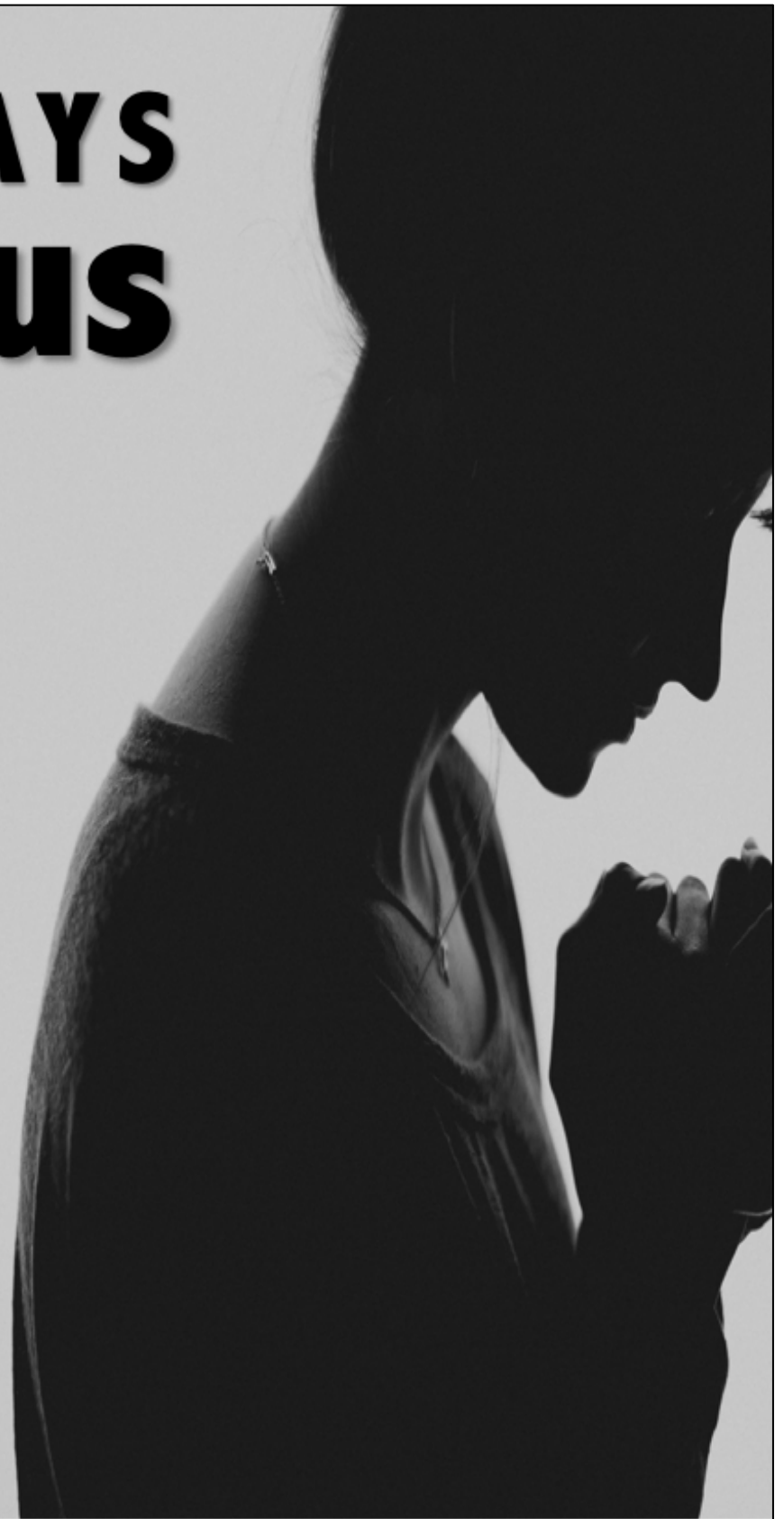


FORTY DAYS with **Jesus**



2020 LENTEN READER & PRAYER JOURNAL
ST PAUL UNITED METHODIST CHURCH



2019-2020 Confirmation Class Members

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Arthur Bickerstaff
James Cornavaca
Mason Gregory
James Kilgore
Jenna Mayhew
Katie Ritchie
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Carley Mayhew
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St Paul United Methodist Church is located at 2101 Wildwood Avenue in Columbus, Georgia. Visit our online communities: spumccolumbus.com, facebook.spumccolumbus.com, youtube.spumccolumbus.com, twitter.spumccolumbus.com, live.spumccolumbus.com, give.spumccolumbus.com, media.spumccolumbus.com, and video.spumccolumbus.com.

Senior Minister: Rev. Dr. Shane Green.

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Welcome to the **Journey**

If you are reading these words, I want to welcome you to St Paul UMC's Lenten Reader and Prayer Journal. You might have noticed a few words in the title: Journey and Jesus. These are very specific words that describe what to expect over the next 40+ days. Journey implies movement and activity. But instead of an outward movement where one might walk a path, *journey* here implies an inward activity. However, no one makes this journey alone for one walks with Jesus.

Over these next few weeks, I invite you to find a quiet place to spend time with Jesus via this reader. Though fitting for anytime of day, this reader will be most effective at the beginning of the day. Many of the daily reflective questions and actions to consider help structure that coming day. The idea is to start the day off journeying with Jesus.

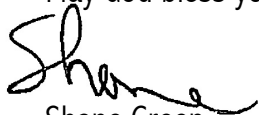
You will notice that our reader is divided into four categories: Reading, Reflection, Response, and Relationships. This is a multi-spiritual, disciplined approach to the Lenten Reader. Each day there is a different scripture text(s) to read and contemplate. There is a place for you to write any key reflections or thoughts that come to your mind after you have read the selected passage(s). Don't feel pressure to write something, but if Jesus prompts you, please use the personal space to write what God brings to your mind. Don't rush the reflection! Often the best time for personal growth is when God uses quiet reflection to allow the Holy Spirit to transform and change you. Remember, you make the walk with Jesus. You do not make the journey alone.

After moments of reflection, there is a response to consider for the day ahead. Use this as a directive for your thoughts and actions throughout Lent. Again, remember you walk with Jesus throughout the day. Just as we allow him to direct our reflections, we allow him to guide us in our daily actions.

Because we are relational beings, we included suggested ways to pray for those around you. Much of one's identity flows from relationships: a relationship with God and with others. Use some of the extra space to make notes, reminders, or directives of things you might do to strengthen, repair, and foster your relationships.

Again, welcome to this journey with Jesus. My prayer is that during this Lenten Season, you will grow in grace and love.

May God bless you.


Shane Green
Senior Minister

DAY ONE

February 26, 2020

READING:

“Be especially careful when you are trying to be good so that you don’t make a performance out of it. It might be good theater, but the God who made you won’t be applauding. “When you do something for someone else, don’t call attention to yourself. You’ve seen them in action, I’m sure—‘playactors’ I call them—treating prayer meeting and street corner alike as a stage, acting compassionate as long as someone is watching, playing to the crowds. They get applause, true, but that’s all they get. When you help someone out, don’t think about how it looks. Just do it—quietly and unobtrusively. That is the way your God, who conceived you in love, working behind the scenes, helps you out. “And when you come before God, don’t turn that into a theatrical production either. All these people making a regular show out of their prayers, hoping for stardom! Do you think God sits in a box seat? “Here’s what I want you to do: Find a quiet, secluded place so you won’t be tempted to role-play before God. Just be there as simply and honestly as you can manage. The focus will shift from you to God, and you will begin to sense his grace.”

(Matthew 6:1–6, The Message)

“When you practice some appetite-denying discipline to better concentrate on God, don’t make a production out of it. It might turn you into a small-time celebrity but it won’t make you a saint. If you ‘go into training’ inwardly, act normal outwardly. Shampoo and comb your hair, brush your teeth, wash your face. God doesn’t require attention-getting devices. He won’t overlook what you are doing; he’ll reward you well.”

(Matthew 6:16–18, The Message)

REFLECTION:

RESPONSE:

Do not show off. Keep your prayer between you and our Lord God in heaven.

RELATIONSHIPS:

Pray that the Holy Spirit speak to us the solemn message of humility during our Lenten journey this year.

DAY TWO

February 27, 2020

READING:

How well God must like you— you don't hang out at Sin Saloon, you don't slink along Dead-End Road, you don't go to Smart-Mouth College. Instead you thrill to GOD's Word, you chew on Scripture day and night. You're a tree replanted in Eden, bearing fresh fruit every month, Never dropping a leaf, always in blossom. You're not at all like the wicked, who are mere wind-blown dust—

(Psalm 1:1-4, The Message)

GOD charts the road you take. The road they take is Skid Row.

(Psalm 1:6, The Message)

REFLECTION:

RESPONSE:

Surround yourself with those who delight in the Lord.

RELATIONSHIPS:

Pray for those who serve our community in our Columbus Government that they may be the hands and feet of the Gospel message.

DAYTHREE

February 28, 2020

READING:

“Shout! A full-throated shout! Hold nothing back—a trumpet-blast shout! Tell my people what’s wrong with their lives, face my family Jacob with their sins! They’re busy, busy, busy at worship, and love studying all about me. To all appearances they’re a nation of right-living people— law-abiding, God-honoring. They ask me, ‘What’s the right thing to do?’ and love having me on their side. But they also complain, ‘Why do we fast and you don’t look our way? Why do we humble ourselves and you don’t even notice?’ “Well, here’s why: “The bottom line on your ‘fast days’ is profit. You drive your employees much too hard. You fast, but at the same time you bicker and fight. You fast, but you swing a mean fist. The kind of fasting you do won’t get your prayers off the ground. Do you think this is the kind of fast day I’m after: a day to show off humility? To put on a pious long face and parade around solemnly in black? Do you call that fasting, a fast day that I, GOD, would like? “This is the kind of fast day I’m after: to break the chains of injustice, get rid of exploitation in the workplace, free the oppressed, cancel debts. What I’m interested in seeing you do is: sharing your food with the hungry, inviting the homeless poor into your homes, putting clothes on the shivering ill-clad, being available to your own families. Do this and the lights will turn on, and your lives will turn around at once. Your righteousness will pave your way. The GOD of glory will secure your passage. Then when you pray, GOD will answer. You’ll call out for help and I’ll say, ‘Here I am.’”

(Isaiah 58:1–9, The Message)

REFLECTION:

RESPONSE:

Lent is a time for us to share our bounty with the poor, to pray, and to fast. Bring a bag of canned food to the church for the Wynnton Neighborhood Food Network.

RELATIONSHIPS:

Tomorrow is the Valley Interfaith Promise Annual Bed Race. Ask God to help VIP and other parachurch ministries find favor in His eyes and our community’s.

DAYFOUR

February 29, 2020

READING:

After this he went out and saw a man named Levi at his work collecting taxes. Jesus said, "Come along with me." And he did—walked away from everything and went with him. Levi gave a large dinner at his home for Jesus. Everybody was there, tax men and other disreputable characters as guests at the dinner. The Pharisees and their religion scholars came to his disciples greatly offended. "What is he doing eating and drinking with crooks and 'sinners'?" Jesus heard about it and spoke up, "Who needs a doctor: the healthy or the sick? I'm here inviting outsiders, not insiders—an invitation to a changed life, changed inside and out."

(Luke 5:27–32, The Message)

REFLECTION:

RESPONSE:

Fast from social media today.

RELATIONSHIPS:

St. Paul is full of people who have responded positively to the Call of Christ to invite others to hear the Gospel message. Today, pray for those who serve as Youth Directors, Youth Volunteers, Sunday School Teachers, and other people whom the Holy Spirit brings to mind.

DAY FIVE

March 2, 2020

READING:

GOD spoke to Moses: "Speak to the congregation of Israel. Tell them, Be holy because I, GOD, your God, am holy."

(Leviticus 19:1-2, The Message)

"Don't steal. Don't lie. Don't deceive anyone. Don't swear falsely using my name, violating the name of your God. I am GOD. Don't exploit your friend or rob him. Don't hold back the wages of a hired hand overnight. Don't curse the deaf; don't put a stumbling block in front of the blind; fear your God. I am GOD. Don't pervert justice. Don't show favoritism to either the poor or the great. Judge on the basis of what is right. Don't spread gossip and rumors. Don't just stand by when your neighbor's life is in danger. I am GOD. Don't secretly hate your neighbor. If you have something against him, get it out into the open; otherwise you are an accomplice in his guilt. Don't seek revenge or carry a grudge against any of your people. Love your neighbor as yourself. I am GOD."

(Leviticus 19:11-18, The Message)

REFLECTION:

RESPONSE:

Our God is just, filled with mercy and compassion. Write a note to three of our confirmands reminding them to remember God's mercy and compassion for them.

RELATIONSHIPS:

As our sixth graders walk through their confirmation journey, pray that they are reminded of God's mercy and compassion for them. (You'll find a list of all the confirmands on page two.)

DAYSIX

March 3, 2020

READING:

“The world is full of so-called prayer warriors who are prayer-ignorant. They’re full of formulas and programs and advice, peddling techniques for getting what you want from God. Don’t fall for that nonsense. This is your Father you are dealing with, and he knows better than you what you need. With a God like this loving you, you can pray very simply. Like this: Our Father in heaven, Reveal who you are. Set the world right; Do what’s best— as above, so below. Keep us alive with three square meals. Keep us forgiven with you and forgiving others. Keep us safe from ourselves and the Devil. You’re in charge! You can do anything you want! You’re ablaze in beauty! Yes. Yes. Yes. “In prayer there is a connection between what God does and what you do. You can’t get forgiveness from God, for instance, without also forgiving others. If you refuse to do your part, you cut yourself off from God’s part.”

(Matthew 6:7–15, The Message)

REFLECTION:

RESPONSE:

Today, pray the prayer that Jesus taught us. Remember to focus on God’s forgiveness.

RELATIONSHIPS:

Choose five youth that you know and ask God to encourage them in some special way today.

DAYSEVEN

March 4, 2020

READING:

Next, GOD spoke to Jonah a second time: “Up on your feet and on your way to the big city of Nineveh! Preach to them. They’re in a bad way and I can’t ignore it any longer.” This time Jonah started off straight for Nineveh, obeying GOD’s orders to the letter. Nineveh was a big city, very big—it took three days to walk across it. Jonah entered the city, went one day’s walk and preached, “In forty days Nineveh will be smashed.” The people of Nineveh listened, and trusted God. They proclaimed a citywide fast and dressed in burlap to show their repentance. Everyone did it—rich and poor, famous and obscure, leaders and followers. When the message reached the king of Nineveh, he got up off his throne, threw down his royal robes, dressed in burlap, and sat down in the dirt. Then he issued a public proclamation throughout Nineveh, authorized by him and his leaders: “Not one drop of water, not one bite of food for man, woman, or animal, including your herds and flocks! Dress them all, both people and animals, in burlap, and send up a cry for help to God. Everyone must turn around, turn back from an evil life and the violent ways that stain their hands. Who knows? Maybe God will turn around and change his mind about us, quit being angry with us and let us live!” God saw what they had done, that they had turned away from their evil lives. He did change his mind about them. What he said he would do to them he didn’t do.

(Jonah 3:1–10, The Message)

REFLECTION:

RESPONSE:

Today, subvert your pride and submit to God’s rule. Even the mighty need to humble themselves to do God’s will.

RELATIONSHIPS:

Pray for Wayne and Jeanne Martz and others that serve tirelessly for our music ministry. Be thankful to God for their gifts and willingness to serve.

DAYEIGHT

March 5, 2020

READING:

“Don’t bargain with God. Be direct. Ask for what you need. This isn’t a cat-and-mouse, hide-and-seek game we’re in. If your child asks for bread, do you trick him with sawdust? If he asks for fish, do you scare him with a live snake on his plate? As bad as you are, you wouldn’t think of such a thing. You’re at least decent to your own children. So don’t you think the God who conceived you in love will be even better? “Here is a simple, rule-of-thumb guide for behavior: Ask yourself what you want people to do for you, then grab the initiative and do it for them. Add up God’s Law and Prophets and this is what you get.”

(Matthew 7:7–12, The Message)

REFLECTION:

RESPONSE:

Prayer is at the heart of your Lenten journey. God wants to hear your prayers.

RELATIONSHIPS:

Pray for those you know who have lost loved ones over the past year. Ask God to hold them in the palm of His hand and remind them how much He loves them.

DAY NINE

March 6, 2020

READING:

Unless you do far better than the Pharisees in the matters of right living, you won't know the first thing about entering the kingdom. "You're familiar with the command to the ancients, 'Do not murder.' I'm telling you that anyone who is so much as angry with a brother or sister is guilty of murder. Carelessly call a brother 'idiot!' and you just might find yourself hauled into court. Thoughtlessly yell 'stupid!' at a sister and you are on the brink of hellfire. The simple moral fact is that words kill. "This is how I want you to conduct yourself in these matters. If you enter your place of worship and, about to make an offering, you suddenly remember a grudge a friend has against you, abandon your offering, leave immediately, go to this friend and make things right. Then and only then, come back and work things out with God. "Or say you're out on the street and an old enemy accosts you. Don't lose a minute. Make the first move; make things right with him. After all, if you leave the first move to him, knowing his track record, you're likely to end up in court, maybe even jail. If that happens, you won't get out without a stiff fine."

(Matthew 5:20–26, The Message)

REFLECTION:

RESPONSE:

Open your heart to reconciliation. Today, seek a way to settle an old disagreement.

RELATIONSHIPS:

Pray for those who selflessly serve at the Wynnton Neighborhood Food Network.

READING:

“You’re familiar with the old written law, ‘Love your friend,’ and its unwritten companion, ‘Hate your enemy.’ I’m challenging that. I’m telling you to love your enemies. Let them bring out the best in you, not the worst. When someone gives you a hard time, respond with the energies of prayer, for then you are working out of your true selves, your God-created selves. This is what God does. He gives his best—the sun to warm and the rain to nourish—to everyone, regardless: the good and bad, the nice and nasty. If all you do is love the lovable, do you expect a bonus? Anybody can do that. If you simply say hello to those who greet you, do you expect a medal? Any run-of-the-mill sinner does that. “In a word, what I’m saying is, Grow up. You’re kingdom subjects. Now live like it. Live out your God-created identity. Live generously and graciously toward others, the way God lives toward you.”

(Matthew 5:43–48, The Message)

REFLECTION:

RESPONSE:

Today, be generous and gracious toward someone in your life. Remember that because of the finished work of Christ on the cross, you are made perfect.

RELATIONSHIPS:

There will be three morning church services this Sunday at St. Paul. Invite the Holy Spirit to our worship services. Ask God to soften the hearts of those who will be there, those who will watch live on the Internet, and those who will listen to services in the days that follow. Pray for John and Shane that they may faithfully speak God’s message.

DAY ELEVEN

March 9, 2020

READING:

Our Father is kind; you be kind. "Don't pick on people, jump on their failures, criticize their faults—unless, of course, you want the same treatment. Don't condemn those who are down; that hardness can boomerang. Be easy on people; you'll find life a lot easier. Give away your life; you'll find life given back, but not merely given back—given back with bonus and blessing. Giving, not getting, is the way. Generosity begets generosity."

(Luke 6:36–38, The Message)

REFLECTION:

RESPONSE:

Today, show mercy and forgiveness to those who are not forgiving and merciful to you.

RELATIONSHIPS:

As our sixth graders walk through their confirmation journey, pray that they are reminded of God's love and faithfulness.

DAY TWELVE

March 10, 2020

READING:

Now Jesus turned to address his disciples, along with the crowd that had gathered with them. “The religion scholars and Pharisees are competent teachers in God’s Law. You won’t go wrong in following their teachings on Moses. But be careful about following them. They talk a good line, but they don’t live it. They don’t take it into their hearts and live it out in their behavior. It’s all spit-and-polish veneer. “Instead of giving you God’s Law as food and drink by which you can banquet on God, they package it in bundles of rules, loading you down like pack animals. They seem to take pleasure in watching you stagger under these loads, and wouldn’t think of lifting a finger to help. Their lives are perpetual fashion shows, embroidered prayer shawls one day and flowery prayers the next. They love to sit at the head table at church dinners, basking in the most prominent positions, preening in the radiance of public flattery, receiving honorary degrees, and getting called ‘Doctor’ and ‘Reverend.’ “Don’t let people do that to you, put you on a pedestal like that. You all have a single Teacher, and you are all classmates. Don’t set people up as experts over your life, letting them tell you what to do. Save that authority for God; let him tell you what to do. No one else should carry the title of ‘Father’; you have only one Father, and he’s in heaven. And don’t let people maneuver you into taking charge of them. There is only one Life-Leader for you and them—Christ. “Do you want to stand out? Then step down. Be a servant. If you puff yourself up, you’ll get the wind knocked out of you. But if you’re content to simply be yourself, your life will count for plenty.”

(Matthew 23:1–12, The Message)

REFLECTION:

RESPONSE:

Pride stands in opposition to humility. C. S. Lewis wrote, “Humility is not thinking less of yourself. Humility is thinking of yourself less.” Today, model for those in your care a spirit of humility and selflessness.

RELATIONSHIPS:

Pray today for those who will be at the Tuesday Morning Bible Study and those at the Women’s Lunchtime Study. Ask the Holy Spirit to plainly speak the Gospel message again.

DAYTHIRTEEN

March 11, 2020

READING:

Jesus, now well on the way up to Jerusalem, took the Twelve off to the side of the road and said, "Listen to me carefully. We are on our way up to Jerusalem. When we get there, the Son of Man will be betrayed to the religious leaders and scholars. They will sentence him to death. They will then hand him over to the Romans for mockery and torture and crucifixion. On the third day he will be raised up alive." It was about that time that the mother of the Zebedee brothers came with her two sons and knelt before Jesus with a request. "What do you want?" Jesus asked. She said, "Give your word that these two sons of mine will be awarded the highest places of honor in your kingdom, one at your right hand, one at your left hand." Jesus responded, "You have no idea what you're asking." And he said to James and John, "Are you capable of drinking the cup that I'm about to drink?" They said, "Sure, why not?" Jesus said, "Come to think of it, you are going to drink my cup. But as to awarding places of honor, that's not my business. My Father is taking care of that." When the ten others heard about this, they lost their tempers, thoroughly disgusted with the two brothers. So Jesus got them together to settle things down. He said, "You've observed how godless rulers throw their weight around, how quickly a little power goes to their heads. It's not going to be that way with you. Whoever wants to be great must become a servant. Whoever wants to be first among you must be your slave. That is what the Son of Man has done: He came to serve, not be served—and then to give away his life in exchange for the many who are held hostage."

(Matthew 20:17–28, The Message)

REFLECTION:

RESPONSE:

Today, serve someone who is on the margins of your world.

RELATIONSHIPS:

Pray for those who are traveling today.

DAYFOURTEEN

March 12, 2020

READING:

GOD's Message: "Cursed is the strong one who depends on mere humans, Who thinks he can make it on muscle alone and sets GOD aside as dead weight. He's like a tumbleweed on the prairie, out of touch with the good earth. He lives rootless and aimless in a land where nothing grows. "But blessed is the man who trusts me, GOD, the woman who sticks with GOD. They're like trees replanted in Eden, putting down roots near the rivers— Never a worry through the hottest of summers, never dropping a leaf, Serene and calm through droughts, bearing fresh fruit every season. "The heart is hopelessly dark and deceitful, a puzzle that no one can figure out. But I, GOD, search the heart and examine the mind. I get to the heart of the human. I get to the root of things. I treat them as they really are, not as they pretend to be."

(Jeremiah 17:5–10, The Message)

REFLECTION:

RESPONSE:

Today, renew your trust in God. Believe what God says about Himself in the Bible is true and that trusting Him with everything is worthwhile.

RELATIONSHIPS:

There are many children that are entrusted to our spiritual care. Prayer for our Sunday School teachers and our Preschool faculty.

DAY FIFTEEN

March 13, 2020

READING:

“Here’s another story. Listen closely. There was once a man, a wealthy farmer, who planted a vineyard. He fenced it, dug a winepress, put up a watchtower, then turned it over to the farmhands and went off on a trip. When it was time to harvest the grapes, he sent his servants back to collect his profits. “The farmhands grabbed the first servant and beat him up. The next one they murdered. They threw stones at the third but he got away. The owner tried again, sending more servants. They got the same treatment. The owner was at the end of his rope. He decided to send his son. ‘Surely,’ he thought, ‘they will respect my son.’ “But when the farmhands saw the son arrive, they rubbed their hands in greed. ‘This is the heir! Let’s kill him and have it all for ourselves.’ They grabbed him, threw him out, and killed him. “Now, when the owner of the vineyard arrives home from his trip, what do you think he will do to the farmhands?” “He’ll kill them—a rotten bunch, and good riddance,” they answered. “Then he’ll assign the vineyard to farmhands who will hand over the profits when it’s time.” Jesus said, “Right—and you can read it for yourselves in your Bibles: The stone the masons threw out is now the cornerstone. This is God’s work; we rub our eyes, we can hardly believe it! “This is the way it is with you. God’s kingdom will be taken back from you and handed over to a people who will live out a kingdom life.”

(Matthew 21:33–43, The Message)

REFLECTION:

RESPONSE:

Speak to five people outside your home about God’s love for all people. Bear fruit. Be bountiful in speaking of him.

RELATIONSHIPS:

Whisper a prayer for those who will participate in a small group Bible study this week. May God our ordinary means to express His extravagant grace.

DAYSIXTEEN

March 14, 2020

READING:

O my soul, bless God. From head to toe, I'll bless his holy name! O my soul, bless God, don't forget a single blessing! He forgives your sins—every one. He heals your diseases—every one. He redeems you from hell—saves your life! He crowns you with love and mercy—a paradise crown.

(Psalm 103:1–4, The Message)

He doesn't endlessly nag and scold, nor hold grudges forever. He doesn't treat us as our sins deserve, nor pay us back in full for our wrongs. As high as heaven is over the earth, so strong is his love to those who fear him. And as far as sunrise is from sunset, he has separated us from our sins.

(Psalm 103:9–12, The Message)

REFLECTION:

RESPONSE:

God showers us with undeserved gifts. Shower God with your adoration throughout your day.

RELATIONSHIPS:

There will be three morning church services this Sunday at St. Paul. Invite the Holy Spirit to our worship services. Ask God to soften the hearts who will be there, those who will watch live on the Internet, and those who will listen to services in the days that follow. Pray for John and Shane that they may faithfully speak God's message.

DAYSEVENTEEN

March 16, 2020

READING:

Well, let me tell you something: No prophet is ever welcomed in his hometown. Isn't it a fact that there were many widows in Israel at the time of Elijah during that three and a half years of drought when famine devastated the land, but the only widow to whom Elijah was sent was in Sarepta in Sidon? And there were many lepers in Israel at the time of the prophet Elisha but the only one cleansed was Naaman the Syrian." That set everyone in the meeting place seething with anger. They threw him out, banishing him from the village, then took him to a mountain cliff at the edge of the village to throw him to his doom, but he gave them the slip and was on his way.

(Luke 4:24–30, The Message)

REFLECTION:

RESPONSE:

Think of those you ignore and neglect. Look for a place on your calendar for them today.

RELATIONSHIPS:

Whisper a prayer for military spouses and families.

DAYEIGHTEEN

March 17, 2020

READING:

Show me how you work, GOD; School me in your ways. Take me by the hand; Lead me down the path of truth. You are my Savior, aren't you? Mark the milestones of your mercy and love, GOD; Rebuild the ancient landmarks! Forget that I sowed wild oats; Mark me with your sign of love. Plan only the best for me, GOD! GOD is fair and just; He corrects the misdirected, Sends them in the right direction. He gives the rejects his hand, And leads them step-by-step.

(Psalm 25:4–9, The Message)

REFLECTION:

RESPONSE:

Confess to God a fear you have about the future. Be open and allow God to teach you today. You don't know everything!

RELATIONSHIPS:

Meet with a spiritual mentor. Share with each other what God is doing in your lives.

DAY NINETEEN

March 18, 2020

READING:

“Don’t suppose for a minute that I have come to demolish the Scriptures—either God’s Law or the Prophets. I’m not here to demolish but to complete. I am going to put it all together, pull it all together in a vast panorama. God’s Law is more real and lasting than the stars in the sky and the ground at your feet. Long after stars burn out and earth wears out, God’s Law will be alive and working. “Trivialize even the smallest item in God’s Law and you will only have trivialized yourself. But take it seriously, show the way for others, and you will find honor in the kingdom.”

(Matthew 5:17–19, The Message)

REFLECTION:

RESPONSE:

Write your favorite promise from the Bible on a notecard. Read it over and over again throughout the day.

RELATIONSHIPS:

Pray for caregivers.

DAY TWENTY

March 19, 2020

READING:

But I did say this, commanded this: "Obey me. Do what I say and I will be your God and you will be my people. Live the way I tell you. Do what I command so that your lives will go well." "But do you think they listened? Not a word of it. They did just what they wanted to do, indulged any and every evil whim and got worse day by day. From the time your ancestors left the land of Egypt until now, I've supplied a steady stream of my servants the prophets, but do you think the people listened? Not once. Stubborn as mules and worse than their ancestors!" "Tell them all this, but don't expect them to listen. Call out to them, but don't expect an answer. Tell them, 'You are the nation that wouldn't obey GOD, that refused all discipline. Truth has disappeared. There's not a trace of it left in your mouths.'"

(Jeremiah 7:23–28, The Message)

REFLECTION:

RESPONSE:

Practice the art of wise decision making today. Before every decision, ask yourself, "In light of my past, my present circumstances, and my future hopes and dreams, what is the wise thing for me to do?"

RELATIONSHIPS:

Pray for a person you know that needs to find their identity in Christ.

DAY TWENTY-ONE

March 20, 2020

READING:

One of the religion scholars came up. Hearing the lively exchanges of question and answer and seeing how sharp Jesus was in his answers, he put in his question: "Which is most important of all the commandments?" Jesus said, "The first in importance is, 'Listen, Israel: The Lord your God is one; so love the Lord God with all your passion and prayer and intelligence and energy.' And here is the second: 'Love others as well as you love yourself.' There is no other commandment that ranks with these." The religion scholar said, "A wonderful answer, Teacher! So lucid and accurate—that God is one and there is no other. And loving him with all passion and intelligence and energy, and loving others as well as you love yourself. Why, that's better than all offerings and sacrifices put together!" When Jesus realized how insightful he was, he said, "You're almost there, right on the border of God's kingdom." After that, no one else dared ask a question.

(Mark 12:28–34, The Message)

REFLECTION:

RESPONSE:

Your love for God can only be a result of God's love for you. You didn't first love God; He first loved you. Your love is a *response* to His first love. Spend today simply thanking God for first loving you.

RELATIONSHIPS:

Reach out to someone who needs to be reminded that God loves them.

DAY TWENTY-TWO

March 21, 2020

READING:

“Come on, let’s go back to GOD. He hurt us, but he’ll heal us. He hit us hard, but he’ll put us right again. In a couple of days we’ll feel better. By the third day he’ll have made us brand-new, Alive and on our feet, fit to face him. We’re ready to study GOD, eager for God-knowledge. As sure as dawn breaks, so sure is his daily arrival. He comes as rain comes, as spring rain refreshing the ground.” “What am I to do with you, Ephraim? What do I make of you, Judah? Your declarations of love last no longer than morning mist and predawn dew. That’s why I use prophets to shake you to attention, why my words cut you to the quick: To wake you up to my judgment blazing like light. I’m after love that lasts, not more religion. I want you to know GOD, not go to more prayer meetings.”

(Hosea 6:1–6, The Message)

REFLECTION:

RESPONSE:

Your religion does not make you a follower of God. It’s what you practice to develop your relationship with God that makes the difference. Imagine the characteristics of a relationship that you have with a close friend. Make a list of those characteristics asking yourself why they are important. Do any of these characteristics need to be put into action today to deepen your relationship with God?

RELATIONSHIPS:

Tomorrow is Confirmation. Lift up our confirmands, their families, and their mentors.

DAY TWENTY-THREE

March 23, 2020

READING:

At once, this same Spirit pushed Jesus out into the wild. For forty wilderness days and nights he was tested by Satan. Wild animals were his companions, and angels took care of him. After John was arrested, Jesus went to Galilee preaching the Message of God: "Time's up! God's kingdom is here. Change your life and believe the Message."

(Mark 1:12–15, The Message)

REFLECTION:

RESPONSE:

God will *never* overthrow your kingdom by force. But if God never rules in your life, then you will never experience the sweet release of Jesus' words to lay your burdens upon Him. When you don't relinquish sovereignty of your kingdom, it is like you are coming to Jesus on *your own terms*. Reflect on one thing that you have not let go. Now, give it over to God. Allow The Kingdom of God to rule in this area.

RELATIONSHIPS:

Give thanks for the first responders in our community. Express your gratefulness to one of them today.

DAY TWENTY-FOUR

March 24, 2020

READING:

They were hardly out of the boat when some men carried a paraplegic on a stretcher and set him down in front of them. Jesus, impressed by their bold belief, said to the paraplegic, "Cheer up, son. I forgive your sins." Some religion scholars whispered, "Why, that's blasphemy!" Jesus knew what they were thinking, and said, "Why this gossipy whispering? Which do you think is simpler: to say, 'I forgive your sins,' or, 'Get up and walk'? Well, just so it's clear that I'm the Son of Man and authorized to do either, or both...." At this he turned to the paraplegic and said, "Get up. Take your bed and go home." And the man did it. The crowd was awestruck, amazed and pleased that God had authorized Jesus to work among them this way. Passing along, Jesus saw a man at his work collecting taxes. His name was Matthew. Jesus said, "Come along with me." Matthew stood up and followed him. Later when Jesus was eating supper at Matthew's house with his close followers, a lot of disreputable characters came and joined them.

(Matthew 9:2-10, The Message)

REFLECTION:

RESPONSE:

C. S. Lewis says, "We don't come to Jesus as bad people wanting to be good people. We come to Jesus as rebels who surrender to Him by laying our weapons at His feet." What "weapons" do you still hold on to that need to be laid at the feet of Jesus?

RELATIONSHIPS:

All through our life, people are beacons that continually remind us of God's love and forgiveness. Pray for those people today. Thank God for their willingness to point you to God and His mercy.

DAY TWENTY-FIVE

March 25, 2020

READING:

GOD spoke all these words: I am GOD, your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of a life of slavery. No other gods, only me. No carved gods of any size, shape, or form of anything whatever, whether of things that fly or walk or swim. Don't bow down to them and don't serve them because I am GOD, your God, and I'm a most jealous God, punishing the children for any sins their parents pass on to them to the third, and yes, even to the fourth generation of those who hate me. But I'm unswervingly loyal to the thousands who love me and keep my commandments. No using the name of GOD, your God, in curses or silly banter; GOD won't put up with the irreverent use of his name. Observe the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Work six days and do everything you need to do. But the seventh day is a Sabbath to GOD, your God. Don't do any work—not you, nor your son, nor your daughter, nor your servant, nor your maid, nor your animals, not even the foreign guest visiting in your town. For in six days GOD made Heaven, Earth, and sea, and everything in them; he rested on the seventh day. Therefore GOD blessed the Sabbath day; he set it apart as a holy day. Honor your father and mother so that you'll live a long time in the land that God, your God, is giving you. No murder. No adultery. No stealing. No lies about your neighbor. No lusting after your neighbor's house—or wife or servant or maid or ox or donkey. Don't set your heart on anything that is your neighbor's.

(Exodus 20:1–17, The Message)

REFLECTION:

RESPONSE:

As you read God's commandments, repent and ask for His forgiveness in specific areas of your life.

RELATIONSHIPS:

Pray this prayer for *yourself*: "Remember me, kind Father, as I seek to make your path my path."

DAY TWENTY-SIX

March 26, 2020

READING:

"It's also like a man going off on an extended trip. He called his servants together and delegated responsibilities. To one he gave five thousand dollars, to another two thousand, to a third one thousand, depending on their abilities. Then he left. Right off, the first servant went to work and doubled his master's investment. The second did the same. But the man with the single thousand dug a hole and carefully buried his master's money. "After a long absence, the master of those three servants came back and settled up with them. The one given five thousand dollars showed him how he had doubled his investment. His master commended him: 'Good work! You did your job well. From now on be my partner.' "The servant with the two thousand showed how he also had doubled his master's investment. His master commended him: 'Good work! You did your job well. From now on be my partner.' "The servant given one thousand said, 'Master, I know you have high standards and hate careless ways, that you demand the best and make no allowances for error. I was afraid I might disappoint you, so I found a good hiding place and secured your money. Here it is, safe and sound down to the last cent.' "The master was furious. 'That's a terrible way to live! It's criminal to live cautiously like that! If you knew I was after the best, why did you do less than the least? The least you could have done would have been to invest the sum with the bankers, where at least I would have gotten a little interest. "Take the thousand and give it to the one who risked the most. And get rid of this "play-it-safe" who won't go out on a limb. Throw him out into utter darkness.'

(Matthew 25:14–30, The Message)

REFLECTION:

RESPONSE:

Your life is a gift that is lent to you through Christ's finished work on the cross. How are you investing your God-given gift? Make a list of three God-given traits you have. How can you invest these traits in others on Christ's behalf? Make a specific plan to invest them in a specific person today.

RELATIONSHIPS:

Columbus High School is our partner in education. Ask God to give its faculty, staff, and administration wisdom and discernment as they shape young lives.

DAY TWENTY-SEVEN

March 27, 2020

READING:

Just because something is technically legal doesn't mean that it's spiritually appropriate. If I went around doing whatever I thought I could get by with, I'd be a slave to my whims. You know the old saying, "First you eat to live, and then you live to eat"? Well, it may be true that the body is only a temporary thing, but that's no excuse for stuffing your body with food, or indulging it with sex. Since the Master honors you with a body, honor him with your body! God honored the Master's body by raising it from the grave. He'll treat yours with the same resurrection power. Until that time, remember that your bodies are created with the same dignity as the Master's body. You wouldn't take the Master's body off to a whorehouse, would you? I should hope not. There's more to sex than mere skin on skin. Sex is as much spiritual mystery as physical fact. As written in Scripture, "The two become one." Since we want to become spiritually one with the Master, we must not pursue the kind of sex that avoids commitment and intimacy, leaving us more lonely than ever—the kind of sex that can never "become one." There is a sense in which sexual sins are different from all others. In sexual sin we violate the sacredness of our own bodies, these bodies that were made for God-given and God-modeled love, for "becoming one" with another. Or didn't you realize that your body is a sacred place, the place of the Holy Spirit? Don't you see that you can't live however you please, squandering what God paid such a high price for? The physical part of you is not some piece of property belonging to the spiritual part of you. God owns the whole works. So let people see God in and through your body.

(1 Corinthians 6:12–20, The Message)

REFLECTION:

RESPONSE:

How does the dictionary define "redeem"? How do you define the title, "Redeemer"? Consider what would be different if in every decision you made today, you considered first that *you are not your own—you were bought with a price.*

RELATIONSHIPS:

As Spring Break approaches for Muscogee County Schools, both educators and students are ready for a well-deserved break. For *all* the educators in our community (both public and private) at every educational institution (including colleges, universities, and technical colleges), pray that they are given opportunities to become students in Your classroom. Whisper into their ears words of worth and encouragement.

DAY TWENTY-EIGHT

March 28, 2020

READING:

So roll up your sleeves, put your mind in gear, be totally ready to receive the gift that's coming when Jesus arrives. Don't lazily slip back into those old grooves of evil, doing just what you feel like doing. You didn't know any better then; you do now. As obedient children, let yourselves be pulled into a way of life shaped by God's life, a life energetic and blazing with holiness. God said, "I am holy; you be holy." You call out to God for help and he helps—he's a good Father that way. But don't forget, he's also a responsible Father, and won't let you get by with sloppy living. Your life is a journey you must travel with a deep consciousness of God. It cost God plenty to get you out of that dead-end, empty-headed life you grew up in. He paid with Christ's sacred blood, you know. He died like an unblemished, sacrificial lamb. And this was no afterthought. Even though it has only lately—at the end of the ages—become public knowledge, God always knew he was going to do this for you. It's because of this sacrificed Messiah, whom God then raised from the dead and glorified, that you trust God, that you know you have a future in God.

(1 Peter 1:13–21, The Message)

REFLECTION:

RESPONSE:

Give help to anyone you see today who appears to be in need.

RELATIONSHIPS:

There will be three morning church services this Sunday at St. Paul. Invite the Holy Spirit to our worship services. Ask God to soften the hearts who will be there, those who will watch live on the Internet, and those who will listen to services in the days that follow. Pray for John and Shane that they may faithfully speak God's message.

DAY TWENTY-NINE

March 30, 2020

READING:

“Tell me what you think of this story: A man had two sons. He went up to the first and said, ‘Son, go out for the day and work in the vineyard.’ ‘The son answered, ‘I don’t want to.’ Later on he thought better of it and went. ‘The father gave the same command to the second son. He answered, ‘Sure, glad to.’ But he never went. ‘Which of the two sons did what the father asked?’ They said, ‘The first.’ Jesus said, ‘Yes, and I tell you that crooks and whores are going to precede you into God’s kingdom. John came to you showing you the right road. You turned up your noses at him, but the crooks and whores believed him. Even when you saw their changed lives, you didn’t care enough to change and believe him.

(Matthew 21:28–32, The Message)

REFLECTION:

RESPONSE:

Answer Jesus’ question, “Which of the two sons did the will of his father?” More importantly, which one are you?

RELATIONSHIPS:

Apologize to someone you let down.

DAYTHIRTY

March 31, 2020

READING:

“God’s kingdom is like an estate manager who went out early in the morning to hire workers for his vineyard. They agreed on a wage of a dollar a day, and went to work. “Later, about nine o’clock, the manager saw some other men hanging around the town square unemployed. He told them to go to work in his vineyard and he would pay them a fair wage. They went. “He did the same thing at noon, and again at three o’clock. At five o’clock he went back and found still others standing around. He said, ‘Why are you standing around all day doing nothing?’ “They said, ‘Because no one hired us.’ “He told them to go to work in his vineyard. “When the day’s work was over, the owner of the vineyard instructed his foreman, ‘Call the workers in and pay them their wages. Start with the last hired and go on to the first.’ “Those hired at five o’clock came up and were each given a dollar. When those who were hired first saw that, they assumed they would get far more. But they got the same, each of them one dollar. Taking the dollar, they groused angrily to the manager, ‘These last workers put in only one easy hour, and you just made them equal to us, who slaved all day under a scorching sun.’ “He replied to the one speaking for the rest, ‘Friend, I haven’t been unfair. We agreed on the wage of a dollar, didn’t we? So take it and go. I decided to give to the one who came last the same as you. Can’t I do what I want with my own money? Are you going to get stingy because I am generous?’ “Here it is again, the Great Reversal: many of the first ending up last, and the last first.”

(Matthew 20:1–16, The Message)

REFLECTION:

RESPONSE:

Write a note to someone who needs encouragement.

RELATIONSHIPS:

Pray for those you will see today. Ask God to give you an opportunity to share His love for them. Now that you’ve prayed for it, diligently look for that opportunity!

DAYTHIRTY-ONE

April 1, 2020

READING:

Be very sure now, you who have been trained to a self-sufficient maturity, that you enter into a generous common life with those who have trained you, sharing all the good things that you have and experience. Don't be misled: No one makes a fool of God. What a person plants, he will harvest. The person who plants selfishness, ignoring the needs of others—ignoring God!—harvests a crop of weeds. All he'll have to show for his life is weeds! But the one who plants in response to God, letting God's Spirit do the growth work in him, harvests a crop of real life, eternal life. So let's not allow ourselves to get fatigued doing good. At the right time we will harvest a good crop if we don't give up, or quit. Right now, therefore, every time we get the chance, let us work for the benefit of all, starting with the people closest to us in the community of faith.

(Galatians 6:6–10, The Message)

REFLECTION:

RESPONSE:

Have you given something up for Lent? Think of it as physically handing that item or behavior up to Christ. With that burden lifted, you are free to keep doing good.

RELATIONSHIPS:

It's so easy to get discouraged from doing good, especially when it goes unnoticed. Pray that God gives you perseverance to keep doing good.

DAYTHIRTY-TWO

April 2, 2020

READING:

It wasn't so long ago that you were mired in that old stagnant life of sin. You let the world, which doesn't know the first thing about living, tell you how to live. You filled your lungs with polluted unbelief, and then exhaled disobedience. We all did it, all of us doing what we felt like doing, when we felt like doing it, all of us in the same boat. It's a wonder God didn't lose his temper and do away with the whole lot of us. Instead, immense in mercy and with an incredible love, he embraced us. He took our sin-dead lives and made us alive in Christ. He did all this on his own, with no help from us! Then he picked us up and set us down in highest heaven in company with Jesus, our Messiah. Now God has us where he wants us, with all the time in this world and the next to shower grace and kindness upon us in Christ Jesus. Saving is all his idea, and all his work. All we do is trust him enough to let him do it. It's God's gift from start to finish! We don't play the major role. If we did, we'd probably go around bragging that we'd done the whole thing! No, we neither make nor save ourselves. God does both the making and saving. He creates each of us by Christ Jesus to join him in the work he does, the good work he has gotten ready for us to do, work we had better be doing.

(Ephesians 2:1-10, The Message)

REFLECTION:

RESPONSE:

Give your support today to someone who is in a tough leadership position.

RELATIONSHIPS:

Trusting God while wanting to remain in control is impossible to do. In our prayers today, trust God with all your strength and acknowledge Him in all your ways.

DAY THIRTY-THREE

April 3, 2020

READING:

“When he finally arrives, blazing in beauty and all his angels with him, the Son of Man will take his place on his glorious throne. Then all the nations will be arranged before him and he will sort the people out, much as a shepherd sorts out sheep and goats, putting sheep to his right and goats to his left. “Then the King will say to those on his right, ‘Enter, you who are blessed by my Father! Take what’s coming to you in this kingdom. It’s been ready for you since the world’s foundation. And here’s why: I was hungry and you fed me, I was thirsty and you gave me a drink, I was homeless and you gave me a room, I was shivering and you gave me clothes, I was sick and you stopped to visit, I was in prison and you came to me.’ “Then those ‘sheep’ are going to say, ‘Master, what are you talking about? When did we ever see you hungry and feed you, thirsty and give you a drink? And when did we ever see you sick or in prison and come to you?’ Then the King will say, ‘I’m telling the solemn truth: Whenever you did one of these things to someone overlooked or ignored, that was me—you did it to me.’ “Then he will turn to the ‘goats,’ the ones on his left, and say, ‘Get out, worthless goats! You’re good for nothing but the fires of hell. And why? Because— I was hungry and you gave me no meal, I was thirsty and you gave me no drink, I was homeless and you gave me no bed, I was shivering and you gave me no clothes, Sick and in prison, and you never visited.’ “Then those ‘goats’ are going to say, ‘Master, what are you talking about? When did we ever see you hungry or thirsty or homeless or shivering or sick or in prison and didn’t help?’ “He will answer them, ‘I’m telling the solemn truth: Whenever you failed to do one of these things to someone who was being overlooked or ignored, that was me—you failed to do it to me.’ “Then those ‘goats’ will be herded to their eternal doom, but the ‘sheep’ to their eternal reward.”

(Matthew 25:31–46, The Message)

REFLECTION:

RESPONSE:

Truthfully answer: (1) *I show my sheep side when...*
(2) *I show my goat side when...*

RELATIONSHIPS:

Pray and plan how to help the poor and those who are pushed to the margins in your life and our community.

DAYTHIRTY-FOUR

April 4, 2020

READING:

“Here’s another way to put it: You’re here to be light, bringing out the God-colors in the world. God is not a secret to be kept. We’re going public with this, as public as a city on a hill. If I make you light-bearers, you don’t think I’m going to hide you under a bucket, do you? I’m putting you on a light stand. Now that I’ve put you there on a hilltop, on a light stand—shine! Keep open house; be generous with your lives. By opening up to others, you’ll prompt people to open up with God, this generous Father in heaven.

(Matthew 5:14–16, The Message)

REFLECTION:

RESPONSE:

Today is the day! You are here to be the light. Think of three people who are *walking through a valley of darkness*. Ask the Holy Spirit to show you how to be a reflection of God’s light for them.

RELATIONSHIPS:

Pray that God gives you a loving and forgiving spirit.

DAY THIRTY-FIVE

April 6, 2020

READING:

Every time you cross my mind, I break out in exclamations of thanks to God. Each exclamation is a trigger to prayer. I find myself praying for you with a glad heart. I am so pleased that you have continued on in this with us, believing and proclaiming God's Message, from the day you heard it right up to the present. There has never been the slightest doubt in my mind that the God who started this great work in you would keep at it and bring it to a flourishing finish on the very day Christ Jesus appears. It's not at all fanciful for me to think this way about you. My prayers and hopes have deep roots in reality. You have, after all, stuck with me all the way from the time I was thrown in jail, put on trial, and came out of it in one piece. All along you have experienced with me the most generous help from God. He knows how much I love and miss you these days. Sometimes I think I feel as strongly about you as Christ does! So this is my prayer: that your love will flourish and that you will not only love much but well. Learn to love appropriately. You need to use your head and test your feelings so that your love is sincere and intelligent, not sentimental gush. Live a lover's life, circumspect and exemplary, a life Jesus will be proud of: bountiful in fruits from the soul, making Jesus Christ attractive to all, getting everyone involved in the glory and praise of God.

(Philippians 1:3–11, The Message)

REFLECTION:

RESPONSE:

Write a note to someone reminding him or her that God's not finished; and what God starts, He *does* complete.

RELATIONSHIPS:

God has not abandoned you or written you off. Today, be thankful to God and offer the day to him.

DAYTHIRTY-SIX

April 7, 2020

READING:

Watching for a chance to get him, they sent spies who posed as honest inquirers, hoping to trick him into saying something that would get him in trouble with the law. So they asked him, "Teacher, we know that you're honest and straightforward when you teach, that you don't pander to anyone but teach the way of God accurately. Tell us: Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar or not?" He knew they were laying for him and said, "Show me a coin. Now, this engraving, who does it look like and what does it say?" "Caesar," they said. Jesus said, "Then give Caesar what is his and give God what is his." Try as they might, they couldn't trap him into saying anything incriminating. His answer caught them off guard and left them speechless.

(Luke 20:20-26, The Message)

REFLECTION:

RESPONSE:

Have you fooled yourself into believing that what you have is "yours"? Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal to you what you still hold on to so tightly. Now that you know, ask yourself, "Is it mine...or...is it God's?" How can you use it today for God's Kingdom?

RELATIONSHIPS:

Whisper a prayer of thankfulness for the people in your life.

DAYTHIRTY-SEVEN

April 8, 2020

READING:

If I was “trying to be good,” I would be rebuilding the same old barn that I tore down. I would be acting as a charlatan. What actually took place is this: I tried keeping rules and working my head off to please God, and it didn’t work. So I quit being a “law man” so that I could be God’s man. Christ’s life showed me how, and enabled me to do it. I identified myself completely with him. Indeed, I have been crucified with Christ. My ego is no longer central. It is no longer important that I appear righteous before you or have your good opinion, and I am no longer driven to impress God. Christ lives in me. The life you see me living is not “mine,” but it is lived by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. I am not going to go back on that. Is it not clear to you that to go back to that old rule-keeping, peer-pleasing religion would be an abandonment of everything personal and free in my relationship with God? I refuse to do that, to repudiate God’s grace. If a living relationship with God could come by rule-keeping, then Christ died unnecessarily.

(Galatians 2:18–21, The Message)

REFLECTION:

RESPONSE:

Say to yourself, “I forgive you, I love you, and it’s time to move on.”

RELATIONSHIPS:

Whisper a prayer of thankfulness for all you have in your life.

DAY THIRTY-EIGHT

April 9, 2020

READING:

Just before the Passover Feast, Jesus knew that the time had come to leave this world to go to the Father. Having loved his dear companions, he continued to love them right to the end. It was supertime. The Devil by now had Judas, son of Simon the Iscariot, firmly in his grip, all set for the betrayal. Jesus knew that the Father had put him in complete charge of everything, that he came from God and was on his way back to God. So he got up from the supper table, set aside his robe, and put on an apron. Then he poured water into a basin and began to wash the feet of the disciples, drying them with his apron. When he got to Simon Peter, Peter said, "Master, you wash my feet?" Jesus answered, "You don't understand now what I'm doing, but it will be clear enough to you later." Peter persisted, "You're not going to wash my feet—ever!" Jesus said, "If I don't wash you, you can't be part of what I'm doing." "Master!" said Peter. "Not only my feet, then. Wash my hands! Wash my head!" Jesus said, "If you've had a bath in the morning, you only need your feet washed now and you're clean from head to toe. My concern, you understand, is holiness, not hygiene. So now you're clean. But not every one of you." (He knew who was betraying him. That's why he said, "Not every one of you.") After he had finished washing their feet, he took his robe, put it back on, and went back to his place at the table. Then he said, "Do you understand what I have done to you? You address me as 'Teacher' and 'Master,' and rightly so. That is what I am. So if I, the Master and Teacher, washed your feet, you must now wash each other's feet. I've laid down a pattern for you. What I've done, you do. I'm only pointing out the obvious. A servant is not ranked above his master; an employee doesn't give orders to the employer. If you understand what I'm telling you, act like it—and live a blessed life.

(John 13:1-17, The Message)

REFLECTION:

RESPONSE:

Fast from making excuses today. Get tasks done.

RELATIONSHIPS:

Who are you unwilling to serve? Whose feet are you unwilling to wash? Pray for God's strength to serve those around you.

DAYTHIRTY-NINE

April 10, 2020

READING:

“Don’t let this throw you. You trust God, don’t you? Trust me. There is plenty of room for you in my Father’s home. If that weren’t so, would I have told you that I’m on my way to get a room ready for you? And if I’m on my way to get your room ready, I’ll come back and get you so you can live where I live. And you already know the road I’m taking.” Thomas said, “Master, we have no idea where you’re going. How do you expect us to know the road?” Jesus said, “I am the Road, also the Truth, also the Life. No one gets to the Father apart from me. If you really knew me, you would know my Father as well. From now on, you do know him. You’ve even seen him!” Philip said, “Master, show us the Father; then we’ll be content.” “You’ve been with me all this time, Philip, and you still don’t understand? To see me is to see the Father. So how can you ask, ‘Where is the Father?’ Don’t you believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words that I speak to you aren’t mere words. I don’t just make them up on my own. The Father who resides in me crafts each word into a divine act. “Believe me: I am in my Father and my Father is in me. If you can’t believe that, believe what you see—these works. The person who trusts me will not only do what I’m doing but even greater things, because I, on my way to the Father, am giving you the same work to do that I’ve been doing. You can count on it. From now on, whatever you request along the lines of who I am and what I am doing, I’ll do it. That’s how the Father will be seen for who he is in the Son. I mean it. Whatever you request in this way, I’ll do.

(John 14:1–14, The Message)

REFLECTION:

RESPONSE:

Fast from being impatient today.

RELATIONSHIPS:

Pray for patience and openness with all you meet today.

DAYFORTY

April 11, 2020

READING:

We're not saying this to make ourselves look good to you. We just thought it would make you feel good, proud even, that we're on your side and not just nice to your face as so many people are. If I acted crazy, I did it for God; if I acted overly serious, I did it for you. Christ's love has moved me to such extremes. His love has the first and last word in everything we do. Our firm decision is to work from this focused center: One man died for everyone. That puts everyone in the same boat. He included everyone in his death so that everyone could also be included in his life, a resurrection life, a far better life than people ever lived on their own. Because of this decision we don't evaluate people by what they have or how they look. We looked at the Messiah that way once and got it all wrong, as you know. We certainly don't look at him that way anymore. Now we look inside, and what we see is that anyone united with the Messiah gets a fresh start, is created new. The old life is gone; a new life burgeons! Look at it! All this comes from the God who settled the relationship between us and him, and then called us to settle our relationships with each other. God put the world square with himself through the Messiah, giving the world a fresh start by offering forgiveness of sins. God has given us the task of telling everyone what he is doing. We're Christ's representatives. God uses us to persuade men and women to drop their differences and enter into God's work of making things right between them. We're speaking for Christ himself now: Become friends with God; he's already a friend with you. How? you ask. In Christ. God put the wrong on him who never did anything wrong, so we could be put right with God.

(2 Corinthians 5:12-21, The Message)

REFLECTION:

RESPONSE:

Fast from interrupting people today.

RELATIONSHIPS:

All around the world, people will gather electronically for worship tomorrow and celebrate the Risen Christ. Pray that God's Gospel message of hope is not interrupted tomorrow!

St. Paul United Methodist Church
growing the **faith** of people



2101 Wildwood Avenue • Columbus, GA 31906
spumccolumbus.com