

As you read the passages for this week, prayerfully seek the ways in which God may be calling you to live within the witness of the early church. Then use the guidelines as a way to center yourself more fully within the presence of God, to listen for God's voice and God's direction for your own life.

-Have you ever considered the value of wisdom? Or, put another way, do you consider wisdom to be valuable? Not human wisdom, not the kind of wisdom that tells you to get as much as you can, anyway that you can, and at any cost. But, rather, the kind of wisdom that comes from God, through the Holy Spirit that invigorates your heart and your mind to hear more clearly the voice and the presence of God in your life.

-Most of us consider this kind of wisdom valuable. Most of us want it in our lives. But, you may be asking yourself, where is this kind of wisdom found? And when I find it, how do I use it or experience it in my daily life? What difference would it make in my life and how invaluable would God's wisdom really be for me?

-The difference between the wisdom of God and human wisdom is the difference between night and day, or the difference between light and darkness. That is because the wisdom of God, which the Holy Spirit teaches, compares spiritual things with what is spiritual; with what is essential and important in the eyes, heart, mind and will of God. Human wisdom is limited and concerned with only you, and not with God.

-This is a great comfort for us. For it means that God, in God's wisdom, is concerned for all people and all things at all times; and that all of life is seen and understood in God. So, how valuable is the wisdom of God? Priceless?

-As you pray, read and meditate on the scriptural passages for this week, concentrate on the ways in which you are being called to live in the wisdom of God within the love of Christ. Then prayerfully seek the guidance and the wisdom of the Holy Spirit to show you the ways in which you can grow, recognize and value the wisdom of God in your life. And in your response to right relationship with God, always remembering how important all of us are in the eyes and heart of God in Jesus Christ.

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-Understanding that change is very real and necessary part of life, especially of the Christian life is important. In accepting and facilitating healthy changes, even those we may not agree with that support a personal decision, a family or a congregation are signs of spiritual and emotional maturity.

-No matter where we live, where we work or where we worship, unity and diversity will always be part of our lives. Because we are able to learn so much from one another, due to unity and the diversity among people and circumstances, these two things can either make our lives stressful or interesting. It's all in the vantage point or perspective in which we seek to understand sameness and difference.

-One of the greatest gifts that we give one another from and by God is the love of God: the complete and unconditional love of God in the person of Jesus Christ. That is what makes saying *love covers a multitude of sins* so poignant. It's really another way of saying that life is hard and yet in even in the difficulties we are empowered and called to love. Because God so fully loves us within the daily ruts of the mundane; within the unity; within the diversity, we are loved. And when we encounter change, within the love of God, we are strengthened to live as one with God and with one another.

-As you pray, read and meditate on the scripture passages for this week, concentrate on the ways in which you are being called to live in prayerful acceptance of others within the love of Christ and with the unity and diversity of life.

-Then prayerfully seek the guidance and wisdom of the Holy Spirit to show you the ways in which you can reach out to others within the diversity of your own life. And in your response to right relationship with God, always remembering how important all of us are in the eyes and heart of God in Jesus Christ.

WEEKLY DEVOTIONAL-September 20, 2020 Finish 1 Corinthians

As you read the passages for this week, prayerfully seek the ways in which God may be calling you to live within the witness of the early church. Then use the guidelines as a way to center yourself more fully within the presence of God, to listen for God's voice and God's direction for your own life.

-Hope is an important part of your life. In fact, without hope, your life can and will become despondent: hopeless. And when you live in a state of hopelessness, you are unable to respond to God, to others or to yourself with any sense of confidence and courage.

-It is important to understand that as Christians, we have been given an important gift from God in the person of Christ. For it is in Jesus that our hope rests and is protected. That no matter what happens to you. Or to someone you love, God is right there, right beside you and those whom you love, in the person of Christ.

-God does not abandon us to circumstance. Knowing this can and should be a source of tremendous comfort and hope for you. No matter what the circumstances that you might be facing today, you are not alone.

-Today. You can be confident in your faith and in your life knowing that all will be well because of God's love for you in Christ: and not only for you but for your entire world. That is why Paul's words to the church of Corinth are still applicable today: *But thanks be to God, who give us victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.*

-As you pray, read and meditate on the scripture passages for this week, concentrate on the ways in which you are being called to live in hope and in the love of Christ within all of the circumstances of your life.

-Then prayerfully seek the guidance and the wisdom of the Holy Spirit to show you the ways in which you can reach out to others in hope, becoming the visible presence of the body of Christ on earth. Always remembering how important all of us are in the eyes and the heart of God in Jesus Christ.

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-Forgiveness is not always easy. When we hurt by someone or by an event in our lives, forgiveness can seem like the hardest task in the world. And yet, forgiveness is not just something that we feel it is something that we *do*.

-Forgiveness is not just an emotion, it is an action. And *doing forgiveness* we allow God to work within us to remove the bitterness that can close off our hearts and cloud our judgement.

-What that means is that in Christ, who has already given us the perfect model of forgiveness, we find the heart to go on. And not just go on, but to begin dealing with those who have hurt us. And all of the bad feelings that can accompany the pain.

-Paul reminds us that we ought rather to forgive those who hurt us rather than be swallowed up with too much sorrow. And therein lies the key: God, in Christ calls to cast our sorrows and burdens upon God. It is in this surrender that we find the courage and strength to do what is right. It is in this surrender that *we do* forgiveness.

-As you pray, read and meditate on the scripture passages for this week, concentrate on the ways in which you are being called to live in the forgiveness of God, yourself and others in the love of Christ and within all of the circumstances in your life.

-Then prayerfully seek the guidance and wisdom of the Holy Spirit to show you the ways in which you can reach out to yourself and to others in forgiveness. Always remembering how important all of us are in the eyes and heart of God in Jesus Christ.

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-Our tithes and our offerings to God are God's by right. Tithing is God's key to your personal and professional finances. Since we as Christians live under grace, our tithing is not a legal requirement but as a response of grace to God. We give to God in grateful response to what God has given us.

-Paul reminds us that this is how we show our love for God and for one another. When we give and share from our resources, giving to those who are in need and in support of the church, we are easing the burden and creating equality as God so does for us.

-As you pray, read and meditate on the scripture passages for this week, concentrate on the ways in which you are being called to live in the grace-filled generosity of God, yourself and others in the love of Christ and within all of the circumstances of life.

-Then prayerfully seek the guidance and wisdom of the Holy Spirit to show you the ways in which you can reach out to yourself and to others in generosity. Always remembering how important all of us are in the eyes and heart of God in Jesus Christ.

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- Legalism was a big problem in the lives of the early Christians and their young churches. It was a problem that kept the young believers from moving forward in their faith and in forming faith communities that were supportive of diversity. Legalism was a problem that the Apostle Paul had to deal with constantly.

- Becoming caught up in legalism (substituting God's gift with human's work) is a way of believing and acting that the Good News of the gospel (that *all* has been made right with God through life, death and resurrection of Christ) is just too good to be true. Belief in legalism only causes strife.

- The truth is that we are never called to win or to earn God's approval. We are made free and whole in and by Jesus Christ: *Stand fast therefore in the freedom by which Christ has made us free, and do not become entangled with a yoke of bondage.* This truth can never be altered. We are called by God not to bind one another but to free one another. And to live soundly in the love and the fellowship of God in Christ.

- We are called to be responsible with the gifts and the talents that God has lavished upon us. We are called to justice and equity. We are called to serve. We are not called to add or to subtract from the simple truth that as Christians our role is to concentrate on keeping our focus with the rush of other things, which are able to divide and to destroy us.

- As you pray, read and meditate on the scripture passages for this week, concentrate on the ways in which you can reach out to yourself and to others within all of the circumstances of your life.

- Then prayerfully seek the guidance and the wisdom of the Holy Spirit to show you the ways in which you can reach out to yourself and to others in freedom, forgiveness and love. Always remembering how important all of us are in the eyes and the heart of God in Jesus Christ.

WEEKLY DEVOTIONAL-October 18, 2020

Ephesians 1-5

As you read the passages for this week, prayerfully seek the ways in which God may be calling you to live within the witness of the early church. Then use the guidelines as a way to center yourself more fully within the presence of God, to listen for God's voice and God's direction for your own life.

- We all desire relationships in which we are valued, we are respected and we are wanted. Often, the esteem that we desire from others rarely relieves the desperation that we may experience in our struggle for acceptance.

- As Christians, we have been made whole by God's love and by God's total acceptance of us in Christ. Because of God's deep love for us, we can be assured that even when we fail, God does not see us as failures. But rather takes our failures, as well as our successes, to draw us more closely into God's Being to transform us into the whole people that God already realizes us to be.
- As you pray, read and meditate on the scripture passages for this week, concentrate on the ways in which you called to live within the total acceptance of God for yourself and for others within all the circumstances of your life.
- Then prayerfully seek the guidance and the wisdom of the Holy Spirit to show you the ways in which you can reach out to yourself and to others in freedom, acceptance, forgiveness and love. Always remembering how important all of us are in the eyes and the heart of God in Jesus Christ.

WEEKLY DEVOTIONAL-October 25, 2020
Colossians

Ephesians 6, Philipians,

As you read the passages for this week, prayerfully seek the ways in which God may be calling you to live within the witness of the early church. Then use the guidelines as a way to center yourself more fully within the presence of God, to listen for God's voice and God's direction for your own life.

- One of the most comforting truths of our Christian faith is that Christ, and the love that Christ has for all of us, is available to us 24/7. In all the stories that we read in the New Testament concerning the life and the ministry of Jesus, there was never a person who was reluctant to approach him for fear of being rejected.
- Although rejection is a very real part of our human existence, and none of us will escape the experience, Christ is the only person who will never reject us. No matter what we may or may not do. That is not to say that our sin does not separate us from God's physical presence: it does. But what is important for us to realize is that we, as God's creation are never rejected or abandoned. God rejects our sin, yet we are made whole, healed and forgiven in Christ.
- This is a wonderful truth. For it means that our anxiety and worry about whether or not God will accept us, should never get in the way of the reality that we are already completely accepted by God in Christ. It is really us that causes and creates

the distance before God. But God heals and closes that gap for us in and through the love and the person of Jesus Christ. We need only to draw close to God and to trust in God's total, transforming love for us.

- As you pray, read and meditate on the scripture passages for this week, concentrate on the ways in which you called to live within the total acceptance of God for yourself and for others within all the circumstances of your life.

- Then prayerfully seek the guidance and the wisdom of the Holy Spirit to show you the ways in which you can reach out to yourself and to others in freedom, acceptance, forgiveness and love. Always remembering how important all of us are in the eyes and the heart of God in Jesus Christ.