



HOPE STARTS HERE

May 18-23, 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. Open by reading the Bible passage(s) for each day, then read the devotional text. Take a few moments to reflect, 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 us as we seek his face together!

May 18—Found People Find People

Adrienne Nolan

WORKMANSHIP

[Romans 1:18-23; Ephesians 2:1-10](#)

March 22 is when the stay-at-home-order went into effect (that's 57 days ago for those keeping track), and we all know that our world started changing long before that. Over the last eight or nine weeks, it's become increasingly evident that positivity and motivation are hard to keep in supply. I've found myself asking the question, "If I don't have motivation myself, how can I encourage others to keep pushing forward?" If Found People Find People, how can I still reach others for the Kingdom even in moments I don't feel "found" myself?

Let's dive into the word *poiēma* for some inspiration. In Greek, this word is found in two places—Romans 1:20 and Ephesians 2:10. It is usually translated as "workmanship" or "of the works of God as creator." In both passages, a mirror is held up to the fallenness in our lives—wicked people, dead in their sins, ignore God's workmanship and the gift of grace he brings to make us his masterpiece.

Feeling down or unmotivated is valid; don't brush it off as if it's nothing. Lean into those feelings and let God work in their midst. But remember, you are found. You're his workmanship, his masterpiece. God calls you his own—let that be encouragement for your heart in the difficult moments, and motivation to continue to do Kingdom work.

As Pastor Rich wrote seven weeks ago, "Ask God how you can be a bountiful blessing, especially to those who are lost and distant from the knowledge of his powerful and gentle presence."

Prayer prompt: Jesus, remind me daily that I am your creation. Remind me that I, and everyone I pass, are created for good. Guide me toward your work; lead me to your hope.

STEWARDS OF VARIED GRACE

[1 Chronicles 23:1-6; 1 Peter 4:10-11](#)

I'm following a "Bible in a Year" plan for my morning devotions. The challenge with this sort of plan usually appears somewhere around February, when you hit Leviticus.

The opening of Chronicles isn't much better. It starts out with long genealogies, followed by the respite of a few chapters about King David's reign. And then, suddenly, the writer dives back into lists of names. These names are of the Levites, the tribe of Israel set apart to serve God. A few centuries earlier, Moses had assigned them specific roles in transporting the tabernacle.

David, however, is making preparations for the permanent temple that Solomon would build—no more campsites to worry about. So he gives new roles to the Levites. Some would play music for worship. Others would maintain safety in the sanctuary. Still others would be responsible for preparing the bread and oil for the daily offerings. And some would be administrators, officials, treasurers and judges.

It can seem quite boring to us, these names we can't pronounce. But for them, and their families after them, being listed among those caring for the House of the Lord was a great honor. It may have been a small role—somebody had to sweep the floor—but it was an honor to serve God and his people.

We are all "stewards of God's varied grace," as Peter writes. We've all been gifted to serve God and our brothers and sisters. In the midst of this pandemic, and as we prepare to gather together again, how are you glorifying God through your service?

Prayer prompt: Father, show me how you are calling me to serve today. Give me strength to step out in faith and in love for you and those around me.

ON WOBBLY LEGS

[2 Peter 3:17-18](#)

Our youngest grandchild just turned one year old. A short while back she learned to stand up on her own, and it didn't take long before she was putting one wobbly leg in front of the other for a few steps; then, down she would go.

This week, we watched her, from a distance, as she chased after her older siblings and even climbed a short playhouse ladder on her own. Physical growth is easy to observe and easy to measure—even if, as parents and grandparents, we wish we could slow the process! Is our “inner” growth as easily observable and measurable? It should be.

Learning more about our Heavenly Father, and becoming more committed to our relationship with him, feeds that inner growth. We change. The Holy Spirit gives us discernment so we are less likely to be “carried away by the error of unprincipled men.” We become more steadfast in our faith and less shaken by the seemingly endless crises of this world. We “grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ,” and are able to extend that grace to others even when they offend or mistreat us. As we grow in the Lord, others are able to observe the outward manifestations of how we change, even though those changes emanate from within.

From standing on wobbly legs to being steadfast and confident in faith, growing people change within, for all the world to see.

Prayer prompt: Heavenly Father, help us to continue growing in grace and knowledge so that we may be ever more steadfast in our faith in the face of challenges and adversity.

HOW DO WE LOVE?

[Ruth 1:6-18; 1 John 4:7](#)

There are two things in this familiar passage from Ruth that speak to me. The first is how much Ruth loved Naomi. The author tells us that Ruth clung to her mother-in-law and that she vowed to go wherever Naomi went. “Where you go I will go, and where you stay I will stay. Your people will be my people and your God my God,” she said.

These words were a part of my wedding vows. To be honest, I was simply repeating what the pastor had said, but boy, do I wish I had understood those words at that time. They are powerful. Have you ever loved somebody this much? Have you ever loved somebody so much that you “clung” to them and stood by them no matter what?

This brings me to the second thing that speaks to me in this passage: This is how we are to love God. We should love him with enough passion to say, “Where you go I will go, even if it is uncomfortable; where you stay I will stay, even if I am restless; and your people will be my people, even when they aren't who I had in mind.”

We need to love with the zeal and loyalty of Ruth, because that is how we are loved. John tells us, “Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God.” We don't even have to love in our own strength; love comes from God, and loved people don't do life alone.

Prayer prompt: Father, thank you for loving me unconditionally. Help me to love you above everything else in my life: above myself, my work, my hobbies and my desires. Fill my heart, Lord, with love that comes from you, that I may pass it on to those around me.

WHAT DO YOU HAVE?

[Acts 3:1-10](#)

This is one of my favorite stories in the Book of Acts. With this story we get a very clear picture of who the post-Pentecost Peter really is. The difference between the Peter we find in the gospels and the Peter we find in Acts is truly amazing. What causes that difference? The indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit in his life.

In Acts 2, Peter stands up and gives this incredible message that declares who Jesus the Messiah is and what he has done. He concludes by calling all who are hearing to “repent and receive the Holy Spirit.”

In our lesson today Peter and John are heading to the temple and approach a lame beggar who is daily brought there by someone who cares. The beggar asks for alms but receives so much more. The pinnacle of the story is captured in Peter’s words when he declares, “I have no silver or gold, but what I do have I give to you. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk!” More than alms, Peter gives him the love, the presence and the power of the Holy Spirit.

As disciples of Jesus Christ, no matter what our lot or status in life is, we always have the love, the presence and the power of Jesus Christ with us for the sake of others. Every Friday, the Fresh Start shower bus goes to the west side of Cleveland. There we provide showers and clothing. But, in fact, we come with so much more. Most of all, Fresh Start arrives with the love, power and presence of Christ and Holy Spirit. More than anything else, a platform is being built, and relationships are being established for the gospel of Jesus Christ.

As you start moving about and going more places as our communities begin to re-open, remember that you are always carrying with you the greatest treasure to share with someone else: the love, presence and power of the Holy Spirit. Don’t hide the Holy Spirit; share him, and others will be filled with amazement and wonder for the Jesus you love and serve.

Prayer prompt: Holy Spirit, remind me of the treasure that you are in my life. Show me how you want me to share you with others.

THANKS IN “UNCERTAIN TIMES”

[1 Thessalonians 5:16-18](#)

“Uncertain times.” “The new normal.” “Unprecedented.”

These are terms we’ve grown all too familiar with, maybe even too comfortable with, over the last few months. There have been adjustments that everyone has had to make, whether willingly or unwillingly, in the midst of this pandemic. With Ohio recently deciding to begin reopening, we are even seeing disagreements on whether things are moving too fast or too slow.

Regardless of where we land on the subject, there is a truth lying in the middle of all of this, one that we can all agree on: This isn’t going the way we want it to, and it’s uncomfortable.

But in this passage from 1 Thessalonians, we are told to give thanks. Not just when it’s comfortable, but in all things. Even, and especially, in the midst of a global pandemic where information and restrictions are constantly changing and we just want life to get back to “the real normal.”

Why give thanks? Because God promises that he is working all things out for good for those who love him. We can trust in that, because he has proved himself trustworthy time and again. Is this how I want things to be? No. But instead of shaking my fist at the world, I will instead raise my hands to heaven and give thanks to God for his love and the work he is doing.

Prayer prompt: Father, help me to have my perspective focused. Help me to be other-centered rather than self-centered, and help me to seek your face in the midst of my discomfort. Today, I praise you and give you thanks.

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

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