

Family Devotion Month

January 2025

"The Power of Prayer"



"Even them I will bring to My holy mountain And make them joyful in My house of prayer. Their burnt offerings and their sacrifices Will be accepted on My altar; For My house shall be called a house of prayer for all nations." (Is. 56:7 NKJ)

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Happy New Year!

The new year is the ideal time to look back and reflect on God's work and providence in our lives in 2024. However, it is also time to look ahead and set a course for 2025 that leads to an expected end. And how can we know the way to this expected end in which we should go? I would suggest, seeking our Lord and Savior in prayer.

The month of January is declared our "Family Devotional Month". It is a time designed to build up, initiate deep relationships, help create a firm foundation for your children's spiritual growth and establish a sense of unity and direction within families. I encourage you to be intentional in setting aside time to focus on growing your faith together in Bible study, worship, and prayer. Getting our families in the Word is a crucial part of building a family of faith. If you want your children to be passionate followers of Jesus, you must make room for Jesus in your daily lives.

There's no better way to start the new year than time with God in prayer. Prayer is a treasured privilege that undergirds every aspect of who we are and what we do. Prayer is simply a two-way communication with God: Listening to God and talking to God.

Never underestimate the power of prayer. It is one of the powerful weapons believers must use against the enemy. That is why the enemy tries to limit our prayer life because he knows that our prayers limit him. We should never stop praying, (1 Thessalonians 5:17), no matter how we feel or the circumstances that we face in our lives.

Through prayer, we can experience intimacy with God and deepen our relationship with Him. When you pray, surrender totally to Him, tell Him about your desire to glorify Him, express your feelings. Learn to focus on who He is, His character, love, goodness, and greatness.

Let's reset our spiritual compass and bring about spiritual renewal in every area of our lives through prayer. My hope is that this time of family prayer and devotion will refresh us personally but also our church as we seek His blessing and direction.

As we embark on this new year, may our family bonds grow stronger, our love deepens, and our moments together become cherished memories. May joy, unity, and happiness reign within our family circle throughout the year ahead.

Reverend Brenda Jenkins
(original comments from 2024 devotional message, dates were modified)

Table of Contents

Title: We Need God’s Word for Our Everyday Needs	1
Title: Blessing and Intercession	2
Title: Come Down, Lord	3
Title: Connecting with the God.....	4
Title: Each Morning I will Sing to You.....	6
Title: Faith.....	7
Title: Encourage Me By Your Word	9
Title: Thank You (Gratefulness)	10
Title: Guide My Steps By Your Word!	11
Title: Guiding Light	12
Title: I Praise You for My New Hope	14
Title: He ALWAYS Hears Our Prayers for Our Everyday Needs.....	15
Title: Blessing and Intercession	16
Title: In Search of Clarity.....	18
Title: I Will Praise You with All of My Heart.....	20
Title: Numbering My Days.....	21
Title: Pray for Joy in Our Everyday Lives.....	22
Title: Blessing and Intercession	23
Title: Thank You (Protection and Provider)	24
Title: Rejoice	26
Title: Pray for Guidance in Our Everyday Lives	28
Title: Prayer-Is Powerful.....	29
Title: Thank You (Making Me)	30
Title: When Will You Comfort Me?	32
Title: Rescue the Humble	33
Title: Blessing and Intercession	34
Title: Why Do I Have Such A Stubborn Heart?	35
Title: Seeking Divine Wisdom.....	36
Title: Thank You (Wisdom).....	38
Title: You Have Rescued Me	40
Self-Reflection.....	41

Title: We Need God's Word for Our Everyday Needs

READ: Psalm 119:4-8

KEY VERSE: You have charged us to keep your commandments carefully. - Psalm 119:4 (NLT)

Introduction: God's Word will help us get through our everyday lives.

A lot of times we feel like the only things we need in our everyday lives are air, food, and water. Although those things are needed for our physical body, we need God's Word to feed our spiritual bodies. We need the Word to get us through the good times and bad times of our lives. The bible helps us to praise and thank God for his brand-new grace and mercy that we witness everyday He allows us to see, and the Word helps us in our prayer lives. When we make reading God's Word part of our everyday lives, we build our relationship with God which increases our prayer lives, and we when prayer for our everyday needs, we start to pray that God shows us new things in His Word every single day.

Deacon Tarmaine Harris

LOOKING WITHIN: Remember to make reading God's Word a part of your everyday life to help your relationship with God grow more and more.

Prayer: Lord, help me to increase my relationship with you by reading your Word everyday.....Amen.

Title: Blessing and Intercession

KEY VERSES: “²⁴ ‘May the Lord bless you and protect you. ²⁵ May the Lord smile on you and be gracious to you. ²⁶ May the Lord show you his favor and give you his peace.’” - Numbers 6:24-26 (NLT)

Introduction: It is truly much better to give than to receive. What a privilege to speak (give) blessings over others, as well as yourself. I pray that the Lord my God will bless and protect you in all the ways that He knows that you stand in need of. When I think upon the goodness of the Lord and all that He has done, I can truly say that God has smiled on me and been gracious unto me. The favor of the Lord is something that cannot be bought or earned! It is truly God’s prerogative, His good pleasure to show us favor and give us His peace!

In the world we live in the evil one continues to walk around as a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour. Yet, there is good news, for greater is He that is within us than he that is in the world. Therefore, I pray the Lord’s blessing and protection upon you and me. In my life there have been times when I knew beyond a shadow of a doubt, that it was nobody but the Lord who protected me from external and internal forces. The external forces are easier to spot, however, the internal ones (my own stinking thinking) sometimes are a little more difficult. Yet, more good news, God is faithful--even when I mess up, He is quick to forgive when I confess my mess. Thank you, God, for your favor and for giving me your peace. Not as the world gives peace, but that peace that passes all human understanding He gives to all who love Him.

Reverend Shirley Stewart-Tibbs

LOOKING WITHIN: What in your life might be hindering you from receiving the blessings of Numbers 6:24-26? Are you holding on to things, people, places, ideas, etc. that place you outside of the will of God?

Prayer: Lord, help me identify those things in my life that prevent me from experiencing your protection and blessings. Once identified Lord, I ask you in Jesus’ name to show me how to eliminate these things, that I may be free to worship you in spirit and in truth! Let me be quick to confess my mess so that I can receive your blessing and protection. Please smile on me and be gracious unto me. Thank you for your favor and your peace.....Amen.

Title: Come Down, Lord

READ: Isaiah 64:1-4

KEY VERSE: From old, no one has heard or perceived by the ear; no eye has seen a God besides you, who acts for those who wait for him. - Isaiah 64:4 (ESV)

Introduction: The crying of the people moves to its high point with a plea to God not only to “Look down from heaven” (63:15) but to actually “come down” to show his presence with his people (verse 1). Throughout this narrative, the people of Judah express their confidence in God, who was present with them in the wilderness, at the altars, the Tabernacles, and the Temple. This fact made their God Yahweh unique and the places He manifested Himself sacred space. Yet, the people are ready to acknowledge their sins. The lament moves back and forth between the people’s call for help from God and their acknowledged failure to obey him.¹

How similar to us are the people of Judah? We willingly fail Him until we need His help and then cry out. Our problem(s) is the same as theirs. There is a lack of righteousness. If we expect God to respond to our petition, we must live God’s covenant relationship with His son and His people. We must do what God commanded us to do to receive his blessings. If we are faithful to do those things then God will meet, encounter, and interact with (a) those who rejoice, (b) those who act righteously, and (c) those who will remember God and his ways of doing things. We must do good to others without a hidden agenda or the expectation of receiving good.

Reverend Dr. Elton Wilson

LOOKING WITHIN: This month, start by doing kindness for someone outside your usual circle of associates.

Prayer: *O Lord, why do you stand so far away? Why do you hide when I am in trouble? Amen.*

¹ Graham S. Ogden and Jan Sterk, *A Handbook on Isaiah*, ed. Paul Clarke et al., vol. 1 & 2, United Bible Societies’ Handbooks (Reading, UK: United Bible Societies, 2011), 1782.

Title: Connecting with the God

READ: John 16:13 ESV

KEY VERSE: When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth, for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come. - John 16:13 (ESV)

INTRODUCTION:

When developing a deeper, more personal relationship with a friend or potential life partner, we invest time in activities such as dating, talking, listening, and offering support. This intentional communication allows us to uncover deeper aspects of their personality, such as likes, dislikes, family dynamics, hobbies, and dreams. These insights serve as a foundation for meaningful and lasting connections, be they friendships or more intimate relationships.

Similarly, as believers, we possess the divine guidance of the Holy Spirit—the third person in the Trinity. Much like a reliable friend, the Holy Spirit is a constant presence, ready to listen, guide, and provide support. Just as we dedicate time and effort to building personal relationships, we must invest the same in developing our relationship with the Holy Spirit.

According to God's word, When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth; for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears, he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come. The Father gives the Holy Spirit to assist in guiding and directing our lives. When we neglect prayer, read, study, worship, and learn, it becomes a challenge to connect with the Divine.

Creating a connection with God for proper guidance and direction requires daily communion with the Father. I encourage you to seek God consistently by spending time in His presence each day, even if only for five minutes."

Sister Pearl McFadden

LOOKING WITHIN: How do you intend to prioritize spending time with God in 2024?

Prayer: Dear Heavenly Father, guide me wholeheartedly dedicating time to engage myself in Your Holy Word. May this commitment enable me to seek Your guidance, make wise decisions, and positively impact not only my life but also my family, friends, and those I encounter. Amen.

Title: Each Morning I will Sing to You

READ: Psalm 59:1-17

KEY VERSE: But as for me, I will sing about your power. Each morning I will sing with joy about your unfailing love. For you have been my refuge, a place of safety when I am in distress. - Psalm 59: 16 (NLT)

Introduction: Psalm 59, penned by David, is a heartfelt prayer for deliverance from adversaries. The Psalm illustrates the hostile circumstances David faced, his unwavering faith in God amidst these trials, and the declaration of God's protective power and refuge.

I believe each morning, we can awaken with confidence that no matter what is happening or has happen in our lives, we can always have a song of praise in our heart that will flow out from our mouths to our God for an atmospheric change of mind, body, and soul.

When we find ourselves in trying times, when we are filled with doubt or fear, when our enemies, both literal and figuratively, surround us, we should imitate David's example. We should sing to God; we should have an “**as for me**” song!

Remember how He has worked in amazing ways on your behalf. Remember that He is faithful and that even on your worst days, He has carried you through. As you wake up each morning reflect on His new mercies and sing of His strength because He is worthy of our worship and our song.

Reverend Brenda Jenkins

LOOKING WITHIN: How are you singing praises to God in the mornings?

Prayer: Lord, let my heart be filled with songs of praise instead of dark fears. Amen.

Title: Faith

READ: Hebrews 11:1

KEY VERSE: Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see. – Hebrews 11:1 (NIV)

Introduction: For me, faith is knowing God can and will resolve any issues or situations I may face.

In life we place our faith and trust in people, places, or things. For example, in our jobs we perform the duties of the position and have faith and trust we will receive payment for the work performed. Most people do not realize there is a difference between having faith and trust. Having faith means you are trusting in something that you cannot see, touch, or prove. Trust means assured reliance on something or someone. Faith is having confidence God will fulfill His promises. Trust is based upon past experiences or actions. Our faith is strengthened by reading and studying the bible and continuously praying.

To have faith in Jesus is to trust Him without any doubt or disbelief. In Matthew 9:20-22, a woman who had an issue of blood for twelve years; acknowledged all she had to do was touch the hem of Jesus' garment and she would be healed. She had faith without any uncertainty, once she made contact with Jesus; she would be healed. Faith in action was demonstrated because the woman did not know Jesus personally or had ever come in contact with Him. She knew without any doubt, she needed to get to Jesus in order to be healed. The woman showed great faith. This is how we should react when we experience trials and tribulations in our lives. We need to make contact with Jesus and know that He will resolve our situation.

We must come in contact with Jesus. 1 Thessalonians 5:17 states, "Pray without ceasing". We are to keep our minds on things of God and be in constant communication with him. By having a consistent prayer life with God, we hear from God and are able to align our actions and thoughts. When we pray, we open our hearts to Him, and He is able to work in us. Prayer provides a continual contact with God. We get to know God better by praying and reading the bible.

Sister Lisa Gibson

LOOKING WITHIN: What are some things I can do to strengthen my faith in God?

Prayer: Lord, may I continue to hide your word in my heart so I may access it in times of trouble or distress and also to have faith to stand firm, unmovable, and abounding in your word and know that you will work the situation out in my favor. Amen.

Title: Encourage Me By Your Word

READ: Psalm 119:25-32

KEY VERSE: I have chosen the way of faithfulness; I set your rules before me. -
Psalm 119:30 (ESV)

Introduction: Let me be clear: this is not about the World Wrestling Entertainment (WWE) organization. The opponent is real. The combat has eternal ramifications, and the weapons used by the opponent are temptations. The struggles that confront us are real. The significance of wrestling is temptation. Temptation is nothing more than wrestling or combat in which we engage daily. As long as you and I are in this life, we must endure these ongoing confrontations with temptation.

The good news is that God has provided us with a way to retire as champions. All of us who have accepted Christ will award a championship title regardless of our defeats or victories. However, I want to suggest that instead of one day standing in front of the Father with a record marred by countless instances of repentance that are indications of our lost battles with temptation, we should strive to minimize the marks on our record and make the choice David made – the way of truth – the practice of *faithfulness*.

God has always given us the choice to do or not. All of us remember the first choice laid out before Adam and Eve. I would encourage all of us to exercise our volition and follow the course of the psalmist, choose the way of faithfulness, and set *His rules before us*.

Reverend Dr. Elton Wilson

LOOKING WITHIN: Decide to do what is by God's instructions and determine to make the appropriate decisions daily.

Prayer: *Father, grant me the strength to choose what is good and right by your word. Amen.*

Title: Thank You (Gratefulness)

READ: Psalm 92: 1-2 and 4-5 - All his great blessing

KEY VERSES: For you make me glad by your deeds, Lord; I sing for joy at what your hands have done. How great are your works, Lord, how profound your thoughts! - Psalm 92: 4-5 (NIV)

Introduction: Psalm 92 is a poem of thanksgiving, that express praises to God for his goodness, mercy, and faithfulness to his children. It expresses great gratitude for all God has done and is able to do. This scripture reminds us that it is good to sing praises to God and to encourage others to share of his great works every day. To praise the Lord at all times.

When I think about all the things, I have to be thankful for because of God's blessings, my heart is overjoyed. I live my life being thankful in all situations and circumstances. Each morning as I meditate on Psalms 118:24 "this is the day the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it", I know that regardless of what I face on the day God is my strength, healer, provider, my all, and all. I shout thank you, halleluiah. We should be thankful for the mere fact of having life, a good portion of health, clean air and water, food, and clothes. Recognize that these things are not because of us ourselves but is all due to God's great works. I thank God for family and friends to share these blessing with daily. Being in the Army for 20 years has afforded me the opportunity to have friends literally all over the United States. I am forever grateful for my family and friends that God has blessed me with to share in this journey of life. I show my gratitude for God's many blessings through prayer each day and lifting him up in songs of worship. I am grateful for opportunities to serve others and to share the Good News. When we praise God for his many blessings, acknowledge him for is good works. It truly brings joy and happiness into our hearts. I will share the good news of Jesus every day.

Deaconess Natasha Denmark

LOOKING WITHIN: How can you show gratitude for God's blessing?

Prayer: *Heavenly Father you are worthy of so much honor and praise. I come offering nothing but a prayer of thanksgiving and praise. Praising and thanking you for all the blessings in my life. I am so grateful for your love, grace, and mercy. Thank you for the gift of life and for all the wonderful things that you have done for me throughout the years. Thank you for each new day, protecting and keeping us your children. We thank you for our comings and our goings. I thank you for all things. In your Son Jesus name, I pray. Amen*

Title: Guide My Steps By Your Word!

READ: Psalm 90:13-17

KEY VERSES: 129 Your laws are wonderful. No wonder I obey them! 130 The teaching of your word gives light, so even the simple can understand. 131 I pant with expectation, longing for your commands. 132 Come and show me your mercy, as you do for all who love your name. 133 Guide my steps by your word, so I will not be overcome by evil. 134 Ransom me from the oppression of evil people; then I can obey your commandments. 135 Look upon me with love; teach me your decrees. 136 Rivers of tears gush from my eyes because people disobey your instructions. – Psalm 119:129-136 (NLT)

Introduction: GOD'S Discipline Teaches Us Joy - GOD Is His People's Refuge.

This is a reminder that God is still in control, and HE will act against the wicked. Through this anonymous writer's thoughts, we are reminded that the wicked will not prevail. Because God loves, HE disciplines. This discipline is essential in teaching right and wrong. It also is what shapes our own character. When we go off the rails in our relationship, He will discipline in His timing. As no discipline is enjoyable at the time, His Word declares it will produce a harvest of righteousness and peace (Hebrews 12:11).

The hand of God's correction in our life is noteworthy. It is because HE loves us that HE does what HE must. What HE is doing is breaking our own selfish will, much like a young child, and redirecting us through such times.

Sister Pat Wright

LOOKING WITHIN: If you are in such times, would you seek out His discipline for you?

Prayer: *Father GOD, we all want to be fruitful in our lives. But without self-discipline and you directing our paths, we will not achieve much. Lord, my heart yearns for your presence every day. You are my desire. Thank you for your love, your tender mercy, help, refuge, and guidance - everything that you have done for me, given to me and continues to do for me. In Your Precious Son's Name, JESUS CHRIST. AMEN*

Title: Guiding Light

READ: Psalm 119:105

KEY VERSE: "Your word is a lamp for my feet, a light on my path." – Psalm 119:105 (NIV)

Introduction: In the fast-paced journey of life, much like relying on navigation systems in our cars and smartphones, we often seek guidance to navigate unfamiliar grounds or territories. These technological tools are designed to provide clear directions, preventing us from losing our way. However, for more thoughtful and sincere guidance, like relational prayers, we turn to the divine.

"Prayers for guidance and direction" are more than just words; they signify a deep, intimate relationship with God. Just as a navigation system needs a connection to our cars or phones, these prayers require a personal connection with the divine. Psalm 119:105 beautifully illustrates this connection, stating, "*Your word is a lamp for my feet, a light on my path.*" The symbolism used - lamp, feet, light, and path - resonates with our daily experiences.

Consider the lamp, casting light so we can see clearly. In our spiritual journey, God's Word lights our way, dispelling darkness and providing clarity. Our feet, instrumental in carrying us forward, align with the complex design mentioned by Health Harvard Publishing. They not only bear our weight but act as shock absorbers, mitigating the impact of life's challenges.

A path, often shaped by the collective footsteps of humanity, reflects the course of our lives. Unlike a navigation system that we use occasionally, God desires to guide us daily. When life becomes overwhelming, and our feet grow weary, God's Word becomes our source of light in seemingly hopeless situations. It is this divine guidance that leads us onto a righteous path, promoting a life of quality and purpose.

So, as we entrust our journeys to technological aids when navigating physical roads, let us not forget to lean on God's Word for spiritual direction. In moments of fatigue and despair, turn to the divine navigation system, and let the light of God's guidance brighten your path to righteousness and fulfillment.

Sister Pearl McFadden

LOOKING WITHIN: In what ways do you intend to make God's Word a constant encouragement, serving as a guiding light for your steps and a source of light for your daily journey?

Prayer: Dear Heavenly Father, Your word is a lamp for my feet, a light on my path. In Your divine presence, I acknowledge that Your word is a joyful lamp for my feet, casting a bright light upon my path. I earnestly pray for Your Word to be the unwavering navigation system guiding my life every day, not occasionally. Grant me the wisdom and clarity to attentively listen to Your voice and outstand Your Word deeply, enabling me line up my actions with Your divine will. May Your Word light my journey and inspire me to walk faithfully in accordance with Your purpose.

In Your grace, I surrender my path to Your guidance, seeking Your continuous presence in my daily endeavors. Amen.

Title: I Praise You for My New Hope

READ: 1 Peter 1:3-4

KEY VERSE: Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. - 1 Peter 1:3 (ESV)

We live in a world that is often called hopeless. A hopeless and hostile world of despair is often how many people feel about life. Is there a time when you needed encouragement? A time when you need assurance. Peter opens his letter with words of praise for God the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ, reminding us that salvation is a gift of God's mercy. We have a hope that is anchored on God's unchangeable promises. In those hard times, those times of feeling hopeless, we, the children of God, have a Living hope.

We have something to set our eyes upon when life becomes full of suffering and difficulty. We have a hope that is not based on the futile things of this world. Our hope is not in this country, our jobs, our financial status, or our feelings. Our hope is built upon the resurrection of Jesus. We praise God! Our inheritance is reserved in heaven for us. When God makes something reserved for you, you can have confidence that your inheritance has your name on it and is waiting just for you.

Let us live upright and godly lives in this present age as we wait for that blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, in whom we trust.

Reverend Brenda Jenkins

LOOKING WITHIN: How can the loss of earthly hopes make room for the eternal hope we have in Christ?

Prayer: Eternal God, our Father, we are so grateful for the living hope You have given us through the resurrection of Jesus Christ. We praise You for Your mercy and love, which has transformed our lives and secured our eternal future. Help us to keep our eyes fixed on this hope, drawing strength and courage from it as we navigate the challenges of this changing world.

Title: He ALWAYS Hears Our Prayers for Our Everyday Needs

READ: Psalm 69:16

KEY VERSE: Answer my prayers, O Lord, for your unfailing love is wonderful. Take care of me, for your mercy is so plentiful. (NLT)

Introduction: I am so glad God is never too busy to hear my prayers. Imagine you're boarding a Boeing 767 with your wife, nine-year-old son, and seven-year-old daughter, heading to Australia to live for three years at the beginning of a pandemic. You're nervous, worried, and so much more, but the Holy Spirit reminds you that Hebrews 13:5 says that "I will never fail you. I will never abandon you." Then, only a peace God can give you falls on you, and you know everything will be ok.

The situation above happened to me three years ago, as my family and I were preparing to fly to the other side of the world to Australia. When my wife and I first received word that our family would be moving to Australia we were excited, but then COVID-19 happened, and the worry started to make us uneasy about the move. I prayed to God every day that the transition from the States to another country clear across the world would be smooth for my family, but something in me kept thinking about all the negative things that could happen, i.e. our children wouldn't like their new school, me and my wife wouldn't like our new jobs. So, I arrived at a point where I felt God was not hearing my prayers because I was not at peace. But that day, on the airplane, God reminded me that He answers our prayers, He will take care of us, and His mercy is plentiful.

You may not be in a situation like I was in, but whatever you are praying to God for, you may have to exercise patience to hear God's response to your prayer.

Deacon Tarmaine Harris

LOOKING WITHIN: When tough times come, what can you do to help remind yourself that God hears your prayers?

Prayer: Lord, help me to remember that you promised to never leave me nor forsake me, so when I feel like you are not listening to my prayers, remind me that you are always hear my prayers.....Amen.

Title: Blessing and Intercession

KEY VERSES: “May God, who gives this patience and encouragement, help you live in complete harmony with each other, as is fitting for followers of Christ Jesus. ⁶Then all of you can join together with one voice, giving praise and glory to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.” - Romans 15:5-6 (NLT)

Introduction: As we look at our families, communities, churches, nations, etc. it is apparent that patience and encouragement may be somewhat at an all-time low. There seems to be an air of distrust, discontent, disinformation, and despair permeating our senses. None the less, we Christians know where the answer to this conundrum lies—the answer is our God—the Father of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. For only our creator, the living God, can give us humans patience and encouragement in abundance.

Patience is truly a virtue and in my humble opinion it does not come naturally. At least not for me. It is only through praying and awareness that the situations that arise assist me in developing patience. Truly, I would not advise anyone to ask for ‘patience’ as your wish will be granted. You will find yourself in all manner of trying situations in which the only thing that you can do is exert patience, for it would be useless to do anything else but exercise patience. Especially those situations in which you absolutely have no control, i.e. waiting for the drawbridge to lower, waiting for that child to be born, waiting for the check to come in the mail, waiting for your ship to come in (that was one of my mother’s favorite sayings), etc. I have found that acceptance has gone a long way in my development of patience. It also helps me to be encouraged by knowing that God got this!!!

It is true that patience and encouragement are necessary relational wise. All of us do not arrive at the level God would have us to be at the same time. Some get there sooner, others take the circuitous route, and some get completely lost. Yet, as followers of Christ Jesus this acceptable behavior will enable us to live in complete harmony with each other; our reasonable service as we collectively give praise and glory to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Reverend Shirley Stewart-Tibbs

LOOKING WITHIN: Is your level of patience and encouragement pleasing to God? Are you relationally mature which is evidenced by your harmonious living with other Christians?

Prayer: Lord, show me the areas in my life which are not aligned with your Word. May I be worthy to wear the name of Christian, as I strive to imitate my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ in word and deed. Help me as only you can to develop the patience and encouragement that will allow me to live in harmony with your people and give you the praise and glory that you so rightly deserve! Amen.

Title: In Search of Clarity

READ: Proverbs 3:5-6

KEY VERSES: Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight. - Proverbs 3:5-6 (NIV)

Introduction: Whose life is empty of personal struggles? No one! Well, maybe except for most children, right? Children should ideally be free from personal struggles, especially as they navigate through the various stages of life. I firmly believe that every child deserves a carefree existence, unburdened by personal struggles, and should relish the joys of simply being a kid. The weight of life's struggles typically falls upon us in adulthood.

Various storms and challenges can significantly hinder our ability to think clearly. Let's explore some common everyday hurdles that often prohibit our ability to make sound and wise decisions:

- **Loss and Grief:** Coping with the death of a loved one or experiencing a significant loss can be emotionally overwhelming, especially during holidays and special occasions, making it challenging to think clearly.
- **Relationship Issues:** Disharmony in personal relationships, such as conflicts with family members, friends, or romantic partners, can introduce emotional stress that clouds one's thinking.
- **Financial Stress:** Struggling with financial difficulties, debt, or job insecurity can induce anxiety and distraction, impacting one's ability to think rationally.
- **Health Challenges:** Serious health issues or chronic illnesses can affect both physical and mental well-being, making it difficult to focus and think clearly.
- **Overwhelming Responsibilities:** Juggling numerous responsibilities, such as work, family, caregiving for a sick loved one, and personal commitments, can lead to burnout, mental fatigue, and physical exhaustion, all of which affect clear thinking.

While these are just a few examples of life's challenges that impair our ability to think clearly, it's crucial to acknowledge that countless others exist. Seeking secular support from family, friends, and trained professionals is important, but so is seeking spiritual guidance. As the Word of God wisely advises, "Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight." While worldly support is beneficial, involving your Creator in the journey through these challenges should never be overlooked.

Sister Pearl McFadden

LOOKING WITHIN: In the face of life's challenges, how do you intend to safeguard yourself from allowing them to confuse your clarity of thought?

Prayer: Dear Heavenly Father, In humble respect, I embrace the wisdom of trusting in You with all my heart, leaning not on my limited understanding. I wholeheartedly submit all aspects of my life to You, trusting that You will light and guide my paths. In moments when the challenges of life may threaten to weaken my determination, I earnestly seek Your strength, particularly in my mental abilities. Grant me the clarity and discernment to make wise and righteous decisions for myself, my family, and my friends, rooted in the principles of Your Holy Word. With unwavering faith, I offer this prayer, Amen.

Title: I Will Praise You with All of My Heart

READ: Psalm 9: 1-2

KEY VERSE: I will give thanks to the LORD with my whole heart; I will recount all of your wonderful deeds. - Psalm 9:1 (ESV)

Psychologist, Christine Costa, who has studied the positive effects of gratitude on the brain, says it shouldn't just be something we do on special occasions. Gratitude should turn into a daily habit. "The more we do it, the easier and faster it becomes to be grateful". It is suggested, expressed meaningfully, gratitude can have positive effects on our mental and physical health. Studies have found it can help people sleep better, lower stress, lower blood pressure and improve interpersonal relationships-just by expressing gratefulness.

The Psalmist David had a spirit of gratitude. His brain and heart understood no matter what he had to endure; God was worthy of praise. David's entire being was directed in affection toward God. David shows us to not only give thanks, but to transform our hearts into thankful hearts. To open our eyes to all the wonderful works and deeds that God has done. When you get up each morning, when brushing your teeth, be grateful that you have clean safe water, toothpaste, and a toothbrush. When you take a hot shower, be thankful that you have hot water. When you go to a restaurant, be thankful that you have the monies to purchase your food.

Being thankful is a discipline, not an emotion. Being thankful heightens the enjoyment of the good seasons of life. Being thankful provides strength to make it through the difficult seasons of life.

Reverend Brenda Jenkins

LOOKING WITHIN: How does your attitude impact your ability to be thankful?

Prayer: Father, I come to You, confessing that I tend to have a heart that is filled with whining and complaining instead of gratitude. Please forgive me. Help me learn to see Your hand at work in my life. I want to trust You even when I don't understand my circumstances. Right now, I choose to praise You. Amen

Title: Numbering My Days

READ: Psalm 90:1-9, 11-12

KEY VERSE: So teach us to number our days, that we may gain a heart of wisdom. – Psalm 90:12 (NKJV)

Introduction: Many of us are at a point in our lives where there's more time behind us than there is in front of us. In our earlier days, we had springs in our kneecaps and felt like we were invincible! Then *poof* –we turned around and quickly found ourselves in need of knee braces, and each body twinge causes us to think “uh-oh...!”. I'm not immune - lately I've been describing myself as an old Ford Pinto, leaving parts by the side of the road, and wondering “what's happened here?”

Yes, life is fleeting, but God has been so gracious to all of us. He's granted us many years and too many new mercies to count! We've also said and done things that have deeply disappointed Him. We often spend a lot of time preoccupied with obtaining and keeping the things of this world, when we really should be spending more time on pursuing those things that God wants us to know, learn, and practice in anticipation of the time when we will go to be with Him in Heaven. Even Jesus taught about the importance of concentrating on what awaits us in the next life in Luke 12: 13-21. Only God knows when our souls will be required of us.

Stuff is stuff – and we will not be taking it with us when we go to meet our Heavenly Father. Indeed, there are good things here on earth. But the better things await us, and if we are blessed enough to have this additional time, we'd be much better off if our minds were occupied with heavenly endeavors instead of those of this earth. And we can begin to do that - not only with the glory that we give God, but also with the love and service that we give to His children.

Deaconess Cheryl Wilson

LOOKING WITHIN: While we're still here – and while we still can...be sure to ask Him: Lord God – what can I do for You today?

Prayer: *Father God, the Creator of us all – we thank You for loving us like You do. Please help us to seek Your face and Your guidance so we can learn to do Your will in our lives and return to you one day. In Jesus' name, Amen.*

Title: Pray for Joy in Our Everyday Lives

READ: Psalm 4:6-8

KEY VERSE: You have given me greater joy than those who have abundant harvests of grain and new wine. - Psalm 4:7 (NLT)

Introduction: Joy is required in our everyday lives.

I remember one evening I was returning home from a hard day at work and my kids who were around 6 and 4 at the time greeted me at the door with big smiles on their faces and their arms open wide for a hug, then as I made my way up the stairs my wife greeted me with a kiss, and all my day's hardships melted away. At that point of my day, I realized that joy is required in my everyday life and didn't even think about it before. Psalms 4:6 says Many people say, "Who will show us better times?" Let your face smile on us, Lord. As much as I loved seeing my kids' smiling faces as I walked through the door there is no greater feeling than when the Lord smiles down on me, that smile from the Lord gives us the joy only God can provide. The joy that God gives to us helps us to get through our everyday lives, regardless of what may come our way throughout the day. The best way to receive God's joy and peace is to ask for His joy and peace through our daily conversations with Him(prayer). Whenever you find yourself feeling down remember that Nehemiah 8:10 tells us that the **JOY** of the Lord is our strength, and we should seek that joy because it is needed in our everyday lives.

Deacon Tarmaine Harris

LOOKING WITHIN: Seek joy everyday of your life through prayer and fellowship with God.

Prayer: Lord, please help me to seek joy everyday with you through prayer and reading your Word.....Amen.

Title: Blessing and Intercession

KEY VERSE: “May you always be filled with the fruit of your salvation—the righteous character produced in your life by Jesus Christ—for this will bring much glory and praise to God.” - Philippians 1:11 (NLT)

Introduction: What does that mean to be filled with the fruit of my salvation? Salvation is being delivered from the penalty of my sins. The fruit of this is being **free: from** guilt, shame, running, lying, hiding, disgrace—**filled with His grace! His grace--**Undeserved favor, unmerited grace—can’t be bought, bargained, traded, earned—it is truly the gift of God! This gift, undeserved of it that we are, Jesus loved us so much that He laid down His life for me and for you so that whosoever believed on Him would not perish but have eternal life! What a privilege to be so loved!

Knowing that we are so greatly loved, hopefully prevents us today from doing things that we know would not bring glory and honor to our Father and our God. Obedience is better than sacrifice. When we know better it is hoped that we will do better. My love and appreciation of what God has done for me compels me to want to do His will and not mine. Sadly, I am not always successful—but the more I lean not to my own understanding and acknowledge Him in all my ways—the greater my success rate is! My love is evidenced from the fact that I willingly desire to live by the Word as much as I am humanly capable of. When my will is not enough, I call on the power of the Holy Spirit to help me overcome the evil that I would not. My desire is that God would be able to throw me under the bus like He did Job, when satan puts certain obstacles in my way! That in my behavior—the righteous character produced in my life will be on display and bring much glory and praise to God!

Reverend Shirley Stewart-Tibbs

LOOKING WITHIN: How you living? Does your life reflect the righteous character produced by Jesus Christ? Philippians 1:11

Prayer: Lord, I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me. Help me to live the promises of God daily. Thank you for giving me a life worth living and most of all thank you for Jesus! May the life I live speak for me! Amen.

Title: Thank You (Protection and Provider)

READ: Psalm 23

KEY VERSE: The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. – Psalm 23:1 (KJV)

Introduction: When I joined the active-duty Army in 1990, it was at the start of the Gulf War. I was a young soldier. I knew that with me saying yes to the Army there was a chance that I would be sent into battle. When the time came, and I was called as the next person to prepare to leave I was a 19-year-old frightened soldier. I knew the Lord, but I didn't know him well. I had to attend training for four weeks before I would be sent off to battle. During those four weeks of training, I prayed like never before and read Psalm 23. During this time is when I came to realize that God is my protector and provider. That I just need to trust in him, and he would see me through. I completed my training and went back to my Army Unit to wait on my departure date to deploy to the Gulf War. Well, that day never came.

Psalm 23 lets us know that we do not have to be afraid of anything because our God is the ultimate protector. God protects those who love and follow Him. God is always with us, even in our most difficult times. It tells us that we are never alone. I have learned that regardless of the situations I find myself in, God is there with me.

The very first verse of Psalm 23 says that "The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want" (KJV). This tells us that God is our protector and provider of all our needs. Just as a shepherd looks after the needs of their sheep. We can trust that God will take care and provide for us his children, even in our most difficult situations. I am thankful that God is the ultimate protector and provider.

This scripture brings me comfort and strength in knowing that no matter the circumstance, whether I am walking through a valley or shining in the sunlight, God is with me. He will provide our every need. I am grateful that over the years God has ensured my needs were met. He has protected me through every valley experience throughout my life and for these things I am thankful.

God is our protector, and he is all-powerful, all-knowing and with us in every situation. Proverbs 1: 33; Isaiah 41:10; and 2 Thessalonians 3:3, lets us know of God's protection.

Philippians 4: 19 – “My God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus” (NKJV) helps us to see God as the provider of all our needs. When we allow God to lead in our lives, He provides not only our physical needs but also our spiritual needs as well. I am grateful for his love and protection.

Deaconess Natasha Denmark

LOOKING WITHIN: When was the last time you thanked God for suppling your everyday needs?

Prayer: Father God, I am forever thankful for your love and protection. Thank you for how you continuously keep my family and I safe from all hurt and harm. Thank you for how you provide for our every need when we call on your precious name. Thank you for sending your angels of protection to protect our homes, jobs, and even our minds. When we go through our most difficult situation, we fear not because we know you are there. I give you all honor and praise for the peace I have in knowing you are present to lead, guide and protect me. In Jesus name, Amen.

Title: Rejoice

READ: Habakkuk 3:17-19

KEY VERSE: Yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation. - Habakkuk 3:18 (NIV)

INTRODUCTION: Rejoice in knowing that God has your back, no matter the situation.

On this journey called life we will encounter many trials: emotional, spiritual, mental, financial, etc. Some trials are coincidental while others can be self-inflicted. Just like the different types of trials, duration can vary as well; some trials are long-term, while others are short-term. Regardless of the trial type, development, or duration, we often cross the threshold into a “woe is me” type of mindset. Our human tendency is to murmur and complain when facing trials of any kind but instead, we should turn to the word of God to strengthen and encourage ourselves. God’s word says, “Do everything without grumbling or arguing, so that you may become blameless and pure, “children of God without fault in a warped and crooked generation.” Then you will shine among them like stars in the sky (Philippians 2:14–15).

At times you can even encounter trials and have no inclination as to why. In Acts 16 Paul and Silas endured a serious trial. They had been faithfully serving God and sharing the good news and yet God allowed them to be thrown in prison. Even though they didn’t know why at the time, God had a purpose in allowing this trial to occur. Acts 16:25 states, “About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the other prisoners were listening to them.” As a result, the jailer and his whole household had come to believe in God. The lesson from Paul and Silas is clear, no matter what the circumstance or how difficult the situation, the choice in how you respond is yours.

When you encounter trials, choose, by faith, to put your trust in God. Find strength and confidence in knowing that God has your back. Trust God to work things out in His way and timeframe which ultimately will produce the best in your life. Psalm 50:15 says “and call on me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you will honor me.” As you call on the name of the Lord during trials and tribulations, rejoice because He hears and will deliver you.

Deaconess Tammy Tolson

LOOKING WITHIN: How can I learn to rejoice in the Lord instead of focusing on trials encountered in life?

Prayer: Lord, teach me to rejoice despite my circumstances. You never said that life would be easy, but you did promise that you would never leave me nor forsake me. Father, your Word is amazing, and I will continue to read it, study it, and hide it in my heart knowing that your Holy Spirit will bring it back to my remembrance at the right time, giving me the strength necessary to stand and not sink or falter when trials come. Father God, I find comfort knowing that you will work everything out in my favor according to the plan that you have for my life. Amen.

Title: Pray for Guidance in Our Everyday Lives

READ: Psalm 23:1-6

KEY VERSE: The Lord is my shepherd; I have all that I need. - Psalm 23:1 (NLT)

Introduction: I'm glad God is always guiding me.

Have you ever felt like you're walking through life in darkness without a flashlight? We sometimes feel like nothing is working out for us. There are times we pray for God to lead us and guide us, but it feels like we run into a brick wall time after time, but in Psalm 23 God reminds us that He is our shepherd. When you look at one of the definitions of shepherd, it states that a shepherd is someone who will guide or direct in a particular direction (Oxford Languages). If we allow God to take our hand and lead us in the direction, He would have us to go the result will always be with God receiving the glory and our lives being blessed. We will have times in our lives when we feel like we're not going in the right direction or we feel like we're not moving forward at all, but 1 Peter 5:7 tells us to give all our cares to God because He cares about us. God cares about us like a SHEPHERD cares about his sheep, and a shepherd will never lead his sheep into harm's way, and a shepherd will always make sure that his sheep have everything they need in their everyday lives. So, whenever our everyday worries arise, we should be like sheep and let our SHEPHERD lead us.

Deacon Tarmaine Harris

LOOKING WITHIN: When you feel lost and don't know where to turn allow God to lead you toward the path, He has already set for you.

Prayer: Lord, there are times I feel lost, and I don't know what to do or where to go, but I know you are my shepherd, and you will not lead me astray. Help me to remember to turn to you when I feel like a lost sheep.....Amen.

Title: Prayer-Is Powerful

READ: Psalm 107:28-30

KEY VERSE: He made the storm be still, and the waves of the sea were hushed. - Psalm 107:29 (ESV)

Introduction: One evening, I recall driving home from work, rain was coming down so hard that I could barely see right in front of me. The wind was so strong that the car swayed in and out of the lanes. Some of the other drivers were driving as if the roads were not hazardous. I saw multiple accidents and emergency assistance on the shoulders. I was fearful that I was going to get in an accident and not make it home safely.

I began to pray a simple prayer, asking God to let me and the other drivers get home safely and to let the rain slow down so that everyone could visualize the road better or just for the storm to stop. As I thought about the weather storm, I began to think about life. Struggles and devastation we've all felt them, we've seen them, and we've experienced them. They hurt, they linger, they hold us down, and they discourage us. There will be storms that are physical and mental, however we have a lifeline to God through prayer.

When I finally arrived home, I realized an amazing thing happened. God had caused the storm to be still, and the winds cease. Be assured, no matter the storm you're facing, don't be afraid to cry out to the Lord in your trouble. He does hear us, and He will answer our prayer.

Reverend Brenda Jenkins

LOOKING WITHIN: What storms in my life am I fighting against? What is holding me back from crying out to the Lord and seeking His deliverance?

Prayer: *Almighty God, because we abide in you, we have direct access to the Father. Thank you for the access that allows us to bring everything to you in prayer. Amen.*

Title: Thank You (Making Me)

READ: Psalm 139:13-18

KEY VERSE: I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful; I know that full well. – Psalm 139:14 (NIV)

Introduction: In this passage of scripture, David is thanking and praising God for his great works in creating him so exceptionally. David is in complete awe of God. I too, thank God for making me so wonderfully complex! For making me, just me!

When I was a young child, I did not understand the greatness in being unique. My friend and I wanted to always dress alike, have the same hairstyle, even talk the same. We tried to be carbon copies of one another. Because we were bought up differently, came from different households with different financial situations it was easy at times to feel like you were not good enough. If you didn't have a high self-esteem, it could become easy to feel like you were inadequate, or less than.

When I got into my teenage years is when I started to realize that it is okay to be different. As a matter of fact, uniqueness was a good thing. My friend couldn't sing like I could sing in the girl's chorus, and I couldn't dance like she could on the dance team. We came to realize that we both had our own talent but together we put on a good talent show.

As I became an adult and started to read and better understand Gods word, I realized that I am fearfully and wonderfully made. What exactly does that mean? It means that God created us in his image (Gen 1:27). I stand in awe of his creativity. God took time to shape and mold me into the wonderful individual I am today. We each have a special unique talent that God has giving us. We are each God's divine creation, designed to fulfill His purpose.

The next time you begin to think you are not enough, remember who made you. You are special because God made you. You are a child of the Most High, a masterpiece made by God to fulfill His purpose. Our God makes NO mistakes. You were not made to be like anyone else. God made you with your own distinctive look, thoughts, and personality. You were giving your strengths, weaknesses, and gifts, all to be used to serve Him and his people.

Deaconess Natasha Denmark

LOOKING WITHIN: Look into a mirror, reflect on God’s wonderful work. Then praise and thank God for every feature that you see.

Prayers: Gracious Father, I give you all honor and praise. Thank you for creating me and giving me the gift of life. Thank you for creating me in your image to fulfill your mission. Help me to be who you would have me to be. To show kindness and compassion for your people. God, help me to live in your creation without trying to hide my flaws. When I am experiencing doubt about who’s I am, bring it back to my remembrance that I am fearfully and wonderfully made in your image. In Jesus name, Amen.

Title: When Will You Comfort Me?

READ: Psalm 119:81-83, 88

KEY VERSE: For I have become like a wineskin in the smoke, yet I have not forgotten your statutes. - Psalm 119:83 (ESV)

Introduction: The young, fair, and handsome warrior King David is now shriveled like skin hung up in my grandfather's smokehouse to cure. He is afflicted by years of conflict, upheaval, and heavy, long-continued burdens. Yet he has not forgotten God's statutes. What an exemplar to and for all of us born of a woman. Time and life's vicissitudes, those fluctuations of circumstance that see our fortunes change drastically and our sunshiny, cloudless skies suddenly and without warning turn dark and deadly.

When life takes those turns, we could adhere to Job's wife's advice and curse God and die, or we could seek the sustaining power of His word and search them prayerfully and with a humble spirit that we may obtain the secure assurance that He does not make a promise that He does not keep. We can have confidence and take encouragement in that He said He'd be there with and for us no matter what we may or are going through.

As we grow older, be on the watch against the trials that come upon you when you feel the coldness of friends or the unkindness of enemies; know that He has not forsaken you, and God certainly hasn't forgotten you!

Reverend Dr. Elton Wilson

LOOKING WITHIN: As we grow older, we must have confidence in God's word to strengthen us.

Prayer: I cried out, "I am slipping," but your unfailing love, O Lord, supported me. When doubts filled my mind, your comfort gave me renewed hope and cheer. Amen.

Title: Rescue the Humble

READ: Psalm 18:25-27 (NIV)

KEY VERSES: 25-To the faithful you show yourself faithful, to the blameless you show yourself blameless, 26-to the pure you show yourself pure, but to the devious you show yourself shrewd. 27-You save the humble but bring low those whose eyes are haughty.- Psalm 18:25-27 (NIV)

Introduction: Striving to live a life that is pleasing to God is difficult. Every day we do our best to think of things that are true, honest, pure, and lovely (Philippines 4:8), we strive to walk in obedience to the Lord's commands (Joshua 22:5), and when opportunities present themselves, we serve our families, neighbors, communities, and our church with the love of Jesus Christ (Romans 12:10, 1 Peter 4:10-11). But there are times in which we fall short in our thinking, doing the opposite of what the Lord requires of us, or serving others with murmuring on our lips and no love in our hearts. In other words, we fall short in our sins. Truth is, because of our sins, we aren't always faithful, we aren't blameless, and we aren't pure. But we serve the ONE who is Faithful, the ONE who is Blameless, the ONE who is Pure, the ONE who is able to rescue us when we fall short. David reminds us that God is able to rescue us ONLY if we are humble, recognizing that we are not perfect and, we are not self-sufficient and that we need the Lord's guidance in all things. We can receive anything from God when we are humble. When we are humble, we attract God's grace. (Peter 5:5) God's grace is sufficient, there to help us in our weakness, short comings, (2 Corinthians 12:10) to justify us and to save us.

Reverend Dr. Amanda Haines – Lott Carey Missions

LOOKING WITHIN: Take a moment to reflect on your daily life. Are you thinking of those things mentioned in Philippians 4:8? Are you complaining and murmuring as you do good works? Are you living a life of obedience to the Lord's commands? If you find yourself falling short in any area of your life, humble yourself and ask the Lord for forgiveness. Our God who IS faithful, blameless, and pure, WILL RESCUE YOU.

Prayer: *Lord, thank you for this right now moment I'm having with you. Lord, I humbly ask for forgiveness of my sins. Forgive me for my wrongful thoughts, for my disobedience to your command, and for the times when I lack love when you called me to be of service to those around me. Lord, thank you for reminding me to always strive to be a humble servant. And if I fall short, you will rescue me.*

Title: Blessing and Intercession

KEY VERSE: “May God give you more and more mercy, peace, and love.” – Jude 1:2 (NLT)

Introduction: Many people are always looking and wanting more, more, more, and never being satisfied with what they have. Unfortunately, many are searching for the next big thrill, the next big conquest, the rare object, the next million, the next...more, more, more! Ironically, once an objective has been achieved, the sad part is that it did not satisfy as much as the quest for more.

Have you ever heard someone say, when I get that raise—I’ll be able to do this; or when I get that promotion—I’ll be able to do that; when I get that power ball—I’ll be able to buy this, when I get that man/woman—I’ll be able to be happy! When will people look at what they have and where they are and make that enough.

I believe when we stop looking at the creation and look to the creator for the good and perfect gifts that He longs to give us we will change our perspective. This verse reminded me of how in the past, I used to want more of this and more of that. First one thing and then another. Everything that I wanted more of I found out that when I got it, whatever more of it was—it was still not enough as I was never satisfied. In society at large I find that I am not unique. This verse causes me to not only desire more of this for myself but for others as well. I pray for God to give more mercy—not justice—more mercy—continue to forgive me and others when we don’t always do what we should--more peace—in that no matter how bad a situation may seem—may the peace that transcends all human understanding keep our hearts and minds stayed in perfect peace as we focus on God; and please give us more love—for love covers a multitude of sins. May we be quick to forgive and slow to take offense. May we know that we are loved by God and because we are loved we must show love because God is love! Thank you, God, for more mercy, more peace, and more Love!!!

Reverend Shirley Stewart-Tibbs

LOOKING WITHIN: What are you in search of “more of?” Has your quest been affected by reading this devotional? Why or why not?

Prayer: Lord, help me to desire the more good and perfect gifts of mercy, peace, and love that you give!.....Amen.

Title: Why Do I Have Such A Stubborn Heart?

READ: Isaiah 63:15-17

KEY VERSE: O LORD, why do you make us wander from your ways and harden our hearts so that we fear you not? Return for the sake of your servants, the tribes of your heritage. - Isaiah 63:17 (ESV)

Introduction: Once again, we find ourselves facing the enemy, and the enemy is us. The prophet Isaiah appeals to God with great intensity. This cry is characteristic of the cry of (Job 3:11-12, 20, 23; Habakkuk 1:3). There is a profound mystery and paradox in this verse. Israel is responsible and accountable to God for her conduct, and yet the source of sin is traced to Him. The effect of sin is more sin, callousness, and irreligion. the terrible consequence of sin is the hardening of the heart. Like ancient Israel and continuing through our time, the heart is hard, but we do not reverence Him, but we still need the Lord. In fact, we need Him more than ever. Most certainly, at the climax of history, we will need Him, and we will see Him in all of His awesomeness. Will we be ready?

Reverend Dr. Elton Wilson

LOOKING WITHIN: Set aside a time during the week to quiet yourself and meditate on the awe and the glory of God.

Prayer: O Lord, give me a listening heart that I may receive your instruction and grow in your wisdom to be a profitable servant. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Title: Seeking Divine Wisdom

READ: James 1:5

KEY VERSE: If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you. - James 1:5 (NIV)

Introduction: The age-old adage suggests that "wisdom comes with age," encouraging us to think about its truthfulness. Does this statement truly capture the differences between godly and worldly wisdom? Should both be embraced, and do they hold equal significance?

While I admit that there may be a grain of truth in the idea that "wisdom comes with age," my teenage years reveal a lack of knowledge about wisdom and how to acquire it. It seems that the journey of life, coupled with mistakes, serves as a test for gaining wisdom as we progress with age.

An article from Next Avenue defines wisdom as "the use of knowledge for good — for good health, financial well-being, and the betterment of humanity. Basically, wisdom shows up when our choices benefit our overall well-being. For instance, when money is scarce, and there's a tempting name-brand purse for a party, the question becomes: do I pay rent or splurge on the purse? The smart move is paying rent and saving up for the purse over time—a choice that proves wisdom.

Godly wisdom comes from God, aiming to honor godly principles, while worldly wisdom is rooted in the secular world, focusing more on self-interest than divine guidance. Both types of wisdom may have value when blended well in our lives. When seeking guidance, especially for Christians, it's crucial to prioritize divine wisdom.

Sister Pearl McFadden

LOOKING WITHIN: How do you intend to use divine wisdom in directing and shaping the path of your life?

Prayer: Dear Heavenly Father, in moments where wisdom escapes me, I humbly seek Your divine guidance. Grant me the wisdom to make sound decisions that positively impact my life, family, friends, and those crossing my path. Amen.

Title: Thank You (Wisdom)

READ: Daniel 2:20-23 - Wisdom

KEY VERSE: He changes times and seasons; he deposes kings and raises up others. He gives wisdom to the wise and knowledge to the discerning. – Daniel 2: 21 (NIV)

Introduction: King Nebuchadnezzar had a dream in which he wanted wise men to interpret. But he refuses to reveal what the dream was in advance. Since the King refused to reveal the dream no one could interpret the dream. King Nebuchadnezzar being infuriated that no one could do as he asked order that they be killed.

Daniel and his associates prayed an effectual and fervent prayer for God to have mercy, to reveal the King's dream and the meaning. God answered the prayer revealing the hidden things to Daniel. Daniel immediately thanked God for answering his prayer and saving him and his friends from being killed. He ushered praise and honor to God for giving wisdom to his servants before even interpreting the dream for King Nebuchadnezzar.

Daniel was shown the power and wisdom of God. Daniel's prayer of thanksgiving acknowledges God's control over kings (such as Nebuchadnezzar and God's ability to disclose the mysteries of life to those who seek his wisdom. God does not give wisdom to everyone in the world, but rather to every believer in Christ who asks in faith. He gives wisdom to the wise. James 1: 5 says "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him. God gives wisdom generously to those who ask for it in faith."

Merriam-Webster Dictionary defines knowledge as "the fact or condition of knowing something with familiarity gained through experience or association. Knowledge is obtained by reading, researching, and memorizing facts." Wisdom is defined as "The quality of having experience, knowledge, and good judgment. It is understanding the pertinent facts and how it is to be used. Having the power of discernment and judging properly as to what is true or right based on experience and evaluation." We obtain wisdom and knowledge through the studying of God's word. I thank God for the wisdom He has given me through the reading and meditation of His Holy Word. God is all wise, He has all wisdom.

Reading your bible regularly helps to gain a deeper understanding of God's character and His ways. There are many verses in the bible that talks on wisdom:

- For the LORD giveth wisdom: out of his mouth cometh knowledge and understanding. (Proverbs 2:6)
- If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him. (James 1:5)

- Be very careful, then, how you live—not as unwise but as wise. (Ephesians 5:15)
- But the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure. (James 3:17)
- Blessed are those who find wisdom, those who gain understanding (Proverbs 3:13, NIV)
- God reveals His wisdom by the Holy Spirit to those who are spiritual (1 Cor 2:6-16).

As I have been on this Christian journey, I find that as I study God’s holy word more of God’s great wisdom is revealed to me. I thank God for the wisdom He has given me through reading his word and prayer.

Deaconess Natasha Denmark

LOOKING WITHIN: We should pray for wisdom and discernment in all areas of our lives. Wisdom is a gift from God. Give thanks to God for revealing the hidden things.

Prayers: Heavenly Father, I give you all honor and praise. I praise you for being the all-knowing God. Lord, I thank you for granting me wisdom and discernment. I thank you for when I seek wisdom in your Holy word you grant it. Your wisdom is a precious gift that allows me to make sound decisions. I thank you God for these blessings in my life. Amen

Title: You Have Rescued Me

READ: 1 Samuel 2:1-10

KEY VERSE: My heart rejoices in the LORD! The LORD has made me strong. Now I have an answer for my enemies; I rejoice because you rescued me. - 1 Samuel 2:1 (NLT)

Introduction: For years, Hannah lived in daily strife, constant agitation and bullying by her husband's second wife, Peninnah. Hannah was unable to have a child and this barrenness led her into a period of depression and desperation. (1 Samuel 1:) **Desperation is a poison that turns off your hopes, motivations, and energy little by little.** In the long run, this state makes you extremely vulnerable to depression, anxiety, and other emotional disorders.

In today's Scripture reading, Hannah uses the most powerful weapon against her enemy-Prayer. Amid her anguish, Hannah finds solace in prayer. I am not speaking of a "now I lay me down to sleep" prayer. This prayer is a sincere, passionate, and desperate cry for help. When God came through, she didn't forget to thank Him. Hannah's expression of thanksgiving reminds us of the importance of acknowledging and giving glory to God for His provision and answered prayers.

Hannah's story is a testament to the power of prayer, perseverance, and faith in the face of adversity. Just as God rescued Hannah from her enemy, He has also rescued us. God rescued us from dead-end alleys and black dungeons. He has rescued us from ourselves and gave us, Jesus Christ.

Reverend Brenda Jenkins

LOOKING WITHIN: Do you believe prayer can change your situation? Take the time right now to pray for your breakthrough.

Prayer: Lord, I am grateful that I can come to you for all my issues. I praise you for your divine covering and protection over me. Amen.

Self-Reflection

I encourage you to commit to communicating with God daily by scheduling time to pray and spend time with Him. Prepare your heart- remember that God is your Father and He loves you. Focus on the mission that our Pastor has in place for our church and PRAY!

Devotion: _____

Prayer: _____

We Offer Christ to YOU!



Roman Road to Salvation

The Roman Road to salvation is Romans 3:23, "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." We have all sinned. We have all done things that are displeasing to God. There is no one who is innocent. Romans 3:10-18 gives a detailed picture of what sin looks like in our lives.

The second stop on the Romans Road to salvation, Romans 6:23a, teaches us about the consequences of sin: "For the wages of sin is death." The punishment that we have earned for our sins is death. Not just physical death, but eternal death!

The third stop on the Romans Road to salvation picks up in the middle of Romans 6:23b: "But the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." Romans 5:8 declares, "But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us." Jesus' death paid for the price of our sins. Jesus' resurrection proves that God accepted Jesus' death as the payment for our sins.

The fourth stop on the Romans Road to salvation is Romans 10:9, "That if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved." Because of Jesus' death on our behalf, all we need to do is believe in Him, trusting His death as the payment for our sins - and we will be saved! Romans 10:13 says it again, "for everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved." Jesus died to pay the penalty for our sins and rescue us from eternal death. Salvation, the forgiveness of sins, is available to anyone who will trust in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior.

The final stop of the Romans Road to salvation is the results of salvation. Romans 5:1 has this wonderful message: "Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." Through Jesus Christ we can have a relationship of peace with God. Romans 8:1 says, "Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus." Because of Jesus' death on our behalf, we will never be condemned for our sins.

Finally, we have this precious promise of God from Romans 8:38-39: “For I am -convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

Have you made a decision to accept Christ If so, we are so happy for you. Please connect with us at www.mountcalvarybaptist.com or our 24-hour prayer line, 844-622-2733 and someone will be available to assist and pray with you.

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Resources

J. Oswald Saunders, Prayer, Power Unlimited
James Banks, Praying the Prayers of the Bible
Holy Bible
ESV – English Standard Version
KJV – King Hames
NIV – New International
NKJV – New King James
NLT – New Living Translation