



August 2024

Pastoral Prayer After the Failed Assassination of President Trump

July 14, 2024 | David Cassidy

Editors' note:

Earlier today, pastors around the United States led their congregations in praying in the wake of yesterday's failed assassination attempt on former president Donald J. Trump. We offer one such prayer by David Cassidy, pastor of Spanish River Church in Boca Raton, Florida. Below is a lightly edited version shared with permission.

It's with profound shock, grief, and sadness that our country is once again facing the specter of political violence. The assassination attempt on President Trump as he spoke at a Pennsylvania rally yesterday was an evil act that deserves condemnation across our society and among all Christ's servants.

Murder and its attempt is a violation of God's law. It's an attack on his image. Political violence is not only an attack on a person but also an attempted subversion of the cherished liberties and the Constitutional order on which our Republic is founded. Many of us can recall such attacks in our lifetime, and it's right that we decry and lament them at every turn.

We may better do this today by humbly acting together as God's people in the following ways.

We must give thanks to God that the life of President Trump was spared. While this heinous act injured him, it didn't kill him, and for this, we may be genuinely grateful. Please join me in praying for his recovery, the comfort of his family,

and his future protection from such harm.

We must grieve and pray for the innocent, slain, and injured attendees of the rally and their families. This is a horrific personal crime, changing so many lives forever. The trauma of such loss and pain is great, and we must uphold all those overwhelmed with the agonizing weight of this sorrow.

We can and must pray for our country today and for all those who serve us in positions of authority and protection. How easily we forget those who are prepared to risk their lives to defend us; how quickly we forget to pray for those in office and those who aspire to such positions. Our renewed commitment to such prayer is critically important.

With one voice, we must reject all political violence and remind those who even jokingly refer to such terrible things that this can have no place in our society, and we must give it no place in our fellowship. As long as nations and governments exist, there will be political disagreements and differences. We must find

the grace to speak of candidates and one another in ways that aren't dehumanizing and that don't give rise to extremists and their violent acts.

Our prayer today for President Trump and all who seek to hold high office must be accompanied by prayer for those already serving us: President Biden, Governor DeSantis, our senators and representatives, and all justices, whether serving at the state or federal level. Let us also remember our respective mayors, city council members, and other officials.

I hope that out of the ashes of this terrible act, a more gracious discourse and debate, a less extreme and polarized posture, and a more generous concern for one another during this election season will emerge. May God find us regularly praying together in our families and with one another for our country and for his protection and wisdom now and in the coming months.

Here's a prayer we can offer together today from the Book of Common Prayer:

Almighty God, who hast given us this good land for our heritage: We humbly beseech thee that we may always prove ourselves a people mindful of thy favor and glad to do thy will. Bless our land with honorable industry, sound learning, and pure conduct. Save us from

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Pastor David Missel

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It is our desire to assist anyone who is seeking help, if possible, whether it be spiritual or otherwise. Please contact Pastor David or any Session Elder if you would like us to be of help.

When Pastor David is unavailable:

Pastor David is presently scheduling Fridays as his day off so matters of less urgency could be left on the church office answering device, or call one of the Ruling Elders:

- George Briggs 585-382-3038
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 - Carol Griffen 585-382-3681
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 - Cathy Mlyniec 585-322-6669
- Clerk of Session*
- Leo Richardson 585-382-3153

Session will be on recess for August. The next regular Session Meeting is scheduled for September 12, 2024.

Other Contacts

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The following devotional is by Dr. David Jeremiah.

TRIALS IN THE BELIEVER'S LIFE

*Deliver me in Your righteousness, and cause me to escape:
Incline Your ear to me and save me. (Psalm 71:2)*

When in the hospital during my bout with cancer, I awoke in a morphine-induced grogginess with the thought to read Psalm 71. I recall noting the hour - 3:00 a.m. - but could not remember who, prior to coming to the hospital, had encouraged me to meditate on that particular psalm. I reached for my Bible and began to read the words of the psalmist, who wrote concerning a dark night he had been through. The words of that psalm were a bright light in a dark night in my life, and can be for you as well.

Regardless of the name of the author of this psalm, we do know this about him; he was thoroughly familiar with the ways and words of God. It is a compilation of truths about God's deliverance of his saints during times of trouble.

It is not the absence of suffering but the response to suffering that makes Christians unique. Believers are not exempt from trials in life, but we can be exempt from failure in those trials.

I pray that the trials and challenges you encounter will strengthen your faith in God, who promises to always be with us no matter what happens.

Pastor David

Prayer Shawl and Lap Robe Ministry

If you know of someone who has serious health problems and would find some encouragement, warmth and comfort from receiving a handmade shawl or lap robe, please contact Carole Missel.

Each robe or shawl given is prayed over specifically for the recipient.



Photo by Carole Missel

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violence, discord, and confusion; from pride and arrogance, and from every evil way. Defend our liberties, and fashion into one united people the multitudes brought hither out of many kindreds and tongues. Endue with the spirit of wisdom those to whom, in thy Name, we entrust the authority of government, that there may be justice and peace at home, and that, through obedience to thy law, we may show forth thy praise among the nations of the earth. In the time of prosperity, fill our hearts with thankfulness, and in the day of trouble, suffer not our trust in thee to fail; all of which we ask through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

May Christ's peace be yours,
David Cassidy

Taken from thegospelcoalition.org

Continued Prayers for:

Pray for peace in Jerusalem.

May all who love this city prosper.

O Jerusalem, may there be peace within your walls and prosperity in your palaces.

For the sake of my family and friends,

I will say, "May you have peace."

For the sake of the house of the Lord our

God, I will seek what is best for you,

O Jerusalem. Psalm 122:6-9 niv

- Pray for Israel and the Middle East
- Pray for all hostages and refugees throughout the world.
- Pray for all the "innocent" civilians caught in the middle of warring factions.
- Pray against hatred throughout the world.

God's will be done!

Wednesday's Word

**A WEEKLY DEVOTIONAL
FROM PAUL TRIPP**

PaulTripp.com

PART 1

We're about to embark on an extended series examining four aspects of a healthy, intentional "personal ministry" relationship with a brother or sister in Christ.

I put "personal ministry" in quotes because we could use interchangeable terms. You might prefer discipleship, mentoring, accountability, or even simply, friendship.

Whatever vocabulary you prefer, the goal remains the same: God plans to use people in need of change—you—as an instrument of change in the life of someone else in need of change.

The four aspects are: Love. Know. Speak. Do.

It's important to remember that these will all be ongoing simultaneously. There is some logic to the order, but it's not as if you start at Love, graduate from that phase, and then move on to the next, never to return to Love again!

The words of 1 Corinthians 13:8 couldn't be more true in the Love. Know. Speak. Do. ministry model: "*Love never ends.*"

So, let's dive into Love!

LOVE. Know. Speak. Do.

When I was a seminary professor, I taught a biblical counseling course that students needed to take before graduating from the pastoral track. The class was populated by young guys who were incredibly passionate about preaching the Word of God from the pulpit.

While we should protect and esteem the pulpit, there was a flaw in the logic of many of my students. They thought that if the truth was declared corporately on Sunday, the congregation wouldn't need discipleship, pastoral care, or biblical counseling.

One semester, a frustrated student said aloud, "Dr. Tripp, we know we will have these projects in our churches. Just tell us what to do with them so we can get back to the work of the ministry."

Yes, he actually said that aloud. And yes, he was referring to the people he would pastor in the future. A hush covered the room. But before you judge this young man and snicker at him like his classmates did, ask yourself: do I view any of my personal ministry relationships as projects?

This is why we often get stuck in the mess of discipleship. We don't want ministry that demands love. We don't want to serve others in a way that requires so much personal sacrifice.

Are you trying to lob grenades of truth into people's lives rather than lay down your life for them? Are you treating the work of personal ministry more like an assembly line, where people are objects, and you move them along quickly and mechanically?

The church is not a manufacturing plant, assembling and repairing machines and robots. It is a conversion, confession, repentance, reconciliation, forgiveness, and sanctification center, where flawed people place their trust in Christ, gather to know and love him better, and learn to love others as he has designed.

Personal ministry relationships are messy and inefficient, but it is God's wonderful mess—the place

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Monthly Celebrations

August Birthdays

22 Shari Stringham
28 Cindy Briggs

Anniversaries

4 M/M Michael Mallaber
12 M/M Paul Griffen
20 M/M Sam Maggio, Jr.

Many “Thanks” to Gene Gregg and his “Associate” Leo Richardson, for repairing the Church siding above the Fellowship Hall! Retired but not for hire!



Fatu Thoronka

Fatu is in the class of JSS1 at Mapa-inda Junior Secondary School in the Mayatta area, Sierra Leone.

Please continue to pray for Fatu.



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where he radically transforms hearts and lives.

The foundation for heart-and-life transforming gospel ministry is love. Without love, our ministry is a boat without oars. Or, in the words of 1 Corinthians 13:1-8:

“If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. If I give away all I have, and if I deliver up my body to be burned, but have not love, I gain nothing.

Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

Love never ends.”

Love is what drove God to send and sacrifice his Son. Love led Christ to subject himself to a sinful world and the horrors of the cross. Love is what causes him to seek and save the lost, and to persevere until each of his children is transformed into his image. His love will not rest until all of his children are at his side in glory.

Can we expect to be called to do anything less in personal ministry?

A Prayer for Today: Lord, would you help me to love others in a way that reflects your love for them? Please help me to love the people in my life as you designed. Open my heart to everyone you have placed in my circle of influence, and give me the eyes to see them not as projects to be fixed, but as human beings you have created and love. Lord, I lack the strength to do this, but with your power, all things are possible. Please make the impossible possible in my life. In Jesus’ name, amen.

God bless, Paul David Tripp

Reflection Questions

1. Why do you think God wants to use you (a person in need of change) as an instrument of change in the lives of other people in need of change? Why is the element of love such a powerful part of those relationships God is calling you to? How does the phrase from 1 Corinthians 13:8—Love never ends—apply specifically to you and the people God has called you to love?
2. Do you view any of your personal ministry relationships as projects? Why do you think it’s so easy to do that? Why does God call us to love others not as projects, but as human beings he has created?
3. Why is personal sacrifice such an important part of loving others? What specific elements (time commitments, money, energy, etc.) push you away from others if they are difficult to love? In what ways can you be praying for your own heart to change toward the people in your life who are hard to love?
4. Knowing that personal ministry relationships are messy and inefficient, how and in what ways is God calling you into his wonderful mess? How might God use those wonderful messes to change not only the people you minister to, but your own heart as well?
5. Take some time to pray for your own heart to be transformed more and more into the heart of Jesus. Pray for the difficult people in your life who are difficult to love and pray that God would change your posture toward them so that you might grow to love them despite their propensity to be difficult.

Subscribe to Paul Tripp's email list and receive Wednesday's Word each week!

Submitted by Leo Richardson

The Power of Praying In Jesus' Name, Amen

Today's inspiration comes from:

Before Amen

by Max Lucado

IT troubles you, fatigues you, shames you. IT is the disease you can't heal, the job you can't stomach, the marriage you can't fix, the rage you can't tame.

IT hurts.

IT looms over life. Two towering letters, tall and defiant. IT! They march like Frankenstein's monster. Each step a thud. Each thud an earthquake. Clomp. Clomp. Clomp. IT! IT! IT!

"Look out! Here IT comes!" "I can't take IT anymore!"

IT overshadows and intimidates everyone — everyone, that is, except people who take IT to Jesus. People like the Roman soldier.

He was a centurion. He held unquestioned authority over his men. Yet there was something special about this particular officer. He loved his servant.

'Lord, my servant is lying at home paralyzed, dreadfully tormented.' And Jesus said to him, 'I will come and heal him.'
— Matthew 8:6-7

The soldier's prayer was unembroidered. He simply stated a fact: "My servant is lying at home paralyzed, dreadfully tormented."

That was enough to set Jesus in motion. He turned and immediately began to walk in the direction of the centurion's house. But the officer stopped him.

Lord, I am not worthy that You should come under my roof. But only speak a word, and my servant will be healed. For I also am a man under authority, having soldiers under me. And I say to this one, 'Go,' and he goes; and to another, 'Come,' and he comes; and to my servant, 'Do this,' and he does it. — Matthew 8:8-9

The centurion understood the dynamic of authority. He was a man under authority and a man with authority. His superiors sent directives to him, and he obeyed. He gave commands, and his soldiers obeyed. They didn't question his decisions. The Roman army respected the chain of command. The centurion knew authority when he saw it. And he saw ultimate authority in Jesus Christ.

"Only speak a word, and my servant will be healed." [Jesus] marveled, and said to those who followed, *"Assuredly, I say to you, I have not found such great faith, not even in Israel!.. Go your way; and as you have believed, so let it be done for you."* And his servant was healed that same hour. — Matthew 8:8, Matthew 8:10, Matthew 8:13

The centurion's confidence in Jesus ran deep. Jesus could handle the request long distance. Just a word from Jesus would suffice. Jesus was stunned. Finally, His response implies, someone understands my authority!

Do we?

Jesus has unimpeachable authority.

He sustains everything by the mighty power of His command. — Hebrews 1:3

God exalted Him to the highest place and gave Him the name that is above every name. — Philippians 2:9

The Roman government tried to intimidate Him. False religion tried to silence Him. The devil tried to kill Him. All failed. Even *"death was no match for Him"* — Acts 2:24 MSG.

Jesus "disarmed the spiritual rulers and authorities. He shamed them publicly by His victory over them on the cross" (Colossians 2:15 NLT). He was not kidding when He declared, *All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to Me.* — Matthew 28:18

Jesus is the command center of the galaxies.

Two sparrows cost only a penny, but not even one of them can die without your Father's knowing it. — Matthew 10:29 NCV

He occupies the Oval Office. He called a coin out of the mouth of a fish. He stopped the waves with a word. He spoke, and a tree withered. He spoke again, and a basket became a banquet. Economy. Meteorology. Botany. Food supply.

All things have been handed over to me by my Father. — Matthew 11:27

Since you matter to God, your prayers matter in Heaven.

That includes Satan. The devil was soundly defeated by Christ on the cross. Jesus outranks him in every situation. He must obey Jesus, and he knows it.

Prayers offered in the name of Jesus have *"divine power to demolish strongholds"* (2 Corinthians 10:4 NIV). Demolish! Not damage or hamper but demolish. Prayer falls on strongholds like lit matches on a grass hut.

The devil fears prayer. Imagine this scene. He sat in the back of the room during a strategy session. A dozen demons had gathered to hear a report on the life of a particularly stalwart saint.

"He won't stumble," groused the imp responsible for his demise. "No matter what I do, he won't turn his back on God."

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Photo by Carole Missel

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The council began to offer suggestions.

“Take his purity,” one said.

“I tried,” replied the fiend, “but he is too moral.” “Take his health,” urged another.

“I did, but he refused to grumble or complain.”

“Take his belongings.”

“Are you kidding? I’ve stripped the man of every penny and possession. Yet he still rejoices.”

For a few moments no one spoke. Finally, from the back of the room, came the low, measured voice of Satan himself. The entire council turned as the fallen angel rose to his feet. His pale face was all but hidden by the hood. A long cape covered his body. He raised his bony hand and made his point. “It’s not enough to take his purity. It’s not enough to take his health. It’s not enough to take his belongings. You must take what matters most.” “What is that?” asked the subordinate.

“You must take his prayer.”

Prayer slaps handcuffs on Satan. Prayer takes problems out of the domain of the devil and into the presence of God. Prayer confesses, “God can handle IT. Since He can, I have hope!”

When we pray in the name of Jesus, we come to God on the basis of Jesus’ accomplishment.

Since we have a great high priest [Jesus] over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith. — Hebrews 10:21–22

As our high priest, Jesus offers our prayers to God. His prayers are always heard.

Truly, truly, I say to you, if you ask the Father for anything in My name, He will give it to you. — John 16:23

There are those who say, “Prayer changes things because it changes us.” I agree but only in

part. Prayer changes things because prayer appeals to the top power in the universe. Prayer is not a magical formula or a mystical chant. It is the yes to God’s invitation to invoke His name.

Mark it down: IT won’t have the last word. Jesus will.

God raised [Christ] from death and set Him on a throne in deep heaven, in charge of running the universe, everything from galaxies to governments, no name and no power exempt from His rule. And not just for the time being, but forever. He is in charge of it all, has the final word on everything — Ephesians 1:20–22 MSG

The phrase “In Jesus’ name” is not an empty motto or talisman. It is a declaration of truth: My cancer is not in charge; Jesus is. The economy is not in charge; Jesus is. The grumpy neighbor doesn’t run the world; Jesus, You do! You, Jesus, are the Head Coach, CEO, President, King, Supreme Ruler, Absolute Monarch, High and Holy Baron, Czar, Overlord, and Rajah of all history.

Just speak the word, Jesus...

Pray! Since God works, prayer works.

- Since God is good, prayer is good.

Since you matter to God, your prayers matter in Heaven. You’re never without hope, because you’re never without prayer. And on the occasions you can’t find the words to say, pull these out of your pocket:

Father,

You are good.

I need help.

Heal me and forgive me.

They need help.

Thank You.

In Jesus’ name, amen.

Excerpted with permission from *Before Amen: The Power of a Simple Prayer* by Max Lucado, copyright Thomas Nelson.

Submitted by Carole Missel

Not Just Survival! Revival!

Today’s inspiration comes from:
100 Bible Verses That Made America
by Robert J. Morgan

How To Experience Perpetual, Personal Revival

On a recent visit to New York City, I paused at the 9/11 Memorial, which is at the end of Fulton Street. Then I began walking down Fulton Street itself, which runs crosswise across lower Manhattan. I was looking for a monument, memorial, or historical plaque to indicate how that street changed American history long before the events of September 11, 2001. I didn’t find a monument there, and the thousands of people going back and forth on the sidewalks don’t have a clue. But I do know the story.

In the middle of the 1800s, a tailor named Jeremiah Lanphier moved to Manhattan and established a clothing business. He was a Christian and a sidewalk evangelist in the Wall Street district. On Wednesday, September 23, 1857, he invited people to drop by for prayer at a room on Fulton Street during their lunch hour. Six people showed up. The next week, twenty came. The next week, forty.

Soon churches all across New York overflowed with daily prayer meetings. Fire departments and police stations opened their facilities for prayer, and local businesses set aside rooms for employees to pray. The movement swept over the eastern seaboard and pushed westward into the nation. Citywide awakenings struck Cincinnati, Louisville, Cleveland, Detroit, Indianapolis, St. Louis, and innumerable smaller cities and towns.

From the United States, the revival spread to Ireland, Scotland,

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Wales, and England. For two years, approximately 50,000 people a week came to Christ. Within a year of the start of the Fulton Street Prayer Meetings, over a million converts joined America's churches, and thousands of existing church members were born again or revived in their faith.

The world needs another such awakening, and I pray every day for revival to sweep our country. Our problems are not primarily political, but spiritual; and the answers we need are not primarily political. We need another national and global revival.

Whether God unleashes a great geographical revival or not, I'm convinced you and I can enjoy perpetual, personal revival. Psalm 23:3 says, *He refreshes my soul.*

Jesus said, *Whoever believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, rivers of living water will flow from within them.* — John 7:38

When we experience personal, perpetual revival, our faith is revived, our love is stronger, our faces are more joyful, our enthusiasm is more contagious, and our individual ministries are empowered.

Even when we can't control our emotions, we can choose our attitudes, trust God with our burdens, and turn problems into prayers.

How, then, can we experience revival when everyone else is simply struggling for survival?

1. Pull all the ingredients of your life into the circle of the Lordship of Jesus Christ. This takes a determined decision, which is renewable daily. You can do this instantly, or you may want a bit of time to ponder its implications. God isn't likely to bless what isn't yielded to Him. Every morning I pray something like this, "Lord, I want You to

be in control of every aspect of my life. My time. My habits. My money. My relationships. May they be under Your authority today." Christians used to call this "full surrender." The word "surrender" isn't currently in vogue, but the spiritual concept has never been more needed. If some area of your life has slipped out of the circle of Christ's Lordship, confess it as sin and, with His help, rein it back in.

2. Never miss a day without a personal closed-door appointment with God, allowing Him to speak to you through His Word and responding to Him in prayer. In a marriage, it's hard to keep the romance alive if a couple never communicates. In our relationship with God, it's hard to keep the revival burning if there's no regular communication. I'm not sure why Christians have so much trouble maintaining their habits of personal devotional time, but Jesus told us to go into a private room, close the door, and meet with the Father (Matthew 6:6).

Though everyone's schedule is different, for the last 48 years I've been doing this every morning after breakfast. I open my Bible to where I left off the day before, underline and mark verses that speak to me, and talk to the Lord as if He were actually in the room — which He is!

3. Ask God to fill you with His Holy Spirit, for Ephesians 5:18-19. *"be filled with the Spirit, speaking to one another with psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit. Sing and make music in your heart to the Lord, always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

4. As you leave the secret room and go into your day, consciously remember the reality of God's presence. He goes with you. A great

missionary of yesteryear, George Brown of India, was known for his constant awareness of God's nearness. When a friend asked him about it, he said, "Yes, God is nearer to me, consciously, than anyone in this room." Train yourself to remember God is with you, near you, around you, within you—and that you have constant access to Him through Jesus Christ.

5. Let this show up on your face. Ecclesiastes 8:1 says, *A person's wisdom brightens their faces and changes its hard appearance.* I realize we can't always smile. Troubles and grief intrude, and we face moments requiring serious thought. But biblical joy isn't an undependable electric circuit in a developing nation. The Bible says, *Rejoice in the Lord always.* — Philippians 4:4

Even when we can't control our emotions, we can choose our attitudes, trust God with our burdens, turn problems into prayers, and, as Charles Wesley said, "laugh at life's impossibilities."

None of this is easy, perfect, or quick for most of us. It's a series of life patterns. But how vital for times like these! If our world is ever going to experience a series of global revivals, it's got to begin in you and me.

We've got to find our way to Fulton Street. Written for Devotionals Daily by Robert J. Morgan, author of 100 Bible Verses That Made America.



Photo by Carole Missel

Why Is It Good To Fear God?

Taken from **OneForIsrael.org**

It seems odd to some people that we are supposed to fear God. Surely God is good and compassionate, righteous and just—what is there to be afraid of? Many people interpret the idea to be simply one of great respect and appreciation, awe and reverence. But surely not actual fear? The words are explained away and brushed under the carpet as meaning something far less intimidating.

Yet the fear of God is absolutely foundational to a right relationship with Him. When this is out of place, the whole building is on shaky ground. This is why we're repeatedly told throughout the Scriptures that it comes first – at the beginning:

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom; all who follow his precepts have good understanding. To him belongs eternal praise. (Psalm 111:10)

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and instruction. (Proverbs 1:7)

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and knowledge of the Holy One is understanding (Proverbs 9:10)

If you want to be wise and understanding in your faith, fear of God must come first. Not only is the fear of God foundational for a healthy spiritual life, but God's word promises a wealth of benefits to starting off on the right foot.

Downside up: Fearing God frees us from fear

Anyone who has been born again and crossed over from the kingdom of darkness to the kingdom of light knows very well this is an upside down kingdom. A. W. Towzer expresses it like this:

“Well, it is not to be wondered at. A real [believer] is an odd number anyway. He feels supreme love for One whom he

has never seen, talks familiarly every day to Someone he cannot see, expects to go to heaven on the virtue of Another, empties himself in order to be full, admits he is wrong so he can be declared right, goes down in order to get up, is strongest when he is weakest, richest when he is poorest and happiest when he feels worst. He dies so he can live, forsakes in order to have, gives away so he can keep, sees the invisible, hears the inaudible and knows that which passeth knowledge.”

In this apparently contradictory kingdom, choosing the path of proper fear ironically provides us with the escape route from every other fear.

We may baulk at the idea of truly fearing God, thinking that fear is negative, but in the same way that we “go down in order to get up”, we must first enter into fear in order to be freed from fear. Jesus put it this way for us:

Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather, be afraid of the One who can destroy both soul and body in hell. (Matthew 10:28)

But I will warn you whom to fear: fear him who, after he has killed, has authority to cast into hell. Yes, I tell you, fear him! (Luke 12:5)

When we have that true appreciation the fact that God really can destroy us forever, all other fears have to take a back seat. God is terrifying—a terror to all his enemies. He is the only One that no one—NO-ONE—has the authority to rescue you from. He is the last line of defence and if you're in trouble with Him, that's the end of that. But by His grace, he has made us who were once His enemies into His friends. He is now a dread warrior by our side. This truth, when it hits, liberates.

Adonai is for me—I will not fear! What can man do to me? (Psalm 118:6)

If you have not grasped this yet, ask for God to help you perceive

it. An understanding of who He is and what He can do, the position He truly holds over humanity, leads to unspeakable comfort when we realize that this God has forgiven us from all our sin. He Himself has rescued us from punishment and has adopted us as his children. Like many aspects of life in the Messiah, bending low in humility, bracing ourselves to embrace these realities, opens up vast arenas of freedom and joy that the human mind cannot fully fathom.

Dumbing down and diluting of the fear of God only results in us shooting ourselves in the foot. We are the ones who miss out if we do this. Fearing God is not simply a matter of enjoying His character or appreciating His wonders. The more we become God-fearing, appreciating the true position humanity is in before God, the more our lives will overflow with blessing. Those who pretend to themselves that God is just a cuddly teddy bear of a guy, a big softie in the sky, do so to their own great detriment.

Holiness, purity and power

A right fear of God leads us into holiness as we seek to obey and please God. God-fearing men and women desire to be pure in His sight, and the pure in heart get to see God, according to Yeshua's sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5. As it has been said, those who fear God, hear God. He speaks to those who come close to His heart, who delight in His ways.

If you search the phrase “fear of God” in the Bible, and note the benefits mentioned in every reference, you will be greatly encouraged. A friend of mine says that fearing God helps to remind us to be obedient. When we obey God, great blessings are the result, because His ways are

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right and true, and for our good.

Here are some examples from the Bible of the benefits promised to those who fear God:

Confidence for you and a refuge for your children, Prov 14:26
Blessings, Ps 112:1, 128:1-4,
Prov 28:14
God's work in us, Phil 2:12-13
Riches, honor, and life, Prov 22:4
Safety from snares of men,
Prov 29:25
Knowledge of God, Prov 2:1-6, 2:5
A fountain of life, Prov 14:27
God's mercy from generation to generation, Luke 1:50, Deut 5:29
Life, satisfaction, and protection,
Prov 19:23
Friendship with the Lord, Ps 25:14
Help turning away from evil,
Prov 16:6 and sin Ex 20:20
Women who fear God are praised,
Prov 31:30
God will hear your cry and save you,
Ps 145:19
Our good and our preservation,
Deut 6:24
God's goodness stored up for us,
Ps 31:19
We inherit His righteousness through faith, Heb 11:7
The Angel of the Lord encamps around us and delivers us, Ps 34:7-9
We shall have no lack, Ps 34:7-9
God is our help and our shield,
Ps 115:11
Divine protection, 2 Chro 17:10
God's pleasure, Ps 147:10-11
Work and family blessings,
Ps 128:1-4
God shows His compassion to us as a father, Ps 103:13

But would you fear God for free?

Satan asks God in the first chapter of Job, "Does Job fear God for nothing?" **The challenge was to see whether Job is motivated by the rewards that flow from**

fearing God, or by genuine and unconditional love – for free. We may never understand why life goes the way it does until we see God face to face in glory but come what may, He is still worthy of our love and obedience.

So now, O Israel, what does Adonai your God require of you, but to fear Adonai your God, to walk in all His ways and love Him, and to serve Adonai your God with all your heart and with all your soul (Deuteronomy 10:12)

This exhortation from Deuteronomy has its parallel later on in Micah:

He has told you, humanity, what is good, and what Adonai is seeking from you: Only to practice justice, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God. (Micah 6:8)

Faith is failing all around us because people expect God to behave the way they think He should. These verses clarify that justice, love and mercy are all high on God's agenda—they are part of His immutable character—and we must not be hoodwinked by those who suggest otherwise. There is plenty in the Bible to make you blink in bewilderment, but God's plans are perfect and His justice impeccable. Fear of God recognizes God's right to sit on the judgment seat and call the shots with childlike trust He knows what He's doing. If your faith is built on that kind of foundation, you will not be easily shaken.

ONE FOR ISRAEL

ONE FOR ISRAEL is an initiative of native-born Israelis on the forefront of high-tech media evangelism, proclaiming salvation to Israel, raising up spiritual leaders through ONE FOR ISRAEL's Bible College and equipping them with the tools they need to transform our communities.

Submitted by Sharon Richardson



Photo by Carole Missel

The Wild Glory of an 'Ordinary' Life

by Jon Bloom

June 28, 2024

Staff writer, desiringGod.org

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To the left of my desk is an original oil painting by an award-winning artist named Audrey Strandquist. Unless you live about an hour west of Minneapolis and are above the age of fifty, I doubt you've seen her work. Audrey was my wife's maternal grandmother, and her awards were conferred mainly at regional fairs. She typically painted landscapes, but in the painting next to me, titled "Threshing" and dated August 8, 1940, she beautifully captured a portrait of her tall, strong 24-year-old soon-to-be farmer husband, Wally, standing next to a bin of freshly threshed grain. In the background is a field of mature corn. Audrey was 23 when she applied the oils to this old canvas.

Audrey passed away in October 1998, and Wally in April 2013. Both are buried a short distance from the farm they worked from the time they married well into their elder years, in a small cemetery next to the little evangelical country church they faithfully attended and served for most of their lives. They were what we might be tempted to call "ordinary folk." But that would be a misnomer, an oxymoron of colossal proportions.

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There actually exists no such thing: an ordinary human life. To think a life ordinary is to believe a delusion. It reveals the shameful fact that we can barely bear true beauty — we who tire quickly of sunsets, often curse the rain, find wind an inconvenience, and define boring as watching the grass grow. How strange that we find violent virtual deaths in our films more captivating than the gentle life that miraculously awakens when buried, pushes up through the dark soil, catches the sunlight for food, and grows into a brilliantly green brushstroke of beauty in the very real landscape art we view every day.

“As for man, his days are like grass” (Psalm 103:15). Perhaps that is why we find the lives of men boring and ordinary. Watching a man is like watching the grass grow.

Lives Like Grass

Wally and Audrey were like grass. But being farmers, they found the adventure of grass less boring than most of us. Year after year, in a choreographed dance of collaborative labors, they tilled the dark soil, buried the seeds, and watched the epic of nourishing life slowly unfold. They endured the suspense and sometimes the tragedies of storms, droughts, and pestilence. They knew that the flower of the field was both fiercely resilient and fearfully fragile.

Like the grass they so carefully tended, their lives were a portrait of unassuming beauty. In the landscape of reality, you likely wouldn't notice them unless you took the time to look. Wally was strong yet gentle, and his voice was calm and soothing. Audrey was kind and encouraging, and the bounty of her dinner table was unsurpassed. They moved like the slow, steady rhythms of the seasons. They were human poetry

in motion. But we frenetic twenty-first-century Westerners, who have largely lost the patience required for poetry, might call it slow motion.

“There actually exists no such thing: an ordinary human life. To think a life ordinary is to believe a delusion.” With unpretentious drama, they both came to faith in the living Christ while young, being raised by faithful parents and in faithful church communities. They met, fell in love, got married, and then faithfully loved one another for more than half a century. That alone is a marvelous feat, given how many dangers, toils, and snares half a century brings to anyone. The lyrics of these living poems tell of how Wally patiently and tenderly cared for Audrey through the numerous health challenges she faced throughout her adulthood, and how both of them, in thousands of ways over many decades, served the saints of Oster Covenant Church.

But the most profound effect they had on me was how they faithfully raised a daughter who came to embrace the faith she saw them live out in the so-called ordinary ebb and flow of life, which of course is where all the truly epic events of life occur. They had no idea the priceless gift this would be to me since their daughter would become my godly mother-in-law — 48 years after Audrey put her brush to canvas on that hot, midsummer, threshing day.

The Grass Withers

Wally and Audrey were like grass. Grass might seem to grow slowly, but in reality, its poetic life is brief. Which is why this painting moves me deeply, this portrait of a hardworking young man crafted by his gifted, hardworking young soon-to-be wife, both in the flower of their youth. That was 84 years ago.

The painting is still with us, but the mortal bodies of the artist and her subject are not.

These blades of the grass of God flourished in the morning, but in the evening, they faded and withered (Psalm 90:6). Scorching winds of disease eventually passed over Audrey and then Wally, and now they are gone (Psalm 103:16). Two more casualties of the curse. Another reminder of the ignoble prosaic ending to the poem so noble and full of wild glory that tongues of neither men nor angels can fully capture it: a human life. An ordinary human life.

All flesh is grass,

and all its beauty is like the flower of the field.

The grass withers, the flower fades when the breath of the Lord blows on it;

surely the people are grass.

The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God will stand forever. (Isaiah 40:6–8)

Where Grass Withers No More

I was there on the mournfully joyful days when we sowed the perishable remains of that kind, encouraging, artistic woman, and then, fifteen years later, the remains of that gentle, down-to-earth man, like seeds, into the hallowed ground beside the meeting house of the church they loved.

But make no mistake: we indeed sowed them. For it is the core of the Christian hope, the hope Wally and Audrey treasured in their souls, that what is sown perishable will be raised imperishable, what is sown in weakness will be raised in power, what is sown natural will be raised spiritual (1 Corinthians 15:42–44).

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Our Mission

The EPC exists to carry out the Great Commission of Jesus as a denomination of Presbyterian, Reformed, Evangelical, and Missional congregations.

Our Vision

To the glory of God, the EPC family aspires to embody and proclaim Jesus' love as a global movement of congregations engaged together in God's mission through transformation, multiplication, and effective biblical leadership.

Our Motto

In Essentials: Unity.
In Non-Essentials: Liberty.
In All Things: Charity.

The Steeple Newsletter

is published monthly by the Leicester Evangelical Presbyterian Church, for the purpose of proclaiming that Jesus is Lord and that He is moving among his people here. Our intent is to keep the readers informed of local events, provide information to stimulate and edify it's readers, mixed with a touch of humor to lighten the day.

For those who would like a printed version of the church newsletters, we keep the last 2 months' issues in the brochure rack, on the wall to your right, as you exit the sanctuary to Fellowship Hall.

Submission Deadline:
The 3rd Sunday of the month.

Contact:

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Staying Connected: If anyone does not receive the Steeple Newsletter, participate in Prayer Chain Activations, receive church updates by e-mail, or has a change for the "Birthdays and Anniversaries" and wants to be included, please contact Leo Richardson.

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They died in the hope all believers share: that the Sun of righteousness, the bright Morning Star, will make it possible for us, even though we die, to live in the eternal morning where the grass of God withers no more (Malachi 4:2; John 11:25-26; Revelation 21:4; Revelation 22:16).

And a day is coming when we will know that the epic stories of these quiet, grass-like saints have always been far more thrilling than the best novels and the greatest films. We will marvel at our former dullness, having ever considered such lives ordinary.

Someday, the curse will be reversed, and we will not have the patience to watch the millisecond epics of cinematic mass murder that have captured the imagination of fallen man. We will not have the capacity to find such dim phantasmal shadows entertaining at all. Not when what is playing out before us in vibrant colors now inconceivable is the gloriously wild real story of everlasting grass that, having burst from the ground, is alive with the light of the undying Star.

Submitted by Carole Missel

Voice of the Martyr's:

icommittoprayer.com

June 13, 2024 | Cuba

Pastor Under House Arrest on False Pretenses

Pastor Dizzis Ramos' public ministry has made him a target of government officials in his atheistic Communist country. Earlier this month, he and another pastor were charged for allegedly falsifying receipts after they legally purchased cement for a construction project. Pastor Ramos was placed under house arrest and the other pastor taken into custody. "Everything indicates that this is a trap to stop the work of Pastor Dizzis Ramos, who has made a great positive impact in the community where he pastors," a front-line worker said.

July 04, 2024 | Nepal

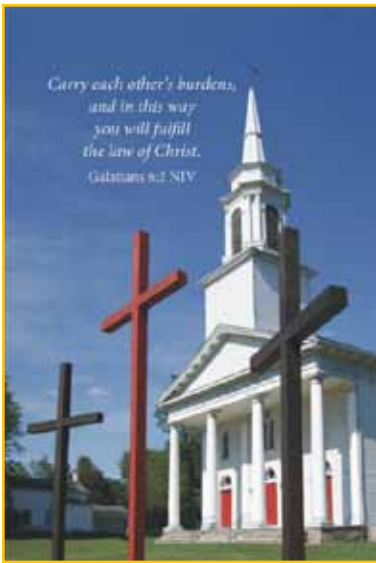
Family Evicted, Beaten for Faithful Witness

Jailed as a murderer, Blawan Kumar Paswan had no hope. Then, a Christian in his prison shared the gospel with him and he placed his trust in Jesus Christ and was baptized. After serving 10 years, Blawan returned to his village and dedicated his life to sharing the gospel, but persecution followed. His uncle evicted his family and took their possessions. A group of drunken men beat Blawan and his wife, Bina. Front line workers offered to relocate the family, but Blawan refused. "If I leave this place, how can I witness Jesus to these people again, and what will happen to other new believers?" he said.

June 27, 2024 | Israel

Christians Help the Hungry in Gaza

A pastor in Gaza and his team are regularly providing hot meals to hundreds of people sheltering and trying to survive the current conflict. "We have been able to distribute meals to the people in Rafah and the middle of the Gaza Strip," the pastor said. "The situation is very dire, and people are desperate for food." The pastor is grateful for support from the global body of Christ that enables his team to provide aid and hope to the suffering. "May God bless you abundantly for your kindness and compassion towards our brothers and sisters in Gaza," he said.



EPCConnection

EPCConnection is the news and information service of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church, a denomination of Presbyterian, Reformed, Evangelical, and Missional congregations. To the glory of God, the EPC family aspires to be a global movement of congregations engaged together in God's mission through transformation, multiplication, and effective biblical leadership, embodying Jesus' love to our neighbors near and far.



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Everyone is Welcome!

Sunday morning Worship
 9:40 - 10:20 Berean Sunday School
 - **Summer recess**
 10:00 - Prayer and Share
 10:30 - Traditional worship (Hymnals/piano)
 Communion First Sunday of the month
 Dish-to-Pass Luncheon 2nd Sunday of the month after church



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On the Lighter Side... Submitted by Paul Griffen



DOCTOR: Don't worry, Dave, this is a simple operation.
PATIENT: But Doc, my name's not Dave!
DOCTOR: I know. It's mine.

Q: Where are average products made?

A: At the satisfactory.

ED: Your girlfriend told me you never buy her flowers.
FRED: I didn't even know she sold them.