

# HOPE-FULL LIVING

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

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## Hope-Full Living Mission Statement

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

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Sunday, July 1, 2018

# A New Teaching?

*They were all amazed, and they kept on asking one another, "What is this? A new teaching with authority! He commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey him."*

*Mark 1:27*

When Jesus began his ministry among the people it was an exciting time. He brought to the people an experience of God that led them to cry out, "What is this? A new teaching?"

Because of Jesus, God is always opening the newness of his kingdom to us. He is always revealing himself to us in ways and places we had never expected. Our experience of God may be something way beyond anything we could ever have expected. But because of Jesus, no matter how unknown the way before us might be, God is already there; no matter how new the experience, God is already working his blessing for us.

*Lord Jesus, let me begin each day with the words: My faith looks up to you. Amen.*

*Search: What is it that you need to ask and trust God for most of all at this time in your life?*

*Read: Mark 1:21-28*

*Lionel Otto  
Adelaide, Australia*

Monday, July 2, 2018

# Learning to Count

*My mouth will tell of your righteous acts, of your deeds of salvation all the day, for their number is past my knowledge.*

*Psalm 71:15*

When you are walking with your grandchild, do you find yourself counting the cracks in the sidewalk or the number of houses on the block? Teachable moments for sure. Author Bob Talbert noted, “Teaching kids to count is fine, but teaching them what counts is best.” So what is best?

When Jesus walked with his disciples, he taught them about the many things that count. Jesus talked to his disciples about his death and resurrection (Mark 9:31). Now that was a teachable moment! Other attributes that count are love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control (Galatians 5:22-23). These life-changing qualities transform us as the Holy Spirit moves in our lives.

*Lord, help me to be open to your leading and your teaching. Mold me into what you want me to be. Amen.*

*Memorize: Memorize the fruit of the Spirit.*

*Read: Micah 6:8; 1 Peter 5:5; Colossians 3:12; 2 Timothy 3:16-17; Hebrews 12:1-2*

*Jan Bathke  
Neenah, WI*

Tuesday, July 3, 2018

# Go Ye

*They still bear fruit in old age.*

*Psalm 92:14*

A legend concerning the aged apostle John is most instructive. According to this legend, the feeble apostle was carried into the sanctuary where he delivered the Word of God in five brief words: “Little children, love one another.” Our Lord Jesus commissions his children to teach and baptize all nations. There is no age limit. There is no requisite that we must be in perfect health. Our God promises that his children will “still bear fruit in old age” (Psalm 92:14).

What a marvelous promise! Often we consider ourselves to be of little use to God. No longer are we filled with the vitality of youth. How can we serve the Savior? Paul reminds us that Christ has apportioned gifts of Christian service to each one of us according to his grace (Ephesians 4:7). Regardless of our weaknesses, we remain the commissioned children of God! Hallelujah!

*Lord, regardless of our health, use us as your instruments of Gospel proclamation. Amen.*

*Petition: Seek the Spirit's guidance to use your gifts for Christian ministry.*

*Read: Psalm 92:12-15; Ephesians 4:7-13*

*David Bernthal  
Juliette, GA*

Wednesday, July 4, 2018

# Set Free

*In my anguish I cried to the Lord, and he answered by setting me free.*

*Psalm 118:5*

July is freedom month in the United States. Freedom is a very big word in the Scriptures: “You will know the truth, and the truth will set you free” (John 8:32); “For freedom Christ has set us free” (Galatians 5:1).

What did the psalmist mean when he cried to the Lord in anguish, and the Lord answered by setting him free? I suspect the psalmist was thinking of the power that worry and anxiety can have over us. God’s peace sets us free from worry and anxiety. There is true freedom in resting in the everlasting arms, in knowing how much God cares for us, in trusting his promise to always be involved in our lives, working for our good. Be at peace today; live freely in the presence of the Lord.

*Thank you, Lord God, for faith’s freedom in you.  
Amen.*

*Search: Use a concordance to search the Scripture for the words “freedom” and “free.”*

*Read: Psalm 118*

*Don Schatz  
Kenmore, WA*

Thursday, July 5, 2018

# Whoosh!

*And I heard the voice of the Lord.*

*Isaiah 6:8*

I was brushing my teeth when I heard a persistent whooshing sound. At first, I ignored it, but then I looked out of the bathroom window. Whoa! I raced outside, shouting to my husband. “Balloon!” A hot-air balloon, firing up warm air with each whoosh, passed over us—so low that my husband could speak to the people in the basket.

At times, God gets our attention with a whoosh. God’s joyful call may be flapping laundry on a clothesline or someone sweeping a walkway. He calls us to come out of our homes and out of our self-centered thoughts. God has something new to show us and teach us, a new way of experiencing and sharing his love. Listen to God’s call. You may hear something wondrous!

*Loving God, perk up my day with a whoosh. I’m ready to learn something new. Amen.*

*Listen: How is God calling you today? Let outside sounds take you out of your home and out of yourself.*

*Read: Psalm 85:8*

*Catherine A. Welch  
Southbury, CT*

Friday, July 6, 2018

# Summertime

*Be at rest once more, O my soul, for the Lord has been good to you.*

*Psalm 116:7*

Remember that famous line of a popular song long ago: “Summertime and the livin’ is easy”? It encouraged us to relax and refresh during these summer months. A similar thought comes from a sign: “The cure for anything: a nap, sunlight and ice cream.” I buy that also, but it makes so much more sense to add to the list, “and a daily reading of the Scriptures!”

The Lord has been good to us indeed. These summer months are great times to be refreshed and to tell others of the refreshing love and forgiveness that are ours—and theirs as well. We can rest, knowing that the Lord has already done everything we need to be loved and forgiven.

*Lord, thanks for doing everything for us so that we can rest, knowing that your love will never leave us. Motivate us to read Scriptures daily and find our rest in you. Amen.*

*Share: Invite someone to go with you for a delicious ice cream cone. (Make mine chocolate chip!) And enjoy the sun and a nap while you are at it.*

*Read: Ecclesiastes 5:18-20*

*Rich Bimler  
Bloomington, IL*

Saturday, July 7, 2018

# Learn by Remembering

*Oh give thanks to the Lord; call upon his name;  
make known his deeds among the peoples!*

*Psalm 105:1*

Remember the popular song by The Four Lads, “Moments to Remember”? “The day we tore the goal posts down, the quiet walks, the noisy fun and the ballroom prize we almost won”? Now moments to remember fly by faster than cyberspace. How often do we recall the day we met the Lord’s gift of our future spouse, the miracle that was the birth of our first child, a career change we didn’t think would work out, but did?

When we reflect on past events, we put ourselves in the same state of mind as that of many biblical writers, including the psalmist who wrote Psalm 105. He looks back and recalls the way the Lord guided his people into green pastures. By recalling how Jesus died and rose for us, we draw strength and wisdom to put together graciously the events of our lives.

*O Jesus, help me to review the important events in my life under your guiding grace. Amen.*

*Consider: Reflect today on five major events in your life.*

*Read: Psalm 105*

*Gordon Beck  
Williamsburg, VA*

Sunday, July 8, 2018

# Forgive

*As the Lord has forgiven you, so you must also forgive each other.*

*Colossians 3:13*

The ball players of summer step up to the plate, and they know that in baseball it's three strikes and you're out. The world doesn't provide for much forgiveness.

What can we expect from God? Seven times or seventy times seven? Seventy times seven indicates an unlimited amount and I know that's the way God has forgiven me. My wrongs are as uncountable as sand on all the beaches, yet I believe that I stand before God pure and holy, completely forgiven for all my sins. The pictures in Scripture—washed in the blood of Jesus, washed in the waters of baptism, cloaked in the pure white robe for the feast—set no number before I'm "out." Forgiveness that flows from our Savior is unlimited; there is enough for everybody, every time we sin. The divine rules don't work in baseball, but they surely work for me and you.

*Forgiving God, thank you for your unspeakable love in forgiving us in Jesus' name. Amen.*

*Forgive: Think about your level of tolerance for actions that irritate you.*

*Read: Matthew 18:21-35*

*Eldor Kaiser  
Lenexa, KS*

Monday, July 9, 2018

# Daring to Ask

*Teach me your way, O LORD.*

*Psalm 86:11*

As a shy child at school, I would burn with embarrassment at the thought of asking a question in class. I was certain that if I were to admit that I didn't understand what the teacher was saying my foolishness would be exposed for all to see.

I've heard it said that "there is no such thing as a stupid question." Asking questions helps us to find answers and gain knowledge. Thankfully these days I've learned to speak up and ask "stupid questions" and I value each opportunity to learn. When it comes to knowing God and growing in faith, the lessons to be learned are endless. And I believe that for as long as we are curious and teachable, we will continue to learn and, as a result, will never truly grow old.

*Dear Lord, thank you for inviting me to ask questions, and for your patience and grace in teaching me new things. Amen.*

*Reflect: Think of a question that has puzzled you and share it with a trusted friend. Search for answers together.*

*Read: 1 Corinthians 13:10-12; 2 Timothy 3:16-17*

*Kerry Osborne  
Sydney, Australia*

Tuesday, July 10, 2018

# Inattentive Living

*Who is blind as my dedicated one, or blind as the servant of the LORD? He sees many things, but does not observe them.*

*Isaiah 42:19-20*

I was embarrassed! I ran a stop sign, nearly creating a horrible accident. Why didn't I see it? I wasn't texting or trying to handle a burger and a drink. I was simply lost in thought, thinking about the things I had to do that day. Consequently I was mindless of others and not driving responsibly. My eyes may have seen the sign, but my brain didn't register what I saw.

Likewise my faith may go on autopilot from time to time. I become preoccupied with self. It's not that Jesus isn't important to me, or that I don't care about others with whom I share the highway of life. I simply allow other matters to tune them out. Consequently I miss opportunities to witness and serve. It's time to ask God to help me pay attention, as I live by faith.

*Lord, open my eyes to others and their needs, especially their need for Jesus. Amen.*

*Stop: Look. Listen. Discern needs and opportunities to serve.*

*Read: Isaiah 42:18-25; John 1:35-51*

*Ted Zimmerman  
Napa, CA*

Wednesday, July 11, 2018

# Experience

*What you have learned and received and heard and seen in me—practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you.*

*Philippians 4:9*

Have you ever seen a self-help book entitled *How To Learn To Walk by the Age Of One*? We don't find a book like that because we learn to walk by experience. There is help from family members, but a major component is learning by experience. It takes a lot of ups and downs—mostly crawls. But what a joy when an infant takes that first step and begins to walk.

We children of God learn a lot by experience. God certainly teaches us through the Scriptures, but we often learn by doing, while having a lot of ups and downs in the process. But we rejoice that God our teacher is patient and forgiving and that we do learn something from the teacher named "Experience."

*Thank you, heavenly Father, for giving me grace to learn through your Word. Amen.*

*Reflect: What does God want you to learn by your experience today?*

*Read: Matthew 7:24-28*

*Ken Holdorf  
Frisco, TX*

Thursday, July 12, 2018

# Fishers of Men

*I will make you fishers of men.*

*Matthew 4:19*

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

Good fishermen mend their nets. Good disciples practice a daily evaluation of how they touch the lives of people. Good fishermen accept the fact that there will be days when the nets are empty and sometimes full. Good disciples accept the fact that not all witnessing will be fruitful.

Good fishermen do not fish alone. Good disciples join with others in witnessing for the Lord Jesus. Good fishermen, even in their old age, find themselves fishing. Good disciples keep on sharing their faith in their later years. Go fish, my friends!

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

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

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

*Walter M. Schoedel  
Webster Groves, MO*

Friday, July 13, 2018

# Got It!

*Listen and understand!*

*Matthew 11:15*

One morning at our church's adult literacy class, I was helping a student understand the Pythagorean theorem. I explained it and she got it immediately—a most rewarding teaching moment! Then she asked, “But what do I do with it?” I didn't have an answer.

Jesus uses parables to help us understand God's kingdom, and that moment when we “get it” is most rewarding, too. But unlike geometry, we do know what to do. We understand how to forgive (the prodigal son), how to be a neighbor (the good Samaritan), how to bear fruit (the sower). We understand the need to repent (the lost sheep), that God honors humility (the Pharisee and the publican). We learn not to lose heart (the unjust judge), to use our resources in godly ways (the talents). When we get it, we are called to be doers—right back to Jesus' summary of the commandments: Love God and love our neighbor. Got it!

*Dear Lord, fill us with your Spirit to love. Amen.*

*Practice: Read one of Jesus' parables and follow its instruction.*

*Read: Luke 10:25-37*

*Sally Beck  
Williamsburg, VA*

Saturday, July 14, 2018

# Visual Learners

*And we have seen his glory.*

*John 1:14*

Some people learn best by seeing things work or by seeing pictures. Do you think Jesus' disciple Thomas was a visual learner? When he heard news of a resurrection, he stated, "Unless I see ... I will never believe" (John 20:25).

Our Creator knows that we have different learning styles. In John's Gospel, the miracles of Jesus are called "signs," demonstrations of power. John even began his account of Jesus by explaining that the Word became flesh and dwelt among us so that we humans could see the glory of God.

The psalmist wrote, "The heavens declare the glory of God" (Psalm 19:1) and "Taste and see that the Lord is good" (Psalm 34:8). With faithful eyes we look to see God's goodness and glory all around us. Even blind eyes can be opened to perceive God's grace and mercy.

*Open my eyes, Lord, to see you all around me.  
Amen.*

*Look: What pictures or sights illustrate God's goodness for you?*

*Read: Psalm 34; John 9*

*Martin Doering  
Bellwood, IL*

Sunday, July 15, 2018

# Not Just Yet

*Rejoice at all times. Pray without ceasing.*

*1 Thessalonians 5:16-17*

I have a friend who's been going through a lot with a hip replacement that's slow in healing. I asked him, "How are things coming along?" He said, "I've been asking God to help me with the healing." "What's been his answer?" With a smile, he said, "He's just not ready yet."

As we enter those "golden years" the "not yet's" seem pretty common. Sometimes when we pray, we hope for immediate results and sometimes God has other plans, plans to teach us patience, for instance, or compassion for others who are suffering. Whatever God's plans are regarding the trials in our lives, we can be rest assured that he knows what he's doing.

The psalmist has said, "Commit your way to the LORD; trust in him, and he will act" (Psalm 37:5) Whatever you're praying for right now, God will act, when the time is right.

*Lord, I know that in your good time you answer all prayer. Help me to trust that in your good time you'll answer mine too. Amen.*

*Ask: Remember to keep others in your prayers, too.*

*Read: Psalm 37; 1 Peter 5:1-7*

*Edward Arle  
St. Charles, MO*

Monday, July 16, 2018

# Always Repurposing

*Many are the plans in the mind of a man, but it is the purpose of the LORD that will stand.*

*Proverbs 19:21*

Drive through most big cities or small towns, and you'll see buildings that have been repurposed. Warehouses become upscale loft apartments. Movie theatres turn into community outreach centers. While it may seem sad when movie theaters or companies go out of business, repurposing gives those buildings new appearance and new functions.

God is a master of repurposing his buildings—which, actually, are us. Paul writes, “You are God’s field, God’s building” (1 Corinthians 3:9). As we age, God keeps repurposing us, changing our appearance and functions according to his plans. His plans may seem unclear at times or at odds with our own, but we always can be sure God’s plans are for our good. “The LORD will fulfill his purpose for me; your steadfast love, O LORD, endures forever” (Psalm 138:8).

*Thank you, Father, for repurposing me year after year through your Word and Spirit. Amen.*

*Reflect: Consider how God has changed your appearance and functions over your lifetime.*

*Read: Psalm 57:1-3; James 5:11*

*Marj Maynard  
Billings, MO*

Tuesday, July 17, 2018

# Sword in Hand

*Each of the builders had his sword strapped at his side while he built.*

*Nehemiah 4:18*

When God's people returned from exile, they set out to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem. Threatened by enemies who had no wish to see the work completed, the Jews kept on building, with half the people doing construction and the other half standing guard. Even the builders kept swords strapped at their sides while they labored. Workers doing the heavy lifting steadied burdens with one hand and held a weapon in the other.

Each day we, too, go about our daily callings with the tools of work in one hand and the sword of the Spirit, "which is the word of God" (Ephesians 6:17), in the other hand. With books and computers, with laundry and mixing bowls, with shovels and hammers, we serve God as we serve others each day, ready always to wield the Spirit's sword in love as we share the good news of Jesus.

*Lord, arm us with the Spirit's sword as we work and witness. Amen.*

*Prepare: Study God's Word to keep that sword sharp and ready for action.*

*Read: Nehemiah 4:15-23; Ephesians 6:10-20*

*Carol Geisler  
Manchester, MO*

Wednesday, July 18, 2018

# Gulp!

*So teach us to number our days that we may get a heart of wisdom.*

*Psalm 90:12*

Having performed a thorough examination of me, my doctor said, “I won’t be seeing you again.” Gulp! My rapid transformation from ruddy to pale must have alerted the doctor to stutter a quick, “I’m retiring.” Whew. Talk about emergency medicine!

The Great Physician will never say, “I won’t be seeing you again.” You have faith in Jesus, who did everything needed to save you from your sins. You also have his promise of life forever in his presence. Until you actually experience that reality, the psalmist provides godly guidance: Wise up!

Conventional wisdom suggests that wisdom comes with age. But it’s not automatic—and you have observed proof of that. So how will your heart of wisdom grow? The Bible builds wisdom. Repeated readings often offer familiar words along with new insights—wisdom—and comfort and assurance.

*Divine Doctor, thank you for your constant care. Amen.*

*Grow: Spend 15 minutes each day randomly reading the Bible.*

*Read: Psalm 119:97-105; John 8:31-32*

*Ed Grube  
Addison, IL*

Thursday, July 19, 2018

# Settled Dust

*For he knows our frame; he remembers that we are dust.*

*Psalm 103:14*

As a child, our family's house was located on a gravel road. We had no air conditioning so in the heat of the summer, the windows would be wide open to allow a breeze to come in. Every passing vehicle raised a cloud of dust. While it wasn't actually visible as it sifted through the screens, it was certainly noticed after a week of settling on everything. My job was to dust and make everything clean again.

How often do we dust our lives? The dust of this world permeates everything and many times affects what we do and how we think. We may not notice it as we hear, see and absorb the sinful things that come our way, but they become much more noticeable as they collect. We confess the gathered dust of our sins, and in Christ, we are made clean!

*Lord, just as we remove dust from our homes, remove the fine particles of sin that cling to us. Amen.*

*Clean: When you dust your furniture, contemplate the dust in your life.*

*Read: 1 Corinthians 15:49; Psalm 119:25*

*Gloria Doty  
Ft. Wayne, IN*

Friday, July 20, 2018

# Mystery of Mysteries

*Can you fathom the mysteries of God?*

*Job 11:7*

At the end of a mystery book or movie, we expect a solution. Yet the greatest mystery of all, God's love for us humans, often escapes us. God is able to move mountains and stop the waves, but he's also our Father, personal and close. He gave us many mysteries to ponder, beginning with creation, the birth of Jesus and his resurrection, to the work of the Holy Spirit. We want to ask how and why. Scholars have tried to explain, but God has already told us in the Bible. We are to believe and trust. Jesus is the answer to all these questions. If that makes us feel like children in Sunday school, then so be it. We are God's children, and to us God has made known "the riches of the glory of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory" (Colossians 1:27).

*Dear God, help me listen and know that you are the one and only God, all-powerful and all-knowing, and I am your creation. Amen.*

*Pray: Ask God to quiet your questions with the answers of his Word.*

*Read: Ephesians 3:4-13; Colossians 1:24-27*

*Judy Scherr  
Lemay, MO*

Saturday, July 21, 2018

# Rock of Ages, Cleft for Me

*Trust in the LORD forever, for the LORD, the LORD himself, is the Rock eternal.*

*Isaiah 26:4*

I admit that I have sung the words to this classic hymn many times, but I never really thought about that word *cleft*. It just was not in my everyday vocabulary. That is, until my 70th birthday and I was checking something off my bucket list—hiking up to the top of Pike’s Peak. The 12-mile climb took an arduous 13 hours. I began to wonder if I would make it or if I would have to find a place to stay overnight. Suddenly a cleft, an opening in the rock, became very significant.

I did eventually make it to the summit, but the words “Rock of Ages, cleft for me, let me hide myself in thee,” took on a whole new meaning. The loving arms of the Lord surround us always.

*Father, thank you for providing protection under all circumstances. Amen.*

*Rejoice: Find a private place, a cleft, and sing this beloved hymn.*

*Read: Exodus 33:20-23; Matthew 28:20; 2 Samuel 22:2-3*

*Don Luepke  
Fremont, IN*

Sunday, July 22, 2018

# Cane Is Able

*Taking five loaves and the two fish [Jesus] looked up to heaven and said a blessing.*

*Mark 6:41*

Sometimes we are embarrassed to make use of a cane, a walker or a wheelchair, be tethered to medical equipment, take daily medications or do physical therapy every day. Yet those assisted living items allow us to do what we could not do otherwise—get out of bed, get up out of a chair and put one foot in front of the other. They make it possible to go places we could not go otherwise.

The Lord unashamedly used various resources during his earthly ministry to be a blessing for others. He used five loaves and two fish, six stone water jars at a wedding in Cana, spittle on eyes to heal a blind man, a coin in a fish's mouth to pay taxes, his personal garment touched by a desperate woman and a fishing net filled with fish that blew professional fishermen away. Great things can come through simple things.

*Gracious God, thank you for the resources that enable us to live for you. Amen.*

*Ask: What resource has God made available to you, that you are not making use of now, to meet a personal need?*

*Read: John 2:1-11*

*Jerrold Lloyd Nichols  
Fort Wayne, IN*

Monday, July 23, 2018

# Learning and Playing

*Let the children come to me and do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of God.*

*Luke 18:16*

A case could be made that, during Christ's time on the earth, he went around playing with the children and teaching the adults. In the Scriptures, we hear the Lord encouraging people to bring children to him as he went about teaching, or trying to teach (!) the adults who perhaps thought that the kids would only get in the way.

In today's church we might have our priorities upside down. Today's congregations are often "playing with the adults" through sports and other social events and "teaching the children" through classes and other religious instruction. There is nothing wrong with that, except that we adults have much to teach and share with younger and older adults around us. Perhaps we older adults can be more intentional about teaching other adults as they teach their children.

*Lord, help us to teach and to play with both children and adults, as you teach us all. Amen.*

*Encourage: Encourage adults to support children.*

*Read: Titus 2:1-8; Colossians 3:16-17*

*Rich Bimler  
Bloomingdale, IL*

Tuesday, July 24, 2018

# How Does Your Garden Grow?

*I am the vine; you are the branches.*

*John 15:5*

“Mary, Mary, quite contrary, how does your garden grow?” Like Mary’s garden in the nursery rhyme, our gardens grow and produce. Zucchini from the garden and grapes from the vineyard appear on our dinner tables. In the Old Testament, God used the image of the vineyard as a picture of his people Israel. Isaiah described the care God lavished on his “vineyard” as he waited for its fruit. When no fruit appeared, he threatened to dry up the vineyard and destroy its vines (Isaiah 5:1-7).

On the night before his death, Jesus used the image of the vineyard to comfort his disciples. He spoke of choice vines bearing good fruit. What made the difference? Jesus himself, the true vine, gives life to the branches, all who live by faith in him. Watered by Baptism, we grow and bear fruit for him.

*Lord, make us fruitful branches through Jesus, the true vine. Amen.*

*Harvest: Bear fruit in the garden of your life.*

*Read: John 15:1-11*

*Eileen Ritter  
Byron Center, MI*

Wednesday, July 25, 2018

# Love in the Air

*But this I call to mind, and therefore I have hope:  
The steadfast love of the LORD never ceases.*

*Lamentations 3:21-22*

During the October 2017 fire storms in the wine country of Northern California, the smoke in the air was horrendous. In the town of Sonoma where flames licked at the very borders, a sign was posted: "The love in the air is thicker than the smoke." This referred to the great outpouring of support for victims from good neighbors both near and far.

It will take a long time for many to rebuild their lives after losing homes, businesses, jobs and loved ones. The reporters, television's cameramen, and first responders have left, and the winds have blown away the smoke. Disaster relief agencies remain longer, but in time they will leave. Human support grows faint in time, but God's love will always be in the air.

*Lord, quicken our trust in your constant love,  
thankful for your care that reaches us through others. Amen.*

*Watch: What opportunity is presenting itself today  
for you to show Christ-like concern and love?*

*Read: Lamentations 3:19-33; Ephesians 3:14-21*

*Ted Zimmerman  
Napa, CA*

Thursday, July 26, 2018

# Lasting Beauty

*The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God will stand forever.*

*Isaiah 40:8*

The short walk to our front door is bordered by flowers—rich beds of bountiful begonias, pink and red and white, sturdy geraniums, vincas, daisies and allysum. I tell admirers my garden pays tribute to God’s amazing creative hand. I love it. Yet I know the beauty at its peak in July will fade in the heat of late August and turn brown and dry by September’s end.

God, who breathes life into my beautiful flowers that live for a season, assures me I can trust his promises to endure forever. Promises such as: I love you. I will never leave you. I forgive you. You have an eternal home with me. The Word of the Lord remains forever. That’s beauty that lasts.

*Lord, you fill the world with beauty, yet nothing can match the beauty of your eternal Word. Amen.*

*Search: Each day feed on God’s everlasting Word. Search the psalms or the gospels for God’s promises. Invite someone to share them with you.*

*Read: Psalm 119*

*Donna J. Streufert  
South Bend, IN*

Friday, July 27, 2018

# Travel Light

*Then Jesus told his disciples, “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.”*

*Matthew 16:24*

Those going on a trip are often told to “travel light” so that excess baggage won’t slow them down. This is also sound advice for our faith journey, especially when we’ve lived a long life. Christ told those wishing to be his disciples to make the sacrifice of leaving their home and possessions behind.

He offers the same invitation to us today. To accept it, however, we must leave behind our baggage. We must give up attachments to whatever interferes with the development of our spiritual life. A closer walk with God can give us great happiness on earth and the hope of eternal life with him. In the process, we can inspire others to join us on our faith journey.

*Lord, help me to focus on you and what you have done for me. Amen.*

*Consider: What baggage do you need to put down at the foot of the cross?*

*Read: Psalms 4:5; Psalm 28:7*

*Jan Kilby  
San Antonio TX*

Saturday, July 28, 2018

# Learning Needed

*Let the wise listen and add to their learning, and let the understanding get guidance.*

*Proverbs 1:5*

As we age, we continue to grow in knowledge and wisdom. Parents, relatives, teachers, clergy, co-workers and friends all contribute to our learning. Age is not a reason to stop learning.

Learning exercises our minds—learning about computers, crafts, gardening, games or whatever exists. The phrase, “When you’re through learning, you’re through!” needs to be taken seriously. Consider a doctor who does not learn about new medical discoveries concerning the ways our marvelous bodies function or about new medical treatments. Would you want your doctor to stop learning?

Does our loving God want us to stop learning? The answer is no. Does our loving God want us to stop learning about him and our eternal hope? Never!

*Loving God, help us to keep our minds fresh, using the endless opportunities you give us to learn.  
Amen.*

*Write: List things about which you wish to learn.*

*Read: John 6:60-69*

*Don Hollmann  
Ballwin, MO*

Sunday, July 29, 2018

# I'm Surrounded!

*The Lord surrounds his people from this time forth and forevermore.*

*Psalm 125:2*

I live in Las Vegas. In every direction I look I can see mountains. What stability, strength and awe these mountains convey! Psalm 125 reminds us of another aspect of mountains. They convey the constant, living presence of our powerful, loving God. As pilgrims trudged to Jerusalem to offer sacrifices at the temple, they walked through the mountains. As they walked onward, they also would know that they were surrounded by the very nearness of God.

If you don't happen to live near any mountains, that still doesn't disqualify you from knowing God surrounds you. You don't have the visual reminder I do, but we both have the same assurance. No matter where we go or what might befall us, we have a God who will guide and lead us, love and forgive us. Our God surrounds us—with his love.

*Remind me every day, Lord, that I am surrounded by your loving presence. Amen.*

*Reflect: What reminders do you have of the presence of God in your life?*

*Read: Psalm 125*

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

Monday, July 30, 2018

# The Best Is Yet to Come

*Those who sow in tears shall reap with joyful shouting.*

*Psalm 126:5*

How often have you heard someone say, “The best years of my life are behind me?” I admit I’ve thought and said that many times myself as my bones creak me awake in the morning. Sometimes I’ll be watching athletes bend, stretch and do marvelous things, and I think to myself, “I bet I could still play a little basketball if I wanted to.” And then my knees shout, “Just sit back until the feeling goes away.”

Sitting back isn’t all that bad, though. If the Bible is close at hand, you can look up the second chapter of Joel that says “In the last days ... your old men shall dream dreams” (Joel 2:28). You can listen to St. Paul: “In Christ ... the old has passed away; behold, the new has come” (2 Corinthians 5:17). It’s true. The best is yet to come ... in Christ Jesus.

*Lord, there are days when I feel I’m all washed up. Help me to dream dreams and make things happen for your sake. Amen.*

*Challenge: Mentally assess your strengths and then use them.*

*Read: Galatians 6:1-9; Psalm 30:1-5*

*Edward Arle  
St Charles, MO*

Tuesday, July 31, 2018

# Fit for Fishing

*And he said to them, “Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.”*

*Matthew 4:19*

When I was growing up, my family spent many summer days fishing, but it always made me squeamish. Catching the fish was fine, but baiting the hook and cleaning the fish—yuck! Thankfully, my dad took care of all that for me. All I had to do was cast and reel.

Jesus calls us to be “fishers of men.” Frankly, that makes many Christians squeamish. Thankfully, our heavenly Father does the hard work for us. By His Holy Spirit, God equips us with everything we need to be effective fishermen. All we have to do is cast his love, mercy and truth amidst the sea of people he puts in our lives. As we draw people to Jesus, he will make them clean—forgiven of sin and prepared for eternal life.

*Thank you, Jesus, for making me fit for fishing. Grant me your favor as I cast your Good News this week. Amen.*

*Find your spot: Ask God to show you where to fish today. Who needs you to show them the love of Jesus?*

*Read: Matthew 28:18-20; Hebrews 13:20-21*

*Sandi Geis  
St. Louis, MO*

Wednesday, August 1, 2018

# Today Is the Day

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

*Psalms 118:24*

This is the day God has made and given to you. Yesterday is a memory. Tomorrow is a mystery. God's presence is truly a "present," given to bless and inspire us today.

This is the day to celebrate the world he created: seamless sky, flowers and foliage, majestic mountains, colorful canyons, productive plains ... an endless list God provided for our enjoyment and enrichment.

This is the day to learn about giving rather than receiving, loving rather than being loved, walking by faith rather than sight, trusting in God's good plan.

This is the day to remember the gift of God's grace. Our eternal salvation is secure because of Jesus' perfect life, sacrificial death and triumphant victory over sin.

This is the day to rejoice!

*Lord, you alone are worthy of my thanks and praise today and every day. Amen.*

*Share: Celebrate, learn, remember and rejoice. Be prepared to share the reason for your joy and hope.*

*Read: Philippians 4:4-9; Psalm 16:11*

*Sharolyn Sander  
Lincoln, NE*

Thursday, August 2, 2018

# MS Bike Ride

*I can do all things through him who strengthens me.*

*Philippians 4:13*

Twenty-five years ago, some in our family rode 150 miles from Milwaukee to Madison as a fundraiser for finding a cure for MS, especially for our daughter. On the 25th anniversary this August, our family will ride it again, adding our grandson's father-in-law, who also has MS.

I have memories of our son waiting for me at the top of every steep hill, to encourage me to finish that first ride. So it is with senior challenges in our lives. Jesus helps us over each tough time, so that we may finish our life's journey with him. Twenty-five years ago, as we rode across the finish line in Madison, a welcoming crowd cheered. So it will be also as we enter heaven. Christ and many other believers will cheer and welcome us home!

*Dear Christ, please continue to be with us as we face senior challenges. Amen.*

*Share: Encourage others to overcome tough times with Christ's help.*

*Read: Philippians 4:6-9; 2 Corinthians 1:3-7; 2 Timothy 4:7*

*Annette Schumacher  
Muskego, WI*

Friday, August 3, 2018

# Scattering Breadcrumbs

*Forget the former things; do not dwell on the past.*

*Isaiah 43:18*

In the nursery rhyme “Hansel and Gretel,” young Hansel had the clever idea of leaving a trail of breadcrumbs behind them on the path in the woods to help them find their way home. In a way, we all leave a trail behind us as we walk through life—sometimes for better, sometimes for worse.

Most of us have regrets about past mistakes or missed opportunities. Regret can be a damaging emotion, unless it leads us to God’s redeeming love. When we carry our regrets to God in prayer, a miracle takes place. Just as Hansel turned around to discover the breadcrumbs had disappeared, blown away by the wind or eaten by animals, God wipes away our mistakes and sins of the past and allows us to walk on in peace.

*Dear Lord, I bring you my regret and ask you to take this burden from me. Sweep the path clean and allow me to walk forward with confidence. Amen.*

*Reflect: Consider a regret of your past, a mistake or missed opportunity, and take it to the Lord in prayer.*

*Read: Isaiah 43:18-19; Philippians 3:13-14; 1 John 1:9*

*Kerry Osborne  
Sydney, Australia*

Saturday, August 4, 2018

# I Will Fear No Evil

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

*Psalm 23:4*

There is a real place in the Holy Land appropriately called the Valley of the Shadow of Death. It's along the road from Jerusalem to Jericho, 30 miles of a winding, hilly path, a frightening walk in Bible times. David cared for sheep in that area as a boy and knew its many dangers. His reference to the valley of the shadow of death was not just a literary phrase. That same death valley is the setting for Jesus' parable of the Good Samaritan. All who traveled between those two cities knew the valley well. Jesus himself likely walked that way at times.

Just as David and Jesus walked through that valley, we, too, find ourselves facing dangerous and uncertain issues as we travel through life. We can confidently say with David, "I will fear no evil, for you are with me."

*Dear Lord, my Good Shepherd, give me confidence that goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life. Amen.*

*Share: Read or recite Psalm 23 with someone who is presently walking in a personal, shadowed valley.*

*Read: Psalm 23*

*David Ebeling  
Bloomington, IN*

Sunday, August 5, 2018

# Preserving the Harvest

*You are a hiding place for me; you preserve me from trouble.*

*Psalm 32:7*

My mother had a large garden, fruit trees and various types of berries. What she didn't have was a freezer, so everything had to be preserved one way or another. The berries were made into jams and jellies using sugar and heat to preserve them while vegetables, fruit and meat were canned in a pressure canner. If the pressure was not high enough, the contents of the jars would spoil, causing time and efforts to be wasted.

God, in his wisdom, often allows intense pressure, also. Whether it's life decisions, finances, health or other concerns, we chafe under the uncomfortable feelings. However, just as the contents of the glass jars are rendered useless if not exposed to pressure, we can easily become useless, too. God uses our circumstances to strengthen and preserve us.

*Father, teach us to be thankful and persevere through pressure so we can be useful in your kingdom in this world. Amen.*

*Open: The next time you open a jar of food, think about the pressure needed to preserve the contents.*

*Read: 2 Corinthians 11:27-28; Psalm 143:11*

*Gloria Doty  
Ft. Wayne, IN*

Monday, August 6, 2018

# Our Unchanging God

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

*Hebrews 13:8*

From my 12-year-old granddaughter's perspective, my childhood was spent in "primitive" times. As our family was among the last in our small town to get a refrigerator, my sisters and I would take our red wagon to the ice house a short distance away. From there we would hurriedly bring back a 50-pound block of ice for our icebox. Today, she can go to the refrigerator-freezer and get crushed ice immediately from its ice-maker.

Yes, times change, with inventions and technology happening faster, it seems, than we can keep up with them. But there is something that has never changed and never will—God's love, forgiveness and plan of salvation. Praise God for this eternal truth. He loves us with everlasting love and forgives again and again. Jesus' death for our salvation is the same good news today that it was back then, and it will always be so.

*Dear Lord, thank you for being our never-changing God. Amen.*

*Give: Share with younger people some blessings of our generation.*

*Read: John 3:16; 1 John 4:19*

*Harriet Stennfeld  
Fort Wayne, IN*

Tuesday, August 7, 2018

# Renew

*For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be with him in a resurrection like his.*

*Romans 6:5*

As we repent honestly to our Lord for our sins, dying to them, Christ reassures us that he has equipped us with the joy and energy to live a resurrected life today. Having been cleansed by Christ, we consciously step away from self-pity.

We look out so that we do not wallow in self-guilt. Humming or quietly singing a Christian song can help us maintain our upbeat joy and confidence in God. The apostle Paul compares the two-step process of repenting and being renewed with taking off a soiled article of clothing and putting on fresh, clean clothing: “Put on, then, as God’s chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience ... And above all these put on love which binds everything together in perfect harmony” (Colossians 3:12, 14). Let love renew you.

*Jesus, help me not be bogged down in self-pity.  
Renew my spirit with joy from you. Amen.*

*Answer: If someone asks about your joyful spirit,  
share the good news of Jesus!*

*Read: Psalm 51:12*

*Deane Schuessler  
Woodbury, MN*

Wednesday, August 8, 2018

# Every Day, a Choice

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

*Galatians 5:22-23*

I thought a cup of tea would lessen the chill and lift my spirits on a rainy day. Shivering, I opened my cupboard to get a teabag. There used to be one choice: black tea. Now, several herbal teas are available. Which one did I want—sweet peach, invigorating peppermint or calming chamomile? Each distinctive flavor is good, but I chose the peppermint.

Every day we have routine choices. We choose toast or oatmeal, a blue sweater or a gray one. Why not have a cup of tea and ponder these choices?

Today, I will pray before I make a decision.

Today, I will speak with kindness and gentleness.

Today, I will be patient at someone's limitations.

Today, I will remind myself of God's faithful promises to me.

These choices are sure to sweeten your day, perhaps energize it or maybe have a calming effect.

*Father, guide my choices today and help me especially to choose joy. Amen.*

*Recall: Reflect on today's choices.*

*Read: John 15:16-17*

*Marilyn Nutter  
Greer, SC*

Thursday, August 9, 2018

# A New View

*But grace was given to each one of us according to the measure of Christ's gift.*

*Ephesians 4:7*

In life, there are many things we often take for granted, until a change occurs. We don't think of our sense of vision until there is a noticeable change. It wasn't until I had difficulty seeing the chalkboard in my freshman year of high school that I realized I needed corrective lenses. Once I began wearing them, I realized how blurry life was before glasses.

As we journey throughout life, we can unintentionally take people or things for granted. Sometimes we fail to see life through our Savior's eyes. However, during such times, our Savior gives us a new view through his grace and love. With him, our lives have the brilliance and clarity that we all need.

*Dear heavenly Father, help me always to see life through your eyes and never take for granted the blessings you have graciously given to me. Amen.*

*Reflect: What have you taken for granted in life? What caused you to realize the blessings God has given to you?*

*Read: Psalm 107:1*

*Betsy Becker Niedringhaus  
Ballwin, MO*

Friday, August 10, 2018

# Through Christ

*I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.*

*Philippians 4:13*

She is a source of Christian inspiration. Our neighbor lady, a retired professional, has been a widow for many years. She lost her only child, her son, several years ago and yet she remains a maturing Christian. Her actions joyfully proclaim her faith in Jesus. When her younger sister became handicapped, she purchased a van complete with a lift and all the tools needed to transport her sister. No, she had never operated such machinery before, but with her Savior's guidance she learned how to utilize that vital tool. That's faith in action!

There are times in my life when God calls me to serve him in ways outside my comfort zone. As soon as the "No way, Lord" proceeds from my mouth, I picture the apostle Paul and my neighbor lady together encouraging me, "You can do all things through Christ."

*Holy Spirit, empower me in the truth that I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me. Amen.*

*Observe: Who inspires you to do all things through Christ?*

*Read: Philippians 4:10-13; Matthew 28:18-20*

*David Bernthal  
Juliette, GA*

Saturday, August 11, 2018

# Four Faith-Full Friends

*And they came, bringing to him a paralytic carried by four men.*

*Mark 2:3*

The scene could have taken place in a prime-time medical drama. Four men carry their paralyzed friend to a home where a crowd has gathered around an itinerant rabbi, whom they believe is capable of healing diseases. When the crowd prevents their entry, they remove a portion of the roof and lower their friend's stretcher directly in front of Jesus. It would have been easy to turn back in the face of these obstacles. But Jesus saw their faith and healed their friend, forgiving his sins and removing his paralysis.

Faith-full friends today assure us of God's forgiveness when sin troubles our hearts. They offer support in times of sickness, comfort in times of grief. God uses faith-full friends to bolster our faith in times of doubt. Has God blessed you with faith-full friends? Has he called you to be a faith-full friend to others?

*Thank you, Lord, for faith-full friends. Make me a faith-full friend to someone who needs my love and support today. Amen.*

*Encourage: Share God's love with someone who is suffering.*

*Read: Mark 2:1-12*

*Eileen Ritter  
Byron Center, MI*

Sunday, August 12, 2018

# Gifts

*They still bear fruit in old age.*

*Psalm 92:14*

While speaking with our new 92-year-old neighbor, I learned that at the age of 81 he had taken up water-color painting. I also learned that 38 of his paintings would be part of a hospital exhibit called “The Visual Arts and Healing.” The people viewing his paintings commented on the detail and beauty of his artwork. God has certainly given him a special gift.

Romans 12:6-8 reminds us that God has given all of us special gifts and that we should use them. Psalm 92:14 tells us that we, too, can still bear fruit at an old age. Are you gifted musically? Dust off your vocal cords or instrument. Are you gifted as a good listener? Visit a home-bound person or someone in the hospital. Is creative writing your gift? Submit a devotion to *Hope-Full Living*. Use your gifts to declare that the Lord is upright and that he is your salvation!

*Lord, help me to bear fruit to your glory throughout my lifetime. Amen.*

*Share: Explore a new talent you would like to try.*

*Read: Psalm 92:12-15; Romans 12:6-8*

*Stan Torsen  
Stewartville, MN*

Monday, August 13, 2018

# God's Ways

*Make me to know your ways, O Lord, and teach me your paths.*

*Psalm 25:4*

Like all good parents, my mother used to tell me how to prepare to go outside. She would ensure I was wearing the right apparel, bug spray or sunscreen. As a child it drove me crazy, but at some point I realized that my mother was smart and wanted the best for me.

David recognized that God's ways are wiser than man's ways and he desired this wisdom. Rather than fighting against God like a rebellious child, he asked God to teach him his ways and was ready to listen. Even when we don't want to follow God's way, we must understand that he is not only wiser than we are, but also has our best interests at heart. We can trust and follow him.

*Lord, make me to know your ways and lead me in the way I should go. Amen.*

*Reflect: What are some tough decisions you've had to make in your life? How can you apply Scripture to those times?*

*Read: 1 Corinthians 1:22-30*

*Brenda Stewart  
Jackson, MS*

Tuesday, August 14, 2018

# Not Too Few

*Go outside, borrow vessels from all your neighbors, empty vessels and not too few.*

*2 Kings 4:3*

A widow needed help from the prophet Elisha or she would have to sell her children into slavery to pay her debts. He told her to go to her friends and neighbors and borrow empty jars, and not too few. Then she was to take her one jar of oil that she had and start pouring the oil into the borrowed jars. She acted in faith and her one jar of oil filled all the jars she gathered. God provided an abundance limited only by the number of jars she gathered.

Like the widow, we need to act in faith and trust that God will abundantly provide for our needs. Our God is a God of abundance, not scarcity. We need to recognize all the blessings God freely gives us and give thanks.

*Lord Jesus, give me eyes of faith to see your bountiful blessings. Amen.*

*See: Look for all the ways God has blessed you.*

*Read: 2 Kings 4:1-7*

*Glen VanderKloot  
Springfield, IL*

Wednesday, August 15, 2018

# Learning on the Road

*Did not our hearts burn within us as he talked to us on the road?*

*Luke 24:32*

Many families are preparing their children or young adults for “back to school.” What might that mean for older adults so far removed from school memories? The two disciples on the road to Emmaus thought their learning was complete as they grieved Jesus’ death and prepared to face a world without him. But when they met a stranger who questioned them about recent events, their learning was turned upside down. When Jesus broke bread at table with a blessing, their eyes were opened. Then their learning on the road exploded with belief in Jesus as their risen Lord, their hearts burned within them, and they hurried to tell the other disciples.

What are you learning about Jesus on your road of life? How does God’s Word touch you each day with new learning? How will you share the risen Lord with families going back to school?

*Risen Lord, thank you for lifelong learning to grow and share you with others. Amen.*

*Walk: Teach one other person this week what you are learning about Jesus.*

*Read: Luke 24:13-35*

*Stephen J. Carter  
Oakville, MO*

Thursday, August 16, 2018

# Lord, Teach Me

*They will all be taught by God.*

*John 6:45*

What do you hope to learn this year? I asked this of students every start of the school year. To learn fractions, to read chapter books, and to know Jesus better were some answers I recall. Jesus' students, the disciples, also asked to learn. You might think they would have asked to turn water to wine, to walk on the sea or to still storms.

What would you ask to learn? Lots of excellent skills come to mind—how to get along with irritating people, how to calm my racing thoughts or how to handle boredom. The disciples didn't ask what I expected. They only asked Jesus to teach them one thing—to pray (Luke 11:1). What do you hope to learn this year? Jesus is the master teacher. He will answer you!

*Rabbi Jesus, I want to be taught by you. Help me to know what to ask. Amen.*

*Decide:* After you've pondered the question above, write your request at the back of this devotion booklet. When you flip to that final page, see how Jesus answered your request.

*Read:* Romans 8:34; Acts 6:4

*Julaine Kammrath  
Aurora, IL*

Friday, August 17, 2018

# Look to the Son

*For God, who said, "Let there be light in the darkness," has made us understand that this light is the brightness of the glory of God that is seen in the face of Jesus Christ.*

*2 Corinthians 4:6*

Sunflowers are in bloom now. They soak in the sun's life-giving rays. Their yellow petals radiate outward the sun's bright rays. When summer ends, the sunflower faces droop downward, heavy with seeds. A few seeds may work their way into the soil to make new sunflowers next year.

Just like sunflowers, we look to Jesus as the Son of God. His glory lights up our dark hearts. His face shines peace on us when we are sad or discouraged. The more time we spend looking to the Son, the brighter our countenances shine for his glory. When you share seeds with others, God's glory nourishes those around you. You will plant seeds of love, hope and joy that others will reap in days to come. Look to the Son for your light and strength.

*Lord Jesus, I turn my face to you today. Show me your glory. Amen.*

*Share: Tell a story of God's faithfulness and plant a seed of hope in someone's heart today.*

*Read: Isaiah 60:1-2; Matthew 5:16*

*Sarah Geringer  
Jackson, MO*

Saturday, August 18, 2018

# No Longer Alone

*I have trodden the winepress alone, and ... no one was with me.*

*Isaiah 63:3*

As a boy, I sometimes spent a Saturday alone in the barn shucking corn. On occasion, my mother left her duties to help me. No longer was I alone, and that felt good. In biblical times, people would trample on grapes in the pit, while others gathered around the winepress and cheered them on with music and dancing. Isaiah speaks of treading the winepress alone. His words, “I have trodden the winepress alone,” point us to Jesus. When he was all alone, he trampled not grapes, but sin, death and the devil so that they could not destroy us. Jesus would never leave us alone “in the pits.”

Some of us have lost the stamina or ability to perform ministries that we once loved doing at a younger age. We can still gather around young people with words of encouragement, cheering them on. They need not serve alone. Supporting them becomes our joy.

*Jesus, strengthen us to do those things that we can do to support others. Amen.*

*Watch: Help those you see who are alone.*

*Read: Isaiah 63:1-7*

*Leo Symmank  
Seabrook, TX*

Sunday, August 19, 2018

# Alive in Christ

*The death he died he died to sin, once for all, but the life he lives he lives to God. So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.*

*Romans 6:10-11*

Is your body alive with new life in Jesus or is it a sepulcher for him? Our lives can be like the white-washed tombs that Jesus described. We can act holy and yet be dead to a life in Christ. When we are baptized into Christ, our bodies become the temple of the Holy Spirit. God the Spirit has chosen to dwell within us.

Jesus wants us to be his disciples, which means we should imitate the things he did. He spread the good news to all he met. He treated all with compassion and mercy. We are to be his hands, legs and voice in this world. His work gives meaning and joy to our lives. With the Lord's help, we can do just that in our everyday life.

*Dear Lord, help me to be filled with new life in you. Give me the strength to act like you in all things. Amen.*

*Serve: Look for ways to help and serve others, as Jesus did.*

*Read: Romans 6:3-11; 1 Corinthians 6:19-20*

*Betty Gravlin  
St. Peters, MO*

Monday, August 20, 2018

# The Desire to Be Great

*The Son of Man came ... to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.*

*Matthew 20:28*

Striving to be important is not new. A rich young man chose his “great possessions” over eternal life. The mother of James and John sought prestige for her sons. It’s no surprise that people of today do almost anything for fifteen minutes of fame.

In God’s kingdom “greatness” involves a turn of direction, from self to others. The focus is on love and service. The rich young man’s outward obedience fell short, due to inner pride. Likewise, a mother’s selfish ambition had nothing to do with worthiness before God. Rejoice today in Jesus’ words and example. He fed the hungry, healed the lame, comforted the weak and gave his life as a ransom for all. God gives the faith to believe and the desire to serve. Eternal peace and joy await us for all eternity. Now that’s really great!

*Lord, open our eyes to the wonder and greatness of your love, as we follow your example. Amen.*

*Be attentive: Who needs your loving service today?*

*Read: Matthew 19:16-30; Matthew 20:20-28; Ephesians 2:8-10*

*Sharolyn Sander  
Lincoln, NE*

Tuesday, August 21, 2018

# Hearing Aids

*He who has ears to hear, let him hear.*

*Matthew 11:15*

A few years ago, I purchased hearing aids. I knew my hearing was decreasing, but not until I began using my hearing aids did I realize how much I was missing out on. My hearing aids are truly a miracle from the touch of God's hands. Has your hearing of God speaking to you personally diminished? Are you not hearing clearly the poignant message he has fashioned just for you?

God desires for us to have ears that hear him clearly: "They will listen to my voice" (John 10:16), "Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one" (Deuteronomy 6:4), and "Faith comes from hearing" (Romans 10:17). God has provided many hearing aids for us to hear him speak clearly to us.

*Dear Lord, just as surely as you hear our prayers, may we also hear you speak to us your powerful word of forgiveness, your comforting word in times of loss or your word of encouragement in difficult situations. Amen.*

*Consider: What resources are available to you, that you are not making use of, that would help you to hear the Lord speak to you?*

*Read: John 10:1-18*

*Jerrold Lloyd Nichols  
Fort Wayne, IN*

Wednesday, August 22, 2018

# Act, Don't Wait!

*Let your light shine before others.*

*Matthew 5:16*

After a recent health crisis, I was prescribed a new medication to prevent a recurrence of the problem. Taking a medication to prevent something, I found, is an exercise in trust. The only way to know if it is working is to wait passively and trust that the same problem will not happen again.

Our Christian faith is also built on trust, but thankfully it is not passive. We trust that Christ's sacrifice has restored our relationship with God, but that does not mean that we just sit around and wait until we are reunited with our Savior after death. Jesus makes very clear that we are to act while we are still here on earth: to love our enemies (Matthew 5:44), to provide food and clothing to those who lack life's essentials and to visit those who are lonely or isolated (Matthew 25:35-36). In action, we serve others as followers of Christ.

*Oh, Lord, keep me open every day to opportunities to serve others. Amen.*

*Do: Reach out to someone who needs a friendly call or visit.*

*Read: Matthew 5:13-16; 1 John 4:19-21*

*Nancy J. Clark  
Niles, MI*

Thursday, August 23, 2018

# Fingerprints

*He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature.*

*Hebrews 1:3*

At Pentecost, the apostle Peter told the gathered crowd that Jesus was “attested to you by God with mighty works and wonders and signs that God did through him in your midst” (Acts 2:22). Jesus’ mighty works identified him as God in the flesh. Jesus touched the eyes of the blind, the ears of the deaf, the diseased skin of lepers and the bodies of the dead. He held little children in his arms and blessed them. Bread and fish multiplied in his hands. Jesus left his fingerprints all over the place—the fingerprints of God.

Still today he leaves his fingerprints, and all of himself, in his Word and in the bread and wine of his holy Supper. Nourished in faith, our hands, reaching out in love and service, leave fingerprints all over the place—the fingerprints of Jesus.

*Lord Jesus, as your works identified you, let us be known by works of love done in your name. Amen.*

*Evidence: Where can you leave fingerprints of love and service to others?*

*Read: Hebrews 1:1-4; Acts 2:22-24; John 13:35*

*Carol Geisler  
Manchester, MO*

Friday, August 24, 2018

# On Being Thankful

*Give thanks in all circumstances.*

*1 Thessalonians 5:18*

Our Vacation Bible School sang “Jesus in the Morning”: “Thank him in the morning, thank him in the noontime ... thank him when the sun goes down!” The Bible states over 100 times that we are to give thanks.

Paul encourages the Thessalonians to be thankful in all circumstances. We may not be able to be thankful *for* everything that happens to us, but we can be thankful *in* everything. We can thank God that he is with us even in tough times. The psalmist’s words echo this perspective: “Oh give thanks to the LORD, for he is good; for his steadfast love endures forever” (Ps 118:1). We have a God whose love never changes. We can give him thanks in all circumstances.

*Thank you, Father, for loving us always. Help us to give you thanks in all circumstances. Amen.*

*Write: Make a list of all the blessings God has given you, giving him thanks for each one.*

*Read: 1 Thessalonians 5:11-24; Psalm 118*

*Steve Hess  
Ft. Myers, FL*

Saturday, August 25, 2018

# A Master Rescues

*And I will give you shepherds after my own heart, who will feed you with knowledge and understanding.*

*Jeremiah 3:15*

An Irish setter on a leash lurched away from her owner to chase a goose. She made a beeline all the way into a large lake! The poor dog began to paddle frantically when she couldn't find a way back onto shore. Her fearful master phoned for help and soon three emergency vehicles with flashing lights arrived. A rescuer ran toward the pond, reached into the water with a long pole and pulled her to safety. The dog owner embraced her furry friend, forgiving her rash behavior.

Our Lord does the same when we give in to temptations such as gossip, deception, greed or pride. We realize our sin, and become anxious until he sends someone to show us the way, through forgiveness in Christ Jesus.

*Lord, thank you for shepherding me when I behave impulsively. Amen.*

*Remember: When did you act thoughtlessly? Remember that Jesus came to rescue you from sin.*

*Read: John 6:60-69; Jeremiah 3:14-17*

*Lisa Heule  
Littleton, CO*

Sunday, August 26, 2018

# In God's Wet Cement

*Those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son.*

*Romans 8:29*

Have you ever noticed that children tend to take on the qualities of their friends? Child psychologist Haim Ginott said, "Children are like wet cement. Whatever falls on them makes an impression." That doesn't happen just to children. Adults are also susceptible to the wet cement syndrome. Some wet cement is honorable, but other cement is worldly and evil.

What makes an impression on you? Your friends? Movies? The internet? The apostle Paul tells us exactly where our thoughts need to be and as his followers what our qualities should be (Philippians 4:8-9). We are God's wet cement. The attributes of truth, honor, justice, purity and excellence define what we should be like as his children. If there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things.

*Jesus, help me to conform to your ways. Amen.*

*Reflect: During your quiet time, list the items that fall into the wet cement of your life. Decide which ones are God-pleasing and which ones are harmful.*

*Read: 2 Corinthians 6:14; Philippians 4:3; Ephesians 5:1*

*Jan Bathke  
Neenah, WI*

Monday, August 27, 2018

# An Eager Grandmother

*Now the Bereans were of more noble character than the Thessalonians, for they received the message with great eagerness and examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true.*

*Acts 17:11*

She's almost 90 years of age, with grandchildren and great-grandchildren. She has some physical limitations, but she is eager to study the Bible. Every time we gather she brings her large family Bible with her. She wants to find her way in the Bible and better understand what it says to her. She asked us to help her find a more useful copy of the Bible. We took her to a store to buy a study Bible. She's into it so that she will know the truth, the life and the way to the Father through Jesus Christ. The Scriptures she wants to understand testify of him (John 5:39).

*Thank you, Father, for the gift of your Son and for the Word that testifies to him. Thank you for working in us the eager desire to study your Word, so that by the Spirit's power we know and believe in Jesus as our Redeemer. Amen.*

*Teach: Help a student new to Bible study discover the truth of our salvation in Jesus Christ.*

*Read: Acts 2:36-47; Psalm 119:89-93, 102-105; John 20:31*

*David P. Schmidt  
Ballwin, MO*

Tuesday, August 28, 2018

# Old Vine and Aged Wine

*I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit.*

*John 15:5*

“Let someone younger do it.” Those words are uttered by many older adults who feel past their prime when it comes to serving the Lord and his Church. Loss of energy, an incorrect sense that we lack the needed skills, and a misunderstanding that our ideas are outdated may make us feel inadequate to bear any more good fruit for God’s kingdom. Can you relate? Don’t give up!

The good news is we are still connected to an old vine—Jesus, the God of the ages. Old vines produce great fruit! California’s oldest vines have extreme root depths, which amplify the flavor complexities of the grapes. This produces fine wine. Connected to Jesus, who chose us “before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight” (Ephesians 1:4), we are suited to bear fine fruit year after year. In fact, like wine, it may just get better as it’s aged!

*Jesus, remind me that it’s not my own abilities, but my connection to you that brings good fruit. Amen.*

*Produce: Continue to share your ripened fruit, in Jesus’ name.*

*Read: John 15:4-8; John 15:16*

*Sandi Geis  
St. Louis, MO*

Wednesday, August 29, 2018

# What We Say Matters!

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

*Psalms 19:14*

The words we speak are powerful. They have the capacity to build up others or to tear them down. How often do we think carefully before we speak? We can be guided by a spirit of love in our speech by asking for God's wisdom every time we speak. We can choose to increase peace and love in the world by first listening to our hearts, before we open our mouths. We can ask ourselves the question: Is what I am getting ready to say loving, or not?

Jesus longs to use us as instruments for good. He wants our help in bringing about his kingdom by spreading a message of love, peace and joy. We show Christ's presence by the way in which we express ourselves to the people we see every day.

*Lord, help me to speak only the words you would have me to speak. Amen.*

*Reflect: Think about times you have been helped or hurt by others' words.*

*Read: Matthew 12:36-37*

*Sally Macke  
St. Louis, MO*

Thursday, August 30, 2018

# Rainbow Colors

*I am putting my rainbow in the clouds.*

*Genesis 9:13*

What a beautiful, picturesque sight! I had the privilege once again to witness another rainbow. God told Noah that a rainbow is a visible sign of his covenant commitments.

For me, various colors remind me of God's message for my pilgrim journey. Dark colors remind me of my sins (Romans 3:23). Red focuses my attention on the blood of Jesus shed on Calvary's cross for me (1 John 1:7). White tells me that I have been cleansed of my sins (Psalm 51:7). Green encourages me to grow in grace and in the knowledge of Jesus Christ and respond with a life of forgiveness, love and witness (2 Peter 3:18; 2 Peter 1:3-8). Yellow prompts me to view paradise as my goal in life (John 14:2-3). It is good for us to reflect upon God's creation and see reminders there of his message for us.

*Jesus Christ, thank you for your message that comes alive through the colors of the rainbow. Amen.*

*Meditate: Ponder what the colors of the rainbow symbolize for you.*

*Read: John 20:30-31; Romans 15:4-7*

*Walter M. Schoedel  
Webster Groves, MO*

Friday, August 31, 2018

# Children Present

*After three days they found him in the temple, sitting among the teachers.*

*Luke 2:46*

When the TV blares of countless sales, when traffic increases, when little stop signs pop out from large yellow vehicles, when children dart into the street unawares, you realize a time of irritation has arrived. No, no, a time of opportunity has arrived!

Mary and Joseph seemed surprised to find Jesus in school. But for other children, then and today, school may not be a place of first choice. Academic challenges abound. Social media disturbances arise. Schedules are hectic. Drama is staged everywhere.

Children are present and Jesus loves them. We can get to know their faces from Sunday school or the youth group. We can smile. We can compliment them on their achievements. We can say “hi” at the gym, church, theater or store. We can listen to their interests. Though years separate us, these are brothers and sisters in Christ.

*Thank you for the children with whom we worship. Amen.*

*Remember: You once sat at a school desk.*

*Read: 1 Samuel 1:21-28; Deuteronomy 6:6-9*

*Harry Edenfield  
Brownstown, MI*

Saturday, September 1, 2018

# Too Much Information

*For the word of God is living and active ... discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart.*

*Hebrews 4:12*

“Too Much Information” is such an everyday problem that it’s often referred to simply as TMI. We are bombarded with information from TV, the internet, books, magazines, radio and newspapers. Sometimes it’s helpful, but other times it’s just too much. The frantic output of information is a bit like a vision God gave Daniel. “Many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall increase” (Daniel 12:4).

How can Christians cope with TMI? We can follow Paul’s advice: “Avoid the irreverent babble and contradictions of what is falsely called ‘knowledge’” (1 Timothy 6:20). We can focus on the “living and active” Word described in today’s verse. We can believe Jesus when he says, “Everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to me” (John 6:45). By filtering information through the Word and being taught by God, we can learn to discern what we see and hear.

*Father, when I am overwhelmed with information, calm me and teach me through your Word. Amen.*

*Practice: Try using Scripture to filter information.*

*Read: 1 Timothy 6:20-21; Philippians 1:9-11*

*Marj Maynard  
Billings, MO*

Sunday, September 2, 2018

# Chickens

*Under his wings you will find refuge.*

*Psalm 91:4*

Think it's hard herding cats? Try herding chicks! They're a rowdy bunch, always running here and there, oblivious to potential dangers. But the mother hen knows. When she senses danger, she calls out to them, and they come to her. She will place them under her wings and protect them. Under no circumstances will she abandon them, even if it costs her life.

Jesus said we are like chicks running around bumping into each other, often oblivious to the dangers that are near. And so he gathers us together. Under no circumstance will he leave us to fend for ourselves. But his protection came at a price—his life. Now he places us under his protective grace, guarding our hearts and minds even unto eternal life.

*Heavenly Father, your love for me is so strong that you sent your Son to seek me out and save me. When I am frightened, bring me under your protective love and remind me that you will never leave me to fend for myself. Amen.*

*Share: How might I share Jesus' protective love with others when they are frightened or discouraged?*

*Read: Matthew 23:37*

*David A. Boyd  
Staunton, VA*

Monday, September 3, 2018

# Meaningful Work

*Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain.*

*1 Corinthians 15:58*

Labor Day honors all who work, which means all of us! Even if we have retired from our job or profession, we still have work to do—daily chores and responsibilities to fulfill. Sometimes those chores seem endless and our efforts are all for nothing.

Nevertheless, God does give us important, meaningful work to do right now for him: loving one another, praying without ceasing, caring for the poor, sharing our faith, and much more. Also, abounding in the work of the Lord means we do lots of that work—at every opportunity.

Remember, those over 65 don't get a pass.

*Lord, thank you for work. Help me stick to the job of sharing you with others, knowing that whatever I say or do in your name will not be in vain, but will bring you glory. Amen.*

*Give: Determine how you will spend the gifts God gives you as you work for him.*

*Read: Romans 12:1-13*

*Donna J. Streufert  
South Bend, IN*

Tuesday, September 4, 2018

# The Best Teacher

*Learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart.*

*Matthew 11:29*

Who was your favorite teacher? Most of us can remember someone who made learning fun and interesting. Good teachers encourage curiosity and exploration in an environment of safety. They prepare lessons that are just difficult enough to challenge their students.

Jesus is a good teacher. He prepares lessons for us that may be difficult, but he does not leave us on our own to figure it out. He gives us his textbook, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit to tutor us. He knows the answer to every question, but he allows us to learn from our experiences and even our mistakes. Jesus is a gentle teacher. His tender heart welcomes the brightest students and those who struggle, surrounding them all with his love.

*Lord Jesus, thank you for being such a good teacher. Help me to be a good student. Amen.*

*Share: Tell someone what you have learned from Jesus today.*

*Read: Luke 11:9-13*

*Jan Schmidt  
Florissant, CO*

Wednesday, September 5, 2018

# In God's Hands

*I trust in you, O LORD ... My times are in your hand.*

*Psalm 31:14-15*

Have you ever prayed as David did, “Be a rock of refuge for me, a strong fortress to save me”? (Psalm 31:2). There are times when we are “in distress,” times when our “eyes grow weak with sorrow,” times when our “life is consumed by anguish,” times when our “strength fails because of our affliction” (Psalm 31:9-10).

But no matter how difficult our life becomes, we can pray confidently with David, “Be merciful to me, O LORD,” knowing that God is merciful and compassionate to all those who call on him in faith (Psalm 31:9). It is possible because of what Jesus accomplished for us on the cross, where he defeated the powers of darkness and death. In the midst of our troubles and struggles, we pray with David, “I trust in you, O LORD ... My times are in your hand.” Each day we can pray with absolute assurance:

*“Into your hands I commit my spirit; for you have redeemed me, O LORD, faithful God” (Psalm 31:5).  
Amen.*

*Trust: Place your worries and difficulties in God's hands today—and leave them there.*

*Read: Psalm 31*

*Gil Duchow  
Muskego, WI*

Thursday, September 6, 2018

# A Lamp Unto My Feet

*Thy word is a lamp unto my feet and a light to my path.*

*Psalm 119:105*

When I get up in the middle of the night, for some reason I forget to turn on the light. So I stumble over my dog—a black dog—in a dark hallway. Thus we stumble in our lives, if we do not turn on the light of God’s Word. Wouldn’t it be great if God stopped us in our tracks and told us what to do, like he did for Moses? Well, he does. It’s all there in the guidebook he gave us, the Bible. We must find time in our busy days to reach for that book and seek guidance from our all-wise God. Our souls need guidance more than our feet. We may well learn from the psalmist: “Lead me in thy truth and teach me, for thou art the God of my salvation” (Psalm 25:5).

As the hymn says, “Be thou my wisdom and thou my strong word ... Lead thou me heavenward, O power of my power.”

*Creator God, give me the wisdom to do your will for me today. Amen.*

*Learn: Set aside time to read God’s Word today and every day.*

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

*Connie Bretscher  
Valparaiso, IN*

Friday, September 7, 2018

# What to Wear

*And above all these, put on love.*

*Colossians 3:14*

What to wear today? It's a question we ask ourselves every morning when we consider the weather and our planned activities. Some of us have too many choices; others have very few.

But a choice we all need to make as Christians is to clothe ourselves in Christ before beginning our day. As Paul reminds the Colossians, they are to have compassion for others, to be kind, humble, meek and patient. Above all, they are to “put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony” (Colossians 3:14). When we put on Christ, we share a kind word with a lonely neighbor, we offer to help a stranger who is struggling to open a door, we take a bag of groceries to the local food pantry or we patiently listen to a friend who is overwhelmed with problems, binding all together in Jesus' love.

*Lord God, help me remember to clothe myself every day with your love. Amen.*

*Share: Donate your extra clothing to a resale store.*

*Read: Colossians 3:12-17*

*Nancy J. Clark  
Niles, MI*

Saturday, September 8, 2018

# God's Book of Wisdom

*The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is insight.*

*Proverbs 9:10*

Proverbs has 31 chapters. I read of a man who loved reading the chapter coinciding with that date of the month. I, too, turn to the “Proverb of the day” when wrestling with problems requiring wisdom and understanding.

“A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger” (Proverbs 15:1). “The name of the Lord is a strong tower; the righteous run to it and are safe” (Proverbs 18:10). These passages are but a small sampling of the richness found in this book, wonderful words from God providing a clear path to wisdom in daily life. God inspired King Solomon to author the book of Proverbs, and “God gave Solomon wisdom and very great insight, and a breadth of understanding as measureless as the sand on the seashore” (1 Kings 4:29).

*Lord, you are wisdom. Teach me to run to you for understanding. Amen.*

*Reflect: Think of verses in Proverbs that have guided you in the past.*

*Read: Check today's date, and read the corresponding chapter in Proverbs.*

*Katherine Hussmann Klemp  
St Paul, MN*

Sunday, September 9, 2018

# The Gift of Wonder

*Wonderful are your works; my soul knows it very well.*

*Psalm 139:14*

Do you still experience child-like delight in seemingly trivial discoveries? I feel blessed and thankful to have this gift of wonder. What a blessing to see God's hand in momentary and fascinating delights in people, places and things that could easily escape notice. Jesus encouraged us to learn from lilies of the field and birds of the air. He used salt and light to teach new truths. He said the very hairs of our heads are numbered! Jesus used everyday things of life in descriptive object lessons, filled with spiritual insights and heavenly meaning.

Watch for God's surprising and delightful gifts, like a genuine smile or a thoughtful gesture. Examine an insignificant insect. Smell the roses. Focus on your beating heart, your steady breathing and the peace in your soul. Be still, and hear God whisper in your ear.

*Lead us to be wonder-full today, as we delight in you, O Lord. Amen.*

*Ponder: Look for the wonders around you today, giving God all the credit.*

*Read: Psalm 139; Psalm 46:10*

*Sharolyn Sander  
Lincoln, NE*

Monday, September 10, 2018

# Not Without My Teacher!

*I am continually with you; you hold my right hand.*

*Psalm 73:23*

Writer Elbert Hubbard said, “The object of teaching a child is to enable him to get along without his teacher.” Maybe you’ve said the same thing to your grandchildren. As you’re teaching them to bait a hook, you might say, “I’ll show you how to do it a couple of times. But after that, you are on your own.” Fortunately, most children want to be independent and master skills on their own.

But when it comes to my true Teacher, Jesus, I don’t want to get along without him. We are to trust in the Lord and not to rely on our own insight (Proverbs 3:5). Seeking his counsel, holding his hand, relying on him for everything—that’s what his children need to do. So, the next time you are encouraging your children or grandchildren to learn a new skill, don’t forget to remind them about the necessity of always relying on the best Instructor—their Lord.

*Jesus, continue to hold my hand as I go about my day. Keep me close to you. Amen.*

*Learn: Commit one of the Bible verses below to memory.*

*Read: Psalm 32:8; James 1:5; Ephesians 3:16-19*

*Jan Bathke  
Neenah, WI*

Tuesday, September 11, 2018

# From Broken to Beautiful

*He has made everything beautiful in its time.*

*Ecclesiastes 3:11*

God made us beautiful. Unfortunately, we don't always feel that way.

Life's struggles can discourage us. We then feel lost and afraid and tempted to give up on God. We can also mistreat ourselves or others. We must remember, however, that we were made in God's image and likeness—holy—and that holiness is restored in Christ. I picture God lifting up what is broken in us to make it whole and beautiful again. He uses our weaknesses and losses to help us call upon him, and he restores relationships, heals illnesses and resolves doubts. He works through those who encourage us.

If we can remember the times we've made the journey from fear to faith before, we can often gain the strength to do it again. Jesus is "the way, and the truth, and the life" (John 14:6). That is his promise!

*Lord, help me to trust you to restore me to holiness. Amen.*

*See: Look in a mirror and remember that in Christ, you are forgiven and restored.*

*Read: Jeremiah 17:14; John 14:1*

*Jan Kilby  
San Antonio, TX*

Wednesday, September 12, 2018

# Home Movies

*We shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his.*

*Romans 6:5*

Although just being in Jesus' presence will be enough, I've always hoped that in heaven God might show home movies. What would it be like to hear the angel announce Jesus' birth to the shepherds, to see the holy Child in the manger or to witness the awful darkness at our Lord's death?

But then, if you have ever held a newborn child, you have been to the manger of the Christ Child, because his birth was like ours. If you have ever kept watch over a dying loved one, you have stood at the foot of the cross, because Jesus died, surely in our place, yet as all people die. There is one experience that we have not yet shared with our Lord. His birth was like ours. His death was like ours. On the day Jesus returns, our resurrection will be like his. Maybe we don't need to see those home movies after all.

*Come, Lord Jesus. Amen.*

*Remember: Look at family pictures (or home movies) and remember that Jesus is Emmanuel, God with us.*

*Read: Romans 6:1-8; 1 John 3:1-3*

*Carol Geisler  
Manchester, MO*

Thursday, September 13, 2018

# What Did You Learn?

*But the crowds learned about it and followed him. He welcomed them and spoke to them about the kingdom of God.*

*Luke 9:11*

A mother asked her daughter, “What did you learn at school today?” The daughter answered, “Well, evidently not enough. They want me to come back again tomorrow!”

What will you and I learn today that we can share with someone tomorrow? We notice in the Scriptures that the Lord is always teaching the disciples. Sometimes they “got it”; other times they did not—just like us. So we, too, need to “go back to school” as we search the Scriptures, worship and continue to receive God’s grace and forgiveness through the Word and Sacraments. Our days as students in school may be over, but it is never a time to stop learning and sharing the love and joy in the Lord!

*Lord, thanks for not failing us but giving us another chance tomorrow. Amen.*

*Study: What will you learn today about God’s love that you can share with someone tomorrow?*

*Read: Acts 17:10-12*

*Rich Bimler  
Bloomingdale, IL*

Friday, September 14, 2018

# The Joy of Not Knowing

*Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding.*

*Proverbs 3:5*

When Mum celebrated her 70th birthday, I asked what she had learned in her seventy years. Thoughtfully she replied: "I've learned that the older I get, the less I know." Only now I see the wisdom in her words. As youngsters we often think we know everything. Yet as the years slip by, God has a knack of showing us that without him we can accomplish very little. His love and guidance line the path to true wisdom.

God's ways are unfathomable and his love for us is limitless, but he goes on revealing his truth to us little by little, year by year, as we are able to receive it. Admitting that we don't know it all is like opening a gate to his glory, as we keep on listening, learning and looking to him.

*Dear Lord, thank you for teaching me more of your truth every day. Here I am today with an open heart, ready to listen and learn. Amen.*

*Consider: Reflect on something you once believed but now know to be false.*

*Read: Isaiah 55:8-9, Psalm 71:16-18*

*Kerry Osborne  
Sydney, Australia*

Saturday, September 15, 2018

# When Authors Die

*These are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.*

*John 20:31*

My wife and I love to read novels. We identify with main characters who come to life in book after book through many adventures against overwhelming odds. And then favorite authors die. We grieve their loss, partly because their compelling characters die with them. What next?

Thank God, the Bible lives on, always pointing to Jesus Christ as the only way to salvation. All of our favorite biblical authors are dead. Yet the stories of God's love continue along with the flawed but believing historical characters who touch our hearts and minds for life with Christ. None is better than the apostle John, who gives his eyewitness account of Jesus, the Word made flesh, who lived, died and rose from the grave for us.

*Thanks, Lord, for biblical authors who live on in the Scriptures, always pointing to your salvation. Amen.*

*Share: Read your favorite biblical author today and share your excitement with a friend.*

*Read: John 20:30-31; John 21:24-25*

*Stephen J. Carter  
Oakville, MO*

Sunday, September 16, 2018

# Learning Love

*You shall love your neighbor as yourself.*

*Matthew 19:19*

Is it possible to teach anyone to love? We fall in love; it just happens. If that's the only way we love, we love a very narrow number of people. I believe that children are not naturally loving. We must learn to love. But can love be taught? Some of my students got into fights on the playground. Telling them to love each other didn't work. How could I teach them to love and forgive?

I believe we learn to love by being loved by those around us. If we are not loved, it is hard to believe that God loves us. We must see the love of God in other people to believe it. We trust the forgiveness of God by being forgiven. Love cannot be commanded. Love is caught more than it is taught.

*Loving God, your love for me is so great. I pray that it may spill over and fill me with love. Show me how to love my neighbors. In Jesus' name. Amen.*

*Consider: Recite or read John 3:16 and think of what God's love means to you.*

*Read: 1 Corinthians 13*

*Eldor Kaiser  
Lenexa, KS*

Monday, September 17, 2018

# Jack, Be Quick!

*Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to become angry.*

*James 1:19*

You remember the nursery rhyme. As children we prided ourselves in being nimble and quick. As we grow older we still like to be nimble of mind and quick with an answer, but nimble minds and quick answers can sometimes hurt others.

We who know Christ as our Savior “should be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to become angry.” What a comfort to others when you lend a listening ear to them. It’s tempting to “solve” the problems of others with a quick answer, but they may not need your quick cures. They need to know that you will simply listen and understand and pray for them. Be quick with an answer when you’re watching *Jeopardy* or doing a crossword puzzle, but otherwise, be more ready to listen. Then, when it’s time to speak, give them God’s word of grace and love in Jesus our Savior.

*Dear Lord, give me your listening ear and your good words to share. Amen.*

*Listen: Practice good listening techniques.*

*Read: 1 Peter 5:6-11; Psalm 130*

*Lonie Eatherton  
Fenton, MO*

Tuesday, September 18, 2018

# The Correct Bait?

*Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation.*

*Matthew 26:41*

While living in an old farmhouse, an annual event was realizing there was an uninvited mouse in the house. We would break out the mouse trap and place a piece of cheese on it. We discovered that didn't work, so we changed the bait; a piece of popcorn was tied onto the trap. In the morning, the trap was sprung, but alas, no mouse. Now it was time for what is evidently a mouse's downfall—peanut butter.

The mouse was ultimately dismissed, but the bait scenario made me realize how similar it is to the struggle between Satan and us. He knows our weaknesses. When one temptation doesn't cause us to slip, he offers another, more alluring one. Unlike the hapless mouse, we have Jesus on our side. We can ask for strength and discernment to resist Satan's temptations, regardless of what they are.

*Heavenly Father, grant us strength to resist any and all temptations Satan uses to cause us to fall. Amen.*

*Ask: Think about your most alluring temptations and pray about them.*

*Read: Hebrews 4:15; James 1:12; Galatians 6:1*

*Gloria Doty  
Ft Wayne, IN*

Wednesday, September 19, 2018

# Smart vs. Wise

*And because of him you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God.*

1 Corinthians 1:30

By this time in our lives, we've all met people who have years of schooling and advanced degrees. We've also discovered that smart people aren't always wise, and wise people aren't always smart. Being both is great, of course, but what's more important?

The apostle Paul addresses this question. He writes in 1 Corinthians 1:26, "Not many of you were wise according to worldly standards." Most of Paul's readers probably wouldn't have been labeled "smart" for lack of education. Yet God chooses humble, ordinary folks like them, and like us, to be his own. Through Christ, he gives us "wisdom from God, righteousness and sanctification and redemption" (1 Corinthians 1:30). Being smart by worldly standards is fine, but what's more important is wisdom from God that leads us to believe in Jesus our Savior.

*Lord, let your Spirit always lead me to seek your wisdom and not rely on my own "smarts." Amen.*

*Encourage: Assure fellow believers that true wisdom comes not from the head but the heart.*

*Read: Proverbs 1:1-7; 1 Corinthians 1:18-31*

Marj Maynard  
Billings, MO

Thursday, September 20, 2018

# Accept the Plan

*Then Rebecca and her attendants got ready and mounted the camels.*

*Genesis 24:61*

Who would've "think"? God's methods of choosing a path for us are sometimes most mysterious. Abraham knew his son Isaac needed a wife to carry on the line. So this somewhat elaborate plan was devised to select a woman, from back in the old country, to become the mother of millions. Abraham's servant dutifully carried out his master's orders and the scenario played out just as the Lord had planned. Rebecca showed up in Isaac's field riding on a camel and with a ring in her nose! When he saw her, he immediately loved her and the rest is history.

God sometimes acts in strange ways in our lives as well. As we age, things happen that we don't understand, yet if we accept the plan that the Lord has set out for us, all will be good.

*Father, help me to just smile and accept your plan even though I don't always understand. Amen.*

*Consider: Think about the maybe strange manner in which God has laid out the map for your journey in life.*

*Read: Genesis 24; Jeremiah 29:11*

*Don Luepke  
Fremont, IN*

Friday, September 21, 2018

# Need Comfort?

*As a mother comforts her child, so will I comfort you.*

*Isaiah 66:13*

“What’s wrong?” My daughter and I were enjoying a cup of coffee when her three-year old son walked up and put his hand on her arm.

“I have a headache,” he answered. He moved in closer and sat on her lap. As his head rested on her shoulder and she wrapped her arms around him, tears filled my eyes at the beautiful sight.

The prophet Isaiah uses that picture of beauty to remind us of the Lord’s comfort. Our lives change. We may move to another residence, feel lonely, face health challenges or experience the loss of someone we dearly love, but the comfort of the Lord never changes. It is always available. We can “walk up” to him and share our need. We will feel his arms around us, just like a mother’s comfort for a child.

*Father, sometimes changes overwhelm me. Today, I ask for your dependable comfort to touch me. Amen.*

*Encourage: Comfort someone by sharing the comfort you have received.*

*Read: Psalm 119:76; John 14:26; Hebrews 13:5*

*Marilyn Nutter  
Greer, SC*

Saturday, September 22, 2018

# Fall

*So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes ...*

*Genesis 3:6*

Autumn is a beautiful season for the eyes. Crops are harvested and processed. We enjoy driving through the countryside to behold the beauty of the trees showing green, yellow and red colors. Farmers have roadside markets, selling everything from honey to cornstalks.

As seniors, we are very careful when we walk so we don't slip or trip and fall down. An ad for an Alert button says, "I have fallen and I can't get up." Even a worse "Fall" happened when Eve took the fruit in the Garden of Eden. All people fell into sin, but we soon had help. Our Alert button is Jesus our Savior. He suffered and died for all sinners. His heavenly Father saw to it that our sins would then be forgiven when Jesus was crucified.

*Lord, let all of our work this day be for the good of your kingdom. Amen.*

*Remember: Read Genesis 3 again as a reminder that we are truly sinners who fell with Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden.*

*Read: Genesis 3:16-19; Genesis 6:5-8*

*Jim Wiedman  
Lombard, IL*

Sunday, September 23, 2018

# But It's Not the Same!

*I the LORD do not change.*

*Malachi 3:6*

How comforting are those words from Malachi! For lots of years I have been blessed to be “Oma” (a German word for grandmother) for our school’s kindergarten class. I am expected to read to the children once a week and show up with cookies. Quite suddenly this year the current teacher had to leave and the children and I have a new teacher. The first time I read to the children after the “change,” they were wiggly, giggly and somewhat bewildered. It was a good time to reassure them that our loving Jesus is always right there in their classroom, teaching them and caring for them as he had been doing since they first came to kindergarten.

At times we too feel a bit wiggly and bewildered as we cope with change all around us. Then we can go back to those words from Malachi: “I the LORD do not change.”

*Thank you, Lord, for your many reassuring promises in Scripture. Amen.*

*Rejoice: Pick up a hymnal and read (or sing) the words from the beautiful hymn “Abide with Me.”*

*Read: Hebrews 13:8; Psalm 46*

*Lois Scheer  
San Diego, CA*

Monday, September 24, 2018

# Fresh Insight

*But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you.*

*John 14:26*

Apple-picking season is upon us. A fresh apple tastes wonderful: sweet, crunchy and a bit tart. Fresh apples make the best pies and applesauce. Why does fresh taste the best? It's when the flavors are at their peak. The soil, sunshine and rain have combined to form a perfect apple. Wait too long to eat it, and the apple loses its freshness.

Does your spiritual life sometimes feel stale? I have heard the Bible stories many times over the years. I can see them as stale unless I ask the Holy Spirit to give me fresh insight. When you read the Bible this week, pick a story that's familiar to you. Pray that the Holy Spirit will reveal fresh truths to you. The new insight you'll gain will be sweet and fresh, like the first apple of the fall harvest.

*Lord Jesus, let your Word be sweet and fresh in my heart today. Amen.*

*Talk: Share a familiar Bible story with a friend and share the fresh insights you find together.*

*Read: Proverbs 16:16; Philippians 1:9-11*

*Sarah Geringer  
Jackson, MO*

Tuesday, September 25, 2018

# Sing Praises

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

*Psalm 47:6*

Did you count how many times that one Bible verse tells us to “sing praises”? If you didn’t, the answer is four. Four times in one verse! If God mentions it that much in just one verse, it must be pretty important. But why does God want us to sing praises? What does it mean to praise God?

When you praise something, that means you worship it, glorify it and say good things about it. We should want to praise and thank God because he has given us everything that we have. Singing praises to God also helps us share his message with others. That is just what we have been put on this earth to do. What are you waiting for? Sing his praises now!

*Dear Father, you are worthy of our praise. Help us to sing joyfully to you. Amen.*

*Rejoice: Gather together with some friends to sing praises to God.*

*Read: Psalm 104:31-35; Psalm 108:1-5*

*Celeste Cummins  
Storm Lake, IA*

Wednesday, September 26, 2018

# In the Shadow of the Cross

*For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.*

*Romans 1:16*

Driving on the streets in late afternoon, the telephone poles cast a shadow like a cross on the weary workers returning home from work and the other sojourners through this life. We who believe in the power of Christ's cross, live with the assurance that Christ died to save us from sin, death and the evil one. The power of this truth calms all our fears and provides strength for today. May the shadow of the cross as seen in the cross-shaped poles remind us of the light of the grace we have in Christ Jesus.

*Dear Savior Jesus, may I always be reminded of the power of your work for us on the cross. May I live joyfully in the assurance of your grace and salvation. Amen.*

*Look: Watch for other cross-shaped reminders of the love of Christ for you and all believers. Share the Gospel with someone today.*

*Read: John 3:16; Romans 5:8*

*Nancy Rapp  
St. Louis, MO*

Thursday, September 27, 2018

# Walking in the Master's Footsteps

*For to this you have been called ... that you might follow in his steps.*

1 Peter 2:21

Working in the garden I sensed someone behind me. It was my curious young son. "Son," I said with alarm. "Don't come into the garden! You might step on tender plants." "It's OK, Daddy," he replied. "I am walking in your footprints."

Parents learn that nothing teaches like an example. Masters working with a novice know you have to demonstrate good technique, not just describe it. The disciples of Jesus first received him as their Savior. Then they learned to serve by walking in his footsteps. Ultimately, they drank deeply of his Spirit so they could replicate his life and ministry. That's true for disciples today. There is no substitute for spending intimate time with Jesus and his Word. It is also helpful to spend time with experienced Christians who are shaped by their walk with Jesus.

*Jesus, help me walk today in your footprints.  
Amen.*

*Ask: Whom might you mentor in faith?*

*Read: 1 Peter 1:13-25; 1 Peter 2:1-12, 21-25*

*Ted Zimmerman  
Napa, CA*

Friday, September 28, 2018

# Light in Darkness

*God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.*

*1 John 1:5*

I had a stroke after Thanksgiving last year and it affected my vision. The first nights in the hospital I railed against the darkness. I couldn't sleep and I couldn't see well enough to read or watch television. Finally, about the third night the obvious (or it should have been obvious) thought occurred to me: pray. Thank you, Jesus, for redirecting my resentment! So I prayed. I named and thanked God for every person I could remember, living or dead, with whom God had blessed me. And each night, just a few minutes after "lights out," I was "surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses" (Hebrews 12:1). I still haven't finished that prayer. The light of those saints' lives and will not be extinguished. Neither will yours.

*Jesus, let me walk in your light and be an instrument of your light in the darkness today. Amen.*

*Pray: Give thanks for the saints who surround your life.*

*Read: Genesis 1:1-3; John 1:1-5; John 9:1-7*

*Mike May  
Kansas City, KS*

Saturday, September 29, 2018

# Who Am I?

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

*Matthew 16:15*

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

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

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

*Reflect: Spend time reflecting on the conversation that Jesus had with his disciples (Matthew 16:13-20). Answer the questions, "Who is he? Who am I? What does he do? What do I do?"*

*Read: 2 Timothy 1:8-12*

*Walter M. Schoedel  
Webster Groves, MO*

Sunday, September 30, 2018

# Time

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

*Esther 4:14*

Small word with endless meanings. Where is that “time” Bible verse? You know the one: “For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven.” Then Solomon lists all those “times,” starting with “a time to be born, and a time to die.” One of my favorites has to be “a time to weep and a time to laugh,” but the one I am still working on is “a time to keep silence and a time to speak.” Why is it so hard to listen thoughtfully when someone is speaking even if we don’t agree? Why is it so hard to speak up when our faith life is questioned or criticized? Listen carefully before you respond. There is a time to declare and support your Christian faith. But are you ready to do so? Maybe now is the time to prepare.

*Dear Lord, guide my mind and mouth to spread the joy of your forgiveness and love for everyone in good time. Amen.*

*Witness: Listen first, then share your love of Jesus with a friend.*

*Read: Ecclesiastes 3:1-8*

*Lois Scheer  
San Diego, CA*

# HOLY HABITS for **HOPE-FULL HEALTH**

Who was your favorite “teacher” as you were growing up? As you recall this person from days of yore, ask yourself why this person popped into your mind. Here are some questions to start you thinking:

1. Was it something this person did or said?
2. Was it how this person smiled at you and related to you?
3. Was it the activities and projects you did together?
4. Was it because of a specific incident where you were encouraged, supported and affirmed?
5. Was it what this person taught you academically, socially or athletically?
6. Was it because of the faith in the Lord that this person shared with you?
7. Was it because you spent quality time with this person?
8. Was it because this person was upbeat, encouraging and just “fun to be with”?
9. Was it because you knew that this person liked you and believed in you?
10. Was it because this person was “there” when you most needed a friend?

Look around you in your own life. Who has the Lord put into your life, right now, that you can teach and reach the way you were taught and loved? What are we waiting for?

# Hope-Full Praying

## *Independence Day*

On this special day of celebrating independence, help us to realize that we all are dependent on you. Continue to create in us the joy of our salvation so that we know that true freedom does not come from countries or leaders or systems, but only from you, who lived, died and was raised to free us forever. Amen.

## *Time with Family and Friends*

Lord, summertime is a special time to gather and enjoy family and friends, through outings, visits, e-mails and phone chats. Do not let us take for granted the gift of our loved ones, Lord. It is so easy to do so. Instead, empower us to visit and pray and laugh with them, and, in the process, to give thanks to you for them. Amen.

## *Finding Rest*

I get tired, Lord, and sometimes it isn't even noon yet! I get tired of routine and aches and a feeling of worthlessness. I get tired of being tired. Teach me to see the word R.E.S.T. as meaning that you give me the time to **R**eflect, **E**valuate, **S**leep and **T**hank, always assured that you are with me. I am ready to rest in you, Lord. Amen.

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