

Lenten Devotional

Reflections for each day in Lent

*A collection of readings
from Friends & Family of
Wesley Chapel Church
February - April 2026*

and only atoning sacrifice acceptable to God, taking on our sin as the true Passover Lamb of God, and by His blood alone, shed on a cross made of a tree (by the way we ate the fruit of a tree and died there), so that we would be forgiven by faith alone in Him. Now, when we are forgiven by God in Jesus Christ, no condemnation exists. The burden is lifted and removed. By what means? The cross. Now that we are forgiven, in Christ, we are cleansed, bought with a price, given value and life which we being dead in our sins did not have on our own, In Christ. When accusations **assail the heart, remember this...you are forgiven by God in Christ. Your forgiveness was not earned by you. It never could be. It is not achieved by you. You couldn't possibly ever be so. No, you are forgiven by faith in Christ Jesus, by God the Father. His forgiveness is for eternity.**

Have you ever noticed how the rain helps to melt the snow? The heat and life given off by the sun also melts the snow as well. This is true **spiritually too. The cleansing flow of Jesus' blood and the direct rays of the Son's light (for He is the Light of the World) melt away and cleanse us from** all the sins and burdens of yesterday, today, and the future. As the Scripture says, Jesus gives us lasting and eternal forgiveness. We are cleansed from all unrighteousness in Jesus. Do not live in the shadows of sin, sorrow, and the past. Instead come into the light, confess your sin, and be forgiven, forever.

This Lent let the cleansing work of Jesus sink deep with your heart. Live as one redeemed. Take time to worship, to pray, and to praise Jesus. **Make it your life's focus to spend each day you are given as one who exists to bring Jesus honor and glory. For you are living by faith in Jesus, as one who is truly and forever forgiven.**

~Written by Pastor Tim Monteith

Prayer: Lord Jesus, thank You for dying for me. Thank You for shedding Your blood on the cross to forgive and cleanse me forever. Let me live my life for Your praise and Glory, as one who is living forgiven. Use me where, when, and how You please for Your honor and glory. As Isaiah said in Isaiah chapter six, once he was forgiven and cleansed, "Here I am Lord, send me..."

*In Jesus' name,
Amen*

Holy Saturday ~ April 4

FORGIVEN

Read: Psalm 130: 1-6

I have been amazed to see the height of the snow piles along the **roadsides, in parking lots, and yes, at my house this year.** It's hard to believe how much snow can fall quietly, softly, and over time. Before you know it the amount is greater than one expects.

Recently, I moved one of the piles over to free up some more space to move and walk along the pathways outside our house. Each shovel full I moved was heavier. The snow had packed down and been weighed down by more and more snow until the load became hard to move and, frankly, burdensome.

Spiritually, this is true in our lives. Sin makes a mess of our lives. It injures, divides, corrupts, and burdens with a heavy load the souls and lives of us as humans. On our own, we cannot lift the burden, free ourselves, move forward in newness of life and redeem each breath and step we take. The reality also exists that we must each give an account to God, for who we have been, who we are really, where we have been, and what we have done with the time we have been given to live. **We cannot escape this reality...the truth. We must give an account.** Now, we can ask others for forgiveness of our sins. We can pretend they do not exist. This is the path of self-deception. We can mask ourselves, insulate ourselves, try to put on good works. Yet, none of this will offer the forgiveness and redemption we need. Nothing can unburden the soul, when we look to other places and faces to do so rather than God. Nothing and no one can wipe our souls clean, cleanse us, and make us new, completely new, other than God.

That's the good news, though. Sure it might not sound like good news at first, but it is. We were dead in our sin, completely unable to do anything to save and redeem ourselves. We could not cleanse ourselves of our sin in any way whatsoever and make us new. Jesus came, God, fully God in human flesh and fully man, to do for us what we could not do. He, being sinless Himself, offered up His life as the one

(Continued on page 55)

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.

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*

Good Friday ~ April 3

SERVE WITH OBEDIENCE

Read: Exodus 3:11-12

In the eleventh century, King Henry III of Bavaria grew tired of court life and the pressures of being a monarch. He made application to Prior Richard at a local monastery, asking to be accepted as a contemplative and spend the rest of his life in the monastery. "Your Majesty," said Prior Richard, "do you understand that the pledge here is one of obedience? That will be hard because you have been a king." "I understand," said Henry. "The rest of my life I will be obedient to you, as Christ leads you."

"Then I will tell you what to do," said Prior Richard. "Go back to your throne and serve faithfully in the place where God has put you." When King Henry died, a statement was written: "The King learned to rule by being obedient." When we tire of our roles and responsibilities, it helps to remember God has planted us in a certain place and told us to be a good accountant or teacher or mother or father. Christ expects us to be faithful where he puts us and heed his call to service. - *Adapted from an illustration submitted by Steve Brown, Key Biscayne, Florida.*

When God called Moses to deliver the people of Israel out of Egypt, Moses questioned his own ability to serve. God responded by reminding Moses that **He would be with him. Moses used his unique skills to serve God's greater purpose.** This is the task to which each of us is called. By accepting salvation, **we are acknowledging God's power and must use our distinctive circumstances to further God's kingdom.** As we remember the life of Jesus, let us be ever mindful of our duty to serve Him.

~Written by Gary Weimer

*Thought for the day: **Someone once said, "Most Christians really want to serve God, but they only want to do it in an advisory capacity.***

*Prayer: Father, Creator of all things, I come to You humbly. I realize I am nothing without You. Help me to use what skills You have given to me to spread the Word of God. Help me to explain what Easter means to me and **how God's plan of salvation is for everyone. I will rely on You for my strength as I do Your will. In Jesus' name, Amen.***

(Continued from page 51)

fully prepared. He relied on The Father for his sustenance, and word as **He defeated the devil's temptations one step at a time. As I learned how** to be prepared as a young boy when heading into the woods, I've learned to prepare myself with the word of God, prayer, and the peace of salvation in Christ when we face the wilderness of life and everything it throws at us.

~Written by Tim Latuch



Ash Wednesday ~ February 18

ENCOURAGEMENT

Read: Hebrews 10:25

When we were asked by my sister to write a devotion, the first thing that **came to our minds was the word encouragement. As many of you don't** know us, but we have come to know many of you by reading your devotions for many years. We want to thank everyone of you who has shared their hearts, struggles, encouragements and the good things God has done in their lives. No one will ever realize the impact they make on **one's life. I have for years saved these devotional booklets, and I have** went through them time and time again, sharing with many others along **the way. I've even made copies to share with others. I used them for** many personal journeys with the Lord. So many children and youth that contribute to this devotional—**they are the church's future. How** awesome God is! So as I end, we pray for each and every one of you who submit to the devotional book—you truly have a heart for God. We pray that the Lord blesses each and every one of you, and they you keep the devotions coming. Happy Easter - THE LORD HAS RISEN!

~Written by Phillip & Allison Bittner
(Christine Singo & Roxann Blough's sister & brother-in-law)

Thought for the day: A little encouragement goes a long way.

Prayer: Dear Lord, Help us to encourage one another no matter the circumstances. Help us lift one another up. In Jesus' loving name. Amen.

Thursday ~ February 19

WHERE ARE YOUR TREASURES?

Read: Matthew 6:1-6, 16-21; Joel 2:1-2; Isaiah 58:1-2, Psalm 51:1-17

On Ash Wednesday, millions of people will **pause to hear the words, “Remember you are dust, and to dust you shall return”** as someone makes the mark of a cross with ashes on their forehead. This Ash Wednesday ritual is an annual invitation to take stock of what matters most in the precious few years the Lord has granted each of us.



We cannot know how long we will live or what triumphs, joys, sorrows, disasters and accomplishments we will encounter along the way. We do get to decide our priorities and what we most treasure. Our hearts - that is, our attention and energy - follow our priorities, whether those are accumulating wealth and things, achieving goals, or spending time with loved ones.

Ash Wednesday is when we wear a visible outward expression of an invisible inner conviction. God grants us control over these unseen convictions. May we choose to treasure things of lasting and eternal value. Treasures come and go; the love of God is everlasting.

~Submitted by Rene Temple

~Taken from “Christ in Our Home”, Vol. 73, No. 1, January-March 2026,
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Prayer concerns: Those who are struggling to find the true treasure of life.

Prayer : Great Creator, help us to turn our attention to those things that matter most to You. Amen.

Thursday ~ April 2

THE WILDERNESS

Read: Matthew 4:1-11

Growing up I spent a lot of time in the wilderness. I learned to start campfires, gather wood, harvest game, learned to cook, and build shelters. I had no idea how important those skills would become in life. It was just fun to me. One thing quickly became apparent, being prepared was maybe the most important lesson that I had learned when spending time in the wilderness. Some years later, as I approached adulthood I found myself in a different kind of wilderness. One I was not prepared for. Life. The pressure to fit in, get ahead, and the temptations that go along with it. I was not prepared for this wilderness. Have you ever been in this wilderness?

Matthew 4:1-11 describes Jesus' experience in the wilderness.

1 Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted[a] by the devil. 2 After fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry. 3 The tempter came to him and said, “If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread.” 4 Jesus answered, “It is written: ‘Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.’[b]” 5 Then the devil took him to the holy city and had him stand on the highest point of the temple. 6 “If you are the Son of God,” he said, “throw yourself down. For it is written:

“He will command his angels concerning you, and they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.”

7 Jesus answered him, “It is also written: ‘Do not put the Lord your God to the test.’[d]” 8 Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor. 9 “All this I will give you,” he said, “if you will bow down and worship me.” 10 Jesus said to him, “Away from me, Satan! For it is written: ‘Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only.’[e]” 11 Then the devil left him, and angels came and attended him.

Much can be gleaned from Jesus' perfect example as He faced the wilderness and Satan's relentless pursuit of his submission. Jesus was

(Continued on page 52)

Wednesday ~ April 1

PRESSING ON TO PERFECTION IN LOVE

Read: Philippians 3:13-24; 1 Thessalonians 5:23

"My remnant of days I spend to His praise Who died the whole world to redeem: Be they many or few, My days are His due, And they all are devoted to Him!" — John Wesley, 1788.

Scripture Focus:

- Philippians 3:13-14: "...*Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.*"
- 1 Thessalonians 5:23: *"May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ."*

Lent is a season for "going on to perfection"—a deeper devotion to God. Wesley calls for heart examination and dedication of every moment of life as a "living sacrifice". As people reflect on the journey to the cross, they can surrender themselves to Him, seeking perfect love.

~Devotional from John Wesley
~Submitted by Tom Skelton, created using Google AI

Thought of the day: What area of your heart or life do you need to fully surrender to God this Lent?

Prayer: Lord, I am no longer my own, but Yours. Put me to what You will, rank me with whom You will. Let me be full, let me be empty. Let me have all things, let me have nothing. I freely and heartily yield all things to Your pleasure and disposal. Amen. — John Wesley's Covenant Prayer.

Friday ~ February 20

WHAT MAKES YOU A CHRISTIAN?

Read: Matthew 7:21-23

What makes you a Christian? Some people think if they go to church every week, are kind to people, and help others, then they will go to Heaven. **Being a Christian isn't about how nice you are or about how much you don't sin. Judas followed Jesus every day. He saw Jesus perform miracles and told people he loved Him, but when he was offered money, he betrayed Jesus (Matthew 26:14-16).** It is easy to say you are a follower of God, but sometimes in life we betray Him. But how do you get to Heaven? Matthew 7:21 says that not everyone who calls the **Lord's name will go to Heaven, but the people who truly believe and love God will.** Heaven is not a place you can earn your way into. We need to realize that we are sinners and need to repent of our sins. We all sin like Judas did and will continue to make mistakes every day. It is only **through Jesus' sacrifice that we are able to get to Heaven. This is why we also need to spend time in God's word to know right from wrong.** Being a Christian means following God by loving, worshiping, and trying to be more like him, even when temptations and obstacles are presented in our lives.

~Written by Faith Millin

Prayer: Heavenly Father, we praise and thank You for Your Son's sacrifice. We pray that we can understand the meaning of being a Christian and help us to be more like You. We also pray that You keep us away from temptations and focus on You and Your Word. In Your name we pray, Amen.

Saturday ~ February 21

**FROM WHERE DOES EVIL COME?
DID GOD CREATE EVIL?**

In a few of my discussions, with a variety of people; the question comes up, "Where does evil come from?" or "Did GOD create evil?" Many times when I look back at my response I found it to be a bit inadequate, but recently found an article of a discussion between two people and neither of them identified.

The conversation went something like this:

"Did GOD create Evil?"

"No, He didn't."

"But didn't GOD create everything?"

"Yes, He did."

"How does that make sense?"

"Does the cold exist?"

"Yes, haven't you felt it?"

"Yes, you can feel it but technically it doesn't exist. Cold is simply the absence of heat."

"What about darkness?"

"We study light, but darkness is something that doesn't exist on it's own. Darkness is just the absence of light."

"In the same way, GOD didn't create evil. Evil is what happens

when we push GOD away. When we lose love and faith. Love and faith are like light and warmth. Without GOD in our lives, evil takes their place."

So while GOD created everything, He didn't create evil."

Just think about what happens when we turn away from our GOD and what replaces the many blessings GOD has granted us. If GOD is not in our lives, think what replaces those gifts from GOD; with no LOVE there is HATE, with no FAITH there is WORRY, with no HOPE there is DESPARE, with no PATIENCE there is ANXIETY, with no JOY there is DISCONTENT, with no PEACE there is DISORDER, with no

(Continued on page 9)

Tuesday ~ March 31

THE ONLY WAY

Read: John 14:6

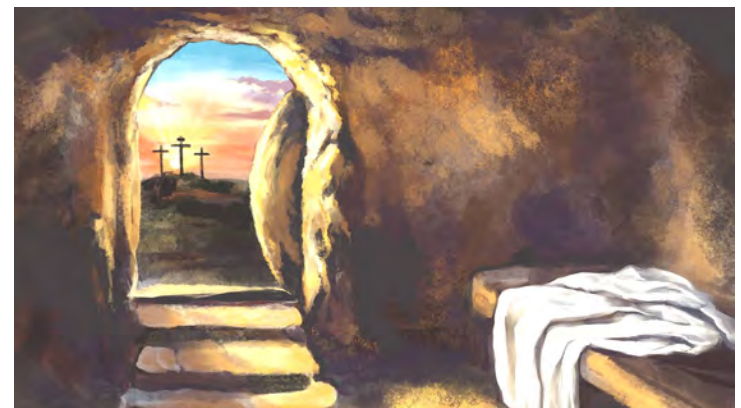
He is the exclusive bridge between humanity and God. He went to the cross to die for our sins. We can not do anything to be forgiven for our sins **except through Jesus' grace and mercy. Jesus suffered all of our earthly agonies in His short life span here on earth.**

Resurrection was our Heavenly Father's assurance if we acknowledge Jesus as our Savior in our heart and confess with our mouth we will go to heaven with Jesus.

If the cross was the answer alone for our forgiveness without the resurrection we would not be able to inherit eternal life. It is impossible to separate the priority of the cross and the resurrection for they are equivalent in importance in our Christian faith.

~Written by Connie Kammerer

Prayer: Please forgive me for my sins through this holy Lenton season and help me to study Your Word that I may live a more productive life for sharing the life of Your Son. In Jesus' Name, Amen.



Monday ~ March 30

STRONGER TOGETHER

Read: Psalm 139

For the past few years a few of my family members and I have committed ourselves to a year of Bible reading/Bible study. This year we are taking turns choosing a book of the Bible or topic that we want to study and then choosing a Bible study guide to complete. We thought this would give us a wide range of topics to study. We all work independently, but will check in on each other or ask each other questions every now and then. The first guide we are **completing this year is "40 Days Through the Bible". This is a guide that I chose** for the group. When my family was checking in with each other to see what progress everyone was making, one of my family members said that they struggle with questions that are asking about their own spiritual journey. We all **have struggles and sometimes it's hard to vocalize them or write them down, but it's an important part of learning what we need to work on or improve in our** relationship with God. Whether it is reading our Bible more often, studying certain books, talking to others about Jesus, or strengthening our prayer life, if we ask the Lord for help and lean on Him for support, it will lead us to a deeper relationship with Him.

So during this Lenten season, or even this year, start a prayer circle or study group with your family/friends. It will benefit all of you and you will learn more about the Lord and strengthen your relationship with Him. Psalms 139 is a **powerful reminder of God's intimate knowledge and presence in our lives. We** are uniquely created individuals who are loved and known by God. He knows our strengths and struggles and walks beside us through every season of life.

~Written by Christine Singo

Prayer: Lord, create in me a clean heart and renew a right spirit within me. Amen.

GOODNESS there is IMMORALITY and with no LOVINGKINDNESS there is CRUELTY.

Look at the world around us, what do you see? We see a people who have turned away from GOD and have let evil fill the vacancy where GOD should be!!

~Written by Dave Henry

*Thought for the day: Thought for the DAY: Turn your heart to GOD, **walk in GOD's truth and project your light into the darkness of evil** through your faith and love in Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior.*

Prayer: Lord GOD, we pray for all who have turned from You, may we be the light to others to direct the lost souls to You, through our lovingkindness and giving the Glory to You. Continue to guide and direct us in the best manner to tell the world of Your unbounded grace available to all that return to You. In the name of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

NO VACANCY

Monday ~ February 23

OUR LOVING RESCUER

Read: *Psalm 55:1-5,16-22*

During a raging wildfire, a forest ranger saved a bear cub. At a recovery site safely away from those still fighting the inferno, he placed the rescued animal on the ground. Standing on its tiny back paws, the **cub hugged the man's calf. The ranger gently pried himself away. Mouth wide as if crying out in desperation, the little bear clambered and clawed in an attempt to remain in the refuge of his rescuer's embrace. As the cub clung to his arm the kind man relented and rubbed his furry friend's head.**

What if we pursued our ultimate rescuer—Jesus—with the same fierce desperation and confidence as the bear cub who pursued and clung to the one who saved him from death?

All people God made need saving. The psalmist David confessed his need for a rescuer—for God to hear and answer his prayers (Psalm 55:1-2). Admitting he faced troubles, threats, suffering, and fear (vv. 3-5), **David pursued God with assurance. “As for me, I call to God, and the LORD saves me,” he said (v. 16). “Evening, morning and noon I cry out in distress, and He hears my voice” (v. 17). David prayed continually. He believed God listened and trusted that He would rescue him “unharméd” (v. 18).**

When we face difficulties or suffering of any kind, like David, we can cry out to God. Our loving Rescuer, who pursues us, hears and saves us when we pursue Him too.

~Taken from Bible in a Year, Written by Xochitl Dixon

~Submitted by Connie Pletcher

Thought for the day: How can you pursue God today? When has God rescued you from trouble or suffering?

Prayer: Dear God, thank You for rescuing me from death through Christ and for being my refuge every day. Amen.

Saturday ~ March 28

FATIGUE

Read: Isaiah 40:28-31

I like to think that I am in pretty good shape for a man my age. Unfortunately, whenever I begin to do some serious physical activity, I realize very quickly how out of shape I am. Even worse, after several days or weeks of strenuous work, my body begins to break down. My muscles and joints no longer function as they should with fatigue and inflammation taking its toll.

I find this to be true in our spiritual lives as well. When I become distracted **with the world and put my faith on the back burner, I tend to get “Out of shape”. My prayer life declines, my Bible reading suffers and as a result, my relationship with God becomes more distant and difficult to regain. Before I know it, I begin to wonder. “How did I drift this far?”**

The flip side of this coin is fatigue. Sometimes after pouring all of our effort into our **“duties” in serving the Lord and the church we may find ourselves burnt out.** Year after year of trying to keep up with obligations can become taxing. Worse yet, we may even become complacent, wondering why we are making the effort to attend church and put in added energy when it seems as though we have done it all already. (I call this Groundhog Day apathy). The truth is, we as humans get tired. We get lazy. We lose focus. And we fall away from God.

To all of these problems there is but one solution. We must pull our strength not from ourselves but from God. He does not get tired or grow weary. He is the only one capable of providing the strength that we need to do His will day in and day out for our entire existence.

Why do we attend church? Why do we sign up to lead groups and activities? **Why do we write devotions? It shouldn't be to show what good Christians we are. It should be in an effort to grow in our relationship with our Savior. It's not about our deeds; it's about our hearts. We need to do these things with our hearts rejoicing in and focusing on God continually. As we draw closer to Him, the more strength we receive. He is power without limit.**

~Written by Mark Millin

Prayer: Lord, I know that without you I am weak. I ask for your strength in all that I do and in all that I do I pray that I keep You as my focus. Amen

Friday ~ March 27

LOVE WORTHY OF OUR LIFE

Read: Matthew 16:25

William Temple, a twentieth-century English bishop, once concluded a sermon to Oxford students with the words of the hymn “When I Survey the Wondrous Cross.” But he cautioned against taking the song lightly. “If you mean [the words] with all your hearts, sing them as loud as you can,” Temple said. If you don’t mean them at all, keep silent. If you mean them even a little, and want to mean them more, sing them very softly.” The crowd went quiet as everyone eyed the lyrics. Slowly, thousands of voices began to sing in a whisper, mouthing the final lines with gravity: “Love so amazing, so divine / Demands my soul , my life, my all.”

Those Oxford students understood the reality that believing in and following Jesus is a serious choice, because it means saying yes to a radical love that demands everything from us. Following Christ requires our entire life, our whole being. He plainly told His disciples, “Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me” (Matthew 16:24). No one should make this choice flippantly.

Yet following Jesus is also the way to our deepest joy. Life with Him, we’ll discover, is the life we truly desire. It appears to be a great paradox. However, if we respond to GOD’s love, believe in Christ, and relinquish our selfish, shortsighted demands, we’ll find the life our soul craves (v. 25).

~Written by Winn Collier
~Submitted by Cindy Miller

Thought for the day: What will believing in and following Jesus cost you? What will you gain?

Prayer: Dear GOD, following You isn’t easy, but I want to give You my life and my all.

Tuesday ~ February 24

TEMPORAL OR ETERNAL

Read: Romans 12:2

From time to time I get this image in my mind of hundreds of salmon swimming up a raging stream against the current which has to be extremely hard! The salmon know its goal, and will do everything it can to get where it needs to go. Such an awesome creation of God. Then I look at myself, and am convicted that I am not working hard enough to separate myself from this world. Am I doing God’s will for my life...or my will. I catch myself thinking about the temporal things and not of the eternal things. Paul talks about not being conformed to the pattern of this world and I ask myself... do I make a conscious effort to steer away from the societal pressures, situations and temptations that can pull me in. Am I thinking in an eternal perspective ?

Paul also says that we need to be transformed by the renewing of our mind so that we may know what God’s will is for us, that which is good, acceptable and perfect. As a Christian, the best way of renewing your mind is to commune with God daily through prayer and reading His word. For me, I find it more and more easier to hear His voice when I try to focus on *His* will for my life and replace my old way of thinking. It is not easy, but it is so much better when I am in prayer and in His word. Thank you God for those things.

For sure... it is a daily battle, and we all need to ask the Holy Spirit to guide us throughout the day and enable us to make Godly decisions that have eternal value.

~Written by Tracy Pritts

Thought for the day: Turn you 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.

Prayer: Father, search our hearts and take away our pride, fill us with humility and bless us with discernment to give our energies to the Eternal matters and not the Temporal matters of this perishing world. Bring our sins to mind, as we seek to be more like you. In Jesus name, Amen.

Wednesday ~ February 25

FAITH THAT HOLDS DURING HARD TIMES

Read: Psalm 34:18

We all face seasons when life feels hard. Often, it's only later that we look back and realize God was with us all along. But how do we find strength to anchor our souls to God in the midst of affliction? The storms are relentless sometimes. Maybe for you, it is a loss, hurt, trauma, disappointment, or unfulfilled longing.

Sometimes, it feels like all we can do is survive and exist. We take it one day or even one hour at a time. Jesus told us to expect trials and sorrows. **Thankfully, He also reminded us that He'd overcome the world.**

The truth is we don't know what will get resolved on this side of heaven. But we know the One who walks with us and weeps with us. And we can take Him at His Word. We know if we're in Christ, we're promised eternity with Him. This means an end to our suffering, grief, addictions and anxieties. Sometimes, the hope of heaven alone is what we cling to.

When I let my hardships define me, I have to stop and remember the truth. I remind myself who God is and what His Word says about me. **For every pain we can think of, there's an attribute of God we can rest in**—something that will anchor our souls to eternal truth.

Where people abandon, God never leaves His children.

Where people deceive and do not keep their word, God is steady and unchanging.

All His words are true.

Where death's sting is sharp, God is the comforter and sustainer who has already conquered it.

We can stay anchored by reading Scripture that reminds us how **we're deeply loved. God created us in His image, giving us value, dignity, and worth**—even if people have made us feel otherwise. Psalm

(Continued on page 13)

(Continued from page 44)

And I, as the quiet girl God made me, right there in that quiet room, prayed that quiet prayer. I expected a sort of thunder clap experience, perhaps with lightning or a kind of extra-loud spiritual confirmation right there in my dark room, a rush of *something...maybe even angels singing.*

But there was silence.

Maybe, I thought, maybe I said it wrong. I know I meant it with all my heart, but maybe God was expecting me to put something more into it. **Maybe my posture wasn't quite right. I tried praying again.**

Silence.

I don't know how long I wrestled with the silence. I don't know how long I carried the confusion in my heart, but God in His grace and mercy led me to find Him in Scripture, particularly where He says, “if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.”

There it was, in Scripture, and that's what it came down to. Would I trust what He says in the Bible? Did He really mean what He said? Is it for real? Could God be trusted to save me? I would have to bank this prayer, and every prayer, on Him, and on the promises in His Word, not on my feelings, and certainly not on my good-doing. I knew I needed a Savior, and He would do the saving. I confessed and I believed.

I still do.

In the silence, I learned to trust Him.

~Written by Amy Monteith

Prayer: Father, thank You that You hear every prayer we pray. Thank You for sending Jesus and showing us the way to salvation and life with You. Thank You that in the quiet, in the noise, and in every circumstance, we can pray and trust You. Thank You that every prayer is faithfully answered in Jesus. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Thursday ~ March 26

SILENCE

Read: Matthew 27:34

I grew up in a small town with a population of about 350 people. A lot of them were Amish. Country roads, quilted fields, blue sky stretching wide. Our quiet days started with horse hooves clip-clopping down the hill on the street in front of our house. Then there was breakfast and a somewhat slow **ride to school (it isn't safe to pass an Amish buggy on a hill)**. All the days started that way, and they ended just as quietly. Slow ride home, homework, extra-curricular activities, dinner, tv, horse hooves clip-clopping up the hill, bed. We lived our days as regularly and surely as the seasons.

The church my family attended was small, and it was just as quiet and predictable as our days. Started and ended with the same songs. Prayed the same prayers. Liturgy throughout, doxology after the offering, children **dismissed to junior church during the pastor's quiet sermon midway**, and called back in to end the service with our parents.

I learned Bible stories and Bible songs in Sunday school and junior church. Being good was especially encouraged. The only message I remember hearing from my pastor as a young child must have happened at **VBS. He taught us to sing "I have decided to follow Jesus" in Portuguese**. I sang it with my heart, and still remember the chorus. I wonder what else he might have taught us had we been allowed to listen.

I don't have a memory of clearly hearing the gospel until I was 11 years old. It was our youth leader who told us about our need of a Savior. I took this news home and thought about it. That night, I bowed my knees at my bed, and confessed to God my need of a Savior. I asked Jesus to be Lord of my life.

It was one of those quiet nights. They all were. Homework was done, dinner eaten, tv watched, horse hooves clip-clopped up the hill. Bedtime.

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34:18 is a promise in the pain that God is close to the brokenhearted. **This means He's close even if we don't feel close.**

As we hold onto God's promises, practicing gratitude can direct our minds to the truths that settle our souls. Even when it feels like life has collapsed with an impossible future, God's character does not change.

I may not have the strength in my grief to thank God, but I can **always thank Him that He's steadfast and full of love toward me. I can be grateful that He'll never leave me. I can remind myself that He's my comforter and sustainer who equips me with strength and endurance.** I can choose to take Him at His Word.

For every pain we can think of, there's an attribute of God we can rest in—something that will anchor our souls to eternal truth.

~Written by Lindsay Burt, Orlando, USA; Jesus Film Project

~Submitted by Gary Weimer

Thought for the day: What Scripture or promise of God can you meditate on to keep your mind and heart anchored to Him?

Prayer: Jesus, thank You for being the trustworthy Savior of my soul. Thank You that I can stand on the truths in Your Word no matter what I'm walking through. Be my sustainer and comforter and help me to remain anchored in You as I'm reminded of Your promises. Amen.



Thursday ~ February 26

IT WON'T MATTER IN HEAVEN

Read: 2 Corinthians 4:18 and Colossians 3:2

These two verses are important, are they not? We need to remember in our daily lives that this earth is not our home. What you see on the news does not matter. If the president decides to take away some kind of **important freedom, it won't matter in heaven. When you have a bad hair day when your hair insists upon sticking out the wrong way, it won't matter in heaven. When your dog rolls around in the mud and jumps on your clean bed, it won't matter in heaven. When your favorite football team gets a new (and frankly bad) coach, or loses its most important game of the season, it won't matter in heaven. Just please don't you go losing it too, whatever you do.**

God wants us to remember to not be afraid. It's like this: if you're in a wintery storm in your car driving and you slide off the mountain, or right into the rails of Dicky Hill, you'll be alright. It won't matter in heaven. *Have I not commanded you? Be strong and of good courage, do not be afraid, nor dismayed, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go. Joshua 1:9* God wants us to not be vain. After all, He was the creative One who **created us. It's like this:** if you are interviewing for mayor and you spill spaghetti sauce on your best dress or your best suit, it won't matter in heaven. I don't recommend spilling sauce on your favorite clothes, mind you. *But the LORD said to Samuel, "Do not look at his appearance or physical stature, because I have refused him. For the LORD does not see as man sees; for man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart."* **1 Samuel 16:7**

I hope you will remember these verses and remember that nothing bad will matter in heaven. Have a blessed day!

~Written by Brooklyn Monteith

*Prayer: God, I thank You that none of this bad stuff in the world will really at all matter in heaven. I thank You that I can be safe while (accidentally) sliding off the mountain. Thanks **really for everything!** In Jesus' Name, Amen.*

Wednesday ~ March 25

AT THE CROSSROADS

Read: Proverbs 8:1-2

The problem with crossroads is that they present choices and require that they need to be made, and unless you make the right choice you end up being **hopelessly lost! Reminds me of a story...**

A big truck came to a halt at a country crossroads and the driver shouted to a man working nearby, "Can you tell me how to get to Cranberry, please?" "No, I can't," the man replied. "Then which way to 79?" the driver asked. "Can't rightly say," answered the man. "You don't know much, do you?" asked the truck driver sarcastically. "No, I don't know much," replied the local man. "But I'm not lost... you are!"

It is at the crossroads that we need somebody who, like Christ, has words of wisdom to impart. Our life is full of crossroads; all about choices. The need to make choices never ends. Fortunately, there is a word from the Lord on the subject—WISDOM. **Sometimes this wisdom is called "common sense and understanding" (8:5), "excellent things and right" (8:6), "truth" (8:7), and "advice that is wholesome and good" (8:8).** This wisdom is more than knowledge. There are learned people who lack wisdom, and uneducated people who display the wisdom that Scripture speaks.

The key is found in Proverbs 9:10 "Fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. Knowledge of the Holy One results in understanding." True wisdom is available to those who fear the Lord. This does not mean living in mortal terror of a cold and merciless Deity, but rather loving with reverence and awe of a great a gracious God who longs to be deeply involved in your life's journey and consulted at your life's crossroads. **We need to pray continuously!!**

~Written by Linda Henry with excerpts from Tekarta Devotions

*Thought for the day: It takes a wise person to listen to the right voice and make the right choices. **This way we will find the right road...this way we take the high road with Christ.***

Prayer: Heavenly Father, we know you do not even wait for us to ask directions at these crossroads, help us to gain Your unearned love and favor through Your gracious love. Amen

Tuesday ~ March 24

DEAD TO SIN, ALIVE TO GOD

Read: Romans 6:1-14

What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin so that grace may increase? 2 May it never be! How shall we who died to sin still live in it? 3 Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death? 4 Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life. 5 For if we have become united with Him in the likeness of His death, certainly we shall also be in the likeness of His resurrection, 6 knowing this, that our old self was crucified with Him, in order that our body of sin might be done away with, so that we would no longer be slaves to sin; 7 for he who has died is freed from sin. 8 Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him, 9 knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, is never to die again; death no longer is master over Him. 10 For the death that He died, He died to sin once for all; but the life that He lives, He lives to God. 11 Even so consider yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus. 12 Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its lusts, 13 and do not go on presenting the members of your body to sin as instruments of unrighteousness; but present yourselves to God as those alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God. 14 For sin shall not be master over you, for you are not under law but under grace.

~Submitted by Blaine Walter

Prayer: .Dear GOD, we thank You Your Grace. AMEN!

Thought for the day: *Sin will not be our master because you are not under the law but under grace.*

Friday ~ February 27

GLOBAL COOLING

Read: Matthew 13:9

The world is a pretty cold place right now. Yes, it is currently -3 degrees as I am writing this but that isn't what I'm talking about. As I look at the "news" that pops up on my phone every day I can't help but notice a continual cycle of strife and anger. War in Russia, terrorism in the Middle East, genocide in Africa, riots in our cities. Sounds pretty familiar right? But those events are not our biggest concerns, ***"You will hear of wars and rumors of wars, but see to it that you are not alarmed. Such things must happen, but the end is still to come."*** -Matthew 24:6

Although this quote from Jesus is quite true today, it could be applied throughout most of human history. I guess that is why we ***shouldn't be alarmed. It is what Jesus says after those lines that I see as our more immediate problem. "At that time many will turn away from the faith and betray and hate each other, and many false prophets will appear and deceive many people. Because of the increase of wickedness, the love of most will grow cold..."*** -Matthew 24: 10-12

It is no secret that Christian faith and values in the developed western world are under constant assault. These attacks have come from many directions but the end result has left us with many being deceived. The arguments are no longer between right and wrong but whose "truth" is the most popular. Even when their "truths" can be proven false. These corruptions of our beliefs have caused a divide where people of opposing view points no longer discuss, they shout. Our society has grown very cold towards each other.

We as a church must remain united though. For the world may be growing colder, ***"but the one who stands firm to the end will be saved."*** - Matthew 24:13 We cannot allow opinion, deception and worst of all, indifference to separate us from the Truth that is Jesus Christ. For all of the struggles that we see happening in our country and around the world will continue. That is why we must read our Bibles, teach our children, talk to our neighbors and hold each other accountable. It is

(Continued on page 16)

(Continued from page 15)

only by maintaining our relationship with Jesus Christ and sharing Him with others that we are able to keep the warmth and love of Christ within us. **We must all “stand firm” until the end by keeping the love and truth of Jesus Christ as the focus of our lives.**

~Written by Mark Millin

Prayer: Lord, may your Love, Truth, and Spirit be always in us. Guiding us and enabling us to do your will and showing the world your Love. Amen



(Continued from page 40)

Some people won't like hearing about Jesus. Some people won't like you because you talk about Him. But some people will hear and believe and be saved. All because you just couldn't be quiet.

~Taken from You Can Count On God, 100 Devotions for kids, by Max Lucado

~Submitted by Reed Breegle

*Thought for the day: **It's your turn! Telling other about Jesus takes courage. It's okay to start with people you know and then go from there.** Practice by talking to your mom and dad about Jesus. Talk to a friend. Then see who God brings into your life—and tell them.*

*Prayer: Dear Lord, help me to tell others about you, even if I have **nothing in common with that person or don't know them on a personal level.** Help me to spread your GOOD NEWS! Amen.*

Monday ~ March 23

CAN'T BE QUIET

Read: Acts 22:15

There are times when you just can't be quiet. And there are times when speaking up can get you in trouble, like in the library. But there are times when **the trouble is worth it, like when you're talking about Jesus. That's what the disciples decided.**

You see, after Jesus returned to heaven, they started telling everyone **about Him. The religious leaders didn't like that. They wanted the disciples to be quiet, so they had them thrown into jail.** But during the night, an angel of the Lord came and opened the prison doors. Then the angel told the disciples to go to the temple and preach about Jesus some more.

The disciples knew that would make those religious leaders even angrier! But let me say that when an angel shows up and tells you to do something, you do it.

The next morning, a man came running up to the religious leaders and said, **"The men you put in jail are standing in the Temple. They are teaching the people!" (Acts 5:25).** And sure enough, those leaders were furious. They had the disciples brought to them. **"We gave you strict orders not to go on teaching in that name," the high priest said (v.28).**

But Peter didn't back down. He said, **"We must obey God, not men!" (Acts 5:29).** The leaders had the disciples beaten and warned them once again not to **speak about Jesus. But the disciples just couldn't be quiet. They had to tell everyone the good news of Jesus.**

It's easier not to say anything about Jesus. But the people of this world need Him. They need to know about His love and truth. They need to know how to be forgiven and how to be a child of God. And they need you to tell them.



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Saturday ~ February 28

STEWARDSHIP

Read: Philippians 4:19

So, growing up on a farm when we were younger, we had barn work to do such as putting together the milkers, sweeping in hay and other chores. My grandfather always paid us, but, first, we had to spell money backwards. I always struggled as I did not get good grades in school in that subject. I was always ready to go shopping. I would spend my **money on things I didn't need (you can ask Christine).**

A few years ago, at work I was searching for a podcast to listen to. I **came across Dave Ramesy. If you don't know who Dave Ramesy is, he teaches a biblical financial principles center on stewardship, emphasizing living debt-free through diligent budgeting, saving, and generous giving, viewing money as God's resource to manage for His purposes, not personal idols.** My entire adult life I have never thought of money as **God's money until I heard Dave say it (it was that light bulb moment).** We are just here to manage it for him. He provides everything we need.

Looking back to when the kids were younger, I think how did we survive? The cost of daycare, groceries, and everyday life expenses. God always provided! We had a roof over our heads, groceries, jobs, and good health. We had so many blessings, but I focused on the money. I have learned not to stress but instead pray about it. God already knows what's going on and I'm looking to him for guidance.

~Written by Roxann Blough

Thought for the day: How are you spending God's money?

Prayer: Dear Lord, please help us live with open hands and obedient hearts. Amen

Monday ~ March 2

ARE YOU DISTRACTED?

Read: Psalm 23

Let's be honest: life can be full of so much noise—so many distractions, so much busyness—and the temptation for many can be to just get swept away by all of it. There are meetings to be at, functions to **attend, demands to be met, and if we're not careful, we can be in danger** of drifting away from our Lord. Though we live in a society that seems to continually clamor in both speed and noise, our passage today reminds us of a bygone era when the pace was a bit slower and the noise was a **bit less. The psalmist's words invoke an image of peace, rest, and tranquility** taken next to a stream of quiet beauty—an image that has resonated with souls over millennia.

I count myself blessed, having experienced in nature my soul being rejuvenated next to peaceful pastures and streams of quiet waters. And **though I don't always have the means of picking up and physically** traveling to a location where this image can be experienced, I do have the ability of reading the passage, closing my eyes (wherever I am), and imagining myself in this place Scripture reveals. On many occasions, even in the midst of the busyness and distractions of life, I have recalled the words of the psalmist, imagining myself in this place of tremendous beauty and peace, and there I center my spirit and quiet my soul.

I encourage you, in this season of Lent, to take a moment today and ask our Good Shepherd to lead your spirit next to a place of green pastures and quiet waters—so that he may restore your soul.

~Written by John Boyer
~Submitted by Mindy Singo

Prayer: Good Shepherd, today would you help to quiet the noise and limit the distractions so I can hear Your still, small voice? Lead me in the way of green pastures and quiet waters, and guide me in Your paths of righteousness—for Your Kingdom and Your Glory. Amen.

Saturday ~ March 21

SURRENDER

Read: Hebrews 12:1-2

Through most of my life, I've always been involved in athletics, and over the past 6 years, primarily swimming. To succeed at anything, especially sports, discipline is one of the most important things and the one that is preached to athletes the most. But something that is overlooked more is the surrender of outcomes to the One who knows them before they happen. God is a creator who created us in His image, inherently giving us a creative nature. So when the time comes that you have something big that needs to be done, surrender it to Him and let yourself move in peace as you create the outcome that is led by Him.

~Written by Jon Moneith



Friday ~ March 20

INTROSPECTION & SELF-REFLECTION

Read: Romans 12:2; Matthew 16:24

Have you ever reflected how you got where you are today? This was a question that Willie Robertson asked at the beginning of a chapter in his book, Gospeler. This is a very viable question that so often we do not think about. **Today's world is moving faster and faster with many distractions that seem innocent but keeps us away from God and/or that intimate relationship He so desires from us.** In later chapters of the Gospeler, Willie talks about how he got caught up in rat race of life. He found himself chasing after worldly things as **success came his way. As he put it, "Work and success had seemingly slid up the top of the priority list. It wasn't like I woke up one morning and shouted, I am now going to make my job and the pursuit of money my number one goal. But that's exactly where I ended up."**

I can find myself relating to Willie in many ways. But after really reflecting on his question, I have been challenging myself to do as scripture says in Luke 9:23 and that is to take up my cross daily (not every other day, or weekly, etc.). What does this mean? It means to not only meditate on the inward thoughts **and motives to align myself daily with God's Will but also to Self-Reflect** on the outward actions and behaviors that again will help me walk in the spirit **according to God's Perfect Will as Romans 12:2 states. By doing this you will** find yourself backing away worldly lusts and/or following the masses but instead it will set you apart as God calls us to be.

~Written by Jason Breegle

Thought for the day: Are you examining yourself daily? Allow the truth of God's word to align your thoughts and actions daily so you can have that intimate relationship with God. Be set apart so that your example would be that light to others.

Prayer: Lord, I pray that we would be fully committed to following You and that you would give us strength and power to overcome worldly influences. Amen

Tuesday ~ March 3

STRIFE AND WORRY

Read: Proverbs 20:3

She wished she could be like her husband. Nothing ever seemed to get to him. He took everything in stride, and he acted as though he **hadn't a care in the world. She, on the other hand, worried about** everything. She was positive that if there was something that could possible go wrong, it would. She wanted to be able to let go of her **doubts and fears, but so far she hadn't been able to.**

It's sometimes hard to realize that GOD gave us life as a gift. Many times it feels like such a burden. GOD never wants us to suffer unnecessarily. Part of the message that Christ brought to this world was that no one had to face problems alone. GOD is with us always. Another part of His message was that nothing on this earth is important other than our relationship to GOD and to our neighbor. Job, finances, illness, and a hundred other things create stress in our lives, but when compared with the bigger picture of eternal life, they are totally insignificant. As Christians, we need to learn to look at the world through eternity-eyes, rather than temporal-eyes. Our home is in heaven, and everything that happens to us now means nothing, so long as we have our relationships in order.

~Taken from: "Wisdom from the Bible – Daily Thoughts from the Proverbs" September 10; by Dan & Nancy Dick and edited by Trudie Martineau.

~Submitted by Dave Henry

Prayer: Lord, I get side-tracked so easily. I let the silliest things bring me down. Help me to see everything in its proper perspective. Grant me peace of mind which never ends. AMEN!

Wednesday ~ March 4

HARSH WORDS

Read: Proverbs 15:1 and James 1:19

Friday morning was a typical school morning and it was going rather smoothly, even with me frazzled from all the previous evening's activities. It was smooth until it came time for the boys to decide if they were taking their sleds to school for their outside snow party. Reed wanted to take his, but Flint argued strongly that it would get broken. I tried to calmly say that it would be ok even if it broke. NO LUCK...the conversation just got more heated between all of us, and I was in no mood at this point. Tears were shed and voices raised. In the end, the sled went into the school with them, but this momma's heart was broken. All day I struggled with how I should have handled the situation better. I was in the middle of looking at a notification on my phone and low and behold a Focus on the Family post popped up. It spoke directly to me, it was just what I needed in my time of sadness and guilt. God knew I needed it, His perfect timing never ceases to amaze me. I have included the post below. I hope it speaks to you just as it did to me.

"You can't control your family, but you can control your responses to the things they say or do. The best time to think about how you'll respond is before you leave home.

Think of it this way: You already know what kind of comments to expect. What if you responded to those comments with grace? Not sure what that looks like?

"A soft answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger" (Proverbs 15:1). You can't just pretend everything is fine, but imagine the difference you could make by choosing grace instead of hurtful remarks.

Whatever situation you might be facing this season, cover yourself and your family in prayer. God alone can help us speak life and grace in the face of hate. Release yourself in humility, knowing He holds it all."

After I read this, I prayed and asked God to forgive my heated

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Thursday ~ March 19

WHY WORK

Read: Titus 2:11-14

As humans here on earth, we have many jobs and responsibilities to tend to whether it is our daily 9-5, or our own projects that we may get into. Many might wonder why we do all of this knowing that our time is short here on this globe. **God's main purpose for placing us on this earth is so that we may build a personal relationship with Him and use the guidance He gives us to spread the love of Christ to others.** God wants us to trust Him and never look away in hard times. Our lives are a test to make sure that no matter how bad things may get, that we stick with Him, knowing that someday He will pull us out of this sinful world to live with Him for eternity in Heaven. In Titus Chapter 2:11-14, it says, **"For the grace of God has appeared that offers salvation to all people. It teaches us to say 'No' to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, up-right and godly lives in this present age, appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good."** These verses basically explain how we should live on this earth staying devoted to God while we look forward to the day when Jesus returns to take us home with Him to heaven. During this time, we are placed here to do good as a reflection of God's Glory. Seeing how God can transform people that shy away from Him by pulling them out of the darkness to walk in the light truly shows how powerful God is. God wants everyone to be saved and live with Him in heaven but how we live our lives here on earth will truly determine what path we will go down. It is important that no matter what you do, whether it is your daily job or your own project, you do it to the glory of God so that others may see Him through you and that others will start to do their work the same. In conclusion, the work we do on this earth is not a waste of time because everything we do we are doing for our creator the one and only God!

~Written by Glenn Millin

Thought for the day: *What work can you do on this earth to bring more people to Christ?*

Prayer: Lord God, no matter what work we do, I ask that we do it all to the glory of Your presence. Even when we fall short and question why we are placed on this sinful earth, help us to remember that we are placed here to spread Your Word and to help create more disciples to follow You and bring more people to Christ. Amen.

Wednesday ~ March 18

SURRENDERING OUR PRIDE

Read: 2 Peter 2:10-16, Proverbs 11:2

Many false teachers start out with good intentions but then fall victim to pride. We must be sure not to make the same mistake.

Many false teachers do not start out as false teachers; rather, they are simply people who have lost their way by thinking of themselves more **highly than they should. Slowly, they exchange the Truth of God's Word** for their own feelings, opinions and interpretations—**despising God's** authority in the process. (see 2 Peter 2:10)

When our pride is not surrendered to the Holy Spirit, we become bold and arrogant, thinking that we know better than God.

Pride is at the very core of this blasphemous exchange. This is the problem with so many false teachers. They critique Scripture, saying, **"This is right; this is wrong. This happened; this did not happen."** They **judge God's Word instead of allowing it to judge them.**

True believers come to Jesus in a posture of brokenness and humility, not arrogance and self will. But even genuine believers have the potential to become blind to pride, for it is a subtle foe. That is why every one of us needs faithful friends to hold us accountable.

Friend, God is patient, but He will not be mocked. Whether you are at the beginning of your Christian walk or have been following Christ for years, ask God today to reveal if there is any hidden sin in your heart. He alone can save us from being ambushed by our pride.

~ Taken from Leading the Way online devotions by Dr. Michael Youssef
~Submitted by Shanna Breegle

*Thought for the day: **Be aware of those false teachers in today's society.** No matter what stage our walk with Christ is, help us to give all the glory to You, and humble ourselves.*

Prayer: Lord, I surrender to You. You alone are all-wise, all-knowing, all-powerful. Thank You for Your patience and for the gift of Your spirit, who leads me to repentance. By Your grace, may I grow in righteousness and humility for Your glory. I pray in the Name of Jesus. Amen.

temper and words towards my children. How can I make this right? I knew I needed to pick the boys up and greet them with much love and apologize for my actions and tone that morning. I did just that as they came to the car at pickup. Turns out we all knew in our hearts that our actions that morning were not ideal and far from what Jesus calls us to do. We all apologized and talked about how we could have handled it with grace. To top it off, the sled did not break and the kids had a **blast...how awesome to end the day knowing we are covered in God's** mercy and grace!

~Written by Shanna Breegle

Thought for the day: May we turn to God first in times of trials or heated discussions. Stop and pray, ask Him for guidance in how to answer with grace and not harsh words.

Prayer: Dear Heavenly Father, be with me on days that it seems easier to just let my temper flare. Help me to respond in kindness and give me the soft words just as You would respond to us in times of trial. In Your Holy Name we pray, Amen.



Thursday ~ March 5

DISCIPLESHIP

Read: Matthew 16:24

I was watching a YouTube video recently with Alex Kendrick, and he was talking about the difference between a believer and a true disciple of Christ. A believer is not necessarily a disciple, but a disciple is a believer. He compares it to college students sitting in the stands cheering for the team and the students in uniform on the field playing ball on the team. Two different positions but belonging to the same school. Discipleship comes at a cost. In Matt. 16:24, Jesus says to deny yourself, take up your cross and follow Him. In this video, Alex asks what does the cross mean? The cross means something is going to die. To take up your cross means you have to die to yourself daily. True discipleship is denying yourself and dying to whatever the Lord asks you to die to. It takes practice, commitment, and hard work. For example, I think of Charlie Kirk and how he put himself out there day after day sharing the gospel of Jesus and how committed he was to Christ, ultimately losing his own life. We may not have the platform of someone like Charlie, but we can get into the game right where we are by sharing the gospel of Jesus to the world around us. Are you playing on the team or sitting in the stands?

~Written by Kristen Sanner

Prayer: Dear Lord, help me to be a true disciple of You, by denying myself and taking time to spend with You. Give me ears to listen to You speak Lord. I pray for courage and opportunities to stand for what is right and to share Your love with those around me. In Jesus' name, Amen.

man, died on the cross as a sacrifice for sin, and rose again, He made a way to save us and usher us into a new relationship with the Father. God in Christ bore our sins. God in Christ assumed our guilt and paid our penalty. He came to save us from bondage and bring us into the freedom of a life lived for Him. And soon and very soon, He will return to establish the new heaven and earth, where we will be free of sin and suffering and enjoy the beauty of His presence forevermore.

3. Jesus is OURS. Many people believe Jesus is Lord and Savior. But if **that's where your belief ends, then you do to have personal salvation. The Bible is clear that Christ is ours. He's not just the Savior and Lord; He's OUR Savior and Lord. This personal, possessive adjective is very important. Just read through the Psalms: "Oh, Lord, my rock and my salvation...The Lord is my shepherd...The Lord is my light and my salvation and the stronghold of my life". And the apostle Paul confessed, "I consider everything a loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus MY Lord..."**

What is our response to the Eternal King? Jesus, who was born into this world, who lived and died in the first century Israel, and who physically rose again from the dead, is now alive forever and ever. He is not dead and gone; He is available and accessible to all people. He is not finished and fossilized; He is alive and active. He calls us to follow Him and offers to dwell in us. This is the miracle God is willing to perform in every heart that comes to Him asking, seeking, submitting. Is He YOUR Lord and Savior?

~Written by Dr. Michael Youssef
~Submitted by Shirley Walter

Thought for the day: This is the miracle God is willing to perform in every heart that comes to Him asking, seeking, submitting. He is YOUR Lord and Savior.

Prayer: Help us to remember He's not just the Lord and Savior, but He is OUR Lord and Savior. Amen.

Tuesday ~ March 17

3 TRUTHS THAT SETS JESUS APART

Read: Psalms 18: 2, 23: 1, and 27: 1 Philippians 3: 8

After leaving Sikhism for Christ, Sardu became an evangelist in India, who traveled from village to village preaching the Gospel. At a speaking engagement at a Hindu college, a professor asked him, “What did you find in Christianity that is so unique?” Immediately he responded, “I found Christ.” Irritated, the professor pressed, “I understand, but what particular principle or doctrine have you found in Christianity that you did not find before?” Sardu responded, “The particular thing I have found is Christ.”

The only uniqueness worth defending and even dying for is Jesus Christ. The heart and soul of Christianity is not just a religious system or ethical standards—it is Christ Himself. Christianity without Jesus is a dead corpse. Unlike all the other religious founders, His claims are true. His promises are sure, and His call is unmatched. We must say to those who call Jesus a great teacher—**those who imply He’s a mere historical figure like Alexander the Great or Napoleon**—no, Jesus is the only. He is unique. He has no peer, no equal, no rival. Jesus has no predecessor, and He has no successor.

In every generation, people seek to conform Jesus to their image—a milquetoast Jesus who makes no demands and accepts their will. They do not want the divine, eternal Son of God revealed in the Scriptures. But to truly know the King of kings, we must embrace the Truths declared about Him in the Bible. First, Jesus is the Lord. Second, He is the Savior. Third, He is ours. These three truths set Him apart from all the others.

1. **Jesus is LORD.** Jesus is God’s full expression. He is God’s own Son, the second person in the Trinity, who became flesh. He was there at creation; He is the sovereign ruler of the universe. Colossians 2: 9 declares that all the fullness of the godhead, that all the fullness of the deity, dwelt in Him bodily. He is the head of the Church, and He alone is LORD.
2. **Jesus is SAVIOR.** We are all born alienated from God, enslaved to self-centeredness, and at enmity with Him due to our sin. And because the wages of sin is death, we are born heading for hell and eternal punishment. But Jesus changed all this. When He became

(Continued on page 35)

Friday ~ March 6

TRUTH OR DARE

Read: Genesis 2:15-17; 3:1-7; Psalm 51; Jonah 3:1-10; Romans 1:1-7

The account of Adam and Eve is one of the best known and yet most misinterpreted stories in the Bible. The serpent misled Eve. While Adam and Eve did not physically die that day, they lost their innocence and began the blame game. **Humanity hasn’t been the same since. But what if this story is about the tragedy of believing lies rather than about assigning blame or justifying a human hierarchy? I’ve had several opportunities to be part of disaster response clean-up crews. Strangers of varied backgrounds and religious beliefs gather to do whatever need doing. No one is assigning blame or competing for attention.**

I imagine this is what the garden of Eden was like, a foretaste of the reign of God.

Too often we are intentionally misled to believe that we can’t fully trust God or that some people are superior to or more important than others. That lie leads us to suspect one another rather than accept God’s assignment to care for all of His creations.

~Taken from “Christ in Our Home”, Vol. 73, No. 1, January—March 2016, Published by Augsburg Fortress.

~Submitted by Rene Temple

Prayer Concerns: Teachers of the Word of God may they always convey the truth.

Prayer: Lord God, grant us vision to see all people as Your beloved children. Amen.

Saturday ~ March 7

A TEST OF FAITH

Read: Galatians 2:20

In our world that we live in today, there are so many things going wrong and so many trials that we have to overcome. In those times, we might feel lonely, upset, angry and we even might ask, "God, why?". It's ok to feel those feelings - **we're all human, but what God wants to see is how we react to Him in those circumstances.** He wants to see if our answer to His way is , "Let your will be done, Lord," or if our answer is to give up faith in Him entirely. God already knows how much we love Him - **for He knows everything about us from the minute we're born, to the day we breathe our last breath, even when we don't.** He wants to make us realize how much He is in control, and that everything that He does has a purpose. **God is testing our faith in Him, even when we don't expect Him to.** C.S Lewis, who is widely known as the author of the Chronicles of Narnia, wrote many books on Christianity, and his faith towards God. Lewis had a hard life, with many devastating challenges that were thrown onto his path. Even so, he had kept his faith in God until the end. One famous quote that Lewis said was, "I believe in Christ like I believe in the sun - **not because I can see it, but by it I can see everything else.**" If we hold our faith to God, even in the hardest times, there will be no stopping us as we walk in His light and on His path.

~Written by Grace Sechler

Prayer: Dear Heavenly Father, thank You for loving me and always being by my side, even when times are tough. Help me to have faith in You in the brightest of days and the darkest of nights, and when it seems I can't go any farther. Please help me look to You in this dark world. In Your Holy Name I pray, Amen.

(Continued from page 32)

Thought for the day: Looking for a shortcut to peace? Give into His grace!

Prayer: Dear Heavenly Father, thank You for Your unfailing love. Please help me to be completely still and fully focused on You. I pray that You surround me with Your presence each day. In Jesus' Name, Amen.



Monday ~ March 16

IN HIS PRESENCE

Read: Psalm 16:11

There are times during prayer or singing a song or just simply sitting in silence that I feel the presence of God. It is overwhelming and yet **incredibly peaceful at the same time. It makes me feel weightless, like I'm floating in water.** No negative thoughts can reach me and everything feels like it was always supposed to be this perfect. It never lasts long enough and I never know when I will feel it again, but it is something that my soul craves. When I do not feel close to God, I experience something that can only be compared to the feeling of homesick. We were created to walk with God in the garden, so the separation is painful and unnatural. **Sin cast us out of the physical presence of God, but through Christ's sacrifice and the power of the Holy Spirit, we are forever connected to Him spiritually until that wonderful day when we walk with him again.**

There have been times that I have found myself in situations where fear had a very strong grip on me. When I am locked in those terrifying circumstances, I take a minute, close my eyes and imagine His scarred hand holding mine. Nothing can compare to the comfort that brings. But **it shouldn't take a terrifying situation for me to reach for that hand. He holds it out to us daily.**

Sin continues to wage its war against our relationship with God. The reason that my moments of connection to Him feel so few and far between is because I allow too many other things to crowd it out. I fight hard for control, carry all the stress and worry about every unknown. I usually crash and burn and wear myself out before I finally give into His **grace. The answer to everything is so simple. "Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you." (Hebrews 13:5)**

When I am completely still and fully focused on Him, I realize that I am in His presence. He was there the whole time!

~Written by Angie Millin

(Continued on next page)

Monday ~ March 9

Lent Word Search

E	N	S	K	F	O	R	G	I	V	E	N	E	S	S	O	O	D	F	G
R	O	A	W	L	Y	K	E	R	U	S	L	O	R	Y	I	M	B	A	I
P	I	S	K	R	M	E	N	O	I	X	H	E	N	A	S	H	E	S	K
E	X	O	E	A	Y	K	A	R	S	S	O	R	C	D	W	A	T	T	R
N	B	L	E	S	A	L	N	I	K	A	L	K	E	Y	D	E	R	I	O
A	S	H	W	E	D	N	E	S	D	A	Y	O	D	T	U	D	F	N	S
N	E	M	Y	O	N	P	S	R	U	M	T	A	P	R	B	E	T	G	E
C	R	O	L	K	U	Y	I	E	A	S	H	P	G	O	O	D	L	A	T
E	R	A	O	V	S	O	R	K	C	R	U	C	I	F	I	X	I	O	N
D	I	S	H	I	M	K	S	L	E	M	R	E	M	B	I	P	E	R	O
O	S	A	M	F	L	P	A	O	D	F	S	I	L	A	E	R	N	K	I
C	J	E	R	O	A	S	C	G	O	O	D	F	R	I	D	A	Y	S	T
R	E	Y	A	R	P	E	R	A	M	R	A	D	E	A	W	S	I	S	C
U	R	S	P	E	D	R	I	L	A	T	Y	A	J	R	E	T	S	A	E
C	U	S	Y	L	E	C	F	E	L	S	O	P	E	G	O	E	Y	C	R
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I	A	R	W	E	E	K	C	R	A	J	E	R	U	H	E	G	O	F	U
S	L	A	Y	A	R	T	E	B	O	S	D	I	S	C	I	P	L	E	S
H	E	S	A	C	T	M	O	W	S	U	R	H	O	L	P	A	N	K	E
A	M	B	P	E	N	R	E	I	M	E	C	N	A	T	N	E	P	E	R

Word Bank

ASHES	DESERT	GOOD FRIDAY	PENANCE
ASH WEDNESDAY	DISCIPLES	HOLY THURSDAY	PRAYER
BETRAYAL	EASTER	HOLY WEEK	REPENTANCE
BLESS	FASTING	JERUSALEM	RESURRECTION
CROSS	FORGIVENESS	JESUS	RISEN
CRUCIFIXION	FORTY DAYS	PALM SUNDAY	SACRIFICE

~Submitted by Pam Weimer

Prayer: Dear Lord, please open our hearts to ponder the meaning of the words as we search for them. Amen.

Tuesday ~ March 10

WOUNDED HEALER

Read: John 20:19-25

With so much pain and devastation in the world right now, I find this scripture comforting. We are like Jesus not only in the image of God, but also in our scars, bruises, and wounds.

In *The Wounded Healer*, Henri Nouwen argues that true ministry in a broken world stems from believers embracing their own vulnerabilities and wounds to generate empathy and connection with others.

The Gospel of John is filled with rich narrative and relatable characters. In chapter 19, the disciples were in hiding when the resurrected Jesus suddenly appeared to them. He walks in, and His first words to His followers are, “shalom,” meaning “peace be with you.” Then He shows them His hands and His side. Jesus is showing His followers His scars. Jesus then gives them a commission, “As the Father has sent me, so I send you...” What a magnificent moment! Jesus addresses His disciples with a moment of restoration and reality, comfort and confusion.

We are not perfect—we are far from it. But we can learn from Jesus that our pain, our scars, are critical parts of our journey. Even in Jesus’ resurrection, he showed his human side. His flesh did not come back untouched. His experience left its mark. And so does ours.... Our scars, our wounds, our bruises are real. But so is our faith! And the intersection of our scars and our faith is where we find our own “Wounded Healer”.

~Written by Tom Skelton

Prayer: Heavenly Father, May we be reminded that we have a story to tell. A story about how our experiences and beliefs shape us as Your servants, and how we are accepted through Your Grace - scars and all. Grant us the strength to follow in Jesus’ footsteps, showing our wounds and scars as we encourage others to strengthen their relationship with You. Amen.

Saturday ~ March 14

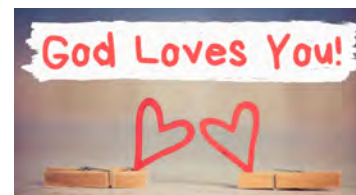
GOD LOVES US!

Read: Ephesians 1:4

We live in an age when sin is “winked” at and where God is treated as one who is indulgent, softhearted and understanding...tolerant of those who break His commandments. But God has NOT forgotten about sin... God hates sin! Why? Because God loves us, and He knows the terrible devastation sin brings to us. Sin is like a deadly cancer, bringing about suffering, pain and death in its wake. Left unforgiven, sin also sends men and women into a timeless eternity apart from God—into Hell.

But, you see, God’s love for us did not begin at Calvary. Before the morning stars sang together, before the world was baptized with the first light, before the first tender blades of grass peeped out, God loved us! Before the world were created, He knew all about us and the need we would have some day for Jesus Christ to die for us. So, in His love,” He chose us in Him before the creation of the world”. God does not change—and neither does His love. Confess your sin today, don’t wait. Receive God’s forgiveness and restoration so that you might be of use to Him and enjoy His love forever.

He will love you forever. Will you love Him in return?



~Author Unknown

~Submitted by Linda Henry

Thought for the day: The Bible reminds us that our days are as grass. Instead of wasting them, as we so easily do, we need to ask for redemption and repent of our sins.

Prayer: Father, this Lenten season is our Christian hour of decision. Help us to glorify You by asking for forgiveness from our sins. May our lives be flecked with the beauty of eternity with You. In Your Son’s name we pray...Amen.

(Continued from page 29)

Prayer: Dear Lord, help me not to worry and when I do, help me to remember to give them over to You. Thank you for providing everything we need. Amen.

Friday ~ March 13

IN THE GARDEN

Read: 1 John 1:9

My dad loved to sing the old hymns. One of his favorites was "In the Garden." A few years back, we sang it at his funeral. The chorus is simple: " And He walks with me, and He talks with me, and He tells me I am His own, and the joy we share as we tarry there none other has ever known." That song brought joy to my dad-as it does to me.

Hymn writer C. Austin Miles says he wrote this song in spring 1912 after reading chapter 20 of the gospel of John. "As I read it that day, I seemed to be part of the scene. I became a silent witness to that dramatic moment in Mary's life when she knelt before her Lord and cried, 'Rabboni [Teacher].'"

In John 20, we find Mary Magdalene weeping near Jesus' empty tomb. There she met a man who asked why she was crying. Thinking it was the gardener, she spoke with the risen Savoir-Jesus! Her sorrow turned to joy, and she ran to tell the disciples, "*I have seen the Lord!*" (v.18).

We too have the assurance that Jesus is risen! He's now in heaven with the Father, but He hasn't left us on our own. Believers in Christ have His spirit inside us, and through Him we have the assurance and joy of knowing He's with us, and we are " His own."

~Taken from Our Daily Bread
~Submitted by Jill Heiple

Prayer: *Jesus, I'm so thankful You're alive and that as Your child, You live in me! Amen.*

Wednesday ~ March 11

IT IS FINISHED

Read: John 17:4

The death of Jesus Christ is the fulfillment in history of the very mind and intent of God. There is no place for seeing Jesus Christ as a martyr. His death was not something that happened to Him-something that might have been prevented. His death was the very reason He came.

Never build your case for forgiveness on the idea that God is our Father and He will forgive us because He loves us. That contradicts the revealed truth of God in Jesus Christ. It makes the Cross unnecessary, and the redemption "much ado about nothing." God forgives sin only because of the death of Christ. God could forgive people in no other way than by the death of His Son, and Jesus is exalted as Savior because of His death. "We see Jesus...*for the suffering of death* crowned with glory and honor..."(Hebrews 2:9). The greatest note of triumph ever sounded in the ears of a startled universe was that sounded on the Cross of Christ-"*It is finished!*" (John 19:30). That is the final word in the redemption of humankind.

Anything that lessens or completely obliterates the holiness of God, through a false view of His love, contradicts the truth of God as revealed by Jesus Christ. Never allow yourself to believe that Jesus Christ stands with us, and against God, out of pity and compassion, or that He became a curse for us out of sympathy for us. Jesus Christ became a curse for us by divine decree. Our part in realizing the tremendous meaning of His curse is the conviction of sin. Conviction is given to us as a gift of shame and repentance; it is the great mercy of God. Jesus Christ hates the sin in people, and Calvary is the measure of His hatred.

~Taken from My Utmost For His Highest by Oswald Chamber
~Submitted by Todd Pritts

(Continued on next page)

(Continued from page 27)

Thought for the day: Do you finish the work our Lord lays out before you each day?

Prayer: Heavenly Father I pray for the strength to walk the walk that you lay out before me each day. Whatever it is let me do it in a way that brings all Glory and Praise to You. Help me to be obedient to your will, just as Christ set the example for us. Amen.



Thursday ~ March 12

STOP AND GIVE IT TO GOD

Read: Philippians 4:6

Do you ever worry? Everyone does sometimes. Worry is what we feel **when we're afraid something might happen or might not happen**—or things might not go the way we have planned.

Worry can be like a little seed that gets planted in our thoughts. It can grow and grow and grow—until it takes over! Worry can keep us from doing things we want and need to do. And it can keep us from seeing all the good things that are happening around us. That's why the apostle Paul wrote, "*Do not worry about anything.*"

Now, maybe you're thinking, That's easy for him to say. He was the famous "Paul." What kind of troubles could he have to worry about? Well, plenty as it turns out.

When Paul wrote, "Do not worry about anything," guess where he was? In prison! From the moment he decided to follow Jesus, people were out to get him. He was beaten and stoned several times. The religious leaders hated him. And it seemed like people were always trying to kill him. So, yeah, Paul had plenty of things to worry about...if he wanted to worry.

But in the very next line, Paul tells us how to get rid of worry; "*Pray and ask God for everything you need.*" God wouldn't tell you to ask for something then not give it to you. So in Philippians 4:19, he promises to give you everything you need! And God always keeps his promises (Hebrews 10:23). Paul knew it, and now you know it too.

What do you worry about? Maybe fitting in or passing the big test. Or maybe it's your parents' jobs or someone who is sick. Whenever a little seed of worry tries to plant itself in your thoughts, don't let it grow. Right then and there, stop and ask God to take care of that thing that's trying to worry you.

~Taken from You Can Count On God, 100 Devotions for kids, by Max Lucado

~Submitted by Flint Breegle

Thought for the day: Check out a couple of God's promises for you: Psalm 121:1-2 and Matthew 28:20. Which one is your favorite?

(Continued on page 30)