

DAILY DEVOTIONS

Monday, April 26 – Jesus is a Promise Keeper

And I will pray to the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever.

John 14:16

Jason wailed as his parents handed him over to Amy. It was the two-year-old's first time in the nursery while Mom and Dad attended the service—and he was not happy. Amy assured them he'd be fine. She tried to soothe him with toys and books, by rocking in a chair, walking around, standing still, and talking about what fun he could have. But everything was met with bigger tears and louder cries. Then she whispered five simple words in his ear: "I will stay with you." Peace and comfort quickly came.

Jesus offered His friends similar words of comfort during the week of His crucifixion: "The Father . . . will give you another advocate to help you and be with you forever—the Spirit of truth" (John 14:16–17). After His resurrection He gave them this promise: "Surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age" (Matthew 28:20). Jesus was soon to ascend to heaven, but He would send the Spirit to "stay" and live within His people.

We experience the Spirit's comfort and peace when our tears flow. We receive His guidance when we're wondering what to do (John 14:26). He opens our eyes to understand more of God (Ephesians 1:17–20), and He helps us in our weakness and prays for us (Romans 8:26–27).

He stays with us forever.

What do you need from Holy Spirit today?

PRAYER:

Father, How thankful I am that You remain always by my side, Jesus! I need You. Amen!

Tuesday, April 27 – Tender Mercy

“Blessed be the Lord, who has not left you this day without a close relative and may His name be famous in Israel!”

Ruth 4:14

When James was just six years old, his older brother David died tragically in an ice-skating accident. It was the day before David’s fourteenth birthday. In the years that followed, James tried his best to console his mother, Margaret, who in her deep grief sometimes reminded herself that her elder son would never have to face the challenges of growing up. In James Barrie’s fertile imagination, decades later that same idea would burgeon into inspiration for a much-loved children’s story character who never aged: Peter Pan. Like a flower pushing its way through pavement, good emerged even from the hard ground of unthinkable heartache.

How comforting is the thought that God, in an infinitely more creative way, is able to bring good out of our most difficult circumstances. A beautiful illustration of this occurs in the Old Testament story of Ruth. Naomi lost her two sons, leaving her without means or support. Her widowed daughter-in-law Ruth chose to remain with Naomi to help provide for her and to serve her God (Ruth 1:16). In the end, God’s provision brought them unexpected joy. Ruth remarried and had a child, “and they named him Obed. He was the father of Jesse, the father of David” (4:17). He would also be listed among the ancestors of Jesus (Matthew 1:5).

God’s tender mercy reaches beyond our ability to fathom and meets us in surprising places. Keep looking! Perhaps you’ll see it today.

PRAYER:

Father, I thank You that one day You’ll wipe every tear from my eyes because You’re greater than every heartache or difficulty I’ll ever face. Amen!

Wednesday, April 28 – Difficult People

A soft answer turns away wrath, But a harsh word stirs up anger. Proverbs 15:1

Lucy Worsley is a British historian and TV personality. Like most people who work in the TV industry, she sometimes receives nasty mail—in her case, over a mild speech impediment that makes her r's sound like w's. One person wrote this: “Lucy, I’ll be blunt: Please try harder to correct your lazy speech or remove r’s from your scripts—I couldn’t sit through your TV series because it made me so annoyed. Best Regards, Darren.”

For some people, insensitive comments like this might trigger an equally rude reply. But here’s how Lucy responded: “Oh Darren, I think you’ve used the anonymity of the internet to say something you probably wouldn’t say to my face. Please reconsider your unkind words! Lucy.”

Lucy’s measured response worked. Darren apologized and vowed not to send anyone such an email again.

“A gentle answer turns away wrath,” Proverbs says, “but a harsh word stirs up anger” (15:1). While the hot-tempered person stirs things up, the patient person calms them down (v. 18). When we get a critical comment from a colleague, a snide remark from a family member, or a nasty reply from a stranger, we have a choice: to speak angry words that fuel the flames or gentle words that douse them. May God help us to speak words that turn away wrath—and perhaps even help difficult people to change.

PRAYER:

Father, give me the ability to respond to people who want to be challenging with patient, gentle words. Amen.

Thursday, April 29 – Held Captive in Fear

But seek the Kingdom of God, and all these things shall be added to you.

Luke 12:31

In 2020, an outbreak of the coronavirus left the world in fear. People were quarantined, countries were put under lockdown, flights and large events were canceled. Those living in areas with no known cases still feared they might get the virus. Graham Davey, an expert in anxiety, believes that negative news broadcasts are “likely to make you sadder and more anxious.” A meme that circulated on social media showed a man watching the news on TV, and he asked how to stop worrying. In response, another person in the room reached over and flipped off the TV, suggesting that the answer might be a shift in focus!

Luke 12 gives us some advice to help us stop worrying: “*Seek His kingdom*” (v. 31). We seek God’s kingdom when we focus on the promise that His followers have an inheritance in heaven. When we face difficulty, we can shift our focus and remember that God sees us and knows our needs (vv. 24–30).

Jesus encourages His disciples: “*Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has been pleased to give you the kingdom*” (v. 32). God enjoys blessing us! Let’s worship Him, knowing He cares for us more than the birds of the air and the flowers of the field (vv. 22–29). Even in difficult times, we can read the Scriptures, pray for God’s peace, and trust in our good and faithful God.

PRAYER:

*Jesus, instead of living in fear or worry, help me to focus on Your care for me.
Amen!!*

Friday, April 30 – Comfort

“...God of all comfort, Who comforts us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort those who are in trouble, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.” 2 Corinthians 1:3,4

Radamenes was just a kitten when his owner dropped him off at an animal shelter, thinking he was too ill to recover. The kitten was nursed back to health and adopted by the vet. He then became a fulltime resident at the shelter and now spends his days “comforting” cats and dogs—just out of surgery or recovering from an illness—through his warm presence and gentle purr.

That story is a small picture of what our loving God does for us—and what we can do for others in return. He cares for us in our sickness and struggles, and He soothes us with His presence. Paul in 2 Corinthians calls our God, “*the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort*” (1:3). When we are discouraged, depressed, or mistreated, He’s there for us. When we turn to Him in prayer, He “*comforts us in all our troubles*” (v. 4).

But verse 4 doesn’t end there. Paul, who had experienced intense suffering, continues, “*so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves receive from God.*” Our Father comforts us, and when we’ve experienced His comfort, we’re enabled to comfort others.

Our compassionate Savior, who suffered for us, is more than able to comfort us in our suffering and distress (v. 5). He helps us through our pain and equips us to do the same for others.

PRAYER:

Father, thank You for Your comforting presence in my pain and sorrow. Help me in turn to be a comfort to others. Amen.

Saturday, May 1 – Seeing With New Eyes

Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others. Philippians 2:4

A video game, one that's become a cultural phenomenon, places a hundred players on a virtual island to compete until one player remains. Whenever a player eliminates you from the contest, you can continue to watch through that player's vantage point. As one journalist notes, "When you step into another player's shoes and inhabit their point of view, the emotional register . . . shifts from self-preservation to . . . communal solidarity. . . . You begin to feel invested in the stranger who, not too long ago, did you in."

Transformation happens whenever we open ourselves to see another's experience, looking beyond our own vision and encountering another's pain, fear, or hopes. When we follow Jesus' example and "do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit" and instead "in humility value others above [our]selves," then we notice things we would have missed otherwise (Philippians 2:3). Our concerns broaden. We ask different questions. Rather than being preoccupied with only our own needs or angst, we become invested in others' well-being. Rather than looking to "[our] own interests," we become committed "to the interests of . . . others" (v. 4). Rather than protecting what we assume we need to thrive, we joyfully pursue whatever helps others flourish.

With this transformed vision, we gain compassion for others. We discover new ways to love our family. We may even make a friend out of an enemy!

PRAYER:

Father, too often what I see is only my fear, my pain, or my lack. Help me to see my sisters and brothers. I want to truly see them and love them the way You see and love them. Amen.

Sunday, May 2 – Satisfied With Waiting

Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice...do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. Philippians 4:4-6

John Ortberg, one of my favorite writers once wrote, “Biblically, waiting is not just something we have to do until we get what we want. Waiting is part of the process of becoming what God wants us to be.”

You see, it is so important to understand scripture in context. For instance, Philippians 4:6 is often portrayed only as, "Try not to worry, be patient." While the passage does demand patience, the context provided by the statement "*Rejoice in the Lord always...*" adds the critical detail of the manner in which we wait!

As you eagerly await the answers to life's hard questions, don't miss the opportunity to actually bear fruit while you wait. Instead of merely waiting for the Lord to fulfill your desire, allow your heart to be aligned with His in active patience through prayer, reading of scripture, and receiving of guidance. These are the practical ways in which we "rejoice in the Lord always." In this way, you can experience the very best He has for you while you wait!

For when you are seeking first to glorify Christ in your life, then you will be truly satisfied to wait upon Him patiently. And who knows? Perhaps you will see the thing you are waiting for differently as a result of the journey you've just experienced.

PRAYER:

Father, thank You for Your word. Thank You for the way it directs us as we live our lives. I pray that you would help me to learn active patience, and in so doing "rejoice in You always." In Jesus Name, I pray, Amen.

