

Prayer Devotions



October 2020

Luke 18:1

Pray Always and Never Give Up

Prayer for Persecuted Church

Pray for those in the midst of persecution

Remember those who are in prison, as though in prison with them, and those who are mistreated, since you also are in the body. Hebrews 13:3

Global watchdog Open Doors reports that 322 Christians are killed every month for their faith while millions more suffer persecution on a routine basis.

Please pray that these believers will not only stay committed to the call of Christ but also will respond in love to the evil shown by their aggressors. God's love will open doors for these believers to share the Gospel even more.

This Month's Countries, these are some of the most dangerous countries to follow Jesus:

Maldives

Iraq

Egypt

Daily prayers for October... “Obey your spiritual leaders and be willing to do what they say. For their work is to watch over your souls, and God will judge them on how well they do this. Give them reason to report joyfully about you to the Lord and not with sorrow, for then you will suffer for it too.”
Hebrews 13:17 - Living Bible

Thursday, October 1st: Being a leader in any capacity can be a challenge; leading during a period of unrest, fear, and uncertainty is daunting. We are in a state of such division and polarity and our leaders are not immune to the effects, yet we look to them to give us direction and to somehow make some sense out of it all. Praise God that we are blessed with pastors who spend time on their knees seeking guidance from their true Leader. We need to be faithfully praying for their protection, discernment, encouragement, and unshakeable certainty in His leading. In addition, we need to follow the example of the Bereans by receiving their words eagerly, examining the veracity of those words by daily reading the Scriptures, and by taking to heart and incorporating into our lives the lessons gleaned. Finally, let them know that you’re praying for them and that you appreciate them and their service, being personal and specific whenever possible and appropriate. A simple thank you will be welcomed, but a thank you for (personal comment) makes it so much more precious and meaningful.

1 Thessalonians 5:12-13; 2 Timothy 4:1-5

Friday, October 2nd: Seeing God in the small things helps build our faith for the big things! There are some days that are special, where God seems to be present in my life in surprisingly small ways. For instance, have you ever been late to an appointment and caught all the traffic lights green? Or have you heard from a friend at just the right time, as you needed counsel and prayer over a situation? God is with us at all times, and sometimes we forget that as we go about our daily lives. He arranges our days and circumstances to help us and bless us along the way. When I am able to recognize God’s hand at work in these small ways, it builds my faith in Him and helps tremendously when I need to stand strong in faith for the bigger issues. Knowing God is with me makes all the difference! Make a deliberate effort to see God’s hand at work in your life today. Refuse to give the credit to random coincidence, but acknowledge and give thanks to God instead. Here are some scriptures that reassure us of God’s presence and help in times of need: **Isaiah 41:10, Deuteronomy 31:6, Zephaniah 3:17, Matthew 28:20, Romans 8:38-39**

Saturday, October 3rd: The election is exactly one month from today. If you have not voted yet (by mail, of course) or are still undecided, please take the time to consider what is at stake and make your voice and your convictions heard. I'm not telling you who to vote for or which party you should decide to support – it's much bigger than that. Instead look at some of the key issues that are represented, one of which has to do with the government-subsidized elimination of unwanted babies. That sounds a lot like infanticide to me. And when God created "man" didn't He specifically make them male and female in order to multiply and fill the earth, mirroring our intimate relationship with Him? In addition, there is growing sense within the populace that the *government* is our source of freedom and security and it is *their* responsibility, not our own or that of our Creator, to provide for our needs. Abraham Lincoln once stated, "America will never be destroyed from the outside. If we falter and lose our freedoms, it will be because we destroyed ourselves." Pray for clear direction and a clear conscience about how you should make your voice heard, asking God to show you what would best honor Him and serve His purposes. Vote! Suffrage is a privilege we have in this country that should not be taken lightly, and we have an obligation to our Creator to stand up for Biblical principles. We need to be willing to take a stand if we don't want our country to fall. Lord, we ask for Your sure and clear guidance as we determine the future of America. Thank You for the freedoms we enjoy, and may they be preserved. **Deuteronomy 1:13; Proverb 29:2; Romans 13:1-7**

Sunday, October 4th: It's fall planting time, so we've been preparing the soil and determining what we want to plant in our garden. It's important to choose the correct seeds for what we want to harvest, because as we all know, you reap what you sow. The problem is, "nature" will also sow weeds in the soil. When we sow to the Spirit we are sowing seeds of righteousness and encouragement, but when we allow our flesh to do the sowing the results are harmful, a hindrance to the good produce, and a distraction. There are some interesting things we can learn from seeds. The evidence that they've been planted takes time and sometimes the harvest takes longer than we'd like when the seeds are desirable, but somehow it seems the weeds always sprout quickly. Another thing is the harvest is always greater than the seed. I can plant a single pumpkin seed and garner multiple pumpkins, some of which will produce seeds that I can plant another year and repeat this process of multiplication. This makes me realize that I need to be very intentional and aware of what types of seed I'm sowing. Lord, let us mindfully sow to righteousness. **Hosea 10:12; Galatians 6:6-10**

Monday, October 5th: We learned recently about the impact of our words and the importance of being intentional and mindful of how we choose them and which ones are best left unsaid. A strategy we were urged to use in determining what we should and should not say and how to assess words we have already uttered was: assess, acknowledge, and admit. If only we could master the tongue! Evidence of what can happen when this is not utilized can be seen in the book of Job. Not only did Job's friends presume to speak for God, obviously without first actually seeking Him, but they demonstrated more of an attitude of judgment and superiority than compassion or mercy. Some of their words were actually sound, but they missed the mark when they began to assign divine motivation to something they knew nothing about. Maybe you've been in a situation where someone is ostensibly comforting or assisting you, but it feels more like a sermon or an elitist and academic lecture. Ouch. Unfortunately Job also assigns supposed motives and attitudes to God that just aren't accurate. Understandably Job was confused and dismayed about his trials since he had been living an upright life, but he assumed that it was God Himself who was angrily punishing him. I find it interesting that God doesn't reveal to Job the back-story of what he experienced. Instead He reminded him of just who He was. The take away is that if we will take the time to filter our thoughts and speech through the guidance of His Spirit and then take ownership of our words, we can rest assured that the outcome will not only benefit the recipients but ourselves as well. And when we miss the mark, own it and move forward. As I used to tell my children - set a guard, O Lord, over my mouth; keep watch over the door of my lips.

Psalm 19:14, 141:3; Ephesians 4:29-31; Colossians 4:6; James 1:26

Tuesday, October 6th: In the past few years, I have realized my interest and passion for how food grows on plants, trees and vines. While watering a grape vine a few months ago I noticed the healthy green branches that had clusters of grapes growing on them; however, there were also branches that didn't have any grapes growing that were brown on the edges and looking dried out. These branches would eventually get trimmed off so that the other thriving branches would produce even more fruit. Immediately I was reminded of John chapter 15 where Jesus says, "I am the vine, you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit, apart from me you can do nothing. If you do not remain in me, you are like a branch that is thrown away and withers, such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned. If you remain in me, ask whatever you wish and it will be done for you. This is my Father's glory that you bear much fruit showing yourselves to be my disciples." Oh, how I desire to be filled with nourishment from His word that I may be like the green healthy grape vine branches abiding in Him, and producing beautiful fruit. Like Proverbs 3:7-8 states, fearing the Lord, turning from evil and not being wise in our own eyes brings health to our bodies and nourishment to our bones. **John 15: 1-17, Acts 17:28**

Wednesday, October 7th: The idea of an open door suggests a clear path to opportunity or an advantage to be enjoyed in pursuit of a goal. The lyrics to an old song purport that prayer is the key to Heaven, but faith unlocks the door. This can apply to both spiritual as well as physical doors. I love the story in Acts 12 when Peter was put in prison but the church was fervently praying for him. During the night an angel appeared, Peter's chains fell to the ground, the prison gates were opened and Peter went to the house of Mary where the prayers were being raised to heaven. When the servant girl Rhoda responded to his knocking, rather than open the door she ran in amazement to tell everyone and they told her she was crazy! It makes me wonder just what exactly they were praying for and how much stock they put in their petitions. In another instance Paul and Silas were also in prison, and while they were singing and praying there was a violent earthquake that shook the prison walls, the doors flew open, and everyone's chains came loose. Praying for doors to open is a Biblical practice. In Colossians Paul asked for open doors for the advancement of the gospel. Whether we're asking for spiritual or physical doors to be opened, the objective is to open prison doors and for the chains of bondage to be broken. Pray for doors to be opened for ministries at Pure Heart, in our city and country and around the world. Also pray for doors to open and chains to be loosed in your own life and in the lives of others.

Matthew 7:7-8; Acts 14:27, 16:24-27; Colossians 4:3

Thursday, October 8th: There's a decades old chorus which declares that we are covered over with the robe of Jesus' righteousness. Over the years this truth has become more meaningful and precious to me. It underscores the reality that our Abba Father doesn't see us as servants, though that is what we are. Our standing with Him is not that we become saved (sons and daughters) because we serve but rather that we serve because we have been saved (adopted) and we realize the magnitude of that gift. When the prodigal squandered his inheritance with unrighteous living and finally came to his senses, he returned home to beg his father to accept him as a hired hand, lamenting that he was not worthy to be called a son. And he was right. The truth is – neither are we, and furthermore we never were and never will be based on what we do. It has nothing to do with the right kind of living and everything to do with right relationship. The robe is our birthright based on whether or not we choose to receive it. Our Father is so gracious that He gives us the choice to say no. But once that robe has been placed on us, it's up to us to either live as heirs who understand the privilege and responsibilities the robe represents or to regard it lightly or not at all and only pull it out when convenient. When I fully appreciate how costly the robe was, I am compelled by love and gratitude to do those things that will please and honor Him. After all, why should we settle for scrounging at the pig trough when a feast has been prepared for us?
Zechariah 3:1-4; Isaiah 61:10; Galatians 4:7

Friday, October 9th: When my oldest daughter was in Pioneer Girls she made me a ceramic spoon rest as a gift for Mother's Day. It was in the form of a bird's nest because she knows how much I love birds, but she was sick the night they painted and fired the ceramics and the person who did that for her was, shall we say, less than artistic and the final result was no "objet d'art." However, I cherished that hideous looking spoon rest and used it for years. And as a result, God has taught me two wonderful lessons about His love. The first has to do with the racial turmoil we are experiencing, and the lesson was in Job 31:5 which addresses the fact that every person on this planet was formed by God. I cherished the spoon rest, not because it was beautiful but because I loved the one who had made it. If I truly love God, I will also try to see the intrinsic value and beauty in all He has made, even when appearances or the rest of the world may not seem to support that. Secondly, my now adult daughter was horrified when she discovered I still used the spoon rest. When I explained my reasoning, she was touched but also asked if I would think about or love her any less without the reminder. Don't get me wrong. I believe it is good for us to have remembrance stones for momentous victories, but when our love for the Lord is profound, we don't require trinkets. He already should have a preeminent place in our hearts and thoughts. We love because He first loved us – all of us. When we love the way He does, our love will be deep and pure. Or as the children's chorus reminds us – deep and wide.

Ephesians 3:14-21; John 13:34-35; 1 John 4:7-8

Saturday, October 10th: Before Genesis 1:1 there was only one thing—one person. God. And among all the things we are taught about God, one thing is often overlooked. And it is this. From time immemorial, God was supremely delighted in Himself. He was supremely delighted in the Son simply for who the Son was/is/and would be and in the Holy Spirit simply for who the Holy Spirit was/is/and would be. And it was this shared supreme delight which motivated such unified purpose in creation and the work of salvation. They each foresaw their roles and delighted in such glory and in the glory of each other. But what was the source of the supreme delight? Was it ego? No, it was this. God delighted in the love He poured out on the Son and the Holy Spirit—God ordained it so by being. And not only that, but He delighted in the fact that He was loved in return simply for who He was/is/and would be by the Son and the Holy Spirit. The delight was rooted in the reciprocity and sincerity of the love exchanged eternally in the Godhead. Not only this, but this love was further enriched by the Trinity, where each Person experienced the unique expression of love and devotion of the other two. What delight is this! Magnified, made more acute, and drawn into sharper focus by delight upon delight. Delight made supreme by the presence of another. Delight made even more glorious by the presence of all His children both now and forevermore.

So what is God after? He wants us to partake in that supreme delight by drawing us to a place of surrender where we are absolutely broken over our own sin and absolutely assured of the Father's love.

“His divine power has given us everything we need for a godly life through our knowledge of Him who called us by his own glory and goodness. Through these He has given us His very great and precious promises, **so that through them you may participate in the divine nature**, having escaped the corruption in the world caused by evil desires.” **2 Peter 1:3-4** “My sacrifice, O God, is a broken spirit; **a broken and contrite heart** you, God, will not despise.” **Psalm 51:17**

Sunday, October 11th: My brother loves to find old cars that are beat up and restore them. He will spend countless hours locating original parts to bring those cars back to their original condition. Sometimes we might feel like one of those cars, or maybe we know someone who has seen better times and has been beat up and discarded. Praise God, He is in the business of restoration and He doesn't use after-market parts and is not satisfied with just bringing back to the former condition. He restores to the original design – no spot or blemish. And that's true of His plan for every renewal undertaking. The church, our nation – the true need is restoration - “to bring back to health, soundness, vigor; to an unimpaired condition; restitution of something taken away or lost.” The church is His bride, our country was founded on godly principles, we are made in His image, and the original design of all of His creation was good! The process of bringing something back to its original and intended condition isn't always an easy one, and there may be a significant amount of pounding out dents and sanding away corrosion, but when we submit ourselves to the skillful hands of the One who created us there can be no doubt that His intentions are for ultimate perfection and beauty. Lord, may we never be satisfied with simply a make-over. Thank You that Your desire is to see full restoration according to Your perfect design. We're ready and eager for You to begin. **Acts 3:19-21; 2 Corinthians 5:14-19; 1 Peter 5:6-11**

Monday, October 12th: The moment we received Jesus as our Lord and Saviour we became ambassadors for Him and we were given the ministry of reconciliation. One of the interesting things about ambassadors is they are sent. They don't necessarily get to choose where they will be sent. We don't have the latitude to tell Him we really would prefer to be ambassadors to the rich and famous or maybe to the homeless on the beaches of Hawaii. Not that there isn't a real need in both those locations, but it's up to the sender to decide where we will be sent. Secondly, the message that is carried is not that of the ambassador but rather the entity being represented, and the ambassador is required to present the message exactly as the sender prescribes. And our message is one of reconciliation because we have been reconciled. The reason there has been failure in this area is not the message. It has never been the message. The message hasn't changed. More often the reason is that the ambassadors have either abdicated in their responsibility to accept the call or they are carrying a message of their own design or biased interpretation rather than the unadulterated and complete message with which they were entrusted. This is a sacred call and we have a responsibility to accept the whole call – not just the parts that fit our world view or preferences. We are called to bring life, and it truly is a matter of life or death. Be sent – not sedentary or self-serving. **Luke 14:23; 2 Corinthians 5:16-21; Ephesians 6:18-20**

Tuesday, October 13th: Heart desires - What is your passion? What are your goals? What is driving you? My word implores you to search your heart. Find what is true. **Let** My Holy Spirit shine the spotlight on your desires. Examine your own motives. The heart is deceitful and given free reign can lead to unrighteous desires. You must guard your heart against all unrighteousness. I have said, guard your heart for **out** of it flow the issues of life. My word has the power to transform you. My word is your defense against the enemy who comes to kill, steal and destroy. My word renews your mind. **Psalm 119:103-105** “How sweet are your words to my taste; they are sweeter than honey. Your commandments give me understanding; no wonder I hate every false way of life. Your word is a lamp for my feet and a light for my path. My word is like a hammer breaking up the hard places of your heart. You are clean through my word. The Holy Spirit will guide you into all truth. My word is truth.

Wednesday, October 14th: This week’s prayer strategy is one that needs to be done in a group setting. It’s called “Rapid Fire” and has been employed on occasion at Pure Heart. A topic or emphasis is given and microphones are set up on either side of the auditorium. The topic can be something as broad and universal as sex trafficking, addiction, or the upcoming election; or as specific as a particular need for the group praying. Those who are led to pray line up on either side and are encouraged to pray what is on their hearts relating to the subject in 30 seconds or less, alternating between sides. By engaging a greater number of people, a wide variety of insights and burdens become revealed and often a richer and deeper understanding and heart for the prayer need is experienced. This can also promote greater unity in the body as all join together in a common cause, and each person is given an opportunity to contribute. This would be an excellent practice for small groups to encourage everyone to come together in unity for a common petition to the Lord. Everyone is offered a chance to be part of the solution.

Matthew 18:19-20; 2 Corinthians 1:11

Thursday, October 15th: Jentzen Franklin has written a new book entitled *Acres of Diamonds* which retells the story originally related to Russell Conwell in 1869 about Ali Hafed, a wealthy Indian farmer who was told about precious diamonds that could be found in a distant land. This farmer became discontent and went off in search of the place where these riches would be found. After exhausting all of his resources to no avail, he took his own life in despair. The man who purchased his farm was watering his camel at a stream on the farm one day and discovered a large black stone which he placed on his mantel. A visiting priest – the one who had told Ali Hafed of the diamonds – gasped when he saw the black stone. It was a diamond. The farm became the site of the Golconda diamond mine, one of the most important diamond mines in all of Asia. Each of us has been placed on this planet exactly where God chose us to be and has provided for us rich resources (acres of diamonds) if we will only choose to be satisfied with His provision and develop to the best of our ability what He has given. When we faithfully and gratefully do that, there is no limit to what He can then reveal to us and through us!
Psalm 37:3-4; Matthew 6:25-26, 32-33; Philippians 4:12-13, 19

Friday, October 16th: A niece recently shared a quote by William Arthur Ward on social media. “We can choose to throw stones, to stumble on them, to climb over them, or to build with them.” In the past months we’ve seen ample evidence of throwing stones, stumbling on them, or just trying to get over or past them. And unfortunately some of the throwing has been very literal and destructive, but the stones can also be our words and our attitudes towards others. Even if we’re not the ones throwing them, how easy it can be to stumble because of them or try to either ignore them or just push through. But I’m pretty sure God has a much better option in mind for us. We can build with them. Not dividing walls, but dwelling places that will accommodate all of us. Places where we will truly hear and be heard without threats of violent reprisal, stubborn and arrogant condescension, or indifferent dismissal. In truth we’re living in the middle of a ripe harvest field, but unless we do something creative with the rocks in the fertile soil there will never be a fruitful yield. We know the foundation upon which we must build, and we have already been given the cornerstone to hold it all together. God has given us the blueprint for what He desires us to build, but He needs humble and faithful workers who will adhere to His design. What will we do with the stones?
Psalm 118:22; 2 Corinthians 4:3-10; 1 Peter 2:1-5

Saturday, October 17th: Recently my brother and I were planning to do some music for my mother's memorial service. He is a musician by profession, a guitar player, and I have sung in non-professional venues for many years. We don't live in the same town, and never got around to practicing until the night before the memorial. He called me on the phone and we started to do the first song. I had practiced several times on my own to get familiar with the melody and learn the words, so I was eager to hear how he had arranged the music. He played the introduction and I started to sing, but he stopped and said through the phone, "You're behind a beat. Listen...come in on..." and began to count out the rhythm. I didn't think I was late coming in, but we started again. Every time it was the same thing and we were both getting frustrated. He suggested I get a metronome. He called his wife over so she could sing in order for me to hear her sing on the beat. We finally gave up after several tries and agreed to practice the next morning when we could be together. It turns out that the phone caused the lapse in time. The first time we practiced side by side, it was lovely. I think often that's how we view God when we pray about something. We think He is late or not listening. We get more and more frustrated and offer Him suggestions about how He can solve our situation(s). But when we are in intimate fellowship with Him – enjoying His presence and just listening to Him, we find our eyes on Him rather than the situation and we can trust Him with all that concerns us. Don't allow your own ideas about what is going on, dictating suggestions to the Lord as you pray; instead, get to know Him--enjoy His friendship—trust Him. He loves you more than you'll ever realize in this life. He'll do what's best. **Proverb 16:9; 2 Peter 3:8-9**

Sunday, October 18th: Most of us are familiar with Luke 16:13 which deals with serving God or mammon. Frequently we assign the definition “money” to the word mammon, but it is actually *mamónas* which is a Semitic term and more accurately translates as “the treasure a person trusts in” and was the name of the Syrian god of riches. The Amplified reads like this – “No servant can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will stand devotedly by the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and mammon [that is, your earthly possessions or anything else you trust in and rely on instead of God].” Did you catch that? Anything in which we falsely put our trust to give us security or a sense of significance other than God. In other words, a false god. We can say we trust in God, but if we find it hard to part with our finances or are so interested in what others think of us that we deny Him in public either in our words or actions, those things have become our “god” or master, and that amounts to idolatry. In doing so, we are in essence despising God. There’s nothing wrong with having money, fame, relationships or whatever as long as those things are not our first love. They only become unrighteous when they take His place. When we put them in perspective with God taking preeminence, they can become blessings instead. He is the only one who can really satisfy our greatest needs. As the game show from the late 50’s asked, “Who Do You Trust?”

Psalm 31:19; Luke 16:9-10, 13; Matthew 6:24-26

Monday, October 19th: Disappointments - So, I get up to start a new day. The day is going well. I spent time with the Lord in fellowship and reading the word. Such a beautiful morning...all seems to be going well. But... a text message changes everything. My world was rocked, as they say. Things I thought were going so good, all of sudden, in a moment turned into total devastation. I spent time trying to correct and salvage any remnant I could. I'm scratching my head - what went wrong? I thought I had heard from the Lord that He was guiding and His hand of blessing was extended in the situation. So, I didn't cry... maybe I wanted to, but gave up the idea. Instead... lean on the Lord. Aren't His ways higher? Didn't He say all things work together for good to those who love the Lord, to those who are called according to His purpose. Strength to get through this all the while I am letting my light shine. So, I recall the joy of the Lord is my strength. On top of that I am not to be anxious about anything. Pray about everything. Is this a valid prayer: "Lord what is going on? Where are You? Why did everything fall apart?" The Lord knows our heart. He knows our thoughts. So, I am disappointed but I am going to trust the Lord that He knows what is best and will prevail in the situation. He must have something better in mind. I can fall back to the word that says He knows the plans He has for me, plans to give me a hope and a future. I know that it will all work out according to God's plan. Although, I am disappointed, I know God's goodness and mercy is following me and in the end He is going to get the glory because His promises are yes and amen! **Jeremiah 29:11; Isaiah 58:8-9**

Tuesday, October 20th: We received a notice from the Arizona Department of Economic Security that a request for unemployment benefits in one of our names had been denied because of a problem with the routing information provided for depositing the monies. The biggest issue here was that neither of us had applied for these benefits. I marvel at how people seem to think that it's okay to steal from others or "the system" because they don't attach a face to the one they're stealing from, so for them it's very impersonal. Secondly, they seem to believe they will never be found out, and evidently that proves true for many of these people for a long period of time. But the truth is there *is* a face, it *is* personal for the one being victimized, and in the end there will *always* be negative consequences. We tend to do the same thing with God. I heard a powerful message on God's house. We think of the church as being God's house, but in truth it's all His and we're merely stewards of what He entrusts to us. One thing that means is when you walk into wherever you live you're entering God's house. The other implication is you are expected to either make a rent or mortgage payment for the privilege of having that roof over your head. Skip too many payments and you lose that benefit because it reveals you don't make wise decisions and are trying to take advantage of the lender or landlord. When we don't see God as our benefactor and the provider for everything good we enjoy, we become poor stewards of what He has given us and we get greedy and thinks it's okay to squander it all on ourselves. Even though we haven't seen His face, we should know Him personally – He certainly knows each of us. God doesn't need our resources, He just needs to know that He can trust us to assess and appropriate them wisely with His best interest in mind. And remember, there's no dollar sign in front of blessing.

Proverb 21:20-21; 2 Corinthians 9:6-8; 1 Timothy 6:7-11

Wednesday, October 21st: Oftentimes we will pray for the Lord to bless someone, but it comes out so nonspecific that it loses its impact. A friend of Pastor Covert came up with an acronym for a prayer of blessing that should be easy to remember: B.L.E.S.S. Begin by praying for their **B**ody – their physical health, strength and protection. Then pray for their **L**abor – as in work experience and financial security. Next is **E**motional health – joy, peace, hope, and the mind of Christ. The first "s" is **S**ocial – this would include their relationships within their family and extend to friends and associates. Finally pray for their **S**pirituality – for their salvation if they don't yet have a personal relationship with Him, and then that their walk with Him would be intimate, intense, and fruitful. This prayer will literally bless every area of their lives and any specific needs you are aware of or concerned about will fit into one of those categories. To steal a line from comedian Tim Hawkins, don't just "bless the *hands* of those who prepared the food" but bless the entire person! **Numbers 6:24-26; Ephesians 3:16, 6:18; Philippians 1:9-11**

Thursday, October 22nd: One of my favorite Scriptures is found in Isaiah 61 which declares the anointing of the Spirit on us to proclaim good news to the afflicted, bind up the brokenhearted, proclaim liberty to captives and freedom to prisoners, to proclaim the favorable year of the Lord and His day of vengeance, and to comfort all who mourn. Oh, may we all take up that mantle! We aren't in need of new laws or better enforcement; we are in need of new hearts and greater unity with less shouting and finger pointing while ignoring our own faults. And that goes for all of us because there are none that are truly righteous. All who defy laws – both civil and spiritual – need to be held accountable. We have to stop condemning the acts of others as horrific if we are just as guilty. So often it's a matter of semantics and point of view. In a conversation with a pastor on an Indian reservation, J. Vernon McGee learned about perspective. The pastor told him that when a group of men from the tribe would kill several settlers it was referred to as a massacre, but when the soldiers would wipe out an entire village of Native Americans it was called a victory. Neither is acceptable, but how we perceive/recount something has much to do with the lens through which we filter it. We can't proclaim good news or set captives free if we don't first seek to understand their need and ask the Spirit to anoint us with His wisdom, empathy and an open mind. Take up the mantle.

Isaiah 61:1-4; 2 Thessalonians 2:7-17

Friday, October 23rd: Trusting in the storm - My ways are higher than your ways. My thoughts toward you are only for good. I am in the midst of the storm and I am working in the background. All things work together for good. When everything around you looks like it is falling apart, look to Me, your redeemer. There is nothing too difficult for Me. You must bring all your anxieties and give them to Me that I might work on your behalf. I am the vine you are the branch. Apart from Me, you can do nothing. The cares of this world can become such a heavy burden to bear. But...I am here for you waiting for you to give Me that heavy burden that I might carry it for you. Come into My presence and be refreshed and you will see that in My presence is fullness of Joy. I call you to come and sit awhile and find a rest in the Spirit for your weary soul. Rest! My mercy is new every morning and My desire for you is to just rest and be blessed by My unending mercy and unfailing grace.

Matthew 11:28-30; Romans 8:28; Lamentations 2:22-23

Saturday, October 24th: In light of all that has been experienced this year on a global level, there is an increased interest in the book of Revelation. People can read it for a variety of reasons: it has some pretty sensational content not unlike the Apocalyptic movies that have been produced; some are interested in accumulating more knowledge in order to pontificate their interpretations to those of “lesser” understanding; but then there are those who take to heart John’s words in verse three which instruct us to read and heed. Nearly every generation has speculated that theirs was the end times, and I think that should be how we all live. John is not just unveiling what we should expect in the physical realm to signify how it will all end. Rather he is giving us a fuller picture of Jesus - the Alpha and Omega, who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty. Aged and exiled on the Isle of Patmos, John had firsthand knowledge of Jesus when He walked the earth in human form, but he also was given knowledge through the Spirit of God of the current condition of the churches which are representative of “the church” as well as what is to come when He returns in triumph. He is writing about the person of Jesus, the Son of Man whom he had known intimately and who we can know as our best friend. He is writing about the power of Jesus who now sits at the right hand of the Father, His deity profound and yet His power is accessible to us. He is writing about the purpose of Jesus in purifying the earth, the final defeat and banishment of the devil and his minions, and the final restoration of fellowship with His church. May we all come to know Him so intimately and purely as we cry out, “Come, Lord Jesus.” **2 Timothy 3**

Sunday, October 25th: As the months drag on, there are many who are impatient to get back to the way things used to be. Really? Part of our problem may be that we had fallen into settling for less than what God would desire for us and He would choose to set us free from bondage. In some ways, we are not unlike the Israelites who were released from the oppression of Egypt only to almost immediately begin complaining. Three days after they had witnessed the miraculous parting of the Red Sea they doubted that God would provide them with drinkable water. A short time after that they grumbled, “Would that we had died by the Lord’s hand in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the pots of meat, when we ate bread to the full...” God never said that the journey to His promise would be swift with five star accommodations. First they had to come to accept the depravity of what they had left behind, and so do we. The pandemic has only brought to greater light the divisions and levels of decadence that were already there. Our idols are sports, entertainment, self indulgence, the financial market; and some of the evidences of our captivity are sexual immorality, infanticide, violence, and a total lack of respect for authority or life itself. We have to acknowledge the wickedness of what *was* before we can truly enter into the abundance of what awaits us. It may not be economic or material prosperity, but if we are in His will, it most assuredly will satisfy our deepest longings and be more fulfilling than anything we “give up” in order to possess it. Heavenly Father, we thank You that all Your plans for us are for good. Forgive us for misplaced priorities and not honoring You with our total devotion to You and Your word.

2 Chronicles 7:13-15; Acts 3:17-21; 1 John 1:9

Monday, October 26th: Many years ago I lived just down the street from Pure Heart and I remember a neighbor who simply seemed too saccharine to be real, so I was very guarded when she attempted to make friends. However as I got to know her I discovered she actually was an extremely nice and very genuine woman. In fact, it was partly due to her that I recommitted my life to Christ. When we meet someone new, our first response should be a desire to see them beyond any veneers or our own preconceived ideas about who we think they are. Discover their heart and try to empathize and see things from their perspective without passing judgment. We can never know or understand their back story if we begin without giving them the proverbial tabula rasa. And for the record, the woman I mentioned became my best friend at a very vulnerable period in my life. I wonder sometimes if she had any prejudices about me that she had to overcome before reaching out to me! Lord, show us how to see others with open hearts and minds and with Your eyes of compassion, mercy and grace.

Matthew 7:12; Romans 2:1-4, 12:16-18

Tuesday, October 27th: Phil. 2:14-15 reads, “Do all things without grumbling or disputing so that you will prove yourselves to be blameless and innocent, children of God above reproach in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you appear as lights in the world.” (emphasis added) For me there are some pretty challenging aspects to that directive. First of all it references all things. There is no wiggle room there. So how am I told to do and respond to everything? Without grumbling or disputing. That means I need to refrain from complaining about what I’m asked to do or about my circumstances and I should do it without arguing or creating unnecessary friction and unrest. There’s a purpose behind this – it’s to be a people that stand out from the crowd...the noisy, whining, finger pointing, arrogant attitudes that surround us. It’s pretty difficult to appear as a light when our actions and attitudes blend right in with the rest of the crowd, but it’s during trying times that we can model the unprecedented hope and peace that can be found in the person of Jesus Christ and in being in His circle of friends. Up front you need to accept that you will experience times of failure, but even that is one of those “all things” opportunities to demonstrate how we handle our own failures. We own them, make amends when necessary, and humbly but confidently press on. We know this is impossible in our own strength, but when lean into the Holy Spirit and depend on Him to guide and empower us, we’ll find that we actually *can* do all things through Him who strengthens us.

Philippians 4:11-13; Colossians 3:22-24

Wednesday, October 28th: Periodically during your prayer time ask the Lord to bring to mind people you may not regularly pray for: family members, extended family, friends, the checker you witnessed to at Walmart, you fill in the blank. Ask Him who He wants you to pray for and then wait quietly for Him to answer – He will not only bring to mind who He wants you to include but He will give you ideas about how you should pray for them. Maybe have a notepad next to you to write down names and specific needs God lays on your heart and then continue to pray for them in the ensuing days or weeks. There may be times when one of those for whom you have been praying will mention something to you in a very random manner that confirms God’s prompting. A dear friend told me of a time when she and her husband were on a pier in Santa Barbara and were suddenly nudged by the Spirit to pray for someone. This was during the raging fires in California, and when they turned to go back to shore they could see a figure in the distance coming towards them. As they got closer they realized it was the woman for whom they had been praying. They exchanged greetings and spoke of the Lord’s hand in this encounter. That evening they received an email with a picture of the two of them holding hands at the end of the pier as they gazed into the hazy atmosphere. The woman had seen them and taken the photo because she thought it was a tender image, not knowing it was her friends! You just never know what He has in mind when He prompts you to pray

Job 42:10; Ephesians 6:18

Thursday, October 29th: Much earlier this month we discussed seeds and that one of their characteristics is that their yield is exponential. This is very applicable in the area of witnessing to others about our hope in Christ. We all have spiritual fathers (or mothers) who first introduced us to the inheritance we have with our heavenly Father through the person of Jesus Christ. We know God values genealogy from the many lists in both the Old and New Testaments. This can be true in the value of spiritual genealogy as well. In the year 1857 a Boston Sunday school teacher by the name of Edward Kimball was very dedicated to the young men in his class and desired that each of them would have the opportunity to accept Jesus as their Lord and Savior. To that end he shared with one of his boys who worked in a shoe store, and the young man became a believer. His name was Dwight L. Moody. But it doesn't stop there. At a London revival where Moody preached, another young man by the name of J. Wilbur Chapman was converted. Chapman went on to become an evangelist and at one of his gatherings a professional ball player with the day off accepted Christ. His name was Billy Sunday. Sunday joined Chapman's team, and when Chapman accepted the pastorate of a large congregation, Sunday began his own evangelistic endeavors. One of his converts was a gentleman by the name of Mordecai Ham. When Ham went to Charlotte, North Carolina, to lead a revival a young man called Billy Frank vowed he would not attend, but he became intrigued and decided to go with some of his rowdy friend to possibly disrupt the meeting. Instead he responded when the invitation was given and later became known as Billy (Franklin) Graham. Can you imagine the thousands upon thousands whose lives were eternally impacted through the faithfulness of this genealogy? And it all started with a Sunday school teacher who cared about a belligerent young man. Who do you know that you might influence? Anyone can count the seeds in an apple, but only God can count the number of apples in a seed. **Romans 10:14; 1 Peter 3:15-16**

Friday, October 30th: IF MY PEOPLE... “When I shut up heaven and there is no rain, or command the locusts to devour the land, or send pestilence among My people, if My people who are called by My name will humble themselves, and pray and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and heal their land.

2 Chronicles 7:13-14

This is God’s word to His people. We are called to pray, to seek God and repent and then God will forgive our sin and heal our land. Our prayers can change the atmosphere if we are willing to turn from anything that hinders our walk with the Lord.

God’s desire is for His purpose to prevail in His people. His will not mine. Lord hear my prayer: “Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me.” **Psalm 51:10**

Saturday, October 31st: Everyone likes to feel important – valued. There’s nothing wrong with that. In fact God created us with a need to belong. The problem arises when our need to be recognized overshadows our need to belong fully to Him from whom we receive everything that would make us valuable. There’s a very subtle temptation called a Babylon spirit and it is a counterfeit of what God would have for us. It’s when the desire to be known or recognized and appreciated supersedes our desire to do His will. We can be doing all the right things but for an underlying fatal reason which is epitomized in Isaiah where our heart of hearts whispers, “I am, and there is no one besides me.” We learn to crave the recognition more and more until we feed on it more than on the reason we were “doing good” in the first place. To see how this might play out, think about our social media posts. I am (and there’s nobody else in this Instagram selfie besides me) doing such wonderful things for God. You see, this is such an affront and a counterfeit representation to the true “I Am”. According to Revelation 17 and 18 we can become drunk on the wine of Babylon – the mentality of self promotion and independence. We need to continually ask ourselves if we’re getting a little tipsy from this potentially intoxicating temptation because when it begins to take hold of us, all of our efforts become hollow and the reward stops at the feet of self promotion. As Beth Moore so succinctly summarized it, our self interest will become our self destruction. The most dangerous drunks of all are the ones who refuse to admit they’re drunk. Be willing to admit when you’ve been tempted to drink from that cup and instead repent and be filled with the new wine.

Jeremiah 9:23-24; 1 John 2:15-17; Luke 18:9-14

