



FAMILY DEVOTIONAL

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Blessing Our Community: Family Devotional

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ABOUT THIS BOOK

Thank you for joining the Half-Million Mobilization's fifty-day journey of prayer from Easter to Pentecost. God has done his deepest work in my life through prolonged times of prayer. In my first church, a young layman by the name of Rob asked if we could hold an all-Saturday prayer meeting. I was a busy young pastor and only reluctantly agreed. In spite of myself, God did a deep work in my life that day, and his Spirit was poured out in a special way on our church in the services that followed.

I am asking the Lord to do a deep work in your life, in your family, in our church, and through our church in these next fifty days. Will you enter this time of prayer with that expectation?

Our Half-Million Mobilization theme this year is Blessing Our Community. This year, we have added this *Family Devotional* to our resources to include all members of the body of Christ, including our children! I hope this time in prayer together as a family will do a deep work in our lives and our churches to be a mighty force for blessing our community throughout the year ahead.

In a world often filled with chaos and uncertainty, it's easy to feel overwhelmed by the needs of our communities. As parents, we often feel pulled in a million different directions! Yet, amidst the challenges, there is a profound opportunity for us to make a difference. As a family, we have the privilege and responsibility to be agents of blessing, spreading love, hope, and compassion wherever we go. This family prayer guide is designed to inspire and equip us to bless our community intentionally. Through

ABOUT THIS BOOK

Scripture, reflection, and prayer, we'll explore what it means to be a blessing and how we can partner with God to transform lives and neighborhoods.

As we encounter his divine power throughout these fifty days of prayer, may the Lord mobilize all Nazarenes in unity across all generations, empowering us to bless our communities bring people to Jesus, and become Christlike disciples.

We're ready! Let's get started!

—Stan Reeder
Director, USA/Canada Region
Church of the Nazarene



A NOTE FROM EQUIP TO ENGAGE

We are excited to present the Half-Million Mobilization *Family Devotional* to you! We know this has the potential to be a beneficial resource for your kids and family. Equip to Engage is grateful to partner with the Church of the Nazarene USA/Canada to provide this for your family!

Spending time in God's Word as a family can be challenging. During the years we have our kids at home, our lives are busy with sports, gymnastics, band, choir, school, church activities, and more. Sometimes we might not know where to start or what resource to use. And then, what happens when we miss one or a few days in a row? How will we ever catch up? We understand these challenges, and we hope the Half-Million Mobilization *Family Devotional* is a helpful spiritual tool for your family.

There are times throughout the year when working through a short Bible study is more doable. We have found this to be true in our family. The important thing is to create a rhythm and intentionality with learning and engaging in spiritual conversations together. Short studies like these can be a great start for those who desire these special family times and aren't sure where to begin. Our family knows from experience that life happens, and we may miss a day or two of the plan. We encourage you to pick up where you left off and keep going! These times can be as flexible as they need to be; some days it may look like a conversation around the dinner table and other times it may look like a conversation in the car on the way home from a ballgame.

A NOTE FROM EQUIP TO ENGAGE

These short devotions require no supplies which makes it a great on-the-go resource for busy families. They were written for your family by some of the leading Children's Pastors and Leaders in the Church of the Nazarene USA/Canada. The writers include:

Evan Offutt Boesiger (South Texas)
Candice Brooks (Southwest Oklahoma)
Trey Brooks (Southwest Oklahoma)
Cortney Coombs (Northeast Indiana)
Shane Guldi (Northwest Indiana)
Mike Hancock (South Arkansas)
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Sheri Lynne Martin (Canada West)
Heather Pillers (Intermountain)
Cindy Reynolds (Northwest)
Beth Bidle Rush (North/East Texas)
Diane Solberg (North Arkansas)
Shaun Stevenson (MidSouth)

We are confident your family will find these meaningful to create spiritual conversations in your home.

—*Candice and Trey Brooks*
Co-Founders, Equip to Engage
equiptoengage.org



SUNDAY • MARCH 31, 2024



Even the Son of Man did not come to be served. Instead, he came to serve others. He came to give his life as the price for setting many people free.

Mark 10:45

Who are some of the heroes you can name? Maybe there is a hero in your favorite streaming show or in a book you've read. Heroes are people who spend their time serving and helping take care of others. Sometimes they even give up what they want so that other people's needs are met.

Did you know that as Christians we have a hero? When Jesus came to earth as a person, he lived his whole life in perfect holiness—loving God and loving others. He lived his whole life taking care of others and telling them about the God who loves them. He healed the sick, fed the hungry, encouraged those who were sad, and befriended people who no one else would even talk to! Then, Jesus died on the cross so that we could be forgiven and have victory over sin and death. Now that is a true hero!

Did you know that God calls us to be heroes as well? When we believe in Jesus, we are called to live godly lives. That means that like Jesus, we should be looking for ways to love others by being kind, helping them, and telling them about God. What is one way you can be a hero and love others like Jesus today?

PRAYER: Thank you, Jesus, for dying for our sins and coming back to life. Help us to live each day all in for you by loving you and loving others! Amen.

*—Cindy Reynolds, Northwest District Children's Director, Northwest District
Shaun Stevenson, Pastor to Kids, Gallatin First Church of the Nazarene*

MONDAY • APRIL 1, 2024

Jesus replied, " 'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul. Love him with all your mind.' This is the first and most important commandment. And the second is like it. 'Love your neighbor as you love yourself.' Everything that is written in the Law and the Prophets is based on these two commandments."

Matthew 22:37-40

A lot of heroes in stories often have someone who teaches them how to be a hero. Call that person a guide, a mentor, or someone who has been a hero a long time! That guide teaches the hero everything they need to know about how to be a hero.

For Christians, Jesus is our hero! He showed us how to use our "super power," also known as: love. Jesus loved God and loved others, and because Jesus *is* God, Jesus loved God and others perfectly! Throughout his entire life, Jesus showed us what it meant to love God by obeying God, caring about others, and teaching them about who God is and what God has done, is doing, and will do one day!

Jesus also showed love to the people around him. He cared about the people who were sick, poor, needing encouragement and help, and by challenging them to follow after God with everything they have!

That's what Matthew 22:37-40 is talking about when it says to love God with all your heart, soul, and mind. Jesus is basically saying, "Love God with all of you!" Jesus showed his love for us by dying on the cross and coming back to life three days later. How can you show love to someone in your life today?

PRAYER: Dear Jesus, thank you for showing us how to love you and love others! Help me to love you and the people around me today! Amen.

*—Cindy Reynolds, Northwest District Children's Director, Northwest District
Shaun Stevenson, Pastor to Kids, Gallatin First Church of the Nazarene*

TUESDAY • APRIL 2, 2024

I will give you new hearts. I will give you a new spirit that is faithful to me. I will remove your stubborn hearts from you. I will give you hearts that obey me. I will put my Spirit in you. I will make you want to obey my rules. I want you to be careful to keep my laws.

Ezekiel 36:26-27

What if a hero decided *not* to save the day? What if they refused to help the people who needed help?

- Go around the room and share what you think would happen if a hero refused to save the day!

Jesus was not a stubborn hero. He knew what he had come to do: show us how to love God and love others and then defeat sin and death by dying on the cross and coming back to life three days later. Jesus was faithful to do what he had come to do! He had a willing heart.

God promises in Ezekiel 36:26-27 that when we come to him, he will give us “new” hearts! He transforms us into someone like Jesus: willing to serve and love God and others. He takes that stubborn, selfish heart out of us and replaces it with a heart that is willing to obey him!

Sometimes we get stubborn and don’t *want* to be loving to our siblings who might bother us. Or we might not *want* to be kind to the new kid in our class at school. But God has called us to be like the greatest hero: Jesus, who didn’t refuse to love others. He said yes to loving God and loving others always!

PRAYER: Holy Spirit, give us willing hearts to love God and love others always. Change us from the inside out to be more and more like Jesus!

—Cindy Reynolds, Northwest District Children’s Director, Northwest District
Shaun Stevenson, Pastor to Kids, Gallatin First Church of the Nazarene



Who is more important? Is it the one at the table, or the one who serves? Isn't it the one who is at the table? But I am among you as one who serves.

Luke 22:27

Has someone ever shoved you out of the way so they could go first or be the first in line? Have you ever shoved someone out of the way to be first?

We like to be first because it makes us feel important. If someone is giving us extra attention, it can also make us feel like we're important.

Jesus is God. In fact, Jesus is *the* most important out of everybody in the whole universe! But even Jesus when he was on earth didn't try to take the most important seats or be the first in line. Instead, Jesus actually served others. Jesus gave up the most important spot so he could show us how to serve one another.

Jesus could have taken the front of the line, but he didn't. Instead, he helped others, he talked with people no one else would talk to, and he served by doing the jobs that nobody else would have wanted to do, like washing the disciples' feet!

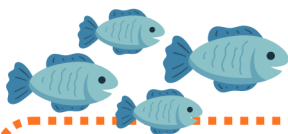
We are called to love God and love others like Jesus. That means sometimes we give up the front of the line or the best spot so we can serve others and show them God's love. How can you serve someone today, like Jesus, the greatest hero?

PRAYER: God, help me to serve others and love them like you do. Amen.

—Cindy Reynolds, Northwest District Children's Director, Northwest District
Shaun Stevenson, Pastor to Kids, Gallatin First Church of the Nazarene

THURSDAY • APRIL 4, 2024

Jesus said to them, “Come and have breakfast.” None of the disciples dared to ask him, “Who are you?” They knew it was the Lord. Jesus came, took the bread and gave it to them. He did the same thing with the fish.



John 21:12-13



Even heroes have to take a break sometimes to rest and recharge! If a hero kept going and going and going, even they would get tired at some point; unless they had a Never-Get-Tired super power!

But we don't have that super power! In fact, God calls us to be still, to pause, and to rest. In John 21:12-13, Jesus has breakfast with the disciples. This took place after Jesus had died on the cross and come back to life three days later. Jesus rested with the disciples and they spent time together.

We have really busy lives with school and practice and having fun with our families! But sometimes we need to pause, slow down, and sit with Jesus. When we take time to rest, we can remember who God is and all that God has done for us. We can say thank you to God for all the good things he has done in our lives and ask him for help with the things that bother us.

Today, take some time to slow down, sit down, and rest. As you rest, talk to God about your day and what you've been up to. Spend some time with Jesus just like the disciples did at breakfast on the beach!

PRAYER: Jesus, help us to remember to rest. Give us moments when we can pause and think about all that you have done for us. You are so good! Amen.

*—Cindy Reynolds, Northwest District Children's Director, Northwest District
Shaun Stevenson, Pastor to Kids, Gallatin First Church of the Nazarene*

FRIDAY • APRIL 5, 2024



I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet. So you also should wash one another's feet. I have given you an example. You should do as I have done for you.

John 13:14-15

Have you ever had dirty, stinky feet? Maybe you were playing soccer or another sport and got really sweaty. Ew! Maybe you were playing outside and splashed in a mud puddle. I bet you needed a bath afterwards!

Jesus once had a dirty, stinky foot situation on his hands! He was sitting down to an evening meal with his disciples and decided to show them an example of how to serve one another. He got a towel, a basin, and began to go around washing his disciples feet! In those days, people walked barefoot or with sandals so you can imagine how dusty and smelly they were! But Jesus did it to show an example of how to take care of and serve people around us. Even Jesus, the Son of God, was willing to do a dirty, stinky task to care for his friends.

What kinds of tasks can you do for others—things that nobody really *wants* to do? (Examples: take out the trash, fold a sibling's clothes, wash the dishes, dust the furniture, pick up litter). Serve someone you care about this week by doing a task so they don't have to!

PRAYER: Dear Jesus, thank you for showing us how to love others by serving them. Help us to follow your example and show love by helping someone this week! Amen.

—Cindy Reynolds, Northwest District Children's Director, Northwest District
Shaun Stevenson, Pastor to Kids, Gallatin First Church of the Nazarene

SATURDAY • APRIL 6, 2024



“Come to me, all you who are tired and are carrying heavy loads. I will give you rest. Become my servants and learn from me. I am gentle and free of pride. You will find rest for your souls.”

Matthew 11:28-29

We all get tired. That’s why we sleep each night! Our bodies need rest each day in order to help us through the next day. Sometimes when we work hard on something like cleaning our room or helping with the dishes or other chores, we might get tired too.

In Matthew 11:28-29 Jesus calls everyone who is tired to come to him. Jesus doesn’t mean everyone who is sleepy, but Jesus means everyone who is ready to trust in God, instead of trusting in themselves.

We can tire ourselves out because we choose to trust in ourselves instead of trusting in God for help. We might think we can do everything, but the truth is, we need God. If we keep trying to do everything in life on our own without God’s help, we will get very, very tired! That’s who Jesus is calling out to: anyone who is tired and needs rest.

Jesus is good; he is the greatest hero! He wants to help us throughout our lives. When we’re tired, when we’re excited, when we’re sad, when we’re unsure, Jesus is always with us, calling us to trust in him for help.

PRAYER: Jesus, help me to trust in you instead of trying to do everything myself. Thank you for being the greatest hero and for always being with us! Amen.

—Cindy Reynolds, Northwest District Children’s Director, Northwest District
Shaun Stevenson, Pastor to Kids, Gallatin First Church of the Nazarene

SUNDAY • APRIL 7, 2024



“Jesus told him, “Go and do as he did.”

Luke 10:37b

Have you ever played a game where you copy someone? Maybe you look up to a family member or another person. You might try to copy everything they say and do.

- Go in a circle and have everyone share about a time they copied someone or a time when someone copied them!

In the Bible, Jesus tells a story about a Samaritan man that helped a Jewish man. In those days, Samaritans and Jews didn't like each other. The Jewish man was hurt and laying on the side of the road. The Samaritan was kind to the hurt man even when others were not. He made sure the man was taken care of so he would get better. He didn't have to show kindness. In fact, many people would expect him *not* to be kind to a Jewish man, but the Samaritan showed compassion and helped him. Some might even say he was a hero.

This scripture shows us that Jesus wants us to copy the Samaritan. Just like the Samaritan showed love and kindness to a man that he wasn't even friends with, Jesus wants us to show love and kindness to everyone. God calls us to be a hero in the name of Jesus.

PRAYER: God, thank you for giving us a good example to follow. Help us to look for ways to show love and kindness to everyone around us, even the ones that are hard to love. Amen.

—Candice Brooks, Co-Founder, Equip to Engage

MONDAY • APRIL 8, 2024



Anyone who is kind to poor people lends to the LORD. God will reward them for what they have done.

Proverbs 19:17

When you lend something, it means you let someone borrow something with the understanding that they will give it back or pay you back.

- Go around the room and share about a time when you let someone borrow something. Did they return it?

You would probably agree that being kind to the poor or being kind to someone is a good thing to do, wouldn't you? But, did you know when you are kind to the poor and to others, you are actually lending to the LORD? You are letting God borrow YOU! God wants to use us to be his hands and feet that walk the Earth and demonstrate God's love to all people. When you show kindness, you are lending your hands and feet to God so he can do his work in the world.

- Talk about ways God can use your hands. Talk about the places you go where God may want you to show kindness.

Proverbs 19:17 reminds us that God doesn't borrow without paying us back. God will reward us for what we have done. When we honor God by being kind to the poor and to others, God will honor us.

PRAYER: God, I want to lend myself to you. You can use my hands and feet to show love and kindness to others. Thank you for the amazing privilege to be used by you to do your work in the world. Amen.

—Candice Brooks, Co-Founder, Equip to Engage

TUESDAY • APRIL 9, 2024



In everything I did, I showed you that we must work hard and help the weak. We must remember the words of the Lord Jesus. He said, "It is more blessed to give than to receive."

Acts 20:35

Would you rather give a gift or receive a gift?

- Share about the best gift you have ever given to someone else.

Today's scripture tells us that helping others can be hard work or inconvenient, but it is important to do.

One day as our family was driving through our city, we saw a homeless man walking across the hot pavement with no shoes. Suddenly, I felt like I was supposed to pull over and give that man my shoes. The shoes I was wearing were shoes I really liked. I had searched all over to find them, and they were basically new. However, I knew I was supposed to give them to that man, so I did. As we drove away, one of our kids asked, "Why did you do that?" I explained that inside of me I felt like God was asking me to give him my shoes. As I was driving away (now barefoot), I felt like God used me in that man's life. I had worked hard to find those shoes, and I really liked them; but in that moment, I felt blessed that God was able to use my willingness to give.

- Share ways God has used others to help you or a time when you were able to help someone else.

PRAYER: God, thank you for all the gifts you have given me. Help me to be willing to freely give from the blessings that you have given me. Amen.

—Candice and Trey Brooks, Co-Founders, Equip to Engage

WEDNESDAY • APRIL 10, 2024



In the same way, let your light shine so others can see it. Then they will see the good things you do. And they will bring glory to your Father who is in heaven.

Matthew 5:16

Do you like being in the dark? Where is the darkest place you have ever been?

One time, my daughter and I went on a tour through a cave. At one point, our tour guide turned off all of the lights. It was so dark, we could not see a single thing. Not even a little bit! We put our hands in front of our faces, but it was pitch black. After a short time, the guide turned the lights back on, and we felt instant relief!

This scripture reminds us that God wants us to shine our light to others in the dark world. Light represents Jesus and darkness represents sin. The light we shine is the light of Jesus shining in us. Just like I felt relief in the cave when the light turned on, we can bring comfort to people in the dark who need Jesus by doing good things for them. We don't do good so others will think we are amazing. We do good so they will see our amazing God who loves them and wants to be in relationship with them.

- Share specific ways you can be light and do good things in each of these places: school, neighborhood, teams, work places, and other groups you are around.

PRAYER: Thank you, God, for filling us with your light, love, and hope. Help us to shine your light and do good so others may want to know you, too. Amen.

—Candice and Trey Brooks, Co-Founders, Equip to Engage

THURSDAY · APRIL 11, 2024



But be sure to have respect for the Lord.
Serve him faithfully. Do it with all your
heart. Think about the great things he has
done for you.

1 Samuel 12:24

Who in your life can you always count on? You know they will keep their promises to you. You know they will always be there for you.

My family got to see “Old Faithful” in Yellowstone National Park in Wyoming, USA. It is a geyser that shoots water over 100 feet (30.5 meters) into the sky! The reason it is called “Old Faithful” is because it is so predictable. They can accurately predict what times the geyser will erupt throughout each day.

This scripture talks about serving God faithfully. To be faithful means you can be counted on and you are reliable. God is calling us to be faithful and serve him faithfully with all of our heart. This is one way we can show respect for our wonderful God who has done so much for us.

- Pause for a moment and list all the great things you can think of that God has done for you.

Our loving and generous God deserves our best. God may want to use you to show his love to someone, to be a friend, to say a kind word, to work hard at a job no one may notice, or to pray for someone. God wants to use each of us. Can God count on you?

PRAYER: God, I want to faithfully serve you with all of my heart. You can count on me. Amen.

—Candice Brooks, Co-Founder, Equip to Engage



Even in the darkness light shines on honest people. It shines on those who are kind and tender and godly.

Psalm 112:4

- Share with each other about what a flashlight is for.

When my husband and son go to church camp, they like to bring their flashlights. They keep their flashlights handy at night when it is dark outside. However, their favorite reason for bringing their flashlights to camp is so they can play a flashlight game right before bed. When it is time to turn out the lights and go to bed, they always take a few minutes for everyone in the cabin to turn on their flashlights, shining the lights all over the room!

Lights are designed to help us see things. This scripture reminds us that light shines in the darkness onto those who are honest, kind, tender, and godly.

- Talk about what honest, kind, tender, and godly mean.

When we spend time growing in our relationship with God through praying, reading our Bible, and having spiritual conversations with other followers of Jesus, he is able to grow these qualities in our life. We become more like Jesus. This verse tells us it is like God shines a flashlight on those who are becoming more like him. He sees us, he loves us, and he recognizes we desire to be who God wants us to be.

PRAYER: God, thank you for seeing me. You want me to be more like you. Please shape me into a person that is honest, kind, tender, and godly. Amen.

—Candice Brooks, Co-Founder, Equip to Engage

SATURDAY · APRIL 13, 2024



God's gifts of grace come in many forms. Each of you has received a gift in order to serve others. You should use it faithfully.

1 Peter 4:10

- What kinds of things are you good at?

I used to play basketball. It is really neat to be on a team with people. It took all of us working together to play and win. We were all different, and each of us were good at different things. I was a guard; I could shoot 3-pointers. My best friend was a point guard; she could dribble the ball down the court. Other teammates were posts; they were tall and strong. They could rebound the ball close to the net.

This scripture reminds us that each of us have received gifts, but our gifts are different. It is like we are on a team with other followers of Jesus, and we fill different positions. The gifts we have are given to us by God. He didn't give them to us so other people can think we are amazing. God gave them to us so we can serve others. God wants to use the skills, talents, and gifts he designed in us to make a difference in the world for His glory.

- Think back to the things you said you were good at. Talk about ways God might want to use your gifts to serve others.

PRAYER: Thank you, God, for creating us with skills, talents, and gifts. Help us to be faithful team members to use what you have given us to serve others. Amen.

—Candice Brooks, Co-Founder, Equip to Engage

SUNDAY • APRIL 14, 2024



So we are Christ's official messengers. It is as if God were making his appeal through us. Here is what Christ wants us to beg you to do. Come back to God!

2 Corinthians 5:20

Have you ever played the game “Telephone”? Someone starts by whispering a message into the next person’s ear, who then passes it along to the next person, and so on. The goal is for the message to stay the same as it travels from one to the next.

In 2 Corinthians 5, it tells us that we are called to be a messenger of Christ. When we know things about Jesus, he doesn’t want us to just keep that message to ourselves. We are encouraged to pass along the message of God’s love, goodness, forgiveness, and grace with the world around us.

But it’s not like once we share the message of God, we can be done with our task. He invites us to return to him often—every day, throughout the day. He wants us to continue to get to know him so that we can continue to be shaped by him. The more we know who Jesus is, the better we can share his message with the world around us, both through our words and our actions.

PRAYER: Thank you, God, for revealing who you are to us. help us to continue to get to know you better each day so that we can be your messengers in the world, sharing the message of your hope and love with those around us. And through sharing that message, might we help to transform the world to be a place that better reflects you. Amen.

—Heather Pillers, Children’s Pastor, Nampa College Church

MONDAY • APRIL 15, 2024

Then Jesus came to them. He said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. So you must go and make disciples of all nations. Baptize them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Teach them to obey everything I have commanded you. And you can be sure that I am always with you, to the very end.”

Matthew 28:18–20

Think about the ending to your favorite book, story or movie. Sometimes the ending can be sad or happy. Maybe it didn't end the way you were expecting, or it was really intense and exciting!

The greatest story of all time is about Jesus. He spent his time on earth building relationships with people and doing everything he could to love and point them to God. Then he laid down his life so everyone could have a relationship with him as the Savior of their lives. Though that seemed like the end of Jesus's story at the time, it wasn't. He rose from the dead, defeated evil, and proved the power of his love to be stronger than anything.

As followers of Jesus, our story is not over either. Jesus empowers each of us to live a life like his, which will bring more people into relationship with him. This can feel like a scary task at times, but this verse reminds us we are not alone. Jesus promises we can do this and reassures us he is with us until the very end.

PRAYER: Jesus, thank you for allowing us to be a part of your story and for never leaving us alone. Give us strength to show our friends, neighbors and strangers the Good News of Jesus. Amen.

—Kaleb Harper, Children Integration Pastor, Valley Shepherd Church

TUESDAY · APRIL 16, 2024



I will make them and the places surrounding my holy mountain of Zion a blessing. I will send down rain at the right time. There will be showers of blessing.

Ezekiel 34:26

I grew up near Seattle, where they average around 150 days of rain a year. Rain comes in all kinds, from a light mist to a torrential downpour. While the rain was not always bad, sometimes it felt like it would never stop. But now, living in the high desert of Idaho, there are seasons where we are begging for rain!

Sometimes our own relationship with God can become a bit like the dry desert. Perhaps God feels really far away. Why would he care about the small things I face? Other times, it feels like we are reaching out to him for help or answers and are met with silence. Maybe it feels like the blessings we once experienced are long gone and now we sit and wait in the desert.

In Ezekiel 34, we see God's promise of sending rain to the land of Israel at just the right time. His rain brings blessings of crops, fruit on the trees, and security for the people.

We can trust that God isn't absent, silent, or holding back, but instead he is deeply invested in our lives. God will send his showers of blessings on us. As we are filled, we can share his blessings with the world around us.

PRAYER: God, if we are feeling empty today, would you pour out your blessings on us? As we are filled, may we see how we can share those blessings with the world around us. Amen.

—Heather Pillers, Children's Pastor, Nampa College Church

WEDNESDAY • APRIL 17, 2024

Let us consider how we can stir up one another to love. Let us help one another to do good works. And let us not give up meeting together. Some are in the habit of doing this. Instead, let us encourage one another with words of hope.

Hebrews 10:24–25a

Have you ever tried to squeeze all the toothpaste out of its tube at once? It would probably be really easy... and messy. It also probably wouldn't take very long. But have you ever tried to put all that toothpaste back? Trust me; I've tried it, and it's a whole lot harder!

Our words and actions can be kind of like toothpaste. Sometimes it's really easy to say something hurtful. Our words may get away from us, and we find ourselves with a big, sticky mess. Once the mess comes out, it is very difficult to put it back in. It can be hard to flip the switch to love and encouragement once we've caused so much hurt.

When we look to Scripture, we discover the example Jesus set for how we should treat one another. In the Bible we are called "children of God," "the light of the world," "chosen," "loved," "a masterpiece," and "made with a purpose." Those words are powerful, and that's just a small glimpse of the many words used to encourage us!

How can you seek to encourage first, and prioritize loving others like Jesus does with your words and actions?

PRAYER: God, help me to think through the words I say and the actions I do so they may be your encouraging hope to all people. Amen.

—Kaleb Harper, Children Integration Pastor, Valley Shepherd Church

THURSDAY • APRIL 18, 2024

Christ is the one we preach about. With all the wisdom we have, we warn and teach everyone. When we bring them to God, we want them to be like Christ. We want them to be grown up as people who belong to Christ.

Colossians 1:28

Have you ever hung out with a toddler? They are learning so much about life every single day. They are fun to be around, but they are not very mature human beings.

When we first get to know Jesus, we could say we have “Toddler Faith.” We like to hear stories from the Bible, sing songs about God, and even repeat simple things we’ve heard other Christians say.

But Paul, in this passage from Colossians, is challenging us to be people who grow in our faith.

So how do we increase in our faith?

1. Read your Bible and see what you can apply to your life.
2. Talk and listen to God.
3. Serve others in your community.
4. Be part of a faith community where you can grow.
5. Make sure your words, actions, and attitude reflect Jesus.

Growing up in faith takes practice. Let’s get in the habit of putting our faith in practice so we can continue to grow in it and become more and more like Jesus.

PRAYER: God, help me to see ways I can grow in my faith today. May I not get weary practicing, but instead, see the ways you are transforming me each day to be more like you. Amen.

—Heather Pillers, Children’s Pastor, Nampa College Church

FRIDAY • APRIL 19, 2024

He wanted the rulers and authorities in the heavenly world to come to know his great wisdom. The church would make it known to them. That was God's plan from the beginning. He has fulfilled his plan through Christ Jesus our Lord.

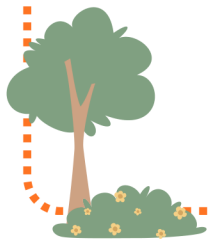
Ephesians 3:10-11

I remember as a kid, my friends and I were playing at a park with lots of trees to climb and a creek to play in. One day we realized that along the creek was the perfect place to build a fort. We made a plan and gathered branches, cleaned out the space, and set up the fort. We were proud of the plan we had come up with and the progress we made, but by then it was getting late and we all needed to head home.

The next day, we excitedly came back together to play in our fort, only to discover it had been destroyed. After all that dreaming and planning and building, we were devastated.

We see in Ephesians that, unlike our plan to build the greatest fort of all time, God's plan did not fail. Jesus, the Son of God, came and fulfilled God's plan so everyone can know him. Through the Holy Spirit, God has given all of us the power to share his plan, wisdom, and love with everyone in the world. Let's go today and help fulfill this plan to make sure everyone we encounter knows they are loved by God.

PRAYER: Lord, help me come up with a plan I can live out to help others know about your great wisdom and love for them. Amen.



—Kaleb Harper, Children Integration Pastor, Valley Shepherd Church

SATURDAY • APRIL 20, 2024

Here are the beliefs and way of life that God our Father accepts as pure and without fault. When widows are in trouble, take care of them. Do the same for children who have no parents. And don't let the world make you impure.

James 1:27

When I was eleven years old, my parents came to me and my older sister to share important news. Our family was adopting a girl from a country around the world. Nine months later, my parents journeyed there, spent six weeks getting to know my little sister, the orphanage, and the kids who were her family, before bringing her home.

My parents' "yes" to a girl with no parents transformed our family. My sister now teaches Kindergarten, sharing love and kindness with the kids in her class.

While James points out the orphans and widows in this passage, what it is showing us is that as followers of Jesus, we are encouraged to notice the forgotten and the overlooked. Then we are called to be "doers of the word", which means we are called to *do* something. Just as Jesus noticed needs around him and did something about it, we should take notice of those in need and find a way to serve them. God is already there. We are partnering with God to serve God's people!

PRAYER: God, help me to notice the places where there are hurting, broken, or even left-out people. Help me know how I can best show them your love through serving them. Amen.

—Heather Pillers, Children's Pastor, Nampa College Church



“But a Samaritan came to the place where the man was. When he saw the man, he felt sorry for him.”

Luke 10:33

Ring! Ring! The bell for recess time rang and Sarah was so happy! She was tired of sitting in school and couldn't wait to get outside to play soccer. Sarah grabbed her soccer ball as they lined up to go.

Once outside, she ran to the soccer field! Soon they were starting a game, but Sarah looked up and noticed that Mary was sitting alone on a bench up by the school. She didn't want to leave the fun soccer game, but she saw Mary looking sad and lonely. In Sarah's heart she felt sorry for Mary.

Sarah let the other kids play with her soccer ball and she left the game to go sit with Mary. Sarah asked Mary why she was sitting alone. Mary was sad and worried about a problem happening at home. Sarah offered to say a prayer for Mary because she knew God could help her with the problem.

Ring! Ring! The end of recess bell rang. Sarah and Mary went back to class with all the other kids. Sarah was sad she had missed the soccer game, but she was glad Jesus had given her compassionate eyes to see a friend who needed to be noticed and prayed for. Sarah felt good knowing she obeyed God when he showed her someone who needed a friend.

PRAYER: Lord, Help me to notice people in need and feel compassion for them. I want to obey you and show love to those who need Your help. Amen.

MONDAY • APRIL 22, 2024



Is anyone among you sick? Then that person should send for the elders of the church to pray over them. They should ask the elders to anoint them with olive oil in the name of the Lord.

James 5:14

Elias asked his mom on the way home from church, “Mom, what’s wrong with our friend Mary?”

Mom gently answered, “Mary is really sick and needs to have surgery. That is why she will be anointed next Sunday.”

“What does anointed mean?” Elias asked.

“To be anointed means to be dedicated to God. When people are anointed with oil, a little bit of olive oil is put onto their skin while they are being prayed for.”

“Why olive oil?” Elias asked.

Mom explained, “The olive branch is used as a symbol of peace and olive oil symbolizes the peaceful presence of God. Our pastor will say, ‘I anoint you in the name of God the Father, Jesus the Son, and the Holy Spirit’ and the elders will gather around Mary and we will all pray.”

“What is an elder?”

Mom explained, “An elder in the church is a spiritual leader who serves God faithfully. People who have decided to follow Jesus and be a part of his family have a responsibility to do the work of the Lord here on earth. Part of that work is to compassionately pray for people who are sick and anoint them with oil in the name of our Lord.”

MONDAY • APRIL 22, 2024



Is anyone among you sick? Then that person should send for the elders of the church to pray over them. They should ask the elders to anoint them with olive oil in the name of the Lord.

James 5:14

Elias shared his thoughts, “I want to pray for Mary too.”

Mom was so glad Elias understood! She suggested, “Let’s start praying for Mary tonight and then we will pray again with our church family when she is anointed.”

PRAYER: Lord, Help us to care for the sick and dedicate them to you. Thank you for elders in the church who serve you faithfully. Help me to see people with compassionate eyes and feel the love that Jesus has for them in my heart. Amen.

—Cortney Coombs, Children’s Pastor, Anderson First Church of the Nazarene



But the Lord wants to have mercy on you. So he will rise up to give you his tender love. The Lord is a God who is always fair. Blessed are all those who wait for him to act!

Isaiah 30:18

Sammi threw her glove and hat on the kitchen table, and headed for the refrigerator. “Wow, it is hot outside!”

“There’s some lemonade in the blue pitcher,” Sammi’s mom said. “It will probably help with that thirst.”

“Nah!” Sammi exclaimed, “I want one of those homemade popsicles. They should be frozen by now.”

Sammi grabbed one of the popsicles, pulled it out of the tray, and said, “See! Perfect!” Sammi bit into it, and to her surprise, blue-raspberry Kool-Aid went down her face and arm.

“What happened?” Mom asked with a grin. “Too soon?”

“Yeah,” said Sammi. “I thought they’d be done.”

Sammi’s mom grabbed a kitchen towel and helped Sammi clean up. “Waiting can be hard. Especially for things we really want. That’s why God talks about waiting. The Bible says if we wait on God, because God is fair, we will get the best God has for us.”

“And,” Sammi said with a smile, “it won’t be messy.”

PRAYER: God, forgive us when we try to take control. Please give us courage and peace to wait while you are working things for our good. Amen.

—Shane Guldi, Children’s Pastor, One Church

WEDNESDAY • APRIL 24, 2024



You are God's chosen people. You are holy and dearly loved. So put on tender mercy and kindness as if they were your clothes. Don't be proud. Be gentle and patient.

Colossians 3:12

I don't know about you, but I like being picked for something fun. There is just something about someone pointing at me and saying they want me to be on their team. It shows the person who picked me sees something in me. They see I have something to offer the team that will put it at an advantage.

Colossians 3:12 tells us that we are *God's* chosen people. It is incredible to think that God, the creator of the universe, *choose us* to be on *his* team to help him spread the good news to those around us. Maybe it's your artistic abilities, or your gift of encouragement. Or maybe you're outgoing and make people feel at home. You have something God wants!

Can you imagine sliding on *mercy* like a pair of pants? What do they look like? How about putting your arms and your neck through *kindness* like it was a shirt? What does it look like? God's Word tells us we are to wear kindness and mercy like clothes. That's what people see when they meet us. They help us point others to *him* through our words and actions.

PRAYER: God, thank you for choosing me to be on your team. Help me to remember I am loved as I try to love others and show kindness and mercy to everyone around me. In Jesus name I pray, Amen.

—Shane Guldi, Children's Pastor, One Church

THURSDAY • APRIL 25, 2024

Give praise to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! He is the Father who gives tender love. All comfort comes from him. He comforts us in all our troubles. Now we can comfort others when they are in trouble. We ourselves receive comfort from God.

2 Corinthians 1:3-4

As a young boy, I loved to ride my dirt bike up and down our country road. I would pedal as fast as I could between my drive and my neighbor's drive. I would stomp on my pedals to lock up my back tire and see how far I could skid.

One day I got too close to the ditch and I skidded off the road. I lost control of my bike and I went down hard. With my elbow bleeding, I ran with tears running down my face to my mom to get her help. She knew exactly what to do to comfort me, because as a kid, she had wrecked on her bike and had to get bandaged up too.

Do you remember a time when you were hurt? Maybe it wasn't your elbow, but instead it was your feelings. Maybe your best friend moved away. Do you remember what your family did to try to cheer you up, to give you comfort? Maybe they prayed for you, or encouraged you with a Bible verse.

Did you know God even uses your hurt to help others? Being hurt helps us understand others' hurt. When Jesus helps us through *our* problems, we learn by his example how we can help others through *their* problems. Because Jesus comforts us, we can comfort others.

PRAYER: Dear Jesus, thank you for your comfort. Help me to see when someone is hurting and help me bring comfort to them. Amen.

—Shane Guldi, Children's Pastor, One Church

FRIDAY • APRIL 26, 2024

Don't do anything only to get ahead. Don't do it because you are proud. Instead, be humble. Value others more than yourselves. None of you should look out just for your own good. Each of you should also look out for the good of others.

Philippians 2:3-4

Amelia and Liam had been practicing for a race at school. Amelia trained hard for the race and practiced every single day. Liam also worked hard and asked God to help him do his best.

The day of the race came, and Amelia and Liam were both running well, but Amelia was a little ahead the entire race until her shoe came untied. At first she kept up her pace, but she tripped on it and almost fell down. She had to stop and tie her shoe before finishing the race.

Liam knew this was his chance to win! He could keep on running to get ahead while she tied her shoe. He was tempted to use Amelia's problem to make himself the winner, but instead he stopped while she was stopped. When she was finished tying her shoe and began to run again, Liam also started to run again. He ran as hard as he could, but he couldn't quite catch up to her. Amelia won the race and Liam congratulated her!

Liam had prayed and asked God to help him do his best, and his prayer was answered! God calls us to value others more than ourselves. Liam was humble and allowed the best runner to win, and that was doing his best for God!

PRAYER: Lord, help me to be humble and to put you first and others before myself. Help me to do my best for you in everything that I do. Amen.

—Cortney Coombs, Children's Pastor, Anderson First Church of the Nazarene

SATURDAY · APRIL 27, 2024



The Lord is holy and kind. Our
God is full of tender love.

Psalms 116:5

When we watch a show or read a story, if a character is doing something bad we hope he or she gets caught! Often the audience tries to figure out who is doing something bad and hopes that character will be punished for what they did wrong. We might even cheer when they get what they deserve. Can you think of a story where you were hoping the bad character would be punished?

Did you know God is not trying to catch you doing something bad and he isn't hoping you will get what you deserve? God is full of tender love and he sees you with compassionate eyes. The Lord is holy and perfect, but he died for you so you don't have to face the consequences of sin! He wants to catch you doing something good and encourage you not to give in to temptation. When you do make a bad choice, he wants you to ask for forgiveness so he can forgive you because he is so kind.

PRAYER: Lord, thank you for being kind! Please forgive me for all of my sins and be my Savior. I want to love you and obey you because you are our holy King. I believe you are the one true God who wants to be my loving Friend. Thank you for being my Savior, my King, and my Friend! Amen!

SUNDAY • APRIL 28, 2024

He went to him, poured olive oil and wine on his wounds and bandaged them. Then he put the man on his own donkey. He brought him to an inn and took care of him. The next day he took out two silver coins. He gave them to the owner of the inn. 'Take care of him,' he said. 'When I return, I will pay you back for any extra expense you may have.'

Luke 10:34–35

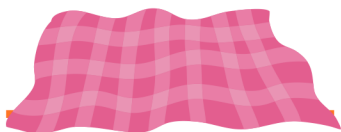
When Lucy turned seven, she received the best gift ever: a blanket with her name on it. It was bright pink, soft, and similar to what all her friends had. She took this blanket everywhere!

One wintry day, as Lucy walked to the park, she saw a woman huddled on a bench, shivering from the cold. Lucy knew some people lived like this, but it made her sad to think about it. Before she knew it, Lucy offered her blanket to the woman. The woman looked at her with tears in her eyes and accepted her gift.

That night when Lucy went to bed without her blanket, even though she missed it, she hoped the woman knew someone cared.

Jesus tried to teach us this kind of sacrifice when he told the story in Luke 10 of the man who gave up important things to help another man who was hurting. When Jesus talks about loving our neighbour, this is what he is talking about. Jesus modeled what it meant to love our neighbour when he gave up his life on the cross for us.

PRAYER: Dear Jesus, thank you for showing us how to love our neighbours. We pray you will help us see people who are in need. Please prepare our hearts so we are ready to give up for others. Amen.



—Tammy Herbert, District NDI President, Canada West

MONDAY • APRIL 29, 2024

My dear brothers and sisters, remain strong in the faith. Don't let anything move you. Always give yourselves completely to the work of the Lord. Because you belong to the Lord, you know that your work is not worthless.

1 Corinthians 15:58

When I was a little girl, I remember playing a team game called, "Red Rover." We were divided into two teams. We held hands and faced the other team. We called one of the children from the opposing team to come running towards our team, trying to break-up the chain of children holding hands.

I remember flexing my muscles, digging my feet into the grass and dirt, and holding tight onto the hands of my other teammates when someone was running towards us. I did all of this because I didn't want to be moved. I didn't want my team's chain to be broken.

God is calling us to stand firm in our faith. He asks us to dig in deep to what is right and good in his eyes. We need to hold on to his goodness. Today you might be challenged at school, in an afterschool game, at recess, or your workplace to go against what God would want you to do. If this happens, remember "God is calling us to stand strong!" If you see someone not treating another person correctly, the way God would want them to be treated, reach out your hand, be strong, stand firm, dig in, and stand up for that person today!

PRAYER: Lord, help us to stand firm in our faith. Help us to not be moved or swayed so we can stay focused to help others today. Amen.



—Sheri Lynne Martin, NDI Educational Field Coordinator, Canada



We are God's creation. He created us to belong to Christ Jesus. Now we can do good works. Long ago God prepared these works for us to do.

Ephesians 2:10

Before you ever knew you were you, God created you. He designed you just the way he wanted you to be. Go look in a mirror, and see how amazing you are!

It's hard to see others who have different skills or talents we don't have. But it's okay; God created each of us to be unique and to fulfill our purpose on earth. Just like God created the sun to bring light to day and the moon to light up the night, God designed each of us to shine in our own way.

Some people are helpers. They step in when they see someone in need. Other people have imaginations. They bring light through beautiful things. No matter who we are or where we come from, God wants us to discover our purpose and use it to do his work here on earth.

What are you good at? How can you use that to help others? Pray and ask God what he has in mind for you. Then follow his guidance and do it. Maybe God is asking you to reach out to someone who doesn't have a friend. Or maybe he wants you to help an older person in your neighbourhood do some chores. We are all unique and made by God to do his work.

PRAYER: Dear God, thank you for creating us and making us just right so we can do your work here on earth. We pray right now that you will show us what you want us to do. Help us to obey and do what you ask. Amen.

WEDNESDAY • MAY 1, 2024



My brothers and sisters, you were chosen to be free. But don't use your freedom as an excuse to live under the power of sin. Instead, serve one another in love.

Galatians 5:13

When I was a kid, I watched Batman and Robin cartoons on Saturday mornings. I loved the way this dynamic duo worked together to fight against evil. Superhero Batman was strong and intelligent, always figuring out how to solve problems, rescue people, and do what was right and good.

Each episode, Batman had a decision to make. He had to decide if he was going to choose to do good or to choose to do evil. He always chose good. I am sure Batman was tempted by all of the power. Maybe there were days he was tired, or hungry, or just didn't want to bother with other people's problems. But regardless, he always chose good.

There is a more important superhero in our lives. His name is Jesus. He made a choice, and decided to give up his life for us, so we would no longer be burdened by sin. This was the ultimate way to serve others, by giving up his life for all of us. Each day, we have a decision to make. Are we going to choose to be selfish and put ourselves first, or are we going to be like Jesus and put others first? Let's go and be a superhero like Jesus today!

PRAYER: Jesus, thank you for the freedom you have given me. Please help me not to have excuses, but to use the super powers you have given me to serve and love other people. Amen.

—Sheri Lynne Martin, NDI Educational Field Coordinator, Canada

THURSDAY • MAY 2, 2024



Don't just listen to the word. You fool yourselves if you do that. You must do what it says.

James 1:22

What would happen at school if you listened to what the teacher said, but did not follow through and do the work they assigned you? Would you get better at doing math if you just listened to the teacher but never did the assignments? What about if you listened closely to the science teacher but refused to do the experiments that showed you how it works?

Today's verse comes from the book in the Bible written by James, who saw firsthand what it looked like to see words put into action. James was not only a follower of Jesus but Jesus' little brother too.

All of James' life, he saw his big brother, Jesus, trying to show all of us how to live a life of love. Jesus gives us a lesson of how to live for him, but we can't just listen. We must live for him through our actions by how we share God' love and treat other people. We need to be committed and fulfill God's purpose in our lives.

The next time you find it hard to do homework or live out what Jesus teaches, remember this verse. You are a fool if you only listen and never do what it says.

PRAYER: Dear Jesus, your Word is so important to us. Help us to listen to it, but also put it into action and do what it says. Amen.

—Tammy Herbert, District NDI President, Canada West

Brothers and sisters, God has shown you his mercy. So I am asking you to offer up your bodies to him while you are still alive. Your bodies are a holy sacrifice that is pleasing to God. When you offer your bodies to God, you are worshiping him in the right way.

Romans 12:1

When I wake up in the morning, the first thing I want to do is eat breakfast. I am starving! My favorite cereal is Cheerios. I quickly grab a bowl and a spoon, pour out the cereal, open the fridge, and grab the milk. I twist off the cap to the jug or open up the carton and pour the milk onto my yummy Cheerios.

But there is nothing worse than when a disgusting smell hits your nostrils. The milk has gone sour! There is nothing I can add or do to my bowl of cereal to make it edible once the milk has been poured. It is spoiled!

God is calling us to be a holy sacrifice. What does that mean? It means we are to live a life that is pleasing to him. God doesn't want us to become sour or get sucked into doing things that wouldn't please him. Each day we get to decide if we are going to do what is popular in the world or what is pleasing to God. God wants us to think the way he thinks, and act the way Jesus acted when he was here on Earth.

Sometimes it's hard not to become sour, or to get sucked into bad behaviour, but God tells us in our scripture today, that he shows us mercy. All we need to do is to call out to him for help and he will always be there for us.

PRAYER: Dear God, help us not to have sour thoughts or actions today, but to live a life that is pleasing to you. Thank you for your love and your mercy. Amen.

—Sheri Lynne Martin, NDI Educational Field Coordinator, Canada

SATURDAY • MAY 4, 2024



Don't forget to do good. Don't forget to share with others. God is pleased with those kinds of offerings.

Hebrews 13:16

A boy left home with a lunch his mom packed, on the way to do one of his favourite things: fishing! Along the way, he stopped to listen to a man who talked to thousands of people about a new, different kind of kingdom that was coming. This man encouraged everyone to follow him and be a part of this new kingdom.

The boy lost track of time and soon he realized, “Hey, I’m hungry!” He grabbed his lunch, but then suddenly he realized no one else had a lunch. The boy overheard the men who were in charge; they were worried and discussed how they would feed these thousands of people. Even though the boy was very hungry, he offered to share his little lunch of five small loaves of bread and two tiny fish. That’s all he had, but that was all that was needed. You see, the man was Jesus, and Jesus performed a miracle and made sure everyone had enough to eat. The boy could have kept his lunch all to himself, but he wanted to share what he had. God was pleased that he gave up his meal to help others (this lesson also taught Jesus’ disciples to do the same!)

We all have something to give that can make a difference. Don't forget to do what is good and share with others.

PRAYER: Dear Jesus, what a miracle you did to help those thousands of people eat that day when the boy shared his lunch. Help us to see what we can give and what we should share with others. Amen.

—Tammy Herbert, District NDI President, Canada West

SUNDAY • MAY 5, 2024



Do everything you say or do in the name of the Lord Jesus. Always give thanks to God the Father through Christ.

Colossians 3:17

Have you heard or read the nursery rhyme, “Jack Be Nimble, Jack Be Quick?” Every time I hear it, I always envision Jack as a ninja. In order to jump over the candlestick, he had to be flexible, quick on his feet, ready for anything—much like a ninja.

Being nimble means we are flexible and adaptable. Just like Jack had to gracefully move and jump over the candlestick, God desires us to be nimble in our hearts and actions, too. Why? Because God calls us to do everything in his name. Whether we are studying with a friend, doing homework, or helping our siblings clean their room: do it all for Jesus!

When we stay nimble, we can be a blessing to others. Think like a ninja who moves silently and quickly, but do that to help someone in need. When we are nimble with our words and actions, we can be a blessing.

So, as we begin this week, let’s practice being nimble in our words, actions, and attitude. When we do everything for Jesus, we spread love, joy, and kindness.

PRAYER: Lord, we ask that you would help us be flexible and adaptable with those we encounter today so that in all we do and say, we are a blessing to others and point people to you. Amen.

—Diane Solberg, Pastor to Kids & Families, Bentonville Community Church

MONDAY • MAY 6, 2024



When he saw the crowds, he felt deep concern for them. They were treated badly and were helpless, like sheep without a shepherd.

Matthew 9:36

Have you ever made-up an excuse so you wouldn't have to help someone with something? Maybe you were busy with homework, you had practice, or you were in the middle of your favorite game. Matthew 9:36 says that Jesus looked at the crowds and felt compassion for them because they were confused and helpless.

Jesus didn't make up any excuses for why he couldn't help. He noticed people that were in need and responded. He was the perfect shepherd taking care of his sheep. He listened to people's stories, healed the sick, and showed love to everyone.

There are times that we may have reasons not to help. But what if we responded like Jesus did: always ready to listen, help, and love people? It could be simple things like sitting with a new person at school, listening to a friend who is upset, or doing the dishes without your parents asking.

When we forget our excuses and make ourselves available to help others, we become a blessing. Let's keep our eyes, ears, and hearts open so we can be like Jesus and be ready to lend a hand, even if that means changing our own plans.

PRAYER: Lord, open our eyes, ears, and heart so we can see the hurting people around us. Please give us courage to step up to meet their needs. Help us to be more like you today. Amen.

—Diane Solberg, Pastor to Kids & Families, Bentonville Community Church



Lord, teach me how you want me to live. Do this so that I will depend on you, my faithful God. Give me a heart that doesn't want anything more than to worship you.

Psalm 86:11

Have you ever gotten lost, felt confused, or not sure which way to go? I have to admit, I'm terrible at directions. People try to tell me how to get to certain places, but if I do not have my GPS on, I will probably still get lost.

Psalm 86:11 talks about the Lord teaching us his way of living so we can follow his truth. It's like God is our very own personal GPS. It's like having a front seat view to the best path in life! God's way is like a treasure map, leading us to love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. However, there is a catch: we have to be willing to follow his truth, just like I have to be willing to follow my GPS, even when it wants to reroute me.

God desires that we have hearts that are filled with love for him. When we worship and obey him, it's like we are saying, "God, you are amazing, and we want to follow your way because it's the best way."

PRAYER: Heavenly Father, we ask that you would teach us your way and make us happy to obey you. Give us hearts that crave to worship you, that we may honor you and become who you created us to be.

WEDNESDAY • MAY 8, 2024

“So, he got up and went to his father. While the son was still a long way off, his father saw him. He was filled with tender love for his son. He ran to him. He threw his arms around him and kissed him.”



Luke 15:20



Have you ever made a really bad choice? Ever felt there was no way you could be forgiven?

In the story of the Prodigal Son, the son asks his father for his share of the inheritance (lots of money). Once he gets it, he takes off to live a life of fun. Then he runs out of money and friends and realizes he made a *big* mistake. He was hungry and lonely, so he decides to go back home. He doesn't know how his family will react or what his father will say.

But guess what? His father saw him from far away, ran to him, and gave him a big hug. He didn't yell at him or punish him. Instead, he threw his son a party to celebrate that he had come home!

What a beautiful reminder of God's love for us. He will always be there to celebrate our journey back to him. When we ask for forgiveness, God is there to forgive with arms open wide. His love for us is the same for those around us. No matter how mean or bad a person may be, God is ready to forgive and welcome them too!

PRAYER: Lord, may we always remember that no mistake is too big for you to forgive us. May we know your love and remind others that you're always ready to welcome us back.

—Diane Solberg, Pastor to Kids & Families, Bentonville Community Church

THURSDAY • MAY 9, 2024



Trust in the LORD with all your heart. Do not depend on your own understanding. In all your ways obey him. Then he will make your paths smooth and straight.

Proverbs 3:5-6

I grew up in northern Indiana where a lot of corn grows and corn mazes open every Fall. Have you ever been to a corn maze? They are super fun, but can also be tricky to navigate your way out of with all their twists and turns.

From the moment you start a corn maze, you have to make decisions. Sometimes life feels like we are in a maze. There are so many decisions that need to be made. In fact, statistics show that we make thousands of decisions each day. Some of those decisions are big, some are not, but they all matter—especially for those of us that follow the way of Jesus.

God's word tells us the best way to navigate through life's maze is to trust him completely. Trusting God means we believe he loves us and knows what's best for us. Instead of us trying to figure everything out on our own, we ask God for help and follow his guidance. Just like someone who works at the corn maze, God can guide us out; God's word and our friendship with him will guide us through life.

PRAYER: Lord, help us to trust you and follow your ways. Give us confidence that you will lead us on the smooth and straight path. Amen.

—Diane Solberg, Pastor to Kids & Families, Bentonville Community Church

FRIDAY • MAY 10, 2024



God began a good work in you. And I am sure that he will carry it on until it is completed. That will be on the day Christ Jesus returns.

Philippians 1:6

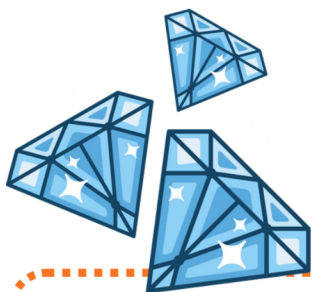
Do you remember the start of this school year? Or do you remember back to the beginning of this year (2024)? Maybe you had plans to get good grades, try a new activity, or make new friends. Perhaps at New Year's you heard adults talking about goals for the year, like reading more books, exercising more, or eating healthy foods.

It can be easy to have big ideas, but hard to follow through on them. In fact, scientific studies show that some people will quit their goals in a week, some in a month, and most in less than four months. That means that most people who set goals at the beginning of this year have already quit; they might not even remember what their goal was!

Thankfully, God doesn't forget! God created you, loves you, and has started a *good* work in you like today's verse says. It's a good work that God won't stop until it's done. God will never quit on you and wants to help you become more and more who you were created to be. God helps you to do more and more good works as you look and act more and more like Jesus!

PRAYER: God, thanks for loving me and for the good work you've started in me. Thanks for never giving up on me and for your promise to complete what you've started. Help me to be who you created me to be. Amen.

—Evan Offut Boesiger, Connections Pastor, Living Word Church



Be kind and tender to one another. Forgive one another, just as God forgave you because of what Christ has done.

Ephesians 4:32

Ever heard it said, “do to others what you would have them do to you”? That’s *the Golden Rule*. Once, when I was in trouble as a kid, I remember telling my dad, “They were mean to me so that’s how they wanted to be treated!” It’s easy to make excuses for being mean, impatient, and rude.

But Jesus, after washing the disciples feet at Passover (John 13) said we should treat others the way *he* would treat them. Wow! What should we call that? *The Diamond Rule*? That could work, since sometimes diamonds need to be dug out, cut, and polished. What if that’s what *the Diamond Rule* does? When we are kind and gentle with “another” like today’s verse says, we’re following Jesus’s example and we’re also being shaped and polished to be the best version of ourselves.

Diamonds “catch” and redirect light. Instead of catching bad attitudes and habits and making excuses, let’s follow *the Diamond Rule*. Let’s catch God’s goodness, forgiveness, and kindness, and also spread it around to others!

PRAYER: God, help me to treat others the way you would treat them. Help me to accept and experience your forgiveness and love and then spread them to others. Let me not to settle for excuses, but make me more like you. Amen.

SUNDAY • MAY 12, 2024



"I will make you into a great nation. And I will bless you. I will make your name great. You will be a blessing to others."

Genesis 12:2

Think about a time when someone made a promise to you or you made a promise to someone else. What was the promise? And most importantly, did you or that person follow through on the promise? Promises should not be made without thought. Sometimes they are broken and we find ourselves sad or disappointed. The good news is when God makes a promise, he always keeps his promises. He blesses us, and we can bless others by our actions.

Today's Bible passage is part of a covenant promise God made with the prophet Abraham. A covenant is like a promise but even more certain; it is a commitment to something or someone that will happen no matter what! Look at the verse above. How many times does God say "I will..."? God then turns his attention to Abraham and says, "You will..." God commits to making good on his promise to Abraham. The fulfillment of the promise would abundantly bless Abraham, and then Abraham would bless others because of God's blessing.

God's promises are reliable. When we make promises to others, we should keep them. So next time, when a family member asks us to promise to help around the house or do something with or for them, we should follow through as a blessing.

PRAYER: Dear Jesus, thank you for keeping your promises. Help me keep my promises to others and to be a blessing, so they can bless others, too. Amen.

—Beth Bidle Rush, SPARK Director, Equip to Engage

MONDAY • MAY 13, 2024



May the LORD bless you and take good care of you. May the LORD smile on you and be gracious to you. May the LORD look on you with favor and give you peace.

Numbers 6:24-26

I remember when I first learned to swim. I was trying to keep my head above water and move at the same time. It was hard! Despite water splashing in my eyes, I was able to look up and see my dad standing at the edge of the pool, watching me with a *big* smile on his face and cheering me on! Simply knowing he was there to take care of me and keep me safe, gave me all the peace and confidence I needed to make it safely across the pool! My father was a blessing to me that day.

That day helped me gain a better understanding and appreciation of our Heavenly Father. God loves and cares for us by giving us good things and protecting us. God cares about everything in our lives—big things and small things. God loves to bless us and for us to bless others.

In today's scripture, the Lord was teaching Moses how to pray a prayer of blessing over the people in his community. Isn't that amazing? God wants us to lift up prayers of blessing for others. Your prayers matter! Bless someone today with a prayer of blessing.

PRAYER: Lord, I pray a prayer of blessing over (insert names). I pray for safety and protection. Please take good care of them and help them when things get tough. May they have joy, peace, and many blessings. In Jesus' name, Amen.

—Mike Hancock, Lead Pastor, Hot Springs First Church of the Nazarene

TUESDAY • MAY 14, 2024



The blessing of honest people
builds up a city.
But the works of sinners destroy it.

Proverbs 11:11

Have you ever spent lots of time building or creating something, and someone came along and destroyed your creation? Maybe they laughed or made fun of you or what you made. Which takes longer: building something or destroying it? Why does it take longer? Our words and our actions either make people feel better or feel awful.

The choices we make with our actions and words can either bless or criticize others. Our tongues may be a small part of our bodies, but they can help, hurt, support, or destroy. Blessing others with encouraging words, caring for them, and lending a hand takes time, energy, and thoughtfulness. However, criticizing, making fun of others, calling people names, or bullying quickly destroys what others think about themselves.

Which would you rather hear or experience? Why? Can you think of a time when someone's actions or words made you feel better about yourself? I wonder what the world would be like if we treated everyone with love, kindness, compassion, and forgiveness instead of hatred, jealousy, judgment, and unforgiveness. Our words and actions either build others up or tear others' feelings down. How would God want us to treat others?

PRAYER: Dear Jesus, thank you for blessing me. Please help me to choose words and actions that build others up and be a blessing. Amen.

—Beth Bidle Rush, SPARK Director, Equip to Engage



So do not be afraid. I am with you. Do not be terrified. I am your God. I will make you strong and help you. I will hold you safe in my hands. I always do what is right.

Isaiah 41:10

Have you ever been the “new kid”? Maybe at a new school, church, or team? It can be exciting at first, but once you get to the door, your stomach turns and you might feel a little nervous, right?

I remember when I moved from Texas to Virginia when I was in 5th grade. My parents took me to my new school and I didn’t know a single person. I was terrified! My mom told me, “Don’t be afraid! God is with you and He will protect you”. Then my dad said, “Put your little hand in God’s *big* hand!” It was as if they were quoting today’s Bible verse to me!

I know life can be tough. The enemy wants you to be afraid, especially when God is leading you outside of your comfort zone. Even adults will hesitate to join a small group or go on a mission trip with new people because of shyness and fear despite feeling called by God. Obeying the Lord takes courage! Remember God’s promises when you are feeling nervous or scared. He will guide, help, and provide you with the strength you need to be a blessing to everyone you are called to reach. Overcoming fear is possible with God’s guidance!

PRAYER: Dear Jesus, I don’t want to be afraid. I don’t want to live in fear. Help me to trust in you as I put my little hand in your *big* hand! I trust your way is the right way. Amen.

—Mike Hancock, Lead Pastor, Hot Springs First Church of the Nazarene

THURSDAY • MAY 16, 2024

Give praise to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.
He has blessed us with every spiritual blessing.
Those blessings come from the heavenly world.
They belong to us because we belong to Christ.

Ephesians 1:3

Have you ever put on someone else's glasses, a funny pair, or even ones with colored lenses? It changes how you see things. Suddenly, things may look funny, out of focus, wavy, multi-colored, or maybe everything looks larger than it is. Today, let's put on our spiritual blessing glasses and name all the blessings God has given us. God's blessings are all around us. How many can you count?

Today's scripture tells us to give God praise for each of his many blessings. What blessings can you see, smell, taste, or touch, like people, nature, shelter, or food? What about blessings you experience, like love, peace, kindness, or emotions? Think about the spiritual blessings God has given us: saving us from our sins, forgiveness, etc. Can blessings be found in things that are difficult or not pleasant? What would those be? For an added challenge, become a blessing investigator and ask other family and friends what blessings they would like to praise God for. This could spark an idea you did not think of.

Good things can distract us from noticing God's blessings. We become so busy with homework, sports, clubs, and relationships. Taking time to stop and focus on God helps us to realize how blessed we are.

PRAYER: Dear Jesus, thank you for all the blessings you give me. Please help me not to be so distracted that I forget to praise you for all your gifts of blessing.

—Beth Bidle Rush, SPARK Director, Equip to Engage

FRIDAY • MAY 17, 2024

Christ Jesus set us free so that the blessing given to Abraham would come to the Gentiles through Christ. He did it so that we might receive the promise of the Holy Spirit. The promised Holy Spirit comes by believing in Christ.

Galatians 3:14

In today's verse, we celebrate that through faith in Jesus, we receive the promise of the Holy Spirit! This promise is a special gift from God. At the start of this week, we read about God's blessing to Abraham (see Gen. 12:2-3). God promised to make Abraham's family into a great nation with a great name and into a blessing to all families of the earth.

God's blessing to Abraham wasn't about making him rich, popular, or the boss of everyone. No, it was about something much bigger. The Savior of the world would be born out of Abraham's family line, forty-two generations later, to redeem *all* nations. This means that through Jesus, everyone can be saved! No matter which family we come from, the color of our skin, how much money we have, or what any of us have done!

When we believe in Jesus, we receive the Holy Spirit. The Spirit guides, comforts, and gives us power to bless our community by sharing and showing God's love to others. Sharing the love of Jesus doesn't have to just happen at church. You can be at school, in the cafeteria, or even on the playground. Who is the Holy Spirit putting on your heart to share the good news of Jesus with today?

PRAYER: Jesus, we thank you for always keeping your promises! We thank you for the Holy Spirit. May we listen to you and know when you are leading us to share the Gospel with those around us! We pray for boldness! Amen!

—Mike Hancock, Lead Pastor, Hot Springs First Church of the Nazarene

SATURDAY • MAY 18, 2024



Finally, I want all of you to agree with one another. Be understanding. Love one another. Be kind and tender. Be humble.

1 Peter 3:8

Have you played a sport like soccer where each team member plays a specific position, and you all work together to get the ball into the goal? Or maybe you have been on a dance or cheerleading team where everyone performs the same action at the same time. These examples of repetition, practice, and teamwork involve listening to a coach.

Peter wrote this letter to the believers in Asia Minor (and us as Christ's followers), asking them to work together and imitate Jesus's actions and attitudes. The ultimate goal is to become more like Jesus, meaning we focus on others. Imagine if everyone on the dance or sports team decided not to work together; they would trip over each other, create chaos, and ultimately miss the goal. The Bible reminds us to leave our selfish desires and perform as a team. Team members rely on coaches to show them better techniques as they realize the team's potential in showcasing their strengths and minimizing their weaknesses. Treating each other with kindness builds a great team.

Can you think of a way to partner with other Christians as a team to bless others? How can you practice becoming more like Christ in your actions and attitudes?

PRAYER: Dear Jesus, thank you for your word, the Bible, that coaches us on becoming like you. Please help me learn and become more like you, treating others with kindness and compassion.

—Beth Bidle Rush, SPARK Director, Equip to Engage



WAIT

“I am going to send you what my Father has promised. But for now, stay in the city. Stay there until you have received power from heaven.”

Luke 24:49

Do you like waiting? What is something you had to wait a long time for? How long did you have to wait?

When I was a kid, my brother and I loved attending church camp. We could not wait for summer to begin so we could spend a week at camp. This was our favorite week. We knew we would stay in a cabin, canoe, do archery, swim, and go to chapel. One year we were so excited to go to church camp that when school was over, we packed and got ready for camp even though it was about three weeks away. We were not very good at waiting that year.

Our verse tells us that sometimes we need to wait to receive what God has for us. Then we will be a witness and share with others about what God is doing in our lives and what God can do in their life. We can't jump ahead. We have to go in order. We wait, receive, and witness. Waiting is hard, but sometimes God asks us to wait for what He has for us. Waiting is an important part of God's plan.

- Go around the room and answer this question: What can we learn when we have to wait?

PRAYER: Dear God, help us to be people who wait on you, even if it is hard, so we can receive what you have for us and share that with others. Amen.

—Trey Brooks, Co-Founder, Equip to Engage

