



deaf devo
September - December 2017



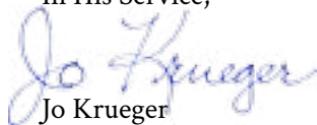
Dear Friend,

I hope that you will enjoy the new “look” of this issue of *Deaf Devo*. The format may be different, but the devotions still contain Bible verses and stories that will help you in your walk with God.

This issue of *Deaf Devo* has devotions that will teach you about wisdom, trust, the early church, Psalm 119, thankfulness and the weather. There are also devotions that will prepare you to celebrate the birth of Jesus.

I pray that each devotion in this book will help you draw closer to God and encourage you to continue serving Him every day!

In His Service,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Jo Krueger". The signature is fluid and cursive, with "Jo" on top and "Krueger" below it.

Jo Krueger

deaf devo

Volume 38

September, October, November, December 2017

Issue 3

Editor-in-chief: Chad Entinger

Editor: Jo Krueger

Assistant Editor: Mavis Brink

Layout: Joseph D. Josselyn

DEAF DEVO (ISSN 0744-9100) is published every four months by Deaf Missions, 21199 Greenview Road, Council Bluffs, Iowa 51503 (Phone: 712/322-5493 Voice/TTY; Videophone: 712/587-8887; Fax: 712/322-7792; Website: www.deafmissions.com). No subscription fee is charged, unless more than one copy of each book is sent to an address. Freewill offerings are accepted to help pay for the publication. Third-class postage paid at Council Bluffs, Iowa 51501. Copyright © 2017. Printed in the United States.

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POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Deaf Missions, 21199 Greenview Road, Council Bluffs, Iowa 51503-4190.

God Never Sleeps

Many years ago, a young Deaf couple had a baby. At that time, there were no baby cry alerts to let the mother know when her baby was crying. What did she do? At night, she tied a string around her baby's foot. Then the mother put the string down the hall and into her own bedroom. Finally, she tied the string around her own hand.

During the night when the baby cried and moved, the string moved, too. This woke up the mother. Sometimes the baby would move around and not be crying. But the mother would always get up and make sure that her baby was okay. What a great example of a mother's love!

God loves us even more than a mother loves her child. Psalm 121:3 tells us something about God, who is our Protector. ***"He will not let you fall. Your Protector will not fall asleep."*** God doesn't sleep. He is always ready to protect us. Another verse in the Bible tells us that God even knows the number of hairs on our heads. Wow! God really cares about each one of us. He is always willing to help us and show us His love.

Think about the many ways that God takes care of you today. Thank Him for His protection.

– Jo Krueger

The Bible

The Bible is God's message to us. God's Holy Spirit inspired about 40 different men to write the books of the Old Testament and the New Testament. The Bible is available in many different languages around the world.

There are many books written in the world every day. Some books give us historical information or facts about the earth. Other books are written to entertain us. Some of these books will be printed again and again. But many will be out of print in a few years. God's Word, the Bible, is different. 1 Peter 1:25 tells us how God's Word is different. ***"But the word of the Lord lasts forever. And that word is the Good News that was told to you."*** God's Word will always be with us.

Think about what our world would be like without the Bible. People would not know what is right and what is wrong. They would not know about God's plan for their lives. That would be a very sad world!

Even though the Bible was written many years ago, it is still important for us. Take time to read God's Word today. Depend on it to lead you in the right way. And thank God for giving you His message that will last forever.

–Eileen C. Wood

Suggested Bible Reading

Psalm 121:1-8

Friday, September 1

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Suggested Bible Reading

1 Peter 1:22-25

Saturday, September 2

Problems in Life

Most people want to live for a long time. I hope that I have many more years to live. Why? Because I want to see my children and grandchildren grow up and have families of their own. God has blessed me with a wonderful family. They make me very happy.

But I do face problems in my life. All people have problems. Some people think that when they become Christians, they won't have any more problems. But that's not true. Sometimes Christians have even more problems because they follow and obey God.

When I have problems, I know that God will be with me and help me. In Psalm 91:15 God says that He is my source of help. ***"When my followers call to me, I will answer them. I will be with them when they are in trouble. I will rescue them and honor them."***

No matter what troubles I have today — financial problems, stress at work, family problems — I know that God will be with me. Whether I live a long time or just live for a few more years, I can be happy knowing God will help me.

Ask God to help you as you face problems today. You can depend on His love and grace!

— Pam Davis

Suggested Bible Reading

Psalm 91:14-16

Sunday, September 3

Give Yourself to God

In 2 Corinthians, chapter 8, Paul talks about the Christians in the area of Macedonia. These people faced many problems because they followed Jesus. And they were very poor people. But they did not sit around and feel sorry for themselves. Instead, they gave themselves to serve God and help other people.

In 2 Corinthians 8:5, Paul tells us about these Christians. ***"And they gave in a way that we did not expect: They gave themselves to the Lord and to us before they gave their money. This is what God wants."*** The people in the churches of Macedonia did not have much money to give, but they gave themselves to serve God every day.

Maybe you are a Christian, but you are wondering what God wants you to do. The first step is to give yourself to Him. How can you do that? Pray to God every day. Read His Word and obey it. Then let Him show you ways you can serve other people.

Look for opportunities to give yourself to God today. Maybe you can visit someone who is sick or in prison. Maybe you can babysit for a tired mother or share a meal with your neighbors. Remember that God will bless you as you serve Him.

— Steve Husting

Suggested Bible Reading

2 Corinthians 8:1-7

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Monday, September 4

Seeds

In the past when I have taken care of plants, they always died. But now I am trying to do some gardening. God has surprised me by teaching me some important lessons as I take care of my garden.

A seed does not begin to grow until it changes. Its outer shell breaks open so it can have roots and grow. I have learned that God helps me change so that I can serve Him better. He shows me how to rely on Him instead of relying on other people.

Seeds need the right amount of air, food, light and water to grow. It is the same in my Christian life. God has shown me that in order to grow spiritually, I need to be involved in Bible study, prayer, worship and service.

At the right time, a seed produces fruit. In the same way, I can produce “fruit” for God’s kingdom. In Psalm 92 the writer compares good people to trees. In Psalm 92:14 he talks about these trees producing fruit. ***“Even when they are old, they will continue producing fruit like young, healthy trees.”*** Throughout our lives, we can continue serving God in different ways.

You can produce “fruit” for God today. Use the gifts God has given you to serve Him.

– Suzanne Austin-Hill

Suggested Bible Reading

Psalm 92:12-15

Tuesday, September 5

Greatest Need

What do people need most in life? Some people might answer this question by saying that people need air. Without air, we would die in a few minutes. Other people might say that we need good health. Good health makes us happy in life. And some people might say that we need love the most.

Our greatest need in life is to have the right relationship with God. This relationship can only happen through Jesus. If we have a right relationship with God, we can experience His love through Jesus and live forever with Him.

Our relationship with God affects everything in our life. And when we have that right relationship with God, He will provide everything we need. Psalm 73:28 talks about being close to God. ***“As for me, all I need is to be close to God. I have made the Lord God my place of safety. And, God, I will tell about all that you have done.”***

If we have the right relationship with God, we will love other people, forgive them like God has forgiven us and sacrifice ourselves so that more people can know about Jesus. Remember that your greatest need today is to be close to God!

– Bob La Forge

Suggested Bible Reading

Psalm 73:23-28

Wednesday, September 6

Spend Time with God

It is fun to watch my little dog, Max. He loves to roll over on his back and kick his legs. When Max wants a treat, he sits in front of me and stares at me until I notice him. He responds well to my commands to sit, speak, dance, lie down and roll over. But Max gets distracted easily. Often he ignores me when I tell him to come to me. I want Max to spend some time with me, but I must call him again and again.

Sometimes I am like Max. I know that I need to spend time reading my Bible and praying. I want to spend time with God. But I get distracted with my home, my family and my job. I ignore the one thing that is most important.

God loves spending time with me. Psalm 149:4 shows us how God feels about us. *"The Lord is happy with his people. He did a wonderful thing for his humble people. He saved them!"* God wants me to read His Word and tell Him that I love Him.

Today is a good day to spend time with God. Read and study some verses in the Bible. Praise God and share your thoughts and feelings with Him. God will bless you and help you grow in your Christian life.

– Donna J. Howard

Suggested Bible Reading

Psalm 149:1-9

Thursday, September 7

God is Awesome

Psalm 29 is a psalm that shows us how awesome God is. The first few verses praise God and talk about His glory and power. The next few verses talk about God's voice. His voice is so powerful that it is like thunder. It can break large cedar trees and goes through the air like lightning.

Psalm 29:10 gives us another reminder that God is awesome. *"The Lord ruled as king at the time of the flood, and the Lord will rule as king forever."* God showed His great power when He covered the earth with a flood. Through God's power, Noah and his family and many animals were saved from destruction.

The Bible is filled with examples of God's great power — when the Red Sea was parted so the Israelites could walk across on dry land, when Joshua and the Israelite army conquered the city of Jericho and when Daniel was in the lion's den. And when Jesus was on earth, He showed God's power through the miracles that He did, too.

When we are emotionally, physically or spiritually weak, God is there to help us. He is so strong that He can help us with any problem we may face. Praise our awesome God today!

– Bonnie Hall

Suggested Bible Reading

Psalm 29:1-11

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Friday, September 8

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Weeds

My family and I live on a small farm. One time we saw a thistle weed growing in our field. We decided that a small weed couldn't hurt us. But soon other weeds grew in the field. We learned our lesson. It is now my oldest son's responsibility to look for thistle weeds and dig them up. This prevents the weeds from growing and spreading their seeds.

This experience reminds me of 1 Corinthians 5:6. *"Your proud talk is not good. You know the saying, Just a little yeast makes the whole batch of dough rise."* A small amount of yeast can make a large batch of dough rise. In the same way, a few thistle seeds can spread and cause many more weeds to grow.

My family learned that it is important to remove even one small weed from the field. This experience teaches that we should not ignore sin in our lives. When we sin, we need to ask God for forgiveness and decide to not do that sin again. If we do not allow God to remove our sin, it will grow and cause us to sin more.

Be sure to examine your life today. Ask God to forgive your sins, and thank Him for Jesus who died so you can have your sins forgiven.

– Joseph Josselyn

Suggested Bible Reading

1 Corinthians 5:6-8

Are You Better?

When you see people who are not Christians, what do you think? Maybe you feel sorry for them because they do not know Jesus. Maybe you feel angry or sad because they have rejected Jesus. Or perhaps you feel like you are a better person than they are.

The devil wants us to believe that we are saved because we are good. He wants us to think we are better than other people. But it is wrong to think that. The truth is, we are not better than people who are not saved. Before we became Christians, we acted like them. But someone led us to Jesus. Then we let Him change our lives.

Does God love us because we are good? No! God loves us because HE is good! In Titus 3:7 Paul wrote about this. ***"We were made right with God by his grace. God saved us so that we could be his children and look forward to receiving life that never ends."***

When you see people who are not Christians, you may be tempted to think that you are better than they are. Don't allow yourself to believe this. Instead, understand that you are saved because of God's grace. Those people can be saved, too, if someone will tell them the Good News about Jesus. Will you share Jesus with them?

– Matt Keller

Be Ready

My friend went to a skin doctor. The doctor said that my friend needed some tests. They started talking about the human body. My friend told the doctor that his body might have some problems now, but he was happy to know that he will have a new body when Jesus comes again. Then the doctor asked my friend if he thought Jesus is coming soon.

In Mark 13:32-33, Jesus talked about the time when He will come back to earth. ***"No one knows when that day or time will be. The Son and the angels in heaven don't know when that day or time will be. Only the Father knows. Be careful! Always be ready! You don't know when that time will be."***

Because we don't know when Jesus is coming back to take His followers to live with Him, we need to always be ready. How can we be ready? We need to make sure that we are following Jesus and obeying His teachings. And we need to have a close relationship with Jesus by reading the Bible and praying every day.

Only God knows when Jesus will return. It might be today! Are you excited to see Jesus? Are you ready to live with Him forever?

– Eileen C. Wood

Suggested Bible Reading

Titus 3:4-8a

Sunday, September 10

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Suggested Bible Reading

Mark 13:28-37

Monday, September 11

Give to God

A loving husband gave his wife a small box wrapped in brown paper. Inside the tiny box was a beautiful ring set with diamonds, rubies and emeralds. It was a wonderful gift, even though it was small.

Jesus sat in the Temple and watched people put their money into the collection box. Many rich people came and gave a lot of money. Then a poor widow came. She put in two copper coins that were worth less than a penny.

In Mark 12:43-44, Jesus taught His followers about the importance of the widow's gift. *"Jesus called his followers to him and said, 'This poor widow put in only two small coins. But the truth is, she gave more than all those rich people. They have plenty, and they gave only what they did not need. This woman is very poor, but she gave all she had. It was money she needed to live on.'"*

God wants us to generously give Him our time, our talents and our money. Even though our gift might be small, He will be pleased when we give with a sincere and thankful heart.

I hope you will honor God with your time, your talents and your money today!

– Lynette H. Denton

Right Choice

When we invite relatives and friends to our house on a holiday, we try to do our best to make our home comfortable and prepare a very special meal. Luke, chapter 10, tells us about a time when Jesus and His followers traveled to the town of Bethany.

Martha and her sister, Mary, lived in Bethany. Martha invited Jesus and His followers to stay at her house. Martha was busy preparing food and taking care of the house. But instead of helping Martha, Mary sat down and listened to Jesus teach. Martha became upset because she thought Mary should help her. Martha asked Jesus to tell Mary to get up and help her serve.

In Luke 10:41-42, Jesus lovingly responded to Martha. *"But the Lord answered her, 'Martha, Martha, you are getting worried and upset about too many things. Only one thing is important. Mary has made the right choice, and it will never be taken away from her.'"* Jesus said that Mary had made the right choice. She chose to be close to Jesus and learn from Him.

Often we become very busy with our daily routine. We do not take time to read the Bible and pray. Remember that loving and serving Jesus is the most important thing you can do today.

– Robert Segress

Suggested Bible Reading

Mark 12:35-44

Suggested Bible Reading

Luke 10:38-42

Everything I Need

People who babysit or take care of young children know that there are two kinds of babies — crying babies and contented babies. Usually babies cry because they need to be fed or have their diaper changed. But contented babies are happy. They feel safe and have everything they need.

Psalm 23 gives us a picture of true contentment. This psalm lists several ways that a good shepherd provides for his sheep — feeds them grass, leads them to water, shows them the right path to take and keeps them safe from danger.

In the same way, God takes care of us. He gives us strength, helps us not be afraid, comforts us and welcomes us as an honored guest. God also shows us His goodness until we are overflowing with His wonderful blessings. Psalm 23:6 tells us the result of God taking care of us. *"Your goodness and mercy will be with me all my life, and I will live in the Lord's house a long, long time."* That is a description of a person who is contented and has everything he needs!

Remember today that God loves you and will always take care of you. He will give you everything you need so you can live for Him every day.

— Pam Davis

Suggested Bible Reading

Psalm 23:1-6

Thursday, September 14

Think Like Jesus

Paul wrote to the Christians in the city of Philippi. He reminded them to be united and take care of each other. He also told them to be humble and obedient. Paul talked about Jesus, who is the perfect example of how we should live.

In Philippians 2:5, Paul showed them how to be humble and obedient. *"In your life together, think the way Christ Jesus thought."* Our thoughts can lead us to obey God or to rebel against God. So we need to have the same thoughts that Jesus had.

Did Jesus think about giving up or getting revenge against someone who hurt Him, or was He impatient with people? No! Jesus thought like a humble servant. We need to stop thinking like people in the world and think like Jesus did.

It is not easy to think like Jesus. To keep focused on Him, we need to study His teachings and obey them. We need to spend time praying and asking for help to resist temptations from the devil.

Learn more about Jesus from the Bible today. This will help you honor and obey Him. When you honor and obey Jesus, you will think and live like Him.

— Steve Husting

Suggested Bible Reading

Philippians 2:5-11

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Friday, September 15

Focus on Jesus

Headlights on a car usually have two settings: bright and dim. One setting lets you see very far ahead. The other setting only lets you see things that are closer. The bright setting does not use more light than the dim setting. It just changes the way the light is focused.

When we choose to focus on worldly goals, problems, pain and struggles, we begin to lose hope. We can only think about those things. But if we change our focus, things become very different. When we focus on Jesus, God's love for us and the hope of eternal life, we begin to understand that the things of this world are not very important.

In 2 Corinthians 4:17, Paul talked about what is important in life. *"We have small troubles for a while now, but these troubles are helping us gain an eternal glory. That eternal glory is much greater than our troubles."* Our goal should be to be like Jesus and share His love with others. Then we will understand that pain and suffering will happen for a short time. We know we will not have pain in heaven.

When we focus on Jesus, we can look beyond the things that are happening in the world. Then we can see the better things He has planned for us.

– Matt Keller

God Comforts Us

My little dog, Max, likes to be near me all the time. When I am sitting on the couch, Max jumps up and lies beside me. I love Max, and I take care of him. I feed him and make sure he has water to drink. I play with Max and take him for walks. But Max has one problem. He is like most dogs — he does not like thunder. When the thunder booms, all Max wants to do is snuggle close to me. I cover him with his blanket and comfort him.

Max makes me think about my relationship with God. Sometimes things happen in my life that make me feel afraid. Then I need someone to comfort me. So, I pray to God and tell Him all my troubles and fears. He fills me with His love and comfort.

2 Corinthians 1:4 talks about God's comfort. *"He comforts us every time we have trouble so that when others have trouble, we can comfort them with the same comfort God gives us."* God wants us to notice other people who are sad or afraid. Then we can comfort them, just like God comforts us.

Do you know someone who needs to be comforted today? Think about the times God has shown you His love and comfort. Then share His comfort with others.

– Donna J. Howard

Suggested Bible Reading

2 Corinthians 4:16-18

Saturday, September 16

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Suggested Bible Reading

2 Corinthians 1:3-7

Sunday, September 17

God's Love

College students are excited to pack their bags and boxes and leave home to begin a new life at college. It is an exciting new adventure. However, as times goes on and the excitement wears off, these students may become homesick. They think about their families and miss all the things that they did together. But these college students know that their families still love them, even though they may be many miles apart.

It is the same with God. We cannot see Him, but we know that He loves us and is always with us. Paul wrote about God's love in Romans 8:38-39. *"Yes, I am sure that nothing can separate us from God's love — not death, life, angels, or ruling spirits. I am sure that nothing now, nothing in the future, no powers, nothing above us or nothing below us — nothing in the whole created world — will ever be able to separate us from the love God has shown us in Christ Jesus our Lord."*

Wow! Those are wonderful verses to remember! When we become overwhelmed with our problems, fears and temptations, we can know for sure that God loves us.

Praise God! His love for you will never stop.

— Bonnie Hall

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Suggested Bible Reading

Romans 8:31-39

Two Choices

James 4:7 tells us about two choices we have in life. ***“So give yourselves to God. Stand against the devil, and he will run away from you.”*** This means we can follow God or we can follow the devil — we have only two choices. There is no third choice.

Choosing God means doing good things and following and obeying God. It also means choosing holiness, purity, wisdom and faithfulness as a way of life. In the end, choosing God leads to heaven and everlasting life.

If we do not choose God, that means we are choosing to follow the devil. Living for the devil means a life filled with foolishness and selfishness. In the end, choosing the devil leads to hell and everlasting punishment.

God has given you these two choices. If you choose to believe in God, ask Him to forgive your sins, obey Jesus' commands and then live for Him every day, you have chosen God. But if you decide to not believe in God and follow Him, you have chosen the devil.

The choice is yours. No one else can decide for you. I hope you choose to follow God today and every day!

– Gayle Thorn

Suggested Bible Reading

James 4:4-10

Tuesday, September 19

Stand Strong!

My favorite cartoon character is Wile E. Coyote. He always chases Roadrunner. Wile E. buys many things to help him capture Roadrunner. But usually Wile E.'s plans backfire and he is caught in his own trap.

The thing that I like best about Wile E. Coyote is that he never gives up. He keeps trying, no matter what happens. Even when his plans blow up, we know that he will be back again in the next cartoon chasing Roadrunner.

Wile E. Coyote is like Joseph. Joseph's brothers were jealous of him. Genesis 37:19-20 tells us one thing that Joseph's brothers did to him. ***“They said, ‘Here comes Joseph the dreamer. We should kill him now while we can. We can throw his body into one of the empty wells and tell our father that a wild animal killed him. Then we will show him that his dreams are useless.’”***

Many other bad things happened to Joseph. He was sold into slavery. He was falsely accused. And he was sent to jail. But Joseph did not give up. He continued to obey and worship God. God used these bad circumstances to bless Joseph.

Be like Joseph and Wile E. Coyote today. Don't give up. Stand strong for God!

– Jo Krueger

Suggested Bible Reading

Genesis 37:12-25a

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Wednesday, September 20

God Can Use You

The Bible tells us about many people who loved God and served Him. Even though these people followed God, they faced problems in their lives. Jacob had a problem with lying, David committed adultery and murder, and Jesus' followers all ran away when Jesus needed them most. But God was still able to use these people to serve Him.

One of God's great leaders was Moses. God told Moses to go to Egypt and help free the Israelites from slavery. Exodus 4:10 tells us Moses' response to God. *'Then Moses said to the Lord. 'But Lord, I am telling you, I am not a good speaker. I have never been able to speak well. And that hasn't changed since you started talking to me. I am still not a good speaker. You know that I speak slowly and don't use the best words.'*

Even though Moses had a problem speaking, God told him that He would be with him and give him the right words to say. That's exactly what happened! With God's help, Moses was able to lead the Israelites out of Egypt and into a new land.

You have problems in your life, too. But God can still use you to serve Him. Ask God to help you find a place of service today!

– Norma Mezoe

Wisdom (1)

The book of Ecclesiastes is an Old Testament book of Hebrew poetry. We do not know for sure who wrote this book. The writer calls himself the "Teacher." Many people think that King Solomon wrote Ecclesiastes. The writer talks about being a king of Israel and having great wisdom and wealth. Those things describe King Solomon very well.

As you study the book of Ecclesiastes, you will see that the writer is trying to find answers to his questions about life. In Ecclesiastes 1:3, the writer asks a question. *"Do people really gain anything from all the hard work they do in this life?"* Throughout the book, the writer talks about what he has observed about life. At the end of Ecclesiastes, he concludes by telling us what he has learned is most important in life.

As the writer of Ecclesiastes looks for answers to his questions, he shares several important lessons that he has learned. These lessons are good for Christians today, too. For the next few days, we will look at these lessons and see how they can help us be closer to God.

Thank God today for His Word, the Bible. And ask Him to help you learn more about serving Him.

– Jo Krueger

Suggested Bible Reading

Exodus 4:10-17

Suggested Bible Reading

Ecclesiastes 1:1-3

Wisdom (2)

The writer of Ecclesiastes reminds us that there is really nothing new in life. He talks about this in Ecclesiastes 1:9. *"All things continue the way they have been since the beginning. The same things will be done that have always been done. There is nothing new in this life."* The writer also explains that the sun comes up in the east and sets in the west every day. The wind blows from the south and then the north. And the rivers of the world flow into the oceans.

People don't really change either. You may watch the news on TV and think that the things happening in the world are worse than ever. But people are still doing the same sins they have been doing for thousands of years.

It may make you sad to think that things in the world are not getting better. But there is good news! The Bible tells us that Jesus never changes. He is the same today as He was yesterday. And Jesus will be the same tomorrow. That means He will always be our Lord and Savior.

When you notice the bad things that are happening in the world today, remember that you can depend on Jesus. He is always ready to share His love and peace with you.

– Jo Krueger

Wisdom (3)

Every day God gives us His blessings. He sends sunshine to keep us warm and to help plants and trees grow. God gives us air to breathe, water to drink and food to eat. Often we forget to thank God for these important things.

The writer of Ecclesiastes shares his thoughts about life in Ecclesiastes 2:24-25. *"There is no one who has tried to enjoy life more than I have. And this is what I learned: The best thing people can do is eat, drink, and enjoy the work they must do. I also saw that this comes from God."* It is important that the writer realized that all these wonderful blessings come from God. This is good advice for us today.

Maybe you have problems, so you think that God is not blessing you right now. But God blesses us, even when we are facing problems. God gives us wisdom and strength to help us work through our problems. Then we can thank and praise Him.

Take time today to think about the many ways that God is blessing you. Maybe you can write down these blessings so you can read them every day. Then be sure to thank God for these blessings and praise Him!

– Jo Krueger

Suggested Bible Reading

Ecclesiastes 1:4-11

Saturday, September 23

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Suggested Bible Reading

Ecclesiastes 2:24-26

Sunday, September 24

Wisdom (4)

Yesterday we learned about the many blessings God gives us. We know that we will receive these blessings every day. But some things will change in our lives. Ecclesiastes 3:1 talks about these changes. ***'There is a right time for everything, and everything on earth will happen at the right time.'***

It is very important that we remember God is in control of the universe. From the time we are born until the time we die, God has a plan for our lives. We may not always understand God's plan, but we still need to trust and depend on Him.

The writer of Ecclesiastes lists many things that we may face in life. Some of these things are birth, death, crying, laughter, sadness, joy, love, hatred, keeping things, throwing things away, war and peace. As we experience these things, we need to allow God to work in our lives. Then our lives will be filled with meaning and purpose.

You can trust God to direct your life today. Read and study His Word. Pray to Him. Ask Him to give you strength as you go through changes in your life.

– Jo Krueger

Wisdom (5)

The writer of Ecclesiastes believed that having good friends is very important. In Ecclesiastes 4:9, he said that it is good when people work together. ***'Two people are better than one. When two people work together, they get more work done.'***

That verse makes me think about two people who might have traveled together in Bible times. As they walked, the two of them could help each other if they stumbled or fell. When they slept at night, they could keep each other warm. And if danger came, they could defend each other. The writer of Ecclesiastes goes on to say that three people together are even better than two. They are like a strong rope made of three strands.

When I think about my friends, I feel happy. Some of my friends have worked with me. Many friends have prayed for me and encouraged me. A few friends have even protected me when I was in danger.

Think about the friends God has given to you. Thank God for these friends. Look for ways that you can show these friends your love and encouragement.

– Jo Krueger

Suggested Bible Reading

Ecclesiastes 3:1-8

Monday, September 25

15

Suggested Bible Reading

Ecclesiastes 4:9-12

Tuesday, September 26

Wisdom (6)

Today we learn more wisdom that the writer of Ecclesiastes shares with his readers. Many people today worship their money. It was the same when Ecclesiastes was written. The writer of that book tells us what some people think about money and wealth.

People think that money gives them satisfaction. Ecclesiastes 5:10 says that is not true. ***Those who love money will never be satisfied with the money they have. Those who love wealth will not be satisfied when they get more and more. This is also senseless.*** Also, some people think that money will solve all their problems. But having a lot of money usually gives people more problems.

Other people believe that wealth gives them peace of mind. But there are many people whose lives have been ruined by their wealth. The writer says that people think money gives them security. But bad things can happen and cause us to lose our money. Finally, we may have wealth on earth. But when we die, we cannot take our money with us.

We all need money to live, but it cannot bring us true happiness. True happiness can only come from a close relationship with God. Are you close to Him today?

– Jo Krueger

Wisdom (7)

In chapter 7 of Ecclesiastes, the writer includes a list of wise teachings. These teachings are very similar to those written by King Solomon in the book of Proverbs. Some of these wise teachings are about a good reputation, going to a funeral, sorrow and laughter, and criticism. These wise teachings are good for us to follow today, too.

Another thing the writer mentions is bribery. Bribery may seem to be an easy way to get something done. But it is dishonest and makes people act foolish and stupid. Ecclesiastes 7:8 reminds us that when we start something, it is important for us to finish it. ***It is better to finish something than to start it. It is better to be gentle and patient.***

The writer gives more wise advice about being angry. He says that we should not become angry quickly. Why? Because being angry is foolish.

I am sure that you want to be a wise person. So it is important to pay attention to wise teaching. The best place to find wise teaching is in God's Word, the Bible. Read and study the Bible and apply its wisdom to your daily life.

– Jo Krueger

Suggested Bible Reading

Ecclesiastes 5:10-17

Wednesday, September 27

16

Suggested Bible Reading

Ecclesiastes 7:7-9

Thursday, September 28

Wisdom (8)

The world is full of people who think that they are wise. Some of these people even think that they can understand God. In Ecclesiastes 8:17 the writer says that is not true. *"I also saw that no one can understand all that God does. People can try and try to understand the things that happen here on earth, but they cannot. There may be wise people who claim to understand the meaning of these things, but they are wrong. No one can understand it all."*

Do you know how many stars are in the night sky? Do you know how big the universe is? Do you know how many drops of water are in the oceans? We don't know these things, but God does!

When I think about those questions, I feel frustrated that I can't understand God. I need to realize that I am not wise like God. He does not expect me to have all the answers. But God does expect me to learn all I can and obey His teachings in the Bible.

When you think about the world today, remember that God is wise and all-knowing. Thank Him for His wisdom and ask Him to help you obey His Word.

– Jo Krueger

Wisdom (9)

In Ecclesiastes, chapter 11, the writer gives some wisdom to young people. But I think that people of all ages can learn from these wise teachings.

The writer encourages young people to do whatever their hearts lead them to do. But he also adds a warning in Ecclesiastes 11:9. *"So young people, enjoy yourselves while you are young. Be happy. Do whatever your heart leads you to do. Do whatever you want, but remember that God will judge you for everything you do."*

Then the writer continues by reminding young people to not let their anger control them or let their bodies lead them to sin. The world is filled with so many temptations for young people today. Young people need to remember to be wise and not foolish. Finally, in the beginning of Ecclesiastes, chapter 12, the writer tells young people to remember God and obey Him.

Whether you are young or old, it is good for you to carefully follow and obey God's Word, the Bible, every day. Don't waste the time God has given to you. Use your time to serve and honor Him!

– Jo Krueger

Suggested Bible Reading

Ecclesiastes 8:16-17

Suggested Bible Reading

Ecclesiastes 11:9-10

Wisdom (10)

We have finally reached the end of the book of Ecclesiastes. Now the writer tells us what we want to know. He tells us what is most important in life.

Throughout the whole book, the writer of Ecclesiastes has looked at wealth, success and other things in life. Now he closes with Ecclesiastes 12:13-14. *"Now, what should we learn from everything that is written in this book? The most important thing a person can do is to respect God and obey his commands, because he knows everything people do — even the secret things. He knows about all the good and all the bad, and he will judge people for everything they do."* The writer does not say that we should try to get more wealth, wisdom or success. He says that we should respect and obey God!

If we respect God, we will pay attention to His Word and obey it. When we study the Bible, we learn more about God and how we can follow Him.

I hope that you have learned some good lessons from the verses we studied in Ecclesiastes. Even though these verses were written many years ago, they still have important messages for us today. May God bless you as you respect and obey Him!

– Jo Krueger

Suggested Bible Reading
Ecclesiastes 12:9-14

Sunday, October 1

Sin

My friend ate lunch in a restaurant. The waitress asked her if she wanted a free piece of chocolate cake for dessert. My friend said, "No, thank you." A few minutes later, the waitress walked by my friend's table. She was carrying a piece of chocolate cake. The cake looked so good that my friend decided to have a piece. My friend told me that the cake did not taste very good, and she was sorry she had eaten it.

Sin is often like that piece of chocolate cake. It looks good. But when we try it, it is never as good as we imagined it would be. Then we are disappointed that we have disobeyed God. God has given us His Word to help us avoid sin, but sometimes we ignore His commands and sin anyway.

When Jesus lived on earth, He was tempted. But He never sinned. Hebrews 4:15 tells us why we can depend on Jesus to help us. *"Jesus, our high priest, is able to understand our weaknesses. When Jesus lived on earth, he was tempted in every way. He was tempted in the same ways we are tempted, but he never sinned."*

Let Jesus help you today. He understands about temptation and sin. Jesus wants you to stand strong and to always obey God.

– Lynette H. Denton

Suggested Bible Reading
Hebrews 4:14-16

18

Monday, October 2

God's Servant

When a person really believes in something, he will work very hard to succeed. He will even be willing to suffer hardships and pain to achieve his goal. That is how Paul was. He was a hard-working servant who did not give up.

When Paul wrote his second letter to the Christians in the city of Corinth, he told them about all the hardships he had faced. In 2 Corinthians 11:24-25, Paul listed some things that had happened to him. *"Five times the Jews have given me their punishment of 39 lashes with a whip. Three different times I was beaten with rods. One time I was almost killed with rocks. Three times I was in ships that were wrecked, and one of those times I spent the night and the next day in the sea."*

Why was Paul willing to suffer these terrible things? Because He loved God and wanted to be His servant. Paul was willing to give up his personal comfort and accept hardships in order to tell people about salvation through Jesus.

As you serve God today, you may face some difficult times. You may be ridiculed or hurt because you follow Jesus. Be like Paul. Be a faithful servant for God.

– Steve Husting

Suggested Bible Reading

2 Corinthians 11:21b-29

Thank You, God!

Teachers at a Vacation Bible School asked the children to name things they were thankful for. They mentioned things like their families, their teachers, their pets and even ice cream!

Whenever I go to my doctor, I think about those children who listed things they were thankful for. My doctor's office always asks me to answer many questions about my health. The questions ask if I have problems or pains in different parts of my body. I am supposed to answer the questions with "yes" or "no." Every time I answer a question with "no," I thank God that I don't have that health problem. When I answer a question with "yes," I thank God that I have a doctor who can help me with the medical problems I face.

1 Thessalonians 5:18 teaches us about being thankful. *"Whatever happens, always be thankful. This is how God wants you to live in Christ Jesus."* We should thank God when good things happen to us. And, when bad things happen to us, we should thank God for being with us and helping us.

Be thankful today! You don't have to set your alarm or write a note to help you remember to be thankful. Just be thankful all the time!

– Suzanne Austin-Hill

Suggested Bible Reading

1 Thessalonians 5:16-22

Relationship with God

Some people I know say they have a close relationship with God, but they never read the Bible or pray to God. It is hard to have a good relationship with someone that you rarely see or never communicate with. A good relationship requires two important things — communication and commitment.

God has communicated His message to us through the Bible. When we read the Bible, we learn about how God worked with people for thousands of years. We learn God's thoughts and actions. Every day when we read the Bible, we can learn something new about God.

But God did not just give us the Bible and walk away. He committed Himself to us. As we read His promises in the Bible, we can know that He will always be with us to help and comfort us. Friends and family members may leave us, but God has promised to always be with us.

Titus 1:2 gives us encouragement about God. *"This faith and knowledge make us sure that we have eternal life. God promised that life to us before time began — and God does not lie."* God has given us His Word and His promises. You can depend on both today!

— Bob La Forge

Grow in Jesus

Flower bulbs are usually very ugly. Most of them are brown, twisted and deformed. But if you plant these bulbs and water them, they will turn into colorful spring flowers. The bulbs may be ugly, but they become beautiful plants that glorify God.

Our lives are like a flower bulb. Before we decide to follow and obey God, our lives are ugly with sin. We may do wrong things or not be kind to other people. But when we confess our sins, repent and accept Jesus' sacrifice on the cross, God cleanses us. Then we become beautiful and our hearts are prepared to do good things for Him.

God gives us His Holy Spirit to live in us and help us grow in Jesus. Galatians 5:22-23 lists characteristics that the Holy Spirit helps us have in our lives. *"But the fruit that the Spirit produces in a person's life is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. There is no law against these kinds of things."* As we grow in Jesus, the Holy Spirit helps us do more good things for God and His kingdom.

Look for ways today to show the fruit of the Spirit in your life. And ask God to help you grow in Jesus every day.

— Donna J. Howard

Suggested Bible Reading

Titus 1:1-3

Thursday, October 5

20

Suggested Bible Reading

Galatians 5:16-26

Friday, October 6

Love

If you ask people what “love” means, you will get many different answers. And you may experience several kinds of love every day. There is romantic love between a man and a woman. This kind of love may come and go depending on our mood. Then there is brotherly love. This kind of love shows kindness to other people and is willing to help people in need.

Finally, there is God’s love. God’s love is very special! It has no limits. God’s love is always with us, and it never changes. John 3:16 tells us about God’s special kind of love. ***“Yes, God loved the world so much that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him would not be lost but have eternal life.”*** God’s love is so special that He was willing to let Jesus die on the cross and accept the punishment for our sins.

God’s special love is the kind of love He wants us to have for other people. But we can’t love this way on our own. We need God’s help so we can show this kind of love to everyone.

Think about God’s love. Then show that kind of love to people you meet today. God will fill your life with love and help you share His love with others.

– Gayle Thorn

Show God’s Love

Every day when I drive to work, I pass a beautiful farm. It has a new house, two new barns and two shiny grain bins. All of these buildings are only a few years old. A couple of years ago, a tornado destroyed the entire farm.

Now there is no evidence of the tornado. A tall tree that had all its branches stripped off has grown new branches and leaves. If a visitor drove by that farm, they would not know about the terrible tornado. They would not know that everything those people owned was destroyed. They could not imagine a picture of broken trees and twisted metal.

Many people we know are like that farm. They may have suffered physical pain or been abused. They may have lost their possessions because of financial problems. These people look just fine on the outside. But inside they are hurting. They need God’s love and our love to help heal their wounds.

Ephesians 4:32 reminds us how we should act around other people. ***“Be kind and loving to each other. Forgive each other the same as God forgave you through Christ.”*** Maybe you will see someone today who is hurting. Be patient with them. Show them God’s love.

– Jo Krueger

Suggested Bible Reading

John 3:14-17

Saturday, October 7

21

Suggested Bible Reading

Ephesians 4:28-32

Sunday, October 8

Family History

I read some history about a family that came to America from Czechoslovakia. The father made the decision to take his twelve family members and sail to a new country. He made the decision in such a hurry that he didn't even have time to sell the family farm.

When a Jewish boy read the Old Testament, it was like reading his family history book. He read about how God worked through his ancestors, the Israelites, and brought them to a new home. He read about how the prophets shared God's messages when they were living in a foreign country.

If you are a Christian, reading the Bible today is like reading your family history. Why? Because you are God's child. You belong to His family. Paul talks about God's family in Ephesians 2:19. ***"So now you non-Jewish people are not visitors or strangers, but you are citizens together with God's holy people. You belong to God's family."***

Don't think about the Bible as just a book full of stories about the things that happened to the Israelites. Think about the Bible as your own personal family history book. Take time today to read some of your family history stories from God's Word!

– Elissa Poe

Suggested Bible Reading
Ephesians 2:19-22

Monday, October 9

Psalm 119 (1)

Today we will begin a series of devotions based on Psalm 119. This psalm has more verses than any other chapter in the Bible. If you look at this chapter in a printed Bible, you will see that it is divided into 22 sections. Each section begins with a different letter from the Hebrew alphabet.

Psalm 119:1-2 gives us some important news about obeying God. ***"Great blessings belong to those who live pure lives! They follow the Lord's teachings. Great blessings belong to those who follow his rules! They seek him with all their heart."*** God blesses us when we obey Him. And following God makes us happy.

The Bible tells us that all people in the world have sinned and disobeyed God. But the writer of this psalm reminds us that God is fair and good. He has given us a way to have our sins forgiven. This way is through His Son, Jesus. Jesus died on the cross so that our sins can be forgiven and we can live forever with God.

Do you want to be happy? Then follow God's plan for your life. Read and study God's plan in the Bible. Then love and obey Him with all your heart!

– Pam Davis

Suggested Bible Reading
Psalm 119:1-8

22

Tuesday, October 10

Psalm 119 (2)

Yesterday we learned about obeying God. Psalm 119 also gives advice for young people. The writer tells us that a young person can live a pure life by following God's instructions.

Christian parents have the responsibility to teach their children about God and His Word. This begins at home and continues with times of learning, worship and fellowship with other Christians.

Why do young people need to follow God's instructions? Psalm 119:11 gives us the answer to that question. *"I study your teachings very carefully. Why? So I will not sin against you."* If I want to pass a spelling test in school, I need to study. In the same way, if I want to learn how to avoid sin, I need to study God's Word.

God wants people of all ages to study His Word and learn how to serve Him. Psalm 119 reminds us that we should enjoy reading the Bible. When we know about God and His plan for our lives, we will be happy.

Take time to study the Bible today. Then remember what you learned and apply it to your life.

– Pam Davis

Psalm 119 (3)

Sometimes when I am driving, the sun shines very brightly on my face. I want to close my eyes. But if I close my eyes, I might cause an accident. I need to keep my eyes open wide so I can see where I am going. If I have a clear view, I can avoid an accident and stay safe.

The Bible keeps me on the right path in life and tells me what God wants me to do. But I need to have an open mind and an open heart in order to receive God's message. Psalm 119:18 tells us about this. *"Open my eyes so that I can see all the wonderful things in your teachings."* That is a beautiful prayer! God has many wonderful messages for us in His Word. We need to study these teachings and understand God's plan for our lives.

The verses in Psalm 119 remind us that it is very important to study God's Word. The writer says that he enjoys receiving God's teachings. They are like a good friend to him. When we receive God's teachings, He blesses us with wisdom and understanding.

Ask God to open your mind and your heart today so you can understand more about His wonderful love and His plan for your life.

– Pam Davis

Suggested Bible Reading

Psalm 119:9-16

Suggested Bible Reading

Psalm 119:17-24

Psalm 119 (4)

Some people use a fireplace to heat their home in the winter. They put wood in the fireplace, light it and then sit close to the fire to keep warm.

Then the room heats up, and the people feel comfortable. They forget about the fire. They watch TV or read a book or talk with their family members. But soon the fire dies down and the people begin to feel cold again. Someone stirs up the fire or adds more wood. The fire burns brightly and warms up the room again.

Christians need to stay close to God and His Word. When we are close to God, it is like a fire that burns brightly inside of us. But when we forget to read the Bible and pray, the fire inside us dies down. We are not doing what God wants us to do.

When we are close to God, we want to think about God's Word more than anything in the world. Psalm 119:34 tells us about being close to God. ***Help me understand your teachings, and I will follow them. Obeying them will be my greatest desire.***

Stay close to God today. Keep the fire of His Word burning in your heart.

– Pam Davis

Suggested Bible Reading

Psalm 119:33-40

Psalm 119 (5)

Children do not always do what their parents tell them to do. Sometimes they make wrong choices and disobey their parents' rules. Children are sad when they are punished. Often they do not understand that their parents are doing what is best for them.

Psalm 119:65-67 teaches us that God always does things that are best for us. ***Lord, you did good things for me, your servant. You did exactly what you promised to do. Give me the knowledge to make wise decisions. I trust your commands. Before I suffered, I did many wrong things. But now, I carefully obey everything you say.***

God is my Father. Just as parents know what is best for their children, God always knows what is best for me. Sometimes He knows that I have a problem and need to be disciplined. His discipline may hurt me, but I can know that God is doing what is right for me.

God may teach you something new today from His Word. He may also discipline you. But remember that He is good and He does good things for you. Accept God's discipline and continue to love and serve Him.

– Pam Davis

Suggested Bible Reading

Psalm 119:65-72

Psalm 119 (6)

My family has always enjoyed putting together jigsaw puzzles. Sometimes we will work for many hours on one puzzle. But often, one of my family members will bump the table and the puzzle will fall apart. Jigsaw puzzles are fragile — they can come apart easily.

God made the entire universe. It is not fragile like a jigsaw puzzle. Psalm 119:90 reminds us about God creating the earth. *You are loyal forever and ever. You made the earth, and it still stands.*" Things happen over and over in the universe, but often we take these things for granted. Every day the sun rises and sets. Tides go up and down. Rivers flow and the mountains stand tall. God is in control of the universe, and it keeps on working.

God made the universe and it keeps on going. It is not fragile. But sometimes my life seems to be fragile. I get sick or depressed. People make fun of me. I face financial troubles. Then I need to depend on God. Why? Because I know that He is in control of everything.

God is faithful and loyal. He controls the universe and takes care of it. He will take care of you today. You can always depend on Him.

— Pam Davis

Suggested Bible Reading

Psalm 119:89-96

Sunday, October 15

Psalm 119 (7)

A child in school is an average student. He is not the best student in his class. But if he studies very hard and gets 100% on a test, his teacher will mark it with an A+. The child feels very proud. He hurries home to show his good grade to his father and mother.

It is good to study from books and pay attention to teachers. But it is even more important to read God's Word, the Bible, and obey it. Verses 99 and 100 of Psalm 119 continue to talk about the importance of Bible reading and study. *I am wiser than all my teachers, because I study your rules. I understand more than those who are older, because I obey your instructions.*"

True understanding and wisdom come from studying God's Word. People of all ages can have this understanding and wisdom if they learn from the Bible. God wants us to enjoy reading and studying His teachings. The writer of Psalm 119 says that God's words are like sweet honey in his mouth.

Learn from God's Word. Then share it with other people. God will bless you with understanding and wisdom.

— Pam Davis

Suggested Bible Reading

Psalm 119:97-104

Monday, October 16

Psalm 119 (8)

I have a friend whose father collects flashlights. They always have lots of flashlights in their house and car. If my friend needs to buy a present for his father, he knows he can always buy him another flashlight.

My friend's father uses a flashlight at his job. He is a security guard. At night, he walks around the buildings and makes sure that everything is safe. His flashlight helps him to see in dark places and to know where it is safe to walk.

God gives His children a very special light. Psalm 119:105 talks about this special light. ***Your word is like a lamp that guides my steps, a light that shows the path I should take.*** Just as a flashlight shows us where we can walk and keeps us safe, God's words protect us from sin and keep us on the way that leads to eternal life.

When we have an electrical storm and the power goes off, I need to have a flashlight. Otherwise, I am in the dark. God wants us to use the light of His Word every day to keep us out of the darkness of sin.

Ask God to help you use His Word today. It will protect you and keep you on the right path.

– Pam Davis

Psalm 119 (9)

For thousands of years, people have searched for gold. They have climbed dangerous mountains to look for gold. They have mined in deep tunnels under the ground. And they have waded in streams, hoping to find some gold.

Many people today love to have things that are made of gold — rings, watches, coins or dinnerware. But Psalm 119:127 tells us about something that is even more precious than gold. ***I love your commands more than gold, more than the purest gold.*** God's teachings in the Bible should be the most valuable things that we have. We should treasure the Bible like some people treasure their gold and jewels.

Gold and other possessions can be lost or stolen. But when we take God's Word into our heart, no one can take that away from us. We will always have God's message in us to help us stay away from sin.

God's Word is not like other books or teachings in the world today. Many of the world's teachings are false. But the Bible is always true, and we can depend on it to lead us every day. Be sure that reading the Bible is the most important thing you do today!

– Pam Davis

Suggested Bible Reading

Psalm 119:105-112

Suggested Bible Reading

Psalm 119:121-128

Psalm 119 (10)

Most people who have pets love their pets and protect them. These people are sad if their animal wanders away from home. They look for their pet and call out their name. If the animal does not return, they ask people if they have seen their pet. Sometimes pet owners advertise in the newspaper and offer a reward if the animal is found.

Sometimes we may feel that we are lost from God. In many of the psalms, God is compared to a shepherd who lovingly takes care of His sheep. The writer of Psalm 119 talks about that in verse 176. *"I have wandered away like a lost sheep. Come and find me. I am your servant, and I have not forgotten your commands."*

Maybe the writer of this psalm became involved in some sin and wandered away from God. Then the writer realized that he needed to be close to God again. So he called out to God and asked God to find him.

In Luke, chapter 15, we learn that God is like the shepherd who will continue to search until He finds a sheep that has wandered away. God wants you to be close to Him. Ask Him to love and protect you today.

— Pam Davis

Suggested Bible Reading

Psalm 119:169-176

Thursday, October 19

Don't Give Up

I read about an athlete who ran in a race many years ago. He was so sure he would win the race that he had his victory statue built even before he ran the race! That athlete was a very confident man.

Sometimes we may not feel confident in our Christian life. We may face struggles and things that try to stop us from doing what we know we should do. We may slow down for awhile or even be tempted to give up.

The writer of the book of Hebrews wanted to strengthen and encourage his readers. In Hebrews 10:35-36 he reminded them to have courage and patience. *"So don't lose the courage that you had in the past. Your courage will be rewarded richly. You must be patient. After you have done what God wants, you will get what he promised you."*

When bad things happen, God does not want us to give up. He wants us to trust Him and keep on loving and serving Him. God will help us when we face tests and trials. He will use these bad times to teach us and strengthen us.

No matter what happens today, do not give up! God will help you succeed and look forward to His promise of eternal life.

— Lynette H. Denton

Suggested Bible Reading

Hebrews 10:32-39

27

Friday, October 20

God is Strong

The apostle Paul did not want to boast about his strengths and good works. If he had boasted, then people would have admired him and looked up to him. Instead, Paul's goal was for people to see that God is strong.

In 2 Corinthians, chapter 11, Paul told the Christians in Corinth about his weaknesses. He even boasted about these weaknesses in 2 Corinthians 11:30. *"If I must boast, I will boast about the things that show I am weak."* Why did Paul do this? Because Paul knew that other people would see his weaknesses and realize that God had helped him be strong.

I knew a man who had many areas of weakness in his life. Because of these weaknesses, he ended up in prison. But while the man was in prison, someone told him about God and salvation through Jesus. From that time on, the man obeyed and followed Jesus. Other people could see how God had worked in this man's life.

No matter how weak you are, God is still strong. He is stronger than any problem or temptation that you might face today. God can work in your life and help you follow and obey Him. Trust God to lead you in the right way every day of your life.

– Steve Husting

Suggested Bible Reading

2 Corinthians 11:30-33

Saturday, October 21

Right Time

For many years, I had a very plain printed Bible that I read every day. I studied that Bible and wrote many notes in the margins. But then I bought a special study Bible. This new Bible had lots of maps and a dictionary in the back. This new Bible helped me learn even more about God's Word.

The phases of my life are like the Bibles I have owned. When I was young, I was not involved in many activities, and I only had a few friends. As I got older, I started doing more things. Then God blessed me with more family members and friends. All of these things made my life become richer and fuller.

The writer of Ecclesiastes talks about God's wisdom and His ability to take care of the world. God helps us through each phase of our life and blesses us. Ecclesiastes 3:11 tells us what God does for us. *"God gave us the ability to think about his world, but we can never completely understand everything he does. And yet, he does everything at just the right time."*

God has given each of us different phases in our life. Each phase happens at just the right time so that we can serve God best. Thank Him for leading you every day.

– Bob La Forge

Suggested Bible Reading

Ecclesiastes 3:9-15

28

Sunday, October 22

Praise Him!

I left home on a sunny day to run some errands. When I finished my list of errands, I started for home. In the distance I could see dark clouds. As I drove on, the sky became totally black. When I was about halfway home, the storm hit. It did not start with just a few sprinkles. The wind and rain happened all at once.

As I continued driving, I started to pray. It was raining so hard that I could not see the road well. Finally I saw a driveway and pulled off of the road. The wind rocked my car, and it started hailing, so I prayed even harder. Then suddenly I stopped crying out for help. Instead, I started praising God and thanking Him for helping me find the driveway and keeping me safe.

The word “praise” is used 18 times in Psalm 148. The writer of this psalm listed many things that he could praise God for. Psalm 148:13 talks about praising and honoring God. *“Praise the Lord’s name forever! Honor his name forever! His name is greater than any other. He is more glorious than heaven and earth.”*

Maybe you will face some difficult situations today, and you will ask God to help you. Don’t forget to praise Him and thank Him for His help and guidance.

— Bonnie Hall

Be Happy

Paul talks about being happy in Romans 5:3. *“And we are also happy with the troubles we have. Why are we happy with troubles? Because we know that these troubles make us more patient.”* Paul goes on to say that this patience shows that God is making him strong. It also gives him hope because he knows that God will never let him down.

What does it mean to be happy during hard times? It means that we feel safe and know that God is in control. It means that we believe God loves us and takes care of us. It also means that we feel peace because we know that our hard times are only temporary.

How can you be happy if you are experiencing troubles? Ask God to bless you and use you to serve Him. Trust God and be willing to let God work through you. Finally, remember that God may be preparing you to do something special for Him.

You don’t know what will happen today or in the future. I hope you will trust God to take care of you even during hard times. If you do, you will be happy and experience God’s wonderful peace.

— Gayle Thorn

Suggested Bible Reading

Psalm 148:1-14

Monday, October 23

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Suggested Bible Reading

Romans 5:1-5

Tuesday, October 24

True or Untrue?

My friend told me that recently he and his family watched the movie, *The Ten Commandments*. It is good to have a movie based on a true Bible story. But does that movie show exactly what the Bible says happened? Or were things added to the story to make it more exciting?

You can read the true story about Moses and the Israelites in the book of Exodus. If you read the Bible verses first and then watch the movie, you will notice that some events were changed and many things were added. We need to read the Bible to know what really happened.

We may read books or watch TV programs that say they are from the Bible. But do those books and programs really agree with the Bible? We have the responsibility to study the Bible and know what it says. Paul wrote to Timothy in 2 Timothy 2:15. He reminded Timothy that he should use God's teaching in the right way. ***"Do your best to be the kind of person God will accept, and give yourself to him. Be a worker who has no reason to be ashamed of his work, one who applies the true teaching in the right way."***

Be sure that you know God's truth from the Bible. Then share His message with other people.

– Jo Krueger

Suggested Bible Reading

2 Timothy 2:14-15

Wednesday, October 25

Be Careful

You probably know the children's story called "Little Red Riding Hood." In the story a little girl goes to her grandmother's house in the woods. On the way, Little Red Riding Hood meets a wolf. The wolf hurries to Grandmother's house and pretends to be Grandmother. The wolf wants to trick the girl into getting close to him so he can eat her.

The lesson we learn from this story is to be careful and watch out for the wolf. We can apply this lesson to our lives as well. We do not need to be watching for a wolf to attack us, but we do need to be watching for false prophets. These are people who look like they are really following Jesus. Instead, they are trying to trick us into following the devil. Jesus talked about this in Matthew 7:15. ***"Be careful of false prophets. They come to you and look gentle like sheep. But they are really dangerous like wolves."***

Some false prophets today preach that if you follow Jesus, you will be wealthy and famous and not have any problems in life. Following a false prophet only leads to disappointment and trouble. God wants us to be careful. Study His Word so you can know what is right and what is wrong. Do not let the devil lead you away from God and His truth.

– Lynette H. Denton

Suggested Bible Reading

Matthew 7:15-23

30

Thursday, October 26

Plowing

On our family farm, we have chickens for eggs, cows for milk and a garden to give us vegetables and fruit to eat. In the fall time, I plow the garden with my tractor to prepare for new plants in the spring. When I plow, I am reminded of Luke 9:62. *"Jesus said, 'Anyone who begins to plow a field but looks back is not prepared for God's kingdom."*

In that verse Jesus talked about people who are willing to follow Him, no matter what happens to them. I did not understand that verse until I started plowing my garden. As I plowed, I sometimes looked back to make sure I was plowing the right way. But when I looked back, I became distracted. I stopped plowing straight ahead and started plowing to the right or to the left.

When we decide to follow Jesus, we need to focus on Him every day. Things in the world may distract us from following and obeying Jesus. But we should not worry about things that have happened in our past or make excuses why we cannot follow Him.

Keep focused on Jesus today. You can always depend on Him to lead you the right way.

– Joseph Josselyn

On Your Knees

Today people use mops and polishers to clean floors. But in the past, many people cleaned floors on their knees. They would kneel on the floor, reach into a bucket of soapy water and scrub the floor with a brush.

Another thing that people often do on their knees is pray. The Bible never says that we have to be on our knees when we pray. We can talk to God while sitting, standing or in any position. But the Bible does give us examples of people who knelt when they prayed.

Daniel is an example of someone who knelt when he prayed. The king had ordered that people could only pray to him. Daniel 6:10 tells us what Daniel did. *"Daniel always prayed to God three times a day. Three times every day, he bowed down on his knees to pray and praise God. Even though Daniel heard about the new law, he still went to his house to pray. He went up to the upper room of his house and opened the windows that faced toward Jerusalem. Then Daniel bowed down on his knees and prayed just as he always had done."*

Daniel was faithful to pray to God every day. I hope you will follow his example and spend time with God today.

– Pam Davis

Suggested Bible Reading

Luke 9:57-62

Suggested Bible Reading

Daniel 6:6-10

Keep Focused on Jesus

As Paul traveled and preached about Jesus, he faced many trials. Several times he was beaten and thrown into prison. Paul experienced many bad things, but he always stood strong for Jesus.

When Paul wrote his second letter to Christians in the city of Corinth, he listed some of his trials. Paul also said that he continued to speak God's truth no matter what happened to him. In 2 Corinthians 6:10, Paul explained his satisfaction in Jesus. ***"We have much sadness, but we are always rejoicing. We are poor, but we are making people rich in faith. We have nothing, but really we have everything."***

Some people I know stop following Jesus when they experience hard times. But God has never promised us that everything will be happy in our Christian lives. If we are serving God, we will face times of persecution and suffering.

What happens when someone makes fun of you because you follow Jesus? Do you turn away from God? Do you begin to doubt that God loves you? Do you hide the fact that you are a Christian? Be like Paul and stand strong for God today. Keep focused on Jesus and the promise of eternal life with Him.

– Steve Husting

Suggested Bible Reading

2 Corinthians 6:1-10

Sunday, October 29

God Never Changes

Yesterday it sleeted and then it snowed. The wind chill was only 5 degrees above zero. The TV weatherman said this morning that in a few days it is supposed to be 72 degrees and sunny. The weather can change very fast. Changes in the weather can affect our emotions and our physical health.

There are many changes that happen in my life every day. World events change, the stock market changes and even my moods change. With so many changes happening, I am happy to know that there is one thing in my life that will never change — God.

James wrote about God and His goodness in James 1:17. ***"Everything good comes from God. Every perfect gift is from him. These good gifts come down from the Father who made all the lights in the sky. But God never changes like the shadows from those lights. He is always the same."***

Maybe you will experience a lot of changes in your life today. Maybe some of these changes will frustrate you or make you afraid. Remember that God never changes. He will always love you. He always keeps His promises. And He wants you to live with Him forever.

– Jo Krueger

Suggested Bible Reading

James 1:12-18

Monday, October 30

Good or Bad?

Psalms, chapter 1, tells us about two kinds of people — good people and bad people. Bad people give evil advice and make fun of God. They are like worthless things that blow in the wind. And when it is time for God to judge the world, bad people will be found guilty.

Good people love and obey God. They do not pay attention to bad people. Good people do not become friends with bad people. Good people love God's words and think about them all the time. Good people are like a strong tree that produces good fruit. God will bless and protect these good people.

Psalm 1:6 tells us why we should want to be good people. *"The Lord shows his people how to live, but the wicked have lost their way."* Good people will live for God and receive their reward of living forever with Him. Bad people do not live for God. They will receive God's punishment.

Good or bad? Which do you want to be? I hope that you want to be one of God's good people. Follow God's teachings in the Bible, love Him with all your heart and serve Him with all your strength!

— *Donna J. Howard*

I'm Sorry

One of the hardest things to do is to tell other people that you have made a mistake. No one likes to admit they have done something wrong. It is hard to talk to a person you have hurt or betrayed.

Even though it is hard to admit we have done something wrong, God wants us to accept the responsibility for our own actions. When we mess up, we need to accept the blame and try to make it right again.

In his letter to Christians, James shared some good advice. In James 5:16 he talked about making mistakes. *"So always tell each other the wrong things you have done. Then pray for each other. Do this so that God can heal you. Anyone who lives the way God wants can pray, and great things will happen."*

When we do something wrong, we should first ask God to forgive us. He has promised to forgive us if we confess our sins to Him. Then, if we have hurt another person, we need to tell them we are sorry and ask them to forgive us, too. And we should pray for each other so that God can heal and strengthen our relationship.

Think about your life today. Do you need to ask God for forgiveness? Do you need to tell someone that you are sorry? God will forgive you and help you obey Him.

— *Gayle Thorn*

Suggested Bible Reading

Psalm 1:1-6

Tuesday, October 31

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Suggested Bible Reading

James 5:13-18

Wednesday, November 1

Buy Now...Pay Later

Many people today want to buy things now and pay for them later. They want to enjoy the best things in life — right now! Some people buy what they want with a credit card or on a payment plan. Often these people do not think about the “pay later” part. They want to have things right away, but they do not want to think about the cost.

We are responsible to pay for things that we buy. In the same way, we are responsible to God for everything that we do here on earth. Paul talked about this in 2 Corinthians 5:10. ***“We must all stand before Christ to be judged. Everyone will get what they should. They will be paid for whatever they did — good and bad — when they lived in this earthly body.”***

God wants us to enjoy life, but our goal should be to do things that please Him. We need to follow and obey God’s Word. We may think that it is okay to disobey God now, but we need to remember that we will be judged later.

Examine your life today. Don’t ignore God and His commands. Start right now to live for Him. And look forward to living with Him and praising Him forever.

— Jo Krueger

Suggested Bible Reading

2 Corinthians 5:6-10

Thursday, November 2

Trust (1)

Maybe someone hurt you. Now it is hard to trust that person again. You are afraid that they might hurt you again. You don’t believe that you can depend on that person any more. But you can always trust God. He will never disappoint you.

Have you ever played a game where you fall backwards and someone catches you? This means you must trust the person who is catching you. Sometimes the person who is catching can become distracted. Then they let you fall to the ground. But God is not like that. We can always depend on Him. He will not let us fall.

David trusted God, and God kept him safe. In Psalm 26:3, David talks about this. ***“I will always remember your faithful love. I depend on your faithfulness.”*** We can always rely on God. He never lets us down. We can know for sure that all of God’s promises will come true.

What will happen to you today? Maybe you will make important decisions. Maybe you will have problems with your family relationships. Or maybe you will face some kind of danger. Trust God. Remember that He is always with you and will keep you safe.

— Barbara Rusiecki

Suggested Bible Reading

Psalm 26:1-3

34

Friday, November 3

Trust (2)

Have you ever felt that God had forgotten you? Maybe you were out of work and couldn't find a job. Maybe you couldn't have the baby you always wanted. Maybe your child was very ill in the hospital. Maybe your best friend betrayed you.

During bad times, many people do not understand what is happening to them. They feel that God is not with them. These people say to God, "I need you now. Where are you?" They think that God has broken His promises to them.

When we follow and obey God, we can trust Him to always be with us. Psalm 33:18 talks about this. *"The Lord watches over his followers, those who wait for him to show his faithful love."* God is always watching us and waiting to give us His help and show us His mercy. We can ask God to help us find a job, give us a family, heal a sickness or help us learn to trust a friend again. Even when things go wrong in our lives, we can ask God to forgive us and show us His mercy.

Remember today that God is your friend. He loves you and always wants what is best for you. Trust Him to help you obey and serve Him.

– Barbara Rusiecki

Trust (3)

Every person wants to be happy and enjoy themselves. Sometimes we make a good choice in doing something that we enjoy — like going for a walk or riding a bicycle. Other times we may make a bad choice — like eating too much chocolate candy! As Christians, our true enjoyment should come from serving God. If we do that, God will bless us here on earth. And, we will also have the blessing of living forever with Him.

The writer of Psalm 37:4-5 talks about enjoying life. *"Enjoy serving the Lord, and he will give you whatever you ask for. Depend on the Lord. Trust in him, and he will help you."* We can truly enjoy ourselves when we are serving God.

What are some ways we can serve God today? We can show kindness to a friend, be patient with our children, take care of an elderly person, give food to the needy or visit someone in prison. We can also spend our time praying for people who are sick or people who need to love and follow Jesus.

As you are working, shopping or playing today, look for ways to help other people. Trust God to show you how you can serve Him best today.

– Barbara Rusiecki

Suggested Bible Reading

Psalm 33:18-22

Saturday, November 4

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Suggested Bible Reading

Psalm 37:3-7

Sunday, November 5

Trust (4)

A woman was a secretary for a company in a large city. This company printed magazines. When a new magazine came out, the secretary would go to different businesses in the city and give them a copy of the magazine.

One day the woman went into a large skyscraper. She took the elevator to the 12th floor. She delivered a magazine and got back in the elevator. But instead of going back down to the lobby, the elevator stopped on another floor. A man got on the elevator and grabbed the woman by her wrists. As the woman struggled with the man, she started praying out loud and asking God to help her. She finally broke free, and the man ran off.

This woman said she knew for sure that God was protecting her that day. The writer of Psalm 3:5 knew that he could trust God to keep him safe, too. *"I can lie down to rest and know that I will wake up, because the Lord covers and protects me."* It is very comforting to think about God covering us and keeping us safe.

Maybe you will be in a dangerous situation today. Or maybe you will face some difficult problems. Don't be afraid! Trust God to be with you and protect you.

– Barbara Rusiecki

Trust (5)

Do you have a BFF — a Best Friend Forever? When I was young, I had a best friend. We did everything together. My friend was always there to help me if I was lonely, hurt, tired, sad or looking for adventure. We knew each other's secrets and dreams. The more time we spent together, the closer we became. We wanted to always be together.

It is like that with God. The more we read His Word and pray to Him, the closer we become. We can be friends with God because of what Jesus did for us. Paul talks about this in Romans 5:11. *"And not only will we be saved, but we also rejoice right now in what God has done for us through our Lord Jesus Christ. It is because of Jesus that we are now God's friends."*

God wants every person to be His friend. He wants us to share our hopes and our dreams with Him. God also wants us to share our fears and our burdens. We can always depend on God. Our friends on earth may sometimes hurt us or let us down. But we can trust God to always be our Best Friend Forever!

Share your thoughts and feelings with God today. Study His Word so that you can know how to obey and serve Him.

– Barbara Rusiecki

Suggested Bible Reading

Psalm 3:1-8

Suggested Bible Reading

Romans 5:6-11

Trust (6)

I knew a very humble Christian woman. She was just an ordinary woman. High school was difficult for her. She had trouble developing relationships with other people. She wore only plain, modest clothes. She raised her children in a very simple lifestyle.

Although this woman had a problem with reading, writing and math, there was one thing she understood clearly. She understood that she needed to respect God and obey Him. This woman lived for God every day. She was an amazing role model for me and other young people.

How did this woman show her respect for God? She showed her respect through her prayer life. She spent time every day talking with God and seeking His help. She also showed her respect for God through the way she raised her children. The writer of Psalm 115:11 was like this woman. He knew that trust is an important part of respecting God. ***“Followers of the Lord, trust in the Lord! He is your strength and shield.”***

Do you show other people that you love and respect God? Recognize His power and trust Him to lead you every day.

– Barbara Rusiecki

Trust (7)

In medieval times, people built fortresses. These buildings were made of stone and had walls that were 8 to 20 feet thick. A fortress provided protection for the king, his knights and his soldiers. A fortress had lookout towers where the soldiers could watch for the enemy to attack. When people were inside the fortress, it was almost impossible for arrows or rocks to hurt them. Some fortresses even had a special prayer room inside where the soldiers could pray and ask God for His protection.

Psalm 91:2 tells us about God's protection. ***“I say to the Lord, You are my place of safety, my fortress. My God, I trust in you.”*** Just as the king and his soldiers were safe inside the fortress, so we can be safe when God protects us.

Psalm 91 lists several ways that God protects us. He protects us from hidden dangers and diseases. God's protection is like a mother bird covering her babies with her wings. And God's protection surrounds us like a soldier's shield.

God can protect you from your fears, worries, sickness and danger. Trust Him today with your life. Then thank God for keeping you safe.

– Barbara Rusiecki

Suggested Bible Reading

Psalm 115:11-13

Wednesday, November 8

37

Suggested Bible Reading

Psalm 91:1-5

Thursday, November 9

Trust (8)

There are people in the world today who are looking for love and a place to belong. Sometimes these people follow a false teacher. Soon they are obeying rules that are not from the Bible and living like slaves. This shows us that we need to be very careful to follow and trust true Christian leaders. A true Christian leader teaches God's message in the right way and for the right reason.

Peter wrote a letter to some Christians. He told them about false teachers. These false teachers taught things that were wrong. But their followers did not know they were wrong. These followers became slaves to the false teacher. Peter gave a warning in 2 Peter 2:3. *"These false teachers only want your money. So they will use you by telling you things that are not true. But the judgment against these false teachers has been ready for a long time. And they will not escape God who will destroy them."*

True teachers of God's Word will give us hope and peace. They will teach from the Bible and help us understand it. They will lead us to a closer relationship with God.

Beware of false teachers today. Make sure that you are learning from God's Word. Ask God to protect you and keep you safe.

– Barbara Rusiecki

Suggested Bible Reading

2 Peter 2:1-3

Trust (9)

Two young Vietnamese people escaped from Vietnam in 1975 while a terrible war was happening there. The girl was just 10 years old when her whole family left Vietnam. In the middle of the night her family escaped in a boat and went to America. About the same time, two other young people also escaped from Vietnam. The parents of these young people trusted God to help their children escape and survive.

These families were very brave. They trusted in God and He rescued them from violence and death. Bad things were happening to the writer of Psalm 22, too. He felt that God was far away from him. So he cried out to God in Psalm 22:19. *"Lord, don't leave me! You are my strength — hurry and help me!"*

When we are in trouble and cry out to God, He will not disappoint us. God will pay attention when we ask for help. However, He may not always answer us the way we want. But we can know for sure that God will do what is best for us.

If you have a problem today, you can ask God for help. He loves you and knows everything about you. You can always depend on Him to do what is best for you.

– Barbara Rusiecki

Suggested Bible Reading

Psalm 22:19-24

Trust (10)

Almost two thousand years ago, the first church started in Jerusalem. From that time on, people have learned about Jesus and shared their faith with other people. That's how the Good News has spread and the church has grown. This is amazing!

Timothy was a young preacher. Paul loved Timothy and wanted to help him grow and be a good church leader. In the New Testament we have two letters that Paul wrote to Timothy to teach and encourage him to keep teaching people about Jesus.

In 2 Timothy, Paul told Timothy that he was like a soldier, an athlete and a farmer. Soldiers, athletes and farmers focus on doing their job well. Paul encouraged Timothy in 2 Timothy 2:2. ***"What you have heard me teach publicly you should teach to others. Share these teachings with people you can trust. Then you will be able to teach others these same things."***

As Christians, we need to share God's Word with others. Our job is to teach people about Jesus and encourage them to grow. You may have an opportunity to be a witness for God today. God will give you understanding and the strength to do His work.

– Barbara Rusiecki

Light

Sometimes when I am driving early in the evening, I meet a driver who has forgotten to turn on the car's headlights. Driving at night without headlights can be dangerous. If we drive without headlights, we might make a wrong turn. Or we might crash into another car or a pole. If we want to drive safely at night, we need to turn on the headlights.

In John 8:12, Jesus compares Himself to a light. ***"Later Jesus talked to the people again. He said, I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never live in darkness. They will have the light that gives life."*** And in John, chapter 12, Jesus tells his followers to trust Him so that they will be children of the light.

Living without Jesus is like driving at night without headlights. It is dangerous to live without Jesus. We need the light of Jesus to help us through life's struggles, illnesses, hurts and hard times. If we don't follow Jesus, we will be like a car at night that makes wrong turns and crashes into things.

I hope you are following Jesus and letting His light shine through you. When other people see you, they will know that you love and obey Jesus. Then they will want to follow Him, too!

– Gayle Thorn

Suggested Bible Reading

2 Timothy 2:1-7

Suggested Bible Reading

John 8:12-20

Early Church (1)

Sometimes Christians ask me, "How can I live like Jesus?" I often tell them to study the early church in Jerusalem. The early church was the group of people who became Christians soon after Jesus died. I tell these Christians to do the same things the early church did.

Today and for the next four days, we will learn about the early church in Jerusalem. Acts, chapter 2, tells us what the early church was like. Peter preached to a group of people about Jesus. Acts 2:41 explains what happened after Peter preached. ***Then those who accepted what Peter said were baptized. On that day about 3000 people were added to the group of believers.*** The rest of chapter 2 tells us what these new Christians did. Christians in the early church met every day. They stayed together. They were devoted to each other.

We should follow the example of the early church. We need to meet together often with other Christians. We need to be involved in times of worship and praise. We need to study the Bible together. We need to be devoted to each other.

I hope you will be like these early Christians in Jerusalem.

– Chad P. Entinger

Suggested Bible Reading

Acts 2:40-47

Tuesday, November 14

Early Church (2)

Yesterday we learned that Christians in the early church met together every day. They were devoted to following Jesus and growing as Christians.

In Acts 2:42, we learn several more things that these early Christians did. ***The believers spent their time listening to the teaching of the apostles. They shared everything with each other. They ate together and prayed together.*** The apostles were men Jesus chose to be His special helpers. The believers paid attention to the apostles. They learned from the teaching of the apostles. And these Christians respected the apostles.

Today we have many pastors and teachers in our churches. These people use their time to teach us about God. We should use our time to learn from these pastors and teachers. We should pay attention to their teaching from God's Word. And we should respect these people. Why? Because they work hard to teach us.

I am thankful for pastors and teachers who taught me about Jesus. I am a Christian today because of their teaching. You should be thankful, too. Be like the Christians in the early church. Pay attention to your pastors and teachers.

– Chad P. Entinger

Suggested Bible Reading

Acts 2:40-47

Wednesday, November 15

Early Church (3)

We have learned about the early church. Christians in the early church were devoted. They used their time to learn from other teachers.

Acts 2:44-45 tells us that the Christians in the early church shared what they had. *"All the believers stayed together and shared everything. They sold their land and the things they owned. Then they divided the money and gave it to those who needed it."* These verses tell us that Christians in the early church truly shared with each other. They gave up their land and the things they owned to help others.

As Christians, we should share our money and possessions with our brothers and sisters in Christ. If someone needs food, we should share food with them. If parents need someone to help take care of their children, we should do that.

When I was young, my parents' car broke down. They could not drive to work. A woman in our church let my parents borrow her car. My parents used her car to drive to work until their car was fixed.

Christians in the early church shared. Sharing is a wonderful way to live as a Christian.

– Chad P. Entinger

Early Church (4)

Christians in the early church were devoted to God. They used their time to pay attention to their teachers. They shared their money and possessions with other people.

In Acts 2:46 we read about one more thing these early Christians did. *"The believers shared a common purpose, and every day they spent much of their time together in the Temple area. They also ate together in their homes. They were happy to share their food and ate with joyful hearts."* The words "ate together" from this verse may mean a meal or the Lord's Supper. Christians in the early church shared their meals and remembered Jesus by eating the Lord's Supper together.

We need to eat the Lord's Supper with other Christians. We also need to eat meals and fellowship with our brothers and sisters in Christ. When we do this, we strengthen the Christian bond we have with each other.

These Christians also prayed together. Praying with others is very important. We can encourage other Christians by praying for their needs and their spiritual growth.

Tomorrow we will learn what happens when we do the things that early Christians did.

– Chad P. Entinger

Suggested Bible Reading

Acts 2:40-47

Suggested Bible Reading

Acts 2:40-47

Early Church (5)

We have learned a lot these past few days from the Christians in the early church in Jerusalem. These people were devoted and met together every day. They used their time to learn from their teachers. They shared their possessions and money with each other. And they also ate and prayed together.

God wants us to live like these Christians. Why? Because exciting things happen when we follow their example. Acts 2:47 shows us what happened to these Christians. ***The believers praised God and were respected by all the people. More and more people were being saved every day, and the Lord was adding them to their group.*** If we live like the Christians in the early church, more and more people will follow Jesus. And we will praise God for this!

There are many people in the world who do not know about Jesus. They do not know how to love and serve God. Some of these people are your family members, neighbors or co-workers. I hope you will live like the Christians in the early church in Jerusalem. Then more people will learn about God's wonderful gift of salvation through Jesus.

– Chad P. Entinger

Keep on Learning

I watched some children who were learning to swim at the local YMCA. The pool was large and divided into lanes by ropes. There were three different age groups of children learning to swim. The youngest children tried to swim within the lanes, but they kept hitting the ropes. The children who were a little bit older only ran into the ropes a few times. But the group of oldest children swam in the lanes and did not hit the ropes at all.

Watching those children reminded me of being a Christian. When we are a new Christian, we truly want to serve God. But sometimes we are like a man named Apollos. He was a new Christian and excited to tell people about Jesus. But Apollos needed to learn more about Jesus. Acts 18:26 tells us about some Christians who helped Apollos. ***"Apollos began to speak very boldly in the synagogue. When Priscilla and Aquila heard him speak, they took him to their home and helped him understand the way of God better."***

No matter how long we have been a Christian, we still need to keep studying the Bible and learning more about God and His plan for our lives. Be sure to keep on learning from God's Word and growing in your faith.

– Bob La Forge

Suggested Bible Reading

Acts 2:40-47

Suggested Bible Reading

Acts 18:24-28

Snow

Many places on earth have weather changes from day to day. God controls the weather so that we can live on earth and grow the food that we need. Today and for the next few days we will talk about different kinds of weather that are mentioned in the Bible.

Snow! Some people love it. Many people hate it. And others have never even seen snow. Snow is one way that God provides water for the earth. Snow can be calm and peaceful. If you have ever experienced a blizzard, you know that snow can also be dangerous.

When snow falls to the ground, it is white and beautiful. Snowdrifts caused by blowing snow look like peaks of whipped cream. The writer of Psalm 51:7 talks about the whiteness of snow. *"Remove my sin and make me pure. Wash me until I am whiter than snow!"*

Sin makes us dirty. Only Jesus can remove our sin and make us clean again. When Jesus died on the cross, He paid the penalty for our sins. Through His death, our sins are forgiven and we can have a right relationship with God.

Do you want to be clean and pure before God? Follow and obey Jesus and accept His wonderful gift of salvation.

– Jennifer Forrester

Rain

Children love to play in the puddles made by a warm summer rain. Plants that are dried and earth that is cracked are renewed by a rain shower. Watching a gentle spring rain can be very peaceful and calming. Rain can also cause problems such as flooding and landslides. Rain, along with a high wind, can cause a lot of damage to buildings and crops.

Rain is a very important part of the weather cycle on earth. But rain doesn't just happen. Like all other parts of nature, rain is controlled by God. God gives us rain as a blessing. Without rain, people and animals would not have water to drink. We could not raise any crops without rain.

Psalm 104 is a psalm of praise to God. It is also a reminder about His great power. Psalm 104:13-14 tells us about the importance of rain on the earth. *"You send rain down on the mountains. The earth gets everything it needs from what you have made. You make the grass grow to feed the animals. You provide plants for the crops we grow — the plants that give us food from the earth."*

When you eat a vegetable or a piece of fruit today, think about the rain that helped it grow. And thank God for His awesome power and blessings.

– Jennifer Forrester

Suggested Bible Reading

Psalm 51:1-8

Monday, November 20

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Suggested Bible Reading

Psalm 104:10-14

Tuesday, November 21

Wind

Wind can be a friend or an enemy to people. Wind can dry clothes hung out on a line or power giant wind turbines that provide electricity for millions of people. Wind can also destroy an entire town or wear away the side of a mountain.

God controls the wind, just as He controls snow and rain. When Jesus was on earth, He showed that He had power over the wind, too. One day Jesus and His followers were in a boat on the lake. Jesus went to sleep in the boat. But soon a bad storm happened. The wind blew and waves covered the boat.

Jesus' followers were very afraid. They woke up Jesus and told Him they thought they were going to drown. Matthew 8:26 tells us what Jesus did. *"Jesus answered, 'Why are you afraid? You don't have enough faith.' Then Jesus stood up and gave a command to the wind and the water. The wind stopped, and the lake became very calm."*

Wow! The followers in the boat were amazed when they saw Jesus' great power. Maybe you will feel the wind today. It may be a gentle breeze or a strong storm. Think about God's power. Thank Him for controlling everything on earth.

– Jennifer Forrester

Hail

Hail is formed when moisture is combined with strong rising wind currents. Small hailstones may not cause any damage at all. But golf-ball-sized hail can break every window in a town or destroy an entire crop.

God's people, the Israelites, were slaves in Egypt. The Egyptian king refused to free the Israelites. So God sent ten terrible events on the people of Egypt. One of those events was a hailstorm.

God sent His messenger, Moses, to tell the king about the hailstorm. Moses told the king that this terrible storm would show the Egyptians God's great power. In Exodus 9:18, God told Moses what would happen. *"So at this time tomorrow, I will cause a very bad hailstorm. There has never been a hailstorm like this in Egypt, not since Egypt became a nation."* The hailstorm happened just as God told Moses. The storm destroyed people, animals and plants in Egypt.

We can always depend on God's Word. When He says that something will happen, it will happen! God said that He would send a hailstorm, and the hailstorm happened. God has also said that Jesus will come again someday. We can know for sure that God will send Jesus to take His followers to live with Him forever.

– Jennifer Forrester

Suggested Bible Reading

Matthew 8:23-27

Suggested Bible Reading

Exodus 9:13-19

Fog

An early morning fog can look very beautiful and mysterious. Sometimes it settles thick in a valley or comes as thin wisps over the land. Dense fog can be a hazard for travelers on a road. But usually when the sun comes out, fog disappears. It only lasts for a short time.

For thousands of years, people have tried to prolong their lives. They have searched for a fountain of youth that they can drink from and never die. But a fountain of youth does not exist. Some people die when they are young. Others live to be one hundred years old. It is God's plan that people are born and then they die.

Think about the many years since God made the earth. If we compare our lifespan to those years, it seems very short. James talks about the shortness of life in James 4:14. *"You don't know what will happen tomorrow. Your life is like a fog. You can see it for a short time, but then it goes away."* Fog comes and then it is gone. In the same way, our lives are very short.

James does not want us to be sad about our short lives. He encourages us to depend on God every day. If we allow God to control our lives, we will not worry about what happens tomorrow. Instead, we will live each day to love and serve God.

— Jennifer Forrester

God's Creation

I was visiting friends in Alaska. One morning I saw movement in the trees back of the house. Suddenly I saw a mother moose and her baby. The mother was about six feet tall at the shoulder. I enjoyed watching them as they ate mushrooms.

We can see God in creation everywhere we look. But sometimes we see something special that causes us to stop and think about God and His awesome creation. As I watched the mother moose and her baby, I thought about how the baby was created to look just like its mother. I thought about how God provided the right kind of food so the mother and her baby could stay strong and healthy.

The writer of Psalm 19 was impressed with God's creation. In Psalm 19:1-2 he tells how creation shows us God's power and glory. *"The heavens tell about the glory of God. The skies announce what his hands have made. Each new day tells more of the story, and each night reveals more and more about God's power."*

Look around you today and learn about God through His creation — enjoy the beauty of a rose, the warmth of the sunshine or the wonder of a newborn baby. Then thank God for all the things He has made for you!

— Robert Segress

Suggested Bible Reading

James 4:13-17

Friday, November 24

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Suggested Bible Reading

Psalm 19:1-6

Saturday, November 25

Come Close to God

A mother robin flew around a house looking for a place to build her nest. Finally she chose to build her nest in a flower box on the porch railing. A few days later, the nest had three eggs in it. The mother robin sat on the nest to keep the eggs warm.

Then one day an egg was lying outside the nest. Maybe it fell out of the nest or there was something wrong with it so the mother pushed it out of the nest. The people who lived in the house decided to put the egg back in the nest. The mother robin accepted the egg and drew it close to her body so she could keep it warm.

The mother robin reminds me of our kind and loving God. Sometimes we turn away from God and live a life of sin. We are separated from God. But we do not like being separated from God, so we know we must tell God we are sorry. James 4:8 tells us what happens when we repent and come close to God. *“Come near to God and he will come near to you. You are sinners, so clean sin out of your lives. You are trying to follow God and the world at the same time. Make your thinking pure.”*

Are you struggling with sin and feeling separated from God? Tell God your sins and come close to Him today. Then He will come close to you!

– Donna J. Howard

Suggested Bible Reading

James 4:4-10

Sunday, November 26

Test Your Faith

Have you ever seen a rock tumbler? A rock tumbler is used to change rough rocks into smooth, polished stones. This is how a rock tumbler works. A rock is placed in a tumbler that is filled with small particles of sand and rock called grit.

The tumbler is turned on and the rock bounces around with the grit for several days. This process is repeated two more times. Finally the rock is smooth and shiny. If a rock doesn't rub against the grit for a long time, it won't become a polished stone. It will just stay rough and ugly.

We are like rocks. Life's troubles — sickness, family problems, financial problems — are like grit. These situations help us to grow and depend on God more. Peter talked about this in 1 Peter 1:7. *“These troubles test your faith and prove that it is pure. And such faith is worth more than gold. Gold can be proved to be pure by fire, but gold will ruin. When your faith is proven to be pure, the result will be praise and glory and honor when Christ comes.”*

Keep focused on Jesus. He will help you be patient and stay strong. Jesus will allow life's troubles to change you. Your faith will grow, and you will be more like Jesus.

– Gayle Thorn

Suggested Bible Reading

1 Peter 1:2b-7

Monday, November 27

Safe Inside

When I was a child, I climbed hills, swam in a creek and played in an apple orchard. If I felt tired, hungry or afraid, I would hurry inside our house. I felt safe inside my house with my family. As an adult, I have often been anxious to get home. After work I would get in my car and drive home. When I was inside my house, I felt safe.

Some large cities have certain buildings or houses called “safe places.” These are places where children can go if they are in danger or need protection. The writer of Psalm 46:1 talks about a very special “safe place.” ***“God is our protection and source of strength. He is always ready to help us in times of trouble.”***

We all want to feel safe. We read a newspaper or watch the news on television. We see that the world is full of violent crimes, damaging weather and financial troubles. These stories may make us feel afraid and insecure.

But we can always trust God to help us feel safe and secure. When we are close to Him, He gives us protection and strength. Stay close to God and His Word today. You can depend on God to keep you safe.

– Pam Davis

Suggested Bible Reading

Psalm 46:1-7

Encourage Each Other

I watched a fire blazing in the fireplace. When I left the room, there were three logs glowing brightly. Thirty minutes later, I looked at the fire again. One of the logs had rolled off the grating and was by itself. The log had turned dark and was not providing any light or warmth. The other two logs were still together and gave off heat and light.

Sometimes when we face a difficult situation in life, we become depressed and want to be left alone. We may even stop going to church. That is a big mistake. We need to continue going to church where we can receive God’s love and encouragement from our brothers and sisters in Christ.

The writer of Hebrews wrote about this in Hebrews 10:24-25. ***“We should think about each other to see how we can encourage each other to show love and do good works. We must not quit meeting together, as some are doing. No, we need to keep on encouraging each other. This becomes more and more important as you see the Day getting closer.”***

When you are facing times of trouble and are tempted to be alone, depend on other Christians to encourage you and keep you close to God and His Word.

– Bob La Forge

Suggested Bible Reading

Hebrews 10:19-25

Forgive Others

When a person says something bad about his friend and hurts his feelings, the devil wants this person to feel that he is worth nothing. The devil wants him to think, "No one loves me. I am no good. I can never be forgiven." Then that person feels he is all alone, and the devil tempts him even more.

As Christians, we should not let that situation happen. When someone hurts us, we should forgive them and help them restore our relationship.

Paul talks about this kind of situation in 2 Corinthians, chapter 2. Paul says that when someone does something wrong, we should forgive them and encourage them. That will keep them from being sad and giving up completely. In 2 Corinthians 2:10, Paul continues talking about forgiveness. *"If you forgive someone, then I also forgive them. And what I have forgiven — if I had anything to forgive — I forgave it for you, and Christ was with me."*

We should want to be like Jesus. He came to earth to heal and forgive people. When someone sins against us, we need to forgive them and show them God's love. Be sure to be loving and forgiving today!

– Steve Husting

Trust God

Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego were faithful Hebrew men who were captured and taken to Babylon to serve the king. Daniel, chapter 3, tells us that King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon built a very tall golden idol. He said that all people in Babylon had to bow down and worship the gold idol. If someone did not worship the idol, he would be thrown into a very hot furnace.

Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego trusted God and served Him. They refused to bow down and worship the gold idol. So the king had them thrown into a hot furnace. The fire was so hot that the soldiers who threw them into the furnace were killed!

But God protected the three men. Daniel 3:27 tells us what happened to them. *"When they came out, the satraps, prefects, governors, and royal advisors crowded around them. They could see that the fire had not burned Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. Their bodies were not burned at all. Their hair was not burned, and their robes were not burned. They didn't even smell as if they had been near fire."*

God was with Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego and saved them from the fire. God will be with you. Trust Him and serve Him today.

– Eileen C. Wood

Suggested Bible Reading

2 Corinthians 2:5-11

Thursday, November 30

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Suggested Bible Reading

Daniel 3:8-30

Friday, December 1

Pay Attention

There are several bird feeders in my front yard. Many kinds of birds come to eat the seeds that I put in the feeders. As I watch the birds, I have noticed one thing that all birds do while they are eating. Every few seconds their heads go up and down, and then they look around. The birds are always paying attention to see if any danger is close by.

Peter wrote a letter to some Christians. He taught them how to follow God and encouraged them to serve God every day. In 1 Peter 5:8 he gave these people a very important warning. *“Control yourselves and be careful! The devil is your enemy, and he goes around like a roaring lion looking for someone to attack and eat.”*

The devil is always looking for ways to tempt us to sin. We should not pay attention to his lies. He wants to trap us, discourage us and destroy us. So we should be careful and watch for his attacks.

When the devil tempts you to sin today, refuse to follow him. Use God’s Word to fight against the devil. Ask God to help you stand strong for Him. God will be with you and support you.

– Suzanne Austin-Hill

Suggested Bible Reading

1 Peter 5:5-9

Thankfulness

Maybe you know people who are always complaining. They complain about the weather and their jobs. They are never happy with the food they eat, their jobs or their families. We do not enjoy being around people who complain all the time.

Thankfulness is the opposite of complaining. God doesn’t want us to complain. He wants us to be thankful for the blessings He gives us every day. Paul wrote a letter to Christians in the city of Ephesus. He told them to be very careful and to not be foolish. Paul also told them to encourage each other.

Then, in Ephesians 5:20, Paul reminded these Christians to give thanks. *“Always give thanks to God the Father for everything in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.”* It is easy to give thanks for good things that happen to us. But God wants us to also give thanks for things we don’t like or things that go wrong in our lives. When we have an attitude of thankfulness, God can take bad situations and make good things happen.

Be thankful today! When you have to wait in a long line at the grocery store today, don’t complain. Instead, thank God that you have money to buy groceries. If you are planning a picnic and it rains, don’t complain. Thank God for the blessing of rain!

– Jennifer Forester

Suggested Bible Reading

Ephesians 5:15-20

Creation

Yesterday we talked about thankfulness. Today and for the next three days, we will talk about things we should be thankful for.

We should be thankful for the world that God made for us. It is easy to pray a quick prayer and thank God for the whole earth. But maybe we should take time every day to really experience the world. Have you ever looked at a soap bubble? When light hits the bubble, you can see all the colors of the rainbow. Have you ever stopped when you were outside and smelled a flower or felt the rough bark of a tall tree? God made these things for us to enjoy and to show us His love.

Many Old Testament psalms talk about many things in the world that God made for us — the sun, the moon, the stars, animals, birds and fish. Psalm 136:5-6 reminds us about His creation. *“Praise the one who used wisdom to make the skies! His faithful love will last forever. He spread the land over the sea. His faithful love will last forever.”* We should be thankful for everything God has made. When we are thankful, we are reminded about how much He loves us.

Instead of complaining today, take time to look at the world around you. Praise God for His wonderful creation!

— Jennifer Forrester

Suggested Bible Reading

Psalm 136:1-9

Monday, December 4

Possessions

Some people in the world have a lot of money and possessions. Other people are poor. But God has given all of us things that we need — food, clothes and a place to live. And most of us probably have many extra things that we don't really need.

We should have an attitude of thankfulness about the possessions that God has given us. When we are truly thankful, we will be satisfied with what we have. Paul was always satisfied with what he had. Sometimes he had a nice place to live and good food to eat. Other times he was in prison or shipwrecked on an island.

Paul told the Christians in Philippi about his thankfulness in Philippians 4:11. *“I am telling you this, but not because I need something. I have learned to be satisfied with what I have and with whatever happens.”* Paul goes on to say that sometimes he had been hungry and others times he had plenty to eat. Then he says that Christ gave him the strength to be satisfied in every situation he faced.

Think about your food, your clothes and the place where you live. Don't complain about them. Thank God for what you have and ask Him to help you be satisfied with His many blessings.

— Jennifer Forrester

Suggested Bible Reading

Philippians 4:10-13

Tuesday, December 5

Work

What kind of work are you doing today? Maybe you are cooking, cleaning, baby sitting, mowing the lawn or managing an office. God has given every person work to do. It is good for our bodies and minds when we have work to do.

Sometimes, though, we may not be thankful for the work we are doing. Maybe we work for a boss who is rude and demanding. Or maybe we just don't like to do a certain job. Or maybe we work with people who tease us for being a Christian. How can we still be thankful for our work?

In the book of Colossians, Paul wrote to people who were free and people who were working for a master. Maybe the people who were working for a master didn't enjoy their work. But in Colossians 3:23, Paul gave them a way to be thankful. *"In all the work you are given, do the best you can. Work as though you are working for the Lord, not an earthly master."*

Whatever work we do in life, we should do it like we are working for Jesus. When we work for Jesus, we want to do a good job and please Him. We should do a good job and please Jesus, no matter what kind of work we are doing. Thank God for the work He has given you, and work for Jesus today.

– Jennifer Forrester

Salvation

In this devotion series, we have talked about thankfulness. We should thank God for His creation, for our possessions and for our work. Today we will talk about thanking God for the most important thing He has given to us.

The most important thing God has given us is salvation through the death and resurrection of Jesus. Without salvation, we have no hope of living forever with Him. God sent His only Son, Jesus, to live on earth and experience pain and temptation. And then God watched as Jesus died a terrible death on the cross. Why was God willing to do this? Because He loves us so much!

Paul reminded the Christians in the city of Corinth about God's wonderful gift of salvation through Jesus. He talked about his gift in 2 Corinthians 9:15. *"Thanks be to God for his gift that is too wonderful to describe."* Paul was thankful that God had forgiven his sins and promised Him eternal life.

Jesus died for a sinner like Paul. No matter what you have done in life, Jesus died for you, too! Remember today that God loves you. And be sure to thank Him for His wonderful gift to you!

– Jennifer Forrester

Suggested Bible Reading

Colossians 3:22-25

Suggested Bible Reading

2 Corinthians 9:12-15

God's Child

How old are you? Maybe you are a teenager and have just started driving a car. Maybe you are middle-aged and have grown children. Or maybe you are in your eighties and have several great-grandchildren.

No matter how old you are, if you are a Christian, you are God's child. It doesn't matter how tall you are or how smart you are. If you follow and obey God, you are one of His children.

God loves you so much that He wants you to be part of His family. 1 John 3:1 talks about this. *The Father has loved us so much! This shows how much he loved us: We are called children of God. And we really are his children. But the people in the world don't understand that we are God's children, because they have not known him.*"

Wow! Being God's child is very special. God has promised that He will be with His children every day. God has also promised that Jesus will come back someday and take His children to live with Him forever!

Are you God's child? If not, I hope that you want to become His child. Read God's Word, the Bible, and learn how you can follow and obey Him today!

– *Donna J. Howard*

Suggested Bible Reading

1 John 3:1-3

Be a Witness

You can be a witness for Jesus! Do you know what a witness is? A witness for Jesus is someone who tells other people about God and His plan of salvation. The New Testament tells us about many people who shared God's message with their family and friends.

Some people are witnesses in foreign countries. But you don't have to travel to a faraway place to serve God. You can share about Jesus with people who live close to you.

Jesus traveled and taught about God. His whole ministry happened within 200 miles of his hometown of Nazareth. Matthew 4:23 tells us where Jesus went. *"Jesus went everywhere in the country of Galilee. He taught in the synagogues and told the Good News about God's kingdom. And he healed all the people's diseases and sicknesses."*

It's not important how far away from home Jesus was. What is important is that wherever Jesus went, He told people about God. Jesus did God's work every place He went. Maybe God will send you to a foreign country. Maybe God will ask you to stay home. It doesn't matter. People everywhere need to know about God.

Tell the people in your house, in your neighborhood and at your work about God and His plan of salvation today.

– *Gayle Thorn*

Suggested Bible Reading

Matthew 4:23-25

Important Message

It is very important that we are able to communicate with other people. Most children learn how to communicate at a very early age. When they go to school, they learn how to read and write. It does not matter whether we share our thoughts through sign language, writing or speaking.

God has given us an important message that He wants us to share with others. What is this message? God's message is that He sent Jesus to die for our sins. God's message is filled with love and hope. We can read God's message in the Bible. We can also learn about God's message through the world that He created. Through nature we can know about God's power and glory as well as His plan for our lives.

The apostle John wrote several letters to Christians. 1 John 5:13 tells us why John wrote these letters. *"I write this letter to you who believe in the Son of God. I write so that you will know that you have eternal life now."* John wanted to share God's message with other people. And he also wanted to encourage Christians to continue following Jesus.

If you are a Christian, you have an important message to share with your family, friends and co-workers today. Tell them how Jesus has saved you and changed your life!

– Pam Davis

Suggested Bible Reading

1 John 5:13-15

Sunday, December 10

Don't Look Back

Sometimes we may be tempted to look back on our life and wish that we were different. We may wish that we could wear the same size clothes we used to wear. We may wish that we were as handsome or beautiful as we used to be.

We may also wish that we had not done certain things in our lives. We all make mistakes and bad decisions. We may wish that we had chosen a different career or spouse. We may wish that we had spent more time serving God.

All of us have good and bad experiences in life. We like to remember some experiences, and some we want to forget. Paul encourages us in the book of Philippians to forget what has happened in the past and move forward. Philippians 3:14 is an encouragement for all Christians. *"I keep running hard toward the finish line to get the prize that is mine because God has called me through Christ Jesus to life up there in heaven."*

No matter what has happened to you in the past, you need to look forward to serving God and living with Him forever. Use every opportunity you have today to reach out to others and share God's love with them. Live today as if it is the last day of your life!

– Lynette H. Denton

Suggested Bible Reading

Philippians 3:12-16

Monday, December 11

Warnings

Paul loved the Christians in the city of Corinth. He wrote two long letters to them. In his letters, Paul told these Christians the wrong things they were doing. He warned them that they needed to change. Paul also encouraged these Christians and reminded them how much God loved them.

In 2 Corinthians 6:14-15, Paul reminded these Christians to not be like people in the world. *You are not the same as those who don't believe. So don't join yourselves to them. Good and evil don't belong together. Light and darkness cannot share the same room. How can there be any unity between Christ and the devil? What does a believer have in common with an unbeliever?"*

In some churches today, the preacher preaches only what the people are willing to accept. The preacher does not challenge and convict people to repent and give up their life of sin. Paul warned the Christians in Philippi to not be like other people who do not love and follow God.

We should pay attention to Paul's warning today. And we should also remember that God has promised eternal life and great blessings to people who stay close to Him.

– Steve Husting

Christmas Gifts (1)

Christmas Day will be here soon! Today and for the next two days we will look at some special Christmas gifts that God has given to us.

I know a family who has two dogs. These dogs stay in a room where there is a gate across the doorway. When the gate is closed, the dogs cannot leave the room. But when the gate is open, the dogs won't leave the room. That is very interesting. When the gate is open and the dogs are free to go into the rest of the house, they don't even know they are free!

Jesus talks about freedom from sin in John, chapter 8. He reminds His followers to accept and obey His teachings. In John 8:31-32 Jesus tells us how we can have freedom from sin. *"So Jesus said to the Jews who believed in him, If you continue to accept and obey my teaching, you are really my followers. You will know the truth, and the truth will make you free."* This is truly a wonderful gift from God!

As you celebrate the birth of Jesus this Christmas, remember that God sent Him to earth so that we can have freedom from sin. Thank God today that you are no longer bound to your old life of sin. Praise Him for sending Jesus to die for you!

– Suzanne Austin-Hill

Suggested Bible Reading

2 Corinthians 6:11-7:1

Suggested Bible Reading

John 8:31-32

Christmas Gifts (2)

There have been many bad storms in America this year. On the news people have talked about houses that were damaged, trees that fell down and street signs that were blown away. After a storm is over, it may be hard to drive through a town that was hit by the storm. Familiar landmarks are gone and there are no street signs to show the way.

Some wise men from the east studied the stars and learned that Jesus had been born. They wanted to worship Jesus and bring Him some gifts. How did the wise men know how to find Jesus? God used a star in the sky to lead them to the place where Jesus was living.

Matthew 2:11 tells us what the wise men did when they found Jesus.
The wise men came to the house where the child was with his mother Mary. They bowed down and worshiped him. Then they opened the boxes of gifts they had brought for him. They gave him treasures of gold, frankincense, and myrrh."

God gave the wise men a star to lead them to Jesus. God has given us the gift of His Word to show us how we can know Jesus and accept Him as our Lord and Savior. Thank God for His Word today!

– Suzanne Austin-Hill

Christmas Gifts (3)

I love to give gifts. I give gifts to people for their birthday, graduation, wedding, birth of a baby and anniversary. But my favorite time of the year to give gifts is Christmas. At this time of the year, I remember God's wonderful gift of His Son, Jesus.

Jesus' life on earth was filled with gifts for us. First, He was born to be our Savior. Second, Jesus never sinned. He gave us the example of how we can live a pure life. Third, when Jesus died on the cross, He became the sacrifice for our sins. Fourth, when Jesus arose and went back to heaven, He gave us the gift of the Holy Spirit to live in us and comfort us every day. And fifth, as we think about Jesus coming again, we know that He gave us the promise of eternal life.

Paul talked about all of this in Ephesians 2:4-5. *"But God is rich in mercy, and he loved us very much. We were spiritually dead because of all we had done against him. But he gave us new life together with Christ. (You have been saved by God's grace.)"*

God has given us so many gifts through Jesus. Thank God by loving Him with all your heart, your soul, your mind and your strength!

– Suzanne Austin-Hill

Suggested Bible Reading

Matthew 2:1-12

Thursday, December 14

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Suggested Bible Reading

Ephesians 2:4-10

Friday, December 15

God Sent Jesus (1)

Many people around the world are planning to celebrate Christmas soon. Christmas is a time when we remember that Jesus was born as a baby in Bethlehem. You may know many facts about Jesus' birth. But do you know why God sent Jesus to earth? The Bible gives us many reasons why God sent Jesus. Today and for the next few days, we will look at some of these reasons.

One day Peter and John went to the Temple in Jerusalem. While they were there, Peter healed a crippled man. The Jewish people who saw this miracle were amazed. Peter said that this man could only be healed through God's power. Then Peter told them about Jesus. In Acts 3:26, Peter explained why God sent Jesus to earth.
"God has sent his special servant Jesus. He sent him to you first. He sent him to bless you by causing you to turn away from your evil ways."

God sent Jesus to bless everyone on earth. Jesus taught that all of us are sinners and that we are separated from God. Jesus died on the cross to forgive our sins. When we obey Jesus and allow Him to forgive our sins, we are no longer separated from God. That is the greatest blessing we can receive!

God sent Jesus to earth to bless you with salvation! Thank Him today for the wonderful gift of His Son.

– Jo Krueger

Suggested Bible Reading

Acts 3:24-26

Saturday, December 16

God Sent Jesus (2)

Paul was a Jewish man who loved God. But Paul did not believe that Jesus was God's Son. Paul joined other Jews and did bad things to Christians. Then Jesus spoke to Paul and told him he was wrong. Paul asked God to forgive him. Paul was baptized and started following Jesus. Paul traveled to many places to teach about Jesus and start new churches.

Later, Paul wrote two letters to a young Christian preacher named Timothy. Paul loved Timothy and encouraged him to follow Jesus. Paul told Timothy in 1 Timothy 1:15 why God sent Jesus to earth. ***"Here is a true statement that should be accepted without question: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, and I am the worst of them."***

Before Paul followed and obeyed Jesus, he did bad things to Christians. Paul knew that he was a terrible sinner. But he also knew that God loved him and showed him mercy. Paul was thankful that God had sent Jesus to save him!

Maybe you have done some terrible things in your life. Maybe you think that God cannot forgive your sin. But God can forgive you! Be like Paul. Follow and obey Jesus today!

– Jo Krueger

Suggested Bible Reading

1 Timothy 1:15-17

Sunday, December 17

God Sent Jesus (3)

During Old Testament times, a Jewish high priest made animal sacrifices for the people's sins. This was God's plan for His special people, the Jews. These sacrifices were necessary for sins to be forgiven.

Later, God sent Jesus to earth. Jesus grew up and taught the Jews about following and obeying God. When Jesus died on the cross, He paid the price for everyone's sin. Jesus was like the Old Testament high priests. His sacrifice brought forgiveness to people.

The book of Hebrews in the New Testament explains that Jesus' sacrifice was much better than the animal sacrifices that the Jewish high priests made. In Hebrews 3:1, the writer gives us another reason why God sent Jesus. *"So my brothers and sisters, those chosen by God to be his holy people, think about Jesus. He is the one we believe God sent to save us and to be our high priest."*

Maybe someone will tell you that you don't need to love and follow Jesus. Remember that God sent Jesus to be your high priest. Jesus is the only one who can save you and give you eternal life. Thank God for Jesus today!

– Jo Krueger

Suggested Bible Reading

Hebrews 1:1-3

Monday, December 18

God Sent Jesus (4)

The past few days, we have learned that God sent Jesus to bless us, to save us and to be our high priest. Today we will learn something that may surprise you. God sent Jesus to earth to cause trouble!

One time Jesus was teaching a group of people. Many of these people wanted Jesus to set up an earthly kingdom and bring peace to the Jews. But in Matthew 10:34, Jesus said something different. *"Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I did not come to bring peace. I came to bring trouble."*

How can following Jesus cause trouble for Christians? Sometimes when people follow Jesus, their families mock them or make trouble for them. Maybe you have lost your job or your friends because you are a Christian. Think about our world today. Many Christians are being persecuted or killed because they follow Jesus. God has never promised that our lives will be easy. But He has promised to always be with us.

No matter what happens today, keep following Jesus. People may tease you, hurt you or take away your possessions. But don't give up. Stay close to Jesus and His Word.

– Jo Krueger

Suggested Bible Reading

Matthew 10:34-39

Tuesday, December 19

God Sent Jesus (5)

This Christmas season many people will think about Jesus being born as a baby. But when Jesus was born on earth, He grew up and became an adult — just like other humans. It was God's plan for Jesus to come to earth in human form. In 2 John 7, the apostle John wrote about Jesus becoming a man. *"Many false teachers are in the world now. They refuse to say that Jesus Christ came to earth and became a man. Anyone who refuses to accept this fact is a false teacher and the enemy of Christ."*

It is very important that Jesus became a human. While He lived on earth, Jesus felt pain, hunger, thirst and loneliness. He also knew how it felt to be tempted by the devil. Because Jesus experienced these things, He understands how we feel when we are hurt or tempted.

When Jesus says that He will comfort us, we can know that He understands what it feels like to lose a loved one. When Jesus says that He will keep us strong, we can know that He experienced temptation from the devil.

Are you sad or lonely today? Are you tempted to stop following Jesus? Let Him fill you with His comfort, peace and strength.

— Jo Krueger

Suggested Bible Reading

2 John 7-8

Wednesday, December 20

God Sent Jesus (6)

I watched a small boy and his mother. The boy disobeyed his mother. So she sent him to his room to be alone and think about what he had done. The boy was sad. He did not want to be separated from his mother. He wanted to be close to his mother again and feels her arms around him.

It is the same with our relationship with God. When we sin and disobey God, we are separated from Him. But in our heart, we want to be right with Him again. We want to feel close to Him. God sent Jesus to earth so that we can be right with Him.

Paul talked about being right with God in his letter to Christians in the city of Philippi. He explained that Jesus was more important than anything else in the world. Then Paul wrote in Philippians 3:9 about being right with God. *"I want to belong to him. In Christ, I am right with God, but being right with God does not come from following the law. It comes from God through faith. God uses my faith in Christ to make me right with him."*

God loves you and wants you to have a right relationship with Him. That relationship begins by having faith in His Son, Jesus. Your faith will lead you to learn more about obeying God and living for Him every day.

— Jo Krueger

Suggested Bible Reading

Philippians 3:5b-11

Thursday, December 21

God Sent Jesus (7)

Read a newspaper and see what is happening around the world. Watch the news on TV. Soon you will learn that there is not much peace on earth. People want the kind of peace that brings freedom from war and fighting.

Yesterday we learned that God sent Jesus so that we can have a right relationship with Him. God also sent Jesus to bring us peace. But God's kind of peace is not freedom from war. God's peace happens because we have the right kind of relationship with Him. When someone becomes a Christian, he is a new person. The old way of living is gone. Everything is new in Jesus. This kind of relationship brings us peace with God. Paul talked about this in 2 Corinthians 5:18. *"All this is from God. Through Christ, God made peace between himself and us. And God gave us the work of bringing people into peace with him."*

Through Jesus, we can have true peace. And when we experience this peace, we have the responsibility to show other people how they can have God's peace, too.

Look for opportunities today to tell people about Jesus. Show them how they can have peace and a right kind of relationship with God.

– Jo Krueger

Suggested Bible Reading

2 Corinthians 5:16-19

God Sent Jesus (8)

God spoke to His people, the Jews, through men called prophets. God's prophets shared messages about things that would happen to the Jews soon, things that would happen in the future and things that will happen at the end of the world. God's prophecies always come true.

Many prophecies have already happened — they have been fulfilled. For example, many Old Testament prophecies were about Jesus being born and His ministry among the Jews. Those prophecies were fulfilled when Jesus was born and lived on earth. But some prophecies will not be fulfilled until Jesus comes again.

God sent Jesus to earth to give full meaning to these prophecies. Jesus was teaching a large group of people. In Matthew 5:17, He talked about God's law and the prophets. *"Don't think that I have come to destroy the Law of Moses or the teaching of the prophets. I have come not to destroy their teachings but to give full meaning to them."*

As we read about Jesus' life on earth, we learn that God's Word is always true. We can read the Bible and trust what God says. Depend on God's Word to lead you today.

– Jo Krueger

Suggested Bible Reading

Matthew 5:17-20

God Sent Jesus (9)

Jesus taught about God and His Word. Many people followed Him wherever He went. Jesus became very popular. Some people even wanted to make Jesus their earthly king. But that was not God's plan for Jesus. God sent Jesus to follow His plan and do what He wanted Him to do. Jesus wanted to obey God. In John 6:38, Jesus told a crowd of people why God sent Him to earth. *"I came down from heaven to do what God wants, not what I want."*

The night before Jesus was crucified, He prayed to God in a garden. Jesus was very sad. He knew that He was going to die the next day. He asked God if He had another plan. But then Jesus said that He was willing to do whatever God wanted Him to do. God's plan was for Jesus to die. So Jesus obeyed God and willingly gave up His life.

Jesus is a wonderful example for us. Sometimes we may not want to do what God wants us to do. We want to follow our own plan. But we should be like Jesus. We should trust God and obey Him.

What does God want you to do? He wants you to read His Word and obey it. Ask God to help you obey Him today.

– Jo Krueger

God Sent Jesus (10)

This is our last devotion about why God sent Jesus to earth. We have learned that Jesus came to bless us, save us, make us right with God, bring us peace and follow God's plan. All of these things show us the most important reason for sending Jesus. God sent Jesus because He wanted to show us how much He loves us!

Every person wants to be loved. Even if no other person on earth loves us, we can know for sure that God loves us. The Bible teaches again and again that God loves us. John wrote about this in 1 John 4:9. *"This is how God showed His love to us: He sent his only Son into the world to give us life through Him."* God sent Jesus to show us His great love.

I hope you have been thinking about God's love during this Christmas season. The world wants us to think about ourselves at Christmas — the gifts, the food, the decorations and the parties. These things are not bad, but we need to keep God's love at the center of our Christmas celebration and worship.

You are important to God. He loves you so much that He sent Jesus to be your Savior! Merry Christmas!

– Jo Krueger

Suggested Bible Reading

John 6:35-40

Suggested Bible Reading

1 John 4:7-10

Hard Questions

A young Buddhist man was engaged to a woman who was a Christian. His fiancee told him that she could not marry him unless he became a Christian. She wanted her family to be united in Christ.

The young man thought about some hard questions. He imagined being married and having children. He wondered how he would answer his children when they asked, "Daddy, who is God? How can I know Him?" His fiancee had told him about the Bible, so he decided to start reading it.

The man started reading the book of John. In John, chapter 1, he learned about God. He learned that Jesus was with God from the beginning. The young man read John 3:16 and learned that God showed how much He loved the world by sending Jesus to die on the cross.

Then the young man read John 14:6-7. *"Jesus answered, I am the way, the truth, and the life. The only way to the Father is through me. If you really knew me, you would know my Father too. But now you know the Father. You have seen him."* Then he knew the answers to the hard questions. The only way to know God is through Jesus.

Thank God today for sending Jesus to be the only way to salvation and eternal life!

– Robert Segress

Suggested Bible Reading

John 14:1-7

Tuesday, December 26

Good Ground

One day I was driving home from grocery shopping. Suddenly two squirrels darted onto the road ahead of me. When the squirrels realized they were in danger, they stopped in the middle of the road. Then one squirrel continued running across the road and into the ditch. The other squirrel turned around and ran back across the road.

That reminds me of Christians I have met. Some continue serving God all their life. When they face hard times, they do not give up. But some Christians turn back and follow a life of sin again. I wonder why some people keep on following God while others turn back to sin.

In Luke, chapter 8, Jesus talks about seeds sown in different kinds of ground. Some seeds grew only a little. They are like people who stop following Jesus. Luke 8:15 tells us what happens when seeds are planted in good ground. *"And what about the seed that fell on the good ground? That is like the people who hear God's teaching with a good, honest heart. They obey and patiently produce a good crop."*

I hope that you are like the good ground. I hope that you will continue to love and follow God and do good things for God's kingdom.

– Donna J. Howard

Suggested Bible Reading

Luke 8:4-15

Wednesday, December 27

Good Examples

A minister and a visiting preacher were walking down the street. They stopped at houses and invited people to come to a special meeting at the church. They stopped at one house. But the people in that house pretended they were not home. The two men walked away, but later they came back to the house again. This time the front door was open, so the men went inside. They invited the woman and her family to come to the church meeting.

As a result of that church meeting, the woman became a Christian. She lived the rest of her life obeying and serving God. She set a wonderful example for her children. They, too, became Christians and followed Jesus.

The writer of Hebrews, chapter 12, lists many people who obeyed God. Then in Hebrews 12:1 he talks about the importance of these people. *"We have all these great people around us as examples. Their lives tell us what faith means. So we, too, should run the race that is before us and never quit. We should remove from our lives anything that would slow us down and the sin that so often makes us fall."*

Live for God today so that other people will see your example and want to follow God, too.

– Norma Mezoe

Suggested Bible Reading

Hebrews 12:1-3

Warranty

I have a folder in my file cabinet at home. The label on the folder says "Warranties." Every time I buy a new appliance or piece of equipment, I receive a paper called a warranty. I keep this paper in the "Warranties" folder. A warranty is a guarantee or a promise. This paper says that if the appliance or equipment stops working, the company who made it promises to fix it or replace it.

When Paul wrote to the Christians in Ephesus, he talked about God's blessings. In Ephesians 1:14, Paul reminded these people that God had given them the Holy Spirit. *"The Spirit is the first payment that guarantees we will get all that God has for us. Then we will enjoy complete freedom as people who belong to him. The goal for all of us is the praise of God in all his glory."*

When we become Christians, God sends His Holy Spirit to live in us. Then we have the guarantee that God will keep His promises and continue to bless us. What are these promises? God promised that we have an eternal home with him. He also promised that Jesus will come again to take His people to live in that home.

These promises are wonderful! Thank God today for the Holy Spirit who guides you in your Christian life. And thank God for His promise of living forever with Him.

– Jo Krueger

Suggested Bible Reading

Ephesians 1:13-14

I Don't Want To!

What do you have to do today that you don't want to do? Go to work? Tell someone some bad news? Visit a grouchy neighbor? Tell someone you are sorry and ask for forgiveness?

Sometimes God expects us to do certain things, but we don't want to do them. If we obey God and do what He wants, we become stronger Christians. Doing those things teaches us self-control. They help us learn how to do things that are difficult. We also learn to be content and satisfied with the life God has given us. Doing what God wants may also give us a cheerful attitude and teach us to smile and persevere.

In 1 Corinthians 15:58, Paul encouraged the Christians in Corinth. *"So, my dear brothers and sisters, stand strong. Don't let anything change you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord. You know that your work in the Lord is never wasted."* When we give ourselves fully to God's work, then we will truly be serving Him.

Maybe today God will give you something to do for Him, but you will say, "I don't want to!" Change your attitude and start serving God. Then you will become more like Jesus.

– Gayle Thorn

Look at the Heart

A local library offered a class on "face reading." The advertisement said that the class would teach how to know what a person is like just by studying their face. I thought about going to the class. Then I remembered the Bible story about Samuel and David, and I decided not to go to the class.

God was not pleased with King Saul. So God sent His prophet, Samuel, to choose another man to be king. Samuel went to the home of Jesse. Seven of Jesse's sons came before Samuel. 1 Samuel 16:7 tells us what God said to Samuel. *"But the Lord said to Samuel, Eliab is tall and handsome, but don't judge by things like that. God doesn't look at what people see. People judge by what is on the outside, but the Lord looks at the heart. Eliab is not the right man."*

Samuel looked at each son and wondered if he was the one God had chosen to be king. But God always said, "No." Finally Jesse's youngest son, David, was brought to Samuel. God told Samuel that David was the one He had chosen to be king over Israel.

God does not judge us by the way we look on the outside. He knows that what is in our heart is more important. We should be like God. Ask God to help you see other people as He does.

– Suzanne Austin-Hill

Suggested Bible Reading

1 Corinthians 15:54-58

Suggested Bible Reading

1 Samuel 16:1-13

Authors

Thanks to these people who wrote devotions for this issue.

Bonnie Hall—*Muncie, IN*

Bob La Forge—*Freehold, NJ*

Barbara Rusiecki—*Warner Robins, GA*

Chad P. Entinger—*Deaf Missions Staff*

Donna J. Howard—*Orfordville, WI*

Eileen C. Wood—*Loganville, GA*

Elissa Poe—*Council Bluffs, IA*

Gayle Thorn—*Wayne, OH*

Jennifer Forrester—*Los Angeles, CA*

Joseph Josselyn—*Deaf Missions Staff*

Jo Krueger—*Deaf Missions Staff*

Lynette H. Denton—*Fort Smith, AR*

Matt Keller—*Deaf Missions Staff*

Norma Mezoe—*Sandborn, IN*

Pam Davis—*Epps, LA*

Robert Segress—*Surprise, AZ*

Suzanne Austin-Hill—*Ruskin, FL*

Steve Husting—*Fountain Valley, CA*



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