



THE SEASON OF LENT

2018 LENTEN DEVOTIONAL

FEBRUARY 14 – MARCH 31

The Lenten Season

Lent is a forty-day period before Easter. It begins on Ash Wednesday and ends with the Saturday when Jesus was buried. We skip Sundays when we count the forty days, because Sundays commemorate the Resurrection. This year Lent begins on February 14, 2018 and ends on March 31, 2018. Easter Sunday is April 1, 2018. Lent is a time meant for repentance and reflection, for silence and prayer, for listening to God. The season serves as a reminder of our need to worship and praise our loving God and Savior for His great gift of redemption, culminated on Easter Sunday with His resurrection.

This devotional guide includes a devotion related to a specific passage in Scripture and contains a prayer that was written by an ancient or modern Christian. Many of our devotions were written by members of our congregation who shared passages that held particular meaning for them. Other days we have a devotion that was written by an historic or modern Christian writer. We hope these thoughts and reflections of faith will provide inspiration for continuing our church-wide mission of "Following Jesus for Life".

*This Lenten season we are reflecting on favorite Bible passages and reading some historic prayers.
We hope these devotions provide inspiration during this reflective Lenten season.*

February 14, 2018 Ash Wednesday

Scripture: Jeremiah 29:11

For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future

Devotion: God's Plan

Submitted by: Marty Sommercamp

When my husband, John, died suddenly at 64, I was just devastated. After almost 40 years of marriage, I was alone and heart-broken. For several weeks, I could hardly get out of bed or do anything.

We had two sons. John Owen was the oldest and the father of two little girls, Shelley and Amy. James Peyton was newly married. Shortly before my husband died, he had told us there was a new grandchild on the way. Four months after my husband died, I was blessed with the birth of my first grandson, Luke. My heart melted the moment I held him in the nursery. Luke looked just like James but also my husband. I knew I could not ruin this wonderful moment by being depressed, so I chose to embrace this new life. Twenty months later, our precious Hannah was born. I travelled to the Sacramento area dozens of times to help with the babies. I became the San Diego Nanny!

God has filled my broken heart with 4 precious grandchildren, who needed a grandmother who could come anytime. I almost never say no. I gave up counting after 50 roundtrips on Southwest! The pain of loss has been eased by the joy these four children have given me. While I am sad that my husband has missed this experience, I feel so blessed that God has allowed me this time and opportunity to devote myself to my grandchildren. While one door was closed, another beautiful door was opened for me.

Prayer: Our Family Prayer

When my husband, John Owen Sommercamp, was born on February 4, 1939, his maternal grandfather gave him a prayer that he composed for his new grandson. Morris Owens was a very religious Welsh Presbyterian, who had immigrated to America and settled in Twin Falls, Idaho, amongst fellow Welsh farmers. He read his Bible daily. This prayer was a nightly ritual at bedtime, and the memorization took quite a while. When our sons were born, this became their bedtime prayer. Now my grandchildren know the prayer; three generations have recited this family prayer. The closing of the prayer was a vehicle to ask God to watch over the family or someone close. Occasionally, the prayer was given at a meal by one of the children to demonstrate that they had memorized the family prayer.

DEAR HEAVENLY FATHER,
To thee I pray,
Give me wisdom, health, strength this day.
To do life's duties faithful and true,
As thou require that I should do.
In Jesus Name, Amen.



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February 15, 2018

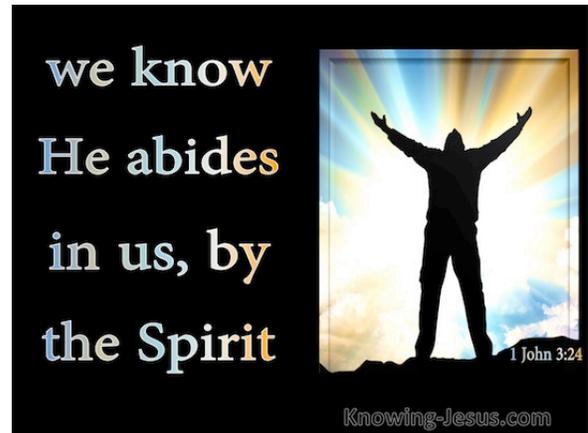
Scripture: 1 John 3:24

The one who keeps God's commands lives in him, and he in them. And this is how we know that he lives in us: We know it by the Spirit he gave us.

Devotion: Abiding Spirit

*From the works of Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758)
(American Puritan revivalist preacher, theologian, and philosopher)*

Thus we see how full, clear, and abundant, the evidence from Scripture is, that those who are truly gracious, are under the government of that lamb-like, dove-like Spirit of Jesus Christ, and that this is essentially and eminently the nature of the saving grace of the gospel, and the proper spirit of true Christianity. We may therefore undoubtedly determine that all truly Christian affections are attended with such a spirit: and that this is the natural tendency of the fear and hope, the sorrow and the joy, the confidence and the zeal of true Christians.



Prayer: A Heart for God

Today's prayer is from Ambrose, a bishop of Milan in the 4th century (339-397). He contributed to theology and doctrine of the early Christian Church and influenced Augustine of Hippo.

O Lord, who hast mercy upon all,
take away from me my sins,
and mercifully kindle in me
the fire of thy Holy Spirit.
Take away from me the heart of stone,
and give me a heart of flesh,
a heart to love and adore Thee,
a heart to delight in Thee,
to follow and enjoy Thee, for Christ's sake, Amen

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February 16, 2018

Scripture: Psalm 46:10

Be still and know that I am God.

Devotion: Be Still

*From “Everyday Encouragement and Hope” by Debora Coty, Pamela McQuade,
and Patricia Mitchell
(American Christian authors)*

If we become simply caught up in busyness, we lose the distinction of our faith: a close relationship with Jesus. Knowing God is not about what we do, but whom we love. Our good works mean little if we disconnect from Him. Spend time being still with God today, and a deepened knowledge of Him will be your blessing.



Prayer: In Silence

Today’s prayer is from Mother Teresa of Calcutta (1910-1997) and comes from the book “No Greater Love.”

We cannot find God in noise and agitation.
Nature: trees, flowers, and grass grow in silence.
The stars, the moon, and the sun move in silence.
What is essential is not what we say
but what God tells us and what He tells others through us.

In silence He listens to us;
in silence He speaks to our souls.
In silence we are granted
the privilege of listening to His voice.
Silence of our eyes.
Silence of our ears.
Silence of our mouths.
Silence of our minds.
...in the silence of the heart
God will speak.

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February 17, 2018

Submitted by: Lynn Lilyquist

Scripture: 2 Timothy 1:7

For the Spirit God gave us does not make us timid, but gives us power, love, and self-discipline.

Devotion: Spirit of God

Submitted by: Lynn Lilyquist

Few things in life seem more important than being able to accomplish what I want, to be able to love as I am directed, and to be able to face everything fearlessly.

Scripture speaks to this. 2 Timothy 1:7. For God gave us not a spirit of fearfulness; but of power and of love and of a sound mind. What else could I ask for?



Prayer: Disturb Us

Today's prayer was written by Sir Francis Drake (1540-1596), an English sea captain and the second sailor to circumnavigate the globe.

Disturb us, Lord, when
We are too pleased with ourselves,
When our dreams have come true
Because we dreamed too little,
When we arrived safely
Because we sailed too close to the shore.

Disturb us, Lord, when
With the abundance of things we possess
We have lost our thirst
For the waters of life;
Having fallen in love with life,
We have ceased to dream of eternity
And in our efforts to build a new earth,

We have allowed our vision
Of the new Heaven to dim.

Disturb us, Lord, to dare more boldly,
To venture on wilder seas
Where storms will show Your mastery;
Where losing sight of land,
We shall find the stars.

We ask you to push back
The horizons of our hopes;
And to push back the future
In strength, courage, hope, and love.

This we ask in the name of our Captain,
Who is Jesus Christ. Amen.

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February 18, 2018

Scripture: Matthew 5:9

Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God.

Devotion: Peacemakers

From Alexander Maclaren (1826-1910)

(English minister, of Scottish origin, whose sermons drew large congregations.)

If a man go and carry to men the great message of a reconciled and a reconciling God manifest in Jesus Christ, and bringing Peace between men and God, he will have done more to sweeten society and put an end to hostility than I think he will be likely to do by any other method. Christian men and women, whatever else you and I are here for, are here mainly that we may preach, by lip and life, the great message that in Christ is our Peace, and...there is no nobler office for Christians than to seek to damp down all these devil's flames of envy and jealousy and mutual animosity.

We have to do it, first, by making very sure that we do not answer scorn with scorn, gibes with gibes, hate with hate, but "seek to overcome evil with good." It takes two to make a quarrel, and your most hostile antagonist cannot break the peace unless you help him. If you are resolved to keep it, kept it will be.



Prayer: Peace Among Nations

Today's prayer for peace among nations was written by William Temple (1881-1944), a bishop in the Church of England and Archbishop of Canterbury.

O Almighty God,
the Father of all humanity,
turn, we pray, the hearts of all peoples and their rulers,
that by the power of your Holy Spirit
peace may be established among the nations
on the foundation of justice, righteousness and truth;
through him who was lifted up on the cross
to draw all people to himself,
your Son Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

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February 19, 2018

Scripture: 2 Corinthians 4:18-5:1

For we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen, for the things that are seen are transient but the things that are unseen are eternal. Though the earthly tent we live in be destroyed, we have a house from God, not built by human hands, eternal in the heavens.

Devotion: Fixing My Eyes

Submitted by: Betty Brown Simm

This is a meaningful Bible message to me for several reasons. The first, as personally expressed before, is my literal understanding of God’s presence in my earthly life: the feeling of peace from God when our home and all possessions burned up in a California wildfire. I was a witness to “seen” things going up in smoke. My “unseen” faith remained, looking to a calm future.

My second insight into this Bible message has developed through the years with my acceptance of Jesus Christ. His holy “show and tell” living pattern on earth and God’s keeping promises to me brought my faith into miraculous bloom. For 95 years I have believed God and Jesus. Struggling with human failures, yes! Following false persuasions, yes! But the enduring Holy Spirit “picks me up, dusts me off” and I pick up where I left off. God doesn’t forget me. He loves me but not my straying actions.

This Bible verse reflects my nine-decade deepening belief; my “seen” earthly life, though transient, will shine forth in my “unseen” eternity as a faithful child in God’s heavenly family.

Prayer: Knowing, Loving, and Serving Christ

Today’s prayer is from the “Sarum Primer” (1500s), which was a book of prayers and Christian worship resources collected at the Salisbury Cathedral.

God be in my head and in my understanding.
God be in my eyes and in my looking.
God be in my mouth and in my speaking.
God be in my heart and in my thinking.
God be at my end and at my departing.



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February 20, 2018

Scripture: Matthew 7:7

Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you.

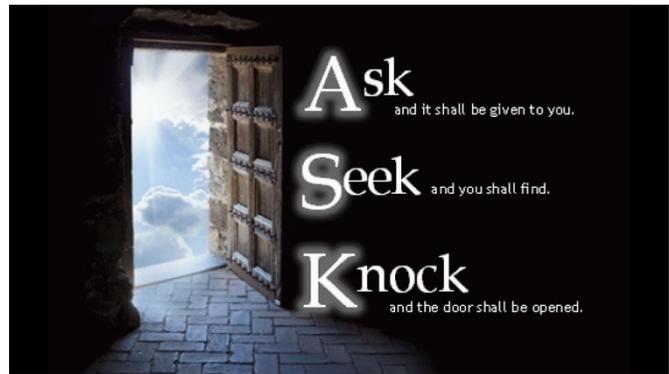
Devotion: Ask, Seek, Knock

From the works of Max Lucado

(American Christian author and preacher at Oak Hills Church in San Antonio, Texas)

Countless copies of Scripture sit unread on bookshelves and nightstands simply because people don't know how to read it. What can we do to make the Bible real in our lives?

The clearest answer is found in the words of Jesus. "Ask and God will give it to you." The first step in understanding the Bible is asking God to help us.



Prayer: Teach Me

Today's prayer is by Anselm of Canterbury (1033-1109), a Benedictine monk, abbot, philosopher and Christian theologian. He served as the archbishop of Canterbury from 1093-1109.

O Lord my God,
Teach my heart this day where and how to find you.

You have made me and re-made me,
And you have bestowed on me all the good things I possess,
And still I do not know you.
I have not yet done that for which I was made.

Teach me to seek you,
For I cannot seek you unless you teach me,
Or find you unless you show yourself to me.

Let me seek you in my desire;
Let me desire you in my seeking.
Let me find you by loving you;
Let me love you when I find you.

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February 21, 2018

Scripture: Isaiah 6:8

Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, “Whom shall I send? And Who will go for us? And I said, “Here am I. Send me!”

Devotion: Send Me!

Submitted by: Bill Brackett

Just a few weeks ago we all sang the hymn *Here I Am Lord* which was no doubt inspired by this scripture. Here is the refrain from that hymn:

*Here I am, Lord. Is it I, Lord?
I have heard you calling in the night.
I will go, Lord, if you lead me.
I will hold your people in my heart.*



It is the custom of our Deacons to start each monthly meeting with a devotional and prayer. This duty is rotated among the members, usually falling to those who have been deacons for some time, thus providing new members time to become acclimated and have a sense of what is expected.

I served many years ago and it was the day before what was to be just my second meeting, when the phone rang. It was the chair of the deacons. She said that the person who was scheduled to deliver the devotional tomorrow had been called away, and asked if I would be willing to do it. The caller identified herself as Kathy. She even sounded like Kathy, but in my heart I knew who was really calling. The above scripture was running through my head, and the only voice I could hear was that of my God, calling me into service.

When our God calls, just as he called Isaiah, there is only one answer. “Here am I. Send me!”

Prayer: Doing God’s Will

Today’s prayer is from Ignatius of Loyola (1491-1556), a Spanish priest and theologian who founded the Jesuits. Jesuits served the Pope as missionaries.

Teach us, good Lord,
to serve you as you deserve,
to give and not to count the cost,
to fight and not to heed the wounds,
to toil and not to seek for rest,
to labor and not to ask for any reward,
save that of knowing that we do your will. Amen.

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February 22, 2018

Scripture: 1 Chronicles 16:11

Look to the LORD and his strength; seek his face always.

Devotion: Spiritual Food

From the works of Rick Warren

(American Christian author and pastor at Saddleback Church in Lake Forest, CA)

Just like you need physical food for physical strength, you need spiritual food for spiritual strength. The Bible describes itself as spiritual food — the water, milk, bread, and meat of our spiritual lives. It's everything you need for sustenance.



If you were a construction contractor, you wouldn't consider sending out a guy who hadn't eaten anything in two weeks. If you were a commander in the Army, you wouldn't send a person into battle who hadn't eaten in a month. Right? We need to feed ourselves to have the strength to accomplish the tasks ahead of us.

You're not going to have much success in winning the spiritual battles you face if you're starving yourself to death. That's why we need to feed on the Word of God. Unlike eating physical food, whenever I feed on God's Word, I get even hungrier. The more I taste and see how good God is, the more I want.

Prayer: Grant Me O Lord

Today's prayer is by Thomas Aquinas (1224-1274), who was a Dominican friar and influential philosopher and theologian in the church.

Grant me, O Lord my God,
a mind to know you,
a heart to seek you,
wisdom to find you,
conduct pleasing to you,
faithful perseverance in waiting for you,
and a hope of finally embracing you. Amen.

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February 23, 2018

Scripture: 2 Corinthians 9:15

Thanks be to God for his inexpressible gift!

Devotion: Riches of Believers

From the works of John Calvin (1509-1564)

(French theologian, pastor and reformer in Geneva during the Protestant Reformation)

We cheerfully lay out what belongs to us for whatever purposes He directs. He teaches us that these are the true riches of believers, when, relying upon the providence of God for the sufficiency of their support, they are not by distrust kept back from doing good. Nor is it without good reason, that he dignifies with the title of affluence the satisfying abundance of a mind that is simple, and contented with its moderate share; for nothing is more famished and starved than the distrustful, who are tormented with an anxious desire of having.



Prayer: Inexpressible Gift

The Syro-Malabar Church traces its origin to Thomas the Apostle, who, according to tradition, came to the Malabar coast of southern India (Kerala state today), landed at Cranganore about 52 A.D., and founded seven Christian communities. The early Christians of southern India became known as St. Thomas Christians, and this name persists today. This prayer is from the 5th century liturgy of the church.

Grant, O Lord Jesus,

That the ears which have heard the voice of your songs may be closed to the voice of dispute;

That the eyes which have seen your great love may also behold your blessed hope;

That the tongues which have sung your praise may speak the truth in love;

That the feet which have walked in your courts may walk in the region of light; and,

That the bodies which have received your living body may be restored in newness of life.

Glory to you for your inexpressible gift. Amen.

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February 24, 2018

Scripture: Luke 2: 34-35, 51

Then Simeon blessed them and said to Mary, his mother: “This child is destined to cause the falling and rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be spoken against, so that the thoughts of many hearts will be revealed. And a sword will pierce your own soul too.”

Then he went down to Nazareth with them and was obedient to them. But his mother treasured all these things in her heart.

Devotion: Mother’s Love

Submitted by: Margaret (Margot) Wallace

Falling, Jesus bears-up his cross to Golgotha despite blasphemous shouting. Although feeling alone, oppressed, and afflicted, he does not protest. Rather, like a lamb, he is led to slaughter. Growing weaker, Jesus encounters his Mother. In this moment of recognition, Mary is with him in unwavering courage and fidelity.



Picture painted by Margot Wallace

Looking deeply into each other’s eyes, they share the searing pain. Together they give each other strength to continue the climb in obedience to the prophecy. In this hour of darkness, Jesus sees and knows the consolation from faith. Even the greatest pain may be comforted by an expression of love.

Prayer: Make Me a Tree

Today’s prayer is by John Birch, from the United Kingdom, who has written several books of prayers and studies Celtic prayer.

Make me a tree, Lord
Sturdy
Deep rooted
Useful.
Support
To those in need,
Shelter
To those who are weary,
Fruit
For those who hunger.
Make me a tree, Lord
Sturdy
Deep rooted
Useful

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February 25, 2018

Scripture: Psalm 121:7-8

He keeps you from all evil and preserves your life. He keeps his eye upon you as you come and go and always guards you.

Devotion: Confidence in God Alone

From the works of Matthew Henry (1662-1714)

(English minister and author who an exhaustive verse by verse study of the Bible)

We must not rely upon men and means, instruments and second causes. Shall I depend upon the strength of the hills? Upon princes and great men? No; my confidence is in God only. Or, we must lift up our eyes above the hills; we must look to God who makes all earthly things to us what they are. We must see all our help in God; from him we must expect it, in his own way and time.

This psalm teaches us to comfort ourselves in the Lord, when difficulties and dangers are greatest. . . He will take care that his people shall not fall.

You will not be hurt, neither by the open assaults, nor by the secret attempts of your enemies. The Lord will prevent the evil you fear, and sanctify, remove, or lighten the evil you feel. He will preserve the soul, that it be not defiled by sin, and disturbed by affliction; he will preserve it from perishing eternally. He will keep you in life and death; going out to your labor in the morning of your days, and coming home to your rest when the evening of old age calls you in. It is a protection for life. The Spirit, who is your Preserver and Comforter, will abide with you forever. Let us be found in our work, assured that the blessings promised in this psalm are ours.

Prayer: Do Not Forget Me

Today's prayer is from Jacob Astley, first Baron Astley of Reading (1579-1652), who was a Royalist commander in the English Civil War. His battle prayer was written just before the Battle of Edgehill in 1642.

O Lord,
You know how busy I must be this day.
If I forget you,
Do not forget me.



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February 26, 2018

Scripture: Philippians 4:13

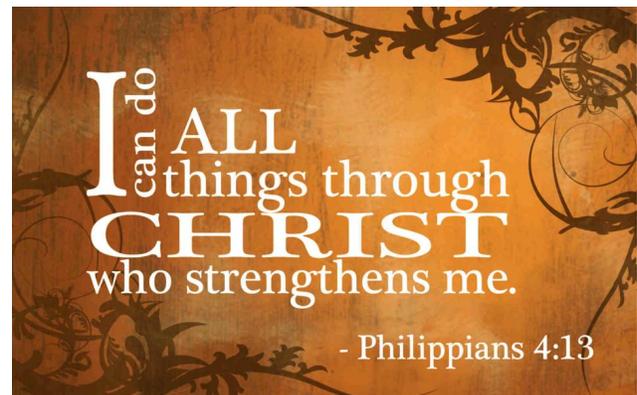
I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.

Devotion: Fear God and Work Hard

From the works of David Livingstone (1813-1873)

(Scottish Christian Congregationalist, pioneer medical missionary, an explorer in Africa, and one of the most popular British heroes of the Victorian era.)

I will go anywhere, as long as it be forward. If you have men who will only come if they know there is a good road, I don't want them. I want men who will come if there is no road at all. I will place no value on anything I have or may possess except in relation to the kingdom of Christ. I determined never to stop until I had come to the end and achieved my purpose. Fear God and work hard.



Prayer: Trust in Christ

Today's prayer is from Brendan the Voyager (AD 484-577), an Irish monk. Reputedly he set sail in a small coracle of wood and ox hide from Ireland and ended up in Newfoundland -- an amazing achievement in his time.

Help me to journey beyond the familiar
and into the unknown.
Give me the faith to leave old ways
and break fresh ground with You.

Christ of the mysteries, I trust You
to be stronger than each storm within me.
I will trust in the darkness and know
that my times, even now, are in Your hand.
Tune my spirit to the music of heaven,
and somehow, make my obedience count for You.

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February 27, 2018

Scripture: Ephesians 5:2

And walk in the way of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

Devotion: Walk in Love

*From the works of Thomas Traherne (1636-1674)
(English poet, clergyman, theologian and religious writer)*

O God who has redeemed me to be a Son of God, and called me from vanity to inherit all things, I praise you, that having loved me and given Yourself for me, you command us saying, "As I have loved you, so you also love one another.

Since love is the end for which heaven and earth was made, enable me to see and discern the sweetness of so great a treasure. And since you have advanced me into the Throne of God, in the bosom of all angels and men; commanding them by this precept, to give me a union and communion with you in their dearest affection; in their highest esteem; and in the most near and inward room and seat in their hearts; give me the grace which Saint Paul prayed for, that I may be acceptable to the saints. Fill me with your Holy Spirit, and make my soul and life beautiful, make me all wisdom, goodness and love, that I may be worthy to be esteemed and accepted of them. That bring delighted also with their felicity, I may be crowned with You and with your glory.



Prayer: Do Good Anyway

Today's reflection was written on the wall of the children's home Mother Teresa (1910-1997) operated in Calcutta.

People are often unreasonable, irrational, and self-centered. Forgive them anyway.
If you are kind, people may accuse you of selfish, ulterior motives. Be kind anyway.
If you are successful, you will win some unfaithful friends and some genuine enemies.

Succeed anyway.

If you are honest and sincere people may deceive you. Be honest and sincere anyway.
What you spend years creating, others could destroy overnight. Create anyway.
If you find serenity and happiness, some may be jealous. Be happy anyway.
The good you do today, will often be forgotten. Do good anyway.
Give the best you have, and it will never be enough. Give your best anyway.
In the final analysis, it is between you and God.
It was never between you and them anyway.

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February 28, 2018

Scripture: Psalm 118:24

This is the day that the Lord has made! Let us rejoice and be glad in it!

Devotion: Rejoice!

Submitted by: Julie MacNeil

This is a verse that I share with a friend every morning. There was a time when this friend did not want to share anything, not lunch, not laughter, not anything. Sunshine was gone from her life, and her world was dark.

Missing her, I tried to open the door to her heart and mind. I wrote. I knocked. I called. Every Sunday on my way to church, I would leave a message on her phone: “Hey! This is the day that the Lord has made! Let us rejoice and be glad in it!” I longed for her to see the same sunshine that I saw as I drove. For a long time she never answered or returned my calls.

My prayers for her were numerous, as were the prayers of many friends. We prayed for God to lift the clouds of darkness and despair! We were impatient. But in God’s time, He did answer those prayers. She saw the day that the Lord had made, and all of her friends standing in the sunshine, and she came and stood with us.

Then one morning on my way to church, a text came in. “Hey, Jules, this is the day that the Lord has made! Let us rejoice and be glad in it!” She had gotten my messages all along, and now she was returning my calls! Ever since that day, we share that verse in text messages. Whoever gets up first texts, “This is the day that the Lord has made...” and her friend answers, “Let us rejoice and be glad in it!” Whenever I read or hear that passage, I smile and know that the Lord is merciful and good, and I rejoice.



Prayer: Christ’s Body

Today’s poem is widely attributed to Teresa of Avila (1515-1582), a Spanish Carmelite nun, reformer, theologian and author.

Christ has no body but yours,
No hands, no feet on earth but yours,
Yours are the eyes with which he looks compassion on this world.
Yours are the feet with which he walks to do good.
Yours are the hands, with which he blesses all the world.
Yours are the hands, yours are the feet, yours are the eyes, you are His body.
Christ has no body now but yours.
Yours are the eyes with which he looks compassion on this world.
Christ has no body now on earth but yours.

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March 1, 2018

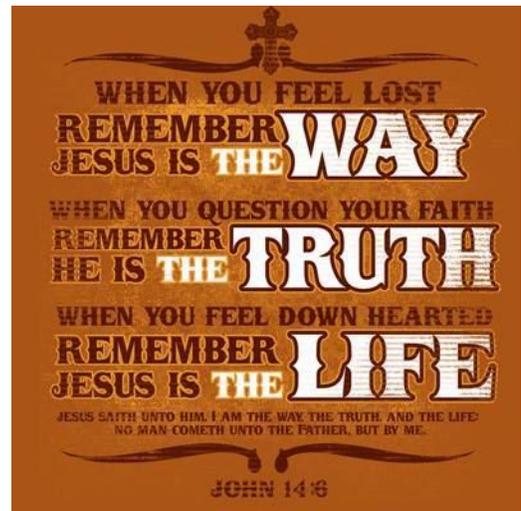
Scripture: John 14:6

I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.

Devotion: The Way

*From “Everyday Encouragement” by Pamela McQuade
(An American author of Christian books and devotionals)*

Plenty of people doubt Jesus. But those who have accepted Him as their Savior need not wallow in uncertainty. His Spirit speaks to ours, moment by moment, if we will only listen. He tells us God has shown us the way: we need not seek another path or truth. No other road leads to God. For a vibrant Christian life, we simply need to continue down the highway we’re traveling with Jesus.



Prayer: The Way, the Truth, and the Life

Today’s prayer was written by Erasmus (1466-1536), a Dutch Renaissance classical scholar, humanist, priest, social critic, teacher and theologian.

Lord Jesus Christ,
you have said that you are the Way, the Truth and the Life.
Do not allow us to stray from you, who are the Way,
not to distrust you, who are the Truth,
nor to rest in anything other than you, who are the Life.

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March 2, 2018

Scripture: 1 John 3:9

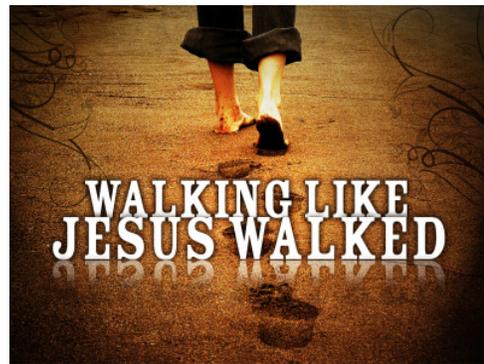
The person who has been born into God's family does not make a practice of sinning because now God's life is in him; so he can't keep on sinning, for this new life has been born into him and controls him—he has been born again.

Devotion: Walking the Talk

From the works of C. S. Lewis (1898-1963)

(British novelist, poet, academic, medievalist, literary critic, essayist, lay theologian, broadcaster, lecturer and Christian apologist.)

If Christianity is true why are not all Christians obviously nicer than all non-Christians? ... If conversion to Christianity makes no improvement in a man's outward actions – if he continues to be just as snobbish or spiteful or envious or ambitious as he was before – then I think we must suspect that his conversion was largely imaginary; ... Fine feelings, new insights, greater interest in "religion" mean nothing unless they make our actual behavior better... When we Christians behave badly, or fail to behave well, we are making Christianity unbelievable to the outside world... Our careless lives set the outer world talking; and we give them grounds for talking in a way that throws doubt on the truth of Christianity itself.



Prayer: Holy Spirit

Today's prayer is from Augustine of Hippo (354-430), an early Christian theologian and philosopher. He was the bishop of Hippo Regius (modern day Annaba, Algeria) and is viewed as one of the most important church fathers in Western Christianity.

Breathe in me, O Holy Spirit, that my thoughts may all be holy.
Act in me, O Holy Spirit, that my work, too, may be holy.
Draw my heart, O Holy Spirit, that I may love only what is holy.
Strengthen me, O Holy Spirit, that I may defend all that is holy.
Guard me, O Holy Spirit, that I myself may always be holy.

This Lenten season we are reflecting on favorite Bible passages and reading some historic prayers. We hope these devotions provide inspiration during this reflective Lenten season.

March 3, 2018

Scripture: Matthew 6:25-27

Therefore, I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothes? Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they? Can any one of you by worrying add a single hour to your life?

Devotion: Don't Worry

Submitted by: Laura Metzger

What if we could reclaim all of the minutes, hours and days we have sacrificed to worry? What if we stopped trying to control what we can't change? I've spent time worrying about the future, relationships, how well I would be able to do something, what people would think, health issues, my children's future, money and many other things. And just how effective has this time been in solving any problem I worried about? It turns out, the more I worry the more I lose the reality of how much control I have in resolving any of these problems.

This verse is my go-to verse whenever I begin to worry. I can feel the signs – constantly thinking and scheming about something I really have no power to control; being fearful of the future; and engaging in relentless criticism. This verse helps me refocus my thoughts to break the cycle of worry and fear. It helps me focus my attention on the moment and concentrate on the here and now. God becomes present and I begin to see the good in the moment – not the fear of the future.

God clearly wants to have his presence felt when we work through difficult times and hard issues. We can only take appropriate action when we replace the worry and fear with the peace and light God so lovingly offers us through prayer and meditation. I will face problems that I need to resolve...I choose to face those problems with the help of God, not self-inflicted worry.

Prayer: Thine Eye is Upon Us

Today's prayer was written by American Christian evangelist Billy Graham (born in 1918) for a meeting in New York in 1957.

Our Father and our God, we pray that ... we all might be conscious that Thine eye is upon us. If God can see the sparrow fall, if He has the hairs of our head numbered, we know that He watches us, that He loves us, that He cares for us, and we're told in Thy Word that He cares for us so much that He sent His only begotten Son to the cross to die that we might find forgiveness of our sins. We pray ... that Thy Holy Spirit will draw all men unto the Savior, for we ask it in His Name. Amen.



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March 4, 2018

Scripture: Romans 15:13

May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Devotion: Hope

From the works of A.W. Tozer (1897-1963)

(American Christian pastor, preacher, editor, author and spiritual mentor.)

So strong, so beautiful is hope that it is scarcely possible to overpraise it. In the midst of death Paul could be bold and buoyant because he had firm confidence in the final outcome. His lovely little benediction (Romans 15:13) pronounced over the Roman Christians shows how faith and peace and joy live with hope like four fair sisters dwelling in the same cottage.



Faith is confidence in the character of God, and hope is the sweet anticipation of desirable things promised but not yet realized. Hope is an electronic beam on which the Christian flies through wind and storm straight to his desired haven. To the child of God, hope is a gift from the heavenly Father "who loved us and by his grace gave us eternal encouragement and good hope" (2 Thessalonians 2:16). The Christian's hope is sound because it is founded upon the character of God and the redeeming work of His Son Jesus Christ. For this reason Peter could call it "a living hope" (1 Peter 1:3). It is living because it rests on reality and not on fancy. It is not wishful dreaming but vital expectation with the whole might of the Most High behind it.

Prayer: Our Morning Star

Today's prayer is from Bede the Venerable (AD 673-735), who was an English monk in the Kingdom of North Umbria of the Angles. He was an author and scholar.

O Christ, our Morning Star,
Splendor of Light Eternal,
shining with the glory of the rainbow,
come and waken us
from the greyness of our apathy,
and renew in us your gift of hope. Amen.

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March 5, 2018

Scripture: Colossians 1:22

He has done this through the death on the cross of his own human body, and now as a result Christ has brought you into the very presence of God, and you are standing there before him with nothing left against you—nothing left that he could even chide you for;

Devotion: Presence

From the works of Brother Lawrence (c1614-1691)

(French lay brother in a Carmelite monastery. Best known for his writing “The Practice of the Presence of God.”)

That practice which is alike the most holy, the most general, and the most needful in the spiritual life is the practice of the Presence of God. It is the schooling of the soul to find its joy in His Divine Companionship, holding with Him at all times and at every moment humble and loving converse, without set rule or stated method, in all time of our temptation and tribulation, in all time of our dryness of soul and disrelish of GOD, yes, and even when we fall into unfaithfulness and actual sin.



When we are busied, or meditating on spiritual things, even in our time of set devotion, whilst our voice is rising in prayer, we ought to cease for one brief moment, as often as we can, to worship GOD in the depth of our being, to taste Him though it be in passing, to touch Him as it were by stealth. Since you cannot but know that GOD is with you in all you undertake, that He is at the very depth and center of your soul, why should you not thus pause an instant from time to time in your outward business, and even in the act of prayer, to worship Him within your soul, to praise Him, to entreat His aid, to offer Him the service of your heart, and give Him thanks for all His loving-kindnesses and tender-mercies?

Prayer: Empty Vessel

Today’s prayer is from Martin Luther (1483-1546), a German professor of theology, composer, priest, monk and leader of the Protestant Reformation.

Look, Lord, on an empty vessel that needs to be filled.
In faith I am weak - strengthen me.
In love I am cold - warm me and make me fervent
so that my love may go out to my neighbor.
I doubt and am unable to trust you completely.
Lord, strengthen my faith and trust in you.
You are all the treasure I possess.
I am poor, you are rich, and you came to have mercy on the poor.
I am a sinner, you are goodness.
From you I can receive goodness, but I can give you nothing.
Therefore I shall stay with you.

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March 6, 2018

Scripture: Romans 8:37

We are more than victorious through Him who loved us. For I am convinced that not even death or life, angels or rulers, things present or things to come, height or depth, or any other created thing can separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord!

Devotion: Confidence in Christ

From the works of Joyce Meyer

(American Christian author, speaker and president of Joyce Meyer Ministries)

To be more than a conqueror means that before you ever get a problem, you already know that whatever problem comes your way, you can overcome it through Christ. You live with confidence that God loves you no matter what and He will never leave



you nor forsake you. And when you have this kind of relationship with Christ, you aren't constantly afraid of bad news or of things that may happen that aren't in your plan. When the unexpected happens or you're disappointed, you won't be devastated by it. See, when you get a revelation of who you are in Christ, you know that with Christ on the inside of you, there is nothing that can happen that's more than you are because there's nothing that's too much for Him!

Prayer: Victory is Ours

Today's prayer is from Desmond Tutu (born 1931), a South African social rights activist and retired Anglican bishop who actively opposed apartheid in the 1980s. This prayer is from his book "An African Prayer Book".

Goodness is stronger than evil;
Love is stronger than hate;
Light is stronger than darkness;
Life is stronger than death;
Victory is ours through Him who loves us.

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March 7, 2018

Submitted by: Deen Austin

In Loving memory of Henry “Hank” Austin

Scripture: John 3:16

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

Devotion: Proclaiming God’s Love

Submitted by: Deen Austin

In Loving memory of Henry “Hank” Austin

Hank Austin served for 28 years as a Chaplain in the US Navy. He was present at the battle of Iwo Jima. Hank had a deep love for Christ and was an active evangelist, intent on ensuring that the people he met knew about their Lord and Savior. John 3:16 was *his* verse, and it became the Austin Family verse.



As Hank would drive through the gate at the base on his way to work, he would greet the guards with this passage and ask if the young man knew about Christ. In any family upheaval, Hank would bellow out John 3:16 to try to get answers and resolution. In times of sorrow, when he would have to visit sailor’s family and share news of harm that had come to their loved ones, Hank would lovingly cite John 3:16 and embrace the family.

The Austin family loves this verse because it is the verse of their father. All of the Austin children memorized John 3:16 to remind them of the power of their Lord and Savior. While a well-known verse, it holds a special memory for the entire Austin family!

Prayer: We Bless You God

Today’s prayer was written by Charles Spurgeon (1834-1892), an English Baptist preacher, known as the “Prince of Preachers”.

We bless You, O God, as the God of our redemption, for You have so loved us as to give even Your dear Son for us. He gave Himself, His very life for us that He might redeem us from all iniquity and separate us unto Himself to be His peculiar people, zealous for good works.

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March 8, 2018

Scripture: Psalm 1:1-2

Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly. Nor stands in the path of sinners, nor sits in the seat of the scornful; But his delight is in the law of the Lord, and in His law he meditates day and night.

Devotion: Remember to Live

From the works of Blaise Pascal (1623-1662)

(French mathematician, physicist, inventor, writer and Catholic theologian)

We do not rest satisfied with the present. We anticipate the future as too slow in coming, as if in order to hasten its course; or we recall the past, to stop its too rapid flight. So imprudent are we that we wander in the times which are not ours and do not think of the only one which belongs to us; and so idle are we that we dream of those times which are no more and thoughtlessly overlook that which alone exists.

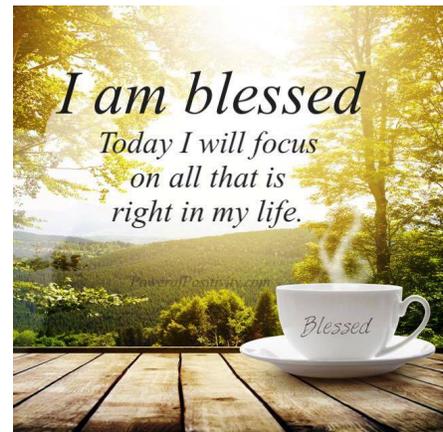
For the present is generally painful to us. We conceal it from our sight, because it troubles us; and, if it be delightful to us, we regret to see it pass away. We try to sustain it by the future and think of arranging matters which are not in our power, for a time which we have no certainty of reaching.

Let each one examine his thoughts, and he will find them all occupied with the past and the future. We scarcely ever think of the present; and if we think of it, it is only to take light from it to arrange the future. The present is never our end. The past and the present are our means; the future alone is our end. So we never live, but we hope to live; and, as we are always preparing to be happy, it is inevitable we should never be so. Remember to live.

Prayer: Blessed

Today's prayer is from Giles of Assisi (1190-1262), one of the original companions of Francis of Assisi.

Blessed is he who loves and does not therefore desire to be loved;
Blessed is he who fears and does not therefore desire to be feared;
Blessed is he who serves and does not therefore desire to be served;
Blessed is he who behaves well toward others and does not desire that others
 behave well toward him;
and because these are great things, the foolish do not rise to them.



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March 9, 2018

Scripture: Micah 7:18-19

*Who is a God like you, who removes guilt and pardons sin for the remnant of his inheritance;
Who does not persist in anger forever, but instead delights in mercy, and will again have
compassion on us...?*

Devotion: The Living Jesus

*From the works of Mother Teresa (1910-1997)
(Nun and missionary who worked ministered in Calcutta, India)*

Do you really know the living Jesus -- not from books but from bring with Him in your Heart? Have you heard the loving words He speaks to you? The devil may try to use the hurts of life, and sometimes our own mistakes to make you feel it is impossible that Jesus really loves you, is really cleaving to you. This is a danger for all of us. And so sad, because it is completely the opposite of what Jesus is really wanting, waiting to tell you. Not only that He loves you, but even more, He longs for you.



Prayer: Christ Lead Me

Today's prayer is from Augustine of Hippo (AD 354-430) was an early Christian theologian and philosopher. He was the bishop of Hippo Regius (modern day Annaba, Algeria) and is viewed as one of the most important church fathers in Western Christianity.

Lord, I commit my failures
as well as my successes
into your hands,
and I bring for your healing
the people and the situations,
the wrongs and the hurts of the past.

Give me courage, strength and generosity
to let go and move on,
leaving the past behind me,
and living the present to the full.

Lead me always to be positive
as I 'entrust the past to your mercy,
the present to your love,
and the future to your providence'.

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March 10, 2018

Scripture: Genesis 18:14

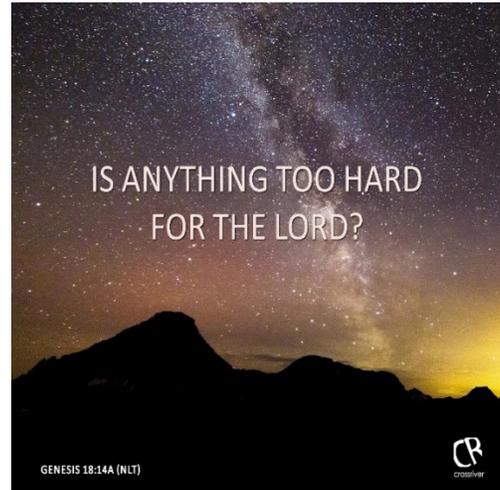
Is anything too hard for the LORD?

Devotion: Nothing is Too Hard for God

Submitted by: Pat Grant

Abraham and Sarah laugh at the Lord when he tells them they will finally get their heart's desire, a son, next year – Sarah who will be 90 and Abraham 100. We can't really blame them for laughing – we might well do the same thing if it happened to us. But the Lord reminds them and us: Genesis 18:14 "Is anything too hard for the Lord?" Sarah and Abraham get the baby and name him Isaac, meaning "He laughs." And so should we – at ourselves when we forget that our loving God is all-powerful.

Lent is an old word meaning the slow season for planting until spring comes and the ground is ready to seed. In the Church, Lent commemorates the 40 days Jesus spends in the wilderness to prepare for his condemnation and death on the Cross. Yet those dark days result in our reconciliation with God and the triumph of the Resurrection – Easter. "Is anything too hard for the Lord?"



I keep a prayer diary and ask for God's help in times of trouble. When I look back, I see that God has answered, not always as I wanted, but sometimes even better. It may take time – God's time – but God always answers prayer. Clearly, nothing is too hard for our Lord.

Prayer: I Can Not Do This Alone

Today's prayer is from Dietrich Bonhoeffer (1906-1945), a Lutheran pastor, theologian and anti-Nazi dissident in Germany. He was executed by the Nazi regime just prior to its collapse.

O God, early in the morning I cry to you.
Help me to pray
And to concentrate my thoughts on you;
I cannot do this alone.
In me there is darkness,
But with you there is light;
I am lonely, but you do not leave me;
I am feeble in heart, but with you there is
help;
I am restless, but with you there is peace.

In me there is bitterness, but with you there
is patience;
I do not understand your ways,
But you know the way for me....
Restore me to liberty,
And enable me to live now
That I may answer before you and before
men.
Lord whatever this day may bring,
Your name be praised. Amen

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March 11, 2018

Scripture: Matthew 5:6

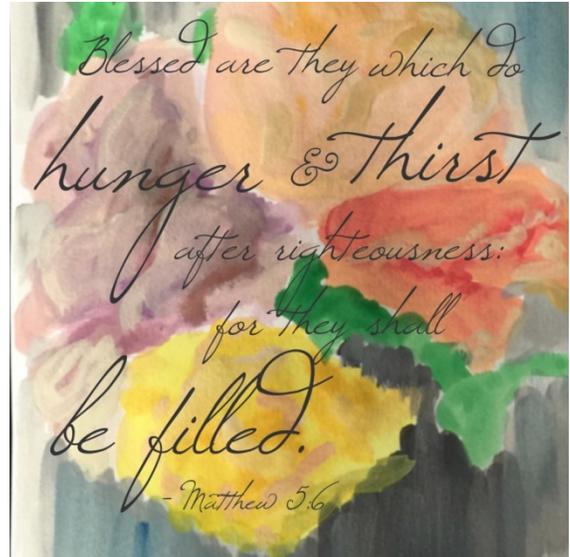
Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be filled.

Devotion: Works of Mercy

From a sermon given by Leo the Great (AD 390 – 461)

(Roman aristocrat, Christian theologian, and Catholic Pope)

Let works of mercy, therefore, be our delight, and let us be filled with those kinds of food that feed us for eternity. Let us rejoice in the replenishment of the poor, whom our bounty has satisfied. Let us delight in the clothing of those whose nakedness we have covered with needful raiment. Let our humanness be felt by the sick in their illnesses, by the weakly in their infirmities, by the exiles in their hardships, by the orphans in their destitution, and by solitary widows in their sadness: in the helping of whom there is no one that cannot carry out some amount of benevolence. For no one's income is small whose heart is big, and the measure of one's mercy and goodness does not depend on the size of one's means. Wealth of good will is never rightly lacking, even in a slender purse. Doubtless the expenditure of the rich is greater and that of the poor smaller, but there is no difference in the fruit of their works where the purpose of the workers is the same.



Prayer: Teach Us Lord

Today's prayer is from Blaise Pascal (1623-1662), a French mathematician, physicist, inventor, writer and Christian philosopher.

Teach us, Lord,
to do the little things
as though they were great
because of the majesty of Christ
who does them in us
and who lives our life.
Teach us to do the greatest things
as though they were little and easy
because of His omnipotence.

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March 12, 2018

Scripture: 2 Peter 3:18

Grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior.

Devotion: Knowing Your Savior

From the works of Alexander Maclaren (1826-1910)

(Scottish minister who was one of the most widely read of his time.)

The knowledge of a person is not the same as the knowledge of a creed or of a thought or of a book. We are to grow in the knowledge of Christ, which includes but is more than the intellectual apprehension of the truths concerning Him. He might turn to injunction into – “Increase your acquaintance with your Savior.” Many Christians never get to be any more intimate with Him than they were when they were first introduced to Him. They are on a kind of bowing acquaintance with their Master, and have little more than that.



We sometimes begin an acquaintance which we think promises to ripen into a friendship, but are disappointed. Circumstances or some want of congeniality which is discovered prevents its growth. So with not a few professing Christians. They have got no nearer to Jesus Christ than when they first knew Him. Their friendship has not grown. It has never reached the stage where all restraints are laid aside and there is perfect confidence. “Grown in the knowledge of your Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.” Get more and more intimate with Him, nearer to Him and franker and more cordial with Him day by day.

Prayer: Discernment

Today’s prayer is from Thomas A Kempis (1380-1471), who was the author of “The Imitation of Christ”, one of the most popular and best known Christian books on devotion.

Grant me, O Lord, to know what I ought to know,
to love what I ought to love,
to praise what delights Thee most,
to value what is precious in Thy sight,
to hate what is offensive to Thee.

Do not suffer me to judge according to the sight of my eyes,
nor to pass sentence according to the hearing of the ears of ignorant men;
but to discern with a true judgement between things visible and spiritual,
and above all things always to inquire what is the good pleasure of Thy will.

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March 13, 2018

Scripture: 1 Corinthians 1:28-30

God chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things—and the things that are not—to nullify the things that are, so that no one may boast before him. It is because of him that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God—that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption.

Devotion: New Life

*From the works of Arthur T. Pierson (1867-1911)
(American Presbyterian pastor, Christian leader, missionary and writer)*

Christ becomes to us the sphere of new power in becoming the sphere of new life. A sphere contains an atmosphere, and that atmosphere may be quite different from that which is outside; it may have different qualities and be capable of supporting life in a far higher degree. So, what we could not do, outside of Christ, becomes both natural and possible in Him, because we have new appetites, desires, and affinities. The old passions, habits, bondage, are displaced by a new life, capacity and freedom.



Prayer: Prayer Upon Rising From Sleep

Today's prayer is originally by John Calvin 1509-1564) and adapted by Timothy Keller (born 1950). John Calvin was a French theologian, pastor, reformer of the Protestant Reformation, and principal figure in developing the theology known as Calvinism. Timothy Keller is a theologian, author, Christian apologist, and minister of the Redeemer Presbyterian Church in New York City.

My God, Father, and Savior, since you have been pleased to give me the grace to come through the night to the present day, now grant that I may employ it entirely in your service, so that all my works may be to the glory of your name and the edification of my neighbors. As you have been pleased to make your sun shine upon the earth to give us bodily light, grant the light of your Spirit to illumine my understanding and my heart. And because it means nothing to begin well if one does not persevere, I ask that you would continue to increase your grace in me until you have led me into full communion with your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, who is the true Sun of our souls, shining day and night, eternally and without end. Hear me, merciful Father, by our Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.

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March 14, 2018

Scripture: 1 Corinthians 13

If I speak in the tongues of men or of angels, but do not have love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. If I give all I possess to the poor and give over my body to hardship that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing.

Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.

Love never fails. But where there are prophecies, they will cease; where there are tongues, they will be stilled; where there is knowledge, it will pass away. For we know in part and we prophesy in part, but when completeness comes, what is in part disappears. When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put the ways of childhood behind me. For now we see only a reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known.

And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love.

Scripture: Psalm 103:8-10

The LORD is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy. He will not always chide: neither will he keep his anger forever.

Devotion: Love

Submitted by: Geeta Antony

When my father passed away I recall pondering what really is our purpose in life. Is there something beyond the mundane events of our life between birth and death? I saw my father's physical being was no more and the only thing that now endured is the love he spread during his life.

As President of the YMCA in Mumbai, India, my father initiated many programs to help and uplift the less privileged into a better future for their lives. The starting point for all initiatives was the "C" in YMCA, which stands for "Christian". Through his leadership, the YMCA followed Christ's commandment of loving our neighbor. This passage shows us what this love looks like. The programs of the YMCA extended to all people, regardless of their faith, their economic class or caste. Every time I return to Mumbai I hear stories about how my parent's love and encouragement gave a vision and a start to many for a life far beyond their expectations. Love, indeed, is unconquerable and endures forever.

When people hurt us we are quick to respond with exasperation, unkind words, or by holding a grudge. We each bring our worldly expectations of how things "ought" to be in our relationships with others. This imposition of our world view, our ideas, our egos, only serves to create schisms



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in our relationships. Paul gives us the formula for repairing these schisms with the qualities of Love from God. Similarly, Psalm 103:8-10 shows us how we should behave towards others, “The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy. He will not chide: neither will he keep his anger forever.”

When we lose a loved one we wish we could have been more tolerant, put their needs above our own, and responded to their faults with love. Learning from our shortcomings and regrets of the past, how can we live this day forward with Love, as prescribed in this passage?

Prayer: God’s Love Broke Through

Today’s contemporary prayer was written by the Rev. Michaela Youngson, a Methodist minister from London. She is a poet, author, and broadcaster.

Your love was too strong,
too wide,
too deep
for death to hold.

The sparks cast by your love
dance and spread
and burst forth
with resurrection light.

Gracious God,
We praise you for the light of new life
made possible through Jesus.
We praise you for the light of new life
that shone on the first witnesses of resurrection.
We praise you for the light of new life
that continues to shine in our hearts today.

We pray that the Easter light of life, hope and joy,
will live in us each day;
and that we will be bearers of that light
into the lives of others. Amen.

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March 15, 2018

Scripture: Deuteronomy 31:8

And the Lord, He is the One who goes before you. He will be with you, He will not leave you nor forsake you; do not fear nor be dismayed.

Devotion: Trust in God

From "Jesus Lives" by Sarah Young

(American Christian author, best known for her devotional "Jesus Calling")

I myself go before you – opening up the way. I will never leave you nor forsake you. Therefore, you need not be afraid or discouraged. I realize, though, that feelings often fail to submit to logic. So don't be surprised when your emotions rebel against your will. David – who was both a mighty warrior and a gifted poet – expressed fearfulness, trembling, and even overwhelming horror in one of his psalms. Yet his trust in Me was genuine and deep. His life and his writing demonstrate that fear does not "trump" trust: they can coexist. This is why David could proclaim, "When I am afraid, I will trust in You."



Trust is a relational word. It's one of the prime ways you can draw near Me. When you are afraid, don't blame yourself for having that very human emotion. Instead, acknowledge what you are feeling; then affirm your trust in Me – out loud or in a whisper. This affirmation protects you from the lie that feeling fearful means you don't trust Me. Even better, it brings you consciously into My Presence, where you can find comfort and hope. The Light of My Presence illuminates the vast dimensions of My Love for you – empowering you to grasp how wide and long and high and deep My love is, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge.

Prayer: God Everywhere

Today's reflection is from the "Carmina Gadelica", which is six volumes of prayers, hymns, blessings, songs, proverbs and literary folkloric poems from the Gaelic speaking regions of Scotland. Compilation of the works began by Alexander Carmichel between 1860 and 1909.

God to enfold me,
God to surround me,
God in my speaking,
God in my thinking.

God in my sleeping,
God in my waking,
God in my watching,
God in my hoping.

God in my life,
God in my lips,
God in my soul,
God in my heart.

God in my sufficing,
God in my slumber,
God in mine ever-living soul,
God in mine eternity.

*This Lenten season we are reflecting on favorite Bible passages and reading some historic prayers.
We hope these devotions provide inspiration during this reflective Lenten season.*

March 16, 2018

Scripture: Ephesians 6:10

Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might.

Devotion: Christ's Armor

*From "Quiet Talks With the Master" by Eva Bell Werber (1889-1962)
(American Christian author)*

You must learn from this day to shield yourself from all destructive thoughts and influences. You must learn to draw an armor about yourself, to say quickly when annoying things arise, "This cannot touch me, I am wearing the armor of Christ Consciousness." Practice this faithfully and see with what safety and calmness you will be able to move among your daily contacts. You are in the world, yet above its tumult; calm and still within, for nothing but good can penetrate the shining armor of the Christ. My child, the restlessness within your soul is as a bird beating its wings against the bars. Your soul is beating against the bars of the material for the full revelation of My Truth.



Prayer: Breastplate Prayer

Today's prayer, an excerpt from "The Breastplate Prayer", was written by St. Patrick (AD 385-461), a Christian missionary and bishop who served in Ireland.

Christ be with me, Christ within me,
Christ behind me, Christ before me,
Christ beside me, Christ to win me,
Christ to comfort and restore me.
Christ beneath me, Christ above me,
Christ in quiet, Christ in danger,
Christ in hearts of all that love me,
Christ in mouth of friend and stranger.

I bind unto myself the Name,
The strong Name of the Trinity;
By invocation of the same.
The Three in One, and One in Three,
Of Whom all nature hath creation,
Eternal Father, Spirit, Word:
Praise to the Lord of my salvation,
Salvation is of Christ the Lord.

This Lenten season we are reflecting on favorite Bible passages and reading some historic prayers. We hope these devotions provide inspiration during this reflective Lenten season.

March 17, 2018

Scripture: Matthew 22: 37-40

Jesus replied: “‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.”

Devotion: The Greatest Commandment

Submitted by: Ruth Grendell

I have discovered that selecting a favorite Bible verse is not an easy task. I spent the last several days sorting through Bible chapters, my notes, and hymnals. There are so many favorites, and each one is especially meaningful at a specific time. As a child I memorized verses in Sunday School. The first Psalm was a very important one to accomplish and remember. I know that many verses serve as the foundation for hymns and anthems—even oratorios. I remember hearing my mother sing the great old hymns while she worked around the house. I treasure the words of Isaiah in Haydn’s Messiah every time I hear them. What a powerful reminder that our God has a plan for each one of us. He keeps his promises!



The book of John has so many comforting messages that I enjoy reading often, as well as Jeremiah’s assurance that God loves us with an everlasting love. How can I choose? As I reflected, the memory of seeing an embroidered picture on the wall of an African woman’s home of Joshua’s words—As for me and my house we will serve the Lord. ‘Auntie Jane’ was a great role model for the people in her village. Aha! For now, my favorite verses are Christ’s response in Matthew 22:37-40.

“You should love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the greatest and first commandment. And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.’ A great message to reflect upon throughout this Lenten season and throughout life!

Prayer: Love For God

Today’s prayer is by John Vianney, Cure of Ars (1786-1859), who was known for his priestly and pastoral work in the parish of Ars, France.

I love you, O my God, and my only desire is to love you until the last breath of my life.

I love you, O my infinitely lovable God, and I would rather die loving you, than live without loving you.

I love you, Lord, and the only grace I ask is to love you eternally.

... My God, if my tongue cannot say in every moment that I love you, I want my heart to repeat it to you as often as I draw breath.”

*This Lenten season we are reflecting on favorite Bible passages and reading some historic prayers.
We hope these devotions provide inspiration during this reflective Lenten season.*

March 18, 2018

Scripture: Philippians 2:3-4

Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others.

Devotion: A Foundation of Humility

From the works of John van Ruysbroeck (1293-1381)

(Flemish mystic who wrote in Dutch vernacular instead of Latin to reach a wider audience)

Charity and Righteousness: these two lay the foundation of the kingdom of the soul where God would dwell. And this foundation is humility. These three virtues prop and bear the whole weight and the whole edifice of all the other virtues and of all transcendence. For charity always confronts man with the unfathomable goodness of God, from which it has flowed forth, that thereby he may live worthily and remain steadfast before God, and grow in true humility and all other virtues. Righteousness places man face to face with the eternal truth of God, that he may know truth, and become enlightened, and may fulfill all virtue without erring. But humility brings man face to face with the most high mightiness of God, that he may always remain little and lowly, and may surrender himself to God, and may not stand upon his selfhood. This is the way in which a man should hold himself before God, that thereby he may grow continually in new virtues.



Prayer: A Prayer for Humility

Today's prayer was written by William Barclay (1907-1978), a Scottish author, radio and television presenter, professor of Divinity, and minister in the Church of Scotland.

O Father, give us the humility which realizes its ignorance,
Admits its mistakes, recognizes its need, welcomes advice,
Accepts rebuke.

Help us always to praise rather than to criticize,
To sympathize rather than to discourage, to build rather than to destroy,
And to think of people at their best rather than at their worst.

This we ask for thy name's sake. Amen.

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We hope these devotions provide inspiration during this reflective Lenten season.*

March 19, 2018

Scripture: Acts 10:43

Everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name.

Devotion: Forgiveness of Sins

From the works of Charles Spurgeon (1834-1892)

(English Calvinist Baptist preacher, known as “The Prince of Preachers”)

All our transgressions are swept away at once, carried off as by a flood, and so completely removed from us that no guilty trace of them remains. They are all gone! Oh, believers, think of this, for it is no little thing. Sins against a holy God, sins against His loving Son, sins against the Gospel as well as against the law, sins against man as well as against God, sins of the body as well as sins of the mind, sins as numerous as the sands on the seashore and as great as the sea itself: All, all are removed from us as far as the east is from the west.



All this evil was rolled into one great mass and laid upon Jesus, and having borne it all, He has made an end of it forever. When the Lord forgave us, He forgave us the whole debt. He did not take the bill and say, “I strike out this item and that,” but the pen went through it all; Paid. It was a receipt in full of all demands; Jesus took the handwriting that was against us and nailed it to His cross, to show before the entire universe that its power to condemn us had ceased forever. We have in Him a full forgiveness.

Prayer: The House of My Soul

Today’s prayer is from Augustine of Hippo (354-430) was an early Christian theologian and philosopher. He was the bishop of Hippo Regius (modern day Annaba, Algeria) and is viewed as one of the most important church fathers in Western Christianity.

O Lord,
the house of my soul is narrow;
enlarge it that you may enter in.
It is ruinous, O repair it!
It displeases your sight.
I confess it, I know.
But who shall cleanse it,
to whom shall I cry but to you?
Cleanse me from my secret faults, O Lord,
and spare your servant from strange sins.

*This Lenten season we are reflecting on favorite Bible passages and reading some historic prayers.
We hope these devotions provide inspiration during this reflective Lenten season.*

March 20, 2018

Scripture: Ephesians 4:23

Now your attitudes and thoughts must all be constantly changing for the better.

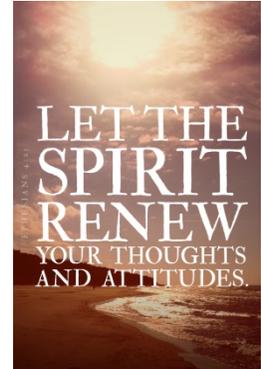
Devotion: Endless Possibilities

From the works of Josh McDowell

(Contemporary American Christian apologist, evangelist and writer.)

The more you learn about God and his ways, the more you begin to think in ways that other people just can't understand. As you learn more and more about God and accept him as the authority over right and wrong, your thoughts and attitudes will begin to change. When others react one way to a certain situation or temptation, you will act and react in a totally different way. When others choose wrong, you will be able to choose right because you know some things that they don't understand.

If something seems impossible, people think, "Hey, it can't be done." Let's face it - as humans we can be pretty limited in our thinking. But we can be trained to go beyond our limitations. How? By thinking like Christ. With his limitless thinking, the possibilities are endless.



Prayer: Lord, Master of My Life

A prayer from Ephraim the Syrian (AD 305-373). He was a Syriac Christian deacon and theologian who wrote a variety of hymns, poems and sermons, and other theological documents.

O Lord and Master of my life,
give me not the spirit of laziness,
despair, lust of power, and idle talk.

But give rather the spirit of sobriety,
humility, patience and love to Thy servant.

Yea, O Lord and King,
grant me to see my own transgressions
and not to judge my brother,
for blessed art Thou unto ages of ages. Amen

*This Lenten season we are reflecting on favorite Bible passages and reading some historic prayers.
We hope these devotions provide inspiration during this reflective Lenten season.*

March 21, 2018

Scripture: Jeremiah 29:11-12

For I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. Then you will call on me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you.



Devotion: God’s Plan

Submitted by: Celeste Bailey

Leaving Lebanon during the civil war was very difficult for my mother, sister and me. We loved living in Beirut, especially after spending a difficult childhood in Cairo. In Cairo, we were raised by a single mom (my father passed away), with no close relatives. She was also considered a foreigner (Romanian) despite having an Egyptian passport and speaking Arabic fluently. Due to the gravity of the war situation in Beirut, my mother became despondent and went through a nervous breakdown. We had to evacuate our apartment and, with the help of friends with powerful political connections, were able to reach the airport unharmed. We traveled to Egypt and stayed with my mother’s best friend in Cairo with the plan of returning to Beirut when the war was over. Her hospitality, generosity and graciousness helped us through the two months in Cairo. We had to decide: Do we stay in Cairo until the civil war ends? Do we go back to Beirut in the midst of the bedlam? My older sister, her family, our extended relatives and close friends were still in Lebanon. Or would we emigrate to the United States where my brother, a US citizen, was living in New York? My brother implored us to come as refugees. My sister and I had only one desire: for the war to end and go back home. Why go to the US? - What did we know about the US except for the programs we watched on TV? Egypt? - A lot of discrimination against Christians and many unhappy memories for my mother.

My sister and I decided to pray and surrender our future to the Lord. We asked Him for guidance and discernment with a very unconventional approach. We wrote the names of each city on a separate piece of paper, folded and, shuffled them then prayed for God to reveal His plan and recited Jeremiah 29:11,12 and Proverbs 3:5-6. I don’t remember who picked the paper, either my sister or me, but it read “New York”. We both cried because our hopes that the war would end soon were utterly dashed and we realized that we would not go back to Beirut. Nevertheless, undeterred by our grief and disappointment, our desire was to be obedient to Him. My mother also agreed that emigrating to the US was what we needed to do. After some wrangling to get visas to the US, the American consulate finally gave us permission. We arrived at Kennedy Airport in New York, and that was over 40 years ago! God is faithful and His promises are true, giving us hope and a future. These verses continue to guide me to this day.

Prayer: I Stand and Listen

Today’s meditation was written by Columba (AD 521-597), an Irish abbot and missionary who spread Christianity through Scotland. He founded the Abbey of Iona, which was a dominant religious and political institution in the region for centuries.

I stand and listen.
In the silence of my heart I can hear his will,
When I listen despairing people flock to me,
They expect that I can see the answers,
They ask my advice, they say I am wise.
I answer that nothing can deceive me,

If I stand alone and silently listen.
For I am but a servant who is guided by his king,
when I listen.
Sometimes in a lowly cell in the presence of my
God
I stand and listen.

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We hope these devotions provide inspiration during this reflective Lenten season.*

March 22, 2018

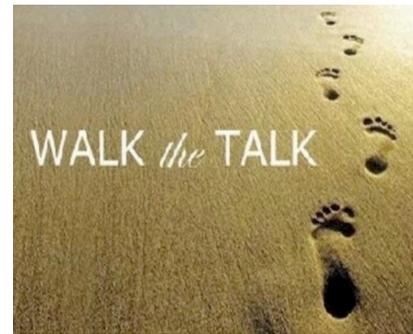
Scripture: 1 Corinthians 9:27

*Like an athlete I discipline my body, training it to do what it should, not what it wants to.
Otherwise I fear that after enlisting others for the race, I myself might be declared unfit and
ordered to stand aside.*

Devotion: Living Christian

*From the works of Jacquelyn Sheppard
(Contemporary American educator, counselor, Bible teacher and international speaker.)*

It's fairly easy to stand up in front of a crowd and preach or teach. The crowds may applaud and congratulate us on a job well done and people may gather to talk to us or ask questions. If we are foolish, we can walk away from those moments thinking we have lived the Christian life well and taught "sinners" how to be converted. We may even feel we have glorified the Lord with our effective words or singing. But, it's not in those confines that we live the Christian life. No, it's in the moments with our families when we are tired or discouraged. It's when someone in the office has misplaced the stapler or calculator. It's when things didn't work out as planned. It's when someone failed to do their jobs and left us with our hands full of their responsibilities. It's then that our Christianity rings true or hollow. We must live what we preach and teach. If not, we have not glorified the Lord regardless of our words or songs. He wants to be glorified in how we live our lives – down in the "nitty-gritty." That's when our words are the clearest and our songs the most beautiful. Consistent Christian living is just that – living Christian consistently.



Prayer: Lenten Journey

*Today's reflection is from contemporary author Henry Baron's book "Talking With God."
Baron emigrated to the US in 1948 from the Netherlands,*

I must follow you, Lord, on this Lenten journey
I must go where you went
with eyes and ears wide open
if I'm to change.
... keep me listening, Lord of all
let me not get lost or hide among
the heedless sons and daughters
of my own Jerusalem.

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We hope these devotions provide inspiration during this reflective Lenten season.*

March 23, 2018

Scripture: Ephesians 5:8

for you were formerly darkness, but now you are Light in the Lord; walk as children of Light

Devotion: Fruits of the Light

From the works of Alexander Maclaren (1826-1910)

(Scottish minister who is one of the most widely read of his time.)

We all tend to cultivate those virtues which are in accordance with our natural dispositions, or are made most easy to us by our circumstances. And there is nothing in which we more need to seek comprehensiveness than in the effort to educate ourselves into, and to deduce from ourselves, kinds of goodness and forms of excellence which are not naturally in accordance with our dispositions, or facilitated by our circumstances. The tree planted in the shrubbery will grow all lopsided; the bushes on the edge of the cliff will be shorn away on the windward side by the teeth of the south-western gale, and will lean over northwards, on the side of least resistance. And so we all are apt to content ourselves with doing the good things that are easiest for us, or that fit into our temperament and character. Jesus Christ would have us to be all-round men, and would that we should seek to aim after and possess the kinds of excellence that are least cognate to our characters. Are you strong, and do you pride yourself upon your firmness? Cultivate gentleness. Are you amiable, and pride yourself, perhaps, upon your sympathetic tenderness? Try to get a little iron and quinine into your constitution. Seek to be the man that you are least likely to be, and aim at a comprehensive development of 'all righteousness and goodness and truth.'



Further, remember that this all-round completeness is not attained as the result of an effortless growth. True, these things are the fruits of the light, but also true, they are the prizes of struggle and the trophies of warfare. No man will ever attain to the comprehensive moral excellence which it is in his own power to win; no Christian will ever be as all-round a good man as he has the opportunities of being, unless he makes it his business, day by day, to aim after the conscious increase of gifts that he possesses, and the conscious appropriation and possession of those of which he is still lacking.

Prayer: Walk in the Light

Today's prayer is a matin, from the Byzantine Rite. The Byzantine Rite consists of liturgical texts developed to guide services of vespers, compline, midnight office, matins, and hours. The original Rites were developed in the late 4th century. They have been adapted and are still used by Eastern Orthodox churches today.

As you have once given light
to the blind from birth,
shine upon my soul, which does not see your light,
O merciful Lord,
but lies buried in the darkness of sinful forgetfulness
and in the cares of this life.

This Lenten season we are reflecting on favorite Bible passages and reading some historic prayers. We hope these devotions provide inspiration during this reflective Lenten season.

March 24, 2018

Scripture: Malachi 3:13-17

You have spoken harsh words against me, says the Lord. Yet you say “How have we spoken against you?” You have said, “It is vain to serve God. What do we profit by keeping his command or by going about as mourners before the Lord of hosts? Now we count the arrogant happy; evildoers not only prosper, but when they put God to the test they escape.” Then those who revered the Lord spoke with one another. The Lord took note and listened, and a book of remembrance was written before him of those who revered the Lord and thought on his name. They shall be mine, says the Lord of hosts, my special possession on the day when I act and I will spare them as parents spare their children who served them.

Devotion: From Skepticism to Faith

Submitted by: Stephanie Schultz

Last week at my Bible study small group my leader asked us to think about writing a Lenten Devotional about our favorite Bible passage. We all weren't sure if we could name just one passage. A few days later I was reading the daily devotional in *Our Daily Bread* and it became a new favorite passage.

Believers during the time of Malachi faced the challenge of skepticism about God's plan for the future. Some felt it was futile to serve God. In our increasingly secular world we can feel that same skepticism as we see arrogant and destructive people prosper. When people of faith are belittled and mocked our own faith can be shaken. It can be difficult to stand firm with God. But when we gather in worship and sing praises to God and hear God's word our faith is strengthened. When we gather in Bible study to learn more about God's continuous presence in our lives the skepticism fades. And when in our small group we share our struggles, doubts and fears we encourage each other. What a gift and joy to know God is listening AND remembering all who fear and honor Him. God notices and cares for us. Let us stay faithful.



Prayer: Let Nothing Disturb You

Today's prayer is by Teresa of Avila, (1515-1582), a Spanish Carmelite nun, reformer, theologian and author. This prayer was contained in the book "Teresa of Avila: Mystical Writings."

Let nothing disturb you
Let nothing make you afraid.
All things are passing.
God alone never changes.
Patience gains all things.
If you have God you will want for nothing.
God alone suffices.

*This Lenten season we are reflecting on favorite Bible passages and reading some historic prayers.
We hope these devotions provide inspiration during this reflective Lenten season.*

March 25, 2018

Scripture: Ephesians 2:8

For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast.

Devotion: The Gift of Salvation

From the works of Billy Graham (born 1918)

(American evangelical Christian minister and evangelist, who became well known internationally after 1949)

Nothing can compare with all that is ours in Christ when we find salvation. Forgiveness. Justification. Adoption. Eternal life. What a glorious life the Gospel offers to those who are searching for purpose and meaning or to those who have found that materialism and sensual pleasure are not the answer to the deepest yearnings of the heart.

Unfortunately, many people today have distorted the meaning of salvation, saying that it means only political, social and economic liberation in this life. Certainly, Christians should be concerned about injustice and do what they can to promote a more just world. But lasting and complete liberation from social injustice will come only when Jesus Christ returns to establish His Kingdom. Biblical salvation is far deeper, because it gets to the root of our problem—the problem of sin. Only Christ can change the human heart and replace greed and hate with compassion and love.



Prayer: The Sinner's Prayer

Today's prayer, known as the Sinner's Prayer, is from John Chrysostom (AD 347-407), who was the archbishop of Constantinople and an early theologian of the church.

O my all-merciful God and Lord, Jesus Christ, full of pity:
Through Your great love You came down and became incarnate in order to save everyone.
O Savior, I ask You to save me by Your grace!
If You save anyone because of their works, that would not be grace but only reward of duty,
but You are compassionate and full of mercy!
You said, O my Christ, "Whoever believes in Me shall live and never die."
If then, faith in You saves the lost, then save me, O my God and Creator, for I believe.
Let faith and not my unworthy works be counted to me, O my God,
for You will find no works which could account me righteous.
O Lord, from now on let me love You as intensely as I have loved sin,
and work for You as hard as I once worked for the evil one.
I promise that I will work to do Your will,
my Lord and God, Jesus Christ, all the days of my life and forever more.

This Lenten season we are reflecting on favorite Bible passages and reading some historic prayers. We hope these devotions provide inspiration during this reflective Lenten season.

March 26, 2018

Scripture: 1 Corinthians 2:9

However, as it is written: “What no eye has seen, what no ear has heard, and what no human mind has conceived – the things God has prepared for those who love him – these are the things God has revealed to us by his Spirit.

Devotion: Sufficiency

From the works of V. Gilbert Beers

(American publisher and developer of Bible reference materials, particularly for children)

Often, when we think we have something, we don't, or when we think we don't have something, we do. This concept was vividly dramatized in the fall of a powerful high-tech company. For years, employees had given their lives to build this company and were rewarded richly in company stock. Some, near retirement, had a million dollars or more in company stock, more than enough to give them a comfortable, even delightful, retirement. Then the company fell overnight from an accounting scandal. What these trusting people thought they had, a comfortable retirement income, they didn't have. Their stock was almost worthless. What they thought they didn't have, worry about insufficient money for older years, they did have. These were real live people living out a real life drama before our eyes. As we remember their story, we are reminded that they, and we, are tempted to think we have self-sufficiency in circumstances such as this. But what we thought we had, self-sufficiency, we didn't have. What we thought we didn't have, insufficiency, we had. From a human viewpoint, we could despair. Then we realize that God's all-sufficiency can transcend both our self-sufficiency and our insufficiency.



Prayer: A Prayer for Lent

Today's prayer is by Henri Jozef Nouwen (1932-1996), who was a Dutch priest, professor, writer and theologian. This prayer is from "A Cry for Mercy: Prayers from the Genesee."

How often have I lived through these weeks without paying much attention to penance, fasting, and prayer? How often have I missed the spiritual fruits of the season without even being aware of it? But how can I ever really celebrate Easter without observing Lent? How can I rejoice fully in your Resurrection when I have avoided participating in your death? Yes, Lord, I have to die—with you, through you, and in you—and thus become ready to recognize you when you appear to me in your Resurrection. There is so much in me that needs to die: false attachments, greed and anger, impatience and stinginess.... I see clearly now how little I have died with you, really gone your way and been faithful to it. O Lord, make this Lenten season different from the other ones. Let me find you again. Amen.

*This Lenten season we are reflecting on favorite Bible passages and reading some historic prayers.
We hope these devotions provide inspiration during this reflective Lenten season.*

March 27, 2018

Scripture: John 7:17

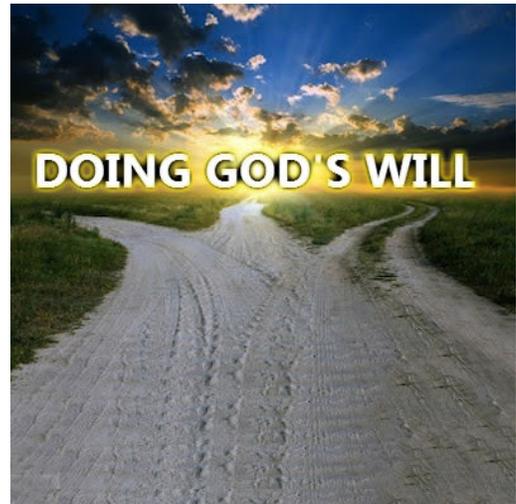
If anyone wills to do His will, he shall know concerning the doctrine, whether it is from God or whether I speak on My own authority.

Devotion: God's Will

*From the works of Henry Drummond (1851-1897)
(Scottish evangelist, biologist, writer and lecturer)*

It requires a well-kept life to do the will of God, and even a better kept life to will to do His will. To be willing is a rarer grace than to be doing the will of God. For he who is willing may sometimes have nothing to do, and must only be willing to wait: and it is far easier to be doing God's will than to be willing to have nothing to do – it is easier far to be working for Christ than it is to be willing to cease. No, there is nothing rarer in the world today than the truly willing soul, and there is nothing more worth coveting than the will to will God's will. There is no grander possession for any Christian life than the transparently simple mechanism of a sincerely obeying heart. And if we could keep the machinery clear, there would be lives in thousands doing God's will on earth even as it is done in Heaven.

There would be God in many a man's career whose soul is allowed to drift—a useless thing to God and the world—with every changing wind of life, and many a noble Christian character rescued from wasting all its virtues on itself and saved for work for Christ.



Prayer: Loving and Serving Christ

Today's prayer is by Augustine of Hippo (354-430), who was an early Christian theologian and philosopher. He was the bishop of Hippo Regius (modern day Annaba, Algeria) and is viewed as one of the most important church fathers in Western Christianity.

Eternal God,
who are the light of the minds that know you,
the joy of the hearts that love you,
and the strength of the wills that serve you;
grant us so to know you
that we may truly love you,
and so to love you
that we may fully serve you,
whom to serve is perfect freedom,
in Jesus Christ our Lord.

*This Lenten season we are reflecting on favorite Bible passages and reading some historic prayers.
We hope these devotions provide inspiration during this reflective Lenten season.*

March 28, 2018

Scripture: 1 John 4:7-8

Dear friends, let us practice loving each other, for love comes from God and those who are loving and kind show that they are the children of God, and that they are getting to know him better. But if a person isn't loving and kind, it shows that he doesn't know God—for God is love.

Devotion: God is Love

Submitted by: Kathleen Nassi

To me, 1 John 4:7-8 represents what it has been an integral part of my belief from that time. As the President of our High School Young Life chapter, I read this verse at our senior farewell meeting to my peers and over the years, I have used it when people ask me about my faith and are inquiring about Christianity.



The very essence of God is love and if we want to be like Jesus we are called to love, to help one another, and to support those in need. Love is inherent in all that God does, and, as Christians, we are called to love one another. We can certainly show love in our families, and in our relationships, but we are also called to demonstrate God's love through mission work, through our daily interactions at work and in doing our errands. It is represented in conversations with others and in our attitude toward others as we live out our day-to-day life. Genuine love can only be expressed as God lives in us and as we live in him. That is the love of Christ through us.

Prayer: The Fragrance Prayer

Today's prayer is by Mother Teresa of Calcutta (1910-1997) and is said to be one of her favorite prayers.

Dear Jesus,
Help us to spread your fragrance everywhere we go.
Flood our souls with your spirit and life.
Penetrate and possess our whole being so utterly, that our lives may only be a radiance of yours.
Shine through us, and be so in us, that every person we should come in contact with may feel
your presence in our soul.
Let them look up and see no longer us, but only Jesus.
Stay with us, and then we shall begin to shine as you shine; so to shine as to be a light to others;
the light, Jesus, will be all from you.
None of it will be ours.
It will be you shining on others through us.
Let us thus praise you in the way you love best, by shining on those around us.
Let us preach you without preaching: not by words, but by our example, by the catching force,
the sympathetic influence of what we do, the evident fullness of the love our hearts bear for you.
Amen.

This Lenten season we are reflecting on favorite Bible passages and looking at some historic prayers. We hope these thoughts and prayer provide inspiration during this reflective Lenten season.

March 29, 2018
Maundy Thursday

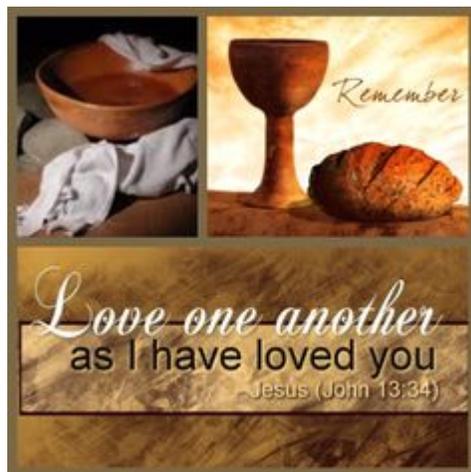
Scripture: 1 John 13:34

A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another.

Devotion: Divine Love

From the works of Jeanne Guyon (1648-1717)
(French mystic and author of books about prayer)

It is God's love towards us that gives us everything... When He is able by his love to produce that love in us. He reigns within; He constitutes there our life, our peace, our happiness, and we then already begin to taste that blissful existence which He enjoys. His love towards us is stamped with his own character of infinity: it is not like ours, bounded and constrained; when He loves, all the measures of his love are infinite. He comes down from Heaven to earth to seek the creature of clay whom he loves; He becomes creature and clay with him; He gives him his flesh to eat. These are the prodigies of Divine love in which the Infinite outstrips all the affection we can manifest. He loves like a God, with a love utterly incomprehensible. It is the height of folly to seek to measure infinite love by human wisdom. Far from losing any element of its greatness in these excesses, He impresses upon his love the stamp of his own grandeur, while He manifests a delight in us bounded only by the infinite.



Prayer: Maundy Thursday

Today's prayer is from the "PC-USA Book of Common Worship."

Holy God, source of all love,
on the night of his betrayal Jesus gave his disciples a new commandment,
To love one another as he loved them.

Write this commandment in our hearts;
give us the will to serve others as he was the servant of all,
who gave his life and died for us,
Yet is alive and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and forever. Amen.

This Lenten season we are reflecting on favorite Bible passages and looking at some historic prayers. We hope these thoughts and prayer provide inspiration during this reflective Lenten season.

March 30, 2018
Good Friday

Scripture: Psalm 51:14

Deliver me from bloodguiltiness, O God, thou God of my salvation: and my tongue shall sing aloud of thy righteousness.

Devotion: A Contrite Spirit

From the works of Charles Spurgeon (1834-1892)

(English Calvinist Baptist preacher, known as “The Prince of Preachers”)

In this solemn confession, observe that David plainly names his sin. He does not call it manslaughter nor speak of it as an imprudence by which an unfortunate accident occurred to a worthy man, but he calls it by its true name: bloodguiltiness. He did not actually kill the husband of Bathsheba; but still it was planned in David’s heart that Uriah should be slain, and he was before the Lord his murderer.



Learn in confession to be honest with God. Do not give fair names to foul sins; call them what you will, they will smell no sweeter. What God sees them to be, that do you labor to feel them to be; and with all openness of heart, acknowledge their real character. Observe that David was evidently oppressed with the heinousness of his sin.

It is easy to use words, but it is difficult to feel their meaning. Psalm 51 is the photograph of a contrite spirit. Let us seek after like brokenness of heart; for however excellent our words may be, if our heart is not conscious of the hell-deservingness of sin, we cannot expect to find forgiveness.

The psalmist ends with a commendable vow: If God will deliver him, he will “sing aloud.” Who can sing in any other style of such a mercy as this! But note the subject of the song – “thy righteousness.” We must sing of the finished work of a precious Savior, and he who knows most of forgiving love will sing the loudest.

Prayer: Psalm 51

Today’s prayer is based on Psalm 51.

Have mercy upon us, O God, according to your steadfast love; according to your abundant mercies, blot out our transgressions. Wash us thoroughly from our iniquity and cleanse us from our sin. For we know our transgressions, and our sin is ever before us. Create in us a clean heart, O God, and put a new and right spirit within us. Cast us not away from your presence, and take not your Holy Spirit from us. Restore to us the joy of your salvation and uphold us with a willing spirit. Through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

This Lenten season we are reflecting on favorite Bible passages and looking at some historic prayers. We hope these thoughts and prayer provide inspiration during this reflective Lenten season.

March 31, 2018

Scripture: Joshua 1:9

Be strong and of good courage; do not be afraid, nor be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go.

Devotion: In the Hollow of His Hand

Submitted by: Cynthia Soltero

This Bible verse is very significant to me for two reasons. Years ago when my mother had just turned 80 she had a life threatening rupture in her small intestine that caused our family a lot of worry. Her advanced age and the location made it difficult to treat and repair. Her surgeon voiced great concern. We had everyone we knew pray for her. My mother was a woman of deep abiding faith and a prayer warrior in her own right. Before she went into surgery she told me she had claimed Joshua 1:9 and no matter what the outcome, God would be with her. She came through that first surgery in good spirits. A week later another surgery was required because the intestine had ruptured again and three weeks after that another surgery was needed. With each surgery her doctor became more doubtful about her ability to survive. God miraculously brought her through all three surgeries and she lived another fruitful six years. Seeing the faith my mom had during that stormy season helped to deepen my faith in God as well. Through all of mom's physical trials, she was calm and completely at peace. She knew God held her in the hollow of His comforting hand. With all the turbulence whirling around her she felt safe and secure knowing God lovingly held her in the calm of the eye of a storm and would always be with her.



Recently I went through a difficult physical challenge. I had torn the cartilage attached to my right hip and pelvis. At first I was given a cane. Following several MRIs and treatments a couple of sacral discs were dislocated, which caused me excruciating pain. My condition worsened and I was confined to a wheel chair for a few weeks. Many caring people from church, as well as dear friends and family, prayed for my healing. A few days before I was scheduled to sing *The Magnificat* with our church choir, God miraculously healed me taking away all my pain. I couldn't help but think of my dear mother and how strong and courageous she had been during her physical trial. It's good to know that no matter what we are going through God is always there for us.

Prayer: Heavenly King

Today's prayer is a Byzantine Prayer

Heavenly King, Comforter, Spirit of Truth, Who art everywhere present and fill all things; Treasury of Blessings, and Giver of Life, come and dwell within us, cleanse us of all stain, and save our souls, O Gracious Lord. Amen.



Box 704, 6225 Paseo Delicias,
Rancho Santa Fe, CA 92067

Office: 858.756.2441 • FAX: 858.756.3746
villagechurch.org