

Youth Change a Nation

For in the eighth year of his reign, while he was yet young, he [Josiah] began to seek after the God of David his father.
(2 Chronicles 34:3a *KJV*)

Scripture: 2 Chronicles 34:1–7

Song: “I Have Decided to Follow Jesus”

See You at the Pole is an annual event that was initiated by a youth group in Texas in 1990. In September of that year, more than 56,000 students from 1,200 campuses met to pray. The youth prayer meeting received media attention and began to spread, gaining momentum year after year. See You at the Pole has grown to be an international meeting for youth to gather and pray.

It is important to not underestimate the ability of youth to impact the world for Christ. Josiah is a shining example of how God can use young lives to make a difference for eternity. Early exposure to Bible teaching is one of the best ways to prepare children for kingdom service. Family devotions, Bible-based bedtime stories, and Sunday school are only a few of the ways to introduce children to God. Exemplifying Christian living is also imperative, as shown by Josiah’s father, David. All of these, done in the love that God commands us to demonstrate, will provide a strong foundation for children to flourish and come to know Jesus as Savior and Lord. As they grow, their witness can draw others to Christ—and so can yours.

Father, help me to draw others to You at every stage of my life. In Jesus’ name I pray. Amen.

September 29–October 5. **Apollo Stevens** lives in Virginia and is married to a pastor. She is a registered nurse and works alongside her husband in ministry.

Throne of Grace

Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need. (Hebrews 4:16 *KJV*)

Scripture: Hebrews 4:12–16

Song: “What a Friend We Have in Jesus”

For eight months I had been praying about a situation that seemed to be getting worse. There were days when I felt God’s peace envelop me. There were other days when I laid face down and cried tears of frustration and disappointment. I began to feel ashamed because of the emotional rollercoaster I was experiencing.

One Sunday, my husband’s sermon was about confession. He taught that God is waiting for us to open the doors of our heart, tell Him everything that is weighing us down, and allow His light to shine into every dark corner. I realized that I really had not prayed about the real problem: fear. I was afraid that God would not “fix” the situation to my satisfaction. Later that day, I prayed and confessed my fears and doubts. As I prayed, I began to cry cleansing tears of release and relief. The feeling of shame left me, and as the days passed, my emotions stabilized.

Because of Jesus’ sacrifice, we have immediate access to our heavenly Father through prayer. We can freely confess everything that is in our hearts. In return, He lifts our spirits and covers us with mercy and grace.

Father, I will not be ashamed to tell You everything that is in my heart. I receive the mercy and grace that comes from being totally open with You. In Jesus’ name I pray. Amen.

Feed the Flock of God

“And I will give you pastors according to mine heart, which shall feed you with knowledge and understanding.”

(Jeremiah 3:15 *KJV*)

Scripture: Jeremiah 3:12–19

Song: “Thy Word”

My husband is an ordained pastor. We moved to southwestern Virginia in 2023, and within a 50-mile radius of our new home, there were over 35 congregations without pastors. At a prayer breakfast, my husband met a leader of a church congregation that had been without a pastor for five years. The people had a deep hunger for sound biblical instruction. They also wanted someone who cared about them as individuals and who would support them during times of trouble. So they invited my husband to speak for a month, and then asked him to serve as interim pastor for six months. At the end of that time, the congregation knew that my husband was the pastor they had been praying for.

The NIV translation of Jeremiah 3:15 says: “I will give you shepherds who are dear to my heart. Their knowledge and understanding will help them lead you.” The Israelites had been unfaithful and had turned to false gods. But the one true God promised to bless them again, should they return to Him. He even sent “shepherds” (leaders) to show them the way back. He does the same for us.

Leaders who work diligently to teach, guide, and watch over their congregations are a gift from God. May we support, encourage, and pray for these shepherds of God’s flock.

Father, Your Word says the harvest is great, but the laborers are few. Please send shepherds to care for Your flock. In Jesus’ name I pray. Amen.

Inward Repentance

So put on sackcloth, lament and wail, for the fierce anger of the LORD has not turned away from us. (Jeremiah 4:8)

Scripture: Jeremiah 4:5–14

Song: “Jesus Paid It All”

Sackcloth was made of goat hair, which produced a rough, uncomfortable woven fabric. This fabric was made into a garment that was an outward sign the wearer was in deep distress, mourning, or in a state of repentance and submission before God. In Jeremiah’s time, putting on sackcloth and crying out to God were outward demonstrations of the need for forgiveness from sin.

Jesus’ sacrifice ushered in a different way to receive forgiveness from sin and avoid God’s judgment. Because I have accepted Jesus as my Savior, when I do something that is not in line with biblical standards, I can repent and receive forgiveness. I must simply tell God what I did, be *truly* sorry, and ask Him to forgive me. Instantly, forgiveness is mine: “He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9 *KJV*). The repentance happens in my heart and yields a lifestyle that honors God.

Sin does not have to linger in my life and negatively impact my relationship with God. When I realize I have done wrong, forgiveness is readily available through Jesus.

Father, there are times when my actions or thoughts may not be in line with Your Word. When that happens, speak to my heart and remind me that all I need to do is repent, and You will forgive me. In Jesus’ name I pray. Amen.

Discipline Produces Good Fruit

“No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it.”
(Hebrews 12:11)

Scripture: Hebrews 12:3–17

Song: “Where He Leads Me”

I was in line at a takeout restaurant. Ahead of me was a man with a young boy who appeared to be about five or six years old. The boy begged for a soda. When the man told the boy, “No, it’s not good for you,” the boy began to hit the man’s legs and shout, “I hate you! I hate you!” The man’s face turned red, and I could not help but think, “What kind of person will the boy become if this behavior continues uncorrected?”

The Bible conveys our heavenly Father’s wise instructions to us. In it He tells us what is good for us and what is not. He does not force us to open its pages or to do what it says. However, if we prioritize learning the Scriptures and live according to their wisdom, our lives will produce the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22–23). The righteousness that God’s Spirit produces in our lives helps us to look more like God’s Son, Jesus.

At times I have been tempted to respond to situations in my own way instead of God’s way. When I have yielded to temptation, it did not turn out well. Choosing to obey God’s Word is always best.

Father, when I am tempted to act differently than what the Bible teaches, help me resist the temptation and instead obey You. In Jesus’ name I pray. Amen.

Thankful Worship

Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us be thankful, and so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe. (Hebrews 12:28)

Scripture: Hebrews 12:18–29

Song: “I Stand in Awe”

Because we live in a troubled world, we hear distressing news on a regular basis. Just this week I encountered news of multiple wars being fought around the world, severe storms causing widespread power outages and significant damage, human trafficking, political unrest, and dozens of earthquakes.

Hebrews 12:28 reminds us that this world is not the end. When Jesus returns, He will bring a new heaven and earth, and His reign will be established. We who have received Jesus as our Savior will be welcomed into an unshakeable kingdom where war, calamity, and controversy have been abolished. No matter what happens in our earthly lives, we can rest assured that God’s promises are true. We can show God thankfulness, reverence, and sincere worship for this hope. When my focus is on God, I don’t read the news in the same manner.

When disturbing things happen, I reflect on our good God. He has brought me through so many challenging times. I also remind myself that God is in control. Every night my prayers start with thanking God for the day: not necessarily being thankful *for* the circumstances but giving thanks *in* the circumstances.

Father, there are distressing things that happen daily in the world and sometimes in my world. Help me to trust You and find hope in Your kingdom. In Jesus’ name I pray. Amen.

Speak Up

But as soon as Jeremiah finished telling all the people everything the LORD had commanded him to say, . . . all the people seized him and said, “You must die!” (Jeremiah 26:8)

Scripture: Jeremiah 1:6–10; 26:8–9, 12–15

Song: “Softly and Tenderly”

Throughout the Bible we read about those who spoke up for God at the cost of their freedom or their lives. Even today there are places where it is dangerous to be a Christian and to spread the gospel. A missionary friend shared about one country they visit regularly that heavily sanctions any group meeting of more than 15 minutes—and someone is always watching.

I have not faced such extreme situations. Yet, I have had to work hard to become comfortable sharing my faith when the opportunity presents itself. I used to wonder, “Will others want to hear what I have to say?” and “Will they be offended?” I have had to push past the self-questioning to do what Jesus commanded: “Go and make disciples” (Matthew 28:19). The world really needs to hear about Jesus. He is the solution for every problem.

My life has been transformed by faith in Christ. Because of that, I want as many people as possible to experience the life-changing power that is found in Jesus. I have made the commitment to share the good news!

Father, whatever the situation, help me to witness for You with my words and my lifestyle. In Jesus’ name I pray. Amen.