
THESE DAYS

Daily Devotions for Living by Faith



OCTOBER | NOVEMBER | DECEMBER | 2019

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ABOUT OUR WRITERS

THESE MOMENTS: AN OLDER MAN GIVES THANKS

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OCTOBER 1–5: THE SACRED PRESENCE OF GOD

Todd B. Freeman, 712 S. Columbia Ave., Tulsa, Oklahoma 74104, revtodd.freeman@cox.net, has served as pastor of College Hill Presbyterian Church since 2008. His ministry includes a dedication to inclusion, education, outreach, social justice, and progressive theology. He is active in the interfaith community of Tulsa and has a special interest in Celtic spirituality.

OCTOBER 6–12: BLOOM WHERE YOU ARE PLANTED

Marie Cook Waehler, Ocean View, Delaware, ChefMarieCook@gmail.com, is a member of Ocean View Presbyterian Church. She is a freelance writer who loves cooking, reading, photography, and needlework. She leads workshops on spiritual journaling and Christian meditation.

OCTOBER 13–19: GOD'S WORD FOR US

Bill Weimer, 5216 Antares Ct., Atlantic Beach, Florida 32233, chapbillret@gmail.com, attended the University of Florida, where he studied existential philosophy and the New Testament. A Presbyterian minister and retired navy chaplain, he and his wife have led Bible study discussion groups in congregations, campuses, and military commands for five decades.

OCTOBER 20–26: PRAY ALWAYS

Joan Standridge Gray, 147 15th St. NW, Apt. 16B, Atlanta, Georgia 30309, joansgray@earthlink.net, has served twelve congregations in the Atlanta area. Her latest call was as Mission Coordinator and Stated Clerk of Cherokee Presbytery. She is the author of *Spiritual Leadership for Church Officers* (Geneva Press, 2009) and *Sailboat Church* (Westminster John Knox Press, 2014).

OCTOBER 27–NOVEMBER 2: THE SAINTS OF GOD

Brian Ellison, Covenant Network of Presbyterians, 3210 Michigan Ave., Ste. 300, Kansas City, Missouri, 64109, brianellisonkc@gmail.com, is executive director of the Covenant Network of Presbyterians, a national organization working for full inclusion of LGBTQIA people in the church. He served as a pastor for thirteen years in Kansas City and is a contributor at KCUR, an NPR affiliate.

NOVEMBER 3–9: THANKS BE TO GOD

Denn Hollandsmith, Mount Joy, Pennsylvania, is a member of Derry Presbyterian Church, where he occasionally preaches. He has served as a Stephen Minister for First Presbyterian Church of Lancaster and loves delving into biblical texts in Greek.

NOVEMBER 10–16: IT TAKES ONLY . . .

Helen Donnelly Goehring, Seattle, Washington, hgoehring@comcast.net, spent thirty years in development work. At age sixty-eight, she moved to Seattle to join the Jesuit Volunteer Elder Corps. Helen attends St. James Catholic Church.

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 1, 2019

THE SACRED PRESENCE OF GOD

LAMENTATIONS 1:1-6

Lament

*How lonely sits the city
that once was full of people!
How like a widow she has become,
she that was great among the nations!*

Lamentations 1:1

Jerusalem has been destroyed by the Babylonians. The city, a shadow of its former self, lies in desolate ruin, with many of its people taken into exile. A lament, in the form of a dirge, is sung as the only way to express the devastation and pain that is so deeply felt by those who remain.

A lament, perhaps the most passionate expression of grief and anguish, originates and cries out from the very depths and core of our being. We don't talk often enough about the power of lament, especially as a way to share our deepest sense of loss, pain, sorrow, and regret with God. Even as we ask, "How long?" we help release to God that grief and anguish so that it doesn't fester into even more paralyzing pain. Lament is a prayer that ultimately expresses hope and trust in God, who is always with us, and within us, even during times of devastation. Is there a lament buried within you that needs to be released to God?

*Hear, O God, the laments that lie in the depths of
our being. Amen.*

Todd B. Freeman, Tulsa, Oklahoma

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 2, 2019

THE SACRED PRESENCE OF GOD

PSALM 137

Exile

*By the rivers of Babylon—
there we sat down and there we wept
when we remembered Zion.*

Psalm 137:1

After the Babylonians conquered Judah and destroyed the temple in the city of Jerusalem, many of Judah's inhabitants were carried off into exile to a foreign land. Zion had lived at the heart of the exiles' religious life. Their grief, heartache, and longing to return home are revealed in this psalm of lament. How is it possible—for them and for us—to worship God when our entire world has been turned upside down?

We don't usually read through to the end of this psalm in church. Why? The psalm turns from a tearful prayer that expresses sorrow and anguish to an angry request for retribution on those who have brought devastation and affliction to their lives. Such are the emotions associated with the experience of exile. Such are the emotions that should be shared with God. Have you ever had an experience of exile, of being displaced physically, emotionally, or spiritually from the heart of your life?

O God, hear our cries of anguish and anger when our lives are in upheaval. Amen.

Todd B. Freeman, Tulsa, Oklahoma

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 3, 2019

THE SACRED PRESENCE OF GOD

2 TIMOTHY 1:1-14

Memory

I am reminded of your sincere faith, a faith that lived first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice and now, I am sure, lives in you.

2 Timothy 1:5

Who are those persons who passed down faith to you? Timothy can trace his faith to his mother and grandmother, thus revealing the important role women have *always* played in sharing a living faith.

The faith passed on to Timothy is a “sincere” faith, literally in Greek meaning “without hypocrisy”—a faith that finds expression not just in beliefs but also in actions. Timothy is instructed, as are we, to “rekindle the gift of God that is within you” (v. 6).

Our faith is a gift of God, one that dwells within the depths of our very being. At times, that gift needs to be rekindled. Remember, a sincere faith comes with “a spirit of power and of love and of self-discipline” (v. 7), not of cowardice. Live boldly the faith you hold dear.

As I remember the people of faith who have made an impact on my life, rekindle the gift of sincere faith within me. Amen.

Todd B. Freeman, Tulsa, Oklahoma

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 4, 2019

THE SACRED PRESENCE OF GOD

LUKE 17:5-10

Faith

*The apostles said to the Lord, "Increase our faith!"
The Lord replied, "If you had faith the size of
a mustard seed, you could say to this mulberry
tree, 'Be uprooted and planted in the sea,' and it
would obey you."*

Luke 17:5-6

Why did the apostles ask Jesus to increase their faith? Most likely, it was their response to what Jesus had just told them in the verses prior to this passage. Jesus has just commanded his disciples to forgive those who repent. Forgiveness is hard. Do we not all need to increase our faith in order to fulfill that task?

Jesus' response has often been misinterpreted. Jesus was not scolding them for not having enough faith. Instead, Jesus was encouraging them by reminding them that even a small amount of faith is effective, powerful, and capable of doing miraculous things. Faith isn't to be quantified and measured. Faith is simply a trust and openness to connect with the powerful sacred presence of God in our midst.

*Empowering God, thank you for the gift of faith that
dwells within me. Amen.*

Todd B. Freeman, Tulsa, Oklahoma

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 5, 2019

THE SACRED PRESENCE OF GOD

LUKE 17:5-10

Service

“So you also, when you have done all that you were ordered to do, say, ‘We are worthless slaves; we have done only what we ought to have done!’”

Luke 17:10

Since the first Sunday in October is most commonly celebrated with a World Communion Sunday theme, chances are this difficult passage rarely makes its way into our awareness. Known as the parable of the Worthless Slave, this text comes across as harsh and ungrateful. To understand the parable, we must first set aside our modern cultural aversion to hearing a message about being worthless.

But looking through the lens of our relationship with God, we learn something important. As followers of the ways and teachings of Jesus, we are called to a way of life lived in obedience to God’s commands, such as loving our neighbors and forgiving others. We learn that a life of faith isn’t about collecting stars in our crown. That’s a misguided merit-based approach, not the grace-based approach offered by God. We are called to a life of service, just as Jesus was.

O God, remind us that we are simply called to a life of obedience and service. Amen.

Todd B. Freeman, Tulsa, Oklahoma