

***Daily Devotions***  
***September 20<sup>th</sup> – September 26<sup>th</sup>***

***Monday, September 20<sup>th</sup> – 26<sup>th</sup> – A Living Document***

***Blessed is the one . . . whose delight is in the law of the Lord , and who meditates on his law day and night.*** Psalm 1:1-2

In memorializing his grandfather’s work, Peter Croft wrote, “It is my deepest desire for the person who picks up their Bible, whatever version they use, to not only understand but experience the scriptures as living documents, just as relevant, dangerous, and exciting now as they were those thousands of years ago.” Peter’s grandfather was J.B. Phillips, a youth minister who undertook a new paraphrase of the Bible in English during World War II in order to make it come alive to students at his church.

Like Phillips’ students, we face barriers to reading and experiencing Scripture; and not necessarily because of our Bible translation. We may lack time, discipline, or the right tools for understanding. But Psalm 1 tells us that “*Blessed is the one . . . whose delight is in the law of the Lord* ” (vv. 1–2). Meditating on Scripture daily allows us to “prosper” in all seasons, no matter what hardship we’re facing.

How do you view your Bible? It’s still relevant with insight for living today, still dangerous in its call to believe and follow Jesus, still exciting in the intimate knowledge of God and humanity that it imparts. It’s like a stream of water (v. 3) that provides the sustenance we need daily. Today, let’s lean in—make time, get the right tools, and ask God to help us experience Scripture as a living document.

What barriers do you face when reading the Bible?

How can you make space to listen to God’s voice?

***Prayer***

*Father, help me experience Scripture as a living document not just today, but everyday. May I apply it to my life and be strengthened by it. Amen.*

## ***Tuesday, September 21<sup>st</sup> – “Hotel Corona”***

***Christ’s love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all . . . . From now on we regard no one from a worldly point of view.***

2 Corinthians 5:14,16

The Dan Hotel in Jerusalem became known by a different name in 2020—“Hotel Corona.” The government dedicated the hotel to patients recovering from COVID-19, and the hotel became known as a rare site of joy and unity during a difficult time. Since the residents already had the virus, they were free to sing, dance, and laugh together. And they did! In a country where tensions between different political and religious groups run high, the shared crisis created a space where people could learn to see each other as human beings first—and even become friends.

It’s natural and even normal for us to be drawn toward those we see as similar to us, people we suspect share similar experiences and values to our own. But as the apostle Paul often emphasized, the gospel is a challenge to any barriers between human beings that we see as “normal” (2 Corinthians 5:15). Through the lens of the gospel, we see a bigger picture than our differences—a shared brokenness and a shared longing and need to experience healing in God’s love.

If we believe that “*one died for all,*” then we can also no longer be content with surface-level assumptions about others. Instead, “*Christ’s love compels us*” (v. 14) to share His love and mission with those God loves more than we can imagine—all of us.

What helps remind you of our equal brokenness and need for Jesus’ love?

### ***Prayer***

*Jesus, in hard times, thank You for those moments when I see a glimmer of breathtaking beauty through the love and joy of others. Help me to live each day knowing we must see each other from Heaven’s point of view. Amen.*

## ***Wednesday, September 22<sup>nd</sup> – A Great Act of Love***

***Consequently, just as one trespass resulted in condemnation for all people, so also one righteous act resulted in justification and life for all people.***

Romans 5:18

In Oregon's Malheur National Forest, a fungus popularly known as the honey mushroom spreads through tree roots across 2,200 acres, making it the largest living organism ever found. It's been "weaving its black shoestring filaments" through the forest for more than two millennia, killing trees as it grows. Its shoestring filaments, called "rhizomorphs," tunnel as deep as ten feet into the soil. And although the organism is incredibly large, it began with a single microscopic spore!

The Bible tells us of a single act of disobedience that caused widespread condemnation and a single act of obedience that reversed it. The apostle Paul contrasted two individuals—Adam and Jesus (Romans 5:14–15). Adam's sin brought condemnation and death "*to all people*" (v. 12). Through one act of disobedience, all people were made sinners and stood condemned before God (v. 17). But He had a means of dealing with humanity's sin problem. Through the righteous act of Jesus on the cross, God provides eternal life and a right standing before Him. Christ's act of love and obedience was powerful enough to overcome Adam's one act of disobedience—providing "*life for all people*" (v. 18).

Through His death on the cross, Jesus offers eternal life to anyone who puts their faith in Him. If you haven't received His forgiveness and salvation, may you do so today. If you're already a believer, praise Him for what He's done by His great act of love!

What do the single acts of Adam and Jesus tell you about the impact of sin?

How does Jesus' sacrifice ignite or renew your desire to live a life that honors Him?

### ***Prayer***

*Father, thank You for providing salvation and eternal life through Jesus! Help me to reveal Your saving way to others.*

## ***Thursday September 23<sup>rd</sup> – Don't Hurry Your Prayers***

***Be still, and know that I am God.***

Psalm 46:10

Alice Kaholusuna tells a story of how the Hawaiian people would sit outside their temples for a lengthy amount of time preparing themselves before entering in. Even after entering, they would creep to the altar to offer their prayers. Afterward, they would sit outside again for a long time to “breathe life” into their prayers. When missionaries came to the island, the Hawaiians sometimes considered their prayers odd. The missionaries would stand up, speak a few sentences, call them “prayer,” say amen, and be done with it. The Hawaiians described these prayers as “without breath.”

Alice's story speaks of how God's people may not always take the opportunity to “*be still, and know*” (Psalm 46:10). Make no mistake—God hears our prayers, whether they're quick or slow. But often the pace of our lives mimics the pace of our hearts, and we need to allow ample time for God to speak into not only our lives but also the lives of those around us. How many life-giving moments have we missed by rushing, saying amen, and being done with it?

We are often impatient with everything from slow people to the slow lane in traffic. Yet, I believe God in His kindness says, “*Be still. Breathe in and out. Go slow, and remember that I am God, your refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble.*” To do so is to know that God is God. To do so is to trust. To do so is to live.

Think back to a time when you slowed down and listened to God in your prayer time. How did that feel?

What actions can you put into place to still yourself in God's presence and know Him?

### ***Prayer***

*Father, thank You for being my ever-present help in good times and the bad. Give me the grace to be still and know that You are God. Amen.*

***Friday, September 24<sup>th</sup> – The Secret of Contentment***

***I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation.***

Philippians 4:12

When Joni Erickson Tada returned home after suffering a swimming accident that left her a quadriplegic, her life was vastly different. Now doorways were too narrow for her wheelchair and sinks were too high. Someone had to feed her, until she decided to relearn how to feed herself. Lifting the special spoon to her mouth from her arm splint the first time, she felt humiliated as she smeared applesauce on her clothes. But she pressed on. As she says, “My secret was learning to lean on Jesus and say, ‘Oh God, help me with this!’ ” Today she manages a spoon very well.

Joni says her confinement made her look at another captive—the apostle Paul, who was imprisoned in a Roman jail—and his letter to the Philippians. Joni strives for what Paul achieved: “*I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances*” (Philippians 4:11). Paul had to learn to be at peace; he was not naturally peaceful. How did he find contentment? Through trusting in Christ: “*I can do all this through him who gives me strength*” (v. 13).

We all face different challenges throughout our days; and we all can look to Jesus moment by moment for help, strength, and peace. He will help us to hold back from snapping at our loved ones; He will give us the courage to do the next hard thing. Look to Him and find contentment.

How has leaning on Jesus helped you to find peace?

In what areas of your life are you struggling right now? How could you commit them to God?

### ***Prayer***

*Jesus, thank You for giving me courage and hope. When I feel weak, help me to find strength that can only be found in You. Amen.*

***Saturday, September 25<sup>th</sup> – A Remarkable Life***

***Be careful to live properly among your unbelieving neighbors. 2 Peter 2:12***

I came to learn about Catherine Hamlin, a remarkable Australian surgeon, through reading her obituary. In Ethiopia, Catherine and her husband established the world's only hospital dedicated to curing women from the devastating physical and emotional trauma of obstetric fistulas, a common injury in the developing world that can occur during childbirth. Catherine is credited with overseeing the treatment of more than 60,000 women.

Still operating at the hospital when she was ninety-two years old, and still beginning each day with a cup of tea and Bible study, Hamlin told those curious with questions that she was an ordinary believer in Jesus who was simply doing the job God had given her to do.

I was grateful to learn about her remarkable life because she powerfully exemplified for me Scripture's encouragement to believers to live our lives in such a way that even people who actively reject God "may see your good deeds and glorify God" (1 Peter 2:12).

The power of God's Spirit that called us out of spiritual darkness into a relationship with Him (v. 9) can also transform our work or areas of service into testimonies of our faith. In whatever passion or skill God has gifted us, we can embrace added meaning and purpose in doing all of it in a manner that has the power to point people to Him.

What has God called you to do?

How might you do it today in Jesus' name?

### ***Prayer***

*Jesus, may Your love and grace be evident in my words and deeds today. Amen.*

***Sunday, September 26<sup>th</sup> – Moving Into Maturity***

***Become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.***  
Ephesians 4:13

A recent survey asked respondents to identify the age at which they believed they became adults. Those who considered themselves adults pointed to specific behaviors as evidence they had arrived at adulthood. Having a budget and buying a house topped the list as being marks of “adulting.” Other adult activities ranged from cooking dinner every weeknight and scheduling one’s own medical appointments, to the more humorous ability to choose to eat snacks for dinner or being excited to stay at home on a Saturday evening instead of going out.

The Bible says we should press on toward spiritual maturity as well. Paul wrote to the church at Ephesus, urging the people to “*become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ*” (Ephesians 4:13). While we’re “young” in our faith, we’re vulnerable to “*every wind of teaching*” (v. 14), which often results in division among us. Instead, as we mature in our understanding of the truth, we function as a unified body under “*Him who is the head, that is, Christ*” (v. 15).

God gave us His Spirit to help us grow into a full understanding of who He is (John 14:26), and He equips pastors and teachers to instruct and lead us toward maturity in our faith (Ephesians 4:11–12). Just as certain characteristics are evidence of physical maturity, our unity as His body is evidence of our spiritual growth.

In what ways are you still vulnerable to “every wind of teaching”?

How can you continue to grow spiritually?

***Prayer***

*Loving God, You’re the author of my growth and maturity. Please help me to see where my understanding of You is still immature and teach me more of Your wisdom. Amen.*