



# HOPE STARTS HERE

April 6–11, 2020

*As we face this challenging time of social distancing, we want to join in daily devotionals, structured around our church's Core Values, to encourage us in our walk with God. We invite you to open by reading the Bible passage(s) for each day, then read the devotional text. Take a few moments to reflect on the Scripture and the text. Then close in prayer, including the prompt for each day but adding the praises and prayers that are on your own heart. May God bless his people through this time as we seek his face together!*

## April 6—Found People Find People

Adrienne Nolan

### ONE ANOTHER

[Hebrews 10:19-25](#)

Last week I was able to catch up with a good friend and mentor of mine. We talked about the changes this past month has brought and the ways that our communities are reacting. He's worked in ministry for several years and has a gift for creating environments where people feel connected and important. He often refers to Hebrews 10:25, the "one another" verse as he calls it, to show the importance of the body of Christ being together.

What would it look like for "one another" to be a verb? Would it be reaching out to someone you haven't talked to in a long time? Sending an encouraging word to a friend who is struggling? Helping mom and dad with the dishes after dinner... or ignoring the mess for the sake of quality family time?

The writer of Hebrews calls us to actions, conversations and prayer lives that spur others toward good deeds and love. Are you being kind to the fast-food worker or delivery driver who has to work stressful hours with a happy smile? Are you being patient with the cashier at the store who is exhausted and scared? Are you praying for our nurses, doctors, factory workers, pharmacy techs, social workers and political leaders?

How can you intentionally find people when many are hidden away out of fear and depression? What does it look like to "one another" in such a crucial and historical time?

**Prayer prompt:** God, share with us someone who needs to be found, someone who needs to be "one anothered." Let us be motivated to share the gift of salvation.

**PLAYING THE PART**

[Matthew 23:1-13](#)

Matthew places Jesus' condemnation of the scribes and Pharisees on Tuesday of Holy Week, while he was teaching in the temple. In contrast with the grace and gentleness Jesus shows to outcasts and those who were called sinners, Jesus doesn't pull any punches when he talks to the religious elites.

Notice that he doesn't condemn what they say. "Practice and observe whatever they tell you," he says, "but not what they do. For they preach, but do not practice." The word used in the Greek has come into English virtually unchanged: Hypocrites.

In ancient Greek, this was the word for "actors"; those who pretended to be one person, but in reality were another. When it's done for entertainment, this is fun. When it's done in life, it's something else altogether.

Especially at this time, we who bear the name of Christ need to be on our guard against hypocrisy. We need to bear witness to the hope we have in Jesus; we need to pray for our leaders and families and communities.

But we also need to bear others' burdens, to be servants to all. We shouldn't do this to be seen by others, but do it out of love. Are you calling your neighbors to see if they are OK? If you are able to go out for groceries, are you offering to shop for someone else who shouldn't be leaving home? Are you looking for ways to be the hands and feet—and ears and arms—of Jesus?.

**Prayer prompt:** God, keep our actions aligned with your Word. Make our lives in this world fitting testimonies to your goodness and grace.

Download a printable "Neighbors Helping Neighbors" flyer  
to focus your outreach to your neighbors!

[noefc.org/helpingneighbors](http://noefc.org/helpingneighbors)

**SPIRITUAL FULLNESS IN CHRIST**

[Colossians 2:6-7; John 15:8-11; Ephesians 3:16-19; 2 Peter 3:18](#)

Despite all the directions the world usually pulls us, it seems lately a lot of us have not had the regular pressures of our normal daily life fighting for our attention. There is more time to slow down, think, appreciate and really be intentional about our days, since we are dealing with a different way of doing life right now.

Last week I took my kids to the beautiful Metroparks and walked the paths through the woods. I was so aware of God's creation all around us and would point to something specific and say, isn't God so amazing!

The Lord has shown me many things in these weeks. He gives clarity, gratefulness and thankfulness, and he has especially reminded me to always look at the bright side of any situation. I felt so grateful walking through nature and thanked him as I walked those paths.

God expects us to grow spiritually. We have a long way to go as we walk through our life and relationship with him, but we should be growing and changing daily. We cannot claim to live for Christ if we are not being formed by Christ. Through faith and the working of the Holy Spirit, God transforms us. Aren't we blessed to belong to a church that helps us along in our walk! Pray and ask the Lord to reveal how he wants to change you and give you spiritual fullness in him.

**Prayer prompt:** Heavenly Father, help us to seek you daily to show us where you need us to change and draw closer to you. Guide our thoughts and help us to speak from our heart directly to you.

**COMMUNITY, APART BUT TOGETHER**

[Ephesians 4:1-16](#)

I was speaking with someone once who told me, “I appreciate that a live stream can reach a broader audience, but I prefer to see people face to face.” I completely understood where they were coming from. Unfortunately, the option of face-to-face just isn't a reality in this season. We are all learning new ways to be flexible during this time.

The beginning of Ephesians 4 is all about unity and maturity in the body of Christ. I've always held that a sign of maturity, spiritual or otherwise, is the ability to be flexible, whether that be with your time, money, circumstances or other elements.

In this time of social distancing, don't fall away from the body of Christ because of your own personal preferences. Be flexible with your means, continue to bear with one another in love, grow together, and stay connected through any of the various means we have provided to you through Facebook Live, Zoom and other options. Don't hesitate to visit [noefc.org/connect-online](https://noefc.org/connect-online) for a listing of all the ways you can stay connected to the Body in this time.

**Prayer prompt:** Father, help me to make a point to stay connected to my church family in this season.

**GIVE BLOOD**

[Isaiah 53:4-6; Romans 8:12-18; Hebrews 12:4](#)

On Good Friday, we often recall Isaiah's prophecies of the Suffering Servant, those words that were so profoundly fulfilled seven centuries later: "With his stripes, we are healed... The Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all."

The work Jesus did on the cross for our sake is finished. As Hebrews 9 points out, unlike the daily sacrifices of animals in the temple, Jesus' blood was offered once for all. It is a gift to us we could never accomplish for ourselves.

Yet as Paul reminds us in Romans 8, this gift has an appropriate response. As we considered the planned blood drive at our church, we determined to keep it on the schedule due to the great need for blood donations nationwide. We joked as a staff that we should put on the church sign, "HE GAVE HIS; YOU GIVE YOURS. BLOOD DRIVE MAR. 29."

Paul points out that we have been adopted into God's family; we are heirs with Christ. And the only appropriate response is to give our all. We should hold nothing back. Paul and the writer of Hebrews remind us that following Jesus will involve sacrifice and suffering. It will involve giving up our comfort, our time, our money, our stuff—perhaps our very lives.

It was gratifying to see every appointment slot filled on the day of the blood drive. But as we reflect on all Jesus gave for us, are we willing in gratitude and love to give him our all?

**Prayer prompt:** Jesus, help us to see the depths of your love through your suffering for us. Show us how we can truly give you our whole selves in thanks and love.

Join us for our live-streamed Good Friday service at 7 p.m.

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## PEACE IN THE STORM

[Mark 4:35-41](#)

Jesus asks his disciples to get into the boat and go to the other side of the lake. En route, he falls asleep and a powerful storm erupts, tossing the boat every which-way. The disciples think they are going to perish.

It can be frustrating, when we face our own storms, how often it seems that God is sleeping and totally oblivious to the danger. The storm, though violent and crushing, seems to concern him not at all. Could it be that Jesus knows more than we do? Could it be he is an example to us that when the storm comes, we don't need to be afraid, that in fact we can relax in the assurance of God's power and love?

I find it interesting that when Jesus is awakened, he seems perturbed. He "rebukes" the wind and shouts to the sea, "Quiet! Be Still!" And as we know, it becomes perfectly calm. All creation is under his control. But the more interesting part is this: You would expect the disciples to experience calm and a sense of relief, too. However, did you notice when the disciples truly become afraid? It was after Jesus calmed the storm and sea! They were undone by this question: Who is this man?

The only thing more frightening than being in a small boat in the middle of a big storm is being in a small boat with a man who shouts at big storms and succeeds. He is larger than the storm. But we know who he is: Jesus, our friend and our savior.

**Prayer prompt:** Holy Spirit, remind us throughout the day, every day, to worship God in our words, thoughts and deeds.

Join us for our live-streamed service at 10 a.m. Easter Sunday!

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