



**DAILY DEVOTIONS ON THE
PREVIOUS WEEKEND'S PSALM**

Summer 2016

Monday, June 27
The Giving List

Read: Psalm 16

I will bless the Lord who has given me counsel. —Psalm 16:7

By now, most of the Christmas presents have been lovingly purchased and carefully wrapped. Some have been mailed to friends and family who live far away.

But it all started with a list. You wanted to get the right gifts, so you carefully wrote a list, making sure to match each person with the right present. It was a giving list—based solely on the desire to give to those you love.

It's good that we do that, because it's so easy for us to fall into the trap of making lists of what we want to receive rather than what we can give.

Unfortunately, this happens all too often in our prayer life. There are so many times when we need God's help that we tend to make a prayer list that is like a child's list of stuff he wants for Christmas.

To avoid being one-sided in our praying, perhaps it would be helpful to keep two kinds of prayer lists: the needs list in which we bring our problems to the Lord, and the giving list in which we offer our praise to the Lord. Psalm 16 includes items for which we can praise God under all circumstances: His protection (vv.1,8), His goodness (v.2), His care (vv.5-6), His counsel (v.7).

In prayer, as in all of life, we need a giving list. And first on the list is praise to God.

*Lord, may our needs not come before
Our need to give to You
Our heartfelt gratitude and praise
For everything You do. —Sper*

A good attitude toward life begins with gratitude toward God.

By Dave Branon

Tuesday, June 28

Thinking About Heaven

Read: Psalm 16:1-11

At Your right hand are pleasures forevermore. —Psalm 16:11

In his classic devotional book titled *The Saint's Everlasting Rest*, English Puritan pastor and author Richard Baxter (1615-1691) wrote:

“Why are not our hearts continually set on heaven? Why dwell we not there in constant contemplation? . . . Bend thy soul to study eternity, busy thyself about the life to come, habituate thyself to such contemplations, and let not those thoughts be seldom and cursory, but bathe thyself in heaven's delights.”

That's sound advice. Instead of spending all of our time thinking about where we are, we as believers in Jesus Christ also need to think about where we're going to be. We'll go to a place prepared especially for us (Jn. 14:2). We'll be with God, where we'll enjoy “pleasures forevermore” (Ps. 16:11).

Baxter goes on to point out four benefits of thinking about heaven: It protects us from temptation because it keeps the heart focused on what pleases God. It maintains the vigor of the Christian life. It provides medicine for our afflictions, cheering our spirits and easing our suffering. And it makes us an encouragement to our fellow pilgrims.

With this in mind, we ask as Baxter did, “Why are not our hearts continually set on heaven?”

*O glorious mystery of love,
That I, a child of earth,
May dwell by faith with Christ above,
The Lamb of matchless worth! —Christiansen*

Those who have their hearts fixed on heaven will hold loosely the things of earth.

By David Egner

Wednesday, June 29

“It’s Bedtime!”

Read: Psalm 16

*My heart is glad, and my glory rejoices; my flesh also will rest in hope. —
Psalm 16:9*

In his book *The Best Is Yet To Be*, Henry Durbanville recalled that as a boy, when the shadows of evening lengthened and darkness fell, he would hear his mother call, “Henry, it’s bedtime!” Typical of all small boys, he resisted the idea of leaving his friends, putting his toys away, and going to his room for the night. Yet deep within his heart he knew very well that sleep was necessary.

Durbanville made this spiritual application for the Christian who senses the end of life drawing near: “Death is both affectionate and stern. When the right moment comes, she says to us, ‘It’s your bedtime.’ Oh, we may protest a little, but we know very well that the hour for rest has come, and in our hearts we are actually longing for it.”

The thought of dying can fill even a Christian’s heart with mixed emotions. When we think of leaving our loved ones, it may cause the tears to flow. The breaking of close human ties does hurt. On the other hand, there is the anticipation of resting from our labors and being in the presence of the Lord.

If we have placed our faith in Christ, we can look forward to the joy and release that will be ours when we hear the evening call, “Come Home. It’s bedtime!”

*In life’s eventide, at twilight,
At His door I’ll knock and wait;
By the precious love of Jesus
I shall enter heaven’s gate. —Blom*

**For the Christian, dying is the last shadow of Earth’s night before
heaven’s dawn.**

By Richard DeHaan

Thursday, June 30

Sleepless Nights

Read: Psalm 16:1-11

My heart also instructs me in the night seasons. —Psalm 16:7

The psalmist David had his dark, lonely nights when everything seemed out of control. Doubts and fears assailed him, and there was no escape from his problems. He tossed and turned just as we do, but then he turned to his Shepherd (Psalm 23:1) and reminded himself of the Lord's presence. That brought peace to his anxious, troubled soul. David said, "Because He is at my right hand I shall not be moved" (16:8).

We too have occasions of wakefulness when anxious thoughts jostle one another for attention, when we curse the darkness, and when we long for sleep. But we mustn't fret, for darkness can be our friend. God is present in it, visiting us, counseling us, instructing us in the night. Perhaps on our beds, as nowhere else, we may hear God's voice. We can listen to His thoughts and meditate on His Word.

We can talk to the Lord about every concern, casting our care on Him (1 Peter 5:7). We can talk about our failures, our conflicts, our challenges, our anxieties, our frustrations over His lengthy delays—all the things that stress us out and render us sleepless—and listen to what He has to say. That's what can set us apart from ordinary insomniacs. That's the secret of quiet rest.

*I couldn't sleep last night, but did not toss
And count my wakefulness a dreadful loss;
Ah, no! I was quite glad to lose my sleep—
I had such wondrous company to keep! —Seller*

When you can't sleep, don't count sheep. Talk to the Shepherd.

By David Roper

Friday, July 1
The Pursuit Of Pleasure

Read: Psalm 16:1-11 | Bible in a Year: Psalms 66-67; Romans 7

In Your presence is fullness of joy. —Psalm 16:11

The United States Declaration of Independence says that one of our unalienable rights is “the pursuit of happiness.” I think we would all agree that pleasure, the agreeable reaction of our senses to some stimulus, is a king-size ingredient of happiness. Most people spend much of their leisure time pursuing pleasure in the hope of finding happiness.

Scripture doesn’t say that we shouldn’t enjoy life. Indeed, Paul affirmed that God has given us “richly all things to enjoy”—like food and drink and the ability to sing, laugh, and make music (1 Timothy 6:17).

Paul also warned us that excessive indulgence in God’s good gifts may have a killing effect on our enjoyment of the supremely good. “[The widow] who lives in pleasure,” he wrote, “is dead while she lives” (5:6). And the writer of Ecclesiastes learned that pleasure cannot satisfy (Ecclesiastes 2:1).

Anyone who makes pleasure the main goal of life becomes desensitized to earth’s greatest delight—fellowship with God—which is also the abiding joy of heaven. As David wrote in Psalm 16:11, “In Your presence is fullness of joy; at Your right hand are pleasures forevermore.” No pleasure can rival that of fellowship with God—a pleasure that is a foretaste of heaven.

*A wonderful Savior is Jesus my Lord,
A wonderful Savior to me;
He hideth my soul in the cleft of the rock,
Where rivers of pleasure I see. —Crosby*

Fellowship with Christ is the secret of happiness now and forever.

By Vernon C. Grounds

Monday, July 4
Dependence Day

Read: John 15:1-13

I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing. —John 15:5

In the US, the Fourth of July is a national holiday when outdoor grills are heated up; beaches are packed; and cities and towns have parades and fireworks displays, picnics, and patriotic celebrations. All of this is in remembrance of July 4, 1776, when the 13 American colonies declared their independence.

Independence appeals to all ages. It means “freedom from the control, influence, support, and aid of others.” So it’s not surprising that teenagers talk about gaining their independence. Many adults have the goal of being “independently wealthy.” And senior citizens want to maintain their independence. Whether anyone is ever truly independent is a discussion for another time and place—but it sounds good.

Craving political or personal independence is one thing; daring to pursue spiritual independence is problematic. What we need instead is a recognition and acceptance of our deep spiritual dependence. Jesus said, “I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing” (John 15:5).

Far from being self-reliant, we are totally and eternally dependent on the One who died to set us free. Every day is our “dependence day.”

*I need Thee every hour, most gracious Lord;
No tender voice like Thine can peace afford.
I need Thee, O I need Thee; every hour I need Thee!
O bless me now, my Savior, I come to Thee. —Hawks/Lowry*

Our greatest strength comes from dependence on our strong God.

By Bill Crowder

Tuesday, July 5

Why Go?

Read: Psalm 122:1-9

Let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together. —Hebrews 10:24-25

It's Sunday morning, and our neighborhood is alive with activities. One neighbor is backing his boat out of the driveway as his family prepares for a day on the lake. Another sits comfortably on his front porch reading the newspaper. My daughter's friend calls and asks her to go to a basketball game. At the same time, our family is racing to find a missing pair of shoes so we can get to church on time.

Has that ever happened around your house? If so, you may feel as if you're swimming upstream against a current of apathy. It might even be easy to give in and give up going to church. Before you do that, think about what you'll miss.

* The joy of gathering with others who love to praise God for His greatness (Ps. 122:1).

* The encouragement, care, and unity that occurs when believers meet together (1 Cor. 12:25).

* Obedience to God's command to meet together regularly (Heb. 10:25-26).

* The instruction, edification, and challenge that come from the teaching of God's Word (2 Tim. 4:2).

No other Sunday activity can replace what you'll get by meeting with fellow believers. See you there!

*Our week's not complete till we make it our goal
To honor the Lord's Day and nourish our soul;
The help that we need for the tasks that we face
Will come as we worship and draw on God's grace. —DJD*

Christians are like coals of fire—together they glow; apart they grow cold.

By Dave Branon

Wednesday, July 6
Mrs. Craig's Problem

Read: Psalm 122

*I was glad when they said to me, "Let us go into the house of the Lord." —
Psalm 122:1*

Church attendance is a privilege. We recognize that some people cannot attend because of physical problems or other legitimate reasons. But those who can be in church should be. The singing, prayers, fellowship, and teaching of God's Word are just what we need for the week ahead.

The Nashville Banner reported that 81-year-old Ella Craig had perfect attendance in Sunday school for 20 years. That's 1,040 Sundays! The article then raised these questions:

Doesn't Mrs. Craig ever have company on Sunday to keep her away from church?

Doesn't she ever have headaches, colds, nervous spells, or tired feelings?

Doesn't she ever take a weekend trip?

Doesn't she ever sleep late on Sunday morning?

Doesn't it ever rain or snow on Sunday morning?

Doesn't she ever get her feelings hurt by someone in the church?

The article concluded by asking, "What's the matter with Mrs. Craig?" The answer? Nothing at all. But if we are not in church on Sunday when we can be, there is something wrong with us! We need to take a lesson from Mrs. Craig.

*Each week if we make it our goal
On Sunday to nourish our soul,
God's help for the tasks that we face
We're sure to receive by His grace. —D. De Haan*

Weak excuses keep some people from church week after week.

By Richard DeHaan

Thursday, July 7

Go To The House With Joy

Read: Psalm 122:1-9

*I was glad when they said to me, "Let us go into the house of the Lord." —
Psalm 122:1*

It was late winter in Kishnau, Moldova, a city near the Romanian border in what was formerly a part of the Soviet Union. "Uncle Charlie" VanderMeer, director of Children's Bible Hour, was visiting the city to encourage Christian workers and to tell children about Jesus Christ.

Another cold Sunday didn't deter the Christians in Kishnau. They turned out in force—1,500 strong—to worship at a church built 10 years earlier during strong communist persecution. According to VanderMeer, of all those who attended, only 20 or 25 arrived in cars. The rest either walked in the snow (some as far as 3 or 4 miles) or took public transportation. Some had to change buses up to five times. Then they did it all over again for the evening service. Amazed at the dedication of these people, Uncle Charlie wondered, "Would we go to church if we had to do that?"

The Christians of Moldova, like the people David wrote about in Psalm 122, were willing to go to great lengths to worship God. Neither the faithful in Jerusalem nor the worshipers in Kishnau had it easy. They faced many hardships and obstacles, yet they went with gladness and dedication.

As believers, we worship the same living God. Let's go to the house of the Lord with the same joy and eagerness.

Do you go to church eagerly and out of love for God?

Do you pray during the week for your church, your pastor, and your own preparation for worship?

A good indicator of our spiritual temperature is our eagerness to go to church.

By Dave Branon

Friday, July 8

Expect A Blessing

Read: Colossians 3:1-17 | Bible in a Year: Proverbs 8-9; 2 Corinthians 3

*I was glad when they said to me, "Let us go into the house of the Lord." —
Psalm 122:1*

When a person stomps out of a church service complaining about the quality of the music, the length of the announcements, or a poorly delivered sermon, he himself may be the problem.

Getting little or no benefit from a worship service is somewhat like going into a huge department store and coming out with a 99-cent item. Literally hundreds of thousands of dollars' worth of merchandise are available, but the shopper will take away with him only what he has come prepared to get.

If we enter a church service expecting a blessing, we have taken the first step to receiving one. If we participate with a genuine desire to hear God speak to us through the Scriptures, we will surely come away with our hearts filled. But we are bound to depart empty handed if we merely go out of a sense of duty, attend with a critical attitude, or bear ill will toward the pastor or fellow members.

The next time you go to church, go in the spirit of the psalmist, who declared, "I was glad when they said to me, 'Let us go into the house of Lord'" (Ps. 122:1). Then the hymns of praise, the fellowship of believers, and the preaching of the Word will bless your soul!

*The house of God should be a place
For praise and reverent prayer;
Let holy thoughts your spirit fill
And bow before God there. —HGB*

To be spiritually fed, go to church with a good appetite, not a bad attitude!

By Richard DeHaan

Monday, July 11

Fast Food

Read: Psalm 104:23-35

What You give them they gather in; You open Your hand, they are filled with good. —Psalm 104:28

An item in the National Geographic magazine carried this caption: “New Spin on Fast Food.” The article was about the phalarope, “a wading shore-bird that has a unique way of dining on creatures too deep for it to reach.” Spinning in the water at breakneck speed—a full spin per second—it creates a vortex that “pumps up” shrimp from a depth of 3 feet.

According to UCLA biologist William M. Hamner, the bird is also a speedy eater. His research team has learned that “phalaropes detect prey, thrust, seize, transport, and swallow in less than half a second, at a rate of 180 pecks per minute.”

The author of Psalm 104 probably never saw a phalarope, but he had observed enough of God’s creative genius in nature to fill his heart with praise. He wrote, “The earth is full of Your possessions . . . , living things both small and great. . . . These all wait for You, that You may give them their food in due season. What You give them they gather in” (vv.24-28).

Do we think of our life-support systems—the food we eat, the air we breathe, the strength we receive—as coming from the hand of God? Most of us take these provisions for granted. With your Bible open to Psalm 104, look again at the marvels of God’s world.

*This is my Father's world,
And to my listening ears
All nature sings, and round me rings
The music of the spheres. —Babcock*

All creation is an outstretched finger pointing toward God.

By Dennis J. De Haan

Tuesday, July 12

The Warbler's Witness

Read: Romans 1:18-25

*O Lord, how manifold are Your works! In wisdom You have made them all.
—Psalm 104:24*

A tiny bird, the lesser whitethroat warbler, spends summers in Germany and winters in Africa. As the days grow short, the adult birds head south, leaving their young behind. Several weeks later, the little ones fly across thousands of miles of unfamiliar land and sea to join their parents.

How do they find a place totally unknown to them? Experiments have shown that they have an instinctive knowledge of longitude, latitude, and the ability to tell direction by the stars. God has given them a calendar, a clock, and all the navigational data they need to fly thousands of miles to their parents' side.

The evolutionist says that our amazing and complex world developed by chance. But is this easier to accept than to believe that God created this amazing warbler, and thousands of other such creatures? To me, ascribing this to chance is absurd.

God's wisdom is plainly observable in the works of His creation. His handiwork in nature speaks so strongly for His existence and power that Paul used it as an argument to establish man's guilt and condemnation. He wrote that man is without excuse if he does not respond in faith to the God who made it all (Romans 1:20).

Our Creator deserves our recognition and praise! —DCE

*All things bright and beautiful,
All creatures great and small,
All things wise and wonderful,
The Lord God made them all. —Alexander*

We are spiritually blind if we cannot see God's hand in nature.

By David Egner

Wednesday, July 13

Insects And Their Witness

Read: Psalm 104:16-28

*O Lord, how manifold are Your works! In wisdom You have made them all.
—Psalm 104:24*

The more than 1.5 million kinds of insects display a diversity that points to the wisdom of an infinite Creator. The common honey bee organizes a little city inside its hive. It builds 10,000 cells for honey, 12,000 for the larvae, and a special chamber for the queen mother.

When temperatures inside the hive become so warm that the honey is in danger of being lost through the softened wax, squads of sentinels automatically take their places at the hive's entrance. Their fast-beating wings create a cooling system that rivals the electric fan.

French scientist René Antoine Ferchault de Réaumur examined a wasp's nest in 1719 and noted that it seemed to be made of a type of crude pasteboard. After further investigation, he discovered that most of the material was obtained from tree fibers. As a result of this study, the first successful production of paper from wood pulp was achieved. Yet God had instilled this ability in the wasp at the dawn of history.

There are millions of similar wonders in our world, more than enough to convince anyone with an open mind and a searching heart that a great, all-wise Creator brought them into being. He deserves our heartfelt worship.

*"There can't be a God," the learned fool scoffed
As he studied the bees at their business aloft,
And followed the planets, unchained, yet in place,
And pondered the spider suspending its lace. —Gustafson*

The natural world bears the signature of a supernatural Creator.

By Henry G. Bosch

Thursday, July 14

The Universe Is God's

Read: Psalm 104:31-35

He touches the hills, and they smoke. —Psalm 104:32

Rising 6.3 miles from its base on the ocean floor and stretching 75 miles across, Hawaii's Mauna Loa is the largest volcano on Earth. But on the surface of the planet Mars stands Olympus Mons, the largest volcano yet discovered in our solar system. The altitude of Olympus Mons is three times higher than Mt. Everest and 100 times more massive than Mauna Loa. It's large enough to contain the entire chain of the Hawaiian islands!

Long ago, David looked up at the night skies and stood in awe at the wonder of his Creator's universe. He wrote, "The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament shows His handiwork" (Ps. 19:1).

But the stars and the sky were not all that stirred the wonder of ancient writers. Earthquakes and volcanoes also inspired awe for the Creator. Psalm 104 says, "[God] looks on the earth, and it trembles; He touches the hills, and they smoke" (v.32).

As space probes explore more of our solar system, they will continue to discover unknown wonders. But whatever they find is the work of the same Creator (Gen. 1:1).

The wonders of the universe should move us to praise God, just as they moved a shepherd boy long ago as he gazed up at the heavens (Ps. 8:3-5).

*I sing the mighty power of God
That made the mountains rise,
That spread the flowing seas abroad
And built the lofty skies. —Watts*

All of creation bears God's autograph.

By Dennis Fisher

Friday, July 15
Come And Get It!

Read: Psalm 104:19-35

What You give them they gather in. —Psalm 104:28

A bird-feeder stands outside the window of my study where I sit and write. Every day, wonderful wordless sermons are preached to me from that feeder. The preachers are my feathered friends, and the message they illustrate so effectively is this: Dependence on God is right and reasonable for all of God's creatures, including you and me!

Here is the three-point sermon on God-dependence that the birds live out faithfully:

- Seek God's provision daily.
- Seek His provision expectantly, for He has satisfied you before.
- Seek His provision actively, taking responsibility to gather it in.

The birds illustrate Psalm 104:27-28, "These all wait for You, that You may give them their food in due season. What You give them they gather in."

The Bible is like a table, laden with nourishing food we need every day: promises, instruction, wisdom, comfort, and encouragement. Like any good host, God tells us, "Come and get it!" But we often fail to do this. We depend on everything but Him and wonder why our faith is feeble.

But if like our feathered friends we'll come and feast daily, expectantly, and actively, our divine Host will provide for all our needs. Depend on it!

*God's Word provides the nourishment
We need to have if we're to grow;
But if we do not feast on it,
Vitality we'll never know.— Sper*

God feeds the birds, but He doesn't throw the food into their nests.

By Joanie Yoder

Monday, July 18

Righteousness Endures Forever

Read: Psalm 112:4-9

His righteousness endures forever. —Psalm 112:9

A good deal of our unhappiness as we grow older is caused by our pining for the “good old days”—those times when we enjoyed health, wealth, position, or power. But the things of this world don’t last. They are vacillating, changeable, capricious. In time, they may be taken away from us and replaced with poverty, isolation, weakness, and pain.

When we realize that this world and everything in it is unstable and unpredictable, we are left longing for something that lasts. What is left?

The psalmist wrote, “[God’s] righteousness endures forever” (112:9). It is untouched and unharmed by time and circumstances. Nothing that happens in this world can take it away. It endures when life has stripped us of every other possession.

This righteousness is ours as we draw near to God through faith in Jesus Christ (see Rom. 1:17; 3:21-26). He is our rock and our salvation and the only source of true and lasting happiness. Psalm 112:1 says, “Blessed [happy] is the man who fears the Lord, who delights greatly in His commandments.”

Delight in the Lord and in His Word, and you’ll find true happiness. He alone offers a righteousness that endures for all eternity.

*I love Your truth, O Lord,
The Word which You have given;
Its precepts shall my soul delight
On earth as well as heaven. —Bosch*

Happiness is ours when we delight in the Lord.

By David Roper

Tuesday, July 19
The Work Of Our Hands

Read: Psalm 112

The righteous will be in everlasting remembrance. —Psalm 112:6

One reason we're left here on earth and not taken to heaven immediately after trusting in Christ for salvation is that God has work for us to do. "Man is immortal," Augustine said, "until his work is done."

The time of our death is not determined by anyone or anything here on earth. That decision is made in the councils of heaven. When we have done all that God has in mind for us to do, then and only then will He take us home—and not one second before. As Paul put it, "David, after he had served his own generation by the will of God, fell asleep" (Acts 13:36).

In the meantime, until God takes us home, there's plenty to do. "I must work the works of Him who sent Me while it is day," Jesus said. "Night is coming when no one can work" (John 9:4). Night is coming when we will once for all close our eyes on this world, or our Lord will return to take us to be with Him. Each day brings that time a little closer.

As long as we have the light of day, we must work—not to conquer, acquire, accumulate, and retire, but to make visible the invisible Christ by touching people with His love. We can then be confident that our "labor is not in vain in the Lord" (1 Cor. 15:58).

*If you rely upon God's strength
And live a life that's true,
Then what you do
in Jesus' name
Will be His work through you. —D. De Haan*

In God's eyes, true greatness is serving others.

By David Roper | See Other Authors

Wednesday, July 20

A Good Man

Read: Psalm 112:1-10

Blessed is the man who fears the Lord. —Psalm 112:1

A good man is hard to find these days. At least that's the impression you might get from a society that is having a tough time finding heroes.

Too often, though, we look in the wrong places when we're searching for role models. We look for someone who is a good athlete or who makes a lot of money or who commands respect because of leadership skills.

When we look only in these situations for good men, we fail to see that most of the godly men are not in the spotlight. They are just quietly and faithfully serving their families, their friends, and God.

In Psalm 112 we see a clear set of guidelines for what makes a man good. According to the psalmist, a good man fears the Lord (v.1), delights in God's commands (v.1), and is gracious, compassionate, and righteous (v.4). He is generous and exercises discretion (v.5). He is unshakable in his faith, and he has no fear because his trust is in God (vv.6-8).

Looking for a good man? In a society where so many are anything but godly, how can we set the right example? Look at Psalm 112. It's a pattern all Christian men (and women) need to follow if they want to make a difference in their world.

*The model of a man is he
Whose life is strong and true,
Who loves the Lord with all his heart
And seeks His will to do. —DJD*

To make a difference in the world, let Jesus make a difference in you.

By Dave Branon

Thursday, July 21
He Lights The Way

Read: Psalm 112

Unto the upright there arises light in the darkness. —Psalm 112:4

A missionary in Peru went to visit a group of believers one evening. She knew that the house where they were meeting was located on a cliff and the path would be treacherous. She took a taxi as far as it could go, and then she began the hazardous ascent to the house on foot. The night was dark and the way was very difficult. As she rounded a bend, she suddenly came upon several believers carrying bright lanterns. They had come out to light the way. Her fears were relieved, and she ascended the path easily.

In a similar way, God lights our path. When we trust Jesus as our Savior, He who is the Light of the world enters our lives and removes the darkness of our sin and despair. This light continues to comfort us through times of sorrow. In the midst of sadness, trouble, illness, or disappointment, the Lord brightens the way and encourages His children by giving hope.

This may come through a word of exhortation from a fellow believer. It may be the illumination of God's Word by the ministry of the Holy Spirit. It may be calm reassurance in response to heartfelt prayer. Or it may be the miraculous supply of a specific need. Whatever the case, God sends light when we are engulfed in darkness. Jesus gives light in the darkest night!

*No darkness have we who in Jesus abide—
The Light of the world is Jesus;
We walk in the Light when we follow our Guide—
The Light of the world is Jesus. —Bliss*

God sometimes puts us in the dark to show us that Jesus is the light.

By David Egner

Friday, July 22

The Task Remains

Read: Psalm 112

He will not be afraid of evil tidings; his heart is steadfast, trusting in the Lord. —Psalm 112:7

Our life had always been rather simple. When my wife and I were first married, we were not looking for riches or fame—just a way to glorify God with whatever He gave us to do. In all arenas of our life, that purpose stayed clear. As our children grew and I began working at RBC Ministries, our goal continued to center around glorifying God.

But then, in 2002, came bad news of the worst kind. Our third child, 17-year-old Melissa, was unexpectedly ushered into heaven. Suddenly, we were forced to rethink things. Could we, in our new identity as bereaved parents, still find a way to glorify God? Or did this unbearable circumstance alter our perspective and goal?

We've spent a lot of time pondering that question. When the One you've entrusted with your children allows one of them to be taken, it would be easy to stop trusting, serving, and pointing others to God. But the psalmist's words showed us the way. He said that the person who fears God "will never be shaken . . . His heart is steadfast" (Ps. 112:6-7). And so we—and you, no matter what you are facing—can continue to be "steadfast, trusting in the Lord."

Even in the face of "evil tidings," the task remains: Glorify God.

*Griefs bravely borne may serve Him
And richly glorify,
As quiet waters mirror
The beauty of the sky. —Nicholson*

Trust through sorrow brings triumph over sadness.

By Dave Branon

Monday, July 25
God Of New Beginnings

Read: Psalm 25:1-12

God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble. —James 4:6

How did you learn to skate?" someone asked the winner of a competition. "By getting up every time I fell down," was the reply.

The Christian life is also a series of new beginnings, of falling down and getting up again. When we stumble, we often think, "I've failed again. I might as well give up." But God is the God of new beginnings. He not only forgives our sins, but He also uses our failures to make us wiser.

Sometimes our pride can cause us to resist starting again. In Psalm 25, David showed a heart of humility by praying for forgiveness. He asked the Lord to forgive the sins of his youth (v.7), and he rejoiced that God teaches sinners (v.8), guides and instructs the humble (v.9), and teaches His ways to those who fear Him (v.12).

John Newton, the composer of "Amazing Grace," expressed a similar perspective: "Though I am not what I ought to be, nor what I wish to be, nor yet what I hope to be, I can truly say I am not what I once was By the grace of God I am what I am!"

Do you feel like a failure? Do you need a new start? Go to the Lord in humility, and He'll show you that He's the God of new beginnings.

*Amazing grace—how sweet the sound—
That saved a wretch like me!
I once was lost but now am found,
Was blind but now I see. —Newton*

Failure is never final for those who begin again with God.

By Joanie Yoder

Tuesday, July 26

Guidance From Above

Read: Psalm 25:4-15

Show me Your ways, O Lord; teach me Your paths. —Psalm 25:4

The Global Positioning System (GPS) is changing the way we work, travel, and play. Using the signals from multiple satellites, an inexpensive GPS receiver can compute your location anywhere in the world. Using the information can help a lost hiker return to camp, enable a driver to locate a house in a strange city, or guide commercial fishermen back to the place of a big catch. In a very real sense, it is “guidance from above.”

But it helps only the person who believes the information and acts on it. What if a person viewed the GPS readout and said, “I can’t possibly be where this says I am”? What good would it be if a person turned off the unit, jammed it in a pocket, and headed out on his own, saying, “I know I’m going east, even if this thing says I’m going south”?

In a similar way, God’s guidance through the Bible benefits us only when we trust His Word and obey it. “The humble He guides in justice,” the psalmist wrote, “and the humble He teaches His way. All the paths of the Lord are mercy and truth, to such as keep His covenant and His testimonies” (Psalm 25:9-10).

Remember, guidance from above is promised to all who will accept God’s Word and follow His directions.

*We need God's guidance from above,
His daily leading, constant love;
As we trust Him for direction,
To our course He'll make correction. —Fitzhugh*

The question is not only "where do we stand?" but also "where are we headed?"

By David McCasland

Wednesday, July 27
All The Wrong Notes

Read: Psalm 25:6-9

*Good and upright is the Lord; therefore He teaches sinners in the way. —
Psalm 25:8*

Ansel Adams, the well-known landscape photographer and conservationist, told a story about himself that I've been fond of ever since I heard it. Before he became famous as a photographer, he studied piano and showed some talent. At one of his first recitals he played Chopin's Nocturne in F Major. "In some strange way," he said, "my right hand started off in F-sharp major while my left hand behaved well in F major. I could not bring them together. I went through the entire nocturne with the hands separated by a half-step."

The next day, someone walked up to him and jokingly commented, "You never missed a wrong note!"

Perhaps you feel that way about your performance as a Christian. You want to live for God and please Him, but some days it seems that you "never miss a wrong note." You feel like such a failure. "How can God care about a sinner like me?" you ask.

Yet you can be sure that God loves you and will help you if you reach out to Him. The psalmist declared that the Lord "teaches sinners in the way. The humble He guides in justice, and the humble He teaches His way" (Psalm 25:8-9).

*So don't give up on yourself—God hasn't!
Confess your sins and humbly seek His help today. —DHR*

Jesus died on the cross for all your sins—not just some of them.

By David Roper

Thursday, July 28
E-Mail Challenge

Read: 1 Samuel 17:31-58

*I come to you in the name of the Lord of hosts . . . whom you have defied. —
1 Samuel 17:45*

It came to me as a two-sentence e-mail from Norway: “I think that Jesus Christ never existed, and I believe we are from monkeys! You are stupid to believe in Jesus.”

I believe this anonymous scoffer represents a growing number of people who not only reject Christ but are closed to the facts that support belief in God and creation. They are unwilling to consider the evidence.

How do we witness to such a person? How do we present Christ to someone who won’t even listen to us? In his book *Foolishness to the Greeks*, Lesslie Newbigin suggests that we need to have the courage to “hold and proclaim a belief that cannot be proved to be true” by the world’s standards.

That’s what David was doing when he said that with God’s help he could defeat Goliath (1 Sam. 17:45-47). He believed what could not be proven at that moment. He may have sounded foolish to the skeptics around him, but he knew that the One he served would show Himself to be the true and living God.

In response to the skeptics, we can affirm our confidence in the Bible’s uncompromising truths. And we can echo David’s words: “O my God, I trust in You; let me not be ashamed; let not my enemies triumph over me” (Ps. 25:2).

*The skeptic questions, doubts, and scoffs,
Protesting truths we hold so dear;
But God's Word stands, its truth remains,
Proclaiming what we need to hear. —K. De Haan*

The evidence for God is clear to the one who is looking for Him.

By David Egner

Friday, July 29

Bubbles On The Border

Read: 2 Corinthians 4:8-18

We do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. —2 Corinthians 4:18

Stuck in a long line at the US-Canada border, Joel Schoon Tanis had to do something to lighten the mood! He reached for his bottles of bubble-making solution, bounded out of the car, and began blowing bubbles. He handed bottles to other drivers too, and he says that “soon there were bubbles everywhere. . . . It’s amazing what bubbles do for people.” The line didn’t move any faster, but “suddenly everyone was happy,” Joel says.

“What we see depends mainly on what we look for,” said British statesman John Lubbock (1834–1913). A good attitude and the right focus help us to handle life joyfully, even though it doesn’t change our circumstances.

Paul encouraged the Corinthians in their trials: “Do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal” (2 Cor. 4:18).

So what’s unseen and eternal that we can look at? The character of God is an excellent place to focus. He is good (Ps. 25:8), He is just (Isa. 30:18), He is forgiving (1 John 1:9), and He is faithful (Deut. 7:9).

Pondering God’s character can give us joy in the midst of our struggles.

*The eyes of faith when fixed on Christ Give hope for what’s ahead;
But focus on life’s obstacles, And faith gives way to dread. —D. De Haan*

When Christ is the center of your focus, all else will come into proper perspective.

By Anne Cetas

Monday, August 1
'God Hides His Face'

Read: Psalm 77:1-15

Will the Lord cast off forever? And will He be favorable no more? —Psalm 77:7

Does it ever seem as if you can't get through to God in prayer? If so, you're not alone.

David Brainerd was a godly missionary to the North American Indians in colonial days. He kept a diary in which he recorded his spiritual mountain peaks as well as his valleys. At one point he wrote, "I lodge in a bundle of straw, my labor is hard and extremely difficult, and I have little appearance of success to comfort me. . . . But what makes all my difficulties grievous to be borne is that God hides His face from me."

When it seems God isn't listening, that He's "forgotten to be gracious" (Psalm 77:9), what should you do?

* Recognize that your experience is not unique and doesn't mean you are an outcast

from God's redeemed family.

* Seek out a fellow believer with whom you can share your feelings and ask for prayer (1 Thessalonians 5:25).

* Meditate on the truths of Scripture and what God has done for you in the past (Psalm 77:11-12).

* Keep on praying in faith to your great God, no matter how silent heaven may seem (Luke 18:1).

Remember, our God is "the God who does wonders"! (Psalm 77:14).

*And since He bids me seek His face,
Believe His Word and trust His grace,
I'll cast on Him my every care,
And wait for thee, sweet hour of prayer. —Walford*

When it comes to prayer, don't hang up—hang on!

By Vernon C. Grounds

Tuesday, August 2

Days Of Doubt

Read: Psalm 77:1-20

I will remember the works of the Lord. —Psalm 77:11

In 1970, Ronald Dunn began keeping a record of answered prayers and special blessings in a little book. He misplaced the book but found it again several years later at a time when his faith was floundering. He was surprised that he had forgotten most of the incidents he had written about.

As he was reading, something happened. “My memory of God’s faithfulness was revived and my sagging faith began to recover,” he said. “Remembering had restored my confidence in the Lord.” Dunn now encourages Christians to keep a book of remembrance, recording God’s activity in their lives. “One day,” he writes, “it may mean the difference between victory and defeat.”

In Psalm 77, Asaph’s faith was also floundering. After listing his serious doubts, he asked, “Has God forgotten to be gracious?” (v.9). Suddenly he stopped and said: “I will remember the years of [God’s] right hand . . . I will remember the works of the Lord; surely I will remember Your wonders of old” (vv.10-11). The act of remembering obviously revived his faith. Just read the rest of the psalm!

Why not create your own book of remembrance, recording God’s wonderful deeds? Then read it often, especially on days of doubt. —JEY

*When faith grows weak and doubts arise
Recall God's love and tender care;
Remind yourself of all He's done
And of those times He answered prayer. —D. De Haan*

Remembering God's goodness is a good cure for doubt.

By Joanie Yoder

Wednesday, August 3

Known Unto God

Read: Psalm 77:1-15

Has God forgotten to be gracious? Has He in anger shut up His tender mercies? —Psalm 77:9

While visiting a World War I military cemetery in France, I was struck by the number of grave markers bearing only these words:

A SOLDIER OF THE GREAT WAR: KNOWN UNTO GOD

The cemetery was surrounded on three sides by stone panels bearing the names of 20,000 soldiers who fell in nearby battles. Imagining the loneliness of men dying in war and the anguish of families grieving at home was overpowering.

There may be times in life when we feel forgotten and alone. Like the psalmist we cry out: “Will the Lord cast off forever? And will He be favorable no more? . . . Has God forgotten to be gracious? Has He in anger shut up His tender mercies?” (Psalm 77:7,9).

The psalmist’s answer to feeling abandoned came in remembering all that God had done in the past, meditating on His wonderful work, and speaking of it to others (vv.11-12).

In our darkest moments, we can remember the words of Jesus: “Are not five sparrows sold for two copper coins? And not one of them is forgotten before God. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Do not fear therefore; you are of more value than many sparrows” (Luke 12:6-7).

We are never forgotten by God.

*When trials loom or death is near,
In Christ we can confide;
We never need to feel alone—
He's always at our side. —Sper*

In every desert of trial, God has an oasis of comfort.

By David McCasland

Thursday, August 4
Abandoned To God

Read: Psalm 77:1-20

I cried out to God with my voice . . . and He gave ear to me. —Psalm 77:1

Walter Cizsek, a Christian in the former Soviet Union, was imprisoned and tortured for his faith in Christ. He was forced to make a soul-rending choice: cooperation or execution. Cooperate with liars and murderers? Never! But an agonizing death? How could he endure that?

On the verge of losing his faith in God, Walter began to pray desperately. Eventually he was able to abandon himself completely to the will of the Father. He writes that God's will was not "out there" but "in the situations in which I found myself. What He wanted was for me to accept these situations from His hands, to let go of the reins and place myself entirely at His disposal." Empowered by grace, Walter was able to do just that.

Have you ever felt abandoned by God? Have you ever felt like the psalmist who cried out in despair, "Has God forgotten to be gracious? Has He in anger shut up His tender mercies?" (Ps. 77:9). The psalmist's distress was alleviated when he remembered and meditated on the wonderful works of the Lord and realized that He is totally in control (vv.10-20).

As we "let go of the reins" and place ourselves entirely at God's disposal, our feelings of abandonment by Him will fade away.

*When we're abandoned to God's will,
We need not doubt or fear;
We'll know that He is in control,
That He is always near. —Sper*

No one who is abandoned to God will feel abandoned by God.

By Vernon C. Grounds

Friday, August 5
Dangerous Crossings

Read: Psalm 77:16-20

Your way was in the sea, Your path in the great waters, and Your footsteps were not known. —Psalm 77:19

I don't wade in swift streams anymore. The bottom's too slippery, the current's too strong, and my old legs aren't what they used to be.

So many challenges that I once took on readily are now too difficult for me. Like the psalmist, I lose sleep sometimes, wondering how I can negotiate them (Psalm 77:1-4).

Then I remember the "works of the Lord," His "wonders of old" (v.11). His "way was in the sea, [His] path in the great waters," though He left no footprints behind (v.19).

That's the way it is with God. Although you can't see Him, He is surely there. Unseen, He leads His people "like a flock" (v.20). He does not fear the currents and storms of life, for His strength and courage are infinite.

And there's more: The Shepherd leads us through the help of other people. He led Israel "by the hand of Moses and Aaron" (v.20). He leads us in the wise counsel of a father or mother, in the strong grip of a godly friend, in the loving encouragement of a caring husband or wife, in the gentle touch of a young child.

Good hands are reaching out to us. Our Lord is a tough and tender Shepherd who leads through perilous crossings to the other side. Have you put your hand in His?

Thinking It Over

*What causes you to lose sleep? Why not leave it in God's hands?
Learn how by reading *What Can I Do With My Worry?**

God tells us to burden Him with what burdens us.

By David Roper

Monday, August 8

Hallelujah!

Read: Psalm 148:1-14

*Let them praise the name of the Lord, for His name alone is exalted. —
Psalm 148:13*

Recently I saw a television commercial that made it appear that fish and animals were singing “The Hallelujah Chorus.” At first it seemed a bit absurd and even sacrilegious to see angelfish and brown bears mouthing the word hallelujah. But as I thought about it, a passage of Scripture came to mind.

Psalm 148 calls for everything in creation to praise the Lord. Included in the invitation are “great sea creatures” (v.7), “beasts and all cattle; creeping things and flying fowl” (v.10). Not exactly the usual crowd in the choir loft or the congregation on Sunday morning!

As you read Psalm 148, count the number of different elements of God’s creation that are invited to join in praising the Lord. Among them are angels, stars, sea creatures, mountains, trees, animals, kings and princes, men and women, young and old.

The psalmist cried out, “Let them praise the name of the Lord, for His name alone is exalted; His glory is above the earth and heaven” (v.13). Is anyone or anything excluded from this invitation? It appears not.

On this day and throughout the year, may each of us answer this call to praise God in a joyful and lasting way. Let’s join all creation in celebrating the greatness of our God!

*When all Thy mercies, O my God,
My rising soul surveys,
Transported with the view, I'm lost
In wonder, love, and praise. —Addison*

Let everything that has breath praise the Lord. —Psalm 150:6

By David McCasland

Tuesday, August 9

Eclipse

Read: Psalm 148:1-14

*Let them praise the name of the Lord, for His name alone is exalted. —
Psalm 148:13*

A friend who experienced a total solar eclipse in England described the incredible sensation of being engulfed by the rushing shadow of darkness, then being awed by the rapidly approaching dawn. Some observers saw it as merely a coincidence that the moon was in the exact position to shut out the sun's light from reaching the earth at that particular time and place. My friend, though, called it an amazing show put on by God. She saw it as evidence of God's design, order, and precise control in the universe that He created.

Psalm 148 calls upon all creation to shout God's glory: "Praise Him, sun and moon; praise Him, all you stars of light! . . . Praise the Lord, . . . kings of the earth and all peoples" (vv.3,7,11).

God's creation sings His praise and reminds us of His sovereign purposes and control of all things in our lives. We are to "praise the name of the Lord, for His name alone is exalted; His glory is above the earth and heaven" (v.13).

These truths can be comforting when the sunlight of our lives is eclipsed by a time of darkness and difficulty. We can trust and praise the sovereign God, knowing that His design is perfect, that His timing is exact, and that He is in complete control.

*This is my Father's world,
O let me ne'er forget
That though the wrong seems oft so strong
God is the ruler yet. —Babcock*

Because God is in control, we have nothing to fear.

By David McCasland

Wednesday, August 10

That's The Spirit

Read: Psalm 148:1-14

*Let them praise the name of the Lord, for His name alone is exalted. —
Psalm 148:13*

For 37 years, Bob Ufer was the enthusiastic radio voice of University of Michigan football. He delighted listeners with his emotional play-by-play coverage of the Saturday afternoon football games. Anyone who heard him knew at once whose side he was on. The loyal following that Ufer built up through the years indicates how contagious and appealing it is when a person gives himself wholeheartedly to a cause he loves.

That sportscaster's fervor reminds us how natural it is to respond with intensity to something that is close to our hearts. The Scriptures give many examples of men who served the Lord with great enthusiasm.

To mark the return of the ark of the covenant, David laid aside his royal dignity and celebrated in the streets (2 Sam. 6:14). Centuries later, Jesus burned with godly zeal as He chased the money-changers from the temple (Mt. 21:12). And the early church chose men like Stephen because all could see that the Spirit of God was working through them (Acts 6:1-5).

What about us? Do people quickly recognize by our enthusiasm that we love and serve God and are filled with His Spirit? Do our lives give evidence of the wholehearted praise that is called for in Psalm 148?

*Let us serve the Lord with gladness
And enthusiastic praise,
Telling all who do not know Him
Of His great and wondrous ways. —Sper*

A person who has no fire in his heart cannot warm others.

By Mart DeHaan

Thursday, August 11

Star Praises

Read: Psalm 148:1-14

Praise Him, all you stars of light! —Psalm 148:3

The Hubble telescope has provided us with dramatic pictures of the farthest regions of the starry heavens. Photographs show clouds of interstellar hydrogen gas towering nearly 6 trillion miles high, illuminated by the ultraviolet radiation of stars like our sun.

The telescope revealed evidence of an enormous galactic collision that produced immense shock waves which pushed space dust and gases together to form new stars. The Hubble lens focused on Eta Carinae, one of the brightest and most massive stars known to man, which erupts every so often with enormous bursts of energy. And it has given a glimpse of a “stellar nursery,” an area in the constellation Orion where “stars are mass-produced by the dozen” (Time, November 20, 1995).

After viewing space through the Hubble telescope, astronomers used words like awestruck, overwhelmed, and amazed to describe their reaction. These are also appropriate responses for us as we think about the One who “commanded and they were created” (Ps. 148:5).

The stars speak in eloquent praise of the Lord’s creative power. And if even the stars sing God’s praises, how much more should we!

*With words of power God formed the world,
Across the heavens the stars were hurled;
And now in honor to Him we bring
Our words of praise as we pray and sing. —JDB*

All creation bears God's autograph.

By David Egnor | See Other Authors

Friday, August 12

Creator Praise

Read: Genesis 1:1-13

You alone are the Lord; You have made heaven, . . . the earth and everything on it. —Nehemiah 9:6

“In the beginning” (Gen. 1:1) is not the only place in the Bible where we read about creation. The remarkable work of God’s creation is not a one-passage phenomenon. Woven throughout Scripture are reminders that God fashioned our world—telling us again and again how vital it is to believe that the universe and everything in it came through the masterful work of His mighty hand.

We need that reminder. Otherwise, we could easily be influenced by the teaching we hear continually from some educators who hold to a view of origins that rules out God.

Yet that’s not the primary reason to explore what God’s Word says about creation. No, the main reason we need to acknowledge God’s role in bringing everything into existence is so that we will give Him praise.

The Bible tells us that God created: “the foundations of the earth” (Ps. 104:5); sun, moon, stars, and the heavens (Ps. 148:1-5); “the ends of the earth” (Isa. 40:28); lightning, rain, wind (Jer. 10:13); people (Mal. 2:10); “all things” (Eph. 3:9; Col. 1:16).

Look around. Look in the Bible, God’s Word. See the hand of Almighty God. And praise Him for His powerful, creative work.

*The greatness of our God is seen
In sky and sea and forest green;
All living creatures great and small
Reveal the God who made them all. —DJJ*

God's work of creating is done; our work of praising has just begun.

By Dave Branon

Monday, August 15

In Control

Read: Psalm 56:1-13

Whenever I am afraid, I will trust in You. —Psalms 56:3

It is easy to lose control of our emotions when someone who wants to hurt us seems to have gained the upper hand.

Fred had been falsely accused of stealing and was in danger of losing his job. The man out to get him was a clever foe. Fred was angry and frustrated—angry over the false accusation and frustrated because he couldn't convince his boss to believe him.

Sometimes Fred would lose control of his emotions. On one occasion, he declared vehemently that he was going to kill his enemy. At other times he would talk about suicide. His mood would swing back and forth from bristling defiance to forlorn surrender.

The writer of Psalm 56 was also the object of undeserved hatred. His crafty enemies were actually threatening his life. But he didn't lose control of himself. Instead, he talked to God openly and honestly. He reviewed the facts and then asked God to come to his rescue—and He did!

To be wrongfully hated and bitterly attacked is not easy to take. But we don't need to give in to our emotions. We can pray to God and place our trust in Him. When we do, He will respond. He will either deliver us or give us the strength to endure the wrong and love our foes—always!

*When I am angry or afraid,
O God, I'll trust in You;
Give me the strength and self-control
To help me make it through. —Sper*

Losing your temper is no way to get rid of it.

By Herbert VanderLugt

Tuesday, August 16

Life Is Real

Read: Psalm 56

Whenever I am afraid, I will trust in You. —Psalm 56:3

In the comic strip Peanuts, Lucy had just broken the news to Linus that children cannot live at home forever. Eventually they grow up and move away. Then she said that when he left she would get his room. But Linus quickly reminded her that at some time she too would have to leave home. When this realization hit Lucy, she was shocked, but she quickly came up with a solution. She turned the TV up loud, crawled into her beanbag chair with a bowl of ice cream, and refused to think about it.

Avoiding unpleasant circumstances is not as easy as Lucy thinks. Life's realities cannot be avoided. We may try to run and hide, but struggles and trials have a way of dogging our footsteps and eventually catching up with us.

Instead, we should face up to our problems. The psalmist David did this when beset by persistent foes and false friends. He didn't try to minimize his danger; he acknowledged the storm that was raging around him and looked to the Lord. He wrote, "In God I have put my trust" (Psalm 56:4).

Let's follow David's example—not Lucy's. Facing up to life's difficulties may be a frightening experience. But when we trust God and draw close to Him, we'll experience real deliverance.

*Whatever life may bring your way
Each hour of every passing day,
Throughout the months and long years too,
The Lord in heaven will care for you. —Anon.*

When troubles call on you, call on God.

By Paul Van Gorder

Wednesday, August 17

Trouble With People

Read: Psalm 56

*In God I have put my trust; I will not be afraid. What can man do to me? —
Psalm 56:11*

Was David paranoid? Did he think the whole world was out to get him? You might get that impression as you read through some of his psalms. Look at a few of the statements he made:

“Strangers have risen up against me, and oppressors have sought after my life” (Psalm 54:3).

“There are many who fight against me” (56:2).

“They lie in wait for my life; the mighty gather against me” (59:3).

Of course, during this time David was being hotly pursued by Saul and his men, so it’s easy to see why he felt as he did. Nonetheless, his observations about people may echo the way we feel on occasions when others criticize and oppose us. Perhaps it’s those with whom we work. They seem to disagree with us no matter what we do or say. Maybe it’s family members who apparently enjoy irritating us. Or people at church who seem to be critical and faultfinding. We just feel as if everyone is against us.

If this describes your situation, it’s time to do what David did. He declared, “In God I have put my trust; I will not be afraid. What can man do to me?” (56:11).

When you have trouble with people, turn to God. He understands.

*When people are cruel and attack you,
And hope for relief becomes dim,
Remember that Jesus has told you
To cast all your care upon Him. —Anon.*

God is stronger than our strongest foe.

By Dave Branon

Thursday, August 18

A Stroll With God

Read: Psalm 56:1-4

*The eternal God is your refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms. —
Deuteronomy 33:27*

Etty Hillesum was a young Jewish woman living in Amsterdam in 1942. During that time, the Nazis were arresting Jews and herding them off to concentration camps. As she awaited inevitable arrest, and with a fear of the unknown, she began to read the Bible—and met Jesus. She simply put her hand in God’s hand and found rare courage and confidence.

Etty wrote in her diary: “From all sides our destruction creeps up on us and soon the ring will be closed and no one at all will be able to come to our aid. But I don’t feel that I am in anybody’s clutches. I feel safe in God’s arms. And whether I am sitting at my beloved old desk in the Jewish district or in a labor camp under SS guards, I shall feel safe in God’s arms. For once you have begun to walk with God, you need only keep on walking with Him, and all of life becomes one long stroll.”

Etty was a living, courageous picture of the psalmist’s declaration: “Whenever I am afraid, I will trust in You. . . . What can flesh do to me?” (56:3-4). What a challenge for anyone plagued by fear!

As we sense the strength of God’s everlasting arms beneath us (Dt. 33:27), we can stroll through life with confidence, holding the hand of our unseen Companion.

You can be confident about tomorrow if you walk with God today.

By Vernon C. Grounds

Friday, August 19
How To Conquer Fear

Read: Psalm 56:1-13

Whenever I am afraid, I will trust in You. —Psalm 56:3

We live in a world plagued by fear. People worry about illness, poverty, family disruption, war, famine, and the future.

For those who place their trust in the Lord, however, it's different. Because their lives are in the hands of an all-wise, all-loving, all-powerful heavenly Father, they can face any difficult situation with confidence.

Henry Durbanville writes this about the gifted fourth-century preacher John Chrysostom: "Exiled from the position which he held as the greatest preacher of his age, this noble man refused to be intimidated. 'What can I fear?' he asks. 'Will it be death? But you know that Christ is my life, and that I shall gain by death. Will it be exile? But the earth and all its fullness are the Lord's. Will it be loss of wealth? But we brought nothing into this world and can carry nothing out. Thus all the terrors of the world are contemptible in my eyes, and I smile at all its good things. Poverty I do not fear, riches I do not sigh for, and from death I do not shrink.'"

This same testimony can be ours. With God as our Father, Christ as our Savior, and the Holy Spirit as our Guide, we can face every situation with perfect confidence in the One who conquers fear.

*Terror by night nor arrow's flight
Can make my soul afraid;
Naught can alarm, no foe can harm,
When on Him I am stayed. —Anon.*

Faith in God is the best antidote for fear.

By Richard DeHaan

Monday, August 22

The Ultimate Friend

Read: Psalm 145:10-21

My mouth shall speak the praise of the Lord. —Psalm 145:21

We all need a friend—someone we can turn to, talk to, and even cling to if necessary. Sometimes friends are family members. Sometimes they're co-workers, or schoolmates, or neighbors. When you have a friend, you know you are loved, and the days seem brighter.

But not everyone has a friend. Many people go through life with the sinking feeling that no one really cares in a special way for them. It is a lonely, haunting feeling.

To anyone like that—and actually to all of us—let me suggest the ultimate Friend. He is the Lord God, the One who, far more than any human acquaintance, can meet our deepest companionship needs.

When we consider all that God does for us, it's obvious that He is our greatest Friend. In Psalm 145, we read that God upholds all who fall and raises up all who are bowed down (v.14). He gives food in due season and satisfies the desire of every living thing (vv.15-16). God is righteous in all His ways and gracious in all His works (v.17). The Father is near to all who call on Him in truth (v.18). He fulfills the desire, hears the cry, and saves those who fear Him (v.19). And He preserves all who love Him (v.20).

God is the ultimate Friend. You can depend on Him.

*We have a Friend who'll never leave,
Who's closer than a brother;
He's there to meet our deepest needs,
To comfort like no other. —Sper*

Only God can fill the emptiness in the human heart.

By Dave Branon

Tuesday, August 23
Joy On The Journey

Read: Psalm 145:1-21

*The Lord is good to all, and His tender mercies are over all His works. —
Psalm 145:9*

What the evangelist said shocked many in his audience: “Heaven is my home, but I’m not homesick.” He wasn’t downplaying the anticipation we should have for heaven. He was reflecting the truth that our heavenly Father wants us to enjoy with gratitude the good things He has provided for us in this world. This old Jewish proverb reinforces the idea: “In the judgment, a man will be held accountable for every blessing he refused to enjoy.”

For those who are near the end of life, are lonely or depressed, or whose bodies are weak and disease-ravaged, it is understandable that they long for the indescribable blessings of the land of no more heartache, pain, and tears. But as Christians, we certainly must not disregard the daily mercies and the rich bounties our Father gives to us. The Bible says that God “gives us richly all things to enjoy” (1 Tim. 6:17). His goodness is shown to all mankind in “rain from heaven and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness” (Acts 14:17). In other words, all of us, even non-Christians, are able to enjoy much of life’s goodness.

Yes, heaven awaits us, but God wants us to be glad and enjoy all His goodness as we journey homeward.

*The God who put us here on earth
Knows life is tinged with sadness,
And so He offers many things
That fill our hearts with gladness. —Hess*

God is good to all people in some ways and to some people in all ways.

By Vernon C. Grounds

Wednesday, August 24

Houses That Speak

Read: Psalm 145:1-13

These words . . . shall be in your heart. . . . You shall write them on the doorposts of your house. —Deuteronomy 6:6,9

Shortly after Scottish preacher G. Campbell Morgan's wedding, his father visited the home the newlyweds had just furnished and decorated. After they had shown him the place with pride and satisfaction, he remarked, "Yes, it's very nice, but no one walking through here would know whether you belong to God or the devil!"

Morgan was shocked by his father's gruff but well-meaning comment. But he got the point. From that day forward, he made certain that in every room of his home there was some evidence of their faith in Christ.

Many believers make an effort to include reminders of God's grace and goodness in their homes. Just a Bible verse inscribed on a plaque or a tasteful work of art with a Christian theme may be all that is needed to encourage family members to serve and praise the Lord.

Then too, the presence of Christian books and magazines can foster meditation on God's Word. Such quiet testimonies may also open opportunities to speak to house guests about the goodness of the Lord.

What about your home? Would a visitor have any clue as to your spiritual allegiance?

*If people should enter your home today,
Could they tell you were walking in Jesus' way?
Would Bible and books tell them what you read,
And would scriptural mottos proclaim your creed? —HGB*

What's in your home mirrors what's in your heart.

By Henry G. Bosch

Thursday, August 25

He's Near To Hear

Read: Psalm 145:17-21

The Lord is near to all who call upon Him, to all who call upon Him in truth. —Psalm 145:18

When I was 7 years old, my grandfather was caretaker of a wooded estate. One fall evening I took my toy gun, called for my dog Pal, and headed down a path into the forest. I walked bravely into the woods. Soon, though, it began to get dark and I panicked. “Grandpa!” I shouted.

“I’m right here,” he said calmly, only a few yards away. He had seen me go into the woods and had followed me to make sure I was okay. Talk about being relieved!

As followers of Christ, we sometimes venture into unfamiliar territory. We try new things. We take on responsibilities in the work of the Lord that are bigger than we’ve ever attempted before. We risk rejection when we witness to friends about Christ. It can get pretty scary.

But wherever we go, God is there. His pledge to be near is backed up by His omnipresence. His promise to help us is backed up by His mighty power. He will hear the cries of those who fear Him (Psalm 145:19-20).

So, take some risks in your walk with God. Venture out into the scary unknown in your service or giving or witnessing. God is nearer to you than Grandpa Hayes was to me in the darkening woods. He will always hear your cry.

*The Lord is near to all who call;
He promised in His holy Word
That if we will draw near to Him,
Our faintest heartcry will be heard. —Hess*

Dark fears flee in the light of God's presence.

By David Egner

Friday, August 26
Attics Are For Mice

Read: Psalm 145:1-10

My mouth shall speak the praise of the Lord. —Psalm 145:21

I read about a young man who flunked out of the University of Michigan. In shame, he decided to disappear. For the next 4 years he hid in the unused attic of a nearby church. Taking great pains to conceal himself, he quietly prowled around only at night, living off food and water from the kitchen. He never left the building or spoke to a soul. No one ever suspected he was there. One day, a slight mistake gave him away. The young recluse accidentally made some noise and the police were called. He was finally discovered.

That shamed student reminds me of many believers in Christ who are overwhelmed by a sense of failure or embarrassment. They hesitate to take a stand for the Lord and may even try to conceal the fact that they are Christians. How unlike the psalmist, who publicly praised God for His greatness and goodness (Psalm 145:21). His relationship to the Lord was so wonderful that he couldn't keep it hidden.

Do you withdraw into an “attic of silence” rather than let it be known that you are a follower of Christ? If so, confess your fearfulness to God and ask Him for the courage to tell others about the wonderful salvation He has provided.

Remember, attics are for mice, not for men!

*Lord, help us never be ashamed
To take a stand for what is true,
And give us courage to be named
As faithful followers of You. —Sper*

A faith worth having is a faith worth sharing.

By Mart DeHaan

Monday, August 29

A Message To All

Read: Psalm 19:1-14

The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament shows His handiwork. —Psalm 19:1

A United States Army general speaking in Japan told a story with the punch line, “Show me. I’m from Missouri.” His translator knew the audience wouldn’t understand, so he said in Japanese, “The general has made a joke and I’ll be in trouble if you don’t laugh.” The people obligingly laughed. But because some things don’t translate well, the general had failed to communicate.

There is a message, however, that is always clear. It crosses the barriers of language and culture to communicate plainly with every person on the face of this earth.

Psalm 19 states, “The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament shows His handiwork. . . . There is no speech nor language where their voice is not heard. Their line has gone out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world” (vv.1-4).

In Borneo or Belgium, in hut or high-rise, God’s creation reveals His power and glory. No one can miss it. And to us He has entrusted the message of His love—the good news of salvation in Jesus Christ. God’s message in the heavens paves the way for His messengers on earth.

Are you ready to speak to someone who has seen the stars and longs to know the One who made them?

*The heavens reveal the power of God
To everyone living on earth;
But then the good news of the gospel must come
From those who've experienced new birth. —Sper*

All creation is an outstretched finger pointing toward God.

By David McCasland

Tuesday, August 30

Einstein's God

Read: Psalm 19:1-6

The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament shows His handiwork. —Psalm 19:1

When the great physicist Albert Einstein was asked if he believed in God, he responded: “We are in the position of a little child entering a huge library filled with books in many languages. The child knows someone must have written those books. It does not know how. . . . That, it seems to me, is the attitude of even the most intelligent human beings toward God. We see the universe marvelously arranged and obeying certain laws but only dimly understand these laws.” Although Einstein marveled at the design he saw in nature, he did not believe in a personal Creator.

The psalmist shared Einstein’s sense of awe about nature but took the next step and believed in the Designer behind the design: “The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament shows His handiwork” (Ps. 19:1).

The wonder we feel as we behold our universe should serve as a road sign pointing to the One who created it. The Scriptures tell us, “All things were made through [Christ], and without Him nothing was made that was made” (John 1:3).

Are you struggling in your beliefs? Look up at the stars tonight. In the sky is crafted an amazing road sign pointing to the Designer behind the design.

*God wrote His autograph Upon the sky last night,
In the stars I never saw A signature so bright! —Schoeberlein*

Creation’s design points to the Master Designer.

By Dennis Fisher

Wednesday, August 31

The Greatest Treasure

Read: Psalm 19:7-11

*I have rejoiced in the way of Your testimonies, as much as in all riches. —
Psalm 119:14*

What is the world's greatest treasure? Some people might say it's all the gold stored in Fort Knox. Others might suggest it's the Sistine Chapel in Rome. Still others would think of the fabulous wealth once displayed in the czarist palaces of Russia. The answer that I hope would come to your mind is the Bible, God's Word.

At the coronation of England's Queen Elizabeth II, the Archbishop of Canterbury presented her with a Bible and said, "Our gracious Queen: To keep your Majesty ever mindful of the Law and the Gospel of God as the Rule for the whole life and government of Christian Princes, we present you with this Book, the most valuable thing that this world affords."

If the world were somehow robbed of all the splendid things we call treasures, that would be an incalculable loss. Suppose, though, the world were somehow stripped of the Bible and every trace of its influence. What a barren, blighted desert this planet would be!

Yes, the Bible is our greatest treasure, worth far more than gold (Psalm 19:10). But are we giving more than lip service to its worth? Are we obeying it as "the Rule for the whole life" because we believe the gospel and trust Christ personally as our Lord and Savior

*It is God's will that we should read
His Word from day to day,
Not just for knowledge, but much more—
To love Him and obey. —Hess*

The rich treasures of God's Word are waiting to be discovered.

By Vernon C. Grounds

Thursday, September 1

It's Still Relevant

Read: Psalm 19:7-11

. . . having been born again . . . through the Word of God which lives and abides forever. —1 Peter 1:23

It's estimated that every year 300,000 new books are published worldwide. What a torrent of print! Yet one volume, the Bible, stands out above all the others.

How do we explain the appeal of this ancient book? The answer is simple. It is God's Word, given in human language, and it tells us about our Creator and His purposes for the world. But it also gives us the most accurate understanding of mankind's perplexing nature and why we behave the way we do.

Harvard professor Robert Coles has interviewed hundreds of people in many different societies. When asked what he had learned from his research on human nature, Dr. Coles pointed to the Bible on his desk and said, "Nothing I have discovered about the makeup of human beings contradicts in any way what I learn from the Hebrew prophets . . . and from Jesus and the lives of those He touched."

The writings of others and our own experience can teach us much about why we behave as we do. But only the Bible tells us that our sinful heart is the heart of our problem, and that we can be changed from within by trusting Jesus.

Yes, the Bible is still relevant. Are you growing in your love for this ancient book?

*Your heart and conscience cannot guide,
For they're deceived by sin inside;
But if you want to see what's true,
The Word of God will mirror you. —Hess*

The Bible is a mirror that lets us see ourselves as God sees us.

By Vernon C. Grounds

Friday, September 2
The Most Influential

Read: Psalm 19:7-14

The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart. —Psalm 19:8

Many of us own a copy of the Bible. Some of us may have many copies in different versions and even different languages. This ancient book, written originally in Hebrew and Greek, with small portions in Aramaic, is still “the most influential book in history” according to a 1996 survey of United States citizens.

Of the people surveyed, 79.8 percent said that the Bible was the most influential. Next on the list was Dr. Spock’s baby book, which received only 4.7 percent of the vote. Then came Charles Darwin’s *The Origin Of The Species* (4.1 percent) and George Orwell’s *1984* (2.4 percent). The Bible was the overwhelming winner among influential books.

But how many of those who applaud the Bible’s influence ever read it? Do you? Do I? And if we do, do we read it regularly? Do we read a passage here and there, or do we follow some system that will make us familiar with the whole Bible? Do we have a strong desire to know the Word? (Psalm 19:10).

An even more important question is whether we believe and practice what we read. Is this book decisively influencing our lives? Is our relationship to the Bible one of obedience? After all, this book is immeasurably more than a collection of human writings. It is God’s authoritative Word.

*The books men write are but a fragrance blown
From transient blossoms crushed by human hands;
But high above them all, splendid and alone,
Staunch as a tree, there is a Book that stands. —Frazee-Bower*

**If a Christian is careless in Bible reading, he will care less about
Christian living.**

By Vernon C. Grounds

Monday, September 5
The Beauty Of Silence

Read: Psalm 62:1-8

Truly my soul silently waits for God. —Psalm 62:1

Written on the wall behind the pulpit of the church we attended in my teens were these words: “The Lord is in His holy temple. Let all the earth keep silence before Him” (Habakkuk 2:20). And keep silence we did! All eight of us boys said nothing to one another as we sat waiting for the service to begin.

I loved this quiet time and often succeeded in pushing thoughts about girls and the Detroit Tigers out of my mind. The best I could, I tried to reflect on the wonder of God and His salvation. And in the silence I often sensed His presence.

Today we live in a noisy world. Many people can’t even drive without music blaring from their car, or the beat of the bass vibrating their vehicle. Even many church services are marked more by noise than by quiet reflection.

In ancient times the pagans cried out in a noisy frenzy to their idols (1 Kings 18:25-29). In sharp contrast, the psalmist saw the wisdom of silence, because in quiet reverence God can be heard. In the stillness of the night under a starry sky, in a hushed sanctuary, or in a quiet room at home, we can meet the living God and hear Him speak.

The psalmist’s words are relevant today: “Wait silently for God alone” (Psalm 62:5).

*Speak, Lord, in the stillness,
While I wait on Thee;
Hushed my heart to listen
In expectancy. —Grimes*

To hear God's voice, turn down the world's volume.

By Herbert VanderLugt

Tuesday, September 6

Heart To Heart

Read: Psalm 62

Pour out your heart before Him; God is a refuge for us. —Psalm 62:8

We would expect King David to be extremely upset, because his enemies were scheming to dethrone him. Yet in Psalm 62 he testified that his soul was quietly confident before God. How was this possible in the midst of such turmoil? Verse 8 offers a clue—one I discovered for myself several years ago.

I had just returned home, weary, alone, and at my wit's end. As I began pouring out my woes before God, I suddenly stopped myself and said, "Father, forgive me. I'm treating You like a counselor!" But the torrent of words flowed on, followed by the same embarrassing apology. Then God's Spirit whispered deep within, "I am your Great Counselor."

But of course! Hadn't He, the Creator of my physical and spiritual makeup, also created the emotional part of me? How reasonable, then, to spread out my ragged feelings before Him. Then came His comforting, corrective counsel, ministered skillfully by the Holy Spirit through His Word. My problems didn't evaporate. But like David, I could rest in God alone. I was at peace again.

Never hesitate to pour out your heart to God. In your day of trouble, you'll find that prayer is the shortest route between your heart and God's.

*In the silence of my chamber
I can with my Savior share
All my worries and my troubles
As I talk with Him in prayer. —Anon.*

God fills our heart with peace when we pour out our heart to Him.

By Joanie Yoder | See Other Authors

Wednesday, September 7

Our Rock And Our Refuge

Read: Psalm 62:1-12

In God is my salvation and my glory; the rock of my strength, and my refuge, is in God. —Psalm 62:7

A century ago an ocean liner sank off the southwest coast of England, taking many people down with it. A 16-year-old galley boy, who was tossed up along the rugged shore, survived by clinging to a rock all night long. When he was finally rescued, he was asked, “Didn’t you shake as you were clinging all night to that rock?” The boy replied, “Yes, of course. But the rock never shook once.”

The ancient Israelites learned from their experiences in the desert that rocks were more than masses of stone. A rock could serve as shelter from a sudden storm. It could provide a cool shadow from oppressive heat. It was a stronghold and a place of safety from enemies (Ps. 61:2-3; 62:1-2; Isa. 32:2).

That’s why it meant so much when David called the Lord “my rock and my salvation” (Ps. 62:6) and “my strength, and my refuge” (v.7). David knew firsthand how important a rock could be in times of trouble.

Just as the Hebrews found the rock of their salvation in the Lord who brought them up out of Egypt, so we find our rock of salvation in the One who through His Son delivered us from bondage to sin. When storms of trouble threaten to overwhelm us, we can cling to Him in faith, thankful that our Rock is our unshakable refuge.

*O safe to the Rock that is higher than I
My soul in its conflicts and sorrows would fly;
So sinful, so weary—Thine, Thine would I be:
Thou blest "Rock of Ages," I'm hiding in Thee. —Cushing*

You may tremble on the Rock of Ages, but the Rock will never tremble under you.

By Vernon C. Grounds

Thursday, September 8

Hope For The Blues

Read: Psalm 62

Pour out your heart before Him; God is a refuge for us. —Psalm 62:8

You've felt it yourself, or at least listened to other people talk about it—the blues, times of dark discouragement. Lynette Joy, in an article for christian-womentoday.com, tells of several steps we can take during those dark times to turn toward Jesus, the Light of the World:

- Light up your heart through prayer. Pour out your heart to God when you're feeling overwhelmed (Psalm 62:8). Take your anxieties to Him in prayer (Philippians 4:6-7). And if you journal or write down your prayers, you can look back later to see how the Lord has answered you.
- Light up your mind with truth. Read the Word of God every day, at least for a few minutes. Let His truth challenge, permeate, and transform your incorrect thinking that life is hopeless (Psalm 46:1; Romans 12:2).
- Light up your life by doing God's will. His will for you is to worship and serve Him. Stay involved in your church where you can worship and fellowship with others and serve Him (Hebrews 10:25). This will help you grow in your trust of God.

When we feel darkness begin to close in on us, we need to turn to Jesus, the Light. He will be a refuge (Psalm 62:7-8) and will give us the strength to keep going.

*Lord, give us strength to trust You when
Life's burdens seem too much to bear;
Dispel the darkness with new hope
And help us rise above despair. —Sper*

You won't stumble in the dark if you walk in the light of God's Word.

By Anne Cetas

Friday, September 9

Tell It All

Read: Psalm 62

Trust in Him at all times, you people; pour out your heart before Him; God is a refuge for us. —Psalm 62:8

A clerk who helped me purchase a small digital voice recorder told me that he kept one just like it in his car when he worked in California. “When I began driving home after work I switched it on,” he said, “and I talked about everything that happened that day on the job, good and bad. When I pulled into my driveway, I hit the erase button.” Then he smiled. After telling everything to his voice recorder, he apparently had no need to go over the day’s problems with his wife or family.

It reminded me of how often I needlessly rehearse my disappointments and problems to others instead of telling them to God. The psalmist wrote: “Trust in Him at all times, you people; pour out your heart before Him; God is a refuge for us” (Ps. 62:8). Twice he spoke of waiting silently for God, his rock and salvation (vv.1-2,5-7).

While there is great comfort in sharing our difficulties with a friend, we miss the greatest help if we fail to bring them to the Lord. Joseph Scriven said it so well:

*What a Friend we have in Jesus,
All our sins and griefs to bear!
What a privilege to carry
Everything to God in prayer!
O what peace we often forfeit,
O what needless pain we bear,
All because we do not carry
Everything to God in prayer!*

No matter where we are, Jesus is only a prayer away.

By David McCasland

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