

MONDAY

John 14:28 ²⁸"You've heard me tell you, 'I'm going away, and I'm coming back.' If you loved me, you would be glad that I'm on my way to the Father because the Father is the goal and purpose of my life.

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An older man is on the operating table awaiting surgery. He has insisted that his son, a renowned surgeon, perform the operation. He is about to receive the anesthesia when he asks to speak to his son.

"Yes, Dad, what is it?"

"Don't be nervous. Do your best; and just remember, if it doesn't go well, if something happens to me, your mother is going to come and live with you and your wife."

Preaching

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According to legend, a young man roaming the desert came across a spring of delicious, crystal-clear water. The water was so sweet he filled his leather canteen so he could bring some back to a tribal elder who had been his teacher.

After a four-day journey, he presented the water to the old man, who took a deep drink, smiled warmly, and thanked his student lavishly for the sweet water. The young man returned to his village with a happy heart.

Later, the teacher let another student taste the water. He spat it out, saying it was awful. It apparently had become stale because of the old leather container. The student challenged his teacher: "Master, the water was foul. Why did you pretend to like it?"

The teacher replied, "You only tasted the water. I tasted the gift. The water was simply the container for an act of loving kindness and nothing could be sweeter. Heartfelt gifts deserve the return gift of gratitude."

I think we understand this lesson best when we receive innocent gifts of love from young children. Whether it's a ceramic tray or a macaroni bracelet, the natural and proper response is appreciation and expressed thankfulness because we love the idea within the gift.

Gratitude doesn't always come naturally. Unfortunately, most children and many adults value only the thing given rather than the feeling embodied in it. We should remind ourselves and teach our children about the beauty and purity of feelings and expressions of gratitude. After all, gifts from the heart are really gifts of the heart.

Michael Josephson

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After shopping for most of the day, a couple returns to the parking lot only to find that their car has been stolen. They return to the mall office to report the theft. When the police arrive, they head back to the parking lot to show the officer where they were parked ... only to find, much to their amazement, that their car has been returned!

There was an envelope on the windshield with a note and two tickets to a concert that evening featuring a popular singer. The note read, "I apologize for taking your car, but my wife was having a baby and we don't have one. So I hot-wired your ignition and rushed her to the hospital. Please forgive this terrible inconvenience. Here are two tickets for that big concert tonight. I hope this will, in some way, make it up to you."

Their faith in humanity restored, the couple attend the concert and return home late. There, they discover that their house has been robbed. Every valuable in the home has been taken, from basement to attic.

On the back door they find another note. This one reads, "Hey, new babies are expensive! At least you still have your car!"

Selected from Jokes Central

TUESDAY

John 14:29-31 ²⁹"I've told you this ahead of time, before it happens, so that when it does happen, the confirmation will deepen your belief in me.³⁰ I'll not be talking with you much more like this because the chief of this godless world is about to attack. But don't worry—he has nothing on me, no claim on me.³¹ But so the world might know how thoroughly I love the Father, I am carrying out my Father's instructions right down to the last detail. "Get up. Let's go. It's time to leave here."

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A four-year-old was at the pediatrician for a checkup. As the doctor looked in her ears, he asked, "Do you think I'll find Big Bird in here?"

The little girl stayed silent.

Next, the doctor took a tongue depressor and looked down her throat. He asked, "Do you think I'll find the Cookie Monster down there?"

Again, the little girl was silent.

Then the doctor put a stethoscope to her chest. As he listened to her heartbeat, he asked, "Do you think I'll hear Barney in there?"

"Oh, no!" the little girl replied. "Jesus is in my heart. Barney's on my underpants."

Cybersalt

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I have a reputation at work for being a strict boss.

One day I was in the break room with another manager. I reached into the refrigerator for my lunch, which was packed in an Ace Hardware paper bag. My co-worker stopped mid-bite and stared at me, looking a little tense. When I pulled my sandwich out of the bag, he sighed in relief.

"What's the matter?" I asked him.

"Uh, nothing," he replied, "I was beginning to think you really do eat nails for lunch."

From Doc's Daily Chuckle

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Oh, the pressures that a lip-conscious gal has to deal with! First of all, you have to have lipstick in shades to match every outfit. On top of that, for some reason no one really understands, all those colors are required to have names that make you feel really ridiculous. Like "Passion Perky Pink," "Vixen Tart Wine," "Mysteriously Misty Mauve"--you have to hide the label while you're putting them on. I mean, as a pastor's wife, I just can't afford to get caught rubbing "Vixen Tart Wine" on my lips, even if it is the only shade that goes with my purple suit.

On top of it all, you have to be careful that you never pull out the wrong thing to put on your lips. A friend of mine reached into her purse for her Chap stick and accidentally grabbed her GLUE STICK instead. I don't want to embarrass her so I can't tell much about it; my lips are sealed. But for the record, so were hers. It puts a whole new spin on SWAK, doesn't it?

God gives us lip instruction that doesn't involve color. Or glue. These lips were made for praising him and for building up the people he loves. Psalm 34:1 says, "I will thank the Lord at all times. My mouth will always praise him" (GWT). When we're using our lips in the right way, it's really the very best 'lip service'-whether you're bare-lipped or covered with Passion Perky Pink.

Rhonda Rhea

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Giant Sequoia trees, also known as redwoods, are the biggest living things on Earth. Heights of 300 feet and diameters of 30 feet are not uncommon. They can range in age from 2,000 to 3,000 years--some of which were living when Jesus walked the shores of Galilee.

WEDNESDAY

John 15:1-3 ¹ "I am the Real Vine and my Father is the Farmer. He cuts off every branch of me that doesn't bear grapes. ² And every branch that is grape-bearing he prunes back so it will bear even more. ³ You are already pruned back by the message I have spoken.

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The junior high school teacher was giving her students a test on American history. One question was, "Who said, 'I regret that I have but one life to give to my country'?"

A youngster answered, "Nathan Haley said it. The saying is now known as Haley's Comment."

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Most things that are broken don't fix themselves, and they don't work right until they are. A leaking faucet doesn't just stop leaking one day. Buttons don't sew themselves back on. In every instance where something is broken, I've had to attend to it with care.

Sadly, I see many people walking around broken, pretending they are okay. Instead of acknowledging hurt and seeking healing from the One who can give it, they ignore it. Instead of seeking professional help when needed, they bury the pain, and hope it's deep enough to not bother them again. But the pain never really heals. It always pops up. And it affects current relationships and commitments when it does. The truth is, none of us is as good as new. We are ALL broken in some way. We all have hurts we've buried and tried to move past. But that brokenness doesn't completely heal by itself. Thankfully, there is good news if you feel broken.

We serve a God who loves healing and wholeness. He knows it's painful to deal with past hurts. But He's willing to help. While we will never be "good as new" until heaven, we can be emotionally healed here on earth. Maybe we need to pick up our broken pieces, carry them in tender hands and present them to Jesus.

It may not be easy, and it will probably take time. But emotional healing is possible. After all, the One who conquered death, can certainly mend our brokenness.

Dear Lord, only You really know the depths of my pain and desperation. I've tried to hide it, even from You at times, but I won't any longer. Today I openly admit my pain and hurt, and ask You to heal me. Please give me wisdom to know other steps I need to take. Thank You for what You are going to do in me and through me. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Encouragement for today, Glynnis Whitwer

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Hymns to sing while driving. Keep them in your glove compartment. And while singing them, keep your eyes on the road:

- 45 mph: God Will Take Care Of You
- 55 mph: Guide Me, O Thou Great Jehovah
- 65 mph: Nearer My God To Thee
- 75 mph: Nearer Still Nearer
- 85 mph: This World Is Not My Home
- 95 mph: Lord, I'm Coming Home
- Over 100 mph: Precious Memories *Laugh & Lift*

THURSDAY

John 15:4 ⁴"Live in me. Make your home in me just as I do in you. In the same way that a branch can't bear grapes by itself but only by being joined to the vine, you can't bear fruit unless you are joined with me.

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Don't tell me what you can't do. Talk about what you did and who you are because of it. Even if you set out to climb the highest mountain in the world and you only go so far, you can never say you failed to finish. You went the distance... you climbed further up the mountain than ever before. That makes you a mountain climber. *Bob Perks*

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My son Zachary, 4, came screaming out of the bathroom to tell me he'd dropped his toothbrush in the toilet. So I fished it out and threw it in the garbage. Zachary stood there thinking for a moment, then ran to my bathroom and came out with my toothbrush. He held it up and said with a charming little smile, "We better throw this one out too then, 'cause it fell in the toilet a few days ago.

Humor Digest

QUOTATIONS FOR LIVING BETTER

"It is never too late to be what you might have been." (George Eliot)

"All the masterpieces of art contain both light and shadow. A happy life is not one filled with only sunshine, but one which uses both light and shadow to produce beauty." (Billy Graham)

"Love and time are the only two things in all the world that cannot be bought, only spent."
(Gary Jennings, paraphrased)

"When you have exhausted all possibilities, remember this: you haven't." (Thomas Edison)

"Start by doing what's necessary, then do what's possible. Suddenly you will find you are doing what you once thought impossible." (St. Francis of Assisi, paraphrased)

"The highest reward for a person's toil is not what they get for it, but what they become by it." (John Ruskin)

"It takes as much energy to wish as it does to plan." (Eleanor Roosevelt)

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In the Sept. 18-19 edition of his *Turning Point Daily Devotional*, David Jeremiah writes: "While PFC Brendan Schweighart was helping retrieve a tank in Iraq, he felt a thud hit him, a force so hard that he later likened it to a sledgehammer. It was a bullet from an enemy sniper. The bullet struck the Bible in his pocket--one he had promised his mother he would carry into battle--and that Bible acted like a shield, trapping the bullet and saving his life."

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The doorbell rang and the lady of the house found, quite unexpectedly, a well-dressed man with a small box of smaller tools standing on her porch.

"Good day to you, madam. I am Lucius, the piano tuner," the man announced.

The lady, quite taken aback, replied, "That is certainly all well and good, young man, but I did not send for a piano tuner."

"Yes, madam, I know," said the man. "Your neighbor's did." .

Doc's Daily Chuckle, via Mark's Musings

FRIDAY

John 15:5-8 ⁵*I am the Vine, you are the branches. When you're joined with me and I with you, the relation intimate and organic, the harvest is sure to be abundant. Separated, you can't produce a thing.* ⁶*Anyone who separates from me is deadwood, gathered up and thrown on the bonfire.* ⁷*But if you make yourselves at home with me and my words are at home in you, you can be sure that whatever you ask will be listened to and acted upon.* ⁸*This is how my Father shows who he is—when you produce grapes, when you mature as my disciples*

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"Someone asked me recently if I didn't think God was unfair, allowing me to have Parkinson's and other medical problems when I have tried to serve Him faithfully. I replied that I did not see it that way at all. Suffering is part of the human condition, and it comes to us all. The key is how we react to it, either turning away from God in anger and bitterness or growing closer to Him in trust and confidence."

Billy Graham

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God understands. God cares. God can bring us through it and even make something beautiful out of it.

God empathizes with our pain. His own Son, Jesus -- Who is God -- suffered grief. I think readily of one example. John 11:33-35 (NRSV) "When Jesus saw Lazarus' daughter weeping, and the Jews who came with her also weeping, he was greatly disturbed in spirit and deeply moved. He said, "Where have you laid him?" They said to him, "Lord, come and see. Jesus began to weep. So the Jews said, "See how he loved him!" Of all people, Jesus certainly knew about Heaven. He knew that Lazarus wasn't suffering. But He also knew that it hurt to lose him.

Even though we know someone is suffering less, or something is for the best, God doesn't expect us to just act like nothing has happened - He knows that it hurts. It is good to keep an eternal perspective. At the same time, we need to be able to work through our grief with God.

God cares about our pain. He knows everything, including our emotions, but He wants to hear from us.

Psa 62:8 (NRSV) "Trust in him at all times, O people; pour out your heart before him; God is a refuge for us."

He cares for us in our griefs! He wants us to pour out our hearts to Him. He wants to hear our hurts. He isn't an aloof God who distances Himself from what we are going through. He is a loving God, a Shepherd, a Father. Those of you who are parents -- think about how you feel for your children when they are grieving, over a friend who has moved, a beloved pet who has been killed. And our Heavenly Father loves us even more than we love our children.

But the ultimate perspective we have does need to take into account eternity, God's glory and His purpose even now. Eventually the intensity of the pain will subside. Sometimes it goes away completely while we are still here on Earth, and sometimes it doesn't.

God wants to teach us valuable lessons from it. I think of two valuable insights I have gained through pains I have encountered: I can now better understand others' pain. When we are hurting, as well as afterwards, we need to ask God to use this for His glory and to help His other children. 2 Cor 1:4 (NIV) "who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God."

Rom 8:28 (NIV) "And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose."

I cherish the relationships that I have now. I realize how short life can be, and that we need to tell people now how much we appreciate them. We need to take time for the family and friends God has blessed us with.

"Dear Lord, we thank You for showing us that You care and that You can bring good out of everything. When we are mourning, help us to turn to You and to remember that it will get better as You take us forward. And use us and teach us through our grief. In Jesus' name, Amen."

Cup O'Cheerweekly chapnotes

