

I'm sure that, if I had an opportunity to relive my life, I would be thought of as a good, kind and generous person. I think that my intentions are generally good, but for some reason I just don't act on them when presented with an opportunity. With just a few dollars (the seemingly meaningless difference in price between some brands of pancake syrup), I could have helped the man buy his food. And with just a few minutes of my time, I could have given him a warm ride. I'm sure that, if I could relive that moment (as with so many others), I would be more helpful to my neighbor. Unfortunately, in the end, we are judged by our actions in the present. I seem unable to determine the right course of action until the opportunity has passed, which likely stems more from a lack of action than of perception or sympathy. For me, having the right heart is the easy part, having the right spirit is the killer!

Lord, help me act to serve my neighbor and not just love him or her. Help me do what is just and right and have a new heart and a new spirit. Amen.

Jonathan Mosley

SATURDAY - FEBRUARY 9TH

PSALM 32 and PHILIPPIANS 4:10 – 20

I'd like to share some thoughts with you. They are not my words and I have long since forgotten the author, but they speak to me.

"When our churches have crumbled and our vestments have rotted and the wind blows through the ruins of our ecclesiastical structures, all that will stand and have eternal significance are creative acts of compassion – the effectual signs of the presence of the Kingdom."

Dear God, as we experience this Lenten season, may we individually and collectively engage in acts of compassion. Amen

Janet Cline

SUNDAY - FEBRUARY 10TH

HEBREWS 2:10-18 and JOHN 12:44-50

Have we asked ourselves, why am I a Christian? Was the choice based on family tradition, parental or ministerial guidance, a "burning bush" experience, blessing, church or the Bible? It could be one of these, others, or more likely a combination of factors. However, was not Jesus, who was with us in flesh and spiritual part of man, sent to save the world, speak as commanded by His Father and be the bearer of our salvation through suffering and death on the cross, the reason?

As Christians, are we special and God's chosen? In Scripture, Paul says, "*For there is no difference between Jew and Gentile – the same Lord is Lord of all but only those who call on the name of the Lord will be saved*" (Romans 10:12-13).

Therefore, as Abraham's descendents, and believers in Jesus, let us declare ourselves all brothers and sisters in one family, and as such – Christians.

God, may our love and faith in your Son be strong, everlasting and may His light shine in our lives and make us radiant Christians. Amen.

Dr. Earl K. Shirey



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WEEK ONE

ASH WEDNESDAY - FEBRUARY 6TH

LUKE 18:9-14

Luke 18:9-14 from *The Message*

Jesus said, "Two men went up to the Temple to pray, one a Pharisee the other a tax man. The Pharisee posed and prayed like this: 'Oh, God, I thank you that I am not like the other people – robbers, crooks, adulterers, or, heaven forbid, like this taxman. I fast twice a week and tithe on all my income.'

"Meanwhile the tax man, slumped in the shadows, his face in his hands, not daring to lookup, said, 'God, give mercy. Forgive me, a sinner.'"

Jesus commented, *"This tax man, not the other, went home made right with God. If you walk around with your nose in the air, you're going to end up flat on your face, but if you're content to be simply yourself, you will become more than yourself."*

The difference between these two men was huge, but not for the reason the Pharisee thought. The difference was not in what they said or did, it was what was in their hearts. The taxman knew he was a sinner and needed mercy, forgiveness and grace. The other man - the "religious" guy - thought, because of his fasting and tithing, he deserved to be honored by God. What he didn't understand is that our faith is not about being pompous in our religion, but humble in our response to God who gave us everything in Christ Jesus.

Dear God, Please forgive me, for I am a sinner. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Amy Campbell

THURSDAY - FEBRUARY 7TH

PSALM 37

"Just a little while longer" Psalm 37

I often wonder what it would be like to have super-human powers and use them for the betterment of all mankind. How marvelous it would be to intercede on the behalf of others in regards to their health, happiness, and prosperity. This sentiment is triggered on a daily basis, every time I access the daily news. Whenever I hear of acts of violence and bloodshed anywhere in the world, I imagine being able to go out like a thief in the night to remove every single weapon from the hands of those who would do harm to others. Imagine the surprise they would have when they wake up in the morning!

My heart is saddened at the loss of victims of cancer and the myriad of other life-threatening diseases. I imagine being able to provide a cure with something as simple as drinking a glass of "healing" water. With just a few gulps of my water, every disease, ache, and pain would be washed out of the body with the next urination. Wow!

As you can imagine, I could go on and on about how I would use these powers to solve matters of hunger, poverty, crime, depression, etc. Oh, if only I had the power. If only any of us had the power!

And then I read the 37th Psalm which reminds me that there is one who does have the power: ^(v.5) *"Commit your way to the Lord; trust in him, and he will act".* But act when? Surely if you and I

had the power, we would act NOW. What is he waiting for? ^(v.7) *"Be still before the Lord and wait patiently for him"* and ^(v.10) *"Yet a little while longer, and the wicked will be no more; though you look diligently for their place, they will not be there. But the meek shall inherit the land, and delight in abundant prosperity".*

And what do we do in the meantime? ^(v.27) *"Depart from evil, and do good; so you will abide forever"*, and ^(v.34) *"wait for the Lord, and keep to his way, and he will exalt you to inherit the land".*

How refreshing these verses are. I can now relax and not worry about how I can save the world, as if I really could! I must learn to be patient and trust in the one who truly has the power and will use it at the appropriate time.

Thank you, dear Lord, our great provider, for reminding us through the scriptures that your ways are not our ways. We trust in you and your great wisdom. You will provide as you have always provided in the past. Help us to be patient and confident that you will act at the right time, not our time. Amen.

Paul McElroy

FRIDAY - FEBRUARY 8TH

EZEKIEL 18:1-4; 25-32 and PHILIPPIANS 4:1-9

"And if wicked people turn away from their wickedness, obey the law, and do what is just and right, they will save their lives." (Ezekiel 18:27)

"Put all your rebellion behind you, and get for yourselves a new heart and a new spirit." (Ezekiel 18:31)

It's the "spirit-part" that's the killer!

Last night, my wife and I decided to introduce our three year-old to pancakes. He was particularly delighted at this idea, perhaps in large part because he seemed to be of the understanding that we were going to be eating "candy-cakes" – surely a perfect marriage between two of his favorite food groups. We decided to go out for our dinner, but, upon arriving at the restaurant, were disappointed to discover that there was a long wait to be seated. We decided that the simplest course of action would be to go to the grocery store, buy the ingredients and cook the pancakes at home.

Shopping was uneventful, though I admit that I was a little bit unjustifiably annoyed with the seemingly excessive amount of time it was taking my wife to buy syrup – a delay which seemed to be related, in part, to the few dollar price difference between some of the different brands. In the express checkout line, there was a man in front of us purchasing a small number of groceries (orange juice, vegetables, cheese, etc.). He carried a large sports bag slung over his shoulder and, judging by his accent, he was from an African country, though I don't know which one. It was taking him a long time to check out because, as it soon became apparent, he did not have enough money to cover the cost of his groceries. I watched as he picked amongst his groceries, trying to select a combination of items that would not take him even a couple dollars over the \$15 he had on his person. He was very apologetic as I watched him ultimately find a workable combination. After paying, he said to himself, "I think I've made it, if just." He then meticulously loaded his groceries into his large bag, swung it over his shoulder and left the store. After we had purchased our groceries and were walking to our car, I saw the man walking away from the store in the cold, with his bag over his shoulder.