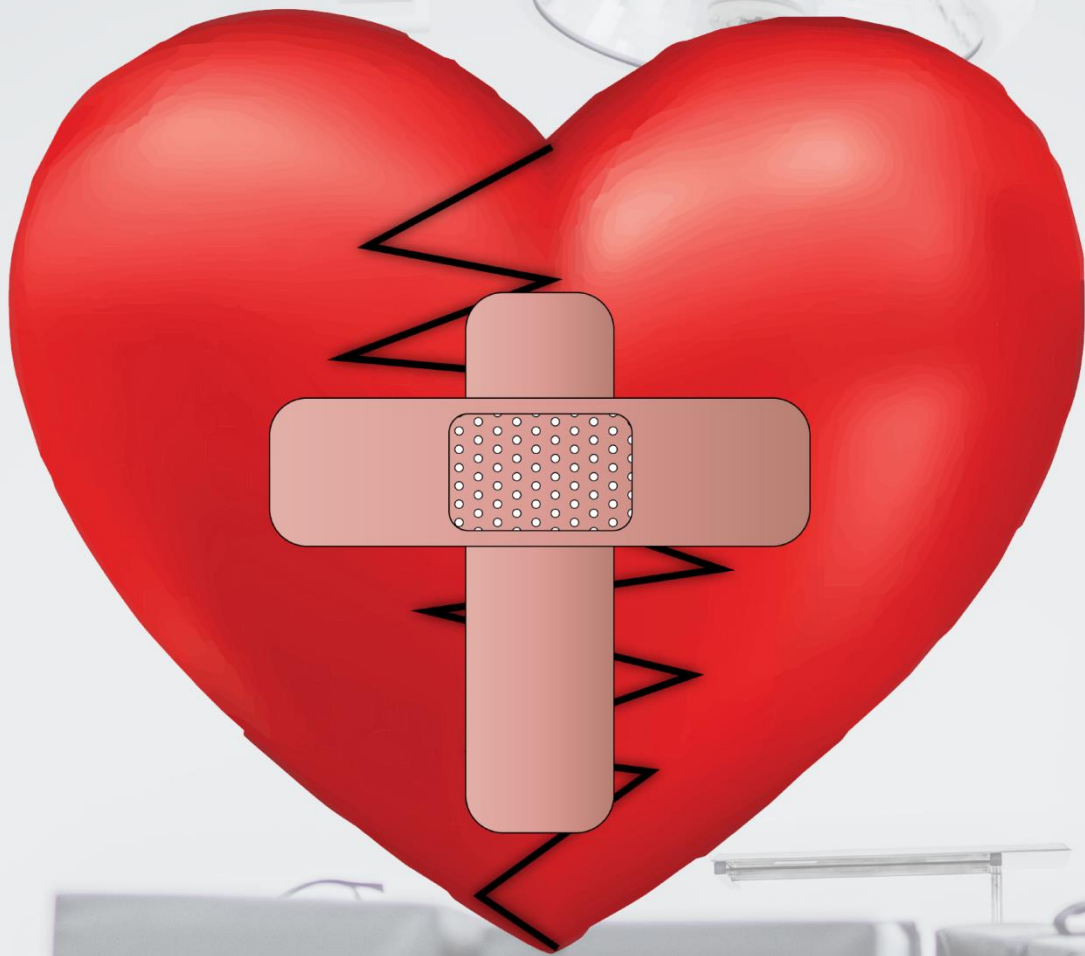


# CONNECT 7

## DAILY DEVOTIONS



**The Spirit's Healing**  
**For Emotional Wounds**

## **Sermon Series**

### **The Spirit's Healing for Emotional Wounds July 11 - August 15**

#### **Sunday July 11**

**Theme: You are Not Alone - Luke 13:10-17**

**Readings:** Amos 7:7-15, Psalm 85:(1-7) 8-13, Ephesians 1:3-14, Luke 13:10-17

#### **Sunday July 18**

**Theme: Just Come In – Isaiah 43:18-25**

**Readings:** Isaiah 43:18-25, Psalm 23, Ephesians 2:11-22, Mark 6:30-44

#### **Sunday July 25**

**Theme: Learning to Trust – Ephesians 3:14-21**

**Readings:** Genesis 9:8-17, Psalm 136:1-9, Ephesians 3:14-21, Mark 6:45-56

#### **Sunday August 1**

**Theme: Healing the Hurt, Hate, and History of the Past – Luke 7:36-50**

**Readings:** Exodus 16:2-15, Psalm 145:10-21, Ephesians 4:1-16, Luke 7:36-50

#### **Sunday August 8**

**Theme: Your New Name – Mark 5:24-34**

**Readings:** 1 Kings 19:1-8, Psalm 34:1-8, Ephesians 4:17-5:2, Mark 5:24-34

#### **Sunday August 15**

**Theme: Filled with the Spirit – Ephesians 5:6-21**

**Readings:** Proverbs 9:1-10, Psalm 34:12-22, Ephesians 5:6-21, John 6:51-69

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## Connecting to Worship: July 11

**Theme: You are Not Alone - Luke 13:10-17**

**Readings:** Amos 7:7-15, Psalm 85:(1-7) 8-13, Ephesians 1:3-14, Luke 13:10-17

### Never Alone

**Monday July 5, 2021**

If anyone loves Me, . . . We will come to him and make Our home with him. —

John 14:23

#### Today's Scripture:

Psalm 139:1-12

Have you ever been alone—really alone?

Many people can answer yes because they feel that way every day. I'm not referring to people who live in a remote cabin on a mountaintop far from civilization. I'm talking about those who feel alone in a crowded mall, or in a church full of people.

I'm referring to people who simply cannot find anyone to connect with. Perhaps they are new to a community. Maybe they have lost a spouse. It could be that they simply feel alone because they think of themselves as different, unusual, and left out of normal communication with others.

Have you ever been alone, really alone? If so, there's good news. If you have invited Christ into your life as Savior and Lord, you're never alone. You have His constant presence. Here is His promise: "I am with you always, even to the end of

the age" (Matthew 28:20). And from God the Father: "I will never leave you nor forsake you" (Hebrews 13:5). Recognize with the psalmist that there's no place you can go where God is not with you (Psalm 139:7).

Sure, we all need flesh-and-blood companions, but let's not overlook the reality of the Lord's presence. We can depend on it. With Him by our side, we're never alone.

By: Dave Branon

## Loneliness

Tuesday July 6, 2021

Be content with such things as you have. For He Himself has said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you." —

Hebrews 13:5

### Today's Scripture:

Hebrews 13:1-6

From time to time, lonely people call me to share their problems. One man, who professes faith in Christ, is struggling to live a pure life. Whenever he falls into sin, he needs reassurance of God's forgiveness.

Another person who calls is a woman who has had some bad experiences with men. She has to be assured that God still loves her.

Then there's a young woman with a physical disability. She lives alone because she is treated badly at home.

All these people have two things in common: they've felt the pain of rejection, and they are lonely. But it's loneliness that stands out as their greatest problem.

Loneliness can't be cured just by being with people, seeing a counselor, or talking on the phone. What's needed is friendship. That's where we who are not lonely can help. We must befriend lonely people.

Just waiting for someone to become a friend, however, is not the way to find the cure for loneliness. Hebrews 13:1-6 does not mention this problem, but it does give the answer. We must focus our attention on Jesus Christ. He promises to be a helper who will never leave nor forsake us (vv.5-6).

Jesus always listens and always cares. He will help you make it through any situation.

By: Herbert Vander Lugt

**When solitude's burden would weigh down the  
soul**

**And feelings of loneliness o'er us would roll,  
The Savior continues to stay by our side  
To strengthen, to comfort, to help, and to guide.**

—DJD

*Jesus cares.*

## Never Alone

Wednesday July 7, 2021

You comprehend my path and my lying down, and  
are acquainted with all my ways. —

Psalm 139:3

**Today's Scripture:**

**Psalm 139:7-18**

In today's world of inexpensive, high-tech spying devices, total privacy has become a rare and precious thing. A special agent for the Georgia Bureau of Investigation says, "Don't assume that you are alone, not ever."

Cameras are used to monitor people in public places like banks and shopping malls. In addition, tiny wireless video cameras that sell for less than \$100 are being used by ordinary people for less than honorable purposes.

It might seem odd, therefore, to hear someone celebrate a complete lack of privacy, until we realize that the One watching his every move was Almighty God. After stating that God knew each thought, word, and action before it happened, David said, "Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot attain it" (Psalm 139:6).

No place was beyond the presence, guidance, and protection of God (vv.7-10). The deepest darkness became flooded with light because God was there (vv.11-12). From the womb to the tomb, every day of David's life was known to his Creator (vv.13-16).

And the number of times God thought about him could not be counted (vv.17-18).

We are completely known and never alone in our relationship with God. What a comfort! —DCM

By: David C. McCasland

## Never Alone

Thursday July 8, 2021

I will never leave you nor forsake you. —

Hebrews 13:5

### Today's Scripture:

Hebrews 13:5-6

Robinson Crusoe, the chief character in a novel by Daniel Defoe, was shipwrecked and stranded on an uninhabited island. Life was hard, but he found hope and comfort when he turned to the Word of God.

Crusoe said, "One morning, being very sad, I opened the Bible upon these words, 'I will never, never leave thee, nor forsake thee.' Immediately it occurred that these words were to *me*; why else should they be directed in such a manner, just at the moment when I was mourning over my condition, as one forsaken of God and man?

"'Well then,' said I, 'if God does not forsake me, . . . what matters it, though the world should all forsake me . . . ?' From this moment I began to conclude in my mind that it was possible for me to be more happy in this forsaken, solitary condition than it was probable that I should ever have been in any other state in the world; and with this thought I was going to give thanks to God for bringing me to this place."

Have you been forsaken by a friend, a child, a spouse? God has said, "I will *never* leave you nor forsake you" (Hebrews 13:5). So you too can say with confidence, "The Lord is my helper; I will not fear. What can man do to me?" (v.6).

By: David H. Roper

**When all around me is darkness  
And earthly joys have flown,  
My Savior whispers His promise  
Never to leave me alone. —Anon.**

*Fear will leave us when we remember that God is  
always with us.*

## Lonely, But Not Alone

Friday July 9, 2021

You will be scattered, each to his own, and will leave Me alone. And yet I am not alone, because the Father is with Me. —

John 16:32

### Today's Scripture:

John 16:25-33

Her brief note to me spoke volumes. “I am a handicapped person in a wheelchair,” she wrote. “I am very lonely even though I know I’m never alone. God is always there. I don’t have a lot of people to talk to.”

*Loneliness* has been termed the most desolate word in the English language. It is no respecter of age, race, economic status, or intelligence. Albert Einstein said, “It is strange to be known so universally, and yet to be so lonely.”

God made us for intimacy and companionship with others. Even before sin entered the world, He declared that it is not good for man to be alone (Genesis 2:18). That’s why many people often feel so empty inside.

Jesus knew loneliness too. He surely must have felt it when His disciples deserted Him (Mark 14:50).

The Father’s presence more than compensated for this, however. He said, “I am not alone, because

the Father is with Me” (John 16:32). That intimacy with the Lord is available to all who put their trust in Him and His Word (14:16-23).

We can lessen our feelings of loneliness by reaching out to others. But even more important, we must reach out to the Lord. He is always with us, and He wants us to fellowship with Him throughout the day.

By: Dennis J. DeHaan

**When we are feeling all alone**

**And no one seems to care,**

**We must remember: Jesus said**

**That He is always there. —Sper**

*Those who know Jesus are never alone.*

**Connecting to Worship: July 11**

**Theme: You are Not Alone - Luke 13:10-17**

**Readings:** Amos 7:7-15, Psalm 85:(1-7) 8-13, Ephesians 1:3-14, Luke 13:10-17

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## Connecting to Worship: July 18

**Theme: Just Come In – Isaiah 43:18-25**

**Readings:** Isaiah 43:18-25, Psalm 23, Ephesians 2:11-22, Mark 6:30-44

### New Beginnings

**Monday July 12, 2021**

Behold, I will do a new thing, now it shall spring forth; shall you not know it? —

Isaiah 43:19

### Today's Scripture & Insight:

**Isaiah 43:14-21**

New beginnings are possible. Just ask Brayan, a young man who joined a gang in elementary school. Brayan ran away when he was 12 years old, and for 3 years was lost in gang and drug life. Although he left the gang and returned home, it was difficult for him, as he had been expelled from school for selling drugs. When he enrolled in a new high school, however, a teacher inspired and encouraged him to write about his experiences rather than repeat them. He embraced the challenge and is now experiencing a fresh start.

God, through the prophet Isaiah, encouraged Jewish exiles to think about a new beginning as well. God said, “Do not remember the former things, nor consider the things of old” (Isa. 43:18). He told them to stop dwelling on their punishment and even on His display of power through the original exodus from Egypt. He wanted their

attention to be focused on God who would give them a new beginning by bringing them home from Babylon through a new exodus (v.19).

With God, new beginnings are possible in our hearts. He can help us to let go of the past and start clinging to Him. Relationship with Him provides a new hope for all who will trust Him.

By: Marvin Williams

*Reflect & Pray*

**Lord, we need Your touch on our lives.  
Work in our hearts in whatever areas need  
a fresh start. Help us to do our part and to  
trust You to do what only You can do.**

*God gives fresh starts from the inside out.*



## Quiet Times

Tuesday July 13, 2021

Be still, and know that I am God. —

Psalm 46:10

### Today's Scripture:

Psalm 23:1-3; Mark 6:30-32

My friend Mary told me that she had always valued the time she spent fishing with her dad. Not being a fishing aficionado myself, I was curious about what she found so enjoyable. “I just like being with my dad,” she said. “So you just fish and talk?” I asked her. “Oh, no, we don’t really talk,” she said. “We just fish.”

It wasn’t the conversation—it was the company.

Did you ever think about how much time we spend talking? In what we like to call our “quiet time” with God, we usually fill in any silence with our prayers. But do we ever practice just being “still”?

God said, “Be still, and know that I am God” (Ps. 46:10). When Jesus noticed that the disciples were so busy that they didn’t even have time to eat, He told them, “Come aside by yourselves to a deserted place and rest a while” (Mark 6:31). When we leave the distractions of life behind, we can more easily rest and refocus on God.

Are you allowing quiet moments alone with God to be a part of your life? Do you desire for Him to restore your soul? (Ps. 23:1-3). Let Him teach you how to “be still.” And listen when Jesus invites you: “Come aside with Me and rest a while.”

By: Cindy Hess Kasper

*Reflect & Pray*

**The quiet times we spend with God in solitude  
and prayer will strengthen and restore our souls  
and help us sense His care. —Sper**

*Quiet times with God store up power for future  
emergencies.*

## Quiet Time With God

### Wednesday July 14, 2021

He makes me to lie down in green pastures; He  
leads me beside the still waters. —

Psalm 23:2

#### Today's Scripture:

#### Psalm 23

The word *connected* captures our contemporary experience of life. Many people rarely go anywhere without a cell phone, iPod, laptop, or pager. We have become accessible 24 hours a day. Some psychologists see this craving to stay connected as an addiction. Yet a growing number of people are deliberately limiting their use of technology. Being a “tech-no” is their way of preserving times of quiet, while limiting the flow of information into their lives.

Many followers of Christ find that a daily time of Bible reading and prayer is essential in their walk of faith. This “quiet time” is a disconnection from external distractions in order to connect with God. The “green pastures” and “still waters” of Psalm 23:2 are more than an idyllic country scene. They speak of our communion with God whereby He restores our souls and leads us in His paths (v.3).

All of us can make time to meet with God, but do we? In Robert Foster’s booklet “7 Minutes With God,” he suggests a way to begin: Start with a brief prayer for guidance, then read the Bible for a few

minutes, and close with a short time of prayer that includes adoration, confession, thanksgiving, and supplication for others. It’s vital to take time today to connect with the Lord, who is our life.

By: David C. McCasland

*Reflect & Pray*

**We need to set aside the time To read God’s Word  
and pray, And listen for the Spirit’s voice To guide  
us in His way. —Sper**

*Time spent with God is time well spent.*

## Something New

### Thursday July 15, 2021

See, I am doing a new thing! . . . I am making . . . streams in the wasteland.

Isaiah 43:19

#### Today's Scripture & Insight:

##### Isaiah 43:14–21

Farming is difficult in areas that lack fresh water. To help solve this problem, the Seawater Greenhouse company has created something new: “cooling houses” in Somaliland, Africa, and other countries with similar climates. Cooling houses use solar pumps to drizzle saltwater over walls made of corrugated cardboard. As the water moves down each panel, it leaves its salt behind. Much of the remaining fresh water evaporates inside the structure, which becomes a humid place where fruit and vegetable crops can flourish.

Through the prophet Isaiah, God promised to do a “new thing” as He provided “streams in the wasteland” for ancient Israel (Isaiah 43:19). This new thing contrasted with the old thing He had done to rescue His people from the Egyptian army. Remember the Red Sea account? God wanted His people to recall the past but not let it overshadow His current involvement in their lives (v. 18). He said, “See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it? I am making a way in the wilderness” (v. 19).

While *looking* to the past can bolster our faith in God’s provision, *living* in the past can blind us to all the fresh work of God’s Spirit today. We can ask God to show us how He’s currently moving—helping, remaking, and sustaining His people. May this awareness prompt us to partner with Him to meet the needs of others, both near and far.

By: Jennifer Benson Schuldt

*Reflect & Pray*

**What new thing is God doing in your life? How is He using you to touch others’ lives and help make the world a better place?**

*Dear God, I praise You as the living One who constantly does new things. Help me to trust You to meet my changing needs.*

## Running and Rest

### Friday July 16, 2021

[Jesus] said to them, “Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest.”

Mark 6:31

#### Today's Scripture:

#### Mark 6:30–46

The headline caught my eye: “Rest Days Important for Runners.” In Tommy Manning’s article, the former member of the U.S. Mountain Running Team emphasized a principle that dedicated athletes sometimes ignore—the body needs time to rest and rebuild after exercise. “Physiologically, the adaptations that occur as a result of training only happen during rest,” Manning wrote. “This means rest is as important as workouts.”

The same is true in our walk of faith and service. Regular times of rest are essential to avoid burnout and discouragement. Jesus sought spiritual balance during His life on Earth, even in the face of great demands. When His disciples returned from a strenuous time of teaching and healing others, “He said to them, ‘Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest’” (Mark 6:31). But a large crowd followed them, so Jesus taught them and fed them with only five loaves and two fish (vv. 32–44). When everyone was gone, Jesus “went up on a mountainside to pray” (v. 46).

If our lives are defined by work, then what we do becomes less and less effective. Jesus invites us to regularly join Him in a quiet place to pray and get some rest.

By: David C. McCasland

Sign in to track your progress!

**Lord Jesus, thank You for Your example of prayer alone with Your Father. Give us wisdom and determination to make rest a priority as we follow You.**

*In our life of faith and service, rest is as important as work.*

#### **Connecting to Worship: July 18**

**Theme: Just Come In – Isaiah 43:18-25**

**Readings:** Isaiah 43:18-25, Psalm 23, Ephesians 2:11-22, Mark 6:30-44

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## Connecting to Worship: July 25

**Theme: Learning to Trust – Ephesians 3:14-21**

**Readings:** Genesis 9:8-17, Psalm 136:1-9, Ephesians 3:14-21, Mark 6:45-56

### Generous God

**Monday July 19, 2021**

[God] is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think. —

Ephesians 3:20

#### Today's Scripture & Insight:

#### **Ephesians 3:14-21**

When our family lived in Chicago several years ago, we enjoyed many benefits. Near the top of my list were the amazing restaurants that seemed to try to outdo each other, not only in great cuisine but also in portion sizes. At one Italian eatery, my wife and I would order a half portion of our favorite pasta dish and still have enough to bring home for dinner the next night! The generous portions made us feel like we were at Grandma's house when she poured on the love through her cooking.

I also feel an outpouring of love when I read that my heavenly Father has lavished on us the riches of His grace (Eph. 1:7-8) and that He is able to do "exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think" (3:20). I'm so grateful that our God is not a stingy God who begrudgingly dishes out His blessings in small portions. Rather, He is the God who pours out forgiveness for the prodigal (Luke

15), and He daily crowns us "with lovingkindness and tender mercies" (Ps. 103:4).

At times we think God hasn't provided for us as we would like. But if He never did anything more than forgive our sins and guarantee heaven for us, He has already been abundantly generous! So today, let's rejoice in our generous God.

By: Joe Stowell

*Reflect & Pray*

**Lord, remind me often that You have been exceedingly generous to me. Help me to extend that generosity of spirit toward those around me, so that they may know who You are and rejoice in You.**

*Praise God from whom all blessings flow!*

## More Than We Can Imagine

Tuesday July 20, 2021

To him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us.

Ephesians 3:20

### Today's Scripture & Insight:

#### Ephesians 3:14–21

What are the five best toys of all time? Jonathan H. Liu suggested the following: A stick, a box, string, a cardboard tube, and dirt (GeekDad column at wired.com). All are readily available, versatile, appropriate for all ages, fit every budget, and are powered by imagination. No batteries required.

Imagination plays a powerful role in our lives, so it's not unusual that the apostle Paul mentioned it in his prayer for the followers of Jesus in Ephesus (Eph. 3:14–21). After asking God to strengthen them with His power through His Spirit (v. 16), Paul prayed that they would be able to grasp and experience the full dimension of the love of Christ (vv. 17–19). In closing, Paul gave glory to “him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us” (v. 20).

Often our experience limits our prayers—a situation we can't picture being different; destructive habits that remain unbroken; long-held attitudes that seem to defy change. As time passes,

we may begin to feel that some things cannot be changed. But Paul says that is not true.

By God's mighty power working in us, He is able to do far more than we may dare to ask or even dream of.

By: David C. McCasland

*Reflect & Pray*

**Dear Father, help us today to embrace all that You have given us in Your Son—forgiveness, hope, encouragement, and power to live a new life.**

*Never measure God's unlimited power by your limited expectations.*

## A Place of Belonging

Wednesday July 21, 2021

So that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith.

Ephesians 3:17

### Today's Scripture & Insight:

#### Ephesians 3:14–21

Some years after the tragic loss of their first spouses, Robbie and Sabrina fell in love, married, and combined their two families. They built a new home and named it *Havilah* (a Hebrew word meaning “writhing in pain” and “to bring forth”). It signifies the making of something beautiful through pain. The couple says they didn’t build the home to forget their past but “to bring life from the ashes, to celebrate hope.” For them, “it is a place of belonging, a place to celebrate life and where we all cling to the promise of a future.”

That’s a beautiful picture of our life in Jesus. He pulls our lives from the ashes and becomes for us a place of belonging. When we receive Him, He makes His home in our hearts (Ephesians 3:17). God adopts us into His family through Jesus so that we belong to Him (1:5–6). Although we’ll go through painful times, He can use even those to bring good purposes in our lives.

Daily we have opportunity to grow in our understanding of God as we enjoy His love and celebrate what He’s given us. In Him, there’s a

fullness to life that we couldn’t have without Him (3:19). And we have the promise that this relationship will last forever. Jesus is our place of belonging, our reason to celebrate life, and our hope now and forever.

By: Anne Cetas

*Reflect & Pray*

**In what ways has Jesus changed your life? What does it mean for you to belong to Jesus?**

*I’m grateful that I belong to You, Jesus. Thank You for a life of hope for now and forever.*

## Dwelling in Our Hearts

Thursday July 22, 2021

I pray that . . . he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith.

Ephesians 3:16–17

### Today's Scripture & Insight:

#### **Ephesians 3:14–21**

Sometimes the words of children can jolt us into a deeper understanding of God's truth. One evening when my daughter was young, I told her about one of the great mysteries of the Christian faith—that God through His Son and Spirit dwells in His children. As I tucked her into bed, I said that Jesus was with her and in her. "He's in my tummy?" she asked. "Well, you haven't swallowed Him," I replied. "But He's right there with you."

My daughter's literal translation of Jesus being "in her tummy" made me stop and consider how when I asked Jesus to be my Savior, He came and took residence within me.

The apostle Paul referred to this mystery when he prayed that the Holy Spirit would strengthen the believers in Ephesus so that Christ would "dwell in [their] hearts through faith" (Ephesians 3:17). With Jesus living within, they could grasp how deeply He loved them. Fueled by this love, they would mature in their faith and love others with humility and

gentleness while speaking the truth in love (4:2, 25).

Jesus dwelling inside His followers means that His love never leaves those who've welcomed Him into their lives. His love that surpasses knowledge (3:19) roots us to Him, helping us to understand how deeply He loves us.

Words written for children can say it best: "Yes, Jesus loves me!"

By: Amy Boucher Pye

*Reflect & Pray*

**How does Jesus dwelling inside you give you great comfort? How can you grow closer to God knowing that His power gives you strength?**

*God, You're not far off, but are close to me. May I delight in Your love and share it with others.*



## Rainbow Halo

### Friday July 23, 2021

My rainbow . . . will be the sign of the covenant  
between me and the earth.

Genesis 9:13

#### Today's Scripture & Insight:

#### Genesis 9:12–17

On a hike in the mountains, Adrian found himself above some low-lying clouds. With the sun behind him, Adrian looked down and saw not only his shadow but also a brilliant display known as a Brocken spectre. This phenomenon resembles a rainbow halo, encircling the shadow of the person. It occurs when the sunlight reflects back off the clouds below. Adrian described it as a “magical” moment, one that delighted him immensely.

We can imagine how similarly stunning seeing the first rainbow must have been for Noah. More than just a delight to his eyes, the refracted light and resulting colors came with a promise from God. After a devastating flood, God assured Noah, and all the “living creatures” who’ve lived since, that “never again [would] the waters become a flood to destroy all life” (Genesis 9:15).

Our earth still experiences floods and other frightening weather that results in tragic loss, but the rainbow is a promise that God will never judge the earth again with a worldwide flood. This

promise of His faithfulness can remind us that though we individually will experience personal losses and physical death on this earth—whether by disease, natural disaster, wrongdoing, or advancing age—God bolsters us with His love and presence throughout the difficulties we face. Sunlight reflecting colors through water is a reminder of His faithfulness to fill the earth with those who bear His image and reflect His glory to others.

By: Kirsten Holmberg

*Reflect & Pray*

**How does God’s promise reassure you in the midst of weather-related catastrophes? Who in your life needs your reflection of God’s glory?**

*Thank You, God, for Your faithfulness to protect and provide for me by sustaining the natural laws of Your creation. Help me to reflect Your glory to those around me.*

**Connecting to Worship: July 25**

**Theme: Learning to Trust – Ephesians 3:14-21**

**Readings:** Genesis 9:8-17, Psalm 136:1-9, Ephesians 3:14-21, Mark 6:45-56

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## Connecting to Worship: August 1

**Theme: Healing the Hurt, Hate, and History of the Past – Luke 7:36-50**

**Readings:** Exodus 16:2-15, Psalm 145:10-21, Ephesians 4:1-16, Luke 7:36-50

### Fishing Where They Ain't

**Monday July 26, 2021**

One of the Pharisees asked [Jesus] to eat with him. And He went to the Pharisee's house, and sat down to eat. —

Luke 7:36

#### Today's Scripture:

Luke 7:34-48

I have a good friend I fish with now and then. He's a very thoughtful man. After climbing into his waders and boots and gathering up his gear, he sits on the tailgate of his truck and scans the river for 15 minutes or more, looking for rising fish. "No use fishing where they ain't," he says. This makes me think of another question: "Do I fish for souls where they ain't?"

It was said of Jesus that He was "a friend of tax collectors and sinners" (Luke 7:34). As Christians, we are to be unlike the world in our behavior, but squarely in it as He was. So we have to ask ourselves: Do I, like Jesus, have friends who are sinners? If I have only Christian friends, I may be fishing for souls "where they ain't."

*Being with* nonbelievers is the first step in "fishing."

Then comes *love*—a heart-kindness that sees beneath the surface of their off-hand remarks and listens for the deeper cry of the soul. It asks, "Can

you tell me more about that?" and follows up with compassion. "There is much preaching in this friendliness," pastor George Herbert (1593–1633) said.

Such love is not a natural instinct. It comes solely from God. And so we pray: "Lord, when I am with nonbelievers today, may I become aware of the cheerless voice, the weary countenance, or the downcast eyes that I, in my natural self-preoccupation, could easily overlook. May I have a love that springs from and is rooted in Your love. May I listen to others, show Your compassion, and speak Your truth today."

By: David H. Roper

*Reflect & Pray*

**When amazed by His love for me, To love Him back became my prayer. I sought an answer sincerely— It was: Love the neighbor who's there.**

**—Verway**

*We are to be channels of God's truth— not reservoirs.*

## Moving Toward Maturity

Tuesday July 27, 2021

Become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.

Ephesians 4:13

### Today's Scripture & Insight:

#### Ephesians 4:11–16

A recent survey asked respondents to identify the age at which they believed they became adults. Those who considered themselves adults pointed to specific behaviors as evidence of their status. Having a budget and buying a house topped the list as being marks of “adulting.” Other adult activities ranged from cooking dinner every weeknight and scheduling one’s own medical appointments, to the more humorous ability to choose to eat snacks for dinner or being excited to stay at home on a Saturday evening instead of going out.

The Bible says we should press on toward spiritual maturity as well. Paul wrote to the church at Ephesus, urging the people to “become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ” (Ephesians 4:13). While we’re “young” in our faith, we’re vulnerable to “every wind of teaching” (v. 14), which often results in division among us. Instead, as we mature in our understanding of the truth, we function as a unified body under “him who is the head, that is, Christ” (v. 15).

God gave us His Spirit to help us grow into a full understanding of who He is (John 14:26), and He equips pastors and teachers to instruct and lead us toward maturity in our faith (Ephesians 4:11–12). Just as certain characteristics are evidence of physical maturity, our unity as His body is evidence of our spiritual growth.

By: Kirsten Holmberg

*Reflect & Pray*

**In what ways are you still vulnerable to “every wind of teaching”? How can you continue to grow spiritually?**

*Loving God, You’re the author of my growth and maturity. Please help me to see where my understanding of You is still immature and teach me more of Your wisdom.*

## Beautiful Scars

Wednesday July 28, 2021

Her sins, which are many, are forgiven, for she loved much. —

Luke 7:47

### Today's Scripture:

Luke 7:36-49

A number of years ago I was hiking along the Salmon River and came across a grove of pine trees that had been partially stripped of their bark. I knew from a friend who is a forester that the Native Americans who hunted this area long ago had peeled the outer bark and harvested the underlying layer for chewing gum. Some of the scars were disfiguring, but others, filled with crystallized sap and burnished by wind and weather, had been transformed into patterns of rare beauty.

So it is with our transgressions. We may be scarred by the sins of the past. But those sins, repented of and brought to Jesus for His forgiveness, can leave behind marks of beauty.

Some people, having tasted the bitterness of sin, now loathe it. They hate evil and love righteousness. *Theirs is the beauty of holiness.*

Others, knowing how far they fall short (Rom. 3:23), have tender hearts toward others. They rise

up with understanding, compassion, and kindness when others fail. *Theirs is the beauty of humility.*

Finally, when acts of sin are freely and thoroughly forgiven it leads to intimacy with the One who has shown mercy. Such sinners love much for much has been forgiven (Luke 7:47). *Theirs is the beauty of love.*

By: **David H. Roper**

*Reflect & Pray*

**Let the beauty of Jesus be seen in me—**

**All His wonderful passion and purity!**

**O Thou Spirit divine, all my nature refine,**

**Till the beauty of Jesus be seen in me. —Orsborn**

*A forgiven heart is the fountain of beauty.*

## Beautiful

Thursday July 29, 2021

She has done a beautiful thing to me.

Mark 14:6

### Today's Scripture:

Luke 7:36–50

Picture two teenage girls. The first girl is strong and healthy. The other girl has never known the freedom of getting around on her own. From her wheelchair she faces not only the emotional challenges common to life, but also a stream of physical pains and struggles.

But both girls are smiling cheerfully as they enjoy each other's company. Two beautiful teenagers—each seeing in the other the treasure of friendship.

Jesus devoted much of His time and attention to people like the girl in the wheelchair. People with lifelong disabilities or physical deformities as well as those who were looked down on by others for various reasons. In fact, Jesus let one of “those people” anoint Him with oil, to the disdain of the religious leaders (Luke 7:39). On another occasion, when a woman demonstrated her love with a similar act, Jesus told her critics, “Leave her alone . . . She has done a beautiful thing to me” (Mark 14:6).

God values everyone equally; there are no distinctions in His eyes. In reality, we are all in

desperate need of Christ's love and forgiveness. His love compelled Him to die on the cross for us.

May we see each person as Jesus did: made in God's image and worthy of His love. Let's treat everyone we meet with Christlike equality and learn to see beauty as He does.

By: Dave Branon

*Reflect & Pray*

**Dear Lord, help me to see people as You see them—not important because of what they can do or how they look, but because they are made in God's image and You loved them enough to die for them.**

*Everyone we meet bears the image of God.*

## Imperfect, Yet Loved

Friday July 30, 2021

God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

Romans 5:8

### Today's Scripture:

#### Luke 7:36–50

In Japan, food products are immaculately prepared and packaged. Not only must they taste good but they must look good too. Often I wonder if I am purchasing the food or the packaging! Because of the Japanese emphasis on good quality, products with slight defects are often discarded. However, in recent years *wakeari* products have gained popularity. *Wakeari* means “there is a reason” in Japanese. These products are not thrown away but are sold at a cheap price “for a reason”—for example, a crack in a rice cracker.

My friend who lives in Japan tells me that *wakeari* is also a catchphrase for people who are obviously less than perfect.

Jesus loves all people—including the *wakeari* who society casts aside. When a woman who had lived a sinful life learned that Jesus was eating at a Pharisee’s house, she went there and knelt behind Jesus at His feet, weeping (Luke 7:37–38). The Pharisee labeled her “a sinner” (v. 39), but Jesus

accepted her. He spoke gently to her, assuring her that her sins were forgiven (v. 48).

Jesus loves imperfect, *wakeari* people—which includes you and me. And the greatest demonstration of His love for us is that “while we were still sinners, Christ died for us” (Rom. 5:8). As recipients of His love, may we be conduits of His love to the flawed people around us so they too may know that they can receive God’s love despite their imperfections.

By: Albert Lee

*Reflect & Pray*

**I know I’m not perfect, Lord, so help me not to be hypocritical and pretend I have it all together.  
Open my heart to others in acceptance and love so that they might know Jesus’s concern for them.**

*Broken people are made whole by God’s love.*

### Connecting to Worship: August 1

**Theme: Healing the Hurt, Hate, and History of the Past – Luke 7:36-50**

**Readings:** Exodus 16:2-15, Psalm 145:10-21, Ephesians 4:1-16, Luke 7:36-50

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## Connecting to Worship: August 8

**Theme: Your New Name – Mark 5:24-34**

**Readings:** 1 Kings 19:1-8, Psalm 34:1-8, Ephesians 4:17-5:2, Mark 5:24-34

### He Knows Your Name

**Monday August 2, 2021**

I have summoned you by name; you are mine.

Isaiah 43:1

#### Today's Scripture & Insight:

##### Isaiah 43:1–7

After breaking with our longtime church, my husband and I reunited with the fellowship after three long years. *But how would people treat us? Would they welcome us back? Love us? Forgive us for leaving?* We got our answer on a sunny Sunday morning. As we walked through the big church doors, we kept hearing our names. “Pat! Dan! It’s so great to see you!” As children’s author Kate DiCamillo wrote in one of her popular books, “Reader, nothing is sweeter in this sad world than the sound of someone you love calling your name.”

The same assurance was true for the people of Israel. We had chosen a different church for a time, but they had turned their backs on God. Yet He welcomed them back. He sent the prophet Isaiah to assure them, “Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have summoned you by name; you are mine” (Isaiah 43:1).

In this world—where we can feel unseen, unappreciated, and even unknown—be assured that God knows each of us by name. “You are precious and honored in my sight,” He promises (v. 4). “When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you” (v. 2). This promise isn’t just for Israel. Jesus ransomed His life for us. He knows our names. Why? In love, we are His.

By: Patricia Raybon

*Reflect & Pray*

**Why does God welcome His people back to Him?**

**How has He shown that He knows you by name?**

*Jesus, when I stray from Your arms and Your fellowship, summon me home by name. I’m so grateful to be Yours.*

## **My Personal Space**

### **Tuesday August 3, 2021**

We do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses.

Hebrews 4:15

#### **Today's Scripture & Insight:**

#### **Luke 8:40-48**

An industrial design graduate from a Singapore university was challenged in a workshop to come up with a novel solution to a common problem using only ordinary objects. She created a vest to protect one's personal space from being invaded while traveling in the crush of crowded public trains and buses. The vest was covered with long, flexible plastic spikes normally used to keep birds and cats away from plants.

Jesus knew what it was like to lose His personal space in the commotion of crowds desperate to see and touch Him. A woman who had suffered from constant bleeding for 12 years and could find no cure touched the fringe of His robe. Immediately, her bleeding stopped (Luke 8:43-44).

Jesus' question, "Who touched me?" (v. 45) isn't as strange as it sounds. He felt power come out of Him (v. 46). That touch was different from those who merely happened to accidentally touch Him.

While we must admit that we do sometimes wish to keep our personal space and privacy, the only

way we help a world of hurting people is to let them get close enough to be touched by the encouragement, comfort, and grace of Christ in us.

By: C. P. Hia

*Reflect & Pray*

**Lord Jesus, I want to be near You and know You so that when I'm in contact with others they can see You through me.**

*A Christian's life is the window through which others can see Jesus.*



## Take The Time

### Wednesday August 4, 2021

Whoever receives one of these little children in My name receives Me. —

Mark 9:37

#### Today's Scripture:

#### Matthew 9:18-26

A legend is told about a rabbi from a small Jewish town. The people had gathered in the synagogue on the eve of Yom Kippur (Day of Atonement), but when the time came for the most important service of the Jewish year to begin, the rabbi was nowhere to be found.

During the delay, a young mother went home to check on her little daughter, whom she had left sleeping. To her surprise, she saw the rabbi sitting quietly in a chair, holding the child in his arms. He had been walking by her home on the way to the synagogue when he heard the infant crying and stopped to help. He held the little one until she fell asleep.

There's a lesson for us in this rabbi's example and in Jesus' love for people (Mt. 9:18-26). In our hectic and busy lives, we tend to get so caught up with our own concerns that we lose our sense of compassion for others. We must take time to observe and respond to individuals—whether they are little children, parents, or older believers.

Somewhere amid all the demands on you as a servant of Jesus Christ, take the time to hold the hand of an aging believer, to comfort a tired mother, or to cradle a child until she sleeps.

By: David C. Egner

*Reflect & Pray*

**How good to be an instrument  
Of grace that He can use  
At any time, in any place,  
However He may choose! —Guirey**

*Great occasions for service come seldom—little ones surround us daily.*

## Dial 9 For Worship

### Thursday August 5, 2021

I will praise You, O Lord, with my whole heart. —

Psalm 9:1

#### Today's Scripture:

#### Psalm 9:1-14

You're in the dentist's office and it's taking longer than expected. You're late for another appointment, so you ask to use the phone. You dial the number twice and nothing happens. "How do I dial out?" you ask in frustration. "I'm sorry," says the receptionist, "you need to dial 9 first."

You've come to church to worship God. You're singing. You're praying along with the pastor and following the Bible passages as they are read. But nothing's happening inside. You want to worship the Lord, but you're just going through the motions. What can you do?

Here's a suggestion: Dial 9. Open your Bible to Psalm 9 and follow David's prompts as he expresses his heartfelt praise to the Lord.

- Open your heart (v.1). Let praise roll forth!
- Review all the things He has done for you (v.1).
  - Rejoice! Be glad! Sing! (v.2)
- Acknowledge that He defends you (vv.3-5).
  - Go to Him for refuge (v.9).
- Talk about what He's done for you (v.11).
  - Receive His mercy and rejoice in His salvation (vv.13-14).

Try following David's example. You'll reconnect with God in your worship and praise.

By: David C. Egner

*Reflect & Pray*

**You alone are worthy, Lord,  
To be worshiped and adored;  
We to You our tribute bring  
As our hearts rejoice and sing. —Hess**

*At the heart of worship is worship from the heart.*

## Help Them One By One

Friday August 6, 2021

Inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these  
My brethren, you did it to Me. —

Matthew 25:40

### Today's Scripture:

Luke 8:40-56

A young man strolling along a beach at dawn stopped to watch an older man pick up starfish and toss them back into the sea. The older man said he was rescuing the starfish before the hot summer sun could bake them. Sarcastically, the young man said, "There must be hundreds of starfish here. How can you make any difference?" The old gentleman looked at the starfish in his hand before throwing it into the waves. "It makes a big difference to this one," he replied.

Jesus never let the vast crowds discourage Him from helping individuals. In Luke 8 we read that a multitude pressed about Him (v.40), yet He took time to minister to one man and one woman in need (vv.41-56). Jesus calls us to do the same. But looking on today's multitudes we may say, "How can I make a difference among so many?"

Henri Nouwen wrote, "Those who want to be for 'everyone' find themselves often unable to be close to anyone." Many of us have this problem. Yet we must recognize the importance of

ministering to the individual, for Jesus said, "Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me" (Mt. 25:40). It's better to help one than none!

By: Joanie Yoder

*Reflect & Pray*

### Putting It Into Practice

**Are you overwhelmed by all the pain and  
suffering in  
the world? In your city? In your neighborhood?  
What can you do to help one person today?**

*Do what you can to help one at a time, and  
prayerfully leave the rest to God*

**Connecting to Worship: August 8**

**Theme: Your New Name – Mark 5:24-34**

**Readings:** 1 Kings 19:1-8, Psalm 34:1-8, Ephesians 4:17-5:2, Mark 5:24-34

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## Connecting to Worship: August 15

**Theme: Filled with the Spirit – Ephesians 5:6-21**

**Readings:** Proverbs 9:1-10, Psalm 34:12-22, Ephesians 5:6-21, John 6:51-69

### Live Like It's Morning

**Monday August 9, 2021**

The fruit of the light consists in all goodness,  
righteousness and truth.

Ephesians 5:9

#### Today's Scripture & Insight:

#### Ephesians 5:1–9

When I have to travel across time zones by air, I try various remedies to avoid jet lag. I think I've tried them all! On one occasion, I decided to adjust my in-flight eating to the time zone where I was heading. Instead of eating dinner with the rest of the passengers, I kept watching a movie and tried to fall asleep. The hours of elective fasting were difficult, and the breakfast that came right before we landed left much to be desired. But living "out of sorts" with those around me *worked*. It jolted my body clock into a new time zone.

Paul knew that if believers in Jesus were to truly reflect Him in their lives, they would need to live out of step with the world around them. They "were once darkness" but now they were to live as "children of light" (Ephesians 5:8). And what might that look like? Paul goes on to fill out the picture: "The fruit of the light consists in all goodness, righteousness and truth" (v. 9).

Sleeping through dinner may have seemed foolish to the people on my flight, but even as it's midnight in the world, as believers, we're called to live like it's morning. This may provoke scorn and opposition, but in Jesus we can "walk in the way of love," following the example of the One who "love[s] us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God" (v. 2).

By: Glenn Packiam

*Reflect & Pray*

**Where have your actions and choices lined up too closely with the world around you? What would the fruit of goodness, righteousness, and truth look like in your life?**

*Jesus, wake me up to the new day that has come in You. Fill me with Your power to live in a "different time zone." Open my eyes to choose goodness, righteousness, and beauty.*

## Full Sun

**Tuesday August 10, 2021**

Live as children of light.

Ephesians 5:8

### Today's Scripture & Insight:

#### Ephesians 5:1-16

I know better, but I still keep trying. The instructions on the label are clear: "Needs full sun." Our yard has mostly shade. It is not suitable for plants that need full sun. But I like the plant. I like its color, the shape of the leaves, the size, the scent. So I buy it, bring it home, plant it, and take really good care of it. But the plant is not happy at my house. My care and attention are not enough. It needs sunlight, which I cannot provide. I thought I could make up for lack of light by giving the plant some other kind of attention. But it doesn't work that way. Plants need what they need.

And so do people. Although we can survive for a while in less-than-ideal conditions, we can't thrive. In addition to our basic physical needs, we also have spiritual needs that can't be met by any substitute.

Scripture says that believers are children of light. This means that we need to live in the full light of God's presence to thrive (Ps. 89:15). If we try to live in darkness, we will produce nothing but "fruitless deeds" (see Eph. 5:3-4, 11). But if we are

living in the light of Jesus, the Light of the world, we will produce the fruit of His light, which is good, faithful, and true.

By: [Julie Ackerman Link](#)

*Reflect & Pray*

**Dear Lord, thank You for redeeming me and giving me new life. Help me to live as a child of the Light.**

*Children of the Light walk in His light.*

## Remote Control

Wednesday August 11, 2021

Walk as children of light . . . , finding out what is acceptable to the Lord. —

Ephesians 5:8,10

### Today's Scripture:

Ephesians 5:1-17

Flick. “That’s tonight at 8 on ABC.” Flick. “A high pressure system is moving in.” Flick. “He kicked the ball wide of the goal!” Flick. “I’ll take ‘World History’ for \$600, Alex.” Flick. “In the news today . . .” Flick!

What’s happening? It’s a TV viewer giving the thumb a good workout with the remote control, looking for something to watch, filtering through the maze of choices.

Each time we stop on a channel, we’ve made a choice. We’ve made a decision to allow that program to influence us in some way. But have we been discerning? Are we using our time wisely and beneficially? Will what we watch build us up or tear us down? These are vital questions for the Christian, for we have been told to do all things for God’s glory (1 Corinthians 10:31).

One set of guidelines is outlined in Ephesians 5. We are to steer clear of immorality, filthiness, foolish talking, coarse jesting (vv.3-4). And we are to have

no “fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness” nor “speak of those things which are done by them in secret” (vv.11-12).

We need to keep learning what is “acceptable to the Lord” (v.10). And sometimes that means taking the remote and clicking the TV off.

By: Dave Branon

*Reflect & Pray*

**Take heed to what you see and hear,  
For it affects your soul;  
Be sure it's pleasing to the Lord  
And that He's in control. —Fitzhugh**

*The best TV guide is the Bible.*

## Evening

**Thursday August 12, 2021**

When He had sent the multitudes away, He went up on the mountain by Himself to pray. Now when evening came, He was alone there. —

Matthew 14:23

**Today's Scripture:**

**Ephesians 5:6-17**

The evening is one of my favorite times of day. It's a time to look back, take stock, and reflect on the events of the day—whether good or bad. When weather permits, my wife and I walk, or sometimes we'll just fix a pot of coffee and talk with each other about our day and what we've accomplished. It's a time for careful thought and evaluation, for thanksgiving, and for prayer.

Our Lord had a similar practice during His earthly ministry. At the end of a wearying and demanding day, He went up on a mountain by Himself for a few moments of reflection and prayer in the presence of His Father (Matt. 14:23).

The value of the quiet presence of our heavenly Father and the careful examination of how we have engaged life on a given day has great significance. Perhaps this was the goal of the apostle Paul's challenge for us to redeem the time (Eph. 5:16); that is, to make sure we are making the best use of the time God gives us for living and serving.

As the day winds to a close, take some time for quiet reflection. In the serenity of the evening, we can, in God's presence, get a more accurate perspective on life and how we are living it.

By: Bill Crowder

*Reflect & Pray*

**I come aside from the world of strife,  
With its burdens, trials, and the cares of life  
To a beautiful, quiet, restful place  
Where I commune with my Jesus face to face. —  
Brandt**

*There will be more reflection of Jesus when there is  
more reflection on Him.*

## What's Your Reputation?

Friday August 13, 2021

Now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light.

Ephesians 5:8

### Today's Scripture & Insight:

#### Ephesians 5:8–14

At local high school sporting events, Ted was the largest and loudest cheerleader in the stands. Before a degenerative condition took its toll on him, he stood six feet six inches tall and weighed 290 pounds. Ted's crowd-stirring chants of "Blue!" (the school's color) and candy-tossing at school events were legendary, earning him the name "Big Blue."

But Ted's reputation in his community wasn't just for cheerleading. Neither was it for the alcohol addiction he experienced as a younger man. No, he will be remembered for his love for God and family, for his generosity and kindness. At a four-hour "home-going service" that celebrated his life, person after person came forward to testify about the vibrant Christlike ways of a man who'd been rescued from darkness by the power of Jesus through the gospel.

In Ephesians 5:8, Paul reminded believers that they "were once darkness" but quickly noted, "but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light."

Such is the call for every believer in Jesus. Children of light, like Ted, have much to offer those engulfed in this world's darkness. "Fruitless deeds of darkness" are to be avoided (see vv. 3–4, 11). Those in our communities and throughout the world need the brilliant, distinctive witness of those upon whom Jesus has shined (v. 14). How distinctive? As different as light is from darkness.

By: Arthur Jackson

*Reflect & Pray*

**What are some reasons you hesitate to more intentionally spread Christ's light in this world?**  
**Where are the places around you that need His light?**

*Father, forgive me for my passivity about being light. Lead me and use me as light in the dark spaces of this world.*

**Connecting to Worship: August 15**

**Theme: Filled with the Spirit – Ephesians 5:6-21**

**Readings:** Proverbs 9:1-10, Psalm 34:12-22, Ephesians 5:6-21, John 6:51-69