



HOPE STARTS HERE

April 27-May 2, 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 27—Found People Find People

Pastor David Hoovler

THANKSGIVING & LOVE

[1 Timothy 4:1-5; 1 Corinthians 8:8-13](#)

During the stay-at-home order, my family has been doing what we can to stretch the time between shopping trips. We've been exploring the corners of our chest freezer and getting creative with how to use up what's in the house so nothing goes to waste.

Food was a big concern for the early church. Part of this was because some thought that to become Christian was to become Jewish, including all of the ceremonial and dietary laws. The Jerusalem Council of Acts 15 deals with this, concluding that Jesus' teaching and the witness of the Holy Spirit declared all foods "clean."

Elsewhere, though, Paul takes up another concern. Meat wasn't common fare for most people, but it often came to the marketplace from pagan temples, where it had been sacrificed to an idol. Throughout his letters, Paul argues that idols are nothing in comparison with God. As he writes to Timothy, "nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving" (1 Timothy 4:4).

But we aren't the only ones to be concerned about. Paul reminds the Corinthian church that they must also think about the consciences of others. If someone sees you eating meat that had been offered to an idol, he says, that could communicate that you are also worshipping that idol, and push them further from the true God.

We are to be a people free from legalism, free from fear. But we must not communicate arrogance; we should draw others toward Jesus. As we continue through this season, are our actions saying that we don't care, or are they showing that we are a thankful people who love our neighbors to life in Jesus Christ?

Prayer prompt: God, make us a people of thanksgiving and love today, that our actions would lead people to see your goodness and grace.

THE LORD WILL SPEAK TO YOUR HEART

[Matthew 20:28; Ephesians 6:7; Hebrews 13:16](#)

If God has saved you from your sin, he has called you to serve him in some way with your gifts and abilities. When we serve others, we serve Christ. It is the most powerful way we can share the gospel. Every Christian is saved to serve! Jesus led by serving, and he loved by serving.

When we are busy with our own lives this can fall to the wayside. I am guilty of it in my own neighborhood with those who live right around me. Thankfully we have the Holy Spirit to nudge us and who will put things on our heart to love our neighbors, friends, and even strangers, whether they are living directly around us or some miles away.

In [John 13:1-15](#), Jesus sets an example for us to follow. After washing his disciples' feet, an act of love and service, he encourages us to follow his lead and serve one another.

Ask the Lord to put someone on your heart to serve and bless. It can be as simple as a note, a bouquet of flowers, a dessert from your kitchen or the bakery, a helping hand. An act of love serves others much more than we can probably imagine.

Prayer prompt: Holy Spirit, help us to recognize and follow what you put on our hearts. Let us follow your promptings to serve, love and help others.

CHANGE OF MIND = CHANGE OF HEART

[2 Corinthians 10:1-5](#)

We have seen a serious heart issue in America, and it has become more prevalent than ever in recent weeks. There has been so much talk about “fake news” in the recent past that it has almost become a joke at this point.

The reality, though, is that in our social media-driven world, everyone has been given a voice, and some of those voices spread lies or incorrect information. The problem comes when we are unable to discern between what is true and what is not.

It saddens me to see people disregarding facts and defying precautionary measures only to find themselves, or at-risk people near them, stricken with this virus or dying from it. I read an article recently regarding Christians, propaganda and conspiracy theories. The author concluded:

God has not called us to be easily fooled. Gullibility is not a Christian virtue. Believing and sharing conspiracies does not honor the Lord. It may make you feel better, like you are in the know, but it can end up harming others, and it can hurt your witness.

More simply put, “You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor” (Exodus 20:16).

I believe this falls right in line with what Paul is warning us against in 2 Corinthians 10:5. We cannot allow our hearts and minds to be swayed simply because something is worded well. Satan is a master of making lies sound eloquent and tempting; remember the Garden.

We need to put our trust in Jesus first, and carefully discern fact from fiction. Propagating false information does nothing to help our testimony of life change through Christ, and in fact hinders it. In this season, may we all be looking carefully how we walk, and speak, and share, and seek to do it all in wisdom ([Ephesians 5:15-17](#)), that we might reveal Christ at work in our lives, and through that, lead others to Him.

Prayer prompt: Father, help me to take every thought captive, that I might not be easily swayed by lies, but instead seek the truth found in your Son. Help me to seek wisdom in all things, that I would not drive others from your truth, but lead them to it.

SLIGHT MOMENTARY AFFLICTION

[2 Corinthians 4:13-18](#)

Let's acknowledge that these are challenging times. Some people are struggling with sickness and death. Some are making life-and-death decisions as leaders of governments or organizations. Some are placing themselves in harm's way to care for the sick. Some are dealing with abusive situations in a home they cannot leave.

At the same time, it occurs to me that many of us have to honestly say, "Well, I'm not as bad as all that." Yet we find ourselves depressed, anxious, irritable or stressed.

We have all faced challenges during this time, and our challenges are all different. We may be concerned about family members or anxious about our own health. We may be struggling to teach from home or to help our children with online classes. We may have lost our job, or we may be working longer hours than usual. We may be lonely, or we may be longing for some time alone.

Paul's challenges were different than those of the church in Corinth. Paul was traveling in hostile territory, facing beatings and death for his testimony. The church to which he was writing was beginning to experience their own suffering at home. Yet Paul described all of these serious challenges as "slight momentary affliction" (2 Corinthians 4:17).

He is not minimizing the pain. In fact, he has been emphasizing that he knows the seriousness of their sufferings. His point is that in the midst of their trials, they are being prepared to receive "an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison."

It is good for us in openness and love to share one another's burdens, whether they seem comparatively large or small. And it is good for us to speak to one another the encouragement that the God who brought us to this time will also bring us through this time, and to an eternal weight of glory.

Prayer prompt: God, help me to share someone else's burden today, and to allow them to share mine. May our words speak encouragement to one another, to your glory.

GIVE GLORY

[1 Corinthians 10:31-33](#)

Does “Blessed people give like God” mean tithing? Or volunteering? What about giving thanks to God? Or perhaps we could look at a model of giving based on what Christ gave us?

1 Corinthians 10 invites us to do all these things for God’s glory. But however we give, we should note our motivation for giving.

For his glory.

Last week, Adam wrote about selflessness. He shared that his wife, Sarah, spent several hours baking dozens of cookies and breads for friends and family to show them a little love in this hard time. Serving others with a selfless heart is a gift she has from God. I would agree.

I see the same attribute in my mom. A little over a month ago I moved into my first apartment and felt overwhelmed by the thought of unpacking and organizing. Without a second thought, she gave her time to help. Her heart shows care through selflessly serving others.

Today is May 1, the day we’ve all been waiting for, when we expect restrictions to begin to ease. But we need to remember that it is not about our personal expectations and wants. We are all excited and anxious to get out into the world again, but it may not go the way we all envision. Remember to be selfless as the world gets back at it. Please be kind as we all try to figure out what life looks like now.

And do it all for the glory of God. We are a blessed people; as such, we need to give heavenly glory.

Prayer prompt: God, make our motivation for every act and thought be your glory.

TIRED OF BEING THE HERO

[1 Kings 19:1-9a](#)

The Washington Post recently reported a story of 43 men who lived in their factory in southeast Pennsylvania for a straight month, working 12 hour shifts daily.

The reason? They were producing tens of millions of pounds of the raw materials that will end up in face masks and surgical gowns worn on the front lines of the pandemic. They finally went home for a break last Sunday. We are grateful for such heroes.

Elijah had been working ceaselessly for God against the tide of idolatry in Israel. But even as God worked miraculously, Elijah was tired and ready to give up. He ran away and told God he wanted to die.

Essentially, God's response is "Here's some food. Why don't you take a nap?" So Elijah slept, ate and decided things maybe weren't as bad as he had thought. We should never underestimate the spiritual power of a nap and a snack!

As human beings we get tired even when we are doing good. But our God is gracious and patient and understanding of our humanity. What's more, the Creator of the universe often gently chooses to serve us.

Jesus said in Luke 12:37, "It will be good for those servants whose master finds them watching when he comes. Truly I tell you, he will dress himself to serve, will have them recline at the table and will come and wait on them."

Think about the way you serve God; then consider how many ways God has graciously chosen to serve you.

Prayer prompt: Jesus, grant us rest in you. We worship you for the many ways you have humbly served us.

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

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