

The  
Journey  
of Lent

A collection of readings  
from Friends & Family of  
Wesley Chapel Church  
March - April 2025



*Greetings friends,*

*As we enter into the season of Lent the following devotions will give you opportunity for scripture reading, studying, and being in God's word. Many are personal testimonies that may speak to situations you have experienced in your life. It is my hope that you will find them uplifting, thought-provoking and perhaps convicting. Take time each day to reflect on the messages. Be open to what it is God may be saying to you. If you were touched or inspired by a particular devotion, consider letting that person know. Please see the added Reflections/Prayers section at the end of this booklet for you own personal use.*

*Thank you for giving me the opportunity to provide these readings to you and I pray that you remember the love of God and Jesus for these forty days leading to our celebration on Easter Sunday and that you can claim the Promise and Hope of the Resurrection!*

*Blessings to you today and always,  
Shanna*



# Ash Wednesday ~ March 5

## WHO DID ALL THIS?

**Read: John 14:3-15**

As the Bible begins with God, so Christian faith and hope and love begin with Jesus. For what we know about God the Father comes through Him, that is, through God the Son.

So, as we begin another Lenten journey, let us make His way our way. "Where He leads me I will follow" should express our personal commitment, while "Lead on, O King Eternal!" should be our fervent prayer.

We have chosen His words, "For their sake I consecrate myself" as the general theme of these Lenten meditations. But they should also be heard as His challenge to us to do the same. For His sake and for the sake of His "little ones" in need, may we devote our lives!

As we think, day after day, of His preaching, teaching, healing, living, laboring, suffering ministry to mankind and upon His glorious triumph at the Eastertide, let us place our hearts at His disposal and our lives in His hands to rule and guide.

~Written by Rev. David Dunn in 1955

~Submitted by Pam Weimer

**Prayer:** *"Thou are the Way; to Thee alone from sin and death we flee; and he who would the Father seek, must seek Him, Lord, by Thee." Amen.*

Thursday ~ March 6

## CLEANSED AND JOYFUL

**Read: Psalm 51:7**

Before we enter our 40-day journey to Holy Week, let us conclude David's prayer in Psalm 51. Now he offers a prayer for deep cleansing. "Cleanse me" is translated from a word that denotes a cleansing or purifying ceremony during which sin is done away with. Hyssop is a small plant that grows on walls, probably marjoram in the mint family. It was used in purification ceremonies to apply blood and water. David is calling upon God himself, not just a priest, to cleanse him through and through to remove his deeply ingrained sin. If God cleanses him, if God washes him, then he will be "whiter than snow". Being separated from God by sin brings pain in one's spirit, a sense of guilt and estrangement. Contrary to those who cynically perceive Christianity as a guilt-driven religion, God doesn't desire for us to live with guilt, but rather to enjoy forgiveness and full fellowship with Him. Here David prays for joy to replace his misery and "the bones you have crushed". David has known the joy of God's salvation and rescue before. Now he longs for this joy in fellowship to be restored to him once more. It is his earnest prayer. Have you lost the "joy" of your salvation? Have you become somewhat distant from God? Have you taken God for granted? Or perhaps you have never really got to know Him? God wants to restore the joy to you that is your birthright as a Christian. Joy is a fruit of the Holy Spirit's work in your life (Galatians 5:22-23). Call out to Him in repentance and receive the joy God desires for you.

~Taken from Faith For Daily Living, by Jonathan Christie

~Submitted by Martha Mitchell

**Prayer:** *Lord, I call out to You to restore to me the joy of Your salvation. Amen.*

Friday ~ March 7

**BE STILL AND LEARN**

***Read: Psalm 1:2***

Quiet time to learn of God's ways requires discipline. Yet our daily routine cries for our attention. We find ourselves with too much to do and the ticking of the clock constantly in our ears.

Our loved ones cannot be ignored. Duty calls. There are meals to prepare, medicine to dispense, and clothes to arrange. When is there time for God?

It's easy to put our quiet time with God on the back burner. But the very thing we need most—hope—only the Lord can fill. He understands our exhaustion and frustration. He feels our pain and sadness. He's waiting to extend grace when we call upon Him.

Our quiet time—reading scripture and praying—is like water on a sponge. It fills us and expands our ability to keep going. It strengthens us for the day. It empowers us to fulfill what God requires.

Don't let the call of your duties drown out the need for quiet time. Discipline yourself to set aside a few minutes for the Lord. He is our hope, our salvation. We need His fellowship. To neglect that time is dangerous.

~Taken from 3-Minute Devotions for Women

~Submitted by Kizzie Sanner

***Prayer:*** *Father, help me to focus on You, to carve out minutes from my day to spend in prayer and the Word. My desire is to fellowship with You. Amen.*

Saturday ~ March 8

## CLEAN YOUR OWN WINDOW FIRST

**Read: Matthew 7:3-5**

I recently was reading through a bunch of stuff and came across the following little story and found it rather telling. The story went something like this:

A young couple moves into a new neighborhood. The next morning while they are eating breakfast the young woman sees her neighbor hanging the wash outside. "That laundry is not very clean; she doesn't know how to wash correctly. Perhaps she needs better laundry soap." Her husband looks on, remaining silent. Every time her neighbor hangs her wash to dry, the young woman makes the same comments.

A month later, the woman is surprised to see a nice clean wash on the line and says to her husband: "Look, she's finally learned how to wash correctly. I wonder who taught her this?" The husband replies, "I got up early this morning and cleaned our windows."

And so it is with Life... What we see when watching others depends on the clarity of the window through which we look. (Author not listed)

Isn't this our nature? We look at the world around us, seeing the things our neighbors, friends and families are doing wrong; pointing out the sins of others, while we ourselves have forgotten or ignored our own shortfalls and sins. We must never forget, but there without the Grace of GOD go I. Come along side of those who need to know GOD's Grace, insuring them that you too have fallen short of GOD's Glory, if it were not for the redeeming blood of our LORD and Savior, Jesus Christ.

### **Matthew 7:3-5**

"Why do you look at the speck that is in your brother's eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye? "Or how can you say to your brother, 'Let me take the speck out of your eye,' and behold, the log is in your own eye? "You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother's eye."

~Written by Dave Henry

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**Prayer:** *Remind us dear LORD, to be aware of the plank in our own eyes before we attempt to remove a speck from the eyes of others. Help us to all realize that we are all sinners, sins we cannot remove from ourselves or other by our power but only by the blood of our LORD and Savior, Jesus Christ. In Jesus' precious name. AMEN!*

**Thought for the day:** Clean your own windows first so you may see the world outside with greater clarity, understanding and with less judgement of others.



Monday ~ March 10

## BORN AGAIN

**Read: John 3:3,5-8**

In John 3, verses 3, 5-8, Jesus says that you must be born again. During this time Jesus was talking to Nicodemus, an older man. When Nicodemus heard that he had to be born again he was confused, saying that people can't enter their mother's womb again. When Jesus said that you have to be born again, he did not mean physically, but spiritually. Have you been born again? Like Nicodemus, sometimes we don't always understand what the Bible is saying. Maybe it's hard to believe or comprehend. Jesus is in everyone's life, waiting for you to ask him into your heart. He is there to protect, and love you. But even though Jesus will never leave you, unless you are born again, he can no longer protect you. Sometimes being a Christian isn't easy, and it would be a lot easier to do the wrong things. But if we give our life to Jesus, love Him, and worship Him, going to Heaven will be easy. And if you tell more people about Jesus and all the things He does for everyone, maybe more people will decide to follow Him and be born again too.

~Written by Faith Millin

**Prayer:** *Lord, help us to remember that, not only do we need to follow you, but also tell more people about you. Help us to open our hearts to you, trust you, and love you. Amen.*

**Thought for the day:** How many of your friends could you help bring to Jesus, just by telling them about Him?

Tuesday ~ March 11

## NO ONE IS TOO FAR GONE

**Read: Acts 10:34-36**

No matter who you are or where you are, God is not saying, “Eeny, meeny, miny, moe, this must stay and this can go,” concerning Heaven. No. God wants everybody saved. I believe that. Jesus loves the little children of the world; they are precious in His sight.

While salvation is very broad in its availability, it is very narrow in its source. The source is the Lord Jesus Christ. There’s no other way. Do you believe that? If Jesus Christ is not the only way, then He’s none of the ways. If Jesus Christ is not the only way, then He is a liar, a fake, a fraud, an imposter. But He’s not one of those things because a liar is no one’s Savior. And Jesus has cornered the market on salvation.

Any people, anywhere, anytime can be saved, but if they are saved, they’re going to be saved through Jesus Christ. There’s no other way to be saved. That’s the way Peter begins his testimony to Cornelius. He said, in effect, “Look, Jesus alone can satisfy your hunger, Cornelius. Jesus alone is God’s answer to your sin. Jesus alone can give you the meaning of life and death. Jesus alone can take the sting out of sin. Jesus alone can take the pain out of parting. Jesus alone can take the dread out of dying. Jesus alone can give hope that is steadfast and sure.”

~Taken from Love Worth Finding with Andrian Rogers

~Submitted by Kristen Sanner

**When you pray:** *Pray and ask God to open your eyes to the people who want to know Him more. Ask Him to give you the words to show that there is no other way but through Jesus.*

**Thought for the day:** Who are some people you know who may feel too far gone to be saved? Who have you shared Jesus with? What did you share with them?

Wednesday ~ March 12

## STAGNANT

**Read: Revelation 3:15-16**

I have been working on fixing a lot of sugar line over the past few weeks in preparation for this year's maple season. We do not bring our lines in at the end of the season and therefore they remain in place all year long. After each season, we drain the sap out of the lines as much as possible but there is always some residual sap left over that collects in the low areas of the lines. These stagnant pockets of sugar water don't stay sweet and delicious for very long. Natural yeast and bacteria in the system begins to work on the sap. Within a few weeks, that once sweet water is now sour and slightly fermented. Given enough time, additional bacteria will consume the alcohol in the water and turn it into vinegar. At any rate, it is never enjoyable getting a mouthful of this soured water while chewing on the end of a line while repairing it. (Yes, they make tools for that but I don't always have it with me when a line needs repaired).

This lesson in maple sap is a good reminder of what happens when we become stagnant in our relationship with God. In the verse from Revelation referenced above, Jesus conveys that he wishes that the people's deeds were either hot or cold, not lukewarm. This does not mean that he wants you to be hot-blooded or cold tempered. Lukewarm can be interpreted as lazy or stagnant. He wants you to be active in your mission as a follower of Christ, not complacent. Hebrews 12:1-2 tells us, "Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, fixing our eyes on Jesus..." Sap that is flowing through the lines does not have time to become stagnant. If kept cold and agitated, the bacteria in it will not be able to grow as rapidly. Thus keeping it fresh. When maple sap is heated to boiling, it begins to be refined into a more-pure state. The heat kills the harmful bacteria and in the process, produces a sweeter product that will not turn sour.

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Only by staying active in our faith are we able to keep the decaying forces of sin away. Unfortunately, it is a much easier process to make sour water than it is to make delicious maple syrup. But for those who are willing to put in the effort, there is a great reward in store.

-Written by Mark Millin

**Prayer:** *Lord, we thank you for all of the good work that you have put into us and for the gifts that you have in store for us. We ask that you will be near us and strengthen us in our daily lives and to help us be faithful followers of yours. Amen*



Thursday ~ March 13

## HANDS & FEET

**Read: Luke 15:4-7**

Jesus's life is filled with goodness and helping others and bringing bad people to the good God. Jesus could be called a collector—a collector of people. Just think, he thinks of you everyday and if He hasn't already, He thinks of collecting you. Don't you ever think that Jesus has no time to think about you. Because he has a great big mind big enough for the whole wide world.



Jesus compares us with sheep. I must admit that I am a lot like a sheep. People always want to be like their friends, which isn't always be a good thing. Sheep will follow *anything*—even pigs (but you will have to talk with the pastor's wife about that). And we try to follow our friends in just the same way. But for that reason, Jesus has called himself “the Good Shepherd”. Jesus is a great shepherd.

Jesus once told a parable (Luke 15:4). He said:

“**4** ‘Suppose one of you has a hundred sheep and loses one of them, doesn't he leave the ninety-nine in the open country and go after the lost sheep until he finds it? **5** And when he finds it, he joyfully puts it on his shoulders **6** and goes home. Then he calls his friends and neighbors together and says, “Rejoice with me; I have found my lost sheep.” **7** I tell you that in the same way there will be more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who do not need to repent.”

Just think, He says that He'll rejoice in a single repented sinner instead of 99 righteous persons. He loves us that much.

But if you don't need to repent, that doesn't mean Jesus is done with you. One thing I long for is to be God's hands and feet. And if you don't know how to do that, it means to bring more followers to Jesus. And if you don't know how to do *that*, it means first of all to have the fruits of the spirit which are love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness,

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gentleness, faithfulness and self control. Another way to be His hands and feet is to tell people about Him. But grab control of the fruits of the spirits for now.

~Written by Brooklyn Monteith

**Prayer for the day:** *Dear Lord, thank You for being our loving Father and for caring for us. Let us be Your hands and feet. And we pray for everyone who doesn't know you and that they'd come to know you. Amen.*

Friday ~ March 14

## LESSONS YOU CAN LEARN

**Read: Proverbs 23:12**

You can learn a lot about life by paying attention to the things that happen around you...and that's exactly what God wants you to do. God is trying to teach you things, and you can learn those things the easy way (by paying attention and obeying God's rules) or the hard way (by making the same mistakes over and over again until you finally learn something from them). Of course, it's better to learn things sooner rather than later...starting now.

~Taken from the VeggieTales 365 Bedtime Devos for Boys

~Submitted by Flint Breegle

**Prayer:** *Dear Lord, I have so much to learn. Help me keep my eyes open wide. And, help me learn the lessons You want me to learn. Amen.*

Saturday ~ March 15

## LOWLY BUT LOVED BY GOD

**Read: Psalm 138**

On day at church, I greeted a visiting family. I knelt next to their little girl's wheelchair, introduced her to my service dog, Callie, and complimented her pretty, pink glasses and boots. Though she was nonverbal, her smile told me she enjoyed our conversation. Another little girl approached, avoiding eye contact with my new friend. She whispered, "Tell her I like her dress." I said, "You tell her. She's kind, just like you." I explained how easy it was to speak with our new friend even though she communicated differently, and how looking at her and smiling would help her feel accepted and loved.

In Scripture and in this world, people are often excluded because they're perceived as *different*. However, our great God celebrates our differences and invites us into relationship with Him and His family. In Psalm 138, David says, "I will praise you, Lord, with all my heart; before the 'gods' I will sing your praise" (v. 1). He says, "the LORD is exalted" and yet, He "looks kindly on the lowly" (v. 6).

God, exalted and holy, looks kindly on us, His created ones, especially when we humble ourselves. As we ask Him to help us look kindly on and behave kindly toward others, we can thank Him for affirming that we're lowly *and* loved!

~Taken from Our Daily Bread, by Xochitl Dixon

~Submitted by Cindy Miller

**Prayer:** *Dear God, please help me greet all people with the same abundant kindness and unconditional love that You show me each day. Amen.*

**Thought for the day:** How does remembering you're lowly in comparison to God change the way you see others? How can you show love to those in your community with disabilities?



Monday ~ March 17

## WHO'S YOUR ENEMY?

**Read: 1 Peter 5:8**

If someone were to ask you who or what is the greatest enemy of the church today, how would you answer? Some would answer that the biggest enemy is government institutions, which in many ways are becoming more hostile toward the Christian faith. Others might say that other human institutions seem to work tirelessly to oppose the preaching of the gospel.

While there's no doubt that some worldly and human institutions want to keep Christianity in a corner, Christian men need to understand that they're in a spiritual battle, not a political or physical one. The apostle Paul put it like this: "Our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms" (Ephesians 6:12 NIV).

Yes, you should stand against evil in the secular world today and contend for what is right in God's eyes. But you should never forget that your ultimate enemy is the devil, not the lost and misguided people who oppose God.

And above all, you need to remember to put on the full armor of God (Ephesians 6:10-18) as you do battle against the devil and his minions.

~Taken from God's Word For Guys

~Submitted by Pete Sanner

**Prayer:** *All-powerful God, I have a spiritual enemy who knows my weaknesses and has the ability to throw me off track. Thank You that You have ultimate power over him.*

Tuesday ~ March 18

## REGRETS

**Read: Philippians 3:13-14**

Regrets...a letter written by Elizabeth Elliot's grandfather, Phil, to her grandmother. In the letter Phil references an accident their son, Phillip, had at the age of 12. Phillip had snuck out of their house on the morning of July 4th, 1910 to play with fireworks after he had been forbidden to do so, and consequently lost his left eye in the accident.



*Dearest:*

*I am not one bit surprised that after all our experiences of the past four years you should suffer from sad memories, but I really do not believe for a moment that you should feel you have any occasion to let remorse bite into your life on account of Phillip's accident. Surely we cannot guard against all the contingencies of this complex life, and no one who has poured out life as you have for each one of your children should let such regrets take hold.*

*None of us could be alive to the pressing needs of today if we should carry along with us the dark heaviness of any past, whether real or imagined. I know, dearest, that your Lord cannot wish anything of that sort for you, and I believe your steady, shining, and triumphant faith will lead you out through Him, into the richest experiences you have ever had. I believe that firmly.*

*I have had to turn to Him in helplessness today to overcome depression because of my failures. My Sunday School fiasco at Swathmore bears down pretty hard. But that is not right. I must look ahead, and up, as you often tell me, and I will. I know how sickening remorse is, if anyone knows; yet I also know, as you do, the lift and relief of turning the whole matter over to Him. We must have more prayers*

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*and more study together, dearest. I haven't followed the impulses I have often had in this.*

*Lovingly, your own Phil*

~Taken from *Keep A Quiet Heart*, by Elizabeth Elliot, pgs 148-149

~Written by Amy Monteith

**Prayer:** *Father God, thank You for your dear precious Word, and thank You for the records of others' faith that we sometimes come across. Help us to remember to turn to You in our times of need. You are a good Father and You are ever ready to help us in our times of need (Psalm 46:1; Psalm 91). Help us to trust that what You say in Your Word is true and real and good and right. Renew us and transform our lives (Romans 12:1-2; 2 Corinthians 10:5). Let Your Word reap a harvest of righteousness and truth in our hearts and minds, our lives, our families, our church, our community (Isaiah 55:10-13). Help us trust and so live in the blessed promise that as we confess Jesus as Lord, You forgive us and cleanse us from all unrighteousness (1 John 1:9). Free us from the remorse and regret of sin, of things that are far beyond our control, of "the dark heaviness of any past, whether real or imagined" so that we can joyfully "be alive to the pressing needs of today" and do the good works that You have prepared in advance for us to do (Ephesians 2:10). Help us trust that You can and will and do work all things for Your glory and our good (Romans 8:28). Help us to realize more and more that we are Your children (1 John 3:1), and that because of Jesus we can forget "...what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead...press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus (Philippians 3:13-14). Holy Father, thank You for making this possible through Christ. Let us walk freely today and always in the joy and delight of knowing You.*

**Listen:** *Take Heart (John 16:33)*, by Shane and Shane and the Kingdom Kids

[https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=sQhzE5r\\_okI](https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=sQhzE5r_okI)

Wednesday ~ March 19

**“SURELY YOU DON’T MEAN ME, LORD?”**

**Read: Psalm 56:3-5**

We all have those moments when we question someone by saying, “You don’t mean me...do you?” Most of the time we say that when we aren’t prepared, or when we are scared about something. The same thing happened to Jesus. So, how did He react to it? Well, from the very beginning, Jesus was with God, and knew everything that was to happen. Even now, far in the future, He knew our names, our children, and even our great-grandchildren. So, that would mean He knew that he was going to come to our sinful world and die for everyone’s sins even when they wouldn’t be grateful! Put yourself in His shoes. Would you do it? Would you be spat at, kicked, punched, and then die a painful death? I don’t know about you but I would defiantly ask that question if I was told to do it. Did you know, though, that you could be asked to something this very minute? No, I’m not talking about by your family and friends, I’m talking about God. Like Jesus, He could be asking you to do something very difficult. You might be asking Him right now, “Surely you don’t mean me, Lord?” How did Jesus respond? Even though He didn’t want to suffer, He had complete faith and trust in God so He followed God’s plan and died for us. I think that’s what we need to do. Someone can say they believe in Him, but they might not always trust Him. Satan believes God is real, but does he trust him? No. In fact it is quite the opposite. Believing is a major thing, but you need to believe AND have **TRUST** in Him. So whether you’re being called to do a hard task, or you’re going through a rough time, you need to respond, “Alright, Lord. I’ll do it.”

~Written by Grace Sechler

**Prayer:** *Dear Lord, please help me to respond to Your call with complete faith and trust in You, and to teach others the way Your Son taught us. Amen.*

Thursday ~ March 20

## HUMBLE

**Read: Matthew 23:12**

Here in Matthew, Jesus presents to us another principle of the upside-down kingdom. Those who humble themselves will be exalted. Every kingdom of this world will tell you that to get ahead, you must fight your way up the ladder. These systems run on pride and self-promotion. But Jesus' way is the opposite. He asks His followers to humble themselves.

To humble yourself does not mean that you hate yourself or treat yourself poorly. Humility is thinking less of yourself. To do this, sometimes we need to be quiet. To listen, be forgiving, let go of judgement, and be gracious to others are all "easier said than done" ways of preferring others. With God, it means to confess our sins, to be quiet before Him, and to pray that His will be done, not our own. Jesus, our King, was the humblest servant of all. Philippians 2 lays out for us exactly how humble He was. If our God displayed humility even to the point of losing His life, are we better than our King? No! Let us lay our lives down for others, following the humble example of Christ.

~Taken from A Daily Word for Women, a 365-Day Devotional  
~Submitted by Shanna Breegle

**Prayer:** *Dear Lord, help us to better serve You by humbling ourselves and looking to the interests of others. In Your Name we pray, Amen.*

**Thought for the day:** Which action listed about becoming humble stood out to you most?



Friday ~ March 21

## REFINED BY FIRE

**Read: Romans 5:1-11**

Every year, late in the summer, the Somerset Historical Society puts on the Mountain Craft days. Occasionally, when we would go, we would inevitably end up watching the blacksmith work his trade. It was fascinating to watch as the blacksmith worked by heating pieces of wrought iron or steel until the metal becomes soft enough for shaping with his hammer or tools.



So, as the blacksmith explained, a bar of raw steel or iron may be purchased for just a few dollars. But when that bar of steel has been thrust into the fires of the forge and processed, when it has been tempered and forged over time, then it is made into so many things... it may be worth many hundreds or even thousands of dollars. God through the refining power of His Spirit performs a thousand miracles a day in the spiritual realm. His regenerating power can take the dull and ordinary things of our lives—even the burned-out ashes of our past—and forge them into something useful, even beautiful for His purposes.

There is a hymn that we sing occasionally called “Spirit of the Living God” which resonates these thoughts “Spirit of the living God, fall afresh on me....Melt me, mold me, fill me, use me, Spirit of the living God, fall afresh on me.” During this Lenten season, allow the Holy Spirit to forge His life in you.

~Written by Linda Henry

**Prayer:** *Father, permit your Holy Spirit to test and mold us for your purpose. In Christ's name we pray, AMEN.*

**Thought for the day:** Pray that the Holy Spirit tests you with the fires of life and he molds you into His purposes.

Saturday ~ March 22

## COUNTING OUR BLESSINGS

**Read: Roman 8:28**

On January 14th, 2006, we had a power outage at Rocky Hollow Farms. In order to milk our cows that afternoon, we needed to hook up the generator to get power. When the fellows started the generator, we didn't know at the time that the wires were rusted off at the top of the pole and when they started the generator, fire flew off the pole. That caused a power surge, which damaged a lot of appliances, etc. in both farm houses, our outdoor furnace and some things at the barn and shop and it like "WOW, OH MY!". When the electric company came to fix the problem, they told the fellows they could have been electrocuted when they hooked up the generator. Then again, it was "OH MERCY!", you must be kidding. It could have been a terrible tragedy and we just praise and thank God and His guardian angels for watching over and protecting the fellows and not allowing a tragedy to happen that day. The material things can be replaced, but not the their lives. Praise the Lord. Amen.

~In memory of and written by Loretta Sechler in 2006

**Prayer:** *Lord, we thank You for our many blessings and especially for not allowing a tragedy to happen that day. Amen.*

**Thought for the day:** Taking too many things for granted in our daily lives.

Monday ~ March 24

## RUN YOUR RACE

**Read: *Philippians 3:14***

The apostle Paul often referred to our journey as Christians as being a race. This race can have only one winner. There is no second place. You either win or you lose. Fortunately, the race of life is not actually a competition. We are not stacked up against each other. You are not losing, and the person running their race near you is not winning. The race features runners going in different directions, at different paces, facing different hurdles along the way. But the finish line is the same: eternity with Jesus. When we take our eyes off Him to focus on the racers around us, we can trip, get hurt, or throw ourselves off course. We must run our own race. It is ours to win or lose.

~Written by Gary Weimer with excerpts taken from a daily reading through YouVersion Bible.

**Prayer:** *Heavenly Father, my goal is to spend eternity in heaven with you. Make that my primary focus in life. Each day I get closer to the goal only if I trust Your Word and follow your commands. Let me be guided by your Spirit as I head toward the finish line. In Jesus name, Amen.*

**Thought for the day:** Run your own race. Keep your eyes on the prize.





Tuesday ~ March 25

## GOD TEACHES US

**Read: Proverbs 28:13**

The Bible says that when people make mistakes, God corrects them. And that means that if you make a mistake, God will try to find a way to teach you how to keep from making that same mistake again.

God doesn't expect you to be perfect, but He does expect you to learn from your mistakes—NOW!

~Taken from the VeggieTales 365 Bedtime Devos for Boys  
~Submitted by Reed Breegle

**Prayer:** *Dear Lord, sometimes I make mistakes, and when I do, please help me learn from them. Amen.*

**Thought for the day:** When you make a mistake, learn something and forgive someone: yourself. Remember, you don't have to be perfect to be wonderful.

Wednesday ~ March 26

## JESUS ON STRESS MANAGEMENT

**Read: Romans 14:5-6**

Growing up a southern Baptist we lived daily under threat of hellfire and damnation for carnal pleasures. Sund was for family and churches, no stores were open. Easter was the most Holy Season celebrated; the Passion play/cantata, the new outfit, the Resurrection sermon, followed

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by the ham dinner, egg hunt and Easter basket. Lent was not part of our community's worship practices back then.

When I moved to Pittsburgh, my workplace friends were 90% Catholic and 10% were Methodists and all observed Lent in some form. Some just picked something to give up and some tried to deal with true temptation. Eating lunch with them every day I became aware of their individual "sacrifices" of chocolate, lottery tickets, meat, desserts, etc. I ate a lot of fish and mac'n'cheese and things I never heard of, like pierogies (kraut & prune ones too), whether I wanted to or not to honor their effort. I finally understood why so much chocolate goes in the Easter basket.

Just because my culture and faith didn't observe Lent, doesn't mean that I should not take time to examine myself. Every day should be an observation of the idea of Lent. Everyday I should "sacrifice" those things that tear down my body and spirit. Just as Jesus fought temptation for forty days and nights, I need to be conscious of the temptation coming my way and pray that God will help me through it. This is very hard to do because we are human. Therefore, I better understand why some faiths observe the special time of Lent and why it is individual to each person.

~In memory of and written by Barbara Hart in 2006

***Prayer:*** *Dear Father: My sin alone would have been enough to cause Your only Son's death. This is a debt I can never repay. Help me to live as He lived and as if He were coming today. Amen.*

Thursday ~ March 27

## THE PASSION OF CHRIST

**Read: Isaiah 53:4-7, 10-12**

Before Jim Caviezel played Jesus in the film *The Passion of the Christ*, director Mel Gibson warned that the role would be extremely difficult and could negatively impact his career in Hollywood. Caviezel took on the role anyway, saying, "I think we have to make it, even if it is difficult."

During the filming, Caviezel was struck by lightning, lost forty-five pounds, and was accidentally whipped during the flogging scene. Afterwards, he stated, "I didn't want people to see me. I just wanted them to see Jesus. Conversations will happen through that." The film deeply affected Caviezel and others on the set, and only God knows how many of the millions who watched it experienced changed lives.

The passion of Christ refers to the time of Jesus' greatest suffering, from His triumphal entry on Palm Sunday and including His betrayal, mocking, flogging, and crucifixion. Accounts are found in all four gospels. In Isaiah 53, His suffering and its outcome are foretold: "He was pierced for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities: the punishment that brought us peace was on Him, and by His wounds we are healed" (v. 5). All of us, "like sheep, have gone astray" (v. 6). But because of Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection, we can have peace with God. His suffering opened the way for us to be with Him.

~Taken from *Our Daily Bread*, written by Alyson Kieda

~Submitted by Jill Heiple

**Prayer:** *Precious Savior, it's hard to express how grateful I am that You suffered, died, and rose again for me. Thank you, Amen.*

Friday ~ March 28

## WHO DO YOU FOLLOW?

**Read: Matthew 16:24 & John 6:35**

Have you ever noticed how a sunflower always seems to have its face to the sun? Well, that's not a coincidence, it purposely tracks the sun all day long and the moon at night! Technically its called heliotropism. It faces the morning sun when it comes up in the east and follows it all day long to the west. At night it slowly bends back to the east from the pull of the moon so that its all ready to greet the sun in the morning. That way it can make its food (photosynthesis) all day long and get the most out of its life cycle. Our God has made so many intricacies in our world and He is absolutely amazing. If we could just be like a sunflower and we would be ready in the mornings to have our face to the **Son** and always have our thoughts, prayers, behaviors on Him throughout the day. If we would go to sleep at night knowing that he cares for us and loves us.... how much more wonderful would our life cycle be? He would supply all of our needs! But we think we know best and are obstinate in our lives. We make things so difficult by allowing Satan to deceive us with this lie. Jesus says in **Matthew 11: 28-30** " Come to Me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light."



This Lenten season take the time to focus on the One who provides all our needs. "Turn your eyes upon Jesus, look full in His wonderful face, and the things of earth will grow strangely dim, in the light of His glory and grace."

~Written by Tracy Pritts

**Prayer:** *Father, may I focus on You today and every day, may I be in Your word, may I be in prayer and fully rely upon You in all I do. May You be the sustenance to feed my soul. Amen.*

**Thought for the day:** Next time you see a sunflower, I hope it reminds you to follow the SON.

Saturday ~ March 29

## GOD'S BEAUTIFUL CREATION

**Read: Genesis 2:15**

God made the earth for us to live on and enjoy while doing his work. The earth is full of magnificent sights that only God himself could design. As I look outside, I can see many beautiful things that God has placed around me that are absolutely magnificent.

As many of you know, I love being in the outdoors. Every spare minute I have I spend out in God's creation hunting, trapping, fishing, and whatever else my mind may have in store. As an outdoorsman, I especially see the beauty in God's creation from the mountains and the streams to the animals that God has placed upon them. As I look at all of these things, I think of how God has placed us here to watch over and care for this land that he has created. He placed us here to till the soil, harvest the timber, and manage the wildlife. As it says in Genesis 2:15, "The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it." This shows that in the beginning, when God placed Adam here on earth, he did it with the intension that man would watch over his creation. As God's servants, we need to fulfill God's plan by taking care of his creation, and respecting all that's in it.

God truly must love us for placing us on such a beautiful landscape, and it shows even more how much he loves us by giving it all to us to watch over and enjoy. Just imagine, if the earth he placed us on is this beautiful, how amazing will heaven be?

~Written by Glenn Millin

**Prayer:** *Lord God, we thank you for placing us in such a beautiful creation, and we thank you even more for allowing us to watch over and care for it. Help guide us to make the right decisions to keep your creation a Holy world full of your people. Amen.*

**Thought for the day:** If the earth is this beautiful, imagine what heaven will look like.

Monday ~ March 31

## SAVED BY GRACE

**Read: Luke 22: 61-62**

It doesn't happen often, thankfully, but it does happen. An employee makes a serious mistake that costs the company a large amount of money—and the employee is let go from his job. Whatever the reason for the mistake—negligence, poor judgement, or an honest error—the employer can't risk it happening again.

Aren't you thankful God has a different perspective on our failures? Granted, most of our failures may be small, but the principle of holiness is that to fail in one thing is like to fail in everything (James 2:10). If God judged us on our works, none of us could be saved. Before he came to understand grace, the apostle Peter probably thought he was finished when he denied knowing Christ three times. Yet Jesus, after the Resurrection reached out to Peter and embraced him, recommissioning Peter in His service (John 21).

~Written by David Jeremiah  
~Submitted by Shirley Walter

**Thought for the day:** Never forget: We are saved by grace through faith, not by works. Our salvation, and our ministry, is the gift of God. (Ephesians 2:10)



<http://misdibujoscristianos.blogspot.com>

Tuesday ~ April 1

## WORRY

**Read: Matthew 6:34**

When we are uneasy and troubled about something that means we are worried. When we worry it means that we are lacking faith. When we worry it means we have doubts about God's ability to see us through.

We might never say that we doubt God, but that is exactly what worry is. Doubt steals faith. Worry steals time. We gain nothing by worrying. We gain everything by faith. Worry will not add any hours to your life.

Research shows that most things that people worry about will never happen in the first place. So we spend all that time worrying about something that will never happen. Worry is absolutely a waste of your time. We do not have time to waste.

Replace your worry with faith. Replace your doubt with hope. Go to God about what worries you. Go to God when you think about bad things that might happen to you. Every day has its own set of complications. Take one day at a time with God by your side. Let the "What am I going to do?" turn into the "I know God has got me."

~Taken from Pretty Little Truths, by Mandy Fender

~Submitted by Roxann Blough

**Prayer:** *Dear Lord, help me to focus on taking one day at a time and appreciating every second of it instead of worrying about every part of it. Amen.*

**Thought for the day:** God holds your future so there is no need to worry about all the tomorrows. Plan ahead but don't worry. Don't worry, be happy.

Wednesday ~ April 2

## JESUS, THE CREATOR OF ALL, REACHES OUT TO SAVE US

**Read: Matthew 14:22-33**

In our Lenten and Easter devotion, we will be focusing on the hand of the Lord. Specifically, we will be focusing on the hand of our Lord Jesus, God in the flesh, the Creator in our Gospel for this evening. Jesus' hand reaches down to save Peter. The Hand of the Lord saves. Up to this point in Matthew's Gospel account, Jesus' hand has been at work. Immediately before our reading, Jesus took five loaves and two fish into His hands and fed five thousand men, besides women and children. Jesus was in control of that situation, and He had a handle on this situation with Peter even before Peter needed Jesus to grab him out of the water. It was Jesus who immediately made the disciples get into the boat. When they were struggling against the wind and the waves, it was Jesus who came to His disciples, walking on the waves. All of this thus far has been pointing to who Jesus is. He is God, the Creator in the flesh. Job said that it is God "who alone stretched out the heavens and trampled the waves of the sea" (9:8). Jesus is the Great I AM. He is the Word through whom "all things were made" (John 1:3). He is God walking on the sea. When His Hand stretches out, it is truly the hand of the Lord. That also means that what Jesus does with those hands also is the work of God. His hand is in control. But sometimes, our limited understanding has difficulty grasping when God seems distant, mysterious, and even terrifying. While the disciples were out in the boat, they had one of those moments. They were frightened early in the morning. But our text does not say that the wind and waves were scaring them. They had, no doubt, handled their fair share of wind and waves out on the Sea of Galilee. What terrified them? It was this figure walking on the water! They cried out, "It is a ghost!" Now that would strike fear into the heart of a fisherman. But the Lord addressed each of their concerns. To their being troubled, He said, "Take heart." To their cry that it was a ghost, He said "It is I." To their being afraid, He said, "Do not be afraid."

*(Continued on next page)*



The Lord immediately addressed all of their concerns right there! They had everything that they needed in His words. Everything was in His Hands.

~Taken from The Hand Of The Lord Resources for Lent and Easter Preaching and Worship Sermon series, by Matthew D. Rosebrock  
~ Submitted by Rene Temple

**Prayer:** *Dear heavenly Father, You are our Creator. We stand in awe of the work of Your hands. Not only are You awesome in Your deeds, but You are also compassionate to save. Bless our time of study so that we may see ever more clearly how You save us through Your Son and our Lord, Jesus Christ. In His name we pray. Amen.*

**Thought for the day:** Jesus, the Creator of all, stretches out His compassionate hand to save us, are you going to take His hand?



Thursday ~ April 3

## REMAINING IN JESUS

**Read: Matthew 16:13-19**

A fire burned Balsora Baptist Church to the ground. As emergency workers and community members gathered after the blaze subsided, they were surprised to see a charred cross standing upright amidst the smoke and ashes in the air. A firefighter commented that the fire “took the structure, but not the cross. [This is a reminder] that the building was just that, a building. The church is the congregation.”

The church is not a building, but a community united by the cross of Christ—the One who died, was buried, and rose again. When Jesus lived on the earth, He told Peter He’d build His worldwide church, and nothing would destroy it (Matthew 16:18). Jesus would gather believers from all over the globe into a group that would continue throughout time. This community would face intense difficulty, but they’d ultimately endure. God would dwell within them and sustain them (Ephesians 2:22)

When we struggle to establish local churches only to have them stagnate and sputter, when buildings are destroyed, or when we’re concerned about believers struggling in other parts of the world, we can remember that Jesus is alive, actively enabling God’s people to persevere. We’re part of the church *He’s* building today. He’s with us and for us. His cross remains.

~Taken from Our Daily Bread, written by Jennifer Benson Schuld

~Submitted by Connie Pletcher

**Prayer:** *God, please strengthen Your people everywhere. Fill them with wisdom, protect them, and help them stay faithful to You. Amen.*

**Thought for the day:** In what ways might you support fellow believers? How does sharing the good news relate to God’s plan for the church?

Friday ~ April 4

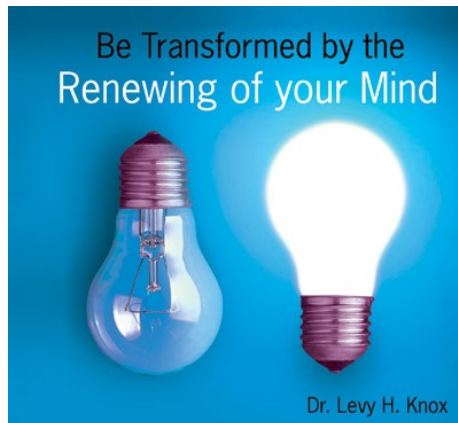
## CHANGE

**Read: Romans 12: 2**

Sometimes things change. For better or for worse, they change. Change can be welcomed or unwanted, good or bad, unnecessary or necessary. Truth is, change can come in many forms.

We may change our job, school, address, church, car, or truck. You get the idea about change. As the Lenten season is upon us, it's a time to reflect on our life and evaluate change, whether a result of circumstance, decision or the Lord's nudging. As we spend time with our Lord during this season, let's reflect on where we are with Him and our loved ones and focus on the changes that He seeks in us according to His will and plan for our life. We as Christians spend a lot of time in the world and the reality is that can leave us needing minor or major changes. Romans 12:2 says " Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect." The world around us can be awfully pervasive if we allow it. And the truth is, sometimes we do. Now is the time to allow Christ to survey the damage and to make the changes He seeks in us.

~Written by Tim Latuch



Saturday ~ April 5

## REMEMBERING, SHARING, GROWING

**Read: *Psalms 34:9 & Matthew 6: 25-34***

Below is a prayer that my great grandfather “Bobbo” wrote. My mom, Connie, recently found, gave, and encouraged me to share with you. She remembers her grandfather listening to a preacher named William Ashley Sunday. Sunday was an American evangelist and professional baseball outfielder, who played for eight seasons in the National League before becoming the most influential American preacher during the first two decades of the 20th century. Billy Sunday never went seminary but had an old-fashioned religion: a personal God, a salvation through Jesus Christ, and followed the moral lessons of the Bible. He lived from November 19, 1862 - November 6, 1935.

My Bobbo is one my mom is confident will be in Heaven. As Bobbo lived in Illinois when I grew up in Michigan and Pennsylvania, my visits with him were a few times a year. I remember him for his love of nature, though a city business guy. He was a bird watcher and vaguely quoting me the above scripture. From his writing I can see evidence of his faith. He died my freshman year of college in 1990.

Since each generation will pass away from this Earth, the written Word of the Lord is so precious to teach the next generation.

### **An Easter Prayer**

True to the prophecy, the Christian Era had begun,  
The calendar as we know it now, began with year A.D. 1  
The Prince of Peace, as Babe became known,  
Gathered believers, He called disciples, due to the interest they had  
shown  
He spoke words, of a Kingdom above  
Posed for friendship, eternity and Brotherly Love,  
Along Highways and Byways, His gospel was spread,  
He who believeth in me, shall arise from the dead  
He was questioned by the Elders, who found His intelligences, beyond

*(Continued on page 37)*

His years  
This in turn caused the governments' fears,  
He was arrested for what He had said,  
He was betrayed by a kiss on the head.  
He preached the Gospel of Peace on Earth, good will to all men.  
Which has been repeated, throughout history, again and again.  
He was crucified and buried but He arose from the dead.  
He made several appearances to prove what He said.

~Written by Arthur J. Klein 1981

~Submitted by Sarah (Sadie) Pletcher

**Prayer:** *Dear Lord Jesus, you are the One. Thank you. Thank you for your people to teach us through and with your Word and their presence in our lives. Help me be your witness to others today. In Jesus's name. Amen.*

**Thought for the day:** God is WITH you so do not worry. Let your WITHness with others be a WITness of Him.

Monday ~ April 7

## GOD'S TIMELINE

**Read: 1 Corinthians 7:29-31**

I was in the passenger seat of my friend's red, late 90s Pontiac Grand Prix when he ran a red light and pulled directly into oncoming traffic, resulting in another vehicle T-boning into the passenger side door. While no one was injured, this was one of the few moments in my life when I felt a close call with my mortality. Time seemed to have been altered. I watched other cars drive past and wondered how they could just go

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about their everyday life. Didn't they realize that life was so fragile? For some time after the accident, it felt as though all the priorities I had been so caught up in just a couple days before were foolish.

In the broader section that encompasses today's reading, Paul is responding to questions from church members in Corinth about marriage and divorce. But in the few verses that make up this reading, it's as if Paul pauses and says, "You guys are asking the wrong questions! Christ is risen and is coming back! Everything is different!" You can feel how Christ's resurrection and impending return has bent time for Paul. I imagine him, like me on that sidewalk years ago, asking the Corinthians, "Don't you realize life is fragile when you have and short?" Paul reminds us that anything we are engaged in on earth is relative in Christ's timeline. These words from Paul remind us to focus on what truly matters: the love of Christ that lives within us. When we view our lives from the perspective of life in Christ, things that seemed so important just moments ago carry a lighter weight, and the things that really matter come into focus. Time is growing short. Let's spend it focused on the things of Christ.

~Taken from The Upper Room Discipline written by Anne Cuming  
~Submitted by Martha Mitchell

**Prayer:** *God of eternity, help me to live on Your timeline. When I get caught up in worries and cares, remind that the things of this world are passing away. Draw me back to Christ and the things that are truly important. Amen.*



Tuesday ~ April 8

## FASTING

**Read: Matthew 9:14-15**

The season of Lent is set apart as a period of mourning for the suffering and death of our Lord Jesus on the cross. It is in preparation of the celebration of His resurrection on Easter Sunday. Paul instructs us in Romans 4:3-6 that fasting is an individual choice for the Christian saved by Grace, and one should not be judged by whether or not they fast. More important than the fast is our daily living for Christ; allowing Christ to live through us. This should be our daily prayer, that every action we do demonstrates Christ in our life. If we choose to fast remember what Jesus said in Matthew 6:16-17

“Whenever you fast, do not put on a gloomy face as the hypocrites do, for they neglect their appearance so that they will be noticed by men when they are fasting. Truly I say to you, they have their reward in full. But you, when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face so that your fasting will not be noticed by men, but by your Father who sees what is done in secret will reward you.”

~In memory of and written by Roger Hart in 2014

**Prayer:** *Dearest Lord Jesus, let my day be a day of demonstration of Your love. May everything I do glorify Your name. Amen.*

**Thought for the day:** During this season of Lent and every day of the year let your day begin with prayer.

Wednesday ~ April 9

## FINDING PEACE IN THE MOMENT

**Read: Psalm 29:11, Isaiah 26:3, & John 14:27**

Throughout my career, I traveled frequently. One of the least peaceful times of my week was catching the Friday flight that would take me home. Flying home through New York or Chicago only added to the stress. O'Hare Airport in Chicago is one of my least favorite airports. If you've ever flown through there, you know it's not a place commonly associated with the word "peace." This is especially true in the spring – during thunderstorm season.

Late one night, as I anxiously awaited my connecting flight home, flight after flight was delayed due to thunderstorms in the area. With flights being delayed, the terminal getting crowded. With the thunder rumbling outside, those of us inside were beginning to grumble. Emotions were high in the boarding area - the masses were unsettled. This was not a time of peace.

With one lone exception.

As I stood waiting, I heard someone humming a song. Turning to look, I saw a young woman seated against the wall. Under a blanket, she held an infant in her arms. It was clear the child was not more than a few months old. The baby was nursing. It was at peace. I was struck by the irony of the moment.

All of us incredibly sophisticated travelers were stressed, anxious, and in a frenzy. The one person who was at peace was this baby. Why? Because that baby had the peace of its mother. Of course, you had taken that child away from its mother, and it would surely have lost its peace. The same goes for us and God.

God will give us his peace; it is up to us to remain in his arms. To receive his warmth and nourishment and to be blanketed with his protection.

~Written by Tom Skelton

**Prayer:** *Prince of Peace, we come before you with hearts burdened and restless. Grant us the inner peace available to us only through your grace and our devotion to you. Amen.*



Thursday ~ April 10

## USING TIME WISELY

**Read: Luke 19:11-27**

Today's passage shows us people with three different attitudes. First, those who reject Jesus. Second, those who hide what they have been given. Third, those who honor Jesus and put his gifts to good use. God has given us spiritual gifts (1 Corinthians 12:7-11) and all kinds of other resources. He wants us to use them wisely. How should we then live?

A man received a phone call from his bank. "Someone is going to deposit \$1,440 into your account. You must use it all today." The man was confused, and the day passed while he wondered what to do with the money. The next morning, another phone call came. "\$1,440 was deposited in your account today. The money that you did not spend yesterday was taken out. Use the money today." The man was a bit uncertain, but spent the money as he pleased. The next morning, the phone rang again. "This morning, \$1,440 was deposited into your account. You must use it all today." The man used all the money. This happened every day. Then one day the man began to worry: "What if I don't get the money today?"

What's the lesson here? God gives us 24 hours—1,440 minutes—each day. We can choose how to use this time. But we must remember that our time can run out. There will come a day when we are called to account for how we have used the time and all the other resources God has given us.



~Written by Jang Ho Park

~Submitted by Mindy Singo

**Prayer:** Lord, thank you for this day, that we can know your will and live by it. Help us to live in a way that honors you. In Jesus; name we pray. Amen.

Friday ~ April 11

## RAISED TO LIFE

**Read: Ephesians 5:8-14 & 1 Thessalonians 4:14**

I never attended church growing up, so for me Easter was all about hunting eggs and getting a day off from school or work. Even after I began attending church regularly, I still didn't completely understand what was special about Easter, or what the Resurrection meant.

At that time my focus was more on being successful. I had built for myself the life that I thought I had always wanted. But then I developed epilepsy, and a 30-year career was suddenly ended. Unable to work, or even to drive, I felt dead inside. Life as I had known it was over. All I could think of was, *Lord, what will I do now?*

It would have been easy then to lose all hope and just give up. But after much prayerful thought and consideration, I realized that even though my old life might have ended, there was still much that I could do. So, I began to put my efforts into the ministries of the church. As God gave new meaning to my life, the message of Easter has become clear to me. No matter what disasters we face, with God's help we can build from the ashes—and with Jesus, experience new life.

~Taken from The Upper Room 2014, written by Mark A. Carter  
~Submitted by Pam Weimer

**Prayer:** *Precious Lord, we thank You for Your presence with us and for being our hope when our own hope is gone. Amen.*

**Thought for the day:** God can raise to life anyone who feels dead inside.

# Saturday ~ April 12

## IF ONLY

### **Read: Ephesians 2:1-10**

In the book *When God Doesn't Make Sense*, there is written about the burdensome situations in life that we can't understand. Some of painful or life-threatening, other are simply inconvenient or uncomfortable. We know that God could eliminate these problems with a whisper, but, instead, He allows us to struggle.

Why? One of His greater purposes is to reveal His power to us. This understanding comes straight from the apostle Paul who wrote, "But we have this treasure in earthen vessels (clay pots), that the Excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us" (2 Corinthians 4:7 KJV)

Instead of accepting the irritations of life, many people struggle with what is called "if onlys." "If only I didn't have diabetes (or deafness or sinus infections)." "If only I were not infertile." "If only I hadn't gotten into that bad business relationship (or lawsuit or loveless marriage)." "If only we didn't have a sick child." "If only we weren't so strapped financially."

Are you struggling with "if onlys" today? If so, we encourage you to release them to God. He has a perfect, loving plan for all of your life—even when life seems less than ideal. We may not see why God allows hardships in our lives, but we can be assured it is part of His eternal plan for our good. He asks us to accept His love and reach in humble dependence for His sufficiency.

~Taken from "Night Light" by Dr. James & Shirley Dobson

~Submitted by Jason Breegle

**Prayer:** *Lord, help us rely on Your great love for us even when we feel weighed down by disappointments. Comfort and strengthen us in our need. Amen.*

**Thought for the day:** Can we learn to depend on the Lord at this point of need?

Monday ~ April 14

## GOD IS OUR REFUGE

**Read: Psalm 91:2**

When my middle sister was small, she had several minor health issues and constant nose bleeds. Sometimes, she knew she was in over her head with some of the bleeds and she would scream “Dad!” and run to him with outstretched arms. In my sister’s case, she knew this small crisis was difficult for her to handle, so she needed someone bigger and wiser who could offer refuge and strength to her. Scripture proclaims “God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in troubles.” (Psalm 46: 1)

A refuge is a place safely out of harm’s way. A fortress is a fortified building that is virtually impenetrable by any conventional means. Martin Luther wrote a wonderful hymn that says, “A mighty fortress is our God; a bulwark never failing. Our helper He amidst the flood; of mortal ills prevailing.” What a statement about the magnificent power and protection of God! Does God care for you and me? Can we turn to Him in trust and faith when troubles and temptations threaten to overwhelm us? Yes—a thousand times yes! What greater proof do we need than that He sent His Son, Jesus Christ, to die in our place?

~Written by Linda Henry

**Prayer:** *God, we know that you are big enough to handle our troubles. Help us to know you, and turn to you with confidence today. Amen.*

**Thought for the day:** In the midst of trouble, the most protective, strong, present and faithful parent alive is our God.

Tuesday ~ April 15

## BLESSED ASSURANCE

**Read: Hebrews 10:22**

Sometimes God opens the doors that we least expect. Opportunities come out of nowhere and possibilities arise from unlikely places. I have been praying for quite some time for God to redirect my career path and, as usual, He has been faithful in His timing. For the past few months, I have been diligently studying the in-depth world of insurance. I have spent countless hours reading about the many ways to cover the things we consider valuable in the event of a loss. I have learned a lot based on the premise that life is unpredictable and risk is certain. My studies also gave me some insight on the difference between insurance and assurance. I can honestly tell you that it is, in fact, wise to fully insure the things we need and to prepare for the unforeseen. But how do we insure our souls? How do we put full coverage on eternal life? The answer is simple, "Blessed assurance, Jesus is mine." Insurance is limited and temporary, but assurance in Jesus Christ is secure now and forever. He covered our sins and His grace knows no end. Most people do realize the importance of protecting assets, but few understand the urgency in safeguarding their relationship with God. It is our job, as Christians, to share the assurance that faith brings and to guide those around us to the One who came to save. What a relief it will be when our friends and family can join us in singing:

"Blessed assurance, Jesus is mine  
Oh, what a foretaste of glory divine  
Heir of salvation, purchase of God  
Born of his Spirit, washed in His blood"

And "What a day of rejoicing it will be, when we all get to Heaven!"

~Written by Angie Millin

*(Continued on page 46)*

**Prayer:** Dear Heavenly Father, help us draw near to you with a sincere heart and with the full assurance that faith brings. Thank you for the gift of salvation through Jesus. Help us to share your everlasting love with all those around us and to be the light in this world. Amen.

**Thought for the day:** Practice the hymns today that you want to sing with the choirs in Heaven.

# Blessed Assurance

Fanny J. Crosby

Mrs. Jos. F. Knapp

1. Bless-ed as-sur-ance, Je-sus is mine! Oh, what a fore-taste of  
 2. Per-fect sub-mis-sion, per-fect de-light, Vi-sions of rap-ture now  
 3. Per-fect sub-mis-sion, all is at rest, I in my Sav-iour am

glo-ry di-vine! Heir of sal-va-tion, pur-chase of God,  
 burst on my sight; An-gels de-scend-ing, bring from a-bove  
 hap-py and blest; Watch-ing and wait-ing, look-ing a-bove,

CHORUS  
 Born of His Spir-it, washed in His blood.  
 Ech-oes of mer-cy, whis-pers of love. This is my sto-ry,  
 Filled with His good-ness, lost in His love.

this is my song, Prais-ing my Sav-iour all the day long; This is my

sto-ry, this is my song, Prais-ing my Sav-iour all the day long.

Wednesday ~ April 16

## TURNING THE WORLD RIGHT SIDE UP FOR JESUS

**Read: Acts 5:41-42**

Now this is what we are called to do: make Jesus known to our neighbors. What would it look like if we started to live this way? When the people of God took Him at His Word, the Gospel spread, and lives were restored.

Now if you do what He has called you to , God will bless your obedience, and the Holy Spirit will equip you and bless what you're doing. In the next chapter, we see that "in those days...the number of the disciples was multiplying" (Acts 6:1). Why? When you obey Him, the Spirit is received, joy is achieved, and the Gospel is believed.

There are enough people right now to turn this world inside out, upside down, and right side up for Jesus Christ. Imagine the restoration and beauty we could see God do in the lives of those around us, impacting our community and all around the world, if we walked with God and listened to Him.

~Taken from Love Worth Finding with Andrian Rogers

~Submitted by Kristen Sanner

**When you pray:** *Pray and ask God to put someone on your heart who you can share your faith with. Begin praying for that person and consider how you can show the love of Christ.*

**Thought for the day:** Have you ever shared your faith with someone? What was that like? What has held you back from sharing your faith?

# Maundy Thursday ~ April 17

## GENERIC GOD

**Read: Exodus 3:13-14**

As we read through the Bible, we find that our GOD is identified by a plain and generic word, God or Lord. At best, these words are translated in most versions of the Bible, designate Him as a Supreme Being or Sovereign of the Universe. Of course, we capitalize the word to give it a greater rank or higher regard but do not explain or give any detail to the true character of our GOD.

So, what one word can encompass and describe the character of our GOD? One author wrote "... if the Heaven of heavens cannot contain GOD, how can a name describe Him?" Unfortunately, this is the problem; no one word can define the true and total nature of our GOD but the Jewish people at least attempted to clarify who their GOD and our GOD is. I have found there to be at least 10 names used frequently in the Bible to name our GOD and some commentaries and books have identified as many as 100 names translated in the Bible to "just" God.

A couple of the more used names are:

**Elohim** is used 2,570 times throughout the Bible and thirty-two times in the first chapter of Genesis. Elohim is best described as the Creative Almighty God. One last neat thing regarding this name, it is in a plural masculine form of a noun but is typically accompanied with verbs and adjectives in the singular form.

**Jehovah** occurs 6,823 times through the Old Testament and is used in conjunction with Elohim in chapters 2 and 3 of Genesis as Jehovah-Elohim and is used the remaining times the single form. GOD as Jehovah is the LORD GOD who in Himself possesses essential of life and has an unchangeable permanent existence.

**El-Shaddai** is found in the Old Testament forty-eight times. GOD's character as El-Shaddai is GOD Almighty, all-sufficient with great blessings to support, satisfy, nourish and supply.

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**Adonai** occurs some 300 times in the Old Testament, hundreds of times in the New Testament and many times to identify the character of Lord Jesus Himself.. This name of GOD is also in the plural tense and affirming the idea of a triune GOD. Adonai describes GOD as the Lord and Master of all of mankind, claiming ownership and obedience from all. This word indicates the expected relationship between GOD and man.

A few other names used to better define the nature of GOD are: Jehovah-Jireh – see how the Lord will provide, Jehovah-Rapha – the Lord that heals body and soul, Jehovah-Nissi – the Lord that goes before me with His banner of strength, Jehovah-M'Kaddesh – the Holy One that consecrates and sanctifies you and Jehovah-Shalom – the Lord of perfect harmony and complete reconciliation; who is peace.

There are many other names I could list to define the nature of our GOD but I am certain it would require more paper space than I am permitted. In closing, I simply ask that you not use the name of GOD generically but with an understanding of GOD's great character, His want for a personal relationship with you and His never ending love for all of us.

~Written by Dave Henry

**Prayer:** *Dear GOD, I thank You for Your never changing nature, I thank You for being the GOD You are. Let me not forget Your character and that You are the Great I Am. Most of all I thank You the sacrifice of Your Son, my LORD and Savior, Jesus Christ. In Jesus' precious name. AMEN!*

**Thought for the day:** As you are reading through the Bible and you come across the word God , give great consideration to the nature and character of our GOD and the situation and circumstances of His dealings with us as His creation and children.

# Good Friday ~ April 18

## GETHSEMANE

**Read: Matthew 26:36-46**

During the Last Supper, Jesus told his disciples what was soon going to happen to him – betrayal, arrest, and crucifixion.

Jesus was filled with anguish and sorrow over what he would soon experience. Taking his three closest disciples, he went to the Garden of Gethsemane to pray. He asked his disciples to sit here and keep watch while I pray. On this dark night in the Garden, he calls out to his Father God. Jesus was distraught, he fell with his face to the ground and prayed with all his might. He returned to his disciples and found them sleeping. He chastised them for their inability to keep watch during this time. The Gospel of Luke says that while he was praying and angel appeared to him and strengthened him, and that his sweat was like droplets of blood. Jesus knew what God's plan was and was submitting to God's will even in the face of immense suffering. He was submitting to God's plan to save humanity from their sin.

Gethsemane is a testament to Jesus' humanity, his commitment to God's will, and his sacrificial love. Gethsemane should serve as a reminder to us that even in our darkest moments, we can find solace in seeking God's presence and surrendering to his will. We all face burdens and trials, and Gethsemane should encourage us to bring our burdens to the Lord.

~Written by Christine Singo

**Prayer:** *Father, everything is possible through you. Take this cup from me. Amen*

**Thought for the day:** Jesus submitted to God's will to save ME from my sin!

# Holy Saturday ~ April 19

## HEAVY EYES

**Read: Mark 14:35-42, Luke 22:41-44, & 2 Corinthians 12:8-10**

At times, we can feel weak, weary, and tired. Have you had a moment, when you could not keep your eyes open as sleep closed in and took hold? I was sitting at a friend's house and talking with him. The fire was big and warm, and the room was so cozy. As I talked with him, I did not realize how tired the day had made me, and I fell asleep. No matter how hard I tried, my eyes with heaviness simply would not stay open. I drifted off to sleep.

As Jesus was preparing to go to the cross, He took his disciples with Him to the Garden of Gethsemane. He asked them to do something for Him. He asked them to keep watch and pray. He went further on from them alone and submitted to the Father's will for Him. Remember His Words, "And He went a little beyond *them*, and fell to the ground and *began* to pray that if it were possible, the hour might pass Him by. And He was saying, 'Abba! Father! All things are possible for You; remove this cup from Me; yet not what I will, but what You will.'" (Mark 14:35-36). You'll remember that the disciples could not do what Jesus asked them to do under their own power. They could not keep watch and pray. They fell asleep. Their weariness and/or heavy eyes kept getting the best of them. Mark 14:38-41 puts it this way, "Keep watching and praying that you may not come into temptation; the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak." Again He went away and prayed, saying the same words. And again He came and found them sleeping, for their eyes were very heavy; and they did not know what to answer Him. And He came the third time, and said to them, 'Are you still sleeping and resting? It is enough; the hour has come; behold, the Son of Man is being betrayed into the hands of sinners'". Jesus understood their issue. Imagine that with me. The LORD was going through a time like none of us have fully known, one of pain, pressure, and suffering, to the point that He was sweating drops of blood. Luke 22 says, "And He withdrew from them about a stone's throw, and He knelt down and *began* to pray, saying,

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'Father, if You are willing, remove this cup from Me; yet not My will, but Yours be done.' Now an angel from heaven appeared to Him, strengthening Him. And being in agony He was praying very fervently; and His sweat became like drops of blood, falling down upon the ground." (Luke 22:41-44) Yet He came patiently to them repeatedly and commanded them to keep watch and pray. He even said, "The spirit is willing but the flesh is weak". (Mark 14:38) In other words, "I know you want to do this but you cannot do it under your own strength".

It is amazing to me that Jesus, having endured the Garden of Gethsemane, arose to His feet and resolutely gave Himself into the hands of sinful men. He allowed Judas to kiss Him. He allowed Himself to be taken into custody by the Jewish officials and the Romans. He remained obedient even unto death. Hear the power of His words as He instructed the disciples following His surrender to the Father's will in the Garden: "Get up, let us be going; behold, the one who betrays Me is at hand!" (Mark 14:42). In other words, "Let's go. It's time!" As we move to the cross of Calvary this Lenten Season, see with fresh eyes how Jesus, who possesses all the authority and power of eternity, willingly and resolutely surrendered Himself into the hands of the Jewish leaders and Romans (Gentiles) to be placed on the cross. He did it for our forgiveness and redemption. Look to the grave which could not hold Him. Jesus is the Resurrection and Life!

Where we are weary, weak, and experiencing the fatigue and heavy eyes of life, in our toughest and longest hours, remember that Jesus endured everything and stayed awake for you and me. He fervently prayed and said to the Father, "Not My will but Yours be done...". Now, with nail scarred hands and the life of resurrection He says to you and me, no matter where we find ourselves, "My Grace is sufficient for you, for My Power is perfected in weakness." (2 Corinthians 12:8-10)

~Written by Pastor Tim Monteith

**Prayer:** *LORD of Glory, Thank you for humbling Yourself and being obedient to the point of death, death on on a cross, for my forgiveness and redemption. Remind me this Lenten season that in my weakest places and times, Your Grace is sufficient, for Your Power is made perfect in weakness. Let me respond to You in humility and worship in Spirit and truth. Let me rely on You as I marvel at Your Grace and Glory. In the Name of the One who is the Resurrection and Life, My King, Jesus. Amen.*





