

**Devotions - September 9 - 15, 2007**  
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**Sunday, September 9**

*“I will tell of the kindnesses of the Lord, the deeds for which He is to be praised..”*

*Isaiah 63:7*

Feeling a sense of social obligation, a man brought his boss home for dinner with his family one night. Filled with an overblown sense of self-importance, the boss acted pompous, pretentious, boastful, and even rude. The little boy of the household had difficulty tearing his eyes away from the boss and stared at him throughout dinner. Finally, the boss stopped talking and asked, “Young man, why do you keep looking at me like that?” The boy shyly replied, “My daddy says you are a self-made man.” The boss, filled with pride, admitted that he was, indeed, a self-made man. Then the little boy asked, innocently, “I was wondering, if you are a self-made man, why did you make yourself like this?”

Why do we as individuals, as communities, as nations, as the global human family do the things that we do? Why have we made ourselves the way we are? Every nation hates war, yet wars continue to be fought and new ones started. Every human being wants to live in peace and harmony, yet households are torn by dissension and divisions wrack communities. People of faith speak of welcoming the stranger, yet nations build walls. Every individual relishes the beauty and wonder of nature, yet many live in disregard for the resources that have been entrusted to our care. We value compassion; yet turn our back toward those who hurt or need help; individually and collectively through our institutions.

Why?

*Dear God, you made us in your image, yet we fall short of the kindness, compassion, love, tolerance, patience, and respect that is part of your very essence. Help us to live in our actions, the values we say in our words and the faith that we hold in our hearts.  
Amen*

**Monday, September 10**

*The commandment we have from him is this: those who love God must love their brothers and sisters also."*

*1 John 4:21*

An old Rabbi once asked his pupils how they could tell when the night had ended and the day had begun.

"Could it be," asked one of the students, "when you look upon an animal on a distant hill and can see whether it's a sheep or a dog?"

"No," answered the Rabbi.

Another asked, "Is it when you look upon a tree in the valley below and can see whether it's a fig tree or a pear tree?"

"No," answered the Rabbi.

"Then, how can you tell when the night has ended and the day has begun?" the pupils asked.

"It is when you can look upon the face of any man or woman and see that it is your sister or brother. Because if you cannot see this, it is still night."

*Dear God, please send the light of day into our hearts so we may see every person as our sister or brother, created and loved by you. Amen*

## **Tuesday, September 11**

*“What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if you say you have faith but do not have works...” James 2:14*

*“Preach the Gospel at all times; if necessary use words.” St. Francis of Assisi*

Have you ever watched a foreign film without English subtitles? Or, watched a movie or DVD on TV with the sound turned off? It is a great way to sharpen your visual senses and to evaluate whether a movie’s acting and cinematography are good enough to carry its message without depending on a “verbal explanation”. You might be surprised as to how much can be understood by simply watching the action, the setting and the actors’ body language and emotions. If they do not convey the story, even without the dialog, it is generally a second rate movie.

You might also be surprised as to how much of the Bible can be understood if the “sound is turned off”. The “Word of God” is central to the Christian faith and we are saved by faith, not works. However, our actions, the setting and our body language and emotions also convey critical elements of our faith. Jesus lived a life of compassion and love. He was constantly reaching out to the poor, the disabled, the mentally ill, the sick, people of different cultures and the disenfranchised. He embraced those who society shunned, rejected, or ignored. Before he left this earth, he commanded his disciples to carry on BOTH the Word and the compassion of his ministry.

*Dear God, let our actions and our emotions convey the story of love and compassion that you lived as an example of the faith and faithfulness you want of us.*

**Amen**

**Wednesday, September 12**

*“For he will command his angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways.”*

*Psalm 91:11*

**Last January many of us anxiously followed the story of a Missouri boy who had been kidnapped. We rejoiced when he was found after a 4-day intensive search. We rejoiced even more when another boy, missing for over 4 years, was found in the same house. We, together with millions of caring people across the country, gave thanks that they were both safe and would be returned to their loving parents.**

**In the midst of our joy, many of us also experienced feelings of apprehension and fear. Even the most vigilant of parents must confess that there have been many times that their children were outside of their watchful eyes. Even the most careful of us must confess that we have driven while distracted or tired. Those of us who provide care to others must confess that it is impossible to provide an environment that is 100% safe. The reality is, our loved ones and those we care for are safe, because God watches over us.**

**I wonder how many times God and his heaven-sent angles have protected our children? I wonder how many times those we love have avoided injury or harm when our best efforts have fallen inches short? How many times may we have been delayed by a second or two and delivered from an accident that never happened? How many times have the benevolent hands of God, unseen, unfelt, and unknown, kept us safe? The compassion of Christ knows no bounds.**

*Dear God, we give thanks for your loving compassion and protection. We rejoice in the return of the two boys in Missouri to their homes. We give thanks for the accidents that never happened, the illnesses that were never contracted, the disasters we've never experienced, and the pains that we've never felt. Continue to watch over us in all that we do.*

**Amen**

**Thursday, September 13**

*“Like good stewards of the manifold grace of God, serve one another with whatever gift each of you has received.”*

*1 Peter 4:10*

When I was a child, I had an Uncle Lawrence who was very close to my family. He was a bachelor-farmer and we shared every major holiday with him. I always felt challenged to think of the right Christmas and birthday gifts for him each year. I often observed that the flannel shirts that Uncle Lawrence wore around the farm were threadbare and had holes in the elbows. I also observed that the jackknife he carried everywhere was worn and dull. As a result, most of the gifts that I bought for him were either a new flannel shirt or a new, sharp jackknife. I beamed with pride as he opened his gift, knowing that I had selected just what he needed.

Many years later, after his death, I was helping to clean out Uncle Lawrence’s house when I discovered a large drawer full of brand new flannel shirts and another drawer containing numerous new jackknives. He had never used the gifts that I had so lovingly given to him! My mother explained that he had always considered the new shirts and the new knives “too good” to be used in his daily life on the farm. He saved them for a special occasion. Now, we were packing them in boxes to be given to a local charity.

God has given each of us special gifts. Gifts that are just what we need to be of service to others. What are we doing with the gifts that we have been given? Are we saving them for some “special” occasion? Or, are we using them in our daily lives, being good stewards by graciously serving others with whatever gifts we have received?

*Dear God, thank you for the many wonderful gifts that you have given us. Help us to be good stewards of these gifts by using them in our daily lives in service to you and to others.*

*Amen*

**Friday, September 14**

*“Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children, and live in love, as Christ loved us...”*

*Ephesians 5:1-2*

**Children are natural imitators. They have an innate drive to be like someone else. They “play” house and they “play” school. They say that they want to be like “so and so” when they grow up. Their young lives are lived observing others and imitating them. If we want to see a reflection of ourselves, we can quietly observe the actions and words of the children we are closest to. Sometimes that reflection gives us pleasure, and sometimes it makes us uncomfortable.**

**So much of what we learn is learned from watching others. Who we choose to learn from – whom we choose to imitate – is very important. Paul writes to the Christians in Ephesus that God has provided them the perfect model to imitate. If we look to Christ, and model our lives after the example He set for us, we will live in love. We will see Christ’s love reflected in our attitudes, actions, words and behaviors.**

*Dear God, thank you for your life, given for our salvation and as an example for how you want us to live. Give us the innate drive to be imitators of Jesus in our lives, in how we treat others, and in our daily tasks. Amen*

**Saturday, September 15**

*“As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you; abide in my love....This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you.” John 15:9 & 12*

**God loves us! God really loves us! As one pastor reminded his congregation, “If God has a refrigerator, your drawing is on it. If God has a wallet, your photo is in it. God sends us flowers every spring and a sunrise every morning. When you want to talk, God listens. God can live anywhere in the universe but he has chosen to live in your heart. Face it, God is crazy about you.”**

This passage from John clearly communicates that we are to play a game of “Pass-It-On”, with love as the object that gets passed on. The Father loves the Son. The Son loves us. And, we are to love one another. When we invite Christ into our lives, he insists that we let him bring his friends with him, all of them. We cannot truly love Christ without loving those who he loves. And, he loves everyone.

*Dear God, fill our hearts with your love and let it flow directly through us to others.*

*Amen*