

## The Best News

**What I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day (1 Corinthians 15:3-4).**

**Scripture:** 1 Corinthians 15:1-11

**Song:** “Tell Others of Jesus”

During a visit to my daughter’s house, I heard crying outside. I opened the back door just as my barefoot 3-year-old granddaughter, Leo, reached for the knob, tears streaking her face. At the same moment, an older neighbor girl pushed Leo aside to announce, “Leo hurt her foot. I just wanted to tell you that.” And off she ran.

I’ve never understood the need some have to be the first to share a piece of news, but I do find it rewarding to offer information that someone needs to know, especially when it points them to resources that meet a need. Sometimes, though, I forget that the most important words I can share with anyone are these: “Jesus died for you.”

Regardless of how interesting or helpful our conversations with others may be, the most important ones will have eternal impact. We’re surrounded by people who’ve never heard about Jesus’ birth, death, and resurrection and what that means for them personally. When we share that news, we’re pointing people toward the one who can meet all their needs.

**Father,** help me stay alert and open to every opportunity to share the life-changing news of Your love and forgiveness. In Jesus’ name, amen.

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February 26–28. **Dianne Neal Matthews** lives in Tennessee with her husband. She enjoys traveling to visit children and grandchildren, cooking, DIY projects, and serving her local church.

## Selective Memory

**[Dathan and Abiram said to Moses,] “We will not come! Isn’t it enough that you have brought us up out of a land flowing with milk and honey to kill us in the wilderness?”** (Numbers 16:12-13).

**Scripture:** Numbers 16:12-13, 23-34

**Song:** “Count Your Blessings”

I frequently hear people talk wistfully about “the good old days” when life was simpler. They’re often referring to a time period that includes my early childhood. Although I do understand what they mean, I can’t help reminding them of some modern conveniences and benefits that were lacking at that time. It usually helps them reevaluate their longing.

During times of trial, hardship, or suffering, it’s especially easy to fall into this kind of mindset. When we shift our focus away from God and become fixated on our present difficulties, the past may seem better than it actually was. We may become blind to what God is doing in our lives right now. Trust means clinging to what we know about God even when we go through tough times.

As time passes, it’s easy to develop selective memory without realizing it. But we can have “elective memory” instead when we choose to focus on God’s faithfulness and love. If we believe that His intentions toward us are good, then surely we believe that He will lead us through the wilderness in His time. And we can be assured that the destination will be worth the journey, despite any rough terrain along the way.

**Father**, help me to stay focused on the blessings in my life at this moment in time, resisting the temptation to compare to the past. In Jesus’ name, amen.

## Dragged to Safety

**When [Lot] hesitated, the men grasped his hand and the hands of his wife and of his two daughters and led them safely out of the city, for the LORD was merciful to them (Genesis 19:16).**

**Scripture:** Genesis 18:20-22; 19:1-5, 15-17, 22-25

**Song:** “God Leads Us Along”

A scene from a movie I watched years ago has stayed in my mind: two men restrain their friend from rushing into a building that’s about to be destroyed by a bomb. In that critical moment, the man’s frantic obsession with the lab that represents his life’s work overcomes his sense of self-preservation; his friends have to drag him away. Later, the man starts thinking clearly and thanks them for keeping him safe in spite of himself.

Sometimes God restrains us or even pulls us away from what we’re clinging to. While He has given us free will, He may choose to overrule our choices or desires. God can see the end results of our self-destructive habits, toxic relationships, or any idols that we’ve allowed to interfere in our relationship with Him.

God often allows us to experience the natural progression of our disobedience to help us mature spiritually. But there are times when He intervenes. Instead of grumbling about a change in our circumstances, we can learn to trust that He has a purpose in allowing it. Later on, we may come to understand that it was His way of showing mercy and keeping us safe in spite of ourselves.

**Father,** thank You for the times You have pulled me back from something that would have eventually hurt me or a loved one. In Jesus’ name, amen.

## Trusting Our Judge

**When they hurled their insults at [Jesus], he did not retaliate; when he suffered, he made no threats. Instead, he entrusted himself to him who judges justly (1 Peter 2:23).**

**Scripture:** 1 Peter 2:13-25

**Song:** “Do I Trust You?”

I regretted taking the time to read through a conversation on social media. Someone had shared an opinion on a current issue, hoping to prompt a well-thought-out, logical discussion. Instead, it resulted in an online brawl with insults, name calling, and accusations between acquaintances and strangers alike. The original topic abandoned, each rude comment triggered another one in response.

Rudeness and verbal attacks seem to be accepted forms of communication in our society. And this often escalates to a new level when it's aimed at our Christian faith. Jesus knows how it feels to be mocked, falsely accused, spit on, beaten, and crucified. Even though He was sinless and could have stopped His persecution at any moment, Jesus endured it. He knew that it all fit into God's plan of redeeming people from the penalty of sin.

False accusations, unjustified criticism, even persecution may come our way when we don't deserve it. We might never be vindicated during our lifetime. These situations may tempt us to lash out in retaliation or to quietly grow bitter and resentful. There is a third option. God has promised that one day He will reveal hidden things and right all wrongs. Until then, we can imitate Jesus and entrust ourselves to the true judge.

**Father,** when I'm unjustly criticized or insulted, help me not respond in kind, but with kindness. In Jesus' name, amen.