



The

Sanctuary

You are God's Temple

...God's Spirit Lives in You. 1 Cor. 3:15

BLESSED SAVIOR LUTHERAN CHURCH + 1205 NORTH LINCOLN AVE. + O'FALLON, IL 62269 + 618=632-0126 + WWW.MYBSLC.ORG

Upcoming Events

August/September 2023

Sunday August 20

Worship in the Park
10 am

Rally Day and Church Picnic follow

Pool Party—Casa Monaco
4-6 p.m.

Mon. Aug. 21, 28

Support Group 7 pm

Sept. 4, 11, 18, 25

Support Group 7 pm

Sun. Aug. 27, Sept. 3

Worship 930 am

Mon. Sept. 4, 11, 18, 25

Support Group 7

Tues. Sept. 5

Quilting 930-12

Elders Mtg. 7

Wed. Sept. 6, 13, 20, 27

Ladies Bible Study 10 am

Sat. Sept. 9

Basket Weaving 10-2

Sun. Sept. 10, 17, 24

Worship 930 am

Sun School & Adult Bible

Study 1045 am

Tues. Sept. 12

Church Council 7

Tues. Sept. 19

Christian Ed & Youth 7 pm

Wed. Sept. 20,

Adult Choir begins 7 pm

Thurs. Sept. 21

Fellowship Meeting 430 pm

Ladies Night Bunco 6pm

Tues. Sept. 26

Stewardship Mtg 6 pm

Wed. Sept. 27

Adult Choir 7 pm

Friday Sept. 29

Friendship Dinner 6 pm

Sign up in the narthex

Bring a friend!

Sunday, August 20 Worship at the City Park

10:00 a.m.

Followed by Rally Day
& Church Picnic



Worship in
the Park



Sunday School Rally Day

Sunday, August 20

City Park following Worship

Approximately 11:00 a.m.

Come for fun, games and sign up for
Sunday School

Annual Church Picnic

Following Worship and Rally Day

Sunday, August 20

Approximately noon

Sign up in the Narthex to attend and bring
items to share to picnic

Reservations need to be made by

Thursday, August 17

Free Will offering will be gathered.



Join us at the
**Church
Picnic!**



Pool Party!!

Sunday, August 20

Casa Monaco

11190 Hagemann Rd

Lebanon, IL

4:00 p.m.—6:00 p.m.

Come and bring your friends!



Friendship Dinner

Blessed Savior Youth Invite you to the
Friendship Dinner & Dessert Auction

Friday, September 15

6:00 p.m.

More information to follow





Blessed Savior Family,

Take a moment to read Psalm 100. It will just take 30 seconds. I'll wait.

Now, would you focus on the last three words of the 5th verse: "to all generations!" That's us!! What this text says in plain Hebrew is that the Lord's goodness (חסד) steadfast love (חַסֵּד) and faithfulness (אֱמֻנָה) for all generations!

Blessed Savior congregation is going through a generational change. As I look back over the past 29 years, I have seen so many blessings. What a joy to have baptized both infants and adults in Christ, to have studied the Scriptures and been mutually encouraged by them, and to see the fruit of faith form in our children who, confirmed in the faith, have grown up to be mature Christians. There is not a person among us who doesn't want those blessings to continue to be passed on to future generations. So this is an exciting time as the torch is being passed to the next generation to hear the call of the Lord and to do His bidding.

Psalm 100

Now, while the church may experience changes in procedure, government, music etc., (don't let anyone tell you the church hasn't changed), what will not change is God's Word.

God's Word and the doctrines that proceed from it are of ultimate importance. They contain everything we need to be nurtured in the faith and to grow as mature Christians. They contain the promises God has made in this life and the next like, the assurance of the forgiveness of sin and our salvation through Christ's sacrificial death and resurrection. The next generation needs these promises and assurance just as much as ours so that we don't live in despair, doubt and uncertainty of God's intentions. Passing on the faith to future generations requires diligence and repetition so that those teachings go deep into the soul.

There's an apocryphal story about a Lutheran pastor who is teaching his confirmation class about the Sacraments. He noticed that little Johnny sitting in the back was not paying attention. He decided he would call the boy out in order to get to start paying attention.

"Johnny," the pastor sternly called out. Little Johnnie looked up. "Pay attention. The Sacraments are very important to the church."

"I know," Little Johnny said.

"Then how many Sacraments are there in the Lutheran Church?" asked the pastor.

Little Johnnie panicked and thought of what his parents considered very important in church. Then he took a deep breath and replied, "Two."

The pastor was impressed. He couldn't believe he got it right. "And what are those two sacraments?" he asked.

Confident now that he had it right, little Johnny replied, "Coffee and Potlucks!"

The generation that valued coffee and potlucks may be passing, but the teachings of Christ will never outlive their value to every human being of every generation. I know you believe that to be true. But to insure a continuation of the instruction of the Lord to the next and future generations means we must all be engaged in that work. Not just the pastor, but everyone in the church family.

Here are some things that are happening at Blessed Savior in August and September and some areas where you might help the mission of bringing Christ to our beloved community in Metro St. Louis.

Make a joyful noise to the LORD, all the earth!

Serve the LORD with gladness!

Come into his presence with singing!

Know that the LORD, he is God!

It is he who made us, and we are his;

we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture.

Enter his gates with thanksgiving,

and his courts with praise!

Give thanks to him; bless his name!

For the LORD is good;

his steadfast love endures forever,

and his faithfulness to all generations. (ESV)

This Sunday, August 20th is our annual **Worship in the Park**. The service starts at 10 AM. Worship is where the church is fed for ministry. It will be followed by Rally Day activities to get the kids prepared for the Sunday School year. The picnic (the 3rd Lutheran sacrament J), is a great way to fellowship with old and new members of our congregation. Friendship is the foundation upon which the church practices reconciliation and love. Please call the church office this week or contact Ginger Kieffer (gkieffer24@gmail.com) to register so we can provide enough burgers and brats for all. An opportunity to share your favorite salad or dessert is also provided.

The Monaco Family has invited everyone for a relaxing **Pool Party and Refreshments** for additional fellowship that afternoon (4 – 6ish PM). Their address is: 11190 Hageman Rd. Lebanon, IL. It is approximately 4 miles from the church.

Sunday School will begin September 10, the Sunday AFTER Labor Day. We are not only looking for active participation to inculcate the teachings of our Lord, but we are looking for teachers who will give themselves to the task of instructing the youth of our congregation. We always say that one of the best ways of growing as a Christian is to teach the faith to others. Please call or contact me (pv@mybslc.org) if you are willing to tackle this most important office in the church.

Starting in September is the **Basket Weaving Class** for people of all ages. The next event is on Saturday, **Sept 9 from 10-2 PM**. Contact Charla Morton mrtn105@att.net if you are interested.

The Ladies' Bunko Night (the 3rd Thursday of the month) has been a great outreach to the women of our community. The first fall meeting will be Thursday, **September 21 at 6 p.m.**

The Youth and Fellowship Committees are working together for the annual **Friendship Dinner** which has been scheduled for Friday, September 29 (6 PM). Chef Noah Geis will be planning a meal that will delight the taste buds. A Dessert Auction to support the Youth will conclude the evening.

As you know, my last Sunday as your pastor will be December 31, 2023. With that announcement months ago, we have already begun to plan for the transition to a new pastor. It's time to pass the torch on to the next generation of believers. A Call Committee has been formed to analyze the data from the self-study that was made available to you. They will be receiving Pastoral Information Packets of pastors to be considered for the call to BSLC. SID President Timothy Scharr will be sending Blessed Savior an interim pastor to serve you until the call process is completed and new pastor is installed. Pray that God will make clear to us the man of His choice.

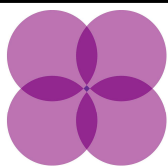
I'm looking forward to my last Sunday as your pastor but not for the reason you might be thinking. Former member Mike Bradfield, now living in San Antonio, TX stopped by the house the other day. In jest, I suggested that he come back for my last Sunday so we can get the Blessed Savior Vocal Band (David Kempton, Mike Bradfield, Eric Stake and Paul Kempton) together for the last time. To my shock, they have all (three of whom live in other states) agreed to come back for that special day. I am so looking forward to giving God praise one more time with these brothers in Christ. So this is just a "heads up" to save December 31 on your calendar.

For now, "I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus." (Philippians 3:14).

In His Service + By His Grace,
Pastor Vern

You might be a Lutheran if:

- ...a meeting isn't a meeting unless it lasts three hours.
- ...when you hear someone mention the colors "red and green" you don't think of Christmas you think of a battle over hymnals.
- ...You consider a WELS bride and a LCMS groom a mixed marriage.
- ...whenever something changes, the old way was better.
- ...the only German you know is the four verses of "Silent Night" which you know by memory.
- ...your church is heavily divided over whether it's a "hot-dish" or a "casserole"
- ...the church burns down and you run in to save the coffee pots.



Fellowship Committee

Your Fellowship Board has been working through the summer on events scheduled to the end of the year. In August we have the Worship in the Park Event this Sunday the 20th. Bring a dish to share and there will be a FREE WILL OFFERING.

In September we will be bringing back Ladies Bunco on Sept 21, at 6p.m. Bring an appetizer to share and let's have some fun!

We also now have a Basket Weaving guild. The guild meets every 2nd Sat of the Month. Next meeting will be held the 9th of Sept at 10 a.m., in the Fellowship Hall. All are welcome and if you want to make a basket, let us know the Sunday before so we can get the materials for you. Septembers Basket Weaving is an open weave meaning you can work on any project you like. Please contact Ginger @ gkief-fer24@charter.net or 618-407-2639 if you need assistance or want to know more.

On September 29 at 6 p.m. we will be helping the Youth with the Friendship Dinner & Dessert Auction. More details to follow. Sign up for this event in the Narthex. Come over and have a great time at this event. This event always promises to be a great time.

Starting the second Sunday in Sept, we will be having WOODS Bakery Donuts Again for Fellowship after the morning worship service. As always, this too is a Free will offering to help with the cost of Donuts and Coffee, Juice, etc. We will always try to have fruit with the donuts for those who prefer something else.

And that's the catch up for August and September 2023.

Hope to see everyone enjoying the events.

Gwen and Ginger

BUNCO RETURNS THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 21



Ladies! Sign up in the Narthex to attend Bunco on Thursday, September 21. Don't miss out! It's fun! No experience necessary!



All youth are invited to a day of fun in the sun and *Raging Rivers*!

Saturday, August 26

Time tba—they open at 10 am

We need a couple adult volunteers to help with transportation and chaperones.

Call Taylor Michael 618-407-1000 for more info or

To sign up. Friends are welcome!

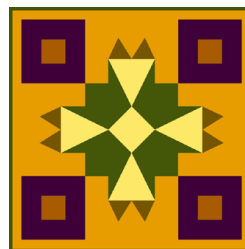
Join the Choir!!

♪♪ Music ♪♪ Fun ♪♪ Fellowship ♪♪

When: Adult choir will resume Wed, Sept 20, 2023 at 7pm!!

Where: BSLC Sanctuary

Please join us singing praise to God!



Join the Lutheran World Relief QUILTERS on **Tuesdays, Sept. 5, Oct. 3 & Nov. 7** from 9:30–12:00 p.m. to tie quilts. (We don't actually quilt by hand. Instead we secure the layers by hand tying them.) Come and join us for a time of good ole fellowship. Hope to see you there! Mark your calendar for the 1st Tuesday of each month. If you have any fabric pieces, thin blankets, curtains, drapes, sheets, etc. you no longer need, the quilters would love to recycle them into quilts.



Stewardship CORNER



Go ... Sell All You Have?

"What must I do to inherit eternal life?" asked the rich young ruler. Jesus said, "You know the commandments." And he replied, "All these I have kept from my youth." And Jesus said to him, "One thing you still lack. Sell all that you have and distribute to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me" (Luke 18:18–22).

When we hear this story, this question comes to mind: is Jesus speaking to us also, or only to the rich young ruler? In other words, is Jesus telling us to sell all that we have and give it to the poor?

As good Lutherans, we answer, "No!" But why? Why should we not sell all that we have and distribute it to the poor? The simplest explanation is this: if we sold everything we have, our wife and our children would be neglected. In other words, to sell everything we have and give it to the poor would ignore, even abandon, those whom God has placed in our care. Our money, everything we have, is not to be used solely for the church. But that doesn't excuse us from using our money for the purpose God intends.

Everyone has three stations in life, three spheres in which we live and are to be of service to our neighbors. These stations are the church, the family and society. We are members of all three of these by birth. We are born into the church by water and the Word of God, and our duties to others in the church arise from our Baptism into the church. We are born into a family, and our duties to others stem from our birth into that family. Finally, we are born into society, which is simply a further extension of our birth into our family. The duties we have toward other members of society come from either our own birth or the birth of others into the same society.

All that we have and all that we are ought to be pressed into service for the church, the family and society. If we were to sell all we have and give only to one, the other two would be neglected, and we would falter in fulfilling our duties.

So, consider your life and all that you have in light of these three stations. You pay taxes to support and help those in society. You save for college for your children, and provide food, clothing and shelter for the members of your family.

But the station that is usually thought of last is the church. Since the needs of the family and society are more immediate, the church is often given what is left over. This is not how it should be. Rather, we are to give of our first fruits, from off the top, the best, even as Abel gave the best of his flock.

This requires forethought. It means that you sit down and make a plan of what you will give from the beginning. It means sticking to it even when it seems that there are other more immediate and pressing things.

And this is all the more necessary now as we enter into periods of time where giving is low due to high unemployment or where restrictions on meeting in church limit opportunities to give. If we love God and His gifts of forgiveness given through the means of grace, which we receive at church and only at church, then we will support it, just as we love our country and our family. For all that we have and all that we are is given to us by our gracious God. He spared no expense for us and our salvation. He gave up His Son to death so that our sins are forgiven, and we will live. What's more, He provides for all that we need for this body and life. And our lives in this world, among these three spheres of church, family and society are to mirror the generosity of the one who gave us life in all three at birth.

Don't let the church, your divine family, be an afterthought or even ignored. It is nurturing you, bringing you up in salvation through Word and Sacrament. – LCMS Stewardship Ministry: lcms.org/stewardship

Define Your Life by How You Give

Winston Churchill reportedly said that "we make a living by what we get, but we make a life by what we give." According to Churchill, our lives are defined not by what we have gotten, but by what we give away.

Our Lord's life is defined in this way. He gave completely of Himself for us. He became man for us. He taught the truth of God's Word. He healed those with many and various diseases. He died the death that we deserved for our sins. He gave of Himself in order to save us from sin, death and hell. And so it is that by giving completely of Himself, He got for Himself us, making us citizens of His eternal kingdom by grace.

Continued page 6

Define Your Life by How You Give (cont.)

As it was for Jesus, so it also is for us. We get more from giving than we do from simply getting. For giving softens our hearts and frees us from the grip which the worries of this world and making a living has on us. For when we are singularly focused on making a living, we are singularly focused on what we get. That mindset begins to bleed into all areas of our lives — our relationships with friends and family, with neighbors and coworkers, and with the Lord. It shifts our focus from asking the question, “How can I be a friend, family member, neighbor and servant to others,” to asking the question, “What have they done for me lately?” We become more selfish instead of selfless.

But when we give, we do not have less, we do not become less; rather, we have more and become more. When we give, we join in the bond of friendship and family, the bond of service to those around us out of love for them. And love is the fulfillment of the Law. It is the nature of God Himself, for God is Love. Thus, we are participating in the divine nature. As Jesus said, “It is more blessed to give than to receive” (Acts 20:35). – LCMS Stewardship Ministry: lcms.org/stewardship

This year, [National Suicide Prevention Week](#) begins on September 10 with World Suicide Prevention Day. But AFSP recognizes the entire month of September as National Suicide Prevention Month – and this email serves as a special sneak peek at what we have planned.

Building on our recently launched [Talk Away the Dark](#) campaign, which encourages everyone to make a difference by learning the warning signs, knowing the risk factors, and bravely having a REAL open and honest conversation with someone we care about, we will be highlighting specific actions throughout the month that you can take to help save lives, and rally more people in your communities to fight this leading cause of death.

AFSP continues to shed light on the role each and every one of us can play to help stop suicide. In support of National Suicide Prevention Month, you can watch and share the Talk Away the Dark [PSA film](#), and spread its message with [shareable social graphics and other materials](#). By knowing the [risk factors](#) and [warning signs](#), and learning to have open and honest conversations, we can all make a difference for the people we care about.

In September and beyond, we're encouraging the public to help Talk Away the Dark by taking action. There are so many ways you can help prevent suicide — these are just a few ways to get started:

Join a [local AFSP chapter](#) to drive change and understanding in your community

With local programs and events in all 50 states, AFSP's chapters are at the forefront of suicide prevention. Start a conversation in your community and send the message that suicide no longer hides in the shadows.

Advocate for support for the 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline, and other suicide prevention and mental health policies that will make a difference

Speak your mind and let your public officials know you're ready to stand up by becoming a [Volunteer Advocate](#) and learning more about how we can support issues, like raising funds and support for the [988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline](#)

Educate by bringing the [Talk Saves Lives program](#) to your school or workplace

Knowledge and understanding deepens conversations. AFSP's flagship education program is available in specialized modules, including [TSL — Latinx and Hispanic Communities](#), which you can bring to your community for National Hispanic Heritage Month (September 15 – October 15)

Attend an [International Survivors of Suicide Loss Day](#) event

Those who have lost a loved one to suicide often feel hesitant to talk to others about the type of loss they have experienced. September is a great time to talk away by the dark by spreading the word about the hundreds of local and virtual “Survivor Day” events taking place each November — including Día de Esperanza (Day of Hope) for the Hispanic community

Watch a special episode of *Ask Dr. Jill*

At 3pm ET on September 13, you can tune in to a special episode of *Ask Dr. Jill*, “Communicating Safely About Suicide,” featuring AFSP's Senior Vice President of Research, Dr. Jill Harkavy-Friedman, with guest Dr. Madelyn Gould, an expert on suicide contagion, as well as reporting and storytelling practices that safely drive the national conversation



2— Anne Siron
 6- Glenn Dalton, William Boswell
 7- Wayne Husemann
 7—Bryan Conrad, 8—Brooks Dalton
 9—Haley Bartimus, Gavin Hill, Kelly Siron
 14—George Kruse 16—Emily Sanchez, Diane Schefelker
 17 – Janet Satrom, Patty Gruhn
 18 – John Lundeby, Jared Brockmeyer
 23 – Linda Williams, Sue Rogers, Donna Brockmeyer
 24 Marvin Ganger
 26 Claire Morton, Jackson Morton
 29 –Greg Kieffer, Hannah Grant
 30 – Kim Kesting



1—Peter & Sunnie Hollenbeck
 4—Tom & Gwen Borsch
 7 – Wayne & Kathy Husemann
 14—Dan & Rachel Schmidt
 20 – Eric & Mary Stake
 22 – Billy & Buffi Gass
 22—Harry & Peggy Russell
 22—Don & Mary Geis

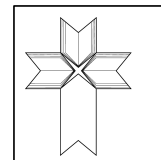
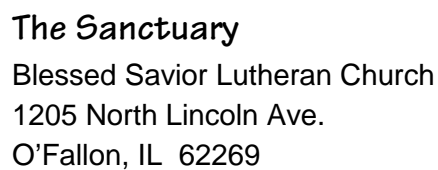
We are sorry if your birthday or anniversary has been overlooked. Please call the church office, 632-0126 or email Nancy at nancy@mybslc.org so we may add your name to our list. Thanks for your help.



1 – Amy Calzada
 3 – Dave Couture
 5 – Angie Conrad
 8 – Mark Poteet, Kara Hubecky
 9 – Cornelia Paulsen (95!), Wren Grant
 10 – Laura Drouin
 11– Nic Kjosa
 12 – Kirk Satrom
 13—Brittni Gass
 16 – Emilie Wickline
 18 – Bob Morton, Miranda Brockmeyer
 19– Olivia Siron
 20 – Julianne Reynolds, Robert Bruns
 21– Marsha Strohm
 22 – Dave Longhorn
 23 Mackenna Leech
 25 – Ken Vohlken, Hanna Schmidt, Jean Miller
 26—AJ Monaco
 28 – Phyllis Miesner



2—John & Ann Lundeby
 6- John & Joan Gefferth
 10—Mark & Lauren Morton
 11 – David & Polly Ziegler
 24—Mitch & Jackie Davis
 28—Dave & Chris Couture
 30 – Kale & Donna Jackson



Answer: I thank my God every time I remember you. In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy. (Philippians 1:3-4, NIV)

Turn Your Platform into an Altar

Having a platform — or an avenue to communicate with lots of people — can be useful to share important messages, as long as we don't focus on our number of followers and pageviews. A platform also may tempt us to think we're the gift being offered; instead, I like to picture an altar. It's a place of offering and humility, where we give sacrificially through the reach God provides.

Use these reminders to view your platform as an altar:

- Strive to obey and trust God, who calls and strengthens you.
- Be a good steward of God's gifts and messages, caring for the people you're reaching.

Avoid comparisons with others, looking to God alone for validation and approval.

Through Abraham's willingness to surrender his only son, the Old Testament patriarch modeled how a platform can become an altar. So did Jesus, the sinless Lamb of God, who became the ultimate sacrifice to pay our debt. As his New Testament followers, it's our privilege to invite others into this paradoxical kingdom, to give of ourselves as a living sacrifice.—Monica Wilkinson

An Abundance of Gifts

In 2022, people set some amazing Guinness World Records. A Nebraska man paddled more than 37 miles in a hollowed-out pumpkin boat. A Vermont teen wearing 4-inch heels walked more than 600 feet across a tightrope. And an Oregon man found and alphabetized all 26 letters in a can of alphabet soup in 2 minutes and 8.6 seconds. (The toughest part, he says, is distinguishing subtle differences between letters such as M and W.)

Your talents might not earn you any world records, but they certainly can grow faith and change lives. Whether you're good at teaching, singing, writing, cooking or accounting, the church can put those skills to productive use. Romans 12 lists many more qualities you may not realize are spiritual gifts: graciousness, serving, generosity, acts of mercy, loving and honoring others, extending hospitality, rejoicing and weeping with people, making peace.

You might not be able to outperform the alphabet soup record. But God abundantly blesses each of us to "outdo one another in showing honor" (Romans 12:10, ESV) and in sharing his love.—Stephanie Martin

Welcomed Back to the Fold

When her beloved dogs "returned home from an adventure smelling of eau de skunk parfum," Pastor Joanna Loucky-Ramsey refused to let them in the house. Instead, she cleaned and cared for them outside, slowly reintroducing them to "full participation in family life" once the stink eased.

"The odor left by the skunk could serve as a metaphor for our sin or for the sin others perpetrate against us," she writes. "As much as God loves us, he hates the sin that hides the lovely fragrance of the image of God within each of us. God wants to welcome each of us into his family and into the heavenly home he has prepared for us, but we need to be 'deodorized' from the eau de sin parfum that would mar the entire experience of being in God's fragrant presence."

Loucky-Ramsey continues: "Just as our dogs needed our help to get rid of the smell of skunk, we need God's help to purge us from the offense of sin that permeates our nature and masks who God created us to be. That's what Jesus accomplished by his death and resurrection: to make us new and whole."—adapted from The Wired Word

When We Least Deserve Love

"Love me when I least deserve it," says a Swedish proverb, "because that's when I really need it." My mom recounts how my 1-year-old sister, scooting around in a walker, somehow got hold of and spilled a loosely capped bottle of cooking oil. As Mom cleaned up, my sis scooted into the bathroom and unwound all the toilet paper.

Mom went to investigate the ruckus, and as she respoiled the TP, my sister went back to the kitchen, pulled crackers out of a lower cupboard, tossed them on the floor and drove over them — in the remaining oil. At that point, Mom decided it was naptime! Yet I know Mom laid her little one in her crib with tender love. After a rest, they'd start afresh.

In John 21, the risen Jesus addresses Peter, who had denied him three times the night of Jesus' arrest. But Jesus didn't treat Peter harshly. In love, the Savior offered his disciple a fresh start. So too, when we're at our worst, hurting God's heart by hurting others and creation, God loves us all the more. He loves us into a fresh start — even, and especially, when we least deserve it.—Heidi Hyland Mann



The following items serve as “little guideposts on the footpath to peace,” according to author and pastor Henry Van Dyke (1852-1933):

- to be glad of life, because it gives you the chance to love and to work and to play and to look up at the stars;
- to be satisfied with your possessions but not content with yourself until you have made the best of them;
- to despise nothing in the world except falsehood and meanness, and to fear nothing except cowardice;
- to covet nothing of your neighbor's except [their] kindness of heart and gentleness of manners;
- to think seldom of your enemies, often of your friends and every day of Christ;
- to spend as much time as you can with body and with spirit in God's out-of-doors.

Keep Trying

In *The God Who Stays*, contemporary Christian musician Matthew West writes about the pandemic's fear-filled early days. After his concert tour was abruptly canceled in March 2020, he rode to an airport “feeling utterly hopeless about a world that was spinning out of control.”

Then Arthur, his ride-share driver, began singing along to the radio — and the song happened to be West's “The God Who Stays.” West joined in, jokingly asking how he sounded. “Not so good,” Arthur replied, not knowing West's identity. “You keep trying.”

The driver shared how those lyrics uplifted him during life's difficulties, and West later recalled that conversation during lockdown, while wondering where God was. The musician realized he had “settled for a socially distant relationship with the One who is nearer than I dare to believe, closer than the air I breathe.” But West pictured “God running toward me with open arms like the prodigal's father,” and he resolved to keep trying — and to grow closer to the God who always stays.

Ingredients for True Success

How far you go in life depends on your being tender with the young, compassionate with the aged, sympathetic with the striving and tolerant of the weak and strong. Because someday in your life you will have been all of these.—George Washington Carver

God is Watching

In the cafeteria line one day, a seminary dean noticed a bowl of big, juicy oranges. A sign by it read, “Take only one. God is watching you!” At the other end of the lunch line sat a large plate of freshly baked chocolate chip cookies. Beside it was a hastily scrawled note, likely from a hungry student: “Take as many cookies as you want. God is back there watching the oranges.”

The message behind that good-natured irreverence? If you believe that God's sight is limited to one place, then your idea of God is too small!—adapted from *The Wired Word*

Blessed With Work

In the movie *Return to Me*, Grace works for her grandfather, Marty, in his restaurant, and the two live upstairs. After closing time one night, Grace looks through the apartment window and sees Marty cleaning tables. She yells down to ask if he wants help, and he replies, “No, dear, that's okay. I'm blessed with work.”

Here's a man well past retirement age laboring extra hours after his staff has clocked out. Marty simply continues to delight in his work, despite the late hour.

Although this snippet had little to do with the movie's plot, I've always remembered Marty's words. But I don't think I've ever claimed to be “blessed with work.” By contrast, I often sigh as I'm dealing with messes or long to-do lists. I can get so caught up in tasks that I overlook the incredible people around me. I miss out on the blessing — the joy — of work.

Ecclesiastes 5:19 (NLT) says, “To enjoy your work ... is indeed a gift from God.” In what ways are you “blessed with work”?—Janna Firestone

Continuing Education

In September, Christian education programs are in full swing. How wonderful to see classrooms of children learning about Jesus! But what about the grown-ups? Some parents who make sure their kids get to Sunday school don't attend Bible study themselves.

Following and learning about Christ are lifelong pursuits. If we are to love God with our *mind* (as well as with our heart, soul and strength), then we must keep learning even into old age. Plus, when we are well informed about God's Word and our faith, we can share it with non-Christians and express the reason for our hope (see 1 Peter 3:15).

To love God with "all your mind" (Mark 12:30), find an adult Bible study or small group that dives into Scripture. Then humbly wear the label of lifelong learner, knowing that God still has new things to teach even the most seasoned Christian.

Christ Still Calls Us

The rugged hills of Galilee drop down to meet the sea
Where burly men still mend their nets, still fish there eagerly.

The sea's the same place where Christ said, "Lay down your nets and heed
My call to love all people, and serve them in their need."

"I'll help you fish for humankind," he told them long ago.
His call's still heard, His help's still real today, as we well know.

Yes, people still are leaving "nets" wherever they might be,
And as disciples still go forth to serve Christ willingly.—Peggy Ferrell

Being NICER as Christians at Work

"As working Christians, we are deeply aware of the gap that exists between Sunday and Monday," writes Roland Heersink, founder of the God & Work Initiative. "Although the two days are next to each other on the calendar, they seem miles apart. On Sunday we hear that we are children of God, saved by grace in Jesus Christ. On Monday, there are endless emails to be answered, spreadsheets to be completed, people to be hired and fired, meetings to attend, and important decisions to be made."

For a stronger relationship between our roles as faith-filled Christians and employees, Heersink uses the acronym NICER. How well do you live out these five essentials in your work life?

No Compromise (See Daniel 1:8-14.)

Integrity (See Daniel 6:1-5.)

Compassionate in Relationships (Follow Jesus' example.)

Excellence ("Do your best, and let Jesus do the rest.")

Responsible to Others (Be a good Samaritan.)



Going to School With Jesus

In *Faith Takes a Name*, Dwight E. Stevenson writes that if we consider ourselves to be disciples of Jesus, then we must remain "learners under the instruction of Christ." He notes, "Quite literally, a disciple is a pupil, scholar, student or learner. In [Jesus'] world a teacher with his band of disciples was to that culture what schools and universities are to our society. To be a disciple of Jesus is to go to school with him."

It's a Miracle!

I believe in miracles. While I believe in the possibility, under God, of any kind of miracle, I am committed especially to the miracle of the changed life. When a human being goes from despair to hope, when a lost soul comes home, or when a mean and destructive person becomes kind and fruitful, the greatest of all miracles has occurred.—J. Ellsworth Kalas

Sprinkle and split

A sprinkle of pepper and a dab of soap illustrate a big concept from God's Word.



What you need:

- Shallow dish
- Water
- Black ground pepper
- Toothpick
- Dish soap
- Bible

What you do:

1. With the dish on a table, fill it halfway with water. Don't jiggle the dish.
2. Sprinkle pepper on the water.
3. Dab the toothpick into a drop of soap. Then touch its tip to the center of the water and observe.
4. Read Psalm 103:8-12.
How does this experiment illustrate God's forgiveness?
5. Explain the science behind this experiment: The soap disturbs the water's surface tension. The soap molecules don't want to interact with the water. This repels the water molecules from the soap, causing the floating pepper to also move to the sides.



Use simple ingredients and your imagination to bake these fluffy, cloud-like treats.

What you need:

- 3 egg whites
- ½ tsp. vanilla extract
- Mixer
- 2 Tbsp. powdered sugar
- 1 Tbsp. cornstarch
- Parchment paper

What you do:

1. Preheat oven to 300°. In a mixing bowl, combine egg whites and vanilla. Whisk eggs with mixer at medium speed until frothy.
2. While whisking, gradually add sugar and cornstarch. Keep whisking at high speed until stiff peaks form.
3. Spoon mixture onto a baking sheet lined with parchment paper. Create fun shapes.
4. Bake 20 minutes. Cool and enjoy!



Godly, biblical wisdom is more valuable than gold or silver. Make this do-it-yourself toy to practice your searching skills.

What you need:

- 12 small, smooth rocks
- An empty, clean egg carton
- Paintbrush
- Acrylic paint (gold or silver)
- Black permanent marker

What you do:

1. Clean the rocks and egg carton. Place newspaper on a table to protect it from paint.
2. Paint all sides of the rocks and carton. Let dry. Add a second coat, if desired.
3. When rocks are dry, number each rock (1-12) with marker. Place rocks in the carton.
4. Play hide-and-seek with a friend. Take turns hiding the rocks in a room, sandbox or backyard. Give clues, if needed, and count the rocks as they're returned.
5. Use your imagination to incorporate a treasure hunt into study time or family devotions.