

HOPE-FULL LIVING

• *Daily Devotions for Christian Seniors* •

October • November • December • 2012

Volume 1 • Number 4

Rich Bimler, Mark Zimmermann, Editors

Kasey Nugent, Editorial Assistant

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."

Hope-Full Living (ISSN pending) is published quarterly in January, April, July and October by Creative Communications for the Parish, 1564 Fencorp Drive, Fenton, MO 63026. Subscription rates: 1 year, \$14 (Canada \$16); single copy, \$3.75 (Canada \$5.50). Periodicals postage paid at St. Louis, MO. Canada GST# is 84231 1870RT. Printed in the USA. Individual subscriptions: (855) 325-4673; 5 or more: (800) 325-9414. Website: www.hope-fulldevos.com

POSTMASTER: Send individual address changes to *Hope-Full Living*, P.O. Box 291847, Kettering, OH 45429-0847. Send bulk address changes to *Hope-Full Living*, 1564 Fencorp Dr., Fenton, MO 63026-2942.

Cover Design: Paul Berkbigler, Madison, WI

Monday, October 1, 2012

Living in Hope

No longer will there be anything accursed, but the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and his servants will worship him.

Revelation 22:3

It was perfect: a beautiful garden, food to eat, no need for clothes, walks with God. And then it happened. Adam and Eve ate the fruit forbidden to them. The consequences were great—no more life of leisure in the Garden of Eden. Instead, a life of toil, suffering and eventual death. And not just for them, but for the whole world thereafter.

And so it has been for all the years of our lives. Is there no hope for release or reprieve?

The answer is a resounding “YES”! Jesus came as the Christ who would die and rise again for our salvation. On the Last Day, he’ll come in glory to lift the curse forever. Rejoice in this hope today!

Lord Jesus, grant us the hope of future joy and life with you. Amen.

Reflect: Are there some things you can release because of the hope that is yours in Christ?

Read: Romans 8:18-39

*Gayle Truesdell
Ballwin, MO*

Tuesday, October 2, 2012

Enmeshed with Jesus

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.

John 3:16

This “Gospel in a Nutshell” becomes more meaningful as we grow older. Jesus knew the Father’s mission for him and carried it out all the way to the cross. The final words of Jesus’ “High Priestly Prayer” are “I made known to them your name, and I will continue to make it known, that the love with which you have loved me may be in them, and I in them” (John 17:26).

Christ does not pray that he might be a peripheral part of our lives, but that his life becomes our life, his love becomes our love, and that we are so enmeshed with the love of Jesus that when people see us, they see Jesus. When we forgive, encourage and support one another, do random acts of kindness toward one another, we do so because we have been embraced by God and see the presence of Christ in one another.

God, thank you, for by the power of the Holy Spirit we know you and your love for us. Amen.

Know: that God loves you and those whom you have the privilege of serving.

Read: Jesus’ “High Priestly Prayer,” John 17:1-26.

*Steve Albers
Kirkwood, MO*

Wednesday, October 3, 2012

True Colors

For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven.

Ecclesiastes 3:1

Brilliant colors herald the coming of another autumn season! Orange and yellow hues, hidden all summer by green chlorophyll, make their appearance when hours of sunlight start decreasing. Reds and purples emerge from unused food stored in the leaves. Each year our world is transformed by colors that were really there all along.

The autumn of life is filled with similar wonders, because “there is a season and a time for every matter under heaven.” We can now use time differently and serve God in new ways. Interests long hidden under constraints of work and responsibility begin to re-surface. God makes everything beautiful in his time, and the splendor of God’s grace is revealed when we share HIS story and reflect HIS love. The “true colors” of your faith produce Christ-like qualities that make others sit up and take notice.

Lord, allow me to reflect your unchanging love during the changing seasons of my life. Amen.

Journal: List the gifts of God you most appreciate in this season of life.

Read: Ecclesiastes 3:1-13

*Sharolyn Sander
Roselle, IL*

Thursday, October 4, 2012

Happy Fall? No Way!

For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and all are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus.

Romans 3:23

Never say “Happy Fall!” to an older adult! Don’t people realize that more older people are injured by falls than in any other way?

As the leaves fall, the grass turns brown and the signs of death and decay are around us, we rejoice in the Gospel words of St. Paul. We all fall short of the glory of God, but we also all rejoice in being lifted up by God’s grace! What an affirmation, what a way to start each day and to rejoice even when we do stumble and “fall,” physically, emotionally or spiritually!

So no “Happy Fall” greetings during these months because we have been lifted up by Christ, each day! And while he lifts us up, he also empowers us to lift up those around us who may be tripping and slipping and falling on their paths today. No “Happy Fall.” But have a “Blessed Autumn,” in the Lord!

Lord, thanks for those who have picked us up when we fall, and help us to do the same. Amen.

Lift: Stand up for, pick up or reach out to someone today.

Read: Psalm 37:23-28

*Rich Bimler
Bloomington, IL*

Friday, October 5, 2012

Your Favorite Season?

For everything there is a season ...

Ecclesiastes 3:1

My favorite season is winter! Your favorite season is spring? You're eager for summer? You don't want fall to end? I get it, still there's room in my igloo, if you stop by.

But there are other seasons: childhood—school—marriage—career—raising family—travel—relocation—grandparenting—retirement. There are so many seasons in our life. What's your favorite?

I hope—(yes, hope-full living)—that your favorite season is the season you are living—this day—this time. I like to think of Jesus as “The Man for All Seasons and the God for all Ages!”

Touched by the love of Jesus in your baptism, all the seasons of your life have been, and still are, in his hands! Between birth and death, a lifetime of Spirit-filled living unfolds, and the best is yet to come!

*Jesus, there are no pain-free seasons of life.
Strengthen me, gracefully, on the journey. Amen.*

Revisit: Revisit your seasons of life with a friend.

Read: Luke 2:25-52

*Randy Shields
Florissant, MO*

Saturday, October 6, 2012

Dry Bones

So I prophesied as he commanded me, and the breath came into them, and they lived and stood on their feet ...

Ezekiel 37:10

I love the Sunday when the Old Testament reading is from Ezekiel's story about the dry bones rattling around in the desert and reassembling as a human body. The drier my old bones become, the more I chuckle at this vision. Grace is the oil, the lubricant that puts us back together. One morning I feel certain my elbow has no connection to my neck, my right ankle bone lies alone in the sand. My mouth is dry, my skin flakes. Then the Word descends in a Scripture passage, joyful music, a touch and a smile, a laugh-out-loud e-mail. Our dry bones feel like dancing. There's a song in our heart, forgiveness in our soul. Jesus has breathed life into our dry bones once more.

Thank you, Lord, for the countless ways you breathe life back into my aging bones. Amen.

Help: Find that friend who is suffering from dry-bone syndrome, and let the Lord breathe them back to joyful living through you.

Read: Ezekiel 37:1-14

*Lois Scheer
San Diego, CA*

Sunday, October 7, 2012

Change Is Difficult

Now the LORD said to Abram, “Go from your country and your kindred and your father’s house to the land that I will show you.”

Genesis 12:1

Few people like change. In fact, the older we get, the less we like it. Minor changes like painting a room or getting new carpeting or making a new flower bed are okay and can be exciting, but don’t ask me to move out of my comfort zone—not figuratively or physically. Most of us like our surroundings and our ideas to stay in the familiar zone, where we are comfortable.

When Jesus left heaven to come to earth, he left his “comfort zone.” He was willing to do his Father’s bidding because he knew there was no other way to save us from the death that we deserved. We can see Jesus as an example of being able to adapt, no matter where God may lead us.

*Father, help me to accept changes in my life and adapt to new circumstances and surroundings.
Amen.*

Encourage: Help and encourage someone who is going through a difficult time of change.

Read: 2 Corinthians 5:2-5; Philippians 4:13

*Gloria Doty
Ft. Wayne, IN*

Monday, October 8, 2012

Keep Serving

Whoever gives one of the little ones even a cup of cold water ...

Matthew 10:42

Playing golf these days means lowering my expectations if I am not to give up in exasperation.

So with our Christian service. We accept that we can do less than we once did, so that we continue to do what we can do. No longer can I staff an eight-hour shift at the homeless shelter nor work even a half day at Habitat for Humanity.

But Jesus doesn't let us off the hook. He insists the "one talent" man not bury his gift. When we see little results, he encourages us with parables of the tiny mustard seed growing into a full bush and reminds us of the unseen power of leaven in a loaf of bread.

So I can sort canned goods at the food pantry and stop and chat with the widow on her porch while I walk the dog. Jesus calls "great" anyone who serves in any way, even just giving a cup of cool water.

Lord, thank you that though we are not all equal, you love us equally. Amen.

Help: Look up, look out—is there a need? Can you help?

Read: Matthew 10:42; 13:31-33; 25:14-30; Mark 10:35-45

*Robert C. Hereth
Grayslake, IL*

Tuesday, October 9, 2012

Forgiveness Heals

Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.

Ephesians 4:32

Through a long lifetime we have experienced times when we have been wronged and times when we have wronged others. We cannot wait for people to say, "I am sorry." Now is the time to forgive. Not to forgive another embitters our relationship with God and even with loved ones who did us no wrong.

Years ago there was a TV short in which a man had stolen a calf to feed his starving family. The cowhands hauled the man in front of their boss and asked, "Boss, what should we do with him?" He scowls, "String him up. It will teach him a lesson." That night the rancher has a dream that he is hauled before God. The angels recite all the wrongs that the rancher has done and then ask, "What shall we do with him?" God answers, "Forgive him. It will teach him a lesson." Forgiveness heals our living together in God's family and brings peace and joy.

God, give me a heart that readily forgives others as you so richly forgive me. Amen.

Response: Seal your forgiveness to one you forgave with acts of kindness.

Read: Colossians 3:12-17

*Leo Symmank
Seabrook, TX*

Wednesday, October 10, 2012

From *I Can't!* to *I Can!*

I can do all things through [Christ] who strengthens me.

Philippians 4:13

Have you ever stopped to count how many times you thought or said, “I can’t”? I can’t do this. I can’t do that. St. Paul begs to differ. He starts with “I.” Sometimes we can’t pass the buck to another. Only I can and must do it. “I can,” he writes. Already far too many people go around saying, “I can’t.” “I can do”—not just think about it, hope for it, ignore it—can do it. “I can do *all things*”—survive the difficult today and the impossible tomorrow, bear any burden, carry any load, love the unlovable and forgive the unforgivable.

Now, had Paul stopped there without including the words “through [Christ] who strengthens me,” he would have been stating the ridiculous. We cannot, like Superman, leap tall buildings in a single bound or stop speeding trains with our bare hands. But joined by faith to our crucified and risen Savior, the strength will be there to bear every burden with quiet, brave endurance.

Lord, help me change “I can’t” to “I can.” Amen.

Live: Live the above prayer.

Read: Philippians 4:4-13

*Herbert Hohenstein
St. Louis, MO*

Thursday, October 11, 2012

Clinging Vines

Nothing in my hand I bring; simply to the cross I cling.

“Rock of Ages,” stanza 3

“Clinging to the cross.” What does that mean? I think of martyrs who were persecuted, burned at the stake rather than deny their faith in Christ. They were “clinging vines.” I think of the babushkas in the communist USSR who rocked the cradles and sang hymns to their grandchildren. They did what was forbidden and kept the faith alive.

I have never been persecuted for my faith like that, yet sometimes I must cling. I think thoughts like: “Isn’t it all just too preposterous? Jesus—God born as man, risen from the dead. Life forever? Heaven? I can’t imagine it.” When I think thoughts like that, I look around and see others, intelligent people who aren’t drawn into fantasies, who believe. So I cling to my faith strengthened by the Spirit and those in the community of faith. We must cling together so that together we can cling to the cross, to our Savior.

Gracious God, send your Spirit so that we may withstand all doubts, fears and temptations. Amen.

Discuss: Talk with a good friend about how to deal with doubts.

Read: Philippians 1:27-30; Ephesians 6:10-18

Eldor Kaiser
Lenexa, KS

Friday, October 12, 2012

God's Masterpiece!

We are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand.

Ephesians 2:10

Do you know the answer to the old riddle, "Can someone who is not a Christian do good works?"

St. Paul tells us we are God's workmanship, created to do the good works he has planned for us. The Greek word for "workmanship" carries connotations of "a work of art." We are God's breathing masterpieces, carrying out the good works he planned for us to do before we were born. God knows how much we'll slip into our offering envelope next week. He knows what we'll do to help others. He planned it!

As we journey through life, Christ compels us to be generous and loving in ways we could not be without his perfect life and redeeming death as models. God's love makes each of us a work of art far more beautiful than any earthly treasure. Our treasures lie in heaven, where we will celebrate eternal life in Christ.

Father, thank you for creating me as your work of art. Open my eyes to do your good works. Amen.

Plan: Plan a surprise for a lonely or ill friend. You won't be planning alone.

Read: Ephesians 1:11-12; 1 John 4:7-12

*Ruth Geisler
Aliso Viejo, CA*

Saturday, October 13, 2012

Where You Want to Go

When Saul and all Israel heard these words of the Philistine, they were dismayed and greatly afraid.

1 Samuel 17:11

My car tends to go in the direction I am looking. Focus too long on the scenery and I may soon hear my tires crossing the rumble strip on the shoulder. The same is true when I try to avoid a pothole or icy patch. The best way to miss the danger is to focus where I want to go rather than what I want to avoid.

Focus separated David from Saul as they faced the Philistines in battle. Saul and the rest of the Israelite army only saw Goliath. David's focus on God made Goliath a manageable difficulty. Because he was focused on God, David was able to defeat his problem.

The God who was with David is also with you. Keep your focus on him as you face the struggles of the day.

Dear Lord, help me to focus on you, even as I face the struggles of the day. Amen.

Focus: When faced with a struggle today, focus on God's provision in the midst of it all.

Read: 1 Samuel 17:1-54

Joe Iovino
Colorado Springs, CO

Sunday, October 14, 2012

There's a "Me" in There

*One body ... one Spirit ... one hope ... one Lord ...
one faith ... one baptism ... one God and Father of
all ... but grace was given to each one of us ...*

Ephesians 4:4-7

What a comforting, encouraging word that is:
Grace was given to each one of us!

In the family of God, everyone else can seem so important, more gifted, more capable and necessary than I am. And as we grow older and less able to be involved, those feelings can surface very easily.

But Paul assures us in these words that the Church we so often think about like that is actually no more than a whole lot of "me's" who have been called by grace into the one body and family of God. We are all, without exception, grace-blessed people whom the Spirit of God has called into the one body. Each "me" in that body is a powerful witness to the grace that is given to all alike.

Lord, my life as a child of God is all because of your grace. Nothing can be added to that, and nothing is needed beyond that. Thank you. Amen.

Remind: Each day remind someone how precious they are because of God's grace in Jesus.

Read: Ephesians 4:1-16

*Lionel Otto
Adelaide, Australia*

Monday, October 15, 2012

The Comforter

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.

2 Corinthians 1:3-4

My mother made many comforters in her lifetime. They were pieced and knotted with great care. She used flannel material, which was soft and warm and comforting. If I was cold or sick or just needed cuddling, I could wrap myself in the comforter and feel better. Is it any wonder that the Bible refers to God as our Comforter? No matter what the circumstances of our lives that cause us distress, whether it be pain or depression or loneliness, he has promised to cover us and surround us with his comfort.

Heavenly Father, wrap us in the comfort of knowing that your love is always surrounding us. Amen.

Think: Think of someone who is in need of comforting and then show that person God's comfort through you.

Read: Isaiah 49:13; Matthew 5:4; Psalm 23:4

*Gloria Doty
Ft. Wayne, IN*

Tuesday, October 16, 2012

Reunions

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

Luke 19:10

I'm a "loser." When I misplace my keys or eye-glasses, everything grinds to a halt while I search for them. Determined to "lose this habit of losing," I've assigned those items an "official home." Now, each time I put them in their designated place, I mentally say, "I'm putting my _____ on the _____." And wonder of wonders, later I'm able to easily find them. That reunion makes me smile.

As sinners, we are "lost"—set apart from Christ. Because he died for our sins and has prepared a "home" for us, let's pay close attention to where we put our trust. Then when we sometimes feel lost, we'll know where to look for help, guidance, comfort and forgiveness. One day, we'll be with our Savior and reunited with our loved ones in heaven. Look for the huge smile on my face then!

*Lord, direct my life that I never lose my faith.
Amen.*

Help: Help others find Jesus by telling them of Bible studies and church services.

Read: Proverbs 3:5; Luke 15:1-32

*Darlene Seegert
New Berlin, WI*

Wednesday, October 17, 2012

Let Out a Good Cry

For the Lamb ... will be their shepherd, and he will guide them to springs of living water, and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.

Revelation 7:17

Have you ever met someone who says that sometimes they cry for no reason other than to let out a good cry? God gives us our tears to shed, as if rejuvenating our whole emotional system. In fact, even Jesus wept at one point that we know of, though I'm sure he did at other times that are not recorded.

We all need to let out a good cry now and then—for all sorts of reasons and in all sorts of places. Even I tend to shed tears at baptisms and weddings. As the great lyric goes, “Cry sweet tears of joy.” That I shall do from time to time—and I know you probably will too—until that moment when Christ comes again and every tear will be wiped from our eyes, and we will simply rejoice in the mercy of our God.

Lord, help me to know you will wipe away the tears I shed in sadness, and that the tears I shed in happiness are tears to cherish. Amen.

Journal: Write when you have tears and discover God's presence with you.

Read: Luke 7:37-38

*Cory A. Wielert
Crown Point, IN*

Thursday, October 18, 2012

In God's Hands

No man has power ... over the day of death.

Ecclesiastes 8:8

Have you ever wondered why God is letting you live longer than others? Why is God giving you these extra years of living? Why have you survived when friends and family, younger than you, have died? Why them, not you?

Is not God saying to you, "I still want to use your life"? In the Book of Ecclesiastes, where Solomon searches for meaning in life, he states clearly no one has the authority to choose the day of his death. It is entirely in God's hands.

The Apostle Paul caught that truth when he confessed, "If I am to live, well and good, that means Christ. If I am to die, that also means Christ. If I am to live in the flesh, that means fruitful labor for me" (Philippians 1:21-22). Therefore, as we continue to age gracefully, we have the call to spend our days in loving and caring ways.

Lord Jesus, as I continue to live, help me to see that there are still good works for me to do. Amen.

Think: Ponder ways you make these days count for your spiritual growth and for a ministry of service.

Read: Philippians 1:22-30

*Walter M. Schoedel
St. Louis, MO*

Friday, October 19, 2012

This End Up

These men who have turned the world upside down have come here also.

Acts 17:6

Changes in life turn things upside down and inside out. Nothing is the way it used to be. Nothing is in the right place. Nothing feels right anymore.

Early Christians were accused of being people “who turned the world upside down.” It was true! In Jesus Christ, life is no longer “right side up” as the world sees things. Serving is now more important than being served. Humility is valued above pride. Hurt and anger are overcome by forgiveness. Death is defeated by life! The unbelieving world thinks such things are impossible—and completely upside down! But we know that our life in Christ is really right side up. It’s life the way God designed it to be.

Father, when life feels upside down, remind me of my right-side-up life in Christ. Amen.

Turn: Turn things right side up again by praying for and with someone lost in worry or despair.

Read: Acts 17:1-9

*Carol Geisler
St. Louis, MO*

Saturday, October 20, 2012

Belly Button Faith

For you formed my inward parts; you knitted me together in my mother's womb.

Psalm 139:13

Touch your belly button. There's the reality that you were connected to Mom, whom God used to give you life. All life is a gift from God.

Someone raised you during years when you were utterly dependent. Those of us who grew up in the Depression understand that kids don't know they are poor, but someone, somehow gave what you needed to grow. We learned how others gave their lives for our nation so we could be free, and we served as we were called. People we never knew gave so much to provide a church where we were led to faith in Jesus—God's greatest gift to us.

We were given talents and the opportunities to use them to support our families and contribute to the world. Life is a gift from God. Belly button faith is to trust that God will continue giving into eternity.

Lord, help me face honestly my dependence, so that I face willingly my reliance on you. Amen.

Give: Give generously where you see need, even as you have been given.

Read: Psalm 139:1-16; Deuteronomy 8:1-18; Psalm 103; Philippians 4:10-13

*Robert C. Hereth
Grayslake, IL*

Sunday, October 21, 2012

You're All Hemmed In

As the mountains surround Jerusalem, so the LORD surrounds his people both now and forevermore.

Psalm 125:2

Not a pleasant thought is it, to be all hemmed in? No way out. You're in a room with no windows, doors or exits, and the walls are relentlessly closing in on you. Ever feel that way?

Well, you're all hemmed in all right, not just by trouble, but by God. He's *above* you like a protecting mother eagle (Psalm 91:4). He's *beneath* you with his everlasting arms (Deuteronomy 33:27). He's chasing you from *behind* with his goodness and mercy—you'll never be able to outrun his love (Psalm 23:6). He's out *ahead* of you preparing good and safe grazing for you, his beloved sheep, for all your tomorrows (Psalm 23:5).

What a comforting thought—all hemmed in by God! And all because he forsook his only Son as he hung there dying for you on the cross!

O God, since I'm surrounded by you, help me to surround all the people in my life with Christ-like love. Amen.

Believe: Believe that, surrounded by God, you are unconquerable.

Read: Romans 8:31-39

*Herbert Hohenstein
St. Louis, MO*

Monday, October 22, 2012

Know Enough Already?

... learn to do good; seek justice, correct oppression.

Isaiah 1:17

“I already know enough” was one man’s reply when asked to join a Bible study group. That raises a question for me: Do I think I know enough about the work and will of God? About how to “do good, seek justice and help the oppressed?” How about relearning? Have I never forgotten anything? Hardly!

The other day I heard the quote: As long as you’re learning, you’re not old. I’m sure whoever came up with that wasn’t thinking of learning about God, but that could be part of it. There is no statute of limitations on learning that runs out at 65 or even 95. Lifelong learning is popular, and that can include “searching the Scriptures.” The wonder and mystery of what God has done and is doing in the world is so deep we can never know it all. That kind of learning will keep us young! Think learning is for children? Then learning is part of being a child of God, and I want to be a child of God my whole life long.

Gracious God, teach me your ways and the way I should live through your Word. Amen.

Study: Join a group to study Scripture or start studying the Bible daily on your own.

Read: Isaiah 1:12-18

*Eldor Kaiser
Lenexa, KS*

Tuesday, October 23, 2012

Retired or ReFIREd?

If God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.

1 John 4:11

Are you retired? Or are you finding new ways to “work”? God defined “work” with a verb: love. It was love that brought Jesus to earth to become one of us. It was love that reached out to the doubting, the lame, the wounded in spirit. It was love that taught, healed and comforted.

Jesus’ work/love was to do the Father’s will and live a perfect life in our stead. His death paid for our sins, and his resurrection sealed the victory. But Jesus did not “retire” after his resurrection! He appeared to the disciples, convincing them of his divinity and power. They were reFIREd by his commission to tell the world and ignited by his Spirit within them.

Who needs your love/work today? How can you serve the helpless and hopeless around you? Who needs to hear, see, feel the love of God? What you do *now* may be the most important “work” of your life!

Let me be your hands and feet, O Lord, as I love those around me. Amen.

Reach out: Challenge yourself to at least one loving outreach every day this week.

Read: John 3:16; Romans 12:1-21

Sharolyn Sander
Roselle, IL

Wednesday, October 24, 2012

Seize the Day!

Therefore ... let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers.

Galatians 6:9-10

A while ago these words came to mind: “Sometimes we are measured by where the day takes us, but we’re made to be great when we make the day our own.” In other words, seize the day. God gives us a new day every morning to make wonderful and successful. No matter what may be going on in our lives, what change, what mountains we may be climbing, he gives us opportunities to make the days we face days that cause us to be great.

You may have heard the phrase “It’s just a lump of clay until you make something out of it.” That is how each day works. St. Paul’s words to the Galatians give us hope in God’s providence. He is intertwined in all we encounter daily. We are at the dawn of a new day, and there are people out there who need our support, God’s love and a whole lot more. How are you going to make this day your own?

Father, give me guidance in all I do, and help me make this day my own according to your will. Amen.

Challenge: Challenge yourself to see God in all you see and encounter this day.

Read: Psalm 118

*Cory A. Wielert
Crown Point, IN*

Thursday, October 25, 2012

Our Credentials

Jesus said to him, “No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God.”

Luke 9:62

When interviewing for a job, we would likely be expected to bring a résumé listing our qualifications, experiences and competence. Scripture does not indicate that Jesus held job interviews with any of the men he took on to be one of his Twelve. Only the sketchiest of prior jobs get mentioned—fisherman, tax collector. Jesus makes it clear, “You haven’t chosen me; I have chosen you!”

When things are difficult and the days ahead are discouraging, we are urged to look ahead and see Jesus, our loving Lord, going before us, making the path for us, affording us sure-footedness in our stumbling, courage and strength as we make our way through the valley of the shadow of death. We are cheered by his promise, “I will never leave you nor forsake you; you are mine!”

Gracious Lord, keep reminding me that the same God who stood by me in the past promises to be with me for the days that lie ahead. Amen.

Call: Call someone who has recently retired, asking what that person’s plans are for the future.

Read: Luke 19:2-9; Psalm 23

*Karl Lutze
Valparaiso, IN*

Friday, October 26, 2012

Tell Him

What do you want me to do for you?

Matthew 20:32

“What do you want me to do for you?” Jesus asks the two blind men. He asked not because he didn’t know, but because he wants them to tell him. They need to communicate their needs to him and thereby recognize him as the one who can help.

A friend of mine thinks he tells his wife things but doesn’t and then gets upset when she forgets. I sometimes believe I’ve shared my needs with Jesus when I probably haven’t. How simple a mistake to correct! A lady once told me she feels bad repeating her needs to God because he is so busy already. Jesus’ question shows God’s never too busy for any of us. He just wants us to tell him what we need.

“What do you want me to do for you?” We can be sure that Jesus asks us that question every morning. Our day will go better if we get out of bed and tell him. Just tell him and know that he alone has all the power to help.

Lord, help me to tell you all I need, knowing you will answer. Amen.

Tell: Tell him.

Read: Matthew 20:29-34

*Al Schenk
Jennings, MO*

Saturday, October 27, 2012

All Tangled Up

In my distress I called upon the LORD; to my God I called. From his temple he heard my voice, and my cry came to his ears.

2 Samuel 22:7

My dog is not very bright. Almost every morning, when I put her out to eat and do her business, she gets her leash tangled around the same tree. One particularly cold morning, I heard her bark and immediately knew I would have to go get her. Oh, how I didn't want to go out in the cold, but she needed me. While untangling her I said to her empty stare, "We go through this almost every morning. I thought you would have learned by now."

I wonder how often God must want to say the same thing to me, after I have made the same mistake again. "How many times are you going to do this? I thought you would have learned by now." The good news is that like a good master who goes and untangles the leash of his dog, God comes to set me free from my mistakes too.

Thank you God for coming to free me from the same mistakes time and again. Amen.

Think: Recall times when God has come to you in your time of need.

Read: 2 Samuel 22:1-25

Joe Iovino
Colorado Springs, CO

Sunday, October 28, 2012

Powered by Grace

On the contrary I worked harder than any of them, though it was not I, but the grace of God with me.

1 Corinthians 15:10

Dear co-laborer with Christ, did you catch Paul's wonderful reminder: "... though it was not I, but the grace of God with me"? Many aging servants of the Lord suffer discouragement because we can't do as much for the Lord as we used to. Our aging and tired bodies just won't allow it. In our "work-worth" society, we start to question our importance.

Friend, the work we do with Jesus that counts is only that which has been powered by his grace. That is true for what he has yet for you to do in this season of life. Whatever he wants you to do, he provides the grace and the gifting.

Lord, it's by your grace—always has been, always will be. Please help me and encourage me with that reminder daily. Amen.

Reminder: Aging reminds us of our dependency upon his grace.

Read: Romans 12:3-8; 1 Corinthians 15:58

*Peter Ward
Ottawa, IL*

Monday, October 29, 2012

Created Me

God formed a man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being.

Genesis 2:7

Martin Luther gets right to the faith point in his explanation of the Creed's First Article: "I believe that God created me and all things ..."

The heart of faith clings to this affirmation: God created me. I am not an accident of biology, a pawn in the sea of time at the mercy of the fates, a tiny link in the chain of life on the way to bettering the human species. I am God's creation; God's breath infuses my spirit; God's will encompasses me.

And even on a same old morning—my joy is this: I cannot run far enough into the dark haze of my future, nor escape into the caverns of my past, nor wander enough steps into the wilderness of my illusions, nor huddle tightly enough into the closets of my own fears to escape God's gracious love for me in Jesus Christ. The great God of creation made me.

Lord, help me live as though I am a specially created, specially loved child of yours. Amen.

Celebrate: Join someone in celebrating God's creation by caring for it in a special way.

Read: Genesis 1 and 2; Psalm 97

*Ted Schroeder
Maple Grove, MN*

Tuesday, October 30, 2012

What Language Is This?

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

Psalm 119:105

Within a month's time, four or five friends who are on my *e-mail* address book were *hacked*. I was careful not to open the *URL* because I had previously opened a *website* and the computer caught the worst *virus* the *Geek Squad* technician had experienced to date. If you are not familiar with online terminology, this is all "Greek."

Thanks be to God his words are true and changeless. "I am the Alpha and the Omega," says the Lord God, "who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty" (Revelation 1:8).

O Lord, as the meanings of words change, it baffles me, but your Word is true yesterday, today and tomorrow. I have hope in your Word. Amen.

Be intentional: Who needs to hear the true Word of God today? Write an e-mail, write a note or call that person today.

Read: Psalm 119:81; Psalm 119:114; Colossians 3:17

*Naomi Weslock
Lake in the Hills, IL*

Wednesday, October 31, 2012

Our Heritage

... you have given me the heritage of those who fear your name.

Psalm 61:5

The older we get, the more we want to know we'll be remembered. That's one reason I put together a "Grandma Remembers" book for my grandchildren, with photos and written descriptions of things and people most important to me over the years. Traditions, stories and spiritual values provide a glimpse of past generations.

God wants us to remember him and what he has done for us. Moses warned the children of Israel just before they entered the Promised Land, "... take care lest you forget the Lord, who brought you out of the land of Egypt ..." (Deuteronomy 6:12). God knows we forget. Our Christian heritage is detailed in the Bible, a "Christians Remember" book, so to speak. Pages filled with stories of triumph, love, sacrifice, etc., help us get to know those who came before us and provide examples of how to live.

Lord, help me remember my biblical ancestors and their hard-won lessons learned. Amen.

Do: Pass on your most important legacy: the story of your faith.

Read: Psalm 33:12; Psalm 94:14

*Darlene Seegert
New Berlin, WI*

Thursday, November 1, 2012

All the Saints

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

1 John 3:1

The first snowfall of the year turns the colors of late fall into a blanket of white. The snow will not stay, but it is a reminder of winter to come and on All Saints Day a reminder of all who have gone before us and who will come after us. In other words, we are not alone. We are blanketed by God's grace and surrounded by a great chorus of the faithful. If we let them, their stories support us and give us hope.

Recently, someone wrote me after the church door had been left unlocked several times, "I give up!" My thought was "Don't let that little thing defeat you." Think about the saints when you need hope. Read their stories. Think of those people still living who have been a saint to you. If you are able, thank them for the gift of faith and hope. Pass the stories on to your children and loved ones. Finally, ask God that you might be a source of hope for others, a saint.

Thank you, God, for all the saints who have enriched our lives and helped us believe. Amen.

Write: Write down a story about a saint you have known and share that story with someone you love.

Read: Matthew 5:1-12; Revelation 7:9-12

Jeffrey Loudon
Park City, UT

Friday, November 2, 2012

Hear *and* Understand

This is why I speak to them in parables, because seeing they do not see, and hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand.

Matthew 13:13

At the request of my adult children, I made an appointment to have my hearing checked. I really didn't think I needed it, but obviously, they were tired of repeating themselves.

While talking to the audiologist, I explained that my hearing was actually very good. I could hear my watch ticking if the room was quiet. The problem I was having was in the understanding. I thought this would be a revelation to him, but he smiled and said that was indeed a problem for most people who came to see him.

Isn't that our problem with God's Word? We go to church and we hear it, but we don't take the time to study, learn and inwardly digest it. Therefore, we don't understand what God is telling us.

Dear Lord, give us the wisdom to not only hear your Word, but to study and learn it, so that we might understand it. Amen.

Study: Pick a Bible passage and really study it. Ask God to help you with the understanding.

Read: John 20:30-31; 2 Timothy 3:14-17

*Gloria Doty
Fort Wayne, IN*

Saturday, November 3, 2012

Think About It!

Do not be anxious.

Luke 12:22

What will happen tomorrow? What will happen today? Jesus tells us, “Do not be anxious.” That’s a lot easier said than done. It’s hard to stop worrying. To replace our anxiety about what might be, Jesus turns our attention to what is.

Look at the ravens and how God cares for them. Look at the lilies. Not even the royal robes of Solomon could match the beauty of those flowers. You are worth so much more! God knows what you need, and he’ll take care of you. Instead of worrying about what *might* happen, think about what *has* happened! Through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, you have forgiveness and eternal life. You are part of God’s kingdom. Think about that!

Heavenly Father, help me to trust your watchful care. Amen.

Look: Look at flowers and listen to birds. Remember God’s care for them and for you.

Read: Luke 12:22-31

*Carol Geisler
St. Louis, MO*

Sunday, November 4, 2012

God Journey

The Lord will keep your going out and your coming in from this time forth and forevermore.

Psalms 121:8

The prophet Isaiah assures us that we are under the watchful eye of God: “Do you not know? Do you not hear? Has it not been told you from the beginning...It is he who sits above the circle of the earth” (Isaiah 40:21-22) who watches over us. Our daily journey may tempt us to think, “My way is hidden from the Lord, and my right is disregarded by my God ” (Isaiah 40:27). Age, illness and life’s sadness trouble us and we wonder if God cares about us at all.

Yet in his Son Jesus Christ, God is with us on our journey through life. Jesus, whose journey took him to the cross for us, calls out, “Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest” (Matthew 11:28). God promises that he “gives power to the faint, and to him who has no might he increases strength” (Isaiah 40:29). Journey well, friend!

Lord Jesus, strengthen me for my journey. Amen.

Walk: Walk beside someone who feels faint on life’s journey.

Read: Psalm 121

*Tom Zehnder
Baileys Harbor, WI*

Monday, November 5, 2012

Make Peace with God?

What does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?

Micah 6:8

I love watching *Law and Order* reruns, just the older ones with Jerry Orbach. As Micah chapter 6 opens, God accuses his people more fiercely than any prosecutor can defile someone on the witness stand. How dare they turn their backs on him after he has brought them out of slavery in Egypt?

Television courtrooms and the world around us call for revenge, recrimination, getting even, putting ourselves in the best light. God forgives our me-first behavior through the self-sacrificing life and death of his Son. He sends us from the courtroom with a verdict of “Not guilty.” He frees us to walk humbly, hand-in-hand with him, treating our friends mercifully, putting their needs before our own, as justly as God treats us.

Father, thank you for forgiving me through the sacrifice of your Son. Help me share your justice and mercy. Amen.

Do: Serve a friend or family member in a selfless way—make the bed, do the laundry, deliver a treat.

Read: Micah 6:6-8; Matthew 9:9-13

*Ruth Geisler
Aliso Viejo, CA*

Tuesday, November 6, 2012

You Only Get One Vote!

Prayers ... for all who are in high positions ...

1 Timothy 2:1-2

Today, November 6, 2012, is Election Day in the United States. No matter what country you live in, God gives you leaders. The right to vote for your leaders is a special privilege and blessing from God. Even though each person gets only one vote, you know that your vote counts!

God gives each of us a vote for our leaders that counts even more than the one that goes in the ballot box. God invites us to pray for our leaders. God promises to hear our every prayer and answer each prayer for our good. When you pray for your leaders, you are casting a vote for them with almighty God. That vote counts like no other. God will surely bless them. God will make them a blessing to others.

Lord of the nations, bless our country with good leaders. Bless our leaders to do good. Amen.

Vote: Vote today. Pray for your leaders—even the ones you didn't vote for!

Read: Romans 13

*Lonie Eatherton
Fenton, MO*

Wednesday, November 7, 2012

Blessed Hearing

Blessed is the one who reads aloud the words of the prophecy, and blessed are those who hear, and who keep what is written in it, for the time is near.

Revelation 1:3

The New Testament, like the old, insists that God's people live with urgency. Jesus proclaimed that "today" the Kingdom of God has come near. John, here in Revelation, also insists that the time is near.

Squirrel away your possessions for tomorrow, but if you do not hear the Word of the Lord today what will the "day after" your tomorrows be? The Lord speaks of an eternal kingdom, an eternal joy, an eternal hope, an eternal peace, an eternal purpose, an eternal kind of life. Dream your biggest dream; God's reality is immeasurably greater.

Make a point today to read the Scriptures. Read and ponder them for a time. Read them again. Pray that the Lord would implant these words in your heart, mind and soul today. Listen to the tune of God's love for you.

Lord God, speak to me in your Scripture. I so want to hear you. Amen.

Read: Read God's Word today to someone who needs to hear about his love.

Read: John 14:20-22

*Don Schatz
McKinleyville, CA*

Thursday, November 8, 2012

Pray

Will not God give justice to his elect, who cry to him day and night?

Luke 18:7

Sometimes it isn't easy to keep on praying. It may feel like God isn't answering or that perhaps he isn't even listening anymore. It is easy to lose confidence and become fearful.

Jesus told a parable, a lesson for us that we "ought always to pray and not lose heart." The role of God in the little drama is played by an unusual casting choice—an unrighteous judge who fears and respects no one, including God! The widow in the story continually pesters the judge for help. The unrighteous judge, annoyed by the woman's pleas, finally gives her the favorable verdict she requests. If a judge like that grants a favorable judgment, how much more will God help his own beloved people! Keep praying. He's listening, and he's ready to answer.

*Heavenly Father, keep me confident in prayer.
Amen.*

Pray: Pray without ceasing (1 Thessalonians 5:17).

Read: Luke 18:1-7

*Carol Geisler
St. Louis, MO*

Friday, November 9, 2012

Joyful Expectation

For the creation waits in eager expectation ... in hope that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the freedom and glory of the children of God.

Romans 8:19, 21

Most seniors don't talk much about joyful expectation especially as they lose some former strengths. God offers us a strong life after death. This idea of being free from decay that St. Paul wrote the Roman Christians about is something that you might share with others who are mourning the lost of some of their abilities, whether it is to run a marathon or climb stairs. One way for them, or for you, to not feel that years of achievements are lost is to share expertise with others still striving to have similar accomplishments. If you can't wield wood carving tools the way you once did, teach someone else to carve.

Lord, with the help of the Holy Spirit, let me be an instrument of your promised hope of eternal life. Enable me to help others find consolation by sharing their lifetime of knowledge. Amen.

Do: Hug someone who laments losing a skill or talent. Talk to them about sharing fine points of their skill with others striving to achieve.

Read: Romans 8:19, 21; 1 Corinthians 3:3-4

*Patricia Rice
St. Louis, MO*

Saturday, November 10, 2012

Try Yelling, “Help!”

*Contend, Lord, with those who contend with me ...
arise and come to my aid.*

Psalm 35:1, 2

Psalm 35 clearly suggests that David was in trouble. Given his life history, that wasn't unusual. Trouble either found him (often) or he found it (more often). Most of Psalm 35 is a somewhat depressing lament of David in which he wonders whether God has heard his cry for help and whether he is going to let David's enemies just roll over him.

The temper of that Psalm feels familiar to me. I sometime feel that bad things are happening to an innocent: me. I even wonder whether God is going to ever rescue that innocent victim: me. You, too?

On my best days when those thoughts surface, I come to my senses by realizing there was only one real innocent in the world: Jesus, the Savior. He now sends the Spirit to help me know that he has come, has heard my cry and cradles me in his hands.

Lord, when you hear my yelp for help, remind me to read Psalm 23, the smooth side of Psalm 35. Amen.

Ask: What's on your front burner today that feels like it needs a divine response? Ask God for help.

Read: Psalm 23

*Charles S. Mueller, Sr.
Bloomington, IL*

Sunday, November 11, 2012

Thank a Vet

He makes wars cease to the end of the earth.

Psalm 46:9

Today is Veterans Day in the U.S. It is good for citizens of every country to remember those brave men and women who served their country well, especially in times of war and conflict. God uses members of our Armed Forces to protect our nation from those who would attack us and take our nation from us. Some say it this way: “If you are still living in a free country, thank a vet!” Others say it this way: “America: The home of the free because of the brave.”

Yes, we thank our vets. However, our country, like any country that has ever existed on the face of the earth, is not free and strong because of its own strength. It is God who has preserved us as a nation. He does this especially so that we are free to share the Gospel with everyone. God is our Refuge and Strength. So, thank GOD for the vets and for all the brave souls he has used to bless our nation.

Thank you, Lord, for all those who have defended our country. Bless our servicemen and women with courage, safety and a trusting faith in you. Amen.

Thank: Make a call to a veteran. Thank him or her for their service to God and country.

Read: Ephesians 6

*Lonie Eatherton
Fenton, MO*

Monday, November 12, 2012

Awesome and Neat Too!

Who among the gods is like you, LORD? Who is like you—majestic in holiness, awesome in glory, working wonders?

Exodus 15:11

Our grandkids say “awesome” a lot. Grandma has changed from saying “neat” to saying “awesome,” while also using the “cool” word. Grandpa is still stuck on saying “neat”!

Exodus 15:11 helps me to affirm a Lord who is near to me even when I do not sense his nearness. He loves me even when I act in unloving ways. I know in faith that he woos me back to him, no matter how far I have wandered. Now I call that “neat.” Some may say “cool,” but above all, this is really “awesome”!

Go ahead and sing along: “Our God is an awesome God. He reigns from heaven above,” even when I say, “That’s neat!”

Lord, you truly are awesome, regardless of how we describe your love for us in Christ! Continue to work your wonders of awe in our lives. Amen.

Do awe-aerobics: Set aside time each day to ponder the mysteries and wonders of our awesome Lord! Neat!

Read: Psalm 8

*Rich Bimler
Bloomington, IL*

Tuesday, November 13, 2012

Gone Are the Days

Whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it.

Luke 18:17

Aging clues? Glasses. Bifocals. Hearing aids. Limitations from fragile joints and limbs. Diminished strength. Prescriptions. Those who survive the ordeal repeat, “Growing old ain’t for sissies!”

Along comes Jesus. The people standing around may not have been 80- or 90-year-olds. But they were mature—certainly wiser than teenagers. Jesus lifted a youngster onto his lap and said, “This youngster ought to be a model for grown-ups: innocent, naïve, trusting, venturesome, eager to learn.” According to Matthew’s Gospel, among the marks of childhood, Jesus mentions humility. Other qualities include innocence, a desire to learn and an eagerness to win approval of loved ones and strangers. Children want to imitate the parent, share and enjoy the stories of God. And that’s how God would like us to be.

Lord, you have chosen us as your children. Help us care for others as our brothers and sisters. Amen.

Share: Share with others how praying to “Our Father” helps you realize that we are children of God, brothers and sisters to each other.

Read: Psalm 90; Luke 18:15-17

*Karl Lutze
Valparaiso, IN*

Wednesday, November 14, 2012

Bearing Fruit in Jesus

Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit.

John 15:5

“We’ve got to grow!” I was listening to a man speaking on the radio about a business he had just taken over. His words reminded me of the same oft-spoken theme at many of our churches, encouraging us both personally and corporately: “We’ve got to grow!”

Interestingly, Jesus does not mention the word *grow* in his teaching about the vine and the branches. Rather, Jesus speaks a number of times about fruitfulness. As Paul tells us, “fruitfulness” is an outcome of the work of the Spirit within us.

None of us can produce growth. And none of us can bear the fruit of the Spirit on our own. Only a life lived in the fellowship of Jesus’ presence will become fruitful as Jesus transforms us to be like him.

Lord Jesus, so live in me and let me live in you that my life is transformed into the likeness of your spirit. Amen.

Remember: Remember your relationship to Jesus is like a branch growing out of the vine. Encourage one another to grow in Jesus.

Read: John 15:1-8

*Lionel Otto
Adelaide, Australia*

Thursday, November 15, 2012

I Will Like It!

But according to his promise we are waiting for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells.

2 Peter 3:13

Some time ago my grandson asked me, “Grandpa, do you know what heaven is going to be like?” My answer, “No, I don’t know for sure. But I know I will like it! And here’s why. Jesus will be there. We will be in his presence. We will have all that we need. We will gather around his throne praising him (Revelation 22:3). We will be with all his saints (1 Thessalonians 3:13). He tells me that he is preparing a place for me (John 14:2). In heaven, no longer will there be suffering, pain, sorrow or death, but complete joy, peace and happiness” (Revelation 21:4).

I concluded my conversation saying, “I know I will like it. I will be completely satisfied. On earth we have our trials and temptations and troubles. In heaven we will have happiness beyond all measure.” With that my grandson smiled and went on his way.

Lord Jesus, I look forward to that time when I will be with you in heaven. Amen.

Do: Make plans to talk about heaven with your grandchildren.

Read: Revelation 22:1-6; 21:1-4; John 14:1-3

Walter M. Schoedel
St. Louis, MO

Friday, November 16, 2012

No Regrets

... whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.

Matthew 16:25

With the perspective of having lived many years, we understand both the necessity and the worth of “giving up our lives,” as Jesus would have us do, to “find our lives.”

Did you give up a fancier car to finance the kids’ education? Any regrets? What did you “give up” for a down payment and 30-year mortgage to have a home? Any regrets? How about our marriage vow to “forsake all others” for this one lover? The denial of other attractions means we have a faithful spouse we count on through the years with a basic trust that undergirds our life together.

God leads in “right paths.” The right life is the good life. I worry, “Where today is the fidelity, the self-sacrifice, the concern for others that meant so much to us?” How few regrets we have when we do the right thing. We find God’s good life when we lose the self-centered life of the world.

Lord, help me give up the good for the better, and the better for the best—you. Amen.

Thank: Give thanks for so few regrets. Be determined in your right living.

Read: Matthew 16:24-26; Psalm 23:3

*Robert C. Hereth
Grayslake, IL*

Saturday, November 17, 2012

Find Your Smile

This is the day that the LORD has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it.

Psalm 118:24

One of my favorite T-shirts has a large picture of Grumpy, one of the seven dwarfs, looking very grumpy, of course. The words emblazoned next to him say “This IS my happy face!” It always makes me laugh and reminds me to not look that way.

Many times, especially as I get older and have many more aches and pains than I used to have, I forget to smile. There are days when someone would have a hard time distinguishing between my “happy” face and my “grumpy” face. If I profess to love the Lord, then I need to let my face know about it.

Father, help me to count my blessings and be able to laugh and smile about many things, especially your love for me. Amen.

Show: Make a conscious effort to show your happiness today.

Read: Isaiah 55:12; 1 Peter 1:8-9

*Gloria Doty
Ft. Wayne, IN*

Sunday, November 18, 2012

Trick Question or Test?

Jesus said to Philip, “Where are we to buy bread, so these people may eat?” He said this to test him ...

John 6:5-6

Jesus was not teasing when he asked Philip and the other disciples how they might feed 5,000. They came up with no useful answer, so he gave them something more manageable: “Help everyone find a comfortable spot. Meanwhile, I’ll prepare lunch.”

Feeding hungry people and other miracles were not Jesus’ primary life purpose. Jesus was preparing his disciples (and us) for his real-life purpose: “... that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ and believing you may have life in his name” (John 20:31). Now that’s a better deal than getting a free lunch.

*Father, help me to continue to feed on your Word.
Amen.*

Do lunch: Have lunch with someone and talk about your faith.

Read: John 6:5-14

*Charles S. Mueller, Sr.
Bloomington, IL*

Monday, November 19, 2012

Bread of Life

He humbled you and let you hunger and fed you with manna.

Deuteronomy 8:3

God endured the hungry complaints and thankless longing of his people to return to what they imagined as well-fed slavery. He fed his starving people with manna. It was bread with a lesson—so they would know that “man does not live by bread alone, but man lives by every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord” (Deuteronomy 8:3).

As surely and terribly as the Israelites were trapped in Egyptian slavery, we were trapped in slavery to sin and death, unable to save ourselves. God set us free through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. In his name we have forgiveness and eternal life. Jesus is our bread from heaven (John 6:32), the life-giving, nourishing Word-made-flesh from the mouth of the Lord.

Father, thank you for the Bread of heaven, our Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Share: Share the good news of Jesus, the life-giving, nourishing Word of God.

Read: Deuteronomy 8:1-10; John 6:31-40

*Carol Geisler
St. Louis, MO*

Tuesday, November 20, 2012

Without the Turkey?

... yet I will rejoice in the Lord; I will take joy in the God of my salvation.

Habakkuk 3:18

Over the years I've learned to pay attention to the little words in Scripture. The word *yet* in Habakkuk 3:18 is one instance. It introduces Habakkuk's confession. To find the significance of "yet" we need to back up. Habakkuk is testifying to the foundation of his worship of the Lord. Do the circumstances of his life significantly alter his worship of the Lord? Does his financial state or the size of his temporal estate influence the sincerity of his worship? What if his health failed? Would he still celebrate the Lord's salvation? In our own words, if there were no turkey or all the fixings on the table and no pie to enjoy, could I still give thanks to the Lord? Habakkuk says he could. Could I? Could you?

Lord Jesus, please always show me that you are the reason of my worship and the source of all my thanksgiving. Amen.

Think: Does Jesus prevail over your circumstances so that you continue to celebrate him?

Read: Habakkuk 3:16-19

*Peter Ward
Ottawa, IL*

Wednesday, November 21, 2012

Let's Talk Turkey

Let your speech always be gracious ... so that you may know how you ought to answer each person.

Colossians 4:6

“Talking turkey” is a term with roots in colonial times. At first it meant to speak agreeably, possibly describing conversation around the Thanksgiving meal. Today it usually refers to speaking frankly or getting down to serious business. How would you describe the dialogue around your table?

Thanksgiving Day or any day, both definitions have a place in our conversation. Our words are important at home, in the marketplace or wherever we have opportunity to talk with others. We have life-giving facts about Jesus to share. The salvation of family, friends and neighbors is serious business. Paul reminds us, “Let your speech be gracious.” God’s unmerited favor fills us, and transforms our speech and behavior. His love and kindness—coming through our words—will be the soul food every guest needs. That kind of talk fills everyone with thanksgiving!

May the words of my mouth be acceptable in your sight, O Lord. Amen.

Thank: Give thanks today for each conversation conveying God’s love and care.

Read: Colossians 4:5-6; 1 Corinthians 10:31—11:1

*Sharolyn Sander
Roselle, IL*

Thursday, November 22, 2012

Thanks Living

Give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.

1 Thessalonians 5:18

“Thanks Living”—we’ve all heard it, but have we all seen it? I know I have through the example of my father.

My dad lived through the Depression, fought in World War II, raised five children in the faith and was a respected leader in his church and community. Yet his life was not without hardship—losing my mom to cancer, seeing my sister’s life forever altered after a near-fatal accident and losing his own battle with cancer. But through it all he would always say, “What can we give thanks to God for in this?”

Today’s verse urges us to give thanks “in” all circumstances, not necessarily “for” all circumstances. Think about it. Whatever you are facing today, God might be using you to teach others about “Thanks Living.”

Lord, give me a heart of thanks to see you at work in every circumstance. Amen.

Write: End each day by writing down things for which you can give thanks.

Read: Philippians 1:3-11; 4:4-7

*Jane P. Wilke
Woodbury, MN*

Friday, November 23, 2012

Small Blessings

I lie down and sleep; I wake again, because the Lord sustains me.

Psalm 3:5

In chapel, I asked the school kids how they knew God loved them. “Jesus!” was the first response. Then came a long list: He gives me food, clothes, a loving family, a nice house, friends, a nice car. One girl said, “I woke up today.”

That answer stuck with me. It reminded me of how many blessings God gives me each day that I’m not always conscious of. I certainly am glad to wake up each morning, but for me the process is not pretty. These blessings that I overlook are those taken-for-granted things. Or, as I think of them, “small” blessings. That chapel service helped me remember those small blessings and give thanks for them all. Even that blessing of stumbling into the shower each morning.

Lord, keep me mindful of your small blessings and teach me that they are not really small at all. Amen.

List: Make a list of your small blessings and each day give thanks for one of them.

Read: Matthew 6:25-33

*Al Schenk
Jennings, MO*

Saturday, November 24, 2012

Live a Long Life

Honor your father and mother ... that you may live long in the land.

Ephesians 6:2,3

When I had knee replacement surgery, my name appeared on the prayer list in the Sunday bulletin. A friend, who didn't know what was wrong, sent a note and said, "We hope you're okay. Please live a really long time." That note made me smile and feel grateful for my long life.

A long life is a gift from God. Most of us want to live a long life, if our quality of life makes "life worth living." Paul wrote to the Philippians, "My desire is to depart and be with Christ for that is far better," and said that "living" meant living for others.

As long as I am alive, I hope to really LIVE. Like for Paul, surely that means serving others. Each day I have to figure out what that means. It also means celebrating all the blessings from God, living gratefully and praising God's name. I don't worry about death, because if I die, I will be with Christ. If I live, Christ will be with me. I hope to live a really long time.

Thank you, Lord, for the gift of a long life. Make my life a blessing to others for Jesus' sake. Amen.

Do: Send a note to someone who is in poor health.

Read: Philippians 1:21-26

*Eldor Kaiser
Lenexa, KS*

Sunday, November 25, 2012

Oh, Well!

... whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is pure ... whatever is lovely, ... think about such things ... And the God of peace will be with you.

Philippians 4:8-9

A friend shared that when she feels buried with the burden of petty cares and frustrations, she disciplines herself to hear the Lord saying, “When things don’t go as you hoped, look to me lightheartedly and say, ‘Oh, well!’” You and I both know that most of the things that cause us to worry are beyond our control anyway. I even rationalize that worry actually “works,” because a study shows that over half of what we worry about never happens! How foolish!

Check out Matthew 6:25-34 to strengthen our need to announce, “Oh, well!” to ourselves and others. Perhaps an even better phrase is, “Oh, WELL!” as we surrender trying to solve our problems and proclaim the fact that Christ has made us WELL!

Lord, you have made us well through your death and resurrection, and that enables us to say “Oh, WELL!” and even “All is WELL!” in you! Amen.

Practice: Joyfully use the phrase “Oh, WELL” this week. Enjoy the responses and affirmations in the Lord!

Read: Matthew 6:25-34

*Rich Bimler
Bloomington, IL*

Monday, November 26, 2012

About the Very Young

Whoever welcomes this little child in my name welcomes me.

Luke 9:48

People like Abraham and Sarah are exceptions. The rest of us, once we pass fifty, don't give much serious thought to adding children to our household. Most seniors would probably admit that, though they love children, they prefer being with a child for shorter periods, especially if those adults have work to do or other responsibilities that need their attention.

And along comes Jesus—with a sharp word for his disciples who stood nearby reprimanding some parents for not keeping their children in tow and allowing them to disrupt Jesus. He sweeps the little ones into his embrace and says, “Don't keep them away; they are some of God's very own!”

There are more children in God's world than ever. Not all close at hand—but ours to search out, children with whom to share Christ's love.

Jesus, help me to bring joy to you in our commitment to loving and caring for children and not ignoring them. Amen.

Find: How can I encourage a parent today and offer my willingness to be supportive of them?

Read: Matthew 18:1-6; Luke 18:15-17

Karl Lutze
Valparaiso, IN

Tuesday, November 27, 2012

Bare Feet

He made my feet like the feet of a deer and set me secure on the heights.

Psalm 18:33

There is an older man who runs around our neighborhood barefoot. We do not live in a meadow or on a sandy beach. We have potholes, buckled sidewalks, the occasional litter or patch of gravel. He doesn't appear to be bleeding or howling in agony. How does he do it? Tough skin.

How tough is our spiritual skin these days? Can we tolerate changes in our worship services and still worship? Can we listen to our grandchildren's values and still love them? Can we fumble with and laugh at the expanding social media and still understand the Word is going out faster and farther? "Tough skin" for us might mean remembering and giving thanks for the past AND remaining open and curious about the hand of God at work in the present and future.

Lord, give us tolerance and patience for change and an appreciation for the faithful, sturdy feet of our ancestors. Amen.

Walk: Make a date to walk regularly with an unchurched friend—wear shoes.

Read: Proverbs 4

*Lois Scheer
San Diego, CA*

Wednesday, November 28, 2012

In the Midst of Change

We look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal.

2 Corinthians 4:18

People younger than me move, walk, run. I move slowly, no longer take long walks and running is out of the question. People younger than me stand and sing hymns in church. I sit, but I can still sing, maybe not always in tune. People younger than me rake leaves, cut grass, play tennis and golf. I watch as my grandchildren take care of the yard. I cherish the days when I was on the tennis court and golf course.

Yes, change is taking place all around me because I am aging. But God doesn't change (Malachi 3:6). He keeps his promises. I have the assurance that someday he will call me home. Therefore, I do not lose heart. I may experience changes in this body of mine, but my God is renewing my Spirit day by day. Daily I experience his marvelous grace in Jesus Christ.

Lord Jesus, help me fix my eyes on you in the midst of all the changes in my life. Amen.

Ponder: Count your blessings as you wrestle with life's changes.

Read: 2 Corinthians 4:16-18; 5:1-10

Walter M. Schoedel
St. Louis, MO

Thursday, November 29, 2012

Less Is More

... look not only to [your] own interests, but also to the interests of others.

Philippians 2:4

In younger years, our world was bigger. We were busy raising children, involved with all that entailed. Responsibilities of a large home and yard, work and church filled our days. We enjoyed the camaraderie of fellow church members, coworkers, friends and family who have since passed on. Sometimes our lives were a bit chaotic. It was a time when there was no time.

One benefit of my shrinking world is that now I have more time. And, yes, that's a good thing. More time to spend with Jesus, and more time to give smiles, a hug or a hand-pat to those who need it. I have time to discover how large my life really is—filled with opportunities, if only I look for them. My world may have become downsized, but it's the right size for me.

Jesus, you always found time for others. Help me follow your example. Amen.

Do: Look for ways to “grow” someone's world.

Read: John 15:12-15; 1 Peter 4:10

*Darlene Seegert
New Berlin, WI*

Friday, November 30, 2012

Great Expectations

... it is my eager expectation and hope that ... Christ will be honored in my body, whether by life or by death.

Philippians 1:20

Did you read Charles Dickens' *A Tale of Two Cities* in high school? More time to read these days? Try Dickens' *Great Expectations*. "Pip" begins life as an orphan in one of the most dysfunctional homes in literature, becomes the recipient of support from a wealthy but stealthy donor, squanders his fortune and returns home a wiser young man. Sound like the Prodigal Son? Think back to your own "great expectations" versus the reality of the life God allowed you to lead. What would you change? For what are you eternally grateful? How have you grown? Can you chuckle at your "great expectations" and give thanks for endless blessings? Give yourself a pat on the back if you finish the book.

Thank you, Lord, for my valleys and my mountaintops—and the expectation of life with you in heaven. Amen.

Challenge: Pick up an old classic to read or re-read. Try the Book of Revelation once more with a good study guide!

Read: Philippians 1

*Lois Scheer
San Diego, CA*

Saturday, December 1, 2012

Forever Chosen

[Jesus] stretched out his hand and touched the leper and said to him, "I do choose. Be made clean!"

Mark 1:41

Today's Bible verse speaks of a miraculous time when Jesus healed a leper. Not only does Jesus choose to heal the leper, he chooses to make us his children forever. He has been doing this forever! The Christ of the Cross chooses to save!

Marcy knew her memory was leaving her, and from 92 she prayed nightly that she would wake up in heaven. Can you relate? At age 99 her prayer was answered.

In the midst of our earthly struggles, what remains constant is that Christ has chosen us forever. That gift sustained Marcy and, as it has throughout our lives, it sustains us as we look forward to his coming.

Gracious God, I thank you for choosing to save me. Empower me to be your faithful witness to those around me. Amen.

Think: Reflect on the blessing of being a chosen child of God.

Read: Mark 1:40-45; Revelation 22:1-5

*Paul Park
Peoria, IL*

Sunday, December 2, 2012

Advent Joy

Praise our God, all peoples, let the sound of his praise be heard.

Psalm 66:8

Advent joy is a unique joy. It is not the joy that comes because everything is going wonderfully and there are no difficulties. That's life, regardless of age.

Advent joy is knowing even when things are going badly, God is with you and cares about you very much! Advent joy is knowing even when we face disaster, we have not been abandoned and this did not come our way because we have done wrong. Advent joy is knowing even when the medical reports are negative, the Healer knows our pains and brings us peace. Advent joy is knowing when it seems that we have been abandoned by all, we are not alone at all. Our Advent King embraces us.

Advent joy is knowing that the King, whose coming we anticipate, is already with us with the fullness of his love.

Bless us again this Advent with joy that comes from the assurance of your presence and your love. Amen.

Be joyful: Live in Advent joy.

Read: Psalm 66:1-12

*Vernon D. Gundermann
Kirkwood, MO*

Monday, December 3, 2012

As You Will, Lord

And Mary said, “Behold, I am the servant of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word.”

Luke 1:38

Life is full of choices—some very hard. God chose Mary to be the mother of our Lord. Mary now had the choice as to what kind of mother she would be. She could have been unhappy, facing the prospect of being pregnant and unmarried. She could have been in denial. Instead, she humbly trusted that God would guide her. And God did.

Sometimes decisions are thrust upon us that are difficult. Perhaps we need to move, or we are requested to quit driving. Our choice is how will we respond. We can be unhappy. Or we can humbly trust that God will guide us. He always has and he always will.

Lord, into your hands I place myself—lead me where I should go. Amen.

Remember: Remember the times you’ve seen God’s gracious hands leading you.

Read: Psalm 121

*Gayle Truesdell
Ballwin, MO*

Tuesday, December 4, 2012

Where Is the Light?

The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world.

John 1:9

George, frail with age, called out to the nurse caring for him, “Turn on the light so I can see.” With a quick flip of the switch, George was surrounded by light.

George isn’t the only one who is in need of light. During Advent, we are reminded how much everyone, young and old, needs true spiritual light. God knew that, too, and graciously provided the light we desperately needed in the person of his Son, Jesus Christ. Left on our own, we would not know where or how to find God.

Jesus came and brought us the light of his Word and witness so that we can clearly see the way to God and to the fullness of life.

God of light, you have provided us with the light of your Son, Jesus. Send your Spirit to encourage us to seek the light so that we can clearly walk in your paths. Amen.

Enlighten: Turn on all the lights in your dwelling.

Read: John 1:1-18; 8:12-30

*Jeffery Scheer
Webster Groves, MO*

Wednesday, December 5, 2012

The Way of the Lord

Behold, I send my messenger, and he will prepare the way before me. And the Lord whom you seek will suddenly come to his temple.

Malachi 3:1

Today's verse reminds us that Malachi had warned the people of the Lord's coming, yet still they continued to flounder in their sin. Sound familiar? No matter our age, sin still prevails.

Enter Jesus, the Son of Mary. Not what we expected. Humbly and quietly he enters our world, forgiving our sin and reshaping our view of God, the world around us and ourselves. Jesus is the Way of the Lord—the only way to salvation. Like the messenger who prepared the way for Jesus' earthly ministry, we have the responsibility of sharing the message of his return.

Are you walking in the way of the Lord today?

Lord, give me a sense of urgency to share my hope with the world around me this Christmas. For Jesus' sake. Amen.

Announce: Announce good news to someone who might not expect it today.

Read: John 14:6; 1 Corinthians 3:16-17

*Jim Mueller
Jefferson City, MO*

Thursday, December 6, 2012

Come, Lord Jesus

And then they will see the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory.

Luke 21:27

During these days of Advent we anticipate Christ's return—not as a baby, but as the triumphant, glorious Lord of heaven and earth.

Until Christ comes again in glory, we will suffer trials and tribulations. It's part of life as we know it. And as Christ's return draws near, it may even seem that things will get even worse. But as we look to Christ and look for the signs of his coming, we hold on to his promise to return and take us out of this vale of tears and into the life of the world to come. So we need not fear any struggle, trial or hardship now. Instead, during Advent and all our lives, we do as Christ invites, and we lift up our heads and look for the coming of the Lord, for our redemption draweth nigh.

Come, Lord Jesus. Come quickly. Amen.

Pray: Pray every day for the coming again of the Lord.

Read: Luke 21:25-28

*Keith Weise
Ballwin, MO*

Friday, December 7, 2012

Loneliness and Fear

An angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, "Joseph, son of David, do not fear ..."

Matthew 1:20

I recently heard a song about the loneliness and fear long-distance runners experience due to the long miles and singular nature of that sport. However, I don't hear too many songs about the loneliness and fear of growing older.

I believe that Mary and Joseph felt alone and afraid when finding out that she was pregnant with Jesus. The Spirit told them to not be afraid and they believed. Though you may no longer be the tender age of Mary, you might have an emotional understanding of her plight, as perhaps you feel alone and at times afraid of the personal challenges of growing older. Do not be afraid. These words are for Mary, for Joseph and for you.

Dear Lord, wipe away my tears and my fears. In your loving name, I pray. Amen.

Think: Think about times when you were afraid and Jesus calmed the storm in your life.

Read: Mark 4:35-41

*Patrick O'Neal
St. Louis, MO*

Saturday, December 8, 2012

Just Being There

They sat with him on the ground for seven days and seven nights, and no one spoke a word to him, for they saw that his suffering was very great.

Job 2:13

It has been my experience that the presence of someone who cares for us can be a great comfort when life is difficult. They may quietly sit and not say a word, make a cup of coffee or pray with us. These are the times when God becomes present to us through others. It is in the gift of this presence that we begin to come to terms with the life-changing circumstances of growing older.

In the midst of the hurriedness of life, the quiet times are calming and gentle. They speak to a peace and stillness that the Lord uses to speak to our heart—a heart that needs care, a heart that is hurting and needs the Word and love of the Lord. With whom might you share a calm and gentle spirit today?

*Lord, thank you for your presence in my life.
Amen.*

Listen: Be still and listen for the Lord.

Read: Psalm 40

*Judy Coiner
Peoria, IL*

Sunday, December 9, 2012

How Are You Sleeping?

When Joseph woke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him.

Matthew 1:24

Did Joseph sleep well that night? An angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream saying, “Take Mary as your wife, [her child] is of the Holy Spirit, call his name Jesus.” So many questions; Joseph’s head must have been spinning, his heart racing. Where was the “off switch”? Was it a sleepless night?

Throughout life, we’ve all known about a troubled conscience—a cloud of guilt, a ton of worry—and how our bed can become a toss-and-turn marathon of sleeplessness. Jesus is not a magical sleeping pill. He is the merciful Savior. He has come to blanket every sleep-depriving sin, every anxious moment of worry, with the wonder of his accepting, forgiving and “give-it-all-to-me” love.

Jesus, let me “sleep in heavenly peace.” Amen.

Reflect: Reflect on the carol “Silent Night” before you fall asleep tonight.

Read: Psalms 3 and 4

*Randy Shields
St. Louis, MO*

Monday, December 10, 2012

Blessed Assurance

As far as the east is from the west, so far does he remove our transgressions from us.

Psalm 103:12

I was talking to the youngest and only surviving sibling of Phil, who at 90 years old had just died. His brother mentioned that he had noticed Phil getting more serious about church as he got older, but with a grin and a twinkle in his eye, he added, “I could tell you some stories ... but I’d better not.”

I wish he had told me stories because I could have easily talked about how Phil’s 90 years of sins had been washed away in his baptism. As we prepare to celebrate the birth of our Savior, we do so assured that because of Jesus’ sinless life, death and resurrection, God did not have to remember Phil according to his sins, but according to the Lord’s steadfast love and for the sake of the Lord’s goodness.

Thank you that for your name’s sake, O Lord, my sins have been removed. Amen.

Remember: If a sin from your youth comes to mind, remember that in Christ it has been removed.

Read: Psalm 25; Jeremiah 31:31-34

*Brad Thomas
Glen Carbon, IL*

Tuesday, December 11, 2012

Good News!

They shall bring gold and frankincense, and shall bring good news ...

Isaiah 60:6

Good news and Advent go together. God speaks to us through his Word about the coming of his Son Jesus who brings salvation and life to the world. This is definitely good news as we often deal with so much bad news in our world. Even Mary and Joseph had bad news in the midst of the birth of their newborn son. They had to travel for the birth, they were staying in a stable, the king was angry, etc. But then came Good News as angels sang praise and the Magi came to worship their Son with gifts!

Are there places in your life where bad news can be replaced with the Good News of Jesus and his love?

God, you do have Good News for us—your Son's birth saves the world. What greater news is there? Thank you for this Good News! Amen.

Hear and share: This Advent, hear the Good News that God continues to speak. Then share it with others.

Read: Luke 2:1-20; Matthew 2:1-12

*Jeffery Scheer
Webster Groves, MO*

Wednesday, December 12, 2012

The Gift of Ourselves

But each has his own gift from God, one of one kind and one of another.

1 Corinthians 7:7

Think back. What was the one Christmas gift that meant the most to you? Was it wrapped in paper and ribbon? My guess is that it wasn't.

One of the best gifts I ever received was actually a bow. When I was little, I watched my grandmother make bows in her florist shop. Many years later, when she said she found it difficult to shop, I brought out a spool of ribbon and asked her to show me how to make a proper florist's bow. She was delighted and soon the room was filled with bows and smiles.

Just as God gave of himself through the gift of his Son, the gift that will be remembered the longest is the gift of yourself.

Heavenly Father, show me the gifts you have given me, so that I can share them with those I love, sharing your love at the same time. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Teach: Give the gift of teaching something you love to do today.

Read: 1 Peter 4:10

*Wendy Popp
Peoria, IL*

Thursday, December 13, 2012

Open My Eyes, Lord

... and all flesh shall see the salvation of God.

Luke 3:6

Intricate light displays, neighborhoods aglow and decorated homes all vie for attention. Indeed, Advent is a time of sights. It has been that way throughout my life. But the greatest Advent sight is not so elaborate. This great sight of Advent has its consummation in the birth of Christ. In Christ's birth we see not lights and decorations, but the salvation of God.

As Isaiah first promised and John the Baptist promised after him, in Christ we see what God has promised: our Savior from sin, death, the devil and hell. The beautiful sights all around may tempt us with distraction, but the Holy Spirit calls us to fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, and see the salvation of God.

Lord, open my eyes by your Spirit, that I may fix my eyes on Jesus now and always. Amen.

Reflect: Look for Jesus in every moment of life, and in every seasonal display of decoration.

Read: Luke 3:1-6; Isaiah 52:7-10

*Keith Weise
Ballwin, MO*

Friday, December 14, 2012

A Favorable God

And [Gabriel] came to [Mary] and said, “Greetings, O favored one, the Lord is with you!”

Luke 1:28

If Mary were to have run in the 2012 presidential election, she might have been labeled a “classist,” someone who is biased based on social or economic class. In the Magnificat—Mary’s song of praise—some are brought low and some lifted high; some are filled with good things and some are sent away empty.

But Mary is not proposing the perfect equation to maintain the perfect society. Her soul is merely glorifying the Lord; her spirit can do nothing but rejoice in the God who saves even her by the birth of her Son Jesus. We who are baptized into Jesus—God’s beloved Son, born of Mary, a lowly maidservant—can trust we are one of his favored ones, whether we have been brought low or lifted high!

Dear Lord, even as I age, protect me from ever doubting that you will fulfill all you have spoken to me by your Word about your Son, Jesus. Amen.

Respond: When asked “How are you?” respond, “I am blessed and highly favored!” Notice the responses you receive.

Read: Isaiah 40; Luke 1:26-56

*Stephanie Meyer
St. Louis, MO*

Saturday, December 15, 2012

Life Is a Faith Walk

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.

John 3:16

What sustains us throughout our lifetime? Is it faith in the living Savior? A faith we have practiced from youth all the way into our advancing years?

Most of us can name that someone special who introduced us to Jesus. Most likely it was our parents, grandparents or a friend who came forward and said that believing in the living Savior is so important. Occasionally we come to faith later in life, but Jesus is everyone's Savior, both young and old.

Every day of our lives we need to remember the Savior who came to be with us during our life walk, in times of both joy and sorrow. Although we may not always be aware of his presence, he is there. With whom can you share this good news?

Lord, be with me each day as I continue my faith walk with you. Amen.

Share: Share your walk with Jesus with someone today.

Read: John 11:25-27

*Judy Coiner
Peoria, IL*

Sunday, December 16, 2012

Expecting Visitors?

Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for he has visited and redeemed his people.

Luke 1:68

The plaque inside the door read: “Everyone who visits here brings joy; some when they enter, and others when they leave.” How is it with you? What kind of visitor are you expecting this Christmas? Or will you be the visitor? There’s the “hi and good-bye” visit. There’s the “I looked forward to it, but it went so quickly” visit. And everything in between.

How lonely life would be if no one ever visited. God figured that out ages ago. He sent his Son Jesus to visit this lonely, sin-broken world. Blessed be the Lord, for he has come to visit you!

Jesus—the man for all seasons, the God for all ages—comes for a really long visit. He comes to make your heart his permanent home. Jesus comes to be Savior and Lord for the rest of your life! What a comforting visit that is!

Dear Jesus, thank you for visiting me. Amen.

Reach out: Visit someone who may be lonely.

Read: 2 Corinthians 1:3-7

*Randy Shields
Florissant, MO*

Monday, December 17, 2012

Gifted

For the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable.

Romans 11:29

As I minister to older adults, I hear a common lament among these beloved children of God—“I can’t do what I used to do. What purpose do I have?” Actually, this is universal to humanity as we strive to find our purpose or place in life. Another way to approach this might be “How do I make use of my God-given gifts and abilities?”

Advent points us to Christmas and the receiving of the gift of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. I invite you to see every day as a Christmas-event. Every day we get to remember and use the gifts that God has given to us to serve our needs and those of our neighbor.

God, you richly bless each of us with gifts, talents and abilities. Help us to find ways to use them in service to you and your people. Amen.

Reclaim and relish: Reclaim and relish in your God-given giftedness.

Read: 1 Corinthians 12:1-31

*Jeffery Scheer
Webster Groves, MO*

Tuesday, December 18, 2012

Time to Think

Search me, O God, and know my heart! Try me and know my thoughts!

Psalm 139:23

Zechariah had nine months to think. From his first moment of distrust to the written confirmation of John's name, Zechariah was unable to speak. God's discipline for doubting provided time to internalize the wonder of God's ways. He and Elizabeth would be new parents in their old age. This child would be "filled with the Holy Spirit" and would "turn many ... to the Lord." Most amazing of all, their relative Mary carried the long-awaited Savior! No wonder Zechariah emerged from isolation "filled with the Holy Spirit" and with prophecies on his lips.

We also require time to reflect on the need for a Savior and to appreciate God's power and plan. "By the mouth of his holy prophets" we also see his "tender mercy." God brings faith and hope. He gives "light to those who sit in darkness ... and [guides] our feet into the way of peace."

*Guide my thoughts, Lord, and give me your peace.
Amen.*

Think: Set an alarm throughout the day as a reminder to think about God and all he has done.

Read: Luke 1:5-80

*Sharolyn Sander
Roselle, IL*

Wednesday, December 19, 2012

A Deep Connection

Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groaning too deep for words.

Romans 8:26

Bill's dementia was so severe no one was sure if he knew what was going on as he sat quietly with his eyes closed. He was motionless until he started moving his mouth and quietly "singing" along to "Amazing Grace." He had not spoken in months, but this familiar hymn of God's grace resonated within and a connection was made.

Thankfully, God connects in ways we do not understand. Jesus continues to connect with the world through his Word. When we see someone whose age is stealing their memory, we can trust that the Lord is still connecting through his Spirit by his living, active and soul-piercing Word. We can speak and sing God's Word to others, knowing that the Spirit is at work.

Dear Lord, graciously keep me connected to you through your living Word. Amen.

Sing: Sing a familiar hymn with someone who may need a connection.

Read: Hebrews 4:11-13; Luke 1:39-45

Brad Thomas
Glen Carbon, IL

Thursday, December 20, 2012

Pull Down the Shades

I lay down and slept; I woke again, for the Lord sustained me.

Psalm 3:5

As we grow older our sleep is sometimes disturbed by health problems or worry. Where we will live out our last days? What will happen to our family? What disturbs your sleep? Know that at the end of each day, God pulls down his shade and gives us the night for rest. We no longer need to worry about that day's failures. All has been forgiven through our Lord's death and resurrection. Nor should we try to peek around God's shade to see what tomorrow brings.

With the dawn of the morning, God gives us a brand new day. God plans well! We thank him for the shade which ends each day. We live each new day within that day's boundaries. Freed from all sins of the past and from all worries about the future, we live that day for Christ and his loved ones. THIS is the day that the Lord has made for ME!

Forgive me, Father, for the sins of today. Thank you for the good things I enjoyed. Prepare me to live tomorrow in thankfulness and joy. Amen.

Name: Name one thing you plan to do for another person in the name of Christ today.

Read: Matthew 6:25-34

*Leo Symmank
Seabrook, TX*

Friday, December 21, 2012

What Time Is It?

... now is the time of God's favor ...

2 Corinthians 6:2

How often do you glance at the clock or check your watch?

Clock-watchers. Staring at the minute hand. Waiting for the next meal, the next appointment, the next whatever ...

Are there sluggish days in your life when time seems to move slowly, like trudging through a swamp, knee-deep in mud?

Do you ever find yourself “killing time” (what a violent expression), glazed eyes glued to a screen, fingers idly drumming?

Time is God's gift of life. In the fullness of his time he gave us his Son, Jesus. This time—your time—“is the time of God's favor!”

Feelings about time, and the way we use it, may change as we age. Slowing down doesn't mean giving up. Hope-full living also looks ahead to God's favor—in this life—and eternal life!

Savior-God, fill my empty days with your purposeful love and favor. Amen.

Give: Give your (God's) time in service to another.

Read: Psalm 31

Randy Shields
St. Louis, MO

Saturday, December 22, 2012

Tied to Apron Strings

The Lord our God be with us as he was with our fathers. May he not leave us nor forsake us ...

1 Kings 8:57

I'm sure you've heard "tied to her apron strings" in reference to children and their mother. The image of an apron is a strong one. In my mind I can see protection from splattered food, the creation of deliciously cooked meals and, lastly, guidance, as some of the best conversations can take place at the dinner table.

As we age, we remember that Christ ties us to something even greater. He ties us to himself and to his Father. Even though we live in a time where religion and faith are viewed as a weakness, we can continue living in faith each and every day, trusting that the ties of Jesus will never break, weaken or grow undone. Isn't that wonderful?

Gracious Lord, we are grateful that you are true to your promises in never leaving nor forgetting about us, your children. Amen.

Think: Be aware of how strongly Jesus is working in your life.

Read: Hebrews 13:5-6

*Patrick O'Neal
St. Louis, MO*

Sunday, December 23, 2012

Our Lover Forever

Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh. This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church.

Ephesians 5:31-32

Lois and Ed were married for 76 years. On the Sunday after Ed's funeral, Lois said as she was leaving worship: "You know, I lost my lover."

We are called to lead our lives in the context of Christ's eternal love for us. Lois understood today's Bible passage; she did not just lose a husband, she had lost her earthly lover.

The apostle Paul declares in Ephesians that Christ has the same love for us. He came into this world, then took our sins to the cross. The wonderful difference is that his love is forever.

Gracious God, continue to claim us as your loved children. Empower us to be your loving servants as we care for those around us. Amen.

Think: Reflect on the blessings of Christ's eternal love.

Read: Ephesians 5:25-32; 1 Corinthians 13

*Paul Park
Peoria, IL*

Monday, December 24, 2012

Sing a Christmas Song

Oh, sing to the Lord a new song, for he has done marvelous things!

Psalm 98:1

It's Christmas Eve. Wherever you go in the stores and shops, you hear Christmas carols playing. At no other time of the year would you hear songs in the marketplace that tell about Jesus our Savior. But they do now!

Why, for more than a month now they've all been playing our songs! Oh, sure, you'll hear "Jingle Bells" and "Frosty" too. But listen, there's "Silent Night" and "Hark! The Herald Angels Sing" and "O Little Town of Bethlehem." Isn't it great! So sing along. Better yet, sing together as a family or even go caroling tonight. Everybody needs that wonderful message of Jesus, born to be our Savior. That's what Christmas is really all about. And singing Christmas carols is a fantastic way to share that message with others.

Dear God, you put Christmas melodies in our hearts and give us songs of your great love to sing. Give us voices to sing your praises always. Amen.

Sing: Sing a Christmas carol when and where others might not expect it.

Read: Psalm 100

*Lonie Eatherton
Fenton, MO*

Tuesday, December 25, 2012

Decorations that Matter

... so that in everything they may adorn the doctrine of God our Savior ...

Titus 2:10

Christmastime is resplendent in decorations. We even decorate ourselves with holiday-themed neckties and sweaters or by wearing our best clothes for the day. Unfortunately, many celebrate the Christmas holiday without celebrating the birth of Jesus Christ—just going to parties, giving and receiving gifts, gathering with family and friends. Many consider it simply an opportunity to interrupt our work-a-day world with a little bit of kindness and cheer.

Today is the day for remembering that it's Jesus coming into our hearts that brings true joy. He came down to earth for us—this has and always will be what is worth celebrating on Christmas Day. The love that Jesus showed us decorates us from the inside out.

Heavenly Father, use us as shining stars, so that others who simply wonder about the meaning of Christmas may know its truth. We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.

Decorate: Decorate your life with Jesus' love so others see the Savior in you.

Read: Matthew 1:18-25; Luke 2:1-20

*Wendy Popp
Peoria, IL*

Wednesday, December 26, 2012

Bethlehem to Cross

I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live ...

John 11:25

As we journey from Bethlehem to the cross, our faith is fed. We see the baby Jesus grow into manhood. We experience his walk—helping, listening, caring for and serving God’s children. We see and learn that this Son of Mary truly is the Son of God. Not only because of the miracles he performs, but more importantly why he does them.

As New Testament people, we can see and live his journey. He alone defeated death and paid the price for our sins so that by his grace we now have the promise of life everlasting with our Savior in heaven. We now can live with true hope.

Loving God, grant us the faith to see and accept the journey our Savior made. Give us faith to also accept his gift of grace for life everlasting with him. Amen.

Consider: How has God shown his grace to you over the years?

Read: John 11:17-27; John 3:16

*Karen Pitkin
St. Charles, MO*

Thursday, December 27, 2012

I Love to Tell the Story

Come and hear, all you who fear God, and I will tell what he has done for my soul.

Psalm 66:16

I was blessed with a remarkable mother. Her name was Aurelia, derived from the Latin word for gold. And gold she was. She died a few months before her 100th birthday. She was anxious to get home because she missed doing what she loved most. Until she was well into her 70s, every week she passed on to the smallest children in Sunday school the story of Jesus and his love. She was a good teacher because she loved both children and the story of her Lord.

For a few of my earliest years, I was part of her Sunday morning flock. That meant I got a double dose of her telling his story both at church and again at home. In addition to teaching me his story, she also taught me to love telling it to others.

Who taught you the story? Do you remember? Did he or she or they also infect you with a love to tell the story to others as well?

Make me a storyteller, Lord. Give me the will to do it and help me do it in my own way. Amen.

Share: Don't let the day end without telling someone about his story. Start with someone close to you.

Read: 2 Corinthians 5:18-20

*Charles S. Mueller, Sr.
Bloomington, IL*

Friday, December 28, 2012

Refreshing Words

You will be a crown of splendor in the Lord's hand.

Isaiah 62:3

Sometimes in haste we speak hurtful words. We fail to help or to encourage someone in need. Now we feel “down and dirty.” There we lie like a drop of muddy water in the gutter. The sun shines down on that drop of water, warms it, lifts it up into the heavens and finally lets it fall as a snowflake so pure, white and clean.

That is what our Redeemer does for us by virtue of his suffering and death on the cross. Daily he resurrects us to be his gift of grace to those around us. We are more than a drop in a bucket. We are God's refreshing rain that brings a new bloom into each day that he gives us.

Gracious Redeemer, lift up my soul from its depths. Let your love and forgiveness flow through me and water the lives of those around me. Amen.

Act: Praise someone for something he or she has done well.

Read: Titus 3:4-8

*Leo Symmank
Seabrook, TX*

Saturday, December 29, 2012

Forwards

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

Psalm 19:14

If you are *online* you probably receive *forwards*, those wonderful little stories, pictures, jokes, diatribes that someone is certain you will want to read. High point of your day or bane of your existence?

Does God care about forwards? Well, he raised up numerous prophets who spoke the Word of the Lord and predicted coming events—good and evil. He expects us to send the Good News of redemption and salvation to everyone we know. The wonders of creation provide beautiful pictures we can share. But perhaps God expects us to beware of bearing false witness, to know the difference between humor and smut, to check facts before pushing the “Send” button. (And please don’t threaten me with a plague of locusts if I don’t forward your e-mail to 19 friends!)

Lord, let the words that flow from my computer reflect the concerns and joys of a Christ-filled spirit. Amen.

Consider: Apply the eighth commandment before forwarding that funny political cartoon.

Read: Mark 16:14-20

*Lois Scheer
San Diego, CA*

Sunday, December 30, 2012

Senior Time

Therefore do not be anxious about tomorrow ... Sufficient for the day is its own trouble.

Matthew 6:34

C. S. Lewis wrote that the present moment is when we are in touch with God. “Now” is when we are confronting God or relying on God or seeking God’s guidance. That’s not to say we should not enjoy our treasured memories of the past.

From the past we learn how God provides so we live in the present without anxiety. On occasion, rehash the good ol’ days with good ol’ friends. Only don’t live back then and miss God with you today.

And, of course, we prepare for the future, but the whole thrust of Jesus’ assurance in Matthew 6:25-34 is not to be anxious about tomorrow. When that future day arrives, God will arrive with it.

Enjoy God with you today! Whatever the day holds, you’ll not be alone. God will provide what you need. God’s time for seniors is “now.”

Lord, right now I’m talking with you, connected to you, you to me. In a way, “I’m in heaven.” Amen.

Reflect: Pause and reflect that at this very moment you are with God and God is with you.

Read: Matthew 6:25-34; 2 Corinthians 6:2; Ecclesiastes 3:1-8

*Robert C. Hereth
Grayslake, IL*

Monday, December 31, 2012

Make Up Your Mind!

... choose this day whom you will serve ...

Joshua 24:15

Do you greet the last day of the year with a sigh of relief? Do you fear something might still go wrong? The name “New Year’s Eve” suggests a forward look. Don’t look back with disappointment. Don’t fear the day. We are on the eve of a new day and a new year. Look forward with anticipation to all the ways God will bless you in your life.

Have you been putting off a decision or action? Well, what are you waiting for? God didn’t hesitate in sending Jesus to be our Savior. When the time was fully come, he sent his Son. Thank God he didn’t put it off! Confident of God’s grace and every blessing, we can take the steps that we know are good and right today, tomorrow and always.

Lord, thank you for bringing us through another year. Be with us through the coming year with your love and forgiveness and every blessing. Amen.

Challenge: Today is a great day to read the oldest Psalm in the Bible—Psalm 90, the Psalm of Moses.

Read: Psalm 90

*Lonie Eatherton
Fenton, MO*

HOLY HABITS for **HOPE-FULL HEALTH**

*Healthy and Hope-Full Hints for the Holidays
(and Hollow-Days as well!)*

1. Be realistic in your expectations. No need to pout that all the grandchildren are not present, but rather rejoice with those who are able to be with you.
2. Your role in family activities continues to change. You may no longer be “in charge.” Relax, step back and enjoy your family and friends.
3. Choose your “battles.” Everything does not, or will not, go as you had hoped and planned.
4. Look for new surprises, and enjoy the growth and changing lives of family and friends.
5. Lighten up and laugh at yourself through the holidays. It also makes them holy-days!
6. Keep your traditions going. Decorate, wrap gifts, play games, worship, pray, tell Jesus’ story, but only watch the family football game from the sidelines!
7. Say “Thanks” often, and encourage, encourage, encourage, while you listen, listen, listen.
8. Invent “new” traditions. Wrap “stuff” you need to get rid of and give them as gifts. Go caroling. Perhaps even try to keep the TV turned off all day (!).
9. Include on your prayer list each day the folks who send you Christmas cards!
10. Celebrate the moment! Too often we focus on the holiday itself and forget the loved ones among us!

Hope-Full Praying

For Family Gatherings

Lord, you gather families together daily to remind us of your love for us and our love for you and one another. Thanks for calling all families as your one family, throughout the world! There often are family members who are not with us, through miles and deaths and shaky relationships. Mend the broken, Lord, forgive the hurts, bring comfort and hope to the bereaved and keep us celebrating as your family each and every day. Amen.

For the Holiday Season

Lord, holidays can be so much fun as we gather to celebrate, share and enjoy one another's company. But holidays can become hollow-days when loved ones are not with us and when conflicts rage around us. Help us to see that every day is a holy-day! Help us to live each day in that spirit as well. Holy be your name, Lord, and holy be each day. Amen.

For the Blessings of Fall

You give us seasons to remind us that we, too, go through "seasons" of life, Lord. We are born, we grow, we experience, we die. Through your Spirit, we live well, we age well and we die well. Let the changing seasons remind us although our bodies age and our experiences vary, the one thing that does not change is your love and forgiveness of us. Your promise is for every season, and I'm glad! Amen.

Individual Subscription (U.S. and Canada only)

1 Year Subscription (Quarterly)	_____ \$14	U.S. Rate	_____ \$16	Canada Rate
------------------------------------	------------	------------------	------------	--------------------

Mail: Hope-Full Living
P.O. Box 291847
Kettering, OH 45429-0847

Toll-Free
855-325-4673

* An Individual Subscription requires payment with order.

Quarterly Bulk Subscription

	Quarterly Bulk Rate	Quantity
5-9 Copies	\$1.85 each	_____
10-19 Copies	\$1.75 each	_____
20+ Copies	\$1.65 each	_____

Mail: Hope-Full Living Bulk
1564 Fencorp Dr.
Fenton, MO 63026

Toll-Free
800-325-9414

* Bulk Subscriptions are billed each quarter with an invoice in the package. Bulk Subscriptions are sent to one address (no P.O. Box). **Shipping charges will be added.** Bulk subscriptions will continue each quarter unless you notify us of a change. **Payment must be in U.S. funds drawn on a U.S. bank.**

Send to _____

Attention _____

Street Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Daytime Phone () _____