

St. Paul's

# FAMILY DEVOTIONS

September 10 - November 3, 2018



# YOUR FAMILY DEVOTIONS

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## THANK YOU

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# THE FAMILY CHURCH

## Thank You for Building on the Foundation Stone

“On this rock I will build my church.”

Peter had just confessed about Jesus, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.” That truth is the foundation stone of the Church and our Family Church effort.

Through these daily devotions, written by members of the St. Paul’s family, you are building your faith upon Christ as your Savior. If you are living in a family setting, we encourage you to read these devotions together with the rest of your family.

## Join in the Struggle

The title “Family Church” reminds us that the primary gathering of Christians is in the smaller, family setting. God instructed family leaders, “These commandments I give you today... Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up” (Deuteronomy 6:6,7). No wonder that Satan is attacking our families.

The Apostle Paul’s words to the Romans could be spoken by every parent or small group leader as they strive to build their families upon the Foundation Stone: “I urge you, brothers and sisters, by our Lord Jesus Christ and by the love of the Spirit, to join me in my struggle by praying to God for me” (Romans 15:30).

Thank you for praying for our Family Churches.

## Pastor Pete Panitzke

# WEEK 1

# September 10

## Genesis 2:18–20

The LORD God said, “It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him.” Now the LORD God had formed out of the ground all the wild animals and all the birds in the sky. He brought them to the man to see what he would name them; and whatever the man called each living creature, that was its name. So the man gave names to all the livestock, the birds in the sky and all the wild animals. But for Adam no suitable helper was found.

**A**t the zoo one day with my granddaughter, we looked at all the amazing animals. Some with stripes, others with spots. Some had long necks that reached into the trees and others burrowed into the ground. As we read all the signs at the animal enclosures, each sign said something about how the tiger slowly evolved so his stripes would hide him in the Indian jungle or how over time the giraffe’s neck elongated so he could reach the higher branches. “That’s not true, is it, grandma?” my granddaughter said to me. “God made all the animals so we could enjoy them and take care of them.”

It’s true that God made all the animals and showed them to Adam so Adam could name them. But of all the animals, there was not one like Adam. God had yet to design a thinking, feeling being like him.

*Christian Worship 256  
How Great Thou Art  
Verse 2*

*When through the woods and forest glades I wander,  
And hear the birds sing sweetly in the trees;  
When I look down from lofty mountain grandeur  
And hear the brook and feel the gentle breeze,  
Then sings my soul, my Savior-God, to thee,  
“How great thou art! How great thou art!”  
Then sings my soul, my Savior-God, to thee,  
“How great thou art! How great thou art!”*

*Heavenly Father, maker of all creation, we thank you for the wonders of our world. We thank you for the sun and rain. We thank you for our pets as well as the amazing wild animals you created. Help us to care for your creation. In Jesus’ name, Amen.*

# September 11

## Genesis 2:21,22

So the LORD God caused the man to fall into a deep sleep; and while he was sleeping, he took one of the man's ribs and then closed up the place with flesh. Then the LORD God made a woman from the rib he had taken out of the man, and he brought her to the man.

**M**y parents went everywhere together. My father was a marathon runner all the way to his 90th birthday. My mom was always cheering him on at the finish line. One time after a run at the lakefront, my parents were walking together, holding hands. A friend snapped a photo of them. That photo of them walking away, holding hands, is a wonderful picture of marriage: To love being side by side after 65 years together.

In An Exposition of the Old and New Testament, Matthew Henry writes, "Woman was created from the rib of man to be beside him, not from his head to top him, nor from his feet to be trampled by him, but from under his arm to be protected by him, near to his heart to be loved by him."

It is interesting to note that God made the animals and Adam out of the ground, but he created Eve from Adam. That says just how close a husband and wife should be.

*Christian Worship 602  
God of Love and  
God of Marriage  
Verse 1*

*God of love and God of marriage,  
Father, bless our wedding day;  
As your love brought Eve to Adam,  
Make us one in you today.  
As the glory of your presence  
Brightened paradise, O Lord, we pray,  
Let the sunshine of your goodness  
Light our steps along life's way.*

*Dear Gracious Heavenly Father, Thank you for creating families. Thank you for the parents and children that make up our earthly families and for our Christian brothers and sisters that make up our church families. Please protect them and bless them all.  
In Jesus' name, Amen.*

# September 12

## Genesis 2:23,24

The man said, "This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called 'woman,' for she was taken out of man." That is why a man leaves his father and mother and is united to his wife, and they become one flesh.

**A**dam needed a suitable helper, so God created Eve from Adam's rib. This shows that she was every bit as perfect a creation as man and every bit as patterned after God's likeness. (Genesis 1:27)

Woman was created as a complement to man, an integral part of man. Together, Adam and Eve were stronger.

Although men and women have separate roles in a godly marriage, man is no more worthy and woman no less a citizen in God's kingdom. ("Nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus." Galatians 3:28)

Even for people who are not married, the idea of moving from childhood to adulthood and assuming the responsibilities of a mature individual remain the same. Everyone has their own role in God's kingdom, as the Apostle Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 12:27: "Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it."

**Christian Worship 503**  
**Oh, Blessed Home,**  
**Where Man and Wife**  
**Verse 1**

*Oh, blessed home, where man and wife  
 Together lead a godly life,  
 By love their faith confessing!  
 There many a happy day is spent;  
 There Jesus gladly will consent  
 To tarry with his blessing,  
 To tarry with his blessing.*

*Dear Gracious Heavenly Father,  
 Thank you for your creation of marriage. Help those who are married to continue to rely on you and each other as you intended. For those not in traditional families please guard and guide them so they, too, see your will for their lives. And Lord, we ask that those who are single to find joy in their lives and married or single "each person should live as a believer in whatever situation the Lord has assigned to them, just as God has called them" (1 Corinthians 7:17). We know that you have plans for each one of us, "plans to prosper us and not to harm us, plans to give us hope and a future." (Jeremiah 29:11)  
 We thank you that our lives are in your hands. In Jesus' precious name, Amen.*

# September 13

## Ephesians 1:3-7

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ. For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love he predestined us for adoption to sonship through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will—to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves. In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God’s grace.

**D**ave Thomas, founder of the Wendy’s fast food chain, was adopted as an infant. Because he saw the benefits in his own life, he became an enthusiastic life-long promoter of adoption.

The Apostle Paul is a little like Dave Thomas in this passage. Having been adopted into God’s eternal family himself, he enthusiastically spreads the word to others. Read through these verses and note the high emotion in his Spirit-inspired words.

Note also that God’s plan for us, stretching back “before the creation of the world,” is all about Jesus. Count the times he is mentioned here: “...our Lord Jesus Christ... in Christ... in him... through Jesus Christ... in the One he loves. In him... through his blood...” And all that Jesus did for us was because God loved us.

Meditating on these words, we can’t help shouting with Paul, “Praise be to God!”

*Christian Worship 79  
How Lovely Shines  
the Morning Star  
Verse 3*

*O mighty Father, in your Son  
You loved me ere you had begun  
This ancient world’s foundation.  
Your Son has made a friend of me,  
And when in spirit him I see,  
I joy in tribulation.  
What bliss is this!  
He is living, To me giving  
Life forever;  
Nothing me from him can sever.*

*Dear Heavenly Father,  
Thank you for making us your children. Thank you for loving us and adopting us to be your heirs from the beginning of time. In all things we ask that your will be done, knowing that your power and love for us are greater than any we could have. You are the creator and source of all loving kindness. Grace us with your tender mercy and help us to mirror that mercy to others.  
Thank you for making us your children through the sacrifice of your precious Son. Help us to remember who we are in Christ and to share His love with others. In Jesus’ precious name,  
Amen*



# September 14

## Romans 8:14–17

For those who are led by the Spirit of God are the children of God. The Spirit you received does not make you slaves, so that you live in fear again; rather, the Spirit you received brought about your adoption to sonship. And by him we cry, “Abba, Father.” The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God’s children. Now if we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.

**W**hen I was a child, learning to ride a bike, I fell one day and skinned my knees. “Daddy,” I cried. My dad came running and carried me into the house and bandaged my knees. As an adult, one day a door literally fell off my car. I was so upset. I called my dad and cried, “Daddy!” He said, “I’ll be right there.” He didn’t know what was wrong, but he heard my cry and he came.

These are just two examples of the closeness I have with my earthly father. The Apostle Paul in Romans 8:15 is telling us that we can have an intimate relationship with God our heavenly father. “Abba” means “father” in Aramaic, so Paul is emphasizing God’s presence in our life by calling him father in two languages. Many theologians consider “Abba” synonymous with “daddy.” God is our daddy God, someone to whom we can always cry out, no matter the situation. This intimate relationship can be, I believe, especially important for those without an earthly father presence in their lives. God is “a father to the fatherless”; he “sets the lonely in families.” (Psalm 68:5,6)

*Christian Worship 226  
To Your Temple  
I Draw Near  
Verse 2*

*I through Christ am reconciled;  
I through Christ become your child.  
Abba, Father; give me grace  
In your courts to seek your face.*

*Abba Father,  
Thank you for being our true Father, the one in whom we can always depend. Help parents, to daily rely on your Word to raise, discipline, and love their children. Make your Word the most important thing in our lives. Help us to live out that Word and set an example for our children and all people with whom we come in contact. Thank you for always being the Father we can cry out to, whether in bad times or good. In your son Jesus’ name we pray,  
Amen*

# September 15

## 2 Corinthians 4:8–10

We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed. We always carry around in our body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be revealed in our body.

**H**ave you ever had one of those days where everything goes wrong? Or one of those weeks? Have you noticed that if the car breaks down, it always costs more than \$500? And things break in threes? One Thanksgiving, our dishwasher, washer, and disposal broke. Hard to cook with a completely backed-up kitchen sink!

But life continues. These verses in 2 Corinthians remind us that even when things go wrong, we will not be crushed. God never abandons his children. Life may be difficult, but God is always there. In our suffering we have the hope of new life. Jesus suffered here on earth the same as us.

God can use the difficulties in our lives as opportunities for us to draw closer to him. Isaiah 42 (a Messianic passage) speaks of the servant (that is Christ) who “will not break a bruised reed, and a smoldering wick he will not snuff out. In faithfulness he will bring forth justice; he will not falter or be discouraged till he establishes justice on earth. (Isaiah 42:3-4a). Christ will uphold the weak (the bruised reed) and help those burning out (the smoldering wick). We rely on His strength to keep us going even during the difficult times. And the good news is that Jesus knows what we need even before we do!

In Hebrews 4:15 the writer says, “For we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet he did not sin.” This verse brings comfort to me when I’m having a hard day. Jesus understands and we will share in his glory one day.

*Christian Worship 610  
Now Thank We All Our God  
Verse 2*

*Oh, may this bounteous God  
Through all our life be near us,  
With ever-joyful hearts And blessed peace to cheer us  
And keep us in his grace And guide us when perplexed  
And free us from all ills In this world and the next.*

*Dear Heavenly Father,  
You, Father, alone are worthy of thanks and praise. Give us your strength daily so that we may rely on you, knowing that we can do everything you ask us to do through your Son, Jesus. We thank you for your strength especially during the difficult times in our lives. Help us to always draw near to you during those times that we are bruised.  
Bless our church, Holy Father. Give us your wisdom to be aware of the needs around us, and give us the patience and strength to provide for those needs. We want to be your eyes, your ears, your hands, and your feet. Help us to be willing servants for the glory of your name and of your kingdom. Help us to see those in need, whether physically, spiritually, or emotionally. In your gracious name we pray, Amen.*

# WEEK 2

# September 17

## 1 Timothy 3:1-7

Here is a trustworthy saying: Whoever aspires to be an overseer desires a noble task. Now the overseer is to be above reproach, faithful to his wife, temperate, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, not given to drunkenness, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money. He must manage his own family well and see that his children obey him, and he must do so in a manner worthy of full respect. (If anyone does not know how to manage his own family, how can he take care of God's church?) He must not be a recent convert, or he may become conceited and fall under the same judgment as the devil. He must also have a good reputation with outsiders, so that he will not fall into disgrace and into the devil's trap.

**W**hen overseeing something or someone, we expect that that person knows what they are doing. The expectation is that they have experience. Would an NBA team hire a coach with no experience in basketball? Would a growing business hire a president who has no experience in the product that they are trying to sell? The answer to these questions is no. We want someone who has been around the game or around the product long enough to know what he or she is talking about. We want someone who will be a leader.

How does this apply to God's Word, specifically to 1 Timothy 3? We hear that raising a family is similar to helping others grow in the church. A person must stand strong in what they believe in, so that they can help others to a better place.

This does not mean that we are perfect. We are not. But we still need to lead. God has called each one of us to make disciples. As Christians, we are part of something big. It's not something that we want to hide or keep to ourselves.

As children, we easily believed what other people said. Adults aren't as quick to follow blindly. We ask questions. Whether building a house, starting a new job, marriage, investing, starting a new workout program, or even choosing the best place to eat out with friends, we want the facts. The fact about faith is simple. We are loved in Christ. The cross is the proof. God called us to be leaders to others. This can be in your home and in church. What you say and how you act, all help others. Your lifestyle is a testimony for Christ.

God is no longer here physically anymore. He left us to use our gifts and talents to help lead others to him. What a blessing it is that we get to be part of something eternal! We want everyone in heaven with us. So, let's take the lead in whatever role God has placed us.

*Christian Worship 239  
Glory Be to God the Father  
Verse 2*

*Glory be to him who loved us,  
Washed us from each spot and stain;  
Glory be to him who bought us,  
Made us Kings with him to reign!  
Glory, glory to the Lamb that once was slain!*

*Dear God, Thank you for sending your Son to this earth. Help each one of us to be leaders for your people. Help us to not stray from the path that you have given us. Let us be an example for others so that your church can grow. In Jesus, Amen.*

# September 18

## 2 Timothy 1:5

I am reminded of your sincere faith, which first lived in your grandmother Lois and in your mother Eunice and, I am persuaded, now lives in you also.

**W**hat do you want your legacy to be? What mark are you going to leave on this world? How are your children going to remember you?

Maybe you have asked yourself those questions. We want to be remembered for something great! We want our children and grandchildren to not forget us. There is nothing wrong with that. In 2 Timothy, we are reminded of the most important influence we can leave for our family, friends, coworkers, and neighbors all around the world. It's summed up in one word: faith. Faith is believing what we cannot see. We haven't had the opportunity to hear Jesus preach and teach in person. Yet, we know he was here on earth 2,000 plus years ago. We believe he died on the cross to save us, and rose again to show all people that the devil was defeated. Even though we didn't see any miracles performed by Jesus in human form, we still see his miracles in our lives today. He keeps his promises. He answers our prayers.

Perhaps, your mother and grandmother were not the ones to teach you about God. Maybe it was the other way around. You taught them. People can hear God's Word at any point in their lives. Whether it was family, friends, your pastor, or a complete stranger, they first showed you God's love, and it's your turn to show that love to someone else. Since that first seed was planted in your mind, God has helped you to work through his Word to get to know him even better.

Continue to be faithful to God. Remember that he works in you each and every day to help your faith grow. Thanks be to God to whomever helped you see God for the first time. God's church is made up of so many different types of people of all ages. His church has no limits and no one will be denied the chance to get to know him better. We have the confidence in him to know that through our words and actions, he is working faith in another person's heart.

Be the love that someone needs today because through that love, they can see Christ. We can all help make disciples of all nations.

*Christian Worship 369*

*Beautiful Savior*

*Verse 1*

*Beautiful Savior, King of creation,  
Son of God and Son of Man!  
Truly I'd love thee, Truly I'd serve thee,  
Light of my soul, my joy, my crown.*

*Dear God, Thank you for helping our faith in you grow stronger each and every day. Help our words and actions help others to see your love. Help us to remember who taught us about you, and that we can be that person to others. In Jesus, Amen.*

# September 19

## Ephesians 6:1-4

Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. “Honor your father and mother”—which is the first commandment with a promise— “so that it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on the earth.” Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord.

Let's talk about love. Isn't that the underlying factor of why we do all we do? Whether it's your love for your parents, children, spouses, friends, extended family, church family, or God, you show up and are there for them because you love each of them.

Why would God include a special section in Ephesians talking about children honoring and obeying their parents? Maybe you don't have an earthly mom or dad. Perhaps you think these verses don't apply to you. We are going to change that narrative.

Let's substitute father and mother with anyone who has raised you, cared for you, and shown you love. Can you see them in your mind? Do you have a visual of the one, two, three, ten people who have been there to love and support you in all that you do?

It is a blessing that we are able to honor and obey (respect) those individuals who are there for us. We honor them in the same way that we honor God. We go above and beyond for those who care for us and love us because that's what God did for us.

In Ephesians 6:4, Paul commands fathers to raise their children in the Lord. Fathers do this by being patient, loving, and by showing what it means to be a strong Christian. God is our first father. Earthly fathers are to pattern their attitudes and lifestyles after him. They are to show love in all things. Even when reprimanding and guiding their children, fathers are to show the love of our heavenly Father.

God is our eternal Father. He is the role model for earthly fathers. He (Jesus) only had minimal time on earth to train his disciples to be teachers after him. He left his commands for children and fathers. He wants us to remember that we show his love to others every time we show love to our mothers, fathers, anyone who has cared for us and raised us.

Thanks be to God that we have His instructions on how to love, honor, and raise those God has given us.

**Christian Worship 531**  
**Christ Is Made the**  
**Sure Foundation**  
**Verse 1**

*Christ is made the sure foundation,  
 Christ, our head and cornerstone,  
 Chosen of the Lord and precious,  
 Binding all the Church in one,  
 Holy Zion's help forever  
 And our confidence alone.*

**Dear God, Please help me to show your love to those around me by honoring and obeying all of those who care about me and for me. Help fathers to show their love to their children by following in your footsteps. Thank you for giving us your Word to guide us. In Jesus we pray, Amen.**

# September 20

## Proverbs 3:11

My son, do not despise the Lord's discipline, and do not resent his rebuke

**H**ave you ever thought that maybe God's laws don't apply to you? That they are from several thousand years ago, and how can they apply to the 21st century? I know I have. There are some old testament laws that I would have questioned then, and now. God left us the ten commandments to show us how he wants us to act and behave. God knows all things, and he knew that we would need his wisdom today.

People struggle with the way God chose to punish people in the Bible. Sometimes it seems harsh - even random. What happened to the God of mercy?

God does what he does because he loves us. He disciplines us so that we grow and learn. He wants us to turn to him in all things. It's not like he doesn't know what discipline feels like. He has been through what we are going through. He knows pain and sorrow. He knows what it means to lose someone close to him. He cried and felt emotion. He was both God and man here on earth. That gives us reassurance when we feel like he doesn't get it. He does.

That is why when he punished those in the Bible, and when his words punish us still today, we need to listen. We need to read more of his Word for his guidance. We need his love. Discipline is one of the ways he shows it.

Our earthly parents and guardians are the same way. They discipline us because they love us. They are stern because they want us to act better. They want us to experience life and be honest, humble, kind, and loving. There is always someone who cares. Who cares about who you are, what you do, think, say, and how you act. God cares. He is there. He doesn't want us to be mad when he is trying to teach us a lesson. He wants us to learn from it; to grow from what he shows us.

*Christian Worship 471  
Renew Me, O Eternal Light  
Verse 4*

*Grant that I only you may love  
And seek those things which are above  
Till I behold you face to face,  
O Light eternal, through your grace.*

*Dear God, Please help us to want to be more like you. Help us to take your laws and your principles and apply them to our own lives. Help us to live by your law and gospel. Thank you for giving us people around us to guide us and help us see you. In Jesus, Amen.*

# September 21

## Proverbs 13:4

A sluggard's appetite is never filled, but the desires of the diligent are fully satisfied.

There are many ways that we as Christians can be diligent today. We can diligently work hard at our jobs, we can diligently respect those in authority over us, even when we might not agree with everything they say and do. We can diligently take care of our bodies. We show love towards others, even our enemies.

What kind of diligence is God talking about? Am I being diligent about the right kinds of things? God says, "The desires of the diligent are fully satisfied."

Did you catch the beginning of this verse? In the NIV 84, the Bible says, "The sluggard craves and gets nothing." Nothing. This is hard to understand. As sinful human beings we crave love and attention. We crave better bodies, better houses, better clothes, and better cars. We crave other people's lives and think they have it all. Sometimes people who aren't Christians seem to have better lives than us. It makes us want to crave more.

If we crave the wrong things, we will never be fully satisfied. It is okay to work hard and want more from life, to move up in the company we work for, buy a new car, or have the latest cell phone. It's okay to show our children where hard work gets us. We just can't let it crowd out God and his plans for us.

As long as we stay focused on God's Word, we can't falter. It's like Peter when he walked on water. The minute he started doubting Jesus' word, he went down. When we stray from the path that God wants us to walk, we also falter. Sure, maybe it will all seem okay at first. Maybe we will even think we have everything under control. But if God isn't there, we are walking in the dark. What do I crave more than anything? "As the deer pants for streams of water, so my soul longs for you, O Lord." Lord, help me be diligent to know you and serve you better. Only then will I be fully satisfied.

*Christian Worship 536  
Lord Jesus Christ,  
the Church's Head  
Verse 1*

*Lord Jesus Christ, the Church's head, You are her one foundation.  
In you she trusts, before you bows, And waits for your salvation.  
Built on this rock secure, Your Church shall endure.  
Though all the world decay, And all things pass away.  
Oh, hear, oh, hear us, Jesus!*

*Dear Jesus, Thank you for putting us where we are right now. Help us to show your love to everyone we meet. When we stray from your path, lead us back to where you want us. Help us to have faith that is willing to follow you. In Jesus, Amen.*



# September 22

## Proverbs 22:6

Start children off on the way they should go, and even when they are old they will not turn from it.

**W**hat comes to mind when you hear the word “training?” Do you immediately think of training for a sporting activity? Do you think about hard work and the dedication that will be necessary to achieve the potential of who you want to be and become?

In Proverbs, God says to, “Train a child in the way he should go.” He gave us a game plan in his Word. Teaching a child from an early age, right and wrong, means that as he or she grows older, they will remember those instructions. If they are repeated and instilled, they will not be forgotten.

Children will learn and copy the actions that they see before them. Part of training means that we model our actions of those we want to be like. Being a leader means that you are watched. It means that all eyes are on you. Training a child means showing them how to live their lives in a God pleasing way. It means showing, not just telling.

Maybe you didn’t grow up in a Christian household. Maybe you learned later on in life what it means to be a Christian. That’s okay! In this verse it says, “and when he is old he will not turn from it.” It doesn’t matter when you started. It doesn’t matter that your training started when you were 39, 40, 80 years old. Once you know about Christ’s love for you, it changes your lifestyle. It changes what you say, do, and think.

Training can start now. Whether it’s our pastors, friends, coworkers, or extended family that show us what it means to live for Christ, we are all training. That does not stop. We can be 100, and God still has a plan for us. He is still showing us how to witness and be his child. We are all children of God. It is such a blessing and a privilege to know him. To be able to live for him day after day. So, children, listen to everyone, and respect those around you who are trying to train you in God’s ways. They want to see you in heaven. That is the ultimate reason we train.

*Christian Worship 530  
Hark! The Church  
Proclaims Her Honor  
Verse 5*

*Onward, then, without despairing!  
Calm we follow at his Word,  
Thus through joy and sorrow bearing  
Faithful witness to our Lord.*

*Dear God, Thank you for giving us the tools to train children, and those around you who may not know you yet. Give us the words to teach and patience when things get tough. Thank you for showing your love to us each and every day. Amen.*

# WEEK 3

# September 24

## Ephesians 1:17-18

I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better. I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in his holy people.

**T**oo often, my life is consumed by to-do lists: make supper, do the laundry, clean the house, go grocery shopping, work, sometimes even extra hours at work, and so on. What is on your list? I don't know about you, but it is too easy for me to fall into autopilot to complete these tasks, and I lose focus of where my priorities should be.

Paul uses beautiful words in the text above to encourage us. He asks the glorious Father to give wisdom and revelation to know Him better. When I think of the words wisdom and revelation in this context, I think of knowing something in its entirety – being completely opened to its truth.

What is this truth that we should know and, more importantly, believe wholeheartedly without a doubt? “The hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in his holy people.”

Wow! God has called us, His holy people. Who am I to deserve this blessing? Alone, I am no one. I am just a sinner, consumed by to-do lists, that all too often pushes my faith aside. Paul reminds us the importance of knowing our Lord and Savior so that we can remain on the straight and narrow path to Eternal Life.

Let us follow Paul's lead and “keep asking” that God will continue to show Himself to us in His Word. May we also learn from Paul's example and pray for others.

**Christian Worship 290**  
**One Thing's Needful**  
**Verse 1**

*One thing's needful; Lord, this treasure  
 Teach me highly to regard.  
 All else, though it first give pleasure,  
 Is a yoke that presses hard.  
 Beneath it the heart is still fretting and striving,  
 No true, lasting happiness ever deriving.  
 This one thing is needful; all others are vain -  
 I count all but loss that I Christ may obtain.*

**Heavenly Father, thank you for choosing me to be part of your holy people. Please forgive me for the times that I get wrapped up in the busyness of life, and lose focus of my priority. Help me to gain the wisdom and revelation of the hope to which you have called me through diligent study of Your Word. Help me also to encourage others as Paul encouraged so many around him. Amen.**

# September 25

## Ephesians 1:19-21

And his incomparably great power for us who believe. That power is the same as the mighty strength he exerted when he raised Christ from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every name that is invoked, not only in the present age but also in the one to come.

**W**e've all heard the stories of people with such an adrenaline rush that they have enough strength to lift a car in order to save someone's life. There are also people that have that amount of strength all the time! They lift items as heavy as a car for fun! None of that strength, however, compares to the power and strength mentioned in our text.

Some days, I feel like I have nothing left to give. Some days, it takes all I have just to carry my 20 lbs kiddo up the stairs to bed, and then I'm ready to head to bed myself! Our lives can be draining. Even the blessings in our lives can be draining, in positive ways.

So where does our strength come from? "That power is the same as the mighty strength he exerted when he raised Christ from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms." God raising his Son, Jesus Christ, from the dead ensures our salvation. That act of love, and that act of love alone, is what gives us the hope that we have. That is a lot of power and strength!

I would like to be known as a person that just keeps going with a positive attitude, no matter what happens in life. What a testament to our faith we could be if we maintained a positive and energetic attitude during our good times and difficult times.

The power and strength needed to maintain this type of an attitude can only be found in one place, and thankfully God is available to us 24-7, which means that "great power" is also available to us 24-7! May we seek to find our power and strength from our Savior!

*Christian Worship 468  
My God, My Father,  
Make Me Strong  
Verse 1*

*My God, my father, make me strong,  
When tasks of life seem hard and long,  
To greet them with this triumph song:  
Your will be done.*

*Heavenly Father, I don't always have the strength I need to maintain a positive, Christian attitude throughout my life. Please help me to find my strength in you, as you have promised the same power to me that you used to raise your son from the dead! Help me to show my faith in you through my daily words and actions. Amen.*

# September 26

## Ephesians 1:22-23

And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way.

**H**ave you ever used the saying, “he/she completes me?” What you are essentially saying is that you are not whole without that other person. It is a blessing to be able to rely on someone else that intensely, as long as they don’t let you down.

Paul tells us in Ephesians 1:22-23 that God appointed his son, Jesus Christ, as the head over everything for the church. Jesus Christ is the King of Kings. Not anyone or anything is above Jesus. Jesus is the head of the church, his body - that’s us. As the head, Jesus is guide and directing us. Just as the head takes care of the body, so Jesus takes care of us. What a comfort! Not only is Jesus Christ the head of the church, but Paul says that he also “fills everything in every way.” Jesus Christ completes us, and what a blessing it is to find our strength in him. Jesus gives us strength when we are weak, and even goes so far as to make us stronger in our weakness. 1 Corinthians 12:10 says, “That is why, for Christ’s sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong.”

So when others in your life let you down, and it is only a matter of time because of sin, remember that God has appointed the King of Kings to rule over us, to guard us, to protect us, and to make us stronger in our weakness. Call upon God daily in prayer, and find your fullness and strength in him!

**Christian Worship 538**  
**The Church’s One Foundation**  
**Verse 1**

*The church’s one foundation  
 Is Jesus Christ, her Lord;  
 She is his new creation  
 By water and the Word,  
 From heav’n he came and sought her  
 To be his holy bride;  
 With his own blood he bought her,  
 And for her life he died.*

*Heavenly Father, thank you for appointing your son, Jesus Christ, as the head of the church. Help us to remember that we get to fully rely on him, and help us to be made stronger in our weaknesses. Thank you for your grace and the unending amounts of blessings you shower upon us! Amen.*

# September 27

## Ephesians 2:1-3

As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient. All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our flesh and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature deserving of wrath.

**W**hat are some words that come to mind when you think of a dead person? Lifelessness? The end? Maybe even powerlessness? What would you say to someone if they came up to you and told you that you were dead? I imagine that anyone, particularly the youth that still feel indestructible, would call them crazy. But that is exactly what we are: dead.

Although it is hard to hear, the Law is a vital part to our walk with God. Without the Law, there would be no need for the Gospel. We need to fully understand the gravity of our situation without grace.

Sin totally consumes us. It's easy to say "well, at least I'm not as bad as that person," or "I have good morals and try my best." Paul tells us in these words that our best is not enough. Even our habitual sins of speeding, thinking or saying God's name in vain, selfishness and others that seem small to us, make us completely dead in God's eyes. We only deserve God's wrath and punishment!

This is where that beautiful Gospel comes in. Though we are deserving of God's wrath, John 3:16 tells us that "God so loved the world that he gave his one and only son, that whoever believes in him will not perish, but have eternal life."

Thanks be to God for his undeserved love! Salvation is ours through the blood of his son, Jesus Christ!

*Christian Worship 304  
Jesus Sinners Does Receive  
Verse 1*

*Jesus sinners does receive;  
Oh, may all this saying ponder  
Who in sin's delusions live  
And from God and heaven wander.  
Here is hope for all who grieve -  
Jesus sinners does receive.*

*Heavenly Father, I know that because of sin, I am only deserving of death and punishment.  
Help me to use these strong words of your Law as a reminder of my need for your grace.  
Amen.*

# September 28

## Ephesians 2:4-5

But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved.

**T**he definition of “mercy” is compassion or forgiveness shown toward someone whom it is within one’s power to punish or harm. In other words, mercy is something that is given even when it isn’t deserved. It is a true act of love and selflessness.

I don’t naturally think of myself as someone that needs mercy. Convicted convicts need mercy. Terrorists need mercy. Pedophiles need mercy. However, as established earlier in the text, we ALL are in need of God’s mercy! Just go for a drive in down town Milwaukee. I know that I am guilty of withholding mercy to other drivers around me, just as I am completely undeserving of mercy with my, at times, selfish driving.

God’s expectation of us is to show the same mercy to others as he shows to us. Because of our sinful nature, mercy is not easy to give and is an unnatural process. When someone has wronged us, rather than turning to mercy we turn to judgement. However, God does not expect us to do for others what he has not already done for us! Notice that this portion of scripture is in the past tense. The mercy has already been shown, and grace has already been given! What an incredible gift that we are able to share.

Showing mercy is a beautiful reflection of our faith. May God help us to reflect the love and mercy he has shown us through the ultimate sacrifice: the death of his one and only son for the forgiveness of all sins!

*Christian Worship 505  
Love Is the Gracious Gift  
Verse 1*

*Love is the gracious gift of your goodness;  
Love is the patient fruit of your care;  
Love is the gentle work of your Spirit,  
Who is the source of love ev’rywhere.*

*Heavenly Father, although I am dead in my sin, you continue to shower me with your great love and mercy. Help me to reflect your love and mercy to others, so that others may see your through my words and actions. Amen.*

# September 29

## Ephesians 2:8-10

For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— not by works, so that no one can boast. For we are God’s handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

**E**veryone loves gifts, right? Even adults get giddy on their birthday or Christmas knowing the gifts will be coming. Gifts are a great way of showing someone that you care, and we enjoy the feeling of knowing that people care for us!

In the text for today, we are reminded of the ultimate gift. The gift of our salvation. The gift has already been bought for us, and not because of anything we have done or can do to show our worth. “All of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags; we all shrivel up like a leaf, and like the wind our sins sweep us away.” Isaiah 64:6 Nonetheless, God created us as the crown of his creation to do good works for him. Our lives are a thank offering to our Lord and Savior, not for our glory, but for his. God no longer sees the stains of our sins, but rather a robe of righteousness. We have been enabled to serve God wholeheartedly not only in this life, but in eternal life!

So how will you serve God out of thankfulness in your life? In your family? In your work environment? In your hobbies? In every aspect of your life? It can be quite overwhelming to think about, but remember that God is enabling you and your strength comes from him! Be diligent in prayer and finding time to read God’s Word.

May God allow us to remember our gift of salvation and help us to live a life of thankfulness. May we also share this gift with others!

**Christian Worship 219**  
**Lord When Your Glory**  
**I Shall See**  
**Verse 1**

*Lord, when your glory I shall see  
 And taste your Kingdom’s pleasure,  
 Your blood my royal robe shall be,  
 My joy beyond all measure!  
 When I appear before your throne,  
 Your righteousness shall be my crown;  
 With these I need not hid me.  
 And there, in garments richly wrought,  
 As your own bride I shall be brought  
 To stand in joy beside you.*

**Heavenly Father, thank you for the gift of salvation. Please help me to remember that my salvation is not because of anything I have done. Let my life be one of thankfulness. Help me to freely and frequently find the strength and courage to share this gift with others, so that we may rejoice together in Heaven one day. Amen.**



# WEEK 4

# October 1

## Ephesians 3:13-15

I ask you, therefore, not to be discouraged because of my sufferings for you, which are your glory. For this reason I kneel before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name.

**F**amily is from God.

We have some exciting news to share! We are pregnant! Is it a boy? Is it a girl? How are you feeling? When are you due? There are so many excitements and joys of pregnancy. Children are a blessing from God, and family and friends enjoy sharing this blessing together. Abraham yearned for a child and this excitement to share with family and friends. His committed faith in God's promises and his love for God can be seen through his life.

Abraham was faithful to God and waited for a son. God reassured Abraham when he questioned God. Genesis 15:4b-6 "a son who is your own flesh and blood will be your heir." He took him outside and said, "Look up at the sky and count the stars—if indeed you can count them." Then he said to him, "So shall your offspring be."

Abraham knew God would bless him with a son. At 100 years old, God blessed Abraham and Sarah with Isaac. Abraham must have been so proud. Christ's gracious love compelled him to love this child. His heart was so deeply in love with Isaac that God tested him.

Sometimes in life our love for God can become 2nd place to something else. God, in his infinite mercy and love, takes these opportunities to redirect us. Abraham's love for his son was battling with his love for God. Therefore God tested him.

Then God said, "Take your son, your only son, whom you love—Isaac—and go to the region of Moriah. Sacrifice him there as a burnt offering on a mountain I will show you." Genesis 22:2

*Christian Worship  
Be Thou my Vision,  
O Lord of my heart  
Verse 1*

*Be Thou my Vision, O Lord of my heart  
Naught be all else to me, save that Thou art  
Thou my best Thought, by day or by night  
Waking or sleeping, Thy presence my light*

*Lord, let your love live in us and shine through that we may be compelled by your love. When your love and faithfulness is not first in our hearts, Lord please redirect us. Thank you for the opportunity to live for you. In Jesus name we pray. Amen.*

# October 2

## Ephesians 3:16

I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being.

**S**trength in Christ's love.

We cannot properly love our parents, spouse, friends, or acquaintances if we do not properly love our Lord and Savior. Each family needs the love of Christ in their household. God is love.

The easiest love that can compel is love for self. What is best for me? "After all, no one ever hated their own body, but they feed and care for their body, just as Christ does the church." Ephesians 5:29.

In addition to our love for ourselves, our love for God can get misplaced at times as love for things of the world take higher priority. This has always been a challenge for God's people. Sin infiltrates our love. Adam and Eve had a love for knowledge over the love of God. Their love for knowledge led to sin and death for all mankind. Abraham's love for Isaac was so strong, God asked him to sacrifice his son. Abraham's son Isaac loved his son Esau more than his son Jacob, while his wife loved Jacob more. This drove their family apart. Isaac's son Jacob loved his wife Rachel so deeply that he looked with special favor on her sons over his other wife Leah's sons. Jacob's son received the cloak of many colors that led to his brothers' envy and eventually Joseph was sold into slavery.

These examples demonstrate that Christ's love does not always compel our words and actions. God realizes this struggle and gives us two basic commands. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.' 31 The second is this: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no commandment greater than these." Mark 12: 30, 31.

We need the love of God. Just like Adam & Eve, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and others love falls short, so does our family. Daily we need to strive to love God will all our heart.

**Christian Worship 399**  
**To God Be the Glory**  
**Verse 1**

*To God be the glory, great things he has done.  
 He so love the world that he gave us His Son,  
 Who yielded his life our atonement for sin,  
 And opened the life-gate that all may come in.  
 Praise the Lord, praise the Lord,  
 Let the earth hear his voice  
 Praise the Lord, Praise the Lord, let the people rejoice.*

**Gracious Lord. Help us and guide as we strive to properly love our family. Help us to see when we place ourselves or other loves in front of our love for you. In Jesus name we pray. Amen.**

# October 3

## Ephesians 3:17-18

So that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the Lord's holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ.

**A**gainst you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight. God please help me see my sin and help me realize my sins are forgiven. The more I recognize my sin, the more I recognize my need for you God.

"For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." Romans 3:23. Lord, I am no different than anyone else. I am a sinner, I have fallen short of what you demand.

Lord, it is easier for me to see the sins of others before my own. "All of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags." Isaiah 64:6. I am not able to show selfless love without you Lord, I need you. I need your forgiveness. I need your guidance.

He has redeemed me, a lost and condemned creature, purchased and won me from all sins, from death and from the power of the devil, not with gold or silver, but with his holy, precious blood and with his innocent suffering and death (Second Article).

God forgives. "As far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us." Psalm 103:12.

"So in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith." Galatians 3:26.

**Christian Worship 411**  
**What a Friend**  
**We Have In Jesus**  
**Verse 1**

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

**Lord I am unworthy of your mercy. I know I do not deserve it, but you forgive my sins. We have been blessed by God for we have forgiveness through him. Our sin and our filthy rags have been removed and forgiven. Lord, help us live in your grace. Amen.**

# October 4

## Ephesians 3:19

And to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.

**W**hat does it feel like to be picked last for an event? What does it feel like to be the person in the relationship that is dumped? What does it feel like to be the one who is cut from the team? What does it feel like to be the person in the marriage who is left? Pain, sorrow, disappointment, anger - we have all felt the emotions that come from sin.

I am sure given time you can provide many examples of how you have been hurt by people and events in your life. Instead of focusing on the struggles of this life that can leave us feeling hopeless. I want to focus on the love that surpasses all understanding. The love of God that sustains us through the struggles of life.

“For God so loved the world, that he gave his one and only son that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.” God loved you so much that he sent his one and only Son. His son, Jesus, gave up everything and humbled himself to be born of a virgin, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried. He did this for you. Why?

Because God loves you. God wants all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. “You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly.” Romans 5:6

Christ’s love for me compels me. Christ’s love compels me to love and respect myself. Christ’s love drives me to love others through my words and actions as well in my ability to forgive others.

Even with Christ’s love driving my life struggles will come because of sin. I may get picked last, get dumped, be cut... Yet, I know God’s love. I realize these challenges and struggles are temporary and with God’s help I will make it through. Heaven is my home!

**Christian Worship 417**  
***I’m But a Stranger Here***  
**Verse 1**

*I’m but a stranger here,  
Heaven is my home;  
Earth is a desert drear,  
Heaven is my home;  
Danger and sorrow stand  
Round me on every hand;  
Heaven is my fatherland,  
Heaven is my home.*

***Lord God thank you for showing your love and compassion. I am forgiven by your grace. Empowered by your love, let my words and actions demonstrate your love in my life. Help me through the struggles of this life as I await my life in eternity with you. In Jesus’ name I pray. Amen.***

# October 5

## Ephesians 3:20

Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us.

**T**he power of God.

Our God created the world in six days. He made man and woman in his own image. Once mankind had sinned and ruined his perfect creation, he showed more love. He promised a Savior to save humankind. Throughout our lives and the lives of many in the bible, we can see examples of humans falling short and God extending grace.

God truly is able to do immeasurably more than we can ask or imagine. Let us never lose hope in God. The poem, footprints in the sand, encourages us to keep trusting in God to guide us through the struggles of life.

One night I dreamed a dream. As I was walking along the beach with my Lord. Across the dark sky flashed scenes from my life. For each scene, I noticed two sets of footprints in the sand, one belonging to me and one to my Lord.

After the last scene of my life flashed before me, I looked back at the footprints in the sand. I noticed that at many times along the path of my life, especially at the very lowest and saddest times, there was only one set of footprints.

This really troubled me, so I asked the Lord about it. "Lord, you said once I follow you, you'd walk with me all the way. But I noticed that during the saddest and most troublesome times of my life, there was only one set of footprints. I don't understand why, when I needed you the most. You would leave me."

He whispered, "My precious child, I love you and will never leave you never, ever, during your trials and testing. When you saw only one set of footprints, it was then that I carried you (Poem, Footprints in the Sand).

**Christian Worship 411**  
**What a Friend**  
**We Have In Jesus**  
**Verse 1**

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

**Lord, you are able to do immeasurably more than we can ask or imagine. Thank you for carrying us through the struggles of this life. Lord, help us to know you never leave us or forsake us. May we run to you in good times and trying times. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.**

# October 6

## Ephesians 3:21

To him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever!  
Amen.

**M**ankind is the crown of God's creation, therefore we ought to glorify him as our king. "Then the LORD God formed a man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being." Genesis 2:7.

Everything else God created he said "let it be" and it was so. God saw that all he created was good. God took special care with humankind: formed from the dust, breathed life into Adam's nostrils and then took man to make woman. God made us to glorify him.

Our lives get to be an offering to the Lord. We get to pray to God. We get to go to church. We get to be in his Word. The more we connect with God, the more we are able to show and give selfless love to others.

"We love because he first loved us. Whoever claims to love God yet hates a brother or sister is a liar. For whoever does not love their brother and sister, whom they have seen, cannot love God, whom they have not seen. And he has given us this command: anyone who loves God must also love their brother and sister." 1 John 4:19-21.

Love others. Love family, friends, co-workers, neighbors, - everyone we come in contact with in life.

*Christian Worship 335  
Praise God From Whom  
All Blessings Flow*

*Praise God from whom all blessings flow.  
Praise him all creatures here below.  
Praise him above he heavenly hosts.  
Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.*

*God help build your love within me. Lord, help me to show through my words and actions that I am one of your children. Help me share your love with my family Lord. Help me to share your love with my family on a daily basis through prayer, family devotions, and church services. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.*

# WEEK 5



# October 8

## Ephesians 4:1-3

As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace.

It is easy to come with our own agenda and idea of what will be best. We know, of course, what is the best course of action for our joint work project, the best way to organize an event on our volunteer committee, or the best way to load the dishwasher in our family's home. But is our way or idea really best?

God's idea of what is best doesn't come from a single-minded agenda or mindset, but one of joining and connecting with others in him. He tells us in verse 3 to "keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace."

Gratefully, God doesn't give a directive without instructions on how to accomplish it. Paul spells out how to go about maintaining this "bond of peace" in verse 2: "Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love." By this guidance, we see the importance of putting others above ourselves and our agendas.

But what about this word "completely"? It's a mighty tall order to be "completely humble and gentle" going about life in our families, friend groups, workplaces and even churches. We have time constraints, plans, and our own egos to protect, right?

We can't be "completely" humble or kind or patient (or anything positive for that matter!) on our own, but through the amazing love of Christ we can.

How would it look in our homes if we were "completely humble and gentle?" Or in our workplaces, volunteer opportunities, or communities if we strove to "be patient, bearing with one another in love?" By focusing on each other and relying on God's love to permeate our lives and interactions with others, our homes and communities can experience the connection, peace and unity to which we are called in Christ.

*Christian Worship 490  
Love in Christ is  
Strong and Living  
Verse 2*

*Love is patient and forbearing,  
Clothed in Christ's humility.  
Gentle, selfless, kind, and caring,  
Reaching out in charity.*

*Dear Jesus, Thank you for your example of gentleness, humility and love. Please guide us as we rely on you to help us in applying these spiritual fruits as we strive to promote peace and unity in our families, friendships, workplaces and community. In your name, Amen.*

# October 9

## Ephesians 4:4-6

There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to one hope when you were called; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.

The number one can seem kind of lonely, but actually it's pretty popular. Several musical artists have sung about it. Three Dog Night released "One Is the Loneliest Number" in the 1960s and Roxette sang "One Is Such a Lonely Number" in the 1980s and 90s.

In Christ, however, the number one doesn't indicate singularity or loneliness. By being part of "one body" which Paul references in Ephesians 4:4, Christians join together in a unique unity. It's as if God defied the logic of mathematics by presenting the equation  $1+1+1+1+\dots=1$ . The sum of all Christians still equals one in the unity of Christ.

In this equation, God didn't create us as replicates or clones. He created us as individuals, each with gifts specific to use for the purpose he has planned. "But to each one of us grace has been given as Christ apportioned it."

God has an eye on the bigger picture as he treats us as individuals but gives us unique traits, characteristics and talents which can complement each other to make up "one body."

Your gifts are integral along with your family members' to create a functional and loving household. Your skills are needed along with your coworkers to complete tasks at work. Your compassion and care edifies your friendships.

We take great comfort and reassurance in the picture Paul paints in verse 6, that there is "one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all." Like those little potholders we received as a gift from a child or niece or nephew, we all have our own unique strand that is woven with other unique strands to make one weaving which is beautiful as well as purposeful. With God and his love woven through us, holding us all together, one is not a lonely number in Christ.

*Christian Worship 195  
Holy, Holy, Holy!  
Lord God Almighty  
Verse 4*

*Holy, holy, holy! Lord God Almighty!  
All thy works shall praise thy name in earth and sky and sea.  
Holy, holy, holy, merciful and mighty,  
God in three persons, blessed Trinity!*

*Dear Triune God,  
The mystery of your mathematics is beyond our comprehension. We stand in awe of your ability to be three Persons in One and your plan of unifying all your believers as one body. Thank you for the gifts you've given me and help me to use them in conjunction with others to your glory. And thank you for your promise that you are "over all and through all and in all," keeping us unified in you as one body in Christ. In Jesus name, Amen.*

# October 10

## Ephesians 4:11-13

So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.

**W**e know from the story of creation in Genesis what an incredible engineer God is, able to design an intricate system of cells making up a functional human body. In today's verses, we see Jesus as the engineer in creating the body of Christ, also an intricate collection of individuals with function, purpose and the ability to grow.

In school, teachers, counselors and staff guide, teach and develop skills in students. In a similar way, Jesus knew the members of his body would require some guidance to unify and participate in the purpose he had in mind. "So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up" (Ephesians 4:11-12). Jesus gave us leaders to guide the growth of his Christian body, equip us for serving our God and others, and build us up in unity.

In a sense, we are all Christian leaders in our homes, friendship networks, churches and communities as we are all called to be active in the body of Christ. As leaders, "let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds" (Hebrews 10:24). We can lovingly encourage those around us to serve and grow.

And when we think of ways to serve together, we can gratefully acknowledge the unique interests, attributes, talents and skills God has given to us. "Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms" (1 Peter 4:10).

If God gave you a smile and an engaging personality, ask a friend to accompany you in going to a nursing facility to visit with residents. If your language of loving service is food-related, instead of preparing and serving Thanksgiving dinner for your family, gather your family to prepare or serve Thanksgiving dinner for someone else. If you are blessed with stationery and stamps, sit down with your kids to write thank-you cards to send to members of the armed forces or veterans at the VA Hospital.

Enjoy the opportunities God gives you to lead, serve and grow together in the body of Christ!

**Christian Worship 481**  
**O God, Your Hand**  
**the Heavens Made**  
**Verse 2**

*To us are given gifts divine;  
 All talents you have sent.  
 Inspire us now to use them well  
 Your kingdom to extend.  
 We hold each gift a trust from you  
 Nor claim it as our own;  
 We gratefully acknowledge, Lord,  
 All things are yours alone.*

**Dear Gracious God,**  
**Thank you for your amazing design of the body of Christ, and giving each of us gifts which enhance the functioning of your spiritual body. Please show us ways to build up others and serve together, further bringing us closer to each other and to you. In Jesus' name, Amen.**

# October 11

## Ephesians 4:14

Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of people in their deceitful scheming.

I recently read a gut-wrenching and heart-melting book called “Mischling” by author Affinity Konar. This historical fiction novel follows a set of 12 year old Jewish twins who lived through horrific circumstances and dehumanizing experiments during World War II at Auschwitz under the hand of the infamous Nazi physician, Dr. Josef Mendele. One of the fascinating phenomena the author eludes to is the trust the young children place in the deceptive and evil Dr. Mendele. Despite the sinister way he engaged the children, many of them treated the despicable doctor with reverence, respect and sometimes affection. While this certainly is an extreme example of the “cunning and craftiness” and “deceitful scheming” Paul references in Ephesians 4:14, it illustrates that not only “infants” are susceptible to being thrown off course. We all are.

Satan attacks us today in little ways and big ways and everything in between. How do we protect ourselves and those we care about from being moved violently by the waves and the wind Paul references in today’s text?

Remember the story about Jesus and his disciples’ evening cruise turned tumultuous in Mark chapter 4? Jesus slept contentedly in the boat while his friends freaked out about the squall tossing their boat around and filling it with water. When the disciples woke Jesus and told him what was going on, he simply said, “Quiet! Be still!” Jesus’ words calmed the storm as well as his disciples, leaving them in awe of his power.

We have that power too because of Christ’s sacrifice and presence in our lives. When we feel our boat bouncing or our Christian convictions questioned, we can call on Jesus who will powerfully bring the calm and return our focus to him.

**Christian Worship 415**  
**Be Still My Soul**  
**Verse 2**

*Be still, my soul; your God will undertake  
 To guide the future as he has the past.  
 Your hope, your confidence, let nothing shake;  
 All now mysterious shall be bright at last.  
 Be still, my soul; the waves and winds still know  
 His voice who ruled them while he lived below.*

*Dear Jesus,  
 Thank you for your presence with us and help us hear your voice above any others that may lead us away from you. Keep our boat steady with your strength and power as you help us mature in our faith. In your name, Amen.*

# October 12

## Ephesians 4:15

Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ.

Some of us are content with our bodies. Others wish our noses weren't quite as pointy, our hips not as wide, our pants a few sizes smaller. But whatever we think about our physical appearance, we care about our bodies and strive to take care of them. We try to eat well, get adequate rest and exercise in hopes of maintaining a functional body now and prevent disease down the road.

As a Christian, we care about and want to take care of the body of Christ as a whole as well as the other people who make up his body along with us. In our own microcosms of the body of Christ, we love those in our families, our friend groups, our churches and our communities. We want healthy members of our "bodies" so we can continue to be unified in our purposes and the tasks God gives us.

Being healthy in our physical body takes effort, and it's no different in the spiritual body of Christ. In the particular "bodies" God has placed us, we can implement the directive found in I Thessalonians 5:1: "Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing."

In our families, we can recognize each other's skills, personalities and spiritual gifts. We can foster opportunities for our family members to use them to God's glory. We can offer empathy and support for a fellow church member going through a challenging time. We can inspire others with our positive, Spirit-filled attitude as we interact with our coworkers. In building up individuals, we build up the body of Christ.

In our physical body, we may fracture an arm or get a cold or other ailment. When that happens, we don't just cut off the arm or neglect ourselves with less sleep and fluids. Similarly in our Christian bodies, there will be times when the body of Christ isn't healthy or unified. Your child's behavior may require redirection, a beloved coworker messes up a project at work, or a married friend isn't honoring their marriage vows. It's in those times we draw upon the love and care we've put into our relationships to "speak the truth in love" as referenced in Ephesians 4:15. Let's take good care of our bodies, both our own physical body as well as the body of Christ, with encouragement and love.

*Christian Worship 500  
For Christian Homes,  
O Lord, We Pray  
Verse 3*

*United in a bond of love,  
We lift our eyes to you above.  
From you we gain the strength to live,  
The wish to share, the joy to give.*

*Dear Heavenly Father,  
We are grateful for the bodies you've given us, both physical and spiritual. Please help us to take care of each other as we grow in you and as the body of Christ as we "speak truth in love." In Jesus' name, Amen.*

# October 13

## Ephesians 4:16

From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.

In junior high, I was in a skit along with nine other kids called “The Little Toe.” Each of the children in the skit wore a sign signifying one of ten different body parts— one person was the arm, another the brain, another an eye, and so on as well as one child who was the Little Toe. Nine of the body parts couldn’t figure out what the Little Toe was doing there. They didn’t understand what its role was. They started to assemble a human pyramid representing a whole body with only the nine of them. A boy wearing a “leg” sign got on the floor on all fours with a “hand” next to him, an “ear” next to her. On their backs climbed a “foot” and a “lung” and other body parts, but with every attempt they made to build the pyramid bigger, they landed in a crumpled heap of children on the floor. It wasn’t until they welcomed the Little Toe into their body that they were able to solidly construct a pyramid.

At times we may forget that each individual plays a crucial role in the body of Christ. “Why does Lois only decorate the altar but never helps with Kids’ Club?” “Fran and Jim may donate lots of time to the church, but I never see their offering in the plate.” Or at home one child may say about another, “Robby always washes the dishes but never has to vacuum.”

God is a skillful mastermind. He knows a family made up all of dishwashers would have a very messy floor. Or that a church with all altar decorators would be pretty but have a dilapidated youth program, and that the church needs both physical and financial gifts offered to round out all areas of ministry.

God has strategic plan to use the gifts he’s given each individual to promote the unity he desires. “From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.”

Rooted in Christ and his love, we join together with our “different gifts, according to the grace given us” (Romans 12:6a) participating in our individual roles with a unified purpose.

*Christian Worship 490  
Love in Christ  
Is Strong and Living  
Verse 1*

*Love in Christ is strong and living,  
Binding faithful hearts as one;  
Love in Christ is true and giving –  
May his will in us be done!*

*Dear Heavenly Father,  
Thank you for the gifts you’ve given me and all fellow Christians. Help us to lovingly use these gifts collectively to grow in our faith and form your church body. In Jesus name, Amen.*

# WEEK 6

# October 15

## Ephesians 5:1-2

Follow God's example, therefore, as dearly loved children and walk in the way of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

**M**ost of us know what Road Rage is, right? I have a different problem: I get the walking version of that. What would that be called? Sidewalk Rage? Grocery Isle Rage? It kicks in when someone in front of me is walking with no path, agenda, or efficiency. Those are the same people who angle-park their shopping carts or strollers when it's obviously a parallel park situation. I don't even know what to do with myself in those situations.

When I'm considering the theme of this week – that our daily life could reflect an attitude of worship just as much as the one hour in church – I have to tap the breaks a bit on my Sidewalk Rage. The verses of the day challenge each and every one of us as “dearly loved children” that we are to walk in the way of love. Am I walking in the way of love when I mentally honk at someone as they leisurely stroll down the pasta isle? Nope. Definitely not. Am I loving others as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us when I “tactfully” suggest that maybe our carts should have blinkers on them? Ummm...

Follow God's example, therefore, as dearly loved children and walk in the way of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.” These verses paint a beautiful picture of God's definition of worship. Paul encourages us to see our walk – our daily life – as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God. Christ modeled it perfectly for us in every thought, word, and deed he lived while here on earth. It's a walk that puts others first in thought, word, and deed. It's a walk that is willing to sacrifice my agenda for our Heavenly Father's agenda. It's a walk that doesn't allow rage – on the road OR in grocery isles – to control us. When the focus of our daily walk is on Christ's example, our lives imitate the most beautiful offering and sacrifice we could ever give to God.

*Christian Worship 432  
I am Jesus' Little Lamb  
Verse 1*

*I am Jesus' little lamb; Ever glad at heart I am.  
For my shepherd gently guides me,  
Knows my needs and well provides me;  
Loves me every day the same, even calls me by my name.*

*Dear Lord, thank you for giving us your word to sharpen our faith and our walk with. It is so incredible to think that we are your dearly loved children! Please help us to carry our walk of worship outside of the church and into the roads, sidewalks, grocery store isles, and more with an attitude of love. We want our lives to be a fragrant offering and sacrifice to you. Amen.*



# October 16

## Romans 12:1-2

Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship. Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.

**A**t one point in time or another, most of the world has wished that they could see into the future. Usually it was so that they knew how to make the right decision in the present, but sometimes it would be to quell worries or ensure security as well. I used to say that if I only knew what was going to happen, I would be content to wait an eternity for it; it's the unknown that's the hard part, not the waiting for it.

God is so cool. He knows that we wrestle with knowing his will for our lives. He also knows that just knowing the right thing to do is only half the answer. That's why he gave us direction in his word. Today's verses are the perfect example of that kind of direction. In these two verses, he points out to us that the answer is found first in worship.

True and proper worship is defined, in verse one, as offering your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God. How does that bring us comfort and give us insight into his will for us? Well, maybe the reason Paul speaks about that first is because God's way begins with worship. The act of worshipping him within our role of father, mother, sister, brother, son, or daughter means we are giving up our bodies to him. He is merciful and good and will supply every need we could ever have. Once we've given up our physical existence and the agendas that come along with it, then we can clearly see his will for our lives. Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is – his good, pleasing and perfect will. We will not find God's will in the patterns of this world; we need to renew our mind in him.

Whether your position in your family church is leader or supporter, there is a plan for you in these two verses. 1) Be real about who created you and whose you are, and 2) renew your mind in his truth daily. What does that look like in your life today?

*Christian Worship 573  
Hark! The Voice of  
Jesus Crying  
Verse 1*

*Hark! The voice of Jesus crying, Who will go and work today?  
Fields are ripe and harvests waiting;  
Who will bear the sheaves away?  
Loud and long the Master calleth; rich reward he offers thee.  
Who will answer gladly saying Here am I -send me, send me?*

*Dear Lord, you shaped me in my mother's womb. You knew me before time began. I am yours. Help me to continue to daily and fully offer my life, body and soul into your hands. Please forgive me for each time I stopped trusting you and tried imitating the patterns of the world instead of seeking your will. I know with your Holy Spirit, I can daily renew myself and those in my care in your wisdom! Amen.*

# October 17

## Matthew 19:13-15

Then people brought little children to Jesus for him to place his hands on them and pray for them. But the disciples rebuked them. Jesus said, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these." When he had placed his hands on them, he went on from there.

I have always loved the account of Jesus and the little children. First of all, I get a kick out of any account that involves the disciples being rebuked for something I might have done. Who in their life hasn't, at one time or another, tried to rebuff the 300th question from a curious 4-year old? Maybe you've even done it in a group setting where you were trying to have an "important" conversation with another adult and you're not ready to end the adult conversation for the sake of answering "why didn't God put my mouth on my forehead?" Whatever the reason, most of us have had a moment where we've rebuked a child for a moment we felt wasn't theirs. The other reason I love this account is because it's so easy to picture Jesus' love and compassion in it. Jesus' actions model perfectly the parent I yearn to be. I want to be the kind of role model, teacher, parent, and pastor that welcomes and values children. I want to be that kind of person even when I've had a long day and it seems so much easier to dismiss them or give them 10 more minutes of video games.

It gives me very tangible, real ways to describe to my children how much they matter. Jesus said that his kingdom – the kingdom of heaven – belongs to such as these. Jesus reminded just one chapter earlier that "unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven." (Matt. 18:3) Jesus spoke about little children as role models. Whenever they question their worth in this world, I can remind them of the one whose opinion truly matters and what he thinks of them.

If you're reading this and you don't have young children around you regularly, don't think you get a free pass on this one! Somewhere in this world there is a child who doesn't have a Christian influence in their life. Ask God to flood your heart with prayers for these children. Your prayers are much more powerful than you could ever imagine!

*Christian Worship 332  
Go, My Children,  
With My Blessing  
Verse 1*

*Go, my children, with my blessing, never alone  
Waking, sleeping, I am with you; You are my own.  
In my love's baptismal river, I have made you mine forever.  
Go my children, with my blessing – You are my own.*

*Dear Heavenly Father, thank you for welcoming us into your arms, regardless of our size, age, or earthly significance. You have modeled perfectly for us what it looks like for us to welcome the children in our lives. Please give us the patience, energy and joy to keep up with the children in our family church. Help us to appreciate them and celebrate their faith as you do. Amen.*

# October 18

## Colossians 3:16

Let the message of Christ dwell among you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom through psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit, singing to God with gratitude in your hearts.

Are you into music? I found out the hard way that this is a very complex question. Answering “yes” could mean you love playing music. Or, it could mean you love listening to your favorite bands on the radio. Or, it could mean you love live concerts. Or, it could mean that you are the biggest Hymnal groupie in the history of the Lutheran Hymnal. That doesn’t even begin to address the categories of the “no” answers. I should be more specific: Do you enjoy worshipping God through music?

Even though there’s a wide range of thoughts on different styles of worship music, there’s one common thread that God chooses to focus on: Let the message of Christ dwell among you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom through psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit, singing to God with gratitude in your hearts. God encourages us to use music to:

- Help us dwell in his message
- Teach
- Admonish
- Learn from all wisdom through psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit
- Sing with gratitude to God

It occurs to me that we might be under-utilizing the incredible support of music in our family church. There’s so much to learn from the music in God’s word. Where could we add some in? Does your family like campfires? It’s a natural place to let your heart worship in song. You could even do it around your living room fireplace. Do you like singing along with the radio in your car? Bring along a cd of your favorite hymns or worship artists and belt it out! Need help memorizing verses for school? It’s scientifically proven that a melody helps with memory. Sing the verse to “Old McDonald” or “Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star.” Also, you might think this doesn’t apply to you if you are tone deaf. Nope, sorry. God didn’t say anything about sounding GOOD, only grateful.

*Christian Worship 334  
Praise God, From Whom All  
Blessings Flow  
Verse 1*

*Praise God, from whom all blessings flow;  
Praise him all creatures here below;  
Praise him above, ye heav’nly host;  
Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost!*

*Dear Lord, it’s so amazing that you included this form of worship in your word. There are so many of us that love to praise you with the song in our heart. Help us to use all the resources you have provided us with to increase your Spirit’s wisdom in our lives each day. Thank you for loving us no matter what joyful noise we make. Amen.*

# October 19

## 1 Peter 2:9

But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.

So many of today's movie and book themes circle around a main character that is one-of-a-kind. He or she is special or unique and is the only one alive who could do what is needed to save the world. Sometimes it's an ability, sometimes it's a personality, sometimes it's birth order, sometimes it's a complete lack of skill. Regardless, this person seems created to be incredible.

It's hard to feel important in a world that has such specific parameters on what "special" looks like. If you don't match what you read about in those books or see in those movies, it's incredibly easy to feel invisible and unworthy. The solution to this problem – and a worthwhile topic to look at as a family church – is to wrestle with the question "What really makes me special?"

If the world gets to define you, then there's a solid chance you are low on the totem pole. It's been said that every person on the planet gets one minute of fame; for most of us that's all it will ever be. Does that define us? What about the ones who get more than one minute? Is that what defines them? Do our relationships define us? What about our job or our position? Our appearance?

As Christians, we need to continually remind ourselves that Jesus has freed us from the world's power over us. We are free to see ourselves in a completely different light. We are no longer restricted by human definitions of our life. We get to be defined by God! And how does he define us? We are CHOSEN. We are a ROYAL PRIESTHOOD. We are a HOLY NATION. We are GOD'S SPECIAL POSSESSION. And, what is our purpose? Praise him. Praise him who called us out of darkness and into his wonderful light!

When you or someone in your family church is wrestling with feeling less-than or not enough, write the words of 1 Peter 2:9 on a post it and put it where they can't miss it. When we truly realize that we are God's special possession, everything changes.

**Christian Worship 382**  
**My Hope is Built on**  
**Nothing Less**  
**Verse 1**

*My hope is built on nothing less  
 Jesus' blood and righteousness.  
 I dare to make no other claim  
 but wholly lean on Jesus' name.  
 On Christ the solid rock I stand;  
 All other ground is sinking sand.*

*Dear Lord, I've read the words of this verse before but it still floors me. I struggle with comprehending how loved I am by you. Forgive me for doubting your love and forgive me for all the times I've tried to find my worth in this world instead of you. Help me encourage my family church to love each other like you love us. Help us to root our identities together as yours.*

# October 20

## Psalm 51:17

My sacrifice, O God, is a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart you, God, will not despise.

I remember the day one of my boys brought home a craft he had made at school that didn't quite survive the trip home. He tried frantically to re-attach parts and pieces with tape, paperclips and playdoh. As he worked, he became more and more sad and frustrated about how it wasn't coming together. Finally, he decided it was complete and put the whole lumpy present in my hands. He was still pretty upset about how broken it was until he saw that I was excited to have something he made. I told him that it was okay that my present wasn't perfect, I was just happy to have something he made for me.

When I read the verse of the day, I remembered that story and realized that it might not be too far off from how God sees me and my brokenness. He doesn't despise my broken spirit; he loves my sincere acknowledgement of how much I need him. The Bible says that he draws near to the broken-hearted. He doesn't reject our sincere apologies. In fact, he welcomes that as a sacrifice!

What if it teaching this in our family church were as simple as remembering that each time we hurt someone, we also hurt God? I once heard someone speak on the topic of forgiveness and they said there are actually two parts to mending an offense: 1) asking for forgiveness and 2) repairing the part of the relationship that was broken in the offense. The example they gave to support this idea was a scenario where a son yelled at his mom. To mend this hurt, he not only asked for forgiveness but also took her out for a date to McDonald's to repair the hurt relationship his words had caused. We can do that for each other and we can do this with our God. We can offer God our brokenness and regret. We can spend time with him, praising him for the unconditional love he has for us.

God doesn't need us to be perfect to love us. He loves our real, messy, taped-together authentic conversation. He loves when we come to him with our brokenness and ask him to be the reason we're complete.

**Christian Worship 336**  
**Come unto Me, Ye Weary**  
**Verse 1**

*Come unto me, ye weary, And I will give you rest.  
 O blessed voice of Jesus, which comes to hearts oppressed!  
 It tells of benediction, of pardon, grace and peace,  
 of joy that has no ending, Of love that cannot cease.*

**Dear Lord, sometimes it's hard to admit that we feel broken when we are so used to putting on a brave face for the world. Your unconditional love is so incredible that we struggle with believing it's real! Please help us remember that you love us in our valleys as well as our mountain tops. Amen.**

# WEEK 7

# October 22

## Ephesians 6:10-13

Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on the full armor of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand.

**S**o, how's it goin'? The journey? –Your life journey? How's it really going?  
 “Ugh”. “Unsure.” “I don't have time to think about this!” “Seems like there's always something... always something more I should be doing...always something pulling me away from where I really should be.” “I'm not enough for my kids.” “What does (husband) think of how things are going?” “Other moms have it way more together than me.” “When am I ever going to start exercising?” “I should have pulled those weeds today.” “I really should be reading the Bible more.” “I need a break.” “The house is a mess.” “The kids need baths.” “Where are the kids anyway?”

Wow. When I really stop and think about it I am fighting a battle. Every day! The battle of comparison among other moms and families, the battle of worry... the battle of trying to measure up, the battle of self-doubt and insecurities.

I look to the Word. I read Ephesians 6:10-13. It says, “Put on the full armor of God so that you can take a stand against the devil's schemes.” Wait. Are all these cyclical negative thoughts I have actually coming from the devil? “Our struggle is not against flesh and blood...but against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.” You mean this battle I feel like I face alone every day is not all on me? It's from the spiritual forces of evil?

“Be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power.” Is this battle something God is in control of and can help me with? Yes. Yes it is!

“Put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes (ie. when the day comes and you feel as though you do not measure up, that God isn't enough to overcome your worries, your fears, your inadequacies..) you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand.”

God is my armor in all my struggles. No matter what they are. What a comfort!

**Christian Worship 457**  
**Fight the Good Fight**  
**Verse 3**

*Cast care aside, lean on your guide;  
 His boundless mercy will provide.  
 Lean, and the trusting soul shall prove  
 Christ is its life and Christ its love.*

**Dear God, Thank you for the insight from your amazing word today. So many times I feel like the daily battles I face are all on me, that I made the mess and I need to be in control of fixing it all too. Lord, we need you. You promise that we will be able to stand our ground if we put on our full spiritual armor. Lord help us see you as our ultimate source of help and comfort in everything. Amen.**

# October 23

## Ephesians 6:14

Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place.

**H**ow much do you like looking at old pictures and videos of yourself, your kids, or your old family times together? My kids love it! They love seeing themselves being held for the first time. They love seeing all the fun places we took them, the funny things they said, the toys they used to play with, how they talked, what our house looked like. You name it. They love everything about it and could watch for hours.

How do I as a mom feel about it? Not really a fan. I have to be in the right frame of mind. Why is that? One word – lies. Lies you say? I know it sounds harsh but it really is lies that keep me from enjoying looking at old photos and videos. You see, as I watch I remember how I felt, what I was telling myself at the time, that I wasn't doing a good job as a mom, that I felt inadequate, a failure. At times I felt alone, unloved, angry. I didn't feel beautiful. There were some dark days. You can probably relate.

Of course, it looks different in retrospect. I can see the truth a little more clearly. Knowing it all ended up being ok, or that it didn't matter anyway, or that I looked just fine, or that it really was a difficult time but it strengthened me in some way or another and I'm better for it. In reality, I had nothing to worry about!

God talks to us about the importance of truth. Where do we find protection against Satan's lies and schemes? "Stand firm with the belt of truth buckled around your waist."

The truth: God loves me - at all times. I'm his precious daughter. He put me where I am. He strengthens me. He'll always make it work out.

That's why I buckle the belt of truth around my waist.

You might be thinking, "Where am I going to find the time? – I know the truth – I know what God says." But don't be fooled. The devil specializes in creating misunderstanding, faulty perceptions, and misleading circumstances in order to keep us defeated and discouraged. God's Word is full of beautiful truths about who you are in Christ and the love he has for you. It gives you the perspective to say "I have nothing to worry about!" when life so often gets to be too much. When we wear the Belt of Truth, when we are in the Word regularly, we clothe ourselves with God's love, forgiveness, and the truth of who we are in Christ.

**Christian Worship 457**  
**Fight the Good Fight**  
**Verse 4**

*Faint not nor fear; His arms are near.  
He changes not, and you are dear.  
Only believe, and you will see  
That Christ is Lord eternally.*

***Father God, thank you that your Word is Truth (John 17:17); that the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of Truth (John 14:17 and 15:26); and that Jesus is the way, the truth and the life (John 14:6). Keep me steadfast in your Word so that I may be constantly reminded of your perfect love for me, the perfect forgiveness I have in you, and your perfect plan for my life through all eternity. We love you Lord. Amen.***



# October 24

## Ephesians 6:15

Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace.

**G**od loves people. I mean, he really loves people.

He proved his love by becoming one of us. Jesus left the very place everyone from every era has literally been dying to get into. Jesus left an eternal place for a temporal one, left a place of satisfaction for a place of wanting, left a place of peace and majesty for a place of war and shadows.

The earth is beautiful to be sure, but it is only a dim reflection of heaven's wonder. Jesus willingly, joyfully, came "to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross (Colossian 1:20).

Do you feel peace? There are many times I wish I felt it more. It's my fault. I let myself get distracted, angry, worried, upset. I choose to believe Satan's lies about myself and others. Peace comes from knowing that in Christ God loves me more at this moment than he ever has before—no matter how I see or feel about myself. And it's not just me. In Christ God values every man, woman and child, no matter the shape, size, or color. In Christ, we truly are one family, created to look after and care for each other, protected by God, the Father of us all. God's love for us is so great it is unfathomable. This kind of love fundamentally alters those who encounter it, and does not allow us to view ourselves or another human being in the same way again.

The family member that continually gets under your skin? Loved by God. The fellow church member who always seems to have a bone to pick. Loved by God. And your co-worker who lacks obvious social graces? Yeah, he loves her too.

"Gospel shoes" are a brilliant metaphor. Think about it. How often do you leave your house without your shoes?

Then we shouldn't leave without our hearts primed with the "readiness given by the gospel of peace." Those around us should know we are Christians by the love, by the peace we have and the peace we bring into our relationships with those around us.

*Christian Worship 491  
O Master of the Loving Heart  
Verse 1*

*O Master of the loving heart,  
The friend of all in need,  
We pray that we may be like you  
In thought and word and deed.*

*Dear Lord, thank you for your grace, your unfathomable love in Christ. Help us wear our gospel shoes with earnestness. They are a constant reminder that your grace surrounds us, that in Christ you see us perfect and blameless in your sight. Amen.*

# October 25

## Ephesians 6:18

In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one.

I don't know how much experience you have with a shield and flaming arrows. I don't have any. However, if you told me that I would need some kind of defense against [literal] flaming arrows, I'm not sure I would go with a shield. I would probably want a wall with a moat around it and a waterfall gushing down the sides of it. Yep. If I knew that someone were going to attack me with flaming arrows, I would probably try to re-create Niagara Falls between me and that attack.

Do you find it funny that God says all we need to extinguish the flaming arrows coming at us from our enemy is the shield of faith? Faith is THAT powerful? Yeah... yeah it is. Check out the definition of faith from the book of Hebrews: Faith is the confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see. (Hebrews 11:1) So then we could say: In addition to all this, take up the shield of [confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see], with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. I don't know about you, but I think that sounds like one crazy-powerful shield.

I have wrestled with depression and anxiety most of my adult life and I can tell you that the most powerful weapon in the fight against those fiery arrows is hope. Sometimes hope seems lost when we're under attack, right? But God gives us his shield, which is a GIFT, not anything I have to be skilled at or smart enough for. That shield is built perfectly to drench the devil's attacks on us with his confidence and his assurance. Don't you just get chills when you think about that?

This week, I challenge you to write the words of Ephesians 6:16 and Hebrews 11:1 on post-it's and stick them up somewhere where you look every day. Then, any time you feel under attack, read those words out loud to yourself and watch those fiery arrows drown.

**Christian Worship 419**  
**If God Himself Be for Me**  
**Verse 1**

*If God himself before me, I may a host defy;  
 For when I pray, before me my foes, confounded, fly.  
 If Christ, my head and master, befriend me from above,  
 What foe or what disaster can drive me from his love?*

***Dear Lord, you are so powerful and I am so weak. Sometimes I actually mix those two things up and forget how powerful you are and how weak I am. Those are the times that I'm most vulnerable to the enemy's attacks. I need your help to lift up your gift of faith, rather than let feelings of hopelessness burn me. Thank you for giving me access to your incredible power and freedom! Amen.***

# October 26

## Ephesians 6:17

Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

A few years back, I saw the Will Smith movie “Concussion.” It’s based upon the true story of a doctor who made some pretty major discoveries about the neurological damage that occurs in the types of concussions professional football players encounter. I was spellbound the entire movie; I couldn’t stop thinking about how thankful I am to not have any major concussions in my history.

In the fight against the powers of this dark world and the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms, our heads matter, too. Ephesians 6:17 shows us the next two weapons in our arsenal and one is a helmet. The helmet that God desires for us to protect our head with is called salvation. God’s solution to keeping our head protected is to surround it with his salvation. What an incredible image! God’s gift of salvation wasn’t meant to sit on a shelf and grow dusty. Paul reminds us here that it’s meant to be worn; it was built to be tough enough for the battles that rage inside and outside your head.

The second tool offers a different kind of security. This one – Paul calls it the sword of the Spirit - is built to give us the ability to defend ourselves. He goes on to say that it’s actually the word of God. Remember how this whole section began back in Ephesians 6:9-10? We are called to stand firm. In verse 17, God shows us that standing firm happens when we are able to do some damage to the enemy’s lies with God’s truth. How often are we practicing with this tool – becoming familiar with it and how to use it effectively? Do we spend time fencing in God’s word? Do we stress the importance of our sword training within our family church? What does that look like?

There’s a lot packed into this one little verse today. Rather than becoming overwhelmed at the knowledge of this, let’s focus on doing one thing different today because of it. Decide which of these two you will be intentional about in your family church today (and choose the other the next day):

1. Helmet of Salvation: Spend time thanking God for all his salvation protects in your life.
2. Sword of the Spirit: Spend time reading God’s word; use it to learn one truth that defeats a lie you’ve been believing.

*Christian Worship 457  
Fight the Good Fight  
Verse 1*

*Fight the good fight With all your might;  
Christ is your strength and Christ your light,  
Lay hold on life, and it shall be  
Your joy and crown eternally*

*Dear Lord, throughout this series, we are constantly reminded of how wise and powerful you are. You have thought of everything we need and yet here we are trying to struggle through this world without your help. Please give us the humility we need to drop the “I got this” mindset and instead turn to you for our protection. Amen.*

# October 27

## Ephesians 6:18

Christ is your strength and Christ is your light. Lay hold on life, and it shall be your joy and crown eternally. And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the Lord's people.

**D**o we really believe in the power of prayer? Let's really look at this question for a moment. Most of us believe in the power of a human-to-human conversation. Even before infants are able to form recognizable words with their mouth, they use sound to communicate very effectively to their parents that they have a need. We have conversations with friends, family, co-workers, and even strangers for a million different reasons. Why do we talk to one another? Because we really believe in the power of conversation.

Do we really believe in the power of prayer? Do we have human-to-God conversation as often as we do human-to-human conversation? Do we focus on teaching our little humans to converse with diction and clarity and purpose to our Heavenly Father? Do we find ourselves letting minutes and hours slip by at a coffee house in conversation – prayer – with God, like we can with our closest friends?

Do we really believe in the power of prayer?

Today's verse shares the final step to standing firm in this section of scripture: prayer. Pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the Lord's people. That's a lot of "all's" where prayer applies. I don't see any exceptions, do you?

Let's start really believing in the power of prayer today. Carve out 5 minutes sometime today and spend it in human-to-God conversation. If you have a little human with you, invite them to join you in your coffee talk with God. Talk about anything – your day, your fears, your joys, your anger, your hunger, your dreams, your failures – anything! End your time in prayer by praying for someone else in your family who God put on your heart and mind that day.

*Christian Worship 411  
What a Friend  
We Have in Jesus  
Verse 1*

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

*Dear Lord, I say I believe in the power of prayer, but I find myself stuck in this silly cycle of only praying before mealtimes and bedtime. Please awake in me a deeper understanding of what you created prayer to be. Give me an unquenchable desire to spend time with you in conversation of thanksgiving, worship, need, and anything else in-between today and every day. Amen.*

# WEEK 8

# October 29

## 1 Corinthians 12:26

If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it.

**N**o dessert for you!” That was mom. Remember mom? The lady who does everything, dishes, bandaids, laundry, shopping, meals, hugs, kisses, and even cleans the toilets. Mom is a person who when abused, can bring the wrath of God and, when adored, brings the love of Christ.

If mom suffers, then we ALL suffer. A frustrated mom is the catalyst that can set off a chain reaction which leads to tears, fears, sore bottoms and a very awkwardly quiet dinner table. On the other hand, when moms are happy, it seems as if the birds sing, the flowers bloom and more ice cream gets piled up on the freshly baked apple pie. In my case, as a father and husband “Happy wife = happy life!” Mom loves you no matter what and yet the days in which we set off mom we better start running for the hills.

“If one part suffers, every part suffers with it.” The nuclear family is a system. Our church families are also a system. When our words or actions hurt someone else in our “family,” in the end we’re also hurting ourselves.

In the same way a small crayon scribbled note of thanks to mom can add a wholeness to her heart and lead to a wonderful day of joy, so a little word of encouragement, a kind word or deed to another member of our family, can bring joy to everyone in that family.

It starts with loving the Lord, rejoicing in the love and forgiveness he daily pours into our lives. From that flows our love others. Now I cannot promise pie and ice cream all the time, but if we can love our Lord and our families with the same passion our mom has for us, we will see the rejoicing that comes from honoring the gifts God has so graciously given.

*Christian Worship 233  
All People that on Earth  
Do Dwell  
Verse 1*

*All people that on earth do dwell,  
Sing to thee Lord with cheerful voice.  
Him serve with fear, his praise forthtell;  
Come ye before him and rejoice.*

*Lord, you are the head of the house, the center of the church, the creator of the heaven and the earth! Help me to praise you for your power and authority. Help me to bring joy to the church body and pay close attention to the parts and people that are suffering. In Jesus’ name we pray. Amen.*

# October 30

## 1 Corinthians 1:3-5

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. I always thank my God for you because of his grace given you in Christ Jesus. For in him you have been enriched in every way—with all kinds of speech and with all knowledge—

**W**hen you arrive on Sunday morning do you have a routine? Coffee, smile, hand shake, smile, program, nod, enter the main church, find your seat, stay until dismissed, walk out, wave goodbye, and drive away. Your routine is probably similar to what I just described. I came, I saw, I conquered, and I'll be back next week.

What if the routine changed? What if coming to church on Sunday was not just about you and God but also about you and the people God put in your life? God is God. You can have direct contact with him anytime you pray, mediate, sing, or open his Word. But you don't have that same option when it comes to God's people.

"I always thank my God for YOU (my brothers and sisters in Christ) because of [God's] grace given in Christ Jesus." Check it out! Paul is connecting with his fellow believers. How important it is to remember that our time together in worship is also a time to show love to the grace-filled others around us, to check in, chat about their lives, maybe even pray for and with them. What if we chose to arrive a bit early or stay late just so that we could connect with our church family members?

We are Jesus with skin on to the people around us. Lord knows we could use some personal words of encouragement ourselves some weekends or just a listening ear. Let's embrace this precious time to connect on deeper level. You may disagree with me about whether this is truly part of the purpose of our weekly gathering, but I challenge you to ask God for wisdom and discernment about this concept. Find someone at church to discuss it with over a nice hot cup of coffee. Who knows, you just might fall in love with the whole idea!

**Christian Worship 490**  
**Love in Christ Is**  
**Strong and Living**  
**Verse 1**

*Love in Christ is strong and iving  
 Binking faithful hearts in one;  
 Love in Christ is true and giving -  
 May his will in us be done!*

**Dear Lord,**  
**Help me to know you better by building relationships with others around me. Help me to change my routine to include more opportunities for growth and fellowship. Help me to see the opportunities to reach out and learn about the amazing people you have put in my life! God help me the see the good that you do and give glory to you Lord!**

# October 31

## Revelation 7:16-17

'Never again will they hunger; never again will they thirst. The sun will not beat down on them, nor any scorching heat. For the Lamb at the center of the throne will be their shepherd; he will lead them to springs of living water.' And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.'

**D**o you know God loves you? Do you know you are already forgiven? Do you know Jesus said, "It is finished," that he died, rose, ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of God the Father Almighty!

At this point you may be wondering: "What's with all the Sunday School questions? I already know the questions and the answers. Why repeat it all again?" Because all too often I forget what it means to be forgiven. And I think you do to.

Forgiven means you are saved! You are a child of God, an heir of eternal life. We are one stopped heart, car accident, drowning, explosion, final breath away from the glories of heaven. Yet, we don't need to be afraid because our eternal inheritance is secure.

But do we live like we're secure? Are we looking forward to the day Jesus comes back to take us home? Does the thought of our place in heaven put a smile on our face and skip in our step? When the trials and struggles of life weigh us down, do we comfort ourselves with the reminder that our heavenly Father will one day wipe every tear from our eyes?

Like I said, it's so easy to forget, to lose hold of the truth that Jesus is there at the center of our lives. No matter what we do, the truth is Jesus has already taken the sin of the world. He sacrificed himself leaving me his perfection in place of my failure. He is on my side now and I will be by his side in heaven forever.

Not everyone believes this. There are still people out there who need to know this and YOU are the perfect person to deliver that message! Let's stand on the rock of our faith and lend an extended hand to those who do not see the apostle's beautiful and amazing vision of heaven.

*Christian Worship 241  
Alleluia! Let Praises Ring  
Verse 1*

*Alleluia! Let Praises Ring  
To God the Father let us bring Our songs of adoration  
To him through everlasting days  
Be worship, honor, pow'r, and praise  
Whose hand sustains creation.  
Singing, Ringing: Holy holy, God is holy.  
Spread the story Of our God, the Lord of glory!*

*Lord Jesus it is all about you! Your love surrounds and fills my heart. Help me to live out the knowledge I have regarding your forgiveness and love! I know I am going to heaven so while I am waiting, help me as a shepherd to gather some more sheep to stand before your throne on that glorious day. You are the living water. Pour down on me! Amen.*



# November 1

## Colossians 3:2

Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things.

**G**o bizarre with me for a moment. Remember Art Bell? He hosted a radio program called Coast to Coast AM. He would bring in people from all walks of life and have some interesting, sometimes bizarre discussions. One of his repeating genres was aliens, extraterrestrials and UFOs. A topic that was definitely NOT of this world.

Now Paul, in our text, is certainly not talking about aliens and UFO's. But there is a powerful lesson we can learn from the Art Bell show. If we were as passionate and convinced of the things beyond this world as the men and women appeared on the Art Bell show, surely we would set out minds to doing what Paul commands with a little more zeal.

The Bible speaks often of treasures in heaven: angels, beauty, joy, the souls of the faithful, the very presence of God and Jesus. Yet, as we live out our lives, these things are hard to imagine and see.

I guess the point is, if we were as heartfelt and eager over the spiritual blessings that God has promised us as the stargazers and alien watchers are about their topics, we would be living very differently. RIGHT?!

We're talking about faith here. The gift from God to believe in things we don't see, things that God has spoken about and promised in his Word.

If faith is knowing about something bigger than you even though you cannot see it and believing it is true, then let's put our faith into action! This week let's set our minds on things above. Let's look for UFOs: Unique Faith Opportunities. Let's see if we can find them at work, at home, at church, in the community, during discussions, in prayer and in your bible reading. What if every member of our church was focused on UFOs with the same passion and excitement as the call-ins on the Art Bell show?

**Christian Worship 403**  
***I Know My Faith is Founded***  
**Verse 1**

*I know my faith is founded On Jesus Christ, my God and Lord;  
 And this my faith confessing, Unmoved I stand upon his Word.  
 Man's reason cannot fathom The truth of God profound;  
 Who trusts in worldly wisdom Relies on shifting ground.  
 God's Word is all sufficient, It makes divinely sure,  
 And trusting in its wisdom My faith shall rest secure.*

*Dear God in heaven above,  
 Help me to know you more, to understand you better, to see your presence in my life everyday! Help me to gain the wisdom to begin to fathom your truth's so profound.  
 Lord help me to look for UFO's, for Unique Faith Opportunities to share your love with others in my family church! Help me to live in this world but have my mind and heart focused on things above! In Jesus name! Amen*

# November 2

## Philippians 3:20

But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ,

Imagine you were kidnapped and dragged away to some distant country and held captive there. How would you feel? You would long for escape, for a team of rescue agents to come and bring you home?

Many prisoners of war have felt this way. My great uncle would tell stories of the time he spent in Japanese Prison camps in the mid-1940s. Each day was worse than the last. The long deadly marches, the lack of food and water, the waiting for some sort of change, some rescue mission, some hope for a return. By God's grace many POW's (Prisoners of War) were able to return home after months or even years of being away in distant lands. In a sense we are POWs. We too long to one day return home to our Father in heaven.

Earth is a foreign land. We know we don't really belong here, not with all this sin, pain, and trouble around us. We are prisoners per se and we are longing with a hope for something better. We are not of this earth and yet we dwell here. We were made for so much more and won't be truly fulfilled until we reach our ultimate goal.

So we "endure" each day knowing that life won't always be this hard. We have hope that one day Jesus will come and take us home.

This hope, however, is not like the hope of the POW—an uncertain, almost beyond hope kind of hope. Our hope is sure. For we have a nicely written letter which explains the escape plan and the rescue process. In our baptisms we were handed our ticket out of this desolate place, a ticket that was purchased by the blood of Jesus Christ.

The letter that God has written us is a letter that we can share. One of the challenges before us as we live out our lives is to communicate the hope we have with fellow displaced citizens. A simple invitation to church, a personal testimony of the hope we have. If we know that our world is just a temporary, that's it not our true home, why wouldn't we want to introduce those who don't know to the One who can bring them safely home?

*Christian Worship 481  
O God, Your Hand  
the Heaven Made  
Verse 3*

*Deliver us from selfish aims -- True stewards we would be.  
Endow us with a deep desire To live unselfishly.  
A full accounting we must give And see you face to face;  
Let us approach your throne with joy, Supported by your grace.*

*Jesus,  
You gave us the Bible as a promissory note of what is to come and where we are headed! Help us to spend our time on earth not as defeated prisoners on this planet but as stewards of the land and time we have here to wait for you! As we wait with hope and joy, help us to focus on your Word. When we finally return and see your face it will be a homecoming like none other! Amen*

# November 3

## John 3:2-3

Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known.

But we know that when Christ appears,[a] we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. All who have this hope in him purify themselves, just as he is pure.

I read a book once about a caterpillar who was trying to figure out what to do with his life. He watched all the other confused caterpillars who were hustling about trying so desperately to get to the largest tree, climb the highest limb, wiggle across the greenest leaf to prove they were the best.

On his quest the caterpillar came across a group of very competitive caterpillars who were climbing up on to each others' backs in order to build a tower to see who could reach the heavens. The caterpillar did long for something more than what he could see, but this group was too cut throat for him. He did not care for their caterpillar-eat-caterpillar attitudes. One day the caterpillar met a butterfly and suddenly everything changed! The caterpillar realized there was more to him than he had ever imagined. When his time came to transform from what he was then to what he was designed to be, everything would be completely different. He wouldn't need to eat leaves, or balance on the twigs, or climb on the back of others to reach the heavens.

We are children of God, sons and daughters of the Creator of the Universe. One day we will be something that we can't even begin to understand or imagine at his time. What we will be we cannot see now. What takes place in this world may not feel right. We may feel out of place just like the caterpillar in the story, but there is so much more beyond.

Knowing what it to come, we can choose to live differently now. It doesn't need to be a dog-eat-dog world. We can make our families a place where we feel safe and where we can explore the wonders of what we will one day be. We can focus on sharing the good news of the promises of Christ with others. We can seek out the lost, the lonely, the depressed and encourage them with this truth: "Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when Christ appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is."

We can be the butterflies that lift other people's vision to new heights!

*Christian Worship 494*  
*Blest Be the Tie that Binds*  
*Verse 1*

*Blest be the tie that binds  
Our hearts in Christian love;  
The fellowship of kindred minds  
Is like to that above.*

*Dear God in Heaven Above,  
Help us to encourage and support our fellow Christians in love. We are your forgiven children and we will worship and praise your glory together. Give us the foreknowledge to understand you build us for so much more. As we patiently wait to meet you face to face, help us to gather our family of believers together and learn about you and your promises while we wait here in joy! In Jesus Name!*