



HOPE STARTS HERE

April 13-18, 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 13—Found People Find People

Adam Falkenstein

SET THE EXAMPLE

[1 Timothy 4](#)

I have used this passage of scripture more times than I can count to encourage young people in their faith, especially with 1 Timothy 4:12, where Paul says to Timothy, “Don’t let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith and in purity.”

But I think, regardless of our age, and regardless of whom we are ministering to, we can put all of 1 Timothy 4 into practice. This season brings about many challenges, maybe even to our own opinions of the situation. Regardless of how we feel, though, we should constantly be looking to set an example, both for believers and non-believers.

When we think about the conversations we are having, or the things we are posting on social media, are we speaking and writing through the lens of leading others to Christ? Are we setting a Christlike example for everyone around us? Do others notice a difference in our speech, conduct, love, faith and purity?

If we aren't seeking the Spirit to set us apart in these matters, then we cannot expect to lead others to the Cross of grace and mercy. At best, they will see someone no different from the rest of the world, and thus find no reason to seek Christ, and at worst they will see a hypocrite, and flat-out reject him. Let us, instead, reject the world and reflect Christ in all we do.

Prayer prompt: Father, help me to set an example in my speech, conduct, love, faith, and purity, that I might find the lost and lead them to you.

FAMILY SERVICE

[Joshua 24:14-15; Romans 12:1-2](#)

Like everyone else, my family is searching for things to do to keep busy and away from screens. One of my sisters suggested “Marie Kondo-ing” some closets, to which my dad asked, “what’s that?”

My sister explained Marie Kondo’s tactic to pick up an item and ask “does this spark joy” and if it doesn’t, the item is discarded.

My dad paused, thought, and jokingly said “... can I do that with my kids?” Everyone erupted in laughter.

As simple as it seems, joking and laughing together is a way we can serve our families right now. Our normal ways of service have been deemed unsafe by COVID-19 and we have to get creative as to what service looks like at home. Joshua 24:14-15 is typically a proclamation of a family unit serving God—perhaps we can use the verse as inspiration to serve our own families. As the Holy Spirit is constantly working to renew our minds and our hearts, let us commit ourselves to creatively serving those we live with.

And as a simple reminder: You are serving others by staying home and washing your hands. It is a blessing to be bored during this time.

Prayer prompt: Holy Spirit, don’t allow frustration and annoyance to control how we interact with those in our household. Instead, let your grace and service guide us in love.

THE WAY, THE TRUTH AND THE LIFE

[John 14:5-14; Psalm 1:1-3](#)

In the light of Christ's resurrection, I was drawn to the familiar words of Jesus in John 14:6, "I am the way, the truth and the life..." It is one thing to celebrate the resurrection of Jesus. It is quite another matter to be *transformed* by the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

I was recently reading a commentary by Warren Wiersbe* on these words of Jesus. He compared them to Psalm 1:1-3 and described it as a recipe for revival:

Jesus is the way.

Blessed are those who do not walk in step with the wicked or stand in the way that sinners take or sit in the company of mockers,

Jesus is the truth.

but who delight in the law of the LORD and meditate on his law day and night.

Jesus is the life.

They are like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither—whatever they do prospers.

So let me ask you a few questions.

- Is your life walking the way of Jesus, or walking in step with the world?
- Whose truth are you following? Do you truly delight in God's truth and treasure his word in your heart?
- Where are your roots planted? Are you bearing his fruit for the sake of others?

I believe with all my heart that God's desire is for revival to sweep across our land and world as we rise up from the depths of this virus. But it will only happen if we declare—not simply with our mouths but most of all from the depths of our lives—Jesus is the way. Jesus is the truth. Jesus is the life.

As Wiersbe observes, "The less we are like the world, the more we will attract the world!"

Prayer prompt: Jesus, transform us by your Spirit to walk in your way, to delight in your truth and draw life from you.

* Wiersbe, Warren W.. Jesus in the Present Tense: The I AM Statements of Christ (pp. 124, 126). David C Cook. Kindle Edition.

LOVE IS NOT SUBJECT TO SOCIAL DISTANCING

[John 16:32](#)

During this ongoing COVID-19 quarantine, broadcast and social media has been replete with examples of families and communities demonstrating their loving support for each other in creative and generous ways, overcoming the challenges of maintaining appropriate physical distance.

My wife and I have delighted in the online “Facetime” visits and Instagram posts from our children and grandchildren. As Easter approached, with every indication that the lockdown would remain in effect, we arranged for Easter egg hunts in our yard for our youngest grandchildren, one family at a time, implementing recommended “social distancing.” Seeing them face-to-face, even from a distance, was heart-warming and reassuring, reminding us that we are not alone. Loving, and being loved, brings such rewards.

However, there will be times when the enemy endeavors to make us feel unconnected, unloved, and ALONE. But, as Jesus reminded his apostles, the Father was with him—and he is with us. We are always connected, always loved and NEVER ALONE. Though we may be “scattered” like the apostles, and locked-down “each to his own home,” love is not subject to social distancing restrictions.

Take this time to reflect upon those who love you, and those whom you love—family, friends, neighbors, co-workers, church family. And never forget that the Father is with you, always.

Prayer prompt: Heavenly Father, we thank you for your abounding love and assurance that we need never be alone, no matter the circumstances.

FEED MY SHEEP

[John 21:1-19](#)

I have always been fascinated by Jesus' appearances to his disciples between his resurrection and his ascension. In them, we catch a glimpse of our future—for our resurrection bodies will be like Jesus' in some way. At the same time, we see Jesus as he ever was, full of warmth and with open arms, gently chastising the disciples for their lack of faith, but always in love. I picture Jesus laughing often as he enjoys fellowship with his friends.

And it always brings a smile to my face to see how food-focused Jesus is. He breaks bread with the disciples in Emmaus (Luke 24:30), and he digs into leftover broiled fish in the Upper Room (Luke 24:41-42).

And in this passage from John, he invites the disciples to breakfast. As the Lord of creation, he may have spoken this meal into existence, but as a scouter I have to wonder if Jesus, in those predawn hours, was kindling a fire, throwing a line into the lake, cleaning fish, kneading out bread, and gazing over the water toward that small boat of frustrated fishermen who would carry his message to the ends of the earth.

What is his three-fold command to Peter? "Feed my sheep." Through this interaction, he definitively restores him to discipleship, but it is important to notice the parallel: Jesus has just fed Peter. He has granted a second miraculous catch of fish, and he has provided breakfast. All is given from the Master's hand. Yet his call to Peter is not to hoard his presence or his provision for himself, but to care for others.

"Come and have breakfast. ... Feed my sheep"—"Just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another" (John 13:34). God has provided us, like Peter, with his presence; he feeds us spiritually and physically. How is he calling us, with warmth and love, to feed his sheep today?

Prayer prompt: Jesus, remind us of the ways you feed us each day. Give us eyes to see the ways you are calling us to feed your sheep.

PRAISE HIM ANYWAY

[Habakkuk 1:1-4, 3:16-19](#)

The book of Habakkuk begins with a hard question: “How long, Lord, must I call for help, but you do not listen?”

There are times in our Christian walk we will feel that God has forgotten us, and we may wonder if he hears us at all. There will be times when we will not understand what God is doing. The prophet saw his own land being invaded by a violent enemy. Devastation was everywhere, and in Habakkuk’s mind he could not comprehend God’s way. Sometimes it’s okay to ask hard questions.

Christianity, however, has never only been about answering the great questions of life. Christianity is about being connected to the One from whom life comes. Sometimes the best thing to happen in our life is in fact the worst thing to happen to our life. Tragedy and difficulty can call us to seek him with diligence and fervency. Charles Spurgeon once noted, “I have learned to kiss the wave that dashes me against the Rock of Ages.”

At the end of Habakkuk, we seem to come full circle. Not all the questions are answered. The pain of devastation and want is still there.

But Habakkuk has learned to praise God anyway. Though figs don’t bloom and animal stalls are empty, though much in the world seems wrong, the prophet knows that his security is in God, whose very character is mercy and whose plan for humanity is ultimate salvation.

Sometimes we praise God not because all is good, but simply because he is good.

Prayer prompt: Father, teach us to praise you even when much in the world seems wrong. Help us to see your face today.

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

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