



*Worship:  
Our Way of Life!*

Vol. 34 No. 10

October 28 - December 1, 2007

## ***Northminster Devotionals***

It is our belief that reading through God's Word is a transforming experience as we allow the Holy Spirit to teach us Biblical truths and as we connect and find our place in God's story of calling, redeeming, and sending.

*The One Year Bible* reading plan takes us day by day through the Bible with an Old Testament, New Testament, Psalm and Proverb reading every day. Those readings are listed on each day in this devotional guide. Use your own Bible and four bookmarks, or you can pick up a copy of *The One Year Bible* in the church office or at a bookstore. The devotionals written here are the fruit of a dedicated team of writers who base their writing on one of the Scripture verses for that days reading. It is our hope that each devotional opens a door for you to have an encounter with the Scripture and that it can even be shared with family and friends as you discuss the themes, challenges and hopes that the reading brings.

Also discover the "Sunday" Small Group Study Guides that have been provided here for small group, family or individual use. They complement Sunday morning worship at NPC, and are a launching point for going more in-depth into the Bible reading for the morning. New small groups are being formed and they will begin meeting, utilizing this resource.

Don't forget ... this entire resource is on our website, [www.godmorning.com](http://www.godmorning.com), so don't forget to tell your friends.

If you would like to use your God-given talent to become a part of the devotional writing team, call the church at 520-327-7121 and talk to Publications Editor, Jim Peck. This is a very flexible ministry and can be done from anywhere!

## Sunday, October 28 Scripture Readings

Jeremiah 51:54—52:34

Psalms 100:1-5

Titus 3:1-15

Proverbs 26:18-19

### **Small Group Study Guide**

*This week we are continuing with the third of a six week small group series at NPC. We hope you will use this guide to get to know each other, build friendships and community with others, as well as experience encouragement and growth in your faith.*

#### **Gathering As God's Family**

Welcome - *Especially new people.*

Ground Rules - *Remind people what you discussed in week one.*

Ice-Breaker - *What photos do you cherish from the past? Where do you store them now?*

#### **Growing In God's Word**

*The purpose of this study is to get to know each other and to bond as a group. If you are in a group larger than 6 people, we suggest breaking into groups of 3-5 people for this section of the meeting, which gives everyone a chance to reflect and share. After reading the Scripture out loud, read each question, and each person should be open to share, knowing that there are no right or wrong answers. Use these questions to broaden the discussion and share more.*

#### **Bible Study: Luke 9:51-62**

#### **Bible Application**

- e There are three men in this story who have an encounter with Jesus. How would you describe each of them? How are they like or dislike you?
- e In your own words, what do you think each of Jesus' sayings mean?
- e Do you think Jesus is against family? What is his point?
- e Of the issues listed here (comfort, social obligations, family concerns), which one would tempt you the most to not follow Jesus?

#### **Going As Ambassadors For Christ**

Missional Focus - How can God use you to minister to someone this week who doesn't see a hopeful future?

Prayer Requests: "How can we help you in prayer this week?"

Close with Prayer

## Monday, October 29 Scripture Readings

Lamentations 1:1—2:22

Psalms 101:1-8

Philemon 1:1-25

Proverbs 26:20

# *From Useless To Useful*

by Marie Ruiz

*I then, as Paul - an old man and now also a prisoner of Christ Jesus - I appeal to you for my son Onesimus, who became my son while I was in chains. Formerly he was useless to you, but now he has become useful both to you and to me. -Philemon 1:9b-11*

This interesting story is contained in a small book of the Bible having only one chapter. It is a plea from Paul to Philemon, who was a pastor of a church that met in his home, and also the owner of a defected slave, Onesimus. Slaves were a very real part of the economy. No one else could own the slave unless the master released him. Onesimus betrayed his master and stole from him before running away. This was punishable by death under Roman law.

But in an interesting turn of events Onesimus met up with Paul who at that time was a prisoner under house arrest. Paul's influence on him brought about a sincere confession. In gratefulness to Paul, Onesimus stayed with him, serving and helping him while he was in chains. Paul and Onesimus became so close that Paul referred to him as a brother, not as a slave. But Paul also knew that for Onesimus to make things right, he needed to return to his Master.

Paul writes this letter of appeal to Philemon telling him of Onesimus' conversion. Then Paul makes a plea to Philemon to accept Onesimus as a brother in Christ and no longer a slave. Before our conversion, we were slaves to the world, but now we are free in Christ! Paul was aware that punishment could still be an option for Onesimus, but Paul also knows the forgiveness found in Christ and forgiveness Christians need to model.

The story ends by Onesimus returning to his master, Philemon. An interesting side note: in verse eleven, Paul admits that Onesimus was **useless** to Philemon, but now he is **useful** due to his conversion. The name Onesimus actually means useful, and now Onesimus is really living up to his name!

**Youth:** Think of some ways you can be useful to others and show Christ's love.

**Adults:** We have a name to live up to if we are believers—the name of Christ.

**Prayer:** Dear Lord help us never forget as we go through this life that our usefulness depends on our refection of Christ. Amen.

## Tuesday, October 30 Scripture Readings

Lamentations 3:1-66

Psalms 102:1-28

Hebrews 1:1-14

Proverbs 26:21-22

# God Spoke To Us By His Son

by Dick Leon

*... but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom he made the universe. -Hebrews 1:2*

I am tempted in this world to give higher regard to many other claims on my life but texts like this one force me to observe that no other claim comes from one who loves me more, has more lofty credentials or who carries such power and authority into all eternity.

There are four classic “Christologies” in the New Testament, John 1:1-18, Philippians 2:4-11, Colossians 1:15-20, and today’s text, Hebrews 1:1-4. This text from Hebrews begins in early Hebrew history with a reference to how God has always been a seeking God. But, “in these last days,” he has spoken not through prophets but through his Son and what we learn about this Son is nothing like anything that has been said about others in all history:

- † He is heir of all things ... he will rule all creation!
- † All things were created through him!
- † He is the reflection of God’s glory and exact imprint of God’s very being!
- † All things are sustained by his powerful word!
- † He made purification for all our sins!
- † He sits now at God’s right hand!
- † His name is superior to all other names in history.

We live in the era of “these last days.” There is no later revelation from God that comes anywhere near to the life and work of Jesus Christ.

**Youth:** Think of the people or ideas that invite you to follow them with your loyalty and compare their credential with Christ’s in this text.

**Adults:** Our world wants us to think that no single truth is better than another. Can you name any other truth that has such credentials as Jesus?

**Prayer:** Mighty Lord, forgive us for putting anything before you in our lives. You alone are worthy of our total and everlasting loyalty! Amen.

## Wednesday, October 31 Scripture Readings

Lamentations 4:1—5:22

Psalm 103:1-22

Hebrews 2:1-18

Proverbs 26:23

# Trick Or Treat Or Trust?

by Andy Ross

*But now they are blacker than soot; they are not recognized in the streets. Their skin has shriveled on their bones; it has become as dry as a stick.*

-Lamentations 4:8

*So Jesus is not ashamed to call them brothers ... And again, I will put my trust in him. -Hebrews 2:11b,13a*

A favorite part of trick-or-treating is going to the front door to discover that you really know the people standing in front of you - they are not mere goblins and ghouls, hungry for my chocolate - but it's the neighbor child down the street, or kids from the Northminster youth group ringing our bell. The masks come off, laughter is roared, and we invite them in for "extras."

Have you ever wondered how serious life would be if we really lived out our Halloween personas? Jeremiah gave full voice to his lamentation of how his people were "not recognized in the streets," their condition had become so frightful.

What a joy it is to make your way over to the New Testament reading in Hebrews to discover that our hope, for all kinds of frightful conditions we might find ourselves in, is now established through our friend and Savior, Jesus Christ - who recognizes us as "brothers / sisters," and invites us to dwell with him as part of the family of God.

It's not a trick. And it's far more than just a treat. It is a treasury of trust given to us by Jesus - that in him, we have a home and a forever hope!

**Youth:** What makes you afraid? How do you look when you are frightened or sad? How does your friendship with Jesus change that for you?

**Adults:** What part of your life is compelling you to knock on Jesus' door of help and strength these days?

**Prayer:** Dear Lord, help us to come to you, to find our new life and eternal hope in you. Then, Lord, help us to walk with you when our streets are bright or dark, and to stay by your side. Amen.

## Thursday, November 1 Scripture Readings

Ezekiel 1:1—3:15

Psalms 104:1-23

Hebrews 3:1-9

Proverbs 26:24-26

### ***Eating His Words***

by Jennifer Monroe

*Then he said to me, “Son of man, eat this scroll I am giving you and fill your stomach with it.” So I ate it, and it tasted as sweet as honey in my mouth.*

*-Ezekiel 3:3*

Ezekiel has just had the shock of his life. The Lord has appeared to this priest, living in Babylonian exile, in a vision so fantastic and mind-blowing that he can only fall down on his face in wonder. But that's not all. The Lord has a special job for this “Son of man”: Ezekiel is going to be his mouthpiece of judgment to his rebellious people, Israel. I'm sure that this is not a job Ezekiel applied for. Few people would relish being the bearer of such bad news.

Yet, the Lord begins by telling Ezekiel several times, “Do not be afraid,” and encourages this new prophet by saying “You must speak my words to them, whether they listen or fail to listen, for they are rebellious” (2:7). Then, as if to drive the point home, the Lord encourages Ezekiel to actually *eat* a scroll containing his words (of “*lament and mourning and woe*”). Ezekiel ingests the Lord's words; they become a part of the core of his being and they will give him strength for the very difficult task ahead.

What if we approached God's words this way? I'm not suggesting we sprinkle some Ranch dressing on our Bibles and have Scripture salads. Instead, we should think about ways we can make God's Word part of our daily diets, really tasting, savoring, chewing, swallowing and digesting it, so that it gives us the strength and power we need to be the prophetic voice that the world around us needs so desperately to hear.

**Youth:** In your opinion, is reading the Bible like eating chocolate, lima beans, or something else?

**Adults:** Do you practice some kind of discipline of daily Scripture reading? What would it take for you to get in that habit?

**Prayer:** Thank you, God, for your Word. Please give us the desire to read it faithfully and to allow it to become part of our very selves. Amen.

## Friday, November 2 Scripture Readings

Ezekiel 3:16—6:14

Psalms 104:24-35

Hebrews 4:1-6

Proverbs 26:24-26

# ***Restless ... Or At Rest?***

by Dick Leon

*Therefore, while the promise of entering his rest is still open, let us take care that none of you should seem to have failed to reach it. -Hebrews 4:1*

Have you heard it said “There is no rest for the wicked?”

Or maybe you’ve heard the saying: “Our hearts are restless until they find their rest in God.”

I’ve heard those sayings and they remind me of my need for God’s rest in my heart.

We live in a restless world. I sometimes think our whole culture is ADD ... Attention Deficit Disordered! TV is built around short sound bites because they believe the average American attention span is about six minutes. They may be optimistic!!

Actually, I think restlessness is good for us. I believe we are created restless so that we will seek God. George Herbert proposes that God decided to withhold rest from us so that we would not adore God’s gifts and miss adoring the God who gave them. He puts these words in God’s mouth: “Let him keep the rest (*all the stuff of life!*) but keep it with repining restlessness; Let him be rich and weary.” The thought here is that our weariness will at least drive us to God’s breast!

How restless are you? Have you found the quiet of soul that does not answer all of life’s questions, but rather lets you know that you and your future are safe in the hands of our Creator God? Jesus invites us to rest with these words: “Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest” (*Matthew 11:28*).

**Youth:** What do you think is the root of your restlessness? Have you given God a chance to quiet you down?

**Adults:** Do you know what it is to be “rich and weary?” What do you think that teaches us?

**Prayer:** Lord, you have made us with a deep itch inside that can only be scratched by you. Help us to forsake all those fake salves to our restlessness and find our rest in your son, Jesus Christ. Amen.

## Saturday, November 3 Scripture Readings

Ezekiel 7:1—9:11

Psalm 105:1-15

Hebrews 5:1-14

Proverbs 26:28

# ***Making Tigers For Christ Out Of Babes***

by Jerry Smith

*In fact, though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you the elementary truths of God's word all over again. You need milk, not solid food! -Hebrews 5:12*

In order to address the problems found in the above Scripture, the Session decided that Northminster would adopt the goals of a Purpose Driven Church, following the principals of Rick Warren as they applied to our circumstances. Rick believed that people were divided into five groups:

1. Community - The un-churched
2. Crowd - Those who attend but do not belong
3. Congregation - Members
4. Committed - Those members seeking maturity
5. Core - The proverbial 5% who do all the work

Getting the community to join the crowd will always be a work in progress. To move the crowd to the congregation a very good course called Class 101 has been developed. Class 201 has also been developed to move the congregation to committed maturity. Class 301 is in the developmental stage which will help the committed to develop their core ministries.

During my service in the US Navy, I discovered that when my squadron mates understood the objective and their part in reaching that objective the goal was reached much faster with happier squadron personnel.

**Youth:** Your role in *The Purpose Driven Church* is very important because you are our future. Find a way to get involved.

**Adults:** Now that you have become informed of the objective strive to become part of the solution.

**Prayer:** Father God we pray that your hand will be in the development of each of these programs and that all we do will be for the glorification of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen

## Sunday, November 4 Scripture Readings

Ezekiel 10:1—11:25

Psalms 105:16-36

Hebrews 6:1-20

Proverbs 27:1-2

### **Small Group Study Guide**

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#### **Gathering As God's Family**

Welcome - *Especially new people.*

Ground Rules - *Remind people what you discussed in week one.*

Ice-Breaker - What type of bread are you today? Rye? Moldy? Crusty?

Fresh? Whole Wheat? other?

#### **Growing In God's Word**

*The purpose of this study is to get to know each other and to bond as a group. If you are in a group larger than 6 people, we suggest breaking into groups of 3-5 people for this section of the meeting, which gives everyone a chance to reflect and share. After reading the Scripture out loud, read each question, and each person should be open to share, knowing that there are no right or wrong answers. Use these questions to broaden the discussion and share more.*

#### **Bible Study: John 6:24-40**

#### **Bible Application**

- e What major miracles come immediately before this section?
- e Why are the crowds still searching for Jesus?
- e How does Jesus describe how his interests are different than theirs?
- e The crowds seem to be looking for instruction of what to do. What does Jesus tell them to do? Does this register with them?
- e How does Jesus illustrate the difference between their wants and their needs?
- e How does Jesus connect an Old Testament situation with his present identity and purpose?
- e What promise does Jesus repeat three times?

#### **Going As Ambassadors For Christ**

Missional Focus: How do you hunger and thirst after God? How can you hunger after seeing what God is up to in the world this week, and being a part of it?

Prayer Requests: "How can we help you in prayer this week?"

Close with Prayer

## Monday, November 5 Scripture Readings

Ezekiel 12:1—14:11

Psalms 105:37-45

Hebrews 7:1-17

Proverbs 27:3

# ***Provider And Protector***

by Jennifer Hager

*He spread out a cloud as a covering, and a fire to give light at night. They asked, and he brought them quail and satisfied them with the bread of heaven. He opened the rock, and water gushed out; like a river it flowed in the desert.*

*-Psalm 105:39-41*

God is our protector and our provider. In this Psalm, David exalts the Lord in praise with his recognition of God's abundant promise to protect and provide for his people.

The climate of Tucson is like that of Israel. This passage tells us that the Lord will cover the blazing sun with a cloud to protect us. The Lord will provide a fire at night so the blackened desert skies will be less threatening. The Lord will provide us with water - the monsoons replenish and restore the desert and the desert dwellers.

God's promise is even more than that of provision and protection. He promises abundant life in him. He doesn't just give us what we need, he gives us what he wants us to have. We glorify him by using his gifts in his service.

**Youth:** Do you keep your promises?

**Adults:** What have we done lately for the glory of our God?

**Prayer:** Almighty God, we thank you for the protection and provision you give us. We ask that you show us how to use your gifts to glorify you. Amen.

## Tuesday, November 6 Scripture Readings

Ezekiel 14:13—16:41

Psalms 106:1-12

Hebrews 7:18-28

Proverbs 27:4-6

### ***Busted***

by Scott Coverdale

*The former regulation is set aside because it was weak and useless ...*

*-Hebrews 7:18*

Once, when I was noticeably less wise, I decided to take my 1966 Yamaha motorcycle over to my friend's house. I was having trouble with the carburetor, and the only way to keep the engine running was ... well ... to keep it running pretty fast. I hopped on the bike and just headed down the street. My friend lived on the other side of Kolb Road, and because of the temperamental condition of the engine, I decided to forego the irksome custom of stopping at the stop sign. Instead, I gave it some extra gas and sped between cars to the other side.

Unfortunately, one of the cars that I sped in front of was a police cruiser, issued to a representative of the law enforcement community. That official took note of my cavalier approach to traffic customs and decided to talk things over with me.

After an enlightening review of the circumstances, I was informed that my infractions had earned me a fine of thirteen hundred and sixty dollars. Did I mention that I was barefoot, un-helmeted, unlicensed, unregistered, uninsured and speeding? Well!

In the passage from Hebrews, we notice that the Old Testament law did not resolve anything. It did not bring the people's hearts around to the Lord, did not make them more loving or honest or faithful. The main effect of the law is to remove the illusion (*which we tend to favor*) that we are pretty decent folk, and likely to win God's favor by our good character. On the side of Kolb Road that day, I did not argue with the policeman. I knew that he was right and I was wrong. I also knew that I didn't have any thirteen hundred dollars. Likewise, I know that I am not anywhere close to perfect in the light of God's law. I am due a fine.

The policeman told me that if I sold the motorcycle, he would recommend that the judge waive the fine. I sold it that day for a hundred bucks. God has told me to give up running my own life, and has offered me a new one. The bike is long gone, but I am still given the opportunity to live each day in the knowledge of forgiveness, gifted with new life.

**Youth:** Try hard to think of some way that you are imperfect.

**Adults:** Are you still hoping that you will win God's favor by your merit?

**Prayer:** Thank you, loving God, for giving us new life today. Amen.

## Wednesday, November 7 Scripture Readings

Ezekiel 16:42—17:24

Psalms 106:13-31

Hebrews 8:1-13

Proverbs 27:7-9

# *It's Coming, It's Coming!*

by Frank Shallenberger

*But God found fault with the people and said: "The time is coming, declares the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah. -Hebrews 8:8*

Very shortly we will be entering into the Season of Advent. This passage reminds us why we are getting ready to celebrate in a few weeks. God has promised his people a New Covenant. It is through the blood of the New Covenant, shed by Christ during his suffering and subsequent death on the cross, that we all attain salvation. The beginning of this New Covenant is in a stable in Bethlehem. For it is there that God's gift to us, his only son, is born. During this season of joy we celebrate the birth of the Christ child, God's gift to us to start off the New Covenant. Our hearts should be filled with anticipation as we look forward to that wonderful day. The French call it Noel, the Germans call it Weihnachten, we call it Christmas. Regardless of the name, it all means the same. Christians the world over celebrate this wondrous day. God incarnate! Without faith, it is truly unbelievable.

If we are to have the proper attitude at this season of the year we need to prepare ourselves in advance. Everyone has their own personal way. A very special way is daily meditation upon the amazing event when a Virgin was told by an Angel that God had chosen her to bear a child fathered by the Holy Spirit. Her attitude when confronted by the angel Gabriel with such an outrageous proposal is one that all of us should make every effort to emulate. "Let it be done unto me according to thy word." (KJV). Here we see not only abject humility but also trust and obedience. The very qualities Jesus urges us to acquire.

**Youth:** What does Advent really mean to you? Do you think beyond the Christmas tree and gifts from family and friends?

**Adults:** Do you ever take a moment in your life to have quiet and peace and meditate?

**Prayer:** Father, we your children ask you to provide for each one of us a moment sometime during our busy day when we can contemplate the amazing spirit of Mary, the mother of Christ. Help us to be humble and trust you in every way and be obedient unto you. In the name of our Lord and Savior, Jesus. Amen.

## Thursday, November 8 Scripture Readings

Ezekiel 18:1—19:14

Psalms 106:32-48

Hebrews 9:1-10

Proverbs 27:10

### **Sour Grapes**

by Scott Coverdale

*What do you people mean by quoting this proverb about Israel: 'The fathers eat sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge'? -Ezekiel 18:2*

There are a lot of qualities that we can pass on to our children. Physical traits are the easiest to see - eye color, freckles, crazy hair, big bones. Character traits are a little more subtle, but there are definite connections - loyalty, humor, emotional tendencies, eccentricities. Some influences on our children are contrarian - children sometimes rebel (*for good reasons and bad*) against what they see in their parents and end up contrasting sharply with their upbringing. Such things as tastes in music, dress, politics, and some other values might look like they are from different worlds.

The passage in Ezekiel is telling us that there are also a couple of things that we do not pass on to our children, either by training or indoctrination or environmental exposure or deoxyribonucleic acid. We don't give our children guilt or virtue. We are on our moral own.

This is good news and bad news. We don't ride our mother's apron strings through the pearly gates, nor are we held accountable for the failures of our forbearers. This is not to deny that we are greatly blessed by having loving parents or sorely challenged by difficult or crazy circumstances in our early years. We may have lived in circumstances of few opportunities or little nurture. Even worse, we may have had to deal with abuse or neglect. But in all of this, God is asking us to be responsive to him, for his own sake. Our relationship with God stands or falls on its own merits. Fortunately for us, the merit is the great and persistent love that God has for each one of us, regardless of where we have been, what we have been through, and what other people have expected from us. The one who knows us best, loves us best.

**Youth:** In what ways are you similar and different than your parents?

**Adults:** What special blessings and challenges did you come loaded with from your upbringing?

**Prayer:** Thank you, loving God, for your unconditional love for us.

## Friday, November 9 Scripture Readings

Ezekiel 20:1-49

Psalm 107:1-43

Hebrews 9:11-28

Proverbs 27:11

# ***Need A Good Lawyer?***

by Jerry Smith

*He entered heaven itself, now to appear for us in God's presence.*

*-Hebrews 9:24b*

Esther and I recently found a good earth-bound, Christian lawyer to update our wills. We believe it is the obligation of every one to make it as easy as possible for our heirs to dispose of and or redistribute the material blessings God put in our temporary care.

Over 50 years ago we found our heavenly lawyer in a little Presbyterian Church in Milton, Florida under the ministry of Ned Iverson. Why refer to Jesus Christ as our lawyer? In the verse above, "He appears for us in God's presence." In Romans 8:34 "Christ is at the right hand of God making interceding for us" and in 1 John 2:1 KJV "He is our advocate." Sounds like a lawyer to me.

One of the many things he did for us was to resolve a dissolving marriage, and he continues to do so. There is no other way to explain 58 years of marriage between two very different individuals. It hasn't always been easy but he has always been there to resolve those differences and to forgive our sins of indifference.

Another thing he gave us was a burning (Luke 24:32) love for his Word. You've all heard the expression, "When all else fails read the directions." So many of our problems in life and marriage occur because we haven't read God's direction for our lives. His Word is a lamp unto our feet and light unto our path (Psalm 119:105).

**Youth:** Pray that Jesus will always resolve the differences between your mother and father and between your parents and you.

**Adults:** Parents, if you say you have no differences between spouses and or offspring you deceive yourselves and the truth is not in you. But if you take those differences to God in prayer he will resolve those differences and make you a better spouse and parent. 1 John 1:8-9 loosely.

**Prayer:** Father, we thank you that you care about our relationships with you and with each other. Always make us sensitive to when we are behaving in ways that put a strain on those relationships and give us the strength to seek forgiveness. In Jesus name. Amen.

## Saturday, November 10 Scripture Readings

Ezekiel 23:1-49

Psalm 108:1-13

Hebrews 10:1-17

Proverbs 27:12

# A Little Lesson In Forgiveness

by Deb Van Scoyk

*The Holy Spirit also testifies to us about this. First he says: "This is the covenant I will make with them after that time, says the Lord. I will put my laws in their hearts, and I will write them on their minds." Then he adds: "Their sins and lawless acts I will remember no more." -Hebrews 10:15-17*

Lucy, the only child of busy parents, toddled her way into my heart, but it was not until her early teenage years that she began to seek my counsel. On one particularly beautiful afternoon, Lucy and I went for a walk, accompanied by her dog, Caper, who had been a gift from her parents - a talisman against loneliness. Lucy confessed that shortly after Caper came into her life, in a fit of rage at her parents, she had slammed the gate as she exited her family's garden, only to be startled by Caper's pitiful yelp as he had been caught by the gate and thrown back against a rock wall. Soon thereafter Caper began experiencing epileptic seizures, a malady common to his breed, but Lucy was convinced his pain was brought about by her own hand.

Nothing I said negated the self-imposed guilt Lucy had carried, so I suggested we pray. Lucy told God about her anger at her parents and her love for Caper. I fought back tears as she pleaded with God to forgive her. We talked a lot that day about the guilt we impose on ourselves, and my prayer was that Lucy would begin to grasp, inasmuch as any of us can, the depth of God's love for us. I suggested to Lucy that if God loves us so much that he forgives and even forgets our sins and lawless acts, maybe we should be so bold as to forgive ourselves.

**Youth:** Do you ever want to tell God about something you did that makes you feel bad about yourself?

**Adults:** We are sometimes so human we just forget that God isn't.

**Prayer:** Oh gracious Lord, help us to grasp the enormity of your love. Wash away our burdens of guilt and replace our pain with the incomparable joy your presence provides. In Jesus' name. Amen.

## Sunday, November 11 Scripture Readings

Ezekiel 23:1-49

Psalms 109:1-31

Hebrews 10:18-39

Proverbs 27:13

### **Small Group Study Guide**

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#### **Gathering As God's Family**

Welcome - *Especially new people.*

Ground Rules - *Remind people what you discussed in week one.*

Ice-Breaker - If you could take three people up a mountain to meet God, whom would you take and why?

#### **Growing In God's Word**

*The purpose of this study is to get to know each other and to bond as a group. If you are in a group larger than 6 people, we suggest breaking into groups of 3-5 people for this section of the meeting, which gives everyone a chance to reflect and share. After reading the Scripture out loud, read each question, and each person should be open to share, knowing that there are no right or wrong answers. Use these questions to broaden the discussion and share more.*

#### **Bible Study: Mark 9:2-9**

#### **Bible Application**

- e What was happening on the top of that mountain?
- e What might have been an appropriate response to beholding such glory?
- e Instead, what is Peter's response? Why does he say what he does? Do you empathize with Peter at all here?
- e How does Peter and the others experience "correction".
- e How might have Jesus' orders been shocking to the three, especially after what they had just seen?
- e When have you grasped a bit of Jesus' glory in a special way?

#### **Going As Ambassadors For Christ**

Missional Focus: How can you see the glory of God this week in places you might not expect to see it?

Prayer Requests: "How can we help you in prayer this week?"

Close with Prayer

## Monday, November 12 Scripture Readings

Ezekiel 24:1—26:21

Psalms 110:1-7

Hebrews 11:1-16

Proverbs 27:14

# A Pot Of Stew

by Marshall Worden

*Son of man, record this date, this very date, because the king of Babylon has laid siege to Jerusalem this very day. Tell this rebellious house a parable and say to them: "This is what the Sovereign Lord says: 'Put on the cooking pot; put it on and pour water into it ... Woe to the city of bloodshed, to the pot now encrusted, whose deposit will not go away! ... Then set the empty pot on the coals till it becomes hot and its copper glows so its impurities may be melted and its deposit burned away.'" -Ezekiel 24:2-3,6,11*

My grandmother was quite a good cook, and her long-simmering stews on cold winter days brought wonderful aromas, comfort, nutrition and enjoyment. Those stews, however, required a huge, well cared for cooking pot.

In this passage we find God instructing Ezekiel to tell a parable about a cooking pot that was in fact Jerusalem. The choicest ingredients - the most succulent pieces of meat - are gathered and placed in the pot. All is prepared for a sumptuous and pleasing stew, but there is a big problem: the pot is encrusted. Or as Eugene Peterson says more vividly in *The Message*: "thick with scum, thick with a filth that can't be scoured." Such was the state of Jerusalem and God's people at the time. That which was meant to be pleasing and a sweet aroma were very unpleasant indeed.

The parable, of course, causes us to consider the character of our own lives, the condition of the church and the moral fabric of our own city. We know, of course, that no matter how hard we scrub, we can't make ourselves clean enough to please God. But while we have been made clean in Jesus, too often our conduct falls short. Too often we fail to be the courageous voice for a healthier and more wholesome city, school or workplace - places that would honor God.

**Youth:** What are some things in your own life that you need to improve in order to honor Jesus?

**Adults:** How can you be a stronger voice for Jesus in your workplace, neighborhood and city?

**Prayer:** Lord Jesus, thank you for cleaning us up and putting us in places where we can be an influence for you. Amen.

## Tuesday, November 13 Scripture Readings

Ezekiel 27:1—28:26

Psalms 111:1-10

Hebrews 11:17-31

Proverbs 27:15-16

# A Sandy Reminder

by Lisa Grenier

*By faith the people passed through the Red Sea as on dry land; but when the Egyptians tried to do so, they were drowned. -Hebrews 11:29*

Last April, I was in Rocky Point, Mexico with a small group of women for a Bible study retreat and also to paint the houses built by folks from our church last February. It was a wonderful time of fellowship with other women, reunion with the families we met in February, and growing in our faith.

We were also privileged to be able to spend some time at the beach where we observed some unusual things that I won't easily forget. Because Rocky Point has such a large tide, we were able to walk far out into the sea at low tide. Along the way, we commented about the beauty of God's creation noticing the amazing pattern of ripples in the sand carved by the waves which had receded into the distance. Among the ridges of sand were tide pools, a few crabs and some stunning shells. We were in awe of the beauty created by God!

Surrounded by a surreal landscape, we strolled for forty minutes straight toward the water which at low tide appeared to be near the horizon. One woman commented that we were very far from the shoreline just like when the Israelites crossed the Red Sea. It was a reminder that God prepared the way to save his people from slavery to the Egyptians, and by faith, the Israelites took that path through the sea. We were also reminded of God's power to deliver us not only from slavery to sin, but also from any overwhelming circumstances - all for his glory! If we faithfully follow the Lord's lead, knowing in our hearts that God is on our side, we never have to be without hope! Praise God!

**Youth:** Recall a difficult situation God has allowed in your life. How did he deliver you? Did you give the glory to him?

**Adults:** How has God delivered you from a difficult circumstance and how has he used this to aid in your spiritual growth?

**Prayer:** Almighty Lord, help us to trust in you to deliver us from difficult situations. Keep us mindful of how you are our Rock and Deliverer. All glory goes to you, O Lord. Amen.

## Wednesday, November 14 Scripture Readings

Ezekiel 29:1—30:26

Psalms 112:1-10

Hebrews 11:32—12:13

Proverbs 27:17

# ***Iron Men Are Not All Robots***

by Norman Spindler

*As iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another. -Proverbs 27:17*

Did you know that this verse is the cornerstone of the Northminster Men's Group? Does this verse carry with it the meaning that every man at NPC should join, and in so doing become as sharpened iron? Will this give the men inner strength to do God's will within the church and also in the community? This seems to be the vision of this verse.

While men sometimes are noticeably absent from church, how might we convey that strength comes through submission and the receipt of God's grace? Real power comes from God who gives us guidance to be the best husbands, fathers, grandfathers, and "buddies" that anyone could ask for.

God can really use Godly men to strengthen each other, and send them to minister in families and in the community.

**Youth:** WWE wrestlers are not real men. Real men are honest, trust worthy, love God, and treat others with the same love and respect. Men can also still be courageous, strong and adventurous - but being a good friend is a man's most important role. How can you be a good or better friend to others?

**Adults:** Men and women are different, don't you think? It is not that they are not equally made in the image of God, yet that image is reflected differently in men and women. How can God use you as iron to "sharpen" a friend, or how can you let God use a friend to "sharpen" you?

**Prayer:** Dear Lord, we need your word to direct us in the path you have for the men of your church at Northminster. Cause your desires to become action notices to all men. In our Savior's name we pray. Amen.

## Thursday, November 15 Scripture Readings

Ezekiel 31:1—32:32

Psalms 113:1—114:8

Hebrews 12:14-29

Proverbs 27:18-20

# *Can I Really Be Holy?*

by Judy Williams

*Make every effort to live in peace with all men and to be holy; without holiness no one will see the Lord. Hebrews 12:14*

This verse written by Paul to the early Jewish Christians caught my attention. I thought to myself, “I do try to live in peace with everyone - but just what does it mean for me to ‘be holy’?” I know that our triune God is holy; that he is divine, perfect, omnipotent, and all-knowing.

But how could “I” ever be holy?

So, taking my trusty *Webster’s New Collegiate Dictionary* in hand, I found that “holy” can mean:

1. exalted or worthy of complete devotion as one perfect in goodness or righteousness; divine.
2. devoted entirely to God or to the work of God.
3. having a divine quality, such as love.

I decided that Paul must have been saying that although none of us is perfect, the second and third meanings of the word “holy” should certainly begin to apply to me. I should strive to be devoted entirely to God and his work. And, I should strive to have divine qualities, such as love, faith, hope, etc.

While I continually fall short of the holiness goal in my life, that should still be my aim, for I know that without holiness I will not see the Lord. In the fifteenth verse of this chapter, Paul advises his readers to “see to it that no one miss the grace of God and that no bitter root grows up to cause trouble and defile many.” In seeking holiness in my life, I must be aware of any ways I can help others realize the grace God has for us. I must be willing to uproot weeds that would choke out the vine to which we all must stay connected.

**Youth:** When arguments arise among your friends, do you choose to try to be the peacemaker?

**Adults:** What does the idea of your own personal holiness mean to you? How can you become more devoted to God and his work?

**Prayer:** Dear Father, you are exalted and worthy of our complete devotion. Help us to be aware of ways we can become more devoted to you in our daily lives through extending love to those around us. In Jesus’ name. Amen.

## Friday, November 16 Scripture Readings

Ezekiel 33:1—34:31

Psalms 115:1-18

Hebrews 13:1-25

Proverbs 27:21-22

### ***Fistfight***

by Scott Coverdale

*Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have, because God has said, "Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you."*

*-Hebrews 13:5*

Two friends, desperately hungry, discovered a small piece of edible root that had fallen into a dark corner. They decided to share the good fortune, and divided the root. They were so hungry, though, that each of them was determined to get the larger piece, and an argument ensued. Soon, they were struggling with each other, and screaming their anger. The men fought, striking each other repeatedly, and breaking each other's noses, lips and teeth. Blood flowed as the two hungry men howled curses at each other. They lost more in blood and friendship than the root could ever replace. Finally, they both collapsed on the floor of the grocery store, midway between the produce section and the bakery.

This is a great verse, because it not only instructs us to keep clear of the love of money, but puts money into perspective. Why not love money? Why be content with what you have? Because God has promised to never leave us. Money is interesting stuff - very attractive. Money is the root on the floor of the grocery store, and we *are* hungry after all. "But look," says the writer of Hebrews. "Look at what you have. You have the love of God!" Next to the love of God; next to God's promise to be with us all our lives long, the love of money is a ridiculous and sorry occupation. We already have something that is vastly greater and more life-giving than what the pursuit of money can ever provide.

I am challenged by this. I sometimes find myself caring inordinately about money and how to get more of it. I often care for money and its trappings at the expense of my relationships with other people and at the cost of losing the privilege to be a blessing to someone in more need than myself. On the other hand, when I keep the presence of God clearly in my sight, money and its trappings lose their claim to my affections in a hurry.

**Youth:** What things are more important to you than money?

**Adults:** How devout are you to the pursuit of money? What might you do to clarify your perspective of money and the love of God?

**Prayer:** Thank you, God, for your promise to be with us always. That promise is worth more than all the wealth and goods in the world.

**22** Amen.

## Saturday, November 17 Scripture Readings

Ezekiel 35:1—36:38

Psalm 116:1-19

James 1:1-18

Proverbs 27:23-27

# Never Give Up

by Judy Williams

*Blessed is the man who perseveres under trial, because when he has stood the test, he will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love him. -James 1:12*

In the very short book of James in the New Testament, we are given a summary of obligations of all believers. We are told how to behave not only in easy circumstances but how we are to react when circumstances are difficult.

James reminds us that when we are tempted, we should never blame God. We must realize that while life is full of temptations, it is we ourselves that are to blame if we fail to resist those temptations. While it may be easy to blame God when the going gets tough, he knows what is happening to us and will see that when we stay the course through adversity, we are proving our love for and trust in his faithfulness. He will hear our prayers for guidance in all situations.

**Whenever you are troubled and everything goes wrong,**

**Claim God's faithful promises. They will keep you strong.**

Illnesses, job loss, disappointments with friends, family problems, calamities, storms, situations beyond our control; these all have the potential to make us want to give up in despair. All have experienced such trials to some degree. How we respond is the key to successful lives as Christians. No matter how hard the situation may be, our determination to persevere in our faith will result in receiving the crown of life that God has in store for all who sincerely love him.

Remember: Our lives on Earth are temporary; our eternal lives depend on how we live each day in this world. *Never give up!*

**Youth:** Have you ever been unfairly punished for something you really did not do? How did you react? Did you remember to ask God to calm you?

**Adults:** Remember that God has promised that whatever burden we bear will never exceed our endurance to bear it.

**Prayer:** Dear Heavenly Father, thank you for all your promises to us. When we are tempted to become discouraged because we tend to try to solve our problems our own way, remind us that you have the answers. Help us to think first of you when the world is too much with us. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

## Sunday, November 18 Scripture Readings

Ezekiel 37:1—38:23

Psalms 117:1-2

James 1:19—2:17

Proverbs 28:1

### **Small Group Study Guide**

*This week we are continuing with the third of a six week small group series at NPC. We hope you will use this guide to get to know each other, build friendships and community with others, as well as experience encouragement and growth in your faith.*

#### **Gathering As God's Family**

Welcome - *Especially new people.*

Ground Rules - *Remind people what you discussed in week one.*

Ice-Breaker - ??

#### **Growing In God's Word**

*The purpose of this study is to get to know each other and to bond as a group. If you are in a group larger than 6 people, we suggest breaking into groups of 3-5 people for this section of the meeting, which gives everyone a chance to reflect and share. After reading the Scripture out loud, read each question, and each person should be open to share, knowing that there are no right or wrong answers. Use these questions to broaden the discussion and share more.*

#### **Bible Study: Zephaniah 3:14-20**

##### **Bible Application**

- e In spite of all the doom and gloom, of the first part of Zephaniah, on what note does it end?
- e In this book, there is a pattern of rebellion, restoration, and rejoicing. How is this book like the story of your life? What chapter are you living right now?
- e Joy will replace mourning, and calm will replace the storms of God's refining action. How does that agree with your experience of God?
- e What descriptions of worship most connect with you?
- e What reason do you have for worshipping God?

#### **Going As Ambassadors For Christ**

Missional Focus: How can your worship extend beyond the walls of the church, or beyond the confines of your private space? How would you explain worship to someone who asked "What is it, and why do you do it?"

Prayer Requests: "How can we help you in prayer this week?"

Close with Prayer

## Monday, November 19 Scripture Readings

Ezekiel 39:1—40:27

Psalm 118:1-18

James 2:18—3:18

Proverbs 28:2

# ***Faith Shown By Action***

by Anne Price

*But someone will say, “You have faith; I have deeds.” Show me your faith without deeds, and I will show you my faith by what I do. -James 2:18.*

This verse was confusing to me for many years. I would read Paul’s justification of the Gentiles by faith alone in Jesus Christ. Then James would say to the Jews that faith would be evidenced by further action. The two of their writings are supplementary not contradictory. Paul and James were devoted friends and coworkers for Jesus Christ.

I take this reading into my own life as an example. I had been a student of health, physical fitness and nutrition since I was about 22 years old. I attended lectures by tops in the field, read thousands of books on the subjects. I had knowledge, yet I was overweight and my exercise program was sporadic. What good was my faith in the benefits of healthy living? I could tell others about health, but would they believe me? NO!

Today, though I have some of the aches and pains of my chronicle age, I take action. We have choices in life no matter what our goals are. An artist must paint, a writer must write and a teacher must teach. Do we just sit and think or do we go for it?

James reminds us faith is not enough, it needs to accompanied by action.

**Youth:** When you want something in life, do you just think about it or go for it?

**Adults:** As long as we are still alive we can go for our dreams if we take action.

**Prayer:** Heavenly Father, please accept my prayer for your strength to back up my faith in you by action. Amen.

## Tuesday, November 20 Scripture Readings

Ezekiel 40:28—41:26

Psalms 118:19-29

James 4:1-17

Proverbs 28:3-5

# *Tension With The World*

by Dick Leon

*... don't you know that friendship with the world is hatred toward God?*

*-James 4:4*

Sometimes it is said that life will be easier on us when we become a Christian. I have not found that to be totally true. Oh, there are ways my life has been incredibly richer and better because I have tried my best to be a faithful follower of Jesus Christ. But that is not the same as “easier.”

I have found that life has been harder. And the place it has been the hardest is in getting along with the ways of this world. Issues like respect for people who are different from us in skin color or language or culture or economic status or religious beliefs ... the world would have us draw lines around these people and separate us from them or regard them as less worthy of love. Not Christ!

Or an issue like the sanctity of all life. The world easily dismisses the worth of lives that are poor or unwanted or powerless or ugly. Not Christ!

Or all sorts of issues of personal morality put me in tension with this world ... like foul language that is seen as ‘cool’ ... or the place of alcohol that is glorified in modern media and party animals of all ages. Following Christ means we will look, sound, and smell “square” or “old-fashioned” or just plain “out of it”!

I've decided I cannot be “cool” in the world and be a faithful follower of Jesus. And I've decided that winning the world's awards for being “with it” hardly compare with being numbered among God's “friends”!

**Youth:** Your generation faces stronger temptations than any time I can recall in history. How do you find a circle of friends who will help you follow Christ in spite of the mockery of the world around you?

**Adults:** It's been said that if there is no tension between us and our world then either we have capitulated to the world or the world has become Godly! The second option certainly isn't the case!

**Prayer:** Lord, surround us with others who also want to protect our “friendship” with you even when it brings enmity with our world. Amen.

## Wednesday, November 21 Scripture Readings

Ezekiel 42:1—43:27

Psalms 119:1-16

James 5:1-20

Proverbs 28:6-7

# *The Privilege Of Prayer*

by Jerry Smith

*The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective. -James 5:16b*

James 5:13-16 gives some very specific reasons to pray: in trouble, in sickness and for each other. These aren't merely suggestions they are commands. He promises that the prayer of faith will heal the sick and if he has sinned he will be forgiven. There are many prayers in the Bible. One of my favorites is found in Ephesians 3:14-19 and I'm asking God to make this a prayer for all reading this devotion.

*For this reason I kneel before the Father, from whom his whole family in heaven and on earth derives its name. I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being; so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge - that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.*

**Youth:** God loves you and delights in your conversations with him. Try to spend a few moments with him every day.

**Adults:** Spend a few moments in prayer to God. Then every day, try adding a few seconds more. Soon, you won't remember when you weren't immersed in prayer with him.

**Prayer:** Jesus as we ask in your name, according to your will, God will most certainly give it to us. Our joy will be a river overflowing its banks. Amen.

## Thursday, November 22 Scripture Readings

Ezekiel 44:1—45:12

Psalms 119:17-32

1 Peter 1:1-12

Proverbs 28:8-10

# *Dressing Rehearsal!*

by Andy Ross

*For you are receiving the goal of your faith, the salvation of your souls.*

*-1 Peter 1:9*

On this wonderful day of giving thanks ...

- How will your saying “grace” remind you of how you have been served by Jesus?
- How will your feasting today remind you of the heavenly banquet awaiting us?
- How will the reminder of the prophets who did not serve themselves but others, remind you to serve in Christ’s name?
- How will your thanksgiving today be a dress rehearsal for our life in eternity? How will that change the way you live when it’s not a grand holiday, but everyday “normal”?
- How will those who are with you today remind you of others who have brought God’s strength and character and love to you?
- How will you praise God today?
- How will your praise affect the way you want to live as God’s person?

**Youth:** Ask an adult to read 1 Peter 1:1-12 with you today. Then talk about that.

**Adults:** Find a friend or a younger person today, and read with them 1 Peter 1:1-12. Talk about that.

**Prayer:** Dear Lord, how we praise you and thank you for the blessings and glory of our salvation, our inheritance, and the hope you have given us in your Son, Jesus, the Christ. For Jesus ... and so many blessings, we give you thanks. Amen.

## Friday, November 23 Scripture Readings

Ezekiel 45:13—46:24

Psalms 119:33-48

1 Peter 1:13—2:10

Proverbs 28:11

# *Being A Holy People*

by Marie Ruiz

*But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. 1 Peter 2:9*

We live in a world where darkness seems to overshadow the light. I'm speaking of evil and righteousness. It seems everywhere we look, there is strife, hardship, and immorality. Just when we think we've seen it all, something else is revealed that is shocking in behavior and gives us a moment of pause to cry out to God for deliverance from the evil that abounds. But what should we expect? We live in a fallen world where holiness is shrouded from view.

But 1 Peter 1 & 2 gives us the hope of living a different kind of life because we have been chosen by God and are precious to him. We have been likened to being a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God that we may declare the praises of him who called us out of darkness into his wonderful light. WOW!! It is possible to live a holy life for him in this depraved world we live in. It doesn't mean we won't have hardships or difficulties and in some instances even be persecuted for our belief, but God assures us that our righteous living will be a living testimony.

Working out our salvation is a maturing process that takes time and most of all studying God's word and fellowshiping with other believers. One way we can study God's Word is by regularly attending church, studying in a class or getting involved in a small group as well as reading God's word at home.

**Youth:** Make sure to do God's homework and study the Bible in order to know how to live for God.

**Adults:** Make reading the Bible and/or daily devotions a priority so that you will mature in godliness.

**Prayer:** Thank you Lord, for the written Word that gives us direction for our living here on earth. Help us to crave the spiritual food that is necessary for completion in this life. Amen.

## Saturday, November 24 Scripture Readings

Ezekiel 47:1—48:35

Psalms 119:49-64

1 Peter 2:11—3:7

Proverbs 28:12-13

# To Him All Glory

by Jennifer Hager

*When they hurled their insults at him, he did not retaliate; when he suffered, he made no threats. Instead, he entrusted himself to him who judges justly.*

*1 Peter 2:23*

We can trust God to judge justly. Our great compulsion is to plan and scheme against those who hurt us, those who insult us and those who treat us unfairly. My friend Gary calls it “the looping movie reel.” We think about these situations unceasingly, replaying every possible scenario of “could have and should have.” Our thoughts become a repeating video without end.

The Lord Jesus, who is the judge, did not retaliate or threaten. His example for us is to wait in the Lord and let God do his work. We are not without fault in making others suffer and hurt. It is not our role to make things even. The Lord will take care of them and us in his justice.

When we wait on the Lord in these hurtful situations, we bring glory to him because we show the world that we rely on him and trust his judgment.

**Youth:** When you are hurt, ask Jesus to soothe you.

**Adults:** Can we practice turning the other cheek and relying on the Lord?

**Prayer:** Dear Lord, help us this day to see your infallible wisdom and judgment in this world. Amen.

## Sunday, November 25 Scripture Readings

Daniel 1:1—2:23

Psalms 119:65-80

1 Peter 3:8—4:6

Proverbs 28:14

### **Small Group Study Guide**

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#### **Gathering As God's Family**

Welcome - *Especially new people.*

Ground Rules - *Remind people what you discussed in week one.*

Ice-Breaker - For what are you most thankful?

#### **Growing In God's Word**

*The purpose of this study is to get to know each other and to bond as a group. If you are in a group larger than 6 people, we suggest breaking into groups of 3-5 people for this section of the meeting, which gives everyone a chance to reflect and share. After reading the Scripture out loud, read each question, and each person should be open to share, knowing that there are no right or wrong answers. Use these questions to broaden the discussion and share more.*

#### **Bible Study: Psalm 100**

##### **Bible Application**

- e How many reasons does the Psalmist give to give praise to God?
- e Are these reasons for "all the earth" or just "his people"?
- e How are we told to praise? What are ways that you praise God in this way?
- e What attitude characterizes God's people? Why is thanksgiving a public event?
- e What reason most motivates you to praise God?
- e Is your expression of joy: ...too limited or reserved? ...too private? ...too wild? ...just right?
- e What seems to be the essential ingredient for a joyful life?

#### **Going As Ambassadors For Christ**

Missional Focus: How can your joy be an authentic expression of your thankfulness to God? Do others see the joy on your face? Do they know why you smile?

Prayer Requests: "How can we help you in prayer this week?"

Close with Prayer

## Monday, November 26 Scripture Readings

Daniel 2:24—3:30

Psalms 119:81-96

1 Peter 4:7—5:14

Proverbs 28:15-16

### **Renewal**

by Deb Van Scoyk

*Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms. If anyone speaks, he should do it as one speaking the very words of God. If anyone serves, he should do it with the strength God provides, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ. To him be the glory and the power for ever and ever. Amen.*

-1 Peter 4:10-11

My eldest brother, David, came home from Viet Nam tormented by the memory of the horrors of war. While sound physically, he reverted to the troubled teen we'd known a decade earlier - cocky, arrogant, and indecisive. His life became a floundering search for direction and purpose, ultimately leading to a failed marriage, abandonment of his baby son, and the agonizing loss of physical health as he relied on alcohol and drugs to acquire his own version of peace.

David disappeared from my life when I realized loaning him money provided no impetus to altering his chosen course, and three decades passed before he was to contact me again. The roads David had walked during those thirty years could easily fill at least one lengthy book; however, the crucial lesson in this life story came very near the end.

After a stint in a federal penitentiary, followed by many months on the street, David was taken to a hospital by a still unidentified caring soul, freezing and near death due to a failing liver. The psychiatric nurse on duty that night became God's emissary, the vessel through whom God became known, real, and absolutely necessary to David. A couple of years later, she also became his beloved wife.

Today's Scripture summarizes my brother's existence. To him be the power for ever and ever.

**Youth:** Remember that God is with you always and that he never gives you more than you can handle. In those harder moments of life, stop and say a prayer asking for his help.

**Adults:** We must be reliant on God in all things. Try every day to embrace that reliance as the miracle through which our lives can literally be transformed.

**Prayer:** Oh Jesus, your miracles are continually performed in our lives. We are humbled by your power and overwhelmed by the depth of your restorative love. Amen.

## Tuesday, November 27 Scripture Readings

Daniel 4:1-37  
2 Peter 1:1-21

Psalms 119:97-112  
Proverbs 28:17-18

### **On Sailing**

by Scott Coverdale

*I have more understanding than the elders, for I obey your precepts.*

*-Psalm 119:100*

My brother taught me to sail a few years ago, up on the coast of Maine. He took me out in his little bitty sailboat and we went around Sheep Island a few times, then he asked me if I wanted to try it. "Uh, sure," I told him. "How?" I had watched him as we had sailed around the island, but I wanted him to explain to me when to pull in the jib sheet, when to tack, at what angle to keep the wind, where the halyard should be if the wind came up stronger. "Ah, Scott," he told me nonchalantly, "just take it out. You'll figure it out."

I took the little boat out, and after nearly tipping it over a few times, and getting whacked in the forehead once or twice by the halyard, I found out that he was right. It did come to me. Even though I could not explain it very well, I could feel the wind, and got a sense of how to go with it and tack against it and control (*more or less*) where the boat was going. It was exhilarating, and I knew that I could never have planned and studied enough to know what to do in the boat.

In Psalm 119, the writer is saying that he understands because he obeys. He has come to a personal knowledge of the Lord not by being an excellent scholar, not by being old and established in the courts. He says that obedience is the real path to understanding, just the way that sailing away from shore was the real way for me to learn how to sail, not by mastering the theory or the technical terms of a sailboat.

My natural inclination is to want to understand things before I commit to them. I like to keep my options open, limit my commitments and always have a back-up plan. I have reluctantly come to understand, though, that the way to have a relationship with God is to get in and get going. I believe that we will learn as we get out into the wind. I believe that there is a lot we can learn only by obedience - only by committing ourselves to the relationship. A little scary? Oh, yeah. But there is a lot of adventure to be had once we cast off from the shore.

**Youth:** What have you learned just by doing it, and by practice?

**Adults:** What might God have to teach you that you can only learn by doing?

**Prayer:** Lord of All, please give us faith to answer your call into our lives. Please teach us the joy of obedience. Amen.

## Wednesday, November 28 Scripture Readings

Daniel 5:1-31

Psalms 119:113-128

2 Peter 2:1-22

Proverbs 28:19-20

# *History Repeating Itself*

by Jennifer Monroe

*But you his son, O Belshazzar, have not humbled yourself, though you knew all this. -Daniel 5:22*

Henry Ford famously said, “History is more or less bunk.” There are probably hundreds of thousands, if not millions, of people around the world who would agree with him. History as the endless repetition of names, dates, battles, decrees, wars, and treaties does seem pretty useless. Children often roll their eyes and sigh when their parents start talking about their own personal histories and mutter “b-o-o-r-ing ...”

However, the Babylonian King Belshazzar could attest to the truth of another famous saying about history: “Those who cannot learn from history are doomed to repeat it” (*George Santayana*). Belshazzar had the opportunity to learn first-hand from his father Nebuchadnezzar’s mistakes, and yet he chose not to. He chose to “set [himself] up against the Lord of heaven” (5:34) and the prophet Daniel says to the king that “[Y]ou did not honor the God who holds in his hand your life and all your ways” (5:23). God gets Belshazzar’s attention in a rather dramatic way by writing his judgment on the wall during a grand banquet at which the people are carousing with the sacred vessels from the temple in Jerusalem. Daniel tells the king that because he ignored the lessons he should have learned from his father, he will lose his kingdom, and so he does, that very night. It makes good sense to pay attention to the examples of others, lest we make their same mistakes and having a teachable spirit makes studying history seem much more relevant and interesting!

**Youth:** Ask an important adult in your life (*a parent, grandparent or older friend*) about an important lesson they have learned and how they learned it.

**Adults:** What is one lesson you have learned from the example of your parents?

**Prayer:** God, please give us teachable spirits and the wisdom to learn from every example we have been given. Amen.

## Thursday, November 29 Scripture Readings

Daniel 6:1-28  
2 Peter 3:1-18

Psalms 119:129-152  
Proverbs 28:21-22

# *The Lord Waits*

by Lisa Grenier

*The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance. - 2 Peter 3:9*

About a year ago, I was sitting in a large auditorium listening to a speaker tell how he came to faith many years ago. He was a very enthusiastic young Christian who loved Jesus very much. He longed for Christ's return and prayed fervently for it thinking that surely Jesus would return by the time of the bicentennial in 1976. Then he stopped talking about his own experiences and asked those present to raise their hand if they came to faith in Jesus after 1976. My hand went up along with many others who were there.

Next he asked why Christ had not returned yet. He paused briefly and then whispered softly to those of us who had raised our hands, "He was waiting for *you!*" Tears rolled down my cheeks as I realized that God did not answer this young man's prayer in the affirmative because, in his great mercy, God was allowing time for many additional sinners (*like me!*) to repent and come to faith in Jesus *after* 1976. The Lord touched my heart in a powerful way that day! God always keeps his promises and he is never late! Jesus will return when the time is right and according to his will. He is not slow in keeping his promise, but instead he patiently waits for sinners to repent and trust him. Thank you Lord!

**Youth:** Jesus' return could occur at *any* time. Have you repented and given your life to him? How can you tell others about Jesus?

**Adults:** Reflect on how God brought you to faith. Thank him for waiting for you and for using other Christians to tell you about him. Ask Jesus for opportunities to share him with others.

**Prayer:** Lord Jesus, thank you for lovingly waiting for me, a sinner, to come to faith. Please give me the boldness to respond to the nudging of the Spirit to share the good news of your grace and mercy with others. Amen.

## Friday, November 30 Scripture Readings

Daniel 7:1-28  
1 John 1:1-10

Psalms 119:153-176  
Proverbs 28:23-24

### ***Are You Ready?***

by Frank Shallenberger

*"In my vision at night I looked, and there before me was one like a son of man, coming with the clouds of heaven. He approached the Ancient of Days and was led into his presence. He was given authority, glory and sovereign power; all peoples, nations and men of every language worshiped him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed. -Daniel 7:13-14*

On December 25, we celebrate Our Savior's birth. God makes his first appearance upon this earth in human form as a newborn child. The Father thought this was such a glorious event that he sent his angelic host to make the announcement to humble shepherds on the mountainside. A rich man would never understand a child of such importance being born in a stable occupied by beasts. A shepherd could readily accept such primitive circumstances. Had Jesus been born in a palace to a Jewish princess, he never would have faced barbaric execution on a cross. The prophecies would not have been fulfilled and we would not have been redeemed.

Daniel predicted that Jesus would come to us as a sovereign ruler over the entire globe and every man, woman and child will worship him as Lord of Lords and King of Kings. His dominion will never cease and his kingdom will never be conquered. Many times, as we gaze upon replicas of the Christ child in the manger our thoughts go immediately to that horrible event 33 years later. Therefore God, through the prophecy of Daniel, reminds us of an event that is yet to come when our risen Savior will return in glory.

Knowing this, we will not be like many of the Apostles when we look upon the cross and run away but will bow down and adore as did the shepherds 2000 years ago.

Jesus Christ conquered the cross and death. He lives within each one of us who has given our life to him. That is almost beyond comprehension. We are his witnesses until he comes again in glory.

**Youth:** Have you ever given this a thought?

**Adults:** When others look upon you do they see Jesus?

**Prayer:** Lord Jesus, let us not forget that you are going to come again. It may be tomorrow or a thousand years from now. But you will come again in power and glory. If we keep the faith, you will represent us before the Great White Throne. Amen.

## Saturday, December 1 Scripture Readings

Daniel 8:1-27  
1 John 2:1-17

Psalms 120:1-7  
Proverbs 28:25-26

# ***The Light Of The World Has Come***

by Marie Ruiz

*Dear friends, I am not writing you a new command but an old one, which you have had since the beginning. This old command is the message you have heard. Yet I am writing you a new command; its truth is seen in him and you, because the darkness is passing and the true light is already shining.*

-1 John 2:7-8

The word *light* has many definitions. In our Scripture passage today, the definition of the Light that came to the world is Jesus. God incarnate who covered the darkness with a great light. He who is the light of the world, came to bring us the light so that we could pattern our lives after his example. We are called upon as believers to shine the light of Christ in this world so others will know him.

Verse 9 tells us that anyone who claims to be in the light but hates his brother is still in darkness. Whoever loves his brother lives in the light and there is nothing in him to make him stumble. We as Christians have a responsibility to live in this world, but not love the things of the world. This is sometimes difficult and sometimes we fall short of the mark and end up with sin in our life. But God our heavenly father speaks to us and says if we do sin, we have one who speaks to the Father in our defense - Jesus Christ, the Righteous One. He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world.

As we enter this Christmas season, let us remember the Light of the World who came as a baby and lived among us so that we might be saved. And let us hold fast to obeying his commands so we can light the way for another here on earth.

**Youth:** We celebrate Jesus birthday on December 25. Jesus is the Light of the World!

**Adults:** We have the light of life to guide our path in this world. Live as children of light!

**Prayer:** Thank you, Lord, for coming into this world so that we could be saved. Your light is our way into your arms and we thank and praise you for giving us the strength to overcome evil with good. We desire to be Children of Light. Amen.



*The next issue of the Northminster Daily Devotions will be available on Sunday, December 2, 2007.*

# Northminster Presbyterian Church

2450 East Fort Lowell Road  
Tucson, Arizona 85719-2417

520-327-7121

*[www.northministertucson.org](http://www.northministertucson.org)*

520-327-1839 fax

*[www.godmorning.org](http://www.godmorning.org)*

*email: [office@northministertucson.org](mailto:office@northministertucson.org)*

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