

## ***Good News Daily***

**Volume XXVI**

**January 4-10, 2026**

**Number 1**

### **Sunday, January 4**

Colossians 3:12-17 *Be tolerant with each other and, if someone has a complaint against anyone, forgive each other. As the Lord forgave you, so also forgive each other.* (v.13 CEB)

I recently took a trip to visit family. Several extended family members, spouses, and children were gathering from different states. We wanted to see everyone in a short period of time. It was tricky to meet with different sides of the family and accommodate each schedule.

Most times of visiting were wonderful, and it felt good to catch up on what was happening in each family. A few times, personalities would clash or words were misunderstood and feelings got hurt. It can be easy to be intolerant, complain, or be easily offended.

I am thankful for the reminders Scripture gives us. We have been forgiven so very much. Can we not extend this to our family members who are less than loveable? Yes, we can, by the power of His Holy Spirit, indwelling us.

Proverbs 4:1-27; Psalms 66, 67; John 6:41-47

### **Monday, January 5**

John 11:17-27, 38-44 *When Martha got word that Jesus was coming, she went to meet him. But Mary stayed in the house. Martha said to Jesus, "Lord, if only you had been here, my brother would not have died."* (vv.20-21 NLT)

Their brother, Lazarus, had died. And they sent word earlier to Jesus that he was sick. But Jesus did not come. On purpose.

I can feel the disappointment as Mary stayed home while her sister went to meet Jesus as He finally arrived in town. And Martha's words stung as she expressed her frustration as to why Jesus had not come earlier to heal her brother. I have asked this myself: "Jesus, where were you? God, why have you let this happen? I don't understand."

A few verses later we see that Jesus wept. He sees our pain. He understands our disappointment, anger, and questions. Be assured, Jesus, the God-Man weeps with us when we need him.

Jonah 2:2-9; Psalms 2, 110; Ephesians 6:10-20

### **Tuesday, January 6**

Psalms 46 *Surrender your anxiety. Be still and realize that I am God. I am God above all the nations, and I am exalted throughout the whole earth.* (v.10 TPT)

My grandson is on the Autism Spectrum. He goes to a public school and has some special services that enable him to be in the mainstream classroom. But I worry.

Is he getting what he needs? Are the teachers kind to him? Is he being bullied by other students? Will he graduate successfully and live independently? These thoughts can definitely generate anxiety.

God reminds me that I can indeed surrender my anxiety. It is a conscious choice that I myself have to make. I must choose to surrender.

I surrender willingly knowing that He is God and I am not. He has all things under His loving control. Including my grandson and all that he needs.

What worry or anxiety do you need to surrender today?

Isaiah 49:1-7; Psalm 97; Revelation 21:22-27; Matthew 12:14-21

### **Wednesday, January 7**

Deuteronomy 8:1-3 *...we live by every word that comes from the mouth of the LORD.* (v.3b NLT)

I have known Jesus a long time. A really long time! When I first came to know Jesus, my prayer life consisted mostly of “This is what I want You to do, God.” Can you relate? Thankfully, my prayers have matured quite a bit since those beginning days.

I have come to know the vital importance of reading God’s Word *and* praying God’s Word. This is where the power in prayer really comes from. Agreeing with and speaking God’s Word back to Him never returns void or empty (see Isaiah 55:11).

Today’s verses in Colossians 1:9-13 are a beautiful prayer you can pray for your family and friends. You can speak it, pray it, and even write it in a note to someone you are praying for. You will be blessed. They will be blessed.

Who will you pray these verses over today? There is power in His Word.

Psalms 103; Colossians 1:1-14; John 6:30-33, 48-51

### **Thursday, January 8**

Exodus 17:1-7 *So once more the people complained against Moses. “Give us water to drink!” they demanded. “Quiet!” Moses replied. “Why are you complaining against me? And why are you testing the LORD?” Moses named the place Massah (which means “test”) and Meribah (which means “arguing”) because the people of Israel argued with Moses and tested the LORD by saying, “Is the LORD here with us or not?”* (vv.2, 7 NLT)

I have not one, but two, immediate family members who complain often. A lot, actually. They tend to be critical of people—bosses, co-workers and other family members. Very rarely do they show appreciation or gratitude for the multitude of good things and blessings God has given them over the years.

I remember one day, after going the extra mile with chores, cleaning, organizing, and even childcare for my family member, they complained even more. I felt resentful and angry. Later, I texted her saying, “Was what I did today helpful for you?” She replied, “Yes, thank you.” I responded, “You’re welcome. It is nice to be appreciated. A little appreciation goes a long way.”

How often do you and I grumble and demand and contend and argue and test God with our attitudes? We aren’t much different than these Israelites or the complaining friends and family members. What will you thank God for today instead of complaining? He is waiting. A little appreciation goes a long way.

Psalms 117, 118; Colossians 1:15-23; John 7:37-52

### **Friday, January 9**

Isaiah 45:14-19 *“I publicly proclaim bold promises. I do not whisper obscurities in some dark corner. I would not have told the people of Israel to seek me if I could not be found. I, the LORD, speak only what is true and declare only what is right.”* (v.19 NLT)

My autistic, twelve-year-old grandson often takes statements literally. For example, if I were to say someone lost their job as, “they were fired,” he would think someone was actually set on fire. Or if I said, a person was “as busy as a bee,” he wouldn’t get the connection. He doesn’t quite get the idioms or catchy phrases most people would understand. So, when speaking with him, I need to be very clear in what I am saying.

God is this way too. He is very clear in His Word and actions. He sent the prophets to His people Israel to let them know His intentions and plans, whether good or bad.

In today’s world we have the indwelling Holy Spirit and the written Word of God to know Him. If we have sinned, He will let us know. If there is something we need to course-correct, He will let us know. Trust what God is saying to your spirit and confirm it with His Word. He wants us to find Him and know Him. He will let us know what He wants. We can trust Him to be clear.

Psalms 121, 122, 123; Colossians 1:24—2:7; John 8:12-19

**Saturday, January 10**

Psalm 138 *The Eternal will finish what He started in me. Your faithful love, O Eternal One, lasts forever; do not give up on what Your hands have made.* (v.8 The Voice)

I have three adult children—two in their thirties and one in her forties. As teenagers, they each made a profession of faith and started a relationship with Jesus as their personal Lord and Savior. All three were baptized following their initial decisions. I saw them grow and also struggle in their faith over the years.

Honestly, I am not sure where they are now in their relationship with Christ. We have had some heart-to-heart discussions, and I am still unclear where they stand. God has told me flat out that I am not the Holy Spirit to convict them, nor am I God to judge them. So, I pray. I pray often. Even more than once a day.

During creation, God spoke everything into existence except Adam and Eve. He formed them with His own hands. So, I am confident in His Word that for my children He will “not give up on what Your hands have made.” He will finish what He started. Thank You, Father.

Jeremiah 23:1-8; Psalm 139; Colossians 2:8-23; John 10:7-17

***by Pamela Newton***

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## ***Good News Daily***

**Volume XXVI**

**January 11-17, 2026**

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### **Sunday, January 11**

Genesis 1:1—2:3 *So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.* (v.27 NIV)

In what sense are we human beings created in the image of God? Clearly, we are not just like God! We have characteristics that differentiate us from other animals: the ability to reason, creativity, sophisticated communication skills and self-determination. God has those features, but many more that are beyond our ability. What we are to do is make the most of what we have to the glory of God.

Two things are especially important to remember about being in the image of God. The first is realizing that we are we truly are “fearfully and wonderfully made.” When we start getting disappointed about the way we look or some other aspect of the way we were made, it is time to remind ourselves that we are God-created God-images; and, as the saying goes, “God don’t make no junk.”

The second thing is to see in what ways we are (or are not) reflecting God’s character as best we can in our own lives. We reflect God’s character by manifesting love, patience, forgiveness, understanding, faithfulness, gentleness, and kindness. And we need to remember that both men and women are made in the image of God, and neither is “more” in the image of God than the other.

Psalms 146, 147; Ephesians 1:3-14; John 1:29-34

### **Monday, January 12**

John 1:1-18 *The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us.* (v.14a)

John’s use of “the Word” would have had particular meaning to the people of his day. To the Hebrews, “the Word” would have meant an agent of creation (Psalm 33:6), the source of God’s message through the prophets (Hosea 1:2), and God’s measure of holiness (Psalm 119:11). To the Greeks, “the Word” was the principle of reason that governs the universe. John, in speaking of Jesus as “the Word,” is conveying the thought that the person he knew and loved was, at the same time, the creator of the world and the complete revelation of the holy God. That would have been blasphemy to the Jews. The Greeks, on the other hand, would have found John’s statement quoted above impossible because, in their thinking, a principle could not become a person.

The reality of Jesus Christ as “the Word” that fulfills all these criteria was the Good News that John was trying to convey.

Jesus was fully human and fully God. Jesus was both a part of creation and a part of God’s plan for the world. Although he came to earth and lived as a human being, he never ceased being the eternal God who had always existed. This week we will be considering how we may reflect the image of God. Looking at Jesus, as God in the flesh, will help us do so.

Genesis 2:4-25; Psalms 1, 2, 3; Hebrews 1:1-14

### **Tuesday, January 13**

John 1:19-28 *“Are you Elijah?” He said, “I am not.”* (v.21)

In the passage for today, John the Baptist flatly denies that he is Elijah. According to Malachi 4:5, God was going to send Elijah back to earth in advance of the Messiah. And, in Matthew 17:10-13, Jesus makes it clear that the prophecy meant that someone who would symbolically be Elijah would come, and had already come: John the Baptist.

How little we know “who we are” in God’s plan. Even John the Baptist did not understand his role in God’s plan. He simply did what he believed God was telling him to do. He was obedient, and he served a great purpose in the salvation story.

As people created in the image of God, we are in the same position today. We cannot fully know God’s purposes for us. If we look at the life of John the Baptist, we would quickly conclude that we would

never measure up to his obedience to God or the results his ministry achieved. But Jesus said, “I tell you, among those born of women there is no one greater than John; yet the one who is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he” (Luke 7:28). What this means is that Christians have a greater spiritual heritage than John because we have a clearer understanding of Jesus’ death and resurrection, and the gift of the Holy Spirit to guide our way. How we use the grace that has been bestowed on us as a result is up to us.

Genesis 3:1-24; Psalms 5, 6; Hebrews 2:1-10

### **Wednesday, January 14**

John 1:29-42 *Jesus looked at him and said, “You are Simon son of John. You will be called Cephas” (which, when translated, is Peter).* (v.42b)

Jesus knew not only who Simon was, but who he would become. That is why he gave him a new name: Cephas (in Aramaic) or Peter (in Greek). The name means “a rock.”

As we look at Peter of the Gospels, we see a character who didn’t always seem rock-solid. He was impetuous, and even cowardly (in denying Jesus at the time of Jesus’ arrest). But Peter became a solid rock in the days of the early church, as we clearly see in the Acts of the Apostles. By giving Simon a new name, Jesus foresaw the change in character that would occur in the life of Peter.

What’s in a name? Names were very important to the Jews of Scripture. Names were given to commemorate the nature of the birth, the appearance of the child, or the expectations the parents had for him or her. Today we don’t name our children in this manner. More likely, we name them after someone in the family. But, in any event, our last name is a family name. What we do and how we live reflects on our family. And, as members of the Christian family, it is even more important that we honor our name. We are created in the image of God, to live in the image of Jesus.

Genesis 4:1-16; Psalm 119:1-24; Hebrews 2:11-18

### **Thursday, January 15**

John 1:43-51 *“How do you know me?” Nathanael asked.* (v.48a)

If we are to live as people created in the image of God, guided by the image of Jesus, we might want to reverse Nathanael’s question. What is important is how we know God rather than how He knows us. God is all-knowing. Psalm 139 is a wonderful picture of just how well God knows each of us!

But, how do we know God? If we are going to live as He would have us live, we should want to know as much about Him, His character, His expectations of us, etc. as we possibly can. Knowing Scripture is certainly one of the ways we know God. The Bible is His story. As we see how God has dealt with people in the Bible, we can more easily discern His expectations of us. And, certainly as we look at the life and teachings of Jesus, and well as Paul and Peter, we can better understand what God expects of us.

Through a prayer relationship with God, we also get to know Him better. God desires to be in relationship with His people, and prayer is the best way to have that relationship.

Interaction with other people is also a way in which we come to know God better. Being a part of a spiritually vital small group or having a prayer partner can help us be accountable for our lives as Christians. And, God can speak to us through our children.

Genesis 4:17-26; Psalm 18:1-20; Hebrews 3:1-11

### **Friday, January 16**

John 2:1-12 *Jesus said to the servants, “Fill the jars with water”; so they filled them to the brim.* (v.7)

Jesus cared about the simple things as well as the monumental. He was not only willing to die on a cross for the sins of the world; he was willing to prevent the embarrassment of his host at a wedding banquet by miraculously supplying wine that was better than the best.

As we think about what God would have us do to reflect His image to the world, we may come up with some grandiose ideas. We may think we would not be doing God’s will unless it is something really big. How wrong that attitude can be. Mother Teresa of Calcutta is one revered for the wonderful way in which God used her; but, when asked about her worldwide ministry, she said, “I just do what I can where I am with what I have.”

God wants to touch the lives of people for good. We Christians are His hands and feet in that process. Someone once said that God will not judge us by what other people thought of us, but by what we thought of other people. God isn't calling many of us to earth-shattering ministries. He just wants us to do what we can where we are with what we have.

Genesis 6:1-8; Psalms 16, 17; Hebrews 3:12-19

**Saturday, January 17**

John 2:13-22 *"How dare you turn my Father's house into a market!"* (v.16)

With Jesus as our model, trying to be images of God may cause some people to think we are always to be "sweetness and light." Jesus, however, gives us a different picture of himself in this passage. Being a Christian is not simply being a floormat or a "Yes" person. It certainly doesn't mean being "politically correct" or "going along with the crowd."

The love that Christians are to emulate is tough love. God has given us guidelines for living. We are to stand up for Gospel truth even when that is not popular. We are to call people to a higher standard rather than going along with the ways of the world.

Specifically, as we see in this passage, we are not to let our Father's house become a marketplace. If what we "market" in our churches is anything less than the whole Gospel, we are betraying our God. Living in the image of God means living as zealots tempered with grace. The opposite of love is not hate, but apathy. May God never be able to say that we cared too little to stand up for our belief in Him.

Genesis 6:9-22; Psalms 20, 21; Hebrews 4:1-13

*by Harry C. Griffith*

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## ***Good News Daily***

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### **Sunday, January 18**

Genesis 7:1-10, 17-23 *“Take with you seven pairs of every kind of clean animal, a male and its mate, and one pair of every kind of unclean animal, a male and its mate, and also seven pairs of every kind of bird, male and female, to keep the various kinds alive throughout the earth.”* (vv.2-3 NIV)

Once we were gifted an antique bird house including the 3 current occupants who we enjoyed watching play, feed, and bathe, even though their vigorous eating and bathing flung seed and water 3 feet from their home. We decided an even number would be good, two by two like the Ark, and the Pet Shop was happy to help, even suggesting a couple nests for sleep. You know the rest: Two by two they went into nests and soon there were 6, 8, 10.... Can you imagine the chaos and the joys that were created with this choice?! Like Noah, we focused on trying to be obedient to our responsibility to guard and keep these wrens and not miss their gifts of song, flight, and fellowship as we prayed.

Thank you, Noah, for focusing on what God commanded you; to build an Ark to accommodate God’s list of Ark occupants so all would be protected from the flood and to trust God with the details. Thank You, Lord God, for covering us with Your grace, being with us in the good, bad, and ugly of nurturing wren families, teaching us how to work together, to laugh at ourselves, and to receive Your joy over and over.

Psalms 148, 149; Ephesians 4:1-16; Mark 3:7-19

### **Monday, January 19**

Genesis 8:6-22 *The Lord smelled the pleasing aroma and said in his heart: “Never again will I curse the ground because of humans, even though every inclination of the human heart is evil from childhood. And never again will I destroy all living creatures, as I have done.”* (v.21)

God is aware of our tendency to do or think what we shouldn’t and our failure to do or think what we should. After successfully making landfall after a year in the ark, Noah waited for God to tell him to come out. Because he was grateful to the Lord for delivering him from the flood, he built an altar to God and made a sacrifice. It was this pleasing aroma that initiated God’s promise to never destroy living creatures until Jesus returns to destroy evil forever. God chooses love and mercy, and Noah becomes patient and obedient with thanksgiving for the source of his blessings.

Having attended a workshop on self-esteem many years ago with work peers, I expressed a need for help with my feelings of unworthiness. All these years later, I can still hear the gasping of others and the silence of the leader. “Surely, I am a lost cause” was my deduction. God heard my prayer before I even asked. “In you, LORD my God, I put my trust” (Psalm 25:1) is now my song.

Psalm 25; Hebrews 4:14—5:6; John 2:23—3:15

### **Tuesday, January 20**

Genesis 9:1-17 *“Whoever sheds human blood, by humans shall their blood be shed; for in the image of God has God made mankind. Whenever, I bring clouds over the earth and the rainbow appears in the clouds, I will remember my covenant between me and you and all living creatures of every kind. Never again will the waters become a flood to destroy all life.”* (vv.6, 14-15)

Here, God, who is holy, omniscient, and omnipotent, consents to enter into covenant with man, who is weak, sinful, and flawed. God promises Noah and his descendants that he will never again send a flood to destroy all life, empathizes the sanctity of human life and our responsibility to uphold justice, and sends a sign of this covenant in the form of rainbows that form after a storm. The concept of covenant involves promises on the part of each other: God and man.

My granddaughter knows a promise cannot be broken by either party that enters into an agreement. She knows Jesus loves her, promises to always protect her and care for her. She always begins meal

blessings with, “Thank you, Jesus, for....” On a recent visit, she enjoyed watching various birds at our backyard feeder—some waiting their turn, some staying too long, some protecting a smaller bird—and helping Buck refill the birdseed and birdbath. One day she asked Buck if he could help her have her own. When he agreed, she put out her hand and said, “Let’s shake on it.” Just imagine how her worldview will explode when she understands God’s covenants with her!

Psalms 26, 28; Hebrews 5:7-14; John 3:16-21

### Wednesday, January 21

Hebrews 6:1-12 *We want each of you to show this same diligence to the end, so that what you hope for may be fully realized. We do not want you to become lazy, but to imitate those who through faith and patience inherit what has been promised.* (vv.11-12)

This verse reminds me what the first converts pledged to do to nurture their faith in our Triune God: “They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers” (Acts 2:42). Their commitment helped mature them as Christ followers. Hebrews reminds us that we inherit these promises by devoting ourselves to.... through faith in God with diligence and perseverance in prayer, trusting that God’s grace covers us every minute of every day.

Circumstances can try to steal our joy and leave us vulnerable. Reminds me of a woman with cancer, unresponsive to radiation or chemo. A novel treatment was offered, she was admitted for eligibility, treatment began, was stopped, restarted...Where was her hope? Her mustard seed of faith grew as we interceded at God’s throne of grace, especially to believe that she would receive God’s blessings by faith and by sight. Today, the words from Hymn 437 “Tell Out My Soul” align with her heart of gratitude: “in God my Savior shall my heart rejoice.”

Genesis 9:18-29; Psalm 38; John 3:22-36

### Thursday, January 22

Hebrew 6:13-20 *God did this so that, by two unchangeable things in which it is impossible for God to lie, we who have fled to take hold of the hope set before us may be greatly encouraged. We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure. It enters the inner sanctuary behind the curtain.* (vv.18-19)

God nature and God’s promise are interchangeable. Because God is truth, He cannot lie. We can rest knowing His promises reflect His nature of grace and mercy and His good, acceptable, and perfect will which shall be done on earth and in heaven. Is this hope an anchor for your soul?

Early in my journey to know more about God’s character and to believe my identity as a beloved child of God, I remember Canon Glennon saying that God’s promises recorded in The Holy Bible are the Living Word of God to each of us. He challenged us to pray them over ourselves and journal what transpired.

What I discovered was this hope that enters the sanctuary behind the curtain. Just like the Samaritan woman who has an encounter with Jesus at the well who says, “Whoever drinks the water I give them will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give them will become in them a spring of water welling up to eternal life” (John 13-14). Amen.

Genesis 11:1-9; Psalm 37:1-18; John 4:1-15

### Friday, January 23

Genesis 11:27—12:8 *The Lord said to Abram, “Leave your country, your people, and your father’s household, and go to the land I will show you. I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing; I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse, and all people on earth will be blessed through you.”* (vv.1-3)

Again, we hear God giving a command with promises but few itinerary details. Abram was free to choose security/staying put or uncertainty of traveling with God’s direction and blessing. We all have faced or will face choices like Abraham’s. Do we think of the long-term effects of do or not do? Do we seek God’s guidance?



Years ago, we received a fabulous job offer requiring new schools, activities, friends, church home far from relatives, etc. Before seeking God's guidance, we said yes. Then, we prayed. Conflicts with the proposal and the possibilities were identified. We chose to change our decision. "Praise be to the LORD, for he showed me the wonders of his love when I was a city under siege" (Psalm 31:21). We changed our minds and committed to asking God for help before making a key decision.

Psalm 31; Hebrews 7:1-17; John 4:16-26

### **Saturday, January 24**

Genesis 12:9—13:1 *Now there was a famine in the land, and Abram went down to Egypt to live there for a while because the famine was severe.* (v.10)

Abram has traveled from the land of Canaan to Bethel, has built an altar to the Lord, and has called on the name of the Lord. As he continues with his family, all possessions, sheep and cattle, they encounter a severe famine. Abram chooses to change the itinerary and quickly is overcome with fear that the Egyptians will take Sarai for her beauty and kill the rest. His fear had made him forget his trust in God's faithfulness.

My 10-year-old son came home from a soccer game with pain in his wrist from a corner kick. There was no bruise or swelling, just discomfort with movement. His doctor assured us all would be well with rest, so we thanked God. But all was not well. When we discovered his ulna was fractured, I repented from my confidence in man and hardness of heart toward my son. The words of Psalm 32 reflect my blessings from God: "I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will counsel you and watch over you" (v.8).

God rescued Sarai from the hands of Pharaoh, and they quickly departed and returned to Canaan where Abram built an altar to the Lord. "Rejoice in the LORD and be glad, you righteous; sing, all you are upright in heart!" (Psalm 32:11).

Psalms 30, 32; Hebrew 7:18-28; John 4:27-42

*by Jane Shinn*

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## ***Good News Daily***

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### **Sunday, January 25**

Galatians 2:1-10 *They agreed that we should go to the Gentiles, and they to the circumcised.* (v.9b NIV)

Paul and the Christian Jews, who included Peter, disagreed about what Paul was preaching to the Gentiles. Both of these zealous men must have strongly felt they were correct. God spoke to these men and resolved their differences by sending Paul to the Gentiles and Peter to the Jews.

Although it must have been difficult for them, Peter and Paul heard the voice of God and understood that God had not chosen either one of them exclusively to do His work of spreading the gospel throughout the world. We need to remember this whenever we find ourselves taking on too much responsibility in the Church.

God has distributed wonderful gifts among His people which we are to use to glorify Him. It is important to note, however, that God did not give every gift to any one person. God's work on this Earth is to be a shared responsibility among his people.

Many of us, when we see a need, feel we, individually, must take on the responsibility for that need. If we don't do that, we often feel guilty. We must remember, though, that it can be just as bad to be involved with too much as too little. It is important to seek God's guidance in these matters so we will be better able to determine our assignment in God's great army.

Genesis 13:2-18; Psalm 63; Mark 7:31-37

### **Monday, January 26**

Hebrews 8:1-13 *"For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more."* (v.12)

Has someone wronged you lately? Have you forgiven that person? Did you forgive in man's way or God's?

As Christians we know that it is our duty to forgive "our debtors." But we don't always understand what it means to forgive. Usually our (human's) idea of forgiveness is quite different from God's. We say, "I forgive you." Then, instead of wiping the slate clean, we record the event in our minds, only to have it raise its head again in the future. We insist on holding onto the anger and resentment, which have served us well in defending ourselves from the pain.

God does not forgive that way. When God forgives, He forgets. He relieves the sinner from the penalty of our sin, separation from Him.

God intends for us to forgive in the same way. In some situations, we think this to be impossible. And if we try to do it without God's help it is. We must freely confess to God those things that prevent us from forgiving—our anger, resentment, fear. Then we must release those emotions to God, who, through Jesus Christ, takes them from us onto himself. It is only by putting our total trust in Him that we can truly forgive. But if we do, we will experience the real joy specially reserved for who follow the commandments of God.

Genesis 14:1-24; Psalms 41, 52; John 4:43-54

### **Tuesday, January 27**

John 5:1-18 *Later Jesus found him at the temple and said to him, "See, you are well again. Stop sinning or something worse may happen to you."* (v.14)

Sounds easy doesn't it? All we must do is decide we are not going to sin, and we won't. Right? Wrong. Ask the alcoholic or drug abuser to stop using. Ask the family breadwinner to quit spending so much time at the office away from the children. Ask the out-of-control shopper. Chances are they will say that they would like to stop their sinful behavior but can't. This sad fact doesn't make them evil—just human.

It is naive for any of us to think that sin can be conquered simply by deciding to quit committing the sin. It is this kind of thinking which results in so many failed attempts to change our destructive behavior. As humans we find this hard to accept; it presumes we are not capable of controlling ourselves. But, in fact, we are not able to control ourselves; only God can. Our acceptance of this simple principle is vital to any effort to changing our sinful behavior.

We all have had times when, despite all efforts, we don't seem to be able to stop our bad behavior. When that happens, it is vital to take a moment to consider whether we are asking God to control our situation or whether we are trying to beat sin by ourselves. We must remember that is only by calling on God's help that we are able to live the life God has intended for us to live.

Genesis 15:1-11, 17-21; Psalm 45; Hebrews 9:1-14

### **Wednesday, January, 28**

Psalm 119:49-72 *It was good for me to be afflicted so that I might learn your decrees.* (v.71)

The modern-day version of this passage is, "No pain, no gain." Everyone has experienced adversity in his life. While in the midst of that painful experience, it's usually very hard for us to see any good coming out of it. But whether we see it or not, there is good that can come from it; we just have to be wise enough and courageous enough to seize it.

Surely, we all can think back to times in our lives when it seemed that our world was coming to an end and we could not imagine ever recovering from the sorrow. But we made it through and, it is important to note, we were a more mature person having gone through the experience.

It's hard for us to see God's hand at work when we are suffering. We must remember, though, that we humans are incapable of having the same perspective on things as God has. If we were able to sit on God's shoulder, the tragic events in our lives might make much more sense to us.

God allows us to suffer the consequences of our actions. Often that is the only way we will ever learn an important lesson we will need for our well-being. Sometimes we must suffer an "affliction" to open our eyes to things we might not otherwise see. Maybe He intends to use us to help others who might meet the same sort of trouble we are going through. Maybe God is using the pain to bring us back or closer to Him.

We can't completely avoid bad things happening to us. But we can take comfort in the fact that through pain we grow.

Genesis 16:1-14; Hebrews 9:15-28; John 5:19-29

### **Thursday, January, 29**

Psalm 50 *I have no need of a bull from your stall or of goats from your pens, for every animal of the forest is mine, and the cattle on a thousand hills.* (vv.9-10)

When this psalm was written, God's people worshiped Him with animal sacrifice. God reminds them, however, that they do not do so because of any need on God's part. God already owned all the animals, and He was certainly capable of obtaining any sacrifice He might want. He happily accepted their sacrifice, however, because it was their expression of praise and thanksgiving.

It was proper to sacrifice only the best stock to God. By presenting their best to God (as opposed to the leftovers) His people symbolically proclaimed that they regarded Him as their Lord and that they were thankful for His grace.

We no longer sacrifice animals as our expression of our devotion. Instead, we gather together in worship to offer to God our praise and thanksgiving. We don't do this because of some need on God's part. We do it to express our own love for Him. In worship we take the opportunity to express our reverence and thanks. In worship we have the chance to make and fulfill promises to God. We recognize God's stature and where we as humans stand in relation to His greatness. We do all this to further our effort to secure an intimate relationship with Him.

Our worship replaces the blood sacrifice of long ago. We must remember that our worship is our symbolic expression of our love for He who loves us better than we could ever love Him.

Genesis 16:15—17:14; Hebrews 10:1-10; John 5:30-47

**Friday, January, 30**

Hebrews 10:11-25 *...not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another...* (v.25a)

How nice it is to sit alone quietly talking with God or studying the Bible. There is nothing like this to calm one's spirit and put our thoughts into proper perspective. In our quiet room we are insulated from the hustle and bustle of everyday life. Sometimes even going to church deprives us of the blissful solitude. At moments like this we may feel that we would like to separate from the rest of the world.

Quiet time alone is an important component of a Christian life. We must remember, however, that it is only part of a healthy Christian life. Whether we recognize it or not, we need the companionship of other people: "It is not good for the man to be alone" (Genesis 2:18).

Other Christians need us as well. Our Christian life is to include a combination of individual and corporate worship. We are the family of God. We are called on to encourage each other as we make our way as Christians in this sinful world. Isolationism is contrary to God's plan for us. He wants us to live and to thrive together.

Genesis 17:15-27; Psalms 40, 54; John 6:1-15

**Saturday, January 31**

Psalm 55 *If an enemy were insulting me, I could endure it; if a foe were rising against me, I could hide. But it is you, a man like myself, my companion, my close friend.* (vv.12-13)

Having a true friend (including a spouse) is a wonderful and fulfilling experience that everyone should be lucky enough to have. Being a friend means having an intimate relationship with another human being. Intimacy cannot occur unless one is willing to take the chance of being vulnerable to being hurt by the other person.

Those of us involved in such a relationship must remember the sacrifice our friend is making by putting his or her trust in us. We are stewards of this trust, and we owe our friend a special duty not to breach that trust.

Those of us who have suffered a breach of our trust face a difficult, but not impossible, rehabilitation. We must remember that it was not wrong for us to make ourselves vulnerable to the other person, the wrong lies in the breach of that trust. Most importantly, remember that Jesus came to this Earth so that he would be available to us to shoulder our pain, whatever the cause. Take Him up on His offer. It is only by doing so that you will experience true healing, allowing you to be a friend again.

Genesis 18:1-16; Hebrews 10:26-39; John 6:16-27

*by Stephan Carter*

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