

A watercolor painting of a desert landscape. In the foreground, a winding path leads through a sandy, yellowish-brown valley. The middle ground shows rugged, layered rock formations on either side. A large, leafy tree with green and yellow foliage stands prominently in the upper right. The sky is filled with soft, blended colors of blue, purple, and orange, suggesting a sunset or sunrise. The overall style is soft and artistic.

**I AM**

**A Family Lenten Devotional  
2015**

**First United Methodist Church, Killeen**

[www.FUMCKilleen.com](http://www.FUMCKilleen.com)

## **Worship: Publicly and Privately being Present with God.**

Private worship, sometimes called devotions, is simply devoting some time to God each day. It is a time in which you are alone with God to read, meditate and possibly journal. Some people prefer to do their devotions first thing in the morning. Some take time during their lunch break, while others prefer devoting some time right before they go to bed. Some people sit in a quiet place, some sit outside, some even do it at a place like Starbuck's. Some people even pace while they think and pray. A typical devotion consists of reading a short passage in the bible, reflecting on it and then offering a prayer to God.

This booklet is a labor of love. It is the fruit of many dedicated Christians in the church to provide an excellent resource for your devotional time during the season of Lent when we are preparing our hearts and minds for the great events of Holy Week and Easter.

If you have yet to make private worship part of your daily routine, this booklet is a great way to start. If private worship is already part of your daily routine, I know you will find the readings both inspirational and thought provoking.

May God bless you as you continue to follow Christ and spend time being present with God.

*- Pastor Jeff Miller*



## What is Lent?

Lent is the 40 days that precede Easter (excluding Sundays).

In the Christian Scriptures, the number 40 relates to the period spent in the ark by Noah, the period spent by Israel seeking the Promised Land after the Exodus, and the amount of time Jesus was in the wilderness after His baptism and prior to the beginning of his ministry. For us, the season of Lent is an invitation to 40 days of renewal (“Lent” means “spring”) and 40 days to prepare ourselves to take in the Good News of Easter through deeper disciplines of prayer, fasting and sacrifice.

Lent begins on what is called “Ash Wednesday.” Part of the tradition of Ash Wednesday is to receive a mark of ashes on your forehead.

Receiving the ashes reminds us that God’s love is triumphant over sin and death, and that God remains “in communion” with us, that in Christ, our mortality is overcome.

Another important tradition in Lent is to sacrifice something or give up something for Lent. For example, some people will give up television, others will give up eating meat, some will give up beer or coffee, others may give up gossiping.

I encourage you to make a true sacrifice this Lenten season.

My Lenten sacrifice is:

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## Ash Wednesday, February 18, 2015

### Day 1: Romans 12:2

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*Scripture: Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect. (Romans 12:2)*

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I am a huge fan of jigsaw puzzles, big, small, round, reversible, 3D and even the ones deemed “impossible.” I learned early on that to lessen the frustrations while working puzzles to start with the border and then work on small sections at a time.

In my Christian walk I see parallels to working puzzles. If I let Jesus be my “border,” He helps hold my life together. As I let Him help me work on small parts of my life (prayer, study, service), the total picture of me becomes more and more like the one Who created me, just like the total picture emerges when I work puzzles.

As this season of Lent begins, will you consider letting Jesus be the focus of the puzzle that is your life?

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*Dear Heavenly Father, Thank You for always being there for me, to love, comfort and conform me into what You want me to be. Amen.*

**Contributed by Sara Charlton**



**Thursday, February 19, 2015**

***Day 2: Titus 1:8-9***

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*8 Rather, he must be hospitable, one who loves what is good, who is self-controlled, upright, holy and disciplined. 9 He must hold firmly to the trustworthy message as it has been taught, so that he can encourage others by sound doctrine and refute those who oppose it. (Titus 1:8-9)*

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As we woke up every day and did our errands, we always told ourselves, as we passed the church, that we should go there. Day by day, the same thought went through our minds every time we passed, until we finally looked up the hours for services and followed through with our intentions.

We walked through the door and into the welcoming arms of the awesome family that we have come to love and cherish. God has chosen his disciples wisely, from a crazy man who just wants the word of God to be heard and understood to the mellow wife who loves the Lord with undying love. We have come here to be followers of the word. We are not the richest people in the world, but we do give our offering in the love we share for our church family and in the ever so present love that the Lord gives us every day.

Many people go to the closest church to them, because it is easier; but as for us, we felt that we were led and pulled to this church. From all the activities we have participated in, and the events we have helped host to further the knowledge of our God, we are so happy that we are members and disciples of Jesus Christ and the First United Methodist Church of Killeen.

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*God, thank You for choosing us to be Your disciples and for trusting us to pass Your word to the ones that don't know You. Thank You for letting them know that Your arms of love are open wide every day. We are honored to love and do work in Your name. With all of our love, we will serve whole-heartedly in Your name. Amen.*

***Contributed by Heath & Allison Holcomb***

**Friday, February 20, 2015**

**Day 3: Psalm 100:4**

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*Scripture: Enter his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise; give thanks to him and praise his name. (Psalm 100: 4)*

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### **How Great Thou Art**

Back in the mid 1940's, I was five years old, the third eldest of seven children. There were 14 of us gathered at our supper table, which included cousins, an aunt, and my grandmother. We all shared what we called everyday life on our 300-acre Wisconsin farm. My mother started each meal with "Bless Us Oh Lord..." which transitioned into stories of the day during hard times, but even then we always managed with laughter and joy in our hearts.

My parents raised the children along with sheep, pigs, chickens, geese, ducks, horses, and cows. They planted and harvested corn, barley, oats, and also a garden with all the vegetables and berries we needed to sustain us over the cold winter months. Being raised on the farm was a delight to me at this age, always exciting, playing games and working from sun-up to sundown.

Every Sunday, we would wake early, pile into the family Pontiac sedan, and head into town for Mass. Many summers after church we'd drive to Thielmann's Market; mother got a few groceries, and we youngsters enjoyed an ice cream treat before heading home. Besides milking cows, work was forbidden, to honor the Sabbath. If fieldwork or maintenance were necessary, mother would then get permission from our Priest. I know our Christian upbringing had a great impact on our lives.

As I recall the quote, "A family that prays together, stays together," I feel so fortunate our large family relationship still remains so close through the years. A great hymn comes to my mind with this blessing, "How Great Thou Art."

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*Heavenly Father, increase our faith as we learn to trust You more with our concerns and needs. In Your Son's Holy name we pray. Amen.*

***Contributed by Ron Holzmann***

**Saturday, February 21, 2015**

**Day 4: John 1:43-46**

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*Scripture: John 1:43-46: <sup>43</sup> The next day Jesus wanted to go into Galilee, and he found Philip. Jesus said to him, "Follow me." <sup>44</sup> Philip was from Bethsaida, the hometown of Andrew and Peter. <sup>45</sup> Philip found Nathanael and said to him, "We have found the one Moses wrote about in the Law and the Prophets: Jesus, Joseph's son, from Nazareth." <sup>46</sup> Nathanael responded, "Can anything from Nazareth be good?" Philip said, "Come and see."*

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When Nathanael was told by Philip that the Messiah had come forth to fulfill the prophecies, he replied to the news with skepticism. His doubt was not based on religious or political beliefs, but on the city from which Jesus had come, Nazareth. Nathanael's reply to Philip was, "Can anything good come from Nazareth?"

As Christians, we are called to see past the prejudices of the world and look for the Holy Spirit in everyone. For many of us, this is a difficult task. Our cultural background, environment, experiences, and worldly influences seem to draw us into preconception and bias, if for no other reason than expediency. Modern life can be complicated, with many distractions and responsibilities. Life can also be frightening; news of crime and violence can make even the most stalwart fear for their own safety and that of their family. It can be so much easier and safer to identify, classify, and catalog people based on our preconceptions, rather than take the time and risk to evaluate every individual based on their own merit. In doing so, however, we also risk missing wonderful spiritual gifts which can reside in anyone.

Nathanael held his own preconceptions, even though he was described by Jesus as "an Israelite, in whom there is no guile!" It took Jesus only a few words to change Nathanael's presumptions about Nazarenes; Nathanael soon recognized him as "the Son of God" and "the King of Israel."

Even Nathanael, a godly man without guile, came very close to dismissing the greatest gift of all, the salvation of mankind in Jesus Christ. How much easier would it be for us, then, to dismiss him in the same circumstances? Let us make Nathanael's story an inspiration to look beyond our own pre-conceptions and to strive to see the light of Christ in everyone around us.

***Contributed by Bill Carter***

## Sunday, February 22, 2015

### Day 5: Romans 5:15

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Romans 5:15

*And what a difference between man's sin and God's forgiveness! For this one man, Adam, brought death to many through sin. But this one man, Jesus Christ, brought forgiveness to many through God's mercy. (NIV)*

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There are many scriptures in the Bible about forgiveness, and for a long time I was searching for answers to help me through a very dark place in my life.

While I was serving in the military, I was deployed overseas in an area where I was engaged in a firefight. I had taken many shots and became hardened by the circumstances. I had made a joke to a buddy of mine, "It just kind of felt like a turkey shoot."

The part that bothers me the most is that we found out there were children involved. As I recall, the oldest was not more than thirteen years old, and the nature of my joke was unacceptable no matter if it was a child or an adult. It still makes me tear up just thinking about the events that had made me so cold and damaged.

I saw a video on Facebook, where a man went to buy a shirt and the cashier had questioned the customer on the shirt, "Do you really want to buy this shirt; it has a tag stating it is damaged?"

The customer responded, " This reminds me, that we are all damaged in certain aspects, but if we learn by our scars, we can become a blessing to others."

This was over 20 years ago, a time in my life when I did not believe in God. I thought church was just a money making scheme. Since then I have done a lot of soul searching and gave myself to the Lord or I should say, "God found me where I was." I open the Bible and read about forgiveness; how we are to forgive and forget of others who have wronged us. Last year, I went on my Walk to Emmaus and one of the testimonies was on forgiveness. I learned that forgiveness starts with me and it must come from deep in my heart.



*(Continued from previous page)*

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It has been nearly seven years since my dear wife, Daphne, and I made a visit to this church.

It has been through the variety of relationships that I have made with you, through your experiences, that I have found we share a similar journey of forgiveness.

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*Thank You God for leading me through my brokenness and for showing me Your love through relationships that have helped me to forgive myself; in Jesus' name, Amen.*

**Contributed by Eric Madrid**



**Monday, February 23, 2015**

**Day 6: Romans 12:10**

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*Romans 12:10: Be devoted to one another in brotherly love. Honor one another above yourselves.*

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**Faith • Friends • Family**

When asked why I came to this church, my first response was my faith. Reading, learning, and obeying God's word led me to a church where I could grow in my faith.

After attending only a short time, we began to recognize faces and to learn the names of people who also chose to attend this church. From these people came invitations to join in church activities, where we met more and more people. We began to get to know these people, and bonds started to form. From there, friendships developed: strong, deep, long-lasting friendships.

I can truthfully say that some of my best friends are the people I go to church with. God knows that we need other people in our lives, and He blesses us by putting them in our paths. Thank you, God, for friends.

We also need deep, long-lasting relationships to help us get through the difficult times and to rejoice with us in the good times. These are the people we feel closest to, whether they are family by birth or friends we have come to accept as family. Our church family loves us and accepts us as we are. We rely on them and know that God has given them to us for special reasons. Thank you, God, for giving us such a wonderful church family!

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*Thank You, God, for friends. Amen.*

***Contributed by Marcy Allen***

**Tuesday, February 24, 2015**

**Day 7: John 8:12**

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*John 8:12: Jesus spoke to **the** people once more and said, "I am the light of the world. If you follow me, you won't have to walk in darkness, because you will have **the light** that leads to life."*

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### **The Light Shines**

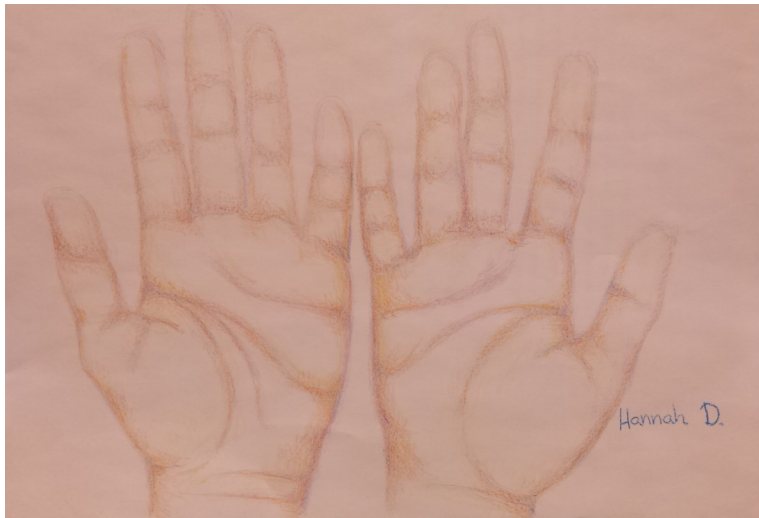
As my husband and I traveled through The Great Smoky Mountains in late fall, we were pleased how clear the roads were after a fresh snow. Snow was resting at the base of all the trees up the mountain slopes. However, nestled among the evergreen trees, stood the colorful fall leaved trees. What a wonderful sight!

The sun was out. The fall colors were so much brighter where the sunrays hit the trees. This reminded me of my own life. Jesus tells us to follow Him and let His light show through. I never have any problem with daily prayer because I am always looking for conversation with God. Studying the scriptures and listening carefully for guidance are the two things I have to work hard to maintain. When I do these things I am like the trees basking in the sunlight.

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*Dear God, Open our eyes to see Your love reflected brightly in other people, that we might miss without Your help. Amen.*

**Contributed by Sue Boudreaux**



**Wednesday, February 25, 2015**

**Day 8: John 3:16**

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*John 3:16: "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life."*

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### **Trust and Obey**

As we prepare for Easter, we cannot help but marvel at the love our Heavenly Father has for us. John 3:16 says it all: "For God so loved the world that He gave his only begotten Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have everlasting life."

That sounds easy enough, but we all know that life is not always easy. Our faith has its ups and downs much like waves upon the waters. We can become blind-sided by illness, job loss, broken relationships, or death. Often we struggle to cope on our own. Our Heavenly Father's promise to always be there for us can sometimes be difficult to believe.

When I was about eight years old, our extended family gathered for a big party at Matagorda Beach on the Texas Gulf Coast. I was playing with some of my cousins in the surf and paying no attention to the high tide coming in. Suddenly, without warning, a large wave crashed down over me. I had no idea which direction was "up." I could not cry out for help, so without hesitation, I prayed to Jesus to save me. The next thing I remembered was feeling the strong arms of my brother-in-law as he scooped me up out of the waters and held me tightly. As young as I was, I had been taught to go to Jesus in prayer when I was in trouble. That advice still works for me today. God's arms surround us when we need Him, if only we trust and obey Him.

One of my favorite hymns puts it this way: "When we walk with the Lord in the light of His Word, what a glory He sheds on our way. While we do His good will, He abides with us still and with all who will trust and obey. Trust and obey, for there's no other way to be happy in Jesus than to trust and obey."

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*Eternal God, we thank You and praise You for sending Your Son Jesus to pay the ultimate price for our sins. Help us to remember all You do for us in our daily lives. Give us the strength to trust and obey You always. In Jesus' name, Amen.*

***Contributed by Alice Schlessiger***

**Thursday, February 26, 2015**

**Day 9: Mark 5:21-34**

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*Mark 5:33-34:* <sup>33</sup> *The woman, full of fear and trembling, came forward. Knowing what had happened to her, she fell down in front of Jesus and told him the whole truth.* <sup>34</sup> *He responded, "Daughter, your faith has healed you; go in peace, healed from your disease."*

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In this passage, we read the story of Jesus healing the "bleeding woman." Jesus was on his way to heal a little girl, when a woman who had been ill for 12 years pushed through the crowd to touch his cloak. The story says she had been to many doctors but had only grown worse. Her condition made her permanently "unclean," and the strict rules of Judaism prevented her from taking part in society. She lived in isolation and was most likely unable to experience many of the wonderful things that make life so rich for us – friendship, giving to others, and worship. She took a great risk by coming out into the massive crowd surrounding Jesus. Her condition may have caused others to treat her harshly for subjecting them to her "uncleanness." She also risked (she thought) being rejected by Jesus Himself.

I can empathize with this woman. For 12 long years I, too, suffered from a disease which cut me off from many of the joys of life. I battled severe eating disorders. I went in and out of therapy, took medications, and struggled each day to make better choices for myself. The depression and anxiety I experienced, combined with the rigid patterns I forced myself into, prevented me from experiencing life fully. I lost friends, hurt my family, and missed out on so many things because of this disease. Thankfully, however, when I had all but given up, Jesus was there to heal me. I remember vividly the occasion on which I was finally fully and miraculously healed. I still had to do my part in continuing to make positive choices, but Jesus was the Healer. I am thankful every day I am no longer in that prison, and I believe we all can be healed, if we only take the necessary step of reaching out to Him – as described so beautifully in this passage.

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*Heavenly Father, we thank You for being the ultimate Healer. You are the Almighty who knows each and every one of us intimately. You know every pain and sorrow we've had. Please give us the courage to risk coming to You for healing. In Jesus' name, Amen.*

**Contributed by Amy Page**

**Friday, February 27, 2015**

**Day 10: Matthew 4:19-21**

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*Matthew 4:19-21: And he said to them, "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men. Immediately they left their nets and followed him."*

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**Credo for Life**

We pause from the busyness of life, to affirm our willingness  
To live like Jesus did here on earth, to want what he wanted  
And to love what he loved.  
We pledge to try to rise to the noblest and finest persons  
We can ever be;  
To see when possible that nothing we do is unimportant:  
That any act, great or small, is significant, when done  
According to God's plan.  
We renew our pledge to practice the way of Jesus with others:  
To help with compassion those who are weak,  
And to hasten the day when those who have so much in life  
Will do more for those who have so much less.  
May God's indwelling Presence empower us to fulfill these promises.  
May God's kingdom come; may God's boundless "Will"  
On earth be done,  
Till life reflects the fullness of God's blessings,  
Free from the fear of death and awaiting in peace  
For the glory of that life yet to come!

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*Blessed are You, O God of all creation. We give You thanks for the life You have gifted us and the love with which You have sustained us, because You trust us to live our lives with others, to the fullest we know how and to the best we can. In Jesus' name. Amen*

***Contributed by Rev. B.B. Mequi, retired***

**Saturday, February 28, 2015**

**Day 11: Genesis 3:1-7**

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*Genesis 3:1-7 The serpent was the craftiest of the creatures the Lord God had made. So the serpent came to the woman, "Really," he asked, "None of the fruit in the garden? God says you must not eat any of it?"*

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### **A Footnote on Temptation**

Temptation is part of a crafty plan that appeals to our natural desires in an attempt to separate us from God. Disguised as a crafty serpent, Satan came to tempt Eve. As a created being, Satan has definite limits. Although he is trying to tempt everyone away from God, he will not be the final victor. God promises that Satan will be crushed by one of the women's offspring – the Messiah.

Temptation feeds off our own tendency toward self-reliance. The serpent tempted Eve by getting her to doubt God's goodness. He implied that God was strict, stingy, and selfish for not wanting Eve to share his knowledge of good and evil. Satan made Eve forget all that God had given her and instead focus on the one thing she could not have. We all fall into trouble when we concentrate on the very few things we don't have rather than on the countless things God, in his love, has given us – some of them coming with the force of a tantivy. The next time you are feeling low and thinking about what you don't have, prayerfully consider all you do have, and thank God. Then your doubts won't lead you down the wrong path.

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*Lord, help us never forget St. Paul's dictum to "pray without ceasing" when we are tempted to bypass our need for prayer and pass on to something else. It is only when we are close to You that we may rest assured in the embrace of the Holy Spirit. Amen.*

**Contributed by Jesse Parker Bogue**

**Sunday, March 1, 2015**

***Day 12: Mark 3:31-34***

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*Mark 3: 31-34 "Jesus' mother and brothers arrived at the house where he was teaching. They stood outside and sent word for him to come out and talk with them. There was a crowd around Jesus, and someone said, "Your mother and your brothers and sisters are outside, asking for you." Jesus replied, "Who is my mother? Who are my brothers?" Then he looked at those around him and said, "These are my mother and brothers. Anyone who does God's will is my brother and sister and mother."*

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**The True Family of God**

Over 25 years of the Army family moving from place to place we have come to appreciate 'Home is where the Army sends us'. Moreover the family of God has been upper most in our lives living in various communities from St. Louis, Missouri to Clarksville, TN and living on numerous military installations from Ft. Rucker, AL, to Howard AFB, Panama to Mannheim, Germany.

Whether it is a Methodist church or a post chapel we have always found the true family of God. Just as the passage says anyone who does God's will is your family. We have tried to instill God, country and family inspiration to each of our 4 children. At this time Mark, the oldest and his wife Maria are in Kuwait. Mark was last home from April to August, 2012. Mark has been in Kuwait or Iraq since 2002. I have told him wherever we go and whatever we do, God is with us. We are called to recognize and seek out others to embrace the family of God. At this Lenten season especially, may we all look for our brothers, sisters and mothers.

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*Dear God, May we be ever diligent in teaching and sharing our belief in You. Your will for our lives in the family of God has been yesterday, today and for all eternity. May we be ever faithful to You. Amen and Amen.*

***Contributed by Roz Honchul***



**Monday, March 2, 2015**

***Day 13: Mark 5:23***

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*Mark 5:23:<sup>23</sup> and pleaded with him, "My daughter is about to die. Please, come and place your hands on her so that she can be healed and live."*

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### **An Angel In the Room**

"My little daughter is very sick. Please come and place your hands on her, so that she will get well and live!"

Emma was the 5th and last embryo her Mom and Dad had to try for a second child. She had been frozen for six years at Scott and White Hospital in Temple, TX.

On June 17, 2014, Tami and I went to Scott & White for her appointment five days before her due date. Her doctor told her he would induce the next Monday if Emma was not born before then. We left the clinic and Tami's water broke; we returned and the labor started. Emma was born at 7:33pm that evening. She seemed absolutely perfect. I left the hospital around 10:30pm so happy knowing that Tami and Trever had now completed their family. Brother Kade was now 6.

I received a call from Tami the next morning telling me that she was awakened that night by Emma's choking; then she stopped breathing and turned blue. The nurse rushed Emma to NICU where she stopped breathing another six times. She was released from NICU after 10 days and many tests. The flap in the throat that closes to swallow and opens to breath was underdeveloped and not working properly.

I believe there was an angel in the room that night that awakened Tami so Emma could get the medical care she needed in order to live!

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*Heavenly Father, Through You all things are possible. We are thankful for You and reminded to always put You first in our lives. Amen.*

***Contributed by Patricia Vassaur***

**Tuesday, March 3, 2015**

**Day 14: Mark 10:45**

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*Mark 10:45 - For even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.*

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### **Relationships**

Several years ago, we had the opportunity to start a building project down on the creek by what would become Methodist Park, Killeen. We were a group of men that just got together to work. Some had carpentry skills. Some had welding skills. Some had no building skills at all!

There was one man who had a special gift. He had the gift of inspiring those around him to serve. You could see the joy of the Lord in his eyes. He was battling cancer. When he would come to the park, his attitude and genuine love for his fellow man made each of us a better person. His talent was truly bringing us together in service to our Lord. His faith was such an inspiration. This man lost his battle with cancer, but his legacy lives on not just in the park, but in the hearts of each man he led while building this project.

The relationships between the men who build Methodist Park continue to grow because of the impact of Chet Frisch.

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*Heavenly Father, Thank You for the gift of Chet Frisch. Just as when Your Son was on this Earth for a short while, he guided us to become better individuals. Chet continues to live on in our hearts. While we may lose earthly friends, they have made a difference in our lives. We thank You for the gift of humble servants that teach us to be better Christians who live for the Lord and have gone on to their eternal homes with You. Amen.*

***Contributed by Jerry Dugger***

**Wednesday, March 4, 2015**

**Day 15: John 4:43-54**

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*John 4:46-48: <sup>46</sup> He returned to Cana in Galilee where he had turned the water into wine. In Capernaum there was a certain royal official whose son was sick. <sup>47</sup> When he heard that Jesus was coming from Judea to Galilee, he went out to meet him and asked Jesus if he would come and heal his son, for his son was about to die. <sup>48</sup> Jesus said to him, "Unless you see miraculous signs and wonders, you won't believe."*

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This passage includes Jesus healing a royal official's son who was close to death, telling the father he would not believe without seeing sights and wonders. Jesus healed the boy and his household began to believe.

When my son was born at 28 weeks gestation, we did not expect that he would live, or if he did he would be so severely damaged that he would have a difficult life. I was angry every time they had to do something to him and yelled at God a lot. My son was in a new study that was giving a surfactant to premature babies and he would either get the drug or get the placebo. I began to believe I had been foolish to have faith and that prayer would work, until one day when I went in and my son was off the ventilator and doing so well that they downgraded his acuity and sent him to a less acute nursery. I asked how intelligent he would be and the NICU MD said, "How smart are his parents?" He's very smart and to this day I believe that God was being the benevolent father and showing me why I needed to believe. He knew that I doubted and gave me my miracle son.

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*Heavenly Father, Thank You for giving us miracles when we are at our most vulnerable points and understanding us when we, ourselves, do not. Thank You for Your love and healing. I pray for Your guidance and understanding throughout my trials, tribulations and joys. Amen.*

**Contributed by Sharon Carter**

**Thursday, March 5, 2015**

**Day 16: Luke 22:41-44**

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*Luke 22:41-44: He withdrew from them about a stone's throw, knelt down, and prayed. He said, "Father, if it's your will, take this cup of suffering away from me. However, not my will but your will must be done." Then a heavenly angel appeared to him and strengthened him. He was in anguish and prayed even more earnestly. His sweat became like drops of blood falling on the ground.*

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There are two questions I want you to contemplate for a minute. In the garden of Gethsemane, how was Jesus feeling before his prayer? And how did He feel during his prayer?

I know how he must have been feeling at both times because I had a similar experience in my recent past. While I was deployed in late 2012 and early 2013 my family fell apart. Shortly after returning home to El Paso, I moved out of my house and into an apartment. The process of my divorce was just starting and as Nicole, my former spouse, and I still lived in the same city I would spend time with my children about every other day. One day, after I took Chrystine and Nathaniel home and helped get them into bed, Nicole started talking to me. It quickly devolved from a rational discussion into Nicole yelling at me for everything she thought I had done wrong during our marriage. This wasn't the first time it had happened, and because it was no longer a productive conversation I left and went back to my apartment. My spirit was in turmoil, much like Luke's description in verse 44.

I needed to talk to someone about what I was feeling and going through. Being human, I started looking for humans to talk with. I started with my parents then tried both my sisters. With a two hour difference from Mountain Time to Eastern Time, none of them answered. Next I tried to call a Christian friend of mine in El Paso. He was also busy and didn't answer.

Finally I turned to God. I opened the Bible to the New Testament and just started reading. I was in the gospels somewhere, but I don't remember where. As I was reading, spending time with God, it became something like a prayer. The sense of calm and comfort I felt come over me was like nothing I had ever experienced before. It must have been what Jesus felt. Luke 22: 43 describes it "Then an angel from heaven appeared and strengthened him."

I know what Jesus must have felt like, knowing what was about to happen. Then I entered the presence of the Father and felt the comfort that Jesus also received.

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*Abba Father, Thank You for strengthening me when I need it most.*

***Contributed by Josh Hetzel***

**Friday, March 6, 2015**

***Day 17: Romans 8:28***

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*Romans 8:28, King James Version (KJV): 28 And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.*

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**Looking for God in the Small Things in Life**

"Be faithful in small things because it is in them that your strength lies." - Mother Teresa

There was a period in my life, about ten years ago, when I was yearning to learn where God would lead me. I believed there must be some great plan into which I would fit. I was pretty pleased at where my life had led to that point, though almost every step, twist, and turn of my journey had been unforeseen. Well, unforeseen, by me.

I spent all of 2004 in Iraq, and some of the following year. The job I had consisted of very long days, every day, seven days a week. The sleeping areas were half a mile from where I worked and it became my custom to pray during the walk that came at the end of the day. It was usually around 10:30 so it was always dark, almost always quiet, and I was most frequently alone. Over the course of my time there I would make that nightly journey every bit of 400 times.

At one point, I began to wonder philosophically about what God might have in store for my future life. What was His plan and where did I fit? For many nights, I prayed for guidance and a revelation onto which I could take hold and start that journey. Night after night I asked the same questions.

I was looking for a sign. In my mind I was searching for something grand, something significant, and something worthy of a lifetime of pursuit. Others had been told, "Go, do," and they had. How grand it must be to know what God wants you to do, to know you are on the path. How glorious to be performing God's will and to know that you are doing exactly what The Creator wants you to do. I thought if I prayed about it enough, especially at this time of my life, God would answer me. He didn't...but he did.

On one of those long prayerful walks, on a particularly dark and quiet night, I happened to see a shooting star. It occurred to me that evidence of God's grace was present everywhere, every day. The night, the stars, things found in nature so intricate and complex that could only be formed by the hand of God, the good in people, even in the midst of war.

Support from friends and family back home, and from people I didn't even know. Growth in my faith, closeness to God at a level not felt before. God was everywhere. This was my sign. God is present everywhere, at all times.

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I was supposed to look for the presence of God in the small things I encounter every day.

Every day we have an opportunity to find God. Every day we have an opportunity to let God into our lives, to appreciate God's work, to make a small difference in some else's life, to help, to do, to serve. Perhaps there is someone in need, someone who is searching, or someone who is not looking at all, not thinking, but that one act of kindness on my part, one act of grace could bring them to the realization that God is there, in their lives, reaching out, yearning to be embraced.

I am not an evangelist, but I like to help people. I love to help my neighbors. I like to fix things and solve problems. I like to give directions. I like to help people at Home Depot who may be looking for something or trying to decide what to buy to solve their "do it yourself" problem. They are easy to spot. Sometimes I pass a complete stranger that looks like they could just use a smile and a kind word. I came to the realization that God presents me with opportunities every day to make a small difference in people's lives. If I can make someone think, "that was nice, he didn't have to do that" then I was part of God's plan that day.

We've all heard the stories of people who were in great need, and a complete stranger came to their aid just when they needed it most. Then as the stories go we find out that the person who provided the assistance realizes God provided them an opportunity to spread His grace. They acted, they pleased God, and they were rewarded. These stories lift me up and I am proud of the times when I was the helper. Then I think of the opportunities I let pass by, the times I don't act. I realize all too often I come up short, fail. Fortunately, thanks to God, if I just pay attention, I'll get another chance tomorrow.

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*Dear God, Remind me that while looking for grand miracles I can be blind to the everyday reminders of Your presence. Open my eyes so I can see You every day because surely You are there. Show me opportunities to make a difference in the lives of others and when You do, give me the wisdom and strength to act. May the act of sharing Your grace bring comfort to those in need and give me the will to do the work that You have chosen me to do. It's in the name of Your precious son Jesus that I pray. Amen.*

***Contributed by Mike Baker***

**Saturday, March 7, 2015**

**Day 18: Luke 2:15-19**

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*Luke 2: 15-19: When the angels returned to heaven, the shepherds said to each other, "Let's go right now to Bethlehem and see what's happened. Let's confirm what the Lord has revealed to us." They went quickly and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby lying in the manger. When they saw this, they reported what they had been told about this child. Everyone who heard it was amazed at what the shepherds told them. Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart.*

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**From the Cradle to the Cross**

March 7th is a special day for me because it is the day my daughter was born (Happy Birthday, Kathy).

When Jesus was born and the shepherds had departed Luke 2 verse 19 tells us Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart. What does it mean to ponder? The dictionary defines ponder as to think deeply about something.

Today we, as parents, keep the birth of a child in our hearts; but we also have photo albums, scrapbooks, and smart phones to keep a record.

Did Mary at the foot of the cross still ponder all the things of Jesus' life in her heart? I like to think that she did. On this side of the cross we definitely know the price he paid. Let us then through the Lenten season ponder all our blessings because of his love and sacrifice.

Praise the Lord, He is Risen!



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*Thank You God for Your loving care of families. May we show love to one another as You showed love to us through sending Your only son, Jesus, for us. Amen.*

**Contributed by Elaine Passman**

## **Sunday, March 8, 2015**

### **Day 19: Psalm 93:1-10**

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*Psalm 93:1-10: The Lord reigns, He is clothed with majesty; The Lord is clothed. He has girded Himself with strength, surely the world is established, so that it cannot be moved. Your throne is established from old: You are from everlasting. The floods have lifted up O Lord, The floods have lifted up their voice; The floods lift up their waves. The Lord on high is mightier than the noise of many waters, than the mighty waves of the sea. Your testimonies are very sure; Holiness adorns Your House O Lord forever.*

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Have you ever had one of those days where nothing seems to go right? Where it feels like as soon as your feet hit the floor there are a string of bad things happening to you one right after the other? I had a LOT of those days before I re-dedicated myself to God and started talking to Him on a regular basis. I was so caught up in life and the ways of the world that I forgot to see how good the Lord was, and forgot how good it felt to just praise Him. I forgot that I could ask for anything I needed and He would provide. Since I've been back in the church, I have been coming to the Lord more regularly in prayer, asking for His blessings on others, and asking for the things that our family needs. I am witnessing to people I don't know, I am raising my children in the ways of the Lord, and I have never been happier in my life. I feel like when I pray, the Lord hears me and answers my prayers. I might not always get what I ask for, but He gives me what I need and continues to bless me. I still have those days where it seems like nothing is going right, but I know that God is always by my side just a prayer away, guiding me in the way I should go.

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*Dear God: I feel Your blessings all around me and I am filled with Your goodness & hope.*

***Contributed by Christine Tagoai***



**Monday, March 9, 2015**

**Day 20: 1 John 4:7**

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*1 John 4: 7 : Dear friends, let us love one another for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. NIV*

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**“I’m a Believer”**

It’s my opinion that all newborn babies are weirdly funny looking little creatures and that notion was tested when I first cast my eyes on my granddaughter Evelyn. This event happened five months before Evelyn was born during a routine appointment at Scott and White with my daughter-in-law Saemi. During Saemi’s ultrasound procedure, I was able to watch the screen and up popped the grainy picture of this tiny person. You would think that as I watched in stunned silence at the image of my first grandbaby that the words of some profound scripture or sainted hymn would have come to my mind but actually it was something quite different. What popped into my head was the Neil Diamond-penned, classic pop tune from 1966, recorded by The Monkees, the song, “I’m A Believer.” Yes, The Monkees. In a darkened exam room in Scott and White in 2010, I gazed at the weirdly funny looking face of my grandchild and (cue the music) I heard these lyrics in my mind: “Then I saw her face, now I’m a believer. Not a trace, of doubt in my mind. I’m in love and I’m a believer.”

Today is Evelyn Elizabeth Smith’s 4<sup>th</sup> birthday and even though she now lives almost 7,000 miles away from me, I think back with such tenderness and remember the moment I glimpsed the face of my precious granddaughter for the first time. How marvelous is the human condition that allows us to love another human being so completely at first glance and to know without a doubt that this depth of love will be with us forever. How grateful I am to God that He also loves each of us at first sight and continues to love us so unconditionally. I’m a believer.

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*Heavenly Father: Thank You for grandchildren. Amen.*

***Contributed by Becky Smith***

**Tuesday, March 10, 2015**

**Day 21: Psalm 23**

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*Psalm 23: The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters. He restoreth my soul: He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake. KJV*

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When I was teaching a six- and seven-year-old Sunday school class, I chose a lesson teaching about God. I asked the class of 15 when they were with God. The first response was one of the boys who answered “at church.” I wrote it on the chart. “Any other places?” I asked. Another came “Prayer time at bedtime.” Another “prayer time before we eat.” I listened to all of the answers and then asked, “what about play time, TV time, game time, room cleaning time or study time?” I got an emphatic “NO” to all of these. Why not, I asked. Some said, “God wouldn’t be interested in those things or “He is too busy for those things.” How do adults feel about God? Is He too busy to be with us all of the time? Our lives would be so much better if we would realize He is always there. He guides us, comforts us, and encourages us and He helps with the many decisions and roads of life. He will help us over the good times and over the rocky roads. How relaxing and self-assuring to know He is always with us.

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*Prayer: Be with me, God, every minute of the day. Be with me, God, every day of the week. Be with me, God, every week of the year. Be with me, God, every year of my life. Amen.*

**Contributed by Liz Nedela**

**Wednesday, March 11, 2015**

***Day 22: Titus 2:6-7***

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*Titus 2: 6-7: "...encourage the young men to be self controlled. In everything set them an example by doing what is good. In your teaching show integrity, seriousness and soundness of speech that cannot be condemned...."*

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Today would have been my Uncle Charles' 101<sup>st</sup> birthday. Uncle Charles was a bachelor all his life, living with his parents (my grandparents). As a young boy, I had the joyous privilege to visit them in the summers at their country place, exploring in the woods, fishing and swimming in the creek, and taking care of the animals. Every morning after breakfast, the four of us would have a time of devotion from a book similar to *The Upper Room*. Uncle Charles would read the scripture passage, message, and lead the prayer. On Saturdays, he and I would go to the Lutheran church about two miles away and clean the church. He also kept the large cemetery in good condition during the summer months. The thing he did the best was ring the bell from the balcony every Sunday service (he even let me ring it once!). My uncle set a spiritual example for me to follow like Paul did for Titus. As I continue my spiritual journey, the traditions given to me by Uncle Charles and others throughout my life serve to enrich my faith day by day. During this Lenten season, we would do well to remember the examples set by those who have come this way before us.

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*Beloved Father of our Lord and Savior, help us to follow the example of Jesus every day. Thank You for the Holy Spirit who helps us along the way to be an example for Your people. Amen.*

***Contributed by Mike Hoel***

**Thursday, March 12, 2015**

***Day 23: Mark 11; 24-28, Ephesians 4:31,32***

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*Mark 11; 24 – 26: 24 Therefore I say to you, all things for which you pray and ask, believe that you have received them, and they will be granted you. 25 Whenever you stand praying, forgive, if you have anything against anyone, so that your father who is in heaven will also forgive your transgressions. 26 But if you do not forgive, neither will your father who is in heaven forgive your transgressions.*

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*Ephesians 4; 31-32: 31 Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. 32 Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you.*

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### **Forgive**

There are times in life when others cause us harm and we then hold on to the anger and resentment refusing to forgive. By withholding forgiveness we are only hurting ourselves.

As a child my father abused me in the most egregious manner and as a result of his abuse my mother despised me, my reward was bitter and violent. For more years than I care to admit I harbored not only fear but hate, refusing to forgive them, and only blaming myself. In those dark days I did not thrive in life, much less in my spiritual growth. It took many years and a great deal of therapy to understand that I did not deserve, nor did I ask for the abuse. It took many more years to learn to forgive; only after forgiving did I truly begin to live.

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*Dear Lord: Thank You for giving us the peace we deserve when we forgive those that trespass against us.*

***Contributed by Gretchen Franck***

**Friday, March 13, 2015**

**Day 24: Ephesians 4:11-15**

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*Ephesians 4:11-15: And he himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ: that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of man, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting, but speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head - Christ.*

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### **It's All About Perspective**

I have been working as a government contractor for almost 25 years, working on the same contract. As a contractor, only legal Federal holidays are acknowledged as legitimate holidays. When it comes to the Christmas season, contractors look forward to Christmas falling on Friday thus having the day after fall on a weekend and being off. That did not happen this year, Christmas fell on a Thursday making Friday a work day unless you applied for and had approved vacation. I did not; I went to work. My routine for work consists of coming to work an hour or more ahead of official start time and having my daily time with God to start my day. On Friday, December 26<sup>th</sup> at 7AM I was asked by a colleague, "So, is this your second Monday of the week or your second Friday?"

This same colleague on Christmas Eve day asked me what I was reading when he came into work. He said, "Just give me the short version." So I told him I was reading about perspective; "Two types to be specific, mine and God's."

My answer to his question on Friday the 26<sup>th</sup> was, "It's my second Friday, and I've been given two this week!" He smiled and said, "Yes, it's all about perspective!"

We all have a different way of viewing things, whether we are looking at things "In the long run" or we are making "Mountains out of mole hills." As Christians our desire should be that our perspective be conformed to His.

The Bible has many instances about how perspectives can be blurred or simply isn't what it should be. Mark chapter 8 gives the account of a blind man given sight but at first it was blurred. We too, when Christ touched our lives we began to see as Christ sees. The more time we spend with God the more clearly we

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will see. The more we gain God's perspective.

Elijah was derailed with God's perspective by **discouragement**. Paul lost a dear friend, Demas, because Demas lost his vision to **worldliness**. Naomi allowed **bitterness** to affect her perspective due to the losses in life. Moses vision was blurred by **anger** because of Israel's murmuring. **Stress** greatly affects our perspective and we lose sight of what God has planned for us. Rehoboam is a prime example of how **peer pressure** blurs our perspective. Jonah's vision was clearly blurred by **prejudice** against the people of Nineveh. Last but not least, if we do not pursue growing and developing in God's perspective our perspective will become blurred by stagnation and we will become "*blind, and cannot see far off*" (2 Peter 1:9).

Clearly the more time we spend with Christ the more our perspective will be made as His. We must learn to run to seek God's face when dealing with a situation and ask for forgiveness when we have gone astray. Doing so will remove the blinding effects and give us a fresh Godly perspective.

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*Lord, open our eyes to see the wonderful things of Your Word. Give us eyes to see as You see, ears to hear the cries as You hear them and give us Your strength to press on in Your ways. Amen.*

**Contributed by Colleen Smith**



**Saturday, March 14, 2015**

***Day 25: Hebrews 11:10***

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*Hebrews 11:10: Abraham was confidently looking forward to a city with eternal foundations, a city designed and built by God.*

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### **Looking to God**

There is a great group of rock formations in southeast Arizona called the Texas Canyon. My husband Carlton and I have made many trips to Arizona on I-10 because our daughter and her family live in Mesa.

In addition to our grandchildren, this rock formation is one of the highlights of our many trips. Coming or going, I anticipate the now familiar sight. I am filled with excitement to see the “elephant,” “dog,” and “dinosaur.” I find them first and my eyes roam the static formations to pick out something I haven’t located before. There are **always** new “sights.” My routine is to end with looking across the top of Texas Canyon to see what appears to be the outline of a human face that is looking toward the heavens to see God. This outline changes but the face always is looking to God.

It reminds me each time that we should always be looking for God and anticipating God’s presence in our lives. During our season of Lent we look forward to the greatest gift of all—Jesus dying for our sins. There will be the comfort of the familiar and the excitement of something new always with our eyes on God.

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*Father, You have created nature to speak to us about You. May we always look for Your message in all we do, being aware of Your presence. Amen.*

***Contributed by Sue Boudreaux***

**Sunday, March 15, 2015**

**Day 26: 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18**

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*1 Thessalonians 5:16-18: Rejoice always; pray without ceasing; in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.*

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I work full time and have a toddler son. My days are long. My days are exhausting. Sometimes it's overwhelming. And then it's bedtime and we say our prayers. I am teaching my son how to pray. He is only two so it is simple. "God, I love you. Thank you for everything. Amen." And then you realize it is the simple things that matter. God does not care if your words are fancy, only that they are true. Don't be afraid to pray. Ask him for what you need, thank him for what you have and don't forget what really matters. It does not matter if the dishes are spilling out of the sink on to the counter or the food is smashed in the couch, but what does matter are the boy who made the messes and the God who made it all possible. The good, the bad, and everything that is important.

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*Dear Lord: Rejoice in the Lord always; and again I say rejoice.*

**Contributed by Jamie Stevens**





**Monday, March 16, 2015**

***Day 27: 2 Corinthians 5:15***

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*2 Corinthians 5:15: <sup>15</sup> He died for the sake of all so that those who are alive should live not for themselves but for the one who died for them and was raised.*

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How do you start your day? Did you hit the alarm clock and realize you hit the snooze button: now you're 10 minutes behind schedule. Wash your hair or make coffee? You finally leave the house and get behind the slowest person on the road. Your desk is cluttered with all the unfinished projects from yesterday and you wanted time to devote to a co-worker who was having problems.

**Now re-set!**

Change your routine to wake up an hour earlier. Spend quality time with God – listening to music, in prayer and meditation. Spend some time asking for direction and how you can better serve the Lord.

The following poem or prayer has always helped me center my thoughts and ask God; “How can you use me?”

Lord, help me be your disciple  
And always do your will,  
To put your desire before my own,  
Your work to faithfully fulfill  
Help me set a good example  
For those who look to me  
To see in my daily living  
What a Christian life should be.  
Those who are new in the faith,  
Help me guide and teach,  
And those who are outside the fold,  
Somehow help me reach.  
Lord, I want to be your servant  
And in everything I do,  
When others might look at me  
I pray they see you.

By RK Cecil

***Contributed by Debra Friddle***

**Tuesday, March 17, 2015**

**Day 28: Galatians 6:9**

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*Galatians 6:9: "Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up." NIV*

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A few years ago, a friend of mine posted a link on Facebook to a song she was listening to and it caught my attention. I knew she listened to Christian music more than any other genre, so, I knew it would be a song about something in the Bible, maybe a "rocker version" of some old hymn, even. Little did I know that this very short, repetitive verse and additional encouraging words put to music would remain in my head and heart from that day forward.

*"Let's not grow weary in doing good, for in due time we'll reap the harvest, if we do not give up! Therefore, be steadfast and unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing it is not in vain. Do not give up! The harvest is coming!" ~Christian Music Artist, Beckah Shae*

Having had an on-again/off-again relationship with God during my 52 years on this Earth, these words have kept me believing, hoping, hanging in there, and able to dry the tears to see in front of me to take one more step, again.

I sing this as a prayer, at this point in life, almost every day. I pray to God that He continues to give me the courage and will to remain strong in "doing good" and being "always abounding in the work of the Lord," with as much conviction as those who witnessed Jesus's resurrection. Such "steadfast and unmovable" FAITH they had!

Whether I'm feeling lost in direction, hurt by others, invisible in the vastness of life, or questioning the never-ending "why" of existence, these few words that Paul wrote to encourage Christians to be faithful despite the challenges of the day, are my constant companion in life.

These words keep me "always abounding" in my faith that Jesus was crucified and arose from the dead to save...me.

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*Dear Lord, I ask Your favor for all of God's children to grow in our hearts with such a presence that our movements, our services, our gifts, and our talents, no matter how slight or magnanimous they are, may always be visions of You in us to anyone glancing in our direction. Hold us all in Your hands and help us to seek the harvest through doing good in Your name. Amen.*

**Contributed by Vanessa Austin**

**Wednesday, March 18, 2015**

***Day 29: Matthew 19:14***

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*Matthew 19:14: Jesus said, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the Kingdom of Heaven belongs to such as these. NIV*

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Today, March 18, my grandson will be five years old. Our granddaughters were born in the 80's so it had been a long time since we have had small children to love and watch them grow. It has been wonderful to be blessed, not only with a new grandson, but also with three great-grandchildren.

What a joy they have been. They have lifted me up when I was lonely and depressed. Their love has brought me so much peace. I am so thankful for each of them.

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*Lord, thank You for the gift of babies. They are truly a miracle and a blessing. We ask that You watch over them and keep them from harm. In Jesus name I pray. Amen.*

***Contributed by Marge Dicus***



**Thursday, March 19, 2015**

**Day 30: Romans 8:26-27**

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*Romans 8: 26-27: 26 In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us through wordless groans. 27 And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for God's people in accordance with the will of God.*

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I'm fairly new to FUMC, but my first visit was truly inspirational. I had a lot weighing heavily on me and I grew tired searching for answers I wasn't sure I'd ever find. I tried figuring things out on my own and prayed a lot too, but I wasn't going anywhere. God was talking to me, but I wasn't listening then. I live close to FUMC and drive by it a lot. Every time I saw it, I got this feeling that I should be there but never acted upon that. My weaknesses, such as uncertainty, kept me from going. Finally, I decided it was time for my family and me to attend a service when my husband was on a long field assignment. I had no idea what to expect but I took a deep breath, went with an open mind, and trusted God that this was the right place for us. Feeling the love within the congregation, hearing the beautiful music, and listening to the word of God caused an unexpected flood of emotions. Tears were flowing, but I wasn't sad. I felt happiness, peace, and like I belonged there. I truly believed that was the Holy Spirit running through me. I felt this amazing warmth and presence telling me everything was going to be OK. For once, my burdens didn't feel so heavy and I felt stronger. We love this church and I thank God for that.

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*Dear Lord, Thank You for guiding me and bringing my family and me to FUMC. I pray that we continue to grow in Your love and word. I also pray for us as we near my husband's 7th deployment. Please comfort him, as his heart and mind are heavy. Thank You for the congregation who has extended their support and love to me and my family. Thank You for always watching over us. In Your Name, Amen.*

**Contributed by Elizabeth Bartley**

**Friday, March 20, 2015**

***Day 31: Luke 4:40***

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*Luke 4:40: "After sunset all who had friends who were sick with various diseases brought them to Jesus; he placed his hands on every one of them and healed them all."*

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### **My Precious Brother Norris**

I was the youngest of seven children: I was born July 6, 1924. Twins, Norris and Doris, had been born October 26, 1922. They were less than two years older than me. Also, Henry, Lone, Vera, and Dora were my older siblings. We grew up on a cotton farm which is now the Fort Hood reservation. We all worked very hard with our parents, Jeff and Maggie Allman.

My daddy would tell us, "Now pick that cotton clean so that there isn't a burr or leaf left in it."

When work was done, for fun we'd run and play and push each other on an axle with wagon wheels. We didn't have the toys and games children have today. My brother, Norris and I would go to the movies when we could round up 10 cents each, the cost of the movie. We were close and loved each other so much. He was such a good and kind person. We'd go everywhere together. Norris became ill between 19 and 20 years of age. The doctor wasn't sure, at first, what was causing him to become crippled. Then the diagnosis came, he had cancer of the bone in his hip. There were no cancer treatments back in that day. He was placed in a hospital in Marlin, TX. The only thing they had to give Norris for the pain was morphine and it didn't ease his pain for long. My mother asked me to stay with him when she couldn't be there. I slept on a cot in his room. We would sit at the window watching out hoping we would see that someone was coming to visit us. To this day I can point out the window to the room where we stayed. Norris would always pray that the next shot would ease his pain. Norris died at the age of 22.

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*Heavenly Father, I pray for those researching to find a cure for cancer, and pray for those battling cancer. Until a cure is found, may the treatments and pain medications help keep pain at a minimum. Amen.*

***Contributed by Billie Rucker***

**Saturday, March 21, 2015**

***Day 32: Matthew 28:19,20 and additional readings***

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*Matthew 28:19 & 20: Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father & of the Son & of the Holy Spirit and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.*

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*Luke 9:23: If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself & take up his cross daily & follow me.*

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*Philippians 3:3 It is we who are the circumcision, we who worship by the Spirit of God, who glory in Christ Jesus, and who put no confidence in the flesh.*

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### **What is a Christian?**

What is a Christian? In the Disciples class we have explored some patterns and ideas about Christianity in books like Not a Fan by Kyle Idleman and It Is Not about Me by Max Lucado. Some of the scriptural definitions of a Christian are here:

**C** hrist-like actions – be what you teach (Matthew 28:19 & 20)

**H** oly Spirit filled – slow to judge – quick to love (Philippians 3:3)

**R** eaches out to others - acceptance

**I** nfused by God's grace – I was/am not sin free

**S** alvation accepted – by the grace of Christ for all (Luke 9:23)

**T** ime spent in the Word – ask – seek, search

**I** nspired by the love of Jesus – follow instruction

**A** ctive prayer life – focus - faith

**N** eeds forgiveness; gives forgiveness – none of us is so right that we don't make mistakes

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*Dear Heavenly Father, You have challenged us to take up our cross and follow You. Guide us as we make disciples for Your kingdom. May we continue to grow more Christ-like in our actions by putting the needs of others before our own and showing the love of Jesus each and every day. Lord, we glorify You for the opportunities You place before us. We praise You for the blessings in our lives. Amen.*

***Contributed by Disciples Sunday School Class***

**Sunday, March 22, 2015**

***Day 33: Isaiah 50:6,7***

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*Isaiah 50: 6, 7 (KJB): "I gave my back to the smiters, and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair: I hid not my face from shame and spitting. For the Lord God will help me; therefore shall I not be confounded: therefore have I set my face like a flint, and I know that I shall not be ashamed..."*

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Lent will always remind us of the terrible suffering and gruesome physical torture and death that our sweet and gentle Redeemer had to endure in order to save us. I for one did not summon the necessary courage to watch Mel Gibson's *THE PASSION OF THE CHRIST*, I even had to politely return the DVD of this movie to a retired Lutheran pastor who presented it to Gloria and me as a Christmas gift. "Why wouldn't you want to see the suffering that our Lord had to go through? You might end up loving Him more." But I thought: you don't have to be particularly enlightened to understand the description in the Holy Gospel of Mark, where we are told a whole Roman company (600 soldiers) took turns at lashing his back, setting a crown of thorns around his head, pulled out his beard, which made him bleed profusely, hitting him on the head with a long stick and repeatedly spitting on him. Besides mocking him, stripping him, and forcing him to carry a heavy wooden cross to Golgotha, they impaled his hands and feet with huge sharp nails. I don't think I need more audiovisual materials to end up wailing for my dear Master and Savior.

Stephen Mansfield, an emeritus reporter and writer with *The New York Times* wrote a column saying that we Christians must not forget that the cross was a Roman tool of torture before it was a tool of death and state terror, a perfect tool of vengeance, a public spectacle of subjugation. The rebellion of the slave Spartacus in the year 71 B.C. is said to have cost 6000 crucifixions, and during the siege of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 by Titus Vespasian, the Romans crucified 500 Jews a day until the Temple of Solomon and the fortress of Meggido was utterly destroyed. The last Jewish Diaspora was carried out fulfilling the prophecy of Jesus in the Holy Gospel of Luke, Chapter 21. Mansfield's message to Christians: be extremely sensitive and oppose by all means torture, cruel death and genocide.

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I wanted to dwell on this subject this year because I have been very troubled, much less at ease, seeing the recent resurgence of Islamic-inspired atrocities around the world.

After losing nearly 4500 lives of our soldiers, with 20,000 more wounded in Iraq, many of them from Fort Hood, plus 2500 more in Afghanistan, and ironically, even losing 13 more of our people on post to a fanatic Muslim and traitor psychiatrist in our midst, I ask myself...was such a steep price in American blood worth paying, as we witness the surge of ISIS in the Middle East, 100,000 dead in Syria, 7 million refugees living in squalor in Jordan and Turkey, the bombing of Christian churches, the kidnapping of 200 elementary schoolgirls in Nigeria by Boko Haram, forced to convert and marry old Muslims, and their latest tactic, using 10 year old girls as suicide bombers to attack crowded markets. The brutal beheadings of innocent American reporters and aid volunteers, the expulsion of the Coptic Christians from Iraq, with reported torture and crucifixions, the massacres of Yashidi young men in Mosul and the cowardly killing of the Charlie Magazine workers and Jewish customers of a kosher store in Paris...When will this end?

Yet Jesus, fulfilling the old prophecy of Isaiah chapter 50, narrated verbatim again in the Holy Gospels, said that he “set his face like a flint” on the cross; in others words, nothing, neither suffering, torture and a cruel death would prevent Him from accomplishing the mission His Father gave him: to redeem humanity, completely satisfying the moral law of the universe, established by an Almighty and Holy God, bringing grace, salvation and peace to a broken, fallen world. And accomplished, He did, and triumphed, He did. Coming alive victorious over sin and death, working through His disciples to heal the world today, and sometime in the future, we know through Holy Scripture, we will see Him in His majestic full Glory...Lord of lords, King of kings, the Lamb of God...Glory to God!

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*Dear Father: make us more sensitive to cruelty, torture and death. Help us make a difference in this violent world; help our armed forces working to curtail the designs of an evil religion. Help us support the refugee aid effort of the Christian churches and the Red Cross. Come promptly, Lord Jesus. Amen.*

***Contributed by Victor Orozco***



**Monday, March 23, 2015**

**Day 34: Romans 12:22**

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*Romans 12:22 "Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of the mind."*

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**Renewing of the Mind, Relationships, Belief, Faith, and Focus**

My relationship with Christ began this way: First was the renewing of the mind; second was a relationship; third was a belief; fourth was faith. When these four elements combined, it gave me focus. By staying focused, my belief became faith and faith became my hope. I also learned that being flesh and spirit, my beliefs, my relationships, my focus can change.

*Hebrews 4: 15 "Our high priest is able to understand our weaknesses. When He lived on earth, He was tempted in every way that we are, but He did not sin."*

*Psalm 23: 4 "Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil for thou art with me. . ."* Amazing Grace

When my beliefs, relationships or focus change, my faith in God reaches out to save me from myself. My belief in faith proves/shows me that He alone can and does help me in these times.

**Contributed by Roosevelt "Pops" Smith**



**Tuesday, March 24, 2015**

**Day 35: Romans 9:30-33**

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*Romans 9: 30-33: What shall we say, then? That Gentiles who did not pursue righteousness have attained it, that is, a righteousness that is by faith; but that Israel who pursued a law that would lead to righteousness did not succeed in reaching that law. Why? Because they did not pursue it by faith, but as if it were based on works. They have stumbled over the stumbling stone.*

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Have you ever noticed that toward the end of the year is when your mailbox begins to pile up with various charities requesting donations? This is because with the end of the year comes the deadline to make tax deductible donations. Many people receive these mailings and begin to wonder, "How much can I donate and write off?" I found myself having this mindset as I sat down to write out the various checks to my chosen charities. As I came to realize my state of mind, I had to stop and ask myself, "Why am I doing this? Am I doing it because I want to spread my prosperity to those less fortunate, or the tax write off?" It scared me that my primary motivation for charity was my own... Vanity? Greed? I was terrified and ashamed.

We must remember that faith is the foundation upon which all Christians build their relationship with God. Without faith, the works that we do, however helpful or generous, are not for God and can become self-serving. Faith comes first and in order to be righteous servants of God, we must cast aside our own motivations for service and give all of our glory to God; lest we stumble over the stumbling stone and fall short of God's Grace.

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*Dear God, Make me Your righteous and faithful servant. Let me live in Your glory and serve You in faith. Amen.*

**Contributed by Kevin Malcolm**



**Wednesday, March 25, 2015**

**Day 36a: Exodus 35**

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*Exodus 35 (KJB): Dawn not nigh hither thou standest is holy ground.*

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The Holy Spirit is the most calming source I can think of. When the Holy Spirit is present in me, I am very calm and serene; relaxed and at peace with everybody, especially with God.

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*Dear God, Give everybody the chance to feel the Holy Spirit and the peace that comes from You. Amen.*

**Contributed by Sandra Ford**

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**Day 36b: Psalm 23**

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*From Psalm 23: I'm a soldier of the lord who is my shepherd;*

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I have everything I need for battle; He leads me to rest in the desert sand and always leads me to fresh water; He gives me strength when I need it; He guides me on the right path when I get lost; As he promised me in the Bible. Even if I go through the deepest darkness of evil, I will not be afraid, because my Lord is always with me. For this soldier has lost his way in the heat of battle. How could this happen to him? He could not understand the reason why God could let innocent children die for nothing in this war.

The devil is working his master piece on this soldier. He even got blown up in a vehicle and shot in the chest yet killed many of the enemy. This soldier also saw plenty of death; it made him feel like he was occasionally walking through the valley of the death. He saw several of his comrades die. He started to hate himself and feel so depressed. He was often so sad about what he had become because of this war. This soldier also stopped believing in the Lord. Until one Sunday morning at 0500hrs when he led his convoy into an ambush, and one of his soldiers was shot in the chest. The soldier who was shot changed the other soldier. The wounded soldier told him that God been with him the whole time and that the Lord had His hand on him. The wounded soldier also said to the other soldier, "You are a good man and you need this Bible more than I need it!" After the battle, the soldier was confused thinking about what had happened with the wounded soldier. Was it that God spoke to me? So the soldier wandered into a church that day and found His grace once again.

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*Lord help us when we need to feel Your mercy and strength-Amen.*

**Contributed by Jack Logan**

**Thursday, March 26, 2015**

**Day 37: Luke 22:42**

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*Luke 22:42 (NIV): "Father, if You are willing, take this cup from me, yet not my will, but Yours be done."*

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We are but humans and we can never completely understand the will of God. Christ was the Son of God and yet He was tempted to ask for release from God's purpose for Him on earth. John, Paul and other Apostles were tempted time and time again and sometimes they faltered in their strength and gave in to the temptations. However, they always repented and restored their faith in Christ and God. We are the sons and daughters of men, but we can have a faith as strong as the Apostles. God allowed Christ to be tempted by Satan and we are also tempted every day of our lives.

Twelve years ago I lost my father, and my mother is now 92 years old. I know that her time will come to join my father in heaven and that conviction gives me the strength to accept God's will. Life is precious and we live to share life with those we love. We gain spiritual strength from those loved ones and from our Christian friends. Any loss is hard to accept. I have lived long enough to see my children and grandchildren accept Christ and become active and faithful members of their churches and communities. My precious wife has always been a Christian example for our family, especially me. Just like Paul, it took a while for me to become a true Disciple for Christ and Susan has been that still small voice showing me the way.

We all face trials that bring fear and regret that chills us to the depths of our lives and souls but, just as Jesus did, we must ultimately seek and accept God's will, not our own. When we give our lives to Him completely and without reservation, we receive the strength to meet any challenge, the courage to face any trial and the wisdom to live in His righteousness. When we do that, the temptations become easy to resist and our lives become fuller.

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*Dear Lord, You are the Creator of all that exists and I acknowledge that You are my heavenly Father. I know that Your plan for my life is far greater than I can even imagine or comprehend. Please let Your purposes be my purposes, and let me continue to trust in Your promises and reassurances. Amen.*

**Contributed by Gary McMillan**

**Friday, March 27, 2015**

**Day 38: John 12:1-10**

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*John 12: 7 (CEB): "Then Jesus said, 'Leave her alone. This perfume was to be used in preparation for my burial, and this is how she has used it.'"*

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**"Extravagant Generosity"**

I chose the scripture reading for March 27th because on that day I will celebrate my 80th birthday. Annie Roe Buckley will also celebrate her birthday on March 27th. She took care of me when I was a baby. Our house faced 2nd Street and Sprott Avenue, just next door to Annie Roe and Leo's house. For almost eight decades our family and the Buckley family were active in the First Methodist Church of Killeen. Growing up in the church I learned that being generous was part of our identity... what we now refer to as "part of our DNA."

The scripture from the Gospel of John places Mary anointing Jesus' feet with costly perfume... just before Jesus celebrates the Passover with his disciples. Jesus was on his way to the cross and Mary, as an expression of her love, poured out perfume on Jesus' feet. The value of the perfume was worth a year's wages. According to John's account the house was filled with the aroma of the perfume. Our tendency is to calculate. Mary was spontaneous and her action could be called "extravagant generosity."

We do not claim to have achieved the generosity which Mary expressed. Too often we calculate and put conditions on our response. The Gospel accounts give us a picture of what God is like. Jesus demonstrated the unconditional love of God. Mary was able to express that love because she was open to receive it. As followers of Jesus we are challenged to be "on the road" towards extravagant generosity.

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*Dear God, We are thankful for Your unconditional love. Because we have experienced Your extravagant generosity; help us to be intentional in demonstrating love in action. For it is in the name and spirit of Jesus that we pray. Amen.*

**Contributed by J. Andy Fowler**

**Saturday, March 28, 2015**

**March 39: 1 Thessalonians 5:17**

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*1 Thessalonians 5:17: Pray without ceasing*

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As a young boy I was regularly advised by my elders to "talk with God" about many things. And in Sunday School I had studied scriptures describing many people who heard the voice of God. I frequently overheard others in my church, and even in my own family and household, saying things in conversation such as, "I heard God telling me..." or "I heard the Holy Spirit saying...". I had no doubt they were being truthful. I wanted to hear God and the Holy Spirit speak to me, too. So I followed the aforementioned advice from my elders. When life presented me with such difficult decisions as whether to tell my parents about what my little sister had done, or whether I should feel guilty about my secret love for a pretty girl in school, I did just what they said! I asked God! But as time went on the fact that I never heard Him answer became harder and harder to ignore. By the time I was a teenager I had come to expect that a conversation with God invariably bore some resemblance to a conversation with my dog Bo. In fact I often got more tangible feedback from Bo than I had ever received from God.

It seemed no matter how hard I prayed, no matter how focused I was, no matter how carefully I banished all distractions in my sincere and desperate efforts to hear God's voice, waiting patiently for even just a whisper from God, I was rewarded only with silence. And then finally, after years of asking God, the silence was finally and abruptly interrupted by the rudest of intruders - doubt! The Bible told of men and women who were visited by angels carrying messages from God! Others actually heard His own voice! Moses was said to have had a conversation with God appearing to him as a burning bush! But years of asking God had resulted only in constant, dim, and totally reliable silence. This, I began to believe, was not only cause for doubt. I secretly believed that it may even be evidence to show that the atheists were right after all. Sadly, it seemed increasingly likely that God wasn't answering me because there was no "God" there at all! Perhaps He was little more than the product of mankind's collective imagination.

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The crisis in my faith was something I wrestled with entirely alone. I feared the reaction sharing my thoughts might bring from my parents, grandparents, and even my friends. So I wrestled with it in private. But where does one go when they have such a dilemma? As strange as it sounds, I once again followed the advice of my elders. Though I now had serious doubts about His very existence, I had nowhere else to go! So in desperation I "talked with God".

By now I was over my childhood expectation that one day God would speak to me in a thunderous baritone voice, audible only to me, but I couldn't deny that even without that element, my prayers had often been followed by a certain solace, a measured resolve that all was well, or a comforting sense that He had indeed heard what was on my heart and mind. There had even been times when sickness had been relieved and really serious problems had somehow found solutions in the aftermath of a prayer. So, instead of hoping for a booming voice from Heaven, I opened myself to what may be a more subtle response. And as I did, I began to realize that though my prayers had never involved a burning bush or a thunderous voice from above, they had indeed been answered. And the answers themselves had sometimes been as dramatic as any burning bush may have been. God began to reveal Himself to me somehow anew by simply opening my eyes to the many times He had spoken to me before! And this time it hadn't required any heroic measure of concentration or focus. It began to seem as natural to me as breathing! Prayer went from being something I practiced only on my knees, free from all distractions, to a thing I could do even in the midst of an actual conversation with another person. That sort of deliberate intentional prayer still had its place in my faith life, but being in contact with God, now more real to me than ever, was possible anytime at all, in any circumstance or place. God had answered my doubt and even used it to make me more certain and convinced of His presence in my life than ever before. He used my doubt to somehow encourage me to invite Him into my life in ways I had never done before. And that, I am convinced, is as dramatic and incredible as any burning bush. My prayer for you as you read this is to know exactly what I am talking about, if not instantly, then in the days to come!

***Contributed by Keith Smith***

## **Palm Sunday, March 29, 2015**

### ***Day 40: Revelations 5:8 and additional readings***

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*Revelations 5:8 "And when he had taken it, the four living creatures and twenty four elders fell down before the Lamb. Each one had a harp and they were holding golden bowls full of incense which are the prayers of the saints."*

*Revelation 8:4 "The smoke of the incense together with the prayers of the saints went up before God from the angel's hand."*

*Exodus 40:5 And you shall put the golden altar for incense before the ark of the testimony. Our prayers should give God our attention, praise and adoration.*

*Psalms 141: 2 May my prayers be set before you like incense.*

*Matthew 2:11 Then they (the Magi) opened their treasures and presented him gifts of gold and of incense and myrrh.*

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### **I Wonder?**

Have you ever wondered where prayers go? I have...

Does St. Peter catch them in nets strung with gold and pearls? I wonder...

Does St. Paul keep them under lock and key? I wonder...

The thought occurred to me...why not see what God's Word has to say.

St. John in his book of Revelation gives us a glimpse of what happens.

Recently, I have come to have an appreciation of "incense." Webster defines incense as any substance burned to produce a pleasant odor and continues the definition; a pleasing attention, praise or admiration.

Incense is a fragrant smoke that God commissioned Moses to include in the tabernacle. God gave Moses very specific details of how He wanted to be worshipped in Exodus, Psalm and Matthew.

Sometimes a thought stirs one to wonder, to research and to examine. God gives us a guide of how He is to be worshipped. We are required to pray. But, I think that knowing our prayers have a specific destination (God's golden bowls). Our prayers become like incense, a fragrance that is pleasing to God. This gives me a sense of peace.

How blessed we are that God gives our prayers a special way of celebrating His love for us.

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*May our prayers burn as incense to You, the Three in One. With great humility, joy and adoration Your grateful and thankful children. Amen.*

***Contributed by Karen Willis***



**Monday, March 30, 2015**

**Day 41: Ephesians 5:1**

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*Ephesians 5:1: "Therefore, imitate God like dearly loved children."*

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Have you noticed how children love to imitate adults they admire? Whether it's Jimmy with tools like daddy, or Sarah in her mother's heels; as children we strive to be "just like" someone when we grow up. But what happens when we "grow up?" We lose that child-like adoration and instead focus on being "us." Except God didn't make us to be like us, He made us to be like Him. God made us in his image. It brings him no greater joy than when his children try to be like him. We can never be God, but we should always strive to be God-like.

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*Dear God: Please come into my heart and mind. Restore in me a sense of child-like wonder of You. Help me to imitate Your kindness and love in every aspect of my life. In Jesus' name, Amen.*

**Contributed by Arielle Kittle**



## Tuesday, March 31, 2015

### Day 42: Philippians 4:6-7

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*Philippians 4:6-7 Don't fret and worry. Instead of worrying, pray. Let petitions and praises shape your worries into prayers, letting God know your concerns. Before you know it, a sense of God's wholeness, everything coming together for good, will come and settle you down. It's wonderful what happens when Christ displaces worry at the center of your life.*

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A few years ago I was diagnosed with cancer and as a result I had surgery and endured several months of chemotherapy. As I began to feel better and my hair was starting to grow back, my husband was diagnosed with cancer and underwent a life-altering surgery. It took many months for him to recover. During this time I was very worried and fearful for the future, but my faith in the Lord and the guidance of a Stephen minister helped me to survive a very difficult period in my life.

Today my husband and I have fully recovered with only a few restrictions on our daily activities. I feel God's presence everyday as I see a ray of sun break through the clouds, hear the birds chirping at the feeder and observe the beauty of the wildflowers by the side of the road.

God tells us not to worry in Philippians 4:6-7 and in Matthew 6:25-27. I am comforted by the fact that God is always with me and I am not alone.

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*Dear God, When we are distressed and burdened with worry, help us not to give up. Thank You for Your constant presence with us. Amen.*

**Contributed by Anonymous**



**Wednesday, April 1, 2015**

***Day 43: Luke 12:6***

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*Luke 12:6: Are not five sparrows sold for two copper coins? And not one of them is forgotten before God. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Do not fear therefore; you are more value than many sparrows. Therefore I say to you, "Do not worry about your life."*

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In the summer of 1956 I was at Castle AFB, California, training to be a tail gunner on a B-52. I was on a crew with five wonderful young men. We flew together as a crew for about five years. We each had an instructor assigned to us. We were together during mission planning, briefing, and preflight inspection. Our flight was scheduled for eight hours with the last two hours practicing touch and go landings. We made two of those landings and several people living in Merced started calling the control tower reporting a B-52 flying above them was on fire. We were cleared for immediate landing and made a short pass around the field and landed. A few seconds after landing a hydraulic pack exploded and then came the fire. The fire crew was there and started fighting the fire. The only damage was to the plane and we were all okay.

I never met the callers or even talked to them but I am sure that some of those calls came from Angels who were circling with us.

I was asked if I feared climbing into the B-52 again. I logged about 5,000 hours flying time before retiring and have to admit that I had great faith in my crew and that aircraft and my GOD. I remember the great hymn that we sang many times in Church. "HIS EYE IS ON THE SPARROW AND I KNOW HE IS WATCHING ME."

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*Dear God, Thank You for Your constant love and support. We feel Your presence and love in all we do. Amen.*

***Contributed by Karl Nedela***

## Maundy Thursday, April 2, 2015

### Day 44: John 14:13

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*John 14:13: Whatever you ask in my name, this I will do that the Father may be glorified in the Son*

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I was lying in bed recovering from a compressed vertebrae and severely twisted back from a helicopter crash. It had been several days of taking pain medication and nothing was helping. I couldn't sleep, take a deep breath, and I didn't dare think about a sneeze or cough. I had recently become a new Christian and I remembered that there was a verse in the Bible that stated, "Whatever you ask in my name, this I will do that the Father may be glorified in the Son" (John 14:13). I prayed to God that if He would take my pain away I would serve Him the rest of my life to the best of my ability. I don't know how you feel about those who have claimed a miraculous healing, but the pain went away immediately. I rose from the bed pain free. Now I wish I could say I have been a good Servant of the King since then. The truth of the matter is that I try very hard but I am sure I have disappointed Him at times since then. That said, I know that Jesus died for me and forgives me during those times that I do disappoint Him. However, I intend to continue serving the best way I know how for as long as I can.

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*Prayer: Father as we continue to strive to be better than we are, please continue to forgive us where we fail You and help us strive to be the servants You wish us to be, Amen.*



**Contributed by Dean Honchul**

## **Good Friday, Friday, April 3, 2015**

### ***Day 45: John 19:30b***

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*John 19:30b he said, "It is finished." Then he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.*

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The day that Jesus was put to death on the cross was not always seen as a "good" day. Death and dying were to be feared. It was a darkness from which there was no return. It was a finality that marked the final end. There was nothing thereafter, just darkness.

The day Jesus hung on the cross and was left to die an agonizing death was a dark day. It was a total darkness that lacked hope and future. It was the final act of the son of God. It did not feel like a Good Friday.

However, what we now know that we did not then, is that even death could not hold Jesus Christ. Even the darkest, longest, loneliest of nights could not bind the hands of God.

The darkness of sin and death, the darkness of brokenness and defeat, the darkness of pain and illness, the darkness of confusion and guilt were all swept away that one Good Friday. Jesus took the sins of the world when he died.

When Christ rose again at God's hand, the darkness remained forever buried and in its place rose the light of life. The beauty of hope, the joy of happiness, the delight of life, the promise of newness; these are the things that make it a Good Friday.

Jesus was the chosen one to die for our sins and to rise again to eternal life that we, God's created people, might have hope, joy, love, and peace for all eternity.

Embrace the darkness this day and know that the light that conquers all is coming tomorrow.

***Contributed by Pastor Cynthia***

## Holy Saturday, April 4, 2015

### Day 46: Luke 23:50-56

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*Luke 23:50-56 (CEB):* <sup>50</sup> Now there was a man named Joseph who was a member of the council. He was a good and righteous man. <sup>51</sup> He hadn't agreed with the plan and actions of the council. He was from the Jewish city of Arimathea and eagerly anticipated God's kingdom. <sup>52</sup> This man went to Pilate and asked for Jesus' body. <sup>53</sup> Taking it down, he wrapped it in a linen cloth and laid it in a tomb carved out of the rock, in which no one had ever been buried. <sup>54</sup> It was the Preparation Day for the Sabbath, and the Sabbath was quickly approaching. <sup>55</sup> The women who had come with Jesus from Galilee followed Joseph. They saw the tomb and how Jesus' body was laid in it, <sup>56</sup> then they went away and prepared fragrant spices and perfumed oils. They rested on the Sabbath, in keeping with the commandment

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### **There is No Rest for the Weary.**

Today is the day in between Good Friday and Easter. In the church we refer to this as Holy Saturday. This Saturday, we usually put aside the gospel and have our Easter-egg hunts, get the car washed, mow the lawn, buy an Easter dress, bake a cheesecake. If you asked one the followers of Jesus about all the excitement on Friday, they would probably say, "it's over, it is the Sabbath and it is finished."

There is no rest for Jesus on this particular Sabbath. Jesus is not lying peacefully in the tomb waiting for Easter. He is not yet appearing to the disciples or the women either. Jesus is in a different place, Jesus has descended, he has descended to the dead as the creed states, or has gone to the place where the disobedient spirits are serving out their sentence.

*And in the Spirit, He went and preached to those spirits held captive.* 1 Peter 3:19 The Voice

Demons are raging and shaking with fear. Satan has been stripped of all authority and power. Christ has stolen – no retrieved the keys of death. That small phrase in the creed, "He descended to hell" refers to Saturday. Christ has opened paradise. The angels in heaven are rejoicing, the demons are defeated; scurrying around trying to figure out what went wrong.

But this is missed by most of us. It was missed by the followers of Jesus. They had no idea of the activity Jesus was involved in on that Saturday – the Sabbath, Jesus certainly not resting. To them Jesus was just lying in a tomb. Not even fully prepared for burial – because of the Sabbath.

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The people that were shouting “Hosanna” just a few days before, are now thinking it is finished, their hopes, aspirations and dreams are extinguished. For them all is over as Jesus lies peacefully in a tomb – it is finished.

We live far beyond that first “Holy Saturday.” We know Jesus will rise. We have our plans to celebrate Easter. So why should there be any fuss on Saturday? Because most of us live as Saturday people. And it is on Saturday, in the Saturday times, when things look gloomy, when we are paralyzed by guilt, when we are in despair, when our expectations have been crushed, when it feels like we are in hell, when we think it is finished. We need to be Holy Saturday people knowing it is not finished. We need to know that Jesus is raging war, defeating the dark powers of the world. Even before the great celebration of victory on Easter, there is victory on Saturday. It is Saturday but it not finished.

***Contributed by Pastor Jeff***



## A Family Lenten Devotional from our family to yours.

This devotional is sponsored by the Radical Hospitality Ministry and is in honor of Phyllis & Jim Wheeler.

### Radical Hospitality Team:

Lisa Kure, Chairman  
Rosalind "Roz" Honchul  
Carrol Jean  
Patti Monroe

Pastor Cynthia Moss  
Frances Nelson  
Beverly Tuggle  
Patricia Vassaur  
Phyllis Wheeler

We hope this booklet will be spiritually uplifting during this time of Lent. Please share the devotions in this booklet with others. All devotions are also available on our website at [www.fumckilleen.com](http://www.fumckilleen.com).

Thanks to Louise Bachman, Carol Dugger, Jacque McMahan, Patti Monroe and Veda Kay Waheed for editing. Thanks to Hayley Moore, Marty Portmann and Abby Smith for publishing. We would like to thank our members for contributing their devotionals to this booklet. We also want to thank the children and adults for their artwork. Special thanks to Joe Friddle for the cover artwork. No copyright laws are applied.

### **2015 Lent Activities**

Ash Wednesday Services: 12:05pm, 6:15pm  
Ash Wednesday Fellowship Meal: 5:30pm  
Wednesday Night Worship Experiences during Lent 6:15pm  
Regular Sunday Services: 7:45am (Heritage), 9:30am (Praise), and 11am (Traditional)

### **2015 Holy Week Activities**

29 March: Palm Sunday Services Praise: 7:45am, 9:30am, 11am  
2-3 April: Jerusalem - Evening Live Production (Methodist Park)  
3 April: Good Friday - Reverse Advent Service  
4 April: Holy Saturday - Stations of the Cross (Methodist Park)  
5 April: Easter Services: 7am (Sunrise - Methodist Pk), 9:30am (Praise), 11am (Heritage)  
**Visit [www.FUMCKilleen.com](http://www.FUMCKilleen.com) for details on these activities and our Easter Egg Hunts!**

*To Make Disciples of Jesus Christ for the Transformation of the World.*



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