

DAILY DEVOTIONS

Monday, March 29 – Something Bigger

For we are god’s fellow workers; you are God’s field, you are God’s building.

1 Corinthians 3:9

More than two hundred volunteers assisted October Books, a bookstore in Southampton, England, move its inventory to an address down the street. Helpers lined the sidewalk and passed books down a “human conveyor belt.” Having witnessed the volunteers in action, a store employee said, “It was . . . a really moving experience to see people [helping]. . . . They wanted to be part of something bigger.”

We can also be part of something much bigger than ourselves. God uses us to reach the world with the message of His love. Because someone shared the message with us, we can turn to another person and pass it on. Paul compared this—the building of God’s kingdom—to growing a garden. Some of us plant seeds while some of us water the seeds. We are, as Paul said, “co-workers in God’s service” (1 Corinthians 3:9).

Each job is important, yet all are done in the power of God’s Spirit. By His Spirit, God enables people to thrive spiritually when they hear that He loves them and sent His Son to die in their place so that they can be free from their sin (John 3:16).

God does much of His work on earth through “volunteers” like you and me. Although we’re part of a community that’s much bigger than any contribution we may make, we can help it grow by working together to share His love with the world.

PRAYER:

Father, thank You for including me in Your plan to tell everyone about Your love. Help me to represent You well with my words and actions. Amen.

Tuesday, March 30 – Rest

What do people get for all the toil and anxious striving with which they labor under the sun?
Ecclesiastes 2:22

If you want to live longer, take a vacation! Forty years after a study of middle-aged, male executives who each had a risk of heart disease, researchers in Helsinki, Finland, followed up with their study participants. The scientists discovered something they hadn't been looking for in their original findings: the death rate was lower among those who had taken time off for vacations.

Work is a necessary part of life—a part God appointed to us even before our relationship with Him was fractured in Genesis 3. Solomon wrote of the seeming meaninglessness of work experienced by those not working for God's honor—recognizing its “anxious striving” and “grief and pain” (Ecclesiastes 2:22–23). Even when they're not actively working, he says their “minds do not rest” because they're thinking about what still needs to be done (v. 23).

We too might at times feel like we're “chasing after the wind” (v. 17) and grow frustrated by our inability to “finish” our work. But when we remember that God is part of our labor—our purpose—we can both work hard *and* take time to rest. We can trust Him to be our Provider, for He's the giver of all things. Solomon acknowledges that “without him, who can eat or find enjoyment?” (v. 25). Perhaps by reminding ourselves of that truth, we can work diligently for Him (Colossians 3:23) and also allow ourselves times of rest.

PRAYER:

Father, you bring meaning and purpose to all our work in the Kingdom. Teach us that we need to take our rest in You in every area of life. Whether in the ministry and providing for our families, we still need to take rest. Amen.

Wednesday, March 31 – Sweeter Than Honey

How sweet are your words to my taste, sweeter than honey to my mouth!

Psalm 119:103

On Chicago Day in October 1893, the city's theaters shut down because the owners figured everyone would be attending the World's Fair. Over seven hundred thousand people went, but Dwight Moody (1837-1899) wanted to fill a music hall at the other end of Chicago with preaching and teaching. His friend R. A. Torrey (1856-1928) was skeptical that Moody could draw a crowd on the same day as the fair. But by God's grace, he did. As Torrey later concluded, the crowds came because Moody knew "the one Book that this old world most longs to know—the Bible." Torrey longed for others to love the Bible as Moody did, reading it regularly with dedication and passion.

God through His Spirit brought people back to Himself at the end of the nineteenth century in Chicago, and He continues to speak today. We can echo the psalmist's love for God and His Scriptures as he exclaims, "How sweet are your words to my taste, sweeter than honey to my mouth!" (Psalm 119:103). For the psalmist, God's messages of grace and truth acted as a light for his path, a lamp for his feet (v. 105).

How can you grow more in love with the Savior and His message? As we immerse ourselves in Scripture, God will increase our devotion to Him and guide us, shining His light along the paths we walk.

PRAYER:

Gracious Father, You've given me the gift of Scripture, Your Holy Word. Help me to read it and digest it, that I might serve You faithfully. Amen.

Thursday, April 1– Knowing His Voice

I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me. John 10:14

One year for vacation Bible school, Ken’s church decided to bring in live animals to illustrate the Scripture. When he arrived to help, Ken was asked to bring a sheep inside. He had to practically drag the woolly animal by a rope into the church gymnasium. But as the week went on, it became less reluctant to follow him. By the end of the week, Ken didn’t have to hold the rope anymore; he just called the sheep and it followed, knowing it could trust him.

In the New Testament, Jesus compares Himself to a shepherd, stating that His people, the sheep, will follow Him because they know His voice (John 10:4). But those same sheep will run from a stranger or thief (v. 5). Like sheep, we (God’s children) get to know the voice of our Shepherd through our relationship with Him. And as we do, we see His character and learn to trust Him.

As we grow to know and love God, we’ll be discerning of His voice and better able to run from the “the thief [who] comes only to steal and kill and destroy” (v. 10)—from those who try to deceive and draw us away from Him. Unlike those false teachers, we can trust the voice of our Shepherd to lead us to safety.

PRAYER:

Father, thank You for being my loving Shepherd. Help me to recognize and follow Your voice only. Amen.

Friday, April 2 – God at Work

So when the centurion and those with him, who were guarding Jesus, saw the earthquake and the things that had happened, they feared greatly, saying, “Truly this was the Son of God”. Matthew 27:54

“God is crying.” Those were the words whispered by Bill Haley’s ten-year-old daughter as she stood in the rain with a group of multiethnic believers in Jesus. They had come to Virginia’s Shenandoah Valley to seek God and make sense of the legacy of racial discord in America. As they stood on the grounds where former slaves were buried, they joined hands in prayer. Then suddenly the wind began to blow, and it started to rain. As the leader called out for racial healing, the rain began to fall even harder. Those gathered believed that God was at work to bring reconciliation and forgiveness.

And so was it at Calvary—God was at work. After the crucified Jesus breathed His last, “The earth shook, the rocks split and the tombs broke open” (Matthew 27:51-52). Though some had denied who Jesus was, a centurion assigned to guard Him had come to a different conclusion: “When the centurion and those with him . . . saw the earthquake and all that had happened, they were terrified, and exclaimed, ‘Surely he was the Son of God!’ ” (v. 54).

In the death of Jesus, God was at work providing forgiveness of sin for all who believe in Him. “God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people’s sins against them” (2 Corinthians 5:19). And what better way to demonstrate that we’ve been forgiven by God than to extend forgiveness to each other.

PRAYER:

Father, thank You for loving the world so much that You sent Jesus so I can be forgiven. Help me to demonstrate forgiveness toward others by the way I live. Amen.

Saturday, April 3 – Royal Descendants

So in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith. Galatians 3:26

After meeting the Queen of England at a ball in Scotland, Sylvia and her husband received a message that the royal family would like to visit them for tea. Sylvia started cleaning and prepping, nervous about hosting the royal guests. Before they were due to arrive, she went outside to pick some flowers for the table, her heart racing. Then she sensed God reminding her that He's the King of kings and that He's with her every day. Immediately she felt peaceful and thought, "After all, it's only the Queen!"

Sylvia is right. As the apostle Paul noted, God is the "King of kings and Lord of lords" (1 Timothy 6:15) and those who follow Him are "children of God" (Galatians 3:26). When we belong to Christ, we're heirs of Abraham (v. 29). We no longer are bound by division—such as that of race, social class, or gender—for we're "all one in Christ Jesus" (v. 28). We're children of the King.

Although Sylvia and her husband had a marvelous meal with the Queen, I don't have an invitation from the monarch anytime soon. But I love the reminder that the high and low are all God's children. And that those who believe in Jesus wholeheartedly (v. 27) can be God's children.

How could holding onto this truth shape the way we live today?

PRAYER:

King of Kings and Lord of Lords, thank you for coming to this earth to take on the robe of an earthy man. You suffered greatly for our sins and failures, yet You did it with such great love. A love that has made us who know You in the free pardon of sin, Royal Descendants and joint heirs to the throne. Thank You for loving us! Amen.

Sunday, March 28 – Victory at the Cross

"But I tell you truly, there are some standing here who shall not taste death till they see the kingdom of God". Luke 9:27

After the miracle of feeding the five thousand, Jesus had been alone praying when His disciples joined Him. Jesus asked, "Who do the crowds say that I am?" They answered, "John the Baptist, but some say Elijah; and others say that one of the old prophets has risen again." He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" Peter answered and said, "You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God"" .Luke 9:18-20

Jesus knew people would be talking about the miracle. But who did they think performed it? He warned them to tell no one, saying, "There are some standing here who shall not taste death till they see the kingdom of God."

The first time I studied this, I thought "What did Jesus mean? His disciples died a long time ago and we are still waiting to see the kingdom of God." But I lacked revelation. I assumed He was speaking of heaven, but in actuality, He was referring to retrieved authority.

In the beginning, when Adam sinned, the authority and dominion God had given man was transferred to Satan. Jesus came to retrieve this authority. The Bible says: *"For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil"* (1 John 3:8).

After the miracle of feeding the multitudes, Jesus said, *"I tell you truly, there are some standing here who shall not taste death till they see the [retrieved authority] of God."* He was speaking of His victory at the cross. It was drawing near.

This is proven in another context of scripture:

"Now it came to pass, about eight days after these sayings, that He took Peter, John, and James and went up on the mountain to pray. As He prayed, the appearance of His face was altered, and His robe became white and glistening. And behold, two men talked with Him, who were Moses and Elijah, who appeared in glory and spoke of His decease which He was about to accomplish at Jerusalem". Luke 9:28-31

This passage is often referred to as the Transfiguration. As He prayed and talked with His two visitors, the countenance of Jesus changed this day.

But what's more interesting is their use of the words "decease" and "accomplish" in the same sentence. The words "endure" or "suffer" might seem more appropriate, but not the word accomplish, right?

Wrong.

"But I tell you truly, there are some standing here who shall not taste death till they see the [retrieved authority] of God." His disciples didn't understand. Then a week later, a couple of cheerleaders from heaven encouraged Jesus of what was about to take place. Moses and Elijah spoke with Him about His coming death, which was about to be ACCOMPLISHED at Jerusalem. Their mission was to encourage our Savior, for He was about to retrieve authority for all humanity for all time! His death on the cross, as hard as it might be in the flesh, was going to be a great victory for God and man.

Hebrews 12:1-2 says, *"...for the joy that was set before Him [He] endured the cross."*

In other words, He looked ahead at the victory that would be accomplished. He wasn't focused on the cross itself, or the pain of the moment. Instead, His focus was on the resurrection!

This passage says He *"endured the cross"* which is absolutely true. But Moses and Elijah came to remind Him of His purpose—He was about to accomplish the greatest victory that has ever been or ever will be! The cross wasn't going to be easy, and God didn't want His Son to lose heart, so He sent these messengers to remind Him His coming decease would be a great victory.

No wonder His countenance changed! *"As He prayed, the appearance of His face was altered, and His robe became white and glistening."* Our countenance changes too when our focus and meditation is on the right thing; our victory in Christ.

So be encouraged today! God has rallied all of heaven behind you and I that we might run with endurance the race that is set before us. Remember, we are of those who have not tasted death, yet have seen the retrieved authority of God—for JESUS HAS RISEN!

PRAYER

Father, we rejoice in the power of the resurrection of Your Son Jesus Christ. We are thankful for our Victory at the Cross today and forever. Amen.