



MEMBERS OF CENTRAL UNITED METHODIST CHURCH PRESENTS A
DAILY DEVOTION FOR THE WORK WEEK:



LIVING DAILY AS A DISCIPLE OF JESUS

Central United Methodist Church exists to
CONNECT, GROW, SERVE, GIVE & GO
so that all people know God's love through Jesus Christ.

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Introduction

This devotional was written by members of Central UMC, each sharing a personal story of what it means to follow Jesus and live out their faith.

More than a collection of devotions, these pages are a reflection of how God is at work in the lives of ordinary people. Through their stories, we're reminded that discipleship takes many forms—as we connect with others, grow in our faith, serve those around us, give generously and go wherever God leads.

Together, these stories point us toward the heart of who we are at Central: to connect, grow, serve, give and go so that all people may know God's love through Jesus Christ.

I want to thank Michael Stockham and Rebecca Smith for their work. May the words of this devotional inspire you to live for Christ and share your story!

- *Pastor Scott*

Walk This Way - Message Series

What does it mean to be a disciple of Jesus? During this series, we will explore in depth the essential practices that shape a life of discipleship. More than a program or checklist, Walk This Way is an invitation for us who call Central UMC our church home to embrace living as a disciple of Jesus.

October 4 - *Connect: Come As You Are*

October 11 - *Grow: Finding Spiritual Friendships*

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October 25 - *Give: Live Generously*

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November 8 - *Living the Five: Consecration Sunday*

MONDAY, OCTOBER 5

By Bill Nicolai

"So give your servant a discerning heart to govern your people and to distinguish between right and wrong." - 1 Kings 3:9a

When I became a manager in 1980, I quickly realized there were so many new challenges to address. It was also during this time that I came to understand what Jesus truly did for me. As I read through the bible for the first time, I kept reflecting on this verse where Solomon asked for discernment. It was so sealed in my heart that the plaque I had made continues to sit on my desk.

James 1:5 tells us "If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God..." and Mathew 6:34 tells us "Do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear," and yet Mark 9:14 speaks of a father's claim "I do believe; help me overcome my unbelief!" I can so relate!

As we finished our study of Samuel in our bible study, we recognized all of David's failures – he did break four commandments – yet "as a man after God's own heart" the Lord never gave up on him. David listened, the most effective means in a healing and learning ministry.

As I reflect back on my life's journey, I know that I am blessed – I AM BLESSED! – I have choices, some easy, some tough, but I have choices and I continue to live with the assurance that despite all my shortcomings, I can go back to the Word for comfort, guidance, and wisdom. I may not know all the answers, but I live with the words and promises that Jeremiah exclaimed in vs 31:31 "I will make a new covenant with the people of Israel and with the people of Judah."

Prayer

Lord, I confess my worrying to you. You know my needs well, but I keep forgetting Your all-powerful, all-knowing love, care, and mercy. Forgive me and teach me to seek You first in every situation. Amen.

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 6

By Presley Ann Malone

"Instead, you must worship Christ as Lord of your life. And if someone asks about your hope as a believer, always be ready to explain it." - 1 Peter 3:15

Have you ever met someone with barely any to no faith? Has someone ever asked "What's your religion?" Don't be slow to answer, but say, "God!" enthusiastically and share His goods news. Connecting with others could bring someone to God.

One of my good friends said, "I am a Christian" but she never acted on it. She never went church. She didn't really read her Bible or even pray. When my school decided to let our grade run a Bible study every morning, I convinced her to go with me.

God reached out to many hearts and created many stories that day. After a couple of days, we were sitting at lunch, and I looked over to her new bracelet. It was colorful and had a nice floral design. In the middle where the 2 ends meet was a chip with pink cloth covering it. I asked, "What's that?" and she responded with "It's a bracelet that brings up a website with a daily prayer."

I was so happy to see my friend going through a milestone and upping her religion and I was proud of her to take the next step. I know God gave me the courage to have this conversation and opportunity to connect with my best friend.

Prayer

God, I pray that if anyone out here has a friend or a loved one walking alone in the valleys that you give them courage to spread your word and help bring them to the amazing grace you spoil us with every day. In your name we Pray and Praise. Amen.

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 7

By Ron McKean

"If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me." – Luke 9:23

A disciple is a follower – a person who chooses each day to learn from Christ. Following Christ is not simply a decision we made years ago but a decision that we renew every day. Each day we ask Christ what we can do to serve him for that day and for days to come.

I follow Jesus because he provides me with the strength and determination to do his will. When we fail to meet his will and falter, Jesus offers forgiveness for our shortcomings.

Following Jesus gives my life purpose. He commands us to care for our fellow man and provide love and support for those less fortunate than ourselves. His example of living encourages us not to forget his commandments for our relationship with our fellow man.

Jesus teaches me to live a life of giving and loving and providing help and support for those in need which in turn provides me for a purposeful life.

Jesus is with me in difficult times, providing me with the confidence that if I trust the Lord, all will be well. "I am with you always" Mathew 28:20

Jesus gives me peace by bringing us into a trusting relationship with God. His peace is not simply the absence of trouble, it is the assurance that God is with us, loves us, forgives us, and will not abandon us.

Through His example Jesus teaches me to love others by showing compassion, forgiveness, patience, kindness and mercy – even toward people who are difficult to love.

Jesus gives me hope through his promise of everlasting life.

Jesus helps me to become a better person by teaching me to be more loving, patient, forgiving, honest, humble and compassionate.

Jesus gives me eternal life.

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 8

By Steve Gillman

"I can do all things through Christ, who strengthens me." – Philippians 4:13

My favorite Bible verse is the one you just read. I have had different thoughts about its meaning as I have grown older. As a young man, I thought it just meant one thing---that I can do anything through Christ---that I can do what I pray to do because of Christ who leads and uplifts all at the same time. However, I have found as I have grown older that I do not always know what it is I should be doing or praying to do. Am I making the right decision at work with the people I try to help? Am I on the right side of an issue? Do I know the right way to go in life as a husband or father or son when a decision has to be made? It can be difficult to know what to pray for.

I have taken solace as I age in the above verse revealing another meaning to me Christ also gives me strength in uncertainty, not just the accomplishment of what I believe should be done. In reality, Christ's will in our lives and others is what is important and meaningful not just an outcome we believe we should have.

My prayer now as I have aged is less about asking Christ to strengthen me only as to an outcome, but rather "Your will be done Lord." And I have strength as well in knowing whatever happens, it is His perfect will that it be. As such, I feel strengthened BECAUSE of Christ and his will being done rather than feeling like I have to know the outcome or decision I need to ask for. I have learned that through Christ, we can be perfected with strength even in our weakness of not knowing what to do. And our hearts are lifted knowing no matter the outcome, Christ has the wheel in our lives if we invite him into our hearts.

Prayer

Lord, let your will be done this day and let me be strong enough to be a means by which you use to accomplish it whatever it may be. Amen.

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 9

By Steve Abercrombie

Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.” – Matthew 5:8

A pure heart is not a flawless heart—it is a single-focused, undivided, God-seeking heart. Jesus promises that when our inner life is aligned with Him, we begin to see God’s presence, God’s work, and God’s character with clarity.

Jesus’ words in Matthew 5:8 reach past behavior and straight into the interior world—the motives, desires, and loyalties that shape who we are. In Scripture, the heart is the center of a person’s will and affection. To be pure in heart means to be whole, integrated, and sincere—not divided between God and lesser loves. Purity of heart is not perfection. It is direction. It is the steady, humble turning of the inner life toward God. It is choosing honesty over image, obedience over convenience, and love over self-interest. It is the quiet work of letting God refine what we desire so that our lives reflect His character.

This is one of Scripture’s most breathtaking promises. Jesus says that those who pursue purity of heart will see God—not only in eternity, but even now. Purity sharpens spiritual vision. It clears away the fog of distraction, pride, and self-deception. It opens our eyes to the God who has been present all along. Purity of heart is not something we achieve by effort alone. It is something God forms in us as we walk with Him. God reveals what needs cleansing, strengthens what needs growing, and restores what feels broken. Our part is to remain open, humble, and willing.

Prayer

Lord, make my heart whole. Remove the divided loyalties that cloud my vision. Teach me to desire what You desire, love what You love, and seek You with sincerity. Let my inner life be a place where Your Spirit is welcomed, honored, and obeyed. And as You purify my heart, open my eyes to see You—in Scripture, in people, in circumstances, and in the quiet places where You speak. Amen

MONDAY, OCTOBER 12

By Brenda Fitz

Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.” – Matthew 11:28

My parents modeled service from the beginning—singing in the choir, tending the nursery, and delivering meals to those in need. They also cared for their own parents with patience and love. That example stayed with me.

In my own season of caregiving—for both of my parents—I leaned on Philippians 4:13: “I can do all this through Him who gives me strength.” And He was faithful. My sisters and I cared for Daddy for two and a half years through Covid, taking turns, giving one another grace.

My mother passed in 2009. After Mother’s funeral, a small butterfly fluttered before me as I left the chapel. My father passed in 2022. The day Daddy was transitioning, my sisters and I watched three cardinals near his window—we knew they represented Mother, my late husband, and my sister’s late husband. Daddy was gone five hours later. Now, every butterfly and cardinal carries me back to those sacred moments.

Serving others is not without sacrifice. But in the giving, something beautiful grows. God has become an even greater part of my life through this journey—and my faith is stronger for it.

Keep a smile on your face. Be a blessing. Help those in need. When you walk alongside someone in their hardest moments, you give them the courage to do the same for others.

Prayer

Dear Lord, thank You for the privilege of serving You each day. Amen.

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 13

By Susan Woods

The seeds that fell in good soil stand for those who hear the message and retain it in a good and obedient hearts and they persist until they bear fruit." - Luke 8:15

Gardening is one of my favorite hobbies. Growing up in rural Mississippi, I learned about gardening as my family had large gardens and orchards. Great care was taken to carefully prepare the soil, plant the seed, cultivate and remove the weeds. From this fertile carefully tended soil came lush vegetables and fruits.

The soil of my life was carefully tended also. I am so grateful to my loving family, Sunday School teachers and dedicated Pastors in the little country church who taught me about Jesus and gave me opportunities to grow and serve.

I have also learned that the same soil that produces good crops will also grow weeds. Without diligent attention, the weeds of pride, selfishness, resentment and self centeredness can take over my life garden if not diligently tended. Every day I fall short of what God wants me to be, but He is always there to forgive and help me back on the path.

I am so grateful to God to have been taught what it means to be a Christian and to have always had the opportunity to be an active member of His church. I keenly feel the responsibility to pass on to others through service and example what I have been taught.

Thanks be to God!

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 14

By Scott Layer

"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 4:10

When you first start out as a United Methodist minister on the ordination track, they assign you to a mentor to help you in this process. I was assigned to Don. I met with him a handful of times. I remember on one occasion he talked about the difference of serving as a minister as serving as a regular church member.

Don said there are times you serve because it is your job as a minister. There are also times you serve over and above your job responsibilities because that is what most people do in the local church. They work a full time job, raise their kids, handle their personal responsibilities and in addition give their time, gifts and effort to make a difference. They do it because they are committed to their local church.

This advice has served me well over the years. There are some things that I do for the church because I get to do them, not because it is a part of my job. Sometimes I really want to go over and above in service. Sometimes I don't want to do it as much but I do it anyway because Jesus said it is more blessed to give than to receive. Many times we associate that with money but I believe it is more than that.

It has been said there are two kinds of people in this world, givers and takers. I choose to be a giver. Look for an opportunity God gives you today to serve someone. You will be glad you did.

Prayer

Jesus, you were the greatest servant of all. You not only sacrificed your life for my sins and the sins of the whole world, you served even your closest friends by your actions. Help me to become like you, not only in my deeds but in purity of heart. In Jesus Name, Amen.

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 15

By Melissa Smith

"Though I walk in the midst of trouble, you preserve my life." - Psalm 138:7

Walking seems simple. Even a small child learns how. But I've found that walking well isn't always simple.

Before my knee replacements, I walked with a limp. My knee was unstable and painful, and my body learned to protect it. After surgery, I had to learn to walk all over again. Trusting my new knee was hard enough. The harder part was letting go of the limp. My knee no longer needed it, but I had walked that way for so long that it felt normal.

Our walk with God can be like that. We carry old habits, like fear, holding tight to anger or unforgiveness, or following what everyone else tells us, long after God has offered us something new. Learning to walk with God means unlearning the limp.

Psalm 1 shows us where to begin: blessed is the one who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked, but whose delight is in the way of the Lord. Walking with God is a choice we make intentionally, one step at a time. It shapes where we go, how we spend our time, and what we do with what God has placed in our hands.

And we won't always walk perfectly. Life brings good seasons and hard ones. Some days we walk normal; some days we limp. But the psalmist reminds us that even in the midst of trouble, God preserves us. We never walk alone. God is with us every step of the way.

What "limp" are you still carrying that God has already healed? What would it look like to trust God with your next step, including in your giving this season?

Prayer

Faithful God, teach me to walk in your way. Help me let go of old habits that no longer serve me and give me courage to trust you with every step. Amen.

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 16

By Donnie Malone

"And 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

Have you ever wondered why certain people enter your life at different seasons of your life? We know God has a plan for us. Sometimes that is through life experiences, moments, verses, songs, and people. I am a teacher and love my job. But one year my admin moved me to another grade. The year before I moved grades was a really tough year. I felt like anything that could go wrong went wrong. I felt like moving to another grade was a punishment. Even though my admin reassured me it was because the team needed me, I was taking it personal.

In this season of my life, I felt like I was walking in the valley all by myself. No one was listening, and I felt very alone. I kept praying to God to help me understand and lead me through this season. God answered with a beautiful, Christian family being placed into my class. The mom would come in once a week and work with a reading group. Our friendship quickly formed.

Around Christmas we found out that her cancer had returned, and she didn't have much time left. She passed away 3 months later. God used her short time in my life to transform me. I learned to love big, hug long, smile and trust God because He has a plan. It was hard to say goodbye to that amazing woman, but her legacy lives on in my heart forever. It ended up being an amazing school year despite having to say goodbye to her, and I absolutely loved teaching with my new teammates.

I reflect on this season often. All things worked out. God had a plan. He put someone in my life for a very short season. But His timing was perfect. He has a plan for you too.

Prayer

Lord heavenly father, thank you for loving your children and always providing what they need when they need it. I know someone might be in a season where they need someone else to show up and be your light. I pray you bring that person to them or they can be that person for someone else. May we seek you in all things and give you all the glory and praise. Amen.

MONDAY, OCTOBER 19

By Sarah Stockham

"He leads me beside still waters." - Psalm 23:2

Not stagnant waters. Not loud waters. Not rushing rapids. Still waters — because our Shepherd knows exactly what a weary, anxious heart needs, and He knows exactly where to find it.

Growing as a Christian isn't about arriving at a certain age and suddenly feeling calm. Spiritual maturity isn't a finish line we cross once the worry stops. It's a posture we keep choosing, over and over, at every stage of life.

We are wired, all of us, to scan for threats. Our bodies brace for the next thing. That's not a character flaw — it's how we're built. But the Shepherd doesn't shame the sheep for being sheep. He doesn't demand they conquer their nature before He'll care for them. He simply leads. He goes ahead of us, finds the quiet water, and makes room for us to lie down.

Notice He doesn't hand us a command to "stop worrying" and walk away. He leads us to the place — the prayer, the pause, the breath, the Word — where rest becomes possible.

Growing in faith often looks less like doing more and more like trusting more.

- Trusting that the Shepherd already scouted the path.
- Trusting that stillness isn't wasted time but sacred ground.
- Trusting that we don't have to white-knuckle our way to peace; we simply have to follow where we're led.

So today, wherever you are on your journey, let yourself be led. Lay your worry down like a sheep at the water's edge. It's okay to care without carrying the burden. Seeing you at the still water.

Prayer

Jesus, we carry so many burdens that aren't ours. I thank You for the invitation — not to try harder, but to follow You closer. You are the One who knows how to still my soul. And in You I rest. Amen.

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 20

By Michelle Garcia

"Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men." - Colossians 3:23

You may be like me and asking yourself, "Whatever I do? Really?" I find this verse challenging and inspiring. It redirects our motive and our focus. Whether we are cooking, cleaning, working, gardening, caring for children, helping our parents or playing sports, we can do it with all our heart and for the Lord.

I can remember being 13 and enjoying working with other church members setting up and tearing down tables and chairs for our contemporary service on B street. I can remember learning to use a hammer building ramps with what I didn't realize was the men's group. I can remember serving with our youth group on mission trips with Project Crossroads as a teen and even recently as an adult. No matter who I help or what I do, I get great joy in serving others and I know that it pleases the Lord.

What is harder for me are the things that don't come so naturally. I have to remind myself "whatever I do" means "whatever I do." This verse stretches me and helps redirect my heart and my mind when a task is something I don't enjoy doing, like hand washing dishes or cleaning my shower. And this shift changes everything. May this devotion encourage you to go and do the things you love, and hate, with love for the Lord.

Prayer

Loving God, regardless of if I enjoy doing something, help me to do it with love and to do it in service to You today, in the name of Jesus Christ I pray, Amen.

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 21

By Joel Malone

"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 4:10

Spiritual gifts are not medals to display — they are tools to use. God didn't give you gifts so you could admire them, compare them, or hide them. He gave them so His grace could flow through you into the lives of others.

The beauty of spiritual gifts is that they are diverse, but they share one purpose: building up the body of Christ.

Your gift — whether it's administration, helping others, shepherding, or any other — is a channel of grace. When you use it, people experience God's care in a tangible way.

Think about this:

- When someone teaches, God brings clarity.
- When someone shows mercy, God brings comfort.
- When someone leads, God brings direction.
- When someone serves, God brings relief.

Your gift is not small. It is not accidental. It is not replaceable. It is God's intentional choice for how He wants to bless others through you.

And here's the deeper truth: Spiritual gifts grow stronger when you use them, not when you analyze them. They mature through practice, not perfection.

Prayer

Lord, thank You for the gifts You've placed in me. Help me see them clearly, use them faithfully, and trust that You will work through them. Make me a steward of Your grace — willing, joyful, and bold. Amen.

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 22

By Eric Good

So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live your lives in him, rooted and built up in him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness.” – Colossians 2:6-7

Many times I have attended revivals, spiritual retreats, and the like, and the question always came up: When did you receive Christ, and what was it like? I always felt awkward in these discussions, because I didn't recall having a conversion experience like some did, and I admit to being a little envious of those that had really awesome feelings of love or something else come over them.

It was a long time before I realized how grateful I should be that I was raised by faithful church-going parents, who taught me before I could remember about the love of Jesus and that He is always with us. I have been fortunate to know God my entire life and I have never doubted His continual presence. That doesn't mean that I haven't at times ignored Him or acted in ways that displeased Him, but I know His love for me remains in spite of my poor behavior.

Brother Lawrence of the Resurrection served as a lay brother in a Carmelite Monastery in Paris in the 17th century. His writings describe a way of living intimately with God throughout our daily activities, until, as he put it, “the presence of God becomes something that comes naturally to us.” This struck a chord with me. I do not have the level of intimacy that he describes, but I know that all I have to do is think of God and I know His Holy Spirit is right there with me, whatever I may be doing. When I include God in my inner dialogue, this is my most common form of prayer.

God meets each of us in different ways. Our relationship with Him may look different from one person to another, and our ways of experiencing His presence may differ as well. It isn't about when we receive Christ; it's about continuing to live in Him. We only need to have faith that He will be there always, just as He said He would.

Prayer *(from the writings of Brother Lawrence)*

Give God thanks with me for his great goodness toward me, which I can never sufficiently admire, and for the many favors he has done for so miserable a sinner as I am. Amen.

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 23

By Matt McCollum

*"In their hearts humans plan their course, but the Lord establishes their steps."
– Proverbs 16:9*

In modern language: we make plans, but God ultimately determines where those plans lead.

For much of my life, I attempted to control my own destiny. I would make plans and take actions, thinking I could control what happened. And then, if and when those plans failed – in some cases inevitably and catastrophically – I thought I could just “pick myself up by my boot straps,” which in many cases also failed.

As I’ve matured and grown in my faith, I am now recognizing that many of my failed plans were necessary steps in God’s larger plan that I didn’t understand at that time but can now recognize were instrumental in where I am today and who I want and need to be for the future.

Proverbs 16:9 doesn’t necessarily mean that we should not make plans or that every unexpected event was a miraculous intervention. Rather, it encourages the believer to recognize that God’s purposes are larger than our plans and to trust Him when the path changes.

There is also an important lesson about humility: we can make very carefully reasoned plans and still be wrong about where they will ultimately take us.

In one sentence: Plan diligently, act wisely, and then trust God with the direction and outcome of your life.

Prayer

Lord, I bring my plans, hopes, and concerns before You. Give me the wisdom to know which paths to pursue and courage to take the steps You place before me. When I am uncertain, give me patience. When I am confident in my own plans, remind me that I see only a small part of the road ahead.

Direct my steps, even when I don’t understand where they are leading. Keep me from being guided by fear, pride, impatience, or selfish ambition. Help me recognize Your guidance and follow it faithfully. Amen.

MONDAY, OCTOBER 26

By David Berger

"Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Test me in this," says the Lord Almighty, "and see if I will not throw open the floodgate of heaven and pour out so much blessing there will not be room enough to store it." – Malachi 3:10 NIV

In 1994 our pastor in Alpharetta, GA told the congregation everyone needed to tithe, 10%, during the month of October. It was if the Lord was talking directly to me following our pastor's direction. At that time Sue was not hearing the Lord's direction as loud as I was. After a lot of prayer we decided to tithe per our pastor's direction. We tithed during the month of October. WOW, it seemed as if we were going to run out of money by the end of that month. With two young daughters, day care, house payments, food and the list goes on we felt like we were going backwards by the end of the month.

Following what we felt was a disastrous month financially we stepped back to assess what happened during that month along with prayer. Somehow we received a refund check on something we were not expecting and I received a promotion at work. Once we got over the shock of feeling like we were going backwards financially we saw how God could work with our finances. After a lot of prayer we felt God was ok if we backed off to 2-3% for a while with the goal of getting to the tithe in 5 - 7 years. Since October 1994 we believe God has fulfilled his promise in Malachi 3:10 by trusting in Him. The blessings, not necessarily money, the Lord has given us is beyond what we ever imaged back in 1994.

Please don't get the wrong impression, our lives have not been a bed of roses. There have been stops and starts since then with medical issues, job issues, relationships and just life in general. Sometimes when you ask me how are you? You hear the short version of this story in my response, "Blessed and highly favored."

Prayer

Lord, thank you for the way you touch so many lives. Please examine my heart so I continue to put you in the center of my life. Amen.

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 27

By Jake Platfoot

"Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you." – Matthew 6:33

What does this verse ask of us, to make "the kingdom of God and his righteousness" first? There is a bias in the human mind when we face a question as deep and wide as this question to do a little thing called substitution. Instead of facing the challenge of a complex question, we choose to answer a similar but related question. For example, when asked "What's the most important thing to do?", we might choose to answer the question "What is an important thing to do?" The answer will sound pretty good; at least until someone says "But what about..."

When I face this challenge, it is my bias to answer with some version of the spiritual disciplines: make prayer first, make giving first, make witnessing first, make scripture first, make serving the poor first. Or maybe some vague, mingled version of the whole set.

BUT, while all these things are beneficial, not one of them plumbs the depth of surrender that this verse demands. I may give all I have, make the gospel heard to millions, fill my hours with prayers of intercession, and never scratch the surface. For the kingdom of God, at its simplest, is God's rule and authority over my life. In my deep weakness, I can turn any good work into an act of pride or selfishness. I can give all I have and live in poverty so I might be praised by people. I could make the gospel heard by millions so that my fame would be multiplied. I might fill my hours with prayers of intercession to avoid the awkward, often messy affair of actually serving them. Rather, His Kingdom, His Authority must direct my every choice. Because He has the wisdom to know what will grow me, what will sustain me, what will transform me into His image, the very likeness of His son. He will guide me along the paths of righteousness and prune every branch which does not bear fruit.

Prayer

Father, break my death-grip on my own life. Open my ears so I hear Your voice, that I might surrender to Your authority, not simply out of fear of Your power, but in acceptance of Your great love, so that Your glory might be made manifest through me. Amen.

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 28

By Mike Smith

"I have no greater joy than to hear that my children are walking in the truth." – 3 John 1:4

My grandfather was always an inspiration to me, as he displayed his strong faith in many ways over the years. I still fondly recall him whistling "How Great Thou Art" as he went about his daily life.

My goal has been to be an inspiration to my children and grandchildren, just as my grandfather was to me. My prayer continues to be that my children and grandchildren will walk in the faith.

One of my greatest joys came when my son held up his newborn son and said, "How can anybody who has seen a baby come into the world not believe in God?" Later, looking down the pew as I sat in church with my son and his family not only gave me great joy but also strengthened my faith.

My challenge continues to be trying to set an example for my children and grandchildren. It is so easy to let the problems and frustrations of the world we live in today color my attitude and behavior. When I am with my children and grandchildren, I find myself thinking about what I should be doing and saying to inspire their faith, and how my actions might affect them.

On reflection, I should also be more thoughtful about how I share and live out my faith with friends and acquaintances. As Ephesians 4:29 states: "Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying..."

Prayer

Lord, help me use thought and care with family, friends, and all the people in my life as I try to be a good disciple of Jesus. Amen.

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 29

By Elaine Crowder

"Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms." – 1 Peter 4:10

My husband and I spent our working years in Congo Africa serving the church in areas of education and evangelism. I was also involved in ministry with women and malnourished children and home schooled our girls. They were fulfilling years for both of us.

Upon our retirement I cared for our parents for several years before I became involved at Central. I find great joy in visiting the shut-ins and church members living in assisted living. I also participate in the 90's and above birthday parties, the Tuesday morning prayer group, and United Women in Faith.

The ministry in Congo and church work at Central are all God's ministry. We felt called to Congo and I felt led to be involved at Central. One ministry is not more important than another. God wants us to be faithful servants wherever we.

Prayer

Thank you, Lord, that you want us to be in ministry with you. May our words and actions bring glory to your name. Help us keep our hearts tuned so that we may hear your gentle nudging and obediently do your bidding. Amen.

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 30

By Melissa Best

"I lift 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

My dad was a lay leader who loved to sing for the Lord. When I was twelve, I went with him to a small country church to hear him speak at their revival. A member asked him to sing one of his favorite songs. Dad chose "Through It All," one I heard many times, but that night these words really sunk into my heart: "I thank God for the mountains and I thank Him for valleys and I thank Him for the storms He brought me through. For if I'd never had a problem, I wouldn't know He could solve them. I wouldn't know what faith in God can do."

This song has become a source of comfort in my life. When God called my husband home to heaven in 2017, He has blessed me by sending angels to get me through the grief and difficult times. My faith and relationship with God have grown because of God's grace, love, and strength through the storms. My pastors and church family have helped me to the mountaintops.

God and my dad knew one night in a little country church that I needed to hear the lyrics to "Through It All."

Prayer

God, thank You for all Your blessings. I pray that everyone going through a valley or storm can feel Your loving arms wrapped around them, and have the faith that You will lead them through. Amen.

Bonus

By Michael Stockham

"Then he said to them all: 'Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me. For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will save it.'" – Luke 9:23-24

I am a work in progress. Some days that feels like grace — God isn't finished with me yet. Other days it's a confession: have I truly surrendered my life to Christ, or just the easy parts?

Not all of it — habits I'd rather keep than kill, anger that lingers longer than I'd like to admit. When trouble comes, my first move is rarely prayer — it's problem-solving. I trust my own hands before I trust His.

That's where Luke 9:23-24 meets me. Jesus doesn't say deny yourself once — He says take up your cross daily. Growth isn't a decision made once and filed away; it's a daily, sometimes hourly, choice to put down what I'm gripping and pick up His way instead.

Verse 24 is the hard part: whoever wants to save their life will lose it. Holding tightly to my comfort and my pride is how I lose the life I want. The losing isn't punishment — it's the path. When I let go and wait on His plan instead of my own, I end up with Him — and that's more, not less.

Brennan Manning's *The Ragamuffin Gospel* put words to this: "My deepest awareness of myself is that I am deeply loved by Jesus Christ and I have done nothing to earn it or deserve it." That's the piece I keep forgetting. Taking up my cross daily was never about earning Him — it's about believing I already am loved, and living like it's true.

So that's my prayer, and maybe it's yours too:

Prayer

Lord, help me walk in Your ways, so I can experience joy and peace. Where I'm leaning on myself, teach me to lean into You. Where anger lingers, do the work I can't do on my own. I want to reflect You day by day — not because I've arrived, but because I'm still willing to take up my cross, today, and follow. Amen

A Closing Thought

These weeks of devotions remind us that following Jesus is more than something we believe—it's a way of life. Each devotion, prayer and story has encouraged us to notice God's love and faithfulness in every part of our lives.

And while these weeks come to an end, the journey continues. As disciples of Jesus, we're called to CONNECT, GROW, SERVE, GIVE and GO—living out our faith in ways that make God's love known to the people around us.

That's what it means to *Walk This Way*: embracing a life of discipleship and taking the next step, together, so that all people may know God's love through Jesus Christ.

All glory to God for what He has done, what He is doing, and what is still to come.

