

Sleepwalking in an Airport

Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the first-fruits of those who have fallen asleep (1 Corinthians 15:20).

Scripture: 1 Corinthians 15:16-23

Song: “He Never Sleeps”

My wife, three sons, and I were on one of our trips from the United States to Thailand, with a layover of several hours in the Bangkok airport. We spread out on a section of empty chairs, and one by one began nodding off. However, it was good that I was still awake, albeit barely, when my oldest son started sleepwalking away from us! I hurried to him, quickly returned him to his chair, and bought myself a large cup of coffee. I often stood to keep awake the rest of the time, keeping watch while the others slept.

Today’s passage refers to people who had died as having “fallen asleep” (1 Corinthians 15:18). In this sense, Christ did “fall asleep” once, but praise be to our Father God that Jesus did not remain dead. Rather, God raised Him from the dead, and He lives so that all of us who are in Him can live, even beyond our physical death.

My son could have become lost in the Bangkok airport had I not been awake. Similarly, Jesus ensures that all who trust in Him will never be lost, because He conquered death and is with us always.

Father, thank You that Jesus is alive and that He watches over us and is with us daily. In Jesus’ name, amen.

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August 23–29. **Troy D. Stuart** has worked at a university in the States and at a Christian school in Thailand.

What's in a Name?

I kneel before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name (Ephesians 3:14-15).

Scripture: Ephesians 3:14-21

Song: "He Knows My Name"

Naming a child is one of the important decisions parents must make. There are scores of websites and books dedicated to helping parents find the right name for their child among tens of

thousands of available names. Conferring a name upon someone is significant because it is who others know us to be. Our name is not just a word among other words. It is part of our identity. This is readily seen when people take steps to legally change their names, such as when adopted children choose to take on the last name of their adoptive parents. That such a practice even exists indicates the importance and power of our names.

Our Heavenly Father has given us His name. All who believe in Christ are called children of God. This association of our name with His is highly personal and intimate, and it speaks to our core identity in this world and through eternity.

We kneel before God in worship and praise because of His tremendous act of love. We know Him and are known by Him. He not only knows us by the name that our parents gave us, but He also allows us to be known as His children who bear His name.

Father, help us live out the identity You have given us as Your children. May we live today in a way that honors Your name. In Jesus' name, amen.

Teacher Appreciation Day

Not only was the Teacher wise, but he also imparted knowledge to the people. He pondered and searched out and set in order many proverbs (Ecclesiastes 12:9).

Scripture: Ecclesiastes 12:9-14

Song: “Savior, Teach Me, Day by Day”

Every year, students all across Thailand honor their teachers during the annual Teachers’ Day, known as Wai Kru. Thai nationals have a great deal of respect for their teachers, and honoring them in special ways is a significant part of the culture. The ceremony involves students presenting teachers with four specific types of flowers that represent key ideas: respect, wit, discipline, and perseverance. The students respect both individual teachers and the concept of teacher.

A great teacher imparts wisdom as well as knowledge. The teacher of Ecclesiastes imparted life-giving wisdom to his students. The teacher’s lessons were not centered on developing skills in reading, writing, and arithmetic. His classes focused on how to relate to God and to live with wisdom in this world.

After all the teacher’s lessons about life, he concludes that the wise person is the one who fears God and follows His commands (Ecclesiastes 12:13). In this context, fear does not mean to be scared of something. Instead, the word means to honor, revere, and respect. The natural overflow of fearing God in this way is to put into practice everything He teaches us.

Father, we honor You as our ultimate teacher. We recognize that more than any human teacher we have ever encountered, You are the source of true wisdom and knowledge. May we honor You by living out all that You have taught us. In Jesus’ name, amen.

God's Love Triumphs over Evil

There will be trouble and distress for every human being who does evil: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile; but glory, honor and peace for everyone who does good: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile (Romans 2:9-10).

Scripture: Romans 2:4b-11

Song: "In Evil Long I Took Delight"

The Yad Vashem Holocaust History Museum in Jerusalem is one of the most moving memorials on the planet. The museum chronicles the horrors that the Nazi regime perpetrated against the Jewish people in the World War II era. One of the sections in the museum is dedicated to honoring non-Jews, or Gentiles, who provided aid to persecuted Jews. This section doesn't just emphasize famous people; it pays tribute, by name, to many obscure people who helped rescue even one family.

Today's passage is clear—there is evil in this world. And this Scripture assures us that God's wrath awaits those who reject His righteous way and pursue the path of sin.

Thankfully, God, who is rich in mercy, does not let the story play out to its natural conclusion. Otherwise, we would all stand condemned for our wicked behavior. Rather, through Jesus, we are enabled to walk a different path that leads to life. Once we are liberated from our life of sin, we can then go into our communities and offer hope and good news to a lost world that is headed down a road that leads to destruction.

Father, give us courage to share the good news of Christ with our neighbors so that they won't reject You. In Jesus' name, amen.

Marathon Men

Since through God's mercy we have this ministry [of the Spirit], we do not lose heart (2 Corinthians 4:1).

Scripture: 2 Corinthians 4:1-6

Song: "Run the Race"

Because I am not a runner, I have a profound appreciation for those who run long distances. As awe-inspiring as running a marathon is, there are events in my city that require participants to run more than a double marathon. These courses are not flat either; the terrain is rugged, off-road, and hilly. The endurance, stamina, and grit these competitors demonstrate are genuinely inspiring.

In today's passage, Paul encourages his audience not to lose heart. He implores them never to give up. Too much is at stake; this life is a battle between light and darkness. There is an all-out war taking place between Christ and the god of this age for the hearts and souls of humanity.

Christians must approach ministry with an even greater level of grit than is displayed by the world's most elite long-distance runners. Because we face an enemy who is real and dangerous, we will be tempted to throw in the towel. Today's Scripture reminds us that we must keep fighting. Christ is with us, and He is much more powerful than the foe who stands against us.

Father, we pray that in our effort to minister to others, we will never lose heart. Please give us the strength and endurance we need to shine Your light into this world daily. When we grow weary, we ask that You remind us of what is at stake for those we love and are trying to serve. In Jesus' name, amen.

Marked for Life

We always carry around in our body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be revealed in our body (2 Corinthians 4:10).

Scripture: 2 Corinthians 4:7-15

Song: “Look for the Way-Marks”

During a trip to Cairo, Egypt, I observed that Christians had crosses tattooed on their wrists. Through the course of a conversation, I learned that these crosses have meaning to the believers living there. Not only does it identify them as being Christian, but it helps them remember the persecution that believers have endured in their country. They talk about the hardships that their ancestors experienced from the days of the Roman Empire to the rule of Islamic leaders. These tattoos are a tangible reminder of the persecution and suffering that people—and perhaps even they themselves—have suffered and continue to endure for Christ.

Paul does not shy away from speaking about the hardships that faced the early church. The opposition they encountered was real. Imprisonment, beatings, and even execution were common experiences for the earliest Christians. Even in the face of these harsh realities, Paul could still write words of hope. Hardships were opportunities for Jesus’ life to be revealed through them.

There are still many Christians persecuted today for their faith. Let us unite in praying for the global church and for all those who live under threat for professing faith in Christ.

Father, we pray for Christians around the world who face persecution. May Your glory be revealed in Your church as we experience hardship and opposition for Your name. In Jesus’ name, amen.

Eternal Vision

We fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen, since what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal (2 Corinthians 4:18).

Scripture: 2 Corinthians 4:16–5:10

Song: “Open My Eyes, That I May See”

Some of the world’s best musicians are blind. These men and women have transcended their circumstances to produce some of the most moving melodies known. You just sense that their entire being has entered into their music. What they cannot see they certainly can feel, and what they have produced has brought joy to generations of listeners.

Today’s Scripture makes it clear that life can be rough. At times we feel like our lives and our world are so filled with troubles that all we want to do is groan. Paul acknowledges this feeling but then reminds his readers that Christians are called to see beyond this temporary world. The believer lives with confidence and does not lose heart, because we have hope in what lies beyond this planet.

One key that enables Christians to avoid persisting in negativity is to fix our minds on what is unseen. Like visually impaired musicians who enter deeply into the invisible world of their music, we are called by God to penetrate deeply into the truths and spiritual realities that Christ has invited us to live from—rather than being unduly preoccupied with the light and momentary troubles of this world. It is from that place that we can go forward living by faith, not by sight.

Father, help us fix our eyes on You and only on You today. In Jesus’ name, amen.

Glorified Always

“I [God] will gain glory for myself through Pharaoh and all his army, and the Egyptians will know that I am the LORD”
(Exodus 14:4).

Scripture: Exodus 14:1-9

Song: “We Will Glorify”

As someone who grew up on the Gulf Coast, I was 34 years old before I ever clicked into snow skis and headed to the top of a bunny slope. It didn't take me long to realize that getting to the bottom of the mountain was easy, but how pleasurable or painful the process was could vary significantly!

God has His own way of ensuring end results. We are His creation, and we were made to bring Him glory. Some of us will choose to offer up that glory by turning our lives over to Him. And some of us might not. But as we see in the case of Pharaoh and his army, God is not afraid to secure His own glory through the defeat of those who refuse to offer it.

When we feel threatened by those who oppose our Lord or scheme against His ways, we can know that regardless of whether those enemies double down or turn to Him, our God will have His glory. And in His glory, His children are always victorious. May the pleasure of His glory forever be ours!

Father, help me to trust that You will bring glory out of the moments I feel defeated. In Jesus' name, amen.

August 30–31. **Shannon Baldrige** teaches Bible studies at her church and in her Atlanta-area community, where she resides with her husband, two daughters, and four-legged running partner.

Certain in the Uncertain

“Do not be afraid. Stand firm and you will see the deliverance the LORD will bring you today” (Exodus 14:13).

Scripture: Exodus 14:10-20

Song: “Standing on the Promises”

It’s one of the most feared headlines: “Dow Hit with Historic Losses.” When we see this type of phrasing along with “It could get worse before it gets better,” we can easily panic. Each article we devour has its own take as to the whys—social, medical, economic, political—but bottom line is that investors are bailing. Unknown factors are always at play, but occasionally we are painfully reminded that there are no promises in the stock market.

Cornered at the edge of the Red Sea, the Israelites were beyond nervous. They were in full meltdown, blaming Moses and God for what they thought would be their death. Moses was no more privy to what was going to happen next than anyone else was. It was a total unknown. But he did have a promise. God had promised to deliver them, and so Moses chose to focus on that promise and confidently proclaimed it over the people’s cries in that uncertain moment.

Like Moses, we don’t know the details of God’s plans or how they will look as they play out in our lives, but we do have promises. We know He loves us and has a plan for us. And we know He has all power. No matter the unknowns we face, we can always claim those truths. Let us confidently speak them over each other, for they are our peace in troubling times.

Father, help me to focus on Your promises no matter the uncertainties I face. In Jesus’ name, amen.