

# *Good News Daily*

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## **Sunday, February 11**

Luke 9:18-27 *Then he said to them all: "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me."* (v.23 NIV)

This is the kind of verse that stops me in my tracks. It is a hard saying for me. Peter might have been thinking, "Great! Jesus is the Messiah; the time has come—victory and power are right around the corner." Jesus told him, however, that the divine plan involves sacrifice and service, not power. The disciples had lived with the expectation that the Messiah would be a conquering king who would restore the kingdom. God's plan turned everything upside down—Jesus would suffer, die on a cross, and be raised to life.

If I am honest I have to admit that I often do not deny self, but rely on self. I remember reading once, "Jesus understood that trusting God means non-trust and non-reliance on the security the world offers." The question, "Who do you say I am?" is the sum and substance of making a decision to follow Him as the Lord of my life. The essence of discipleship is humility before God and it begins with denial of self—and that's a challenge for me.

Proverbs 26:1-23; Psalms 148, 149, 150; 2 Corinthians 3:7-18

## **Monday, February 12**

Philippians 2:1-13 *If you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any fellowship with the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, then make my joy complete, by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose.* (vv.1-2)

Many years ago, the Lord laid it on my heart to memorize Paul's Letter to the Philippians. In order not to lose it, I often recite all 107 verses as I'm about my daily tasks, on a road trip to visit my daughter, lying awake in the wee hours of the morning, or with my husband on a train trip into the city. Though Paul's letter was written to the church in Philippi, his words of encouragement and exhortation have spoken to me as an individual many times since I first memorized the letter. When I get off the track of being "like-minded," verses 3 and 4 remind me of my selfishness and need for humility. Paul knew an intimacy with Christ that enabled him to know what it was to "have the same love, being one in spirit and purpose." Paul's entire life found its meaning in Christ. Hiding Philippians in my heart, I am without excuse in knowing how I need to respond to the many circumstances of life within the church and within my daily life.

Proverbs 27:1-6, 10-12; Psalm 25; John 18:15-18, 25-27

## **Tuesday, February 13**

John 18:28-38 *“You are a king, then!” said Pilate. Jesus answered, “You are right in saying I am a king. In fact, for this reason I was born, and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone on the side of truth listens to me.” “What is truth?” Pilate asked. With this he went out again to the Jews and said, “I find no basis for a charge against him.”* (vv.37-38)

We have so much deception today in advertising, in manipulation of the truth by the media, and the popular belief that “what is true for one person is not necessarily true for another,” that without a standard we have nothing by which to measure truth. The question for today’s living, I believe, is not what is truth but is there a source of truth and where do I find it? Thanks be to God that in His grace He has not left us alone to make up our own truths! I am so grateful that He is the source of truth and His Word is our standard of measure. Simply put, God’s truth is revealed to us in Jesus (John 14:6) and He has given us the gift of the Spirit of truth to be with us forever (John 14:17). In his Letter to the Thessalonians, Paul urges followers of Christ to “Test everything” (1 Thessalonians 5:21). We must not accept the claims of others without question, but test them to see that they are in agreement with God’s truth.

Proverbs 30:1-4, 24-33; Psalms 26, 28; Philippians 3:1-11

## **Wednesday, February 14**

Hebrews 12:1-14 *Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.* (v.2)

“Let us fix our eyes on Jesus.” These words from Hebrews offer an excellent place to begin our Lenten journey. I recently heard a person offer advice about the game of golf, specifically how it is often won or lost on the greens. He described how important it is to “fix your eyes” first on the hole and then to “fix your eyes” on the ball until the putter makes contact and the ball is on its way to the “target”. Jesus needs to be our “target”. He continues to call us into a deeper and more intimate relationship, yet we realize how easy it is to be distracted and to miss the joy he longs to share with us.

We know what’s ahead as we begin this season of repentance and reflection. Jesus was willing to endure the cross and become “the author and perfecter” of the faith that makes it possible for us to enter into the throne room of God with the assurance that we have a friend sitting at the right hand of the Father.

Amos 5:6-15; Psalms 95, 32, 143; Luke 18:9-14

## **Thursday, February 15**

Habakkuk 3:1-18 *Yet I will rejoice in the LORD, I will be joyful in God my Savior.* (v.18)

It is easy to take our eyes off the Lord and look at our troubles. The evil acts that led to the collapse of the World Trade Center and the death of so many on September 11, 2001 and the tsunami on December 26, 2004 in Southeast Asia, along with all the recent catastrophes around the world, raise the question for us (and especially for those who continue to suffer), “How long, O LORD, must I call for help, but you do not listen?” (Habakkuk 1:2). Is God not listening to my elderly friend’s plea to be free of the daily pain she experiences in her back? As a volunteer at a pregnancy health center, is God not listening to my prayers for women I meet who, even after seeing an ultrasound of their baby, choose to sacrifice their unborn on the altar of selfishness? Just as Habakkuk could not see nor understand all that God was doing, I must rest in the assurance that God is in control of His world and the events of today. My job is to “be joyful in God my Savior.”

Psalm 37:1-18; Philippians 3:12-21; John 17:1-8

## **Friday, February 16**

Philippians 4:1-9 *Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.* (vv.6-7)

“I have really exciting news! I’m heading for Ireland in a few days for an 8-day, 690 mile bicycle race with my cycling team!” So began our son’s telephone conversation with us. As a mother of two adult children and grandmother of four beautiful grandchildren, I pray daily for the concerns of our family including the Lord’s protection. It was only natural then, as soon as we ended our phone conversation with our son, to bow my head in prayer asking the Lord’s safe keeping for him and all the other riders participating in the race. I also asked the Lord’s protection for our son’s wife and two young boys while he was away. I prayed too for my own mixed emotions of excitement and anxiety. Thankfully, I know the One I can run to any time anxious thoughts overtake me. The circumstances hadn’t changed—our son was still going to Ireland—but having placed him and his family in our Lord’s hands, my anxiety was replaced with His peace. Thanks be to God!

Ezekiel 18:1-4, 25-32; Psalms 95, 31; John 17:9-19

## **Saturday, February 17**

Philippians 4:10-20 *And my God will meet all your needs according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus.* (v.19)

A number of years ago I worked with a small, non-profit agency that matched sister families who wanted to share their friendship and

material abundance with families of lesser means. As the families got acquainted and their friendship progressed, it was not uncommon for the helper family to get requests for designer clothing, particularly designer jeans. It was often the children in the family who needed jeans, but they wanted designer jeans.

How much of what we buy today is because we want it or because we need it? In the near future, we will be purchasing a new car. I went to the Internet to get as much information as I could about how we should go about buying our new car. Somewhat to my surprise, one of the first recommendations was to assess not what we wanted in a car, but what we needed.

As I look back over my life, I can see how lovingly God has taken care to provide for my needs and, in many cases, wisely spared me from my wants.

Ezekiel 39:21-29; Psalms 30, 32; John 17:20-26

*by Gail and Jack Potter*

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