

## Thank You and Encouragement from Our Daily Bread

John was a student who had lost his father to a senseless tragedy that was born out of cultural tradition of revenge for a family grudge. While this student immigrated to the United States, this family rivalry carried this tradition to his father, which ultimately left John without a father. Bitter and confused, John became lost in a society and education system and struggled.

After three years, a teacher began to get to know John and took a special interest in him. He learned about his heritage and even learned about the cultural traditions that brought about his tragedy. After some months, this teacher actually went to John's homeland to visit his country and the schools from which he came. The education system was welcoming to a visitor and the teacher was able to visit several classroom. Having come from the West, what he saw, shocked him.

Regularly, the power was out, including the heat causing most students to learn in dimly lit rooms with coats, hats and mittens. The students sat together with up to three sitting in a desk designed for one. There were no textbooks and definitely no sign of technology, and often, the students were breaking their pencils to share with others.

Through the week, the visiting teacher was hosted for meals by the locals, given opportunities to enjoy the students and was educated deeply on the traditions that caused the tragedy for John. This was the reason for the visit—to understand how this tradition could have been carried down over generations. At some point through the week, the visiting teacher from the West realized he had been looking for the wrong solutions for John. It wasn't the understanding of the tragic cultural tradition that caused his father's death, it was the lack of relationship.

When the tragedy happened to John's father, he didn't care about the history of tradition or even his culture. What John was looking for was someone to come along side of him to replace the absence of relationship. Through the week of visiting John's home country, it was clear that there were not resources and there were not facilities that could even provide heat for the children. What there was, however, was caring and loving teachers. Teachers who knew about the students deeply. Teachers who knew about the lives their students would engage in, their families, their struggles, their accomplishments.

It was the system of lavish resources that John needed, it was the teachers he needed to go on and for three years, most teachers shied away from him because they just didn't have the words or comprehension to understand his tragedy. That's not what he needed.

You, as teachers, provide so much—more than anything in facilities, technology, materials and resources. You are the providers of relationship—the relationships that change lives for the better. We hope that this devotional encourages you each day to remain strong in what you do every day in encouraging others. Please feel encouraged from Our Daily Bread because we know and appreciate what you do to learners from wonderful families and learners like John who come from tragedy. Be encouraged because you have a God that cares about what you do and He values the relationships you bring. Feel that as you read these pages each day for a month of encouragement.

A Blessing from Amaziba Ministries and Pastor Elisha Kakwerere

## Living Sacrifice

Bible in a Year: Numbers 1–3; Mark 3

I urge you . . . in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice.

Romans 12:1

Today's Scripture & Insight: Romans 12:1–8

My great aunt had an exciting job in advertising and traveled between Chicago and New York City. But she chose to give up that career out of love for her parents. They lived in Minnesota and needed to be cared for. Both of her brothers had died young in tragic circumstances and she was her mom and dad’s only remaining child. For her, serving her parents was an expression of her faith.

The apostle Paul’s letter to the church at Rome urged Christian believers to be “a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God” (Romans 12:1). He hoped they would extend Christ’s sacrificial love to each other. And he asked them not to think of themselves more highly than they should (v. 3). When they fell into disagreements and division, he called them to lay down their pride, because “in Christ we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others” (v. 5). He yearned that they would show each other sacrificial love.

Each day we have the opportunity to serve others. For instance, we might let someone go ahead of us in a line or we might, like my great aunt, care for someone who is ill. Or maybe we share from our experience as we give another advice and direction. When we offer ourselves as living sacrifices, we honor God.

By: Amy Boucher Pye

Teacher Encouragement for Today: Each day we have the opportunity to serve others. You are being that living sacrifice.

## Milk Comes First

Bible in a Year: 1 Kings 8–9; Luke 21:1–19

Solid food is for the mature.

Hebrews 5:14

Today's Scripture & Insight: Hebrews 5:11–6:2

In the seventh century, what is now called the United Kingdom was many kingdoms often at war. When one king, Oswald of Northumbria, became a believer in Jesus, he called for a missionary to bring the gospel to his region. A man named Cormac was sent, but things didn't go well. Finding the English "stubborn," "barbarous," and uninterested in his preaching, he returned home frustrated.

"I am of the opinion," a monk named Aidan told Cormac, "that you were more severe to your unlearned hearers than you ought to have been." Instead of giving the Northumbrians "the milk of more easy doctrine," Cormac had given them teaching they couldn't yet grasp. Aidan went to Northumbria, adapted his preaching to the people's understanding, and thousands became believers in Jesus.

Aidan got this sensitive approach to mission from Scripture. "I gave you milk, not solid food," Paul told the Corinthians, "for you were not yet ready for it" (1 Corinthians 3:2). Before right living can be expected from people, Hebrews says, basic teaching about Jesus, repentance, and baptism must be grasped (Hebrews 5:13–6:2). While maturity should follow (5:14), let's not miss the order. Milk comes before meat. People can't obey teaching they don't understand.

The faith of the Northumbrians ultimately spread to the rest of the country and beyond. Like Aidan, when sharing the gospel with others, we meet people where they are.

By: Sheridan Voysey

Teacher Encouragement for Today: When you get down to the level of others, you never know the impact you make and how far it can spread.

Together We Win

Bible in a Year: Ezra 3–5; John 20

Two are better than one . . . : If either of them falls down, one can help the other up.

Ecclesiastes 4:9–10

Today's Scripture & Insight: Exodus 17:8–13

In the middle of the night, Pastor Samuel Baggaga received a call asking him to come to the home of a church member. When he arrived, he found a house engulfed by fire. The father, though burned himself, had reentered the home to rescue one of his children and emerged with an unconscious daughter. The hospital, in this rural Ugandan setting, was six miles (10 kilometers) away. With no transportation available, the pastor and the father started running to the hospital with the child. When one of them tired from carrying the injured girl, the other one took over. Together they made the journey; the father and his daughter were treated and then fully recovered.

In Exodus 17:8–13 the Lord orchestrated a great victory that included the efforts of Joshua, who led fighting men on the battlefield; and Moses, who kept his hands raised while holding the staff of God. When Moses' hands grew weary, Aaron and Hur assisted by each holding up one of his hands until the setting of the sun and the defeat of the enemy.

The value of interdependence can never be underestimated. God, in His kindness, graciously provides people as His agents for mutual good. Listening ears and helpful hands; wise, comforting, and correcting words—these and other resources come to us and through us to others. Together we win and God gets the glory!

By: Arthur Jackson

Teacher Encouragement for the Day: You are often the provider of those wise, comforting and correcting words.

## Kind Correction

Bible in a Year: Psalms 60–62; Romans 5

Whoever turns a sinner from the error of their way will save them from death.

James 5:20

Today's Scripture & Insight: James 5:19–20

The early spring weather was refreshing and my traveling companion, my wife, couldn't have been better. But the beauty of those moments together could have quickly morphed into tragedy if it weren't for a red and white warning sign that informed me I was headed in the wrong direction. Because I hadn't turned wide enough, I momentarily saw a "Do Not Enter" sign staring me in the face. I quickly adjusted, but shudder to think of the harm I could have brought to my wife, myself, and others if I'd ignored the sign that reminded me I was going the wrong way.

The closing words of James emphasize the importance of correction. Who among us hasn't needed to be "brought back" by those who care for us from paths or actions, decisions or desires that could've been hurtful? Who knows what harm might have been done to ourselves or others had someone not courageously intervened at the right time.

James stresses the value of kind correction with these words, "Whoever turns a sinner from the error of their way will save them from death and cover over a multitude of sins" (5:20). Correction is an expression of God's mercy. May our love and concern for the well-being of others compel us to speak and act in ways that He can use to "bring that person back" (v. 19).

By: Arthur Jackson

Teacher Encouragement for the Day: It is often your kindness that is the expression of God's mercy to others.

## The Blessing of Encouragers

Bible in a Year: Ecclesiastes 10–12; Galatians 1

But Barnabas took [Saul] and brought him to the apostles.

Acts 9:27

Today's Scripture & Insight: Acts 9:26–31

The 2010 movie *The King's Speech* tells the story of England's King George VI, who unexpectedly became monarch when his brother abandoned the throne. With the country on the brink of World War II, government officials wanted a well-spoken leader because of the increasingly influential role of radio. King George VI, however, struggled with a stuttering problem.

I was especially drawn to the film's portrayal of George's wife, Elizabeth. Throughout his struggle to overcome his speech difficulty, she was his constant source of encouragement. Her steadfast devotion provided the support he needed to overcome his challenge and rule well during the war.

The Bible highlights the stories of encouragers who gave powerful assistance during challenging circumstances. Moses had Aaron and Hur's support during Israel's battles (Exodus 17:8–16). Elizabeth encouraged her pregnant relative Mary (Luke 1:42–45).

After his conversion, Paul needed the support of Barnabas, whose name literally means "son of encouragement." When the disciples were fearful of Paul, Barnabas, at the risk of his own reputation, vouched for him (Acts 9:27). His endorsement was essential to Paul being welcomed by the Christian community. Barnabas later served as Paul's traveling and preaching companion (Acts 14). Despite the dangers, they worked together to proclaim the gospel.

Believers in Jesus are still called to "encourage one another and build each other up" (1 Thessalonians 5:11). May we be eager to offer encouragement to help support others, especially as they face difficult circumstances.

By: Lisa M. Samra

Teacher Encouragement for the Day: Your Encouragement is powerful to others in who they will impact.

## Hands-On Learning

Bible in a Year: Psalms 26–28; Acts 22

Imitate me, as I imitate Christ.

1 Corinthians 11:1

Today's Scripture & Insight: Titus 2:1–8

My six-year-old son, Owen, was thrilled to receive a new board game. But after a half hour reading the rules, he was frustrated. He couldn't quite figure out how it worked. It wasn't until later, when a friend came over who already knew how to play, that Owen finally got to enjoy his present.

Watching them play, I was reminded of how much easier it is to learn something new if you have an experienced teacher. When we're learning, reading the instructions helps, but having a friend who can demonstrate makes a huge difference.

The apostle Paul understood this too. Writing to Titus about how he could help his church grow in faith, Paul emphasized the value of experienced believers who could model Christian faith. Of course teaching "sound doctrine" was important, but it didn't just need to be talked about—it needed to be lived out. Paul wrote that older men and women ought to be self-controlled, kind, and loving (Titus 2:2–5). "In everything," he said, "set them an example by doing what is good" (v. 7).

I'm thankful for solid teaching, but I'm also thankful for the many people who have been hands-on teachers. They've shown me by their lives what it looks like to be a disciple of Christ and have made it easier for me to see how I can walk that path too.

By: Amy Peterson

Teacher Encouragement for the Day: Modeling to others with your experience demonstrates the love of Christ to others.



## Helping Each Other

Bible in a Year: Isaiah 26–27; Philippians 2

Always strive to do what is good for each other and for everyone else.

1 Thessalonians 5:15

Today's Scripture & Insight: 1 Thessalonians 5:11–25

When playing basketball with her girlfriends, Amber realized her community could benefit from an all-female league. So she started a nonprofit organization to foster teamwork and impact the next generation. The leaders of Ladies Who Hoop strive to build confidence and character in the women and girls and encourage them to become meaningful contributors to their local communities. One of the original players who now mentors other girls said, “There is so much camaraderie among us. This is something I’d been missing. We support each other in so many different ways. I love seeing the girls succeed and grow.”

God intends His people to team up to help each other as well. The apostle Paul urged the Thessalonians to “encourage one another and build each other up” (1 Thessalonians 5:11). God has put us into the family of His people for support in our lives. We need each other to keep walking the path of life in Christ. Sometimes that may mean listening to someone who’s struggling, providing for a practical need, or speaking a few words of encouragement. We can celebrate successes, offer a prayer for strength in a difficulty, or challenge each other to grow in faith. And in everything, we can “always strive to do what is good for each other” (v. 15).

What camaraderie we can enjoy as we team up with other believers in Jesus to keep trusting God together!

By: Anne Cetas

Teacher Encouragement for the Day: It is good to celebrate successes, especially after strengthening one another in encouragement.

## Our Chief Task

Bible in a Year: Job 36–37; Acts 15:22–41

I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.

John 14:6

Today's Scripture & Insight: Matthew 7:12–23

When a British scholar called on the world's religions to work together for worldwide unity, people everywhere applauded. Pointing out that the major religions share a belief in the Golden Rule, she suggested, "The chief task of our time is to build a global society where people of all persuasions can live together in peace and harmony."

Jesus cited the Golden Rule in His Sermon on the Mount: "Do to others what you would have them do to you" (Matt. 7:12). In the same sermon, He said, "Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you" (5:44). Putting those radical commands into practice would indeed go a long way toward peace and harmony. But immediately following the Golden Rule, Jesus called for discernment. "Watch out for false prophets," He warned. "They come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves" (7:15).

Respect for others and discernment of the truth go hand in hand. If we have the truth, we have a message worth telling. But God extends to everyone the freedom to choose Him or reject Him. Our responsibility is to lovingly present the truth and respect the personal choice of others just as God does.

Our respect for others is vital to winning their respect. It's an important step in gaining an opportunity to convey the message of Jesus, who said, "I am the way and the truth and the life" (John 14:6).

By: Tim Gustafson

Teacher Encouragement for the Day: Respect and discernment of truth go hand in hand and you can teach others this valuable principle in all you do every day.

## A Legacy of Faith

Bible in a Year: Psalms 74–76; Romans 9:16–33

I am reminded of your sincere faith, which first lived in your grandmother Lois and in your mother Eunice.

2 Timothy 1:5

Today's Scripture & Insight: 2 Timothy 1:5–14

Long before the decisive moment when Billy Graham came to faith in Christ at age sixteen, his parents' devotion to Jesus was evident. They'd both come to faith while growing up within a family of believers. After their marriage, Billy's parents continued that legacy by lovingly nurturing their children, including praying and reading Scripture and attending church faithfully with them. The solid foundation Graham's parents laid for Billy was part of the soil God used to bring him to faith and, eventually, to his calling as a bold evangelist.

The apostle Paul's young protégé Timothy also benefited from a strong spiritual foundation. Paul wrote, "Your sincere faith . . . first lived in your grandmother Lois and in your mother Eunice" (2 Timothy 1:5). This legacy helped prepare and steer Timothy's heart toward faith in Christ.

Now Paul urged Timothy to carry on this faith tradition (v. 5), to "fan into flame the gift of God" within him through the Holy Spirit, who "gives us power" (vv. 6–7). Because of the power of the Spirit, Timothy could fearlessly live for the gospel (v. 8). A strong spiritual legacy doesn't guarantee we'll come to faith, but the example and mentoring of others can help prepare the way. And after we receive Jesus as Savior, the Spirit will guide us in service, in living for Him, and even in nurturing the faith of others.

By: Alyson Kieda

Teacher Encouragement for the Day: The traditions you teach are carried on by others.

## The Power of Encouragement

Bible in a Year: Psalms 79–80; Romans 11:1–18

The whole assembly became silent as they listened to Barnabas and Paul telling about the signs and wonders God had done.

Acts 15:12

Today's Scripture & Insight: Acts 15:12–21

When he was a young boy, Benjamin West attempted to draw a picture of his sister, but he succeeded only in making a mess. His mother saw his creation, kissed him on the head, and remarked, “Why, it’s Sally!” He would later say that it was that kiss that made him an artist—and the great American painter he would become. Encouragement is a powerful thing!

Like a child learning to paint, Paul didn’t have much credibility early on in his ministry, but Barnabas affirmed his calling. It was through Barnabas’s encouragement that the church accepted Saul as a fellow believer (Acts 9:27). Barnabas would also encourage the fledgling church of Antioch, helping it to become one of the most influential in the book of Acts (11:22–23). And it was through Barnabas’s encouragement, as well as Paul’s, that the Jerusalem church embraced the gentile believers as Christians (15:19). So, in many ways, the story of the early church is really a story of encouragement.

The same should apply to our own lives. We might think encouragement is merely saying something nice to someone. But if we think that way, we fail to recognize the lasting power it possesses. It’s one of the means by which God shapes our individual lives as well as the life of the church.

Let’s thank God for the moments we receive encouragement and strive to pass it along to others.

By: Peter W. Chin

Teacher Encouragement for the Day: Your encouragement is more than just words and has a lasting impact, more than you will ever know.

Ponder It

Bible in a Year: Habakkuk 1–3; Revelation 15

Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart.

Luke 2:19

Today's Scripture & Insight: Luke 2:8–20

During Oswald Chambers' years at the Bible Training College in London (1911–15), he often startled the students with things he said during his lectures. One young woman explained that because discussion was reserved for the following mealtime together, Chambers would frequently be bombarded with questions and objections. She recalled that Oswald would often simply smile and say, "Just leave it for now; it will come to you later." He encouraged them to ponder the issues and allow God to reveal His truth to them.

To ponder something is to concentrate and think deeply about it. After the events leading to the birth of Jesus in Bethlehem, followed by the appearance of angels and the shepherds who came to see the Messiah, "Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart" (Luke 2:19). New Testament scholar W. E. Vine said that ponder means "to throw together, confer, to put one thing with another in considering circumstances" (Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words).

When we struggle to understand the meaning of what's happening in our lives, we have Mary's wonderful example of what it means to seek God and His wisdom.

When we, like her, accept God's leading in our lives, we have many new things about His loving guidance to treasure and ponder in our hearts.

By: David C. McCasland

Teacher Encouragement for the Day: Through struggles and misunderstandings, it is the modeled wisdom of others that we can often relate to for finding comfort and direction.

To My Dear Friend

Bible in a Year: Psalms 63–65; Romans 6

The elder, to my dear friend Gaius, whom I love in the truth.

3 John 1

Today's Scripture: 3 John

What the apostle John did for his friend Gaius in the first century is a dying art in the twenty-first century. John wrote him a letter.

One writer for the New York Times, Catherine Field, said, “Letter-writing is among our most ancient of arts. Think of letters and the mind falls on Paul of Tarsus,” for example. And we can add the apostle John.

In his letter to Gaius, John included hopes for good health of body and soul, an encouraging word about Gaius’s faithfulness, and a note about his love for the church. John also spoke of a problem in the church, which he promised to address individually later. And he wrote of the value of doing good things for God’s glory. All in all, it was an encouraging and challenging letter to his friend.

Digital communication may mean letter-writing on paper is fading away, but this shouldn’t stop us from encouraging others. Paul wrote letters of encouragement on parchment; we can encourage others in a variety of ways. The key is not the way we encourage others, but that we take a moment to let others know we care for them in Jesus’s name!

Think of the encouragement Gaius experienced when he opened John’s letter. Could we similarly shine God’s love on our friends with a thoughtful note or an uplifting call?

By: Dave Branon

Teacher Encouragement for the Day: As educators, we can shine God’s love on our friends with uplifting moments and messages.

## The Baggage Activity

Bible in a Year: 1 Samuel 27–29; Luke 13:1–22

Love them as yourself, for you were foreigners in Egypt.

Leviticus 19:34

Today's Scripture & Insight: Leviticus 19:32–34

Karen, a middle school teacher, created an activity to teach her students how to better understand one another. In “The Baggage Activity” students wrote down some of the emotional weights they were carrying. The notes were shared anonymously, giving the students insight into each other’s hardships, often with a tearful response from their peers. The classroom has since been filled with a deeper sense of mutual respect among the young teens, who now have a greater sense of empathy for one another.

Throughout the Bible, God has nudged His people to treat one another with dignity and show empathy in their interaction with others (Romans 12:15). As early in the history of Israel as the book of Leviticus, God pointed the Israelites toward empathy—especially in their dealings with foreigners. He said to “love them as [themselves]” because they too had been foreigners in Egypt and knew that hardship intimately (Leviticus 19:34).

Sometimes the burdens we carry make us feel like foreigners—alone and misunderstood—even among our peers. We don’t always have a similar experience to draw on as the Israelites did with the foreigners among them. Yet we can always treat those God puts in our paths with the respect and understanding that we, ourselves, desire. Whether a modern-day middle schooler, an Israelite, or anything in between, we honor God when we do.

By: Kirsten Holmberg

Teacher Encouragement for the Day: We can treat those God puts in our paths with the respect and understanding that we, ourselves, desire.

## The Interests of Others

Bible in a Year: Psalms 116–118; 1 Corinthians 7:1–19

In humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests.

Philippians 2:3–4

Today's Scripture & Insight: Philippians 2:1–11

My friend Jaime works for a huge international corporation. In his early days with the company, a man came by his desk, struck up a conversation, and asked Jaime what he did there. After telling the man about his work, Jaime asked the man his name. “My name is Rich,” he replied.

“Nice to meet you,” Jaime answered. “And what do you do around here?”

“Oh, I am the owner.”

Jaime suddenly realized that this casual, humble conversation was his introduction to one of the richest men in the world.

In this day of self-glorification and the celebration of “me,” this little story can serve as a reminder of Paul’s important words in the book of Philippians: “Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit” (2:3). People who turn their attention to others and not on themselves have the characteristics Paul mentions.

When we “value others above [ourselves],” we demonstrate Christlike humility (v. 3). We mirror Jesus, who came not “to be served, but to serve” (Mark 10:45). When we take “the very nature of a servant” (Phil. 2:7), we have the mindset of Jesus (v. 5).

As we interact with others today, let’s not look on our own interests alone but also “to the interests of the others” (v. 4).

By: Dave Branon



Teacher Encouragement for the Day: Humility is powerful and can be demonstrated by placing value in others above ourselves.

Game of Thanks

Bible in a Year: Ezekiel 22–23; 1 Peter 1

Whatever you do, . . . do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.

Colossians 3:17

Today's Scripture & Insight: Colossians 3:12–17

Every autumn we throw a scrumptious Thanksgiving feast on campus at Cornerstone University. Our students love it! Last year a group of students played a game at their table. They challenged each other to name something they were thankful for—in three seconds or less—without repeating what someone else had said. Anyone who hesitated was out of the game.

There are all kinds of things that students might gripe about—tests, deadlines, rules, and a host of other college-type complaints. But these students had chosen to be thankful. And my guess is that they all felt a lot better after the game than they would have if they had chosen to complain.

While there will always be things to complain about, if we look carefully there are always blessings to be thankful for. When Paul describes our newness in Christ, “thankfulness” is the only characteristic mentioned more than once. In fact it is mentioned three times. “Be thankful,” he says in Colossians 3:15. Sing to God “with gratitude in your hearts” (v. 16). And whatever you do, be sure to be “giving thanks to God the Father” (v. 17). Paul’s instruction to be thankful is astonishing when we consider that he wrote this letter from prison!

Today, let’s make the choice to have an attitude of thankfulness.

By: Joe Stowell

Teacher Encouragement for the Day: As educators, we can be the leaders in finding the blessings before the complaints.

## Shining the Light

Bible in a Year: Genesis 13–15; Matthew 5:1–26

You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden.

Today's Scripture & Insight: Matthew 5:14–16

Stephen told his parents that he needed to get to school early every day, but for some reason he never explained why it was so important. Yet they made sure he arrived at Northview High School by 7:15 each morning.

On a wintry day during his junior year, Stephen was in a car accident that sadly took his life. Later, his mom and dad found out why he'd been going to school so early. Each morning he and some friends had gathered at the school entrance to greet other students with a smile, a wave, and a kind word. It made all students—even those who weren't popular—feel welcomed and accepted.

A believer in Jesus, Stephen wanted to share His joy with those who desperately needed it. His example lives on as a reminder that one of the best ways to shine the light of Christ's love is by gestures of kindness and through a welcoming spirit.

In Matthew 5:14–16, Jesus reveals that in Him we're "the light of the world" and "a town built on a hill" (v. 14). Ancient cities were often built of white limestone, truly standing out as they reflected the blazing sun. May we choose not to be hidden but to give light "to everyone in the house" (v. 15).

And as we "let [our] light shine before others" (v. 16), may they experience the welcoming love of Christ.

By: Dave Branon

Teacher Encouragement for the Day: Being welcoming and accepting helps create that light to the world that reflects Christ-like love to others.

## A Divine Duet

Bible in a Year: Psalms 57–59; Romans 4

If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit.

John 15:5

Today's Scripture & Insight: John 15:1–11

At a children's music recital, I watched a teacher and student seat themselves in front of a piano. Before their duet began, the teacher leaned over and whispered some last-minute instructions. As music flowed from the instrument, I noticed that the student played a simple melody while the teacher's accompaniment added depth and richness to the song. Near the end of the piece, the teacher nodded his approval.

Our life in Jesus is much more like a duet than a solo performance. Sometimes, though, I forget that He's "sitting next to me," and it's only by His power and guidance that I can "play" at all. I try to hit all the right notes on my own—to obey God in my own strength, but this usually ends up seeming fake and hollow. I try to handle problems with my limited ability, but the result is often discord with others.

My Teacher's presence makes all the difference. When I rely on Jesus to help me, I find my life is more honoring to God. I serve joyfully, love freely, and am amazed as God blesses my relationships. It's like Jesus told His first disciples, "If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing" (John 15:5).

Each day we play a duet with our good Teacher—it's His grace and power that carry the melody of our spiritual lives.

By: Jennifer Benson Schuldt

Teacher Encouragement for the Day: Relying on Jesus makes our lives more honoring, joyful and loving.

East Meets West

Bible in a Year: Joshua 22–24; Luke 3

Who are you to judge someone else's servant?

Romans 14:4

Today's Scripture & Insight: Romans 14:1–12

When students from Southeast Asia met a teacher from North America, the visiting instructor learned a lesson. After giving his class their first multiple-choice test, he was surprised to find many questions left unanswered. While handing back the corrected papers, he suggested that, next time, instead of leaving answers blank they should take a guess. Surprised, one of the students raised their hand and asked, "What if I accidentally get the answer right? I would be implying that I knew the answer when I didn't." The student and teacher had a different perspective and practice.

In the days of the New Testament, Jewish and Gentile converts were coming to Christ with perspectives as different as East and West. Before long they were disagreeing over matters as diverse as worship days and what a Christ-follower is free to eat or drink. The apostle Paul urged them to remember an important fact: None of us is in a position to know or judge the heart of another.

For the sake of harmony with fellow believers, God urges us to realize that we are all accountable to our Lord, to act according to His Word and our conscience. However, He alone is in a position to judge the attitudes of our heart (Rom. 14:4–7).

By: Mart DeHaan

Teacher Encouragement for the Day: Unity is a value that we can bring to a society when we keep our focus on the Lord.

## Ripple Effect

Bible in a Year: Exodus 12–13; Matthew 16

Because the hand of the Lord my God was on me, I took courage and gathered leaders from Israel to go up with me.

Ezra 7:28

Today's Scripture & Insight: Ezra 8:15–21

The little Bible college in northern Ghana didn't look impressive—just a tin-roofed cinder-block building and a handful of students. Yet Bob Hayes poured his life into those students. He gave them leadership roles and encouraged them to preach and teach, despite their occasional reluctance. Bob passed away years ago, but dozens of thriving churches, schools, and two additional Bible institutes have sprung up across Ghana—all started by graduates of that humble school.

During the reign of King Artaxerxes (465–424 bc), Ezra the scribe assembled a band of Jewish exiles to return to Jerusalem. But Ezra found no Levites among them (Ezra 8:15). He needed Levites to serve as priests. So he commissioned leaders to “bring attendants to us for the house of our God” (v. 17). They did so (vv. 18–20), and Ezra led them all in fasting and prayer (v. 21).

Ezra's name means “helper,” a characteristic that resides at the heart of good leadership. Under Ezra's prayerful guidance, he and his protégés would lead a spiritual awakening in Jerusalem (see chapters 9–10). All they had needed was a little encouragement and wise direction.

That's how God's church works too. As good mentors encourage and build us up, we learn to do the same for others. Such an influence will reach far beyond our lifetime. Work done faithfully for God stretches into eternity.

By: Tim Gustafson

Teacher Encouragement for the Day: Being a helper is a characteristic that resides at the heart of good leadership.

Everyone Needs a Mentor

Bible in a Year: Jeremiah 20–21; 2 Timothy 4

To Titus, my true son in our common faith.

Titus 1:4

Today's Scripture & Insight: Titus 2:1–8

As I walked into my new supervisor's office, I was feeling wary and emotionally raw. My old supervisor had run our department with harshness and condescension, often leaving me (and others) in tears. Now I wondered, What would my new boss be like? Soon after I stepped into my new boss' office, I felt my fears dissipate as he welcomed me warmly and asked me to share about myself and my frustrations. He listened intently, and I knew by his kind expression and gentle words that he truly cared. A believer in Jesus, he became my work mentor, encourager, and friend.

The apostle Paul was a spiritual mentor to Titus, his "true son in our common faith" (Titus 1:4). In his letter to Titus, Paul offered him helpful instructions and guidelines for his role in the church. He not only taught but modeled how to "teach what is appropriate to sound doctrine" (2:1), set "an example by doing what is good," and "show integrity, seriousness and soundness of speech" (vv. 7–8). As a result, Titus became his partner, brother, and coworker (2 Corinthians 2:13; 8:23)—and a mentor of others.

Many of us have benefited from a mentor—a teacher, coach, grandparent, youth leader, or pastor—who guided us with their knowledge, wisdom, encouragement, and faith in God. Who could benefit from the spiritual lessons you've learned in your journey with Jesus?

By: Alyson Kieda

Teacher Encouragement for the Day: You are a guide, an encourager, a leader, a mentor and most of all, a blessing to others.

## Finding Life

Bible in a Year: Genesis 41–42; Matthew 12:1–23

Because I live, you also will live.

John 14:19

Today's Scripture & Insight: John 14:5–14

The words of Ravi's father cut deep. "You're a complete failure. You're an embarrassment to the family." Compared to his talented siblings, Ravi was viewed as a disgrace. He tried excelling in sports, and he did, but he still felt like a loser. He wondered, What is going to become of me? Am I a complete failure? Can I get out of life some way, painlessly? These thoughts haunted him, but he talked to no one. That simply wasn't done in his culture. He had been taught to "keep your private heartache private; keep your collapsing world propped up."

So Ravi struggled alone. Then while he was recovering in the hospital after a failed suicide attempt, a visitor brought him a Bible opened to John 14. His mother read these words of Jesus to Ravi: "Because I live, you also will live" (v. 19). This may be my only hope, he thought. A new way of living. Life as defined by the Author of life. So he prayed, "Jesus, if You are the one who gives life as it is meant to be, I want it."

Life can present despairing moments. But, like Ravi, we can find hope in Jesus who is "the way and the truth and the life" (v. 6). God longs to give us a rich and satisfying life.

By: Poh Fang Chia

Teacher Encouragement for the Day: You have the opportunity to bring those who are in discouragement and despair to a better state of mind.

## Love That Disciplines

Bible in a Year: Psalms 79–80; Romans 11:1–18

Do not despise the Lord's discipline.

Proverbs 3:11

Today's Scripture & Insight: Proverbs 3:11–12

When I took a family studies class in college, we were asked to write a “family history”—a record of the key events that make up one's childhood. This included the patterns that characterized typical family life and the methods of discipline we experienced. We all had at least one instance of a parent misapplying discipline and leaving an emotional or physical scar. Understandably, traumatic experiences like these may affect the way we interpret our heavenly Father's discipline.

In Proverbs 3:11–12, the wise teacher invites readers to accept God's discipline. The word discipline could be translated “correction.” As a good and loving Father, God speaks through His Spirit and the Scriptures to correct self-destructive behavior. God's discipline is relational—rooted in His love and His desire for what's best for us. Sometimes it looks like consequences. Sometimes God prompts someone to point out our blind spots. Often, it's uncomfortable, but God's discipline is a gift.

But we don't always see it that way. The wise man cautioned, “Do not despise the Lord's discipline” (v. 11). Sometimes we fear God's discipline. At other times we misinterpret bad things in our lives as God's discipline. This is far from the heart of a loving Father who disciplines because He delights in us and corrects because He loves us.

Instead of fearing God's discipline, may we learn to accept it. When we hear God's voice of correction in our hearts or experience conviction when reading Scripture, may we thank God that He delights in us enough to lead us to what's best.



By: Daniel Ryan Day

Teacher Encouragement for the Day: Discipline comes from a heart of love.

Graded with Grace

Bible in a Year: Psalms 148–150; 1 Corinthians 15:29–58

While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

Romans 5:8

Today's Scripture & Insight: Romans 5:6–15

My son's blue eyes sparkled with excitement as he showed me a paper he had brought home from school. It was a math test, marked with a red star and a grade of 100 percent. As we looked at the exam, he said he had three questions left to answer when the teacher said time was up. Puzzled, I asked how he could have received a perfect score. He replied, "My teacher gave me grace. She let me finish the test although I had run out of time."

As my son and I discussed the meaning of grace, I pointed out that God has given us more than we deserve through Christ. We deserve death because of our sin (Rom. 3:23). Yet, "while we were still sinners, Christ died for us" (5:8). We were unworthy, yet Jesus—sinless and holy—gave up His life so we could escape the penalty for our sin and one day live forever in heaven.

Eternal life is a gift from God. It's not something we earn by working for it. We are saved by God's grace, through faith in Christ (Eph. 2:8–9).

By: Jennifer Benson Schuldt

Teacher Encouragement for the Day: Grace is a part of what you do to encourage others towards good.

## Two Are Better

Bible in a Year: Deuteronomy 1–2; Mark 10:1–31

Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their labor.

Ecclesiastes 4:9

Today's Scripture & Insight: Ecclesiastes 4:9–11

In the 1997 Ironman Triathlon in Hawaii, two women fought to stay on their feet as they hobbled toward the finish line. Exhausted, the runners persevered on wobbly legs, until Sian Welch bumped into Wendy Ingraham. They both dropped to the ground. Struggling to stand, they stumbled forward, only to fall again about twenty meters from the finish line. When Ingraham began to crawl, the crowd applauded. When her competitor followed suit, they cheered louder. Ingraham crossed the finish line in fourth place, and she slumped into the outstretched arms of her supporters. Then she turned and reached out to her fallen sister. Welch lunged her body forward, stretching her weary arm toward Ingraham's hand and across the finish line. As she completed the race in fifth place, the crowd roared their approval.

This pair's completion of the 140-mile swimming, biking, and running race inspired many. But the image of the weary competitors persevering together remains ingrained in my mind, affirming the life-empowering truth in Ecclesiastes 4:9–11.

There's no shame in admitting we require assistance in life (v. 9), especially since we can't honestly deny our needs or hide them from our all-knowing God. At one time or another, we'll all fall, whether physically or emotionally. Knowing we're not alone can comfort us as we persevere. As our loving Father helps us, He empowers us to reach out to others in need, affirming they too aren't alone.

By: Xochitl Dixon

Teacher Encouragement for the Day: We can model how receiving help from others is a good characteristic of honesty, expression of needs and humility.

The Greatest Teacher

Bible in a Year: Isaiah 39–40; Colossians 4

Who was it that taught [the Lord] knowledge?

Isaiah 40:14

Today's Scripture & Insight: Isaiah 40:12–14

“I don’t get it!” My daughter slapped her pencil down on the desk. She was working on a math assignment, and I’d just begun my “job” as a homeschooling mom/teacher. We were in trouble. I couldn’t recall what I’d learned thirty-five years ago about changing decimals into fractions. I couldn’t teach her something I didn’t already know, so we watched an online teacher explain the skill.

As human beings, we’ll struggle at times with things we don’t know or understand. But not God; He’s the all-knowing One—the omniscient One. Isaiah wrote, “Who can . . . instruct the Lord as his counselor? Whom did the Lord consult to enlighten him, and who taught him the right way? Who was it that taught him knowledge, or showed him the path of understanding?” (Isaiah 40:13–14). The answer? No one!

Humans have intelligence because God created us in His own image. Still, our intelligence is just an inkling of His. Our knowledge is limited, but God knows everything from eternity past to eternity future (Psalm 147:5). Our knowledge is increasing today with the aid of technology, but we still get things wrong. Jesus, however, knows all things “immediately, simultaneously, exhaustively and truly,” as one theologian put it.

No matter how much humans advance in knowledge, we’ll never surpass Christ’s all-knowing status. We’ll always need Him to bless our understanding and to teach us what’s good and true.

By: Jennifer Benson Schuldt

Teacher Encouragement for the Day: As an educator, your intelligence has the opportunity to reflect God and how he has created each of us uniquely.

God's Enduring Word

Bible in a Year: 2 Samuel 16–18; Luke 17:20-37

Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away.

Matthew 24:35

Today's Scripture & Insight: Psalm 119:89-96

At the beginning of World War II, aerial bombings flattened much of Warsaw, Poland. Cement blocks, ruptured plumbing, and shards of glass lay strewn across the great city. In the downtown area, however, most of one damaged building still stubbornly stood. It was the Polish headquarters for the British and Foreign Bible Society. Still legible on a surviving wall were these words: "Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away" (Matt. 24:35).

Jesus made that statement to encourage His disciples when they asked Him about the "end of the age" (v. 3). But His words also give us courage in the midst of our embattled situation today. Standing in the rubble of our shattered dreams, we can still find confidence in God's indestructible character, sovereignty, and promises.

The psalmist wrote: "Your word, Lord, is eternal; it stands firm in the heavens" (Ps. 119:89). But it is more than the word of the Lord; it is His very character. That is why the psalmist could also say, "Your faithfulness continues through all generations" (v. 90).

As we face devastating experiences, we can define them either in terms of despair or of hope. Because God will not abandon us to our circumstances, we can confidently choose hope. His enduring Word assures us of His unfailing love.

By: Dennis Fisher

Teacher Encouragement for the Day: You are a model of teaching others how to meet the challenges of life.

When We're Weary

Bible in a Year: Isaiah 3–4; Galatians 6

Let us not become weary in doing good.

Galatians 6:9

Today's Scripture & Insight: Galatians 6:1–10

Sometimes trying to do the right thing can be exhausting. We may wonder, Do my well-intentioned words and actions make any difference at all? I wondered this recently when I sent a prayerfully thought-out email meant to encourage a friend, only to have it met with an angry response. My immediate reaction was a mixture of hurt and anger. How could I be so misunderstood?

Before I responded out of anger, I remembered that we won't always see the results (or the results we desire) when we tell someone about how Jesus loves them. When we do good things for others hoping to draw them to Him, they may spurn us. Our gentle efforts to prompt someone to right action may be ignored.

Galatians 6 is a good place to turn when we're discouraged by someone's response to our sincere efforts. Here the apostle Paul encourages us to consider our motives—to “test our actions”—for what we say and do (vv. 1–4). When we have done so, he encourages us to persevere: “Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up. Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people” (vv. 9–10).

God wants us to continue living for Him, which includes praying for and telling others about Him—“doing good.” He will see to the results.

By: Alyson Kieda

Teacher Encouragement for the Day: Remember to pray for the wisdom of our father so that you can continue to do good and see good results from your labor.

### Learning from Foolishness

Bible in a Year: 1 Kings 1–2; Luke 19:28–48

The heart of the wise inclines to the right, but the heart of the fool to the left. Even as fools walk along the road, they lack sense.

Ecclesiastes 10:2–3

Today's Scripture & Insight: Ecclesiastes 10:1–14

A man walked into a convenience store in Wollongong, Australia, put a \$20 bill on the counter and asked for change. When the clerk opened the cash drawer, the man pulled a gun and asked for all the cash in the register, which the clerk promptly provided. The man took the cash from the clerk and fled, leaving the \$20 bill on the counter. The total amount of cash he got from the drawer? Fifteen dollars.

We all act foolishly at times—even if, unlike this thief, we’re trying to do the right thing. The key is how we learn from our foolish behavior. Without correction, our poor choices can become habits, which will negatively shape our character. We’ll become “fools . . . [who] lack sense” (Ecclesiastes 10:3).

Sometimes it’s hard to admit our foolishness because of the extra work it requires. Perhaps we need to reflect on a particular character flaw, and that’s painful. Or maybe we need to admit that a decision was made hastily and next time we should take more care. Whatever the reason, it never pays to ignore our foolish ways.

Thankfully, God can use our foolishness to discipline and shape us. Discipline isn’t “pleasant at the time,” but its training yields good fruit in the long run (Hebrews 12:11). Let’s accept our Father’s discipline for our foolish behavior and ask Him to make us more like the sons and daughters He intends us to be.

By: Con Campbell

Teacher Encouragement for the Day: While discipline of learners isn't always pleasant, the appropriate training prepares them for good in the long run.

## The Power of Demonstration

Bible in a Year: Joshua 16–18; Luke 2:1–24

All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness.

2 Timothy 3:16

Today's Scripture & Insight: 2 Timothy 3:10–17

My attempts at fixing things around the house usually lead to paying someone else to undo the damage I caused while trying to fix the original problem. But recently I successfully repaired a home appliance by watching a YouTube video where a person demonstrated step by step how to do it.

Paul was a powerful example to his young protégé Timothy who traveled with him and watched him in action. From prison in Rome, Paul wrote, “You . . . know all about my teaching, my way of life, my purpose, faith, patience, love, endurance, persecutions, sufferings” (2 Timothy 3:10–11). In addition, he urged Timothy to “continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of, because you know those from whom you learned it, and how from infancy you have known the Holy Scriptures” (vv. 14–15).

Paul's life demonstrated the necessity of building our lives on the bedrock of God's Word. He reminded Timothy that the Bible is the powerful, God-given source that we need to teach and to demonstrate to others who want to be Christ-followers.

As we thank the Lord for the people who helped us grow in faith, we are challenged to follow their example of living out the truth as we teach and encourage others.

That's the power of demonstration.

By: David C. McCasland

Teacher Encouragement for the Day: You are helping others to build a foundation for a good life, taking on the challenges that they will encounter.

### Strength for the Weary

Bible in a Year: 2 Chronicles 19–20; John 13:21–38

Those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength.

Isaiah 40:31

Today's Scripture & Insight: Isaiah 40:27–31

On a beautiful, sunny day, I was walking in a park and feeling very weary in spirit. It wasn't just one thing weighing me down—it seemed to be everything. When I stopped to sit on a bench, I noticed a small plaque placed there in loving memory of a “devoted husband, father, brother, and friend.” Also on the plaque were these words, “But they who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles; they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint” (Isa. 40:31 esv).

Those familiar words came to me as a personal touch from the Lord. Weariness—whether physical, emotional, or spiritual—comes to us all. Isaiah reminds us that although we become tired, the Lord, the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth “will not grow tired or weary” (v. 28). How easily I had forgotten that in every situation “[the Lord] gives strength to the weary and increases the power of the weak” (v. 29).

What's it like on your journey today? If fatigue has caused you to forget God's presence and power, why not pause and recall His promise. “Those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength” (v. 31). Here. Now. Right where we are.

By: David C. McCasland



Teacher Encouragement for the Day: When you are tired, remember there is power in the presence of our God.

A Shepherd for Life

Bible in a Year: 1 Samuel 10–12; Luke 9:37–62

God . . . has been my shepherd all my life to this day.

Genesis 48:15

Today's Scripture & Insight: Genesis 48:8–16

When my son changed grades in school he cried, “I want my teacher for life!” We had to help him realize that changing teachers is a part of life. We may wonder: Is there any relationship that can last a lifetime?

Jacob, the patriarch, found out there is one. After living through many dramatic changes and losing loved ones along the way, he realized there had been a constant presence in his life. He prayed, “May the God . . . who has been my shepherd all my life to this day . . . bless these boys” (Gen. 48:15–16).

Jacob had been a shepherd, so he compared his relationship to God as that of a shepherd and his sheep. From the time a sheep is born through its growth to old age the shepherd cares for it day and night. He guides it during the day and protects it during the night. David, also a shepherd, had the same conviction, but he highlighted the eternal dimension to it when he said, “I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever” (Ps. 23:6).

Changing teachers is a part of life. But how good it is to know that we can have a relationship for life. The Shepherd has promised to be with us every day of our earthly existence (Matt. 28:20). And when life here ends, we will be closer to Him than ever.

By: Keila Ochoa

Teacher Encouragement for the Day: Your part of providing influential relationships is building the guidance needed in others.