

# **Go Celebration!**

## **November 19-21, 2010**

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*Then Jesus came to them and said,*

*"All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."*

Matthew 28:18-20

“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes one you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”

Acts 1:8

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**Daily Devotionals**  
**To Prepare our hearts**



*"The man of God came up and told the king of Israel, "This is what the LORD says: 'Because the Arameans think the LORD is a god of the hills and not a god of the valleys, I will deliver this vast army into your hands, and you will know that I am the LORD.'" 1<sup>st</sup> Kings 20:28*

There is a great war story in 1<sup>st</sup> Kings where the king of Aram underestimated the awesomeness of God's power and thought he could defeat God's people in a valley. God answered through his prophet in Chapter 20 verse 28 *The man of God came up and told the king of Israel, "This is what the LORD says: 'Because the Arameans think the LORD is a god of the hills and not a god of the valleys, I will deliver this vast army into your hands, and you will know that I am the LORD.*

How true this is even today. In 1985 we were living on top of many hills and it was easy to say that God was the Lord of all things. We had several cars, a house, great jobs, 2.8 kids and all was well with the world. Then our son Alex began having seizures, as many as 36 in one day and we entered a period of valleys. Surgery was the only option. The neurosurgeon at Strong who was to perform the surgery had a terrible surgery infection rate and was not experienced with pediatric surgeries. We learned that doctors take their seriously ill children only to Boston or Toronto. But for that you needed a referral and we had no hope of getting one. Then my mother-in-law who was in prayer for us in our time in the valley was invited to a party and met a world renowned pediatric neurosurgeon. He heard Alex's story and invited us to a consultation at Toronto Sick Children's Hospital. He diagnosed the problem and scheduled a 9 hour surgery. During the 4 hour diagnostic pre surgery process the surgeon could not find the brain abnormality that was so clear in the original MRI's. God was indeed the Lord of valleys as well. After that valley experience, turns out life is mostly hill-tops, and we will never forget that God is not only in charge of our high places but also our low places. By the way the Israelites defeated the much larger Aramean army in the valley.

**Prayer:** Let me praise you in the high places as well as in my low places because I know you are in charge of every detail of my life. I thank you for looking out for me even when I think everything seems hopeless and reminding me that you are always in control. Amen

*Keith and Sharon Davis*

*"Those people are zealous to win you over, but for no good. What they want is to alienate you from us, so that you may have zeal for them. It is fine to be zealous, provided the purpose is good, and to be so always, not just when I am with you." Galatians 4:17, 18*



To be zealous means, "to be filled with or characterized by zeal," and 'zeal' means, "eager and ardent interest in the pursuit of something." It means we have fervor or passion about something.

All of us are zealous about something. We all get pumped up about something. Maybe it's sports. Maybe it's acting. Maybe it's dancing. Maybe it's music. Maybe it's art. Maybe it's a person. Maybe it's... well, you can fill in the blank.

But Paul says that it's good to be zealous *as long as the purpose is good*. So what's a good purpose? The Greek word that is translated as 'good' means "serving a good purpose, fair; morally beautiful, good, right or noble." If we're going to be zealous about something, if we're going to pursue something, then it must be something worthwhile...something that lasts...something important.

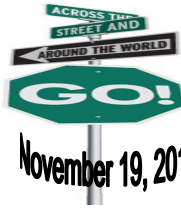
What else is more worthwhile, more lasting, more important than God and his purposes? Nothing. There is nothing more good, noble, righteous or morally beautiful than our Father in heaven. So we should be zealous for him. We should be striving after him. We should be eagerly interested in him.

What are you zealous about? Is it God? Or are there other things that you're more interested in than God, his mission and his church? I don't think it's wrong to get pumped about sports, acting, dancing, music, art or whatever. But when anything becomes more important to us than God, well, we're not just pursuing something other than God; we're making it our god, the thing that we worship.

What is it that you are eagerly interested in pursuing in your life? If it isn't the Father, then admit it, ask for his forgiveness, and get chasing after him.

**Prayer:** *Father, I want to be zealous for you. I don't know how I lost it, but I'm sorry that I did. I need you to restore my zeal for you and your good purposes. And help me to remember that there are many things out there that will try to separate me from you and turn my zeal to them. Don't let me be interested in pursuing anything other than you. Amen the tough things and the difficulties and see your blessings. Amen*

Pastor Ray Hammond



*“Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.” **Philippians 4:6***

November 19, 2010

In November, we remember our blessings and give thanks to God. But maybe you're going through something really tough right now, and it makes it hard to be thankful. I've had those kinds of times in my life. Yet, Paul, the writer of Philippians, says that we shouldn't worry about anything. Instead, we should present our requests to God with thanksgiving. How do you do that when life is tough? Well, it might take some thought, but regardless of your situation, there are reasons to be thankful.

For example, sometimes we don't understand what God is doing. It might even feel like he doesn't really care, because if he did he'd do something; right? But I can assure you that God cares very much. There have been times in my life where things were so hard that I really didn't feel like being thankful. In those times I realized that I could thank God for the fact that he was working even if I couldn't see it, and that I could trust him because I knew he loved me.

Paul knew what it was like to experience hard times. In 2 Corinthians 11, he talks about some of the troubles he went through: he had been beaten, stoned, flogged, shipwrecked, thrown in prison, hungry, thirsty, and in constant danger, all because of his faith in Christ. And yet, in Philippians 4:12-13 he writes, “I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation...I can do everything through Him who gives me strength.” Paul was able to get the right mind-set by going to God and depending on Him.

So in this month of giving thanks, start by thanking God for his love for you and the strength that only he can give. If life is hard right now, remember that God is right there, going through the tough time with you. He loves you more than you can imagine and he has a plan for your life – and that's something to be thankful for.

**Prayer:** *Father, if I stop and think about it, there is always something to be thankful for. Sometimes, life gets in the way and keeps me from seeing all that you have done and continue to do for me. Help me to look past the tough things and the difficulties and see your blessings. Amen*

Lisa Hammond

**Bible Reference: Read Galatians 2:19-21**



November 2, 2010

I love these verses! Hopefully you've already taken the time to read them, and then read them again. I know it may not make any sense to you yet, but it will. Paul wrote this, and some times he's hard to understand. He was a guy who loved God with his whole being. So much so, that he killed Christians. You may be saying, “Wait, you just said he loved God, then why would he kill Christians?” I'm so glad you asked. You see, before he was a Christian he was a Jewish leader who thought that the Christians were evil and needed to be eliminated. That all changed when he came to a cross roads and had an encounter with Jesus. Once he found out that Jesus **is** the Son of God and He **is** here to save us from our sin, his whole life changed. That same zeal and enthusiasm he had to rid the world of Christians, he now had to bring the whole world into a relationship with Christ. Now let's go back to the verses in Galatians. Before Jesus came, the only direction and the only guidelines the Jews had was The Law, which is the Law that was given to them by God through Moses. In these three verses Paul is saying, “No matter how much you follow The Law you can never be righteous, you can never be Holy in God's eyes, only because of God's grace and Christ's death are we able to become righteous.” Verse 20 is so powerful; it reminds us how much Christ did for us. You see when we accept Christ into our lives and allow him to be our Savior, the Lord of our lives then our old self dies on that cross with Christ. We become a new person. Our outsides may look the same, but we are little by little changed into the image of God. So no matter what you have done in the past, whether you killed Christians for a living, did drugs or drank alcohol, had sex before you were married, cheated on a test, stole something, or you lied; Jesus' death on the cross washes away all of that stuff and makes you new. He then molds you into the person you were designed to be. So when ever you get down and are feeling sorry for your self, remember you are a new creation, made in God's image and you have the power of the Son of God on your side and in side of you. How cool is that?!!!

**Prayer:** Father, I thank you for your Son; I thank you that you loved us so much you sent Him to die for us. Lord, help us to remember that our old self was crucified with Christ, and our new self has Christ living in us. We are a NEW CREATION! Help us to daily live for you, to become more and more like you. Amen.

Mike Proud



*“Being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.” Philippians 1:6*

Fall is definitely my favorite season. But along with all that I love about it comes the task of “fall cleaning.” It never fails that as I clean drawers, rearrange closets, shuffle things to and from the basement that I come across unfinished projects. Yes, there’s an unfinished basket down on the table in the basement, pieces of fabric cut for a table runner in a bag in the closet and a partially done cross-stitch sitting in the back of a drawer to name a few. I’m guessing that I’d find this true of many of your households, too.

Why do we leave these things undone? Did we tire of the task, get busy with other things, was it more difficult than we expected?

I’m ever so grateful that God doesn’t treat us in the same fashion! Paul reminds us in Philippians 1:6 that God is continually at work in our lives through the ups and downs, in our struggles and in our joys. He will never push us aside, leave us sitting on a shelf or put us in a drawer out of sight. What He began He promises to complete!

I’ve always enjoyed the song Steve Green wrote based on Philippians 1:6, “He Who Began a Good Work in You.” The lyrics include this assurance, “You can be sure that the Lord has His hand on you, safe and secure He will never abandon you. You are His treasure and He finds His pleasure in you.”

**Prayer:** Father, I thank you today, for the work which you have begun in my life. I thank you for your faithfulness to keep working in my life until that day when Jesus brings all things to completion to your honor and glory. Amen.

*Penny Nice*

**Bible reference: Read Matthew 6:5-15**



## HE KNOWS

Maybe you’ve heard the Lord’s Prayer (Our Father, who is in heaven, hallowed be your name. . .) a bunch of times before. Maybe you can even recite it from memory. But, in the Bible, did you notice what comes right before the Lord’s Prayer? It’s this: “*for your Father knows what you need before you ask him.*”

Hmmm. Why pray then? There are plenty of reasons why Christians should pray. One reason, though, is because some things really do need to be said. If you love someone, and you KNOW they love you, how much sweeter is it when they say “I love you?” If you KNOW that your best friend is there for you through thick and thin, then how much sweeter are the words “I’m here for you” right when you’re going through something awful – even though you knew it already?

So God, our Father, knows what we need, even before we ask. This can be such a great source of comfort – much like the words “I love you” or “I’m here for you” can provide comfort, even though you already know it. The fact that God already knows what we need, means that we aren’t left to wonder if we did a good enough job explaining ourselves. God KNOWS. It means we don’t have to struggle for just the right words that will paint just the right picture to show what we’re really feeling. God already KNOWS.

There aren’t many people on this earth who will “get you” in the way that God does. God knows you and already knows what you need, before you even ask him. When you talk to another person, you find that unless that person has experienced exactly the same thing you are talking about in exactly the same way, then all the talking in the world will not help them to really “get it.” But when you talk to God, it’s a shared experience. He feels what you feel, sees what you see, knows what you know. Why pray? Because when you talk to God, you *commune* with God, not just *communicate*. Share your life with God. Tell him what you need, what you desire, how you’re feeling, what you’re going through. It’s alright He KNOWS.

**Prayer:** Father it’s not with lofty words I come, but with, but just as I am. Thank you that it’s ok to be me. I don’t have to be afraid to express my feelings or make my requests known. . .because you already know.

*Amber Rivera*



For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil.  
Some people, eager for money, have wandered from  
the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs..  
*-1 Timothy 6:10*

I have a friend and relative that recently retired from a very large corporation and received a healthy pension plan. In fact, it was so healthy that he was able to remove all the funds and reinvest them in a more secure plan. At the time, this friend was a Deacon in the church, but I could never establish whether or not he had given up his life to Christ. Every time I asked him he would exclaim that he was a Christian so I accepted that fact. Now, every time I talk to him he has been on a worldwide trip to study birds or some rare creature. When the question comes about giving to a church of his choice he tells me that he doesn't go anymore and he is all set to meet the Lord. I recently heard that he has had an argument with his daughter and his grand children who have left their church to pursue more financial endeavors. We are headed for some very rough economical times so wherever you are with our Lord Jesus Christ, we had better persevere.

**Prayer:** Lord I know I can not worship both you and money. In these difficult economic times help me keep my trust firmly in you, God Almighty...not in the almighty dollar.

*Dave Canham*

*“On my bed I remember you;  
I think of you through the watches of the night.  
Because you are my help, I sing in the shadow of your  
wings. My soul clings to you; your right hand upholds  
me.” Psalms 63:6-8*



### **SHELTERED SAFE WITHIN THE ARMS OF GOD!!**

I love my grandchildren. They bring much joy to my life. I've noticed sometimes when the little ones are tired, or their feelings have been hurt, or they've taken a fall, I pick them up and they wrap their little arms around my neck and just "cling" to me. The whole while they are clinging, I am holding them up in my arms. If you could just picture that image for a moment...they're clinging tightly...I'm holding them up in my arms. As long as I hold them up, they can keep clinging to me. They feel safe there. They feel loved. They feel protected and often time before long they feel better. But I know if I quit holding them up in my arms... their arms would grow tired and wouldn't be able to cling

The Psalmist David has a similar experience with God. *“My soul clings to you; your right hand upholds me.”* I don't know about you, but sometimes I feel tired, or I'm hurting and all I can do is cling to God and hang on! Now I know that all the while I'm clinging, HE's holding me up. So I think I'll just keep clinging to Him. I know I'm safe there. I know God loves me. Do you know what else? I always end up feeling better!

So let the storms rage high,  
The dark clouds rise,  
They won't worry me;  
For I'm sheltered safe within the arms of God.  
He walks with me,  
And naught of earth shall harm me,  
For I'm sheltered in the arms of God.

**Prayer:** Dear God when all I can do at times is cling to you...and maybe even wonder why I don't sense your help...may I remember, the only reason I can cling so long is because you are holding me. I love you and thank you God for that assurance.

*Pastor Tom Stroup*



### **Scripture passage: Read Galatians 6:7-9**

Two years ago, I decided that I wanted to be a Group Leader for Women of Faith (the national conference that comes to Rochester every year) for the following year, which was the 2009 event. There was already a group from our church that went each year but I wanted to take a group of my own friends and family that maybe didn't even HAVE a church, or better yet, maybe didn't even have JESUS! I had attended Women of Faith a couple of times and knew that there were many friends and family that I'd like to invite to come with my small group of 25 tickets. So, in July of 2008, I signed a "buy now, pay later" contract for the June 2009 event which means I was financially RESPONSIBLE for 25 tickets at \$109 EACH. I would have until ten weeks prior to the conference to pay in full. I began selling the tickets but there were so many conflicts that weekend, the Brockport soccer tournament, many dance recitals and the list seemed to go on and on, that they just weren't selling at the speed I would have liked! One day in late April (AFTER the deadline had already passed which means my ticket delivery would be delayed until paid) I called the Women of Faith office in Dallas and one of the Group Specialists suggested I use the message boards on their website. I put up a posting about having five tickets left and that they were floor seats (which the ladies seem to love). Still nothing. As my anxiety level rose with each day that passed, I tried to pray and trust, but I felt overwhelmed by the \$\$\$\$ dollar signs in front of my face.

I called their office again in early May. The sweet southern voice on the other end said (with a big huge twang so read this with a southern voice!) "Juuuulie, I know that God has a plan for EVERY ticket that you have. I am gonna PRAY that your seats are sold quickly and I am SURE that God will see you through this. You call me in a few days, ok?" I think I mumbled ok and hung up...CRYING on my desk at work and muttered to myself in the thickest southern accent I could muster "GOD IS NOT going to pay my CREDIT CARD BILL!"

Later that night, I received a phone call from an unknown caller. She introduced herself as Rachel, a Group Leader with Women of Faith, and said she had seen the message board and needed ALL FIVE of my tickets. She even offered to call Women of Faith directly and pay for the remaining seats on HER OWN credit card!!!!!! I could've smacked myself right in the head for being SUCH A DOUBTER!! YE OF LITTLE FAITH!!!! I've always had an issue with doubt (and it doesn't really help that my maiden name is THOMAS) and so this one just really screamed at me to CUT IT OUT! I was on my knees praising God and thanking Him for seeing me through what I couldn't do without Him.

**Prayer:** Father God, we all have doubt, Lord, we doubt ourselves, we doubt other people and we even doubt you when it is YOU that we should give all things to. Thank you, God, for your precious son and thank you for the joys you put right smack dab in front of us. Help us to be faithFULL followers. Amen

*Julie Tully*

***Create in me a clean hear, O God and renew a steadfast spirit within me. Restore to me the joy of thy salvation, and sustain me with a willing spirit. Then I will teach transgressors thy ways, and sinners will be converted to thee. - Psalms 51:10-13***



One lovely summer day, we were enjoying lunch on the patio, as we watched the activities of the birds at the feeders. The little birds: the chick-a-dees, the gold finches and the sparrows were busy flying back and forth collecting food for their families and catching a snack for themselves in between trips. They were getting along well with each other visiting and sharing. All of the sudden, the serene atmosphere was shattered by a very noisy family of blue jays who flew in scattering the little birds with their loudness and aggressiveness. We referred to them as the "B-J Gang"- a group of bullies who were inconsiderate and rude.

Later, as we reflected on the scene, we thought of how much these intruders resembled people: those that could be bossy, loud, greedy and demanding of "their rights." We came to the conclusion that it was very easy to resent these kind of obnoxious people. Then we thought that what God really wanted was for us to change our attitude toward them...

Prayerfully, we could learn to accept them, and with our loving actions, help them become loving followers of Christ.

*Barb Canham*



*The steadfast love of the LORD never ceases; his mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness. -Lamentations 3:22-23*

## THE ARK OF THE COVENANT

The ark of the covenant's measurements indicate that it was not a very large box, yet it was an example of God's immeasurable grace to us.

The ark was two and one half cubits long, one and one half cubits wide, and one and one half cubits deep. In western measurements that would make it 45" x 27" x 27". All of this was first made of wood which was then covered with gold.

On top of the ark was the mercy seat guarded by two cherubim covering it with their wings. The cherubim were made of gold as was the mercy seat. Inside the ark were the two tablets that contained the law given by God to Moses. Each year when the high priest would enter the holy of holies, he would sprinkle blood on the mercy seat, where God's glory was present, putting the blood between the law and God's judgment. The mercy seat was two and one half cubits long and one and one half cubits wide. Interestingly, the Bible doesn't record the depth of the mercy seat, leading us to understand that there is no limit to the depth of the mercy seat, no way to measure God's infinite mercy to us.

*Pastor Dave Miller*

*"I can Do everything through him who gives me strength." Philippians 4:13*



Have you ever had a time in your life when you felt you were facing something you couldn't do? All of us have I'm sure. My example goes back to last year. I started to shovel my driveway for the 3<sup>rd</sup> time in 2 days. Usually I don't mind it & look at it as good exercise. Not this time. This time I saw it as a task I just couldn't do. At first I was angry & discouraged but then I felt God come up next to me. A Bible verse popped into my head. Philippians 4:13 – I can do all things through Christ who gives me strength. That's a very encouraging verse. I repeated it in my head as I shoveled. Before I knew it I had the driveway done in record time.

I don't know what kind of issues you may be facing today. Perhaps you are having issues with family, a friend, finances, physical issues, or a mixture of all of them. Maybe you just feel as if nobody cares about you. A lot of times when you are dealing with a challenge it may feel that way.

Here are some other verses that may help you. Isaiah 41:10 – So do not fear, for I am with you, do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you, I will uphold you with my righteous right hand. Another is Psalms 29:11 – The Lord is my strength and shield, my heart trusts in him, and I am helped. The last one is Psalms 46:1 – God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble.

This just proves you are not alone. God is always with you along with your church family. Stay strong and depend on him.

**Prayer:** I know you are with me and will not let me fall. Continue to hold me in your hand.

*Gary Wandel*



*“You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on the stand and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven.”*

**- Matthew 5:14-16**

I remember vividly one afternoon standing in a friend’s yard admiring 100’s of tulips blooming throughout her gardens. There wasn’t a weed in sight – just a profusion of flowers. My friend must have sensed my thoughts because she pointed to my three little boys and said, “Enjoy the season you are in right now. When you are my age and the children are grown then you will have time for flowers.”

On the one hand she was right. Our activities are often dependent on the season of life we are in. But the one thing that remains constant throughout our lifetime is our “light.”

As long as we are in relationships, we have the opportunity to live as Christians and reflect the love of Jesus. It may mean helping another student in a college class, sharing an encouraging word to a mother at preschool story time, cheering with another parent at a soccer game, reaching the top shelf for an older lady at Wegmans (that happens to me ALL the time!), buying lunch for a co-worker, rocking a baby in the church nursery, or meeting the mailman at the mailbox and thanking him. It doesn’t have to be some grand gesture – sometimes just a smile and a listening ear will touch someone’s heart.

No matter where you are in life, look for opportunities to shine your light!

*Susan Carlson*



*“Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.” - Philippians 4:6-7*

We’ve seen the signs, “No lifeguard swim at your own risk.”

A lifeguard would see that we swim in a safe area and not engage in risky behavior. But we think it might be fun to try things that are a little beyond what is safe. This could be very dangerous. We might not know the risks that are out there. The lifeguard would bring us back to reality and safety.

God is our lifeguard, our crossing guard, our security guard. He will keep us safe if we put our faith and trust in Him. Just as the song, Come Thou Found of Every Blessing says in the final verse, we are prone to wander. We can be so easily led astray if God is not first in our hearts at all times. Just as a father will guard a two year old from the dangers of wandering into a busy road, our Heavenly Father, will keep us from wandering away from Him and into danger, if we let him. It is through our faith in God, that we know God’s love and peace and allow him to be our security guard.

There are so many subtle things in this world where we can move just a tiny bit away from God. There are things that we might try, that are “not that bad”, but once we start to wander, it is easy to get lost if God is not with us- God is there for us through all things big or small. Through his love and peace he will keep us safe.

In 1996, when my sister and niece were murdered, I was so overcome with grief, that I felt far away from God and His peace. This was such a senseless act that hurt so many people. I tried to find God’s peace but my heart and mind were so filled with anger, prejudice, fear and depression that I couldn’t see that God was in charge.

One night as I was seeking God, He let me to Philippians 4:6-7. I knew that God tells us not to worry or be anxious which was not easy. The part of that scripture that made the biggest impact on my life was verse 7. “And the peace of God that transcends all understanding will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. I began to constantly Thank God for guarding my heart and mind. This brought me the peace I sought and became a great comfort. I was then able to share this with others in my family. To know that God’s love and peace would guard my heart and mind allowed me to adjust my attitude and replace evil thoughts with thoughts of forgiveness and love.

God is faithful in the small things as well as the large things whatever you face today, big or small, know that God’s peace will guard your heart and mind through Christ Jesus.

**Prayer:** Dear Lord, you are my strength and peace at all times. It is such a comfort to know that you are guarding my heart and mind and will keep me safe. I love you Lord and pray that I will always be an example of your love. In Jesus precious name I pray. Amen

*Lois Ryan*



*“Do not judge, or you too will be judged. For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you. Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother’s eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye? How can you say to your brother, ‘Let me take the speck out of your eye,’ when all the time there is a plank in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother’s eye.”*

*Matthew 7:1-5*

## WHO STINKS?

Why is it so easy to see others faults and sometimes be so blinded to our own? Do we readily criticize others, but fall so short ourselves? Something happened to me years ago that the Lord brought to my attention that could be used as a spiritual analogy.

I was asked to do a demonstration at a Christian Women’s luncheon. I’d invited a friend to go with me and stopped to pick her up. After she got in the car I smelled this terrible smell. My guest and I were seated at the head table. The smell continued throughout the luncheon and I hoped the people next to me didn’t think it was me.

I got up and did my demonstration in front of everyone and sat back down. There was that smell again. After the program was over I went to the restroom before heading home. I happen to glance down and on my shoe and up my leg was dog “do-do”. It was ME that “Smelled”. Apparently when I picked up my friend I jumped out and stepped in the smelly stuff. So be very careful when you criticize others. Do you do the same thing? Check yourself first; make sure you don’t have a smelly attitude.

**Prayer:** Father help me to see my own faults and shortcomings more clearly than those of someone else. Forgive me for the times I’ve been the “smelly” one. In Jesus name, Amen.

*Linda Oliver*

*The voice spoke to him (Peter) a second time, “Do not call anything impure that God has made clean.”*

*Acts 10:15*



The Bible reference above may seem a little strange when thinking about reaching others for Christ. However there is a connection. Peter had a vision about eating and he saw food that was forbidden due to Jewish customs. A voice continued to prompt him to eat the forbidden food. Peter understood that the voice was telling him to take the message to the Gentiles (the unclean or separate from the Jewish society).

God wants us to take His message of salvation to those busy people that live near us. Our neighbors may irritate us at times, or ignore us, or are busy living within the world. We may even have a strained relationship with our neighbors. God wants us to hear Him very clearly when He tells us He wants us to share the wonderful story of His Son with our neighbors.

In my “thankful” journal there is a quote by Arthur G. Clutton-Brock. It says, “God is to be seen in the light of a cottage window as well as in the sun or the stars.”

**Prayer:** *My dear Father, may I love and see my neighbor as You do. Someone who needs to have You in their lives. Please use me to love them into a relationship with You! May Your light of truth, Your Son, Jesus Christ become their Savior. May my neighbor’s home be flooded with the light Your Son. Amen.*

*Judy Pray*



### Bible reference: Read Deuteronomy 28:1-14

Have you ever asked the question, “What’s in it for me?” It’s a question that addresses personal motivation. Why should I expend my time, energy, resources, or whatever else is being asked? It’s the question that any kind of advertising addresses. If the answer to the question satisfies

us – we will typically respond. I’ve got to know what I’m going to get out of it before I can make an educated decision.

In this passage there are some pretty great blessings that God promises conditionally. You see the words “you” and “blessing” a whole lot in this passage. What I want us to think about is that the word “you” in this passage is plural. It means you all...you people, and specifically here - you tribes of Israel. The blessings that God promises here are to the tribes of Israel as one people. The conditions under which they have to comply in order to receive the blessings must be met by the entire group. If the entire group does not comply, the conditions are not met. The promised blessing as stated in verse 1 is to make this group of people the greatest nation on Earth. The “what’s in it for me” question is answered in a fairly compelling way. If everyone is on board and does what is required by God – what a beautiful situation it will be for everyone.

This is a relationship with God that we do not normally talk about. This is a relationship between God and a group of people. We have become so used to thinking about everything from a self-centered perspective ... My God, My personal savior, My Lord, “I am a friend of God (shiver),” My Church, My Youth Group, My School, My Family, My stuff, etc. What is true in this passage is that the actions of the individual influence the condition of the community. Have you ever thought about how your actions influence God’s relationship with the groups you are a part of? Does your behavior have anything to do with what God is doing in your school, youth group, church, family? Is God doing something awesome through one of the groups with which you are associated? Is God seemingly doing nothing? Have you ever heard the question, “Are you part of the problem, or part of the solution?” If God is doing something powerful in any of the groups you take part in – encourage the group to keep doing what you all are doing. If God seems to be doing nothing (and you will know when God is at work) you might want to ask God about that question, “Am I part of the problem, or part of the solution?” The big question for us as individuals functioning within community should not be, “What’s in it for me?” It needs to be, “What is my contribution?”

**Prayer:** Father, I pray for all of the people in the circles you have put me in. I pray that I may be a vehicle for your blessing and not an obstacle. Lord, reveal to me my contribution amongst your people.

*Pastor Michael Rivera*

*“In all thy ways acknowledge Him and he shall direct your path.”- Proverbs 3:6*



Being a child of God is so liberating. If you have something positive happen in your life, it is a blessing from above. If you have a disappointment or negative experience in your life, -God has something better in mind for you.

Several years ago my daughter applied for a “college” job at McDonalds. She is bright, outgoing and has a wonderful smile (ok I’m prejudiced). She didn’t get the job and she was embarrassed and unsure why this would happen. We had a talk and I reminded her that anytime you’re turned down for a job, you’ve lost out on a decision or encountered a disappointing time – God is still in control! (1) He has something special for you. (2) You weren’t hired because you weren’t qualified – God didn’t want you there. It didn’t have to do with you; it was about God’s plan.

She accepted the sermonette and went on to get a great job at Wendy’s. She met her future husband at Wendy’s her boss honored her no-work Sundays. She was able to attend church – This was God’s plan! He closed one door but opened another. Proverbs 3:6 “In all thy ways acknowledge Him and he shall direct your path.”

**Prayer:** Lord, help us to take our disappointments and see them as opportunities from God to receive a rich blessing.

*Alana Johnson*



## *Be still and know that I am God - Psalm 46:10*

The night I drove my husband to the hospital so he could check himself into the psychiatric unit, I heard God whispering in my head, “Be still, Cindy, know that I am God and I am in control.” That thought helped me walk through that night, alone, and do what needed to be done.

After my husband was released and we realized he would no longer be able to pastor a church, life changed dramatically. I continued to hear God say, “Be still, Cindy, know that I am God, I am in control.” My husband resigned from the pastorate and I lost most of my friends. I felt alone and awash in a sea of grief and loneliness. Again, God whispered, “Be still, Cindy, I am here, I am God, and I am in control.”

I had hoped my husband would be able to recover within a few months. The months stretched into years and I watched helpless as the medications stole my husband from me. My husband was no longer capable to eating a meal with me, and if he felt well enough to come for dinner, we ate in silence. Social conversation of any kind was very difficult and anxiety producing for him. I felt alone and afraid, yet I still heard God saying, “Be still.” Sometimes, I thought I heard him say, “Cindy, I’ve got this one.”

At times, I was tempted to panic with the weight of the finances and care of our home being all upon me. However, God continued to whisper to me that I just needed to be still and know that He was God. I began to meditate on Psalm 46:10 almost exclusively. I looked it up in other translations and pondered it throughout my day. In the middle of the night when I was not able to sleep, I would slip downstairs and kneel and pray that scripture back to God asking him to make good on it. I began to ponder what it meant to know that He was God and realized that He was very much able to handle my situation. I knew God was big enough for my big problem.

The NAS version says, “Cease striving and know that I am God.” I could easily identify with that particular translation, as I felt I was striving. I knew God was repeatedly telling me I needed to rest, cease striving, and be still. For months it seemed all I heard God say to me was that I needed to rest and be still. Gradually, that is what I did. I learned to listen to His voice and to know it well. I learned to just enjoy sitting and repeatedly reading this verse, while thanking God for the truth contained in it. I became grateful for the fact that because He was God, I could rest and be still; I could cease striving. It was such a simple, yet freeing truth.

All of this did not change my circumstances, but it allowed me to experience peace and God’s presence in the middle of the storm. It allowed me to continue to move through each day trusting God for the future. I continued to ask God to return my husband to me, but I was also able to know that even if my husband never returned, God would see me through. I became confident that God was big enough to take care of my big problem, confident that He would never leave me, and confident that He was in control. All I had to do was be still and know that he was God.

*Cindy Anderson*



## **MOLDY BREAD**

Have you ever opened a bag with a piece of bread in it all covered with blue and green fuzz, and having a foul odor? You don’t think about what to do with it. It goes into the trash immediately. Have you ever felt like such a piece of bread? This September that happened to me – I felt blue, smelly and ready for the trash. Fall had come, but my summer to-do list was far from finished. My house was messier than usual. School was about to start and I wasn’t ready to teach. I had much planning to do for the Bible Quiz season that would start in a few weeks. On top of that, I had something planned every weekend for the next five weeks, so there would be no extra time to catch up on anything. I was overwhelmed and didn’t know what to do first. More than that, I felt like a failure about to fail again, useless to God.

But one morning I read Zephaniah 3:17: “The Lord your God is with you, he is mighty to save. He will take great delight in you, he will quiet you with his love, he will rejoice over you with singing.” This verse brought me comfort and hope because it reminded me of who God is.

What does this verse tell me about God?

- ◆ God is with me – he who made the universe and everything in it and knows me better than I know myself is with me; I’m not alone.
- ◆ God is powerful – He can get me through anything that happens in life, even super-busy-already-behind-schedule times.
- ◆ God delights in me – like a parent over a child who has achieved something big. (See how he boasted about Job in Job 1:8)
- ◆ God loves me – he’s shown it through Jesus on the cross and risen again, by his desire to have a relationship with me and all his help and care in the past.
- ◆ God ‘rejoices over us with singing’ – think of the fans at a Bills game singing “Shout” after every score – that’s the joy and excitement God feels for us.

As I thought about these things I no longer felt ready for the trash, and I knew (whether I felt like moldy or fresh-from-the-oven bread) I was useful to God and he valued me. That gave me hope and joy for the weeks ahead.

To help me remember I wrote the verse on a card and carried it in my pocket for several weeks – it’s wrinkled and dirty from so much use now, but I haven’t thrown it out yet. Whenever I would feel discouraged I just pulled out that verse and read it again which helped me get my focus off myself and my feelings, and put it on God and who he is. Then I could get to work on what needed to be done.

*Penny Norton*