

## Always Show Kindness!

**Do not deprive the foreigner or the fatherless of justice, or take the cloak of the widow as a pledge** (Deuteronomy 24:17).

**Scripture:** Deuteronomy 24:14-18

**Song:** “Make Me a Blessing”

A World War II chaplain encountered a wounded soldier lying on the cold ground. He asked, “Soldier, would you like me to read from the Bible?” “Sir,” the soldier replied, “I am so thirsty. I would rather have a drink of water.”

The chaplain left, but soon returned with water and gave it to the soldier. Observing that the soldier was shivering, the chaplain removed his own overcoat and placed it over him. Then he removed his jacket, rolled it up, and gently placed it under the soldier’s head.

To the chaplain’s pleasant surprise came the soldier’s whispered response: “Sir, if there is something in your Bible that makes you show such kindness, please read it to me.”

Jesus told a story that illustrates the kindness the chaplain showed. It featured the kindness a Samaritan showed to a gravely beaten traveler (Luke 10:30-36).

Jesus’ story demonstrated that the Samaritan did not deprive the wounded traveler of anything—by tending to the victim’s wounds, taking him to an inn, and providing for his recovery.

Jesus affirmed the Old Testament law by saying we should follow the Samaritan’s example (v. 37). The chaplain is also a good example for us.

**Father,** may we reflect Your love in our treatment of others. In Jesus’ name, amen.

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May 17–23. **Jim Dyet** lives in Colorado Springs with his wife of 62 years, Gloria. He is a retired editor and minister, who enjoys daily dog walks.

## The God of New Beginnings

**“I will watch over them to build and to plant,” declares the LORD** (Jeremiah 31:28).

**Scripture:** Jeremiah 31:27-30

**Song:** “Have Thine Own Way, Lord”

I was amazed at the artistic talent of potters at Van Briggie Pottery in Colorado Springs when I took my family there to view the beautifully crafted pottery. We watched a skilled artisan plop a shapeless lump of clay onto a potter’s wheel, add water, deftly cradle the clay in his hands, and shape it until it became a beautiful vase. He started with a mental image of the final product and ended with the visible portrayal of that image. If I were to try my hand at pottery, I would surely end up with a lump of mud and dirty hands!

The Bible tells us that God is a potter who takes human lumps of clay and shapes them into brand-new vessels. Jeremiah 18:1-4 tells us that Jeremiah visited a potter’s house, where he saw the potter take a marred clay vessel and form it into another pot, shaping it as seemed best to him.

No matter how marred a person’s life may be, God, the master potter, can transform it into something valuable and beautiful. Ephesians 2:10 identifies Christians as God’s workmanship.

Let’s view every unbeliever as someone who can have a new beginning through God’s creative work. We cannot give anyone a new beginning, but we can introduce others to the only one who can.

**Father**, we place ourselves in Your hands and trust You to shape us into the image of Your Son. In Jesus’ name, amen.

## Crime Doesn't Pay

**“Because he [a righteous man’s violent son] has done all these detestable things, he is to be put to death; his blood will be on his own head”** (Ezekiel 18:13).

**Scripture:** Ezekiel 18:10-13

**Song:** “Amazing Grace”

No one has escaped from the maximum-security prison located in Florence, Colorado. When I played golf at a course that borders the facility, I took a long, hard look and breathed a sigh of relief that I was viewing it from the outside instead of from the inside. Some of the most infamous, violent criminals incarcerated there include Theodore Kaczynski, the Unabomber; Terry Nichols, accomplice in the Oklahoma City bombing; Ramzi Yousef, a perpetrator of the 1993 World Trade Center bombing; and El Chapo, the notorious Mexican drug lord. They will spend the rest of their lives locked up, hopefully knowing that crime doesn't pay.

In a sense, every human being is a criminal in God's eyes. We all have broken His laws and bear the penalty of physical, spiritual, and eternal death (Romans 3:23; 6:23; Ephesians 2:1; Revelation 20:14). However, unlike the prisoners who cannot escape from the prison in Florence, we can be free from the penalty of our sin by trusting in Jesus as our Savior. He said, “If the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed” (John 8:36). Jesus not only sets us free from sin's penalty but also frees us to live as God wants us to live (Galatians 5:13).

**Father,** thank You for setting me free from sin's penalty and power. May I show my gratitude every day by doing Your will. In Jesus' name, amen.

## Those Sneaky Idols

**“[A righteous man] does not eat at the mountain shrines or look to the idols of Israel”** (Ezekiel 18:15).

**Scripture:** Ezekiel 18:14-18

**Song:** “Whiter Than Snow”

The TV show *American Idol* attracts millions of viewers who find it entertaining to watch contestants perform enthusiastically as they hope to succeed to the next level in their quest of becoming the next American idol. When tryouts were held in my city, eager contestants lined up around the block for their turn to display their talent and be selected for the show. Of course, very few realized the fulfillment of their dream.

Undoubtedly, many of the *American Idol* hopefuls do not worship fame and fortune, but I suspect some do; and TV viewers can idolize the winner of the final *American Idol* contest. Their idol worship differs from bowing down to an idol of wood, stone, or metal, but it is idol worship nonetheless. The worship of a famous singer, actor, sports figure, money, fame, or some material object may not be a conscious form of worship, but it can happen because such idols can sneak into our lives.

When I was a youngster, my idol was golf, and I devoted as much time and effort to it as possible. However, when I became a Christian, like the Thessalonians, I turned from my idol to worship the living and true God (1 Thessalonians 1:9). Although golf is an enjoyable sport, I don't want it or any other idol to sneak back into my life.

**Father,** You alone are God. May we worship You in spirit and in truth. In Jesus' name, amen.

## Something to Smile About

**“If a wicked person turns away from all the sins they have committed and keeps all my decrees and does what is just and right, that person will surely live; they will not die” (Ezekiel 18:21).**

**Scripture:** Ezekiel 18:19-24

**Song:** “Happiness Is to Know the Savior”

Rob is confined to a nursing home, but when he could attend church, he entered the building with the help of a walker. I would ask, “Rob, how are you today?” The response was always the same. He would flash a big smile and say, “I’m alive.” There was a time, however, when first responders didn’t think Rob was alive.

Several years ago, a heavily loaded tractor trailer collided head-on with Rob’s car. First responders pried Rob’s broken body from the wreckage and concluded that he was dead. However, a few minutes later they saw a flicker of life and rushed him to a hospital. After weeks of care and rehab, Rob was able to walk with the aid of a walker. So when Rob smiled widely and said “I’m alive,” he was genuinely happy to be alive.

We can smile about the privilege of being alive to spend quality time with our loved ones and friends, but our smile can grow even wider when we turn from our sin, put our faith in Jesus Christ to receive His gift of salvation, and follow Him. Only then will we surely receive the eternal life that the Lord offers us by grace.

**Father,** thank You for each day You give me to live, and thank You for the offer of Your salvation. In Jesus’ name, amen.

## Putting Self-Righteousness to the Test

**“The Israelites say, ‘The way of the Lord is not just.’ Are my ways unjust, people of Israel? Is it not your ways that are unjust?”** (Ezekiel 18:29).

**Scripture:** Ezekiel 18:25-29

**Song:** “Holy, Holy, Holy”

While I was a guest at a fellow golfer’s home, I learned that my host’s daughter and her husband had become believers. However, my friend could not understand why they insisted that his good life didn’t qualify him for Heaven. He asked for my opinion.

I began, “You are a good golfer. Your average score for 18 holes is about 80. Compared to most golfers, you are better than they are. Now, if God played 18 holes, what do you think His score would be? Because He is perfect, wouldn’t His total score be 18?”

My friend smiled. “You’re right, 18!”

“So how does your average score of 80 compare with God’s 18? It falls far short, doesn’t it? ” Similarly, when you compare your righteousness to that of many people, you look pretty good, but when you compare it to God’s perfect righteousness, it falls far short. That’s why your good life can’t earn you a place in Heaven. You need to trust in Jesus to get you to Heaven.”

As Christians, we have a place in Heaven because of God’s grace revealed so clearly in Jesus’ sacrifice on the cross.

**Father**, thank You for showing us that we fall short of Your glory. Thank You for saving us by grace through faith in Your Son Jesus. In Jesus’ name, amen.

## Everyone Matters to God

**“I take no pleasure in the death of anyone, declares the Sovereign LORD. Repent and live!”** (Ezekiel 18:32).

**Scripture:** Ezekiel 18:1-9, 30-32

**Song:** “Surely Goodness and Mercy”

While serving as a minister in western New York, I received a call from a funeral director in a neighboring town. He explained that the very unpopular town drunk had died, and he could not find a clergy person who would conduct the funeral. He wondered if I was willing to do so. I assured him I was.

At the appointed time for the funeral, not a single mourner was present. The funeral director and I waited until it was evident that no one would attend the service. “Reverend,” the funeral director said, “no one seems to care about the deceased, so why don’t you say what you planned to say? I’ll sit and listen.”

Perhaps many people pass through life without anybody caring about them. Some people may even be glad when a troublesome person has died. But our Lord cares about everyone, regardless how far he or she has wandered. Jesus told a story about 1 sheep that strayed from a fold of 100. The shepherd cared about the lost sheep, searched for it, found it, laid it on his shoulders, rejoiced, and called his friends and neighbors to rejoice with him. Like the shepherd, we should care about every lost soul and launch a rescue operation.

**Father**, the world tends to be impersonal and uncaring. May we not grow callous to the need of every lost soul to receive forgiveness and eternal life in Heaven. In Jesus’ name, amen.