

Reaching the Unreachable

Devotions for Alzheimer's Patients and Their Caregivers

*Robert Charles Van Norstrand
Pastor Emeritus WELS*

Table of Contents

Reaching the Unreachable

<u>Title</u>	<u>Page</u>
Introduction to devotional manual	3
Connecting with a loved one suffering from Alzheimer's	4
Suggested devotion guide	6
For the caregiver	
Devotion 1: Go to Jesus when feeling anxious	7
For the patient and caregiver	
Devotion 2: Go to Jesus when feeling angry	8
Devotion 3: Go to Jesus when feeling grief	9
Devotion 4: Go to Jesus when feeling lonely	10
Devotion 5: Go to Jesus when feeling worthless	11
Devotion 6: Go to Jesus when you are afraid	12
Devotion 7: Go to Jesus when in doubt	13
Devotion 8: Go to Jesus when troubled by sin	14
Devotion 9: Go to Jesus to find life's purpose	15
Devotion 10: Go to Jesus to find the truth	16
Devotion 11: Go to Jesus when seeking hope	17
Devotion 12: Go to Jesus for an abiding faith	18
Devotion 13: Go to Jesus to find love	19
Devotion 14: Go to Jesus, our Good Shepherd	20
Devotion 15: Go to Jesus to learn of his passion	21
Devotion 16: Go to Jesus and learn of his resurrection	22
Suggested opening prayers	23
Suggested closing prayers	24
Acknowledgments	25

Devotions for Alzheimer's Patients and Their Caregivers

Introduction

This devotional series is for all caregivers who want more meaningful and satisfying visits with their dear ones who are afflicted with Alzheimer's.

Scripture passages in the devotions are quoted from the New International Version of the Bible. Included in this series is a helpful guide to use as you and your loved one gather together to share God's Word.

It is our fervent desire that, as you continue to pray with your beloved through these devotions, you will discover the peace only the Lord can give.

True connecting with each other as you share God's Word is not only possible but promised by our loving Savior. His Word is powerful! We all need our faith nurtured frequently in order to remain strong in times of adversity.

As you share these devotions, be patient and persistent. You may not see immediate results; sometimes the timing is clearly wrong. Try again later on using an opportune moment the Lord gives you.

Finally, seek the Lord's help through prayer knowing *this is the assurance we have in approaching God, if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us* (1 John 5:14).

Reaching the Unreachable: *Connecting with a Loved One Suffering from Alzheimer's*

One of the heartaches of living with a loved one suffering from Alzheimer's is the problem of meaningful communication. "It's so difficult to have a conversation with my dear one," we frequently hear people say when describing their struggle to retain some semblance of a normal relationship. I can fully relate to this situation since my wife is a victim of this dreaded disease.

The question arises, "Is there still a chance to maintain a mutually satisfying connection between caregiver and patient?" In my experience this can be done given a thorough understanding of the situation and utilizing knowledgeable sources of help, including that of our Lord Jesus, the Great Physician of body and soul.

The Problem

While each Alzheimer's patient has his unique strengths and weaknesses, there are many commonalities. The stage of dementia involved is a factor which must be considered. With the disease's progressive deterioration of your loved one's mental faculties the loss of communication, in normal terms, grows more acute. The diminishing capacity to understand what you are saying and the corresponding inability to respond verbally in a meaningful way greatly complicate effective "connecting with" your loved one.

A Solution

In seeking to achieve a mutually effective "give and take" with your loved one you must also consider the problems of attention span and level of comprehension. Spending quality time with her and carefully observing her reactions will greatly help you adjust your conversation accordingly. "Keep it simple" is a good rule to follow.

This does not mean, however, that you cannot penetrate these significant barriers to good communication with some encouraging expressions of your love and concern. Using God's Word is the key to connecting with your loved one. *With God all things are possible.* Or as St Paul tells us, *I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me* (Philippians 4:13).

The point here is that taking hold of your loved one's hand, speaking slowly in simple terms and sharing appropriate portions of God's Word will enable you to communicate with your dear one. The Holy Spirit works through the Word with our Lord's power penetrating all barriers!

Years ago the Lord revealed this to me in a most dramatic way while I was making hospital visitations. I was calling upon an elderly gentleman with whom I had visited the previous week and had a mutually satisfying devotion.

When I checked in at the nurse's station prior to my visit I was told that he had lapsed into a coma. The nurses cautioned that I would not be able to communicate with him under the circumstances. I paused for a moment and then responded saying, "We shall see. Let's leave this up to the Lord."

I then went into the man's room and greeted him as if things had not changed. Pulling up a chair beside his bed I took his hand and placed it on one of mine. I proceeded with a Bible reading and finished with a brief prayer.

When I completed the prayer this man who was still in a coma squeezed my hand to let me know that the Lord had reached him with His Word. I had not penetrated the veil but God had!

Guided by this memorable experience and numerous prayers I proceed with confidence when meeting with my wife. I build my visits around sharing God's Word, especially our favorite Psalms. This relaxes her and sharpens her focus. Her reactions vary: a nod, a smile, a word or two, or reaching out to touch me. There is not always a visible response, but still I know the Lord has reached her heart and we have connected.

Conclusion

If we prayerfully enlist the help of our Lord in visiting with our loved ones afflicted with Alzheimer's or other dementia type illnesses we can make these occasions ones for rejoicing and not emotionally wrenching experiences. In fact, we too shall be comforted by our Savior's Word as we share it with a loving spouse or parent. Tears may fill our eyes, but they will be tears of joy knowing that we are "reaching the unreachable"!

Suggested Devotion Guide

Opening Prayer

Dear Father in heaven, we come to you in the name of your Son Jesus, asking for your blessing on our devotion. As we read and talk about your Word, send the Holy Spirit into both our hearts and strengthen us in our faith. This we pray in Jesus' name. Amen. (Additional opening prayers may be found after the devotion section.)

Devotion

Read any of the devotions found in the devotion section, repeating them as often as you wish.

Discussion of the Devotion

Refer to something specific which has happened in your lives related to the devotion. Example: *Do you remember, Dad, when . . . ?* trying to draw out a response. If there is no response, try to refresh his memory by talking about the situation, tying it in with God's Word in the devotion. While you may have to do most of the talking there will be times when your question will trigger a response.

Sharing of a Psalm

Read or recite Psalm 23, *The Lord is my Shepherd . . .* or another favorite psalm. Once again you are using God's powerful Word which is able to penetrate into the heart and strengthen faith.

Closing Prayer

Create in us a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within us. Cast us not away from your presence or take your Holy Spirit from us. But restore unto us the joy of your salvation and grant us a willing spirit to sustain us. In Jesus' name. Amen. (Additional closing prayers may be found after the devotion section.)

The Lord's Prayer

Here it is helpful to take hold of your loved one's hands while you pray, telling her that she may pray along with you in her heart while you pray aloud or she may say the words with you if she wants to. Pray slowly while holding tightly to her hands.

Comments

You may not recognize any reaction at first to the Scripture or to your discussion. Don't be discouraged. This will come in time. Some days it will be very apparent that you have connected, other days you may not know for certain. Again, be patient. In one way or another the Lord will make it clear to you that your dear one is feeling His power at work in your loved one's heart. God bless you in your work of reaching out!

Devotion 1: Go to Jesus When Feeling Anxious

Audience: For Caregiver

Theme: Go to Jesus and learn from him!

Bible Passage: *Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light* (Matthew 11:28-30).

Devotion: There are times when anxiety grips our hearts over circumstances in which we find ourselves. Things are about to overwhelm us and we see no way of escape. For example, we want so desperately to have a meaningful conversation with our loved one, but in view of the circumstances that doesn't seem possible.

Tears well up in our eyes and we find ourselves tongue-tied, unable to say anything of substance. Worry and anxiety flood over us and we begin to despair. Or we just give up and proceed with 'sweet nothings' knowing that we have failed, for the most part, to connect in a meaningful way with our loved one.

Is there a way to resolve this enigma? If so, how do we go about it? Here is another of life's situations in which we clearly need help. Please—go to Jesus, praying that He take away our anxiety and fill our hearts with new-found hope!

Our Savior gives us these guiding words: *Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus* (Philippians 4:4-7).

Going to Jesus in prayer and turning our problems over to Him will change our entire outlook on things. Our joyful and hope-filled attitude will be communicated to our loved one by our facial expressions and tone of voice. Sharing the Word with her will surely touch her heart!

God's Word tells us, *The Word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart* (Hebrews 4:12). This is the penetrating power of God's Word as we have it in the Bible!

Lord, through the power of your Word, take away my anxiety and fill me with joy and hope. Amen.

Bible Readings: Psalm 46; Psalm 121; Philippians. 4:13; 1 Peter 5:6-11.

Devotion 2: Go to Jesus When Feeling Anger

Audience: For Patient and Caregiver

Theme: Go to Jesus and learn from him!

Bible Passage: *Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light* (Matthew 11:28-30).

Devotion: Do you remember the last time you were angry at a person who had hurt you in some way? The more you tried to suppress the anger the more intense it became. Your sinful nature cried out, “Get even!” but your conscience said, “No, this is not the way.” So the battle raged within your soul and you felt terrible. Unresolved anger harms both you and all those around you.

What can we learn from Jesus to help us in times like this? Turning to His Sermon on the Mount we read, *You have heard that it was said, “Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.” But I tell you: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven* (Matthew 5:43-45).

Paul tells us: *In your anger do not sin. Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry . . . get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger . . . be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you* (Ephesians 4:26, 27; 31, 32).

It is healing to pray for those who persecute us and rid our hearts of bitterness by forgiving them as God has forgiven us.

Sometimes we are angry with God when troubles come for no apparent reason. We cry out, “Why, God? Why is this happening to me?”

During our struggle to have a meaningful relationship you and I, without a doubt, have asked the Lord these very questions, challenging God’s fairness. Let’s see how God and Job resolved this: *I know that you can do all things; no plan of yours can be thwarted. You asked, “Who is this that obscures my counsel without knowledge?” Surely I spoke of things I did not understand, things too wonderful for me to know. You said, “Listen now and I will speak; I will question you, and you will answer me.” My ears had heard of you but now my eyes have seen you. Therefore I despise myself and repent in dust and ashes* (Job 42:2-6).

Lord, forgive us our sin of anger, especially toward you. Like Job, move us to accept your holy will in all things. Amen.

Bible Readings: Job 40:1-42:16; Psalm 37:7-9; Romans 8:28-32; James 1:19-21.

Devotion 3: Go to Jesus When Feeling Grief

Audience: For Patient and Caregiver

Theme: Go to Jesus and learn from him!

Bible Passage: *Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light* (Matthew 11:28-30).

Devotion: Our lives can become battered by grief over things we must face here in this world. You and I, dear one, know this all too well, since your illness has brought such changes in our relationship. Both of us have felt moments of overwhelming sorrow, desperately hoping for some relief.

Where can we go for this relief? Once again Jesus is the answer to our problem. Let's look at what God tells us in His Word: *I will be glad and rejoice in your love, for you saw my affliction and knew the anguish of my soul. You have not handed me over to the enemy but have set my feet in a spacious place. Be merciful to me, O Lord, for I am in distress; my eyes grow weak with sorrow, my soul and my body with grief. My life is consumed by anguish and my years by groaning; my strength fails because of my affliction, and my bones grow weak.*

But I trust in you, O Lord; I say, "You are my God." My times are in your hands; deliver me from my enemies and from those who pursue me. (These expressions refer to the cause of our grief whatever form it may take.)

How great is your goodness, which you have stored up for those who fear (love and trust) you, which you bestow in the sight of men, on those who take refuge in you.

Love the Lord, all his saints! The Lord preserves the faithful, but the proud he pays back in full. Be strong and take heart, all you who hope in the Lord (Psalm 31: 7-10, 14, 15, 19, 23, 24).

In Christ's Sermon on the Mount we are told: *Blessed are they who mourn, for they will be comforted* (Matthew 5:4). Jesus reassures us that there is an end to our mourning if we trust him.

Yes, dear friend, let's go to Jesus and let Him share in bearing our grief. Remember His invitation: *Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest . . . rest for your souls.*

Lord, we cast our cares on you for you will sustain us! Amen.

Bible Readings for Added Comfort: Psalm 119:28; John 16:20-22.

Devotion 4: Go to Jesus When Feeling Lonely

Audience: For Patient and Caregiver

Theme: Go to Jesus and learn from him!

Bible Passage: *Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light* (Matthew 11:28-30).

Devotion: Have you ever felt all alone, forsaken and forgotten by family and friends alike? Such experiences do happen to each of us while living in this world with all its imperfections and problems. As we grow older, it often seems that the world has passed us by and no one really cares.

While our loved ones don't mean to desert us, they become wrapped up in their daily lives and time slips by with the result that we begin to feel forgotten and lonely of heart.

To whom can we turn for help and reassurance in times such as these? Once again we should go to Jesus: *I lift up my eyes to the hills . . . where does my help come from? My help comes from the Lord, the Maker of heaven and earth* (Psalm 121:1, 2). And this help is always available: *God is our refuge and strength, an ever present help in trouble* (Psalm 46:1, 2).

Sometimes we are feeling so low that it seems as though even the Lord has forgotten us. Then hear this: *Zion said, "The Lord has forgotten me."* (The Lord responds) *"Can a mother forget the baby at her breast and have no compassion on the child she has borne? Though she may forget, I will never forget you! See, I have engraved you on the palms of my hands"* (Isaiah 49:15). Our Savior is referring to those nail print scars He still carries on His sacred hands, an eternal reminder of His sacrificial death upon the cross for us all.

Listen also to these words from Psalm 27:9a, 10: *Do not reject me or forsake me, O God my Savior. Though my father and mother forsake me (includes all members of my family) the Lord will receive me.* The Lord promises, *"Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you."* So we say with confidence *"The Lord is my helper; I will not be afraid"* (Hebrews 13:5b, 6).

Now that we have heard our Lord speak to us and have been reminded once more of His wondrous love, we have the answer to the pain of loneliness.

Dear Lord, ever remind us how much you care for your own. Amen.

Bible Readings: Psalm 38:21-22; John 14:15-21.

Devotion 5: Go to Jesus When Feeling Worthless

Audience: For Patient and Caregiver

Theme: Go to Jesus and learn from him!

Bible Passage: *Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light* (Matthew 11:28-30).

Devotion: There comes a time in a person's life when we seem to have lost all sense of self worth. We are moved to cry out, "I simply can't do anything worthwhile anymore. I'm a complete failure. How could anyone really care about me?"

If you have felt this way or are now struggling with this feeling of worthlessness, you certainly need someone to help you regain a proper perspective in your life. Despite how painfully we may feel that our lives are empty of purpose and we have nothing to offer others, this simply isn't so!

We are souls of great worth to our Savior who redeemed us from bondage to Satan with his holy precious body and blood on the cross at Calvary. As Peter writes, *You know that it was not with perishable things such as silver and gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect* (1 Peter 1:18,19).

Jesus defines the soul's worth in these words: *What good will it be for a man if he gains the whole world, yet forfeits his soul? Or what can a man give in exchange for his soul?* (Matthew 16:26). When trapped in this feeling of worthlessness we forget God has given us a soul which is of priceless worth.

Not only is our soul of priceless worth to God our Maker, but so is our body, created by His design. Let's examine our worth to God by turning to Psalm 139. *O Lord, you have searched me and you know me. You know when I sit and when I rise; you perceive my thoughts from afar . . . Before a word is on my tongue, you know it completely, O Lord ... For you created my inmost being (my soul); you knit me together in my mother's womb (my body). I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made ... All the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be.*

Knowing how precious we are to the Lord, both in body and soul, we now can appreciate our true worth to loved ones and friends.

Why are you downcast, O my soul? Put your hope in God! Amen.

Bible Readings: Psalm 23; Psalm 34:1-8; Psalm 86:7-13.

Devotion 6: Go to Jesus When You Are Afraid

Audience: For Patient and Caregiver

Theme: Go to Jesus and learn from him!

Bible Passage: *Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light* (Matthew 11:28-30).

Devotion: Can you remember the last time you were afraid? What caused your fear and what did you do about it? Sometimes we are fearful of people or situations. Probably the most common cause of fear, however, is fear of the unknown. Whatever the cause, fear is another of life's experiences in which we need help.

The next time you feel fear grip your heart, remember to go to Jesus in prayer to find the comfort you truly need. Hear these words from Psalm 27:1: *The Lord is my light and my salvation—whom shall I fear? The Lord is the stronghold of my life—of whom shall I be afraid?* David also speaks of this in the familiar Psalm 23:4: *Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff* (refers to God's promises in his Word) *they comfort me.*

Going to Jesus when we are afraid, believing He will help us, shows our faith in the Savior—that we are truly one of His.

Jesus speaks to us with reassuring words. *Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul.* (Refers to people) *Rather, be afraid of the one who can destroy both body and soul in hell.* (Refers to God) *Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground apart from the will of your Father. And even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. So don't be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows* (Matthew 10:28-31).

While we are not to fear people or things, we are to feel a reverential fear of God, a deep respect for his power and unfailing love. In this sense Joshua urges Israel, *Now fear the Lord and serve him with all faithfulness* (Joshua 24:14).

The Lord spoke in like manner to his people in 2 Kings 17: 38-39. *Do not forget the covenant I have made with you, and do not worship other gods. Rather, worship the Lord your God; it is he who will deliver you from the hand of all your enemies.* We fear God when we put Him first in every part of our lives.

Dear Lord, help us fear only you, our Savior God! Amen.

Bible Readings: Psalm 25:1-15; Psalm 56:11; Psalm 112; 1 John 4:17-18.

Devotion 7: Go to Jesus When in Doubt

Audience: For Patient and Caregiver

Theme: Go to Jesus and learn from him!

Bible Passage: *Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light* (Matthew 11:28-30).

Devotion: Among the problems we face in life is that of dealing with doubt. A little while ago we talked about anxiety or worry. An underlying cause of anxiety is this matter of doubt — not being sure of what we should do.

Whenever doubts assail our heart and we simply don't know what to do, we need to go to Jesus for comfort and guidance. We must ask, "Lord Jesus, what would you have me do?" Then we need to believe with all our heart that He will direct us in the way He wants us to go.

The apostle James reminds us: *If anyone lacks wisdom (needs advice) he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him. But when he asks, he must believe and not doubt, because he who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind. That man should not think he will receive anything from the Lord* (James 1:6). Jesus has the answer for conquering doubt.

When we put our full trust in our Savior there is no limit to what we can do. Think about the story of Jesus walking on water, going out to His disciples whose boat was being buffeted by high winds. *When the disciples saw him walking on the lake they were terrified. "It's a ghost," they said, and cried out in fear. But Jesus immediately said to them, "Take courage! It is I. Don't be afraid."* "Lord, if it is you," Peter replied, "tell me to come to you on the water." "Come," he said. Then Peter got down out of the boat and walked on the water to Jesus. *But when he saw the wind, he was afraid and, beginning to sink, cried out, "Lord, save me!" Immediately Jesus reached out his hand and caught him. "You of little faith," he said, "why did you doubt?"* (Matthew 14:26-31).

As long as Peter kept his eyes fixed on Jesus he was able to do the impossible—walk on water! *Let us keep our eyes fixed on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God* (Hebrews 12:2).

O Lord, take away our doubts and make us fully your own. Amen.

Bible Readings: Matthew 14:31; Luke 24:38; John 20:24-29.

Devotion 8: Go to Jesus When Troubled by Sin

Audience: For Patient and Caregiver

Theme: Go to Jesus and learn from him!

Bible Passage: *Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light* (Matthew 11:28-30).

Devotion: Even though we are God's children and believe in His Son Jesus as our Savior we still 'sin much in word and deed'. Paul reminds us: *There is no one righteous, not even one; there is no one who understands, no one who seeks God. All have turned away, they have become worthless; there is no one who does good, not even one* (Romans 3:11, 12). This is why we must have a Savior.

For the Christian, Paul is talking here about our old sinful nature. He goes on to say: *The sinful mind is hostile to God. It does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so. Those controlled by the sinful nature cannot please God. You, however, are not controlled by the sinful nature, but by the Spirit, if the Spirit of God lives in you . . . if Christ is in you, your body is dead because of sin, but your spirit is alive because of righteousness* (Romans 8:6-8, 9a, 10).

Though we still sin because of our sinful nature, with Christ's Spirit — the Holy Spirit — at work in our hearts we are no longer 'slaves to sin' but can go to Jesus for forgiveness — and know that we have it!

Therefore, when next we struggle with sin and feel sadness over our weaknesses we can take heart. There is Someone who understands—Someone who stands ready to help us. Remember, our sins are forgiven by Christ's great work of redemption—His perfect life and sacrificial death for us all. *God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them* (2 Corinthians 5:19).

Let's compare Peter with Judas to affirm this truth in our hearts. Both disciples sinned against Jesus on that night in which He was betrayed. Both felt sorrow over their sins. By God's grace Peter accepted Christ's forgiveness. Judas, however, simply wouldn't believe our Lord could possibly forgive him.

We can hold God to His promise in 1 John 1:9. *If we confess our sins he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.* Forgive us, Lord. Amen.

Bible Readings: Psalm 51 ; Isaiah 43:1 ; Romans 7:7-25; Romans 8:1-17.

Devotion 9: Go to Jesus to Find Life's Purpose

Audience: For Patient and Caregiver

Theme: Go to Jesus and learn from him!

Bible Passage: *Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light* (Matthew 11:28-30).

Devotion: One reason we become discouraged with our lives is that we often fail to discover any real purpose for our very being. As Solomon writes: *I have seen all things that are done under the sun; all of them are meaningless, a chasing after the wind* (Ecclesiastes 1:14, 15). We may feel these words aptly describe our lives since we just don't understand why God has put us where we are.

There are many people in the Bible who likely didn't suspect what God was doing in their lives. One name comes to mind in the New Testament: Simon of Cyrene. Matthew, Mark and Luke all mention Simon in their record of Christ's crucifixion. In Mark 15:21 we read: *A certain man from Cyrene, Simon the father of Alexander and Rufus, was passing by on his way in from the country, and they forced him to carry the cross.* Simon never dreamed that God had a special purpose for his life—to carry his Savior's cross to Calvary!

In the book of Joshua we are introduced to Rahab, a harlot from Jericho. Little did she suspect the role she would play in God's plan to secure Israel in the promised land of Canaan. Nor could she possibly imagine that she would be an ancestor of Christ and listed among the heroes of faith.

While none of us will be called upon to serve as did Simon and Rahab, still God has a purpose for every soul he calls his own.

There is meaning and purpose in our lives only to the extent we are being guided by the Word of our Lord. *In our hearts set aside Christ as Lord* (1 Peter 3:15). When we do just that, the meaning or purpose in our lives begins to unfold. We may not see it during this life, but others may. God will make it known when we get to heaven. *Then we shall know fully, even as we are fully known* (1 Corinthians 13:12).

Paul writes: *We know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose* (Romans 8:28). These words apply to all believers.

Lord, all the days of my life were written in your book before one of them came to be. You have a purpose for me. Amen.

Bible Readings: Psalm 139:1-16; Jeremiah 1:4,5; Acts 9:1-19.

Devotion 10: Go to Jesus to Find the Truth

Audience: For Caregiver

Theme: Go to Jesus and learn from him!

Bible Passage: *Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light* (Matthew 11:28-30).

Devotion: One of the most important blessings God gives His people is the answer to the question which Pontius Pilate asked Jesus, *What is truth?* The truth we are referring to is the truth about our relationship to God and His great plan for our eternal salvation.

Even many of God's Old Testament people had lost the answer to this question as we read: *Truth has stumbled in the streets, honesty cannot enter. Truth is nowhere to be found* (Isaiah 59:14b, 15a). While this applied to truth in general, this sinful attitude stemmed from the typical Israelite's loss of faith in his Lord and the truth concerning his eternal salvation.

While some did listen to the prophets and clung to the saving truth, most went about their lives steeped in the darkness of sin and unbelief. Sad to say this ignoring of God and His holy Word still prevails. Modern day Pontius Pilates are either ignoring the matter altogether or are asking "What is truth?"

We can find truth by going to Jesus in His Word. We may still have difficulty in dealing with truth in general, but our Lord will not only give us a standard to guide us on moral and social issues but will also reveal the truth of His love for us.

Jesus tells us: *If you hold to my teaching you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free* (John 8:31-32). Jesus is reassuring us who, by His grace believe in Him, that we have been set free from Satan, sin and eternal death. Heaven is our home!

Our Lord replied to Pontius Pilate, *For this reason I was born, and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone on the side of truth listens to me* (John 18:37).

Paul tells us: *My purpose is that . . . they may know the mystery of God, namely Christ, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge* (Colossians 2:2-3). When we faithfully search God's Word we tap the one source of truth, knowledge and wisdom.

Lord, sanctify us with your truth. Your Word is truth! Amen.

Bible Readings: Psalm 25:4, 5; Proverbs 9:10; John 1:17; John 16:13.

Devotion 11: Go to Jesus When Seeking Hope

Audience: For Patient and Caregiver

Theme: Go to Jesus and learn from him!

Bible Passage: *Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light* (Matthew 11:28-30).

Devotion: Have you struggled with the feeling of hopelessness? There are times when you and I may begin to lose hope . . . hope for the future and hope for today. When so troubled, things really look grim and we find control of our lives slipping away.

When we feel hopeless, seeking answers from worldly sources, regardless of how learned and well-intended they may be, may only lead to further despair.

It is during times such as these that we need to refocus our lives away from our troubles and turn instead to the true source of a Christian's hope. This we can do through earnest prayer and faithful study of God's Word. In other words, to find the answer to hopelessness, let us go to Jesus!

First let's turn to Psalm 130: *Out of the depths I cry unto you, O Lord; O Lord, hear my voice . . . I wait for the Lord, my soul waits, and in his word I put my hope . . . O Israel, (refers to all believers) put your hope in the Lord, for with the Lord is unfailing love and full redemption.* The Old Testament repeatedly urges us to put our hope in the Lord.

Turning to the New Testament we read: *We rejoice in the hope of the glory of God. Not only so, but we also rejoice in our suffering, because we know that suffering produces perseverance, perseverance character; and character, hope. And hope does not disappoint us, because God poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us . . . God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were yet sinners Christ died for us* (Romans 5: 2-5, 8). Here we see how God himself works hope in the believer's heart as we "continue in his Word."

This hope which our Lord works in us culminates in eternal life. The Bible tells us, *God our Savior . . . saved us . . . through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit . . . so that having been justified by grace we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life* (Titus 3: 4-6). Here, my dear one, is God-worked hope!

May the God of hope fill us with all joy and peace that we may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Bible Readings: Psalm 71:5-8; Colossians 1:22-23; 1 Peter 1:3, 13, 21.

Devotion 12: Go to Jesus for an Abiding Faith

Audience: For Patient and Caregiver

Theme: Go to Jesus and learn from him!

Bible Passage: *Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light* (Matthew 11:28-30).

Devotion: Are there times when you feel that your faith has begun to weaken and doubts arise in your heart? This is a problem common to us all. There is something we can do, however, to recharge our spiritual batteries and regain a strong faith. Let's examine carefully this remarkable gift from God. Doing so will help us continue to fight the good fight of faith.

We turn first to the Bible for God's definition of faith. *Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see* (Hebrews 11:1). Paul adds: *We live by faith, not by sight* (2 Corinthians 5:7). Faith is a matter of the heart and not something we sinful humans can see with our eyes.

Where does faith come from? We are told: *Faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ* (Romans 10:17). The "Word of Christ" refers, of course, to the Holy Scriptures. Jesus, speaking to some unbelieving Jews, defines the Scriptures in this way: *You diligently study the Scriptures because you think that by them you possess eternal life. These are the Scriptures that testify about me, yet you refuse to come to me to have life* (John 5:39). Jesus is the very heart of Scripture and the only one in whom we can place saving faith.

Why is faith so important to us? The Bible tells us: *It is by grace that you have been saved, through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God, not of works, so that no one can boast* (Ephesians 2:8,9). Salvation by faith is the fundamental teaching of Christianity. This is attested to in the Old Testament: *See, he is puffed up* (refers to the ungodly), *his desires are not upright, but the righteous will live by faith* (Habakkuk 2:4). God confirms this when we read: *For in the gospel a righteousness from God is revealed, a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written, "The righteous will live by faith."* (Romans 1:17).

If we turn to the Bible, God's Word, and daily hear him speak to us, he will keep our faith strong and sweep away all doubts!

Lord, preserve us in our faith through your Word of truth. Amen.

Bible Readings for Examples of Faith: Matthew 15:21-28; Luke 7:1-10; 2 Timothy 4:7; Hebrews 11.

Devotion 13: Go to Jesus to Find Love

Audience: For Patient and Caregiver

Theme: Go to Jesus and learn from him!

Bible Passage: *Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light* (Matthew 11:28-30).

Devotion: Do you love me? How many times have we asked this question only to wonder in our hearts whether the person who responded truly meant what he said. So much in the world today passes for love, but may fall well short of the true meaning of this wondrous gift from God.

The Lord refers to love many times in the Scriptures, tying love for Him directly to love for our neighbors (which includes loved ones, friends, acquaintances, and even our enemies).

When asked, “What is the greatest commandment?” Jesus replied: *Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it. Love your neighbor as yourself. All the Law and the prophets* (here Jesus is referring to the entire Old Testament Scriptures) *hang on these two commandments* (Matthew 22:37-40).

Paul tells us, *Love does no harm to its neighbor. Therefore love is the fulfillment of the law* (Romans 13:10). This shows how important God considers love to be—for Him and for each other. Love is the very essence of God’s holy will!

We have further insight into God’s highest regard for love with these words: *Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love . . . No one has ever seen God; but if we love each other, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us . . . whoever lives in love, God lives in him* (1 John 4:7-16). Jesus, whom God sent into this world that we might have life now and for eternity, is the very embodiment of God’s love.

Jesus sums up God’s will concerning love with these words: *A new commandment I give you: love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another* (John 13:34). This is God-worked love—a self-giving love that the world cannot offer us or teach us.

Lord, teach us how to love—to love you and one another. Amen.

Bible Readings: Psalm 119 (Love for God’s Word); Luke 6:27-35 (Love for our enemies); 1 Corinthians 13 (Love is the greatest).

Devotion 14: Go to Jesus, our Good Shepherd

Audience: For Patient and Caregiver

Theme: Go to Jesus and learn from him!

Bible Passage: *Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light* (Matthew 11:28-30).

Devotion: Whenever we feel as though the Lord has abandoned us we should remember Jesus' role as our Good Shepherd. In both the Old and New Testaments our Savior is referred to as our Shepherd or the Shepherd of His flock. Of all the names Scripture gives to Him, this is one of the most comforting.

Scripture tells us: *He will stand and shepherd his flock in the strength of the Lord, in the majesty of the Lord his God. And they* (His flock of believers) *will live securely, for then his greatness will reach to the ends of the earth. And he will be their peace* (Micah 5:4,5). We have security and peace through Jesus, our Good Shepherd.

This same assurance from our Good Shepherd is given in the most familiar and truly comforting twenty-third Psalm. In verse 4 we read: *Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff* (the power of God's Word) *they comfort me.* King David trusted in the Lord's promises and so can we!

Jesus tells us: *I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep . . . I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me—just as the Father knows me and I know the Father—and I lay down my life for the sheep . . . my sheep listen to my voice; I know them and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all; and no one can snatch them out of my Father's hand. I and my Father are one* (John 10:11-30). We are safe, dear one, in the Good Shepherd's flock!

Our Good Shepherd watches over us to the end of our life and to the end of time itself. We read: *When the Chief Shepherd appears you will receive the crown of glory that will never fade away* (1 Peter 5:4).

O God, the Father, we thank you for giving us to the Shepherd of our souls. Amen.

Bible Readings: Genesis 49:24; Psalm 80:1-3; Isaiah. 40:11; Revelation 7:17.

Devotion 15: Go to Jesus to Learn of His Passion

Audience: For Patient and Caregiver

Theme: Go to Jesus and learn from Him!

Bible Passage: *Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light* (Matthew 11:28-30).

Devotion: When we go to Jesus and learn from Him one thing stands out above all others — God’s wondrous love. And that love is nowhere made known any more perfectly than in the gift of His Son, Jesus. We read: *This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him. This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins* (1 John 4:9, 10).

Let’s look at this atoning sacrifice as we focus now on Christ’s holy passion — his suffering and death upon the cross. Crucifixion was the most inhuman method of execution devised by man . . . so much so that no Roman citizen could be crucified. This tortuous form of execution was reserved for the lowest of criminals.

Jesus had been crowned with thorns and brutally flogged before going to the cross. But in the words of the hymn *Stricken, Smitten, and Afflicted* “the deepest stroke that pierced Him was the stroke that Justice gave.” This was when He was separated from His heavenly Father for three long hours suffering the tortures of hell. The Bible tells us: *We all like sheep had gone astray, each of us had turned to his own way; and the Lord (God the Father) has laid on him the iniquity of us all* (Isaiah 53:6). God could not let our sins go unpunished, yet He did not want all of us to languish in hell for eternity. In His justice God the Father laid all the guilt of all the sins of all people of all time on His holy, innocent Son.

John sums up this wondrous truth when he tells us: *He (Jesus) is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world* (1 John 2:2).

We are also told: *I am convinced that neither death nor life . . . nor any powers . . . nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord* (Romans 8:38, 39). No one or no thing can rob us of God’s love, secured for us in Christ’s holy passion!

Dear Lord, remind us to go to your cross whenever we doubt your amazing grace. Amen.

Bible Readings: Psalm 22; Isaiah 53; Matthew 27; Mark 15; Luke 23, John 19.

Devotion 16: Go to Jesus and Learn of His Resurrection

Audience: For Patient and Caregiver

Theme: Go to Jesus and learn from Him!

Bible Passage: *Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light* (Matthew 11:28-30).

Devotion: Of all the teachings of our Savior none is more central to our Christian faith than His resurrection. Jesus tells us: *The reason my Father loves me is that I lay down my life—only to take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down and authority to take it up again* (John 10:17-18).

After Jesus had cleared the temple of the money changers, we hear: *The Jews demanded of him, ‘What miraculous sign can you show us to prove your authority to do all this?’ Jesus answered them, ‘Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days.’ The Jews replied, ‘It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and you are going to raise it in three days?’ But the temple he had spoken of was his body. After he was raised from the dead his disciples recalled what he had said. Then they believed the Scripture and the words that Jesus had spoken* (John 2:18-22).

In addition to the actual resurrection accounts Paul tells us: *For what I received I passed on to you of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and that he appeared to Peter, and then to the Twelve. After that he appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers at the same time . . . Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles, and last of all he appeared to me also* (1 Corinthians 15:3-8).

In the Old Testament Job tells us: *I know that my Redeemer lives, and that he will stand upon the earth. And after my skin has been destroyed, yet in my flesh I will see God; I myself will see him, with my own eyes—I and not another!* (Job 19:25-27). You and I also, my dear, shall have eternal life!

Jesus affirms in John 11:25, 26: *I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die!*

O Lord, thank you for this priceless gift of life eternal through your resurrection. Amen.

Bible Readings Concerning the Resurrection: Matthew 28; Mark 16; Luke 24; John 20.

Opening Prayers for Your Devotion

- ❖ Dear Father in heaven, we come to you in the name of your Son Jesus asking for your blessing on our devotion. As we read and talk about your Word, send the Holy Spirit into each of our hearts and strengthen us in our faith. This we pray in Jesus' name. Amen.
- ❖ Blessed Jesus, we call upon you to guide us in our devotion today. Move each of us to listen carefully to your Word so that you can send the Holy Spirit into our hearts and strengthen our faith. Help us also, O Lord, to apply rightly your message to our daily lives. We ask this in your name. Amen.
- ❖ holy Father and blessed Jesus, come to us in your Word today as we share this devotion. Send the Holy Spirit into each of our hearts and strengthen us in our faith. Quiet our anxieties and reassure us of your love, especially during these difficult times. In the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.
- ❖ Dear Lord, as we join together in our devotion today, send your Holy Spirit into our hearts that we might receive your message of truth and hope. Use your Word, dear Savior, to reassure us of your love and strengthen us in our faith. We ask this in your holy name. Amen.
- ❖ O, blessed Savior, come to us in your Word during our devotion today. Calm the anxiety and confusion in our hearts as we turn our attention to your message of comfort. Reassure us of your wondrous love and strengthen us in our faith. This we pray in the name of Jesus. Amen.
- ❖ Almighty God—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—have mercy on my dear one and me as we share your Word in our devotion today. Send the Holy Spirit into each of our hearts and strengthen us in our faith. Wash away all our sinful thoughts, words, and deeds for Jesus' sake. We ask this in your holy name. Amen.
- ❖ Dear Lord Jesus, we come to you in prayer asking for your blessings upon our devotion today. As we study your Word, help each of us to find your purpose for our lives. Reassure us, O Lord, that you have a blessed purpose for all who believe in you. Continue to work this faith in our hearts for Jesus' sake. Amen.
- ❖ (You may wish to pray the following) Praise God from whom all blessings flow. Praise Him all you creatures here below. Praise Him all you heavenly host. Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost! Amen.

Closing Prayers for Your Devotions

- ❖ Create in us a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within us. Cast us not away from your presence or take your Holy Spirit from us. But restore unto us the joy of your salvation and grant us a willing spirit to sustain us. In Jesus' name. Amen.
- ❖ Blessed Jesus, we thank you for guiding us in our devotion today and for sending the Holy Spirit into our hearts through your Word. We pray that you will move us to apply rightly the truths we have learned to our daily lives of service to you. This we ask in your holy name. Amen.
- ❖ Thank you, holy Father and blessed Lord Jesus, for being with us in our devotion today. Your Word calmed our anxious thoughts and reassured us of your abiding love. Continue to strengthen us in our faith and love for you and our love for one another. We pray in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Amen.
- ❖ Dear Lord, thank you for blessing us with your message of hope and love. With the Holy Spirit working in our hearts we shall grow in our faith and ability to face unafraid each new day of our lives. How precious to us are your thoughts, O God. How vast is the sum of them! In your holy name. Amen.
- ❖ Dear Savior, we thank you for coming to us in your Word during our devotion today. Through your comforting message you calmed the anxiety and confusion in our hearts. Spending these precious moments with you truly has reassured us of your love and served to strengthen us in our faith. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.
- ❖ Almighty God—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—you have once again shown your great mercy toward my dear one and me. Thank you for helping us to confess our sins and receive your forgiveness in Jesus our Savior. Now that you have washed us clean in Christ, grant us your peace. In your holy name we pray. Amen.
- ❖ Dear Lord Jesus, thank you for reassuring us that you have a purpose for each of our lives. Continue to help us learn more about your purpose for us and bless us in our efforts to serve you to that end. May your Holy Spirit comfort and guide us in all things. Amen.
- ❖ Note: you may wish to use one of your own prayers or this special one: Praise God from whom all blessings flow. Praise Him all you creatures here below. Praise Him all you heavenly host. Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Amen.

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- Robert Charles Van Norstrand
Mount Royal Pines II, Apt. 220
70 East St. Marie Street
Duluth, MN 55803

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