

Seeking God

A devotion for our BCA family
so we can seek God together.

Bethel Christian
Academy Staff



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Introduction

Happy Holiday Season!

Our staff family has been working to compile a devotional for the entire BCA family to read for the four weeks of December. We have read, studied, and prayed. We have shared our own personal experiences and prayers in hopes that you can also see the hope that we have found in our relationships with Jesus.

There are days with written devotions and days to read Scripture together. There will be days that will specifically talk to Parents and days that will talk to Children. These are words that you can read together regardless of the target audience, as our Lord speaks through each day's message.

Some of our devotions talk about the season or Christmas, but not all of them do. Hopefully, this can become a set of devotions that you can look at regardless of the season of the year.

It is our prayer that you will have a time of renewing and refreshing. As we work through this time together, I pray that the Lord will speak to you and your family.

We love you all!
BCA Staff

Day 6!

December 1

Natalie Burnett, Principal

Genesis 1:31 And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.

I love to look through the creation story. The way that God created an intentional world where everything hangs perfectly in balance fascinates me. I try to understand the order in which he created everything, but my finite mind cannot grasp why he did things the way that he did them.

There are also days when my finite mind cannot comprehend why he created even me! When we look at the stars, the water, the animals, the plants; we can see the intricacy with which he put it all together. He made a lot of things that don't talk back, that don't doubt, that don't disobey. He did not need to keep going and create humans. However, I am so grateful that he did.

Not only did he create us, but he made us very good - the pinnacle of his creation. Day 6 is the only day that God saw what he made and called it, "very good." We are a very good creation - you, your kids, your neighbors, even those that you don't like! God created us, and sent Jesus to die for us - every single one of us. I am in awe that he did.

Thank you, Lord, that you created even me. Thank you for the ways that you put us together very good so that we could be here for this time. Continue to reveal your plans for us so that we can continue to walk in your will. Amen.

The Best Packages are Small

December 2

Debbie Bass, Art/Tech

John 11:35 Jesus wept.

1 Thessalonians 5:16, 17, 19, 20 Rejoice always, pray continually, [...], do not quench the Spirit.

Luke 17:32 Remember Lot's wife.

Deuteronomy 5:17, 19

Exodus 20:13, 15

Sometimes in life, we get down to a point where we just want something short and sweet. We don't want a long conversation, a long description of our kids' day. We don't want to listen to our spouse or even try to read a really long devotional. Here are the shortest verses in the Bible. God knows that sometimes our fruits will dwindle and just know that even on our hardest days there are powerful messages in small verses.

"Jesus wept." If Jesus wept, then you can, too. "Rejoice always, pray continually, do not quench the Spirit." Rejoice that you have another day to spend with loved ones. Pray continually even when you don't have a lot to say. Don't put out the embers that the Spirit has left on your heart. Huge wildfires start from small sparks, but not if they are quenched with water before they get to burn. Tend to the embers. Even if it takes time, you can get them to burn in the right environment. "Remember Lot's wife." When I read this, I wondered how this small verse could apply to days when you feel down, but Lot's wife turned around to look back at the life they were leaving behind. Do not turn back and look at what was. God wants us to keep our eyes forward on our path ahead of us. So go on and have faith that God is with you even on the days when you are dust trying to make it back to bed at night!

Dear Lord, please guide my day as I struggle and help keep me on the path that you have intended for my life. Let my heart soften as the day continues and grant me peace when I feel overwhelmed.

Amen.

Finding Peace in the Chaos

December 3

Laura Roggy, Kindergarten A

Philippians 4:6-7 Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

1 Corinthians 14:13 For God is not a God of confusion but of peace.

As a teacher and a parent it seems sometimes I would benefit if there was a clone of myself. Someone to help with the endless list of to do's. Between my students, family, house, and my kids and their activities, my attention is pulled in several directions. It seems easy to become overwhelmed by all that is around me. However, there is just one unique version of me, made by God.

When I am feeling overwhelmed I need and want to ask God for help. I have learned that He is the only one who can calm my storm and bring me peace in the midst of every moment. I do this several ways. I say a prayer, read my Bible, or listen to worship music to feel closer to God. Whatever, I am able to do at that specific time. I have to remind myself, I was made unique and special for the roles that God has given me and I will do my best for everyone He has entrusted to me.

Dear Heavenly Father, when I am being pulled in several directions help center me on you. Remind me that you placed me exactly where I am for a special purpose. You chose me to be in my family, a parent to my children, and in the job you have blessed me with. Help me reflect who you are, and point others in your direction. Amen

Trust the Author

December 4

Jeremy Burnett, Superintendent

Psalm 139:16 Your eyes saw my unformed body; all the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be.

You have likely heard more than once that God created you on purpose and for a purpose. You have also probably heard more than once that when God created mankind on the 6th day he said it was very good, and that you are a result of that. You've heard those things so much because they are truths that are so important to understand! God loves you! Psalm 139:16 tells us that God wrote the story of your life before your life began. I find that so encouraging. There are so many times in life that I am surprised by events. There are times that life gets hard, and sometimes things appear so bad that we can't see a way through them. We can't envision a better life or one without our current stress, conflict, trouble, or similar issues.

It's times like this that I remember that God wrote the book. He knows how it ends, and he's with us through it all. When you read a book, you only know some of the things that are happening. You don't know what will happen in later chapters. When the characters do something, you don't know how it will turn out or how it will end. But the author does, because he wrote the book! Since God wrote our story, nothing surprises him. He knows the next chapter, and the one after that...God not only knows the ending, but he knows the way you need to go to get where he wants you to go. You only need to trust him and follow him!

God, thank you for seeing me. Thank you for the story that you have written for me. I pray that I will always trust you, the author of my life, to guide me toward the plan and purpose that you have for me. Lord, help me to always go to you, to seek your will for my life, to ask for help when I need it, and to give you praise for the good things you have done in my life. Thank you for always being there for me! I love you!

Cast Your Cares

December 5

Jodi Gentry, BCA Secretary

1 Peter 5:7 Cast all your anxiety on Him because He cares for you.

Growing up I often heard this scripture verse. It was one of those easy verses to memorize but I never really had to apply it to my life until recently.

The last four years of my life have been filled with brokenness, heartache, doubt, hurt and crippling anxiety. Christians had all kinds of advice, “pray harder, don’t worry, give it to Jesus”. Followed by my favorite, “God will not give you more than you can handle” which, by the way, isn’t exactly scriptural. He won’t let you be tempted beyond what you can bear because He will always provide a way of escape. But we do suffer beneath unbearable loads at times. Anyway, all that advice is fine and dandy, if I knew how to completely release it to Him. I believe God allowed me to have more than I could handle so that I would need to rely completely on Him, and I found that Jesus was the best one to teach me how to do this.

I knew Jesus loved me because I had heard it all my life, but did He love me enough to rescue me from this dark place?

If you have ever experienced the struggle of anxiety and panic attacks, then you know how it hits you at unexpected times. My “panic time” seemed to be in the middle of the night. I was surviving on about 2 hours of sleep a night and during that valuable sleep time is when I would wake up in a panic, so bad that I would sleep with a pulse ox monitor in my nightstand to remind myself that I was not dying, I was just having a panic attack. This is when God intervened and taught me how to completely trust in him.

When I was alone all I could do was call on Jesus. He was there when no one else was, when no one else could even begin to understand what I was going through. From the song “Great are You Lord” by Casting Crowns, I would sing the line “It’s your breath in MY lungs” while begging Jesus to take the pain and panic away. And He did. Was it fast or immediate? No, it took four years. I learned a lot in those years, not from words of wisdom from other Christians, but from Jesus. You are able to cast your cares on him when you feel like that’s all you can do. He does care, He is there, and He is faithful.

Jesus, I pray you touch the heart of your child who is reading this today. Lord surround them with your love and comfort. Let them see Jesus everywhere they look today. Calm their fears and anxieties and let them feel your love in a tangible way.

Grace and Love in Parenting

December 6

Janet Peto, Pre-K 3

Proverbs 22:6 Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it.

Psalm 127:3 Children are a gift from the Lord, they are a reward from him.

The Bible states that it is the parents' responsibility to be leaders and guide their children in the way they should live. Parenting is one of the hardest jobs on the planet. However, it is also a job that God understands fully. He is a loving Father full of grace, mercy and discipline. (Heather Bixler, Patheos Columnist)

We are not raising children in the same world that our parents raised us. There is more accessibility to everything and less time for families. With less time comes less patience and more frustration. Children and families come with many, many needs. There are so many demands being placed on us by society. We begin to feel frustration because we no longer have the time we desire so greatly to spend with our family. Children began to act out in order to receive the attention they desperately need. It is in this moment when we need to take a minute and decide how we want to respond. While consequences are often necessary, they can be given with grace and love. Your child may not remember what they did wrong, but they will remember how they were made to feel in that moment.

This is where we must turn to our Heavenly Father and lean into him. Read his word and ask him for wisdom and guidance. Just as God shows us grace and mercy when we as his adult children act out, we must bestow the same onto our own children. Remember the little hearts and little minds who are craving your love. So, hold them close and love them fiercely as your Heavenly Father loves you. "Children are a gift from the Lord, they are a reward from him." Psalm 127:3

Pray with me,

Heavenly Father, we come before you today with thanks. Thank you for giving us our children. What a beautiful blessing from you. Lord, please give us wisdom and guidance as we raise our children. Help us to show them love and compassion. Please help us to give them grace and mercy as you continue to give to us. Lord, let our children see you in us. Thank you, God, for all that you do for us. In your name we pray, Amen.

Family Reading

December 7

Isaiah 9:1-7

Nevertheless, there will be no more gloom for those who were in distress. In the past he humbled the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, but in the future he will honor Galilee of the nations, by the Way of the Sea, beyond the Jordan—

The people walking in darkness
have seen a great light;
on those living in the land of deep darkness
a light has dawned.

You have enlarged the nation
and increased their joy;
they rejoice before you
as people rejoice at the harvest,
as warriors rejoice
when dividing the plunder.

For as in the day of Midian's defeat,
you have shattered
the yoke that burdens them,
the bar across their shoulders,
the rod of their oppressor.

Every warrior's boot used in battle
and every garment rolled in blood
will be destined for burning,
will be fuel for the fire.

For to us a child is born,
to us a son is given,
and the government will be on his shoulders.

And he will be called
Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

Of the greatness of his government and peace
there will be no end.

He will reign on David's throne
and over his kingdom,
establishing and upholding it
with justice and righteousness
from that time on and forever.

The zeal of the LORD Almighty
will accomplish this.

Fallspiration

December 8

JaneAnne Curless, 5th Grade

Psalm 100

As I drove to various places this autumn, I was so inspired by the brilliant colors displayed. It brought back memories of growing up in Indiana on a dairy farm. Fall times brought in many sights and sounds like picking corn and beans in the fields; the smells of air in the crisp mornings as we did our chores in the barn; gathering our end of the year garden produce to eat homemade vegetable soup. Probably the best memory is the family raking our many leaves, and jumping in huge piles before hauling them off to a nearby field. As I look back at these things, it was all hard work but most importantly it was done as a family.

One of my favorite hymns is Count Your Blessings and my favorite Bible verse for November is Psalm 100. May you be challenged as you read through the song lyrics and read the Psalm. Also, as you gather with friends and family over the holidays, may you resolve to create some fun times to remember the blessings from God.

Praise God from whom all blessings flow.

Plugged In

December 9

Angie Kazimir, Pre-K 4

Ephesians 3:16-19 I pray that out of His glorious riches He may strengthen you with power through His Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge-that you may be filled to all the measure of the fullness of God.

We've all had it happen: we're trying to get our laptop booted up and it's not turning on. We've even checked and the cord is plugged into the computer, but after a few minutes of frustration, we realized that the cord has come out of the socket. This past summer we had power outages in our area and my home was one of the last ones to get power back on; we were out of power for about 114 hours. I was struggling at the end, trying to keep my phone charged and keep food cool in coolers. For our electrical needs, we definitely need to be plugged in and have our power on!

One of my favorite verses from the Bible has to do with being plugged in, but instead of being plugged into a wall socket, it is making sure that we are plugged into our true power source.

Our strength comes by power through the Holy Spirit. We also need His power to understand how wide, long, high and deep is His love, and to be filled with His love.

Dear Lord, we pray these verses for ourselves and the members of our families. Thank You that you give us power out of Your glorious riches to understand how wide and long and high and deep is Your love so that we may be filled to Your complete fullness. Help us to seek You daily and be in Your word so that we may walk in Your power. In Jesus' name, amen.

Perfect Timing

December 10

Amber Pertz, 4th Grade

Proverbs 16:9 In their hearts humans plan their course, but the Lord establishes their steps.

It was the perfect Friday night in October to go to Cedar Point and I was so excited to finally be able to take my daughter on her first ride! It was smooth sailing. The sunroof was open, it was just breezy enough to make the air pleasant and I was getting more excited by the minute for a fun-filled evening. As we approached the turnpike, things quickly took a turn. Our EZ Pass didn't work and we had to take a ticket. "That's weird, the pass is in my car," my mom told me. We shrugged it off and moved forward. As we were approaching the exit, for the first time in my twenty years of going to Cedar Point, the exit was backed up onto the turnpike. We waited in traffic for forty minutes and when we finally reached the toll booth, the EZ Pass registered. My mom and I were baffled, but we kept on our path and stuck to our plan.

It was smooth sailing once more. That was until we reached our exit from the highway. There, we were stuck in another forty-five minutes of traffic where we were cut off and almost ended up in an accident three separate times. Once we finally got back on the road, we saw the back way to the amusement park was incredibly long as well and we needed to go on the main road. There, we discovered there was a horrific accident that we had missed by about a minute. We decided to turn around and took it as a sign that we were not supposed to go to Cedar Point that night.

As we were heading back to the highway, a train was coming down the tracks and an ambulance was driving toward us to get to the accident. The ambulance drove around the guardrails while they were down and missed the train hitting it by less than ten seconds.

It was the craziest night! As I reflected on all that had happened with my husband that evening, I reminded myself that it was all in God's timing. Sometimes we are angry at the fact our plans change, we are late to work, or we get stuck in traffic after a long day. Just remember that if you are stuck at a traffic light for longer than you would like to be, God has it timed so you can reach your destination unharmed.

Heavenly Father, I thank you for your timing in everything. I thank you for the days I wake up late and the nights You put me behind a slow driver so I am a few minutes later getting home. God, I thank you for your timing in my life today, tomorrow, and always.

Amen.

Fan or Follower

December 11

Jill Oman, Physical Education

Psalm 63:8 My soul clings to you; your right hand upholds me.

You know that sports fan—the one who knows every detail of their favorite player. They know all their stats, the high school they went to, their injuries, who they play best with, even their favorite food. They feel like they know that person. They will stand in line for hours for an autograph or cry when they meet them in person. Now, imagine that player's best friend—the person who has been through life with them, who knows their struggles, who walked beside them when their grandparent passed, who is on speed dial when they need someone to cry to. That friend isn't watching from the sidelines; they are fully invested in the relationship.

In our faith, we face the same choice. Will we be a fan of Jesus, admiring Him from afar, knowing the details, and being able to recite them? Or will we be a close follower who clings to Him, pursuing a personal relationship and experiencing the gritty, real details—a friend so deeply committed that they can grow and share life with Him on a level a fan could never experience?

Psalm 63:8 says, "My soul clings to you." This describes someone fully devoted and committed to Jesus—not just someone on the sidelines. It's not a person checking off a box out of habit or obligation but someone clinging to Him with their whole heart.

Pursuing Jesus isn't something that can be forced or done halfway; it is a personal choice. For many, the idea of following Him may feel like something we do because we were told to, because we were raised in the church, or because we prayed a prayer someone once said we should. But the difference between a fan and a follower is a choice—a choice God has given us to make. A fan admires from a distance, cheers because others are, and gets caught up in the moment. A follower, on the other hand, chooses to walk closely with Jesus and pursue Him daily.

Choosing to pursue a relationship with Christ means moving from the crowd to the field, from observing to engaging, and from being told what to do to actively seeking Him.

This week, take a moment to consider where you are in your relationship with Jesus. Are you watching from afar, knowing the right things to say, or are you clinging to Him as David describes in Psalm 63?

Lord Jesus, thank You for the choice to choose You. Help me to cling to You out of desire and not habit. I want to truly know You; give me the courage to pursue You wholeheartedly. Strengthen my faith, and let my life reflect the love and devotion of a true follower, so that others will want to experience the same. Amen.

Facing a Giant Called Fear

December 12

Pastor Garret May, Youth and Young Adult Pastor

1 John 4:4 You, dear children, are from God and have overcome them, because the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world.

We live in very unusual times! With all these unusual events happening around us we may be carrying our own secret fears – maybe fear of failure, fear of not fitting in, fear of not mattering, or a fear of losing a loved one. Fear itself is NOT sinful. Fear is like an internal warning system that alerts us when there is potential danger in our lives.

However, fear can lead to sin. When fear begins to convince us to put safety and control in ourselves, we begin to lose our full faith and trust in God. When we start to focus more on the “what-ifs” it stops us from doing what God has planned for us. Fear can paralyze the plan God has for you.

Because of this reason, Jesus takes our fear seriously. Christ makes 125 Commands between Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. Out of those 125 commands, 21 are related to fear and courage. We can also find in God’s word encouragement against fear such as “Fear not”, “Do not be afraid”, and “Take Courage”. God does not want our lives to be filled with fear, instead God wants to turn our fears into strong Faith.

How can we turn our fears into faith? By trusting that God is greater than whatever we are afraid of. In 1 John 4:4 it says “ the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world.” Let’s put our trust in God together that he is greater than anything we fear!

Dear Lord, I pray that you will help us to trust in you even when we are afraid. I pray that you will help us turn our fears into faith, in Jesus name, Amen.

Believe...

December 13

Brooke Morgan, Middle School Science and Bible

John 6:28-33, 35, 47-51

Isaiah 9:6, 53:9

“Then they asked him, ‘What must we do to do the works God requires?’ Jesus answered, ‘The work of God is this; to believe in the one he has sent.’” Believe because of the signs.

“For unto us a child is born, to us a son is given,” is the cry of the prophet Isaiah. “Behold, the virgin will conceive, and bear a son, and shall be called Immanuel.” “But,” the prophet speaks, “but he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was on him, and by his wounds we are healed.”

So they asked him, “What sign then will you give that we may see it and believe you? What will you do? Our ancestors ate manna in the wilderness; as it is written: “He gave them bread from heaven to eat.” Jesus said to them, “Very truly I tell you, it is not Moses who has given you bread from heaven, but it is my Father who gives you the bread from heaven. For the bread of God is the bread that comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.”

“I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never go hungry, and whoever believes will never be thirsty. [...] Very truly I tell you, the one who believes has eternal life. I am the bread of life. Your ancestors ate the manna in the wilderness, yet they died. But here is the bread of life that comes down from heaven, which anyone may eat and not die. I am the living bread that came down from heaven. Whoever eats this bread will live forever. This bread is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.” John 6:29-33, 35, 47-51

Christmas is about Jesus who comes down from heaven to a wooden manger and a wooden cross to bring himself to us. His broken body is food for our souls and healing to our bodies. His blood spilled out is forgiveness for our sins. He is enough for our brokenness, shame, guilt, and everything else that causes us to hunger and thirst. He is our life and peace.

What must we do to do the work God requires? Believe!

This advent season, open yourself to the Spirit asking Him to reveal the hungry and thirsty places within your soul. Believe that He, who came down, is able to fill you with His life.

Family Reading

December 14

Matthew 1:18-25

18 This is how the birth of Jesus the Messiah came about: His mother Mary was pledged to be married to Joseph, but before they came together, she was found to be pregnant through the Holy Spirit. **19** Because Joseph her husband was faithful to the law, and yet did not want to expose her to public disgrace, he had in mind to divorce her quietly.

20 But after he had considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, “Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. **21** She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus,[f] because he will save his people from their sins.”

22 All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: **23** “The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel” (which means “God with us”).

24 When Joseph woke up, he did what the angel of the Lord had commanded him and took Mary home as his wife. **25** But he did not consummate their marriage until she gave birth to a son. And he gave him the name Jesus.

A Theology of Wonder

December 15

Kim Hopkins, 2nd Grade

Psalm 8

What a wonderful time of year! As we celebrate the birth of Jesus, the world around us turns into a place of wonder: sparkling lights, warm fireplaces, and snow-topped trees. As we gaze on the majesty of the season Psalm 8, written by David, helps to focus our hearts rightly on the one thing we should be in wonder of the most: Our Heavenly Father. The psalm is broken into a few distinct sections that point us toward a theology of wonder.

Verses 1 and 2 declare God's majesty. There is no name more majestic under heaven. And, Our Father's majesty is fully displayed by His control over all enemies. His majestic nature is to be known in wonder.

Verses 3 and 4 call us to humility. God's creation and the work of his fingers should draw us to be humble. As humans, the part of his creation made to be image bearers, we should wonder daily about God's mindfulness of us and rejoice. His creation is to be looked upon in wonder.

Verses 5 through 8 show us the authority God has placed on mankind. He made Adam under the angels. But, He gave him dominion over all creatures great and small. Our Father crowned us with glory and honor giving us authority no other creature holds. His order of things should be praised in wonder.

As David was walking in the wonder of God's glory and greatness, he closed the psalm with the same words he opened with: "O' LORD, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth!" (Psalm 8:9, ESV). As we approach this season of wonder in anticipation of God's ultimate grace, the birth of His Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior, I hope your WONDER leads you to appreciate the glory and greatness of our creator and heavenly Father.

O' LORD, pause our hearts during this beautiful, but busy, time of year to gaze upon Your Majesty. Help us to be like David seeing your beauty, authority, and creation with eyes of wonder. We praise You for sending Your Son to us so we may spend eternity in glory with You! Amen.

More Than You Can Imagine

December 16

Edgar Santos, NextGen Pastor

Ephesians 3:20 Now all glory to God, who is able, through his mighty power at work within us, to accomplish infinitely more than we might ask or think.

What is your biggest dream? If you could snap your fingers and accomplish something great, what would it be?

When I was a child, I dreamt of being an architect. Something about designing buildings and drawing up blueprints fascinated me. I even had one of those slanted drafting tables in my bedroom. As a young boy, I recall telling my mom that I would someday build her a house. Spoiler alert - that never happened.

Ephesians 3:20 reminds us that we serve a God who is infinitely more creative than we could ever imagine. Take your biggest dream and multiply it by a billion – God still has you beat. And that’s a good thing because you belong to the One who can do more than you could even ask or imagine. He has bigger dreams for you, your family, your job, and your circumstances. He has more for your life than you ever thought possible. And guess what? It starts with you. One chapter earlier in Ephesians, Paul reminds us that we are God's masterpiece created to do good things (Eph 2:10). Let that sink in. You are his finest creation. And because of his mighty power that resides in you, he can accomplish infinitely more than you can ask.

So, the question is - what is *God's* biggest dream for you? I would venture to say it's immeasurably more than you can ask or think. Take a moment today to give him glory for what he has done and what he is yet to do in your life. And if you ever become an architect, let me know!

Dear Heavenly Father, thank you for the incredible dreams and plans you have for each of us. We are in awe that you, the Creator of the universe, have placed within us a purpose and potential that goes beyond anything we could imagine. Help us to trust you with our dreams, knowing that your vision for our lives is greater than our own. Lord, remind us that we are your masterpiece, created to do good things. May our lives reflect your glory as we walk in your purpose, and may we give you thanks for all you have done and all you are yet to do.

Embracing the Gift of Legacy

December 17

Jennifer Fintz, 1st Grade A

Psalm 78:4-6 We will not hide them from their descendants; we will tell the next generation the praiseworthy deeds of the Lord, his power, and the wonders he has done. He decreed statutes for Jacob and established the law in Israel, which he commanded our ancestors to teach their children, so the next generation would know them, even the children yet to be born, and they, in turn, would tell their children.

Grandparents hold a unique and treasured role in the family, a position filled with love, wisdom, and experience. As we reflect on our journey, it's essential to acknowledge the significance of the legacy we are creating for the next generation. In Psalm 78, we are reminded of the importance of sharing our faith and the goodness of experiences--those moments where you witnessed God's provision, love, and grace. These anecdotes not only enrich your grandchildren's understanding of the world but also help them see the hand of God in everyday life. As a grandparent, you have the unique opportunity to influence your grandchildren spiritually. Share with them not just the lessons from your life, but also the lessons from Scripture. Introduce them to Bible stories, teach them how to pray, and encourage them to seek God in their own lives. Your relationship with them can be a bridge that connects them to their faith in a meaningful way.

Take sometime this week to share a story or a lesson from your life with your grandchildren. Whether it's a joyful memory, a challenge you faced, or a time when you felt God's presence, let them see how your faith has shaped you. You might also consider starting a new tradition, like reading a Bible story together or having prayer time, to foster spiritual growth in your family.

Dear Heavenly Father, thank you for the gift of grandchildren. Help me to be a wise and living grandparent, sharing my experiences and the truths of Your Word with them. May my life be a testimony of your goodness, and may I cultivate an environment where they can grow in their faith. Give me the words to speak and the love to share, so they may come to know you deeply. Amen.

All Your Strength

December 18

Mikala Minerd, Kindergarten B

Mark 12:30 Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.

Jesus commands us in this verse to love Him with all of our soul, mind and strength. And perhaps, you're like me and sometimes feel as though your soul is weary, your mind is troubled, your strength is almost gone, and you ask "How then can I obey this great command?". I've pondered this frequently when this verse comes to my mind.

One day, I was leaving, of all places, Planet Fitness, when the Lord so clearly spoke to me. It is moments like this that leads me to believe that He might have a sense of humor. After I had finished training my physical strength, His still small voice reminded me "I did not command you to be 'strong' but to love me with all of your strength"

He has commanded you and I to offer Him praise with the little bit of strength we have left, when we are weak. He desires our vulnerability, surrender, and the emptying of ourselves to be filled with more of Him. Leaning into His understanding and not our own. To be like the woman with the issue of blood, who was at the end of her rope, mentally and physically exhausted. But, with the little bit of strength she had left, reached out for the hem of His garment and was delivered.

Lord, When my mind is troubled and I feel as though I have exhausted all of the strength I have, would you remind me where my strength comes from. Would I lean not on my own understanding, and trust in your ways. I offer you all that I have remaining, my love, praise, and adoration. Amen

The Mystery of His Great Love

December 19
Natalie Prough, Music

Psalms 8:4 What is mankind that you are mindful of them, human beings that you care for them?

As a music teacher I have the unfortunate task of listening to Christmas music starting in September (or fortunate depending on how much you like Christmas). Preparing for the Christmas concert with students causes my mind to be on Christmas months in advance. I decided to listen to some Christmas albums in our family's old CD collection. Sorry to the parents that may have to explain what CDs are to their students. We used to listen to Christmas music while decorating the house. While relistening to the albums, the words of the song "Mystery" by Selah caught my attention. The chorus goes like this...

*Mystery, how He came to be a man
But greater still
How His death was in His plan
God predestined that His Son would die
And He still created man
Oh, what love is this
That His death was in His hands*

The words had never really meant anything to me growing up but hearing them with the years to understand them made them stand out to me. The words reminded me of Psalms 8:4. The glory of God is so great in comparison to that of ours. The Lord of Glory set aside the glory of Heaven in order to become a man. Further than that He came to redeem His fallen creation through His suffering on the cross. His creation that hated Him without a cause. Not only did he agree to the Father's plan but He was part of designing the plan. It was both His design and His choice to come to Earth and pay such a great price for our redemption. How amazing that He knew that He would endure this pain and still chose to create us out of love. How great is the God of love and how amazing it is that He sacrificed his Son for us.

Heavenly Father, I thank you for your overwhelming love. I thank you for your love that is beyond our understanding. Remind us during this season of your love to us. Help us to demonstrate your love to others around us. Amen

A New Thing

December 20

Sarah Harmon, Middle School Language Arts and History

Isaiah 43:19 See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it?
I am making a way in the wilderness and streams in the wasteland.

Isaiah 43:19 offers a powerful message of hope and reassurance for those facing difficult, barren seasons in life. Sometimes we find ourselves wandering through the wilderness feeling lost, weary, and afraid. Life may look foreign and we may be in a situation we never expected. God promises a way forward. Even in the most desolate, desert-like circumstances, the Lord pledges to provide flowing water. It may not look the way we thought it would, but God will sustain us in the wasteland. We may not know what life looks like going forward, but we know who leads the way. No matter how dry, barren, or hopeless our circumstances, this verse reminds us that the Lord will renew our strength and continue to lead the way. When we are weary and full of despair, this verse prompts us to trust in God's unwavering faithfulness and to expectantly wait for the new thing He is about to do.

Lord, Thank You for leading me through all my difficult days. Help me to remember You are my strength and my way forward. I know You hold my whole life. Help me to trust that You will sustain me through the good days and the bad ones. Amen

Family Reading

December 21

Luke 2: 1-21

In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world. **2** (This was the first census that took place while Quirinius was governor of Syria.) **3** And everyone went to their own town to register.

4 So Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem the town of David, because he belonged to the house and line of David. **5** He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child. **6** While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, **7** and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no guest room available for them.

8 And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. **9** An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. **10** But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. **11** Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord. **12** This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger."

13 Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying,

14 "Glory to God in the highest heaven,
and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests."

15 When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let's go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about."

16 So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in the manger. **17** When they had seen him, they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child, **18** and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them. **19** But Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart. **20** The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen, which were just as they had been told.

21 On the eighth day, when it was time to circumcise the child, he was named Jesus, the name the angel had given him before he was conceived.

Sacrificial Life as Christ

December 22

Laura Earles, Kitchen Administrator

1 John 2:6 Whoever says he abides in him ought to walk in the same way in which he walked.

1 Peter 2:21 For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in his steps

Ephesians 5:1-2 Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children. And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God

Galatians 2:20 I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

Matthew 11:29 Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.

As the world continues to reveal its desires that do not align itself with the Word or Biblical standards, it is Christians who are to look and live a life separate from how the world looks. We are called to hang our desires, opinions, gossip, mindsets, habits, how something should be or how something should be handled on the Cross. It's a great bible verse to read and teach on but do we actually do it? I, myself, have a hard time displaying the gentleness of Christ in a situation especially if I am right. Do I slap a fake smile on, and "act" like Jesus on the outside while my spirit is disturbed? Where is the victory in that? Where is the crucifying myself actually happening, only for outward appearances so I seem "holy". I am only living a life of hypocrisy like the Pharisees and Scribes. Christ was beaten, spit on, ripped to shreds and how dare I not surrender my emotions or judgements as a living sacrifice unto My Savior. We must call on the Holy Spirit to help nudge us, prod us, move us and shape us. Christ said He will send us a Helper, but how often do we use the Holy Spirit, how often in moments we roll our eyes rather than rolling out an atmosphere for the Spirit of Christ to rule and reign inward and outward. We are made in God's image, but that image is spoiled and polluted in us because of sin. So now God is slowly remaking that image in us - to be more like Jesus

Father, I thank You for Your Holy Presence, I glorify Your name and give You all the Praise. Lord, I ask for forgiveness for the moments I fall short in operating in a Christ-like Spirit. We thank You Jesus for Your sacrifice that we may die to ourselves and live in You and through You. I call upon the Holy Spirit to rule and reign in my life during the moments where I struggle to not live as Christ. I call on fire from Heaven to fall upon my head to the soles of my feet to burn out and cleanse any part of me that is not aligned with the peace, the power and the authority that is readily available to me. In Jesus Name, Amen

Stand Firm

December 23

Pastor Tara Galbraith, Care and Connect Pastor

Psalm 27:14 Wait for the Lord; be strong and take heart and wait for the Lord.

Benjamin Franklin once said, "In this world, nothing is certain except death and taxes." Indeed, death and taxes are inevitable, and I would also add hardships; to that list. At some point, each of us will face hardships; whether it be a call from a doctor, a water heater not working, or even losing a job, we will all face hardships at some point. The beautiful thing is that, as Christians, we do not need to face these trials alone.

When we turn to Scripture, we see that Abram and Sarai were heartbroken because they wanted to have a child but were unable to do so. However, after much sorrow, God miraculously provided for them. Similarly, Elijah hid in the desert during a drought, but God cared for him by sending ravens to bring him manna and water daily, helping him to survive. Ruth also faced hardship; she was without a husband and lived in a foreign town with her mother-in-law until God sent her a kinsman redeemer who married her and restored her position. This illustrates that God cares about our physical, emotional, and temporal needs and hears us when we pray to Him.

James 1:2 tells us to consider it pure joy when facing trials, as these trials test our faith and produce perseverance. It says that if we endure, we will develop, mature, and be complete, lacking nothing. These trials encourage us to grow, and when we find them too difficult to walk in alone, we can run to the Lord. Psalm 91:2 says, "I will say of the Lord, 'He is my refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust.'"

Lord, guide me to remain steady as the storms rage around me. Help me find my strength in You. Remind me that You alone are my safe tower and fortress. Help me remember that my circumstances and trials produce perseverance and a testimony of Your faith. Enable me to stand firm in You! Amen.

Traditions and Togetherness

December 24

Tara Lloyd, Middle School Math

Romans 15:13 May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

“The Beagle has landed! The Beagle has landed!”, I shouted over the walkie talkie. The cold air whipped around me as I held tight to the ladder of the silo. I watched from my position as the family hand cut their chosen evergreen in the distance. My announcement set in motion the next steps as my cousin heard my call and loaded the freshly cut tree into the farm utility vehicle and moved it carefully to the top of the rolling hill near the barn. The tree would be shaken, dead needles falling to the ground, and bound with red and white netting so it could be easily tied to the family’s car for its journey home. For many families, the act of selecting a tree symbolizes more than just a tradition of the Christmas season—it represents the togetherness, love, and joy that a family creates. Although our farm is now closed, my family and I truly enjoyed the years that we were able to be a part of that tradition. As a young girl, it brought excitement and anticipation in my heart in the weeks leading up to Christmas. It was cold and all day work, but it was work that brought satisfaction. Our simple jobs, scouting and retrieving trees, helped those around us to create family memories and we too were making our own. As we patiently await the celebration of the birth of our Savior, let us choose to be present. Give anything that is weighing on your hearts and minds over to Him in surrender. Allow the Holy Spirit to fill you with joy and peace. May we all be the hands and feet of Jesus this season as He has so graciously called us.

Lord, I pray that you would remind me to hand over my worries and concerns to you. Help me to surrender moment by moment when my heart and mind are full. Shift my eyes to You and help me to feel Your presence in this Christmas season. I know that you have created me to be in this time and place for Your glory. Amen.

God's Plan for a Future Full of Hope

December 25

McKenna Marcus, 1st Grade A

Jeremiah 29:11 "For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future."

As a first-grade teacher, I'm always excited to watch children learn, grow, and imagine their future. Every day is an opportunity for students to take another step toward discovering their potential, building new skills, and exploring the unique gifts God has given them. Parents can quickly wonder what the future holds for their children, especially when they are young. But the Bible reminds us in Jeremiah 29:11 that God already knows His plans for each of us, a hope-filled future. Each student needs to know that even though they might not understand their future God has a plan for their lives. Whether it's becoming a teacher, an artist, or a doctor, their future is in God's hands. Each day of learning, growing, and developing in their faith is part of the journey God has laid out for them. Mistakes and challenges students may face there's always an opportunity to grow. Parents you are an essential part in helping your children find their God given potential. Encouraging them to dream big, take risks, and trust God's timing is important. And remember that no matter what the future looks like, God's plan for them is good to prosper them and give them hope.

Dear God, thank you for the fantastic future you have created for each of our students. We trust that you know your plans for them, and we are excited to see how you will use their lives for your glory. Help our students grow in wisdom and confidence so that they know that you are guiding every one of them toward a bright future. We pray for the parents and ask for wisdom and encouragement as they support their children's dreams. May we all trust your perfect plan and remember that you hold our future. In Jesus' name, Amen

The Gift of Sleep

December 26

Natalie Burnett, Principal

Psalm 3: 5 I lie down and sleep; I wake again, because the LORD sustains me.

(Also read the entire Psalm!)

Families. I love mine with my whole heart! However, I don't know if there is anyone who can make me cry faster than someone in my family! Sometimes it may be from anger or irritation. A lot of time, it's simply because my children refuse to stay small and I'm watching them become actual humans!

David was a man of family conflict! If you read through Chronicles you see all the fights and rivalries that his children brought! Psalm 3 was written when he was fleeing (yes, you read that right!) one of his sons who was taking over the kingdom.

There aren't many people who push me to prayer quite like my kids and David was no different. This Psalm was a prayer for the Lord's protection and peace over his life. As verse five says, "I lie down and sleep; I wake again, because the Lord sustains me." There have been nights that as I've put my head on my pillow, I've prayed for the Lord to send me rest. So often, I then wake up hours later not even realizing that I had fallen asleep.

The Lord does sustain us in hard times. I want him to just fix the hard time. I want him to make it go away. I don't want him to sustain me because I want him to just end the difficulty. Sometimes, the greater miracle is his ability to hold us and carry us through - to keep us moving, to continue to give us life.

I try to remember that each sleep is a gift. His sustaining power is a gift. His peace and protection are gifts. All of them get us through whatever it is we are facing.

Thank you, Lord, for the gift of sleep and rest. Thank you for holding us in your hand and sustaining us through the difficult times that come our way. In moments when we don't want to continue fighting or pushing through, give us the rest we need to move through another day. Thank you for your sustaining power. Amen.

Salt for the Season

December 27

Sierra Penix, 3rd Grade

Colossians 4:6 Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone.

Have you ever heard something that totally changes the way you think about a particular subject? One that you hadn't considered before? While tackling my never-ending to-do lists, I enjoy listening to podcasts. In addition to passing the time and making chores a bit more bearable, I will often hear something that makes me pause. And replay. And then think. And then pause and think again. In Colossians 4:6 it says, "Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone." Now, if you are like me, you probably think of this verse as meaning "Make sure your words aren't bitter, so others will listen to what you have to say". While not wrong, diving a little deeper, I found there is more to it than just that.

Salt. Seasoning. It makes those bland potatoes at Thanksgiving a little more tasteful. Salt is usually used to make something that is pleasant to the taste buds. Maybe you snuck the salt from the kitchen as a child so you didn't hurt your Mom's feelings. (Sorry Mom, sometimes your food needs a little more than love!) Maybe when you think of seasoned, your mind wanders to that juicy and perfectly seasoned steak that always turns out just right on the grill. The podcast had a pastor speaking who mentioned this verse. Because I am someone who does need to pay attention to the way my speech comes across, this is a verse I know and try to apply, so it stood out to me. The pastor noted how when looking at this verse contextually, it may have a slightly different meaning. In the time period in which this passage was written, salt would have been used more so for preservation, rather than to season your food. Preservation. The Merriam-Webster dictionary describes it as, "...the activity or process of keeping something valued alive, intact, or free from damage or decay." This painted this verse in a different light for me. I can watch the way I say things, of course, but do I have the self-control within myself to speak in a way that preserves my relationship with others? More importantly, am I speaking to others in a way that will preserve the potential to lead them into a relationship with Christ? Are we speaking to our difficult family members, strangers, and friends with the intention of preservation? With the holiday season quickly approaching, and interactions with our not-so-favorite family members in near view, I pray I remember the reason for the season, and speak in grace, love, and salt.

Prayer: Lord, keep me mindful of my intentions when speaking to others. I only want to lift You up, and see You glorified. When feelings of bitterness and resentment bubble up, let me speak only of preservation, grace, and love. Thank you for being the perfect example of that. Amen

Dwell on These Things

December 28

Pastor James Galbraith, Lead Pastor

Philippians 4:8 Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things.

How has your relationship with God shaped who you are today? As we deepen our connection with Jesus, we discover that every aspect of our lives undergoes transformation. He guides us to change our behaviors, attitudes, and relationships, reexamine how we use our resources, and even process our daily thoughts.

In his teachings, Paul offers us crucial guidance on how to navigate our thought lives. He lays out six powerful filters through which we should sift everything we see and hear. We are called to focus only on what is true, honorable, just, pure, lovely, and admirable. This practice is essential, as our thoughts are the compass that directs our actions and shapes our relationships.

When negative or sinful thoughts creep into our minds, our first instinct should be to remind ourselves of our identity in Christ. It's easy to be pulled away from our true selves when we let our thoughts run wild. If any thought doesn't measure up to those six filters, we can follow the words found in 2 Corinthians 10:5, where we are encouraged to "take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ." Controlling our minds requires conscious effort and a deliberate choice to regain control. By focusing on positive, uplifting thoughts, we can embark on a journey toward a more peaceful life, allowing the transformative power of God to work within us.

"Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind" (Romans 12:2).

Lord, help me exercise control over my thoughts. Guard my mind and guide me to focus on what is true, honorable, just, pure, lovely, and admirable. Today, I choose to dwell on what is worthy of praise and to worship You with all my heart, soul, mind, and strength. Grant me the wisdom to filter my thoughts to protect my heart. In Jesus' name, Amen.

God Has a Plan for You

December 29

Jeremy Burnett, Superintendent

Isaiah 30:21 Whether you turn to the right or to the left, your ears will hear a voice behind you, saying, "This is the way; walk in it."

God is awesome! When we think about his attributes (omniscience, omnipotence, omnipresence, etc.), it really is difficult for our human minds to truly comprehend a being that has always been, always will be, is everywhere at once, knows everything, and has unlimited power! Maybe even more difficult than that, is comprehending that the God of the universe loves you! That he sees you and knows you. That he knit you together in your mother's womb (Ps. 139:13), carefully choosing every detail and making you exactly the way he wanted you to be. It is pretty incredible when you think about it. Then to understand that God sent his son to die on a cross to save you! Wow! How can you not feel loved when you think about that.

Well, the same God that created you also orders that sun to rise and set. He tells the oceans where to stop. He is a God of order. So it only makes sense that he would have a plan for one of his favorite creations (that's you, btw!). We don't always see it. Sometimes we even doubt it. But, God has a plan for your life! One that he made before you took your first breath. He created you with all that you need to fulfill that plan. You just need to listen to his voice, obey his words, and trust him to help you. He will be there through it all, encouraging and empowering you all along the way.

God, thank you for wanting me to be a part of your incredible creation. Thank you for making me the way you wanted me to be and trusting me to fulfill the plan that you have for my life. Help me to take the time to listen for your voice. Help me to have the courage to do what you say. And help me to live a life that makes you proud of me.

Finding Grace in Parenting Struggles

December 30

Jennifer Fintz, 1st Grade B

Proverbs 22:6 Train up a child in the way he should go; even when he is old, he will not depart from it.

Parenting is an incredible journey filled with joy, laughter, love, and, undeniably, struggles. Those moments when a child throws a tantrum in the grocery store, when they refuse to listen, or when you feel overwhelmed with the weight of their future can be challenging. It's easy to feel like you're failing, but it's essential to remember that you're not alone in this experience.

Every parent has days when they wonder if they're doing anything right. You may compare yourself to others--seeing their seemingly perfect kids or their calm parenting techniques--which can amplify feelings of inadequacy. But these struggles are part of the growth process, for both you and your child. Think of the challenges you face as opportunities to lean on your faith and grow in wisdom. Every moment of frustration can become a moment of prayer, a time to seek God's wisdom and strength.

As Proverbs reminds us, the goal of parenting is not perfection but guiding our children on their journey. Every challenge is a chance to teach resilience, patience, and love.

This week, take a moment to pause when you feel overwhelmed. Breathe, pray, and remember that your love and efforts matter. Keep a journal to reflect on your parenting experiences -- both the struggles and the successes. Write down moments where you felt challenged and how you sought God's guidance. This practice can help you see how far you've come and allow you to celebrate the small victories along the way. Remember, parenthood is not about achieving perfection but rather about embracing the journey, struggles, and all, with faith and grace.

*Heavenly Father, thank You for the gift of my children. Help me to remember that struggles are part of this journey. Grant me the patience to navigate the tough days and the wisdom to respond with love. Remind me that it's okay to be imperfect -- what matters is that I'm present and seeking to guide them in your ways. May I model grace and forgiveness, knowing that you are always there, leading us and helping us grow.
Amen.*

Our Daily Bread

December 31

Angie Kazimir, Pre-K 4

Matthew 6:11 Give us today our daily bread.

Matthew 6:34 Therefore, do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself.

Each day has enough trouble of its own.

Recently I have been praying and walking through a situation that has caused a lot of worry, fear and stress. I have someone very close to me who has prayed with me in this situation and a few times has prayed for “our daily bread” as we’ve asked God for His wisdom and for Him to move. As I’ve pondered on those words, I was led to the verse later in the chapter where Jesus tells us not to worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. In this situation that I’ve been praying about, I’ve found myself being anxious and afraid about what the future will hold. When Jesus tells us in the Lord’s prayer to pray for our daily bread, He is saying that we need to pray for what we need for the day we’re in and not worry about the future. It’s so helpful when we are worried about outcomes and what might happen in the future to put those things in God’s hands and know that He’s in control and working it all out for our good. It is part of our human nature to worry about things to come, but we can trust God, knowing that He will give us what we need at the time we need it. I find that as I ask God for my daily bread, I am able to walk in God’s peace because I can trust that He will lead me through this day.

Lord, thank you that we can ask you for our daily bread, and you are faithful to give us what we need for each day. We know that you are on the throne and are working things out for our good because we love You and are called according to Your purpose. No matter what we’re going through, help us to keep our eyes fixed on You, knowing that You are faithful. In Jesus’ name, Amen