

## DAILY DEVOTIONS

### *Monday, April 5 – The Cost*

*When He had received the drink, Jesus said, “It is finished.” With that, He bowed His head and gave up His spirit.* John 19:30

Michelangelo’s works explored many facets of the life of Jesus, yet one of the most poignant was also one of the most simple. In the 1540s he sketched a pieta (a picture of Jesus’ mother holding the body of the dead Christ) for his friend Vittoria Colonna. Done in chalk, the drawing depicts Mary looking to the heavens as she cradles her Son’s still form. Rising behind Mary, the upright beam of the cross carries these words from Dante’s Paradise, “There they don’t think of how much blood it costs.” Michelangelo’s point was profound: when we contemplate the death of Jesus, we must consider the price He paid.

The price paid by Christ is captured in His dying declaration, “It is finished” (John 19:30). The term for *“it is finished”* (tetelestai) was used in several ways—to show a bill had been paid, a task finished, a sacrifice offered, a masterpiece completed. Each of them applies to what Jesus did on our behalf on the cross! Perhaps that’s why the apostle Paul wrote, *“May I never boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world”* (Galatians 6:14).

Jesus’ willingness to take our place is the eternal evidence of how much God loves us. As we contemplate the price He paid, may we also celebrate His love—and give thanks for the cross.

#### PRAYER:

*Father, when I consider the sacrifice Jesus made on my behalf, I am humbled and deeply grateful. Thank You for Jesus, and thank You for the cross. Amen.*

## *Tuesday, April 6 – Helpful*

*Share with the Lord's people who are in need. Practice hospitality.*

Romans 12:13

The caller to the Christian radio station said that his wife was coming home from the hospital following surgery. Then he shared something that spoke deeply to my heart: “Everyone in our church family has been so helpful in taking care of us during this time.”

When I heard this simple statement, it reminded me of the value and necessity of Christian hospitality and care. I began to think that the love and support of fellow believers for one another is one of the greatest ways to demonstrate the life-changing power of the gospel.

In First Peter, the apostle was writing a letter to be circulated among the first-century churches in what's now the country of Turkey. In that letter, he compelled his readers to do something that his friend Paul wrote about in Romans 12:13: “Practice hospitality.” Peter said, “Love each other deeply . . . offer hospitality,” and he told them to use the gifts God gave them to “serve others” (1 Peter 4:8–10). These are clear directions to all believers in Jesus for how we're to treat fellow believers.

All of us know people like that caller's wife—those who need someone to come alongside and show concern and Christ-like love. In God's strength, may we be among the ones who are noted for being “so helpful.”

PRAYER:

*Father, help me to look around for people who need an encouraging word or action from me. Then help me offer hospitality to them. Amen.*

## ***Wednesday, April 7 – Facing Your Battles With God***

***In the Lord I will put my trust; How can you say to my soul, “Flee as a bird to your mountain”?*** *Psalm 11:1*

The heroic deeds of US Army soldier Desmond Doss are featured in the 2016 movie *Hacksaw Ridge*. While Doss’ convictions wouldn’t allow him to take human life, as an army medic he committed himself to preserving life even at the risk of his own. The citation read at Doss’ Medal of Honor ceremony on October 12, 1945, included these words: “Private First Class Doss refused to seek cover and remained in the fire-swept area with the many stricken, carrying them one by one to the edge of the escarpment. . . . He unhesitatingly braved enemy shelling and small arms fire to assist an artillery officer.”

In Psalm 11, David’s conviction that his refuge was in God compelled him to resist suggestions to flee rather than face his foes (vv. 2–3). Six simple words comprised his statement of faith: “*In the Lord I take refuge*” (v. 1). That well-rooted conviction would guide his conduct.

David’s words in verses 4–7 amplified God’s greatness. Yes, life can sometimes be like a battlefield, and hostile fire can send us scattering for cover when we’re bombarded with health challenges or financial, relational, and spiritual stresses. So, what should we do? Acknowledge that God is the king of the universe (v. 4); take delight in His amazing capacity to judge with precision (vv. 5–6); and rest in His delight in what’s right, fair, and equitable (v. 7). We can run swiftly to God for shelter!

### **PRAYER:**

*Father, help me to see You more clearly than any force that opposes me and run to You for true safety and security. Amen.*

## *Thursday, April 8– Slum Songs*

*They will enter Zion with singing; everlasting joy will crown their heads.*

Isaiah 35:10

Cateura is a small slum in Paraguay, South America. Desperately poor, its villagers survive by recycling items from its rubbish dump. But from these unpromising conditions something beautiful has emerged—an orchestra.

With a violin costing more than a house in Cateura, the orchestra had to get creative, crafting its own instruments from their garbage supply. Violins are made from oil cans with bent forks as tailpieces. Saxophones have come from drainpipes with bottle tops for keys. Cellos are made from tin drums with gnocchi rollers for tuning pegs. Hearing Mozart played on these contraptions is a beautiful thing. The orchestra has gone on tour in many countries, lifting the sights of its young members.

Violins from landfills. Music from slums. That’s symbolic of what God does. For when the prophet Isaiah envisions God’s new creation, a similar picture of beauty-from-poverty emerges, with barren lands bursting into blooming flowers (Isaiah 35:1–2), deserts flowing with streams (vv. 6–7), castaway war tools crafted into garden instruments (2:4), and impoverished people becoming whole to the sounds of joyful songs (35:5–6, 10).

“The world sends us garbage,” Cateura’s orchestra director says. “We send back music.” And as they do, they give the world a glimpse of the future, when God will wipe away the tears of every eye and poverty will be no more.

PRAYER:

*Holy Spirit, turn the poverty in my life into something beautiful. Amen.*

## *Friday, April 9 – The Reason for Rest*

*What do people get for all the toil and anxious striving with which they labor under the sun?* Ecclesiastes 2:22

If you want to live longer, take a vacation! Forty years after a study of middle-aged, male executives, who each had a risk of heart disease, researchers in Helsinki, Finland, followed up with their study participants. The scientists discovered something they hadn't been looking for in their original findings: the death rate was lower among those who had taken time off for vacations.

Work is a necessary part of life—a part God appointed to us even before our relationship with Him was fractured in Genesis 3. Solomon wrote of the seeming meaninglessness of work experienced by those not working for God's honor—recognizing its “*anxious striving*” and “*grief and pain*” (Ecclesiastes 2:22–23). Even when they're not actively working, he says their “minds do not rest” because they're thinking about what still needs to be done (v. 23).

We too might at times feel like we're “*chasing after the wind*” (v. 17) and grow frustrated by our inability to “finish” our work. But when we remember that God is part of our labor—our purpose—we can both work hard and take time to rest. We can trust Him to be our Provider, for He's the giver of all things. Solomon acknowledges, “*without him, who can eat or find enjoyment?*” (v. 25).

*PRAYER:*

*Father, thank You for loving me so much. A love that encourages us to rest. May we find complete rest in You! Amen.*

## *Saturday, April 10 – Releasing Now for Greater*

***“Thus says the Lord to you: Do not be afraid nor dismayed because of this great multitude, for the battle is not yours, but Gods ”*** 2 Chr. 20:15

Have you surrendered to what God has called you to do?

Matthew 10:39: “...He that loseth his life for My sake shall find it.” Pay close attention to these words, for they are so very important if you really want to experience God’s fullness during your life journey. The word “loseth” means to release — as to release one’s rights to something. It is the picture of the full surrender of one’s life. But the key is not just forfeiting your own dreams and desires, but rather doing it “for Jesus’ sake.”

The word “find” means to find or to discover. It is the jubilant expression of one who shouts out, “I found it! By asking us to release or surrender our dreams to Him, He is never trying to take something from us; He wants to give us something wonderful. But to receive what He desires to give, we first have to release what we were holding on to and surrender to what He wants to do in and through us.

What about you? What is God asking you to release so He can give you something far greater? I assure you that God is not trying to deprive you of anything. He wants to give you something bigger and better than your imagination could ever conceive. He simply needs your agreement to release your own ideas and to surrender to what He has waiting for you. When you step out of your own realm into Jesus’ realm of possibilities, you’ll find yourself forever grateful that He gave you the courage to say yes when His call to “lose,” or surrender your life came to you!

PRAYER:

*Father, in Jesus’ Name, this is my surrender. I lay down my earthly weapons. I lay down my striving. I lay down my attempts to win my own battles. I cannot win on my own. But You can, and the battle belongs to You. I surrender all to You. I boast only about Your goodness, love, and strength. Father, I don’t want to hold on to my life and, as a result, miss the great adventure You have planned for me and my family. Forgive me for not trusting You — and help me put all fear and doubt aside. Help me allow Your power and love to sink deep into my heart for what You are asking me to do. I repent for hesitating and holding back out of a sense of self-preservation and a fear of the unknown. Today I fully surrender my life and my future to You. In Jesus’ Name, Amen*

## *Sunday, April 11 – Are You Listening?*

*Whether you turn to the right or to the left, your ears will hear a voice behind you, saying, "This is the way; walk in it."*

Isaiah 30:21

Four-year-old Beverly was playing with her toys. Her mother, who was folding laundry across the room, noticed that Beverly's shirt was dirty and needed to be changed. She told Beverly to take it off and bring it to her so that she could wash it.

After telling her twice with no response, her mother finally gave her the full three-name call: "Beverly Elizabeth Provost, did you hear me?" Beverly answered, "Yes, Mama. My ears did, but my legs didn't."

Sometimes we don't hear God's directions because we're simply too busy; we're not listening with our whole being. What is God calling you to do today? To quote John McArthur, "In many ways, the attitude of obedience is much more vital than the act, because if the attitude is right, the act will naturally follow."

Are you ready to listen with your legs as well as your ears?

Prayer:

*Dear Father, help me to be still and listen to You so that I know what You want me to do. In Jesus Name I pray, Amen.*