

30 Days of Passion

You hold in your hands the gift of five men – the Pastoral Leadership Team of Petaluma Christian Church. We (and one bonus guest) have written these 30 devotions to coincide with our celebration of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ – our only Lord and Savior.

We also want to weave into these words our thoughts on the 2010 (and beyond!) P.C.C. Mission Statement: We exist to spread a passion for the supremacy of Jesus Christ in all things for the joy of all peoples.

Our passion for Him begins with His passion for us and the world. “We loved because He first loved us” (1 John 4:19). We want to take a look at His example and do whatever He did. We don’t want to make excuses.

Since I get to be the editor, my devotionals will center on five things the Resurrection does for us. Since Sundays are always a celebration of the Resurrection of Jesus, mine will be on that day, followed by the elders.

Read, enjoy, and draw closer to the Lord. But most importantly, do what Jesus did. -
Pastor Bill

**PCC exists to Spread a Passion
for the Supremacy of Jesus
Christ in all things for the Joy of
all Peoples**

Day 1 – APRIL 4 – Resurrection Sunday!

What does the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead mean to you personally? I once asked the hypothetical question, “If it could be proved to you beyond a shadow of a doubt that Jesus never rose from the dead, would you still follow Him?”

My answer is that I would not. Why not? Because if Jesus didn’t rise, He merely had delusions of grandeur. Maybe He was even a lunatic. For someone to say the things Jesus said about Himself and not to prove it by rising from the dead would evoke our pity, not our worship (see Matthew 16:21 for just one example).

Paul put it this way, “if Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless and so is your faith” (1 Corinthians 15:14). “And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins” (1 Corinthians 15:17).

But after studying all the evidence, I don’t think there’s any way the resurrection could be falsified.

One year, the University of Chicago Divinity School invited Dr. Paul Tillich to speak. He talked for 2-1/2 hours supposedly “proving” that the resurrection of Jesus was false. He then asked if there were any questions.

An old, black preacher with a head of woolly white hair stood up in the back of the auditorium. “Docta Tillich, I got one question,” he said as all eyes turned toward him. He reached into his sack lunch and pulled out an apple and began eating it. “Docta Tillich ... CRUNCH MUNCH, My question is a simple one ... CRUNCH MUNCH ... Now, I aint never read them book you read ... CRUNCH MUNCH ... and I can’t recite the scriptures in the original Greek ... CRUNCH MUNCH ... I don’t know nothin’ about Niebuhr and Heidegger” ... CRUNCH MUNCH. He finished the apple. “All I wanna know is: This apple I just ate, was it bitter or sweet?”

Dr. Tillich paused for a moment and answered in exemplary scholarly fashion: “I cannot possibly answer that question, for I haven’t tasted your apple.”

The white-haired preacher dropped the core of his apple into his crumpled paper bag, looked up at the Doctor and said calmly, “Neither have you tasted my Jesus.”

The 1,000 plus crowd in attendance could not contain themselves. The auditorium erupted with applause and cheers. Dr. Tillich thanked his audience and promptly left the platform.

Because Jesus lives, we have hope that we will live forever too. “If we have been united with him like this (in baptism) in His death, we will certainly also be united with Him in His resurrection” (Romans 6:5).

Suggested Prayer: Father, we thank you that we of all people have hope in the sure promises of God that when Jesus comes back, we’ll be together with Him in glory forever. Give us assurance and hope in the resurrection of Your Son Jesus Christ, in whose name we pray, Amen -BL

Day 2 – Monday, April 5th

"Leave her alone," Jesus replied. "[It was intended] that she should save this perfume for the day of my burial.

John 12:7

Jesus pointed out that Mary was not wasting this perfume on him. Certainly, the money could have been given to the poor; there would always be opportunities to care for the poor. But they would not always have Jesus. Mary understood how special Jesus was. Her anointing with a pint of nard was like an ointment put on his body in preparation for His burial.

Jesus explained that his followers would have many opportunities to help the poor, but only a short time to love and honor the Messiah. Mary's loving act was for a specific occasion — an anointing that anticipated Jesus' burial and a public declaration of her faith in him as the Messiah.

Jesus was so impressed with this outpouring of affection that he declared that Mary's act would be remembered wherever the gospel was told. She had realized how precious it was to have Jesus with them and wanted to demonstrate this before he died.

Jesus is precious — to have him with us is the best we could ask for in life. Let us seize the opportunities to demonstrate our love to him.

Our passion for Jesus should be a demonstration and witnessing to all people. -DV

Day 3 – Tuesday, April 6th

"MIRACULOUS!!"" Revolutionary!" "Greatest ever!"

We are inundated by a flood of extravagant claims as we flip the television dial or magazine pages. The messages leap out at us. The products assure that they are new, improved, fantastic, and capable of changing our lives. For only a few dollars, we can have "cleaner clothes," "whiter teeth," "glamorous hair," and "tastier food." Automobiles, perfume, diet drinks, and mouthwash are guaranteed to bring happiness, friends, and the good life. And just before an election, no one can match the politician's promises. But talk is cheap, and too often we soon realize that the boasts were hollow, quite far from the truth. Jesus is the answer!"

"Jesus is the answer!"..."Believe in God"..."follow me to Church!" Christians also make claims but are often guilty of belying them with their lack of actions. Professing to trust God and to be his people, they cling tightly to the world and its values. Possessing all the right answers, they contradict their words by having no follow up with the Lords commands.

It is not enough to talk Christian faith, we must live it. James 2:14 "What good is it, my brothers, if a man claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save him?" The proof of the

reality of our faith is a changed life. Followed up by actions taught by Christ.

Genuine faith will inevitably produce good deeds. This is brought on by studying Gods word and being a doer of the word, not just a hearer. James 1:22-23 instructs us, “Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says.”

It is important to listen to what God’s Word says, but it is much more important to obey it, to do what it says. We can measure the effectiveness of our Bible study time by the effect it has on our behavior and attitudes. Do we put into action with passion what we have learned and studied?

Suggested Prayer: We pray Lord that our faith is more than just a statement, but that it would be a result of action in putting our faith into loving action for you through Christ who works in us. -SD

Day 4 – Wednesday, April 7th

How to Have a "Quiet Time" with God

The following is taken out of our Daily Disciples Prayer Journal & Daily Disciples Building Divine Devotional Time Book:

Many of us struggle to find time in our busy schedules to do one more thing, but spending time with the Lord should be a priority not a “one more thing.” Finding time to be alone with God must become a part of our daily lives, a habit, a routine, like taking a lunch break. The rewards far outweigh and outlast anything else that we can do. Here are some of our ideas to help you make your “quiet time” a habit...

Choose a time and stick with it...whatever time you choose, make it a priority. You can put up sticky notes to remind yourself on the bathroom mirror, car dash board, by the telephone or even on the

refrigerator. It takes 21 days of doing something consistently to make a habit.

- Morning—set your alarm 15 minutes early
- Lunch—eat lunch with the Lord, maybe in your car or at a park
- Afternoon break—spend that 15 minutes with your Bible and journal
- Evening—go to bed earlier just to read and pray

Choose a place...some place where you can be alone and not distracted. Choose a consistent place where you can keep all your materials. And you want a place that you go to often.

- Your office, your car, Any room in your home, Maybe outside

Open with a prayer ...start talking to God and asking Him to hear your heart.

- Refer to “How to Pray” for tips on praying on <http://www.dailydisciples.org/> website
- Be honest with the Lord and tell Him how you are doing
- Focus on Him first, then on your needs
- Keep your time frame in mind, if you are limited for time

Open your Bible...depending on your availability (try not to short cut this time), pick a reading plan that you will follow every day.

- A daily Bible plan is recommended (Yearly Bible, Chronological Bible)
- Try to read slowly and meditate on the words
- Look for those key words or verses that “pop out” to you
- Pray as you read

Keep a Prayer Journal...write down any notes on the verses and your prayers

- Write down your thoughts, questions, and personal insights
- Dates and times are recommended
- Notebooks and bound journals are recommended instead of loose-leaf papers

- Do this routine daily for one month and the habit should be well established.

We encourage you to have a quiet time with God. That is how your relationship with God will grow. Be sure that you listen with your eyes as you read the Word and then be quiet before Him as your ears will hear His voice. If these methods work for you, please pass them on.

Remember: *Our mission here at PCC is to Spread a Passion for the Supremacy of Jesus Christ in all things for the Joy of all Peoples.*

-TW

Day 5 – Thursday, April 8th

“He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds.”

Psalm 147:3

I found this story in *Our Daily Bread* and thought it was good to share. It was written by Julie Ackerman Link.

Leslie and her two daughters were about to be evicted from their home. Although Leslie believed that God could help, so far He hadn't given a clue as to how. She wondered, Where is God? As she drove to the courthouse, she prayed for God's intervention. Then she heard a song on the radio proclaiming, “God is here! Let the brokenhearted rejoice.” Could this be the assurance from God that she was longing to hear?

Inside the courtroom, Leslie stood before the judge, heard his decision, and signed the legal documents, but still God had not given her an answer. As Leslie was walking to her car, a truck pulled up beside her. “Ma'am,” said the driver, “I heard your testimony inside the courtroom, and I believe God wants me to help you.” And he did. Gary helped Leslie get in contact with a woman from a local church who was able to work with the parties involved to reverse the process so that she and her girls could stay in their home.

When people ask, "Where is God?" the answer is, "Right here." One way God is at work is through Christians like Gary who are continuing the work Jesus started - healing the brokenhearted and binding up their wounds.

I believe that God wants to use us the same as he used Gary. I think that we should be looking for opportunities to help people in need and bind up their wounds. When we love God, we will look for opportunities to serve people.

Suggested Prayer: Dear Heavenly Father thank you for healing my broken heart and binding up my wounds. I ask that you will use me as one of your tools to help heal broken hearts and binding up wounds as you direct me. Help me to see people with your eyes. Amen. -EB

Day 6 – Friday, April 9th

Jesus doesn't like whiners!

Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake.

For when I am weak, then I am strong.

2 Corinthians 12:10

The Bible is filled with stories and teachings that go completely contrary to the views of the world. In Matthew 6:24, Jesus warned us that we could not serve both God and mammon (money).

Later, the apostle John would write: "Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him" (1 John 2:15).

But today's Scripture verse seems to go even a step farther. Paul tells us to "take pleasure" in the things in our lives that make us weak, such as sickness and all other types of distresses. How many of us can truly say that we find pleasure in being sick, having

financial problems, family struggles or even persecution from various sources?

As Christians, we are told not only to believe in Jesus, but to follow Him. In Luke 14:27-28, Jesus speaks of those who choose to follow Him that they must leave everything else behind. He tells them to count the cost before they make their decision.

When we truly follow Jesus, we discover just how weak we really are. It is in the weakness of our lives that He is able to show His power and might. Paul learned to glory in his weaknesses because that is when he saw the Lord work in a more powerful way through him.

Do you have things in your life which you feel are good excuses not to serve God? Time, job, too tired, bad back, sore something, etc.

Ok, we are weak. Ok, we have limitations. But Jesus called upon us to put aside our obvious weaknesses and to get to work for His purpose. He is watching to see if we really believe in Him. If we really do believe, we will quit our whining.

Can you imagine what it would feel like to die on the cross for a bunch of wimpy followers? I feel ashamed when I think of all the times I have complained about how tough I have it and completely forgotten the huge gift I have been given by one who suffered more than I will ever really know.

We will have troubles in this world, despite our efforts to avoid them. We will have sickness, needs, and distresses, but contrary to the world's teachings, we can take pleasure in these times of challenges. Why? Because Jesus will show us His strength and power in glorious ways if we stop focusing on us and put our faith in Him. Sin brings these bad things into our world, but Jesus has made a way for us to live through them with peace and joy.

It is time to stop setting aside the things of God because they may be hard. It is time to get busy for Jesus. He deserves our obedience and doesn't need our rationalizations. Isn't it great to know you will be pleasing Jesus with your effort. What a glorious feeling there is in obedience to our Savior!

Dear faithful Father in heaven, I call upon you to forgive me for my wimpish ways. I know you are a mighty God who will get me through. I thank you for the challenges of my life. I only ask for more chances to please you by cheerfully answering Your call. No more excuses Lord, I am here for You. In Christ's name I pray.

-DR

Day 7 – Saturday, April 10th

My Passion for the Lord and for the Lord's Service

1. Start with my passion for the Lord Himself: hunger and thirst for His word, be committed to Bible study and daily devotionals.

Connie, Patsy, Catina, and I all go to a ladies Bible study every other Thursday evening as well as being committed to our Bible academy where Pastor teaches our socks off every Sunday morning before church! Also for me, that includes Shelby and me listening to Insight for Living with Chuck Swindoll weekday mornings.

I need to be mindful of the fact I **can't give away what I don't have**. I know I have to want to grow in grace and truth with Him in order to give it away to anyone else. I need to genuinely love the Lord myself, want to live to please Him.

2. But my passion for the Lord is all tied up in **who I am as a teacher**. It's the gift He's given me so I want to use my passion to teach for God's glory, not only Mon. through Friday in a public school setting but to teach even **more importantly for God's kingdom!**

God's word tells us to lay up treasures in heaven where neither moths nor rust doth corrupt and where thieves do not break in and steal. Hence, I teach Sunday School, and have for more years than I can probably count.

3. But in using God's gift of teaching, I need to provide an opportunity for children to learn to **love the Lord by loving on**

them as well as sharing the gospel. Our lives are the first Biblical evidence these young lives read. They can't read anything else! And the fastest way I know to accomplish that with my students, is **to pray for them and for their teacher**. I need to seek the Lord's wisdom and guidance in preparing the lessons and working with the children as individuals. I need to see these children as God's children, His gift to us and treasure them as such.

4. When I love these young lives, I'll want the lesson to be the best it can be. I want them to have a **joy for the Lord** and to grow His grace as well, to have that love and passion for Him as their Lord and Savior.

So, my goal is to have **joy in the learning**. I want the class to be a treat and not a treatment. We want them to want to come to Sunday School, so sometimes, they need to just play together for a while: inside with Thomas the train or outside on the jungle gym we have in the back yard, or just going to check out the neighbor's chickens through the fence.

Also, I have a passion **to love and support the precious parents of these children**. Someone was teaching my children along the way so I could go to church and Sunday School and It's my turn to do the same for the next generation.

Those of us who have raised our children, it's a great opportunity to help these young parents who have all those challenges of parenting yet ahead. That's **where the parents need to be – in church**. That's where the Lord can teach, guide and direct their hearts so they can be the best parents they can be, the best husbands and wives they can be, so they can grow in His grace and love too!

5. Finally, it's great working also with the young people who are going to take our place. Bev Proud and I are not going to live forever! I now have the privilege of working with Shelby Raffi in our preschool class. She has such a heart for the Lord and for these children. I've seen her continue to grow in grace and confidence, blossoming toward maturity with a heart for service.

It's such a super strategy, teaming up with one of these young adults, because you go to church every other week and so do they, plus it's a great opportunity to have them learn about

commitment, responsibility, compassion, and to develop their own passion for the Lord and His service.

The children we serve now are the lifeblood of our church. Without our young people, we will die as a church. They're our greatest asset, except for the Lord Himself. On them lie the hopes and dreams of our country remaining a Godly nation, in whom we trust.

So my passion for serving the Lord is in loving on His children, sometimes the young ones, and sometimes the not so young ones. But I know Shelby and I both praise God He brought us to this church, to be part of this family.

You have encouraged loved on us for many years now, and count it a privilege to encourage and love you right back. My prayer for you would be that God would reveal your area of passion for serving Him.

-Linda Dunlap

Day 8 – Sunday, April 11th

True Promises

What does the resurrection of Jesus Christ mean to you personally? For the Christian, His rising means that His promises will come true. His resurrection is the one great miracle of God that gives credibility to all the others. Since He rose from the dead, we can believe everything He said and did. But if Jesus is still in the grave somewhere in Jerusalem, none of the promises He made to be with us as we take His message to others can be relied upon.

Jesus said, "Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age" (Matthew 28:18-20).

How could Jesus be with us as we share a passion for His glory if He's still dead? How could His Spirit equip us and make

us courageous for witness if there is no resurrection? It couldn't. And besides that, who would even want to tell others about a dead Messiah?

But He was raised from His tomb and He does give us assurance of His presence in the here and now. And His Spirit does make us bold to proclaim the truth, which tells me that if we want Jesus to be near and dear to you today, we need to do something courageous in His name.

So let's go and make disciples. Let's baptize them and teach them to obey all that Jesus has commanded us. And Jesus will be with us – it's His promise. He backed it up by coming back from the dead.

Father, thank you for your promise to be with us when we do what you say. Thank you for backing that promise up with the resurrection. Help me today to spread the joy of knowing Jesus to someone who's hurting and needs to be loved. Through Christ, Amen. -BL

Day 9 – Monday, April 12th

"Do you love Me? Tend My sheep."

Jesus did not say to make converts to your way of thinking, but He said to look after His sheep, to see that they get nourishment in the knowledge of Him. We consider what we do in the way in Christian work as service, yet Jesus Christ calls service to be what we are to Him, not what we do for Him. Discipleship is based solely on devotion to Jesus Christ, not on following after a particular belief or doctrine. "If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes and even his own life, he cannot be My disciple" (Luke 14:26).

In this verse, there is no argument and no pressure from Jesus to follow Him; He is simply saying, in effect, "If you want to be My disciple, you must be devoted solely to Me." A person

touched by the Spirit of God suddenly says, "Now I see who Jesus is!"-- that is the source of devotion.

Today we have substituted personal belief for doctrinal belief, and that is why so many people are devoted to causes and so few are devoted to Jesus Christ. People do not really want to be devoted to Jesus, but only to the cause He started. Jesus Christ is deeply offensive to the educated minds of today, to those who only want Him to be their friend, and who are unwilling to accept Him in any other way.

Our Lord's primary obedience was to the will of His Father, not to the needs of people - the saving of people was the natural outcome of His obedience to the Father. If I am devoted solely to the cause of humanity, I will soon be exhausted and come to the point where my love will waver and stumble. But if I love Jesus Christ personally and passionately, I can serve humanity, even though people may treat me like a "doormat".

The secret of a disciple's life is devotion to Jesus Christ, and the characteristic of the life is its seeming insignificance and its meekness. Yet it is like a grain of wheat that "falls into the ground and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit."—it will spring up and change the entire landscape. (John 12:24)

-DV

Day 10 – Tuesday, April 13th

Passion to share the importance of Jesus Christ

Jesus cannot be equated with any person or power. He is the supreme ruler of time and eternity, heaven and earth, humans and angels. We should give him his rightful place as king of our lives.

Because Jesus was sent by God, *we* can trust him with our lives. It is worth everything we have to acknowledge him and give ourselves to him, because he came to be our Messiah, our Savior.

The way to enter Gods kingdom is by faith—believing in Christ to save us from sin and change our lives. We must do the work of his kingdom now to be prepared for his return.

Jesus, teaching shows us how to prepare for life in his eternal kingdom by living properly right now. He lived what he taught, and we too must practice what we preach.

The resurrection of Jesus, all—powerful life for us-not even death could stop his plan of offering eternal life. Those who believe in Jesus can hope for a resurrection like his. Our role is to tell his story to all the earth *so* that everyone can share in his victory.

Suggested Prayer: Dear heavenly Father. Please provide in us by the power of the Holy Spirit living in our lives and existing to spread a passion for the supremacy of Jesus Christ in all things for the joy of all peoples. Amen -SD

Day 11 – Wednesday, April 14th

God's Time

But do not forget this one thing, dear friends: With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day.

2 Peter 3:8

Time is an amazing concept. We can only understand time by how we experience it and how it applies to our lives. Our lives revolve around a 24 hour day, 7 day week, 4 week month, and 12 month year, give or take a few days. Some measure time in increments by celebrating events such as birthdays, holidays, and anniversaries. Others in how fast or how slow it passes. We know that time is moving but we cannot see it, so we watch the sun rise and set, and we keep track of time with our watches and clocks. Our entire life is one constant span of time, uniquely purposed by God for each one of us.

Peter writes to tell us one more truth about time: God's idea of time is not the same as ours. We understand time as a constant, linear progression but God sees time without boundaries, limits or schedules. Can you imagine one day being as a thousand years, or vice versa? The Lord's definition of time does not fit into our neat box of calendars, clocks and sunsets.

My good friend Gary, who led me to the Lord, used this concept when he first started to witness to me. I thought he was a kook. Little did I know!

As Christians, we must learn to live in God's timeline. We must surrender to His timing in all things. And we must be careful not to think that we have control over time, even our own and that's not an easy thing to do. 2 Peter 3:10 says it best: *But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything in it will be laid bare.* There is a day coming when this earth will burn and those of us in Christ will be safe with Him. For those not in Christ, they will spend eternity forever separated from Him in a terrible place called Hell. God is waiting even now just for one more person to come to Him, before it is too late. One day could take a thousand years to complete, or a thousand years could be as one day, and then time is up. Is there time for one more person to come to Jesus? Only God knows; and that is why our time here on earth is precious.

Maybe you know someone who needs to come to Jesus. Maybe the Lord has been telling you to share His message with them, just like Gary did with me. Maybe time is running out and this may be their last chance. Do not let time pass by carelessly. One day God will say to Jesus that time is up for people on earth. Are you ready for that time?

Suggested Prayer: Dear Heavenly Father, thank you for the opportunity to use our time wisely to help further your kingdom...one soul at a time. Amen.

-TW

Day 12 – Thursday, April 15th

*“Some time later God tested Abraham. He said to him,
“Abraham!” “Here I am,” he replied.
Then God said, “Take your son, your only son, Isaac , whom you
love, and go to the region of Moriah.
Sacrifice him there as a burnt offering
on one of the mountains I will tell you about.”
Genesis 22:1-2*

Now, we know that Abraham and Sarah waited a long time to have a son and they loved their son very much. God gave them a great gift. However, Abraham had faith to not hold on to his gift too tightly. Abraham was willing to trust God with his gift, his son, no matter what God asked him to do with Isaac even sacrifice him. Abraham is a good example to us of how we should handle our gifts from God.

What gifts has God given you time, talents, money, house, etc. How are you handling those gifts are you clinging to them too tightly. Maybe we should be like Abraham and be willing to lay our gifts on an altar as a sacrifice to God. We need to use our gifts as God directs us even when it may not make sense to us because God is in control.

God knows what is best for us even when we can't see it. So I encourage all of us to use our gifts in a way that is pleasing to God and brings Him and His Son Jesus Christ glory.

Suggested Prayer: Heavenly Father, I thank you for the gifts that you have blessed me with. I pray that I use the gifts as you intended and not try and hold on to them for myself. May you be glorified in how I use the gifts you graciously have given me. Help people to see you in how I use my gifts. Amen. -EB

A time for fruit

Therefore, as through one man's offense judgment came to all men, resulting in condemnation, even so through one Man's righteous act the free gift came to all men, resulting in justification of life. For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so also by one Man's obedience many will be made righteous.

Romans 7:18-19

We do not teach about a religion, we teach about a relationship with Jesus. Jesus came and taught, died for our sins and rose again so that we could have a relationship with Him, regardless of the sin that exists within us. One of the hardest struggles for Christians is their temptation to rest in the work that Jesus has already done for us. Once we believe in Jesus, truly receive Him into our hearts, then, we are filled with His Holy Spirit and sealed for the day of redemption. (Ephesians 1:13; 4:30) The seal cannot be broken.

So the job is done right? All we have to do now is wait for the rapture! Wrong! Now we have to get to work. What have you done for the kingdom today? It is time for us to look for ways to continue the work of our Lord Jesus Christ. If we do not, we will find ourselves in great peril.

John 15:5-6 - "I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. If anyone does not remain in me, he is like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned."

This is not to say that your works will save you. Many of us are still trying to "work" out our salvation in our own strength. We are trying so hard to please God that we are not letting His Holy Spirit truly fill us each day. In John 15:6 Christ is saying, don't look to your own strength, look to Me. Jesus says, "remain in me!"

John 15:7-8 – “If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be given you. This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples.”

It is time for us to bear much fruit. How will this happen? Through Christ our Lord. When we as a church body continue the work of Jesus by doing as he did for others, we will be remaining in Him and bear the kind of sweet fruit that glorifies the Father. This should be our goal in everything we do. Look for ways that you can accomplish this. Then prepare for the fruit of your work which comes not from you but from the generosity and love of the Father.

Dear precious Lord in heaven, I ask you to fill my heart with the words, deeds and teachings of Jesus Christ. I ask you to help me glorify Him continuing His work by helping others. May I reflect the love of Christ so that more may come to know His saving grace! May everything I do for Christ glorify the Father. In Christ's name I pray. -DR

Day 14 – Saturday, April 17th

*I will have mercy on whom I have mercy,
and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion.*

Romans 9:15

We might still be tempted to say, "Doesn't that seem a bit unfair?" But by asking such a question we are claiming a higher understanding of fairness than God himself. We must remember that God has no obligation to show mercy or compassion to any of us - not one of us deserves his slightest concern. For God to even choose anyone is evidence of his great mercy. These words of God reveal that he does show compassion, but they are by his sovereign choice.

We tend to read God's statement to Moses (which was a response to Moses' request to see God's glory) as if it were an expression of God's withholding mercy rather than a statement of his merciful generosity. In the context of this statement in Exodus, God was not justifying himself, but saying in effect, "I will have mercy on people you would not expect, and I will have compassion in ways that will surprise you, especially when I am compassionate with you!"

No one can know the heart of a person in the way that God knows. No individual, court of law, or group can perfectly assess the righteousness of a person. So we must leave the choosing and judging to God.

We are not so gifted to show compassion on whom we choose. God's command to love our neighbor means to show compassion on every one. The only way we can accomplish this is to have a sincere passion for Christ. -DV

Day 15 – Sunday, April 18th

Promises Delivered

What more does the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead mean to us? It not only delivers on the promise of His presence; it also assures us of His power to change us.

In Ephesians 1:17-20, Paul prays this way: "I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better. I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which He has called you, the riches of His glorious inheritance in the saints, and His incomparably great power for us who believe. That power is like the working of His mighty strength, which He exerted in Christ when He raised him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly realms."

It's a comparative argument: if God had the power to raise Christ from the dead, then He most certainly has the power to help us who believe in Him. That power is FOR us; not against us. And it is a power that draws us closer in fellowship to Him so that we may know Him intimately and passionately.

Don't rely on your own power to be a Christian and do the things He commands us to do. You simply can't do it in your own strength. Rely on the power of God that was so strong, it raised Jesus from the dead.

C.H. Spurgeon put it this way, "To know a crucified Savior as having crucified all my sins, is a high degree of knowledge; but to know a risen Savior as having justified me, and to realize that He has bestowed upon me a new life, having given me to be a new creature through His own newness of life, this is a noble style of experience: short of it, none ought to rest satisfied. May you both know Him, and the power of His resurrection."

Yes, Lord, I want to know You and the power You give to make me more like Jesus. Help me to rely on Your Spirit, through Jesus Christ my Lord, Amen. -BL

Day 16 – Monday, April 19th

What good works?

"Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven."

Matthew 5:16

I have always loved the Sermon on the Mount. Here was a moment in time where Jesus laid out an outline of his ministry for the next 3 years and until His death. In the beginning of it are the Beatitudes. Imagine those assembled to hear the Prophet speak. They have heard of Him and want to know more about His teachings.

Jesus chooses His words carefully and uses the word "Blessed" meaning happy. Happiness is usually a response to someone's life experience. (Surely these were poor people.) Jesus comes out and says, "Blessed are the poor in spirit.... Blessed are those who mourn.... Blessed are the meek...." Then He summarizes this section of His remarks by encouraging the believer to continue doing all those things that are making them poor in spirit, mournful, meek and persecuted because the prophets were treated the same way.

This leads into being salt and light. Jesus is instructing the believer to remain salty and bright for Him. The transitions in the message flow beautifully and make perfect sense.

Then Jesus throws Matthew 5:16 in there. He ends this with, "In the same way, let your light shine before men that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven." In this way Jesus is saying, our deeds bring light which attracts attention to the glory of God.

What does being a Christian mean to you? Do you see Christianity as Christ instructed? Christ always talked of glorifying the Father. Jesus was telling us to live our life in such a way that God the Father is glorified. It is essential as followers of Jesus that we understand that our good deeds glorify God.

Good deeds will not get you to heaven. But good deeds will glorify your Father in heaven and that should be our goal as individuals and as members of this Church body. Not only will men see our good works which will bring glory to our heavenly Father, they will see God in action through us.

Today we call upon the Holy Spirit to show us the way to glorify God by taking action. We need to be faithful to the things God has called us to do and leave the results with Him. We ask God to bring us the opportunity to perform these works for His glory. Let us not turn away from that Christian duty. Let us not be too busy to answer the call of Jesus Christ to help others with our (really God's) good deeds.

Dear Father in Heaven, I am sorry for the times I have turned away from the opportunities you have presented for me to do good deeds. I want to glorify you, Lord, and I will look for the chances

and answer your request to do the good works your have laid before me.

No more excuses Lord. Let me glorify you by taking action without excuse. And in all I do, may the glory go to You. In Christ's holy name, amen.

-DR

Day 17 – Tuesday, April 20th

How's that spiritual formation coming?

“His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness.

Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises so that through them you may participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires.

For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and brotherly kindness, love. For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ”

2 Peter 1: 3-8

Pastor's Bill's message of Sunday, March 21st was such a blessing that I would like to see it as a devotional as well. You'll recognize many of the one-liners used in his sermon.

I was pleased to know that my spiritual growth is just that...my spiritual growth. You and I are unique in that our spiritual growth is “hand-crafted by God because He is not a mass-producer” God has a plan for you and me and He wants for us to

succeed in that plan, but it'll be in His timing...unique to each of us. After all, "God never grows two people the same way".

Whew, I suppose I should be thankful that God is not going to judge me for not growing spiritually as fast as my friends Reid Saunders or Marty Wilhelm. To the degree that I fully surrender to Christ will determine the degree to which I will be fully alive for Him.

There have been too many times where I've not followed God's direction and by God's grace have been pulled out of the mire that I've created. And much like the GPS prop used in Pastor Bill's sermon, God gently spoke to me and said "when safe to do so, execute a U-turn and follow my directions". The key methods that God uses on you and me is not so much finding the right result...it is more finding the right conditions to meet the right uniqueness.

"God doesn't do one-size fits all". Do you want to be fully alive for Him? Then fully surrender!

Prayer: Thank you Lord that you see me as unique and help me to know that I need to fully surrender to you so that I may spiritually grow according to your timetable. Amen. -TW

Day 18 – Wednesday, April 21st

"If you can do anything, have compassion on us and help us" Mark 9:22

After every time of exaltation, we are brought down with a sudden rush into things as they really are; a place where it is neither beautiful, poetic, nor thrilling. The height of the mountaintop is measured by the dismal drudgery of the valley, but it is in the valley that we have to live for the glory of God. We see His glory on the mountain, but we never live for

His glory there. It is in the place of humiliation that we find our true worth to God. That is where our faithfulness is revealed.

Most of us can do things if we are always at some heroic level of intensity, simply because of the natural selfishness of our own hearts. But God wants us to be at the drab everyday level, where we live in the valley according to our personal relationship with Him. Peter thought it would be a wonderful thing for them to remain on the mountain, but Jesus Christ took the disciples down from the mountain and into the valley, where the true meaning of the vision was explained.

"If you can do anything" It takes the valley of humiliation to remove the skepticism from us. Look back at your own experience and you will find that until you learned who Jesus really was, you were a skillful skeptic about His power. When you were on the mountaintop you could believe anything, but what about when you were faced with the facts of the valley?

You may be able to give a testimony regarding your sanctification, but what about the thing that is a humiliation to you right now? The last time you were on the mountain with God, you saw that all the power in heaven and on earth belonged to Jesus—will you be skeptical now, simply because you are in the valley of humiliation? -DV

Day 19 – Thursday, April 22nd

Then Joshua son of Nun secretly sent two spies from Shittim. “Go, look over the land,” he said, “especially Jericho.” So they went and entered the house of a prostitute named Rahab and stayed there.

Joshua 2:1

You might be wondering why I chose this verse out of the bible to share with you. Well I believe that everyone has a gift from God and can use it for His glory and I think that this verse

shows us that. Now, because Rahab was a prostitute, I often didn't think very highly of her, but what she had done doesn't make up all that she is as a person in God's eyes. She knew of God's power and knew that he was a man of His word.

Well, what was Rahab's gift and how did she use it? I believe that she had the gift of hospitality as shown by taking in the two spies and offering them a place to be safe, away from the king of Jericho. Her hospitality to the spies allowed them to complete their task of looking over the land and saving their lives.

Like Rahab, we may make choices that don't glorify Him, but if we will use the gifts God has blessed us with that will bring him glory. We need to look for situations where we can use God's gifts in us for His glory by pointing people toward Him.

Suggested Prayer: God, I thank you for all the blessings you have given to me. Guide me in identifying the gifts you have given me and help me to use my talents in ways that point people to Jesus Christ and bring you glory. Amen. -EB

Day 20 – Friday, April 23rd

Save some for God

Thus Moses did; according to all that the Lord had commanded him, so he did. And he raised up the court all around the tabernacle and the altar, and hung up the screen of the court gate.

So Moses finished the work.

Exodus 40:16,33

Have you felt overwhelmed by too much work? Many times, we are overloaded with overbooked calendars and too little time to do the things we have to do, not to mention the things we would like to do. Most of us are always busy trying to complete the tasks or jobs for the day. Our society is works-based in every way

imaginable. The eighties were a decade that made longer workdays the in-thing.

Forty-hour weeks were considered short in comparison to the more popular sixty to eighty-hour weeks. Stay-at-home moms had to get busier too. Today, with advances in technology and a "faster is better" mentality, doing more is a must. Even our kids are obliged to participate in extra-extracurricular activities, thinking they are necessary for higher education opportunities. As a result, many of us are worn out, stressed out, and burned out from so much work.

In studying the construction of the tabernacle and its articles, we do not read of any overwhelming or stressful problems. The Lord commanded Moses who commanded the people to do all that the Lord had spoken. Simply put, Moses did what the Lord commanded and finished the work. What are we to learn from this story?

When your efforts are in line with your spiritual gifts and God's desire for your life there is little or no stress. Do you think Moses had days when he just didn't feel like working on the tabernacle? Do you think there were times when all the workers would have preferred to be at some other event or just resting? Maybe. But they were strengthened through their obedience to God's purpose and by setting aside their own needs.

If we misplace our energy, what is left for God?

Think for a moment about the work you are doing today. Did the Lord instruct you to do things? Has God given you the tools and talents to carry out the work? Are you working in unison with God, following His instructions and doing all that He says? The things we choose to do outside of the Lord's plans for us will lead to fatigue, frustration and futility in our efforts. We get so busy just being busy that many of us do not stop to include the Lord in our activities.

Some of our busy stuff may seem like good things too. From our rush to get our kids to their next sporting event, to our desire to earn more for our families. It can be good stuff unless we put it ahead of our obligation to God. God really doesn't care about

sports or money. God is glorified when we love His Son enough to make Him the focus of our attention.

Dear God I ask you today to help me direct my energy to the things of God. I want to be there for you. Lord, help me sort out the distractions and duties of my day so that I will be ready to answer your call. I want to be there for you and I will make sure that less important things no longer become my excuse to not answer your call. In the name of your Holy Son, amen. -DR

Day 21 – Saturday, April 24th

PASSIONATE PURSUIT

What we long for is to become more deeply and intimately connected with Christ. Those are not my words but the words found in the Amplified Bible’s reading of Paul’s statement in Philippians 3:10. Read the following words slowly and thoughtfully.

[For my determined purpose is] that I may know Him—that I may progressively become more deeply and intimately acquainted with Him, perceiving and recognizing and understanding [the wonders of His Person] more strongly and clearly. And that I may in that same way come to know the power out-flowing from His resurrection [the power it exerts over believers]; and that I may share His sufferings as to be continually transformed [into His Spirit and His likeness even] to His death.

In that single sentence we find the Apostle’s great goal for life. He refers to it as his “determined purpose” as a follower of the Lord Jesus Christ. What was that? Go back read the verse again, preferably aloud. Turn the key words over in your mind. Chew them up. Get alone and ponder them:

That I may Know HIM....

Progressively become more deeply and intimately acquainted with HIM,

Perceiving...
Recognizing...
Understanding...
Continually transformed...

Could anything on earth be more important? I don't think so.

Suggested Prayer: Dear Heavenly Father,

Help us to make this our determined purpose to embrace this aim: to become more intimately acquainted with Christ. So that we can be transformed from the depravity we struggle with into the likeness of Christ.

The psalmist understood. He too, longed for it.
As a deer pants for the water brooks,
So my soul pants for Thee, O God.
My soul thirst for God,
For the living God... (Psalm 42:1-2)

Filter thru us your living waters.
Thank-you Lord!!!

-SD

Day 22 – Sunday, April 25th

The Value of Passion

What else does it mean that Jesus was raised from the dead? How does that knowledge help us? The forth thing I look to is the assurance the resurrection gives me that what I do for the Lord is not useless.

Sometimes, when we look at the world and its evaluation of Christianity, we think that what we do for the Lord really has no value. Certainly, the world doesn't regard our ministry very highly. But Paul says their opinion is just a lot of bunk.

In 1 Corinthians 15:57-58, after a glorious explanation of the triumph of Christ's resurrection, he says, "Thanks be to God!

He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, my dear brothers, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain.”

Are you ever tempted to give the Lord less than 100% of your passion? I am. But the dear Apostle tells us to go for it with absolute abandon, giving ourselves fully and passionately because our work for Jesus will be greatly rewarded. Even if people on earth don't give a fig for it, God highly regards our work for the cause of Christ.

Live for His approval, and your life will have meaning and purpose.

Go into all of our community and share the good news.

Reach out to others to encourage and comfort in love.

Obey Jesus in love so that our lifestyle may reflect His goodness.

Want it, desire it, pray for it.

Thank God and give Him glory for the good things that happen.

Hard work is the key. Let God use you!

Suggested Prayer: I do thank You and give You glory for all you've done for me. May my love today reflect to someone else Your love to me in Christ. Amen -BL

Day 23 – Monday, April 26th

Physical Infirmary

As you know, it was because of an illness that I first preached the gospel to you. Even though my illness was a trial to you, you did not treat me with contempt or scorn. Instead, you welcomed me as if I were an angel of God, as if I were Christ Jesus himself.

Galatians 4:13-14

The church at Galatia was just one of the many churches that Paul started on his missionary journeys. They were Gentiles who converted to Christianity, all because of Paul's passion to preach and teach them the gospel of Jesus Christ. Through the power of the Holy Spirit, Paul was able to preach the gospel despite his own physical infirmities.

As to Paul's true afflictions (i.e. his thorn in the flesh) it has been debated by many theologians, but Paul does not give details that draw attention to his weakness(es). He, instead, uses them as a means to give glory to God. I can think of many examples at our own PCC that are like Paul. Praise God, in our weakness, God is strong.

As you read this, my very good friend, Joe, is in the hospital in San Jose. He's been there since Jan. 17th, 2010 as the result of a severe auto accident and it has left him paralyzed from the neck down. Once a very outgoing high school music teacher and an accomplished trombone player, he now faces a lifetime of physical struggles. Yet through it all, I was able to see him witness to the hospital staff and technicians that tend to him on a daily basis...and...he can still do it with a smile on his face. His room is a testament to the glory of God with the many scripture verses pasted on the window and the greeting card reminders of those who love him and the Lord.

I thought to myself how often do I allow my physical ailments to bring glory to God? It seems that the most concerning issues receive the most attention and prayer, and we are more than ready to seek the Lord's guidance in those cases. Life-threatening diseases are often wonderful opportunities to bear witness of God's awesome power, regardless of the path. But what about the day-to-day annoying ailments? A headache can make many of us cranky all day. A cold gives us just cause to be cranky for a longer period of time. What happens to our witness in those times? Do we give the daily annoyances to the Lord in prayer or do we let them rule our flesh?

Like Paul, Joe seems to know how to give everything over to the Lord and he's not letting it stop him from furthering his mission for Christ.

Suggested Prayer: Dear Lord, please help me to remember that You are in everything that happens in my life. No matter what affliction, You are with me. Please use my afflictions to bring You glory and to bless others. Your greatest work can be done through my weaknesses and pain, but only if I take my eyes off of me and put them on You, Jesus Christ.

Our mission here at PCC is to Spread a Passion for the Supremacy of Jesus Christ in all things for the Joy of all Peoples

-TW

Day 24 – Tuesday, April 27th

The Good Soil

"But the one who received the seed that fell on good soil is the man who hears the word and understands it. He produces a crop, yielding a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown."

Matthew 13:23

Gardening is definitely not a favorite hobby of mine. After planting flowers for a few hours, my appearance seemed to reflect gardening as a contact sport. I had dirt everywhere. I spent most of my time digging and scrapping and hoeing and massaging the dirt. Placing the flowers in the ground was the easy part.

In talking to my daughter while planting I said to her, "Jesus talks about seeds falling on good soil or dirt. What do you think it takes to recognize good dirt over bad dirt?"

She said, "Well, I think good dirt is darker than bad dirt. It would be darker because it should be wetter than bad dirt." How

insightful of her. The areas that we planted with moister soil did have a darker color because the sprinklers covered that area better. We also found healthier plants in the darker dirt.

I also thought about this spiritually. As we acknowledge our sinfulness, we understand the darkness of our hearts. It is then through the moistening of the Holy Spirit to wet our hearts to receive Jesus as our Savior, that we are redeemed from our sin. That kind of soil is then ready for the Lord to plant His Words in our hearts to bring forth flowers or fruits of righteousness in His time.

The first step is the preparation of the soil. Praise God that He is willing to get His hands dirty for us! We might not like seeing how dark the dirt is but it is in understanding our sinful state that Jesus can do a beautiful work in the end. Remember, seed...time... and harvest! Then do it again.

And don't forget to pass it on. Remember, *Our mission here at PCC is to Spread a Passion for the Supremacy of Jesus Christ in all things for the Joy of all Peoples.*

Prayer: Lord, thank you so much for being my Savior and for your word that we can keep in our hearts. Give us opportunities, Lord, to share that with others who need to know you and come to your saving grace. Amen. -TW

Day 25 – Wednesday, April 28th

As he looked up, Jesus saw the rich putting their gifts into the temple treasury. He also saw a poor widow put in two very small copper coins. 'I tell you the truth,' he said, 'this poor widow has put in more than all the others. All these people gave their gifts out of their wealth; but she out of her poverty put in all she had to live on.' Luke 21:1-4

I have referenced this passage in the past when I have talked to people about using gifts God has given us. I have had people tell me that they don't have a gift or that they only have one gift. Like the widow we may not be rich with gifts from God but we can still use it for God's glory.

If we will take what the Lord has given us be it big or small, many or few and offer it to him he will be pleased. We all have something God has given us that we can use to show our love for him by giving it back to the Lord or by using it to help others. It is not about the amount but more about the faithfulness in using what we have even if it seems small in our eyes.

God looks and judges our heart. So I encourage all of us to have a heart for God and to use all that he gives us time, talents, and money to and for his glory.

Suggested Prayer: Heavenly Father I offer my heart and my life to you. Help me to dedicate all that I have to and for your service. I desire to glorify you in all that I do today and every day. Amen.

-EB

Day 26 – Thursday, April 29th

Move Mountains

So Jesus said to them, "Because of your unbelief; for assuredly, I say to you, if you have faith as a mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will move; and nothing will be impossible for you. Matthew 17:20

The word "faith" has numerous definitions and interpretations. From the intellectual, to the philosophical and of course the spiritual. I found myself back at square one trying to understand its meaning to my personal life. If "faith as a mustard seed" can move a mountain, then I want more faith. Can it be that

easy? After reading pages of explanations, I seemed to make it more complicated, which in turn, dampened my faith. What happens when we really search for true faith?

God is watching us. He is watching to see if our faith in Him is strong or weak. Do we put Him first or second, third... or worse? "I don't have time to do that charity." "I am tired and can't be of service to others." Even, "I'm too old for that stuff." There is always a sporting event, or some other important thing that can stop us from attending Church, working for a charity, praying, etc. It's our choice. All of it says I'm too busy. But is that really what you want to say to God?

The Lord has given us the strength through faith in Him to move mountains. No more pretending you are too weak or too busy. God has given us the time. We must have faith that God has all the strength we need. Do you want to move mountains in your life and see God do the impossible? Trust God, because all you need is faith.

Find the strength to step out in faith, even when you have nothing tangible to cling to but the knowledge He is there for you. Faith is a confidence that is not based on what we know or what has been proven to us. Make God the priority in your life. Let Him guide your prayers and lead your steps. At that point, you just might see those mountains begin to move.

Suggested Prayer: My Lord in Heaven, I ask you to give me the faith I need to move mountains for You. I will not focus on me or my weakness. I will focus on Your greatness. I will not look inward and use that as my excuse to do nothing. I promise to be there for You and with Your strength move the mountains if necessary for Your Glory. In Christ our Lord, amen. -DR

Day 27 – Friday, April 30th

As Jesus and his disciples were on their way, he came to a village where women named Martha opened her home to him. She had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet listening to what he said. But Martha was distracted by all the preparations that had to be made. She came to him and asked, "Lord, don't you care that my sister has left me to do the work by myself? Tell her to help me!" Luke 10:38-40

I know that this story sometimes plays out in my life as well. I at times, like Martha, get distracted by other things rather than listening to the Lord as he is speaking. There are times that we need to be at the Lord's feet listening to him so we better know how and when to serve him and those around us. We need to be focused on God and not just busy trying to serve him.

I also believe that when we lose our focus on God, we start to compare ourselves to others like Martha with Mary. If we are serving with the wrong motives it becomes easier to judge others for not helping us or not doing what we are doing. So I encourage you to use your gifts to serve others, but don't let your serving God distract you from spending time with God.

Suggested Prayer: God help me to keep a good balance in my life. Allow me to stay rooted and grounded in you before I serve you and others. Guide me in using your talents and gifts in me for you glory. Amen. -EB

Day 28 – Saturday, May 1st

"Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends. I have called you friends"

John 15:13, 15

Jesus does not ask me to die for Him, but to lay down my life for Him. Peter said to the Lord, "I will lay down my life for Your sake," and he meant it. He had a magnificent sense of the heroic. For us to be incapable of making this same statement Peter made would be a bad thing—our sense of duty is only fully realized through our sense of heroism. Has the Lord ever asked you, "Will you lay down your life for My sake?"

It is much easier to die than to lay down your life day in and day out with the sense of the high calling of God. We are not made for the bright-shining moments of life, but we have to walk in the light of men in our everyday ways. There was only one bright-shining moment in the life of Jesus, and that was on the Mount of Transfiguration. It was there that He emptied Himself of His glory for the second time, and then came down into the demon-possessed valley. For thirty-three years Jesus laid down His life to do the will of His Father. "By this we know love, because He laid down His life for us. And we also ought to lay down our lives for the brethren". Yet it is contrary to our human nature to do so.

If I am a friend of Jesus, I must deliberately and carefully lay down my life for Him. It is a difficult thing to do, and thank God that it is. Salvation is easy for us, because it cost God so much. But the exhibiting of salvation in my life is difficult. God saves a person, fills him with the Holy Spirit, and then says, in effect, "Now you work it out in your life, and be faithful to Me, even though the nature of everything around you is to cause you to be unfaithful." And Jesus says to us, "I have called you friends." Remain faithful to your Friend, and remember that His honor is at stake in your bodily life.

Jesus has done so much for us, we should demonstrate a great passion for Him.

-DV

God's Plan

Do you ever get discouraged that this old world is headed downhill fast – with no brakes to slow its progress? The final thing I want to write about that the resurrection of Jesus means to me is that no matter how bleak things may seem today, God has a plan to again send His resurrected Son to redeem the world.

Romans 8:19-20 contains words that may seem cryptic until you understand God's plan: "The creation waits in eager expectation for the sons of God to be revealed. For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God."

When Adam sinned, all of creation was negatively affected. But these verses promise that because Jesus rose again and will come back, there will be a day when creation is liberated from its bondage.

The 2nd Law of Thermodynamics (everything is running down) will cease operating. And the cosmos itself will be redeemed. Paradise Lost will become Paradise re-gained.

And the resurrection shows us that this was God's intention all along: that there is a purpose and a plan, and everything will be restored. And you and I get to be part of it.

Since that's the case, let's do all we can to bring it on as quickly as possible – so that more souls in Petaluma will see the glory of God and be saved.

Suggested Prayer: Father, that is our prayer at Petaluma Christian Church – that You would use us as a church to bring all Your flock to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ. Bless our church so that we might accomplish all You have for us to do, in Jesus name, Amen
-BL

Called to a Purpose

"I will make a distinction between my people and your people. This miraculous sign will occur tomorrow."

Exodus 8:23

Have you ever found yourself in a situation wondering how you got there? You feel as if you just woke up to find yourself in a strange place. Or maybe you feel like you are in the midst of a bad dream wishing you could wake up and start over. I wonder if Moses felt this way right after his first visit to Pharaoh.

Moses had already told the Lord more than once that he was not equipped for this job. Who is Moses to demand Pharaoh to let these people go? He is slow in speech, has a slow tongue, and by the way, he is 80 years old. Maybe God should choose someone else, someone younger and more qualified. So, God gives Moses a helper - his older brother Aaron. Now there are two old men set apart as the deliverers of Israel. Sometimes I really think the Lord has a sense of humor.

Moses did not need any help outside of God, nor do we. God is gracious enough to give us those things that bring physical and emotional comfort. At times we all feel a little, if not a lot, overwhelmed with our circumstances. Paul says in 2 Corinthians 12:9 that His grace is sufficient because His strength is made perfect in our weakness. God gets the glory when He works for us and through us in situations that are impossible to us.

We need to understand that, as believers, we are to live with a purpose beyond ourselves that was long ago determined by God. The Bible tells us that God knows all things, from the beginning to the end, and is in control over everything that happens. But we must also realize that God's ways are not our ways and that His thoughts are not our thoughts (Isaiah 55:8-9).

Instead of saying to God, "Who, me? Why me, Lord?" remember Moses and pray that you can be as humble, faithful and

obedient as he was. If He has called you to a task, He will give you the strength to endure to the end. No more rationalizing about how our circumstance does not allow us to do something. God sees through our excuses and notes our disobedience. The Lord also sees when you rise up and do what He has asked of you and is well pleased by your faith that He will get you through.

Dear Lord, what an amazing life you have given me! Thank you God for all I have been blessed with and now I ask you to help me be a blessing to others through my deeds. I will accept your call, Lord, to be there when you call upon me to be the one to do for others. And I know Lord that even when I don't believe I have what it takes, you will provide all that is necessary for me to fulfill your request. Thank you for the opportunity to serve in Christ's name.

-DR

YOUR PRAYER NOTES
