

"Seize the Day!"

This is the day the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it. Psalm 118:24 CSB

I did not grow up in a Christian home, but most days before we walked out the door my dad would bellow out these words: "Seize the day!"

In time I came to learn that he meant to make the most of each day. I still hear his words from time to time. When I first became a Christian and stumbled across this verse—Psalm 118:24—I realized that God had been preparing me for a life in Christ long before I knew it.

This verse is now the first one I quote each day when I wake and thank God for the day. Today is God's gift to you and me, and He has many good things in store for us.

Through our profession in the finished work of Jesus Christ we have been saved from sin and death. We have been sanctified—made holy and blameless by the blood of Jesus Christ. We have been sealed with the person and power of the Holy Spirit to guide us in all truth and right living and, lastly, in Christ our eternity is secured.

That's already a pretty good day! Don't be caught up with looking back—glean all that is good and learn from the bad. God is making a masterpiece. Don't be consumed with looking ahead. See today for all that God wants to do in you and through you. Many of the day's opportunities are passed over because we are consumed with the future and have stepped over them instead of stepping into them.

There is no more important day than today! Stay focused on what God has in store for you today. It's the best way to live!

"This is the day": Seize it! Make the most of it for the glory of God and the cause of Christ. In this you will have lived well, my friend.

Submitted by:

Bob Bartlett
robert.m.bartlett@gmail.com
 Cottonwood Community Church
 Grand Forks, North Dakota

One-Year Bible Reading

Genesis 1:1-2:25
 Matthew 1:1-2:12
 Psalm 1:1-6
 Proverbs 1:1-6

Friday, January 3

Walk as Children of Light

*With weeping they will come,
 And by supplication I will lead them;
 I will make them walk by streams of waters,
 On a straight path in which they will not stumble Jeremiah 31:9*

*And their life will be like a watered garden,
 And they will never languish again. Jeremiah 31:12*

. . . for at one time you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light. Ephesians 5:8 ESV

Last May my husband John and I were hiking in the mountains of northern Portugal in the national forest. Once John got the *On Foot* tour company's GPS guidance working on his phone, we were free of the concern over losing our way and could really revel in the freshness of springtime all around us. For me, the foremost beauties were the rushing streams from many directions and the wildflowers of various shapes, heights, and colors. Over mountaintops, through valleys, and along shaded hillsides we crisscrossed or walked beside streams filled to the brim by spring rains, sometimes our very path becoming a stream! The scene in Jeremiah 31 of God regathering His people, some of the most beautiful images in the Bible, could have been set in Portugal, rather than Israel. Life as a watered garden was easy to picture there.

Among the flowers my favorite became the small, white anemone. This flower has five petals that curve together to form a cup with a gold center. It always looks up to the sun and fills with light. Whenever I saw one or more along the trail, I was instantly encouraged. Anemones became to me a picture of Spirit-filled Christians. We have the light and life of Christ inside us. May we be those who walk as "children of light," giving grace to all who cross our path.

Submitted by:

Dotty Vanderhorst
dottyleevan@gmail.com
 Cornerstone Community Church
 Lenexa, Kansas

One-Year Bible Reading

Genesis 5:1-7:24
 Matthew 3:7-4:11
 Psalm 3:1-8
 Proverbs 1:10-19

Wanting to Know, Having to Wait

Whoever has my commands and keeps them is the one who loves me. The one who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love them and show myself to them. John 14:21 NIV

Joseph had fled with Mary and Jesus to Egypt to escape the wrath of King Herod. After a period of time, Joseph was given a dream from God (Matthew 2:20) in which God encouraged him to return to Israel since Herod had died. Just two verses later, having arrived in southern Israel (Judea), Joseph was given a second dream in which God warned him to leave Judea because Herod's son was now in charge and was also a threat to Jesus' life. Joseph awoke from his second dream and left Judea for northern Israel (Galilee) where Jesus would be raised in Nazareth. Why did God give Joseph two dreams in leading him to Nazareth? Could God not have given Joseph just one dream while he was in Egypt: "Joseph, rise and take the child and His mother to Nazareth"? I'm sure God could have, and, given the character of Joseph, I think he would have followed God's admonition. It seems, however, for reasons we don't know, God chose instead to lead Joseph decision by decision. Perhaps that is the very reason why God used more than one dream—He wanted Joseph to trust Him for the next step, the next decision.

Sometimes God leads us that way, decision-by-decision, without giving us in advance the full vision of the path that lies ahead. Perhaps you are like me: I can be annoyed by unanswered questions, by unresolved dilemmas, by wanting to know but having to wait! Be content to see the next step, the next decision of obedience you know you must take. Patiently let God lead you with each step of obedience given you. What next step does God want you to take this coming year? I assure you, if taken, He will lead you on to the next.

Submitted by:

Tim Cavanaugh
cavanaugh.tim@gmail.com
 Firehouse Church
 Denver, Colorado

One-Year Bible Reading

Genesis 3:1-4:26
 Matthew 2:13-3:6
 Psalm 2:1-12
 Proverbs 1:7-9

Saturday, January 4

A Genuine Walk with God

O God, You are my God; I shall seek You earnestly; my soul thirsts for You, my flesh yearns for You, In a dry and weary land where there is no water. Psalm 63:1

Seeking God early in the morning, first thing, and *believing* that "*all these things will be added*" to me, is a habit my husband and I developed as singles and continue as a married couple of 36 years.

Before I get out of bed I greet the Lord, thank Him for the day, ask Him to help me yield to His will today, and then read His Word. Over the breakfast table our family shares what verse God has placed on each of our hearts. With young children we read the Bible or Bible storybook together and have the children draw pictures, write a Proverbs verse, and once in a while, act out a parable.

Keeping a walk with God genuine means that throughout the day the Bible is referred to, especially a verse or passage read that day or recently. God's Word is living and active—often what we have read is what God wants us to hold onto or obey that day! When there was a squabble we quoted, "Stop a fight before it starts," or if there was disappointment, we encouraged one another to "Rejoice in the Lord always." I have chosen to confess anger more quickly because I had shared my verse, "For the anger of man does not produce the righteousness of God" (James 1:20).

One extended quiet time, in my study of the first two chapters of Luke, I believe I was given an acrostic: CPR. I felt that my daily time with the Lord was not impacting my whole day. C stands for "Connect" with the Holy Spirit, P for "Pray" specifically for things today, and R for "Reread" what I had earlier written down. This has literally breathed life back into my day and helped me keep my walk genuine. I received a note from the oldest of our eleven children recently which said, "Thanks for raising us in the Word and living with Jesus."

Submitted by:

Jan Gordon
thejangordon@gmail.com
 Cypress Church
 Gainesville, Florida

One-Year Bible Reading

Genesis 8:1-10:32
 Matthew 4:12-25
 Psalm 4:1-8
 Proverbs 1:20-23

With

So we keep on praying for you, asking our God to enable you to live a life worthy of his call. May he give you the power to accomplish all the good things your faith prompts you to do. 2 Thessalonians 1:11 NLT

My wife Lisa and I are musicians. One way we love to serve is by creating Bible songs just for kids. We call it "WORDology." Between 2012 and 2015 we made four albums full of kids' Scripture songs.

I thought I was done.

But then about a year ago we were playing at a funeral. After the service, someone handed us an envelope. We assumed it was payment for the music we provided. But it wasn't.

It turns out we were included in the deceased's will.

She had left us a small sum of money to help fund our next WORDology album. The one I had no plans to do. Her gift got us thinking, and we decided it was time to try another one. Just one problem, though.

Writing and recording a whole album is a lot of work.

Our church is going through a restructuring, and my job description is changing and possibly increasing. I'm not sure I can add this on.

But what about the gift . . . ?

The above verse helped me. It's easy for me to think of things I do *for* God. But I don't think I have the time or energy to do this for God. But there is an alternative.

We could do it *with* God.

What is the Lord putting on your heart? Something that feels like "too much"? Maybe that's the point. He wants to accomplish His will through you, and in relationship with you.

With.

Submitted by:

Spencer Bernard
spencerbernard@evergreenbloomington.com
 Evergreen Churches
 Bloomington, Minnesota

One-Year Bible Reading

Genesis 11:1-13:4
 Matthew 5:1-26
 Psalm 5:1-12
 Proverbs 1:24-28

Tuesday, January 7

The Chicken or the Egg?

...the woman was deceived and became a transgressor. 1 Timothy 2:14 ESV

Which came first, the chicken or the egg? It's the epitome of silly questions. Yet, silly or not, the Bible has the answer. The first chapter of Genesis says that God first created fully mature animals and then commanded them to reproduce.

Have you ever wondered the same thing about deception and sin? Are our minds first deceived, causing us to helplessly yield to sin? Or is sin some innate sense of rebellion that wells up within and twists our thinking, pushing our minds into finding many reasons to justify giving into it?

It's probably a lot like chickens. Eggs come from chickens, and chickens come from eggs. So sin comes from deception, and deception comes from sin. Yet, again, if we look back to the beginning of all things, we find that the Bible has the answer concerning which came first. Deception did. Paul summarizes the story above in 1 Timothy 2.

Deception is a part of every sin. We may be deceived and believe that God is stupid to issue such a dumb command. We may believe that He doesn't love us and is intentionally holding us back from what will satisfy us. We may believe that we'll be hopelessly alone unless we always please those around us. We may believe that there will be no consequences to disobeying God. The list could be unending.

Yet understanding that some element of deception is a part of every sin gives me hope. The problem is not, "That's just the way I am." It is the way I am, but I'm often that way because I'm deceived.

Wherever you're struggling with sin, ask God to show you where you're deceived. Look at the roots, the thought patterns, behind your behavior. Every decision stems from a belief. Learn to fortify your heart with truth, so you can avoid deception, sin, and its horrible consequences.

Submitted by:

Dave Bovenmyer
dave@stonebrook.org
 Stonebrook Community Church
 Ames, Iowa

One-Year Bible Reading

Genesis 16:1-18:15
 Matthew 6:1-24
 Psalm 7:1-17
 Proverbs 2:1-5

God's Pattern

Therefore, my brethren, you also were made to die to the Law through the body of Christ, so that you might be joined to another, to Him who was raised from the dead, in order that we might bear fruit for God. Romans 7:4

Have you ever made your own clothes? I learned to sew in Home Ec class in eighth grade. I loved to pick out the exact pattern of what I wanted to make and then roam the store to pick out just the right fabric to make an outfit unique to me. After buying everything, I would come home eager to lay out the entire piece of material, pick out the right pieces from the pattern package, and place them on the fabric just right so that all the stripes would match up perfectly. After pinning the pattern to the fabric, I would cut away the unnecessary cloth so that I only had what I needed. I would then spend a few hours putting together the pieces to make my new clothes.

Do you often think about how much God wants to make you into a new person? Paul tells us in the above verse that we were made to die to the Law. Do you sometimes find yourself lying down on the fabric of the law, still trying to impress God and others with your good works? Do you want to share your quiet time thoughts with others so they will admire your wisdom and insight into Scripture? I sometimes do. Yet we were made to die to our own works of the law.

Every day God wants us to lay ourselves down on His fabric of life and let God cut away the unnecessary cloth of the Law so that only the pieces of grace remain. He can then put those pieces together into a beautiful garment unique to each of us so that He can bear fruit through us for His glory.

Submitted by:

Barbara Wilson
barbarakwilson29@gmail.com
 Grace Community Church
 Raleigh, North Carolina

One-Year Bible Reading

Genesis 13:5-15:21
 Matthew 5:27-48
 Psalm 6:1-10
 Proverbs 1:29-33

Wednesday, January 8

The Spiritual Heimlich Maneuver

As for what fell among the thorns, they are those who hear, but as they go on their way they are choked by the cares and riches and pleasures of life, and their fruit does not mature. Luke 8:14

The Heimlich Maneuver is a procedure for dislodging a piece of food from a person's throat when he is choking. If that procedure is not performed within a relatively short period of time after the object has lodged and cut off the air supply to the choking individual, she will die!

There are clear signs when someone is choking: inability to speak, a panicked look, and clutching the throat. We can be also be choking spiritually (Luke 8:14). There are clear signs of spiritual choking too. Apathy toward God, anxiety, slavery to sin, despair, and frustration are all signs of spiritual choking.

Thankfully, there is also a spiritual Heimlich maneuver! We are spiritually choked when we believe lies from our enemy whose very goal is to cut off spiritual life from us (John 10:10). In John 8:32—"and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free"—Jesus tells us that it is the truth of His Word that will dislodge the lies that choke us spiritually. When we are experiencing the signs of spiritual choking, it is of vital importance that we immediately begin to seek God in His Word so that He can dislodge the lies that suck spiritual life from us with the truth of His Word and the gospel of Jesus Christ. If you will not give up, you will find that He dislodges the lies and gives you the life-giving and joy-producing flow of faith in His Word and in the saving work of Jesus Christ: "So faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ" (Romans 10:17).

If you are not sure where to start, may I suggest reading the gospel of John?

Submitted by:

David Brandts
davidbrandts1@gmail.com
 New Life Church
 Cincinnati, Ohio

One-Year Bible Reading

Genesis 18:16-19:38
 Matthew 6:25-7:14
 Psalm 8:1-9
 Proverbs 2:6-15

An Immense Difference

Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come. 2 Corinthians 5:17

It's a rare believer who grasps all that happens to him the moment he receives Jesus Christ as his Lord and Savior. Many times I've heard a believer witness to an unbeliever with the statement, "The only difference between you and me is I'm forgiven and you're not." What! That's the only difference?!

I know the heart behind the statement is sincere, and the person is simply trying to demonstrate that God's gift of eternal life is freely given on the basis of faith rather than our works. But it's sloppy communication and sloppy theology, for the difference between every Christian and every non-Christian is immense. We must understand it, and we must communicate it to one another and to the lost.

In fact, this verse says you are a whole "new creature." We are changed on a very fundamental level. Says who? Says God! And herein lies a great challenge. You may not feel fundamentally different. You may not look fundamentally different. You live in the same world you lived in before you were saved, and you have to function in that world just as you did before.

But God says you're different. And so it comes down to a matter of faith. *Who you gonna believe: God or your feelings?*

Grasping our identity in Christ is not unlike salvation. Most of us feel we need to earn salvation. When presented with the message of grace, we must choose to embrace salvation by faith in Jesus apart from the works of the Law. It's the same with our growth into spiritual maturity. Believing what God says about us rather than the way we feel will transform our lives. In Christ you are new! Believe it with all your heart!

Submitted by:

Tom Short
tomkshort@gmail.com
 Tom Short Campus Ministries
 Columbus, Ohio

One-Year Bible Reading

Genesis 20:1-22:24
 Matthew 7:15-29
 Psalm 9:1-12
 Proverbs 2:16-22

Saturday, January 11

Deep Change – 3

Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own? 1 Corinthians 6:19

Yesterday we began to look at the implications of Christ buying us back (*redeeming* us) from the slave market of sin. First, Jesus Himself paid for us. Second, He paid a big price, indeed, the ultimate price, in order to purchase us. Nothing else would have worked. Nothing else could meet God's demands. Only the precious blood of the Son of God was sufficient to redeem you and me from the slave-market of sin. Third, because Jesus redeemed us, we are no longer our own. We belong to Him now (1 Corinthians 6:19). Finally, because He purchased us at such a great price, we ought to glorify Him with our body (1 Corinthians 6:20).

Brother and sister, a deep, fundamental change has occurred in our lives. We once were slaves to sin, but because of what Jesus accomplished on the cross, we no longer are. We are now under new ownership. We have a new master. He bought us to set us free.

Do you believe it?

Years ago, when slaves were set free, they often didn't know what to do. They had been so conditioned to be slaves that freedom made them uncomfortable and insecure. Many didn't even believe they were really free. And so they continued to live the same they had before their emancipation.

In a similar way, even though you have been spiritually emancipated, you might not feel free. But we walk by faith in God's word, not by our feelings. Choose to believe the amazing truths related to our redemption. Remind yourself every day that you are free from sin, and that you now belong to Jesus. Do this and your life will never be the same. You will be free indeed!

Submitted by:

Tom Short
tomkshort@gmail.com
 Tom Short Campus Ministries
 Columbus, Ohio

One-Year Bible Reading

Genesis 24:52-26:16
 Matthew 8:18-34
 Psalm 10:1-15
 Proverbs 3:7-8

Free Indeed – 2

Knowing that you were not redeemed with perishable things like silver or gold from your futile way of life inherited from your forefathers, but with precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, the blood of Christ. 1 Peter 1:18-19

God's word is dynamic. A danger of studying theology is that we reduce it simply to "head knowledge." We dissect it, analyze it, and systematize it to death. Certainly, we want to be accurate, but God desires truth in the "innermost being" (Psalm 51:6). That's where I want His truth to be at home in my life—in my innermost being, and it's where I hope it dwells in you as well.

Like many words describing our identity in Christ, *redemption* is not a word commonly used in our day-to-day communication. It refers to the gaining or regaining possession of something in exchange for a payment or clearing of debt. In New Testament times, the word was used to describe a slave being purchased from the slave market. How does this relate to us?

Scripture teaches that people who commit sin become the slaves of sin (John 8:34). The only way to be set free from this slavery to sin is through the Son of God; if Jesus sets us free, we will be free indeed! (John 8:36).

How are we set free? We must be purchased (*redeemed*) out of the slave market of sin. What price must be paid to buy us? Something far more valuable than silver or gold; the price of our redemption is the precious blood of Christ (1 Peter 1:18-19).

Consider for a moment the implications of what I've just shared. First, we were slaves to sin. **You** were a slave of sin. Notice I said "**were**." You are no longer a slave of sin for you have been bought out of the slave market of sin! The Son has set you free!

Tomorrow let's look at more implications of this new freedom.

Submitted by:

Tom Short
tomkshort@gmail.com
 Tom Short Campus Ministries
 Columbus, Ohio

One-Year Bible Reading

Genesis 23:1-24:51
 Matthew 8:1-17
 Psalm 9:13-20
 Proverbs 3:1-6

Sunday, January 12

A Day in the Life

The wise shall inherit glory, but shame shall be the legacy of fools. Proverbs 3:25 NKJV

The Book of Proverbs promises wisdom for life. The proverbs are seemingly sprinkled randomly—particularly after chapter 9—one dissimilar verse next to another. Why? I think it's because that's how life hits us: one random, dissimilar challenge after another. We would do more than well to memorize and meditate in Proverbs as we sail through life.

What follows today—and the next two—is a (mostly) fictitious account of how a man's behavior is guided by Proverbs as he navigates through one typical day. Let's start with his alarm going off.

He wakes in the morning and considers hitting the snooze button . . . until he remembers: "*How long will you slumber, O sluggard? When will you rise from your sleep? A little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep—so shall your poverty come on you like a robber, and your need like an armed man*" (6:9-11). So he rises immediately from bed to face the day.

He feels pinched for time and considers skipping morning devotions with the family . . . until he remembers: "*Hear, my children, the instruction of a father, and give attention to know understanding; for I give you good doctrine; do not forget my law*" (4:1-2). So he gathers his family and they read a chapter in Proverbs, verse by verse for each who can read. Everyone shares a verse that stands out and then each prays.

He charges out the door, sees that the dog hasn't been fed and thinks, "She can wait. I've got to get to work!" . . . until he remembers: "*A righteous man regards the life of his animal*" (12:10). So he pauses to feed her.

Walking with Jesus, empowered by the Holy Spirit and the Bible, is a winning synthesis! More tomorrow in "A Day in the Life."

Submitted by:

Tom Dunham
tomdunham43@yahoo.com
 Cottonwood Community Church
 Grand Forks, North Dakota

One-Year Bible Reading

Genesis 26:17-27:46
 Matthew 9:1-17
 Psalm 10:16-18
 Proverbs 3:9-10

A Day in the Life – 2

The wise shall inherit glory, but shame shall be the legacy of fools.

Proverbs 3:25 NKJV

Nothing shapes our character and guides our behavior like the Word of God. Here is more from "A Day in the Life" of a man guided by the Book of Proverbs.

As he backs out of the driveway, his tire accidentally rolls over some of the neighbor's manicured grass. His fanatic neighbor sees this and runs out yelling. Our guy is tempted to answer fire with fire . . . until he remembers: "A soft answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger" (15:1). So he humbly apologizes and defuses the situation.

As he drives off, he sees the dog across the street eating his own vomit. It reminds him of a fool: "As a dog returns to his own vomit, so a fool repeats his folly" (26:11).

He steps on the gas as he is running late for work . . . until he remembers: "he sins who hastens with his feet" (19:2). So he eases up.

At work his manager asks him to do a task that is not in his job description. His impulse is to resist . . . until he remembers: "The wise in heart will receive commands" (10:8). He then cheerfully follows the directive.

He is tempted to shortchange a client so his company makes more money—and his bonus is padded . . . until he remembers: "A false balance is an abomination to the LORD, but a just weight is His delight" (11:1). He then handles the contract with integrity.

He is tempted to lust . . . until he remembers: "Drink water from your own cistern, and running water from your own well. . . . Let your fountain be blessed and rejoice with the wife of your youth" (5:15-18). Temptation overcome!

More "random challenges" tomorrow!

Submitted by:

Tom Dunham

tomdunham43@yahoo.com

Cottonwood Community Church

Grand Forks, North Dakota

One-Year Bible Reading

Genesis 28:1-29:35

Matthew 9:18-38

Psalms 11:1-7

Proverbs 3:11-12

A Day in the Life – 3

The wise shall inherit glory, but shame shall be the legacy of fools.

Proverbs 3:25 NKJV

With the Word of God as his compass, our godly guy navigates through his day. His character isn't perfect, of course. He loses his temper with a co-worker but quickly apologizes. And rather than sink into the dumps for his failing, he remembers this: "For a righteous man may fall seven times, and rise again . . ." (24:16). Encouraged, he moves on.

He receives his paycheck: \$3,600.00. He thinks of all the bills begging for his attention, but then remembers these words: "Honor the LORD with your possessions, and with the firstfruits of all your increase; so your barns will be filled with plenty, and your vats will overflow with new wine" (3:9-10). The first check he writes is to his church for \$360.00.

He gets word that Stan in receiving has been terminated. Stan has a history of being headstrong and repeating the same mistakes. It reminds our guy of the dog he saw on his way to work: "As a dog returns to his own vomit, so a fool repeats his folly" (26:11). What a pity!

His salary is more than enough to meet his family's needs, but he has the option to work late. The extra income is tempting . . . until he remembers: "Do not overwork to be rich . . . riches certainly make themselves wings; they fly away like an eagle toward heaven" (23:4-5). He grabs his satchel and heads home!

Later, with the kids in bed, his wife shares insecurities about her work as a homemaker. He fortifies her with Proverbs 31: "Who can find a virtuous wife? For her worth is far above rubies . . ." (31:10-31). Encouraged, she sleeps peacefully.

As followers of Jesus, the Holy Spirit takes the Word of God and energizes us to live the truly abundant life!

Submitted by:

Tom Dunham

tomdunham43@yahoo.com

Cottonwood Community Church

Grand Forks, North Dakota

One-Year Bible Reading

Genesis 30:1-31:16

Matthew 10:1-23

Psalms 12:1-8

Proverbs 3:13-15

Collecting

Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break in or steal; for where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. Matthew 6:19-21

Humans are collectors! Everything under the sun is fair game when it comes to collecting—sea shells, antique furniture, art, classic cars, guns, jewelry, Civil war artifacts, old stamps, trading cards, old dolls, autographs; the list never ends! My father helped me as a child to begin a coin collection. (My wife and I let a homeless lady stay with us, and she stole it. I was heartbroken and mad.) Now I have a collection of medals from the dozens of road races I have run.

What are you collecting? In the verses above Jesus challenged our natural human desire of collecting for the present with His contrasting view of collecting for eternity.

Should we follow the religious ascetics and throw out all our collections? No! We can have collections of earthly things and still faithfully follow Jesus Christ. We just need to remember our collections are just that—earthly, temporal, and of much less value than what God says is lasting and eternal. Perspective. What are you collecting of eternal value?

People are the only things that are eternal. Therefore, invest your life in people! Ask God right now to make you an example of Jesus with godly character so that unbelievers will see Jesus in you and be drawn to Him. Seek to bring lost souls to Christ and then help them grow in Him and bring others into His family.

Submitted by:

Stephen Scott Nelson

steve.nelson@reliant.org

Atlanta House Church

Atlanta, Georgia

One-Year Bible Reading

Genesis 31:17-32:12

Matthew 10:24-11:6

Psalms 13:1-6

Proverbs 3:16-18

How Valuable Are You?

So God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. Genesis 1:27 NIV

Vince D'Acchioli held up a piece of paper he had taken out of his wallet. On this piece of paper was imprinted an image made by the U.S. Government. We all knew what this image meant. All of us in the room called this piece of paper a "twenty-dollar bill." We all knew the government had assigned a certain value to this kind of paper with this image.

Vince asked us, "Does this paper have any value to any of you? How many of you would be glad to have it?" I think everyone in the room would have been glad to have that piece of paper in their wallet. Then Vince crumpled up the paper and asked the same question. The response seemed to be the same. After that he tossed the crumpled twenty-dollar bill on the floor, stomped on it with his foot and ground it under his shoe.

Then he picked up the dirty, messed up wad and asked if any of us still wanted it, or should he just throw it into the trash? The response had not changed. Everyone still wanted it and would not let Vince throw it away.

Then Vince said a few words that melted my heart and brought tears to my eyes. He said, "You and every person you meet has been created in the image of God. He has assigned a value that is equal for every person."

Do you recognize that value? In fact, this value is equal to that of His own Son, and the value does not change, no matter how crumpled, trampled, and messed up any person seems to be.

Submitted by:

Mike Bergen

mikobergen@gmail.com

Cornerstone Community Church

Lenexa, Kansas

One-Year Bible Reading

Genesis 32:13-34:31

Matthew 11:7-30

Psalms 14:1-7

Proverbs 3:19-20

God's Compassion

He prayed to the Lord and said, "Please, Lord, was not this what I said while I was still in my own country? Therefore, in order to forestall this I fled to Tarshish, for I knew that You are a gracious and compassionate God, slow to anger and abundant in lovingkindness, and One Who relents concerning calamity." Jonah 4:2

Jonah led the biggest revival of all times. The entire city repented. Disaster was diverted. It was a victorious day. But was Jonah celebrating? Was he praising God for His never-ending love?

No, Jonah was depressed because instead of seeing his enemy punished—and Assyria was Israel's enemy; in less than 100 years Assyria would swoop down and carry Israel into captivity—he saw the Assyrians repent. That should have filled Jonah with joy. But it didn't. Jonah looked with human eyes. To him these people needed to be punished. They didn't deserve to be forgiven.

You find out that the reason Jonah ran from God was because he was afraid that the Ninevites would repent: "in order to forestall this I fled to Tarshish, for I knew that You are a gracious and compassionate God. . . ."

You know the story; God causes a vine to grow up one day, and a worm eats it the next. Depressed and despairing, Jonah cries. God rebukes Jonah, saying that Jonah had more compassion on a plant, which is here today and gone tomorrow, than on the 120,000 Ninevites.

The question left with us is: how many times are we like Jonah? Do we see someone rescued from a hard time and instead of rejoicing with them feel like they don't deserve it? Or after someone is saved, do we hold their past against them? We should rejoice with those who rejoice and weep with those who weep. We need God's compassion.

Look around—share God's compassion today.

Submitted by:

Shirley Ferguson
shirleyferguson327@gmail.com
 Oakridge Community Church
 Clarksville, Maryland

One-Year Bible Reading

Genesis 35:1-36:43
 Matthew 12:1-21
 Psalm 15:1-5
 Proverbs 3:21-26

Sunday, January 19

Could You Build an Actual Mountain?

By faith we understand that the universe was created by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things that are visible. Hebrews 11:3 ESV

Could you build an actual mountain? Yes! That answer might surprise you, but follow my thought experiment.

The mountains to the east of us in Salt Lake City, Utah, are about 7,000 feet above the valley floor. So how big would a hypothetical mountain be? If we assume a cone shape, that produces a volume of 9×10^{10} cubic feet.

Is it reasonable to consider building something that big? Think about Glen Canyon Dam; it's the second highest concrete-arch dam in the United States. About 1.45×10^8 cubic feet of concrete was used from 1960 to 1963 to create this 710-foot-tall dam. So our hypothetical mountain is about 600 times larger than Glen Canyon Dam. I read that Glen Canyon dam would now cost \$814 million to build.

Again, the answer to our thought experiment is yes! If you had an extra half a trillion dollars sitting around and **a lot of time**, you could create a mountain of concrete as large as the Wasatch Mountains.

Now what does Genesis 1:9 tell us? It says on the third day of Creation God created the "dry land" which includes mountains. Later that day He vegetated this newly created earth.

What is the point of my thought experiment? Given enough time and money, you could build a mountain. Remember, though, it took people three years to build a mountain of concrete 710 feet high!

What makes God unique is that He did it in a day. There is nothing miraculous about God taking eons of time to create mountains; people have done that. What makes God so amazing is that He can create mountains using only His word. In a day. In an instant.

Submitted by:

Josh Whitney
josh@trc.life
 The Rock Church
 Draper, Utah

One-Year Bible Reading

Genesis 39:1-41:16
 Matthew 12:46-13:23
 Psalm 17:1-15
 Proverbs 3:33-35

From the Inside Out

The good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth what is good; and the evil man out of the evil treasure brings forth what is evil; for his mouth speaks from that which fills his heart. Luke 6:45

My friend asked, "How does the evangelist equip the saints to do the work of service as described in Ephesians 4?"

First, evangelists equip the saints by being examples. Paul wrote to the elders in Ephesus, "Prove yourselves to be examples to the flock." Evangelists model a heart for the lost. People are inspired by examples, stories from your life, and your experience. They want to see how it can be done. They need to know they can do it too.

Second, evangelists equip the saints when they enjoy developing friendships with unbelievers and celebrate when others do the same. They will explain how they showed love and served. This "pre-gospel" work is essential in preparing the hearts of unbelievers to receive the truth of the gospel. As Zig Ziglar said, "People don't care how much you know until they know how much you care." Being a good witness begins with a sincere love for those God brings into your life. If you sincerely care about them, are honest and humble, they will listen.

Finally, evangelists pray. They ask God to draw people to Himself, to convict of sin, and to change hearts. They will usually pray for them by name and encourage others to do likewise.

We can attempt to equip the saints from the outside in by being overly reliant on programs, or we can ask God to speak to their hearts, working from the inside out. We can guilt believers into sharing the gospel. Or we can connect people with Christ, and allow Him to reveal to them His love for a lost world. Once you connect with the Lord Jesus, you will never be the same!

Submitted by:

Stephen Scott Nelson
steve.nelson@reliant.org
 Atlanta House Church
 Atlanta, Georgia

One-Year Bible Reading

Genesis 37:1-38:30
 Matthew 12:22-45
 Psalm 16:1-11
 Proverbs 3:27-32

Monday, January 20

Who is a Rock Except Our God?

I love Thee, O Lord, my strength. The Lord is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer, my God, my rock, in whom I take refuge; my shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold. Psalm 18:1-2

I love Psalm 18! If you haven't read it for a while, stop reading here and go read it! Let your mind picture the images that describe our God.

He is our **strength!** In our weakness He is always strong! He gives strength to the weary. He empowers us with His strength through His Holy Spirit. Paul's prayer in Ephesians is that we would know "*the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe . . . in accordance with the working of His might*" (1:19).

He is our **rock!** What images come to your mind? Solid ground! A strategic precipice from our enemies. Unshakeable foundation. Remember the parable of the wise man who built his house upon the rock? When the floods came and torrents blew against his well-built house on its solid foundation, it remained.

He is our **fortress!** Martin Luther penned: "*A mighty fortress is our God, a bulwark never failing.*" Can you picture a tremendously strong, thick medieval wall around a castle? Or better yet, an impenetrable sea wall from storm-driven pounding waves? He is our refuge from the storms of life.

He is our **horn of salvation!** You'll love this! The horn is what is used in battle to go forward in attack mode. Think *National Geographic*: charging rhinoceroses! A very strategic weapon in forward motion to protect and reclaim ground. Jesus is the *horn of our salvation* (Luke 1:69). He charged on ahead of us, conquered our foe, and reclaimed us for His own.

Who can stand up against a God who can wipe out the earth at the *blast of the breath of His nostrils*? (Psalm 18:15). *If God is for us, who is against us?* (Romans 8:31)

Submitted by:

Terry Putthoff
terry.rhr@gmail.com
 Open Range Fellowship
 Lone Jack, Missouri

One-Year Bible Reading

Genesis 41:17-42:17
 Matthew 13:24-46
 Psalm 18:1-15
 Proverbs 4:1-6

Who Do You Call Upon? – 2

I call upon the LORD, who is worthy to be praised and I am saved from my enemies. Psalm 18:3

Who do you call upon when you are in trouble? When you are in deep despair or a seemingly hopeless situation? Ever had a dark cloud of oppression hanging over you or experience betrayal by a close friend?

In Psalm 18 David was on the run for his life from a powerful, jealous king whom he had committed himself to protect. King Saul through demonic influence had tried many times to kill him. David describes in this psalm what was really lurking around each corner: “the torrents of ungodliness terrified me; the cords of Sheol surrounded me; the snares of death confronted me.”

What does David do in this distressing situation? “I called upon the Lord and cried to my God for help.” Does God hear? Yes, He does!

Read Psalm 18:7-15 to get the full picture of God’s response and pause after each description. This is what takes place when the distress signal is sent out.

“Then the earth shook and quaked and the foundations of the mountains were trembling and were shaken, because He was angry.” Picture this! “Smoke went up out of His nostrils, fire from His mouth devoured; Coals were kindled by it.” Pause and picture that!

Fast forward: “Then the channels of water appeared, and the foundations of the world were laid bare at Thy rebuke, O LORD, at the blast of the breath of Thy nostrils.” Do you sense it? Do you get the picture?

Our battles may be unseen, but they are not unfelt. Psalm 46:1 says, “God is our refuge and our strength, a very present help in trouble.” Who else could you turn to who could lay bare the earth just “at the blast of the breath” of His nostrils?

Submitted by:

Terry Putthoff
terry.rhr@gmail.com
Open Range Fellowship
Lone Jack, Missouri

One-Year Bible Reading

Genesis 42:18-43:34
Matthew 13:47-14:12
Psalm 18:16-36
Proverbs 4:7-10

Thursday, January 23

Perspective

In return for my friendship they accuse me, but I am a man of prayer. Psalm 109:4

This verse came warmly to mind recently in my prayers as I had once again endured some intense persecution from “unsaved” but deeply loved family members. I am always mindful of this verse and a few others in those times.

As I reflect on the cost of following Jesus, the cost of being misunderstood, the cost of being mocked, and the cost of being maligned by those who do not know the way of Christ, I know that their attacks are out of ignorance—the lack of knowledge, the lack of truth.

Though to follow Jesus may sting, though to follow Him may have great cost, the Lord, we know, is our shield and our stronghold, our ever-present help in the day of trouble. As King David states so well in this verse, no matter what he faced, the answer was always found in the throne room of the Almighty.

I have found that God will, in His throne room, often reveal the big picture—the perspective we need to see what only He sees. Oh, what longing for the heart and the eyes of my Savior—yet that longing is satisfied when I am in His throne room. It is there we must be found! It is there we must always return, if indeed, we want to be His vessel.

I have been a follower of Jesus Christ for 39 years, and of this one thing I am sure: the greatest accomplishments, the greatest achievements, and the greatest blessings always come with the greatest costs. But so much more, my 39 years have deeply cemented in my heart and my being that I am not ashamed of the Gospel for it is the power of God unto salvation.

This day’s revealed perspective: my cost to follow Him will always pale in comparison to His cost to save me!

Submitted by:

Bob Bartlett
robert.m.bartlett@gmail.com
Submerge Church
 Fargo, North Dakota

One-Year Bible Reading

Genesis 46:1-47:31
Matthew 15:1-28
Psalm 19:1-14
Proverbs 4:14-19

Who is Your Enemy? – 3

He delivered me from my strong enemy and from those who hated me, for they were too mighty for me. They confronted me in the day of my calamity, but the LORD was my stay. Psalm 18:17-18

There was a season when we went through a really hard time in ministry. We felt betrayed by some people, experienced declining health, and were on the verge of financial ruin. David’s description in Psalm 18:4-5 pretty much described how I felt: “the torrents of ungodliness terrified me; the cords of Sheol [the underworld] surrounded me; the snares of death [death of a vision] confronted me.”

It was a helpless feeling until I realized who I was really dealing with. Ephesians 6 tells us that our “struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places.” I was surrounded by “spiritual enemies”: despair, doubt, jealousy, pride, critical spirit, and so on. These spiritual enemies had left me in the “slough of despond” as John Bunyan describes it in his classic *Pilgrim’s Progress*, Chapter 4. There the enemy, Apollyon, comes in for the final blow. But Christian regains his sword and thrusts it up into Apollyon with a fatal blow, declaring, “Rejoice not against me, O my enemy, for when I fall, I shall arise again!” (from Micah 7:8)

Paul in 2 Corinthians 10:3-5 says, “For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh, for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses. We are destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and we are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ.” Recognizing who the true real enemy is will determine how you fight. Can you label yours?

Submitted by:

Terry Putthoff
terry.rhr@gmail.com
Open Range Fellowship
Lone Jack, Missouri

One-Year Bible Reading

Genesis 44:1-45:28
Matthew 14:13-36
Psalm 18:37-50
Proverbs 4:11-13

Friday, January 24

God, My Deliverer

He delivers me from my enemies; Surely Thou dost lift me above those who rise up against me; Thou dost rescue me from the violent man. Psalm 18:48

Two days ago we read how God delivered David from his “strong enemy” and from those who “hated” him “for they were too mighty for” him. May I suggest that apart from Christ, our enemy is too mighty for us as well? We are no match for the dark forces of this world or even the nature of our own flesh. *We are helplessly in need of a Savior.*

We need a Deliverer. In Zephaniah 3:17 our God is pictured as a “victorious warrior” who saves . . . “He will rejoice over you with shouts of joy!” He delights in being our Deliverer. Let the truths of these next verses penetrate your doubts and turn them into praise and victorious living.

“He rescued me, because He delighted in me” (Psalm 18:19)—how encouraging and comforting is that? And yet God says so much more through Paul in Romans: “What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who is against us? . . . Who will bring a charge against God’s elect? God is the one who justifies. Who is the one who condemns? Christ Jesus is He who died, yes, rather who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril or sword? . . . But in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Romans 8:31,33-35, 37-39).

What a great God we serve! Take refuge in Him today.

Submitted by:

Terry Putthoff
terry.rhr@gmail.com
Open Range Fellowship
Lone Jack, Missouri

One-Year Bible Reading

Genesis 48:1-49:33
Matthew 15:29-16:12
Psalm 20:1-9
Proverbs 4:20-27

Stars and Apples

And we pray this in order that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and may please him in every way. . . . Colossians 1:10 NIV

I recently started teaching ESL to Chinese kids online. When the students do a good job, I give them five stars. When I do a good job, the parents give me five apples. It sounds silly, but often the first thing I do when I wake up is to check to see if I got any apples. For some reason, getting apples, even if they are digital, is a meaningful thing for me. I would like to think that I'm the sort of person who is above that, but obviously I'm not.

One of my favorite parables in the Bible is when the master gave his servants various amounts of money. He then went away on a trip. When he returned, they gave him back his money with varying amounts of interest. To a couple of his servants the master said, "Well done, my good and faithful servant!" That resonates with me. The idea of having a mansion in heaven doesn't motivate me. Being rewarded with crowns doesn't do much either. (I'd rather have a baseball cap that I can wear backward.) However, if I show up in heaven and Jesus says, "Well done," that would mean the world to me!

I think some people are uncomfortable with the idea of pleasing God. I can appreciate that they don't want a relationship where they must strive to earn God's favor. The good news is: God is easily pleased. We can rest in His love, forgiveness, and relationship as we live to please Him. Just as getting apples is fun, living to please God is even more exciting and even more rewarding!

Submitted by:

Steven L. Nelson
stevennelson@att.net
 The Rio Church
 El Paso, Texas

One-Year Bible Reading

Genesis 50:1 - Exodus 2:10
 Matthew 16:13-17:9
 Psalm 21:1-13
 Proverbs 5:1-6

Monday, January 27

Run to the Rock

The Lord is my rock, my fortress and my deliverer; my God is my rock, in whom I take refuge. Psalm 18:2 NIV

Saul was going along one side of the mountain, and David and his men were on the other side, hurrying to get away from Saul. As Saul and his forces were closing in on David and his men to capture them, a messenger came to Saul, saying, "'Come quickly! The Philistines are raiding the land.' Then Saul broke off his pursuit of David and went to meet the Philistines" (1 Samuel 23:26-27 NIV).

David was very familiar with seeking refuge and protection among the rocks and caves of Israel. Hiding in their cover seemed to be one of his favorite defense strategies against King Saul who was jealously seeking his life. This happened on more than one occasion.

In the particular situation recorded above, Saul and his men were cutting close on the chase. Despite the mountainous terrain, the distance between David and his pursuers was narrowing. It appeared that no amount of rock was going to prevent their attack.

It was then that David powerfully witnessed the "Sure Rock," who defends in ways no physical rock can. God, his rock, stepped in, orchestrating outside events in such a way that Saul with his pursuing band was checked.

David undoubtedly learned that more than the most impenetrable crag of rock, God was his faithful protector and defender—always there, strong, sure, "in-front-of-and-behind," covering him with safety.

Just as with David, I have that same God today, watching over and protecting me! When I'm overwhelmed, confused, feeling weak and vulnerable, might I always remember David's flight to the rocks and most of all, to the **one** Rock, and run to my Rock as well.

Submitted by:

Dawn Bovenmyer
dawnbovenmyer@gmail.com
 Stonebrook Community Church
 Ames, Iowa

One-Year Bible Reading

Exodus 4:1-5:21
 Matthew 18:1-20
 Psalm 22:19-31
 Proverbs 5:15-21

Get Battle Ready with the Word of God Today!

His faithful promises are your armor and protection. Psalm 91:4 NLT

We all need refuge. We all look to something or someone to lean on or support us. It could be our careers, families, friends, finances or even our status in life.

These are all uncertain supports as every one of them will change over time. As we age and life moves on, our careers will evolve, our finances will rise and fall, and even our families won't remain the same. In one moment, in the blink of an eye, what seemed so certain can suddenly be very different from what we expected.

Just this last week I mentioned to my sweet wife, "I think we finally have our savings in a good place." The next day our furnace went out.

The Lord's promises, however, stand firm forever! They will *never* come back empty, *never* leave us alone, and *never* change. His promises are faithful, protective, and our certain refuge. They are our "armor and protection." They are our stronghold in both good days and bad.

Do you know the Lord's promises? Have you armed yourself with them? Here are just a few of them.

"Don't love money; be satisfied with what you have. For God has said, 'I will never fail you. I will never abandon you'" (Hebrews 13:5 NLT). "This is my command—be strong and courageous! Do not be afraid or discouraged. For the Lord your God is with you wherever you go" (Joshua 1:9 NLT). "But thank God! He gives us victory over sin and death through our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Corinthians 15:57 NLT). "For I know the plans I have for you," says the Lord. "They are plans for good and not for disaster, to give you a future and a hope" (Jeremiah 29:11 NLT).

Today cling to the promises of the Lord. Hold these up as your armor and protection. Write them down and place them in a prominent place!

Submitted by:

Steele Crowwhite
steele@trc.com
 The Rock Church
 Draper, Utah

One-Year Bible Reading

Exodus 2:11-3:22
 Matthew 17:10-27
 Psalm 22:1-18
 Proverbs 5:7-14

Tuesday, January 28

Break Down the Walls

The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. 2 Corinthians 10:4 NIV

Walls can occur in each of our lives and become strongholds that may seem almost impossible to overcome. Let's look at some of these. First, a wall can come between us and God. As Christians, we can allow wrong actions or attitudes to come between us and God. Satan, as a roaring lion, walks about seeking people to destroy. He does this by deceiving us to think that our own way or sin is more attractive than obedience to God. We can get too busy and neglect our walk and fellowship with Him. Instead, "Humble yourselves under God's mighty hand, that He may lift you up" (1 Peter 5:5-6).

Second, walls can develop in our marriages. We can easily become careless in our words, our actions, and our thoughts toward our partners. We fell in love at one time as we filled our minds with the attractive qualities of another. Irritations can easily occur in marriages, and we find ourselves thinking of the failures and faults of our partner. Love can dim, and resentment can fill our hearts. The apostle Paul said, "*Above all, love one another deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins*" (1 Peter 4:8). Love is a choice. Choosing to love, appreciate the other, and express that love often will keep the walls down and the flame bright.

Finally, walls can occur in churches. Again, the apostle said, "Make my joy complete, by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose. Do nothing out of selfishness. . . . Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus" (Philippians 2:2-5 NIV).

Break down the walls!

Submitted by:

Herschel Martindale
herschel@reliant.org
 Oak Ridge Church
 Clarksville, Maryland

One-Year Bible Reading

Exodus 5:22-7:25
 Matthew 18:21-19:12
 Psalm 23:1-6
 Proverbs 5:22-23

Trials

Consider it a great joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you experience various trials, because you know that the testing of your faith produces endurance. And let endurance have its full effect, so that you may be mature and complete, lacking nothing. James 1:2-4 CSB

I hope these thoughts on trials encourage you as they have encouraged me. I go to this verse whenever it seems like life has handed me lemons, and when "it's just not fair." I believe in a God who not only knows what's going on in my life but controls it in a very detailed way. Whether letting bad things happen or providing opportunities for faith in trial, He's got His hands on the wheel.

I go through the following progression of thought:

God has not let this happen randomly. He's still in control.

I don't understand why this is happening, but I can trust that God is good even if, right now, He doesn't seem good.

If I choose to have faith in His goodness right now, then that produces in me a contentment and therefore a joy in Him.

I also know that there is more to this life than what I can see. God is at work in me and through me to accomplish His will in the world.

Finally, I know that this life is not the end. Someday I'll move on from this crazy, depressing world and be free from pain, hate, sorrow and even death. I will see fully and know fully. It will all be perfect in the next life; everything that I dislike or even hate here will be gone. I will be free to do everything my righteous soul longs to do. I will be mature and complete, lacking nothing.

This is what God takes me through and how He works in my heart. My prayer is that He can do a similar work in you. His word has power for us every day. Even when it's -26 outside.

Submitted by:

Paul Johnson
paul@discoverlivinghope.com
 Living Hope Church
 Rochester, Minnesota

One-Year Bible Reading

Exodus 8:1-9:35
 Matthew 19:13-30
 Psalm 24:1-10
 Proverbs 6:1-5

Friday, January 31

Pyramidion Placement

The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many. Matthew 20:27-28

James and John probably put their mother up to it, to asking Jesus for her sons to sit, one on each side of Him, in His kingdom. The other disciples overheard their request and were indignant. They all wanted to be great. Jesus took the opportunity to teach an important lesson on the meaning of greatness.

First, though implied, He affirmed their desire to be great. Paul explained to the Thessalonians, "It was for this He called you through our gospel, that you may gain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ" (2 Thessalonians 2:14). Paul thought eternal glory that comes from God a worthy pursuit, but he did not seek the glory of men (1 Thessalonians 2:6).

Secondly, and more pointedly, Jesus explained to His disciples what true greatness meant. Jesus said that greatness in His kingdom was quite different from greatness in the world. He explained, "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great men exercise authority over them. It is not this way among you, but whoever wishes to become great among you shall be your servant, and whoever wishes to be first among you shall be your slave; just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve and to give His life a ransom for many."

The capstone of a pyramid is called the *pyramidion*. In the world, great people are the pyramidions that rest upon the service of many others positioned below. Jesus redefined greatness and simply turned the pyramid upside down and placed the pyramidion on the bottom of an inverted pyramid. He didn't discourage the disciples from pursuing greatness, He just made sure they placed the pyramidion in the right location. Fulfillment comes in discovering how you can serve others.

Submitted by:

Tim Cavanaugh
cavanaugh.tim@gmail.com
 The Firehouse Church
 Denver, Colorado

One-Year Bible Reading

Exodus 12:14-13:16
 Matthew 20:29-21:22
 Psalm 25:16-22
 Proverbs 6:12-15

On Not Quitting

For you have need of endurance, so that when you have done the will of God, you may receive what was promised. Hebrews 10:36

"Paderewski, the famous composer-pianist, was scheduled to perform at a great concert hall in America. The auditorium was packed with high society, including a mother and her fidgety nine-year-old son. She was in hopes that her boy would be encouraged to practice the piano if he could just hear the immortal Paderewski.

"So, against his wishes, he came. As his mother talked to friends, he slipped away from her side to get a better look at the grand piano with its leather-tufted stool on the huge stage. The boy sat down and placed his small fingers on the right location and began to play 'Chopsticks.' The crowd was amused, but some began to shout: 'Get that boy away from there. Where's his mother? Somebody stop him . . . ' Backstage the master overheard the sounds and rushed onto the stage. Without a word he stooped over behind the boy, reached around both sides and began to improvise a countermelody to harmonize with the boy's 'Chopsticks.' As they played together, Paderewski kept whispering in the boy's ear: "Keep going. Don't quit, son. Keep on playing . . . don't stop . . . don't quit."

What "good desires" are you tempted to quit on? Next time you feel that way, maybe it would help to picture your "Master" coming alongside and sort of improvising on your behalf, and whispering: "Don't get tired of doing what is good. Don't get discouraged and give up, for you will reap a harvest of blessing at the appropriate time" (Galatians 6:9).

Submitted by:

Dennis Clark
dennisclark316@gmail.com
 Firehouse Church
 Franktown, Colorado

One-Year Bible Reading

Exodus 10:1-12:13
 Matthew 20:1-28
 Psalm 25:1-15
 Proverbs 6:6-11