



The Lord is Risen! So, Now What?

Connect 7 Devotions

May 9 – June 3

Dear Friends in Christ, at many Christian Churches, including Bethlehem, during the seven weeks of Easter the comforting greeting ***“The Lord is Risen!”*** and the response ***“He is Risen Indeed! Alleluia!”*** is often heard. The Women at the empty tomb first heard those words from an angel. The women were instructed to tell the disciples. However, the response of both the women and the disciples was underwhelming. The great news of the resurrection didn’t seem to make an impact in their lives. It was almost as if they responded to the news of Jesus’ resurrection with a yawn, ***“So, now what?”*** We will during the weeks of Easter seek to look at what response the Good News, ***“The Lord is Risen!”*** ought to bring in our lives. The following devotions are to be read in the week before the message in order to help you to prepare to worship on Sunday. May God bless your devotion.

The Lord is Risen! So, Now What?

Now What? Love! John 13:34-35

	May 15	Fifth S. of Easter	Acts 11:1-18	Psalm 148	Rev. 21:1-7	John 13:31-35
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Devotions for Monday, May 9 – Friday, May 13

Overwhelming Concern

A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another. –
John 13:34

John 13:31-35

A while ago, I wrote an article about my wife, Marlene, and her struggles with vertigo. When the article appeared, I was unprepared for the tidal wave of response from readers offering encouragement, help, suggestions and, mostly, concern for her well-being. These messages came from all over the world, from people in all walks of life. Expressions of loving concern for my wife poured in to the point where we could not even begin to answer them all. It was overwhelming in the best kind of way to see the body of Christ respond to Marlene's struggle. We were, and remain, deeply grateful.

At its core, this is how the body is supposed to work. Loving concern for our brothers and sisters in Christ becomes the evidence that we have experienced His love. While addressing the disciples at the Last Supper, Jesus said, “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are My disciples” (John 13:34-35).

Marlene and I experienced a sampling of Christlike love and concern in those letters we received. With the help of our Savior and as a way of praising Him, may we show others that kind of love as well. By: **Bill Crowder**

Reflect & Pray

**Bearing people's heavy burdens,
Shouldering their pain and grief,
Shows the love of Christ to others,
Bringing them His sure relief. –Anon.**

The height of our love for God is indicated by the depth of our love for one another. –

Morley

Another Chance

Once again you will have compassion on us. You will trample our sins under your feet and throw them into the depths of the ocean!

Micah 7:19 nlt

Today's Scripture & Insight:

Micah 7:1 – 3, 18 – 20

At the Second Chance Bike Shop near our neighborhood, volunteers rebuild cast-off bicycles and donate them to needy kids. Shop founder Ernie Clark also donates bikes to needy adults, including the homeless, the disabled, and military veterans struggling to make it in civilian life. Not only do the bicycles get a second chance but sometimes the recipients get a new start too. One veteran used his new bike to get to a job interview.

Second chances can transform a person's life, especially when the second chance comes from God. The prophet Micah extolled such grace during a time the nation of Israel groveled in bribery, fraud, and other despicable sins. As Micah lamented, "The godly people have all disappeared; not one honest person is left on the earth" (Micah 7:2 nlt).

God would rightly punish evil, Micah knew. But being loving, He would give those who repented another chance. Humbled by such love, Micah asked, "Where is another God like you, who pardons the guilt of the remnant, overlooking the sins of his special people?" (v. 18 nlt).

We too can rejoice that God doesn't abandon us because of our sins if we ask for forgiveness. As Micah declared of God, "Once again you will have compassion on us. You will trample our sins under your feet and throw them into the depths of the ocean!" (v. 19 nlt). God's love gives second chances to all who seek Him.

By: **Patricia Raybon**

Reflect & Pray

What sin will you repent of and gain a second chance from our loving God?

Heavenly Father, thank You for giving us the grace of second chances.

Blooming for Jesus

A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another.

John 13:34

Today's Scripture & Insight:

John 13:31–35

I wasn't truthful about the tulips. A gift from my younger daughter, the packaged bulbs traveled home with her to the US from Amsterdam after she visited there. So I made a show of accepting the bulbs with great excitement, as excited as I was to reunite with her. But tulips are my least favorite flower. Many bloom early and fade fast. The July weather, meantime, made it too hot to plant them.

Finally, however, in late September, I planted “my daughter's” bulbs—thinking of her and thus planting them with love. With each turn of the rocky soil, my concern for the bulbs grew. Giving their plant bed a final pat, I offered the bulbs a blessing, “sleep well,” hoping to see blooming tulips in the spring.

My little project became a humble reminder of God's call for us to love one another, even if we're not each other's “favorites.” Looking past each other's faulty “weeds,” we're enabled by God to extend love to others, even in temperamental seasons. Then, over time, mutual love blooms in spite of ourselves. “By this,” Jesus said, “everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another” (John 13:35). Pruned by Him, we're blessed then to bloom, as my tulips did the next spring—on the same weekend my daughter arrived for a short visit. “Look what's blooming!” I said. Finally, *me*.

By: **Patricia Raybon**

Reflect & Pray

Whom is God asking you to love, even if that person isn't your “favorite”?

What can you do to show that person more of the love of Christ?

Dear Jesus, prune my heart so I can learn to love others in Christ.

Unexplainable Love

As I have loved you, so you must love one another.

John 13:34

Today's Scripture & Insight:

John 13:31–35

Our small congregation decided to surprise my son on his sixth birthday. The church members decorated his Sunday school classroom with balloons and set up a small table with a cake on it. When my son opened the door, everyone shouted, “Happy birthday!”

Later on, as I was cutting the cake, my son came over and whispered in my ear, “Mom, why does everyone here love me?” I had the same question! These people had known us for only six months but were treating us as longtime friends.

Their love for my son reflected God’s love for us. We can’t understand why He loves us, but He does—and His love is freely given. We’ve done nothing to deserve His love, and yet He lavishly loves us. Scripture tells us: “God is love” (1 John 4:8). It’s part of who He is.

God has poured out His love on us so we can show this same love to others. Jesus told His disciples, “As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another” (John 13:34–35).

The people in our small church community love us because God’s love is in them. It shines through and identifies them as followers of Jesus. We can’t comprehend God’s love fully, but we can pour it out on others—being examples of His unexplainable love. By: **Keila Ochoa**

Reflect & Pray

How have you recently experienced God’s love through others? What can you do to reveal His compassionate ways to others today?

Because God loves us, we can love others.

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How have you recently experienced God’s love through others? What can you do to reveal His compassionate ways to others today?

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Now What? Peace! John 16:33

	May 22	Sixth S. of Easter	Acts 16:9–15	Psalm 67	Rev. 21:9–14, 21–27	John 16:23–33
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Devotions for Monday, May 16 – Friday, May 20

Escape or Peace?

I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.

John 16:33

John 16:25–33

“ESCAPE.” The billboard shouts the benefits of having a hot tub installed. It gets my attention—and gets me thinking. My wife and I have talked about getting a hot tub . . . someday. It’d be like a vacation in our backyard! Except for the cleaning. And the electric bill. And . . . suddenly, the hoped-for escape starts to sound like something I might need escape *from*.

Still, that word entices so effectively because it promises something we want: Relief. Comfort. Security. *Escape*. It’s something our culture tempts and teases us with in many ways. Now, there’s nothing wrong with resting or a getaway to someplace beautiful. But there’s a difference between *escaping* life’s hardships and *trusting God* with them.

In John 16, Jesus tells His disciples that the next chapter of their lives will test their faith. “In this world you will have trouble,” He summarizes at the end. And then He adds this promise, “But take heart! I have overcome the world” (v. 33). Jesus didn’t want His disciples to cave in to despair. Instead, He invited them to trust Him, to know the rest He provides: “I have told you these things,” he said, “so that in me you may have peace” (v. 33).

Jesus doesn’t promise us a pain-free life. But He *does* promise that as we trust and rest in Him, we can experience a peace that’s deeper and more satisfying than any escape the world tries to sell us.

By: [Adam Holz](#)

Reflect & Pray

How have you seen invitations to escape in the world around you recently?

How well do you think they might deliver on those promises?

Father, help me to trust You so that I may find peace and rest in You.

Perfect Peace

Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you.

John 14:27

Today's Scripture & Insight:

John 14:25–31

A friend shared with me that for years she searched for peace and contentment. She and her husband built up a successful business, so she was able to buy a big house, fancy clothes, and expensive jewelry. But these possessions didn't satisfy her inner longings for peace, nor did her friendships with influential people. Then one day, when she was feeling low and desperate, a friend told her about the good news of Jesus. There she found the Prince of Peace, and her understanding of true peace and contentment was forever changed.

Jesus spoke words of such peace to His friends after their last supper together (John 14), when He prepared them for the events that would soon follow: His death, resurrection, and the coming of the Holy Spirit. Describing a peace—unlike anything the world can give—He wanted them to learn how to find a sense of well-being even in the midst of hardship.

Later, when the resurrected Jesus appeared to the frightened disciples after His death, He greeted them, saying, “Peace be with you!” (John 20:19). Now He could give them, and us, a new understanding of resting in what He has done for us. As we do, we can find the awareness of a confidence far deeper than our ever-changing feelings.

By: **Amy Boucher Pye**

Reflect & Pray

Heavenly Father, You will keep in perfect peace those whose minds are fixed on You. Help us to trust in You forever, for You are our Rock eternal.

Jesus came to usher peace into our lives and our world.

A Light in the Darkness

In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.

John 16:33

Today's Scripture & Insight:

John 1:5; 16:1–11, 33

In *These Are the Generations*, Mr. Bae describes God's faithfulness and the power of the gospel to penetrate the darkness. His grandfather, parents, and his own family were all persecuted for sharing their faith in Christ. But an interesting thing happened when Mr. Bae was imprisoned for telling a friend about God: his faith grew. The same was true for his parents when they were sentenced to a concentration camp—they continued to share Christ's love even there. Mr. Bae found the promise of John 1:5 to be true: "The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it."

Before His arrest and crucifixion, Jesus warned His disciples about the trouble they'd face. They would be rejected by people who "will do such things because they have not known the Father or me" (16:3). But Jesus offered words of comfort: "In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world" (v. 33).

While many believers in Jesus haven't experienced persecution on the level of that endured by the family of Mr. Bae, we can expect to face trouble. But we don't have to give in to discouragement or resentment. We have a Helper—the Holy Spirit Jesus promised to send. We can turn to Him for guidance and comfort (v. 7). The power of God's presence can hold us steady in dark times.

By: **Linda Washington**

Reflect & Pray

What trouble have you experienced as a believer in Christ or witnessed others experiencing? What is your first reaction during hard times?

Heavenly Father, please protect Your children who are experiencing persecution.

His Peace

You will keep in perfect peace those whose minds are steadfast, because they trust in you.

Isaiah 26:3

Today's Scripture & Insight:

Isaiah 26:3–7

For several months, I coped with intense workplace politics and intrigues. Worrying is second nature to me, so I was surprised to find myself at peace. Instead of feeling anxious, I was able to respond with a calm mind and heart. I knew that this peace could come only from God.

In contrast, there was another period in my life when everything was going well—and yet I felt a deep unrest in my heart. I knew it was because I was trusting in my own abilities instead of trusting God and His leading. Looking back, I've realized that true peace—God's peace—isn't defined by our circumstances, but by our trust in Him.

God's peace comes to us when our minds are steadfast (Isaiah 26:3). In Hebrew, the word for *steadfast* means “to lean upon.” As we lean on Him, we'll experience His calming presence. We can trust in God, remembering that He'll humble the proud and wicked and smooth the paths of those who love Him (vv. 5–7).

When I experienced peace in a season of difficulty rather than ease, I discovered that God's peace isn't an absence of conflict, but a profound sense of security even in distress. It's a peace that surpasses human understanding and guards our hearts and minds in the midst of the most difficult of circumstances (Philippians 4:6–7).

By: **Karen Huang**

Reflect & Pray

What do you do to experience peace? In what areas of your life do you need to trust God and lean on Him?

Father, help me to trust You and have a steadfast mind. Thank You for the perfect peace that comes to me when I choose to trust You.

Making Peace with Trouble

In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.

John 16:33

Today's Scripture & Insight:

John 16:25–33

We were almost home when I noticed it: the needle of our car's temperature gauge was rocketing up. As we pulled in, I killed the engine and hopped out. Smoke wafted from the hood. The engine sizzled like bacon. I backed the car up a few feet and found a puddle beneath: oil. Instantly, I knew what had happened: The head gasket had blown.

I groaned. We'd just sunk money into other expensive repairs. *Why can't things just work?* I grumbled bitterly. *Why can't things just stop breaking?*

Can you relate? Sometimes we avert one crisis, solve one problem, pay off one big bill, only to face another. Sometimes those troubles are much bigger than an engine self-destructing: an unexpected diagnosis, an untimely death, a terrible loss.

In those moments, we yearn for a world less broken, less full of trouble. That world, Jesus promised, is coming. But not yet: "In this world you will have trouble," He reminded His disciples in John 16. "But take heart! I have overcome the world" (v. 33). Jesus spoke in that chapter about grave troubles, such as persecution for your faith. But such trouble, He taught, would never have the last word for those who hope in Him.

Troubles small and large may dog our days. But Jesus' promise of a better tomorrow with Him encourages us not to let our troubles define our lives today.

By: **Adam R. Holz**

Reflect & Pray

What does it look like for you to surrender your troubles to God? What might you use as a prompt to remind yourself to offer up your anxieties to Him throughout the day?

*Father, troubles never seem far away. But when they're close, You're even closer.
Please help me to cling to You in trust today.*

May 29	Seventh S. of Easter	Acts 1:12-26	Psalms 133	Rev. 22:1-6 (7-11) 12-20	John 17:20-26
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Devotions for Monday, May 23 – Friday, May 27

Building Bridges

There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

Galatians 3:28

John 4:7-14, 39-42

In our neighborhood, high concrete walls surround our homes. Many of these walls are enhanced with electric barbed wires lining the top. The purpose? To ward off robbers.

Frequent power outages are also a problem in our community. These outages render the front gate-bell useless. Because of the wall, a visitor may be kept out in the scorching sun or torrential rain during these outages. Yet even when the gate-bell works, to admit the visitor might depend on who they are. Our fence-walls serve a good purpose, but they can become walls of discrimination—even when the visitor is obviously not an intruder.

The Samaritan woman whom Jesus met at the well had a similar difficulty with discrimination. The Jews had nothing to do with Samaritans. When Jesus asked her for a drink, she said, “You are a Jew and I am a Samaritan woman. How can you ask me for a drink?” (John 4:9). As she began to open up to Jesus, she had a life-changing experience that positively affected her and her neighbors (vv. 39-42). Jesus became the bridge that broke the wall of hostility and favoritism.

The lure to discriminate is real, and we need to identify it in our lives. As Jesus showed us, we can reach out to all people regardless of nationality, social status, or reputation. He came to build bridges.

By: **Lawrence Darmani**

Reflect & Pray

Lord, thank You for teaching me not to discriminate among people. Help me to see people through Your eyes so that I may honor You.

Jesus breaks down the walls of discrimination.

Beautiful Unity

Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace.

Ephesians 4:3

Today's Scripture & Insight:

Ephesians 4:1–6

Seeing three large predatory animals cuddle and play together is extremely unusual. Yet this is precisely what happens daily in an animal sanctuary in Georgia. In 2001, after months of neglect and abuse, a lion, a Bengal tiger, and a black bear were rescued by Noah's Ark Animal Sanctuary. "We could have separated them," said the assistant director. "But since they came as a kind of family, we decided to keep them together." The trio had found comfort in each other during their time of mistreatment, and, despite their differences, they live peacefully together.

Unity is a beautiful thing. But the unity Paul wrote about in his letter to the believers in Ephesus is unique. Paul encouraged the Ephesians to live up to their calling as members of one body in Christ (Eph. 4:4–5). By the power of the Holy Spirit they would be able to live in unity as they developed humility, gentleness, and patience. These attitudes also allow us to lovingly bear "with one another in love" through the common ground we have in Christ Jesus (4:2).

Despite our differences, as members of the family of God we have been reconciled to Him through the death of our Savior and reconciled to each other through the ongoing work of the Holy Spirit in our lives.

By: **Marvin Williams**

Reflect & Pray

Heavenly Father, help me to grow in gentleness and patience toward others. Show me how to love others, even when we may have differences.

We keep unity by being united in the Spirit.

Unity

Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace.

Ephesians 4:3

Today's Scripture & Insight:

Ephesians 4:1–6

In 1722 a small group of Moravian Christians, who lived in what is now the Czech Republic, found refuge from persecution on the estate of a generous German count. Within four years, more than 300 people came. But instead of an ideal community for persecuted refugees, the settlement became filled with discord. Different perspectives on Christianity brought division. What they did next may seem like a small choice, but it launched an incredible revival: They began to focus on what they agreed on rather than on what they disagreed on. The result was unity.

The apostle Paul strongly encouraged the believers in the church in Ephesus to live in unity. Sin would always bring trouble, selfish desires, and conflict in relationships. But as those who were made “alive with Christ” the Ephesians were called to live out their new identity in practical ways (Ephesians 5:2). Primarily, they were to “make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace” (4:3).

This unity isn't just simple camaraderie achieved through human strength. We are to “be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love” (v. 2). From a human perspective, it's impossible to act in this way. We can't reach unity through our own power but through God's perfect power “that is at work within us” (3:20).

By: **Estera Pirosca Escobar**

Reflect & Pray

How are you experiencing division or unity in your community of faith?

What efforts can you make in God's strength to keep the unity of the Spirit?

Father, You who are over all and through all and in all, live among us in such a way that unity will be present.

Pursuing Unity

Here there is no Gentile or Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave or free, but Christ is all, and in all.

Colossians 3:11

Today's Scripture & Insight:

Colossians 3:9–17

Growing up during the 1950s, I never questioned racism and the segregation practices that permeated daily life in the city where we lived. In schools, restaurants, public transportation, and neighborhoods, people with different shades of skin color were separated.

My attitude changed in 1968 when I entered US Army Basic Training. Our company included young men from many different cultural groups. We soon learned that we needed to understand and accept each other, work together, and accomplish our mission.

When Paul wrote to the first-century church at Colossae, he was well aware of the diversity of its members. He reminded them, “Here there is no Gentile or Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave or free, but Christ is all, and in all” (Colossians 3:11). In a group where surface as well as deeper differences could easily divide people, Paul urged them to “clothe [themselves] with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience” (v. 12). And over all these virtues, he told them to put on love “which binds them all together in perfect unity” (v. 14).

Putting these principles into practice may often be a work in progress, but that is what Jesus calls us to. What we as believers hold in common is our love for Him. On that basis, we pursue understanding, peace, and unity as members of the body of Christ.

Amid all our wonderful diversity, we pursue an even greater unity in Christ.

By: David C. McCasland

Rivals or Allies?

Be perfectly united in mind and thought.

1 Corinthians 1:10

Today's Scripture & Insight:

1 Corinthians 1:10–17

The city of Texarkana sits squarely on the state border between Texas and Arkansas. The city of 70,000 inhabitants has two mayors, two city councils, and two police and fire departments. The cross-town sporting rivalry between high schools draws an uncommonly high attendance, reflecting the deep allegiance each has to their own state's school. More significant challenges arise as well, such as disputes over the shared water system, governed by two sets of state laws. Yet the town is known for its unity despite the line that divides it. Residents gather annually for a dinner held on State Line Avenue to share a meal in celebration of their oneness as a community.

The believers in Corinth may not have drawn a line down their main thoroughfare, but they were divided. They'd been quarreling as a result of their allegiances to those who taught them about Jesus: Paul, Apollos, or Cephas (Peter). Paul called them all to oneness "in mind and thought" (1 Corinthians 1:10), reminding them it was Christ who was crucified for them, not their spiritual leaders.

We behave similarly today, don't we? We sometimes oppose even those who share our singularly important belief—Jesus' sacrifice for our wrongdoings—making them rivals instead of allies. Just as Christ Himself is not divided, we, as His earthly representation—His body—mustn't allow differences over nonessentials to divide us. Instead, may we celebrate our oneness in Him.

By: **Kirsten Holmberg**

Reflect & Pray

Over what nonessential spiritual issues are you likely to allow division?

How can you foster unity instead?

God, help me to remain focused on You and Your sacrifice for Your people. May I not be distracted by the less important issues but call others to oneness as a community of faith.

PENTECOST	June 5	The Day of Pentecost	Gen. 11:1–9	Psalm 143	Acts 2:1–21	John 14:23–31
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Devotions for Monday, May 30 – Friday, June 3

The Last Call

How the mighty have fallen!

2 Samuel 1:27

Today's Scripture & Insight:

2 Samuel 1:17–27

After serving his country for two decades as a helicopter pilot, James returned home to serve his community as a teacher. But he missed helicopters, so he took a job flying medical evacuations for a local hospital. He flew until late in his life.

Now it was time to say goodbye to him. As friends, family, and uniformed co-workers stood vigil at the cemetery, a colleague called in one last mission over the radio. Soon the distinctive sound of rotors beating the air could be heard. A helicopter circled over the memorial garden, hovered briefly to pay its respects, then headed back to the hospital. Not even the military personnel who were present could hold back the tears.

When King Saul and his son Jonathan were killed in battle, David wrote an elegy for the ages called “the lament of the bow” (2 Samuel 1:18). “A gazelle lies slain on your heights,” he sang. “How the mighty have fallen!” (v. 19). Jonathan was David’s closest friend and brother-in-arms. And although David and Saul had been enemies, David honored them both. “Weep for Saul,” he wrote. “I grieve for you, Jonathan my brother” (vv. 24, 26).

Even the best goodbyes are oh-so-difficult. But for those who trust in the Lord, the memory is much more sweet than bitter, for it is never forever. How good it is when we can honor those who have served others!

By: **Tim Gustafson**

Reflect & Pray

Lord, we thank You for those who serve their communities as First Responders. We humbly ask You for their safety.

We honor the Creator when we honor the memory of those who honored Him.

He Knows Our Names

Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have summoned you by name; you are mine.

Isaiah 43:1

Today's Scripture & Insight:

Psalm 23:1–6

During a visit to the National September 11 Memorial in New York City, I quickly photographed one of the twin reflecting pools. Around these two pools, the names of the nearly 3,000 people who died in the World Trade Center attacks are etched into bronze panels. Later, while looking more closely at the photo, my eyes were drawn to the hand of a woman resting on a name. Many people come to this place to touch a name and remember someone they loved.

The prophet Isaiah reminded God's people of His unfailing love and concern for them, even though they had often turned away from Him. The Lord said, "Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have summoned you by name; you are mine" (Isaiah 43:1).

In the 23rd Psalm, David wrote, "Even though I walk through the darkest valley [the valley of the shadow of death], I will fear no evil, for you are with me Surely your goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever" (vv. 4, 6).

God never forgets us. No matter where we are or whatever our situation, He knows our names and holds us fast in His unfailing love.

By: **David C. McCasland**

Reflect & Pray

Father in heaven, thank You for calling us by name and surrounding us with Your love, today and forever.

God knows our names and He holds us fast in His love.

Can We Relax?

Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.

John 14:27

Today's Scripture & Insight:

John 14:25–31

Darnell entered the physical therapist's office knowing he would experience a lot of pain. The therapist stretched and bent his arm and held it in positions it hadn't been in for months since his injury. After holding each uncomfortable position for a few seconds, she gently told him: "Okay, you can relax." He said later, "I think I heard that at least fifty times in each therapy session: 'Okay, you can relax.'"

Thinking of those words, Darnell realized they could apply to the rest of his life as well. He could relax in God's goodness and faithfulness instead of worrying.

As Jesus neared His death, He knew His disciples would need to learn this. They'd soon face a time of upheaval and persecution. To encourage them, Jesus said He would send the Holy Spirit to live with them and remind them of what He had taught (John 14:26). And so He could say, "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. . . . Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid" (v. 27).

There's plenty we could be uptight about in our everyday lives. But we can grow in our trust in God by reminding ourselves that His Spirit lives in us—and He offers us His peace. As we draw on His strength, we can hear Him in the therapist's words: "Okay, you can relax."

By: **Anne Cetas**

Reflect & Pray

What causes you stress? What characteristics of God can help you learn to trust Him more?

Teach me, Jesus, to trust Your faithfulness, to know Your presence, to experience Your peace—to relax.

The Spirit Delivers

The Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us through wordless groans.

Romans 8:26

Today's Scripture & Insight:

Romans 8:19-27

Until recently, many towns in rural Ireland didn't use house numbers or postal codes. So if there were three Patrick Murphys in town, the newest resident with that name would not get his mail until it was first delivered to the other two Patrick Murphys who had lived there longer. "My neighbors would get it first," said Patrick Murphy (the newest resident). "They'd have a good read, and they'd go, 'No, it's probably not us.' " To end all this mail-delivery confusion, the Irish government recently instituted its first postal-code system which will ensure the proper delivery of the mail.

Sometimes when we pray we feel like we need help delivering to God what is on our heart. We may not know the right words to say or how to express our deep longings. The apostle Paul says in Romans 8 that the Holy Spirit helps us and intercedes for us by taking our unspeakable "groanings" and presenting them to the Father. "We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us through wordless groans" (v. 26). The Spirit always prays according to God's will, and the Father knows the mind of the Spirit.

Be encouraged that God hears us when we pray and He knows our deepest needs.

By: **Marvin Williams**

Reflect & Pray

Thank You, Father, for giving me Your Spirit to help me when I pray.

Thank You for hearing my prayers and for loving me.

When you can't put your prayers into words, God hears your heart.

A Constant Helper

[The Holy Spirit] will remind you of everything I have said to you.

John 14:26

Today's Scripture & Insight:

John 14:15–26

After a spinal injury left Marty paralyzed, he decided to go back to school to earn his MBA. Marty's mother, Judy, helped make his goal a reality. She sat with him through every lecture and study group, jotting notes and handling technology issues. She even assisted him onto the platform when he received his diploma. What might have been unattainable became possible with the consistent, practical help Marty received.

Jesus knew His followers would need a similar kind of support after He left the earth. When He told them about His upcoming absence, He said they would gain a new kind of connection with God through the Holy Spirit. This Spirit would be a moment-by-moment helper—a teacher and guide who would not only live *with* them but also be *in* them (John 14:17, 26).

The Spirit would provide Jesus's disciples with internal help from God, which would enable them to endure what they couldn't handle on their own as they fanned out to share the good news. In moments of struggle, the Spirit would remind them of everything Jesus said to them (v. 26): Do not let your hearts be troubled . . . Love one another . . . I am the resurrection and the life.

Are you facing something that exceeds your own strength and ability? You can depend on the Spirit's constant help. God's Spirit working in you will bring Him the glory He deserves.

By: **Jennifer Benson Schuldt**

Reflect & Pray

Dear God, thank You for the ongoing support available through the Holy Spirit. Help me to rely on Your Spirit when I need help.

When it is a question of God's almighty Spirit, never say, "I can't." —Oswald Chambers