

Don't Forget to Pray

(before sleeping, eating or flushing)



Lenten Devotions for Kids
and Their Families

Heather Roth Johnson, editor

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WELCOME TO YOUR LENT DEVOTIONAL BOOKLET

Don't Forget to Pray (before sleeping, eating or flushing)

It is Lent – the time to prepare your heart and mind to hear the stories of Holy Week and Easter. Kids along with their families are invited to read one Lenten devotional each day from Ash Wednesday, February 14, to Easter Monday, April 2. Each devotional focuses on one word. After you read the devotional, find the word below and color in the cross. Then, check out the drawing on the front cover of the booklet. See if you can find how each word is represented in the drawing. Enjoy!

- | | |
|---------------|---------------|
| ✝ Body | ✝ Kindness |
| ✝ Bones | ✝ King |
| ✝ Bread | ✝ Kingdom |
| ✝ Broken | ✝ Laughter |
| ✝ Camping | ✝ Life |
| ✝ Child | ✝ Light |
| ✝ Christ | ✝ Love |
| ✝ Comfort | ✝ Mirror |
| ✝ Complicated | ✝ Now What |
| ✝ Death | ✝ Overflow |
| ✝ Deny | ✝ Palm Branch |
| ✝ Dirt | ✝ Peace |
| ✝ Earth | ✝ Price |
| ✝ Fear | ✝ Promise |
| ✝ Feet | ✝ Scary |
| ✝ Flock | ✝ Shepherd |
| ✝ Funny | ✝ Sibling |
| ✝ Garden | ✝ Sign |
| ✝ Gentleness | ✝ Thirsty |
| ✝ Guitar | ✝ Time |
| ✝ Happy | ✝ Tomb |
| ✝ Holy | ✝ Tomorrow |
| ✝ Home | ✝ Trees |
| ✝ Hunger | ✝ Water |

ASH WEDNESDAY – FEBRUARY 14

Shepherd

*“I am the good shepherd,” Jesus said.
“I know my own, and my own know me.”*
John 10:14

The Word became flesh ... and the Word claimed to be a shepherd. Jesus knew there is a special bond between people and animals. He tapped into that relationship when he chose the word-picture “shepherd” to help people understand who he is. I once knew a family who owned a little white dog named Muffy. Muffy was a beloved member of the family; in fact, she was so well loved that she was fed with a spoon and pulled in a wagon (or at least that’s how the story goes). One day Muffy disappeared so her owners drove up and down the neighborhood calling her name. But sadly, no little white dog came running in response. Months went by. And then one day a neighbor heard the story of a family in an unfamiliar town some three hours away who had adopted a dog from the city. The father was a traveling salesman, and he had “found” the dog in his travels. The description of the dog sounded strangely familiar, so Muffy’s family hopped in the car and drove three hours to investigate the report. When they found the house of the salesman, Muffy’s owner knocked on the door while his wife waited in the car. Wouldn’t you know, at the sound of the man’s voice a little white dog appeared at the door! Muffy pushed the screen door open and ran to the car, then leaped into the woman’s arms and began to lick her face. When the man of the house claimed the dog had been in the family for years, the man from the city turned toward his wife in the car and asked him, “Is there really any doubt this dog belongs us?” Jesus the shepherd promises to remember us and keep looking for us, too, even when we seem to be lost for good. In fact, Jesus said, “I lay down my life for the sheep” (John 10:15).

Dear Jesus, help me to hear your voice and respond to your call. Thank you for giving me all that I need. Amen.

FEBRUARY 15

Dirt

Don't use dirty or foolish or filthy words.

Instead, say how thankful you are.

Ephesians 5:4

When I taught environmental education at a camp, I was often asked what, if any, difference there is between “dirt” and “soil.” One answer is this: “Dirt is soil where it is not supposed to be.” For example, if you go outside and play in your backyard, you will most likely be walking and playing on top of soil. If you come in the house leaving footprints on the carpet, that stuff from the yard is now dirt, because it is not supposed to be on the carpet. Another answer is that soil is alive and crucial to growth and dirt is dead. Simply put, we use soil and we wash away dirt. The things we say to our friends and family can be compared to soil and dirt. Like soil, some words are useful and important for growth; others are more like dirt and need to be washed away. My grandpa told me he used to have his mouth washed out with soap as a punishment by his mother when he said some bad words! So what kind words did you use today?

God, help me to watch my words and use words that are helpful, positive and necessary. May my words and actions be good soil for growth in faith and love. Amen.

FEBRUARY 16

Kindness

*No one has ever seen God; but if we love one another,
God lives in us and his love is made complete in us.*

1 John 4:2

There once was a boy at a local school who was tired of being sent negative texts and tweets. He asked his school if they could have a Positive Messaging Day. The school enthusiastically replied with a “Yes!” For one whole day, no one could send a text message unless it was positive, something like “You sure are smart at math!” or “You worked hard on that science project. Good for you!” This event caught on and was very successful. People started treating each other differently. Can you imagine how good people felt for sending a positive message, instead of a negative one? Can you imagine getting a kind note from someone that recognized how hard you work? Here is a challenge: For one day say and send only kind messages. Make someone else feel good. No complaining, no whining, no cutting someone else down. It will change your attitude toward others and show God’s love in your heart!

Dear God, help me to see good things in other people. Help me to treat others with kindness, even when it is hard to do. Amen.

FEBRUARY 17

Overflow

*May the Lord make your love increase and overflow
for each other and for everyone else,
just as ours does for you.*

1 Thessalonians 3:12

In the house we lived when our two sons were young, the one bathroom we all shared was next to our bedroom. I would wake up most mornings alarmed. In my usual groggy, half-awake state, the sound of bladders emptying never seemed to end. I was certain the toilet would overflow. I often hinted to my sons that it could not be good for their bladders to wait all night to use the toilet. One morning the echo of “a stream” hitting the inside of the toilet did not end. I was truly alarmed. I jumped out of bed and rushed to the bathroom door, nervously yelling, “Are you okay in there?” My two sons opened the door, doubled over in laughter. The source of the never-ending flow of water was a garden hose pulled through the bathroom window into the toilet. How have you experience God’s overflowing love and laughter today?

Dear Lord, let me be the source of love that overflows from you through me to all whom I encounter this day. Amen.

FEBRUARY 18

Life

*Jesus says, "I came so that everyone would have life,
and have it to the fullest."*

John 10:10

Mom looked outside and asked, "Is that tree alive?" Her 2 year old looked at the crooked branches against the sky and shook her head, "Yes!" Mom thought, "How can she tell?" Even though she was new to life herself, the 2 year old knew that the tree was resting in the winter weather. Even when spring feels far away, the tree is getting ready. Buds will be coming, followed by leaves. The tree is alive, even when there is not one leaf we can see. Jesus brings life to all people. Sometimes people compare Jesus to the tree of life with roots in fresh water, leaves of healing, and so many kinds of fruit. One thing is sure: Jesus brings life to you and me. What will you do with your life today?

Jesus, Tree of Life, help me to taste and see the life you offer. Amen.

FEBRUARY 19

Peace

*And a harvest of righteousness is sown in peace
by those who make peace.*
James 3:18

Are you ever in need of “peace and quiet?” If you’ve shared a room with a younger sibling, you will know what I am talking about! When I was in 6th grade, I was convinced that my 3rd grade sister was the reason there was no peace in my life. She was messy. She was always taking my things. She was trouble. So, I took a piece of tape and put it down the center of our room, making sure her things were on her side and mine were on my side. I thought that by keeping “trouble” out of my space, I would finally have peace. Then I went to the bathroom. Did I mention we shared that, too? **sigh** That night, I took off the tape and said this prayer: Thank you, God, for my little sister. She is not really trouble. I can find some peace on the days when she is at Grandma’s. Amen.

You can use the same prayer above or just sit in silence. Either way, may you find peace.

FEBRUARY 20

Laughter

Let there be tears for what you have done.

Let there be sorrow and deep grief.

Let there be sadness instead of laughter and gloom instead of joy.

James 4:9

Ha Ha Ha Ha! Just kidding! Instead, read this Bible verse:

We were filled with laughter, and we sang for joy.

*And the other nations said, "What amazing things
the Lord has done for them!"*

Psalm 126:2

You know that feeling, right?! When someone says something funny and you burst out laughing, and then you get the giggles, and you cannot stop laughing, and then you start crying because you are laughing so hard, and then your belly aches, and then you cannot breathe, and then you look at your friends, and their face is all red, and they look ridiculous because they are laughing so hard that their nose is running, and they are gasping for breath – is that not the best? Here is what I know for sure: God loves to hear us laugh. God wants our lives to be full of joy, friends and love. Is every day perfect? Nope! Not at all. But there are times of joy when all we can do in response to God's goodness is laugh and sing. This is one of many amazing things that the Lord has done for us!

Lord, give me memories of laughter to get me through the hard times. Give me moments of joy every day. Help me know that all of life is a gift from you. Amen.

FEBRUARY 21

Promise

And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.

Matthew 28:20b

“I pinky promise!” This is what my 14-year-old son always says when he wants me to believe him. He is quite the joker, and he keeps a straight face when he is telling jokes. It is often difficult for me to tell whether he is telling me the truth or making something up. But when he says, “I pinky promise,” and extends his pinky finger out to me, I know that he is telling me the truth. When I read this verse from the Bible, I feel like Jesus is making a pinky promise with each of us. He will be with us, always. That is an amazing thing, right? You are never alone because Jesus promises to be with you. Jesus will be with you when life gets messy and difficult, and when we feel like nobody cares. The best part about Jesus’ promise is that he will be with us when we celebrate, too. In fact, there is no time – whether it is boring, sad or happy – that the promise of Jesus does not follow us. What kind of pinky promises do you make? Do you keep them?

Hey there, Jesus! I know that sometimes I forget that you are always with me, but I just wanted to say “thank you” for always having my back. It is awesome to know that I am never alone! Help me remember your promise each time I see my pinkies. Amen.

FEBRUARY 22

Guitar

*Three things will last forever; faith, hope and love,
but the greatest of these is love!*

1 Corinthians 13:13

I first picked up a guitar when I was 15, thinking I would strive to become the world's greatest guitar player. I mean, how hard can it be? Well, countless hours of practice and many years of guitar playing experience later, I admit that I have fallen miserably short of that goal. However, what I have achieved is a love for playing music that has given me a lifetime of joy and a wealth of treasured experiences. What do you love to do?

Lord, give me the faith, hope, and love needed to follow my dreams and serve you with the gifts and talents I possess. Amen.

FEBRUARY 23

Bread

Jesus said, "I am the Bread of Life."

John 6:35

Our parents and/or caregivers go to work to “put bread on the table.” “Dough” is another way to say money. We leave a “trail of bread crumbs” to find our way back home. When I have bad luck, it seems “bread always lands butter side down.” If I am in trouble, “I am toast!” Bread is important stuff. It is food for energy and survival. Jesus says that he is “the Bread of life.” If our deepest desire is to know God’s love, then Jesus is the only one who can satisfy that kind of hunger pang. God’s love promises to never let us down but guarantees to always fill us up. How might you share some kind of “bread” with someone this week?

Bread of life, people everywhere are starving for your love. Without it, we are toast! Feed us and fill us, and then help us share your love with all who hunger. Amen.

FEBRUARY 24

Trees

Don't panic. I am with you.

There is no need to fear for I am your God. I will give you strength.

I will help you. I will hold you steady, keep a firm grip on you.

Isaiah 41:10

I am a hiker, and I love hiking in the mountains. But once I get above the tree line, I sort of miss the variety of colors, sights, sounds and shapes that make up the forest. The forest smells can literally be breath-taking, too. Did you know that an almost-blind badger can tell the difference between two oak trees just by their smell? Trees have their own odor – there is one that even smells like puke! As I hike, I marvel at the strength of trees. Ever wonder how they withstand strong storms? It is because they experience them; and as they grow, they develop stress wood, which is strong and fibrous, improving their strength and resilience. Can we be compared to trees? Sometimes we go through storms in life, too ... a bad grade in school, hurt feelings between friends or worries at home – problems that we think might break us. But these “life storms” help us grow; perhaps we learn new things about ourselves, we are comforted by the compassion of a friend, or (when we really pay attention) we experience the peace of God with us. So, take a moment today to really notice the trees that you pass. Pretty big, huh? They got that way by enduring and growing through a few storms. How do you weather the “storms of life?”

God, be with me. In the storms of my life, help me to grow deep roots, gnarly bark and massive branches that make me strong and resilient. Let these storms also remind me of the sweet softness of my sap and brilliant colors of my leaves. Amen.

FEBRUARY 25

Feet

*How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of those
who bring good news, who proclaim peace,
who bring good tidings, who proclaim salvation,
who say to Zion, "Your God reigns!"*
Isaiah 52:7

Superbowl 52 happened in my hometown of Minneapolis. Working on the stage team, my feet had a work out. There were 500 pairs of feet setting up the half time show! Our feet had to run sections of the stage up the tunnel, on to the field and into its place. Believe me, the staging was heavy! Somehow, though, our feet worked together without out too much tripping – even when a drum set and drummer were on top of one piece of staging! There were also 1000 feet of dancing to bring the music to life. When it was over, the feet of my stage crew ran out to clean up the field. So many feet! So many pairs of shoes! So many people coming together for one purpose – to serve one another with joy, dance and song! It is amazing how our feet can work for good in making the world a better place. Now, that is a living example of the good news of Jesus! Where might your feet take you today? How might your feet help you serve someone else in need of you?

Creator God, you made our feet and our hands and our beings. May we ever praise you in all we say and do. Help us to work together to bring beauty into this world. In Jesus' name, Amen.

FEBRUARY 26

Camping

Moses led them out of Egypt and performed wonders and signs in Egypt, at the Red Sea and for forty years in the wilderness.

Acts 7:36

The Smithsonian claims camping was invented by a pastor named William H. H. Murray. He wrote a guide book and some sermons about hunting, fishing, sleeping outside and enjoying nature. You know, camping stuff. Well, I think it was God who invented camping. God sent the Israelites into the wilderness for 40 years. God gave them a huge night-sky campfire, fed them manna flakes, offered them instant rock-water. God taught the people how to follow a trail, God's trail! Right now, we are in Lent, and it is a lot like a 40-day campout. The whole world is our wilderness. Not only does God provide for us and guide us (just as God did with the Israelites), we can follow God's trail ... and try not to get lost. Have you ever been lost before? What happened? How did you get back on track?

Awesome Creator of this magnificent but often confusing wilderness, thank you for the beauty of nature and for all your generous provisions! Amen.

FEBRUARY 27

Garden

*Other seeds fell on good soil and brought forth grain,
some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty.*

Matthew 13:8

I love to plant vegetables in my garden. Some veggies take a very long time to grow from seed, and I must wait patiently for months and months. Some grow very quickly, but then they get eaten by hungry bunnies, squirrels and birds. Sometimes there are plants growing that I did not even plant! Last year, I lost quite a few sunflowers and tomatoes to my garden visitors. But I also had a huge squash plant grow right out of the bottom of the compost bin with no effort on my part. I wonder what God is growing in my life that I am not even working on? Where have you seen God at work in your life? One day God will surprise both you and me with that abundance.

God of Creation, help me to be fertile ground for what you are growing in me, and help me recognize the surprises you create in me. Amen.

FEBRUARY 28

Comfort

Listen to what I am saying; that is all the comfort I ask from you.

Job 21:1-2

Puppies, sweatshirts, macaroni and cheese, hot chocolate, beach days are all things that bring comfort to me. However, when something is really bugging me, stuff just does not cut it. I need someone to listen to me. I need someone who is willing to sit still and just listen. I do not need advice or suggestions. What brings me real comfort is having a friend who will listen to my thoughts and problems on tough days. It is the kind of friend that I want to be, and I'm thankful that I can talk to God anytime I have something bugging me. What is bugging you today? How might God's words comfort you?

Lord, help me to remember that you are always there to listen to me and help me to be the kind of friend who is a good listener, too. Amen.

MARCH 1

Happy

*Is anyone among you in trouble? Let them pray. Is anyone happy?
Let them sing songs of praise.*

James 5:13

My three-year-old daughters were excited about acting out the Christmas story in worship this winter. I told them about the props they would get to wear: sparkly halos and royal crowns. And so, instead of waiting to put on costumes in the sanctuary, they came dressed in their princess gowns, Mardi Gras beads and paper crowns from the restaurant Buffalo Wild Wings. This was not what I had in mind, but their joy was contagious. Everyone else in worship was laughing and smiling along with their interpretation of the story. The Bible is full of feelings, just like people. God invites us to be honest about our emotions, especially in our church community. That means we do not have to pretend to be something we are not when we are at church. God can handle whatever we bring in the door – our trouble and our joy alike. When we show up as our real selves, other people can listen, pray and laugh along with us. What is one thing that made you happy today?

God, thank you for understanding our different feelings and teaching us to share them with each other so our trouble and joy never have to be alone. Amen.

MARCH 2

Flock

Like a shepherd he will tend his flock.

*In his arms he will gather the lambs and carry them in his bosom:
he will gently lead the nursing ewes.*

Isaiah 40:11

It must be lonely being a shepherd with just the animals under their care. But it is reassuring to be a lamb with a good shepherd. Jesus is our shepherd, and we are his flock. We are lucky. We do not need to feel this loneliness because Jesus loves us enough to carry and care for us. Jesus never leaves us alone in the world. We just completed tests at school, and I felt the supportive arms of Jesus carrying and helping me through the day. I am thankful that I never need to be alone because of his love.

Lord, help me to be as kind, caring and thoughtful as you are to me. Help me lead those who are lonely into your love. Help me to tend to your flock. Amen.

MARCH 3

Hunger

God created humankind in his image.

Genesis 1:27

What do you hunger for? Pizza every night for a year? The most amazing birthday party ever? The “right” clothes? Being popular? A spot on the team? The lead role in the play? Love? Friends? Acceptance? Whatever it is you hunger for, remember that God created you to be you. You carry God’s love within you and are loved *because* of who you are.

God, when I am hungry, before I devour everything in my path, help me remember that you created me and love me. Amen.

MARCH 4

Deny

*Then Peter remembered what Jesus had said:
“Before the cock crows, you will deny me three times.”
And he went out and wept bitterly.*

Matthew 26:75

It is easy to forget what it means to be a follower of Christ. Sometimes we are not nice to our friends. We do not always tell the whole truth. Maybe, just maybe, we even hurt our friends or disobey our parents. These actions make for some really unhappy days. We say we know Jesus, but through our behaviors we are denying Jesus just like Peter did before the rooster crowed. Three times Peter was asked if he knew Jesus, and three times he answered “no.” Yet Jesus still loved Peter, just as he loves each of us. God’s love for us is greater than any of our mistakes. We can mess up three times, or four times, or more, yet God is always there waiting to forgive us. Just as Peter felt bad and went to cry after he denied Jesus, so too we should be sorry and ask God’s forgiveness when we deny God through our words and actions. God is waiting to wrap us up in God’s love and grace, waiting to shower us with God’s goodness and love, waiting to forgive us and use us just as Jesus used Peter to teach others about God’s love. Who do you need to forgive and shower with love today?

Dear God, please forgive me for the things I do which show others I deny you. Help me to know you are always there to forgive me and help me try again. In Jesus name I pray, Amen.

MARCH 5

Light

You are the light of the world. A city built on a hill cannot be hid.

*No one after lighting a lamp puts it under the bushel basket,
but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all in the house.*

*In the same way, let your light shine before others,
so that they may see your good works
and give glory to your Father in heaven.*

Matthew 3:14-16

When I would go to Camp Lutheridge as a child, we would walk to evening vespers. I remember it would be so dark, one could not see what was in front of them. However, we could bring a flashlight. It was amazing how a flashlight would “light up” and provide direction to where we needed to go. In the same way, I think Jesus wants us to be flashlights that “light up” the world! How can we do that? I wonder if it might begin with love and kindness for one another? What do you think?

Lord Jesus, help us to be flashlights that light up the world. Lead us and guide us to show love and kindness to everyone we meet. Let each one of us be the light that leads to you. Amen.

MARCH 6

Home

*And if I go and prepare a place for you,
I will come back and take you to be with me
that you also may be where I am.*

John 14:3

I travel for work, which makes me think about home a lot. I love to plan trips and to go places, especially where I have never been. There is a sense of adventure every time I get on a plane, even if it might just be a routine trip. Going out into the world there is opportunity, mystery and challenge. There is also a realization that wherever we go – whether it is Boston, Bangkok, or Bangalore – people want the same things: a safe place for themselves and their family, peace and hope for the future, a home. As much as I love the adventure and challenge of going out into the world, there is nothing like coming home to family. What do you love about being at home? What do you think God's heavenly home will be like?

Dear God, you prepare a place for us. What a gift to know we have a home with you. May we all feel the peace that comes with that gift and that we need not worry about the future. Amen.

MARCH 7

Water

Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you.

I do not give to you as the world gives.

Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid.

John 14:27

Every summer since our kids were little, we stayed at a cabin on a lake with no swimming beach. Each day, we took a boat into the middle of the lake and tossed the kids in the water (wearing life jackets, of course)! My husband would swim deep under water to sneak up on them and tickle their feet. He would toss them squealing in the air. One time he told them he was peeing in the lake. Our oldest said, "Gross, Dad! You are swimming in your own contents!" It was silly fun out in the middle of that lake because they were supported in the water by their life jackets and their lifeguard Dad. The peace of Jesus is like wearing a life jacket in cool water, supporting us as we work, play and figure out our relationships. It is a peace that can only come from God. It is a peace that is available to all of us, no matter how old we are. Do you like to swim in a pool or a lake? How does the cool water make you feel?

Dear Jesus, Wow! Thank you for the gift of your peace. Please keep my heart, mind and body calm so I can live each day to the fullest like a child in summer! Amen.

MARCH 8

Fear

*I sought the Lord and the Lord heard me
and delivered me from all my fears.*

Psalm 34:4

When I was little, I was always fearful of many things. I was especially afraid of scary stories and scary movies. If someone was telling a scary story at a sleep over, I would plug my ears or pretend that I had to go to the bathroom for a long time. If I saw a scary movie on television, I would sneak into my brother's room at bed time and sleep in the top of his bunk bed. When he would figure out that I was up there, he would start kicking the mattress to get me out of there. Then I would start to cry and beg him if I could just sleep there that night. He eventually gave up since I had been sleeping in the top bunk for the good part of a year. As I grew up, I became less frightened of things. Now, when I am afraid, for myself or my family, I always remember to ask God for God's help and protection. What do you do when you are fearful? Do you remember to pray to God?

Dear God, thank you for helping us when we feel fear. Amen.

MARCH 9

Sibling

“A friend loves at all times, and a sibling is born to share tough times.”

Proverbs 17:17

Siblings: what is the point? Maybe you have a little brother, who gets in the way when your friends are over and blames you whenever there is a fight. Maybe you have a big sister, who ignores you when her friends are over and is always bossing or bullying you. I have two older sisters and one little brother. Oh, the stories I could tell you of my suffering--tales that would make your toes curl and your skin break into a cold sweat. But do you know what? I would not trade them for the world. When any of us have hit “tough times,” the other three have always been there for each other. I am not sure what means more to me--being there for my siblings or the fact that they are always there for me. How do you care for your siblings, cousins, parents, grandparents, or other caregivers? How do they care for you?

God, thank you for family. Help all brothers and sisters love each other and teach us all to be there for each other. Amen.

MARCH 10

Gentleness

Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near.

Philippians 4:5

When I was pregnant with my first child, I had many moments where I thought to myself, “I will never do that as a parent!” Or “Never my child. Nope, she would not do those things. Never ever.” But now, I am a parent. I know exactly what my mom meant when she told me, “Never say never; they will make a liar out of you every time.” Well, 15 years later with 3 beautiful children, and I can happily say that I am not a perfect parent. “Never” is no longer a part of my vocabulary. I have learned that children are going to behave like children, and parents need to be parents. From that, I get peace from knowing that – as long as I act like an adult, and children are given the opportunity to learn – gentleness, kindness and compassion will shine through me. How do you react to others with gentleness? With kindness?

Dear Lord, please guide me to have an attitude of gentleness and compassion so that I can handle any situation. Amen.

MARCH 11

Kingdom

*... and he sent them out to preach the kingdom of God
and to heal the sick.
Luke 9:2*

Imagining the disciples of Jesus wandering from town to town in their dusty sandals to tell townsfolk about God's love is a typical Sunday School story. We have a picture in our minds of these long-ago bumbling disciples doing funny and old-fashioned things that are nothing like our modern lives. But preaching about God's kingdom is not a one-time thing or something only the 12 disciples can do! God needs, wants and empowers all of us to share God's love. Gone are the days when people walked from town to town to preach, teach and care (although you could probably do that if you really want to)! In today's world, there are endless ways to minister, care and help others. Think of how much easier it is with modern technology, transportation, education and communication. It is so different than it was 2000 years ago! We can pack our spiritual bags and hit the road through prayer, going on a mission trip, befriending someone who is lonely person, participating in a service project, listening to a friend, taking someone to church, volunteering in our schools – I think you get the idea. In small and big ways, our words and actions can help the sick, lonely and broken parts of our modern world. Jesus wants us in our own ways to follow him and share the kingdom of God's love with others. How might you share the love of God with someone today?

God, help me to see the unmet needs in your creation and to answer the call of your Son to preach the kingdom by responding to those needs. Amen.

MARCH 12

Signs

*You believe because you have seen me:
Blessed are those who believe without seeing me.*
John 20:29

Do this! Buy that! Come in! Stay out! Signs are everywhere! Signs keep us safe, provide helpful information, give us confidence and confirm that we are going the right (or the wrong) way! As people of faith it may, at times, seem like a few well-placed, informative signs would be most helpful. I mean, are we doing this Christian life thing right – or what? As hard as we may try, it can be easy for doubt to creep in. Well, if doubt is something you can relate to, it turns out that the Bible is filled from cover to cover with people who wanted a sign from God that they were right! Much of the mission of Jesus was tied to “signs.” We may call them “miracles” like turning water to wine, raising the dead, healing the sick, feeding the 5,000 and many more. The miracles of Jesus are signs! They are helpful! They give us confidence and confirm that we are going the right way! What signs or miracles of God did you see today?

Lord God, thank you for the relationship I have with you. Help me in those moments when I doubt and give me eyes to see the signs of your love. Amen.

MARCH 13

Funny

*The Lord, your God, is in your midst, a warrior who gives victory;
God will rejoice over you with gladness,
God will renew you in God's love;
God will exult over you with loud singing as on a day of festival.
Zephaniah 3:17*

My favorite animals to visit at the zoo are the otters. They are so silly! I like to sit and watch them wrestle, swim and play tag together. I can almost hear the giggles as they jump out from behind the rocks and wrestle each other to the ground. Then, they all fall into the pond. Otters remind me how much fun I have playing with my friends. Otters, friends and sometimes daily life can be funny and make me laugh. God, as the Bible verse tells us, gives us strength, rejoices with us, loves us and will sing before you with a loud voice. If God does all that, then I am sure God enjoys and laughs when we are silly and funny. What did you see today that was funny?

God of laughter and tears, continue to strengthen us and laugh with us, especially when we are just being funny and silly. In Christ's name we pray, Amen.

MARCH 14

Broken

*With mortals it is impossible,
but for God all things are possible.*

Matthew 19:26

When I was in Japan I received a delicate china doll as a gift. She looked like she was praying. I carried her back on the plane and took good care of her for many years. One day, I bumped the shelf she was sitting on, and the doll came crashing to the ground. She was broken beyond repair. Still, I could not bring myself to throw the broken doll away. I put her and her broken parts into a box. Like the doll, there are many broken things that I cannot fix. I have said and done things I wish I had not done. One time, a friend and I argued until our friendship crashed to the ground. But I have learned that with God all things are possible. God can repair what has been broken in our relationships, in our hearts, and in our lives. What is broken in your life? What can you do to repair it? Do you turn to God for help?

Dear God, forgive us for the things we break. Make our lives new, through Jesus' love. Amen.

MARCH 15

Child

*Whoever becomes humble like this child
is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.*

Matthew 18:4

Have you ever heard anyone use the word “child” as a put down? I find it really confusing when I hear people do this. According to Jesus, to tell someone they were acting “like a child” would be a high compliment. He taught us that we are to look to children as examples, as leaders, as mentors! God has declared all of us to be God’s children, brothers and sisters to Jesus, and rightful heirs to God’s kingdom just like Jesus himself! Even though some people think that they are better than others because they are older, have more money or have power over someone, we know this cannot be true. Jesus shows us that the child, the poor person and the powerless are the ones who are the greatest in the eyes of God. Instead of trying to make someone feel bad by calling them a child, let us compliment people by reminding them that they are a beloved child of God!

Father, thank you for making us your children. Help us remember to be humble like the child who was with Jesus when he spoke to us and to respect all your children equally. Amen.

MARCH 16

Christ

You are some of those people chosen by Jesus Christ.

Romans 1:6

Yep, I was one of “those” people in school. One of “those” people who was never picked first to be on someone’s dodge ball team at recess. One of “those” people not invited to the popular girl’s birthday party. One of “those” people who had braces, glasses and plaid pants. One of “those” kids that teachers liked but not my classmates. You get the idea. It makes me really happy to read Paul’s words that I am also one of “those” people Jesus chose to save and love. Jesus did not only choose me; Jesus chose you as one of “those” people, too! Can you share this good news with someone who might need to hear some happy news? Jesus “chooses” them to love as well?

Hey God, thank you for choosing all of us to be your children. Help us to remember that the love of Jesus is with us even when it seems like nobody else cares. Amen.

MARCH 17

Love

*The commandment we have from is this:
those who love God must love their brothers and sisters also.*

1 John 4:21

When I was little my brother destroyed my brand-new NES Super Mario 3 game. I am not talking about just any game; I am talking about my brand-new NES Super Mario 3 game! I was angry, and I prayed that my brother would be severely punished. My prayers included a request for God to send me a new game, and I made sure that God knew I no longer loved my brother. As I lay in bed that night, I plotted all the ways to get rid of my brother. After deliberating, I chose the perfect plot to make him disappear. But then something happened. I got to thinking of how different my life would be without him in it. My emotions went from angry, to excited and then to sad. I realized that I did indeed love my brother and, even if I did not like him, I would always love him. You see, God's love is so great that God loves us even when we feel like we do not deserve it. And because of that love I could (and do) love my brother even when I feel he does not deserve it. Who do you love? How might you show them some love today?

Lord, thank you for loving me always. Help me love my brothers and sisters in all times and in all places. Amen.

MARCH 18

King

*And they began to accuse him, saying,
“We found this man misleading our nation
and forbidding to pay taxes to Caesar,
and saying that he himself is Christ, a King.”*

Luke 23:2

I love the song (and still do) by Sara Bareilles entitled, “King of Anything.” The song is about not caring about what other people think of you. One of the lines of the song is, “... who died and made you king of anything?” Jesus, on the other hand, died to be the king of everything – everything that matters: giving sight to the blind, healing the sick and speaking out for justice when people were afraid. Jesus not only died on the cross, but he also turned the world upside down by showing grace, speaking out for the voiceless and loving unconditionally even when people judged him, spat at him and mocked him. Will you tell someone today about King Jesus and how much he loved the world? Who might that be?

God, help us to remember that you are the king of everything. Help us to seek for your love daily. Guide us in every step we take. Teach us to breathe in the moments. Amen.

MARCH 19

Holy

*Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts;
the whole earth is full of his glory.*

Isaiah 6:3

Socks. Cheese. Spaghetti strainers. These are just a few things we encounter every day that might be holey. When we worship God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, we see that word holy again. This time it is spelled differently! So, what does the Bible mean when it talks about the word “holy”? It does not mean something has holes in it. Holy means that God is worthy of our love and praise. Sometimes we might hear about a certain place or object being holy, too – like the Holy Bible! The Bible is holy not because of bookworms! But it is our sacred book that is devoted entirely to the service of God. Now, here is the cool thing. Since we all have the Holy Spirit within us, this make us holy beings – people made in the image of God. That is kind of wild if you think about it! We were created to give God our complete love and praise. The best way to do that is to show love to all of God’s people, even if (or especially if!?) they smell like holey cheese and have holey socks. All God’s people are holy just like you. How can you share a story from the Holy Bible with someone today? Which story would you pick? Why?

Father, Son and Holy Spirit, you love us more than we can ever imagine. Open our eyes to see the holiness and beauty in ourselves and in everyone else we meet. Amen.

MARCH 20

Scary

*If I say, "Surely the darkness will overwhelm me,
and the light around me will be night,"
Even the darkness is not dark to you,
and the night is as bright as the day.
Darkness and light are alike to you.*

Psalm 139:11-12

When I was a kid, I had a recurring dream. In this dream, I was in a 1970s car called a "Gremlin" (Google it!) and was being chased by some sort of scary monster. Since the wheels of the Gremlin moved so slowly, I would jump out of the car and try to run. But it was like my legs were stuck in molasses; they would hardly go. Everything seemed in slow motion in this dream; however, I always seemed to wake up before being caught. Nightmares like this can be very scary. If there is one thing I have learned, it is that there are lots of scary things in today's world – things that I am afraid of; things that do not go away easily. But I have also learned that because I am a baptized child of God, I have received God's promises. And these promises are more powerful than any hard or scary thing or monster in my dreams. You, too, are created by God, and even as you cry, "This is too hard or too scary," do not forget that God is right there to save you, in darkness and in light. Can you name one thing that scared you today? What happened? How might God help?

God, when we feel surrounded by darkness and unable to escape, please be quick to reveal your love. Amen.

MARCH 21

Complicated

*Trust in the Lord forever,
for in the Lord God you have an everlasting rock.*
Isaiah 26:4

Complicated. It is a big word, but it often means something in our life that is hard or difficult. School, friendships, and even families can sometimes be messy and complicated. My sister, brother and I had a complicated relationship when we were kids. We fought over all sorts of things like television shows, toys and who got to choose what restaurant we went to. School can be complicated, too. Sometimes certain subjects can be hard, or we do not get along with a teacher and we may not always get our homework done. Then, there are our friendships that can be complicated. Sometimes friends can be mean to one another or not always understand each other. Life is hard sometimes, and even God and our faith can be kind of complicated! There is so much to learn about God, and it will be like that for the rest of our lives. We will never know everything about God. But one thing we do know is when things are complicated, we can always turn to God and say a prayer, asking for help and guidance. We know we can trust that God will always be there to help make life a little less complicated.

Thank you, God, for those special things in our life like our family, friends and our teachers. When these things become complicated, we ask for your help and guidance. Thank you for always loving and caring for us no matter what. In Jesus name. Amen.

MARCH 22

Body

*Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts,
to which indeed you were called in one body;
and be thankful.*

Colossians 3:15

How can we let anything rule in our hearts? Our hearts are muscles, made for pumping blood all over our bodies so that we can live and be healthy. If God's peace rules in our hearts, then it rules our whole body too! It is easy to let anger, unrest and sarcasm take over our heart and body. God wants our bodies to be about God's peace and to keep this peace pumping through the body. What is one way you can focus your body on God's peace today?

God, when I feel angry, sad or upset, help me to remember that you are on my side. Let your peace and love flow through my veins. Amen.

MARCH 23

Earth

*The earth is the LORD'S and all that is in it,
the world, and those who live in it.*

Psalm 24:1

Is it not funny to think that the earth belongs to the Lord? We know that God created the earth, but often we forget that the earth is the Lord's – meaning that it belongs to God. I wonder how that changes the way we treat the earth? Usually, if someone you love has something that is very precious, you treat it with great care while you are using it. That is a good reminder for all of us that while we are here, living on earth, we are using something precious that belongs to God. If we love God, we should treat the earth with great care. What is one thing you can do today to take care of the earth?

God, you created the earth and all that is in it. Please help us to take good care of it. Amen.

MARCH 24

Mirror

You are a child of God... You are wonderfully made.

Dearly loved, and precious in his sight.

Before God made you, he knew you ... there is no one else like you.

Psalm 139

A 10-year-old boy was disgusted when he looked into the mirror – his hair was red, his teeth were not sparkly, he was tall and freckles covered his chubby cheeks. How he longed to have a different reflection staring back! When we look in a mirror, we see a reflection of ourselves and, let's face it, we are often our toughest critics. But what if we viewed ourselves as God sees us instead? How would this change the way that we think about ourselves? God sees each of us as wonderfully made. Whether we believe it or not, we are precious in God's sight. God tells us in scripture that God thinks we are worth dying for – that is how much we matter to God. God loves us and those beautiful faces that stare back at us in the mirror. So, write the prayer below on a Post-it note and place it by the mirror so that you see it each day:

God, I am created in your image. I am happy with the way I am made. I appreciate my unique qualities (Genesis 1:27). Amen.

MARCH 25

Palm Branch

*So, they took branches of palm trees
and went out to meet Jesus shouting,
“Hosanna! Blessed is the one who comes in God’s name –
the King of Israel!”*

John 12:13

Minnesota is nicknamed “the Land of 10,000 Lakes,” but if you are here in the summer you might think there are that many parades. What is your idea of a great parade? Is it the huge farm equipment or the number of fire trucks and ambulances? Maybe you try to fill a bag of candy faster than the kids next to you. Imagine a parade where people of all ages grab palm branches and yell, “Jesus is coming! Jesus is coming! Look, it is he. It is really Jesus, the King!” Now, that would be the parade of a lifetime – even better than a bag full of candy!

Lord, help me to be as excited welcoming other people the way you were welcomed as you rode into Jerusalem. Let it be so! Amen.

MARCH 26

Time

*For everything there is a season,
and a time for every matter under heaven...*

Ecclesiastes 3:1-8

In the 1960s, there was a song called “Turn, Turn, Turn” by The Byrds. Cool song, right? (Check out the lyrics online and compare them to Ecclesiastes 3:1-8!) This song seemed so timely, so deep and so important to the people over 50 years ago. Back then, I did not know the song was more or less quoted from the Bible. It is amazing how God’s Word speaks in such a timely way to God’s people. This Bible verse turned song has been walking with people for over 2000 years. Sometimes it is as if time stands still. Can you remember a specific time when you were happy? When you were sad?

Dear God, make me ever mindful of the time I have been given to do the right thing. Amen.

MARCH 27

Tomorrow

Don't worry about tomorrow. It will take care of itself.

You have enough to worry about today.

Matthew 6:34

When I was in middle school we took a class trip to see *Annie*. I could not stop singing:

Tomorrow! Bet your bottom dollar that tomorrow there'll be sun!
Just thinking about tomorrow clears away the cobwebs
and the sorrow 'til there's none!

Annie reminds us that no matter how bad today might seem, there is always tomorrow. However, Jesus tells us not to worry about tomorrow. Today is what really matters. Today you can care for and love someone else. Today you can give thanks to God for what you have. Today you can do your very best, knowing that you are never alone because the Holy Spirit is with you in good times and in bad times. So, for now, do not worry about tomorrow but count your blessings today. What has been the best part of today? What do you worry about for tomorrow?

Dear God, thank you for everything; food, clothing, home, family and friends and especially for today. Amen.

MARCH 28

Price

*This life that I live now, I live by faith in the Son of God,
who loved me and gave his life for me.*

Galatians 2:20b

When my sons were young, I loved buying them Beanie Babies. Some people collected them, as they thought that these stuffed animals would become very valuable someday. So today, what is an old Beanie Baby worth? Well, if someone is willing to pay \$100 for it, then that is how much it is worth. The Beanie Baby is worth whatever price someone is willing to pay for it. That made me consider the question, “How much are we worth?” Well, Jesus thought we were worth a lot, because he paid the ultimate price for us with his life. By dying on the cross, Jesus paid our debt in full. What is the most expensive thing you own? What would happen if it was lost or broken? What price are you willing to pay to replace it?

Dear God, thank you for loving me so much that you gave your life for me. Help me share your love with others. Amen.

MARCH 29

Thirsty

Jesus cried out, "Let anyone who is thirsty come to me."

John 7:37

Have you ever been playing outside on a hot day and been so thirsty you could drink a whole bucket of water? I sure have! I was playing softball, and we were down to our last out and down by one run. I was on second base. My teammate hit the ball, and I took off. Unfortunately, I tripped over third base and scrambled to get up as everyone yelled, "Run!" I dove into home swallowing a cup of dirt in the process. The ump yelled, "Out!" I struggled to get up. I had run my heart out, and I was tired, and thirsty, and sad. I went over to the bench and grabbed a water bottle. But, feeling a little dizzy, I missed my mouth and bonked myself in the head. That made me flip over the bench! My team was worried, but I just started laughing. Soon, everyone joined in, and we forgot about the loss. When we have Christ by our side, it is easier to face the struggles in our lives and receive refreshment for our thirsty souls. When was the last time you were thirsty?

Dear God, thank you for giving us more than just water for our thirsty lives. Amen.

MARCH 30

Death

If we live, we live for the Lord; and if we die, we die for the Lord.

So, whether we live or die, we belong to the Lord.

Romans 14:8

I have always been cautious. Some of my friends liked to climb high into trees and walk close to the ledge, but not me. I did not want to risk falling. I wanted to be safe. I wanted to stay alive! Life is a gift from God, and God wants us to live long and well. But we also do not have to be afraid of death when it comes to us or to others. Death is sad, but it is not the end. We belong to God through all our precious days of life. We belong to God when this life ends, and the new life begins.

God of life and death, help me to take careful risks and to remember that I belong to you, no matter what happens. Amen.

MARCH 31

Bones

*For you are great and do wondrous things;
you alone are God.*

Psalm 86:10

When I was about 7 years old I learned the “Riddle Song.” I felt very clever singing, “I gave my love a chicken that had no bone,” knowing that the third verse would reveal that “a chicken in an eggshell, it has no bone.” Now that I am older, I am amazed to think about the many, many things that God made in such clever ways: jellyfish that have no bones, acorns that grow into tall trees, geodes that are filled with sparkling crystals, lizards that can grow new tails, dandelion fuzzies that carry seeds far away, and birds and butterflies and fish that can find their way to places they have never been before – to name just a few. God truly does wondrous things with and without bones – even with broken Jesus. God raised Jesus from the dead.

Creator God, you do amazing things. Thank you for all the wonders of your creation. Help us to see your greatness as we learn about our world. Amen.

APRIL 1

Tomb

*“Why do you look for the living among the dead?
He is not here but has risen.”*

Luke 24:5

Have you ever played hide and seek with a real professional? You know, the kid who always has the best hiding places? Is it not a great feeling when you find this hidden kid? When Jesus' friends went looking for his body in the tomb, the tomb was empty! Where was Jesus hidden? They would keep on looking, but the angel said that Jesus was alive again. He was not hiding from his friends. They would see him soon. What a great feeling! The empty tomb meant that their friend Jesus had risen from the dead! What is your best hiding spot? Did you know that Jesus can find you wherever you go and promises to be with you?

Jesus, we know you never hide from us. Help us to remember that you are with us always, wherever we go and in whatever we do. Amen.

APRIL 2

Now What?!

You are the witness of these things.

Luke 24:28

Now that Easter is over, what will you do? Except that, Easter is not over! Once Jesus has been raised from the dead, everything is different. For starters, you do not have to be afraid anymore, because God has shown that God can go with us anywhere – even to the darkest places – and bring us back. There may still be times when we are afraid anyway, I know. However, each time we feel scared or alone, it will help to remember God's great love, a love that nothing – absolutely nothing – can separate us from God. So now what? Now what will you do since you know God will always be with you? Now what will you dare to accomplish since you have seen the power of God's love? Now who will you help since you know God loves all people? Now what? What will life look like as you go into this new week filled with God's love and light? I do not know how you will answer these questions, of course, but I do know that you will do something awesome, because Easter and the power of God's love changes everything. What might you do next to share the Easter story with someone?

Dear God, help us live an Easter life, filled with faith, love, and courage because you raised Jesus from the dead. Amen.

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