

DAILY DEVOTIONS

Monday, March 8 – Never Give Up

This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success. Joshua 1:8

“Time went by. War came in.” That’s how Bishop Semi Nigo of the Keliko people of South Sudan described delays in his church’s long struggle to get the Bible in their own language. Not one word, in fact, had ever been printed in the Keliko language. Decades earlier, Bishop Nigo’s grandfather had courageously started a Bible translation project, but war and unrest kept halting the effort. Yet, despite repeated attacks on their refugee camps in northern Uganda and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the bishop and fellow believers kept the project alive.

Their persistence did pay off. After nearly Thirty years, the New Testament Bible in Keliko was delivered to the refugees in a jubilant celebration. “The motivation of the Keliko is beyond words,” said one project consultant.

The commitment of the Keliko reflects the perseverance God asked of Joshua. As God told him, “*Keep this Book of the Law always on your lips; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful*” (Joshua 1:8). With equal persistence, the Keliko pursued the translation of Scripture. Now, “when you see them in the camps, they are smiling,” said one translator. Hearing and understanding the Bible “**gives them hope.**” Like the Keliko people, may we never give up seeking the power and wisdom of Scripture.

PRAYER:

Loving Father, stir up in me a greater hunger to seek, study, and know the Bible, never giving up my quest to understand Your wisdom, Your grace and Your love. Amen.

Tuesday, March 9 – No Longer Me

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

In the summer of 1859, Monsieur Charles Blondin became the first person to cross Niagara Falls on a tightrope; something he would go on to do hundreds of times. Once he did it with his manager Harry Colcord on his back. Blondin gave Colcord these instructions: “Look up, Harry . . . you are no longer Colcord, you are Blondin. . . . If I sway, sway with me. Do not attempt to do any balancing yourself. If you do, we will both go to our death.”

Paul, in essence, said to the Galatian church family: *You can't walk the line of living a life that is pleasing to God apart from faith in Christ. But here's the good news—you don't have to!* No amount of attempting to earn our way to God will ever cut it. So are we passive in our salvation? No! Our invitation is to cling to Jesus. Clinging to Jesus means putting to death an old, independent way of living; it's as if we ourselves have died. Yet, we go on living. *But “the life [we] now live in the body, [we] live by faith in the Son of God, who loved [us] and gave himself for [us]”* (Galatians 2:20).

Where are we trying to walk the tightrope today? God hasn't called us to walk out on the rope to Him; He's called us to cling to Him and walk this life with Him.

PRAYER:

Dear Jesus, thank You for doing for me what I could never do for myself. Today I turn away from trying to please You on my own. I'm so glad I don't need to earn Your love and I know You walk with me. Amen.

Wednesday, March 10 – Facing Adversity

Whenever I am afraid, I will trust in You.

Psalms 56:3

Warren moved to a small town to pastor a church. After his ministry had some initial success, one of the locals turned on him. Making up a story accusing Warren of horrendous acts, the man took the story to the local newspaper and even printed his accusations on pamphlets to distribute to local residents by mail. Warren and his wife started praying very diligently. If the lie was believed by the people in the town, their lives would be uprooted.

David once experienced something similar. He faced an attack of slander by an enemy. *“All day long they twist my words,”* he said, *“all their schemes are for my ruin”* (Psalm 56:5). The relentless assault left him fearful and tearful (v. 8). But in the midst of the battle, he prayed this powerful prayer: *“When I am afraid, I put my trust in you. . . . What can mere mortals do to me?”* (vv. 3-4).

David’s prayer can be a model for us today. *When I am afraid*—in times of fear or accusation, we turn to God. *I put my trust in you*—we place our battle in God’s powerful hands. *What can mere mortals do to me?*—facing the situation with Him, we remember how limited the powers against us really are.

The newspaper ignored the story about Warren. For some reason, the pamphlets were never distributed. What battle do you fear today? Talk to God. He’s willing to fight it with you.

PRAYER:

Father, I’m afraid—and so today I put my trust in You. What can mere mortals do to me when You’re fighting for me? Thank You for the coming victory. I know You continue fighting for us, we will not be defeated! Amen.

Thursday, March 11 – Sometimes I Cry

Jerusalem, Jerusalem . . . how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings. Matthew 23:37

“Mr. Singerman, why are you crying?” asked twelve-year-old Albert as he watched the master craftsman construct a wooden box. “I cry,” he said, “because my father cried, and because my grandfather cried.” The woodworker’s answer to his young apprentice provides a tender moment in an episode of *Little House on the Prairie*. “Tears,” explained Mr. Singerman, “come with the making of a coffin.”

“Some men don’t cry because they fear it is a sign of weakness,” he said. “I was taught that a man is a man because he *can* cry.”

Emotion must have welled up in the eyes of Jesus as He compared His concern for Jerusalem to the care of a mother hen for her chicks (Matthew 23:37). His disciples were often confused by what they saw in His eyes or heard in His stories. His idea of what it meant to be strong was different. It happened again as they walked with Him from the temple. Calling His attention to the massive stonewalls and magnificent decor of their place of worship (24:1), the disciples noted the strength of human accomplishment. Jesus saw a temple that would be leveled in ad 70.

Jesus shows us that healthy people know when to cry and why. He cried because His Father cares and His Spirit groans for children who couldn’t yet see what breaks His heart.

PRAYER:

Father, please replace any cold illusions of strength I cling to with a growing understanding of the cares and concerns that break Your heart for children like me. Amen.

Friday, March 12 – Alone

Two are better than one . . . If either of them falls down, one can help the other up. Ecclesiastes 4:9,10

“It can be an affliction more harrowing than homelessness, hunger or disease,” wrote Maggie Fergusson in *The Economist’s* 1843 magazine. Her subject? Loneliness. Fergusson chronicled the increasing rates of loneliness, irrespective of one’s social or economic status, using heart-wrenching examples of what it feels like to be lonely.

The hurt of feeling alone is not something that is new to our day. It is true that the pain of isolation echoes off the pages of the ancient book of Ecclesiastes. The writer of the book, King Solomon, captures the sorrow of those who seem to not enjoy any meaningful relationships (4:7-8). The speaker lamented that it’s possible to obtain wealth and yet experience no value from it because there’s no one to share it with. But he also recognized the beauty of companionship, writing that *friends* help you accomplish more than you could achieve on your own (v. 9); companions help in times of need (v. 10); partners bring comfort (v. 11); and friends can provide protection in difficult situations (v. 12).

Loneliness is a significant struggle - God created us to offer and receive the benefits of friendship and community. If you are feeling alone, pray that God would help you form meaningful connections with others. In the meantime, find encouragement in the reality that the believer is never truly alone because Jesus Spirit is always with us (Matthew 28:20).

PRAYER:

Father, when I feel lonely, give me courage to reach out to others with an offer of friendship. Please help me not to remain isolated and give me strength to make healthy connections. Ultimately I know You are there for me each and every time I feel alone. Amen.

Saturday, March 13 – Stillness

Whoever dwells in the shelter of the Most High will rest in the shadow of the Almighty. Psalms 91:1

As a full-of-energy preschooler, Xavier avoided afternoon quiet time. Being still resulted in him not willing to take that much-needed, nap. So, he would wiggle in his seat, slide off the sofa, scoot across the hardwood floor, and even roll across the room to evade the quiet. Nearly everyday his pleas were the same: “Mom, I’m hungry . . . I’m thirsty . . . I have to go to the bathroom . . . I want a hug.”

Understanding the benefits of stillness, Xavier’s Mom would settle down him by inviting him to snuggle. Leaning into her side, he would soon fall fast asleep..

Early in my spiritual life, I mirrored my Xavier’s desire to remain active. Busyness made me feel accepted, important, and in control, while noise distracted me from fretting over my shortcomings and trials. Surrendering to rest only affirmed my feeble spiritual strength. So I avoided stillness and silence, doubting God could handle things without my help. But He is our refuge, no matter how many troubles or uncertainties surround us. The path ahead may seem long, scary, or overwhelming, but His love envelops us. He hears us, answers us, and stays with us . . . now and forever into eternity (Psalm 91).

We can embrace the quiet and lean into God’s unfailing love and constant presence. We can be still and rest in Him because we’re safe under the shelter of His unchanging faithfulness (v. 4).

PRAYER:

Father, today we are so THANKFU that we are allowed to lean up against you and fell the warmth of Your over shadowing Love! When it seems our lives are so busy and yet nit very productive, You allow us to draw near to Your side and find rest. Today we draw near ns we are still so we are able to hear Your tender voice! Amen.

Sunday, March 14 – Seeing the Father

Jesus answered: “Don’t you know me, Philip, even after I have been among you such a long time? Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father.”

John 14:9

According to legend, British conductor Sir Thomas Beecham once saw a distinguished-looking woman in a hotel foyer. Believing he knew her but unable to remember her name, he began a conversation with her. As the two talked, he vaguely remembered that she had a brother. Trying to get some idea of who she was he asked how her brother was doing and if he was still working at the same job. “Oh, he’s very well,” she said, “And he is still *king*.”

A case of mistaken identity can be embarrassing, as it was for Sir Beecham. But at other times it may be more serious, as it was for Jesus’ disciple Philip. The disciple knew Christ, of course, but he hadn’t fully appreciated who He was. He wanted Jesus to “*show [them] the Father,*” and Jesus responded, “*Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father*” (John 14:8-9). As God’s unique Son, Christ reveals the Father so perfectly that to know one is to know the other (vv. 10-11).

If we ever wonder what God is like in His character, personality, or concern for others, we only need to look to Jesus to find out. Christ’s character, kindness, love, and mercy reveal God’s character. And although our amazing, awesome God is beyond our complete comprehension and understanding, we have a tremendous gift in what He’s revealed of Himself in Jesus.

PRAYER:

Father, help me to grow in my knowledge and appreciation of who You are. May my life be so much like You that when people see me they see You. May we become a pure reflection of who You are to those around us daily. Amen.

