



Moments
with the
Master

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Moments with the Master

JOHN LEWIS SANDLIN

Lyrical attention to the nature and nourishment of contemporary need are these perceptive devotions based on familiar words from everyday life.

The universal elements of human resources, experiences, activities, surroundings and events here become effective focal points for 115 stimulating and refreshing meditations, each of which is enhanced by pertinent Scripture and prayer.

With characteristic informality, understanding and vigor, John Lewis Sandlin offers in these pages an uncommon selection of inspirational springboards for

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Moments
with the
Master

John Lewis Sandlin

MING H. REVELL COMPANY

*To my mother
whose love inspires me
to draw nearer to
the light.*

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Preface

The ebb and flow of daily living, the changing scenes of time, remind us to take notice of the vocabulary of spiritual life—the language of the heart. 'Midst our busy lives today we can find our wistfulness put to flight by the spiritual yearning of our souls; for we know the Father who satisfies our spiritual needs.

We are not cast adrift upon seas of purposeless existence. We are children of the God who seeks us for His own, drawing us to Himself by the cords of love. When through our sense of need we find His fellowship, we renew our spiritual strength.

This book is a devotional study of words significant and relevant to our sense of need. It seeks to lift up in telegraphic style the tidings, the message for every age and clime.

In the vocabulary of our language, some words are variable in meaning: their definitions may be different a thousand years hence. But the author believes that those contained in this little book will linger in our spiritual treasury to become a legacy to our children and our children's children.

It is my hope that these meditations may underline a portion of our spiritual vocabulary.

JOHN LEWIS SANDLIN

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Part I

RESOURCES

ANTICIPATION

I will trust, and will not be afraid . . . (Isaiah 12:2).

The foretaste of an experience brings delight or dread. Delight in the experience adds wonder to our confidence in the event or result expected. Dread brings upsets that distort appreciation and blight the confidence.

The shadow of dread makes one unwell or destroys the appetite; sometimes one becomes inwardly irritable or unpleasant in his relationships because of dread or forebodings of the future. This is not the proper mood of the Christian personality. Fear prevents intelligent appreciation of any situation.

Anticipation is necessary to the success of every person who worships Almighty God, for as we go into the sanctuary we carry with us the attitude of expectation. We go to find fellowship with God and with the mind attuned to the atmosphere of fellowship, we find:

Confidence in God's grace
Reliance upon God's power
Renewed hope in the midst of living
Undaunted faith in God's justice
Undoubted knowledge of His veracity
Unlimited resources for our work.

The acceleration of life depends largely upon the exhilarating anticipation of new spiritual experience.

Eternal God, who art our Father, may we approach the altar of worship in the spirit of expectation and assurance. Renew our minds with the knowledge of the purity of Thy love. Fill our lives with the attitude of expectation, anticipation of Thy justice; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

BEAUTY

His holy mountain, beautiful in elevation, is the joy of all the earth (Psalm 48:2).

As one views the mountain tops of the range that borders Denver, Colorado, he observes the cross on a church steeple that stands out against the background of the snow caps. What a magnificent array of grandeur!

This symbol of purity impresses our spiritual sensitivity, and we cannot help exclaiming, with the psalmist, "I lift up my eyes to the hills. From whence does my help come?" We must reply to our own question, "My help comes from the Lord, who made heaven and earth."

In the quietude of morning, we lift our prayers to the Lord who is the author of beauty.

Let us pray that we may see:

Beyond today, through every shadow
Into the plans God has for us
Into the service of every opportunity.

Let us pray that God may speak to our hearts:

That we may meditate upon the needs of our world
That we may be used of Him to promote good will among all
people—everywhere
That we may become effective servants of our Father, who has
given us such beauty.

Thou who hast brought from the earth the majesty of the mountain tops, raise us from the dead levels of our selfishness and into the light of Thy will for our lives. Create in us clean thoughts that we may find new values in the ordinary, that we may find beauty in the midst of our efforts to bring forth fruits of labor. Instill within our minds the sense of value that Jesus brought to our heritage. This we pray in His dear name. Amen.

CHEERFULNESS

A cheerful heart is a good medicine . . . (Proverbs 17:22).

When we think of the sunny dispositions of so many persons who suffer, they put us to shame. We wonder how they maintain the glow of cheerfulness in the midst of their maladies. It does us good to be with these persons.

A pastor who was out calling on his parishioners tells of a visit to a bed-ridden person. How interesting was the visit to the pastor! In fact, the minister found that the patient gave him more courage for living than he imparted to the patient.

Good humor lights a lamp in our dispositions.

Words of cheer
Smiles of hope
A warm handclasp
An unselfish act
A kindness rendered—

All express the sunny disposition, the compass of the spirit that gives direction to new hope. Thus do our burdens become lighter or more easily borne—through attitudes that are contagious in their brightness.

How may we share in lifting the loads of those who find the way dark without our smile? A merry heart is power immeasurable.

O Lord, our Lord, we thank Thee for the cheerful souls we meet along the way. We pray that we might impart something of the cheerfulness, the jollity, the fellowship they share with us so freely. May we begin this day in the sunny attitude of those who smile; though Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

CONSECRATION

... I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me (Galatians 2:20).

For St. Paul, the great protagonist of Christianity, Christ was superimposed upon his life. In the manner of the self-forgetting servant, Paul would shirk no hardship in the interest of the Christian gospel.

Christ is the supreme expression of the love of God in the world. For us today, there is the same Christ, waiting for our love, looking into our lives with the full meaning of God's call.

We, too, would find the way He points us toward; we, too, would share in the fellowship that bids us be one in building His Kingdom among men on earth.

Such consecration requires of us:

Daily prayer to God in thanksgiving
Devotion to the tasks before us
Continuous effort in promoting the gospel
Complete surrender of our lives to His will.

And yet, we have not arrived; but we do try. We are seeking to find better ways of serving Him. He who gave Himself without reservation deserves our supreme devotion.

Teach us, O Lord, how to dedicate our lives anew with each day. May we seek through the knowledge of Christ to find the constancy of His love through the service of others; in His name we pray. Amen.

CONSOLATION

I will not leave you desolate (John 14:18).

Soon or late, the time comes when each of us must have the soothing reassurance that someone cares for us. In the hardness of life that is with us, in the day's routine, in our ordinary experiences, we find a need for comfort and reassurance.

Such expectation of consolation is the normal attitude of human life and spiritual progress. We share in the need, we find the longing, and we are blessed by the kind and soothing word of some understanding friend or relative.

Without the steadying force of consolation, our hearts would give up in despair and we would die in loneliness. Jesus experienced the sense of loneliness, but He shared in the consolation of His Father. Likewise, He gave to His wayworn disciples His parting word of hope as He gave new strength to each of them: "I will not leave you desolate."

Today we find consolation as:

He comes to us in spirit
He reassures us
He lives in our fellowship.

Knowing this, we face life unafraid and believe in His ability to see us through any difficulty we may face.

Dear Lord and Father of us all, our hearts are made glad by the steadiness of Thy reassuring love. As we read the words of our Lord, make us adequate for the tests that come. May the parting words of Jesus be the foundation of our longing as we live again today. In His name we pray. Amen.

CONSTANCY

... *be constant in prayer* (Romans 12:12).

In the darkest night the stars may not appear, but they do shine. Above the clouds that hide their brilliance, the light they shed is real.

Within our lives there is the spirit to hold on when life seems unworthy of new effort. At the crossroads of every great experience, when wavering makes us terribly afraid, we still believe and stand steadily by our efforts to pray for the best to happen through our lives, according to His will.

Yes, the spirit of constancy is an endowment of divine creation. Think how chaotic life would be without that ingrained fiber of dependability—that product of constancy. Imagine, or try to imagine, how difficult our sojourn would be if we did not have the love of others who stand by and believe in us, regardless of what happens.

Let us take notice of these characteristics we possess:

Our steadfast loyalty
Our unwavering confidence
Our unflagging attitude.

These we will cherish as the day wears on and matures.

*O Lord, may we find through the constancy of Thy Spirit new meaning in this day's activities; in all our responsibilities, make us attentive to our decision that re-
vives our loyalty to Thee and to our fellow beings. In His name we pray. Amen.*

COURAGE

Be strong and of good courage . . . (Deuteronomy 31:6).

In what was perhaps his last public utterance, Thomas A. Edison said in a radio talk to the American people: "Be courageous. I have seen history repeat itself many times."

Edison was of course referring to the difficult days of the economic depression which began in 1929. He knew what true courage is, for he had faced the world with hardly more than two months' regular study in school.

But, we must remember that whatever else he learned as a boy he acquired from his mother who believed in his ability. The great inspiration of his career was motivated by the devotion of his mother. Thus was his genius nourished in the presence of obstacles.

When he died in 1931 he had patents for more than 1,000 inventions. No human being can tell how much he added to the economic wealth and convenience of people throughout the world. Today we need to stress that firmness of mind known as courage. As we cast aside our fears, let us hold on to the resolution to face life with tenacity of purpose, as Jesus met it.

Endow us, O Lord, with the sturdiness we need. Cause us to find the firmness of spirit that meets every obstacle with determination and fortitude; in the Master's name. Amen.

FAITH

Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen . . . (Hebrews 11:1).

The foundation of our religious experience is laid on faith. By faith the farmer sows the seed and looks for-

ward to the harvest; by faith the scientist launches out into new fields of exploration, believing in his search for truth; by faith the vows of marriage are assumed by the persons who pledge their loyalty to each other.

In fact, without faith the work of the world could not be done. What, we ask, does faith require? And we do not look far to find the answer. Faith requires certain realities:

Belief in the importance of history

Jesus lived among men
Jesus revealed God
Jesus died for the sins of others
Jesus rose from the dead
Jesus promised salvation from sin

Belief in the importance of the present

Our life is eternal, beginning now
We know our sins are forgiven now
We witness to our faith here and now
We experience God's presence now
We grow in grace each day

Belief in the importance of the future

We believe in life after death
We believe we shall be reunited
with loved ones.

Eternal God, our Father, steady us through a faith that will not shrink. May we find assurance in the great promise of eternal life. Help us to share the conviction of our hearts with others, that in the midst of life we may find the way to the Father's house. And as we turn toward the light of Thy love, make us fit for Thy holy sight. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

FAITHFULNESS

But the fruit of the Spirit is . . . faithfulness . . . (Galatians 5:22).

We have a stewardship, an obligation known as faithfulness. We feel responsibility for all God has given, for all belongs to God, and all we have received is a trust from Him:

Life
Possessions
Money.

The trust of life is greatest of them all. Within the time we have, we feel our Father's call to share our lives with others through:

Trustworthiness
Dependability
Loyalty.

Through the use of our possessions, we are able to serve with diligence and industry. In making proper use of our talents, we find new satisfactions—through service.

In the proper use of money, our stored-up personality, we may bring relief to sufferers, establish institutions for the betterment of mankind, and return a portion to God by supporting His church.

We have a stewardship of life, of all God has given. Let us use all we are, all we have, and all we may become for His glory.

Teach us, O Lord, how to make proper use of all Thou dost give. Make us generous, though our wealth of possessions be small. Guide us in the way of wisdom; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

FELLOWSHIP

Thy word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path . . .
(Psalm 119:105).

In the spirit of questing hearts, we face this day with renewed hope. May we ask God's blessing and find courage for the hours ahead.

Let us be grateful for another opportunity:

To seek renewed fellowship
To find meaning in life
To humble ourselves before God
To smile in the face of difficulty.

May we strive to change our minds to suit the will of God as we work together.

May we be tolerant and considerate of those with whom we disagree.

May we be brotherly, even in the presence of discourtesy and rudeness.

In a spirit of humble effort, may we find new insights into the solution of old problems.

May we put aside all hatred and cankering animosity that would destroy or maim our dispositions.

May we find inward and inner peace as we seek to promote harmonious relationships with all persons.

Our Father God, for the living of this day, we offer our thanks to Thee. Continue to use us for the building of fellowship and the promotion of loving-kindness, in the bond of Thy peace and through the fellowship of Thy guidance. In Jesus' name. Amen.

FELLOWSHIP

. . . *they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship . . .* (Acts 2:42).

Kindred minds devoted to a single spiritual objective—that is our goal. As we wait in anticipation of God's blessing and power for our lives, we find renewed fellowship. We soon find a sharing relationship binds us together and dissolves our petty differences.

Fellowship brings, through participation in the group life, many benefits:

Unique experience
Mutuality of understanding
Strength of faith
Concern for growth
Enthusiasm for service.

Think how much may be added to our lives by this endeavor to strengthen fellowship. Imagine how much better our daily tasks may be accomplished through group activity.

O Lord, our heavenly Father, may we find throughout this day a new relationship through co-operation and understanding. Help us to set aside our selfish motives that we may realize anew how dependent we are upon one another. Take us into fellowship that builds a world fit to live in; give us new faith fit to live by. And as we seek Thy will for our part in this time of responsibility, bless us with a new concern for the welfare of others. This we ask in the Master's name. Amen.

GENIUS

But he gives more grace . . . (James 4:6).

That high-born sense of mission, the insight that glows within the heart of a devoted person, is known as genius. Intelligence applied to work, producing effective results, often with great expenditure of energy—that, too, is genius.

Acceptance of the grace of God and making it effective in our decisions—that, too, is genius. How wide and far it shines into the corridors of time—this spirit of dedication to the cause believed worthwhile—genius! For, after all, the proper investment of our lives in the mission God gives to each of us is also genius.

No person is without some useful talent; no individual is destitute of some ability to perform a definite service to the world in which we dwell.

Today we share the thought that God gives to us more grace to believe in tasks of all kinds. The talents we possess make each of us unique; for, while someone else may do our work, no one can do it as He wants us to accomplish it—that, too, is genius.

The brilliance He has given in varied hues will come to the fore in the work of this new day. So to lift our load with willing minds and hearts is to share in this grace He gives—that, too, is genius.

Strengthen us, O Lord, that in the tasks we have to do we may invest our talents, our time and our thoughts with all our might. Make us more intelligent as we serve; in the Master's name. Amen.

GENTLENESS

But the fruit of the Spirit is . . . gentleness . . . (Galatians 5:22).

Gentleness is the outstanding characteristic of Jesus. His attitude toward every person He meets reminds us that He is kind. Refinement in manners, courtesy, benevolence—all are gentleness.

One day Jesus met a woman at Jacob's well, a sinful woman. How gently He dealt with her! As we read the story in John's Gospel, we find great amazement in her discovery of the Master's kindness. With insight and devotion, He counseled her.

We can only imagine how fruitful life would become if we invested Christ's gift of gentleness in our own lives.

We need:

The gentle touch of His spirit
 The contagion of His enthusiasm
 The consciousness of His presence
 The experience of His love.

All this may be ours as we learn to know God the Father through the fellowship of His Son.

Direct us, O Lord, in our search for the gentleness of Jesus. Help us to find the way to the source of kindness and grace. Forgive our harsh attitudes; refine our thoughts. In the spirit of Christ we pray. Amen.

GOODNESS

But the fruit of the Spirit is . . . goodness . . . (Galatians 5:22).

Goodness—virtue—excellence! They mean the same thing. They ring true to the Christian spirit. Indefinable, yet they are recognizable to all of us.

A good person possesses such qualities, and every person possesses them in more or less degree. How may we acquire more depth in these qualities? Here are the ways:

First, by thinking noble thoughts. Let us make a special effort to meditate upon God's purpose for us. As we pursue higher levels in our thinking, we approach goodness.

Second, by going out of our way to help some person every day. This is so easy to do, yet so often overlooked.

Third, by studying and reading the great literature of the ages. This is a privilege—to love good books—to spend more time with the great minds of the past.

Fourth, by looking around us. Here we observe that God has placed us in the midst of friendship's influence. We find Him working through persons. We find His grace through the goodness of personality.

Our Father, show us how to recognize goodness in daily experience, in the associations we have with one another. Take these our efforts and make them Thine indeed. In the Master's name. Amen.

HARMONY

. . . eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace . . . (Ephesians 4:3).

Life is a symphony wherein we should seek to play our parts. In harmony with others, we render the composition in:

The music of life's hope
The knowledge of its renewal
The willing forgiveness of persons
The kindliness of courtesy
The fulfillment of right relationships
The power to surmount selfishness.

How pleasing, yet how self-denying is this symphony! How magnificent is this experience of sharing with every person the kindred mind of agreement!

Sometimes we must modulate the tones of living and find the beauty of unique expression. We must contribute our own phase of the theme.

What is our theme today? How may we come into the orchestra pit and respond to the baton as the Master bids us participate?

Yes, in the unity of this role, we find our place and make our contribution to the symphony of life.

Direct us, O Lord, in our effort to make the proper adaptation to the symphony of life. May we contribute to the chord of great experience the tone that may produce harmony and peace. In the Master's name. Amen.

HOPE

My hope is in thee (Psalm 39:7).

Hope is the telescope God gives us to overcome despair. So often we forget that our spirit is nourished through the dream of the future. Hope springs forth to give assurance that:

There will be another day in which to labor
 There will come another opportunity for new ideas
 There will be another chance for success
 We will have a new incentive to live abundantly.

Hope is our second sight that God has given to guide us through every night of sorrow; for when the dismal shadows lie about us, the inward sextant of the heart takes over until the darkness disappears. So is our life preserved and guided by new hope, and we possess the re-

assuring knowledge that we do not live in a fatalistic world.

New purpose leads us onward into light; for He guides us into new experiences, making us rich in the resources of consecrated living.

Hope is the voice of God, speaking so clearly in spite of any misfortune that may come our way. In holding on to the values we find within, some day we may be able to share them with our fellow beings.

Let us think of the many opportunities we may have for kindling the fires of optimism in lives already overwhelmed by disappointment. Is not this our privilege: to share our hope?

Heavenly Father, who didst send Jesus into our world of despair, we thank Thee for the hope He left in our midst. So many times we have lost sight of this great spirit of another opportunity, another day, another chance for abundant living. Renew the brightness of its glow; fill our hearts with its brilliance; through Jesus Christ our blessed Lord. Amen.

HUMILITY

If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet (John 13:14).

Humility implies equality. Jesus calls His followers to do the same work He did.

Humility does not require that one become inferior. As in the fellowship of concern for others we seek to serve, so do we follow Christ's example. As daily He taught His followers to be useful, so should we try to find opportunity for living as He lived.

Today we bow in His presence and seek to share in:

His humility of spirit
His freedom from pride

His abhorrence of arrogance
His humble courtesy.

Through sharing in His willingness to serve, we find the strength of true greatness. And through such sacrificial love, our lives are strengthened to the point of submission to the Father's will. Of such unselfishness do we build the Kingdom and establish it in the hearts of men.

Heavenly Father, mold our attitudes to the design of Thy great purpose; establish our conviction according to Thy steadfast love for mankind. Help us to live today in the courageous manner essential to the demands of noble occupation. Make us more useful. In the Master's name we pray. Amen.

HUMOR

A glad heart makes a cheerful countenance . . .
(Proverbs 15:13).

A sense of humor brings new life into the midst of some depressing experiences. To be able to laugh when it is so much easier to frown is a great advantage.

Good humor brings freedom to the soul, releases new energy for doing more effective work, and adds appreciation to our experience. This ability to discover and hold up the funny side of a situation is healthy, as long as it is done without disparaging human personality.

Certainly a humor of the spirit can make us laugh at ourselves. In the silent tantrums of the mind, we find relief from the strain of drudgery as we renew our sense of humor. And yet, how often do we refuse to smile or laugh at the things that make us appear rather ridiculous.

How shall we meet this day? Where are the interesting and amusing spots of brightness in our situation?

The cheerful word we say to a friend
The laughing dismissal of imaginary difficulties
The pleasantries of a humorous, clean story—

These make for a new appreciation of one another.

Heavenly Father, may we learn how to find the humorous angle of daily living at the proper time. Increase our wit that we may intelligently share in pleasantries. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

KINDNESS

But the fruit of the Spirit is . . . kindness . . . (Galatians 5:22).

Kindness is the mutual experience that builds a firm foundation for daily living. Kindness is attractive; it builds fellowship, bridges gaps, and destroys prejudice. How refreshing, reassuring and cleansing is a kindly attitude of a friend who breaks the atmosphere of tension and points the way to understanding!

Kindness inspires confidence, increases friendliness, and develops security. It inspires the little child as he grows in trustfulness and confidence. The child believes in the person whose friendliness radiates through genuine interest and affection. He longs to follow in his footsteps, admiring him, loving him, and trusting him implicitly.

Kindness gives meaning to life, stimulates understanding, and inspires hope beyond all imagining. It is worth practicing—an art *par excellence*. Let us be kind to everyone.

Our Father, so many times we have passed by those to whom we should have given a word of kindness. Forgive us. Remove our coldness of attitude that we may share in the fellowship of good will. In Jesus' name. Amen.

LIFE

In him was life . . . (John 1:4).

It is great to be alive! How invigorating is the early morning air! The stillness reigning in the woods, the chirp of a young bird, the filtering rays of sunshine, remind us that we have the greatest day ahead:

To live
To work
To grow
To rest.

Within the reach of each of us is the power to enjoy the blessings of this hour. As we look forward to the things we want to do, our thoughts linger and yearn for the goals we set.

Another page from the book of time is open before us; how are we to use it? And so we plan, aspire and contemplate the potentials of this day.

What we do with this moment of grace is all-important to the hours that follow. In anticipation, we look up and ask the blessing of our Father who provides our life. In gratitude to Him, we offer up our prayer. He challenges us today to accept the way of life—the way he plans to share. In Him we find new hope and follow where He leads.

Our Father, who hast created all life, inspire us to live to the fullness of Thy plan. So may we dwell together that Thy Kingdom may come according to Thy will. In His name. Amen.

LOVE

. . . the greatest of these is love (I Corinthians 13:13).

The final test of our holy religion is the love we possess in our associations. Of all the characteristic virtues, none is more effective than love.

Love is the setting for the precious jewels of daily living in the presence of Almighty God. Love is the light that shows the way to the Christian ideal, adding recognition for the most menial or insignificant service—

Love is considerate and gentle
Love is unselfish and magnanimous
Love seeks out the best in every person
Love is eternal.

Plumbing the depths of life's values, love makes positive the purpose for seeking higher qualities and finds meaning in noble deeds. Love puts to shame the pettiness of complacency and inspires us toward the heights of adventurous living.

Of all the virtues, none surpasses love in understanding and encouragement; for love is the expression of the heart of God.

Love brings to us today a portion of the life eternal; for love is of God.

O God, who dost inspire us to love one another, give us a new vision of what it means to share a new concern for others. Grant us insight to find unity of purpose for this new day; make us unselfish. Cleanse our thoughts and renew our minds; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

MUSIC

... to raise sounds of joy (I Chronicles 15:16).

The language of the heart finds expression in music, for the heart has a language that the mind alone cannot express. Such beauty it portrays, the sound of music. Such depths that cannot be reached, such heights that cannot be attained without the aid of music.

Music lulls our baby hearts to sleep; it summons the warrior into battle, brings new meaning to life as it inspires new hope, and wafts us into the presence of thoughts eternal. Music lifts our spiritual sights from earth to heaven, reminding us that we were created for the celestial enjoyment awaiting our tired spirits.

Within the auditory corridors we find the harmony of inspiration revived, and we are ready with new courage to face the dawn of hope eternal. Such is the power of music that if anything be carried over from earth to heaven and music is not there, we would be sadly disappointed.

Let us praise our Father as we raise the sounds of joy inspired through music, another gift of God!

Our Father in heaven, we thank Thee for the power of great music. As it lifts our hearts above the realm of discouragement, may we find new strength to meet the challenge of this day. In Jesus' name. Amen.

ORDERLINESS

. . . Aaron shall keep it in order from evening to morning before the Lord continually . . . (Leviticus 24:3).

Good form according to the accepted standards, in life as in worship, is necessary. Moreover, we may say that without order we might miss the purpose of life.

Good will requires organization for unorganized good will is ineffective. Carelessness and slovenliness are evidences of insincerity and indecency.

Think what it means to find a house well kept. Think how attractive is a sanctuary of worship when everything is in its place and the people who gather together to praise God are reverently and silently waiting for the service to begin.

The cleansing atmosphere of well-planned worship inspires us to live nobly. Likewise, in our daily activities, we know that planning and co-ordination bring effective results.

How are we going about the organization of our lives at the beginning of the day? Do we come to the close of our day's work with the feeling that we have participated in worthwhile work?

Teach us, O God, how to organize our work and plan our lives for effective, orderly, chaste living. Make real our sense of obligation for the interests of this day; to the glory of Thy name. Amen.

PATIENCE

But the fruit of the Spirit is . . . patience . . . (Galatians 5:22).

Midway between where we are today and where we hope to be is patience—a middle ground of long-suffering

and perseverance. Not always comfortable is this experience of waiting and hoping; nevertheless, it is each person's lot to hold on magnificently.

How difficult it is, yet how necessary to spiritual discipline. Bearing up under strenuous circumstances, meeting trials and annoyances with silent fortitude, keeping quiet when it is so much easier to speak—that is patience.

In training a little child, the wise parent soon finds that unless he possesses patience, the training is in vain.

The student, if he is diligent, learns that he must be patient with himself. Without patience, perseverance will not live.

The teacher who is successful realizes that the potentials of the student are developed most fruitfully through an attitude of patience.

Patience absorbs all the busy-ness, the trifling fretfulness of the day.

How patient are we with ourselves? How long-suffering and considerate of others are we?

Our Father, teach us the art of patience in these difficult times. Make us understanding and kind as we live among our fellows; in the Master's name. Amen.

PEACE

Thou dost keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee, because he trusts in thee (Isaiah 26:3).

Within our souls is a peace of God, welling up to remind us that no power on earth is strong enough to sever our relationship with God's calm. As Joseph Fort Newton says, "At the moment when nature appears to turn traitor . . . there rises in the human soul a white splendor of

spiritual vision which all the tragedies of time cannot erase.”*

We seek peace of mind not to tranquilize or dissipate our fears; we would not be at ease or complacent in our daily living, for to live in this manner would be to vegetate. Rather do we seek the challenge and meet the dangers with new courage. In the busy whirl and through the mad scramble we engage in purposeful living, we possess our souls within us and outwardly express the dynamics of God's power.

The undergirding peace of God abides within the storm of every battle; it finds its place and guides us from the depths unto the highest aspirations. Though the difficulty may appear without, we find within the calm repose of God's presence. This we know beyond our ability to explain.

O Lord, whose undergirding power lives and guides us, we praise Thee for the power of calmness from Thy hand. Be Thou our ever-present Father as we pass into the work of this new day. In Jesus' name. Amen.

PRIDE

Therefore pride is their necklace . . . (Psalm 73:6).

Haughtiness and self-esteem, arrogance and disrespect are the expressions of pride that separate persons and destroy the fine character man should possess. On the other hand, self-respect and magnanimity, dignity and refinement are the spiritual qualities that God gives. They are builders of the pride that means redemption for the home, the church and the school.

Pride is a lovely word; it is also a dangerous word. The

* From an essay, "Fate, Faith and God," *The Hibbert Journal*.

loveliness of pride reminds us that we possess abilities to build our lives into satisfying relationships and make ourselves useful citizens. The dangers lie in the direction of vanity, better known as "false pride."

Social caste creates problems, sets up tensions among nations, promotes imperialism and destroys democracy. Class, rank and degree are explosive and unnecessary terms in the Christian philosophy of life. Yet, we find them like "rock strata" in our minds. From time to time, they rise up and slay us spiritually if we are not on guard.

But as we look at Jesus they level out, and we find new power to see the way to fellowship by placing His valuation on every person, whoever he is.

Our Father, deliver us from selfish attitudes that create false pride within us. Make us self-respecting and brotherly to all persons. In Jesus' name. Amen.

PROPORTION

Create in me a clean heart, O God, and put a new and right spirit within me (Psalm 51:10).

As we fit into our relationships with others, we see how significant and meaningful proportion becomes. However, we soon learn that living in proportion to the landscape and in fellowship is not merely conforming to the *status quo*.

Proportion and harmony seek to develop symmetrical lines of reference, making life stand out like the setting for precious stones.

Proportions of living may be designated as:

Objectivity
Tolerance
Unselfishness

Concern for others
Positive ideals
Uncompromising standards.

In short, we may say that proportions bring balance and grace to daily living by being transformed and by transforming. Through such proportions our minds are renewed.

Great Captain of our souls, who hast endowed us with talents, show us how to bring balance and rhythm to the daily responsibilities we share. May we discover the light of Thy presence in and through all we attempt for ourselves and for others; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

REMINDERS

. . . lest you forget . . . (Deuteronomy 4:23).

So many things we take for granted! So many more we forget:

God's everlasting mercy
His interest in our lives
His blessing of time
His endowment of talent.

Yes, we take into the stride of ordinary routine the opportunities for renewing the covenant we made with Him as we decided to invest our lives in the service of others.

Reminders come to us through the needs of other persons:

Unmerited courtesies
Gracious amenities
Affable attitudes.

Acceptance by our friends is a reminder of the intangible yet real quality of imperishable fellowship. Lest we forget, we try today to explore the depth of friendships that we have unconsciously and unintentionally neglected.

Lest we forget, we think of the many considerations that others have given so freely and magnanimously for our happiness and spiritual growth.

Help us, O Lord, to enlarge our minds through reviewing our beautiful thoughts and appreciation for the kindness of others. Dissolve our selfishness that we may grow; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

RESOURCES

... our inner nature is being renewed every day ...
(II Corinthians 4:16).

Our resources are many, many more than we can measure. In the busy whirl of everyday existence or in the fruitfulness of life lived abundantly, we do not realize the greatness of life's resources.

Resourcefulness depends upon our co-operation with God's plan for our lives. Still, we do not co-operate enough to bring forth the capacities for fruitfulness in those who exercise industry and application.

Resourcefulness lies mainly in the power to meet the challenges we face. In the absence of our usual unopposed means of accomplishment, we must call upon the power beyond ordinary means. What are some of these resources?

Of course, money and property are among the material resources, and they are both necessary. Nevertheless, intangibles such as rest and sleep and companionship must not be neglected if we are to be at our best in spiritual efficiency.

Resourcefulness comes more often through hardships of one kind or another. Take Thomas A. Edison, for instance. Many other persons whom you might name prove by their lives that the greatest resources are brought out through the challenges of life.

Our Father, make us willing and able to meet the demands of this and every day with new powers developed from within. Restore the rays of insight that we may have lost; increase our determination to find greater efficiency in spiritual living; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

SALT

You are the salt of the earth . . . (Matthew 5:13).

The success of any undertaking may be judged by the character of its leaders. Jesus must have had this in mind when He said to His hearers, "You are the salt of the earth."

It is our business to preserve the spiritual atmosphere of our time through maintaining:

Intellectual integrity
Spiritual devotion
Effective leadership.

Such qualities give zest to our daily living at home, in government, in business, and in all other relationships. These are our witness, our means of establishing the Kingdom of God on earth.

By means of the Christian fellowship, through the promotion of harmonious relationships, the world is made a haven of redemption and a place of amity. Then, too, we may add:

Harmony
Friendship
Concord.

Our world becomes more attractive, more seasoned, when we flavor our daily living with the salt of Christian excellence, the finesse of Jesus for making our part of the earth a more inviting fellowship.

Bless us, O Lord, as we attempt to become the kind of persons Thou wouldst have us be. May we have the salt of the Christian spirit in abundance. Amen.

SECURITY

O Lord, I am oppressed; be thou my security! (Isaiah 38:14).

Through the ages, men have prayed for security. When difficulties beset us, we long to find relief and assurance that all will be well with us.

Today the world is filled with persons who think that financial problems are obstructions to security. Not realizing that security is not dependent upon material possessions, and not having quite as much of the world's goods, we speak of financial independence. And that is good; but it is not sufficient simply to possess the *things* we need. Among the few negative statements made by Jesus, we find these words, ". . . a man's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions."

We naturally ask, then, "In what does life consist?" Is it not in accord with the conversation of Jesus and the rich ruler to say that life consists of many intangibles which have spiritual meaning? Indeed we think it is.

Life is made up of:

The things we love
The things we know
The things we do.

Our wills are ultimately tempered by our affections, for eyes dimmed by materialism cannot see clearly into the spiritual meaning of life. The bigness of a city does not determine its quality; the character of its people does.

How big was Jesus? We do not know and we're glad we have no photographs of Him, for we have no false estimates of His character.

How big are our lives today? How is our spiritual security?

Dear Lord and Father of us all, grant us wisdom to see that the security of life lies not in the abundance of material possessions. May we find the steadying forces Thou dost offer through faith in Thee; through Jesus Christ our Redeemer. Amen.

SILENCE

There is no speech, nor are there words . . . (Psalm 19:3).

How eloquently the silence speaks! No words, yet how verbal; no noise, yet how harmonious! No wonder is it then that we hear so eloquently the music of the skies, the reverberations of the blue heavens above!

Like the psalmist of old, we pause under the canopy of immeasurable galaxies of stars and think. The pause of spiritual renewal gives new impetus to our appreciation of God's creation; and that we sorely need today, in the midst of our great scientific knowledge.

It matters not how much we know, how greatly endowed our knowledge becomes—we can never fathom the depths of God's magnificent creation. We stand in awe

of One divine and yet approachable; we find new thoughts inspired within the human situation.

In the silence of our hearts do we find the voice of God reminding us that today is the most important opportunity for living meaningfully in a purposeful universe, set in the midst of innumerable galaxies of God's great multi-verse.

In Him we find all that is discoverable; and through His insistent silence, ineffable presence, an understanding prevails. His grace brings forth new wonderment, that we may see His plan.

O Thou eternal Father, who hast created this world in which we live, we bow in reverence as we observe Thy wondrous creation. Our imagination is baffled by the greatness of all we see. Our understanding can never fathom the full meaning of Thy great design, yet we know something of its vastness. Teach us more of Thy way that we may walk in it. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

SILENCE

... there was silence in heaven for about half an hour
(Revelation 8:1).

Looking into the forest during the stillness of the morning, we find a new experience. How eloquently the silence speaks to our hearts as the breezes whisper among the trees! How like the sigh we breathe at the holy hour!

· We bare our spirits here and find time for:

Self-examination
Thorough consideration
Spiritual contemplation.

In the stillness of our hearts, let us seek a deeper relationship to God as our Father. Here, in this sacred

tryst, we are resolved to make a new commitment, to renew our devotion to God and our fellow men.

No other hour pulls together the fragments of our thinking; here we make decisive the orderliness that comes through such inaudible realities.

This hour of calm repose gives direction to our spiritual insights for living effective and useful lives. So calm and deep and cleansing, so full of life's renewal—this hour of silence. We are glad to be here.

Our Father, out of the busy world we have come to this quiet place to worship. Cleanse the thoughts of our minds that we may worthily lift again our prayers into Thy holy presence. Endow us with the poise we need. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

STEADINESS

... so his hands were steady until the going down of the sun (Exodus 17:12).

Sooner or later in the lifetime of every person the steadying assistance of others is needed. One cannot go through life "on his own."

In the experience of Moses, there were times when he needed the help of others. Joshua became the strong arm of Moses in military matters; Aaron steadied Moses' work through his priestly and prophetic functions.

Perhaps Moses did not notice how great a debt he owed to those who assisted him until one day his hands grew weary and he could no longer hold them up. In his moment of need, Aaron and Hur hastened to Moses' side and held up his hands in the presence of his people who faced a state of exigency; and as they held up Moses' hands, Israel won its battle.

Today we need to find within our thinking a recognition of how much we owe those who make possible our steadiness in times of testing. How often do we express our appreciation for the undergirding of power, the supporting strength of friends?

Eternal God, our Father, make us ever conscious of our dependence upon one another. Make real our constancy; help us to invest all we have in the encouragement of those who are charged with the difficult tasks of today. This we ask in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

STRENGTH

... *be strong* (I Corinthians 16:13).

How may I meet the tasks of this new day without new strength? How may I lift the loads and move out in a new direction? How far away from here to there may I travel? The answers to these questions live in the measure of my strength, my power to exercise the talents God has given.

Then, the vision comes forth to remind me that the source of power lies in such things as:

A new sense of need within
 An abiding aspiration
 A worthy purpose
 A consecrated mind and heart
 A knowledge of God
 A desire to share with others
 A forgiving spirit
 An undimmed optimism
 An acceptance of God's grace.

What more may I possess than what God offers? He offers me another day in which to work with others. His

fellowship extends beyond the boundaries of mere organization; no ideology can contain the measure of strength that God supplies through our characteristic friendliness, our inherently cheerful constitution, our cheerfulness of soul that binds us together in:

Everyday living
Calmness of spirit
Poised personality
Contagious confidence
Consideration for one another.

O God, who art the source of our strength, be with us in the duties of this new day. Enable us to find new paths toward living effective and forceful lives for Thee. Take from our hearts any sense of vindictiveness and let the power of Thy Spirit give serenity to our souls. In all relationships of this day, may we find strength for doing Thy will as we see it. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

SYMPATHY

Jesus wept (John 11:35).

In the vocabulary of the human heart, the greatest word is sympathy. Through it, God reaches down and ties us solidly into the never-failing understanding of His love.

Jesus Himself knew that without a fellow feeling to find the wellsprings of the spirit, there could be no common bond in our dearest relationships. For friends He wept, but more particularly for enemies—those who did not understand.

For all mankind the tie of sympathy is supplied by those who walk the road together, side by side, feeling sorrow's pangs and pointing to their relief. This kindred relationship melts the icy gloom of fatalism and brings us into

deep appreciation for the situations of one another. We find within our lives a quality that reaches out to find the sacredness of:

Compassion for each other
 Condolence to be shared
 Agreement beyond measure.

We always find the greatest spiritual depth and appreciation when we, too, pass through the deep waters of sorrow. But the greatest of all joys comes through sharing our sympathy.

Dear Lord and Father of us all, we thank Thee for the bond of sympathy that binds us closer together. May we find and share Thy love for others in every time of need. In the name of the Man of sorrows we pray. Amen.

TRUST

*For not in my bow do I trust, nor can my sword save me
 (Psalm 44:6).*

Trust and refuge are equivalent words. To say, "I trust you," is to pay the highest compliment to a friend. Such sincerity implies that one places his reputation, his entire future, his confidence in the judgment of his friend, for he knows that his friend will not betray the trust.

Friendships founded upon trust are admirable and of great value. However, there is a trust of even greater significance: trust or refuge in God.

The psalmists often express their confidence in God by saying that they take refuge in Him. Conscious of God's power to lead them into the paths of deliverance, knowing that God has protected them from harm and led them

through danger, they write of it feelingly and appreciatively.

Do we have one friend in whom we place our trust? Is there some one who may be depended upon to stand by us through any experience or trial?

Surely we take refuge in God our Father. In Him we have trust.

Lord, Thou art our refuge and our strength. May we ever cast ourselves upon Thy mercy, seeking Thy protection. Cause us to seek Thy will for us always. Amen.

WORDS

A soft answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger (Proverbs 15:1).

Like a fountain from which the water flows, we give out the word that makes or mars the day. Kind utterances give wings to ideas and place them in the minds of others. New inspirations are set in motion by proper encouragement through the symbolism of words.

Words represent either the best or the worst. They convey either good or bad omens, make for harmony or discord, and give birth to love or hatred. Words are eternal evidence of the quality of one's life, good or bad.

Think of the power of words to create or destroy. Within the balances of the mind, words should be weighed and sorted before they are released.

Consider the accuracy or inaccuracy of our vocabulary, for our words do not always convey what we mean to say. Yet, the spoken word carries with it the inflection of a voice that is often unmistakably accurate.

How are we using our vocabulary in our daily relationships with our fellow beings?

Words have an intangible yet real atmosphere
Words bring grief or inspire happiness
Words lay foundations for new life
Words promote harmony in the midst
of striving toward the better life.

Thou who hast given to us the power of words, bless us with the quality of tact, the inspiration to kindly use of the symbols of communication. Make us truly Thy messengers through the sincerity of expression that cements our relationships. Draw us closer to one another in the fellowship of sharing what we know in the best form of expression, through beauty and accuracy. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Part II

EXPERIENCES

ADVERSITY

If you faint in the day of adversity, your strength is small
(Proverbs 24:10).

We cannot alter the fact that the circumstances of every person's life eventually resolve themselves into adversity. None of us wholly escapes misfortune.

What are we going to do with life in the midst of such experiences? In the answer to this question lies our happiness or our sorrow, for in the measurement of any soul, this axiom must be stated: It is not what happens to us that matters, but how we react in the light of and in spite of what happens to us.

In facing realities and circumstances, what are we doing with adversities? It is so easy to excuse our shortcomings, our mistakes, and sometimes even our sins. Not only do we rationalize, but we "fashion-alize" our sins.

The forward look that rises from the deepest adversity reminds us of the eternity of our expression of faith in the future. Here we take hold of circumstances, remake them, fashioning life worthwhile and making it meaningful. With Shakespeare, we say, "Sweet are the uses of adversity."

Our Father, inspire us to refashion our lives in the midst of misfortune, in spite of disappointment. May we meet the challenges of daily living in the spirit of Him who came to show us the way to Thee. In His name. Amen.

AFTERNOON

. . . late one afternoon . . . (II Samuel 11:2).

Between the hours of noon and evening, the test of labors well attained or by weakness ruled is upon us. Through the hours following the noontide, in the heat of

the latter portion of the day, our work is examined and proved. We work with slow, deliberate effort, and there is the danger that we may tire and fall away from the duties pressing in upon us.

How are we testing our strength for the last part of the daylight hours? How well are we applying the added effort to the final blow that "breaks the back" of the work we have to do?

This afternoon may be an opportunity to check up on the slackness or negligence during the morning hours we wasted. With the remaining hours, we go forth to mend the day by exceptional application.

We need to find:

New interest in our task

New strength to do it well

New hope that now we may attain the goal we seek.

How well we succeed depends largely upon our investment of the hours that remain. To measure up is our desire: to use the hours with close attention.

Teach us, our Father, to make the most of the rest of life. May we be diligent in the application of our strength in the hours left for our use. Renew our interest, replenish our strength, and equip our minds for the final effort, the summation of our goal. Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

CHANGE

He changes times and seasons . . . (Daniel 2:21).

Change is the only constant factor that science knows. Likewise does the progress of civilization or social retrogression move on.

The whole world is moving; today it moves more swiftly than ever. Through the ages history has recorded change which has come about through:

Capture
War
Deportation
Emancipation.

From the time Moses led the children of Israel through the wilderness into the lands beyond, to the time the Hebrews were taken captive by Nebuchadnezzar; from the time of nomad caravans to the time they were allowed to return to their homeland; from the time these people passed from the stage of wanderers into the more stable civilization of stationary living in an agricultural economy—civilization has been on the move.

Today, we find that populations move voluntarily. With faster, easier transportation, change is even more evident and decisive.

What about spiritual change? Are we moving into higher altitudes of religious living? How near to God are we?

Our Father, we thank Thee for the transitions of life. Amidst the changes, may we seek and find Thy will for the ever-new days in which we live. Guide us by Thy wisdom. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

CRISIS

After this many of his disciples drew back and no longer went about with him (John 6:66).

Henry Nelson Wieman reminds us that crisis generally wears the face of disaster. At least, we know there are

definite turning points in life, those that make a difference. Life is never again the same.

Moreover, when we see the crucial situation, we know that we walk either in the presence of disaster or on the edge of greater opportunity for service. This was true in the life of Jesus when many of His disciples, on seeing the danger, drew back and were not willing to follow Him any farther.

Crisis brings us face to face with the test of life. In our cruciform daily living we make decisions that will limit those we can make tomorrow.

In such times, we:

Become more alert

Face the situation realistically

Commit our lives to successful accomplishment.

Some things we must do today that we cannot put off until tomorrow. Effectiveness in spiritual accomplishment grows out of the crisis of today. Tomorrow will present new crises.

Direct us, O Lord, in the midst of the perplexities of today that when we decide upon and choose our direction we may remain steadfast and loyal to the best, as Thou dost call us to service; in the Master's name. Amen.

DAWN

As day was about to dawn . . . (Acts 27:33).

When darkness grows thin and begins to shade into the grayness of dawn, it seems to us that God reaches out and touches the blackness of night, drawing back the curtain of obscurity. The light of dawn proclaims another day, new vistas of hope appear, expand and develop, and the skies proclaim the power of light being born.

Now, as we observe, we begin to understand something of the change that takes place in our daily experience of new beginnings. The break of day reminds us of the unalterable ability of Almighty God our Father to renew our spiritual strength. Let us think again of the challenges that will meet us in this day.

The failures of yesterday are largely swallowed up by the darkness of the night; but at the first appearance of dawn, we are blessed by God's reminder that we have another time to make good our pledge to serve in ways unknown in the yesterdays. And so we are inspired again to share the magnificent promise of time, the most precious of life's treasures:

The constancy of divine love
God's grace beyond measure
New knowledge we may treasure.

Eternal Father, whose love has dawned upon us, bless us by Thy Holy Spirit's presence as this day comes into being. May the reality of this beautiful morning light remind us to use this hour for Thee; in His name. Amen.

EVENING

. . . in the evening I dug through the wall with my own hands . . . (Ezekiel 12:7).

When the shadows of the afternoon have lengthened into the darkness of evening, we remind ourselves of many experiences. So long are the evening hours when we're alone, so empty seems the darkness that surrounds us, and many old forebodings of the unknown seem so real.

Yet, in the hours of darkness, in the silence that surrounds us, we find our Father's presence. We meditate and discover:

Resources for the hours of rest
Creative imagination that reaches for the dawn
Comfort for our disappointments.

In the quiet hours of this night, may we know that God does guide, that He is well aware of our needs, that He never leaves us to blind chance, that in the time of rest He gives new strength.

Yes, evening comes to each of us. We face the night serenely and with faith; for God the Father walks beside us and abides within the sanctuary of our hearts; and we are unafraid.

O God, who hast given the evening hours of rest, make us Thine indeed and in truth as we meditate in the silence of the evening shadows. We would find the power to serve on the morrow in the capacities Thou dost supply so freely. Be Thou our fountain of strength; through Christ our Lord. Amen.

FEAR

. . . love casts out fear (I John 4:18).

Fear is a painful emotion often accompanied by alarm that upsets our equilibrium. Excitement reigns in our minds and we cease to think clearly. This is fear.

Those anxious moments we live through remind us that we cannot cope with situations unless we have courage. In our solicitude we grope in search of certainty, seeking an anchor for our thoughts. Sometimes we stare in consternation and wonder how we may transcend the dreads that haunt our minds. This, too, is fear.

In our irresolution, we know we must find the steadying force to stem the tide and ride the waves of life's roughness. How are we to do it?

We do it by:

Grasping faith in God
 Exercising love for others
 Trusting that these experiences
 are only temporary.

Fear comes to us inevitably; it saves us from harm and keeps us from taking dangerous chances. It keeps us from walking on the precipice.

When in God's presence we allow Him to transform our fears into reverence, we know that He loves us and helps us cast out fear.

O God, who art our Father, comfort us by the presence of Thy reassuring love. Still our hearts in the midst of danger; calm the storms of our lives that we may find Thy peace. In the Master's name. Amen.

FORGIVENESS

... *Your sins are forgiven* (Luke 7:48).

The Christian experience of forgiveness equips us with freedom beyond description. Its outflow, its generosity, its willingness impress us.

Among His last words on the cross, our Lord prayed for the forgiveness of those who placed Him there. Only sacrificial love can forgive. Without love and sacrifice, there could be no forgiveness.

In the story of the prodigal son, the most impressive scene is the one in which the father runs out to meet his unworthy son. Unqualified, unquestioning love reaches out to the person whose sins are bearing down upon his life.

However, forgiveness requires that the person forgiven accept it. While undeserved, forgiveness persists longingly and pleadingly in the very nature of God Himself. The Father seeks us and loves us; He is ever ready and near to redeem us from our sins.

We cannot live in this world and be happy without forgiveness any more than the earth can produce life without the rays of sunshine. Even as the little child seeks the approval of his parents, so do we seek and find the love and approval of God in the forgiveness of our sins. Forgiveness brings peace to our souls.

Almighty God, our heavenly Father, we seek Thy forgiving love. We would have Thy approval. Free us from the bonds of sin that we may be willing to forgive others. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

GROWTH

And Jesus increased in wisdom and in stature, and in favor with God and man (Luke 2:52).

Jesus was a real boy. Born of Hebrew parents, living in the little country of Palestine, He was cared for and directed in His daily life by the interest and concern of religious parents. Luke tells us that Jesus increased in wisdom, grew in stature, and increased in favor with God and man.

Yes, Jesus grew up, as we say of our children. He watched people at work and play. As a very young child, no doubt He looked forward to the time when He would go up to Jerusalem to attend the Jewish festivals. In our homes we also grow up and experience the benefits of comradeship and responsibility.

Today we find growth the great proclaimer of life; for the moment we cease to grow, we begin to die. How like a tree is life, spreading forth in the budding stages of new ideas. Like new leaves, the mind we have reaches forth to share the atmosphere of our environment.

Within the sanctuary of the home, the church and the

school, this mysterious growth continues and provides the purpose we need.

Heavenly Father, we praise Thee for the gift of life and growth. May we be instruments of Thine in planting seeds that will produce and make attractive the environment to nourish the spiritual life of every person we meet. Increase our desire to grow into His likeness. Amen.

HANDICAPS

He who conquers shall have this heritage, and I will be his God and he shall be my son (Revelation 21:7).

We see in life so many things that seem to hinder, to hold back the best of accomplishment, to penalize, encumber, or imprison talents. Yet, we find so many compensations, such fine ways of overcoming the things that would discourage and destroy. There are no absolute and final failures caused by hindrances.

There are handicaps, so-called:

Physical
Spiritual
Mental.

We may see a person wearing glasses as a crutch to overcome the inability to see. A crutch that enables one to walk becomes the means of putting abilities to work. Thus, to some extent the physical handicap is conquered.

Again, we see some warped spirit, a person who clings to deeply ingrained prejudices; he too is handicapped by his refusal to look up. When he learns to lift his intellect above, he soon finds his hindrance overcome.

In the realm of thinking we find the closed mind, the bigot, the man imprisoned in his own dark dungeon of

unpleasantness. He needs no den, for he growls all over the house. He, too, must overcome his handicap.

Heavenly Father, in all of life teach us how to face our duties in the spirit of courage and overcoming. In Jesus' name. Amen.

IDENTIFICATION

... Are not you also one of this man's disciples? (John 18:17).

We identify ourselves by certain inherent characteristics. We may favor our parents or another close relative. By our physical characteristics, we are known to others.

Again, we identify ourselves by our mental traits, our response or lack of response to the true values in life. In short, we identify ourselves by the interests we have in the values that make a difference in our relationships with God and with one another.

Simon Peter had identified himself with Jesus and he intended to follow Him to the end of His mission; but, he grew faint-hearted and fearful in the presence of danger and tried to deny he knew his Master.

Try as he did, he could not separate himself from his association with those who followed Jesus. Nor can we, for when we have met Him our lives are forever different.

While we may grow cold and tremble, lose courage and falter, or maneuver for self-preservation, we are still unable to separate ourselves completely from the obligation to follow Him as He brings His Kingdom into being.

Be Thou our guide, O Lord, as we try to follow the paths that lead to Thee. Strengthen us for the tests; increase our devotion; make us loyal to one another and to Thee; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

INSIGNIFICANCE

*... I was afraid, and I went and hid your talent in the ground
(Matthew 25:25).*

Insignificance comes from within; it is not simply the opinion or estimate of one person by another. The fault of the one-talent man lay not in his inability or small amount of money; it was in his own mind. He had a low opinion of himself.

Is it not our problem, also? In so many experiences, we fail to do our best because we have thought upon how ill-equipped we are and how well-equipped is the other person. By this false comparison, we have lost our way in the labyrinth of insignificance. We often wander about in confusion and sad disappointment, saying, "I was afraid, and I went and hid."

The one-talent child in school may achieve the finest career. Who knows, who can measure human personality? By all the "standards of science," we have sometimes mis-measured and underestimated the ability of a child, and years later he turned out to be a genius.

Think in terms of the genius of the one-talent man. Think in terms of what he might become, not of the apparent failure you may think he is.

The business of the great teacher is to find the genius within the pupil—to discover the genius of the one-talent person. In this way, in this spirit, do we overcome insignificance and live in usefulness to God and man.

Heavenly Father, inspire us to use what we have in the attitude of the Master who recognized the infinite value of every person. Forgive us our insignificance as we recognize the importance of every person Thou hast created. In His name. Amen.

LIVING

For to me to live is Christ . . . (Philippians 1:21).

Among our thoughts today should be some meditations on plain everyday living. What of the use of these days, whether periods of leisure, vacation, or work? What are we doing with these moments and those just over the line of the present?

True, they may never come in the sense of our relationship to time; for relativism is never more real than in the life of the individual. And so we think upon the use of time—just another name for life, for living.

The psalmist prays for ability to count his days in such manner that he may apply his heart to using them wisely. If we only knew the best way, the most efficient method for using our days. This is the desire of our hearts as we meditate upon the meaning, the purpose of life today.

In his informal style, and with all the freedom of one whose spiritual bonds were greater than any physical limitations, Paul sought to encourage his Philippian friends in their distress. We can never forget his great encomium, in spite of his imprisonment, when he writes, "For to me to live is Christ. . . ."

Be with us, our Father, through all of life. In whatever circumstance we dwell, make us steadfast in attitude, cheerful in disposition, thoughtful of others. Grant that we may possess something of the spirit of Jesus, in whose name we pray. Amen.

LONELINESS

I will not leave you desolate . . . (John 14:18).

How painful is loneliness! Indescribable, yet how real, is the depressed feeling that comes to us all sooner or later.

Loneliness is not a permanent experience; it is evanescent, fleeting, and sometimes of great value in our attempts to master difficult problems.

There are at least three different kinds of loneliness:

A loneliness of separation or absence—solitariness

A loneliness of depression, brought about by extended solitariness—lonesomeness

A feeling of loneliness, real or imaginary—desolation.

In the final hours of His earthly life, our blessed Lord reassured His wayworn disciples that He would not leave them desolate. We may, we shall, suffer at times from solitariness; we know we shall be lonesome. Nevertheless, He will deliver us from the desolation that destroys. Our trust in Him, regardless of our misfortunes, brings to our benighted lives the steadiness of His presence. We are not like those who have no hope in the future; we are His, now and forever.

Our Father, whose love reassures us, cleanse the channels of fellowship that bring us into Thy presence that we may unite with others in making life an experience of joy for them and for us; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

MEMORIES

. . . what she has done will be told in memory of her (Mark 14:9).

How they linger in our hearts—memories recalling the goodness of persons! Certainly the retention of pleasing

experiences seems to be more permanent than those that are unpleasant.

The tenacity of our spiritual appreciation allows us to live again in the presence of those whose lives have long since passed on toward the light of God's eternal presence. No longer in our midst as physical beings, they are nonetheless near and dear to us. In the garden of our hearts we find the flowers that will never fade; we can feel the guidance of the prayers that fell from lips now silent. We would not have it otherwise.

This morning we would walk down memory's lane in silence to review the sacred thoughts of those whom we love and who love us. Let us meditate upon the deeds they did for us and the prayers we heard them lift.

We see through memory's eye:

The beauty of a smile
The understanding nod of approval
The assurance of personal interest.

Memory is our eternal treasure, stored forever in our hearts by the love of God our Father. Memory gives us hope for the future.

Eternal God, our Father, we are grateful to Thee for the power of appreciation that stores up memories. We lift our prayer today and cherish these values in Jesus' name. Amen.

MIDNIGHT

*But about midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing . . .
(Acts 16:25).*

From gloom to glory, from despair to happiness, from insignificance to greatest importance—so comes the mid-

night hour to the night of life. There can be no escape from the darkness; the uses to which we put the midnight hour are significant to all of us.

In God's presence, no gloom leaves us without a share of the glory of new impressions. Imagine how gloomy it must have been in the Macedonian prison at the midnight hour, until, out of the silence, the voices of Paul and Silas lifted a hymn of praise to God.

Within the midnight hour of our experience, if we can only find the note of seraphic faith to pierce the shadows, no foreboding sadness can separate us from God's love and care. In the midnights of inevitable sorrow, disappointment and poverty of soul, we are not forsaken. Like our Master who walked seemingly alone through the darkness of Gethsemane, we may abide with the knowledge that regardless of how dark our path may be, He walks beside us and radiates new strength to lift our lives toward His eternal purpose.

Dear Lord, strengthen us for the midnight hours that when the tests of life come upon us thick and fast we may find the reassurance that Thou dost care for all who walk alone and desolate. Make us brave; in Jesus' name. Amen.

OBLIGATION

. . . I owe something to all men . . . (Romans 1:14, Phillips).

Today let us be mindful of great responsibility for promoting good will; for looking carefully and considerately at the point of view of those with whom we so heartily disagree; for being slow to condemn others and swift to cleanse our own thoughts of:

Pettiness
Selfishness
Arrogance
Bigotry
Sin.

To the end that the Kingdom of God may come on earth even as it is realized in heaven, let us pray for peace within that we may share responsibility and spread good will.

Let us work and pray toward the ideal until it is realized in our lives and in those who dwell in our midst. Let us pray that our lives may be challenges and not compromises.

Eternal God who hast created us, who hast given to us the blessings of this life, make real our faith for these days of great responsibility. Inspire us to noble deeds and grant us adequate understanding of our problems; strengthen us for the privilege of kindness and the cultivation of lasting friendship. We are thankful for our duties. Make us more tolerant in our differences; give to us an understanding heart, a discerning mind, a fervent spirit, a concern for others. In the name of Christ we pray. Amen.

PERSPECTIVE

The eye is the lamp of the body (Matthew 6:22).

Pictures and portraits are more than physical objects, but only through our appreciation of them. We cannot fully perceive and appreciate something for which there is no steady view. In fact, there is no sight without an expression of spiritual dimension.

What is the depth of our ability to perceive the colors

in a picture? How can we separate the evanescent and the passing from the permanent? To answer these questions is to gain perspective, one of the great needs of present-day living.

Short-range thinking lacks the ability to see beyond the present day's wants and satisfactions; in short, it is selfishness. Long-range thinking and planning, though painful, is the only whole and constant view of life—it is worth all it costs.

In all our worthwhile undertakings and endeavors, we need:

Steadiness of purpose
Persistent planning
Strong faith.

These are our perspectives. These are our guides.

Heavenly Father, we thank Thee for the inspiration of sight; give us insight to find the greater appreciation as we see things in the clarity of Thy purpose, the beauty of Thy holiness, the steadiness of Thy love. In the Master's name. Amen.

PREJUDICE

. . . Truly I perceive that God shows no partiality . . . (Acts 10:34).

Prejudice is one of the diseases of the human mind. Too many times we form our opinions with little or no information; in not a few instances, we judge and evaluate persons on the bases of ungrounded fact, unverified rumors, or the shallow opinions of those who seek to turn us against others.

To jump to conclusions without thorough knowledge of a situation is to have a prejudice and to exercise it. We are all guilty at one time or another.

The question today is, "How may I overcome prejudice in my relationships?" I think a few pointers might be helpful in avoiding an exercise of prejudice:

Try to believe the best in spite of the worst
Be loyal to a friend to the last point of unfavorable
evidence
Be fair and considerate of others at all times
Be steadfast and lenient to all persons.

Eternal God, our Father, make us kind, considerate and amiable. Teach us to be just and fair; remove any vindictiveness that might arise from preconceived notions. As we think about our togetherness, help us to say to ourselves, "But for the grace of God, there go I." This we ask in Jesus' name. Amen.

SORROW

So you have sorrow now, but I will see you again and your hearts will rejoice . . . (John 16:22).

Distress must come eventually to every person. The experience of sorrow finds us as we live each day. Nevertheless, we must face our sorrows.

We face sorrow through our own sense of guilt, or we are disturbed over another's guilt. We suffer mental anguish from the loneliness of life without another's sympathy, a particular person's interest in us, or someone's presence. We experience torture or grief or misery that seems inconsolable.

When pain of mind comes to us through disappointment and we long for reconciliation with someone we love, we flounder in our fruitless effort and sincere longing for understanding.

Yes, this is sorrow, the excruciating pain of mind that

seeks the restoration of fellowship. The fault may be our own, or it may be that of others. Wherever the blame may rest, sorrow will not release us unless we bless another in its presence.

Thus do we realize, as we go to God in prayer, that we may face the reality of our distress in the spirit of sympathy, in penitence, and in faith that God may use our deepest disappointments for His glory.

Dear Lord and Father, we bare our hearts in Thy presence. We are needy creatures whom Thou dost love; we are Thy children. We pray not for ourselves alone, but for others. Bless us with the assurance, the experience of reconciliation; in Jesus' name. Amen.

SUNRISE

. . . his mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning . . . (Lamentations 3:22, 23).

When at the morning light we find in our hearts the desire to worship God, we know our souls are born anew to the spirit of His love. Again we grasp the meaning of the sunrise of the day, for here in our hearts is the meaning of life's renewal.

No other time of day quite matches the sunrise. Here we find:

New courage to begin again
New hope to lead us onward
New faith for difficulties.

As toward God we look, we find the meaning of the power to be born; we feel the touch of His grace that is sufficient for the testing time. The sun reaches forth, summoning the plants to receive new strength to grow and produce the fruits for God's creatures. Life takes on new

beauty and transforms the landscape into a mural of God's creation. How else can life go on than through the re-creative potency of His great plan?

With the rising sun we lift our thoughts to our heavenly Father in thanksgiving for His preservation and His love.

How great is Thy majesty, O Lord! With the rising sun we renew our thoughts of Thee; in Thy presence we would live again to find the way that Thou wouldst lead. Direct us as Thou wilt. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

SUNSET

Then I saw an angel standing in the sun . . . (Revelation 19:17).

To stand alone at the close of day and gaze upon the setting sun brings us into the sacred sanctuary of God's grandeur. Again, the fellowship of His reassuring love encroaches upon the twining path we tread.

Beyond the hills we see the shadows as the waning glow descends beneath the landscape hidden by the mountain tops. As we view the sun-crowned pinnacles, we see anew the glory that is God's.

Within the twilight shadows we glimpse a sense of rest. Not far away in time is our call to find again the resting place for the night so cool and calm. The shades of night come forth, the crickets sing their song, and the night bird calls through the stillness.

Thus in the calmness set apart, God speaks to us again of His protection. Here within the shadows we dwell and know that sunrise brings us to another day with our souls refreshed.

We pause to pray, to thank God for the grace, the ornament, the afterglow, the darkness, and the dawn.

Thine, O Lord, is the beauty we have looked upon; Thine is the power to create scenes we would describe, but how feeble is our description! Be with us as we go to rest. Abide with us through the eventide, that when the morning breaks we may find anew the brightness of the day; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

SUNSHINE

. . . I will quietly look from my dwelling like clear heat in sunshine . . . (Isaiah 18:4).

Think what it means to us to bask in the sunlight, to enjoy the sunshine and take in the life-giving warmth of this blessing.

Without sunshine:

There would be no plant life on earth
Human life would not be possible
Growth would be impossible.

Life-giving nourishment comes to us from the sun; plants maintain life through photosynthesis, a process beyond explanation yet so necessary. Food is transmuted into the energy we need to live and grow.

Like the sun at the center of the solar system, God is the power at the center of the spiritual universe. Not only is He the creator of all material things; He provides power and light and providential care for our lives. He is the source of all wisdom, the light of all truth, and the sustainer of all life.

God's work on earth is made possible when we cooperate with Him and yield our wills to His. God sent His Son to redeem us from the darkness of sin and restore us to the light of His love through Jesus Christ.

Our Father, who art the sun of our souls, free us from the darkness of our own selfishness. Thou hast redeemed us by the grace which flows into our unworthy lives; we are grateful for every blessing. Be with us in the winding responsibilities of today, that we may serve Thee better in the sunshine of tomorrow. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

TRANSFORMATION

Greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends (John 15:13).

The essential quality of the mind of Christ is sacrificial love. It means and requires the dethronement of self.

This is very difficult to do because man is born selfish. Needless to say, his selfishness is called by another word—depravity.

The Greeks made a great deal of the dignity of man, while the Hebrews exalted God. We need to pause and think of man's dignity in the light of what man is doing for God. That is, we must notice the great need for transformation.

Man has the urge or tendency to serve himself, thinking little of his dependence upon God; man needs to be transformed, and this transformation is a divine process. Most of us have not gone far in co-operating with God in our transformation.

To what extent are our lives dominated by sacrificial love? This is indeed a hard question. We see hostility between men, groups of men, and nations.

Such enmity reigns because man does not have the mind of Christ. Too few of us follow Him when life is difficult. Not many are lovers of the way of the cross.

O God, our Father, we would follow Jesus, but so many times we falter. May we devote our lives to Him in the attitude of sacrificial love, through service to our fellow beings; in His name we pray. Amen.

TRANSITIONS

. . . Let us go across to the other side (Mark 4:35).

While hiking during a summer afternoon, some campers came to a stream too deep to wade across and too shallow for a canoe. After considering the situation, the campers noticed several stones projecting above the surface of the water.

Immediately, they concluded that the stones could become their stepping stones, whereby they could cross on foot. Lifting their canoe upon their shoulders, they walked from stone to stone and gained the other shore.

How frequently do we find some obstacle in our way! How often it is necessary to use obstructions as the stepping stones to progress:

So many disappointments must be laid aside
 So many heartaches must be forgotten
 So many animosities that separate us from others
 must be buried deep.

We cross the ways of life in the sure knowledge that the stepping stones of aspiration lead us onward. We make the clear decision to walk straight ahead, not changing a direction that we know is right. Soon we find the stream is forded by a new consideration, a changing attitude, a sunny disposition.

O God, as we go forth to cross new streams and walk the hillsides of new adventure, give us eyes to see the stepping stones to progress. Make real our sincerity, en-

liven our faith, and clear our sight that we may find newness of life; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

TRIALS

Count it all joy, my brethren, when you meet various trials . . .
(James 1:2).

The testing times of life prove our strength or weakness. Not always are we to have the smooth road to success; in fact, the true path to accomplishment is more often fraught with obstacles. Such is the normal experience of daily living. The question for our day, as we meditate upon trials and consider difficulties, is: How shall we meet the tests?

So often we feel defeated, yet how strong we may become as we refuse to be dominated by discouragements and frustrations. As we begin the day, let us realize that many things we consider difficult are purely imaginary, and are no more than:

Selfishness
Self-indulgence
Self-interest.

Indeed, we have to fight the internal battle against our own vanity, which expresses itself in the meanness and pettiness that overtake us.

Let us decide today that Christ shall reign in our experience as we seek to be thoughtful of others through:

Improving our relationships
Respect for others
Service to others.

O God, our Father, help us to find through our difficulties the pathway to success as we seek to be more

interested in our fellow beings. We thank Thee for the privilege that is ours in overcoming selfishness; in His name. Amen.

TWILIGHT

*So they arose at twilight to go to the camp of the Syrians . . .
(II Kings 7:5).*

When evening shadows blend into the twilight at the close of day, we meditate in silence and find again the beauty of reminiscence. The sun is gone and from the sky the light has come to remind us that:

The silence reigns
Forebodings warn us
Realities face us
Sadness becomes so real.

And yet, the twilight of the morning's approach is not so dreary, for it will not be long until daybreak brings light and reassurance. Here again, we are among those who wait for the morning.

No fateful finality is this twilight which reminds us of:

The rising sun
The coming forth of beauteous light
The reassurance of another day in the making
The true conviction, the optimism, that we
need to face the day.

So goes the twilight: that which comes at the close of day, and that which brings us to another dawn. "And there was evening and there was morning, one day" (Genesis 1:5). How beautiful is the twilight!

Dear Lord, we thank Thee for the calmness of twilight, the coolness of its promise. May we find through the twi-

light of life's experience the meaning of Thy presence. Be Thou our guide through this new day; preserve us through the night that when the morning comes we may abide with Thee; in His name. Amen.

WAITING

. . . they who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength . . .
(Isaiah 40:31).

We are so conscious of speed that we sometimes neglect the engines of our high-powered automobiles. Not enough attention is given to keeping the vehicles in first-class condition; consequently, serious trouble develops and repair bills mount.

In our hurried pace of living, we are tempted to pass by the places where we should pause for spiritual renewal. To rest a little while, to pause, meditate and find out where we are, is essential to physical and spiritual efficiency.

As we pause in God's presence this morning, let us consider the importance of anticipating the resources we must have for effectively meeting life's great challenge. As we go to the quiet place, we find:

New insights for our work
Inspiration for our thoughts
Clarity of ideas
Purpose for noble living.

In the midst of our busy world, we turn away from the mad scramble to linger, read and listen. Then, we rise to take our place beside our fellow beings in the calling that is ours to fulfill.

Our Father, who hast called us to the work of this new day, grant us patience for the waiting hours. May we

pause to find the freshness of new strength. Create in us the power to be diligent and effective; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

WONDER

When I look at . . . the work of thy fingers . . . what is man that thou art mindful of him . . . ? (Psalm 8:3,4).

Let us thank God for:

So many evidences of His love
 Opportunities to serve Him
 The constancy of His care
 The promise of today
 The hope of tomorrow.

Let us thank God for our capabilities, the talents He has given us. While the world stands, let us pray for courage to face the realistic solution of problems. To this end, we pray for the coming of God's Kingdom in the hearts of all persons—here and now.

Let us pray for ourselves and for others that spiritual revival may bring effective, meaningful expression through gracious living. Looking toward the realization of a stewardship of personality, possessions and potentials, may we seek through prayer and work the way our lives may be used of God to make effective His direction.

Dear Lord of life, another day has dawned upon us; another time for work, for offering up our prayers to Thee, according to Thy will. Grant that we may devote our lives to all spiritual demands, following obligations so earnestly and willingly that they may become privileges; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Part III

ACTIVITIES

ADVENTURE

... *I fear no evil* ... (Psalm 23:4).

Each day we enter upon the paths unknown; the way unforeseen is ever before us. Yet we would not have it otherwise, for as we walk beside the Shepherd of our souls, we go forth to the great adventure of noble living.

Today we would begin by aiming at the higher goals of spiritual endeavor. We would try again to reach into the undiscovered where we boldly face the hazards, meet difficulties with courage, and encounter new risks.

The remarkable experience of spiritual adventure is a struggle; we will face it in the trust of those who strive for mastery of self. We would impose new disciplines and experiment with new ideas, knowing that our progress is assured by the One who calls us out under the open skies into green pastures.

We seek the challenge of this new day in the ordinary happenings, the actual events of which we are conscious throughout the waking hours.

Leaving nothing to chance, depending not upon mere circumstance, we seek to alter by our lives the *status quo*. We must make a difference in lives that touch our own.

Heavenly Father, we thank Thee for the great adventure of daily living. Help us to live in the spirit of Him who steadfastly set his life to noble purpose. In His spirit we would pray. Amen.

CO-OPERATION

... *Come over to Macedonia and help us* (Acts 16:9).

Working together, teamwork, helping one another, togetherness, uniting in a common effort for the accomplishment of a goal agreed upon—this is co-operation.

Through co-operation, we do things that we could

never accomplish independently. For example, public schools and efficient government would not be possible without the combined effort of the citizenry. Churches would be non-existent.

Without co-operation, through consideration for one another, family life would be a turmoil and harmonious relationships would be unknown.

With co-operation, we find it possible to:

- Establish hospitals
- Preserve peace and order
- Build churches and schools
- Care for the aged
- Provide homes for orphans
- Build highways
- Provide public utilities.

These are only a few benefits of co-operation. Others are too numerous to mention here. Let us resolve today that we will work together for the good of all persons everywhere.

Gracious Father, inspire us to find a sense of unity that will enable us to work together in singleness of attitude. May we have a concern for the purpose Thou hast given; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

DISCIPLINE

Enter by the narrow gate . . . (Matthew 7:13).

Disciples are persons who have submitted themselves to training, and it is often said, "There is no royal road to learning." One who strives for skills must be willing to devote his mind and talents to the severity of discipline.

Long and arduous hours of practice are the price the musician pays for artistic finesse. Strenuous and thorough

application on the part of the student develops his skills as he becomes a scholar.

Discipline does many valuable things for us. Aside from its difficulties, it:

- Develops skills
- Exercises the mind
- Gives new appreciation
- Corrects mistakes
- Molds character
- Enlarges vision.

By the practice of the presence of God in our lives, we soon find new paths to spiritual progress, new attitudes toward others, and a more definite conception of the purpose of life. Then we are able to know that life is worth living to the full.

O Thou who hast placed us in this life, we thank Thee for the confinement of discipline. We praise Thee for the narrow gates of knowledge through which we must pass to become efficient. We thank Thee for the freedom we experience as a result of training in the spiritual life. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

DUTIES

... we have only done what was our duty ... (Luke 17:10).

In all of life, when we have done all we can and more perhaps than was expected of us, we can only say that we have done our duty. To do more than is expected in any responsibility is to follow the Christian principle of service to our fellows. As we consider what we have tried to do in days past, how near to Christian duty may we say we have come?

Wordsworth has characterized duty as "Stern daughter of the Voice of God."

In a letter to his son, Robert E. Lee admonishes, "Do your duty. You can never do more; you should never wish to do less." And then, wrote Lee, "Duty is the sublimest word in the English language."

Facing this day, how do we measure up to our duty? It is a figment of the imagination to think that one can go beyond the call of duty. As we attempt to measure the meaning of what we ought to do, we lose sight of the obligation that should inspire us to do more and more in selfless investment. By losing ourselves in responsibilities, regardless of how small they are, we find the work God has given.

While longing to do more for others, we have done more for ourselves; if we accept the challenge of forthright "oughtness," we see how much more is possible. We are enabled thereby to accomplish more:

Effective fellowship
Inspired confidence
Productive investments.

Teach us, O Lord, that when we have done all, we are only on the way toward accepting the challenge of duty. Be with us as we go about the duties of this day; guide us in the path of unselfish investment of our lives, that the self-denial of our Lord Jesus Christ may be our guiding light; in His name we pray. Amen.

GOALS

. . . I press on toward the goal . . . (Philippians 3:14).

Without a goal, we cannot score; without some objective, we cannot attain. True in athletics, true also in life—we need a point of attainment.

The method of reaching goals may vary from person to person, but the goal is important. In setting an objective, we express faith in our ability to reach a higher level.

Reaching goals requires constant striving, total commitment, and untiring effort. In addition, we need:

Faith in the work we are doing
 A definite purpose, completely resolved
 A vision lifted above the actual, toward the possible.

We need, also, to remember enough of the past to profit by its mistakes, to find the willingness of mind and consecration of will to move out into new endeavors.

As we face each new day, we should set our goals above those of the day before. In our approach to the uplands of noble living, we walk not only on the plateaus but must also climb the mountain ridges and sometimes surmount the peaks.

What are our aims for this new day? How high have we set the standards we expect to attain?

O God, who dost inspire us to worthy purpose, make us conscious of the need to set higher standards for this day's accomplishments. May we be diligent in our efforts to attain. Teach us how to play the game according to the rules; in the spirit of the Master. Amen.

HABITS

. . . where they were in the habit of meeting . . . (Acts 1:13, Moffatt).

The aptitudes and inclinations of life grow from the trends of daily living: they are not isolated incidents. What is our custom, our practice, as we face this day together?

By repetition, we arrive within the "grip" of habits

which determine our direction and establish our goals. If we could control our habits, our ways of doing things, we could soon find ways of altering life to suit our hearts' desires.

Not only do we acquire habits by repetition; we gain possession of others through the sheer power to resist and hold at a distance many harmful things. And, alas!—sometimes we resist the things that would add grace and finesse to daily living.

Here are some of the habits that help to build fellowship:

Greeting others pleasantly
Complimenting others
Listening attentively to others
Living for others.

Teach us, O Lord, to be magnanimous to others at all times, in spite of the difficulty in doing so. Bless us with the habit of sincere compliment, that we may bring forth the best from the fellowship of persons. In the name of Christ we pray. Amen.

IMAGINATION

... according to the pattern which was shown you on the mountain (Hebrews 8:5).

Spiritual resources depend largely upon the imagination, the conception we have of God. We see in our mind's eye the potentials of God's relationship with us.

Here in the presence of God we take up our needs and present them before Him. This is no cloudland of unreality, for here we sense His nearness and we are strengthened for worship.

New fellowship we find; new cause to live with zest in

attitudes so clear, new insights of loveliness that inspire us for our work. Here we realize we must dream of improvement and plan anew our hopes. We must believe before we can find a sense of reality in new-found spiritual heights.

Consecrated imagination enables us to find the lift, to transpose the deficiencies of our lives and take part in the remaining time we have for worthy work. Let us use imagination with more thorough dedication.

Eternal God, our Father, we thank Thee for the high-born thoughts that come as we surrender ourselves to Thee in worship. Refine our thoughts; enliven our creative minds with the reality of Thy presence; in Jesus' name. Amen.

MEASUREMENTS

... the measure you give will be the measure you get (Matthew 7:2).

Measurements are important; but more important are the standards of measurements. Still more important is the integrity of the measurement applied. How dependable are our standards as we place valuations upon things and persons?

Jesus makes it clear that our inner sense of measurement is the true surveying instrument. The accuracy of our evaluation depends upon the integrity, the reliability of our scale of values.

What are some of the Christian standards of measurement? Here are a few:

An understanding heart
 A clear mind
 A willingness to be fair
 An unsuspecting attitude
 A never-failing trust.

The Christian standard challenges us to try to measure up beyond the levels of yesterday and to hope that today and tomorrow may approach more nearly the spirit and tolerance of our Master.

Teach us, O Lord, to evaluate our own situation in the light of Christian standards. Show us the way to more accurate, more tolerant estimates of our fellow beings. Grant us discernment in understanding, that we may find Thy will in this new day. In Jesus' name. Amen.

MEDITATION

... thy testimonies are my meditation (Psalm 119:99).

We purpose in our hearts to find the way to God through contemplation of His blessings. We set aside a time in which to think, a holy time of silent thought.

We dwell upon the needs of our own souls. In the trysting place we read the hymns and psalms and trace the history of God's people, some bad, some good. All are struggling to begin a new relationship, through consideration of the ways of God with men.

As we reflect upon the duties of this day, our hearts are opened and we pray. Our communion seeks and finds new insight for our work.

Our time of meditation is too often neglected as we try to go on without taking spiritual refreshment. Sooner or later, we must pause to reconsider, to mull over our own situation and try to discover where we are in the scale of our relationships with one another.

As we ponder the noble thoughts of this sacred moment, let us seek to fill our minds with new resources to sustain our living for today.

Our Father, in this room of quietness, the place of peace, renew our sense of spiritual values; send us forth to cease our cynical attitudes. We would approach this shrine of worship in our hearts and share it in the busy world; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

OBEDIENCE

My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me . . . (John 10:27).

Respect for authority inspires confidence and brings forth obedience. The shepherd through his gentleness and love for the flock understands the sheep who follow his guidance. Jesus has this in mind when He reminds His followers that He is the Good Shepherd.

Being worthy of esteem and consideration, the parent instills obedience in his child. Thus, in the life of the little one, we see the quietude of docility reaching out toward the father's hand to experience the fellowship of his protective care. Obedience inspires us to hear the voice of authority, to know the shepherd and follow his leadership.

And so we follow our Lord and Master. Though we falter along the way, stumbling upon the rocks of misunderstanding in our attempts to know Him, we are not disappointed.

He never despairs of what we may do. He sees and knows our potentialities, He leads us to the Father's house and makes us whole again.

Thou, O Lord, hast led us into new paths of living obedience. Teach us how to follow Thy call; bring us to an understanding of Thy way, that we may go to our places of work with new insight. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

PEACEMAKERS

. . . they shall be called sons of God (Matthew 5:9).

The village was in confusion; tension was running high and many people were uttering harsh words of anger. A man had been murdered and the townsmen were searching for the person who had been accused of the crime.

Within a few hours the unfortunate culprit was apprehended—he was in the clutches of an angry mob. Apparently, nothing could be done to halt the cruelty of the rabble, for bedlam reigned and tempers were rampant.

In the midst of the turmoil, the youthful pastor, whom all respected, calmly stepped to a little elevation on the hillside. He showed no excitement as he looked steadily into the faces of those who held the accused man.

Addressing the group, the pastor spoke of his great love and concern for every person in the crowd, reminding them that every person is of infinite value in God's sight. The young clergyman also suggested that they consider the attitude of the Master in their situation. Peace came immediately, and the mob withdrew in sober reflection.

May we become messengers of peace, channels of the divine calmness! How gentle are the ways of God!

Restore to us, O Lord, the kindness to promote peace and love, consideration and tolerance. Make us alive in the calmness of this hour. In the Master's name. Amen.

PRAYER

All these with one accord devoted themselves to prayer . . .
(Acts 1:14).

Prayer is the lifeline of our spiritual lives:

Petitions
 Supplications
 Intercessions.
 Thanksgivings.

Adoration of God is where we begin, for He is our Father who watches over us. Intercession, prayer in behalf of others, is next in importance.

Jesus Himself made it clear that we are to pray for each other. Among His greatest utterances is His high-priestly prayer in the seventeenth chapter of the Gospel of John. Here He prays for unity of spirit among His followers.

How many are the opportunities we have and how we neglect them: the times when we should pray for others! We are so dependent upon each other that we dare not neglect the admonition to intercede for one another.

Prayer, both public and private, is our means of communion with God; this is our spiritual worship.

Teach us, O Lord, how to pray effectively and sincerely. May we offer up our desires unto Thee according to Thy will and not selfishly. Restore harmony to our lives through the fellowship of worship in Thy name. Amen.

PROGRESS

Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect; but I press on to make it my own . . . (Philippians 3:12).

Spiritual progress is a challenge that meets us at the beginning of this day. In what attitude should we face it?

So many pessimists are in the world, so many cynics and "Job's comforters" who lie in wait to devour us with discouraging words. Yet we can see no cause for their

cast-down attitudes other than their own self-centeredness.

When we look out into the needy world, we find many causes for encouragement: all is not dark; there is plenty of light. What should be our attitude as we face the world today?

First, we should be realists in recognizing things as they are. Second, we should leave the past behind us, and not try to drag it into the present. Third, we should be optimists, looking ahead. Fourth, we should be idealists, seeking goals.

How else can we face life? Dare we go out with smoked glasses over our eyes and say that everything is wrong? Indeed not, for we would lose sight of all potential. Let us move out to make progress in the name of the Master.

Thine, O Lord, is this new day. May we do with it as Thou dost direct. Free us from the blindness of deliberate prejudice. Give us insight to find the way that leads into the doing of Thy will; in Jesus' name. Amen.

SERVICE

... I am among you as one who serves (Luke 22:27).

Service is the path to the hills of life. Christianity lives in proportion to the service which is justification for its existence.

Jesus placed His concern for others at the top of all spiritual life. Our privilege and our obligation is to render service. Our only right is to be useful to the building of the Kingdom of God through service.

Our service depends largely upon three things:

Commitment
Well-being
Freedom.

What is the depth of our desire to be the Christians

God wants us to be? Commitment must come from within, without coercion.

Assurance within our lives indicates that we possess spiritual well-being, that we know Him who is the director of all service.

We must be free to accept or to reject the Christian way. The effectiveness of our relationships with God and with one another is determined by our free choice.

Thou who hast chosen us to serve, make us diligent in the work of this new day. Bless us with health and strength, knowledge and insight, that we may serve the present age. Grant us power to do a better job, to perform our duties with willing hearts and ready hands. In Jesus' name. Amen.

SPARKS

How great a forest is set ablaze by a small fire! (James 3:5).

Campers are cautioned to be careful with fire—to keep it in the proper place while cooking or making other uses of it. Under control, fire is a blessing; out of control, it is destructive.

Fire is kindled so easily by sparks:

A carelessly tossed match
Uncontrolled sawdust fires
Careless burning of paper.

Thoughtless smokers who toss cigarettes or cigars out of car windows may not realize how the sparks fly from such burning material. Sparks kindle great fires, endanger human life, destroy trees, cost millions of dollars in property and animal life.

Gossip, the careless spark of speech, is equally harmful. It goes far toward destroying reputations, endangering friendships, and brings grief to persons.

Gossip has broken homes, shaken confidence, undermined faith, and destroyed the loveliness of fellowship. A careless word cast here, an innuendo let loose, a sarcastic barb—any one of these may cause untold harm to others. Gossip most certainly hurts the person who utters it.

Let us resolve to think, to do and to say the best, and silently pass by the rest.

Teach us, our Father, the art of kindly thought, the finesse of clean and accurate speech. In Jesus' name. Amen.

TEACHING

What is this? A new teaching! (Mark 1:27).

Effective teaching commends itself by amazing those who learn and inspiring them to seek more of it. On one occasion Jesus healed a man so effectively that the crowd marveled, saying, "What is this? A new teaching!" His teaching proclaimed great power and established new authority that challenged the learner.

As we think of the teaching of Jesus, we are impressed by its forthrightness; He reminds us that all teaching of quality possesses these undeniable characteristics:

Attractiveness without repulsion
Kindness without affectation
Frankness without discourtesy
Success without boastfulness.

Today we would be teachable; we would seek to know more of our Master's teaching and how to apply it in the spontaneous, natural order of our duties and responsibilities.

Let us begin this day with the thought of having an open mind as we seek God's will and try to do our best

to help in the building of the Kingdom of God here and now.

Teach us, O Father, how we may impart to others the beauty of His teaching. Show us how to share the quality of living and of life in the presence of truth, wherever and whenever it is found; this we ask in His name. Amen.

WORK

We must work the works of him who sent me, while it is day . . . (John 9:4).

Work is a daily blessing which makes possible our participation in God's creation. Work satisfies our longing for accomplishment and brings us to the close of the day with a sense of satisfaction and knowledge of a job well done.

As Longfellow wrote in *The Village Blacksmith*, so may it be said of us:

Something attempted, something done,
Has earned a night's repose.

Work makes possible our livelihood and brings joy to our hearts as we share the fruits of our labors with our loved ones, our institutions, and our friends.

Work adds to life:

The obligation to toil
The privilege of labor
The satisfaction of employment
The security of an occupation.

Our everyday tasks and our duties that extend through life find their expression through work. The quality of our work expresses itself most beautifully through the acts and deeds of our relationships. Let us enjoy our work today!

Eternal God, our Father, strengthen us for the work of this day. Enlarge our abilities that help us to serve our families, our friends, and our fellow beings. Make us benevolent without affectation; in the Master's name. Amen.

WORK

Man goes forth to his work and to his labor until the evening (Psalm 104:23).

Work is a blessing and not a curse. Work is the means whereby we serve one another.

In days gone by, when transportation was difficult and travel less prevalent, life was less complicated. Hours of labor were long and difficult—from sun to sun or until the task was completed. With advancement in scientific means, inventions, modern machinery, and faster travel and communication, life became more complex and hours of labor were lessened.

The five-day work week gave more time for leisure, and cultural pursuits became the privilege of those who were interested. There was time for work *and* recreation.

Thus man has passed from drudgery to labor, from labor to toil, and finally from toil to the privilege of choosing his vocation.

All work that builds institutions of benefit to humanity is worthy and divine. God gives us work and rest and recreation, whereby our lives are enriched and ennobled. Let us thank Him for the blessing of work; let us do it with diligence.

Our Father, we are grateful for the opportunity to work. Grant us strength to carry forward the labors, the toils and the plans Thou dost supply; equip us to do our work with efficiency, willing minds and ready hands. In the spirit of the Master Workman. Amen.

WORSHIP

O come, let us worship and bow down, let us kneel before the Lord, our Maker! (Psalm 95:6).

Worship is a dramatization of life. It sets forth our desires before the presence of our God, calling upon Him in accordance with His will. How we long to worship Him here and now.

We worship Him in the sanctuary of our innermost being. Our souls are thirsty for a deeper experience of what God offers us:

Through the consciousness of His love
In the privacy of our homes
In the sanctuary of the church
In the fellowship of friends,
Through a new understanding of one another.

We worship Him through obedience to the highest urge within, as we set apart a time and place for self-examination. In fact, all of life is a pageant of worship, a harmonious experience that lifts us out of complacency and allows us to live in the midst of an ever-present challenge.

We know that spiritual "dryness" will come; but we shall never leave nor lay aside the provision for spiritual nourishment and communion with God in Christ.

So shall it be this day: we seek to have the grace of His Holy Spirit. Let us in silence find His guidance as we call upon Him.

Almighty God, may we open our hearts to the understanding of the fellowship of worship that gives strength to our souls. Bless us in this hour that we may go forth to share a new experience with others as we live this day for Thee; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

BOOKS

He opened the book and found the place where it was written . . . (Luke 4:17).

Books are a delight to those who thirst for knowledge. At the same time they stimulate the mind to creative imagination:

Books transport us into far places

Books enlarge our experience

Books bring back memories that are dear

Books allow us to live and have fellowship with minds of great persons

Books tell us of the experience between God and mankind through the ages

Books preserve the knowledge of the present and share it with generations yet to come.

Think how limited our lives would be without the inspiration we take from the pages of the Book of books, the Holy Bible. Within this treasure-trove of spiritual reality, we see the multifarious history of man in his relationships with his fellow man and his Creator.

Let us read from the Book and find again the spiritual power to lift our eyes to the hilltops of God's grace.

O Lord our Lord, we thank Thee for the wisdom of the ages preserved in books. Grant that we may be attentive to the admonitions of Thy Spirit as we read and learn. Inspire our minds, revive our thinking, and sharpen our ability to discern Thy truth; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

BRIDGES

Now Moses was faithful in all God's house as a servant, to testify to the things that were to be spoken later, but Christ was faithful over God's house as a son (Hebrews 3:5,6).

Spiritual progress is the road toward accomplishing God's will. We travel this highway to our destination toward which faith points.

The way is devious as we look ahead; it becomes complicated as we travel farther. We try to follow the way we have recognized. We find ourselves far, far from the destination, but we are conscious of the bridges we have crossed and others yet ahead.

Moses was a bridge over which the ideal of the Hebrew nation traveled; he led his people through the wilderness of their uncertainty. His faith was the bridge over which he traveled toward a better country, into a better day, looking toward a better means of living.

John the Baptist tried to show his people that he was the forerunner of Jesus, the bridge between the old and the new. Today, we become the bridge between the religion of our fathers and that of our children. One generation constructs the connecting link—strong or weak, small or great—through which the next is to find God.

Bridges serve to:

Connect
Strengthen
Support
Direct.

Bridges close the gaps and give assurance that the way is clear for traveling to new places, nearing the destination. The betterness of Christ reveals to us God's love.

Eternal God our Father, we thank Thee for the men and women of faith who have bridged the gaps, whose lives have been the connecting links between the old and the new. May we continue to walk toward the ideals of Jesus and thereby build strong bridges to the future; in His name. Amen.

BROOKS

. . . *a land of brooks of water* . . . (Deuteronomy 8:7).

The murmuring sound of the rolling brook provides music for the solitude of the weary hiker as he rests beside the trail. Here he pauses to gain his strength for the remainder of the trek toward the hills.

So pleasingly cool and refreshing is the drink he dips with his cupped hands that he no longer feels the depressing heat of the noonday sun. As he rests for a few moments, he takes a nap.

Awaking to the coolness of the shade, he takes another draught of the stream and watches as it finds its way among the pebbles. In his imagination, he can see the winding channel make its way among the rocks toward the river in the flats below.

How like his life, he thinks, is this ever-flowing rivulet. In restless movement, it flows on; with steady cadence, it pursues the way.

O God, we pray that in the ceaseless flow of Thy great mercy we may find the reassurance, the purifying experience of spiritual refreshment. Give in our resting places along the way the powerful resources we need for our work. Increase our effectiveness in whatever task we are engaged; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

CAVES

. . . *in dens and caves of the earth* (Hebrews 11:38).

In ancient days men lived in caves. Digging into a hillside or hewing into the rock of a mountain, men

found refuge from wild beasts and sought to flee from the cruelty of the elements.

Modern man uses caves for a different purpose: he finds great adventure in exploring the mysteries of the winding caverns concealed beneath or inside the mountain ranges. Such beauty intrigues his imagination and he goes out to find new trails beneath the surface of the earth.

Within the caverns, men have sought to blaze the ways leading through the darkness. Carrying light into the caves, explorers have made it possible for us to see beauty that otherwise never would have been displayed.

Are there not dark caves within our spiritual lives, caves that need the light of God's presence? Indeed, we need the light of new spiritual experience, and we find it by waiting in His presence here and now.

Heavenly Father, take the dimness from our lives. Go with us into the exploration of our needs as we face today. Inspire us by a deeper knowledge of Thy plan. In Jesus' name. Amen.

CHANNELS

Then the channels of the sea were seen . . . (II Samuel 22:16).

From the lightships along the coast, the pilots go to incoming ships and steer them into the harbor; tugboats meet the ships as they near the docks and set them safely alongside the piers. The pilot placed aboard an incoming ship knows the channel. He is familiar with the layout of the harbor, and he knows the way to safety.

Is it not true of our lives that certain channels of guidance remind us of the way we should live? I think they do. Then, too, markers along our way point out the channel as the buoys indicate the channel of the harbor or river.

Our markers are:

Home
Church
School.

The channel markers are here for us to use, to guide our mental, moral and spiritual lives. God places us in homes; He gives us schools for our training; He cares for our spiritual education and inspires us to live in fellowship with others of like mind and heart in the church.

O God, our Father, we thank Thee for the home, the church and the school. May we observe the admonition, the training, the inspiration of these great institutions along life's way. May we find through them the channel that guides us to Thee; in Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

CLOUDS

... *I set my bow in the cloud* ... (Genesis 9:13).

The cloud that hides the sun produces rain to bring forth vegetation. Plant life springs up and produces food for animals and man. In turn the seasons roll on to complete life cycles and build God's world of beauty. Life finds its source within the clouds in God's creative power.

In the ancient record of Genesis, God's promise of life on earth is set against the brightness of the cloud's prismatic beauty as He tells Noah, "I set my bow in the cloud." Thus, in His covenant relationship, God adds new beauty and disperses desolation.

So has it been through all the years:

Upon the clouds is written God's design
Beyond the clouds His purpose we may find
Within the clouds great mystery may linger.

Within the cloud upon the mountain, Moses received instructions concerning the building of the ark. There,

alone with God, he found new insights for doing the work to which God called him.

Likewise, in the midst of the cloud that overshadowed them, Peter, James and John accompanied Jesus to the scene of the transfiguration. They were never the same after that great experience, for they wished to remain there indefinitely—in the presence of their Master. We cannot blame them for wanting to peg their experience at its highest level, but they were soon to discover that the work of the valley is of equal importance.

Out of the obscure silence of the cloud, we find the plan of this great day and age. God speaks to us as clearly as He spoke to Moses and tells us that today is our most significant opportunity for service.

O Thou who dost reveal to us Thy plan, speak to us that we may become useful and efficient. Remove the obscurity that blinds us; take us beyond the drabness of complacency and inspire us by Thy presence. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

DARKNESS

Yea, thou art my lamp, O Lord, and my God lightens my darkness (II Samuel 22:29).

Many of our experiences remind us of darkness because they temporarily obscure our hope and blot out spiritual vision. Among the most prevalent shadows that cast their gloom upon us are:

- Defeated feelings
- Discouragement
- Depression
- Unpleasantness
- Anger
- Temporary or permanent fatalism.

The foes of darkness must be faced and dismissed through positive, upright, decisive living. How shall we deal with them? How shall we obliterate them and walk the way sincerely and with optimism?

First, we should remind ourselves that in the life of every person these shadows will appear with more or less frequency and intensity.

Second, we should face them in the spirit of the long look ahead, knowing that they are transient.

Third, we should exercise our faith in God who is the light of all life, the sustainer of all goodness, the deliverer, the Father who is interested in and who cares for us as His children.

Eternal God, our Father, who art the light of our lives, be with us as we try to live effectively. Shed upon us the beams of Thy reassuring love; through Christ our Lord. Amen.

DESERTS

The wilderness and the dry land shall be glad, the desert shall rejoice and blossom . . . (Isaiah 35:1).

As one travels in the southwestern United States, he views the desert with amazement. He asks himself, "How on earth could anything grow in this hot place?"

There seems to be no sign of life until, as the traveler walks close by it, he sees cactus in bloom. Yes, in the desert there is a blossom, a flowering cactus in an array of color.

So many times we lose sight of the fruitfulness of life's desert experiences. Because we are discouraged, dismayed, or depressed we see nothing of value in our environment until, suddenly, we find some one is interested in what we are doing, how we are faring, how we are feeling.

Sometimes, in our praying, we have hit upon a spiritual desert, a "dryness" of soul, when we thought God was far away. Then, after persistent effort to worship, we discovered that God is with us; He has never left us. Rather, in our routine of monotonous living, we have not paused long enough to see the blossoming of fellowship renewed. In these moments of meditation, let us seek refreshment, so that in the desert places of life we may find the renewal of fellowship, the reality of God's presence.

O Lord, we thank Thee that though we have not always found the beauty Thou dost supply through worship, Thou hast given us another glimpse of it as we pause along the way. Take our lives into the nearness of Thy Spirit's influence. In Jesus' name. Amen.

FLOWERS

The flowers appear on the earth . . . (Song of Solomon 2:12).

No beautiful flower will grow without cultivation, even in fertile soil. The surface of the ground becomes hard, and sometimes it contains rocks and becomes crust-like.

The gardener must take great care to prevent these conditions so that the plant which produces the flower may have the best opportunity for vigorous and productive growth. Then, too, when insects attack the foliage, medicinal care and precaution must be exercised to facilitate the growth of healthy leaves, strong stems and limbs. The verdure of each plant must be nurtured constantly if the garden is to be productive.

Likewise does life's garden require constant cultivation and alteration through the vigilance of devotion and constancy of purpose. Friendships, like flowers, must be

cultivated. Think how careless we are with the responsibilities of culture. Time goes by and we neglect our spiritual gardening; ties are strained and stretched until the breaking point seems inevitable.

We have saved the life of a plant by transplanting it. The soil was changed, and we used a different kind of fertilizer. The sunlight is allowed to come through and thus develop its verdure. In the same way, we save many friendships by transplanting our ideas to soil better suited to thinking and caring.

The propagation of right attitudes goes on in the mutuality that grows from experiences of good fellowship with those whose paths cross ours today. This growth finds fruition through thoughtfulness and courtesy.

Dear Lord and Father of us all, we would be friendly with others. Make us into the likeness of true fellowship. Show us how to transplant attitudes of value; help us to cultivate the attitudes of others, that they too may grow and thrive and live as Thou wouldst have us live. In Jesus' name. Amen.

HOME

In my Father's house are many rooms . . . (John 14:2).

Home is the dearest place on earth. The place where we act our worst and are treated best—home. The place where hearts are bared and sympathetic understanding shared—home. The place to which the child returns or longs for in time of trouble—home.

In quite another sense, home is the cherished unity wherein begins the fellowship that blesses the world in which persons associate with one another and experience something of the heavenly Father's presence. Our Lord

assured His disciples, "In my Father's house are many rooms. . . ." The place of fellowship makes real the unseverable ties.

We picture home through:

Anticipation of homecoming

The assurance of eternal life, beginning here and now

The longing to be reunited with those who have gone on to the Father's house.

We think today in terms of homecoming and home-going and live in anticipation of deeper experience as we approach the Father's house.

Through separation for a season, we strengthen our appreciation as we walk the road leading into His eternal presence, beginning here and now and extending on beyond the ken. More and more we trust in His reassuring promise of tomorrow.

Eternal God, our Father, who hast loved us and cared for us in families, we praise Thee for the unity of home. Bless us today with the continuing hope, the renewed faith to share in the beautiful relationships that lead us on to the Father's house. In Jesus' name. Amen.

LANDMARKS

Remove not the ancient landmark which your fathers have set (Proverbs 22:28).

When we go to a new place, we try to hold in mind the outstanding markers along our way. This is particularly true when we travel to a strange city and drive through the streets for the first time.

In life we should hold on to the teachings we have observed in youth. We have learned where many of them

lead us; we know how important it is to observe their admonitions. These, too, are landmarks.

In civilization, the home, church and school are landmarks of our national and international life. We strive to preserve them; we struggle to defend them. They are precious to us.

You and I can think of the landmarks in our religious training; they too are sacred. Much more than direction-finders, they are the undergirding forces that support our character, particularly in times of testing. We will not surrender them easily; God forbid we should ever let them go!

Our Father, we are grateful to Thee for landmarks that point the direction of spiritual destination. Make us obedient in preserving them as Thou hast directed. In the Master's name. Amen.

LIGHT

Let your light so shine before men . . . (Matthew 5:16).

Look at the candles on the altar of worship. Did you observe that until someone applied the flame the light was absent?

Today we ask for light: for the steady focus, the sharpness of mind, and incisive understanding.

Within the circle of brightness, in God's presence, may we consider our personal relationship to Him. We attempt to overcome our fears through exercising our faith in Christ our Lord and Saviour; we pray for renewal of hope, that our light may shine through:

Character
Witness
Service.

Our Father in heaven, draw us together in the spirit of understanding. Amidst the knotty problems of this hour, make us penitent; endow us with consecrated minds, pure hearts, and steady hands that we may bear Thy message like candles in the hands of pilgrims in the night. Forgive our selfishness; strengthen us for the work Thou hast given us to do. In Jesus' name. Amen.

MOTHER

When Jesus saw his mother, and the disciple whom he loved standing near, he said to his mother, "Woman, behold your son!" (John 19:26).

Within the garden of God's love grow the most beautiful flowers of inspiration and courageous sacrifice. Within the lives of those whose success carries forward the work of this busy world is the gentle hand of meekness and unsought glory.

John the beloved disciple could not desert his Master in the hour of despair, the hour of the crucifixion. As John, agonized, stood with those near and dear to his Master, he waited for the responsibility that became his own. From that hour, Mary became John's *Mater Dolorosa*, and John took her to his own home.

No one can stand close to the cross without being transformed. At Calvary we find a new emphasis placed upon the human family; it is most brilliantly arrayed in the shadow of the cross. Yet, let us never forget that Calvary is a place of victory, not defeat.

Family relationships were sacred to Jesus. A new family was born at Calvary—the family of believers. The cross ties us together in God's family, and we are happy to belong to it!

Our Father, we are grateful for families; we praise Thee for the love that surrounds the home and finds expression through the life of mother whose untiring sacrifice consecrates it to Thy service. Amen.

MOUNTAINS

His holy mountain, beautiful in elevation, is the joy of all the earth . . . (Psalm 48:2).

Mountains have ever been an awe-inspiring sight as we look up to worship God. They bring forth thoughts of the majesty of God; His great power is symbolized by their massiveness, their solidity, their size.

Early man looked to the heights and wondered about the Great Spirit who was said to dwell among the peaks. The Indians of North America set up shrines on the highest peaks. Such majesty is indescribable, and no artist can capture the exactitude of its transcendent beauty; he can only approximate it.

Wherever the ranges project their peaks skyward, we may glimpse the greatness of the Creator's handiwork. We stand in adoration of His omnipotence, feeling our littleness, our finite characteristics, for we know God transcends the majestic wonder of His supreme architecture.

El Capitan, the great peak in northwest Texas, reminds us of a great cathedral. Mt. Rainier, Mt. St. Helens, and Mt. Adams remind us of God's purity. By their snow-capped splendor, their sheer magnificence, we are mystified.

No wonder, then, that the psalmist writes of the holy mountain, ". . . Mount Zion, in the far north, the city of the great King" (Psalm 48:2).

When in the valleys of discouragement, we may lift

our mind's eye toward the pinnacles of God's great mountains and find new inspiration for this day.

O God our Father, we would lift our eyes to the mountains, the symbols of Thy greatness, Thy majesty, Thy great power. May we realize anew the need for worship. Enlarge our vision that we may see beyond the levels of complacency into the heights of Thy great love for us; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

PEARLS

... like a merchant in search of fine pearls ... (Matthew 13:45).

Ancient merchants considered pearls to be among the most precious of all gems. How like a tradesman would it be to sell all he had in order to purchase the "one pearl of great value."

In our lives, we too are purchasing the things we consider of greatest value. What are they? How are we placing estimates upon the commodities of life today?

Such values as we have are those we seek; such standards as we possess are those we find; such qualities of life we own are those we cherish. Within our experience, the process of evaluation is going on as we prepare for tomorrow. We find ourselves constantly seeking, finding, discerning, and evaluating.

Do we invest our time and talents in the search for those eternal and rewarding characteristics that will endure in the lives of our fellow man? Among these gems of immeasurable value are:

Friendship
Fellowship
Companionship
Love.

Our Father, may we never cease to search for values and experiences of eternal worth. Instruct our minds, cleanse our hearts, and help us to discover; in Jesus' name. Amen.

PICTURES

. . . See that you make everything according to the pattern which was shown you on the mountain (Hebrews 8:5).

This morning there is a new canvas before us. Yesterday's was good and we painted thereon, but somehow the colors were not mixed quite so consistently as they are today.

Then, too, the brush we now hold is a finer tool with which to work. It is so much easier to handle; the bristles are more securely held in the stub. The painting is done with more facility, for yesterday we practiced. Strange that we were not quite as interested and absorbed in the consistency of the colors in the previous painting.

Today, this day toward which we have looked, we have another opportunity to place upon the brand-new canvas a portrait in depth not heretofore conceived with appreciation. So moves our life from day to day, as we look upon the landscape and try to portray another image of the scintillating beauty around us.

To look within ourselves for the resources of spiritual life, to find new cause for living, is to paint a new picture according to God's pattern.

Our Father, place in our mind's eye the concept of new pictures for this day's viewing. May we find the way to an understanding of Thy creation, an appreciation of Thy purpose; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

PORTRAITS

Consider the lilies, how they grow . . . (Luke 12:27).

Leaving the shores of South Carolina, the brush works its way gradually into the hills of the Piedmont section of the Palmetto State. Thence, into North Carolina, through the mountains and on into anfractuons ways, the colors become increasingly beautiful and more difficult to describe. Strange, we thought it so much easier to mix these colors but we have not been able to blend them on the palette in the golden hues and pastels of the sky before us.

On the bottom of yon brook is a hue of gray and in the center lies a much-worn rock. When we realize how long it must have taken that little stream, swift though it is, to wear the rock smooth, we divert our thoughts to the problem of time. And so the logic of the mind enters questions which are altogether foreign to the painting of portraits. Is time an irrelevant question?

The rocks and rills, the mountain streams ahead, the greenery of the hillsides remind us that we see far more than is visible to the eye—as we look upon God's creation.

Thou who didst create this beautiful world in which we live, make us conscious of our surroundings. Help us to transplant the attractiveness of Thy love into all relationships of this new day. In Jesus' name. Amen.

RIVERS

A river flowed out of Eden to water the garden . . . (Genesis 2:10)

Rivers are the lifeblood of many, many lands. For example, in Egypt the land is said to be the gift of the Nile.

In springtime, the floods of the Nile bring in the silt and alluvial soil deposits. Both moisture and fertilizer are thus supplied by the river.

While the Nile is not the longest river, it is important because it gives life to vegetation and crops, one of which is the famous long-staple cotton. The Amazon River, the longest in the world, feeds the surrounding country as it sends through many tributaries the moisture essential to untold numbers of plants and animals.

Similarly, in the United States the Mississippi River and its tributaries furnish immeasurable millions of gallons of water to sustain plant life and soil fertility. It also furnishes water power for the electricity to turn the wheels of industry and light the homes.

Rivers bring to the surrounding country the means of life. They remind us of the never-ceasing flow of God's love for us as His Holy Spirit enters the desolate areas of our souls, filling us with new life in the spiritual accomplishment of His purpose.

O Lord, our Lord, we thank Thee for the refreshment that comes to us as we wait in Thy presence. Continue to bring us the living sources of streams in the desert areas of our spiritual lives. May we find new strength for this day as we open the floodgates to the rivers; in Jesus' name. Amen.

ROADS

. . . turn and take your journey . . . (Deuteronomy 1:7).

How winds the road beyond the one we know? More important still, we ask ourselves, "In what direction shall we travel now?" Again we ask, "How far are we to journey on this day?"

We find the answers before our very eyes, for God has given us the sextant to behold the magnitude of His direction. He lends to us His hand and we look upon new vistas, clear and sharp.

As upward we direct our sight, we soon discover what we least expected. Roads fascinate our minds, inspire new journeys, and beckon us to follow through to where we have not yet been. The twining paths lead on to winding shadows, through trees that tower above the plane on which we walk today.

Roads wind beyond the dawn to meet the noontide's brightness, reminding us that our paths advance us through the pleasant mountain trails, by the footpaths in the dust, to the highways choked by the traffic of mankind.

Let us not be weary of the road as we travel on this day, for we know it leads on to where our Father has appointed.

O God our Father, we thank Thee for the new direction Thou dost point us to each day. Though we have not always been obedient to Thy designs, still we ask that Thou wilt lead us onward. Whether it be through pastures green or in the weary shadows; whether it be in the high noon of the brightness of day or in the dark paths of night—we ask for Thy guiding hand as we try to follow the roads Thou hast set before us. In Jesus' name. Amen.

SHADOWS

These are only a shadow of what is to come . . . (Colossians 2:17). They serve a copy and shadow of the heavenly sanctuary . . . (Hebrews 8:5).

Shadows make images of things that are real. When we speak of *the shadow of a man*, we assume there is a man who casts a shadow. Likewise, when we say that something

is foreshadowed, we know there is a cause for believing in its effectiveness. Shadows would not *be* without light; and that which produces the shadow stands in the light.

The psalmists speak of the shadow of God's protection as the cooling refuge that might shelter the weary traveler by the wayside. Shadows tell us many things:

Shadows designate limits
 Shadows protect us from heat
 Shadows remind us of sorrow
 Shadows bring us quietness
 Shadows make sleep possible.

Shadows bring us into the realization of life's values. Out of the shadows we come with new strength for the day's demands. Within the shadows, we may find God.

O Lord, make us mindful of the value that comes to us through the shadows of this day. Where the darkness of sorrow is present, may we know there is luminous experience ahead; have compassion upon us. Where the comforting shadows of Thy love abide, make us truly thankful. In Jesus' name. Amen.

SPRINGS

... the water that I shall give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life (John 4:14).

Today we search the valleys of life for the springs of life-giving water. In the heat of day, along the mountain trail, we pause in the shade of a tree and listen to the gurgling water as it pours forth along the rocks. How cool it is to our hands and feet as we bathe them cautiously in the stream that flows by in ceaseless murmuring! How like the restful breezes of the morning is this soothing dampness.

More pleasing still is quenching our thirsty throats as we pause by an oasis in the desert. Here we are reminded of the source of living, moving water. As we observe the plant life of the fields, we see the meaning of the never-ceasing flow of a great blessing.

For this brief pause we would accept the blessing of God's deep springs that bring to our lives the meaning of Jesus' words, ". . . the water that I shall give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life." He offers us water that is:

Refreshing
Invigorating
Reviving.

Moreover, we find in His presence a new experience in:

Purity
Satisfaction
Strength.

He is our assurance of eternal life, here and now and for ever.

O Thou who didst speak to the woman by the well, bring anew to us the living water of the assurance of eternal life. Help us to live each day as though we expect to live for ever; in Thy name we pray. Amen.

SUN, MOON AND STARS

There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars . . . (I Corinthians 15:41).

Just another glimpse into the universe, the part known as the heavens, admits us to the handiwork of the Creator. Like Abraham of old, we cannot count the stars; we can-

not fathom the great beyondness of it all. Yet we know something of the glory that faces our lives and adds to our personal experiences.

We are impressed by the immeasurable amplitudes, the glorious mystery that surrounds the constellations, the eternal velocities of the heavenly bodies in great obedience to laws established by the Creator of the multiverses.

We stand in reverent awe with the undaunted faith that God's handiwork lies before us on every side; His purpose prevails not only in the creation, but also through our discovery of it. Certainly we are most happily aware of our relationship to His purpose when we look into the magnificence of heavenly bodies, the beautiful northern lights.

Such impressions and observations transform our knowledge, strengthening our faith in God the Creator. We are conscious that we have not found God in nature, but rather have we found the God who creates all things. Creation is still going on through the means our Father ordains, until, in His own good time, His handiwork may be accomplished.

We have discovered that:

Our Father reveals His work to us
He accomplishes great things through us
He wins others to His way through us.

Eternal and everlasting Father, who hast created more than we are able to comprehend, bless us with Thy presence, inspire us by Thy love, and fit us for Thy sight as we live each day. Thy mercy surrounds us in so many ways; we are grateful for Thy great design in all its beauty. Make us Thine indeed; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

TREES

He is like a tree . . . (Psalm 1:3).

How like a tree is our life! As it sends roots down into the earth to receive nourishment, so do we tap the depths of spiritual resourcesfulness. Spreading its branches to the skies for the nourishment of sunshine and rain, the tree betakes itself to the sources of food; likewise, when we open our souls to God and bow in His presence, God supplies the inspiration for the spiritual nourishment to sustain us.

How like a tree is our life! In the springtime of youth, the dream of tomorrow is like the green leaves budding forth in preparation for fruitful service to God and our fellow man. And in the venture toward the vistas of renewed life, the youth looks forward as the shadows fall behind him.

How like a tree is our life! Through the restlessness of adolescence, in the vivid defiance of authority, in the care-free growth and changing voice, life goes on until one day the teenager awakens to new responsibility and assumes it with new vigor.

How like a tree is our life! One day, as we look into memory's book, we find that God has guided our lives into the paths of His eternal purpose:

Life has new meaning
Years take on new values
Appreciation grows
Affection increases.

We thank Thee, our Father, for the growth in life, for the increasing sense of Thy presence that comes to us through the years life places upon us. Grant us wisdom to appreciate the maturing power Thou hast given when

we have waited for Thy guidance; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

VALLEYS

Multitudes, multitudes, in the valley of decision! (Joel 3:14).

Looking down from the mountain top of this high hour of worship, we can see into the valley of decision that God has given to us through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus. On the high peak of worship we come to understand the meaning of the valley in sustaining daily life. In the vale of daily toil, we cultivate the garden of human relationships that bind us closer together in the family of our Father.

We view the shadows between the trees below; we see the cool streams as they wind their way to the bottom land and feed the grasses. Not far away the sheep are grazing in the shades of passing calm. Yes, this is the valley of decision: God's decision to redeem us through the stimulating provision of food and refreshment for His creatures.

Let us find in the valley of every day's experience another cause to rejoice and give thanks that we receive the greatest blessing through toil and investment of talent. Let us increase the fruitfulness of the valley and multiply its beauty. Let us thank God for the green pastures of the river land and find again the path to the still waters that quench our thirsty souls.

Thou, O Lord, who hast created the means of sustenance, bring us to a new appreciation of Thy great blessing of work in the valleys of life. Strengthen our hands for the work of another day; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

WINDS

The wind blows where it wills . . . (John 3:8).

The mystery of winds has never been solved. We know the winds are blowing, for we hear and feel them as they pass.

Jesus likened the work of the Spirit to the winds, in the presence and the moving effect produced. There is mystery in the understanding of both the wind and the Spirit. Moreover, we have knowledge of God's presence, but not complete understanding.

As the breezes of a summer day bring relief to the weary traveler, so the presence of God's Spirit brings a consciousness of a new experience. We feel the touch of new relationships through His reassurance.

Beyond the swirling outer ring of the hurricane, within the "eye" of the storm, is a calm into which the planes of the weather bureau may fly and make observations. In our lives there is a calm, a trysting place, where we find anew the meaning of the steadiness He gives us for today. We must wait for the calm and exercise new patience.

Beneath the tides of life's disturbing woes is the steadiness of His voice saying to us, "Peace, be still." He speaks more clearly to us as we pause to listen for the still small voice that strengthens our faith.

His steadiness we seek throughout this day,
His love we need along the way;
His reassuring presence lingers here,
His fellowship becomes to us more dear.

O God, who hast blessed us in so many ways, speak to us through the stillness of this moment. Strengthen our lives for the duties of this day. Increase our faith in one another, that we may find Thy will in every area of

responsibility. Make us diligent in our search for truth; revive our hope, that we may light the way toward higher goals. In the Master's name we pray. Amen.

WINGS

If I take the wings of the morning . . . thy hand shall lead me . . . (Psalm 139:9).

Wings are the symbols that remind us we are not earth-bound creatures. In our imagination we are able to live beyond the present, to travel far away, to hope beyond today.

Wings carry us to distant places in jet planes. Distance vanishes within a few hours, and we live in more places, serving beyond the boundaries that would otherwise circumscribe our ability to be useful.

The wings of prayer transport us into the presence of God and:

Encourage our hearts
 Enlarge our minds
 Multiply our friendships
 Increase our efficiency.

The wings of hope:

Destroy complacency
 Increase optimism
 Give meaning to life.

Our Father, when we are depressed by our failures, show us how to take the wings of the morning and go to Thee for guidance. Increase our faith; enlarge our vision; make real our fellowship; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Part V

ANNIVERSARIES

ANNO DOMINI

The years of our life are threescore and ten, or even by reason of strength fourscore . . . (Psalm 90:10).

Another year is dawning. Another investment will be made in the work of our Master.

The psalmist refers to "The days of our years . . ." (AV). Time to consider the use of each day is an important phase of Christian living. A new year offers to each of us new opportunity for growth in grace and wisdom, more equipment through knowledge, and more fruitfulness through realizing goals. Let's talk it over:

Sitting by the hearth in meditation
Thinking about the work of tomorrow
Reminiscing over the moments of yesterday
Listening to the sound of clear notes written by a great composer.

Beauty and peace of soul can be ours to a greater and greater degree, in proportion to the joy we bring into the lives of other persons. Checking up on our lives, to see where improvement is necessary and possible, reminds us of the days of our years—not simply that they may be threescore and ten, but that they may be filled, as Kipling reminds us, "With sixty seconds' worth of distance run."

*Thou, O Lord, hast brought us safely to this hour. With gratitude and thanksgiving, we lift our hearts into Thy presence, asking to find the way to greater usefulness, deeper consecration, nobler living. In the time Thou hast allotted to us, may we be mindful of our new tasks and face them with rejoicing. In the Master's name we pray.
Amen.*

CHRISTMAS

. . . a little child shall lead them (Isaiah 11:6).

The letter was a little child's. The characters sprawled across the page could scarcely be deciphered. Thus it read:

Dear Daddy,

Just a line to let you know we're all just fine. We was all to see Grandma about three weeks ago.

How are you getting along up there? I hope it isn't cold there as it is here.

Sissy and the other kids are just fine.

We all want you home for Christmas 'cause without you it won't be one.

Well, I'll close for now.

Love,
Bobby

P. S. Mother still loves you and misses you.

The letter was addressed:

To my Daddy in Heaven
In care of God.

Is not the spirit of Christmas expressed most sincerely and beautifully through the heart of the little child! Thus in our experience do we find a lingering love, a longing for home and hospitality. Thus, too, does God our Father set eternity in our hearts.

O Thou eternal Father, who didst send to us a little child, unite us in the fellowship of families whose love abides. Around the altar of our hearts, may love continue. Add depth to our affection that all who share it, whether present or absent, may have the reassuring bonds of peace and joy at Christmastide and always in all ways. Amen.

E A S T E R

But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep (I Corinthians 15:20).

The center of our faith lies in the resurrection. The conviction that Christ is risen from the dead gives us hope for eternal life, which is promised by our blessed Lord in all that He is in the life of the church through nearly twenty centuries.

The reality of this experience—for indeed it is an experience—gives Christianity to the world as life eternal. Irrespective of disillusionment and frustrated hope; regardless of change and shifting emphases in all the experiences of mankind—the doctrine persists. Our hope is eternal, and we find a glimpse of the future in the present reality of our holy religion.

The reality of mystery—and we would not remove the mystery which surrounds this hope—persists. The soul passes into another stage of life; the life we know in this world disappears from our midst, but the work of departed personalities moves on among us. Our reality is beyond explanation, scientific or otherwise.

Instinct reminds us that life is indestructible; for in the direction of Jesus, whose brief ministry impressed His disciples with the unique quality of life, is the force which moves our minds to speak the language of the heart.

Our hope for life beyond is one of the reasons we place a high value upon our present work. To live this day as though we expect to live for ever, to carry on our work of bringing God's will to pass, to strengthen good will among the nations of earth, to live constructively in the face of difficulties, quietly and confidently expecting that today's work will make a better tomorrow—this is to live eternally.

Eternal God, our Father, who didst bring from the grave our Lord Jesus Christ, give us the meaning of reassuring faith in life eternal. May we so live that the values of eternity may serve to point the way toward eternal fellowship with Thee; through Jesus Christ our blessed Redeemer. Amen.

THANKSGIVING

I thank my God . . . when I remember you . . . (Philemon 4).

When we remember the many mercies that are ours, we must give thanks. When in the busy world we turn aside to think of the blessings God has given, we offer thanks.

We thank God for our homes, we thank Him for the grace of friendships dear, and we thank Him for the food we share. When we take time to meditate upon the wonders of our time—the enrichment of life, our heritage of civilization, our spiritual opportunities—we are overwhelmed with gratitude.

Let us unite with all who meet to offer thanks on this great day of thanksgiving. In adoration we would bow, conscious of our needs; in penitence we ask forgiveness for the times we have carelessly accepted God's gracious gifts without giving thanks.

Let us find in the depths of our hearts a sense of gratitude for every blessing. So may we keep this day that its influence will remind us that every day may be Thanksgiving Day.

Our Father, with gratitude we would bow in Thy presence. Make us truly thankful for Thy mercy, the cleansing power of Thy grace, and the forgiveness of Thy love. In the Master's name. Amen.

VACATION

... they who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength ...
(Isaiah 40:31).

Every person needs a vacation, but what do we mean by *vacation*? No two persons find the same meaning in the word, nor should they; otherwise there would be none of the variety so necessary to the renewal of energy, both physical and spiritual.

While different persons find refreshment and renewal in different types of recreation, the basic need is the same. Breaking monotony is, after all, the end to be attained.

Following the routine is fine, but there must come a time when one lays aside his accustomed duties in order to be refreshed. Many, many times our Lord said to His wayworn disciples, "Come ye . . . apart . . . and rest a while." And so there must come about a change in the tempo, a varying of the pace of living. The removal of "ruts" is essential to an enjoyable and profitable vacation.

For William Hazlitt it was during a journey that life was renewed. He liked the outdoors. His peculiar desire, however, was to travel alone.

Likewise, in our spiritual lives, we seek renewal of the mind through new ideas and new spiritual bases of thought.

Heavenly Father, as we take a vacation, whether it be alone in the fields, on the mountain tops, by the streams, or in the secret places of the heart, be with us. Bless us with new strength. Encourage our hearts and renew our minds. Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

YEARS

. . . O Lord, revive thy work in the midst of the years, in the midst of the years make [it] known . . . (Habakkuk 3:2, AV).

The years roll by in ceaseless rhythm, doing something to us. With each day we find added meaning for the past and seek greater significance in the time that remains for work, until one day we realize the obligation is resting heavily upon us.

With the approaching years of middle life, we become dissatisfied with our short-sightedness, our seeming failure:

We long for success in greater measure
We pine for what is not yet realized
We struggle to get ahead in new ways
We seek a greater witness within ourselves
We long for more reality of God within our lives.

We pause to pray that the middle years, perhaps in the midst of difficulty, may add wisdom, give greater strength to life, and inspire new purpose.

Let us believe that the most productive years are those lived in the struggle of middle life. The toil behind us has made us strong for the bending of the road. The corner has been turned, faith directs us toward the goal, and we are forcing out the superficial ways of living in favor of the thoroughgoing pace.

O God, who art the Master of the years, inspire us to hold the dreams of better work. Through the difficulties of our efforts to improve our tasks, reveal to us the beauty of the way; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

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JOHN LEWIS SANDLIN is known extensively for his work in youth curriculum and camp programs of the church. A former pastor now on the staff of the General Board of Evangelism, The Methodist Church, he served for six years as professor of religion and head of the department at Columbia College in Columbia, South Carolina. He is a popular speaker, a frequent contributor to religious periodicals and to the columns of the secular press, and the author of two previous devotionals, *Graces and Prayers* and *A Prayer for Every Day*.

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