of tulips and daffodils in a riot of color, of the sun’s warm journey north. Does spring fill you with joy as it does me?

Older as we are, we have far too much decorum than to shout our joy to the Lord for all to hear. Such a pity! Let the joy of being God’s child, mingled with the joy of spring’s fresh arrival, fill your heart, your mind, your soul today. Your body is sure to follow!

*Don Schatz
Lynnwood, WA*

Lord, you fill my soul with springtime joy. Thank you!
Amen.

Shout: Go ahead and shout with joy to the Lord today.

Read: Psalm 98; Psalm 100

SATURDAY, MAY 30, 2020

The Patient Gardener

A man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard, and he came seeking fruit on it and found none.

Luke 13:6

Planting season has arrived in many parts of the United States. Last year we pushed the season and planted too early. We had three snowstorms, as well as hail and freezing rains, in the weeks after planting in May. It was a struggle to keep those plants alive all summer and the harvest was meager at best.

Jesus encourages us as his disciples to be patient gardeners as we nurture the faith life of new Christians. Luke tells a parable about a fig tree that was not bearing fruit. The owner wants to cut it down, but the tender of the vineyard begs him to get another chance and he will dig around and fertilize the tree to get it to produce. The message to us is to be patient with the faith lives of those whom God puts in our path. Take time to listen and encourage others as they grow in God's Word.

*Margaret Rickers Hinchey
Englewood, CO*

Lord, bless my "gardening" this day, in your creation and with those whom you put in my path. Amen.

Plant: Plant a flower today to remind you of the care that needs to be given to our Christian friends.

Read: Luke 13:6-9; Mark 4:1-20

SUNDAY, MAY 31, 2020

A Day to Remember

Let all the house of Israel therefore know for certain that God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified.

Acts 2:36

Peter is preaching in the verse above. Jesus, having completed his work of redemption, has returned to heaven, assigning the apostles the task of spreading the Good News of the gospel. Peter's sermon cut to the hearts of the people listening. "Brothers, what shall we do?" they cried. "Repent and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit," Peter answered.

Those who believed Peter's message were baptized—about 3,000 souls! What a day! Awe, rejoicing, joy, amazement filled those hours. But that was just the beginning for those new converts. You and I, too, stepped into a whole new life the day we were baptized. We celebrate life in the Spirit each Pentecost, each day.

*Donna J. Streufert
South Bend, IN*

Come, Holy Spirit. Live in my heart this day and always. Amen.

Think: After the 3,000 were baptized, they began to live in the Spirit. How does this also describe you?

Read: Acts 2:1-47

MONDAY, JUNE 1, 2020

A Flower Grows

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

Psalm 30:5 NIV

Following the funeral of a dear friend, I was sitting in our small courtyard overlooking the brown, dry space where grass had stopped growing due to lack of rain. Weeds were flourishing, however, along with my own sense of sadness.

I was about to retreat into the house when something caught my eye. It was a small red pansy standing alone among the weeds. As I went over to take a closer look, something touched the despair inside me. I began to pull the weeds around the flower; I even took a picture to show others.

“Hope springs eternal in every human breast,” are words from Alexander Pope's *Essay on Man*. I can't help but think that small flower was God's reminder of the hope that comes in Jesus, a hope that springs to eternity.

*Edward Arle
St. Charles, MO*

Lord Jesus, Help me to see your love and glory, even in the clouds. Amen.

Look: Watch for small or big ways our Lord speaks to your heart.

Read: 2 Corinthians 4:16-17; Psalm 126:6



TUESDAY, JUNE 2, 2020

Rescued

He chose us in him before the foundation of the world.

Ephesians 1:4

Near the close of a Sunday morning worship service, a woman began feeling faint and collapsed. Paramedics were called and quickly, quietly went about their work. The woman would be taken to the hospital as a precaution. As the church doors opened at the close of the service, the emergency lights of the first responders' vehicles reflected through the open doors and down the center aisle; they flashed against the altar's silver crucifix.

The lights flashing on the cross reflected the rescue we needed, a rescue that could only be achieved by our Savior's redeeming death and triumphant resurrection. Yet God's action was more than a first response. Before the foundation of the world, God chose us in Christ Jesus to be his own. While we were still lost in sin, before we ever knew our desperate need for salvation, God knew. "Before they call I will answer; while they are yet speaking I will hear" (Isaiah 65:24).

*Carol Geisler
Orange, CA*

Lord Jesus, thank you for rescuing me. Amen.

Share: As you have opportunity, express thanks to first responders for the work they do.

Read: Ephesians 1:3-10; Isaiah 65:24-25

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 3, 2020

The Look

I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go. I will guide you with My eye.

Psalm 32:8 NKJV

As a child, I often received “the look.” With one glance, my mom could correct my behavior, beam her approval or direct my attention to a friend who needed a hug or a kind word.

As a parent, I perfected the look but failed to enjoy the same attention-getting power my mother had. My children had discovered a simple action that rendered the look powerless: they’d turn away. The look only works when the person you’re looking at looks back.

In Psalm 32:8, God promises to instruct, teach and guide us “with [his] eye.” Like my children, however, many of us fail to benefit from God’s guidance because we’re not looking at him. But if we read our Bibles, pray and seek input from godly people, we can clearly see God’s guiding look and reap the benefits of his direction.

*Lori Hatcher
Lexington, SC*

Father, help me seek your face and your direction every day. Amen.

Learn: Turn your attention toward God. Realize his eyes are always upon you, eager to guide your steps.

Read: Psalm 32:8-11; James 1:5-8

THURSDAY, JUNE 4, 2020

Delight in the Detour

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

Proverbs 16:9

A road trip to a vacation site can be filled with beauty and many opportunities to enjoy. However, when taken off course by a detour, I am quick to complain about the inconvenience and delays! Likewise, I look forward to my heavenly destination where I can rest from my trials. I'm still savoring the beautiful moments and opportunities of this life. And when I face obstacles that take me off my preferred course, I complain!

Consider the detour Jesus made for us. He set aside glory and took the road to the cross where he suffered and died to give us new life. Now, Jesus calls us to take up our cross and follow him on the road of suffering. But we can delight in those detours because, in our struggles, Jesus strengthens us, teaches us and uses us to lead others to him.

*Sandi Geis
St. Louis, MO*

Jesus, give me perseverance on life's road until you bring me to heaven to rest in Your eternal glory. Amen.

Merge: In suffering, how can you intersect with someone who needs Jesus?

Read: 2 Peter 4:1-13; Matthew 16:24

FRIDAY, JUNE 5, 2020

Leaving the Nest

God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control.

2 Timothy 1:7

In the spring, a pair of robins labored continuously until they had built a sturdy nest in a tree by my deck. In time, baby birds hatched. Their lives seemed idyllic until the nest became too crowded. Amid a lot of squawking and chirping, I realized the mother bird was forcing the babies out onto a branch. They clung to that branch, fearful of falling. Little did they know they could soar if they let go of the branch.

That scene reminded me of my life. Many times God has shown me his will for my life by pushing me out of my comfort zone. Instead of flying, I cling to my branch because it's safe and familiar.

*Gloria Doty
Fort Wayne, IN*

Lord, help us to understand when you show us how to let go of our branch. Amen.

Look: Let a bird's nest remind you that God uses many ways to show us how to have courage to fly.

Read: Hebrews 10:35-36



SATURDAY, JUNE 6, 2020

The Gardener's Garden

The righteous ... are planted in the house of the LORD.

Psalm 92:12-13

How does your garden grow? Is it lagging in its growth? Or will it be producing a bountiful harvest? What are you expecting from your garden? Oh, those questions are not directed toward you. Those questions are for God, the Gardener!

The good Gardener has planted the seed of faith. He has nurtured this garden to help it grow. He has spread his Word over his garden. And certainly, he anticipates a beautiful, bountiful harvest of “love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, [and] self-control” (Galatians 5:22-23).

Yes, God is a Gardener, for he has planted the righteous in (the garden of) his house. God is expecting that those planted in his garden will produce a good harvest! What's growing in the garden that is you?

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

Help my garden produce a wondrous harvest, Lord.
Amen.

Think: How does my garden grow?

Read: Matthew 13:1-23

SUNDAY, JUNE 7, 2020

God Is Our GPS

Teach me your way, O LORD, and lead me on a level path because of my enemies.

Psalm 27:11

Paper maps are great! With the advent of GPS (Global Positioning System), paper maps have become less popular. Often we find that GPS may send us on a wrong road or even off a cliff! When I as navigator hold a paper map in my hand as we make our way from Colorado to Florida each year, I feel more safe and confident.

It's that way with God too. When we are lost or confused, God can be our road map. We are reminded in Psalm 25:4 that we should ask God to show us the way he would have us go in our daily lives as well. The psalmist implores God not only to make the path known but also to teach the way we should go. So often, we lean on our own understanding or follow the lead of others. God wants us to look to him for guidance and direction. Let God be your GPS!

*Margaret Rickers Hinchey
Engelwood, CO*

Lord Jesus, guide me along life's path so that I may walk in your ways and humbly serve you! Amen.

Do: Get out a map or atlas and remember the places God has led you in your life.

Read: Psalm 25:4; Psalm 86:11; Micah 6:8



MONDAY, JUNE 8, 2020

Dependent

Wait for the LORD and keep his way, and he will exalt you to inherit the land.

Psalm 37:34

It seems that the older I become, the more I realize that I am dependent upon those who are around me. I would like to think of myself as very independent, but the truth of the matter is I need others. Most importantly, I need the Lord to show me what I am to do and say. It is not easy to follow his ways. Yet I know it is worth it. He gives me what I need now and also the promise of eternal life. He has done it all by Christ's death and resurrection. When I am connected to him, he gives me the ability to follow his ways and enjoy life now with the assurance of life with him eternally. He gives me all I need. Each of us must ask him to help us follow his ways, especially when it is not easy. He is there and will help us. It is his promise.

*Mike Lutz
Shelby Township, MI*

Lord, life is hard. I cannot make it on my own. Show me your ways and help me follow them. Amen.

Activity: Ask yourself, "Why is it so hard to follow the ways of the Lord?"

Read: Psalm 138

TUESDAY, JUNE 9, 2020

The Big Questions

[God] said, “I have found in David the son of Jesse a man after my heart, who will do all my will.”

Acts 13:22

Big questions are inevitable as we age. After all, we’ve learned that the little ones like “What will happen to my china when I’m gone?” really don’t matter.

The big questions often involve relationships. Interactions with others have a huge impact on our life. We wonder, “Do I have the courage to forgive this person?” or, more importantly, “How’s my relationship with God?”

The Bible hero David pondered that vital question after facing situations in which he failed God. Yet in spite of David’s sins, the Bible says this king was “a man after God’s heart.” Even after significant failures, David longed to please God. David showed God how he loved him.

What a meaningful takeaway for us! Even if we haven’t always responded in a godly way to the big questions of life, like David, we can be redeemed by our gracious God.

*Mary Manz Simon
Ft. Myers FL*

Merciful God, lead me to do your will. Amen.

Activity: Ask God to guide your response to the next big question you face.

Read: Psalm 32:1-5



WEDNESDAY, JUNE 10, 2020

The Pearl

He ... sold everything he had and bought it.

Matthew 13:46 NIV

The parable of the pearl is about value. A pearl expert knows that an exquisite pearl will have beautiful color, be of size, have a pleasing shape and appear truly lustrous. This parable is so straightforward. The expert seeks the perfect pearl—and finds it! He sells everything he has to acquire it.

What makes you valuable? When you look past the appearance, the accomplishments, the success in life, it's ultimately who loves and cares about you. This parable is also very personal. You're the extraordinary pearl, worthy of an extravagant purchase, despite what you might think of yourself or what others think of you. The heavenly Father is the merchant who has parted with his most precious gift: his Son.

You are forgiven! You are loved! You are the pearl of greatest value!

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

Thank you for finding me of great value, Lord. Amen.

Think: Who else treasures you?

Read: Matthew 13:44-46

THURSDAY, JUNE 11, 2020

Preaching and Reaching!

And how are they to preach unless they are sent? As it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!"

Romans 10:15

There is a church parking lot nearby that has a special assigned parking place for the preacher, although with a little twist. It states, "RESERVED FOR THE PREACHER. PARK HERE, AND YOU GET TO PREACH!"

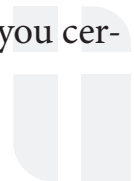
Theologically speaking, I would argue that this sign encourages ANY faith-filled person of the Lord to park there! As the Scriptures emphasize, all of God's people, young and old, are "preachers" of the Good News of salvation in Christ. What is even more exciting is to know that we do not "have to" preach, but rather, we "get to" preach God's Word to those around us. You and I are sent out of our "parking lots" into the world where the Lord has placed us to proclaim God's love in Christ to all people!

*Rich Bimler
Bloomington, IL*

Lord, thanks for moving us out of our "parking lots" of life into the lives of people. Amen!

Do: Be sure to mention to your pastors that you certainly support and listen to their sermons.

Read: Psalm 103



FRIDAY, JUNE 12, 2020

Salt of the Earth

You are the salt of the earth.

Matthew 5:13

As I age, I find that I want more salt on my food than when I was younger. It seems that the salt has lost its flavor, but I think rather my tongue has lost its ability to taste.

I sometimes wonder if my ability to be a “salty Christian” has also diminished. Jesus’ references to salt in the Sermon on the Mount remind us that we are to spread the Word as salt is spread. That means that we are “salt shakers,” containers to spread the Good News. Salt that’s been in the shaker too long can clog the holes hindering the salt from coming out. Does that happen as we age? Does the humidity of diminished abilities clog the flow of the salt of the Word? I think not, if we constantly allow the Spirit to use us to spread the salt of God’s Word with whatever gifts we still have.

*Eldor Kaiser
Lenexa, KS*

O Holy Spirit, shake us up to be the salt of the earth.
Amen.

Remember: When you reach for the salt shaker, remember that you are the salt of the earth.

Read: Matthew 5:13-16

SATURDAY, JUNE 13, 2020

Yoked

Take my yoke upon you.

Matthew 11:29

When you put a wooden yoke over two oxen, they pull the load in sync, going the same direction. What would it look like in your day if your first prayer upon rising was: Jesus, can I be yoked to you today? Would the day's plan be laid out? Probably not. Instead you would have to stay very near him, asking, "This way?"

How much control does one ox have if the lead ox is moving? Not much! Therefore, praying to be yoked to Jesus means giving up control of your time. Where might Jesus take you? Maybe you would feel drawn to the solo person in the cafeteria. Maybe Jesus heads you toward someone in the grocery line in need of some kind words. Maybe he would bring a friend to mind who, that very moment, needs a phone call. Whatever it might be, it will involve relating to someone because that's what Jesus is still doing.

*Julaine Kammrath
Aurora, IL*

Lord, give me boldness to ask to be yoked to you and the experience of what comes next. Amen.

Practice: Observe the people God puts around you. Notice every one because not a one is a coincidence.

Read: Galatians 5:25; John 12:26

SUNDAY, JUNE 14, 2020

The Supplier

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

Philippians 4:19

The promise of this verse is assuring to me and deeply personal—that my needs are met according to God’s riches! Like the Good Samaritan, God finds me broken along the way and unable to mend my wounds. He tends and cares for me according to his unending treasures and magnanimous nature.

This Bible verse clarifies that God knows my needs and his riches lavished on me are not based on my thoughts, words or deeds. Instead of abandoning me, he supplies the redemptive love of Christ Jesus, forgiveness and eternal life to me.

Who does not want God tending to their every need? Why would anyone reject God’s riches so freely given?

*MaryAnn Sundby
Castle Rock, CO*

Dear Heavenly Father, thank you for supplying forgiveness and salvation to me from Jesus Christ. Help me know your love and show it through my actions every day. Amen.

Act: Pray for relatives and friends to accept the riches that come from Jesus Christ.

Read: Matthew 7:7-11

MONDAY, JUNE 15, 2020

God's Path

He was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and of faith.
And a great many people were added to the Lord.

Acts 11:24

The simple prayer “Lord, teach me your paths” will yield many different answers, depending on your gifts and your circumstances. Acts 11 suggests one possible answer: God might be leading you on his path of encouragement.

The church in Antioch, where “the disciples were first called Christians” (Acts 11:26), was experiencing explosive growth including both Jews and Gentiles. A man named Barnabas (“son of encouragement”) was sent by the Jerusalem apostles to evaluate the Antioch church for its faithfulness to Christ. He encouraged these believers in many ways. He “exhorted them all to remain faithful to the Lord with steadfast purpose” (11:23) and brought Saul from Tarsus to join him there (11:25). Many were added to the Lord. Could God be using you to encourage others in your church or community?

*Stephen J. Carter
Oakville, MO*

Lord, lead me on your path of encouragement. Amen.

Consider: Do you have the gift of encouragement? Pray for quiet, practical ways to encourage others.

Read: Acts 11:19-26

TUESDAY, JUNE 16, 2020

Solace

Thomas answered him, "My Lord and my God!"

John 20:28

It must have been a tough week for Thomas. All his companions believed that Jesus was alive, but he held out for proof. He must have felt very alone. Then Jesus appeared, and Thomas saw the nail prints. A new feeling came over him: joy, from solace.

Solace is an old word we once used in hymns. Solace is a feeling of peace, but it is more. It includes comfort and consolation and the joy that comes from that.

I believe Thomas's troubled heart was consoled, and he experienced solace when he recognized that Jesus had risen. What comfort, what consolation, what joy it is to know that Jesus, our Savior and our Friend, lives and is with us. May that solace be with us in times of sorrow and on stressful days.

*Eldor Kaiser
Lenexa, KS*

We praise you, Jesus, risen Lord. May we find solace in our celebration of your resurrection. Amen.

Do: Find the meaning of *solace* and think of what it means to you.

Read: John 20:24-29

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 17, 2020

Detours

For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ.

Philippians 3:8

The apostle Paul sure had his share of problems after he began to follow Christ, but he didn't let those problems sidetrack him. Paul was whipped, beaten, stoned, shipwrecked three times, imprisoned, exiled ... yet, none of that stopped him from being a faithful follower of Christ and writing many of the books of the New Testament. Paul faithfully traveled to many places leading others to faith.

In our lives, we may face many obstacles, detours, and roadblocks, but that should not prevent us from following the path that God has laid before us. Paul's sufferings and trials made him stronger. Instead of acting as detours, they caused Paul to rely more on God's grace.

*Celeste Cummins
Storm Lake, IA*

Dear Father, help me to use the apostle Paul as a faithful example of someone who did not give up in the midst of life's detours. Amen.

Ponder: What is one way you can be a witness of Christ to someone this week?

Read: 2 Corinthians 11:16-33; Philippians 3



THURSDAY, JUNE 18, 2020

Lessons from Pepper

Let us therefore come *boldly to the throne of grace*, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

Hebrews 4:16 NKJV, emphasis added

Pepper is the “doggie” cat I know. She lives two cul-de-sacs over from my house. I see her every day on my morning walk. But she always sees me first.

As soon as I turn the corner and head down the street, she bounds toward me, tail held high and white paws flashing. Unlike other neighborhood cats who approach me hesitantly, Pepper runs toward me with a confidence born of trust and relationship.

Hebrews 4:16 reminds me I can enjoy this same confidence in my relationship with God. Because Jesus Christ has removed the sin barrier that separated us, I can come boldly to him in prayer. Our relationship gives me full access to his mercy and grace. I can be confident he’s always glad to see me approach.

*Lori Hatcher
Lexington, SC*

Father, remind me every day how eagerly you wait for me to approach you in prayer. Amen.

Learn: Remind yourself of God’s invitation to come to him in prayer and boldly approach his throne.

Read: Hebrews 4:14-16; Hebrews 10:19-23

FRIDAY, JUNE 19, 2020

Just Before Dawn

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

John 1:5

Have you noticed how dark it is just before dawn? In the inky stillness, it is easy to believe that the light will never return.

Our experience of seeing the sun rise—watching the light beams pierce the impenetrable darkness and watching the world again illuminated in color and shadow—helps us to believe in the dawn.

Faith grows as we experience God's care for us through dark times, and we know that if we persevere, the dark times will pass and light will return. I've heard it said that the 23rd psalm doesn't describe staying in the darkest valley but allowing God to help us walk through the valley, to the mountain on the other side.

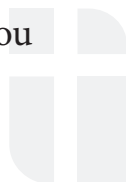
How sad it would be to give up, just before dawn breaks through.

*Kerry Osborne
Sydney, Australia*

Lord, your magnificent creation must not be overlooked. Be with me, I pray, through Jesus Christ. Amen.

Reflect: Reflect on a time God has helped you through a dark valley.

Read: Psalm 23; Psalm 27:1



SATURDAY, JUNE 20, 2020

I Choose You

I was no prophet, nor a prophet's son, but I was a herdsman and a dresser of sycamore figs.

Amos 7:14

The prophet Amos already had a career—in agriculture. He had sheep and also an orchard. But God had something else in mind for this farmer. He has a way of doing that. He said, “I choose you.” He did the same with fishermen and tax collectors and tentmakers and physicians.

Even at this point in our lives, he may be choosing us as well. It may not be re-entering the workforce in a new career, but nonetheless he has special service plans for us. Perhaps we are called to be in prayer ministry, a one-on-one Stephen minister or simply a Barnabas encourager to those people he sets before us. Listen for that “I choose you!”

*Don Luepke
Fremont, IN*

Lord, I do not know what you have in mind for me, but I am ready to listen and learn. Amen.

Explore: Today, explore the boundaries of the plans the Father has for you.

Read: Isaiah 6:8; Deuteronomy 18:5

SUNDAY, JUNE 21, 2020

Springing Back to Life

Whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never be thirsty again.

John 4:14

I have a regular routine for watering our plants, but I admit to getting distracted at times. So, it was of little surprise that one day I discovered I had forgotten to water one of the plants in my office. It was so dry and droopy I thought it was hopeless, but I watered it anyway. Lo and behold, it came springing back to life.

I couldn't help but see a parallel between myself and this plant. When the things of life distract me away from God's Word and sacraments, I become parched. Nothing I do on my own can quench such thirst, but when I am led back to Bible study and the divine service, Jesus brings me springing back to life.

How about you? Has life, for whatever reason, kept you from soaking up all that Jesus can provide? It's never too late to drink of the water that Jesus gives.

*Jane Wilke
Woodbury, MN*

Gracious Father, when the days find me parched, you offer living water in Jesus. Thank you. Amen.

Consider: Is it time to look for a Bible study group you can join or a church you can visit?

Read: John 4:4-26; Psalm 1



MONDAY, JUNE 22, 2020

Somebody Help Me!

How long, LORD, must I call for help, but you do not listen?

Habakkuk 1:2 NIV

On a beautiful spring day, I rounded the corner of the house only to hear my son yelling from the tree he was caught in, “Help! Somebody help me!” How long would he have hollered for help? Once or twice? No, he would have yelled until help came or his voice gave out.

How many times have you called to God for help regarding a specific situation, yet nothing seemed to change? Habakkuk understood the feeling, “How long, LORD, must I call for help, but you do not listen?”

Notice on whom Habakkuk is calling for help. It’s not Dad or Mom. It’s his God, who is also your all-powerful God. Habakkuk calls on God, and we call on God because we’re convinced he will help—when the time is right. We just need to keep calling as long as it takes.

*Randal Jeppesen
Medford, WI*

Lord, I get impatient and frustrated when your answers come slowly. Teach me patience and persistence—as long as it takes. Amen.

Encourage: a friend to be persistent, and watch it increase your willingness to pray as long as it takes.

Read: Psalm 130; 2 Timothy 4:7-8

TUESDAY, JUNE 23, 2020

Where Are You Looking?

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

John 8:12

There is a great deal of truth nestled within the following quote attributed to Corrie ten Boom: “If you look at the world, you’ll be distressed. If you look at within, you’ll be depressed. But if you look at Christ, you’ll be at rest.”

Jesus exhorts us to follow him; yet, it isn’t always easy. Corrie ten Boom had great reason to be distressed and depressed, surviving a Nazi concentration camp. But rather than focus on the horrors thrust upon her, she looked to Jesus and found light and peace and rest. She even found it in her heart to forgive her captors.

The same is true for us; if we focus on what the world has “dished out” and how we feel about it, we risk being pulled into darkness. Instead, let’s look to Jesus who has conquered darkness and leads us into light.

*Jane Wilke
Woodbury, MN*

Lord, teach me to keep my focus fixed on you so that I might find light and peace and rest. Amen.

Reflect: Are you feeling distressed or depressed?
Where is your focus today?

Read: Psalm 34:17-18; 2 Corinthians 1:3-5



WEDNESDAY, JUNE 24, 2020

Sharing Our Gifts

Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them.

Romans 12:6

Whenever I think of this topic, I am reminded of my high-school class motto, which is based on this verse from Romans. “We each have different gifts from God, but together we share his gift of leadership.” We may not all be leaders like Moses or Joshua, but we can faithfully follow Christ and lead others to him.

God gives each of us different gifts so that we can use them here on earth. Some people love to welcome others into their home. Others enjoy spending time with the elderly. Many people use their talents to educate children in Sunday school. Whatever your gift, you can use it to faithfully follow the path in life that Jesus has prepared for you while, at the same time, leading others to faith in him.

*Celeste Cummins
Storm Lake, IA*

Blessed Father, thank you for giving me the gifts you have. Please let me use them faithfully to follow you and lead others to faith in you. Amen.

Ponder: Think about the skills God has given to you. How can you use them to serve him?

Read: Romans 12:6-8; 1 Corinthians 12

THURSDAY, JUNE 25, 2020

True Discipleship

If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.

John 8:31-32

Jesus tells us that following him means accepting his message of love for God and love for others. When we follow Jesus, we know true freedom comes from knowing we are God's beloved children.

As God's beloved children, we are forgiven.

As God's beloved children, we are called and chosen.

As God's beloved children, we carry on Jesus' message of love.

True discipleship also means placing others' needs as important as our own. It means believing wholeheartedly that we are in God's hands. True discipleship means trusting that we belong to God and that God has a purpose for our lives.

Abiding in Jesus' Word helps us know that our greatest longings have been fulfilled.

*Sally Macke
St. Louis, MO*

Shepherd, keep us from straying from your love. Amen.

Do: Invite someone to go to church with you.

Read: 1 John 3:18



FRIDAY, JUNE 26, 2020

Peace

Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. ... Let not your hearts be troubled.

John 14:27

Horatio G. Spafford suffered the loss of his properties in the great Chicago fire and the death of his four daughters drowned at sea. Being a follower of Jesus, he penned the hymn “It Is Well with My Soul.” What a powerful testimony! His words can help us—in the midst of life’s storms—to experience peace because Jesus is with us.

Spiritual songs have a way to touch our hearts in the midst of our trials, tribulations, and troubles. As I continue to age, I have found that hymns and spiritual songs can be an avenue to experience the peace that Jesus offers us. With his peace, troubles vanish.

*Walter M. Schoedel
Webster Groves, MO*

Lord Jesus, thank You for the gift of shalom, peace.
Amen.

Daily: Meditate on the words of a hymn or gospel song. Let the truth touch your heart’s deepest needs.

Read: Luke 24:13-38

SATURDAY, JUNE 27, 2020

Tomorrow

Do not boast about tomorrow, for you do not know what a day may bring.

Proverbs 27:1

I often write out my “to do” list of activities to tackle tomorrow. Sometimes I plan as if tomorrow belongs to me. I might even announce my plans and organize the route to accomplish my errands—as if the day will unfold as I envision. But day after day, I awake to find God pulls me in another direction to help those around me or to tend to problems I hadn’t foreseen. Occasionally, stubbornness and self-absorption creep into my thinking about the new priorities. Does this happen to you as well?

I hope to wake up armed with a joyful understanding that my day belongs to God. What is he nudging me to do? How will I reflect him all through the day? As I write my plans for tomorrow, will his will be clearly displayed?

*MaryAnn Sundby
Castle Rock, CO*

Dear Father, infuse your will in me as I plan my activities for both today and tomorrow. Amen.

Plan: Make a “to do” list. Includes empty lines, ready to be filled when God provides the nudge.

Read: Matthew 6:25-34



SUNDAY, JUNE 28, 2020

By My Name

He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out.

John 10:3

I must admit, I love to hear my wife say my name. No, it's not her accent; it's the tone of love in her voice. I admit, I love to hear our children call me, "Dad." Then I hear our Lord Jesus call me by my name and I am overjoyed. The Author of all good and perfect gifts, the One who has blessed me with my beloved wife and children, calls me to follow him.

I am not worthy of such a call but by the power of the Holy Spirit I answer that call. Where will he lead me? David said that God leads his children of faith in the paths of righteousness (Psalm 23:3). Those paths of righteousness are filled with opportunities to delight in his presence, to proclaim his love to the nations and experience his countless blessings. Wow! God calls me ... by my name!

*David Bernthal
Juliette, GA*

Lord, may I live in the bliss of your presence as you call me by my name and lead me in paths of righteousness. Amen.

Recall: Rejoice in the paths of righteousness God has granted you; celebrate his continued leading.

Read: Isaiah 43:1; John 10:14-15

MONDAY, JUNE 29, 2020

The Color Silver

The words of the LORD are pure words, like silver refined in a furnace on the ground, purified seven times.

Psalm 12:6

I like silver tones in jewelry and decorations. The color reminds me of the biblical references to the metal. The psalmist contrasts the purity of God's words against the lies of men (Psalm 12), and he tells us how God tested Israel, "as silver is tried" (Psalm 66:10). The prophet Zechariah told the Israelites that God would "refine them as one refines silver" but that he would also answer them and make them his people (Zechariah 13:9).

We've lived long enough to have experienced trials that we would not choose to live through again. We can testify that out of the trials comes strength and out of strength comes beauty, shining like silver. For those of us who have silver in our hair, we carry with us the experiences that grounded us in the hope that is everlasting (Romans 5:5).

*Judy Scherr
Lemay, MO*

Lord, thank you for bringing us through the fire and into strength and for the Holy Spirit who leads us. Amen.

Be firm: Call it silver, not gray, and claim it as God's gift of his faithfulness through our lives.

Read: Psalm 66:8-12; Romans 5:1-5



TUESDAY, JUNE 30, 2020

What's New?

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

Today is new. It's the first day of the rest of your life on earth. This day is a glorious gift from God: the Creator, Redeemer and Spirit living within us.

Ask God to open your eyes to the new blessings of this day, to look at his creation with new eyes, to see the old and new people he wants to bless through you.

Worship God in a new celebration of his goodness and grace, for he alone forgives, renews, strengthens, and enables you to do life his way.

*Sharolyn Sander
Lincoln, NE*

Lord, thank you for your endless love and mercy! Enable me to share the salvation story in new and thoughtful ways. Amen.

Challenge yourself: Find a new way to share your faith and love each day.

Read: Psalm 96

HOLY HABITS for HOPE-FULL HEALTH

EASTER EGG “XAMPLES” OF SHARING OUR FAITH!

April, May and June are especially great months to share and show your Easter faith with others because of all the new life of flowers, activities and other living examples popping out all around us. Try out these Holy Habits with others and continue the Easter discussions:

E – Exclaim to others, “Easter Blessings” for the next few months, to remind everyone that Easter is every day!

A – Allow friends and family to look through your Easter decorations and let them pick out one (or more) that they can display in their own home.

S – Send a note to a friend, just to say, “Hi! God loves you and so do I. Happy Easter, every day!”

T – Thank a stranger for a good deed he or she has done for you.

E – Engage a friend or group in a discussion of the Easter story and study various Bible translations of the account.

R – Remember each day that we all live on “this side” of the Resurrection! Hooray for life in the Lord!

Easter Time

Lord, we celebrate this Easter season by affirming that “every day is Easter” because of your death on the cross and resurrection from the tomb! It’s not just a “one season” event, but rather THE event of faith and life! Keep us celebrating, Lord, even through the “Good Fridays” we experience in our own lives. We know, Lord, that, in you, we live on “this side” of the Resurrection. And we are glad! Amen!

Family Time

Dear Jesus, thank you for putting people together in families. Regardless of our age, we need people of all sizes and ages around us—to support us, laugh with us, pray with us and celebrate the life you give to all of us. Whether we live alone, with our family or with other friends, keep encouraging us to spend time together with the younger and the older. We need each other, Lord, and all of us need you. Amen!

Spring and New Growth

God of creation, we thank you today for the bursting buds, the dancing daffodils, and even the dandy dandelions that are popping up all over! Enable us to stop and “smell the roses” this springtime, especially at times we get so busy we do not even see the flowers, let alone smell them. And thanks for the wriggling worms as well! Amen.

Why We Pray

Lord, thanks for the gift of prayer. Too often we tend to worry about life and its problems rather than pray about them. Focus us so that we see prayer as a conversation we have with you about things you can change, instead of us having a conversation with ourselves about things we cannot change. Amen!

Strength from Scripture

Your Word is a lamp unto my feet, Lord, but why do I sometimes forget to see that you are lighting each step of the way? Forgive me when I fail to search the Scriptures, and also when I seem to live as though you are only present in the Scriptures rather than seeing your Word alive in the people and world around me. Amen!

Rejoicing in Accomplishments

There are days when I accomplish much, Lord, and then there are those others days. Help me to focus on what I do right rather than on what I mess up. Help me know that you love me because of what you have done and not for what I do, but also encourage me to share the joys of helping others in your name. Amen.

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