

## **Saturday, March 7**

*Scripture Reading: Luke 12:7*

“...You are more valuable to God than a whole flock of sparrows.” This phrase from Luke gives me comfort because it tells me that no matter where I go or what I do, God values me, just as I am. God has infinite love for me; he has made me. Even the smallest hair on my head is numbered by God and made by his design.

This passage helps me understand that God expects us to have self-worth, and that we should honor our body as we honor God. In a very real way, the human body is a part of God as it holds our spirit and carries us for our life's work. That sentiment is sometimes hard to believe in when you or someone you know is ill, fighting a chronic disease, or simply has no self worth. Nothing is more powerful than God's love and all you have to do to live in his grace is believe and act as though we are in his grace.

Everyone has a purpose and a limited amount of time on earth set by God. No one can fully understand God or replace him and his love. Whether we always strive for perfection or sometimes have no self-worth, what we don't realize is that we already are perfect ~ in our own way ~ by God's will. We can all make the world a better place, just by believing in God.

*Prayer: Lord, please bless us and love us and keep us safe, for we are nothing but a hollow shell without your grace. Help us remember our body is by your design and we are to honor it and you by caring for ourselves and striving for self-worth. Let not our will, but yours be done in everything we do. Amen*

Written by Liz Benner (7th grade)

**Lent begins on Ash Wednesday,  
February 25, 2009.**

## Thursday, February 26

*Scripture Reading: Mark 8:31-38*

Life is full of choices, some easy, some difficult, and some that fall into that pesky grey area where the line between choosing the *right* thing and the *my* thing often gets blurred. We are often tempted to take the path that seems most comfortable and self-serving. But at what cost?

The disciples in this scripture reading wanted to be followers of Jesus, but they wanted to choose the path to follow – the one that would take them to Rome to lead a rebellion, not the one that would end in rejection, suffering, and death on the cross. We spend a lot of time as followers in life, but are much happier doing so when we believe our leader is taking us down a road that will have a positive ending. Look at the hope that President Obama has inspired in our nation – the hope that the path on which he will take us will lead to a more prosperous and peaceful world.

But Jesus was speaking of a journey that would be undeniably painful and absent of fame. You can imagine that Jesus, being human, was tempted to take the other road, the one leading to power and away from the cross. It had to be unimaginably difficult, yet he remained faithful to his purpose and gave his life for ours. What a gift... and what an example for us in our daily living.

Lent is a time to reflect on the paths *we* take, the gains and losses in our attempts to be faithful disciples. When we follow the path of discipleship, we will mostly certainly encounter trials and temptations before reaching the beautiful destination of eternal life that God has prepared. It's tremendously comforting to know that through it all, He is with us, pouring out his love, strength, and guidance. Jesus gave us a profound example of what it means to resist temptation and remain faithful to God. Let us all follow Him down that path.

*Prayer: Dear Lord Jesus, thank you for the life-giving sacrifice you made for us on the cross. When we are standing before conflicting pathways, help us to resist temptation and follow where you lead. In Your name we pray, Amen*

Written by Jim & Becca Miller, Kelsey Brune (8th grade)

## Friday, March 6

*Scripture Reading: Hebrews 11:1*

As our family prepares for the Lenten journey, we look forward to what lies ahead with hope and faith. The remembrance of the Lord's resurrection gives us confidence and peace.

We often take journeys in our lives when we need to be reminded to have faith. Whether it is a faith that the Lord will protect us - or guide us - or just be with us - we believe He is with us always. We have tried to teach our girls to have faith and trust in the Lord, reminding them of His words, "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world" (Matthew 28:20).

Jesus had faith in his Father. His faith carried him even in the most difficult times.

Sometimes the journeys of life are difficult. It is in those difficult, stressful, and trying times that we need to rely on our faith to know that "all things work together for good" even when we can't "see" it.

*Prayer: Lord, help us to keep strong in our faith knowing you are our strength. Amen*

Written by Coleen Koester

## Thursday, March 5

*Scripture Reading: Hebrews 4:12*

There have been many times in my life when I have vowed to read the Bible daily. But, at some point, life happens and other responsibilities and commitments get in the way and before I know it - that habit of daily reading is gone. Then soon I will get my priorities back in order and restart my daily devotions and at those times I wonder . . . “How is it that I sometimes feel I can live without hearing God through his word?”

It seems that almost every time I read a Bible passage, God is communicating with me. It is uncanny how many times I am struggling with a problem and when I randomly open the Bible, it hits me like a ton of bricks. There He is, speaking to me, personally – about my life and my future! It is amazing that generation after generation, people from everywhere in the world, people of all ages have been able to learn answers to life’s complications from the same Bible! Somehow we think our situations are unique, but they are really not. God has helped people through the ages, and His wisdom can guide us now.

To me, the Bible is not only a textbook that teaches us about life, it is not only a book of rules (although it is both of these things), but I believe it is a doorway into my relationship with God. He speaks to us through the Bible. He knows us better than we know ourselves. Through the Bible, he has given us a life-saving tool, a tool to reach us, to heal us and to change us. Through the Bible, God is calling us. Are you taking time out of your busy day to listen?

*Prayer: Dear Lord, please help me to prioritize my time, so that I can spend it with you. Thank you for speaking to me through your word. Help me to seek understanding when you call me. Amen*

Written by Patti Good

## Friday, February 27

*Scripture Reading: Ecclesiastes 3*

This is my favorite Bible passage. Scholars have long debated its meaning. Some argue that because physical life is fleeting and transitory, Christians should enjoy the simple pleasures of life. Eating, sleeping, family, and hard work should all be loved because they are gifts from God. Others argue that because life is filled with many phases, all of which eventually culminate in physical death, Christians should focus solely on what is above death. God’s word. “Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man” (Ecclesiastes 12:13).

I have always believed that Ecclesiastes reminds Christians of our own mortality, and that a Christian’s life will have different phases, all of which are important but temporary, all of which should be used towards serving God’s larger, more eternal plan for us.

Lent is a time of many associations for Christians in its 40 days. The number 40 is associated with numerous Biblical events, especially with the 40 days Jesus spent in the wilderness, facing Satan’s temptations meant to lead him to abandon his calling as our Savior. Lent is a time of hope, trials and tribulations, sacrifice, mission work, good deeds, reflection, repentance, meditation and giving.

So as we move into this season of Lent, we move with the spirit of centuries of Christians before us, honoring Jesus’ ultimate sacrifice. Lent is a time of hope and celebration on Sundays, rejoicing in our Savior’s resurrection. And a time of fasting on Fridays, to mourn Jesus’ death for our sin. Lent is a time of charity, to give back to others as he gave his life for us. It is a time of prayer and self-examination, a chance to meditate on how we can become better Christians for our Lord. We all know what particular sins lie in our hearts. Lent is a chance to focus on God’s grace, to cast away these sins, and lift our face towards God. A chance to be uplifted towards the heavens, away from the dirt. A chance to become a better person and Christian - for ourselves and for God. “All go to the same place; all come from dust, and to dust all return” (Ecclesiastes 3:20). God lifts our spirits up from this dust, and what a glorious gift this is!

Written by Sarah Rupp

## Saturday, February 28

*Scripture Reading: John 8:12-20*

Among the many inspirational books of the Bible, we find the Gospel of John that proclaims the eternal nature of Jesus Christ, who has been with the Father from the beginning of time. The writer mentions “light” more times than in any other Gospel. In John 8:12-20, the writer recounts the story of Jesus proclaiming “I am the Light of the world; he who follows me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.”

The Pharisees who hear Jesus question his ability to prove his statement as their law requires the witness of two people to prove the truth. Jesus reminds them that his other witness is his Father, whom the Pharisees don’t seem at this point to recognize as God. They are “clueless,” as we would say today.

We live in tumultuous times. We, our friends, and family have lost retirement savings and some have even lost their jobs, or their homes, or both. Problems caused by mankind’s sinful ways plague even the guiltless, and the temptation to wallow in despair grows daily. The “clueless” in our midst still strive for worldly power and goods without regard for the needs of the “least of these” that Jesus bade us feed and clothe.

How can we go on? We need only turn our faces to Jesus. That light is so bright that it shines through the valleys and through the dark of night—through sickness and loss and death—and shows us what path to take. Connected to that radiant source, we, too, bear witness to His awesome power—His eternal Light—by following his precepts, daring to be different from the worldly din around us—and experiencing a peace and contentment that can’t be bought or earned—but only achieved when we give ourselves up.

*Prayer: Our Heavenly Father, help us to stop our worrying and striving long enough to bask in the Light of the World and learn where Christ is leading us. Help us to follow where He leads despite pain or ridicule. In Jesus’ name we pray, Amen*

Written by Karen Darby

## Wednesday, March 4

*Scripture Reading: Psalm 46:1-3; Luke 10:38-42*

I was raised by a world class worrier, my mother. I mean no disrespect, but, oh my, can she ever see the dark lining in a dark cloud! My brothers and I realized quite early that we needed to take special care not to do things that would cause our mother to worry (or at least we didn’t let her know we did those things!). As I matured in my faith, I learned what I could do with my worries, especially by trusting in the words of Psalm 46. If God was my protection and my strength even if the earth was falling apart around me, then surely He would see me through my worldly worries. I knew I would need to draw on God’s word to be obedient.

And then I became a mother...! Now my obedience was really put to the test. As a wife, mother, daughter and friend, I have found such comfort in turning over the crisis in my life to God. Then, while searching for the Scripture to use for this devotion, I used a topical collection of Scriptures and read the verses on worry. And there I was!! While the worries that have come from illnesses, deaths, and other tragedies I have dutifully turned over to God, I held tight to the little things. I was a “Martha!” With four children, a husband and a full time job, there was always something for me to fret about getting done. And when I was behind, I made sure everyone around me knew it! So many times I used my busyness as an excuse to not be in the Word or not spend quiet time with God.

Now three of my four sons have moved out of the house, I work only from home and very part time, my fourth son just finished his last day of school and my husband will soon be on a two month medical leave of absence. I have so much time on my hands that I never had before and I find myself worrying about how I am going to fill my days. And then I read about Mary and Martha. I have spent way too much time being like Martha. It is time for me to be more like Mary. I believe I will enjoy “sitting at Jesus’ feet and listening to him teach.” After all, Jesus said that “only one thing was important.” Mary had chosen that one thing. Wise choice, Mary!

*Prayer: Lord, Help me to cast **all** my worries on You, large and small. I want to fill my days sitting at your feet, learning from Your Word. Thank you for being my refuge and my strength. Amen*

Written by Pam Smith

## Tuesday, March 3

*Scripture Reading: 1 Corinthians 13: 4-8*

Most of us think when we read those words “I need to work on my loving skills.” How AWESOME is it, to realize we are loved by this one, pure, perfect and loving God and we give him barely anything in return. Yeah, sure, we go to church, but do we actually listen to the words the pastor is saying? “Go in peace, SERVE the Lord!” Serve, that’s a big job, but not only that, we are supposed to be serving the one and only God! Then a lot of us think “Well I haven’t got a clue of how to serve the Lord. What exactly is ‘serving’ to him?” When is the last time you have prayed for someone you completely dislike? When is the last time you have loved your enemies, just like you have loved any of your friends or family? There’s that word love again. Many people will tell you that love is a feeling; I think all of us have heard it. I want to break something to you...it’s not. Love is NOT a feeling, in fact, it is an action. 1 Corinthians says it all: Love is patient, kind, it’s not jealous, it doesn’t brag, it accepts all things, it trusts, hopes and best of all, it never ever ends! Now, doesn’t that sound like an action? If it were a feeling, how are we supposed to show someone we love them?

Okay, love is something we do, but how do we know that it is ‘love the action’? Eric Ludy says in *When God Writes Your Love Story*, “We as a generation have become experts in the *biology*, but we are illiterate when it comes to the *beautiful*. We are tirelessly in search of it, but we never will find it until we realize that the “beautiful” is *God!* No matter how many times we hear the words *I love you*, it will forever be empty if we don’t blend it with the God who invented true love and is Himself the Author of romance. When you take God out of the center of your world, everything sweet, tender, pure, and lovely is sure to quickly follow.” Oh how true those words are. God is the action! He is Love! As long as you have God, as long as you have him truly in your life, you have TRUE love to share, and sharing is part of serving.

*Prayer: Loving Father, teach us to love each other as you love us. Also, help us to learn how you want us to serve you. In Jesus’ name, Amen*

Written by Kaitlin O’Neill (8th grade)

## Monday, March 2

*Scripture Reading: Ephesians 2:1-10*

Grace is truly amazing. Many of us already know this, because as the Apostle Paul makes clear we were like them at one time, dead in our transgressions and sins, living according to the ways and the whims of the world, under the influence of the ruler of the kingdom of Satan.

There may have been times in our past when we wanted to do better, but we couldn’t, not in our own strength. We were driven by the desires and demands of our own sinful nature. We may not have realized it then, but we were powerless and we had no help. We were spiritually dead, which means we were living apart with God with no hook-up, no connection, no relationship.

The Love of God is the love that pursues us, and woos us, keeps on making a way for us, moves heaven and earth to care for us, keeps us alive, keeps us from losing our mind, does not give up on us until we give in and finally receive all that God wants to lavish upon us. The love of God is what sent Jesus to Calvary to die in our place. The writer John says in 15:13, "Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends."

There is no better time to use our authority than now, when everything in the world seems to be going crazy with wars and rumors of war, with an unstable economy and the rising unemployment, with little girls being kidnapped and/or killed, with people living on the edge wondering what is going to happen next. This is no time for the saints to shrink back in fear, with a wait and see attitude. We need to take our authority.

We have all of this because of grace: God’s unmerited favor in our lives. God showed his love to us when we needed it the most. It is when we are weak and are willing to admit it that we find that God has promised that for every trial, for every disappointment, for every sickness, for every trouble, there will never be a lack of sufficient grace to carry us safely through. Therefore, like Paul, we can delight in our weaknesses, for when we are weak, then we are strong—all because of God’s grace.

*Prayer: Grace-filled God, we have been given the gift of your grace. Help us to find joy and delight knowing that you are with us – in all the events, times and experiences of our lives. Amen*

Written by Pastor Paul Olson