

For the Love of George

For the love of Christ controls us, having concluded this . . . that they who live might no longer live for themselves, but for him who died and rose again on their behalf. 2 Corinthians 5:14

In the spring of 1979 I got a phone call from a good friend, George. He asked me to do him a favor. He said, "I need to know you'll do it before I tell you." At first, I laughed, but I could tell by the tone in his voice he was serious. Because I loved him as a friend, I told him, "Yes, I'll do it."

George let me know that his father had committed suicide earlier that morning, and he couldn't find his younger brother who was at the same college that I attended. He wanted me to rearrange my day, find his brother, tell him about his father's suicide, and help him get back home. I was in shock, and I realized that when I found Charles I would give him news that would rock his world. Out of love for George I took off to find Charles. I barely knew Charles but because I knew George, and because of my love for George, I pursued Charles.

That morning I skipped a few classes, I went into places I didn't normally go, and about four hours after the phone call, I found Charles. And yes, the news rocked his world.

I began to realize that because of the love for George I did what I did to find Charles. What will I do for the love of God? God has asked each of us to communicate news that will rock other people's worlds. The news is the gospel of Jesus Christ. For the love of God, what will you do to get out of your comfort zone so that those who God loves will hear the gospel of Jesus and in a positive sense their world will be rocked?

Submitted by:

Berk Wilson
Grace Community Church
Raleigh, North Carolina

One-Year Bible Reading

Judges 13:1-14:20
John 1:29-51
Psalm 102:1-28
Proverbs 14:15-16

Friday, May 3

Rubik's Cube Discipleship

. . . and what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men, who will be able to teach others also. 2 Timothy 2:2 ESV

Are you familiar with the Rubik's cube? It is a 3D puzzle invented in 1974 by a Hungarian named Ernő Rubik. It is one of the world's best-selling toys. Hundreds of millions of cubes have been sold since its creation.

My oldest son was given a Rubik's cube about seven years ago. He attempted to solve it for a few weeks and then asked for my help when he couldn't figure it out. I did what any modern dad would do; I turned to the internet. I found a YouTube channel that taught eight equations to solve the cube. Then, through a lot of trial and error, I learned how to solve the cube. In turn, I taught my oldest son (who promptly got much faster than me). A couple of years later I taught my second oldest son when he asked for my help.

Fast forward to today. My third oldest son decided he wanted to learn how to solve the Rubik's cube. Imagine my surprise when he walked into my office and declared, "Dad, I know how to solve the cube!" You see, I never taught him—his brother did. That is what discipleship is. You learn how to follow Jesus, using God's Word and other Christians. Then you teach other people how to follow Jesus. And then those people teach other people how to follow Jesus. And so on . . .

When my son told me he could solve the cube, I thought, "We don't need to overthink discipleship." First, *you* learn it. Then you teach *other people*. . . and then *those people* teach people—get it?

Let's make some disciples!

Submitted by:

Josh Whitney
The Rock Church
Draper, Utah

One-Year Bible Reading

Judges 17:1-18:31
John 3:1-21
Psalm 104:1-24
Proverbs 14:20-21

For the Love of God

Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely, I am with you always, to the very end of the age. Matthew 28:19-20

Barna research says most Christians in America do not share the gospel and 90% of Christian millennials do not even recognize what the Great Commission is.

What do we see with those who first knew Jesus? We see in Acts 8 it was those average Christians who scattered that communicated the gospel. As people heard and responded to the gospel, churches began, and leaders were later recognized. The church of Antioch started because "those scattered" preached the gospel. It was part of their Christian culture that Christians not only demonstrated the gospel, but they quickly communicated it and explained why they were different.

What will happen if we: Train every Christian to pray for specific people to come to Christ? Train every member to know, practice and share their story of how Jesus changed them? Train every member to present the gospel and turn everyday conversations to gospel conversations? Train new believers in basics, including how to share, before inviting them to a bigger meeting?

I say "train" because people are attracted to those who are trained to excel. Might we see what the Christians in Acts 8-19 saw, especially Acts 19:8-10 where 8 to 12 million heard the gospel in two years! Could we see all Christians in our churches be confident and competent in speaking the gospel so we all would be consistent in sharing the gospel and seeing disciples made until all have a chance to hear? For the love of God how can we humble ourselves to be and do what the first followers of Jesus did in making disciples who make disciples?

Submitted by:

Berk Wilson
Grace Community Church
Raleigh, North Carolina

One-Year Bible Reading

Judges 15:1-16:31
John 2:1-25
Psalm 103:1-22
Proverbs 14:17-19

Saturday, May 4

Spreading the Word

The word of God kept on spreading; and the number of the disciples continued to increase greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests were becoming obedient to the faith. Acts 6:7

Over the years I have developed the "sacred" act of preparing peanut butter and jelly sandwiches.

Danelle and I raised seven children--so you can imagine, we have consumed thousands of these tasty morsels during our many years together. Now, everyone knows that the only way to prepare the classic sandwich is to spread the peanut butter and jelly all the way to the edge of the bread. After all, who wants to bite into only one or the other, or even worse, into bread alone?

Unfortunately, some people in their haste to make sandwiches have developed the habit of not spreading the PB&J to the edge of the bread. I have to gently remind those individuals to spread the ingredients all the way to the edge.

In the same way, God wants to spread His gospel of grace to every precious life on earth. How does He patiently accomplish this through flawed people like us?

When you love God by reading His Word, applying it to your life, and then sharing it with others to meet their needs, the number of disciples will increase! See the correlation? Let me explain: in your haste to start your day, do you skimp on your time in the Word and spreading it to others? Spread the Word!

Submitted by:

Stephen Scott Nelson
Atlanta House Church
Atlanta, Georgia

One-Year Bible Reading

Judges 19:1-20:48
John 3:22-4:3
Psalm 104:24-35
Proverbs 14:22-23

Gilgal

Then the LORD said to Joshua, "Today I have rolled away the reproach of Egypt from you." So the name of that place is called Gilgal to this day. Joshua 5:9

Gilgal was the place on the plains of the River Jordan where the nation of Israel camped out. This was before they went in to conquer Jericho and the Promised Land, promised to their grandfather Abraham over 500 years before their return from Egypt. I have been interested in the symbolism of "rolling" since I worked with rocks last fall and found I could move a rock by rolling that was far too heavy for me to lift.

So I looked up *Gilgal* in a concordance (yes, a real book) and found the name comes from the Hebrew word *galal* ("to roll") and *galgal* ("wheel"). What happened here is that the new generation of Jewish men were circumcised, a mark of their identity as the people of God which had been neglected in the 40 years of wandering. God required it, and then He affirmed it as His way of "rolling away the reproach of Egypt" from His people. He rolled away the disobedience of their fathers also.

But what is "the reproach of Egypt"? I've been thinking about this in relation to our lives too. In Egypt God's people were slaves. The emotional baggage with this probably included a sense of failure, shame, perhaps depression, and even despair. As slaves they were told, "You're nobody special. Your God has no power!" Have you ever heard this inside your mind? The world tells us this. We may feel it as a heavy burden.

But what is the Lord's response? What's too heavy for us, He rolls away. When He chooses us, He tells us we are set apart—special! He enables us to obey Him through His Holy Spirit. And He commands Joshua (and us) to meditate on His Law day and night: "you will have good success." He promises us His presence wherever we go (Joshua 1). So "Commit (*galal*) your way to the Lord, trust also in Him, and He will do it" (Psalm 37:5).

Submitted by:

Dotty Vanderhorst
Cornerstone Community Church
Lenexa, Kansas

One-Year Bible Reading

Judges 21:1-Ruth 1:22
John 4:4-42
Psalm 105:1-15
Proverbs 14:25

Tuesday, May 7

Hosea: The Living Metaphor

When she had weaned Lo-ruhamah, she conceived and gave birth to a son. And the LORD said, "Name him Lo-ammi, for you are not My people and I am not your God." Hosea 1:8-9

I will betroth you to Me forever; Yes, I will betroth you to Me in righteousness and in justice, in lovingkindness and in compassion, and I will betroth you to Me in faithfulness. Then you will know the LORD. Hosea 2:19-20

Prophets in Hosea's time used to do some interesting things to reflect God's attitude toward Israel. One example is Ezekiel who laid on one side for 390 days and another for 40 days—this symbolized the bearing of iniquity to show the Israelites that their sin was great. In a similar fashion, the first thing God asked Hosea to do was to marry a prostitute named Gomer. Hosea then had three children whose names reflected God's anger toward His people. I don't know about you, but I would have had a hard time doing that.

There are two parts to this message which Hosea essentially announced by using his own family as a metaphorical message. The first is the people's unfaithfulness and rejection of God. He married a prostitute and she left him for other men. Then his three kids' names reflect God's rejection of Israel's sin of following after other gods.

The second message is God's rescue and restoration. Hosea goes and buys Gomer out of slavery and takes her back as his wife. Sound familiar? Jesus did the same thing with us. We turned our back on God, but He sent His Son who paid for our sins in order to rescue and restore us to Him as His bride.

Do our lives reflect this message? Do we show that God is sad with our world's folly, or are we entertained by others' sin? Make your words and life preach and show the message of salvation to all the world so that compassion and truth are the story of salvation that people see.

Submitted by:

Greg Standinger
Glen Arbor Community Church
West Chicago, Illinois

One-Year Bible Reading

1 Samuel 1:1-2:21
John 5:1-23
Psalm 105:37-45
Proverbs 14:28-29

The Grip of Love

I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand. John 10:28 ESV

That verse is like a treasure box full of incredible love! The promised assurance and safety coming from the mouth of Jesus grip my heart every time I read it! And it's these specific words that have really struck me: "no one will snatch them out of my hand." Jesus is saying that we are so secure in His hands that nothing can loosen His grip.

As a parent myself, that's an element of the Father-heart of God I can really resonate with. For example, when I'm with my son in a crowd of hundreds of people I will tell him, "Honey, I need you to hold my hand." Or, when I'm walking through the neighborhood with my daughter and see a big dog up ahead, I pick up my girl and tell her, "Daddy needs to hold you." Every parent knows exactly what I'm talking about. It's that natural instinct (like a momma bear) saying, "Nobody is going to hurt my little cubs and over my dead body is someone going to harm my babies!"

In an even more powerful and divine way, this is Jesus' heart when He passionately proclaims, "No one will snatch them out of my hand." Jesus' promise to protect us is driven by the incredible love He has for us. There is **no one** and **nothing** strong enough to ever break God's grip on us. It doesn't matter what troubles or temptations are ahead, what burdens or trials are in this life. It doesn't matter what lies the world and the devil scream at us. We are in His grip—eternally safe in the hands of God.

Oh, how I hope that thought fills you with gratitude and love for Him! I have a challenge for you today: Go outside and take a minute to admire all of the blooming flowers and trees. Then take some time to meditate and respond to this truth: the God who creates and sustains everything you see is the same God who grips you tightly in His hand. WOW!

Submitted by:

Bryan D. Edwards
The Rock Church
Draper, Utah

One-Year Bible Reading

Ruth 2:1-4:22
John 4:43-54
Psalm 105:16-36
Proverbs 14:26-27

Wednesday, May 8

Spiritual Sink Strainer

Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, dwell on these things. Philippians 4:8

Do you have a double sink in your kitchen? I'm talking about the one where a disposal is on one side and a drain with a strainer is on the other side. Or you might just have a sink with a drain and strainer. Either way, when you wash dishes, you have to put the strainer into the drain so it catches all the food scraps that come off the dirty dishes. Eventually the strainer becomes full and you dump the scraps either into the disposal or the kitchen waste basket. It's one of those unpleasant tasks that needs to be done; it is important because it keeps your sink pipes from becoming clogged and creating more problems.

I like to view the above verse as my spiritual strainer. So many thoughts come into my head, and it's up to me to keep them there or send them out and on their way. So often the anxious thoughts want to stay. Those are thoughts of "If only I had done that," or "What does that person think of me?" or "I can't believe that person said that about her!" or "What if this happens?" But when I ask myself if these thoughts are true, or honorable of someone, or pure or excellent, I can almost always answer "No." That's where the spiritual strainer comes into play, and I can send those thoughts right out of my mind. It's a great task that needs to be done to keep my heart from becoming clogged with bitterness, envy, and fear.

I pray you use this strainer too.

Submitted by:

Barbara Wilson
Grace Community Church
Raleigh, North Carolina

One-Year Bible Reading

1 Samuel 2:22-4:22
John 5:24-47
Psalm 106:1-12
Proverbs 14:30-31

Daily Work to Daily Worship

Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. Philippians 4:8 ESV

The apostle Paul reminded the Philippians that it was a good thing for them to regularly think about the things that would inspire worship and thankfulness to God. I want to remind us of that too!

Recently, as I read this verse, I thought about our church family. My mind has been filled with much joy and thankfulness because of all that God is doing through our lives. Let me give you a few examples from a recent weekend. For over an hour after the service on Saturday night, I watched anywhere from 15-20 little kiddos running around and chasing each other on the lawn. I saw even more adults standing by—laughing and enjoying each other's company as the sun went down.

On Sunday after the services, the sanctuary was full of people gathering together to make plans for the afternoon. I then saw cars, full of friends, heading over to the local coffee shop or restaurant to continue on in fellowship and community. God is doing a really special thing in the lives of the men, women, and children of our church.

It all brings me back to what Paul said in Philippians. When my mind is absorbed with the things that are pure and lovely (thinking about His church specifically), my heart is filled with joy and thankfulness!

What else have you seen God do in your life that is worthy of praise? From your family to your faith, from your daily work to your daily worship, where do you see God's hand of blessing in your life?

I want to encourage you today to find some time and reflect on those things. Take a moment to think about what is pure and lovely in your life. Then respond to God with praise and thanksgiving. It will bless you.

Submitted by:
Bryan D. Edwards
The Rock Church
Draper, Utah

One-Year Bible Reading
1 Samuel 5:1-7:17
John 6:1-21
Psalm 106:13-31
Proverbs 14:32-33

Saturday, May 11

Ultimate Reality

The reality however, is found in Christ. Colossians 2:17 NIV

According to *Webster's Dictionary* the definition of reality is, "The world or the state of things as they actually exist, as opposed to that which is merely imaginary." I've been meditating on three realities about how awesome Jesus is, and I'm motivated to share these truths with others.

Reality #1 – People are spiritual beings. Ecclesiastes 3:11 tells us, "God has set eternity in the hearts of men." Everyone knows there is life beyond the grave. It doesn't really matter what they claim they believe, the reality is they **know**, deep down in their hearts, that eternity is real. Even unbelievers try to comfort themselves at funerals by repeating to themselves, "They are in a better place."

Reality #2 – We need to tap into people's spiritual yearnings. In Colossians 4:5-6 we are exhorted to, "Be wise in the way you act . . ." I recently had an opportunity to share the reality of Jesus with three different people. Two of these folks were Uber drivers—they claimed to be interested in spiritual things. One of these drivers believed everything in life was just a false reality; nothing was real and we would all be okay in the end. I tapped into his spiritual yearnings by telling him about the third reality.

Reality #3 – Jesus is the ultimate reality. Our answer for questions regarding life, death, sickness, pain, joy, depression, divorce, addictions, money problems, gender issues, cutting, jealousy, anger . . . begins with Jesus. He created us and we will all stand before Him on Judgment Day.

Dear friends, we need to see our children, neighbors, friends, family, co-workers, and even our Uber drivers, as spiritual beings. We need to tap into their spiritual yearnings and present Jesus as the "Ultimate Reality."

Reality check: Have you received the gift of salvation through Jesus?

Submitted by:
Bill Young
The Rock Church
Draper, Utah

One-Year Bible Reading
1 Samuel 10:1-11:15
John 6:43-71
Psalm 107:1-43
Proverbs 15:1-3

No Other Gods

They have mouths, but they cannot speak; they have eyes, but they cannot see . . . they have hands, but they cannot feel . . . Those who make them will become like them, everyone who trusts in them. Psalm 115:5-8

When the ark was captured by the Philistines, they put it in Dagon's temple (1 Samuel, chapters 5-7). The next day Dagon was toppled. The following day Dagon was not only toppled, but the statue of Dagon had also lost its head (the ability to think, hear, and see) and its hands (the ability to do). God was showing how pointless Dagon or any false gods are. They can't think, hear, see, or do! They are useless, and yet we still bow to them. Letting the gods of our lives consume our thoughts and time, we worship them. In worshipping we forget that God is opposed to idols.

We might not have an idol made of wood or stone, but we do have gods. What is it in your life that keeps you from spending time with God, serving Him? Is it that TV show or video game, or social media, sports, or hobbies? None of these are wrong, unless they are keeping you from God.

Timothy Keller warns us about this in his *Songs of Jesus*: "Living in pluralistic societies means we must be all the more careful not to absorb the culture's idols or abandon God's laws in order to conform to the world" (page 277). This is not a new problem! In the first century Peter issued the same warning: "Beloved, I urge you as aliens and strangers to abstain from fleshly lusts which wage war against the soul" (1 Peter 2: 11).

So today take a mental test. Ask yourself: What it is that is keeping me from God? Be honest. (It isn't God; He is right there waiting.) Allow God to throw down those gods in your life. They aren't worth it. Take up your cross and follow Jesus. He alone is worthy.

Submitted by:
Shirley Ferguson
Oakridge Community Church
Clarksville, Maryland

One-Year Bible Reading
1 Samuel 8:1-9:27
John 6:22-42
Psalm 106:32-48
Proverbs 14:34-35

Saturday, May 11

Sunday, May 12

Mama Bear

Children are God's love-gift; they are heaven's generous reward. Psalm 127:3 TPT

Google describes a *mama bear* as a woman who is extremely protective of a child. While cleaning, I was dusting off a "Mama Bear" candle that my daughter Grace had given me. I remembered what she said when she gave it to me: "*You were always like a mama bear, looking out for us when we were growing up.*"

Children are a gift. There is no doubt on this. They are a treasure. But when I think of my *treasures* and what my overarching responsibility was with those treasures, I think of protection.

A mama bear looks out for her young. That's what we do.

Moms soon learn that the job assignment isn't for wimps. It isn't for the faint-hearted. It is not for the weak. It is not easy. It's hard. It's never-ending—there is never an end in sight. Being a good mom requires a relentless spirit.

But eventually, it is so rewarding. Hang in there, moms!

I remember so many times of protecting my children: Protecting them from themselves, from each other! Several times pursuing different doctors to figure out health issues, both major and minor ones. Wiping away tears (theirs and mine) as I helped them learn to navigate friends, family, neighbors, school, teachers, church, sports, college, relationships, their dad . . . my list could go on.

Mandy, another of my beautiful daughters, posted this thought on her many platforms: "*There was a new force in Michael Oher's life: a woman paying extremely close attention to him who had an eye for detail, a nose for trouble, the heart of a lion, and the will of a storm trooper*" (from *The Blind Side* by Michael Lewis). Oher went on to graduate from college and become a professional football player. He had a mama bear mother.

Submitted by:
Neva Whitney
Vintage Faith Church
Stillwater, Oklahoma

One-Year Bible Reading
1 Samuel 12:1-13:23
John 7:1-30
Psalm 108:1-13
Proverbs 15:4

Be A Barnabas

Those who refresh others will themselves be refreshed. Proverbs 11:25 NLT

Last June my 93-year old Nana, went to be with our Lord in eternal paradise. She was a true matriarch of our family who thoroughly enjoyed her crossword puzzles—she completed them faithfully, every day. While preparing for her funeral, my mom asked me to send her adjectives that I thought would describe my grandmother; they wanted to put together a “Nana crossword” in her memory. As I’ve thought about how my Nana will be remembered with such favor by us, I’ve been asking myself: How do I think my life will be remembered?

In light of that thought, it can certainly be convicting to look at the lives of specific men and women of the Bible. There are so many people whom we have heard and read about over and over, those who were changed, used, and moved along by the Holy Spirit. One man in particular has been on my mind lately.

In the book of Acts, we see a man named Joseph. He is a Levite from Cyprus, whose life and actions speak so clearly that the apostles called him by a completely different name. We now know him as Barnabas, which means “son of encouragement” (Acts 4:36). Talk about a cool nickname! Proverbs 22:1 says, “A good name is to be chosen rather than great riches, and favor is better than silver or gold.” What are you known for? What nickname would others give you? What adjectives will be in your life’s crossword puzzle?

I have always wanted to be like Barnabas. I would love to be a man who is quick to encourage and uplift, to think of others more than myself. But if I’m honest that is not who I usually am. To my shame, there have been multiple times that I have come to the end of a week and realized that I haven’t thought about anyone but me every day. More tomorrow!

Submitted by:

Caleb Yetton
The Rock Church
Draper, Utah

One-Year Bible Reading

1 Samuel 14:1-52
John 7:31-53
Psalm 109:1-31
Proverbs 15:5-7

Wednesday, May 15

The Easiest Way to Talk about Jesus . . .

I will praise you, Lord, with all my heart; I will tell of all the marvelous things you have done. I will be filled with joy because of you. I will sing praises to your name, O Most High. Psalm 9:1-2 NLT

Budgets . . . ugh. My wife Lisa and I budget our money. We have two kids in college. We don’t pay for all of it, but we help. We can only do this if we budget. Oh, one more thing. We don’t like to budget.

In the past, the budgeting approach that’s worked for us is the Dave Ramsey cash/envelope system. But using those envelopes is about as much fun as cleaning the gutters (sorry, Dave). When you fill the car with gas, you can’t pay cash at the pump. Forget online shopping. Hey Amazon, can you break a \$20?

This time we wanted a new way, and we found it. There’s an app that combines the cash/envelope system with the smartphone called “Goodbudget.” It’s a “virtual envelope” system. It makes sense to us, and we use it. Does it make budgeting fun? Well, let’s not go overboard, but it works for us. (I bet right now some of you are curious about “Goodbudget.” Maybe you’ve stopped reading this and are looking at it. I’ll wait . . .)

If you asked me technical questions about the app, I probably wouldn’t know the answer. We don’t use all the features. I’m not an expert, so I’d refer you to their website. All I can tell you is it works for us. It keeps us on a budget, so we have money for our priorities.

And that’s the easiest way to talk about Jesus. . . . Huh?

Tell people about the difference He’s made in your life. If they ask questions you don’t know, no big deal. Refer them to a knowledgeable source you trust. However, if you stick to your story with Jesus, you’ll never be stumped. No one can argue with you. Your story is your story. Your story has power. And that’s the easiest way.

Submitted by:

Spencer Bernard
Evergreen Churches
Bloomington, Minnesota

One-Year Bible Reading

1 Samuel 17:1-18:4
John 8:21-30
Psalm 111:1-10
Proverbs 15:11

Be A Barnabas – 2

Those who refresh others will themselves be refreshed. Proverbs 11:25 NLT

Barnabas in Acts 11 thought about the needs of others. According to Acts 11:25, he went out of his way to find Saul, a man who was terrorizing and imprisoning Christians. Barnabas put himself in possible danger to comfort and encourage this young man in his newly found Christian walk. Paul (formally Saul) became the greatest missionary this world has ever seen. Again, in Acts 15, Barnabas stuck his neck out for John Mark, vouching for him before Paul (even after Mark had abandoned them on a previous trip). Barnabas truly was a “son of encouragement.”

It goes without saying that we all have gone through difficult times. Perhaps you are in that season right now? When I have found myself in a trying time, by God’s grace, I have had a Barnabas or two come alongside me. I also know that I have had selfish expectations that certain people would be there for me for in that way as well. Reflecting on this, I have realized that we never truly know what someone else is going through. We don’t know their perspective, feelings, needs, or hurts. But we don’t really need to know in order to choose to go out of our way to love and encourage them.

If I want to be more like Barnabas, I must first understand the encouragement that is available to me in Christ (Philippians 2:1). I then need to humble myself and “count others more significant” than myself (Philippians 2:3-4). If I truly realize that “it is more blessed to give than to receive” (Acts 20:35), then I can become a source of grace in others’ lives. And I’m actually freed from what I’m needing or wanting in those moments. But as we refresh and encourage others, we will be refreshed.

Now wouldn’t that produce a nice crossword puzzle? Let’s all strive to be a Barnabas!

Submitted by:

Caleb Yetton
The Rock Church
Draper, Utah

One-Year Bible Reading

1 Samuel 15:1-16:23
John 8:1-20
Psalm 110:1-7
Proverbs 15:8-10

Thursday, May 16

Why Evangelize?

As You sent Me into the world, I also have sent them into the world. John 17:18

At New Life we have been warming up to the “No Place Left” (you can google that) concepts. Last night I was asked to present the opening “Why?” session of a training that will be held at our church soon. This training gives a simple set of tools that can be used in evangelism and making disciples who will make disciples. I reviewed the material a little one night and woke up early the next morning with the Holy Spirit flooding my mind with thoughts from Scripture about this issue.

The more I thought about it, the more the Lord impressed on me that particularly in the New Testament it seems that everywhere you turn (think of words like *testify* and *testimony*), this idea of sharing God’s love in the gospel with the world is there, or at least underlying the narrative. Why did Jesus choose and train twelve disciples? “So that they would be with Him and that He could send them out to preach” (Mark 3:14).

In my *Complete Concordance* the words *preach*, *preached*, *preacher*, *preaches*, *preaching* occupy nearly a page and the references are overwhelmingly in the New Testament. To prove a point to myself and to you, I opened the New Testament randomly to see if I would find this “good news” and some form of command to spread it. At random I opened to what I knew would be the New Testament. Luke 24—I browse the red letters. Verses 44-49 and the black letters of verse 45 catch my attention: “He opened their minds to understand the Scriptures.”

To understand what? Basically the same thing Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 15:3-5, the heart of the gospel. Did I try it again? You bet I did. Did it work? Oh, yes. “Suffering for the gospel,” I read in 2 Timothy 1:6-14. One more time? Yes, and Yes!

Submitted by:

Keith Newman
New Life Community Church
Belton, Missouri

One-Year Bible Reading

1 Samuel 18:5-19:24
John 8:31-59
Psalm 112:1-10
Proverbs 15:12-14

Why Evangelize? – 2

*For while we were still helpless, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly.
Romans 5:6*

Jesus personally commanded us to evangelize as recorded in some form at the end of each of the four gospels, and the apostle Paul's life and words shout it out. But the Lord awakened me early again this morning (the day I wrote this) with the most profound reason.

Because He's **amazing!**

Jesus was amazing when He healed the leper in Matthew 8:2-4: He talked to him and "stretched out His hand and touched him." He was amazing when He had a life-changing conversation with a Samaritan woman who had had five husbands and was at the time living with a sixth man. He was amazing when He asked the accusers of the "woman caught in adultery" that the one without sin cast the first stone. He remained with her until all the accusers had left, and then He talked with her. He was amazing when He invited Himself to dinner with a short, rich tax collector; this got Him in trouble with the religious authorities.

Jesus was amazing when He walked on water and enabled someone else to do so also. When He calmed a storm at sea, His veteran fishermen friends "became very much afraid and said to one another, 'Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey Him?'" He fed thousands, healed many of various ailments, and raised people from the dead, even when He knew it would be the last straw for those plotting His own death. He was amazing at His friend's tomb: "Jesus wept."

Jesus "loved me" and "gave Himself up for me," stated the former persecutor of the church. Jesus overcame death (that's a really big one), **and** He's coming back! Truly, He is awesome. Truly, as the song says, "There is no one like our God." Let's tell people about Jesus.

Submitted by:

Keith Newman
New Life Community Church
Belton, Missouri

One-Year Bible Reading

1 Samuel 20:1-21:15
John 9:1-41
Psalm 113:1-114:8
Proverbs 15:15-17

Sunday, May 19

The Hardest Part of Ministry

Alexander the coppersmith did me much harm; the Lord will repay him according to his deeds. 2 Timothy 4:14

I work with people who are dedicated to proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ and building His church. Many have made this their vocation as well as their ministry. Without doubt the hardest part of doing ministry is fractured relationships. When people who used to be your friends either oppose you or neglect you, it hurts. In 2 Timothy 4:14-18 Paul opens up with Timothy about this kind of hurt. In these five verses, we see five lessons on dealing with people who hurt us while we do ministry.

In verse 14, Paul begins by telling of a man, Alexander, who did Paul "much harm." 1 Timothy 1:20 refers to an Alexander—likely the same person—who evidently was a professing believer at one time but who did not keep the faith (verse 19). Paul says, "The Lord will repay him according to his deeds."

A temptation Paul had (like all of us have) is to be resentful towards the person who has harmed us. We think, "He hurt me—now I want to hurt him." But Paul knew that this was not the way of Jesus Christ. Our Lord did not pay back evil for evil. He instead entrusted Himself to Him who judges righteously. So too Paul looks to God. He knows that to the extent that Alexander did wrong, God would repay him according to his deeds.

So the first lesson from Paul when people hurt us is this: Do not take your own revenge, but look to God, the righteous Judge. The Lord will sort everything out in His own time. He will be perfect in judging according to a person's deeds. This gives us peace in our circumstances and frees us to love God and to continue to love people. And it enables us to demonstrate in practical terms the gospel message that we preach.

Submitted by:

John Hopler
Great Commission Churches
Columbus, Ohio

One-Year Bible Reading

1 Samuel 24:1-25:44
John 10:22-42
Psalm 116:1-19
Proverbs 15:20-21

Leave It to The Professionals

Paul began to admonish them, and said to them, "Men, I perceive that the voyage will certainly be with damage and great loss, not only of the cargo and the ship, but also of our lives." But the centurion was more persuaded by the pilot and the captain of the ship than by what was being said by Paul. Acts 27:9-11

Is there a time and place for professionals? Absolutely! You don't want me performing your open-heart surgery or flying your plane! I am not educated, trained, or qualified for these tasks. I don't want you designing a high-rise office building where I work, unless you are a professional architect who is working alongside a group of licensed engineers. These people are all professionals in their field. The majority of the time they know what they are talking about. You can stake your life on it, and often we do! I am amazed at how much faith we place in people we have never met and don't know anything about, like our pilot!

But there are also times when God gives a Spirit-filled man or woman insight beyond the professionals. Paul was not a professional captain of a ship or pilot. Who did he think he was, giving advice to the professionals? He was a man who had a relationship with the God who made the oceans, created the captain and pilot and all those on the ship, and who knew exactly what was going to happen. Paul listened to and trusted God first and foremost. It turned out exactly as God said, and all on board lived to see another sunrise over the sea.

What can we take away from this true story? Trust the professionals, and don't be foolish to solve your problems alone. Trust even more the One who made the professionals! Trust God and His Word to keep you and those you love safe physically and spiritually.

Submitted by:

Stephen Scott Nelson
Atlanta House Church
Atlanta, Georgia

One-Year Bible Reading

1 Samuel 22:1-23:29
John 10:1-21
Psalm 115:1-18
Proverbs 15:18-19

Monday, May 20

The Hardest Part of Ministry – 2

*Be on guard against him yourself, for he vigorously opposed our teaching.
2 Timothy 4:15*

When Paul was harmed by Alexander the coppersmith, he entrusted himself to God who judges righteously (2 Timothy 4:14). But he also was proactive in warning Timothy about this man.

Christians have a great strength and a great weakness. Our strength is that we believe. Our weakness is that we believe. That is, we are often naïve in believing the best of some people who do not deserve our trust. Paul was warning Timothy: "Watch out for Alexander. Do not trust him."

Alexander was likely a former member of the fellowship who had cultivated relationships in the church. People probably trusted him; he may have been an enjoyable person to be with, may have led some to Christ.

But things had changed. We don't know what those changes were except that now he was opposing Paul and Timothy's teaching. He didn't just oppose Paul's teaching. He opposed "our" (Paul and Timothy's) teaching. And he opposed that teaching **vigorously**.

This is an important point. Paul was not telling Timothy to be on guard against Alexander because of a relational conflict between him and Paul. At issue was the gospel message that Paul and Timothy preached. Perhaps Alexander was a legalist who denied the gospel of grace through Jesus Christ. Whatever the doctrinal dispute, Paul saw that this was not a personal issue but a spiritual issue that jeopardized the gospel message.

Paul was spiritually alert. He did not back down from Alexander. Instead he made sure Timothy was alert and had the backbone to deal with him. So when people hurt you in ministry, are you able to look past the personal hurts to discern what effects that person's actions are having on spreading the gospel of Jesus Christ?

Submitted by:

John Hopler
Great Commission Churches
Columbus, Ohio

One-Year Bible Reading

1 Samuel 26:1-28:25
John 11:1-54
Psalm 117:1-2
Proverbs 15:22-23

Roadblocks to Sharing Christ

But Paul said, "I am a Jew of Tarsus in Cilicia, a citizen of no insignificant city; and I beg you, allow me to speak to the people." Acts 21:39

Jews had arrived in Jerusalem from Asia and incited the crowd to kill Paul. They claimed Paul was teaching Jews to abandon the law of God and the temple, endangering the very survival of Judaism. They severely beat the heretic, attempting to silence him. How did Paul respond? Did he cower in fear? Did he cave to the pressure and slink off to retire in peace? No! He asked the Roman officer for permission to speak to his enemies! Had all the beatings and suffering taken its toll on his mind to make him completely disregard his own well-being? No!

Would you act that way towards those who hated you? I am embarrassed to say it, but I find it difficult sometimes to be kind to those who offend me in just the slightest ways. I get upset when someone cuts me off in traffic, or I'm disrespected by a stranger while swimming laps at the pool. I don't want to be around them, or even worse, I want to say something unkind!

What roadblocks did Paul overcome to ask for permission to speak to his enemies about Christ? He had to overcome *bitterness and resentment* toward those who offended him. He saw these people as Jesus did—with understanding and compassion. Paul also had to overcome physical, emotional, and mental suffering and pain. Being in pain makes it difficult to have compassion towards others. For Paul there was probably also fear of future discomfort—imprisonment and death. Uncertainty about our future causes us to focus inwardly and not think about others' needs. If these roadblocks are keeping you from allowing Christ to love through you, then ask God to change your heart as you re-read this story. Ask others to pray that you would be Spirit-filled and love as Paul did.

Submitted by:

Stephen Scott Nelson
Atlanta House Church
Atlanta, Georgia

One-Year Bible Reading

1 Samuel 29:1-31:13
John 11:55-12:19
Psalm 118:1-18
Proverbs 15:24-26

Thursday, May 23

All Deserted Me – 2

But the Lord stood with me, and strengthened me, in order that through me the proclamation might be fully accomplished, and that all the Gentiles might hear; and I was delivered out of the lion's mouth. 2 Timothy 4:17

Whereas people had deserted Paul, the Lord stood with him. What a contrast! People will leave us—but the Lord Jesus Christ will never leave us or forsake us. This is a very important lesson every leader must learn when he is doing ministry.

It can be very discouraging for a pastor when someone leaves the church. This is particularly difficult if the person was a key leader in the ministry and a close friend. I have known pastors to be shaken to the core when a key individual stops coming to the church. They think, "I never in my wildest dreams expected this person to leave." When I have had these kinds of situations, I stop and remember that this is the Lord's church, not mine. *He* is building His church. I am just a helper to Him in what He is building.

And why does the Lord stand with us? In order that through us the gospel might be proclaimed fully so that all people will hear this great message of salvation. God allows people to leave our lives so that we can re-focus on God and re-focus our ministry on that which is most important—the mission of advancing the gospel message to the entire world.

So when people leave you, do not fret. Jesus Christ will never leave you. It very well may be that He allowed this person to leave so that He might strengthen you in order that you might proclaim the gospel to a whole new group of people.

Submitted by:

John Hopler
Great Commission Churches
Columbus, Ohio

One-Year Bible Reading

2 Samuel 2:12-3:39
John 13:1-30
Psalm 119:1-16
Proverbs 15:29-30

All Deserted Me

At my first defense no one supported me, but all deserted me; may it not be counted against them. 2 Timothy 4:16

It is hard to do ministry when people disappoint you. In this letter to Timothy Paul expresses his expectation that other believers would have supported him in his trial. But no one came to his side. All deserted him.

Notice how Paul dealt with this disappointment. First, he was open about it with Timothy, his main confidante. We all need close friends with whom we can share our deepest emotions. Paul did not stuff his feelings about those who hurt him. He got it out in the open. As someone said, shared sorrow is half-sorrow. So it was probably therapeutic for Paul to share this with Timothy.

Second, Paul prayed for the welfare of those who disappointed him: "May it not be counted against them." Paul prayed for God to show mercy to them, despite their failure in caring for him in his time of need. His prayer showed that he trusted in God, and he cared for the welfare of those who had abandoned him.

If we look to other human beings to meet our need, we will surely be disappointed. But Paul knew there is One who will never disappoint—the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. (More on this tomorrow.)

Submitted by:

John Hopler
Great Commission Churches
Columbus, Ohio

One-Year Bible Reading

2 Samuel 1:1-2:11
John 12:20-50
Psalm 118:19-29
Proverbs 15:27-28

Friday, May 24

The Lord Will Deliver Me

The Lord will deliver me from every evil deed, and will bring me safely to His heavenly kingdom; to Him be the glory forever and ever. Amen. 2 Timothy 4:18

Ministry can be hard. People leave us. People criticize us. People ignore us. So we are tempted to throw in the towel. However, Paul finished the course because he learned that God promised to deliver him from every evil deed and to bring him safely to His heavenly kingdom.

Paul learned to set his mind on things above, not on things that are on earth. Depression will consume the Christian who is consumed with the things of this earth. This world will disappoint—and the people of this world will disappoint. But when we remember that the Lord will ultimately deliver us from the world and all of its evil and when we recall that He will bring us to a place of perfection, we are energized.

What a day that will be when there will be no sadness, no crying, no pain. This is why Peter told the believers to fix their hope completely on the grace to be brought to them at the revelation of Jesus Christ (1 Peter 1:13). How often I have had my hope on the grace to be brought to me today! But God's timetable is different from mine. His plan is to bring about perfection in His own way and in His own time.

So do not lose heart when people abandon you or oppose you. The Lord will deliver you from every evil deed—both your deeds and the deeds of others. Jesus will bring about the obedience of faith among all peoples—"the obedience of faith among all the Gentiles for His name's sake," (Romans 1:5)—and in the end He will bring us safely into His heavenly kingdom. When He does, we will give Him glory forever and ever!

Submitted by:

John Hopler
Great Commission Churches
Columbus, Ohio

One-Year Bible Reading

2 Samuel 4:1-6:23
John 13:31-14:14
Psalm 119:17-32
Proverbs 15:31-32

God's Righteousness

And my God will supply all your needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus. Philippians 4:19

I read in *Jesus Calling*, "Rejoice in your neediness, which enables you to find intimate completion in Me" (page 359). So I am to "rejoice in my neediness." A song comes to mind: "I Need Thee Every Hour." My need for God—for His strength, His wisdom, His guidance—draws me to Him throughout the day. It's not enough to have a quiet time with God in the morning, then put Him on a shelf and start my day. That quiet time is vital to my day, to my life. But it isn't enough.

"Lord, I need You, oh, I need You. Every hour I need You. My one defense, my righteousness, oh God, how I need You" (by Matthew Maher). This becomes the song of my heart.

"My one defense, my righteousness"—this line always frustrated me. I felt like it should say, "Your righteousness." I can boldly say that because God is always righteous. But "my righteousness"? I don't know about that. If my defense is my righteousness, then I am in trouble because all I can see is a broken-down wall—that's my righteousness.

But Jeremiah says, "The Lord is our righteousness" (33:16). J. Vernon McGee says, "The Lord our righteousness in the Hebrew is *Jehovah-tsidkenu*. If you and I have any righteousness, it is in Jesus Christ. He is our Righteousness."

The song is not talking about my good works, my good life, my righteousness. It's talking about God's righteousness in me, filling up and flowing through me. So yes, my righteousness is a broken-down wall, but God comes in and adds His righteousness. Now that broken-down wall is an impregnable wall of defense. I can't do it without Him.

Submitted by:

Shirley Ferguson
Oakridge Community Church
Clarksville, Maryland

One-Year Bible Reading

2 Samuel 7:1-8:18
John 14:15-31
Psalm 119:33-48
Proverbs 15:33

Monday, May 27

Still Bravely Singing

The things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, entrust these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also. 2 Timothy 2:2

John and I were sitting at a meal at the kitchen table when I recalled a war poem I had memorized sometime in junior high, called "In Flanders Fields," by John McCrae. The first stanza goes like this:

*In Flanders fields the poppies blow
Between the crosses, row on row,
That mark our place; and in the sky
The larks, still bravely singing, fly
Scarce heard amid the guns below.*

This is a World War I poem, written in 1915 by a Canadian physician whose close friend had just died. The point of the poem is to give a voice to the dead, as they ask that the living "carry the torch" for them, to continue to battle for the freedoms for which they died:

*Take up our quarrel with the foe:
To you from failing hands we throw
The torch; be yours to hold it high.
If ye break faith with us who die
We shall not sleep, though poppies grow
In Flanders fields.*

The poignancy of this poem is that those who died are just like us, but their time is abruptly ended. They command us to carry on their mission. May we defend our freedoms even today as loyal citizens.

Spiritually, this "passing of the torch" reminds me of the apostle Paul. He knew his end was coming, and he passed the torch to his disciple Timothy in probably his last letter. Like the larks, "still bravely singing," may we take fresh courage to pass on the gospel of freedom in Christ.

Submitted by:

Dotty Vanderhorst
Cornerstone Community Church
Lenexa, Kansas

One-Year Bible Reading

2 Samuel 12:1-31
John 16:1-33
Psalm 119:65-80
Proverbs 16:4-5

Run to the Lord

In the Lord I take refuge. How then can you say to me, "Flee like a bird to your mountain?" Psalm 11:1

I really love this verse. The reason I love it is because it is a reminder that we, as Christians, are to be vigilant to run to the Lord—first. We are to be vigilant to find our joy in the Lord.

David was wrestling with some difficult life circumstances when he wrote this psalm. When others were encouraging him to "flee to the mountain" to find rest, David reminded them that his rest was in the Lord. David was vigilant to turn to the Lord first, he was vigilant to find refuge and joy in Him.

David is a hero of mine. Another hero of mine is a man named Charles Spurgeon. Spurgeon was a great pastor and teacher who was used by God to do big things for the Kingdom.

Interestingly, Spurgeon wrestled with crippling depression. That being said, even though he fought often with "the black gloom of despair," he chose to see the Lord's blessing through it. He chose to turn first to Jesus when depression covered him. He somehow found joy in it.

Here is what Spurgeon wrote of his depression (in one of his many journals): "*This depression comes over me whenever the Lord is preparing a larger blessing for my ministry; the cloud is black before it breaks, and over-shadows before it yields its deluge of mercy. Depression has now become to me as a prophet in rough clothing, a John the Baptist, heralding the nearer coming of my Lord's richer benison.*"

David chose to run not to the mountains in times of difficulty, but first to the Lord. Spurgeon chose to see God through thick darkness, as a blessing in disguise. Christian, this week ask yourself, "Am I vigilant to find my joy in the Lord?"

Submitted by:

Steele Crosswhite
The Rock Church
Draper, Utah

One-Year Bible Reading

2 Samuel 9:1-11:27
John 15:1-27
Psalm 119:49-64
Proverbs 16:1-3

Tuesday, May 28

Never a Broken Promise!

It is impossible for God to lie. Hebrews 6:18

Douglas MacArthur famously said as he fled the Philippine Islands due to being surrounded by Japanese forces, "I shall return!" It was of utmost importance to him that he come back and bring deliverance to the people of the Philippines. He kept his promise and returned and defeated the Japanese forces there.

God gave Abraham, a man from Ur of the Chaldees with a barren wife and no earthly claim to any land in Canaan, a promise that He would make from him a great nation **and** that He would give Abraham the land of Canaan as the earthly possession of this nation (Genesis 12:1-3). How silly to an unbelieving man all of this would seem! Even Abraham and Sarah, his wife, struggled with doubts, though Abraham had heard directly from God.

God took hundreds of years to fulfill His promise and Abraham's descendants struggled with doubts during their long wait. Yet God did one impossible thing after another in order to fulfill this covenant: He caused a barren woman to give birth at 90 years old; He freed the Jews from slavery to the most powerful nation on earth; He fed two million Jews in a vast wilderness; and He used a people with no military experience to conquer kingdom after kingdom in Canaan, among many other miracles!

Douglas MacArthur could have failed to keep his word to the people of the Philippines for many reasons, even though that was his full intention, but **nothing** will keep God from fulfilling His promises! Quite simply, He cannot lie, and no one and nothing can hinder His will! Do you know His promises? Do you believe His promises? "Not one of the good promises which the Lord had made to the house of Israel failed; all came to pass," reports the writer of Joshua (Joshua 21:45).

Submitted by:

David Brandts
New Life Church
Cincinnati, Ohio

One-Year Bible Reading

2 Samuel 13:1-39
John 17:1-26
Psalm 119:81-96
Proverbs 16:6-7

Released into Freedom

It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery. Galatians 5:1

Believe it or not, freed people don't always leave slavery behind.

After the Civil War living in freedom was not a given. Some former slaves never left the plantations due to ignorance, often kept in the dark by self-serving plantation owners. Others wanted to experience the new freedoms but weren't given the means nor the tools to take the next step, which unfortunately caught many of them in the dead-end of sharecropping. Not all who were emancipated experienced freedom.

Isn't that how we are, too? In today's Galatians' snippet, it seems sort of pointless to say we're set free for freedom. It just seems so self-evident.

Christ freed us from the burden of self-perfection and inward focus, *but* Satan wants to keep us ignorant. We might long to experience freedom, knowing it's somehow possible, but we don't have tools of truth to really live it out. So we remain enslaved. What's the primary tool we need? This: *Because of Christ, God declares you to be completely righteous and perfect—a free gift.* Read that again!

Grace freed you from the bondage of self-perfection and self-focus (on what *you do for God* rather than on what *He's done for you*). If righteousness could have been obtained through keeping rules perfectly, then Christ would **not** have needed to die. He paid the cost to free you from that impossible system of self-procured righteousness. Because of this, those who have trusted Christ's payment are no longer slaves to the rules but rather transformed into children of God—freed. (Galatians says so.)

Are you feeling it? Resting in it? Emancipated from shame? Accepting that God is *satisfied* with you? It was for *freedom* that Christ set you *free*. Released. Rest in that freedom.

Submitted by:

Rita Bergen
Cornerstone Community Church
Lenexa, Kansas

One-Year Bible Reading

2 Samuel 14:1-15:22
John 18:1-24
Psalm 119:97-112
Proverbs 16:8-9

Friday, May 31

Learning in the Yearning

If your heart is broken, you'll find God right there; if you're kicked in the gut, he'll help you catch your breath. Psalm 34:18 MSG

Sometimes life hurts. Relationships splinter. Health fails. Dreams are unfulfilled. Recently I have been reading a book called *When Disappointment Hurts*, by Brittany Rust, and she addresses the difficulty in waiting to be on the other side of these difficult circumstances. She writes, "But there is great value in the gap between your discouragement and God's answer. It's where your faith is stretched and growth takes place. It's an openness that asks God to reveal something new in your soul."

I have been thinking about that "gap" in my life and what God has taught me. We recently had close friends leave our church under painful circumstances. I learned that God is my Defender, and He will never abandon me. When my feelings were hurt by a family member, I experienced God as Love, and "love does not demand its own way" (1 Corinthians 13:4). Through Him I can learn not to put demands and expectations on the people in my life. In a situation at work, God has revealed areas in my life where I need to show more humility. Through a heartfelt prayer request that has gone unanswered, I have learned to bring to God my raw emotions and to keep drawing close to Him. I have also learned to trust Him even when I don't understand.

The disappointment is never easy, but God has a lesson in it that can make us more like Him as we reflect and learn from it. What about you? Take some time to bring your hurts to God and discover what lessons He has for you through them.

Submitted by:

Kelly Lewis
Grace Point Community Church
Lewis Center, Ohio

One-Year Bible Reading

2 Samuel 17:1-29
John 19:23-42
Psalm 119:129-152
Proverbs 16:12-13

Jump! In View of God's Mercy

Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship. Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will. Romans 12:1-2 NIV

Paul's call to offer our bodies as a living sacrifice is extreme. It reminds me of when Jesus said that any who followed Him would have to deny themselves, pick up their crosses, and follow Him daily. God doesn't just want our Sunday mornings, our money, or our volunteer hours. He wants our whole being—heart, soul, mind, and strength.

It's challenging to offer ourselves at such a level of deep commitment, but I think in this verse Paul offers a way of looking at it that helps us take this huge step. He says, "Therefore," which ties what he is saying into the earlier parts of Romans, and he says, "in view of God's mercy."

For eleven chapters Paul talks about God's grace, love, and compassion. It is in light of those mercies of God that we can entrust ourselves to live one hundred percent for him. It's like a little kid who stands at the edge of a pool, both excited and terrified. His daddy holds out his arms and calls to him from the water, "Come on, buddy! You can do it. Jump!" It is in consideration of his father's character that the child can jump. In the same way, it is in view of God's character and goodness that we can offer ourselves as living sacrifices—fully devoted to Him!

Submitted by:

Steven L. Nelson
The Rio Church
El Paso, Texas

One-Year Bible Reading

2 Samuel 15:23-16:23
John 18:25-19:22
Psalm 119:113-128
Proverbs 16:10-11