

Prayer Devotions
November 2023



Luke 18:1

Pray Always and Never Give Up.

Prayer for Persecuted Church

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 in just the last year...

- Over 360 million Christians live in places where they experience high levels of persecution and discrimination.
- 5,898 Christians were killed for their faith.
- 5,110 churches and other Christian buildings were attacked.
- 4,765 believers detained without trial, arrested, sentenced, or imprisoned.

These numbers are heart-breaking. And sadly, they do not tell the whole story.

Please pray:

- Whatever their circumstances, God will give persecuted Christians the right words. (Ephesians 6:19-20)
- That persecuted Christians will understand and find peace in the sufficiency of God's grace, even in their weakness. (2 Corinthians 12:9)
- That Christians facing hardship will draw from a source of power larger than themselves. (2 Corinthians 1:7-9)
- God be present in their hardship, protecting them according to His will.
- That their witness would inspire those who seek to harm them.

China

Persecution Type: Communist & post-Communist oppression, Dictatorial paranoia.

Main Religion: Agnosticism

Government: Communist party lead state

Leader: General Secretary Xi Jinping

Mali

Persecution Type: Islamic oppression, Organized corruption & crime, Clan oppression.

Main Religion: Islam

Government: Semi-Presidential Republic

Leader: Interim President Assimi Goita

Iraq

Persecution Type: Islamic & Clan oppression, Dictatorial Paranoia, Organized corruption & crime, Christian denominational protectionism.

Main Religion: Islam

Government: Federal Parliamentary Republic

Leader: Prime Minister Mohammed Shia al-Sudani

Daily Prayers for November:

November 2023 - "A thankful heart is one of the primary identifying characteristics of a believer. It stands in stark contrast to pride, selfishness, and worry. And it helps fortify the believer's trust in the Lord and reliance of His provision, even in the toughest times. No matter how choppy the seas become, a believer's heart is buoyed by constant praise and gratefulness to the Lord." –John MacArthur

Wednesday, November 1st, 2023:

PRAY FOR ISRAEL

“Behold, He who keeps Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep.” (Psalm 121:4)

Our hearts are heavy as we watch the tragedy unfolding in Israel. The constant images we see bring mourning for those who have lost loved ones and those who are missing family members. The land given to the chosen people of God, now under attack. **2 Chronicles 20:11-12** is true today as it was yesterday. “See how they are repaying us by coming to drive us out of the possession you gave us as an inheritance.” The world is rising in protest. Some for Israel and some against Israel. But God is sovereign over all the nations of the world. He rules and reigns in the middle of this crisis. We look to him to intervene and we must trust his judgements. We can approach God as written in His word. “O God, be not silent; do not turn a deaf ear, do not stand aloof, O God. See how your foes rear their heads. With cunning they conspire against your people; they plot against those you cherish. ‘Come,’ they say, ‘let us destroy them as a nation, so that Israel’s name is remembered no more.’” **(Psalm 83;1-4 NIV)**

Prayer: We are told to “Pray for the peace of Jerusalem: May they prosper who love you.” **(Psalm 122:6)** We lift up Israel and ask for your provision for this nation and that you would comfort all those who have suffered loss. Let the light of your love shine in Israel and may you receive glory out of this atrocity. You have said you are the defender of Israel. We ask that you send the armies of heaven to watch over Israel and the City of God, Jerusalem. In your name we pray. Amen

Deuteronomy 14:2, Colossians 1:16-17, Isaiah 49:7, Exodus 25:22

Thursday, November 2nd, 2023:

Now is the Time

The Gospel of Mark differs from the other three Gospels in several respects, and we could learn much about effective sharing from him. It is the shortest of the four Gospels, and it contains nothing about the birth of Jesus, His childhood or His genealogy, and very little of His actual teaching. In addition, there is a real sense of urgency in Mark's writing. He uses the word *euthys*, which translates as "immediately," 40 times - ten times in the very first chapter! Since he is actually recording the preaching of impetuous Peter, this would make sense.

Mark also uses very vivid detail in his description of certain events such as the feeding of the five thousand. When he says they were seated in "groups" on the green grass, the word he uses literally means flower beds. His readers would picture the brightly colored robes of the attendees on the hillside as a beautiful assortment of colorful flowers against the green grass. He also uses ten Latin words, some of which occur nowhere else in the New Testament, and he explains Jewish customs. This is probably because he was writing in Rome and primarily to a Gentile audience, so his desire was to capture their interest. Mark presents Jesus as a mighty conqueror and a suffering servant, and the emphasis is more on His deeds and works, recording 18 miracles and only four parables. **He knew his audience.** That's important.

We find ourselves in a culture that is addicted to sound bites and more interested in results than rhetoric. And because it seems that the downward spiral is gaining in momentum and absurdity, there is definitely an urgency in presenting a message of good news (the meaning of "gospel") that could offer an alternative and better solution to what they are desperately seeking. As Jonny Lee would put it, they are "looking for love in all the wrong places." Our takeaway from Mark would be: keep it short, use vivid and interesting details to capture their interest, use terminology that they can understand, and demonstrate what it looks like to be a Jesus follower. Show them Jesus as someone they can personally relate to and who can fill the void in their lives, miraculously and at no cost.

How? Pray about it, think about how Jesus has impacted you personally, and then ask the Holy Spirit to empower you in every way needed to do it! He has already promised us that He will give us what we need if we'll just ask without doubting. (**James 1:5**) And pray for yourself what Paul prayed for the church in Ephesus, that God will give you "*the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him*". (**Ephesians 1:17**) Don't delay; put it into practice "immediately!" They need to hear.

Friday, November 3rd, 2023:

Branch Out

When the prophet Isaiah spoke of the coming Messiah, he said, “And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and Branch shall grow out of his roots.” (**Isaiah 11:1**) The richness of the extended implications of this metaphor are astounding. In *The Book of Mysteries*, author Jonathan Cahn explains some of the layers to Jesus as the Branch.

We speak of family trees, and the Messiah is repeatedly referred to as the son of David. It is no coincidence that the first verse in the New Testament begins: “The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham.” His roots are from the royal lineage of the house of David, and that was one of the hallmarks of Messiah. The Hebrew word that Isaiah used for branch is *netzer*. When you add the suffix *-et*, the word becomes *netzeret*, and that is the real name of the place we know as Nazareth. And what is the meaning of Nazareth? It means the place of the branch, or the branching forth!

Isaiah tells us that Jesus would grow up like a tender shoot (**Isaiah 53:1**) with no beauty or majesty to attract us. He would be rejected in His boyhood home of Nazareth, yet from there He would “branch forth” to impact the entire world with a message that would bring eternal life and produce fruitfulness in those willing to be attached to Him. He wasn’t called a Nazarene because of anything noteworthy about the place itself, but because of what would branch forth from there.

And now, for us, the Branch has become the Vine and we are the branches. It has nothing to do with anything special about us, but rather what is important is what flows through us and bears fruit. We can bear good fruit only because when we abide in the Vine, He abides in us. The more attached we are, the more fruit we will bear: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. We then become His branching - His Nazareth. Time for us to branch out! **John 15:1-5**

Saturday, November 4th, 2023:

Is He Asleep?

We've probably all been in a situation where we felt totally discouraged, alone, out of resources or abandoned. Through all of it, we begin to wonder where Jesus is and if He is even aware of our crisis. Or worse - does He care? Don't beat yourself up too badly for your lack of faith. Those who had spent a great deal of time in His very Presence went through the same thing. They were in a boat in the middle of a storm, waves crashing over them, and Jesus was asleep in the stern!

First of all, when we find ourselves in such a position, we need to remember that it's not the end of the journey. The disciples were traveling *from* one shore *to* another, and Jesus was the one who had given them orders to go to the other side of the sea. (**Matthew 8:18-26**) At least they knew enough to look to Him for the answer, even though their initial plea was made more in utter desperation rather than in confidence in His ability to handle the crisis. Yet, they amazingly witnessed the power of the One who can even rebuke the wind and the waves! He had initiated the journey, and He would see to it that they arrived at their intended destination. They were just in the middle of it.

We have an enemy who will do all he can to convince us that the journey is too difficult and we will be defeated and destroyed if we keep going. He wants us to take our eyes off the destination and instead see only the wind and the waves that are opposing us and threatening to capsize the boat that we think is our security. In those times, we need to remember that it's who's in the boat with us that's important. He knew full well that sometimes there are almost unbearable things to endure in order to arrive at our safe harbor.

We are reminded in Deuteronomy that when we are facing an enemy stronger than we are, we are not to be afraid because the Lord our God is with us, and He will fight for us against our enemies to save us. (**Deuteronomy 20:4**) Don't be afraid to call out to the One who loves you and only asks that you love and trust Him in return. The author of Hebrews reminds us that we need to fix our eyes on Him and not be afraid. Remember that He endured the cross on our behalf in order to give us the victory over any enemy; He defeated sin and its power over us, and He has promised - "Because he loves me," says the LORD, "I will rescue him; I will protect him, for he acknowledges my name. He will call on me, and I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble, I will deliver him and honor him. With long life I will satisfy him and show him my salvation." **Psalm 91:14-16**

Sunday, November 5th, 2023:

Pray for the Persecuted

Today is the International Day of Prayer for the Persecuted Church. Most of us are only beginning to feel the ripples of persecution in this country, if we are even aware of it at all, but don't be fooled. It's here and it will continue to grow. We have been blessed in the past to enjoy a level of freedom to worship far greater than much of the rest of the world. This would be a good time to not only thank God for the freedom we have, but to pray for those who understand persecution beyond anything most of us cannot even fathom. These are our brothers and sisters in Christ, and we need to remember them in prayer even as we pray for those who are the persecutors. Paul even wrote to the church in Rome to bless those who were the persecutors and to not curse them. (**Romans 12:14**)

Pray for the protection of the persecuted both physically and spiritually. Pray that they would find strength and comfort in Jesus, knowing that He is always with them and will give them the words to speak when they are brought before their persecutors. Pray that they would be so grounded in their love for Him that they would be able to speak words of wisdom and truth and love even in the most hostile of situations, and that they would be even moved to pray for those who are seeking to harm them. Ask the Holy Spirit to comfort them and to let them feel the prayers of the Church be lifted for them.

Finally, pray that we would not live in a vacuum, thinking that we are exempt from this threat. Be aware of what others are facing and ask the Lord to remind us to not only "weep with those who weep" but to also gird ourselves to be ready to face whatever may come. "Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. Resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world." **1 Peter 5:8-9**

Monday, November 6th, 2023:

Paid In Full

Imagine that you had a large debt and you didn't know how you'd be able to pay it. An auto loan, credit card debt or a student loan. It's not hard to imagine because for most of us, this is a reality.

Now imagine if someone came along and paid your debt. All of it. No questions asked. Suddenly you are debt free and no longer have to struggle under the weight of that burden. How excited would you be? It's hard to imagine it would ever happen that way, but IF it did, wouldn't we be so excited that we'd want to tell everyone about this incredible miracle? We'd be shouting from the rooftops about the kindness and mercy we'd just received. We'd be forever grateful and thank that person every day!

Yet, those of us who are believers in Christ HAVE had our debts paid in full. All of them. No questions asked. We are debt free and no longer have to struggle under the burden of sin and shame. Because Jesus, our Redeemer, took all our debts (sins) upon Himself, and He bore the weight of our sins – ALL of our sins – past, present and future – and He died a horrific death on the cross so we could be free and live with Him forever.

Are we so filled with excitement that we're telling everyone about this incredible miracle? Do we shout it from the rooftops about His kindness and mercy? Are we forever grateful and thanking Him every day?

This is SO much more than financial debt being forgiven. This is our eternity!

For what the law was powerless to do because it was weakened by the flesh, God did by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh to be a sin offering. And so he condemned sin in the flesh. **Romans 8:3**

God made Him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God. **2 Corinthians 5:21**

"When you were dead in your sins . . ., God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins, having canceled the charge of our legal indebtedness, which stood against us and condemned us; he has taken it away, nailing it to the cross." **Colossians 2:13–14**

We can't love Jesus too much. We can't think about Him or talk about Him or thank and praise Him too much. All our forgiveness, all our justification, all our righteousness is in Him.

For it is by grace you have been saved through faith - and this is not of yourselves it is the gift of God. **Ephesians 2:8**

Tuesday, November 7th, 2023:

God's Unfailing Love

"Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever." (**Hebrews 13:8**)

You can depend upon the truth of my word because I do not change with the times. I remain the same. "Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away." (**Matthew 24:35**) Just as I was with you yesterday, I am with you today and I will be with you from now and throughout eternity. My love for you is unconditional. My love for you is unchanging and it will not fail. I love you, even if you mess up. Here is my word: "He has removed our sins as far from us as the east is from the west." (**Psalms 102:12 NLT**) What I have done for you in the past, I will do for you in the future. "One thing God has spoken, two things I have heard: "power belongs to you, God, and with you, Lord, is unfailing love"; and, "You reward everyone according to what they have done." (**Psalms 62:12 NIV**) Trust in me, for I am a "sure foundation." (**Isaiah 33:6 NIV**) "But the eyes of the Lord are on those who fear him, on those whose hope is in his unfailing love." (**Psalms 33:18 NIV**) My love for you is steadfast. You are special.

Prayer: "Let the morning bring me word of your unfailing love, for I have put my trust in you. Show me the way I should go, for to you I entrust my life." (**Psalms 143:8 NIV**)

Psalms 36:7

Wednesday, November 8th, 2023:

Healthy Hearts

More and more people are deciding to "eat clean" and to engage in physical exercise to keep their physical bodies in shape and in good health. So many products will tout that they are "heart healthy" meaning they're low in cholesterol and don't contain lots of refined carbohydrates or sugar. We need to be mindful of heart health because that's our body's engine. But there's another kind of heart health that we should be equally, if not more concerned about, and that's the spiritual condition of our hearts.

In **Proverbs 4:23** we are cautioned, "Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it." We know how to guard things. We watch over them carefully, and we install safeguards to alert us of possible dangers. We have car alarms, security cameras, door locks, and insurance policies. But how are we supposed to guard our hearts? And why is it so important? According to Proverbs, everything we do flows from our heart, and the Hebrew word being used for heart is *leb* which refers to the inner man - the mind - the will. So, in order to guard that, we need to install some safeguards.

It's important to monitor what we're feeding our minds. Living water, the bread of life, and the milk and meat of the Word would be a good place to start. Then we should do all we can to eliminate anything that might be already there that would have an adverse effect on our spiritual heart health.

Thursday, November 9th, 2023:

The Miracle of Seeds

I enjoy gardening, and one of the aspects that especially excites me is when I can take the seeds either from something I've purchased at Sprouts or something I've grown myself and harvest the seeds to be used in next season's garden. I wash the seeds, dry them, and then place them in a marked envelope to be used when the soil is ready for the next planting. They now have the potential to become fruitful and multiply, but only if they get taken out of the envelope and actually planted in the soil.

There's another kind of seed that has great potential to become a living entity that will feed not only us but others with whom we share its fruits. In one of His parables, Jesus refers to the Word of God as seeds. When His Word is planted in receptive soil it has exponential potential. Different seeds have different possibilities, but each will become exactly what God intended if it is planted and nurtured properly and consistently.

Just reading the Bible isn't going to transform our lives, although it definitely has the power to do just that. We have to allow His Word to take root in our lives. We have to make sure our hearts and minds are open to receiving it and that we aren't allowing anything to choke out the seed once it begins to grow. Anxiety, anger, bitterness, greed, jealousy, pride, lack of faith - all of these can stunt the growth of the seed, hinder its fruitfulness, or even kill what was intended to grow. And when the seed isn't allowed to produce what was intended in our own lives to strengthen us, it loses the potential to provide "seeds of righteousness" to benefit others. "I said, 'Plant the good seeds of righteousness, and you will harvest a crop of love. Plow up the hard ground of your hearts, for now is the time to seek the LORD, that he may come and shower righteousness upon you.'" **Hosea 10:12**

When you really think about a small, dormant seed being planted in the ground and producing a specific plant that can feed not only you but many others, it really is a miracle. All of that inside a tiny seed, but it needs to be planted in receptive soil and it has to take root because it's being nurtured. Once it takes root, once it becomes a living part of us, that seed will never die. It will continue to produce fruit in our lives, and will have the capacity to produce new, healthy, fruit-producing plants. **1 Peter 1:23-25** Ask the Lord to plant a new seed from His Word in your heart today and cultivate it to become a fruit of His Spirit that can bless others and be multiplied.

Friday, November 10th, 2023:

A Heart of Gratitude

Praise is so important to an effective prayer life. In Paul's experience we see praise opening the way of victory as he and Silas sat in prison (**Acts 16**). Praise affects both the one giving praise and the One receiving praise. **Psalm 22:3** tells us that God inhabits or indwells the praises of His people. While we benefit greatly from our praise of God, always remember that we should not praise Him for the purpose of getting something for ourselves. We praise Him simply because He is worthy of praise.

Prayer:

God, I praise You for who You are: the only One worthy of praise and honor. You are worthy of all my praise, for You have all power and strength and honor and wealth. Your glory overshadows all. I am humbled in Your Presence.

Saturday, November 11th, 2023:

Honor to Whom Honor is Due

With the current state of global affairs, we can probably relate to the price that is paid for defending one's homeland more profoundly than we have for several decades. Today is Veterans Day, a day set aside for us to remember and to honor all those who have served in the armed forces. It was originally named Armistice Day to mark the anniversary of the end of WWI, but in 1954 it was renamed Veterans Day and was expanded to venerate all veterans.

I have personally witnessed the sacrifices made by both those who serve as well as their families even in peacetime. And as we have seen more recently, the horror and devastation during wartime is unimaginable. The trauma of the immediate is insidiously extended into a lifetime of coping with the aftermath. Many come home with both physical and emotional scars, and they not only feel isolated, but it can be a struggle for them to find help in reentry to what is considered a "normal" life. Any number of things that we wouldn't think twice about can trigger flashbacks and emotions that can set them right back into the fray, and the enemy would like nothing better than to pull the trigger on them.

We need to show honor and thanks to whom honor is due. We honor our heavenly Father who fights our battles, so it is only fitting that we also honor those who have been willing to also fight on our behalf. Pray for our veterans, pray for God to heal their wounds and to show them His pleasure, and pray that if they don't already know Him, they will discover the One who has been fighting for them all along.

Thank You, Lord, for those who have been willing to fight to preserve our freedoms and to even lay down their own lives if necessary. We know that this is a reflection of what You did for us. Thank You for Your sacrifice, and if you yourself are a veteran - thank you! "Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one's life for his friends." **John 15:13**

Sunday, November 12th, 2023:

Clothed with the Armor of Christ

**“Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil’s schemes”
(Ephesians 6:11).**

I place on the full armor of God each morning that I may be prepared for any and every battle that comes my way. I thank Jesus, that He has prepared me in advance with the knowledge that trials will come but with Him by my side I am prepared for anything. This awareness in my soul that I have awakened to danger this day does not shake me for I know my victory is in and with Christ, the mighty overcomer of all challenges. There is a quiet assurance deep within me, that I follow the Commander and Chief of the Lord’s Armies (**Isaiah 8:13-14**). In Christ and His word. I am equipped with every piece of battle gear required to defeat Satan and his attacks. So, with immense joy, I pray, gratefully accepting and clothing myself with His armor. Alert to the battle, prepared through prayer, I move through the day’s battles, not with fear, but with confidence in my Lord’s victory (**1 Corinthians 15:57**).

Prayer:

Father, forgive us when we walk out our day in our own strength rather than in the awareness of Your presence. Your armor and Your presence are gifts. You have provided the means for my victory through Your resurrection! Thank You for the precious armor that helps me to meet the challenges and struggles of each day with confidence rather than fear.

Monday, November 13th, 2023:

Freedom from Bondage

Sometimes we can underestimate the power or even presence of bondage in our own lives or in the lives of others. It all begins with a lie being planted in our minds. If we don't immediately recognize and rebuke the lie, we give it a chance to take root and take over a part of our mind, will or emotions. Things like bitterness or chronic insecurity can begin with a twisted perception of something that is said or done to us, and if we don't acknowledge and kick it out quickly, we've just opened the door for the enemy to take a part of us hostage.

Consider the two brothers in the parable of the prodigal son. The younger son, the prodigal, believes the lie that what the world had to offer would bring him more fulfillment than waiting for his father's inheritance. We know the story - he squandered everything, lost his "friends" and wound up in about the most humiliating spot a young Jewish man could find himself - feeding pigs and even eating the slop from the pig troughs! He finally came to his senses and repented, coming to his father and asking forgiveness.

The older son was also in bondage to feelings of jealousy and resentment. He resented that his father rejoiced at the return of his brother, and he was bitter than he felt the father was showing this prodigal unmerited favor. Pastor Robert Morris points out that the father's response was interesting from a grammatical standpoint. He told the son, "You have always been with me, and everything I have is yours." He could have said he had always been with the son, but the subtle parallel we can get is this: we know that God is always with us, but as long as we don't walk away, we are also always with Him and have access to everything He is. We never read that the younger son received anything as an additional inheritance. He has foolishly squandered many of the benefits of being his father's son. And the older son actually would receive twice that amount because of his position in the family. And that wasn't enough for him? He believed the lie that his father was being unfair, and it caused him to act foolishly and selfishly.

Both sons needed to come to their senses and repent. In truth, every one of us has the carrot dangled before us on a regular basis, and we all take nibbles. We fall victim to gossip, envy, unkind words, or actions when we've been offended, or maybe we turn to overindulging in food or alcohol or turning to pharmaceuticals to deaden our pain. Any of these can lead to bondage.

But we have a Father who is always with us and will run to meet us when we come to our senses and repent. We don't just say sorry, we actually change our actions and attitudes.

Tuesday, November 14th, 2023:

Lovingkindness

“Praise the Lord! I will praise the Lord with my whole heart, in the assembly of the upright, and in the congregation.” **(Psalm 111:1)**

Thank you, Father, for giving us a new heart that we might know your lovingkindness. Your word says, “O continue Your lovingkindness to those who know You, and Your righteousness to the upright in heart.” **(Psalm 36:10)** Your majestic works are before all of us. We have eyes to see the beauty in your creation. We look to you for wisdom because you will lead us to decisions that will confirm your lovingkindness towards us. You give us new hope for each day when we look to you and not to the things of the world. Your lovingkindness is our comfort. You will never leave us or forsake us. We look to you. “You, O Lord, will not withhold Your compassions from me; Your lovingkindness and Your truth will continually preserve me.” **(Psalm 40:11)** You are worthy of all our praise. “Acknowledge that the LORD is God! He made us, and we are his. We are his people, the sheep of his pasture. **(Psalm 100:3 NLT)** By your lovingkindness, cleanse our heart and show us the way we should walk before you. Give us a deep desire to know you and to please you with an open heart. “Because your lovingkindness is better than life, my lips shall praise You.” **(Psalm 63:3)**

Colossians 3:2, Deuteronomy 31:6, Psalm 145:3, Psalm 51:10, Philippians 3:10

Wednesday, November 15th, 2023:

Finding Joy Amid Life's Trials and Challenges

Our life is a journey filled with ups and downs, trials, and challenges that can sometimes leave us feeling discouraged and hopeless. However, as Christians, we have the assurance that our joy can remain steadfast even in the face of adversity. Let us always know that we can find joy in the midst of life's trials and challenges through our faith in God.

Life is indeed full of trials and challenges that can steal our joy if we let them. However, by embracing God's promises, surrendering, and trusting in Him, seeking His presence, finding strength in community, and choosing gratitude, we can experience a joy that surpasses our circumstances. Remember, our joy is not dependent on what we face, but on our unshakable faith in God and His loving presence in our lives.

Remember, God is with you, and through Him, you can embrace a joy that remains steadfast in all circumstance!

"These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full." - **John 15:11**

Thursday, November 16th, 2023:

Great Faith

Recently I reread a story told by both Matthew and Mark that begins as Jesus and His disciples were basically hiding out in a house in the non-Jewish region of Tyre (modern-day Lebanon). They were trying to get a little rest when a Canaanite woman, who somehow learned where Jesus was staying, showed up asking Him for help. She cried out, “Lord, Son of David, have mercy on me! My daughter is demon-possessed and suffering terribly.”

Even though she was not a Jew, she quite boldly addressed Jesus on Jewish terms. But Jesus remained silent, so the disciples urged Him to send her away. Instead, He said to them, “I was sent only to the lost sheep of Israel.”

The woman still didn’t give up! We can’t help but admire her persistence for the healing of her daughter. She came and knelt before Jesus and said, “Lord, help me!” This time He responded by saying, “It is not right to take the children’s bread and toss it to the dogs.”

At first glance, Jesus’ response seems harsh and unsympathetic. Was He calling this Gentile woman a dog like the Pharisees often addressed a Gentile? No, the Pharisees used the Greek word kuon meaning “wild cur,” a filthy dog that ran the streets and ate garbage when they referred to unspiritual people. The exact word Jesus used here, in Greek, is kunarion, meaning “small dog” or “pet dog.”

And the Gentile woman understood this. “You’re right, Lord,” she replied. “But even puppies get to eat the crumbs that fall from the prince’s table.”

She didn’t argue with Jesus. Instead, she used His very words as the basis for her plea. Her attitude was hopeful and expectant. Her faith was huge!

She could have let all the obstacles she was facing stand in her way but she didn’t give up. She was a Gentile, not a Jew. She was a woman, and most Jewish rabbis paid little attention to women. It seems like the disciples were annoyed with her and wanted her to go away. And Jesus spoke quite severely to her. She could have taken it the wrong way and thought He was against her. But she accepted her place and believed in Him.

With all the hurdles she faced and conquered, this Mama Bear proved she just wanted her daughter to be healed, and she had full faith that Jesus could do it.

Then Jesus said to her, “Woman, you have great faith! Your request is granted.” And her daughter was healed instantly.

What a testament! We should all strive to have faith like that!

Matthew 15:21-28; Matthew 22:42; Mark 7:24-30; Matthew 7:6; Luke 16:21; Philippians 3:2

Friday, November 17th, 2023

Water from the Well

It's always exciting to "see something for the first time" after having read a particular story in the Bible multiple times. One of my most recent was from the story in **John 4** about the Samaritan woman from Sychar who Jesus asked to give Him a drink of water from Jacob's Well.

Samaria was the capital of the Northern Kingdom, and the name refers to both a city and to the region, which is now part of the contentious West Bank or Palestine. Even then the Jews had a hatred for the Samaritans and referred to the town of Sichem (as well as Samaria itself) as Sychar, which can mean: drunken; falsehood; deceit; impious; ungodly, to name a few. It was an illusion of idolatry. However, in Hebrew the name Samaria actually means watch-mountain which correlates with the topography of the land which is quite hilly. It is also where Mount Gerizim is located, the place where the Samaritans had built their own temple, and where King Ahab erected a temple to Baal.

So Jesus intentionally took a route through Samaria and stopped at Jacob's Well which was on the parcel of land that Jacob had given to his son Joseph. This, you will recall, was the son who was betrayed by his brothers but eventually came to save the entire family and to preserve the nation of Israel. And to accomplish this, he had to release any hostility he may have rightly had against his brothers. What a beautiful picture of the redemption that Jesus has for all who are willing to face their own sins (the Samaritan woman was immoral and Joseph was foolishly prideful) and to humbly accept what the Lord both asks of them and gives to them.

And it was to this Samaritan woman that Jesus first revealed Himself as Messiah. He was willing to share this saving knowledge first to one whom the rest of the world would have deemed wholly undeserving! The picture of redemption through the details: of the outcasts, of the deceived, of those who have been mistreated, and those whose eyes have been blinded. The details that are given in this story are deliberate and revealing if we are just willing to spend some time drawing water from His wells of salvation. **Isaiah 12:3-5** "With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation. In that day you will say: 'Give praise to the LORD, proclaim His name; make known among the nations what He has done, and proclaim that His name is exalted. Sing to the LORD, for He has done glorious things; let this be known to all the world.'"

Saturday, November 18th, 2023:

There's Knowing and There's Knowing

There's a difference between knowing and experiencing. It's definitely a good thing to want to know all we can about God, but we need to take it a step further as well. As Pastor Allen Jackson points out, Satan knows more about God than any of us ever will, and he has even experienced the glory of heaven, but it didn't convince him to submit himself to the sovereignty of God.

I heard a story once about a gifted orator reciting the 23rd Psalm for a large group which elicited a hearty round of applause. And then an elderly gentleman stood up and recited the same Psalm, but with a somewhat shaky and at times faltering voice. When he had finished there wasn't a dry eye in the house. Someone asked what had made the difference, and the response was that the orator knew the Psalm, but the elderly gentleman knew the Shepherd. That's the difference between knowing from an intellectual standpoint versus knowing personally - experientially.

It's possible to know a lot about God without ever experiencing Him through His Holy Spirit. We have to invite Him to fill us and guide us, and we have to be willing to respond to His guidance. When we enter into that relationship with Him, we will want to know more about Him, and the more we learn about Him and His character, the deeper our love will grow. We seek greater knowledge in order to know Him, not just about Him. Otherwise, we could wind up as one of the most Bible-educated residents of Hell, and all of that knowledge won't even get us a cool drop of water.

Jesus even told the Jews, "You search the Scriptures because you think they give you eternal life. But the Scriptures point to me!" **John 5:39** The good news of the Scriptures is that they don't just teach us about God, they are meant to lead us into a relationship with Him. Peter confessed to His Lord that they had believed and had come to know that Jesus was the Holy One of God. **John 6:69** We first have to seek; then we must believe. A deep and abiding faith won't happen overnight, but don't stress. It's a process that brings you closer and closer to Him. Everything points to Jesus. Seek to truly know Him.

Sunday, November 19th, 2023:

Double-minded

James warns us about being double-minded, and most of us would probably think of that as being a little inconsistent or maybe wishy-washy in some areas...not a big deal. But the Greek word for double-minded is *dipsuchos* and literally means “two-souled”. The idea is like being a spiritual schizophrenic, and it’s no small matter. The spiritual implications are significant. In fact, James says that such a person is unstable in all his ways!

It’s not enough just to say we believe in God. If that's true, then our faith in His character and our reliance on Him should be evidenced in how we conduct our lives. If we say we believe in Him and then blithely go about our lives without giving Him a thought, we have less belief than the demons! They believe He’s the true God and it makes them shudder.

So, what are we to do if we struggle with consistency in our walk? James tells us to come near to God and He will come near to us. He then says to wash our hands and purify our hearts. **(James 4:8)** In other words, it’s imperative that we take time to draw near to God so He can reveal to us those impurities that have wormed their way into our hearts, so they don’t have a chance to grow. They can be like mold that needs to be scoured and bleached to prevent contamination. And then as a further preventative, we should set our minds on things above rather than, or at least more than, the things of the earth. Easier said than done.

We live in a world that is constantly challenging our Biblical worldview. In addition, we all have distractions that are legitimate: families, appointments, jobs, and a long list of other responsibilities. So how do we train ourselves to set our minds on things above? The answer, of course, is also found in Scripture, and not surprisingly, it’s the Apostle Paul who admitted he struggled with the pull between the sinful nature and his redeemed spiritual one, who gives us the key.

“Don’t copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will learn to know God’s will for you, which is good and pleasing and perfect.” **(Romans 12:2 NLT)** When we spend time in His word and in prayer, He will do the work and start the transformation of how we think and assess and make decisions that are in line with His perfect will. And when our minds become aligned with His, we are no longer double-minded! Paul goes on to tell us that the mind of sinful man is death, but the mind controlled by the Spirit is life and peace. **(Romans 8:6)** Praise God that we can be single-mindedly His.

Monday, November 20th, 2023:

Truth of the Truth

In John 14, Jesus comforts His disciples in this way, “I am the way, the truth, and the life...” (v.6). He tells His beloved friends “Don’t let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God and trust in Me.” (v.1). These are words to be clung to, in the trials and tribulations of this day. We see an immense amount of brokenness around us, false teachers, violence, and war. The truths foretold in His Word are unfolding right before our eyes. Stand strong, brothers and sisters! Now is not the time to waver.

Jesus is the way and the life. Do not let your physical eyes steer you away from the truth, “...know the truth, and the truth will set you free.” **(John 8:32)** Jesus is the truth, and His word is strength to the soul. When we know Jesus, we see the very nature and character of Father God, the creator and sustainer of His children (That is you my friend). Here and know we must seek His truth and feast on His Word.

Is your heart troubled by the news, the state of our nation – the world, division in family, a child run astray, a negative report from the doctor? Jesus tells us in His word “... here on earth you will have many trials and sorrows. But take heart because I have overcome the world.” **(John 16:33)** The scriptures reveal truth about trials and sorrows – do you know this as a truth of the Word? Do you know of the promises God has revealed through Christ Jesus, the One and Only Anointed, Savior? The Word of God reveals all truth! The truth of life and its challenges and the way to peace through the truth of Jesus.

My friend, it is time to feast on His Word, let the Spirit of truth consume your soul (v. 17). We are not able to withstand the storms without taking hold of the promises and we can’t hold on to a promise that we do not know. The truth rests in His Word.

“The Lord is near to all who call on Him, yes, to all who call on Him in truth.” **(Psalm 145:18)**

Prayer: Father, lead me by Your truth and teach me, for You are the God who saves me. All day long I put my hope in You. Amen. **(Psalm 25:5)**

Tuesday, November 21st, 2023:

Living In Peace

There's a lot of uncertainty in our world today. It feels as though many lines are blurred, and that as a society, we're questioning everything including our sexual identities, our financial stability, our job security, and our well-being. The "world" is selling a very different version of what the Bible is telling us, and it can be confusing, especially for new believers in Christ. If we aren't careful, Satan's crafty ways of repackaging God's truth can trip us up. Look how easily he convinced Adam and Eve to eat from the one and only tree in the entire garden that God prohibited. It's not like they were starving, and that tree was their only source of food. In fact, they weren't lacking anything! Yet the enemy's wily and seductive ways convinced them to disobey God's sole command. **Genesis 3:1-13**

So how do we stand strong in our convictions without getting confused or justifying our actions because, hey, everyone's doing it, right? If we're solidly planted in the Holy Word of God, we will know exactly what He asks of us. If we're still confused, then that's a sure sign we need to be feasting on His Word. Not just a little nibble here and there, but a full-blown-Thanksgiving-dinner-with-all-the-trimmings kind of feast!

God is NOT the God of confusion but of peace. **1 Corinthians 14:33** If we're doing, saying and thinking stuff we know we shouldn't be doing, saying or thinking, and we're trying to run from the Holy Spirit's promptings then we definitely aren't living in peace. That should be our first indicator that we need to be in The Word and in prayer.

Ask God to open you up to His Word and open up His Word to you. **Psalms 119:34** It's important to realize we shouldn't rely on our feelings. Our hearts can lie to us. Jeremiah 17:9 So we need to intentionally keep our eyes on Jesus and trust in Him to keep us on the right path. **Proverbs 3:5-6**

It can seem daunting at times, but we can rest knowing we aren't left to figure it all out on our own. We can rely on the Holy Spirit for strength, wisdom, and discernment as we navigate each day. He will teach us and remind us of all God's promises. **John 14:26**

The apostle Paul tells us to focus on the good and honorable things in the world as opposed to the lies that Satan tries to weave into the world. Whatever is true, noble, right, pure, lovely, admirable, if there is anything of excellence or worthy of praise, think about these things, and the peace of God will be with you! **Philippians 4:8-9**

Wednesday, November 22nd, 2023:

Attitudes of Gratitude

As John Piper wrote in his book *A Godward Life*, “If we do not believe that we are deeply dependent on God for all we have or hope to have, the very spring of gratitude and faith runs dry.” For most of us, we will spend some time today reflecting on the goodness and provision of God and then expressing our thanks to Him. It’s not difficult when we’re sitting at a table laden with turkey, potatoes, stuffing, side dishes and whatever else is traditional in your family.

But what about the other 364 days of the year? Isn’t He the same God, just as faithful and generous and deserving of our thanks on those days even when we’re not preparing a feast? Being thankful is a choice, and we should be expressing our gratitude on a daily, hourly, minute-by-minute basis. Don’t relegate thanksgiving to once a year. And by all means, don’t neglect giving thanks on this day for all He provides, all He does, and all He is! But let it be a catalyst for remembering that He is the giver of every good and perfect gift, and that He withholds nothing that is truly needed from those who walk uprightly.

James 1:17, Psalm 84:11

Pray that we will always remember to give Him the honor, praise, adoration, and thanks that He rightly and richly deserves. Give thanks to the Lord, for He is good, and His mercies endure forever! **Psalm 118:1**

Thursday, November 23rd, 2023:

A Psalm of Thanksgiving

Shout with joy to the Lord, all the earth!

² Worship the Lord with gladness.

Come before Him, singing with joy.

³ Acknowledge that the Lord is God!

He made us, and we are His.

We are His people, the sheep of His pasture.

⁴ Enter His gates with thanksgiving;

go into His courts with praise.

Give thanks to Him and praise His name.

⁵ For the Lord is good.

His unfailing love continues forever,

and His faithfulness continues to each generation.

Psalm 100

I pray the Lord of peace fills you with all joy and thankfulness today and always.

As you reflect on the year may your heart explode with thankfulness.

May even the challenges and trials be celebrated for He is by your side and His victory will prevail and He will have sustained you and created in you a new strength of character.

May He touch your heart with a fresh sense of purpose and perspective.

Blessed be His name, power, and presence in your life.

“Give thanks to the Lord, for He is good; His love endures forever.”

1 Chronicles 16:34

“Rejoice always, pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus.”

1 Thessalonians 5:16-18

Friday, November 24th, 2023:

Focus on the Right Thing

Imagine there's a pandemic and many are sick and dying. (Not a stretch - right?) You have a pretty good idea as to where it's coming from, and you know that there are those in authority who are twisting facts and misleading many. You also know that there's a doctor who has a cure and is willing to share it for free. What would be your first course of action? It's surprising how many would choose to rant and rage about taking down the source and criticize the fear mongers and deceptive rhetoric while those infected continue to die. Meanwhile, the doctor continues to stand in the shadows waiting for someone to ask for the cure.

It's so easy for us to become so focused on the negative that we forget about the opportunity it presents to us. We absolutely should be concerned with eliminating the source of the malady and holding those in authority accountable, but our primary concern needs to be on those who are the casualties. We need to point them in the direction of the One who has the antidote to the disease. There is no argument that we are facing a spiritual pandemic that has already infected a vast number in our country, but if we put all our energies into raging against the darkness rather than turning up the light, we're falling right into the enemy's plot. He would love to keep us distracted while keeping the true source of healing and restoration in the shadows.

As simplistic as it may sound, there's an old hymn that has some very sage advice: "O soul, are you weary and troubled? No light in the darkness you see? There's light for a look at the Savior, and life more abundant and free. Turn your eyes upon Jesus, look full in His wonderful face; and the things of earth will grow strangely dim in the light of His glory and grace." He is the cure. The only thing that can cause the darkness to abate is to turn up the lights, and we have that light in us! Don't get hi-jacked and don't back down - share His truth in love. Let your light so shine before others that those who are living in darkness will see His great light, and that light will dawn on those who are living in the land of the shadow of death. (**Matthew 4:16**) Stay focused.

Saturday, November 25th, 2023:

Time to Come Clean

Sometime back, my daughter learned the power of praying that all things be brought to light when praying for her children. She was actually awakened from a deep sleep with a strong sense that she needed to check her daughter's phone. Rather than shrug it off, she trusted the prompting and found some deleted material that was rather unsettling. It wasn't horrific, but it was enough to initiate a serious confrontation and to bring some serious consequences into play.

In the initial "come-to-Jesus" discussion, my granddaughter's first response was to play innocent. This was followed by feigned confusion as to how this could have happened and perhaps someone else had gotten hold of her phone. Even when confronted with the evidence she attempted to wriggle her way out of taking responsibility, but she finally came to the realization that Momma will always find out! And that was the beginning of redemption.

We never really outgrow that faulty mentality, although we become a little more sophisticated in our attempted cover-ups. Even when we can conceal our unseemly secrets to those around us, we still have to come to grips with the reality that our Daddy is never fooled. That should be a sobering fact to us all. As long as the sin remains hidden it can't be dealt with and it will be like a malignancy that begins to corrupt our heart and our conscience. This doesn't only affect us; it has the potential to harm others as well.

How much better to face the music with our Heavenly Father and deal with it, painful as that may be, than to run the risk of having it exposed publicly or allow it to fester. When He brings it to light and helps us deal with it, there's such a release. His light overcomes the darkness and washes over us to cleanse us from all shame. It's only then that you can walk in the glorious freedom of His forgiveness, knowing that when you're in His Presence you find mercy and grace.

We all have our secrets. Remember that "There is nothing hidden that will not be disclosed, and nothing concealed that will not be known or brought out into the open." (**Luke 8:17**) The sooner we confront and confess these, the sooner we can be released from their toxic effects. "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." (**1 John 1:9**) Time to stop hiding in the darkness and step into the light. Thank You, Jesus, for the price you paid to cover that which we cannot.

Sunday, November 26th, 2023:

BY MY SPIRIT

“But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.”
(1 Corinthians 15:57)

The times and the seasons are in the hands of the Almighty. When the storms of life come, ...” we may boldly say; “The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear. What can man do to me?” **(Hebrews 13:6)** Seek the presence of the Lord and be reassured of his peace. The Lord will calm your fears by the power of His Holy Spirit. Although you can’t see Him with your physical eyes you can sense His presence. “This is the word of the Lord to Zerubbabel: “not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit,’ says the Lord of Host.” **(Zechariah 4:6)** This word is true for you today because God does not change. We are in a spiritual battle and the enemy is defeated by the power of God’s Spirit. “...for we are not fighting against flesh-and-blood enemies, but against evil rulers and authorities of the unseen world, against mighty powers in this dark world, and against evil spirits in the heavenly places.” **(Ephesians 6:23 NLT)** I hear your prayers and I will be your peace when the enemy provokes you with fear. “Call to Me, and I will answer you, and show you great and mighty things, which you do not know.” **(Jeremiah 33:3)** Here is a word for you: “For the LORD your God is the one who goes with you to fight for you against your enemies to give you victory.” **(Deuteronomy 20:4 NIV)**
Daniel 2:21, Hebrews 13:8,

Monday, November 27th, 2023:

A Spirit of Unity

Unity is one of the most difficult things to maintain in the life of a church and between individual believers. As individuals we have differing opinions on everything. And it is common for people to think that anyone who does not see things exactly as they do is wrong.

Satan uses this to his advantage in churches. He drives little wedges between people. He uses style of music, subtleties in theology, decorating tastes, how we discipline our children ... you name it, he uses it to bring disunity!

We must be on guard against these seemingly small disagreements that they not become valleys of division. The Apostle Paul directs us in Ephesians 4 “I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call— one Lord, one faith, one baptism, ...”

Remember our purpose is to build His Kingdom on earth as it is in heaven and how well can we build when we are divided.

Prayer:

May the God who gives endurance and encouragement give my church a spirit of unity among the believers as we follow Christ Jesus, so that with all of our hearts and mouths we will glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen. **(Romans 15:5-6).**

Tuesday, November 28th, 2023:

His Plan - His Provision

We often hear the challenge to “be the best we can be,” but we can also have an inner voice that will whisper repeatedly in our ear that maybe our “best” isn't good enough...maybe we aren't good enough. And in a sense, that is absolutely correct! On our own, we can never be good enough, but that doesn't mean that we've been disqualified.

Even though we serve a God who will call us to great things that are beyond what we could even imagine, we also have an enemy that would like nothing better than to keep us from fulfilling God's purposes. That means we have a battle to fight, and the best place to begin fighting is in our prayer closets and on our knees. However, there's a point where we need to come out of the closet and actually begin to engage. Action is required.

It wouldn't suffice if He told us to plant a garden, and we started earnestly praying and asking Him to bring that dream of a garden to fruition. It's important to ask for some specifics, but then we need to get out there and begin tilling the soil, planting some seeds, feed and water them, pull out weeds that would take over the garden and rob the soil of needed nutrients and light, and then we wait for signs of life to emerge.

The obvious analogy here is for sharing His word, but it could also represent a ministry He is calling you to “plant” or any other number of dreams He may place in your heart. Our job is to tune our ears to listen for His guidance rather than to the voice of the one who is giving us a litany of reasons that would tell us we can never achieve the dream. Yes, we have an accuser, but we also have an Advocate! We are told in **Revelation 12:10**, “...the salvation, and the power, and the kingdom of our God and the authority of His Christ have come, for the accuser of our brethren has been thrown down, he who accuses them before our God day and night.” If the dream is from God, He already knows that together you can accomplish it. Rather than retreating in fear, try raising a hallelujah in the enemy's presence as you advance in the power of the King! “Surrender to God! Resist the devil, and he will run from you” **James 4:7**

Wednesday, November 29th, 2023:

Let Me Not be Ashamed

I'm not 100% certain as to what David's original intent may have been when he wrote in the first verse of Psalm 31 the words "Let me never be ashamed." Although not verified, it has been speculated that the Psalm was written when Absalom, his beloved son, was planning to kill David and take his throne. The obvious message is that David was putting all of his trust in the Lord, believing that God would not allow shame to come upon him. But another underlying meaning jumped out at me as well. Despite the immediate circumstances, whatever the outcome, David was determining that he would never be ashamed of his choice to trust the Lord.

If you're not familiar with the story, David fled the city. This would have been a humiliating thing for a king, and yet David had an enduring trust in the Lord that he would eventually be vindicated, even though the present circumstances were bleak. Yes, David was the rightful king, but he also knew that he had been placed in that position by the true King - the Lord Himself. Therefore, David was not ashamed to humble himself and cry out to the Lord to deliver him. He even went so far as to say, "If I find favor in the sight of the Lord, then He will bring me back..." (**2 Samuel 15:25**)

That's the kind of faith I long to be able to demonstrate to the Lord. A faith that is so sure of and dependent on His faithfulness and goodness that no matter what I face, no matter what the culture is throwing in my face and trying to pressure me to accept, I will not shrink back and acquiesce. I want to have the courage to stand in His strength and to depend on His wisdom to guide me and to fill my mind and my mouth with a godly response.

David's words later in this Psalm declare, "For You are my strength. Into Your hand I commit my spirit; You have ransomed me, O Lord, God of truth." (**Psalm 31:4b-5**) And we could learn from Peter, who himself learned how painful the shame can be for denying the Lord. In his first letter to the churches in Asia Minor, he writes, "For in Scripture it says: 'See, I lay a stone in Zion, a chosen and precious cornerstone, and the one who trusts in him will never be put to shame.'" And shortly thereafter he adds, "However, if you suffer as a Christian, do not be ashamed, but praise God that you bear that name." **1 Peter 2:6, 4:16**

Placing ourselves in His hands can be costly, but the alternative is so much worse. As Luke recorded the words of Jesus to His disciples: "Whoever is ashamed of Me and My words, the Son of Man will be ashamed of them when He comes in His glory and in the glory of the Father and of the holy angels." Just like Peter, we may all at some time experience a moment of weakness, but we also need to learn like Peter did that even in our most humiliating moment of shame, the Lord is there to redeem us and to empower us to stand firm. Perhaps Paul said it best in his letter to the church in Corinth. "Rather, we have renounced secret and shameful ways; we do not use deception, nor do we distort the word of God. On the contrary, by setting forth the truth plainly we commend ourselves to everyone's conscience in the sight of God." **2 Corinthians 4:2**

Lord, may we all pray as Your servant David, "Let me never be ashamed."

Thursday, November 30th, 2023:

God's Voice

Have you ever had a season where your prayers felt lackluster, and you wondered if God was even listening? Like you're the one doing all the talking (and sometimes whining) and you deeply desire to hear from God because you're going through a challenging time or heartbreak that keeps you up at night?

This happened to me a while back. I was worrying about my mother's failing health, and my prayers felt as forced as the smile I plastered on my face. I was exhausted from all the "what ifs" and the "why is this happening" thoughts ricocheting around in my brain. I often turned this burden over to God only to pick it back up and continue wearing the worry like it was the required uniform of a dutiful daughter.

Then one night, after fighting exhaustion and shame for picking up the worry yet again, I prayed in desperation, "Father God, I need You! I need to hear You! I need Your peace!" And shortly after that prayer, I drifted into a deep, peaceful sleep. . . until I was jolted out of my slumber in the wee hours of the morning by a voice. It wasn't the familiar voice in my head. And it wasn't my husband's voice who was sound asleep beside me. It was a commanding voice with a soft tone, almost a whisper that simply said, "I Am!"

It was such a powerful moment! I immediately got out of bed and went to pray and thank Him for reminding me that He is faithful and He is in control!

God is continuously communicating with us. But sometimes we get so caught up in our grief or fear or circumstances that we can't hear Him or see Him all around us.

If you're wondering how God speaks to us, there are many ways we can hear His voice. Here are a few:

- God speaks to us through His Word. **2 Timothy 3:16-17**
- He speaks to us when we pray and meditate on Him. **Psalm 37:7**
- He speaks to us through His glorious creation. **Psalm 19:1**
- He speaks to us through the Holy Spirit. **John 16:13**
- God can even speak to us through circumstances by allowing things to occur that direct us, change us, and help us to grow spiritually. **James 1:2-4**

If you're ever caught up in your grief or fear or circumstances and desperate to hear from God, let me encourage you to lean in, and He will remind you that you are His beloved child. **1 John 3:1** He chose you. **Ephesians 1:4-6** You are valuable. **Ephesians 2:10** You are redeemed! **Ephesians 1:7** And most importantly, you are exceedingly loved! **Romans 5:8**