

YOUR DIFFICULTY IS SHOWING

WED
MAY 6
1998

READ Psalm 8:1-9

Your praise reaches up to the heavens; it is sung by children and babies.

— Psalm 8:1-2 (TEV)

How wonderful it is to see the world through the eyes of a child! My three-year-old son, Joshua, can sometimes put everything in perspective.

I teach his Sunday school class. On some Sunday mornings it is difficult to get motivated. I am a working mother. At times, I would prefer to stay home and relax instead of making the effort to get up, get ready, and be at church on time. Last Sunday morning, my difficulty was apparently showing. In the hustle and bustle of our Sunday morning routine, Joshua took my hand and said to me, "Mommy, don't be sad. Jesus is waiting to love you at Sunday school."

Even at his tender age, Joshua senses my feelings and gives me comfort through his knowledge of God's love.

"Jesus is waiting to love you," said Joshua. While I was fretting, he was singing God's praises. If we come to God as little children, our grown-up worries are put in perspective and we are reminded that God's love will see us through.

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY
When we feel overwhelmed and busy, God is waiting to love us.

Prayer: Thank you, God, for children, who remind us of your love. Help us to be more like them as we look for you in our daily lives. Amen.

Victoria Sain Teachey (North Carolina)

Prayer Focus: TO REMEMBER GOD IN TIMES OF FRUSTRATION

ON MY DOORSTEP

WED
SEPT 26
2012

READ Romans 12:9-13

We are to use our different gifts in accordance with the grace that God has given us. . . . Whoever shares with others should do it generously.

— Romans 12:6, 8 (TEV)

After I had two children in two years, I couldn't be counted on to even show up at church — mostly because often one or both of my two young children would have the sniffles. Ironically, before this time, I was on the church staff in children's ministry, where daily I could use my gift of teaching. I mourned the loss of my ministry.

Then one morning, a friend who is also a stay-at-home mom called me — in tears, overwhelmed, and lonely. I told her I'd be right over and bring my kids to play with hers. We talked all morning about our similar struggles, and she seemed to grow stronger.

Later I thought of another childhood friend. She is a mother of six, on public assistance, with no car and utterly alone with no support from her family.

Though I continually feel inadequate in the face of her needs, I'm beginning to see various ways I can help. I am learning through my relationships with these women that being a friend can be a powerful, challenging ministry.

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

Even when I feel inadequate, God will show me how to be a friend to others.

Prayer: Dear God, our Companion, help us to see that you always have ways to use us, no matter our circumstances. Show us how we can serve. Amen.

Renee Lannan (Pennsylvania, USA)

Prayer Focus: YOUNG MOTHERS

SHARING OUR PLATES

SUN
AUG 13
2017

READ 2 Timothy 1:1-7

I am reminded of your sincere faith, a faith that lived first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice and now, I am sure, lives in you.

— 2 Timothy 1:5 (NRSV)

When my son began eating solid foods, it was a challenge to get him to eat vegetables. Soft, bite-sized pieces of carrots, broccoli, and squash landed on the floor faster than I could spoon them onto his plate. One day I realized that although my son was disinterested in the food on his plate, he was interested in what was on mine. He would eat anything served on my plate in order to imitate me. I learned to pile my plate high with enough colorful vegetables to share with my son. Over time he developed such an appetite for vegetables that he began to enjoy them served on his own plate.

In a similar way, Lois and Eunice influenced Timothy. This grandmother and mother shared a spiritual plate chock-full of their faith in Christ. Over time the faith they planted grew in Timothy to become a life of faith and service to the Lord.

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY
How can I plant seeds of faith for the next generations?

Parents and grandparents want to provide their children and grandchildren with the very best home, education, and opportunities. Lois and Eunice are reminders of our responsibility to also provide the next generation with a foundation of faith, that they may be nourished until they crave a sincere faith of their own.

Prayer: Dear Lord, help us to live in ways that show the next generations our love for you and our sincere faith in Jesus Christ. Amen.

Donyale Fraylon (Texas)

Prayer Focus: CHILDREN WITHOUT ENOUGH FOOD

A FAITHFUL STEWARD

WED
JAN 10
2018

READ 1 Peter 4:8-11

*Offer hospitality to one another without grumbling.
Each of you should use whatever gift you have
received to serve others, as faithful stewards of
God's grace in its various forms.*

— 1 Peter 4:9-10 (NIV)

I have the privilege of being a stay-at-home mom to my six kids. This allows me to spend time with them during the day, greet them after school, teach them, and watch them grow. One of the downsides to being a stay-at-home mom is that my days are full of mundane tasks: washing dishes, doing laundry, sweeping the floor, changing diapers, and picking up toys. These things are not exciting or fun, but they need to be done.

One day as I was matching socks, today's quoted verse came to mind. Do I grumble? Is my work really blessing others if I have a bad attitude? Sometimes it seems that no one else cares about the chores I do, but then I realize as I sit alone matching piles of socks and folding tiny clothes that God sees me. God knows my heart and attitude. God knows if I am working as a joyful servant or just trying to cross things off my to-do list.

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY
Today I will serve God and others with a joyful heart.

God notices all of us even in the mundane and seemingly pointless tasks of our daily lives. When we take the opportunity to serve others with love, we are faithful stewards of God's grace — no matter the task at hand.

Prayer: Dear God, help us to serve others joyfully as we go about our daily tasks. Thank you for allowing us to be stewards of your grace. Amen.

Sarah Lyons (Kansas)

Prayer Focus: MOTHERS

HOPE AND A FUTURE

WED
SEPT 15
2021

READ 1 Timothy 4:7-16

Let no one despise your youth, but set the believers an example in speech and conduct, in love, in faith, in purity.

— 1 Timothy 4:12 (NRSV)

When my son was in kindergarten, I started a morning ritual of reading *The Upper Room* to him. Though we were often rushed in the mornings getting ready for school and work, it became meaningful for us to make time for Jesus and to spend time as a family.

When he was younger, I wondered if some of the topics such as death, illness, or even questioning of faith might have been too mature or complex for him. But I realized that in this world of troubled times, teaching my son about the Bible and equipping him with an armor of salvation is important.

Upon hearing that he has treated others fairly or defended a playmate whom someone else has treated unkindly, I have realized that the grace of the Lord is key to his life. As a parent I have witnessed a lot of my child's joys and sorrows, but having a strong faith has been a source of encouragement for us as a family. As we weather the storms of life, I am assured that the Lord will be by our side, just as we read in Isaiah 66:13, "As a mother comforts her child, so I will comfort you."

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY
When I spend time in prayer and Bible reading, I renew my strength.

Prayer: Loving God, as we grow in an ever-changing and sometimes unjust world, renew our strength daily. Walk with us and help us to be a light for others. Amen.

Melissa Yamaguchi (Hawaii, USA)

Prayer Focus: PARENTS

GOD PROVIDES

TUES
MAY 12
2020

READ 2 Corinthians 9:10-15

Cast all your anxiety on [God] because he cares for you.

— 1 Peter 5:7 (NIV)

Following the birth of my first child, I had postpartum depression, and my husband was facing unemployment. It became clear that a career change was on the horizon for him, which added to the uncertainty we felt about the future. My husband and I both felt anxious about what was next for our family; we even thought we might need to move to another state.

One morning my son was crying to be fed. As I prepared a bottle for him, I said, “Calm down, Sweetie. When have I ever not given you what you need?” As I said this, I realized that I had been crying out to God in fear about how and when my family’s needs would be met. I saw myself as a scared child, in need of something that I could not provide for myself. As I looked at my son, I knew that in a short while the sustenance he was waiting for would be provided — he would be full, content, and happy.

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY
God will provide for me.

What a picture of how God cares for us! In all my worry, God was near, inviting me to cast my fear, anxiety, doubt, and anger on him. Like a loving parent, God can and will provide for our needs.

Prayer: Loving God, when we can’t see the way forward, help us to trust that you can. Amen.

Courtney Boulware (Ohio, USA)

Prayer Focus: THOSE SUFFERING WITH POSTPARTUM DEPRESSION

GREAT LOVE

FRI
SEPT 10
2021

READ Romans 5:6-8

God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.

— John 3:16 (NIV)

Around the time my firstborn celebrated her nineteenth birthday, I became pregnant with my second child. Complications during the pregnancy led to a Cesarean birth. My son remained in a neonatal care unit for six days. Since his birth two years ago, I have never stopped thanking God for the gift of my son, his health, and the joy of being a mother to a young child again.

One day, after some reflection during my prayer time, I realized that I would be willing to give my life for my children. In that moment, I began to understand the enormous sacrifice God made to give his only son for the sins of humankind. I would be willing to give my life for my children, but I would find it unthinkable to sacrifice my children for anyone. Only God was able to do it. And only Christ was able to be faithful to that call. The apostle Paul writes: “God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.” What incredible and amazing love!

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY
How do I reciprocate God’s love for me?

Prayer: Loving God, thank you for your infinite love that truly surpasses all understanding. Help us to feel this love that is the same yesterday, today, and through eternity. Amen.

Azalia Alecón (Dominican Republic)

Prayer Focus: NEWBORNS IN NEONATAL CARE

OVERWHELMED AND AMAZED

SUN
MAY 20
2018

READ Mark 7:31-37

*People were overwhelmed with amazement.
“He has done everything well,” they said.*

— Mark 7:37 (NIV)

Although the people in today’s reading had begged Jesus to heal the man who was deaf and had difficulty speaking, they were still amazed when God granted their request. Even though the man had been suffering for a long time, he didn’t complain, “What took you so long?” Perhaps the man’s long years of suffering intensified the amazement of the onlookers.

I can relate to this story because God once healed me. I had endured over a decade of heartbreaking infertility. And when my husband, Ian, and I attempted to adopt, the birth mother changed her mind and kept her child. Then, a few weeks after our twelfth wedding anniversary, I gave birth to our son, Grayson. I, too, was “overwhelmed with amazement” at God’s power. I most certainly didn’t ask the Lord what took so long as I cuddled my baby against my skin and marveled at each and every one of his fingers and toes. Instead, I rejoiced so exuberantly that the nurse remarked about the intensity of my happiness.

Whenever I’m begging Jesus to address my concerns, I remember that wonderful answer to prayer, and I focus on God’s ability to do all things well in God’s time.

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY
When I want to give up hope,
God can amaze me.

Prayer: Dear Lord, help us to wait patiently and expectantly as we come to you with our concerns. Amen.

Wendy L. Macdonald (British Columbia, Canada)

Prayer Focus: SOMEONE STRUGGLING WITH INFERTILITY