

**BUILDING BLOCKS OF GROWING IN CHRIST**  
**REFORMATION LUTHERAN CHURCH, LANCASTER, PA**

**WRITTEN BY 13 REFORMATION MEMBERS; REVIEWED BY REFORMATION'S PASTOR; DISTRIBUTED FOR THE GLORY OF GOD**

**SEPTEMBER 6, 2020 – 14<sup>TH</sup> SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST**

**BUILDING BLOCKS OF GROWING IN CHRIST**

*I acknowledged my sin to you, and I did not cover my iniquity. I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the Lord," and you forgave the iniquity of my sin. ... You are a hiding place for me; you preserve me from trouble; you surround me with shouts of deliverance."*

*–Psalm 32:5,7*

David fully confessed his sins. He didn't gloss over or make excuses for his transgressions, and having done that, he received God's full forgiveness. He knew he could then turn to God as his hiding place, a sanctuary where he could be preserved from trouble.



Coronavirus, politics, the economy, worrying about our loved ones. Today, many of us wish we had a hiding place, a sanctuary where we could get away from the world and its troubles. The good news is that we do, and it's as simple as confessing our sins and turning toward the Lord. When you find yourself worrying, refocus your attention on our Lord. Clear your conscience with confession, and trust in God. He is the only one who can truly preserve you from trouble. He promises to be with you always, to watch over you and protect you.

**Thoughts to Ponder:** *When you find yourself worrying, try to consciously refocus your mind from your troubles to God's promise to protect you.*

*–Resource: Lutheran Study Bible*

**SEPTEMBER 13, 2020 – 15<sup>TH</sup> SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST**

**BUILDING BLOCKS OF GROWING IN CHRIST**

*"As I live, says the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God. So then each of us will give an account of himself to God"* *–Romans 14:11-12*

In the early church, Christians often disagreed with each other regarding practices of their faith and created problems for each other. Paul addresses this issue by telling the Roman Christians, and all Christians, not to focus on the fact that they have differences, instead focus on the fact that Christ calls us to love one another as we confess Christ is our Lord.



In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, concerns within the church may be different but it is still a struggle to combat division that may result from issues. Paul's call to welcome those with whom we have differences still applies today. It is not for us to judge or hold one another in contempt but to recognize our connection as brothers and sisters in Christ. We must acknowledge that each of us is accountable to God and trust God to do His work.

**Thoughts to ponder:** *As we struggle with reacting to challenges of the pandemic and regathering as a church, what guides our decisions? How do we show love towards our brothers and sisters in Christ, even if their opinions differ from ours? Let's pray every day for God's guidance and strength to love even through difficult times trusting our Lord to lead us with making right decisions.*

**BUILDING BLOCKS OF GROWING IN CHRIST**  
**REFORMATION LUTHERAN CHURCH, LANCASTER, PA**

**WRITTEN BY 13 REFORMATION MEMBERS; REVIEWED BY REFORMATION'S PASTOR; DISTRIBUTED FOR THE GLORY OF GOD**

**SEPTEMBER 20, 2020 – 16<sup>TH</sup> SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST**

**BUILDING BLOCKS OF GROWING IN CHRIST**

*You have said, "Seek my face." My heart says to you, "Your face, LORD, do I seek."  
–Psalm 27:8*

Tucked away in the middle of Psalm 27, this verse popped and reminded me of a story told about our brother-in-law who we lost unexpectedly in June. The mourner told a story of how a bald eagle goes through the preening of 25,000 feathers each morning to remove dirt and parasites as well as to align each feather in position to ensure optimal flight and protection against adverse conditions; she followed with the fact that every morning our brother-in-law would 'preen' himself by starting EVERY day reading scripture and praying for individuals' prayer needs that he kept on multiple lists. Our brother-in-law surely heard God saying to him "Seek My face, seek My presence!" and he let his heart respond obediently: "Your face, Lord, do I seek!"



The truth is, we all know how to seek him: quieting our hearts, putting aside distractions, reading His word, and praying. But all too often we just let the day slip by. We should follow my brother-in-law's routine and learn to seek Him in the quiet of the early morning. It's not only the right thing to do, but the beneficial thing, just like the preening for the eagle.

**Thoughts to ponder:** *Seeking God Himself is our cleansing and protection on our disciple journey. In the weeks ahead focus on how and when you seek the presence of God?*

**SEPTEMBER 27, 2020 – 17<sup>TH</sup> SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST**

**BUILDING BLOCKS OF GROWING IN CHRIST**

*"For I have no pleasure in the death of anyone, declares the Lord God; so turn, and live."  
–Ezekiel 18:32*

As Jesus' disciples we follow and obey Him in love and joy. Fear does not motivate us to be disciples. Fear keeps us in bondage to sin. It prevents us from being disciples and discipling others.



God's word spoken through Ezekiel is an important word for those in the Church and those who are not. The living God does not take pleasure in anyone's death. Period. He does not delight in killing and destroying. He delights in saving and preserving life. He delights in giving eternal life.

If we as believers are trapped in thinking God is out to get us, we are not free to live in God's grace. We are not living in joy and peace. If in fear we tell others about Jesus, who would pay any attention? If they did, we would only add to that person's unbearable burden of fear.

Our heavenly Father sends Jesus as our bridegroom who says, "Turn, and live." We are his beloved. Fear never works in a relationship of lovers.

**Thoughts to ponder:** *In your daily devotions this week reflect on how fear disrupts and weakens our marriage and family relationships. How much more so then does fear impair our relationship with the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.*

**BUILDING BLOCKS OF GROWING IN CHRIST**  
**REFORMATION LUTHERAN CHURCH, LANCASTER, PA**

**WRITTEN BY 13 REFORMATION MEMBERS; REVIEWED BY REFORMATION'S PASTOR; DISTRIBUTED FOR THE GLORY OF GOD**

**OCTOBER 4, 2020 – 18<sup>TH</sup> SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST**

**BUILDING BLOCKS OF GROWING IN CHRIST**

*“Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus as my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ.”*  
-Philippians 3:8

The Apostle Paul had quite the biography, a very strong pedigree of his time: Hebrew of Hebrews, a Pharisee, a Roman citizen, a persecutor of the church. He was very well educated. Can you imagine how much knowledge, authority, zeal and power he had? He cruelly persecuted the early church until he encountered Christ. Then, none of his power and status mattered. It became "garbage", or "dung". What became important was the righteousness that comes from God, the power of resurrection, and the new identity in Christ.



The pandemic has unfortunately brought up uncomfortable issues; our differences and divisions. However, it has also been a reminder of how our comfortable life and status can abruptly be taken away like a rug from under our feet. What matters at the end? Even though our circumstances can change and disrupt our daily life in a blink of an eye, our identity in Christ stays the same.

**Thoughts to ponder:** Spend some time reflecting on your life. What things, feelings and situations distract you from your identity in Christ? Remember God comes to take over our whole life, not just parts of it.

-Resources: *ESV, theologycurator.com/apostle-paul-brief-biography*

**OCTOBER 11, 2020 – 19<sup>TH</sup> SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST**

**BUILDING BLOCKS OF GROWING IN CHRIST**

*“Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice. Let your reasonableness be known to everyone. The Lord is at hand; do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.”*  
-Philippians 4:4-6

Paul wants to encourage the Philippians by showing a growing commitment to service to God and to one another. Ultimate joy in life comes unsurprisingly from Christ dwelling within us. It seems strange that Paul, a man in prison, could tell a Church to rejoice. His attitude offers an important lesson: outward circumstances need not dictate inner attitudes. It is easy for humans to become discouraged or anxious about life's unpleasant circumstances. These attitudes could cause unacceptable responses by Christians to those inside or outside the Church. Imagine never worrying about anything! That may seem impossible, but Paul's advice can turn our worries into prayers.



**Thoughts to ponder:** *How much do you worry? Would you like to worry less? Then try praying more. Whenever you start to worry, stop and pray. The Lord has different ways of helping fallible human beings. Also, take a little time and listen to what God has to say to you. And, don't forget to thank him for all He has done for you.*

- Resources: *ESV Study Bible; Life Application Study Bible*

**BUILDING BLOCKS OF GROWING IN CHRIST**  
**REFORMATION LUTHERAN CHURCH, LANCASTER, PA**

**WRITTEN BY 13 REFORMATION MEMBERS; REVIEWED BY REFORMATION'S PASTOR; DISTRIBUTED FOR THE GLORY OF GOD**

**OCTOBER 18, 2020 – 20<sup>TH</sup> SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST**

**BUILDING BLOCKS OF GROWING IN CHRIST**

*Thus says the LORD to his anointed, to Cyrus, ... For the sake of my servant Jacob, and Israel my chosen, I call you by your name, I name you, though you do not know me. I am the LORD, and there is no other, besides me there is no God; I equip you, though you do not know me.*  
–Isaiah 45: 1a, 4-5

The strengthening of Cyrus for the sake of Israel, fulfilled in the brilliant successes of the great Persian conqueror, was followed by the liberation of the Jews from captivity. But we need to remember that Cyrus never knew that he was under the guardianship and guidance of the Lord of hosts from his earliest childhood to his last successes. God was with him, though he knew not the name and the works of Yahweh.



**Thoughts to ponder:** *Is it possible that there are people in your life today that God is guiding, even though they do not profess to be a Christian? Or as you look back on your life, were you guided by the Holy Spirit before your faith developed? God is big enough to use every person, with or without their own knowledge.*

–Sources: Lutheran Study Bible, Biblehub.com, Pr. Seamon's sermon 3/12/17

**OCTOBER 25, 2020 – REFORMATION SUNDAY**

**BUILDING BLOCKS OF GROWING IN CHRIST**

***“If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples,”***

**–John 8:31b**

One of my favorite devotional booklets is “Five traits of a Christ-follower.” The first trait is “walking with Jesus.” Abiding in Jesus involves studying His teachings in such a way that we develop a closer personal relationship with Him. It goes beyond just intellectual study by bringing Him into our heart. It involves carefully reading His words, meditating on what He says, and bringing Him into our lives so that He becomes a part of who we are. By first becoming His disciple, we are then able to share our love of Him with others. Through this sharing of our relationship and love of Jesus with others we help the Holy Spirit make other disciples.



**Thoughts to Ponder:** *A close personal relationship with someone takes time and a desire to share our life with them. How well am I abiding with Jesus through daily devotion and a desire to grow closer to Him? He wants each of us to abide in him and become His disciple. By becoming His disciple, we become empowered to share Him with others and help make other disciples. Decide today to commit a portion of each day to abide with Jesus so you can be His disciple and make other disciples by sharing your love of Him.*  
–Resource: Lutheran Study Bible

**BUILDING BLOCKS OF GROWING IN CHRIST**  
**REFORMATION LUTHERAN CHURCH, LANCASTER, PA**

**WRITTEN BY 13 REFORMATION MEMBERS; REVIEWED BY REFORMATION'S PASTOR; DISTRIBUTED FOR THE GLORY OF GOD**

**NOVEMBER 1, 2020 – ALL SAINTS SUNDAY**

**BUILDING BLOCKS OF GROWING IN CHRIST**

***“See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are.”***

*-1 John 3:1*

Although we are completely undeserving and sinful, God has called us His own. God has made us His children. He has changed us through the waters of baptism, into a new creation. This “kind of love the Father has given us,” is a gift, and one day we will be purified and sinless. Despite our sinful nature we are God’s children, today, and into eternity.



Knowing that we are simultaneously saint and sinner allows us to die of ourselves, so God can utilize us as He wills, to better serve our neighbor.

**Thought to Ponder:** *God’s faithful promise that we are saved now, in this life, is liberating. Let us pray this week that we succumb of ourselves, and become the vessel which God uses for our neighbors good.*

*Source : Lutheran Study Bible*

**NOVEMBER 8, 2020 – 23<sup>RD</sup> SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST**

**BUILDING BLOCKS OF GROWING IN CHRIST**

***“But I am poor and needy; hasten to me O God! You are my deliverer; O Lord do not delay!”***

*–Psalm 70:5*

The Psalmist knows he is spiritually poor and constantly needs God’s help. In Matthew’s Gospel reading today we are also reminded we need to be watchful as the wise virgins were by being prepared for when the bridegroom comes. What does this mean to us today? As C.S. Lewis says in *Mere Christianity*, once you have accepted Christianity, “then some of its main doctrines shall be deliberately held before your mind for some time every day.” He goes on to say that daily praying, Bible reading and going to church are necessary parts of Christian life – that we need to be continually reminded of what we believe. Because our moods and priorities change from day to day, we must be fed daily or those beliefs will not remain alive in our minds. Lewis asks us how many of our friends have lost their Christian faith by being reasoned out of it, or have they most likely just drifted away?



**Thoughts to ponder:** *Have you become lax in your daily prayer and Bible reading? Start again today! Have you been missing worship? Begin by attending next Sunday’s worship service.*

*–Sources: Lutheran Study Bible, Mere Christianity by C.S. Lewis*

**BUILDING BLOCKS OF GROWING IN CHRIST**  
**REFORMATION LUTHERAN CHURCH, LANCASTER, PA**

**WRITTEN BY 13 REFORMATION MEMBERS; REVIEWED BY REFORMATION'S PASTOR; DISTRIBUTED FOR THE GLORY OF GOD**

**NOVEMBER 15, 2021 – 24<sup>TH</sup> SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST**

**BUILDING BLOCKS OF GROWING IN CHRIST**

*“For all our days pass away under your wrath; we bring our years to an end like a sigh. The years of our life are seventy, or even by reason of strength eighty; yet their span is but toil and trouble; they are soon gone, and we fly away.” –Psalm 90:9-10*

How many times have you said, “I just don’t know where the time went?” The psalmist, using words attributed to Moses, is also lamenting the passage of time. He struggles to understand why his days are filled with toil and trouble. He is concerned about the wrath of God due to his sin. Life to him sounds utterly hopeless.



The Good News for believers is that the Father has taken pity on us and given us everlasting life through Jesus. Our days may still be filled with toil and trouble, but there is hope for us in this promise from the Father. However, we must still consider how we are numbering our days as His servants and give thanks to God for the blessings He has given to us.

**Thoughts to ponder:** *How have you been numbering your days? Have they been in reverence and fear of the Lord or are you not numbering your days and living as if there is no tomorrow by following your own wants and desires? Consider how you are going to respond to God when He inquires about your days?*

*-Resource: The Lutheran Study Bible*

**NOVEMBER 22, 2021 – CHRIST THE KING**

**BUILDING BLOCKS OF GROWING IN CHRIST**

*Oh come, let us sing to the Lord; let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation! Let us come into his presence with thanksgiving; let us make a joyful noise to him with songs of praise!* –Psalm 95:1-2

The call to offer God joyful thanksgiving is made to everyone, without qualification or limitation. Whenever we seek to come into God’s presence, we must come with thanksgiving and praise. The Lord is to be praised. How great is that God, the one who created the whole earth and its fullness; the one who directs and is the disposer of all! We are taught here to praise the Lord Jesus who is our great God; the mighty God is one, and God over all is blessed forevermore. All power is given to the Son, in heaven and earth. He is our God, and we should praise him. He is our Savior, and the author of our blessedness! The church is the Son’s flock; Christ is the great and good Shepherd of believers, he seeks them when lost, and brings them into his fold.



**Thoughts to Ponder:** *This coming week as you go about your daily devotions and as you begin each new day think about how you come into our Lord’s presence. Do you sing and make joyful noise? Meditate daily on how you enter His presence with thanksgiving.*

*-Resource: BibleHub.com*

**BUILDING BLOCKS OF GROWING IN CHRIST**  
**REFORMATION LUTHERAN CHURCH, LANCASTER, PA**

**WRITTEN BY 13 REFORMATION MEMBERS; REVIEWED BY REFORMATION'S PASTOR; DISTRIBUTED FOR THE GLORY OF GOD**

**NOVEMBER 29, 2021 – ADVENT 1**

**BUILDING BLOCKS OF GROWING IN CHRIST**

*“I give thanks to my God always for you because of the grace of God that was given you in Christ Jesus, that in every way you were enriched in him in all speech and all knowledge...so that you are not lacking in any gift, as you wait for the revealing of our Lord Jesus.”*  
*–1 Corinthians 1:4-5, 7*

All Christians are by baptism sanctified, set apart, in Christ. Being sanctified in Him we are called saints of God. For all who acknowledge Him, Christ manifests in our flesh the blessings of salvation and faith. We come to willingly and lovingly obey because we acknowledge He is the Lord of all.



Paul reminds us to give thanks for the gift of faith through the grace given by Christ, grace enriching our lives with spiritual gifts. Paul later notes we are gifted with knowledge that provides the power to witness about Christ who willingly bore our human sin by dying on a cross. Christ's resurrected body made us blameless to receive the only gift in life that truly matters, the grace of resurrected eternal life with Him. In Christ we've received every gift needed for our earthly life.

**Thoughts to ponder:** *Do you thank God each day for His gifts to you, and for providing every necessary spiritual gift? Will you each day add to a list a gift He graciously gives you?*  
*–Sources: NIV Study Bible & biblehub.com*