

Prayer Devotions



October 2021

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:

Cameroon

Bhutan

Oman

Daily prayers for October: “I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, and in Jesus Christ His only Son our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried. He descended into hell; the third day He rose again from the dead; He ascended into heaven, and sitteth on the right hand of God the Father Almighty; from thence He shall come to judge the quick and the dead. I believe in the Holy Ghost; the Holy catholic (universal) Church, the Communion of Saints; the Forgiveness of sins; the Resurrection of the body, and the Life everlasting. Amen.” – The Apostles’ Creed

This will be the final month including devotions written by foreign students of English from MTI (Missionary Training Institute) in Yeosu, South Korea. It is so encouraging to see the tremendous amount of faith these students express, many of whom will be going into harsh and dangerous situations because of their desire to share the love of Jesus. Their reflections will be identified with ^{MTI} at the beginning of the entry.

(Don’t forget that this is Pastor Appreciation Month)

Friday, October 1st: No one is absolutely certain when the Apostles' Creed was officially adopted, but it was the early beginnings of Christianity and the fathers of our faith saw a need to have a solid, foundational declaration of the beliefs that we can all agree on and with which there can be no deviation. Making this declaration was a weekly practice in the church I attended as a child and throughout my years leading to adulthood. As a result, the words could roll off my tongue almost in my sleep, much like many of us respond with the Lord's Prayer. On a positive note, this can be a good thing because we are so familiar with the words, but the negative side is that they can become merely words that are repeated rather than the declaration of our core beliefs and faith in the Godhead – Father, Son and Holy Spirit. If we meditate on the words we are uttering and take them to heart, then we are saying that we truly believe He is the source of all power, authority, and wisdom. And if that is the case, we will be far less prone to look to a government, science, or any other source to dictate our actions and values. Certainly, God has established governments and He is the one who gives scientists the ability to discover wonderful things, but any time they contradict with His truths or discount His supremacy we need to make a choice as to where we're going to believe our strength originates. We are desperately in need of regularly reaffirming our faith in and dependence on Him. Father, forgive us when we've imagined that governments are more powerful than the blood of Jesus. When we need clarity, wisdom, or help we need to agree with Peter's words, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have words of eternal life."

John 6:68-69; 2 Timothy 1:12; 1 John 5:4

Saturday, October 2nd: Although we are told that patience is a virtue, we are also cautioned to never pray for this virtue because God will give us all kinds of opportunities to develop it! We live in such a microwave mindset culture that patience is not on our top ten list of characteristics we seek to cultivate. Yet James tells us to consider it all joy when we encounter various trials because we know that they test our faith (and we all love tests), and these tests produce endurance – aka patience – which will have the perfect result of making us perfect and complete, lacking in nothing. James is being somewhat redundant here because perfect, complete, and not lacking are all basically the same thing. The Greek word for perfect does not mean without flaws; it means having reached its end – mature and complete. I think we'd all like to be mature, not lacking anything. We just want the fast-track route. It's an example of loving the prize but loathing the process. We long for shortcuts. We prefer easy and uncomplicated. However, reaching maturity takes time, and there are growing pains that need to be endured. The sooner we learn to bear up under them, the faster the process to becoming complete.

Ecclesiastes 7:8; Romans 8:24-26, 12:12; 2 Thessalonians 1:4-5

Sunday, October 3rd: It's such a faith builder when we see God's intervention in what on the surface would seem to be an unfortunate and very mundane situation. Such was the case awhile back when we experienced car trouble on the way home from church. Less than three blocks out of the parking lot our truck started making a horrible noise and we were sure we had a flat tire. This was not the case; rather it was the drive shaft and we needed to pull into the nearest parking lot to call AAA for a tow. To our amazement, after enduring a lengthy recorded message we received the discouraging information that we would be waiting at least 90 minutes for a tow truck...at two o'clock on a Sunday in Glendale, Arizona, where the temperature was 108! However, we had pulled into the parking lot of Christ Community Church, and before we had even finished the call a young woman emerged from the church office and asked if we needed help. She and a friend were only there because the friend was using the Wi-Fi for a Zoom meeting, and we were able to wait for the tow truck in air conditioning. Additionally, the young woman had recently assumed a role at the church for establishing and expanding relationships with other churches in the area for the purpose of collaboration.

Monday, October 4th: ^{MTI} It's time to run to Jesus if you want to do love. "Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love." (1 John 4:7-8)

As human beings, everyone wants to be loved and love. That's human nature and one of the most essential basic needs. Love is also known as the commandment of God, one of the most important principals to remember, a precious value to uphold from the Bible, but I have no doubt that love is the trickiest part for us to follow as well. From my experience, it's bound to get harder and harder over time if you keep loving by your own strength. 1 **Corinthians 13:3-5** says, "Love is patient and kind, is not jealous, boastful, proud, rude, self-seeking and easily angered." These verses teach us that love is considered to have many different attitudes in diverse situations. Judging by this definition of love, love is a series of everyday nonstop choices. I know maybe that sounds cliché. You might have heard "love is a choice" a million times. Nevertheless, I want you to hear me on this, so I'll say it again: it's your choice and you are the only one who can decide how hard you want to love as the Bible instructs. However, unfortunately, that's not the only key factor of being successful to love. No matter how passionate about loving others we are, if we didn't love people with love based on Jesus' love, we will end up being disappointed and exhausted sooner or later. That is because we never have any source to love inside of us.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer, who was a German Lutheran pastor and theologian, a Nazi dissident who was imprisoned and executed, once said, "We are unable to help ourselves and Christians can only move on to their brothers and sisters through Jesus Christ. We can love and can be one body because Jesus Christ has made us one through His sacrifice." Not by my strength of love but by the love of Jesus. Here is a story of a person who experienced failure and frustration while trying to love by himself. Yes! It is me. Before our English language training, my family lived with my parents for about 10 months. At first, I thought living together would be a blessing for both my parents and my family. I was so excited about the fact that I could serve my parents, which I hadn't done for so long due to our mission work abroad. To be honest with you, I could say that I strived to love my parents in the way I used to. However, over time, small conflicts were stacking up constantly and I ended up exhausted and thinking of moving out to another place. It felt like I seemed to fail at love. What was wrong? What was I supposed to do? There

must be nothing special needed to love each other except the love of Jesus like Dietrich Bonhoeffer said. In order to love, all we must do is just to come before the Lord and taste his love and feel it. That's it. Loving others when disconnected from Jesus is always highly likely to backfire on us. If the love starting from inside of us which has no power to love fails, it's no surprise, it is an inevitable consequence.

1 Corinthians 13:2 says, "If I had the gift of prophecy, and if I understood all of God's secret plans and possessed all knowledge, and if I had such faith that I could move mountains, but didn't love others, I would be nothing." This Scripture tells us that love would be meaningless if every attempt to love had nothing to do with Jesus.

I thought I had grown in knowing how to love people during my 5year mission experience in Malaysia. I believed that I was quite good at serving and loving. However, I must admit that I treated love so easily and all the passion and enthusiasm for love I had had was not a gift from above and didn't come down from the Father of Lights. Now I know, regardless of its motive, all those intention or willingness came from inside of my strong desire. Dietrich Bonhoeffer once said, "Fleshly love loves neighbors for himself, but spiritual love loves neighbors for Jesus Christ and sacrifices himself." Looking back on the moment, everything I did in the name of love was for me. According to Dietrich Bonhoeffer, it was not a spiritual love but a distinctly fleshly love.

Do you have someone you really want to love? Do you eagerly want to succeed in love? Do you want to accomplish the first commandment ordered by Jesus? Then, it is time to run to Jesus. Martin Luther, the German priest who sparked the Protestant Reformation, once said, "To be a Christian without prayer is no more possible than to be alive without breathing." I couldn't agree more. I also believe that prayer is definitely the best way to deepen and strengthen my interaction with God. Whatever the reason, when we find ourselves not praying to God for his help to love people as much as we once did, or when we find ourselves having a hard time loving others, it is time to run to Jesus once more. The more passionate you want to love, the more you should return to a closer relationship with the Lord. I want us to know that now is the time to pray for an intimate relationship with Jesus which will lead us to a perfect love experience. Jesus is always the one who loves us first.

Tuesday, October 5th: Standards are defined as a level of quality or excellence that is accepted as the norm. There are several ways we can look at standards with a biblical application. God has given us a set of standards to live by that are for our benefit, and when we honor them, we have a source of living water to refresh and sustain us. But when we try to modify or insert secular standards into His well, we pollute the water. How then can we complain about the bad water we draw from it? In that sense we need to raise our standards relating to what we will accept and how we are going to walk out our faith. There's another aspect regarding our standards. We seem to think that when we are doing everything "right" we should experience prosperity and a trouble-free life. We should be getting recognition for our righteous acts, and maybe there should be a new car thrown in, or at least one that doesn't keep breaking down. Maybe we need to lower our "standards" as to what it takes for us to feel satisfied and broaden our thinking as to what true blessing is. Jesus told us that this life won't be easy if we're walking in His paths. The really good news, though, is that He is not only *with* us, He is *in* us. There's no road that we can go down that He hasn't traveled, and because He overcame, so will we. Our only responsibility is to stick to His plan, make His standards our standards, and then drink deeply from the water of the wells of salvation.

Isaiah 12:2-3; Hebrews 4:12-16

Wednesday, October 6th: I wonder sometimes if angels ever feel like second string athletes who sit on the bench thinking, “Send me in! Just give me a chance and let me show you what I’m capable of doing!” This could be likened to the early days of a basketball player named John Starks. Starks was not recruited to play following high school, and he was only on the “taxi squad” – a group of backups who replaced starters who were either injured or suspended – at Rogers State College. After finishing his less-than-stellar college career, he only signed with the Golden State Warriors as a free agent and was again on the bench most of the time. He eventually earned a spot with the New York Knicks, and fans of the Knicks still to this day talk about this great basketball player. He just needed to be given the chance. Angels are far more formidable than any NBA or NFL player, far more prevalent than we are typically aware, and they’re on our team! Yet how often do we try to accomplish something in our own strength and ability, or worse – concede defeat because what we are facing seems too impossible to overcome? Not only can we call upon them when we are facing giants, but they are God’s emissaries to assist us even in mundane times of need. Remember when Elijah was running from Jezebel, he lay down under a tree and asked the Lord to just let him die. Instead, the Lord sent an angel to feed, refresh and encourage him. Who knows but that the stranger who stopped to help you with that flat tire was one of His ministering spirits? Don’t underestimate God’s interest in every intimate detail of your life and the unparalleled magnitude of the resources He is ready to release at our behest when we are part of His team. Send in the first string.

Hebrews 1:13-14, 13:2; Psalm 103:19-20

Thursday, October 7th: When we think about the fruit of goodness, the temptation can be to think of it as not being bad and stop there. But I think it goes beyond just being the opposite of evil. We must think of it in terms of the goodness of God because the Holy Spirit is part of the Trinity. Holy Spirit is not His name, it's His title or position in the Godhead, as in God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. It's the divine kind of goodness that saved us even while we were yet sinners. It would be the kind of goodness that overlooks the insults of those who really don't know any better because they haven't personally experienced His goodness yet. It goes beyond simple kindness and accepts the challenge of mildly correcting in love when warranted. That's why He has given us these attributes of His character – the evidence of His nature in us – so that we might exhibit them to those who are like we once were. We didn't do anything to deserve His kindness. It is only by grace that we were saved through faith. We were recipients of His immeasurable goodness, and now we have the privilege of demonstrating that to others through His power residing in us. The Greek word *agathosune* is defined as "uprightness of heart and life." *Agathosune* is goodness for the benefit of others, not goodness simply for the sake of being virtuous. So, if we know that no one is good except God, God lives in us in the person of His Holy Spirit, and His desire is to reveal His goodness to others through us, then we need to be actively pursuing Him and seeking to know Him better all the time that we might display His goodness. As the Bethel song declares, we've experienced His goodness, all of our lives He has been faithful, His goodness runs after us, so all our lives and with every breath that we are able we will proclaim that to the rest of the world as we sing of His goodness.

Romans 15:13-14; Ephesians 5:8-10; Psalm 145:5-7

Friday, October 8th: Just like Jesus called the 12 to be His disciples, He is also calling us. The word used for call is implying to call together or to invite. Jesus called the twelve to preach the gospel, to heal the sick, and to cast out demons (Luke 9:1) but before they were called to *do*, they were called to *be*. He was inviting them to become His companions that they might learn from Him as they became more intimate from spending time together. The more they knew Him, the better equipped they would become to do the things He asked of them. And the assignment He gave them is also ours – it applies to all of us inclusively, and it applies to all of us in the sense of our whole person. We've learned that we are three parts – body, soul and spirit. You *preach* the good news to the *spirit*, you bring physical *healing* to the *body*, and you *free* the *soul* from the enemy's bondage. It was imperative that they understood that the power to do so properly would only come from being with Him and going in the right spirit. They first needed the peace and Presence of God and a true reverence for Him before they wielded the power, or the outcomes could potentially be filled with pride or the poison of darkness. We too must understand that the true power source is God (through Jesus and the Holy Spirit). We're merely extension cords. An extension cord is useless and powerless unless it is plugged in, but if we allow personal recognition to be what dominates or motivates us, we could find ourselves plugging into the wrong outlet! (Is it AC – angelic current, or DC – demonic current?) I know, it's hokey but memorable. The point is we've been invited to partner with God in bringing the good news of His salvation, healing and freedom to a dark and lost world, but in order to do so we must accept the invitation in both word and deed. Show up, grow up, get up and go. Thank you, Jesus, for being a constant power source that will never fail.

John 15:5-8; 2 Peter 1:1-11; Ephesians 3:7

Saturday, October 9th: ^{MTI} There is a dynamic, profound, and amazing grace that our God gives us every day through Jesus Christ. We are walking, moving, and breathing through the endless goodness of God. We can discover God's grace through **John 1:16**, which says "Out of his fullness we have all received in place of grace already given." In this word, God's grace means a full grace that is constantly given. The grace God gives us is so diverse that it does not stop, it does not lack, and it is given to us again and again. God wants us to be gracious, and he wants to help us in time. When we are tired, when we are sick, when we are down, when we are disappointed. In times of crisis, we need God's grace. But we may not feel his grace. Even so, we should look for and look forward to God. Then the God of Grace still gives us grace that comes to comfort us, strengthen us, help us, heal us, encourage us, and make us persevere.

Have you ever been on a treasure hunt? There's treasure hidden around us. We need to look carefully and carefully look around to find the treasure in order to find it. How do you feel when you find the treasure? The person who hid the treasure may feel happier and happier than you every time you are excited when you find it. We can find God's grace like treasure every moment in our life. Shall we go find it together?

Sunday, October 10th: When our kids were small, I had two secret signals for when we were riding in the car and their behavior was reaching a level that I knew was going to push their dad over the edge. I would hang my hand over the back of my seat and with my fingers signal 1-4-1-3. They knew this meant **Psalm 141:3** which reminded them to set a guard over their mouths and to keep watch over the door to their lips. And if in addition to just being rambunctious they were bordering on rude attitudes, I would signal 4-3-2, **Ephesians 4:32** “Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you.” Those very well may be the first verses of the Bible they had committed to memory, but how beneficial would it be for all of us if we could remember them when life is being less than kind to us? We may not have Mom sitting in the seat in front of us, but we do have a Helper who I am quite certain would be very willing to bring those verses to our minds if we would just ask Him to. After all, it is part of His nature – His fruit – of which we all can all become partakers when we are consciously choosing to walk alongside Him and are allowing Him to direct us. And to respond with kindness is sadly so counterculture that it’s bound to draw attention. We must remember that it is the kindness of God that leads men to repentance, so when we exhibit His forgiveness and kindness to others it’s just possible that it could demonstrate to them a glimpse of His perfect kindness and be a catalyst to their decision to allow Him to take control of their lives.

Romans 2:1-4; Titus 3:1-7

Monday, October 11th: There's a very powerful word that Jesus taught us to use in prayers of supplication. In Greek the word is *plēn*, and the short translation is "yet" – the longer is "nevertheless." Whichever you choose, the meaning is the same. It's the idea of "this is what I would like to see happen" ..., nevertheless. It's a humble submission to the sovereignty of a God who is omniscient and loving, who knows the beginning from the end, and who knows His perfect and divine purpose in our lives. It's an act of total faith, and there's no shame in asking more than one time. The Apostle Paul who wrote 28% of the New Testament had a thorn in the flesh which he entreated the Lord three times that it might depart, and the Lord Himself in Gethsemane asked His Father three times if it would be possible for the cup, He was being given to pass from Him. Neither received the answer their souls cried for, but their responses were in deference to the sovereignty of the One whose purpose they were serving. Paul's answer was that God's grace was sufficient because through Paul's weakness the power of God would be perfected. And when Jesus settled in Himself the Father's answer, He conceded, "...**nevertheless**, not My will but Yours be done." God didn't belittle either for coming back with the same request. In fact, my opinion is that God probably ached as He had to tell them that the answer was not what their flesh wanted to hear, but He rejoiced as they accepted His greater purpose. Our persistence in petitioning simply means that we still believe He hears and answers, and when we know we are asking according to His will, we keep asking until He gives us a reason not to, graciously conceding that His answer, when it comes, will always be perfect.

2 Corinthians 12:7-9; Luke 22:42

Tuesday, October 12th: We are living in extraordinary times where instability and uncertainty have become the norm. I've heard it expressed that our country feels about as stable as meringue – it looks firm and stiff, but it's just full of air. We've seen unprecedented hurricanes, raging fires, devastating rains, deadly floods, and a bankrupt government that keeps giving away money. We've seen gas shortages, sparsely stocked shelves in stores, and the ever prevalent and morphing virus that nobody seems to really understand. It can be unnerving and demoralizing, and unless we learn how to cope and overcome, we'll find ourselves either living in fear or in blissful ignorance. The threats are real, and we can't afford to ignore them, but we also shouldn't be consumed with a constant input of the evil around us. If we want to find peace in the midst of the storms, then we need to be spending more time praying than debating, and more time taking in what God has to say than what the news pundits do. Regardless of where we live, our true citizenship is in heaven and as such we are the beloved of the Lord, and His promise is that we will dwell in security in Him because He is our shield. We can rest securely because we know that He never sleeps nor slumbers, and the Psalmist wrote that the one who fears the Lord will never be shaken and will not fear evil tidings because his heart is steadfast, trusting in the Lord. Focus on your faith and the One in whom you have placed your confidence. The enemy can produce a pretty convincing counterfeit for where to look for security, but when you saturate your mind with truth, the lies are much easier to spot. Remember, we're standing on the rock!

Deuteronomy 33:12; Psalm 112:1-2, 6-8; Psalm 121; 2 Timothy 2:15-19

Wednesday, October 13th: My in-laws were from a very traditional church, and their stance on the gifts of the Spirit was that they were for *then*...not *now*. This especially held true for speaking in tongues, and I think many people feel that way more out of misunderstanding or skepticism than actual biblical study. Maybe they've witnessed a disorderly scene where speaking in tongues was not being practiced according to Scripture. In a group setting, there must always be interpretation so those who hear can be edified— this would be an example of the gift of tongues. However, there is also a prayer language that is private and is for everyone. It can feel a bit awkward at first because to the one praying it may sound like gibberish, but if you have earnestly asked the Holy Spirit to intercede for you, He will pray on your behalf. Imagine that! The Holy Spirit Himself is interceding for you because He knows your heart and He knows your deepest needs and struggles, and He has a heavenly language that is far more exact and expressive than we could hope to master on our own. Don't be discouraged or put off because you don't understand what you're praying – if He were speaking in Farsi I'm quite sure I would be clueless as to what was being prayed, but I know I can trust Him to have my best interest at heart. And the beauty is, as we see the fruit of our prayers and experience the peace that arises as a result, it will encourage us more and more to allow Him to fill our mouths with His heavenly language as we seek the Father's will. Those who have not experienced this may be hesitant or others may try to discourage or even mock you if you tell them about it, but the bottom line is we have been given a gift to help us in our greatest times of need, and just a few verses after we are told about His interceding for us we read the very familiar verse about God causing all things to work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to His purpose. If you truly love and believe in Him, trust Him to take you deeper into relationship with Him in your prayer time. It's between you and Him – what have you got to lose?

Romans 8:23-30

Thursday, October 14th: We all know the Great Commission – go into all the world and preach the gospel. This idea was presented in a Sunday School class of adults, and they were asked how many of them would feel comfortable if they walked into class and were told that they would be “preaching” that day. Not many responded with enthusiasm. I’m sure in everyone’s mind was the idea of trying to emulate Dan, or Patrick, or Bob, or Jon or any of the many other gifted pastors we have at Pure Heart. And the next thought was, “I don’t have the gift or training to do that!” If those were the criteria, why would Jesus have given us all that command? We tend to have an inaccurate definition of “preach the gospel.” First off, the Greek word for preach is *kēruō* and it simply means to proclaim – to state or declare publicly. And the word for gospel is *euaggelion* which translates as good tidings. So what Jesus is telling us to do is to be willing to publicly state the good news of what He has done for us personally and for anyone else who is willing to listen. We should all have a God story to tell, and we aren’t even being asked to back it up with chapter and verse. Just share how knowing Jesus and depending on Him has impacted your life, and when you can supplement it with stories or verses from the Bible, all the better. People may try to debate you on theological points, but they can’t refute your personal experience. As for going into all the world, there are probably people in your neighborhood or where you shop who are “not from around here” and remember that this mandate is given to followers of Christ around the world, so it doesn’t necessarily mean we have to even travel – our responsibility is simply to be willing to share whenever and wherever He gives us the opportunity.

Mark 16:15; Romans 1:16-17; 2 Timothy 4:2-5

Friday, October 15th: Last month we celebrated Labor Day, and quite honestly it is possibly one of the least recognized for its original intent. Most look at it as just a break from “having to go to work” or a long weekend to chill out and do nothing. The holiday’s roots are from the late nineteenth century, when labor activists pushed for a federal holiday to recognize the many contributions workers had made to America’s strength, prosperity, and well-being. Rather than an excuse not to work, it was way of celebrating the strong work ethic of American workers. Maybe one of the reasons we find that interesting is due to the shortage of workers today even though there are many businesses advertising and giving all kinds of incentives to lure prospective employees. Our attitude towards work has become more that it is a burden to be endured – a necessary evil – rather than something we were created for. There are three names in the Bible that may not be familiar to many: Tryphena, Tryphosa, and Persis. Their inclusion is not because they preached to thousands, performed any miracles, or even because of any special spiritual gifting. They are lauded for the simple fact that they worked hard. Have we lost our grasp of the significance of work? It isn’t a punishment; we were created for it. Adam and Eve were placed in a perfect garden that they were expected to tend. The manner in which we perform our duties is one of the ways we can show honor to the Lord. Father, thank You for equipping us with everything we need to do our work heartily as unto You. Help us adjust our minds and hearts to see work as a blessing and part of who we were created to be.

Genesis 2:15; Proverbs 12:11, 13:4; Romans 16:12; Colossians 3:23

Saturday, October 16th: Faithfulness is defined as the quality of being faithful: unwavering in belief; consistently loyal; displaying a sense of responsibility or devotion to duty; accurate and true. It speaks of integrity and of marking the kind of person you would turn to when you desperately needed to have someone in your corner whom you could trust implicitly. I had a recent conversation with a friend who is the manager of a restaurant and as such is responsible for creating work schedules for the employees. She is a very caring person and realizes the needs of those who are under her supervision, so she tries very hard to be equitable and to ensure that everyone gets the hours they need, but she also knows that to be profitable there must be limits as well. So, she tries to make certain there will be enough people on hand to accomplish what needs to be done without undue stress. Consequently, when a certain employee missed three shifts in a row due to “illness” and finally showed up for work with a sunburn, the person’s hours were cut. When my friend was questioned as to why so few hours, she explained that she needed to be able to depend on her workers and she wasn’t about to place extra burdens on those who faithfully showed up for work because of the self-serving attitudes of others. She said she was running a business, not a daycare. God doesn’t want us to be whiney babies who don’t feel responsible to anyone but ourselves. He wants true believers who demonstrate their loyalty to Him through their actions. We won’t always be 100% faithful, but we know that even when we are faithless, He remains faithful because He cannot deny Himself. Ask Him to help you develop His faithfulness in your own actions and attitudes and be the kind of person that everyone knows can be trusted to walk their talk.

2 Timothy 2:11-13, 15; Matthew 24:14-29; 1 Corinthians 4:2; Psalm 18:25

Sunday, October 17th: Jesus gives us a vivid picture of what forgiveness looks like, and He expects us to extend that mercy to others. Paul reminds us of this in his second letter to the Corinthians. An incestuous person had been excommunicated and had evidently repented and now was in dire need of reconciliation. Paul urges the church to extend forgiveness so that no advantage would be taken of them by Satan, as they were not *ignorant of his schemes*. Several things are worth noting here. First, Satan's schemes involve causing excessive guilt and grief as well as nurturing self-righteous attitudes that fail to forgive. Second, we are cautioned to not be ignorant of his schemes. The word for ignorant is *agnoeō*, from *gnō* which means to come to know and *gnōs* meaning knowledge. We know that placing the "a" in front of the word means not or opposite. I find it interesting that this is the root for the word agnostic. When we succumb to the enemy's schemes by refusing to extend forgiveness for any reason, we are being ignorant, just like agnostics who deny that the existence of God is provable. That is from the father of lies! If I can't bring myself to forgive, then I am questioning the very One who has forgiven me so much and am instead being duped by a liar. Now that is just ignorant! Lord, help us trust You and walk in forgiveness that we may reflect You to an often-doubting world.

2 Corinthians 2:9-11; Ephesians 4:31-32

Monday, October 18th: A recent post I read on Facebook reminded me of a comment Pastor Jon made about a young person's fear regarding being left behind. I think what this person had to say warrants repeating.

By the time I was 10 years old, I had been exposed to so many sermons, movies and conversations about the mark of the beast, the Great Tribulation and the rise of antichrist that I legit had a panic disorder that persisted well into adulthood. I would come home from school and not be able to find my mom and panic because I thought I had been "left behind" in the rapture.

As I got older, thanks to some awesome mentors and logical inquiry, this narrative began to crumble. The one question that I apply to nearly everything that doesn't add up is this: "who benefits?" That along with the words of Jesus, "you shall know it by its fruit" are what is needed to sharpen discernment. Who benefits when believers are: Looking for the rise of the antichrist instead of the Return of the King; Obsessed with the mark of the beast instead of being marked by Christ's love and presence; Focused on escaping the earth instead of redeeming it; Immersed in fear rather than hope? Darkness benefits. Yes, there is darkness, and it seems to be increasing (side note, the presence of darkness isn't increasing, only the exposure of it) AND according to prophetic scripture, when darkness is at its thickest, that's when the glory of the Lord rises upon us! Which side of the same coin do YOU want to focus on? The end is indeed near, but it's the end of the reign of terror that has kept God's children enslaved to a matrix of lies and hopelessness. Those of us who are alive during these times get the incredible privilege of seeing with our eyes what prophets of old only dreamed about. Let us fix our eyes on the rising glory of the Sun of Righteousness instead of the momentary darkness that quakes and trembles at the mention of His name. Let's find out where our position is - because if you are alive, you have a part to play! Let's declare the solution instead of wringing our hands over the problem. The end is near, AND the future is bright! Remember who you are. Rise up and reign.

Tuesday, October 19th: ^{MTI} The supremacy of God's glory in **John 17:1** "After Jesus said this, He looked toward heaven and prayed: 'Father, the time has come. Glorify your Son, that Your Son may glorify You.'" It was about time for Jesus to finish His ministry on earth. According to the Apostle John, what Jesus did last before His arrest was to pray for His disciples. This whole chapter is Jesus' last prayer for His people who will continue their journey of faith without their master. Like a testament, these words will His disciples remember as their master's last words. So, we can fathom how important this prayer is for believers.

Except for verse 1, the whole prayer is mainly for Jesus' disciples and their spiritual welfare. So, Jesus is praying for His people by asking for the glory of the Son, along with the glory of the Father. Recently, while I was doing a small group Bible study, one member said, "It is strange that Jesus prayed for Himself first." That question triggered me to think about this theme, the supremacy of God's glory.

The principle: Is Jesus praying for His (and the Father's) own glory first a strange thing? On one hand, I understand what my friend means by saying that. It would be a simply inappropriate thing for me to seek my own glory first in my prayers, or if I put myself in the highest priority, or if I think I am the most precious being in the world, so I love myself more than anything. How wretched I must be to do that or think like that! It is simply the wrong thing because it is not true.

However, when it comes to God, it is totally different. God seeking His own glory first is absolutely right. God putting Himself as the priority all the time is absolutely right. God considering Himself the most precious being in the universe is absolutely right. It is absolutely right simply because it is true.

If God is truly God, He must love the most what is the loveliest. Thus, God loving Himself more than anything is absolutely right. This is the meaning of God being God. Man seeking his own glory first would be an inappropriate thing to do, but for God, it is absolutely the right thing.

God loves His creatures (including all men and women) because He loves what is His own. Eventually, all creatures are in Him and are His own. His love for Himself and His love for His creatures are one.

Application: That is why we must seek for God's glory first in all we do, for that is the purpose we exist. God created us for His glory. The Westminster shorter catechism asks, "What is the chief end of man?" and answers, "The chief end of man is to glorify Him and enjoy Him forever." In the Lord's Prayer, Jesus taught His disciples to ask for God's glory (Hallowed be Your name) first. In another scripture, He said to His disciples, "Seek ye first the Kingdom of God, and His righteousness." **(Matt 6:33)**

Does God commanding His glory first all the time to all creatures make Him look self-centered and proud? I imagine that one could think like that. However, I say that it is because one does not understand what it means for God to be God. He is the most glorious being in the universe; He is the loveliest one, thus by putting Himself at the center of the universe, God is blessing the universe.

Wednesday, October 20th: Wings of Eagles: Sometimes it is hard to see the “BIG” picture. Therefore, you must learn to trust Me in all situations. The trials are always for a reason. I am working to bring good out of bad situations. There are sacrifices that point the way to where I am leading you. My heart is in every calamity that touches the earth. I am there in the midst of chaos, and I am there behind the curtain directing each scene as it unfolds. I am pouring out My goodness and mercy upon each situation. I am working My purpose in the earth. Come to Me with your burdens, hardships, and even confusion and lay all your cares at the foot of the cross. I can give you peace in the midst of your sorrow. I see your tears. Your tears are precious to Me. Let Me comfort you and give you My peace as you struggle with a grieving heart. Let Me go before you and lead you through the valley. I am a strong refuge for you to run to. My arms are wide open to embrace you with My enduring love. Don't hold back your tears but release them to Me. This is a time to seek Me with your whole heart. Lean on Me. Let Me carry your pain and as you lean on Me, I will raise you up and carry you on wings of eagles.

Proverbs 3:5; James 1:2-4; Proverbs 15:3; Matthew 11:28; Psalms 56:8, 46:1; Jeremiah 29:13; Isaiah 40:31

Thursday, October 21st: Words. They can glide off the tongue so effortlessly. Sometimes they may be spewed, others they might be oh so cleverly slipped into a comment like a scalpel. Often, they are spoken before their effect is considered. However, once spoken, they can't be unheard. Therefore, James cautions us to be so mindful of what comes out of our mouths. That one careless remark could be the spark that leads to the destruction of a friendship, a reputation, a person's sense of value, or even a ministry. He refers to the tongue as a fire which can defile our bodies and set on fire the course of our lives! With it we can curse men who are made in the image of God, but we can also choose to use our words to bless our Lord and Father. This happens when we determine to listen first to the promptings of His Spirit within us and then speak only what and when He tells us to. We'll never fully tame the tongue, but we can certainly train ourselves to be more mindful and intentional with our words. May the words of my mouth...be pleasing to You, O Lord.

James 3:5-10; Proverbs 15:1-4; Psalm 19:14

Friday, October 22nd: Citizen of Heaven: I am the Lord of heaven and earth, and all power is in My hand. I have created all things for My purpose and pleasure. My crowning achievement is mankind, created in My image. What is the purpose, you ask? I wanted a family to love. My mercy and goodness are poured out for all mankind. I desire that you would want to know Me. I want to walk with you and guide you with My eye. If you have asked for forgiveness of sin and asked Jesus to be the Lord of your life, then you are My child, and your citizenship is in heaven. You have been bought with a price. You have been redeemed. There is nothing that can separate you from the love of God. You have been washed clean in the blood of the lamb. Repentance brings My cleansing, healing, fire to burn up the old man of sin. I have taken away the old stony heart and given you a new heart. Rejoice, your name is now written in the Lamb's book of life. When you trusted Jesus as your Savior you were born into the family of God. You are My child. Seek Me with all your heart. I will do a work in you that will transform your heart. You have My favor for life. You are My workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, already prepared for you to walk in. I will lead you in the way you should go. Seek My presence and worship Me. I love you, My precious child.

Revelation 4:1,1:5,3:5; Psalms 32:8, 30:5; Philippians 3:20; 1 Corinthians 6:20; Romans 8:38; Ezekiel 36:26; John 1:12; Ephesians 2:10

Saturday, October 23rd: Trying to make appointments or resolve issues with certain entities (doctor's office, cable company, credit card, etc.) can be so frustrating. After multiple attempts and layers of recorded messages you hear the inevitable, "Due to Covid/the heavy volume of callers/etc., the wait may be longer than usual. Please hold for the next available..." We don't like to wait, and our culture is pretty much geared to a "have it now" mentality. Yet the Bible tells us over and over to wait patiently for Him, and then He hears us; He blesses those who wait for Him, He renews our strength, and He promises great reward. When you think about it, it's worth it to wait until a loaf of homemade bread rises and is fully baked. If you eat raw dough, you'll probably get sick, and if you take the bread out of the oven too soon, it may look nice on the outside, but the insides will be gooey and flavorless. When we fail to wait on the Lord, we can expect similar results. So, the next time you hear Him whispering for you to wait - to not be anxious but instead to patiently persevere - trust that He has only the best intentions for the outcome. I want my life to be flavorful and beneficial to those around me; Lord Jesus, teach me the art of waiting expectantly for You to work in and through me for Your glory. **Isaiah 40:31; Psalm 40:1-3**

Sunday, October 24th: Gentleness can also be translated as meekness. We need to understand, however, that meekness does not mean weakness. Rather, it involves humility and thankfulness toward God, and polite, restrained behavior toward others. It's the opposite of harshness and a self-serving attitude. A perfect picture of gentleness would be Chandler Jones (265-pound linebacker for the Arizona Cardinals) cradling a newborn in his arms. Jesus was the epitome of power and strength, yet He is often described as being gentle and meek, and in his second letter to the Corinthians Paul refers to the meekness and gentleness of Christ. When we try to walk in our own power using human wisdom, it's like a ticking time bomb. We don't know how to control our emotions to keep them in check. But when we follow the wisdom and example of Jesus who possessed all power yet submitted Himself fully to the guidance and authority of His Father, our strength becomes a powerful weapon in trustworthy hands. It's a gentle answer that turns away wrath, and it takes a truly strong person to show kindness and gentleness in the face of ill treatment, but this is when such strength under control speaks the loudest to those who are reacting purely in their own fleshly strength. Be more like Jesus for their sake. **Matthew 11:29; Philippians 4:5; 2 Timothy 2:24-26**

Monday, October 25th: I recently learned something interesting about horticulture. If young trees are staked too rigidly, they will never become strong. They need to be loosely secured, giving them room to be battered by the winds in order to force them to put down deep, sure roots. Isn't that true of us as well? If we aren't given the freedom to be vulnerable, yet in a safely controlled place, we won't develop the foundation necessary for stability and healthy growth so the supports can be removed. Praise God for the freedom to not be okay, to be transparent about being battered by life in an environment where we can find loving support that allows us to learn that our strength is in Him, being grounded and supported in His love and truth – not a rigid set of rules. This is what will set us free. We all begin our walk with Him as saplings that need some outside assistance to grow straight and tall and strong. It's like learning to ride a bike. The training wheels are great when we need to learn how to balance and steer, but eventually they need to be removed. Can you imagine Lance Armstrong in the Tour de France with training wheels? Thank You, Jesus, for those you place in our lives to encourage us in our walk with You to keep us growing towards maturity. Let us also be the supports for those who are still developing their roots.

Mark 4:16-17; 2 Corinthians 4:7-10

Tuesday, October 26th: Majesty! You are glorious. You are seated on the throne high above all principalities and power. There is none like You. Who have I in heaven but You? You are my rock and my strong tower. I run to You where I am safe from my enemies. You have the power to crush my enemies. I look to You because without You I can do nothing. You are an ever-present help in times of trouble. You created the earth and all that is in it. You measured the waters with the span of Your hand. You are glorious in power. There is nothing that happens without Your knowledge. You hold the king's heart in Your hand, and You can turn it like the water course, any way You like. Who is man that You even consider us? You poured out Your love on the cross when You died for our sins. This love You demonstrated while we were yet walking deep in sin. You died so that we could live. You laid down your life to save us from ourselves. How can we ever repay the debt we owe? So, humbly I surrender myself to You. I give You thanks and praise You for rescuing me from the muck and mire the world has to offer. You are my Savior. You are glorious in power and majesty. You are my rock. Thank You for the cross.

Ephesians 1:21; Jeremiah 10:6; Psalms 73:25, 8:4, 46:1,18:2; Proverbs 18:10,15:3, 21:1; John 15:5; Isaiah 40:12; Romans 5:8; 2 Corinthians 5:15; 1 Chronicles 29:11

Wednesday, October 27th: When we think of baptism, we generally think of being immersed in water as a profession of our faith in Jesus Christ and as an expression of our new life in Him and being cleansed. Actually, however, there are three baptisms: we are baptized in the Holy Spirit in that He comes to live in us when we accept Jesus, we are water baptized symbolizing our cleansing from sin, and many stop here. But there is a third baptism *with* the Holy Spirit, and this is the one that many are either put off by or they don't fully understand. They see it as optional, and quite honestly as possibly a little radical. However, it's almost mind blowing when you discover how God has revealed the necessity for all three. On the day of Pentecost when Peter explained the outpouring of the Holy Spirit and how the One, they had crucified was indeed their Messiah, they were pierced to the heart and asked what they should do. Peter responded they must repent, be baptized in the name of Jesus for the forgiveness of their sins, and that then they would receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. And John writes that Jesus is the one who came by water and blood (the blood saves, the water washes), and that it is the Spirit who testifies, for there are three that testify – the Spirit, the water and the blood. And in order to enter the Presence of God in the Tabernacle, one first encountered the alter, where blood was shed (our salvation), then the priest would wash at the laver (water baptism), but then to enter into the Presence there was a flask of the holy anointing oil that was used to set apart as holy all to which it was applied. Oil is symbolic of the Holy Spirit. This was not an option. In order to come into His Presence, all three were required. Why would we settle for less? Remember that when Jesus was baptized by John, the Holy Spirit descended on Him. He is part of the Trinity, but in His human form Jesus was submitting His own authority to the Father and the indwelling of the Spirit. If Jesus relied upon His counsel and Presence, how much more should we. God would never give us something that wasn't for our good, and to be sure, the companionship and counsel of God the Holy Spirit is an incomparable gift. If you have never received this gift, ask for it. Don't settle for two out of three – go for the trifacta. Enter into the fullness of His Presence.

Acts 2:37-38, 19:1-6; 1 John 5:6-8

Thursday, October 28th: There are times when I feel a little like Eeyore in Winnie-the-Pooh. One of his classic lines is, “Could be worse. Not sure how, but it could be.” Or maybe you relate more to the tune from that illustrious TV program Hee Haw. “Gloom, despair, and agony on me; deep, dark depression, excessive misery; if it weren't for bad luck, I'd have no luck at all. Gloom, despair, and agony on me.” None of us are totally immune to periods of doubt and insecurity. Even King David had his days of darkness and despair. One minute he was being celebrated as the great warrior and the next he was facing an angry mob that wanted to stone him! People are fickle, circumstances can change in an instant, and trials are a certainty. If you're not going through one now, just wait. This is not to be a fatalist; instead, it is meant to offer some encouragement that even those who appear to be the strongest have struggles, but we can take heart in the fact that we have a comforter and a champion to whom we can cry out and who listens with compassion. When we dwell on the downside, that's the direction our hearts tend to gravitate and it's a very slippery slope. But when we turn our eyes upward, we can say with confidence and renewed hope that we still believe we will see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living. Read through the Psalms if you want to see the tension between crying out in despair and finding solace in the faithfulness, goodness and strength of our King. When Peter was writing to the churches, he was realistic in the assessment that they were going through difficult times, but after reminding them of the glorious and imperishable riches they had inherited as a result of the atoning death and resurrection of Jesus, he challenged them to prepare their minds for action and then fix their hope completely on His grace. Preparing our minds means being intentional about the input. We need to be mentally strong, and that requires being built up with truth. As Peter puts it, gird up our loins. In Roman times the apparel was robes and togas, and if you needed to run you needed to gather up that part of your clothing that would slow you down or trip you up and to get it out of the way. In like manner, we need to intentionally compartmentalize those thoughts and attitudes that might impede us from purposeful forward movement. Remember whose you are and who He is. Set your mind on things above.

Psalm 27:13-14, 33:20-22, 94:18-19; John 16:33; Philippians 4:6-7

Friday, October 29th: We tend to look at the Israelites with a bit of disdain for all their complaining in the wilderness. In **Numbers 21:5** they grumble that their “souls loathe this worthless bread” (the manna that literally dropped out of the sky to feed them)! Yet after visiting some third world countries and seeing their thankfulness for what little they have and then returning home to listen to complaints about such trivial things as having to drive (over paved roads) 5-10 miles to shop at Whole Foods or Trader Joe’s for some specialty item, I wonder what God thinks of our lack of gratitude? In the wilderness, he answered their complaints with a plague that wiped out over 14,000 people! Is anyone feeling a bit of conviction or seeing a possible similarity to the last 18 months? Moses and Aaron interceded and stood between the living and the dead to halt the curse. So where are we? Are we intercessors who are praising and thanking Him for His unmerited, abundant favor; or are we whiners who maybe needed a wake-up call? Lord, forgive us for taking for granted Your gracious provision. You are all powerful, all sufficient, all merciful, and wholly righteous. As You have blessed us, may we acknowledge Your ample supply and in thankfulness seek to share with others that they may come to know and depend on You. Show us those attitudes that need to be realigned with Your heart.

Romans 1:21; Psalm 107:8; Hebrews 12:25-29

Saturday, October 30th: I find it fitting that the fruit of the Spirit begins with love and is wrapped up with self-control. Paul wrote to the Corinthian church that they could have the gifts of the Spirit and do all sorts of worthy things, but without love it was nothing. It all must be based on and born in His love for us and ours for Him. And the anchor for equipping us to walk in that love along with the other evidences of the fruit of His Spirit is self-control. The word used refers to a mastery of our appetites, desires and passions. This is what becoming like Jesus for the sake of others looks like. It's putting aside our own selfish agendas and instead choosing to submit our desires to what His desire is for us, and His desire is that we would abide in Him in order to bear good fruit. Our flesh will tell us that self-control is denying ourselves any pleasure or fun, but the truth is that it's choosing long-term satisfaction over the instant gratification of sinful actions or attitudes. One definition of sin is "filling a legitimate need through illegitimate means." We all need comfort and a feeling of being accepted, but without the indwelling power of the Holy Spirit to guide us we may make poor choices to fill those needs – like alcohol, pharmacology, or illicit relationships. We become slaves to those “antidotes” to our legitimate needs. Before Jesus we were slaves to sin, but the law of the Spirit has set us free from sin because He will always provide a way out for us and instead supply all of our needs according to His riches in glory! All we need to do is cry out to Him for His strength and input and then allow Him to fill us with the right things. Sound impossible? It is on our own, but with Him – all things are possible!

2 Peter 1:2-8; John 15:1-5; Romans 7:21-8:5; 1 Corinthians 10:13

Sunday, October 31st: Sword of the Spirit: I am the God of all comfort. I know your heart. I know your fears. My word spoken out of My mouth does not go forth in vain. I watch over My word when you speak it with faith. I will accomplish My word; it will not return to Me void. I will crush the enemy who comes to steal and kill and destroy. I will send My angels to do a mighty work against the enemy. I will restore what has been lost. I am working all things for the greater good. Although the earth may seem to be reeling in confusion and disharmony, My purposes will come forth despite all the evil schemes of the enemy. Your part is to fully trust Me and let Me lead you in the path of victory. Victory is yours over the enemy, and victory over circumstances beyond your control. I see the beginning from the end, and I am fitting all the pieces of the puzzle together. Although you cannot see how everything is working together for good, just keep on trusting Me. I am not a man that I should lie. I watch over My word to perform it. My word is a sharp two-edged sword. I did not leave you alone to fight the battles. I gave you My word, a sword, to fight spiritual battles. Use your sword against the enemy. I watch over My word to perform it. The battle is not by might, nor by power but by My Spirit. Angels are ministers sent forth to carry out My word. I have said many times, do not fear. I have not given you a spirit of fear but of power, love and a sound mind. My word brings victory against the enemy. "When the enemy comes in like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord will lift up standard against him." **(Isaiah 59:19)**

2 Corinthians 1:3, 2:14; Isaiah 55:11; John 10:10; Hebrews 1:14, 4:12; Romans 8:22, 28; Proverbs 3:5; Numbers 23:19; Zechariah 4:6; 2 Timothy 1:7