

## 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Weekly Devotions

Week 1 – Pressing On

by Pastor Darrin Vick

*<sup>12</sup> Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already arrived at my goal, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. <sup>13</sup> Brothers and sisters, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, <sup>14</sup> I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus. – Philippians 3:12-14*

The Apostle Paul wrote these words to the Church at Philippi to encourage them to press-on through difficulties and to stay focused on the goal that lies ahead. He had experienced plenty of trials and plenty of victories in his past but he knew that he hadn't "arrived" at the place where God was calling him.

The summer before we were married, my wife and I went on a canoe trip with two friends into the Quetico Wilderness. We had all been on canoe trips before but none of us had anticipated the difficulty of this particular area. The portages were long and hard. Our aluminum canoes were heavy and we didn't have proper footwear for hiking. Before long, we were exhausted and hungry. We wondered if we should turn back or settle for a less desirable campsite. But we were losing daylight so we chose to press-on.

As our muscles ached, we prayed and encouraged each other to keep going. Eventually, we arrived at our campsite just as the sun was setting. It was a beautiful, pristine lake that we had all to ourselves. It was a hard journey but we made it together.

Each of us is on a journey with Jesus. Sometimes the difficulties we face may make us want to abandon our journey or settle for something less than God's best plan. We choose comfort over sacrifice or prefer what is familiar to what is exceptional. The truth is we are not finished, nor is God finished with us, until he calls us heavenward. And even more so, Jesus is holding onto us as we press-on together! May God encourage you by his Holy Spirit and hold you in his grace. Amen.

*What is something that you would be better off "forgetting" as you press-on into the future with Jesus?*

Week 2 – A Light on the Path

by Pastor Darrin Vick

*Your word is a lamp for my feet, a light on my path. – Psalm 119:105*

Several years ago, I went on a personal retreat to a Roman Catholic retreat center in Minnesota. The center was located in a heavily wooded area with individual prayer cabins nestled alongside simple dirt paths. There was no electricity; only gas-powered lanterns. It was recommended that you bring a flashlight to navigate the paths after dark so I made certain to pack one in my bag with extra batteries.

Unfortunately, I forgot to bring the flashlight with me as I went for an evening walk. By the time I started to make my way back to the cabin, it was already dusk and the large trees were blocking-out the little light that remained on the paths. It took considerable effort to discern the outlines of the cabins amidst the dimly lit trees. And all the cabin looked the same! After walking in circles several times, I finally found my cabin and vowed to never leave without my flashlight again.

The Psalmist writes to remind us how important God's Word is for finding our way in life. But just like a flashlight, it is of no use if we don't bring it with us. How often do we forget to open God's Word and seek illumination in our daily walk? The beauty of God's Word is that it not only shines a light inward revealing all our flaws and imperfections, it also shines outward like a beacon to point the way toward Jesus and his promises. As the Holy Spirit reveals the truth of God's Word to us, we are "enlightened" to our need for forgiveness and strengthened by the gift of renewed faith. In a world that is growing darker, our need for a well-lit path is greater than ever. Open God's Word and let it light the way! Amen.

*Question – Have you asked God to light your path today? He can't wait to show you something wonderful in his Word!*

Week 3 – Ready! Set! Go!

By Rev. Dr. Palmer Wold

*Have I not commanded you? Be of good courage; be not frightened, neither be dismayed; for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go. – Joshua 1:9*

Joshua had just been given a big job...a REALLY BIG job! He was to take over Moses' position as leader of the Hebrew people. It would be his responsibility to bring them into the Promised Land and that wouldn't be easy! The Hebrews were often rebellious, ignoring their leaders. Likewise, the situation would be dangerous. They would have to face people who had more powerful armies than they had. Joshua had every reason to be frightened and dismayed. However, he had one very good reason to be strong and courageous.

I wonder if Joshua occasionally thought that maybe this was a little too much for one person. But God always seems to ask more of us than we think we can deliver.

Think of the Ten Commandments. Do you know anyone who has ever lived up to them except Jesus? And then Jesus told us that He had only one commandment to give to us and that 'Love One Another' but that is almost impossible for everyone. It's easy to get discouraged and think about giving up but God says, "Have I not commanded you?"

When God commands, he always offers promises.

He has promised:

- That in Christ we are loved and forgiven
- That the Lord God is with us wherever we go

- That He will help us and give us strength and courage to do all that He asks of us.

We can face the most difficult challenges when we trust in the promises of God!

*Question: What has God commanded you to do? What kind of strength does He give to us?*

Week 4 – I love to tell the Story

by Rev. Dr. Palmer Wold

*They that were scattered abroad went everywhere preaching the word. – Acts 8:4*

A pastor had been on a preaching mission in a certain congregation. At the close of one of the services, a young lawyer committed his life to Christ.

After several weeks, the pastor and the lawyer met again. “Have you shared your faith with anyone?” asked the pastor.

Somewhat surprised, the lawyer responded, “No, I don’t believe that is my business. That is your job as a pastor and my job is to live as a Christian while I practice law.”

Knowing that a Christian should live for Christ everywhere, the pastor simply added, “The weakness of the church today is that so many lay people do not express their faith to others.”

He reached into his pocket and pulled out a New Testament and read from Acts 8:4. The pastor continued, “The strength of the early church was that every Christian felt that it was his duty to share the faith with others. Wherever they went, they would say a good word for Jesus.”

It is important to live the Christian life but it is also important to share our personal God story with others. The Holy Spirit will give us boldness at the right time.

*Question: Why is it important to let others know what we believe?*