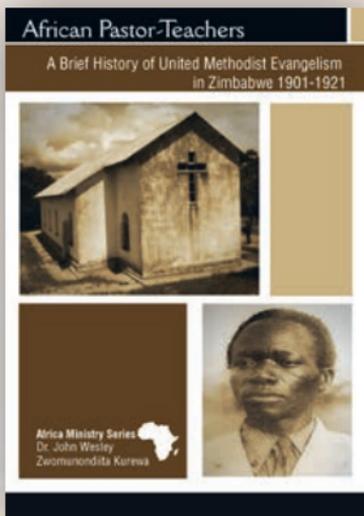


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DAILY DEVOTIONAL GUIDE



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THE UPPER ROOM®

DAILY DEVOTIONAL GUIDE

SEPTEMBER – OCTOBER 2022

CONTENTS

Editorial (Nashville).....	3
Where the World Meets to Pray.....	4
Message from the African Editor.....	5
Cover Art Interpretation.....	6
Meditations for September.....	8
Meditations for October.....	40
Wednesday Discussion Questions.....	72

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One

*The LORD will become king over all the earth; on that day
the LORD will be one and his name one.*

– Zechariah 14:9 (NRSV)

Zechariah 14:9 makes a clear statement of devotion and faith despite the post-exilic chaos from which it emerges. It evokes an image of steadfast hope for the future of Jerusalem as she looks to rise triumphantly from the ashes of her former glory. The prophet Zechariah boldly declares that in the end God’s ultimate rule over the nations and God’s divine sovereignty are undiminished, despite apparent evidence to the contrary.

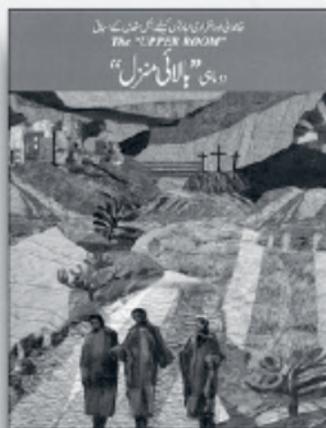
The Hebrew word *echad*, here translated as “one,” means unity, uniqueness, wholeness and indivisibility. This concept is also a pillar of the foundational Shema prayer found in Deuteronomy 6:4-9; 11:13-21, and Numbers 15:37-41. Why is this “oneness” key to God’s identity, and why is it important for us to understand? Simply put, God’s essential unity asserted in prophecy and prayer offers us an invitation to a secure relationship with our Creator as we navigate our fragmented world. May we by faith dare to proclaim – as Zechariah did – that no matter the circumstances, we will keep our eyes open for God’s unwavering love and grace. May that love and grace take root in our governments, neighbourhoods, ministries and families – even as destructive and divisive elements seek to sow chaos among us. God is able.

*– Rev. Kimberly Orr
World Editor and Publisher*

Where the World Meets to Pray



Hindi edition



Urdu edition

Writers featured in this issue of *The Upper Room*:

- K. D. Mecwan (India) • Navamani Peter (India)
- Sammar Aaroom (Pakistan)

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Encouragement for Young People

Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge him and he will make your paths straight. Proverbs 3:5-6 (NIV)

So often we read reports of thousands of young people in our country facing a dismal future as they struggle to find stable employment after graduating, be it from high school or tertiary institutions. This leaves them prone to depression as they reflect on the years of study devoted to reaching their desired goals. Their self-esteem is affected and for many it's a challenge to remain optimistic. Some may lose direction.

I recall the words of a guest preacher when she spoke at a youth service recently. Focusing on Psalm 8, she reminded the congregation of God's all-encompassing love and care. She encouraged the young people to dance to the rhythm of God's creation, to reach out and support each other and look always to Jesus - the way, the truth and the life. Authors of meditations in this issue also offer loving words of encouragement to the youth.

As the Church remembers and celebrates young people during September, our prayer is that they will continue to be guided and encouraged by God's Holy Spirit. *"I will guide you in the way of wisdom and lead you along straight paths. When you walk your steps will not be hampered; when you run you will not stumble."* Proverbs 4:11-12, (NIV)

Beatrice Smith



Africa Editor (English)

Cover Art Interpretation

Moses and the Fire of Sinai

Artist: Darius Gilmont (Israel, Contemporary)

Interpreter: Erin Pearce

Darius Gilmont is a trained architect who has had a career in educational publishing. Gilmont experienced his own personal exodus on the Sinai peninsula and found himself in a wilderness of depression. Gilmont says, “Art was my constant... and was key to helping me return to my Promised Land.”* This personal connection to the land of Sinai and finding personal liberation is evident in the image on the cover, *Moses and the Fire of Sinai*.

Gilmont beautifully paints the scene from Exodus 34:29 where “Moses came down from Mount Sinai. As he came down from the mountain with the two covenant tablets in his hand, Moses didn’t realise that the skin of his face shone brightly because he had been talking with God” (CEB). With bold colours, textures and wavelike lines, Gilmont depicts divine energy radiating from Moses’ head, beard and robes, creating a connection between heaven and earth that symbolises the new covenant between God and God’s people. Moses had a life-altering encounter with God’s divine power, and through that encounter God offered transforming grace to Moses and the Israelites. Gilmont’s painting invites us to step into the scene and imagine the transforming effect of this magnificent moment.

When we find ourselves in one of life’s many wildernesses, the image of Moses with the covenantal tablets reminds us of the wondrous relationship we have with our Creator and invites us to open ourselves to the transforming power of God’s grace in our own lives and in the world.

* <https://www.darius-art.com/about-bible-artist/biblical-artist/>

Cover photo courtesy of Darius Gilmont. ©2020 Darius Gilmont. Prints of cover art are available from www.darius-art.com

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Offering every soul the opportunity to grow holistically through spending time with God every day.

*"So, faith comes from listening, but it's listening by means of Christ's message."
Romans 10:17 (CEB)*



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- Introduced in 2002 to bring *The Upper Room* daily devotional to Southern Africa and beyond.
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- New ecumenical board appointed in 2018
- Providing spiritual formation through Books, Sedibeng, Walk to Emmaus

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THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 1, 2022

Keep Up the Good Work

Read Romans 8:35-39*

In all these things we win a sweeping victory through the one who loved us. – Romans 8:37 (CEB)

One evening as I tucked my eight-year-old son, Brent, into bed, I sat by him as he began his prayers. Then I kissed his forehead, stood up, and began to walk from his room. When I turned off his light, I heard Brent say, “Night-night, Jesus. Keep up the good work.” I scoffed and thought, *Ha! What good work?*

The past few days had been hard. A little child from our school district had died. My aunt was suffering from cancer again after being in remission. My students were wearing face masks while sitting six feet apart, and I was losing faith in my country and its leaders more and more each day. *Keep up the good work indeed!*

But Brent’s prayer and my reaction made me stop and think. I loved that Brent was encouraging Jesus. I didn’t love my negative attitude toward a loving Jesus who has never forsaken me. Taking a moment, I considered all that I have and gave thanks.

We are to give thanks in all things – the joy and the sorrow. That night I thought of the hurt, the people around me who are grieving and scared, but I let myself rejoice in the good too. I rejoiced in all the many victories that Jesus has seen me through, and I followed Brent’s example. “Yes, Jesus. Keep up the good work.”

Prayer: Dear Jesus, continue to be with us, and shower us with hope and joy even when our hearts are heavy. Amen.

Thought for the Day

In all things I will give thanks to the Lord Jesus.

(Mrs.) Kara Lloyd (Illinois, USA)

PRAYER FOCUS: CHILDREN WHOSE FAITH ENCOURAGES ME

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 2, 2022

Anxiety and Faith

Read Psalm 9:9-20

The LORD is a refuge for the oppressed, a stronghold in times of trouble. – Psalm 9:9 (NIV)

I've dealt with anxiety and depression for a long time. Some days I feel like I can take on anything that comes my way; other days I feel vulnerable and scared. The constant stress of the pandemic has magnified these emotions. Most days, I feel trapped with no way to break free.

The stress of these times wears on me, but it has also taught me about God's power, comfort and strength in new ways. I've always been a believer and talk to God on a regular basis, but this year has been different. I've clung to my faith like never before, praying and praising God for each new day and each new blessing. Even though I still feel anxious, my relationship with my Creator helps me to feel calmer and gives me the capacity to think about others. Because God is with me, I can set aside the bad feelings and work for good. And I always remember that it's okay to ask God and others for help.

Prayer: Dear God, give us strength, guidance and perseverance, so that we can take on life's challenges and love others like Jesus does. Amen.

Thought for the Day

On my darkest days, God's light is still with me.

(Mr.) Derrick Zurn (Pennsylvania, USA)

PRAYER FOCUS: SOMEONE DEALING WITH ANXIETY

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 3, 2022

The Best Place

Read John 14:1-4

Do I have anyone else in heaven? There's nothing on earth I desire except you. – Psalm 73:25 (CEB)

After our father died following a prolonged illness, my siblings and I tried to care for our mother by renovating her house and making travel plans for her to see friends and family. She was excited to have her roof fixed, create a small garden, and spend time with loved ones. Then, suddenly, she died in her sleep.

Her passing was incredibly painful for us, not only because it was unexpected but because we had also lost our father so recently. Whereas our father's illness allowed us some time to prepare for his death, we did not expect our mother to pass away so soon after. The reality of losing both parents seemed unbearable.

The morning after her interment, I was filled with sadness. Hoping to find encouragement, I turned to the Bible and saw Psalm 73:25. I took that verse as a heaven-sent message for me. It was as if my mother was assuring me that she was in the best place possible – with God in heaven. While we get a taste of God's goodness on earth, everything will finally be made right in the afterlife (John 14:1-4). I miss my parents, but the thought of their rejoicing in the presence of God eases my pain.

Prayer: Dear Lord, when we are faced with death, help us to hold on to the hope of heaven where we will join the communion of saints and rejoice in your presence. Amen.

Thought for the Day

My joy will be made complete in heaven.

(Mrs.) Marlene Legaspi-Munar (Batangas, Philippines)

PRAYER FOCUS: THOSE WHO HAVE LOST PARENTS

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 4, 2022

Keep Focused

Read Matthew 14:22-31

But when [Peter] noticed the strong wind, he became frightened, and beginning to sink, he cried out, "Lord, save me!" Jesus immediately reached out his hand and caught him, saying to him, "You of little faith, why did you doubt?"
– Matthew 14:30-31 (NRSV)

I have led seven trips to Israel over the past 25 years. During the course of those trips, we always take a boat ride on the Sea of Galilee. When we reach the middle, I ask the captain to turn the boat engines off. As we drift along in the water, I read two passages of scripture aloud: Jesus calming the storm (Luke 8:22-25) and Peter walking on the water (Matthew 14:29-30).

On my most recent trip, it started to rain and a strong wind began to kick up the waves while we were travelling across the water. It occurred to me that Peter might have seen similar waves and felt a similar wind. And when he took his eyes off Jesus to look at the storm around him, he became fearful and began to sink.

I think we all can relate to Peter when we feel like life is out of our control. But if we turn our focus to Jesus through scripture and prayer, he will always be there to reach out his hand and pull us to safety.

Prayer: Thank you, Jesus, for your constant presence. Teach us to rely on you in every situation. Amen.

Thought for the Day

How will I keep my life focused on Christ today?

(Mr.) Gregory N. Seltzer (Florida, USA)

PRAYER FOCUS: PEACE IN THE MIDDLE EAST

MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 5, 2022

The Power of Water

Read John 4:1-15

Jesus said, "Whoever believes in me, as Scripture has said, rivers of living water will flow from within them." – John 7:38 (NIV)

On a recent trip with friends to a nearby lake, I visited a beautiful waterfall. I was able to hear it even before I could see the falling water plunging into the lake below. We anchored our boat and began to swim toward the waterfall. The force of the water, the sound and the coolness didn't scare me. I swam with confidence to the waterfall, letting the water fall sharply on my head, neck and shoulders. My friends were smiling, and we stayed there for quite some time, allowing the cool water to refresh us in the heat of the day.

That majestic waterfall reminded me of God's love, power and constant presence. Jesus offers us Living Water. He quenches our thirst and fills us with his love until it overflows from us to others. This water satisfies like no other and fills the soul.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, we want to be filled with your living water so that we may be refreshed and share your love with others. We pray as Jesus taught us, "Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen" (Matthew 6:9-13, KJV).

Thought for the Day

What evidence of God's love and power do I see in my life?

(Mrs.) Susan G. Walters (Kentucky, USA)

PRAYER FOCUS: GRATITUDE FOR GOD'S GIFT OF NATURE

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 6, 2022

Trusting God

Read 1 Peter 5:6-11

Cast all your anxiety on [God], because he cares for you.

– 1 Peter 5:7 (NRSV)

In high school, French was a difficult subject for me. I had little interest in it, and my teacher's explanations were unclear to me; so I received bad grades. Full of anxiety, I developed a hatred for the subject and prayed to God that I would never have to study it again.

When I was admitted to university, I learned that I was required to take multiple French courses. Fear gripped me, and I wondered how I would pass the classes. I prayed about my fears and asked God to make a way for me. I had full confidence that God would answer me.

After some time, the Lord gave me courage and inspired in me an unexpected interest in French. I had an excellent French professor and received support from people around me. This, along with my constant trust in God, made learning easy. I excelled in my French courses and exams, and I even became a teaching assistant. It was a wonderful experience!

When we have problems or burdens and don't know what to do, we can turn to God. When we lay our cares upon the Lord in prayer, God has promised to sustain us.

Prayer: Dear God, strengthen us when we are afraid, and give us confidence to face the challenges before us. Amen.

Thought for the Day

God helps me carry my burdens.

(Mr.) Asamoah Joseph Omono (Greater Accra, Ghana)

PRAYER FOCUS: STUDENTS ANXIOUS ABOUT SCHOOL

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 7, 2022

Spiritual Friendship

Read Ephesians 5:19-21

Jesus said, "Where two or three gather in my name, there am I with them." – Matthew 18:20 (NIV)

In 2009, my friend Michelle and I had the opportunity to attend a Walk to Emmaus spiritual retreat. The experience was filled with community-building, worship and Bible study. We did not want to lose our excitement about our faith when we returned home, so Michelle and I started to meet once a week. We studied different materials and books over a cup of coffee and breakfast.

Eight years after we began our weekly ritual, Michelle moved across the country. I worried that this would make it difficult to continue our special friendship. I had always interpreted Matthew 18:20 as Jesus asking us to meet in person when we study and worship. But meeting online with Michelle has taught me that we do not have to be in the same room for the Lord to be with us. All we have to do is join our hearts and minds together.

While we can no longer share a meal at the same table, we continue to share details of our lives and encourage each other in our faith journeys by discussing *The Upper Room*, hymns and books. Our relationship is one that I cherish.

Prayer: Dear Lord, thank you for the gift of spiritual friendships. For those of us with this type of friendship, bless these relationships. For those of us longing for a friend, please put the right people in our life. Amen.

Thought for the Day

My faith is strengthened by the faith of others.

(Mrs.) Yvette War Bonnet (Washington, USA)

PRAYER FOCUS: PEOPLE ATTENDING SPIRITUAL RETREATS

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 8, 2022

In Times of Need

Read Genesis 22:1-14

Abraham called that place “The LORD will provide”; as it is said to this day, “On the mount of the LORD it shall be provided.”

– Genesis 22:14 (NRSV)

After losing my job due to changes in the economy, I worried about how I would be able to afford essentials like rent and food to feed my partner and myself. So many thoughts came crashing in on me at once that I began to panic. I told myself to take a deep breath and to know that God would provide, just as Abraham told his son in Genesis 22:8.

The next day my doorbell rang. It was my landlord bringing fresh produce in abundance – carrots, onions, garlic, peppers and more. She told me that her friend owned a restaurant that had lots of leftover food. She couldn't bear to see it all go to waste, so she wanted to share her portion of the food with me. My heart was filled with gratitude. My landlord cared enough to offer me the food, but also God was gracious and blessed me through the restaurant owner who didn't even know me. Nothing is too big for God, who uses unexpected situations to provide for our needs.

Prayer: Dear God, even when we don't know how things will work out, help us to trust that you care for us and will provide for our needs. Amen.

Thought for the Day

Even when my future is unclear, God cares for me.

(Ms.) Eileen Nuñez (New Jersey, USA)

PRAYER FOCUS: RESTAURANT OWNERS

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 9, 2022

Surrender

Read James 4:13-17

Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.

– Philippians 4:6 (NIV)

Long before our children were born, my wife and I started to make plans for their lives. These expectations, hopes and fears seem to be a big part of parenting. We have wondered, *will our children be good students and professionals? Are they going to keep loving God? Will the world be hard on them?* Sometimes we worry more than pray for them, forgetting that we are all children of the same Creator.

For instance, my wife and I were anxious about our daughter's future plans as she neared high school graduation. We envisioned her going to university or joining a short international student exchange programme or working for a year before going back for more schooling. But then COVID-19 spread around the world, and our plans fell apart.

Going to university was not an option and neither was travelling. We turned to God, praying and reading scripture together. The uncertainty of the pandemic has forced us to look to God and remember that the Almighty's love never fails. We find comfort in God's words: "As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts" (Isaiah 55:9). Our God is all-powerful.

Prayer: Lord of love and mercy, teach us how to pray and rest in you. Give us our daily bread and help us not to be anxious about anything. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Thought for the Day

I will put my plans in God's hands.

(Mr.) Andre de Albuquerque Caetano (Minas Gerais, Brazil)

PRAYER FOCUS: PARENTS OF HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 10, 2022

Playing Our Part

Read John 17:20-26

The Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel.

– Isaiah 7:14 (NIV)

From a young age, I was taught at home and in church about God's promises in scripture – those God has already kept and those yet to be fulfilled. I imagine that the childhood of Mary, the mother of Jesus, may have been similar.

In her time, the Jews were eagerly awaiting the Messiah, so they probably studied scriptures that talked about him. Isaiah 7:14 says, "The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel." It amazes me to think that Mary may have sat at the feet of a priest from the temple and heard this passage read, having no idea that it was speaking of her.

Two thousand years later, as you and I read the word of God, we can be assured that we have a part in the unfolding story. We may not have been assigned a role as well-known as Mary's; but when Jesus prayed for future believers in John 17:20-26, he was talking about us. Our part in the story is to be united with other believers so that all will see the love of Christ in us. When we follow God's commands by loving one another, we become important characters in the best story ever written.

Prayer: Dear God, thank you for allowing us to play a part in your ongoing story. Help us to love others the way Jesus prayed we would and to share your truth every day. Amen.

Thought for the Day

I am an important part of God's unfolding story.

(Miss) Jody Williams (Illinois, USA)

PRAYER FOCUS: THOSE WHO FEEL UNIMPORTANT

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 11, 2022

Holding Fast

Read 2 Corinthians 4:7-12, 16-18

We know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.

– Romans 8:28 (NIV)

As a young child, I was diagnosed with several conditions affecting my eyes, joints and blood vessels. Despite a childhood filled with medical appointments and eye surgeries, I eventually lost sight in my right eye. Forty years later, it is by God's grace that I have any vision at all.

All that I've endured sometimes seems a bit senseless, and I don't feel like my faith has been strengthened as a result. I am thankful for God's blessings; but while scripture says we should have patience in suffering (see Romans 12:12), I just want the surgeries and pain to end.

My perspective widened when I joined a prison ministry a year ago. As I nervously shared my story in a hall full of women, everyone was silent and I couldn't see any faces. But by the time I reached the end, there were shouts of "Amen!" and "Hallelujah!" Women came to hug me afterward with tears in their eyes.

Perhaps when suffering does not refine our own faith it can offer inspiration for others. While I may not feel my faith has grown because of my health, I have not abandoned it. Rather, I hold on to faith despite my trials. And maybe that's what really matters.

Prayer: Dear Lord, in spite of our suffering and trials, help us to hold steadfastly on to you. Empower us to share our stories so our vulnerability may be a gift to others. Amen.

Thought for the Day

Even when my pain feels senseless, I can share hope through vulnerability.

(Mrs.) Christine Adhikari (Georgia, USA)

PRAYER FOCUS: THOSE LIVING WITH CHRONIC ILLNESS

MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 12, 2022

Simple Pleasures

Read Ecclesiastes 9:7-10

Go, eat your food with gladness, and drink your wine with a joyful heart, for God has already approved what you do.

– Ecclesiastes 9:7 (NIV)

I enjoy looking at the chirimoya (custard apple) trees [*Annona cherimola*] in my garden and watching them grow. They are quite plentiful – far too many for one person to eat. The fresher they are, the more delicious and aromatic the fruit. When I pick the chirimoyas, I already have in mind the people I will be giving them to.

This morning, though, I saw a large, ripe chirimoya I had missed during my earlier picking. I thought, *if someone doesn't eat it soon, it will go to waste*. On the horizon, the sun was just beginning to peek through. I looked at the sky as I took in the panorama and felt God was offering the tropical fruit to me. I sat down in my garden, facing the morning sun and enjoyed its warmth on my face. I started eating slowly, savouring the fruit. I thought about the many blessings in my life. Filled with God's love and goodness, I quietly repeated today's verse from Ecclesiastes: "Go, eat your food with gladness." A simple pleasure. I have never enjoyed a chirimoya more.

Prayer: Creator God, source of all life and goodness, you bring us the gifts of joy and peace. Greater still are the gifts of your love and presence. Thank you, Lord! Amen.

Thought for the Day

God is good and generous.

(Mr.) Juan Guerrero (Valle del Cauca, Colombia)

PRAYER FOCUS: TO BE MORE GENEROUS

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 13, 2022

United through Prayer

Read Romans 15:1-6

*The body is not made up of one part but of many.
– 1 Corinthians 12:14 (NIV)*

I began my first teaching position at Fort Knox army base, Kentucky, USA, as an English instructor for military recruits, mainly from Puerto Rico and South Korea. We focused not only on English skills but also on the practical understanding of military terminology and materials.

A few of my students were married with children, and one infantry soldier would soon report to his first duty station. On the morning of March 5, 1982, I mentioned to my students that it happened to be the World Day of Prayer. One student spoke up, “Hey, Teacher, sounds like you want to say a prayer.” We then formed a circle and bowed our heads. I prayed for each of them to return safely to their families. As I finished, another student prayed in Spanish, followed by another praying in Korean. We each concluded with a resounding “Amen.” After we raised our heads, the silence and brief glances of understanding sanctified the bond of fellowship among us. United in faith, we could see that the strength of prayer was indeed universal.

Prayer: Dear God, guard us against all fear, and instil in us the power of faith and hope. Thank you for the gift of community. Amen.

Thought for the Day

Prayer unites me with Christians around the world.

(Mrs.) Pamela Cheeseman (Kentucky, USA)

PRAYER FOCUS: MILITARY FAMILIES

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 14, 2022

Running with Jesus

Read John 11:25-36

In [God] we live and move and have our being. – Acts 17:28 (NIV)

I felt numb in the weeks following my fifty-year-old brother's death. My daily devotional time turned into daydreaming. Procrastination replaced time set aside for prayer. Tears came easier than praise.

I was grief stricken, mourning my brother who spent his life in perpetual motion. He embodied Acts 17:28 by living, moving and being in the presence of the Lord. He began walking at eight months, mastered any sport he attempted, gave big, warm hugs, knelt when he prayed, and clapped to praise songs. My brother, who used his athleticism and his body to glorify God, was gone. I felt alone and insecure.

My usual ways of connecting with God felt hollow. Then God led me to take a lesson from my brother's life to cope with his death. I needed to interact with God using my body, mind and spirit. I started a running regimen. Some runs were filled with intercessory prayers for our parents and my brother's children. Some runs were spent peppering God with questions about my brother's too-short life. As I ran, I became aware of my rhythmic footsteps and God's air in my lungs as a healing balm for my spirit.

Kilometre after kilometre, I experienced God's presence and understanding. And just as Jesus loved and wept for his friends, he wept with me and gave me peace as we ran long distances together.

Prayer: Dear Jesus, thank you for loving us and for your promise of life eternal. Amen.

Thought for the Day

God is with me every step of my way.

(Mrs.) Lea Anne Foster (Virginia, USA)

PRAYER FOCUS: SOMEONE SEEKING TO RECONNECT WITH GOD

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 15, 2022

The Importance of Unity

Read Ephesians 4:1-13

So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another. – Romans 12:5 (KJV)

Many years ago, my soccer team was down 3-0 at the end of the first half. As we gathered around the coach at halftime, we blamed one another for the errors that had led the rival team to score. Our coach ignored our complaints and handed a sweeping broom made from a bundle of twigs to our team captain and told him to break it. We all watched with keen interest as he, our captain whom we all respected, tried and tried to break the broom but could not even bend it. He ultimately handed it back intact. Looking around at each of us, our coach explained that this was the power of unity. He encouraged us to work together, and in the second half we played with renewed team spirit, scored five goals and won the game.

I think the Holy Spirit wants to teach us a similar lesson. Ephesians 4:6 reminds us that there is “one God and Father of all.” God wants all believers to unite as one. We’re all children of God. Despite our differences, Christians can and should work together to spread the good news.

Prayer: Dear Lord, help us to set aside our differences and work with Christians around the world, worshipping, serving and glorifying you. Amen.

Thought for the Day

There is one God and Father of all.

(Mr.) Samuel Yali Ituma (Ebonyi, Nigeria)

PRAYER FOCUS: UNITY IN THE CHURCH

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 16, 2022

Quilt of Blessings

Read Psalm 105:1-4

When [Barnabas] arrived and saw what the grace of God had done, he was glad and encouraged them all to remain true to the Lord with all their hearts. – Acts 11:23 (NIV)

My dear friend makes quilts out of old T-shirts that carry special memories for their owners. One day while I was visiting her, she showed me a quilt she had made for her son that highlighted his high school sports. When I told her of all the T-shirts that I had saved over the years, she graciously volunteered to make a quilt for me. I was thrilled and gratefully accepted. I finally had a purpose for all the old T-shirts that meant so much to me and held so many memories.

As I gathered the shirts, I realised that they all reminded me of the blessings God had given me throughout my life. I now have the T-shirt quilt on my bed, and what a joy it is! Every evening and morning as I get into or out of bed, I look at the T-shirts and thank God for my many good friends and loving family members who helped me make all those memories. I have found that giving thanks to my heavenly Father is a very gratifying way to mark each day.

Prayer: Dear heavenly Father, thank you for daily reminders of the blessings you have given us. Thank you for bringing us comfort and showing us your love. Amen.

Thought for the Day

Today I thank God for my loved ones and the joys we have shared.

(Mrs.) Katherine Turk (Wisconsin, USA)

PRAYER FOCUS: TO RECOGNISE GOD'S LOVE AND BLESSINGS

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 17, 2022

Through My Parents' Eyes

Read Exodus 4:10-17

The Lord said to [Moses], "Now go; I will help you speak and will teach you what to say." – Exodus 4:12 (NIV)

Both my mom and my dad were deaf most of their lives. Neither was born deaf; they lost their hearing as children because of illness. While both had a disability, they overcame many challenges and obstacles to become happy and loving people. They approached life with a positive attitude and never let their deafness stand in their way.

While Mom and Dad lacked the ability to hear, they had an extremely strong sense of sight and observation. They could walk into a room, walk back out, and then tell you about the room in vivid detail. When they met someone, they could read the person's facial expressions, gestures and non-verbal cues, and make accurate statements about that person's disposition or mindset without ever hearing them speak.

God knows and provides what we need. Moses was not a great speaker, but God gave him what he needed to be a leader.

I often think of my parents when I am feeling inadequate or unqualified. What they lacked in hearing, God made up for in other ways. Even in the face of immense challenges, God will provide a way for us.

***Prayer:** Heavenly Father, thank you for your gift of grace. You have made each of us unique and will provide us with all that we need when we seek your will for our lives. Amen.*

Thought for the Day

I will embrace the special gifts God has given me.

(Mr.) Brian Foster (North Carolina, USA)

PRAYER FOCUS: THOSE WITH HEARING LOSS

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 18, 2022

Strength in Weakness

Read Hebrews 4:12-16

I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities for the sake of Christ; for whenever I am weak, then I am strong. – 2 Corinthians 12:10 (NRSV)

In the past, I would wake up some mornings with a feeling of dread. I thought about my failures, fears and rejections. I wondered why I hadn't accomplished more by now and why I hadn't fulfilled my dreams. I felt I had not lived up to society's standards. Usually as the day went on, I would forget about these thoughts, but they would return another day.

Then I started incorporating prayer more consistently into my life. Whenever dread started surfacing in the morning, I would begin to pray. I started to realise that what I perceived as weaknesses – my fears, regrets and dislikes – had moulded me into a more humble, empathetic and resilient person. Through prayer I began to recognise my identity and self-worth in Christ. I began to celebrate my small victories and stopped dwelling on my assumed failures.

Most important, I learned never to stop striving to be more like Christ. My weaknesses have proven to me that I am human, but the grace of Christ enables me to change, grow and improve. I believe that times of weakness, pain and suffering can become sources of strength. Now I view my times of struggle as lessons and gifts, and I no longer wake up with dread.

Prayer: Dear God, thank you for being by our side through the challenges life brings. Amen.

Thought for the Day

Prayer can help me discover strength in my weaknesses.

(Miss) Maria Montemayor (Ontario, Canada)

PRAYER FOCUS: TO FIND STRENGTH IN MY WEAKNESSES

MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 19, 2022

Called to Share

Read 1 John 3:16-24

If someone has material possessions and sees a brother or sister in need but refuses to help – how can the love of God dwell in a person like that? – 1 John 3:17 (CEB)

I work at a locally owned lumber and hardware company that has several stores across Central Texas. One common occurrence in the company is a stock transfer, wherein one store sends some of its merchandise to another store that needs it. This action reminds me how God calls us to care for one another.

God knows that we need food, clothing and shelter to live, and our Creator provides these things (see Matthew 6:31-33). God answers prayers through us and calls us to share what we have with others in need (see Deuteronomy 15:11). When we answer God's call to give to others, we demonstrate that our faith is not dead and that God answers the prayers of those in need (see James 2:15-17).

Every time I am asked to assemble a transfer for another store, I am reminded of how God works to meet needs. When God calls me to share my wealth, possessions or time with another person, I witness God answering prayers. Not only does my giving bless others, but it changes my heart to better understand God's love. In giving, I also receive. In giving, I serve the Lord (see Matthew 25:40).

Prayer: Dear God, help us to see the needs of those around us. Empower us to give with humility and generosity. May we grow to be more like you in the process. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Thought for the Day

When God gives me more than I need, I am called to share.

(Mr.) Michael Kimmel (Texas, USA)

PRAYER FOCUS: CHARITABLE ORGANISATIONS

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 20, 2022

Cleansing Tears

Read Matthew 5:1-12

Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.

– Matthew 5:4 (NIV)

I sat in a rocking chair on the front porch of our farmhouse watching the rain drench my garden as a storm moved across the cornfields. Almost immediately the air cooled, and the ground soaked up much-needed rain. Even though the rainfall interrupted my outdoor plans, I knew it offered the earth necessary nourishment.

Earlier in the day I was in church singing an old familiar hymn. The words touched the fresh grief in my soul over the recent death of my sister. My tears rushed forth, replacing my repressed anger with renewed hope and cleansing my soul. Though death had claimed my sister, she now rests in the arms of Jesus, healed and whole.

The Bible tells us that the Lord bottles our tears (see Psalm 56:8). The Lord cares for us in our grief and comforts us as we mourn. Someday there will be no need for tears of sorrow as we reunite with our loved ones in heaven. But for now, I want my tears to wash me clean of the bitterness that clings to me as I witness the world's suffering. I hold fast to God's promise to right all these wrongs. Then, one day Jesus will return to cleanse the earth, making everything new – and we'll witness God's entire creation healed and whole once more.

Prayer: Thank you, Lord, for the rain that nourishes the earth and the tears that cleanse our hearts. Amen.

Thought for the Day

Through my tears God opens my heart to healing.

(Mrs.) Suzanne Montgomery (Indiana, USA)

PRAYER FOCUS: PEOPLE LIVING UNDER DROUGHT CONDITIONS

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 21, 2022

The Gift

Read Luke 10:38-41

“Martha, Martha,” the Lord answered, “you are worried and upset about many things, but few things are needed – or indeed only one. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her.” – Luke 10:41-42 (NIV)

I really enjoy classical music. The Brandenburg Concertos by Bach are special favourites of mine. The history of these pieces makes them even more intriguing. Bach composed them and sent the scores in his own handwriting to the Margrave (Marquess) of Brandenburg-Schwedt in 1721. However, the full score remained untouched in the library until the Margrave’s death in 1734, and it was not published until 1850. It’s amazing to me that such a beautiful gift was neglected for so long.

This reminds me of the gift of salvation that is available to every one of us. Some never open this gift and so never experience the joy it can bring. The reasons are many and complex. But those who do open the gift find abundant living and receive life eternal with God.

So when I hear the Brandenburg Concertos, I remember the gift of salvation that God offers us through Jesus Christ.

Prayer: Lord Jesus, thank you for your precious gift of salvation. May we live a life of loving service as our way of showing our gratitude. Amen.

Thought for the Day

I can encourage others to accept God’s gift of salvation.

(Mr.) Bill Gosling (Western Australia, Australia)

PRAYER FOCUS: CLASSICAL MUSICIANS

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 22, 2022

Journey to Stability

Read Jeremiah 31:1-6

*The LORD appeared to us in the past, saying: “I have loved you with an everlasting love; I have drawn you with unfailing kindness.
– Jeremiah 31:3 (NIV)*

Seventeen years ago, I had a significant realisation and finally understood the Lord’s love for me. For decades I had begged God to deliver me from my eating disorders and clinical depression. They were taking a toll on my relationships, and I felt like even God had given up on me. I prayed, “God, I’m constantly disappointing people, including myself. From now on, I’m going to focus on your love for me.”

Something changed when I heard myself speak with certainty of the Lord’s love for me. In a powerful way I knew my heavenly Father loved me and was on my side. I knew that God never had and never would give up on me. I no longer felt that God was exasperated with me – I sensed God’s tenderness.

That day began my slow and steady progress out of emotional instability. After much counselling, the right medication for a while and, most of all, lots of time with God through prayer and Bible reading, I found stability.

I’m glad I didn’t wait until my situation got worse. Even though my situation seemed hopeless, I learned to trust in God’s love for me and sought the help I needed.

Prayer: Lord God, surround us with your compassion and fill us with renewed hope. Amen.

Thought for the Day

God’s love has the power to save me from hopelessness.

(Mrs.) Sheryl H. Boldt (Florida, USA)

PRAYER FOCUS: THOSE STRUGGLING WITH EATING DISORDERS

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 23, 2022

Finding Peace

Read Isaiah 66:10-13

This is what the LORD says: "I will extend peace to her like a river, and the wealth of nations like a flooding stream."

– Isaiah 66:12 (NIV)

Whenever I read Isaiah 66 where the prophet speaks about restoring peace and prosperity to Jerusalem, it reminds me of when our family lived in Berlin during the Cold War. It was a city literally divided by the Berlin Wall. As a result, a certain tension always hung in the air.

One day our family stopped at the ruins of an old castle as we travelled through West Germany. Climbing up to a terrace, I looked down on the Rhine River Valley and experienced a peace that seemed to push away all the concerns in my life. God's Spirit was present, and peace flowed over me like the river below. Although that was many years ago, I have never forgotten that moment.

With time, I've learned that the peace of the Lord is also available through prayer and meditation on scripture. We can trust the Prince of Peace with all our burdens. He will surround us like a river whenever we seek him and surrender our lives to him.

Prayer: Dear God, help us to seek your peace every day, in good times and in hard times, as we pray, "Father, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come. Give us each day our daily bread. Forgive us our sins, for we also forgive everyone who sins against us. And lead us not into temptation" (Luke 11:2-4, NIV). Amen.

Thought for the Day

What burdens can I give to the Lord today?

(Mr.) John Schliesser (Alabama, USA)

PRAYER FOCUS: THOSE LIVING IN CONSTANT TURMOIL

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 24, 2022

Navigating Changes

Read Genesis 1:20-23

Clothe yourself with the new person created according to God's image in justice and true holiness. – Ephesians 4:24 (CEB)

When our daughter was four years old, we received a chrysalis in a clear jar. I explained to her that it was God's plan for a caterpillar to change into a beautiful butterfly. We kept a close watch on it because we could already see the wings inside.

Then one afternoon we saw that the butterfly was halfway out! Hurriedly, we took the jar outside. The butterfly worked its way out and balanced on the rim of the jar, wobbling back and forth, hesitating. As it attempted to fly, it kept going up and down, almost hitting the ground. My daughter's hand slid into mine. "Do something, Mommy!" Suddenly, the butterfly soared up and away.

It struck me how we humans are often like that when we go through a major change – like moving to a new home, school or job. We can feel wobbly and unsure in our efforts to adjust. But if we keep working at it, we eventually settle into our new way of life.

God is an awesome Creator who speaks to us through creation. I can look back on my life and recognise times when I was like that butterfly. But with God's help, I made it through difficult seasons of change time and time again.

Prayer: Mighty God, thank you for your presence with us as we encounter life's ups and downs. Amen.

Thought for the Day

Though change may be difficult, God gives me strength to endure.

(Mrs.) L. Torpy Skinner (Tennessee, USA)

PRAYER FOCUS: THOSE FACING A MAJOR CHANGE

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 25, 2022

Always on Time

Read Isaiah 55:8-13

Trust in the LORD with all your heart; don't rely on your own intelligence. – Proverbs 3:5 (CEB)

In September 2017 my job contract came to an abrupt end. I was devastated and felt hopeless. *How would I find new employment when companies were concluding business for the year? How would my family survive? Who would come to our rescue?* I had no backup plan, and I thought it would be impossible to find a job in the last quarter of the year.

While I was pondering my next move, I believe God directed my thoughts to visit my wife's sister. After staying with her for a couple of days, I felt prompted to visit a local school I had seen. With my CV in hand, I went to see the principal.

I got the surprise of my life when the principal told me that a business teacher was about to go on maternity leave, so they needed a temporary teacher. I was so relieved! Was it just by chance that I travelled to visit my sister-in-law and went to this school? I think not. When I could not see a way forward, God never left my side. God had made provision well in advance for me.

Prayer: God of all wisdom, teach us not to fret when our plans fall apart. Remind us always to depend on your wisdom. Amen.

Thought for the Day

Today I will give thanks for God's providence.

(Mr.) Say Amen (Gauteng, South Africa)

PRAYER FOCUS: TEACHERS

MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 26, 2022

Filled with New Peace

Read Psalm 121:1-8

*I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help.
My help cometh from the LORD, which made heaven and earth.
– Psalm 121:1-2 (KJV)*

In 2007, my 29-year-old son, Deon, was murdered. He was a loving, caring and giving person. The grief I endured was tremendous. For months in my brokenness I cried – consumed with unimaginable pain.

One day I was sitting quietly, asking God, *why?* In that moment, I felt God telling me that my hurt could be healed if I would allow it. Finally, the healing process began. I started thanking God for sustaining me and restoring peace deep within me. I also thanked God for having given me my son, for the time we spent together, and the joy we shared during his lifetime.

A few years later, I found myself witnessing to others who had also experienced the loss of a child. I felt even closer to God as a result. I learned true forgiveness and compassion for others as I shared my experience with them. God can redeem acts of evil and the suffering that follows. For me, these encounters with others who are grieving are examples of such divine redemption.

Prayer: Dear heavenly Father, thank you for your mercy. Thank you for giving us strength during our most trying times. Amen.

Thought for the Day

There is nothing God can't redeem.

(Mrs.) Florece Graham (North Carolina, USA)

PRAYER FOCUS: THOSE GRIEVING THE TRAGIC LOSS OF A LOVED ONE

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 27, 2022

The Privilege of Prayer

Read James 5:13-16

Jesus told his disciples a parable to show them that they should always pray and not give up. – Luke 18:1 (NIV)

I have recently found myself frustrated, finding how difficult it is to communicate in today's world. Many medical providers are so busy it takes several weeks or months to see a doctor. And recently, I was trying to fix a billing problem over the phone and was transferred to three different people before I connected with the right person. She didn't seem very happy to be talking to me, but we finally resolved the issue.

Communication is hard, especially with large organisations. This makes me keenly appreciate the privilege of prayer. Interacting with God isn't limited to certain hours. There is no waiting; the Almighty is always available. And when we pray to God, our Creator is delighted to hear from us. We know we are talking to the right person because God knows us better than we know ourselves.

God wants us to pray. We see this command all over the Bible. We were created to have a relationship with God, and prayer is the best way we can do that.

Prayer: Gracious and loving God, thank you for the privilege of allowing us to talk to you – anytime, anywhere. Help us to embrace the gift of prayer so that we can grow closer to you. Amen.

Thought for the Day

God is always available.

(Mr.) John D. Bown (Minnesota, USA)

PRAYER FOCUS: CUSTOMER SERVICE REPRESENTATIVES

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 28, 2022

Love Everyone

Read John 13:1-17

*I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you.
– John 13:15 (NIV)*

I can vividly imagine the foot-washing scene in the Gospel of John; Jesus taking off his outer garment, wrapping a towel around his waist, kneeling to remove the disciples' sandals, and then washing and drying one dusty foot after another. My eyes well up at the image. If the Saviour of the world was willing to take on such a humble task, we should all be willing to serve others too, regardless of who we are and who they are.

Following Jesus' example of servant leadership means being willing to engage with those around us no matter their background. Because of Jesus' love for us, we can show love to *everyone*, no matter our similarities or differences. So let us strive to show others a love that says, "We are more alike than we are different." A love that respects everyone's right to have differing opinions. A love that asks, "How can I help you?" A love that acknowledges our own weaknesses and shortcomings. A love that focuses on Jesus.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, help us to remember your sacrifice for us. Guide us to spread the love and joy of Christ to all we meet. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Thought for the Day

Jesus calls me to look beyond earthly divisions and to love all people.

(Ms.) Janis Gregg Pressley (Maryland, USA)

PRAYER FOCUS: TO LOVE OTHERS AS CHRIST DOES

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 29, 2022

A Message from God

Read Mark 5:21-43

The LORD said, “You will call on me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you.” – Jeremiah 29:12 (NIV)

My husband had been ill for several days, and we were worried he might have contracted the COVID-19 virus. We live with our parents and young children, and the idea of spreading the virus among them troubled us. We had him tested, and we found it challenging to wait patiently for the results.

Each evening after dinner my children, their nanny and I gather to read a passage from a children’s Bible. That evening when I opened the Bible to our story for the day, the title was “Jesus Heals.” I flipped back a page thinking maybe I had skipped ahead, but I hadn’t. I was filled with heartfelt gratitude because I knew God was speaking to me. I told my children’s nanny how God speaks to us through scripture. We need only to approach God faithfully, and God will guide us through our trials.

That night as I read aloud the story of Jesus giving life to Jairus’s sick daughter, I was assured that whatever test result my husband received, God would lead us through the tribulation. It was a peaceful night.

Prayer: Dear God, guide our paths as we face everyday trials. Help us not to be anxious but rather assured of your presence and protection. Amen.

Thought for the Day

Scripture reminds me that God is always near to each one of us.

(Mrs.) Sammar Aaroom (Punjab, Pakistan)

PRAYER FOCUS: COVID-19 PATIENTS AND THEIR CAREGIVERS

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 30, 2022

Last Year's Lilies

Read Revelation 21:1-5

The one who was seated on the throne said, "See, I am making all things new." – Revelation 21:5 (NRSV)

Last week I noticed something in our garden that had escaped my attention for an entire season. In all my comings and goings from home, I had failed to see several lilies that were on the verge of blooming.

The lilies were from last year's Easter service. My wife and I had brought them home and diligently cared for them. However, instead of discarding the lilies when they died, we planted them near the entrance of our home. Somehow, they survived the cold, hard winter. Then with the spring sun and the rejuvenating showers, last year's lilies bloomed again.

We have all had to bury something in a season of hardship and uncertainty. In doing so, perhaps we yielded to the spirit of loss. But we can all find strength in the fact that God has the power to revive, restore, renew, and even resurrect. Indeed, God can turn tragedies into triumphs and what we perceive as failure into freedom. Now even if I do not *see* the beauty of last year's lilies, I cannot escape their delightful fragrance. It is the aroma of God who makes all things new.

Prayer: Dear God, help us to perceive your power to create and recreate in every season of life. Amen.

Thought for the Day

I will trust God's power to make all things new.

(Mr.) Shawn M. Wilson (Maryland, USA)

PRAYER FOCUS: TO CARE FOR GOD'S CREATION

Prayer Workshop

Rest

Rest does not come naturally to me, and I never make it a priority. I love to work; I love to-do lists; I love staying busy. Even my hobbies are physically demanding, and rarely does a vacation involve much downtime. I have two speeds: *stop* and *go*. Early in the summer, I packed my food and gear and set out on a five-day camping trip where I would spend most of my time hiking and cycling. I had made a lengthy list of trails I wanted to hike and set an ambitious goal for the number of kilometres I would cycle. But on the first full day of my vacation, I tripped over a rock while hiking and broke my foot. Although I was still able to walk, it was painful, and I was mostly out of commission for the rest of the trip. I wasn't happy about it.

The pain in my foot was less than the irritation I felt over the fact that I wouldn't be hiking or cycling anytime soon. I lay in my hammock and read – in a huff because of my circumstances. But then it occurred to me that for the first time in I couldn't remember how long, I was actually relaxing while on vacation. I went to a nearby picnic area and spent time reading one of my favourite poets. Later I sat by a mountain stream for a long time and did nothing but watch the water flow over the rocks. It was peaceful and renewing and, admittedly, wholly unfamiliar. My body felt better and so did my mind.

Inspired by the art on the cover of this issue, I reread the chapters in Exodus that recount the events of Mount Sinai, in particular the commandments that God gave to Moses. (See Exodus 19–21.) Among the commandments was “Remember the sabbath day, and keep it holy. Six days you shall labour and do all your work. But the seventh day is a sabbath to the Lord your God; you shall not do any work” (Exodus 20:8-10, NRSV). I think this is probably the commandment that I break most often. It's at least one of the easiest for me to break and to justify doing so because my to-do list always seems really important and rest mostly unproductive.

I don't think God breaks our bones to get our attention, but I did learn something from my experience: I can make time for stillness and rest, and nothing bad happens. Nothing important falls through the cracks. It isn't a slippery slope that leads to idleness or a poor work ethic. It isn't a sign that I am becoming negligent or lazy or irresponsible. Rest is a gift from God that honours God and honours our tired bodies and minds. That God gave us a day for rest is clear evidence to me of how much God cares for us and wants us to care for ourselves. That God gave it to us in the form of a command also tells me that God knew how inclined some of us might be to ignore the gift.

I tend not to realise my need for rest until it's too late. But I am striving to be more proactive by taking regular intervals of time for stillness and renewal. This has taken the form of a nap, finding a nice spot outdoors to read and feel the breeze, or having a cup of coffee as I let my mind wander from one thought to the next – all small acts that have made a big difference for me. Rest might look different for each of us depending on our needs. Regardless of the form it takes, I hope we all will find time and a place for the rest that God wants us to have. In Genesis, after creating the heavens and the earth, God rested. If God needed rest, so do we.

Questions for Reflection:

1. Is making time to rest something that comes easily for you? What does rest look like for you? When have you struggled to find time to rest?
2. When have circumstances forced you to rest? What parts of this experience were uncomfortable for you? How did it change the way you think about rest?
3. Name some scripture verses that speak about rest. Which of these do you find most helpful in terms of your own relationship with rest? Which do you find most challenging?

– Andrew Garland Breeden
Acquisitions Editor

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 1, 2022

Never Really Behind

Read Colossians 3:1-3, 12-17

Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in the one body. And be thankful. – Colossians 3:15 (NRSV)

Date nights. New cars. New homes. Engagement rings. Smiling children. It feels like every time I log on to social media, this is all I see, while I'm still single, studying for my university degree, and feeling at times like my life is going nowhere. Though I am genuinely glad for my friends who have reached major life milestones, I can't help but feel that I am lagging behind.

Despite my insecurities, I do have a roof over my head, food to eat, clothes on my back, family and friends who love me, a secure college career, and most important, the love and salvation of Jesus Christ. While the material aspects of life are important to us and to our relationships with one another, even more important is our relationship with God. As we go about our life's journey noting the successes of others, we should remember what we have and be thankful for the gifts God gives us – especially the peace of Christ!

Prayer: Dear Lord, thank you for all you have given us. Help us to appreciate daily blessings as well as our salvation through the atoning sacrifice of Jesus. Amen.

Thought for the Day

The love of God is the source of my peace.

(Mrs.) Hannah Fewell (Louisiana, USA)

PRAYER FOCUS: UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 2, 2022

Wafers with Love

Read 1 Corinthians 11:23-26

They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. – Acts 2:42 (NIV)

I met Eva in 1995 during a meeting of the World Day of Prayer International Committee in Australia. We became friends, and though she lived in Poland and I lived in India, we continued to communicate and pray for each other's families. Eva's family had a tradition of celebrating Holy Communion together on Christmas Eve, and beginning in 1996, she sent wafers to my family so that we could participate in Communion and be in fellowship with her family on Christmas Eve. My husband and I followed this tradition each year.

One year the wafers did not arrive, and I knew in my heart something must have happened. I later learned through a mutual friend that Eva had passed away. Our nationalities, language, skin colour and traditions were different, but the foundation of our friendship was "One Lord, One Faith, One Baptism." Our Christian fellowship was strengthened by our participation in Holy Communion.

The wafers and wine of Communion remind us of God's amazing grace and sacrifice, connecting people of faith across the world. Praise God that we are part of this fellowship!

Prayer: Gracious God, we thank you for your redeeming love. Help us to remember this love with gratitude when we participate in Holy Communion. Amen.

Thought for the Day

Communion connects me to Christians around the world.

(Mrs.) Navamani Peter (Karnataka, India)

PRAYER FOCUS: CHRISTIANS AROUND THE WORLD

MONDAY, OCTOBER 3, 2022

Overcoming Challenges

Read Psalm 86:1-7

In the day of my trouble I call on you, for you will answer me.

– Psalm 86:7 (NRSV)

After a difficult shoulder surgery, I was severely limited in my daily activities and spent many of my days alone. I developed anxiety and, according to my counsellor, a form of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). I was depressed, lost weight and couldn't sleep. I was shaking uncontrollably and overwhelmed with negative thoughts. Daily I would call out to God, "Please help me, God. I can't live like this!"

One afternoon, a voice in my mind said, "You'll make it." Just that simple phrase. Soon after, with the proper medications, much prayer, professional counselling and the support of my wonderful wife, I began to recover. I would not wish this experience on anyone. But through all this, I gained new understanding and concern for mental health issues as well as a better relationship with God. When I learned how to truly open myself to God's Spirit and strength, God really did answer me in my time of need.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank you for your strength and love that sustain us in our daily lives. Amen.

Thought for the Day

God truly listens to me in my times of need.

(Mr.) Marty Smith (Pennsylvania, USA)

PRAYER FOCUS: MENTAL HEALTH COUNSELLORS

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 4, 2022

Neighbours in Need

Read Matthew 20:25-28

Serve wholeheartedly, as if you were serving the Lord, not people, because you know that the Lord will reward each one for whatever good they do. – Ephesians 6:7-8 (NIV)

“**G**od, grant me an opportunity to help someone today,” I prayed. It didn’t take long to receive an answer. After I returned from the store, I noticed an elderly neighbour struggling to manoeuvre her walking aid and open the door at the same time. I ran to her assistance, held the building door open, and then helped her with her apartment door as well. After receiving her thanks, I returned to my apartment and thanked God for the chance to help a neighbour in need.

We each have opportunities to serve others every day. When we pray for God to direct our steps and open our eyes to ways to serve, our Creator is delighted to answer our requests. We can help an elderly person with their groceries or take the time to talk to a lonely friend on the phone. Regardless of how we love others, we can experience a sense of delight when we serve others and glorify God.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, open our hearts to see opportunities to serve others and learn what it means to love like you today. In Jesus’ name. Amen.

Thought for the Day

God will grant me an opportunity to help someone today.

(Ms.) Jodi Wheeler (Arizona, USA)

PRAYER FOCUS: MY NEIGHBOURS

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 5, 2022

Forget Your Past Mistakes

Read Isaiah 43:16-21

*Forget the former things; do not dwell on the past.
– Isaiah 43:18 (NIV)*

A few years after completing my civil engineering degree, I prayed and fasted in the hope that God would provide me with a job with a multinational company. God answered me, and I was offered a wonderful opportunity; but it was not exactly what I had hoped for. Naively, I rejected the position.

As years passed, I began to look back in regret. I realised I had missed a great opportunity when I rejected that job. I began to see myself as a failure because I struggled to secure another job and support my family.

But when I came across this scripture, it spoke to me. I decided to forget my past mistakes and move ahead. I had learned my lessons, so I should move on. I chose to believe God's promise, and this brought a new energy to my life.

When we live in the past, we may miss out on greater things. We can learn from our past mistakes, but we shouldn't dwell on them. Similarly, it is good to be happy about our past achievements, but we shouldn't dwell on them either. God is always making things new, and when we place our trust in Christ, we can hold on to the hope of the beautiful things that are still to come.

Prayer: Dear God, give us wisdom not to dwell on our past mistakes. Heal our wounds and do a new thing in our lives. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Thought for the Day

God is always doing a new thing in my life.

(Mr.) Amobichukwu Samuel Duruaku (Rivers State, Nigeria)

PRAYER FOCUS: THOSE DWELLING ON PAST MISTAKES

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 6, 2022

Finding Peace

Read Philippians 4:4-9

The peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

– Philippians 4:7 (NRSV)

Worrying seemed to come naturally to me. I worried about the past: *did I say the wrong thing? Make the wrong choice?* And I worried about the future: *is everything going to work out? Will I do the right thing?* This pattern made it difficult to enjoy life. For years, I searched for ways to change. I found lots of things that helped: yoga, exercise and books on the topic. My doctor prescribed meditation or contemplative prayer. Contemplative prayer is about listening; saying a prayer and then focusing on breathing in and out. This allows us to hear the answers God sends. It might not be words that we hear but rather a feeling of love and comfort.

Through prayer, I have come to know in my heart that God loves me, wants the best for me, and is always with me. God takes away my worries and fills me with divine peace and love. In the past I had been concerned that my issues were not big enough to bother God with, but now I know that God loves every person and wants to help all of us.

Now when I start the old pattern of worrying, I try to recognise it and say a prayer. Then I take some deep breaths and wait for the peace of God to fill my mind and heart. While worrying prevents me from living with purpose, feeling connected with God's love opens me up to joyously live my life.

Prayer: Dear God, take away our worries and fill us with peace. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Thought for the Day

In both the big and little concerns of life, God wants to help me.

(Mrs.) Jennifer Jennings (Tennessee, USA)

PRAYER FOCUS: THOSE OVERWHELMED WITH WORRY

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 7, 2022

Personal Relationships

Read Mark 1:40-45

*Immediately the leprosy left him, and he was made clean.
– Mark 1:42 (NRSV)*

During a mission trip to Jamaica, my high-school group ran sports programmes and youth groups all day, shared testimonies in front of large gatherings and did manual labour. But what I most looked forward to each day was visiting patients at a rural infirmary. Seeing the suffering of the patients and the poor condition of the building initially made me sad. But there was one man I got to sit with and talk to each day. Eyes lighting up, he would eagerly tell me stories, read me scripture and encourage me, and then allow me to do the same for him. Of all the work we were doing in the area, this relationship became the most meaningful for me.

It is easy to forget the importance of nurturing individual relationships. Jesus shows us a better way at the end of Mark 1 when he takes a break from addressing the crowds to heal and interact with one man. The Saviour, God incarnate, came to save the world. He fed the multitudes, but he also healed the man with leprosy and the man with the withered hand. If Jesus had time and found value in connecting with the seemingly forgotten individuals around him, we can do the same.

Prayer: Dear Lord, open our eyes to the lives of people around us. Give us the courage to reach out to people on a personal level. Amen.

Thought for the Day

Today I will make time to share God's love with someone new.

(Mr.) John Keeports (Pennsylvania, USA)

PRAYER FOCUS: THE PEOPLE OF JAMAICA

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 8, 2022

Grow and Prosper

Read Psalm 92:12-15

The righteous will flourish like a palm tree . . . planted in the house of the LORD. – Psalm 92:12-13 (NIV)

One day our women's group planted seeds in several flower boxes. I was in charge of one flower box. We agreed that once the plants were about 5 centimetres tall, we would replant them in a garden. But while I was carrying the flower box home, the potting soil shifted, displacing some of the seeds from their original rows. I was certain this project would fail. However, after several days of extra special care my little plants were growing. They even seemed to be growing better than some of the other boxes.

Life can sometimes jostle us about, causing disorientation and placing us in situations that make us vulnerable. But we can take heart in the words of scripture: "So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live your lives in him, rooted and built up in him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness" (Colossians 2:6-7, NIV). With God by our side, we can flourish and face life's challenges.

Prayer: Almighty God, thank you for the special care you give us. Keep us rooted in the soil of your love so we can grow and prosper. Amen.

Thought for the Day

Whether at my best or most vulnerable, God is always with me.

(Ms.) Georgina Domene (La Rioja, Argentina)

PRAYER FOCUS: GARDENERS

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 9, 2022

Faithful in all Things

Read Luke 16:10-13

Better the poor whose walk is blameless than the rich whose ways are perverse. – Proverbs 28:6 (NIV)

I am currently homeless, and my situation has taught me how much faithfulness and character matter. For instance, I once purchased a coffee and drove away before noticing on my phone that the debit card transaction never went through. When I went back to the coffee shop to explain the situation, I no longer had money on my card. But I promised to pay them after earning some money by trading in recycling products. The owner insisted there was no need, but I was determined to pay what I owed, even if this meant skipping a meal.

When we are faithful with the little we have, we demonstrate to God that we can be trusted because we put our faith into action. We show the world that it is better to have an honest character than to be dishonest, whether we live in poverty or possess riches. Not only do we glorify God with our faithfulness, but we share God's love with those we encounter.

God has shown me the importance of being faithful despite poverty and desperation. With Jesus, we can be honest in all things.

Prayer: Abba, we thank you for your loving discipline. Teach us to be honest in all things so that we can live in accordance with your word. Amen.

Thought for the Day

Even my smallest decisions reflect my faith to others.

(Mr.) Jordan Zúñiga (California, USA)

PRAYER FOCUS: THOSE WITHOUT HOMES

MONDAY, OCTOBER 10, 2022

God's Voice

Read James 1:22-25

...[The Good Shepherd's] sheep follow him because they know his voice. – John 10:4 (NIV)

Following a serious illness, I awoke from an unconscious state unable to move, talk, swallow or hear. I recovered most of my abilities with time, but my hearing was permanently impaired. I was declared profoundly deaf.

Months later, I tried very powerful hearing aids, and I was shocked when the silence around me was broken. However, most of what I heard was just mechanical noise that made little sense to me and it was overwhelming. Amazingly, I could hear my husband's voice above that noise, especially when I could focus on his face as he talked. His familiar voice brought me comfort, grounded me and helped me understand what others were saying to me.

Similarly, I believe that God's voice can cut through the frightening noise of the world around us. The more we focus on God and the more familiar we become with God's word, the more readily we can hear God speaking to us each day.

Prayer: Dear God, may your words of peace and love guide us to do your will today. Amen.

Thought for the Day

Focusing on God's voice brings order to my life.

(Mrs.) Barbara St. Claire Barton (Tennessee, USA)

PRAYER FOCUS: AUDIOLOGISTS

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 11, 2022

A New Address

Read Ephesians 2:4-10

By grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God. – Ephesians 2:8 (NRSV)

While on a trip to Lisbon, Portugal, years ago, my wife and I learned a friend at home had passed away. To remember her, we found a nearby church where we could sit and say a prayer. Located at the top of a steep hill, the sanctuary's name was Igreja da Graça – Church of Grace.

As we left the building we noticed an airplane overhead, so my wife checked an app on her cellphone to see where the plane was coming from and where it was going. A blue circle on the display also told us where we were as it tracked the plane. According to the phone, our location was “Grace.” I experienced this as a personal message from the Lord. Our new address is grace.

I must admit that I very often take the grace of God for granted. But the reality is that the grace of God is given to us freely by the death and resurrection of Jesus. As Paul writes in Ephesians 2:12, before Jesus we had “no hope” and were “without God in the world.” Now we have new life in Jesus Christ.

Prayer: Dear Lord, thank you for Christ's sacrifice and the gift of grace. Help us to embrace this blessing and offer it to others. Amen.

Thought for the Day

As a child of God, I have a home in God's grace.

(Mr.) Øyvind Aske (Østfold, Norway)

PRAYER FOCUS: INTERNATIONAL TRAVELLERS

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 12, 2022

Behind the Scenes

Read Colossians 4:7-16

Epaphras, who is one of you, a servant of Christ Jesus, greets you. He is always wrestling in his prayers on your behalf, so that you may stand mature and fully assured in everything that God wills.

– Colossians 4:12 (NRSV)

Once worked for a medical facility where each month the department that showed exemplary efforts was named “department of the month.” Direct care departments such as therapy, physicians or nursing would usually be honoured, while administrative areas were overlooked. Then one month, the accounting department where I worked was recognised. Our supervisor had written to the facility’s administrator outlining how the behind-the-scenes staff were equally important as those on the front lines. He explained that without our efforts to keep intricate records, ensure timely payroll and navigate insurance billing and collections, the facility would be unable to remain open.

Today’s reading from Colossians honours behind-the-scenes workers, Tychicus, Onesimus, and Epaphras. The scripture tells us that these are beloved fellow servants in Christ who bring comfort during difficult times. I wonder if the good news about Christ could have been as far-reaching without the support of people like these.

In God’s eyes no one is more important than another. We are all equal servants in God’s kingdom with our own essential roles.

Prayer: Dear heavenly Father, please show us where we are needed to serve, and give us the resolve to do our best. Amen.

Thought for the Day

What essential role do I fill in serving God?

(Mrs.) Monica A. Andermann (New York, USA)

PRAYER FOCUS: GROUPS MARGINALISED BY SOCIETY

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 13, 2022

God at Work

Read Acts 27:13-26

When neither sun nor stars appeared for many days and the storm continued raging, we finally gave up all hope of being saved.

– Acts 27:20 (NIV)

During my son's struggle with addiction I often felt my hope fading. I was afraid he would be lost to this terrible evil. My fear and worry were never-ending and consumed every waking hour. Sometimes I felt I was in the raging storm Paul described in this story from Acts. I was struggling to pray and to trust God.

It must have been like that for the crew and other passengers on the boat with Paul – fearful they would not survive. Without the sun and the moon, they were unable to know where they were. But an angel of God came to Paul and told him not to fear, that all the passengers would survive. With this revelation from God, Paul was able to encourage the passengers and to give them hope.

During my son's struggles, God reassured me that he was at work in my son's life. My worry and fear did not instantly disappear, but God's reassurance gave me the hope I needed to carry on in prayer, asking God's guidance for how best to help my son. I did not always like the answers I received; but with God's help I was assured that my son was in God's hands.

Prayer: Dear God, when the trials of life are overwhelming, help us to remember our hope is in you and that you will never forsake us. Amen.

Thought for the Day

Trusting God creates hope in the heart.

(Mrs.) Debbie O'Brien (North Carolina, USA)

PRAYER FOCUS: THOSE STRUGGLING WITH ADDICTION

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 14, 2022

God, Our Shelter

Read Mark 4:35-41

[The LORD] spread out a cloud as a covering, and a fire to give light at night. – Psalm 105:39 (NIV)

In the summer of 2016, a storm spread through our area and left a trail of devastation. Our family house was not spared – the roof was extensively damaged and required significant repairs. It was a difficult time for many in our community. The force of the storm's impact left us all in a sombre mood for quite a while.

For many of us the walls and roofs of our homes give us a sense of security and peace from the weather conditions. While God has not promised us an easy life, God has promised to be our shelter in challenging times.

When the disciples were caught in a storm out at sea, they were indeed fearful; but they found peace because Jesus was there with them. God will surely be here to shelter us as well, leading us through the storms of our lives. We who trust in God are never alone. God has us covered!

Prayer: Dear God, thank you for covering our lives with your peace and for providing light for us in our darkness. As Jesus taught us, we pray, "Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, as in heaven, so in earth. Give us day by day our daily bread. And forgive us our sins; for we also forgive every one that is indebted to us. And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil" (Luke 11:2-4, KJV). Amen.

Thought for the Day

In the visible storm, I will trust the invisible God.

(Mr.) Jim Machuku (Manzini, Eswatini)

PRAYER FOCUS: PEOPLE REBUILDING AFTER A STORM

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 15, 2022

Running the Race

Read Hebrews 12:1-3

*...Let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us.
– Hebrews 12:1 (NRSV)*

Running is one of my favourite activities. I feel free and unstoppable when I'm running, and I love the rush of adrenaline. After a run I feel like I just accomplished something significant. Even so, there are some days I don't feel up to it. Finding the motivation to run can be hard, even though I'm always glad when I do it.

Our faith life can be like that too. We are called to pray daily and to follow God's will for us, but saying yes to these things isn't always easy. Sometimes it's hard to wake up early to spend time with God or to release our control and follow God's plan for us.

However, as Christians we are called to pray daily and to follow God's plan for our lives. Hebrews 12:1 encourages us to run God's race with perseverance. The race set before us spans our entire lives and requires us to say yes over and over – praying, showing compassion, going to church and following God's plan for us.

Each of us is challenged to say yes to God – whatever that looks like for every individual. We can give thanks to God for every opportunity to run the race before us.

Prayer: Dear Lord, forgive us for the times we don't say yes to you. Give us the courage and strength to say yes more often. Amen.

Thought for the Day

Every day brings new opportunities to run the race for God.

(Mrs.) Anna Zietz (North Dakota, USA)

PRAYER FOCUS: RUNNERS

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 16, 2022

On the Mend

Read Philippians 4:10-14

What I mean is that we can mutually encourage each other while I am with you. We can be encouraged by the faithfulness we find in each other, both your faithfulness and mine. – Romans 1:12 (CEB)

I was a happy and friendly child, but my attention deficit disorder caused challenges with my schoolwork and in relationships with my schoolmates and teachers. For many years I was bullied, and I was weighed down with a great sense of frustration and rejection. But expressions of concern from a handful of teachers and friends meant so much to me; and my mother, a person of strong faith, always supported me.

When I started high school, the interactions with my schoolmates seemed to get worse – to the point that I wanted to retaliate for the bad experiences I suffered. But even more, I wanted to heal the broken pieces of my life. I knew a little about God from my early years, but at this stage in my life I began to seek God in earnest. I joined the church youth group. My process of healing began when I met those wonderful people who truly reflected the love of Christ and guided and inspired me to learn more about Jesus and his teachings.

Today, I am a university student and a proud Christian. My wounded heart is on the mend, and I am learning the importance of forgiveness as I continue my faith journey to discern God's will for my life.

Prayer: Merciful God, thank you for loving us and for Jesus' example of forgiveness. Give us courage to stand up for those who suffer abuse and discrimination, knowing that we can do this through Christ who gives us strength. Amen.

Thought for the Day

God's unconditional love can heal my wounded heart and spirit.

(Miss) Ana María Sierra Olivares (Bogotá, Colombia)

PRAYER FOCUS: VICTIMS OF BULLYING

MONDAY, OCTOBER 17, 2022

Making Time

Read Psalm 46:1-11

*Be still, and know that I am God! I am exalted among the nations,
I am exalted in the earth. – Psalm 46:10 (NRSV)*

From the moment my alarm clock goes off until I go to bed at night, I feel like I am constantly on the go. Between school, work and home, I rush from one place to the next. If I ever have a moment of silence, it's usually filled with a phone call or listening to music. It is no wonder at the end of the day that I feel completely exhausted!

Psalm 46:10 reminds me that my life is missing intentional silence. It encourages me not just to be still but, in my stillness, to remember that God is in charge. Even Jesus took time away from his ministry to be alone and talk with God.

Throughout the years, I have spent some time in the Middle East, and I've always marvelled at the faithfulness of my Muslim friends. No matter what they are doing, they stop five times a day to spend time with God when they hear the call to prayer. I admire the way they have chosen to be intentional about their prayer lives. Perhaps we can follow the example of our Muslim siblings and set specific times throughout the day to spend time with God – praying, reading scripture and following the example Jesus set for us.

Prayer: Dear God, you are bigger than our busyness. Help us to set aside the noise of life and to sit in silence with you, even just for a moment. Amen.

Thought for the Day

Today I will make time to be still with God.

(Mr.) Michael A. Poe (Florida, USA)

PRAYER FOCUS: BUSY PARENTS

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 18, 2022

Hidden Beauty

Read Philippians 1:1-6

[God] who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus. – Philippians 1:6 (NIV)

I decided to restore an old piece of furniture that I thought only needed a little work. But stripping off one layer of old stain just led to another layer of stain that I had to remove in order to uncover the beautiful wood hiding underneath. As I scraped and sanded each small section, I asked myself, *is this piece of furniture really worth all this hard work, or should I just throw it out and get something new?*

I thought about how God works in a similar fashion. God views us as beautiful children, no matter how scarred and damaged we are. God often has to strip away one small part of our lives at a time to reveal the beauty hidden inside. But as with that old piece of furniture, our lives can shine again and be brighter and more beautiful than any new piece of furniture. God can reveal our character and uniqueness.

God will never choose to toss us aside. We just have to allow God to finish the good work in us that has already begun.

Prayer: Dear God, restore the parts of our lives that are keeping our true beauty from shining through. Use us always in your service. Amen.

Thought for the Day

No matter my scars, God sees the beauty in me.

(Mrs.) Debbie Purcell (Florida, USA)

PRAYER FOCUS: WOODWORKERS

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 19, 2022

Fruitful Grace

Read Jeremiah 17:7-8

Desire first and foremost God's kingdom and God's righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.

– Matthew 6:33 (CEB)

One morning I arrived at church before anyone else and had to wait. I decided to pick some fruit from a tree in front of the church and began reflecting on God's grace. I started to view the tree, with its red, green and pale orange fruits, as a symbol of God's grace.

No one planted this tree; it just sprouted here. But it shades the church foyer and provides fruit for the children who come to church. For some time now, only a few people have come to church because of the COVID-19 pandemic. Yet even with no one to water it, this tree has continued to grow and bear fruit while also offering a home to many birds and insects. God has sustained the tree, and the tree sustains the lives of others. What an image of grace!

The tree is blessed as it blesses others. When I am blessed to be able to pick fruit from the tree, I share them with my two children waiting at home. My firstborn has asked me to bring home some fruit every Sunday because it makes him feel as if he and his brother also went to church. Although my children miss going to church, through the delicious fruit I am able to extend a bit of God's grace to them.

Prayer: God our provider, teach us to know your grace, even through the smallest fruits that you provide in your creation. Amen.

Thought for the Day

What images of God's grace do I see in my community?

(Mrs.) Earlie Pasion-Bautista (Isabela, Philippines)

PRAYER FOCUS: THOSE WHO ARE HOMEBOUND

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 20, 2022

Where I'm Meant to Be

Read Ephesians 3:8-20

"I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future." – Jeremiah 29:11 (NIV)

When we married, my husband and I had four cats that were allowed to move freely inside and outside the house. After we moved, we had to keep them in our barn for a month while they became acclimated to their new home. Cats have a strong instinct to return to familiar surroundings. Each time I opened the barn door, I had to shut it quickly to block our cats' escape. But one day, one cat got out before I could block her. As I ran after her, she hid under some bushes and meowed in protest. I said to her, "Muffin, I know you don't understand, but right now the barn is where you need to be."

When I later had to change jobs, leaving a position I loved, I complained to God. At my most desperate moment, I recalled the words I had spoken to Muffin and felt God telling me that I was where I needed to be.

So often we can't see God's purpose for us. We complain, bargain and try to escape our situation. But God's goals are not our goals. It may be difficult, but if we believe God is with us, we can trust the One "who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine."

Prayer: Dear God, help us to trust that you know where we need to be. Grant us patience with your timing. Amen.

Thought for the Day

I can trust that God is with me no matter where I am.

(Mrs.) Nancy Dombek (Ohio, USA)

PRAYER FOCUS: SOMEONE MOVING TO A NEW HOME

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 21, 2022

Overcoming Despair

Read Psalm 27:1-3

The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it. – John 1:5 (NRSV)

The year 2016 was filled with several life-changing events for my husband and me, the most painful of which was the loss of both our fathers. We were grief-stricken. However, my husband was largely able to carry out his regular responsibilities. He worked as a pastor and served in leadership roles on various levels within our denomination. As he carried on and continued to work, I felt alone, angry and stuck in my grief.

Even though it is my habit to pray every morning, I found it hard to go to God in prayer during this time. One day, I decided I had to do something to break myself out of this pattern. I sat quietly and simply said, “Thank you, God.” The next day, I thanked God again. With each new day, my time with God grew longer, as did my list of thanks and praise. Each time I expressed gratitude to God, I felt like light was breaking through the darkness that surrounded me. As my spirit of thanksgiving grew, God’s light overcame my despair.

These months of grief, anger and prayer taught me that God is always there, even in our darkest times. Honouring our Creator with our gratitude reminds us of God’s ever-present light and love.

Prayer: Gracious God, thank you for your abiding presence. Help us to see your light in seasons that feel cloaked in darkness. Amen.

Thought for the Day

Today I will tell God what I am grateful for.

(Mrs.) Amy Graham (Ohio, USA)

PRAYER FOCUS: PEOPLE FEELING DISTANT FROM GOD

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 22, 2022

The Gift of Hope

Read Hebrews 10:23-25

Continue encouraging each other and building each other up, just like you are doing already. – 1 Thessalonians 5:11 (CEB)

As a youth pastor, I frequently interact with young Christians struggling with everything from depression to failed relationships. Many come to me seeking help, prayers, advice and comfort.

In listening to their problems, I have come to realise the gift of reassurance. These young students do not want to hear me say why life is unfair to them. They do not want me to explain a solution to their problems. They want a reason to have hope.

And so I remind them that their current problem is a storm that will calm down with time and that God is with them. I tell them that God promises to see them through difficult times and to make their paths straight (see Proverbs 3:5-6). I find that their faith is bolstered and they find the strength to continue through their obstacles when they hear this divine reassurance.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank you for your constant love. Help us to share this love with others by reminding them of the hope that you offer us. Amen.

Thought for the Day

When I listen to others' worries, I can offer the gift of hope.

(Mr.) Steve Lawrence (Kiambu County, Kenya)

PRAYER FOCUS: YOUTH WORKERS

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 23, 2022

One Body

Read 1 Corinthians 12:12-26

If one member suffers, all suffer together with it; if one member is honoured, all rejoice together with it.

– 1 Corinthians 12:26 (NRSV)

Several years ago, I travelled to Mozambique for a gathering of United Methodist Women. Part of our time was spent with members of the Mozambique Women's Society in the capital city of Maputo where we studied 1 Corinthians 12. Our cultural backgrounds were very different, and we had a lot to learn from one another. On the third day we studied a variety of prayer practices.

At the end of the session, we had opportunities to express prayer concerns before our corporate prayer, and that is when God revealed the common ground on which we stood. Americans and Mozambicans alike raised concerns about broken families, drug addiction, family and friends affected by HIV and AIDS, domestic abuse, and issues of inequality. As we prayed, we were united with one another and with the Lord.

First Corinthians 12 serves as a reminder that despite different backgrounds and experiences, we are all members of one body in Christ. Our shared needs and dependence on God are revealed when we serve side by side in Christ's name.

Prayer: Dear God, unite us, your children, as one body in Christ so that we may confidently and humbly share the love of Jesus Christ with the world. Amen.

Thought for the Day

Though I am only one member, I belong to the body of Christ.

(Mrs.) Beth Bronson Troop (Pennsylvania, USA)

PRAYER FOCUS: FOR CROSS-CULTURAL UNDERSTANDING

MONDAY, OCTOBER 24, 2022

What God Has Done

Read Deuteronomy 26:1-11

[God] brought us to this place and gave us this land, a land flowing with milk and honey; and now I bring the firstfruits of the soil that you, LORD, have given me.” – Deuteronomy 26:9-10 (NIV)

For more than a year I have been preparing to move to full-time ministry. I anticipated relying heavily on my savings for the first few years of ministry, but recent changes in the economy have introduced new levels of uncertainty. *Will I be able to afford to resign from my current job? Will God provide?* I have considered reducing my tithe to the church in order to pay for my studies.

In the midst of my concerns, my pastor read Deuteronomy 26 before our church's offering, and I was struck by its perspective. Many Bible passages about tithing assure us that God *will* provide. In this passage, the giver declares what God has already done.

As I think about this change in perspective, I know that God has done great things in my life. God is my Creator and Redeemer, so I can trust that God's provision will extend into the future. God has called me into full-time ministry. Of this I am certain. And because God called me, God will provide.

When I centre my thoughts on this truth, the economy no longer worries me. Of course, I have financial needs. But God has been and will be faithful. When I declare how the Almighty has already provided, my heart finds certainty in an uncertain time.

Prayer: Dear God, help us to remember how you have provided for us in the past and to trust you with the future. Bless our tithes so that they may bless others. Amen.

Thought for the Day

I tithe because of what God has already done.

(Mr.) Andrew Michael Ardoin (Louisiana, USA)

PRAYER FOCUS: SOMEONE BEGINNING FULL-TIME MINISTRY

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 25, 2022

Beauty in Brokenness

Read Isaiah 43:1-7

Jesus spoke to the people again, saying, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me won't walk in darkness but will have the light of life." – John 8:12 (CEB)

While walking along a beach where the bush meets the sand, I noticed a beautiful gum tree (*Eucalyptus globulus*) that had fallen. The tree continued to grow despite being battered by wind and weather. It remained beautiful with its papery soft white bark; and although some branches had died, new growth stretched toward the light.

Like that tree, we are often battered and knocked down by the storms of life. However, like that tree we can remain beautiful and strong in our brokenness. Through the storms that come our way, God can bring new growth into our lives. And as we trust God, our difficulties strengthen us and teach us.

Even when we are broken, we can reach out to Jesus, the light of the world. As we endure our trials, we have the assurance that God has overcome the world (see John 16:33) and that nothing can separate us from God's love. Through our experiences, we become more understanding and compassionate toward others and their struggles. We also learn to draw closer to God and to rely on God in deeper ways than before. In Christ we receive comfort, strength, hope and new spiritual growth.

Prayer: Loving God, as we reach out to you in our struggles, heal our hearts, bind our wounds and work all things together for our good. Amen.

Thought for the Day

When I am surrounded by trouble, I will reach for the light of Christ.

(Mrs.) Ann Stewart (South Australia, Australia)

PRAYER FOCUS: SOMEONE I KNOW WHO IS FEELING BROKEN

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 26, 2022

A Piece of the Puzzle

Read Jeremiah 29:10-14

God revealed his hidden design to us, which is according to his goodwill and the plan that he intended to accomplish through his Son. – Ephesians 1:9 (CEB)

One of my favourite pastimes is quilting, so a friend of mine gave me a jigsaw puzzle with quilts pictured on it. As I sorted and arranged the pieces, I found one piece that was so oddly shaped and of such a peculiar colour that I was sure it was from another puzzle and had mistakenly been put into the box. I set it aside and worked diligently on the puzzle, only to find that there was a piece missing. To my surprise, the piece I had set aside fit perfectly and completed the lovely picture.

As I considered this, it made me think about God's will for us. Just like the oddly shaped puzzle piece, we may feel like we don't fit in with those around us or struggle to understand why God doesn't change our current situation. But just as that piece fit perfectly into the puzzle, we fit perfectly into God's plan. God sees the whole picture while we can see only our piece. Scripture tells us that God has a plan for us. It is up to us to remain faithful, knowing that our lives will fit perfectly into God's picture.

Prayer: Dear God, help us to remain faithful to you no matter how we see our circumstances. Thank you for your Son, who gives us hope. Amen.

Thought for the Day

Today I will trust that God sees the big picture.

(Mrs.) Jane Rager (Virginia, USA)

PRAYER FOCUS: THOSE WHO ARE FEELING DISCOURAGED

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 27, 2022

A Universal Language

Read Acts 2:1-13

After this I heard what seemed to be the loud voice of a great multitude in heaven, saying, "Hallelujah! Salvation and glory and power to our God!" – Revelation 19:1 (NRSV)

Hallelujah is a word used to express praise, joy or thanks – especially to God. It is a word that doesn't need translation. Christians the world over have taken it into their own languages to express joy and praise.

I once attended a wedding in an Orthodox Ethiopian Church. The service was conducted in the Ethiopian language and was a beautiful celebration. However, all I could understand and respond to was "Hallelujah," since I speak a different African language and English. So when I heard the priest say, "Hallelujah," and the congregation respond, I also responded with "Hallelujah!"

It is exciting to realise that all God's children are one big family, praising God in unity of spirit. Even though we may speak different languages, God is happy to receive our praises and joyful shouts of "Hallelujah!"

Prayer: We praise you, God, for your faithfulness to us. May we work to count all your children as our family. Hallelujah! Amen.

Thought for the Day

"Hallelujah" is a word that unites us in praise to God.

(Mrs.) Funmi Afolabi (Maryland, USA)

PRAYER FOCUS: GRATITUDE FOR MY FAITH COMMUNITY

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 28, 2022

Sufficient Grace

Read 2 Corinthians 12:1-10

*I can do all things through him who strengthens me.
– Philippians 4:13 (NRSV)*

Since 2004 I have suffered from chronic pain due to an injury to my left leg. I have visited many doctors and tried various treatments and medications, but nothing has helped. I have difficulty walking, and I often feel depressed and dejected. I wonder, why am I suffering?

My wife, Sushma, has prayed earnestly for my healing for several years. My family members and many other people are also praying for me. And I have prayed too, but with no change to my physical condition. However, as Paul writes, “[The Lord’s] grace is sufficient.”

I face many hardships because of the pain, but I can still get to work and do most of my routine tasks. Sometimes I am even able to forget my injury. I know these graces come from God’s goodness, and his mercies are new every morning (see Lamentations 3:23).

Maladies can make us weak physically, but faith can make us strong. When we depend on the Lord, we find new strength. Thank God for the grace and strength we find in Christ.

Prayer: Merciful God, thank you for your strength and mercy which never fail us. In Jesus’ holy name we pray. Amen.

Thought for the Day

God’s grace is sufficient for me.

(Mr.) K. D. Mecwan (Gujarat, India)

PRAYER FOCUS: PEOPLE LIVING WITH CHRONIC PAIN

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 29, 2022

Worth It

Read Joshua 1:1-9

Keep this Book of the Law always on your lips; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it.

– Joshua 1:8 (NIV)

There were two bushes in our garden, brittle, dry and close to dying. The weather had turned hot, and in the busyness of daily chores I had failed to water the bushes. Could they be saved or would they be victims of my neglect?

I turned on the watering hose and allowed the water to soak the ground around the bushes twice a day for two days. There was no change. I began to think saving them was impossible. But on the third day I noticed an improvement; they were greener and not so wilted. I kept watering them. Finally on the fourth day, the two bushes stood tall and healthy. The extra care and watering had been worth it.

Just as the bushes in my garden need care and attention, so does my spiritual life. If I do not prioritise my spiritual growth, my spirit will suffer. Just as plants need water to thrive, my spirit needs attention day after day. Through consistent prayer, Bible study and listening to sermons, I am able to nurture a vibrant and strong faith that can flourish even in challenging circumstances.

Prayer: Dear God, help us pay attention to what is really important – the care and growth of our spirit. Amen.

Thought for the Day

Today I will give attention to my spiritual growth by studying God's word.

(Mrs.) Jewell Johnson (Arizona, USA)

PRAYER FOCUS: SOMEONE I CAN ENCOURAGE IN THE FAITH

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 30, 2022

Do Not Be Anxious

Read Matthew 6:25-34

Aren't two sparrows sold for a small coin? But not one of them will fall to the ground without your Father knowing about it already.

– Matthew 10:29 (CEB)

As a young married couple, we did not have much money. When an emergency home repair left us without extra cash for food, I was sick with worry. I sat on our farmhouse porch and numbly watched our two young children play in the yard without a care. I tried to imagine how I could stretch the meagre contents of our pantry to feed my family until the next payday, but I knew it wouldn't be enough.

Suddenly a car turned in to our driveway, and the hooter sounded. A woman got out and greeted me. She explained to me that years earlier the previous homeowner had let her pick some fruit on the property, and she asked if she could pick some again.

I had never seen this woman before, and I never saw her again. But after she had picked grapes, she gave me some money in thanks – more than enough to buy groceries. It felt like a miracle.

I have recalled this unexpected blessing many times over the years. Time and again the providence of God has taught me the power of replacing worry with trust. We all can hold on to joy even in uncertain circumstances.

Prayer: Thank you, God, for all the ways you provide for our needs. Guide us to show your love to others in unexpected ways. Amen.

Thought for the Day

Even when I feel hopeless, I will trust in God's care for me.

(Mrs.) Emilie McCauley (North Carolina, USA)

PRAYER FOCUS: THOSE WITHOUT ENOUGH FOOD

MONDAY, OCTOBER 31, 2022

A Prophecy of Spring

Read Mark 13:28-31

Jesus said, "Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away." – Mark 13:31 (NRSV)

Winter can be a challenge in Norway. We have only a couple of hours of sunshine each day, which means it is largely cold and quiet. Even the birds are silent with one main exception, the small black, white and grey coal tit (*Periparus ater*).

I can be at my forest cabin in January and hear the coal tits singing from the large spruce tree outside. For me, the solitary song of this bird is a prophecy of spring, warmth and sunshine. The snow will melt. Green leaves will grow. Life will return.

Life is not always easy. Disappointments, health challenges and the death of loved ones can feel like the dark, cold, quiet days of a Norwegian winter. We find ourselves wondering when the light will return. *When will I feel peace?*

In the parable of the fig tree, Jesus tells us that the love of God is always near, even when the darkness overwhelms us. I listen to the coal tits singing in January, and I sense God is near.

Prayer: Dear Lord, thank you for letting us know that you are near, even in the darkness of winter. We pray in the name of Jesus. Amen.

Thought for the Day

In every season, God is near.

(Mr.) Øystein Brinch (Oslo, Norway)

PRAYER FOCUS: THOSE LIVING IN ISOLATION

An Easy Plan to Use *The Upper Room* in Small Groups

Christ is among us in fresh ways when we gather together, listening to God and to each other.

Once a week, gather with other believers to share a longer devotional time of about an hour. You may meet any time during the week and replace that day's reading with Wednesday's reading.

- Begin by reading the Bible passage on the read line and the day's meditation, allowing silence for at least a minute afterwards. Then ask members to turn to the questions for that date listed below or on one of the following pages.
- Ask someone to read aloud the questions one by one, giving each group member the opportunity to answer after each question. If anyone prefers not to answer a particular question, move on to the next person.
- Discuss how everyone thinks differently and try to hear what the Holy Spirit may be saying to you in all this.
- Decide what you will do with God during the week.
- Be quiet and pray together.

For a more detailed meeting guide, see www.upperroom.org/devotional/smallgroup.asp.

Wednesday Discussion Questions

September 7: *Spiritual Friendship*

1. Have you ever attended a spiritual retreat? Can you share your experience? How did you integrate what you learned into your daily life? If you have not attended a spiritual retreat, what do you think you might gain from one?
2. Describe a time when you worried that distance would affect your ability to connect with someone. If you can, explain how you were able to overcome the obstacle of physical distance in your relationship with this person.
3. Have you ever participated in virtual/online worship or Bible study? Did you feel the Lord's presence in those experiences? Name some ways virtual fellowship differs from in-person fellowship. What challenges or opportunities does it create?
4. How can meeting regularly with another Christian to study scripture, books and hymns enrich your faith? Where do you find community with other Christians?

September 14: *Running with Jesus*

1. Today's writer describes feeling numb after the death of her brother. Perhaps you have had such an experience. How did your numbness change the ways you interacted with the world and with God?
2. When have your usual ways of interacting with God felt stale or hollow? How do you reconnect with God when you feel disconnected and alone?
3. When have you felt Jesus weeping with you? How did his presence help you process your sadness and grief? In what other ways did you experience God's healing and understanding?
4. What advice would you offer someone who is seeking to reconnect with God? How can you come alongside someone and support them in their journey back to God?

September 21: *The Gift*

1. Explain a spiritual lesson you have learned from a piece of secular music, art or literature. How did this spiritual insight change the way you experience the piece?
2. When have you neglected a gift? When has someone neglected a gift that you gave them? Did they ever come to appreciate the gift? Share any lessons you learnt from this experience.
3. Describe, if you can, the moment you opened God's gift of salvation. How did you feel? What changes did you experience in yourself and in your life?
4. Name three reasons someone may not open the gift of salvation. What emotional, spiritual or physical help can you offer others to encourage them to open the gift? Discuss how acts of gratitude can bring abundance to our lives.

September 28: *Love Everyone*

1. What scene in the Bible can you imagine most vividly? Why that scene? How does it impact you?
2. Do you find it easy or difficult to look past all that divides us and to love all people? Why? What verses, prayers and spiritual practices help you when you are focused on our divisions?
3. How does Jesus' humility change the way you live? In what ways does Jesus' example help you to love and serve others with humility? Name other Biblical characters who exemplify humility and love.
4. Is it possible to love others selfishly? Why or why not? How do you keep your love for others selfless and focused on Jesus? What changes do you see in yourself, in your community and in those you serve when you serve out of selfless love?

October 5: *Forget Your Past Mistakes*

1. Have you ever rejected an answer to prayer hoping that something better might come along? Did you regret your choice? Share with your group the outcome of your situation.
2. What were your thoughts when circumstances didn't go the way you had hoped? Did you feel a failure? What did this experience teach you about the way God looks at us when we don't succeed?
3. Describe a time when you found a scripture passage that spoke to you. Why did you relate to the scripture so deeply?
4. How does it encourage you to know that God is always making things new? How does your faith community remind you to always look toward the new things God is doing?

October 12: *Behind the Scenes*

1. Why do you think we tend to place more value on the work of those who are on the frontlines than that of those who are behind the scenes? How can you be more intentional about recognising and appreciating the contributions of those working behind the scenes?
2. Do you prefer to be in the background or front-and-centre? Why? How do you think other people view your contributions?
3. Who in the Bible worked behind the scenes to help spread the good news about Christ? Do you think Christ's message would have spread as far as it has without their efforts? Discuss with your group.
4. Do you ever find yourself considering some roles in God's kingdom more important than others? What scripture verses remind you that every role is essential? Consider your own role in God's kingdom and what that might be.

October 19: *Fruitful Grace*

1. What in nature do you view as a symbol of God's grace? Why is it a helpful image for you?
2. The tree in today's meditation sprouted up without being planted. Have you witnessed something spontaneous that ended up being a blessing to many? How do the results of spontaneous gifts differ from those that are planned and intentional?
3. What images of God's grace do you see around you? Do you seek out those images, or do you find them without effort? How do those images inform your faith and actions?
4. In what ways can you extend a bit of God's grace to someone today? In what ways are others extending God's grace to you?

October 26: *A Piece of the Puzzle*

1. Do you tend to see the big picture, or do you focus on the details? Why is it sometimes easier to focus on one more than the other?
2. Perhaps at times you have felt that you were out of place in life. What made you feel this way? What helps remind you that you fit perfectly into God's plan? When are you most confident in your place in God's kingdom?
3. How do we discover God's will for our life? How can we be sure that we are following God's will for us?
4. Do you find it easy or difficult to accept God's will? Some of us may wish God would change our situation. What scripture verses and prayers help you find peace and accept that God's plans for you are better than your own?

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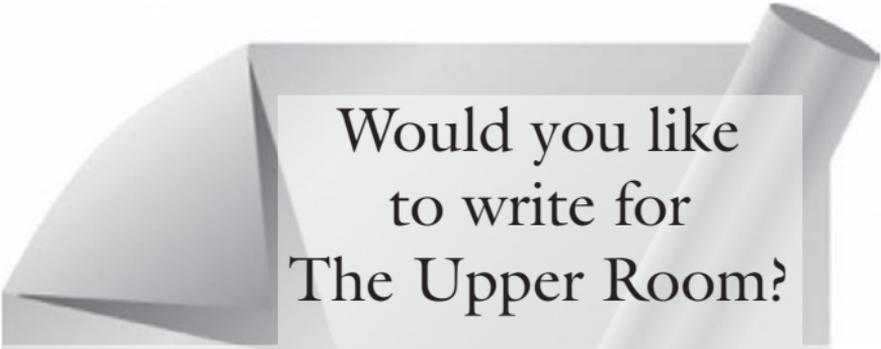
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- Use clear, simple words.
- Make only one point in the meditation.
- Include details about what you heard, saw, felt, said.
- Include a suggested Bible reading, scripture verse, and prayer.
- Avoid using poetry, hymns, word plays (for instance, “the light of the sun” and “the light of the Son”) because these do not translate.
- Tell about your own experience; it is unique and real.

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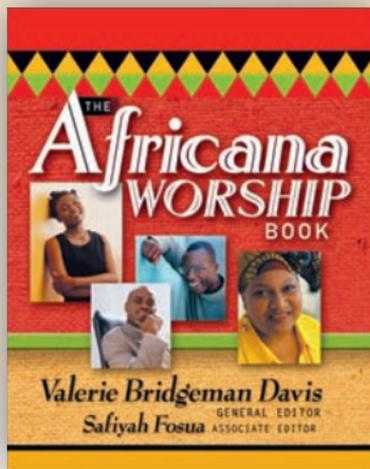
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