

Heart-Fixer

He hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted (Luke 4:18, *KJV*).

Scripture: Luke 4:14-21

Song: “Hear My Cry, O Lord”

The Christmas season is usually a joyous time. However, for those who have experienced a loss, holidays may be particularly challenging. In April 2020, our daughter died. She had developed heart failure during pregnancy and experienced multiple complications during the birth of our grandson. After months of care in health facilities, she was discharged home. Ten days later, she went to bed early because of a headache. She never woke up. Our hearts were broken. The days that followed were hard, and we shed many tears.

Christmastime that year was somber. Yet the faith we had in God kept us moving forward. It was like the star over Bethlehem—a light shining in the darkness, drawing us closer to Jesus. The more we prayed in faith, the more we felt the presence of Jesus. Ultimately, our walk through the grief deepened our relationship with God. We sought the Lord, and He brought us out of our deep sadness.

Today, our hearts are no longer broken. Our grandson is thriving. The joys of Christmas have returned. If you are experiencing heartache during this holiday season, I encourage you to pray about it. Ask others to pray with you. Jesus can heal your heart, just as He healed ours.

Father, my heart is broken right now. Please comfort me, and make my heart whole again. In Jesus’ name, amen.

December 23–29. **Apollo Stevens** lives in Virginia with her husband. She works as a nurse and serves in local ministries.

No Loans Here

Give to every man that asketh of thee; and of him that taketh away thy goods ask them not again (Luke 6:30, *KJV*).

Scripture: Luke 6:27-36

Song: “He Paid a Debt He Did Not Owe”

I’ve found that most people won’t ask for money unless they’re truly in need. I’ve also observed that what the person asks for is often less than what they actually need. And the obligation to return a loan has the effect of increasing the borrower’s burden. Because of this, I do not lend money. I give as much as I’m able to and then release the person from their promise to pay anything back.

God responded to our requests for help in a much more powerful way. Adam and Eve’s disobedience to God brought sin into what had been a perfect world (Genesis 3). Since then, humanity has been struggling, having lost the peace of God’s original plan. The daily news is a snapshot of sin’s impact. And sometimes our personal actions remind us of our own shortcomings. In response to our need, God initiated a “debt forgiveness plan,” available to everyone who will receive it. He gave His Son so we could be released from sin’s deadly grip and be empowered to walk in newness of life.

This holiday season brings an opportunity for us to bless others in a variety of ways. We can be generous with our time, abilities, and finances. The generosity we show today may have an impact far beyond what we realize.

Father, thank You for Your generous gift to me. Show me where I can be generous today. In Jesus’ name, amen.

Leading with Compassion

He will turn again, he will have compassion upon us
(Micah 7:19, *KJV*).

Scripture: Micah 7:14-20

Song: “Compassion Hymn”

I have held leadership roles for a number of years. Rather than positioning myself above my teams, however, I’ve always led by journeying alongside them. In 2022, I attended a training that resulted in my obtaining a “Compassionate Leader” certification. The definition of *compassion*—“to suffer with”—was the foundation of the training. The material presented touched me deeply and confirmed that my approach to leadership is on target.

Jesus has always been my leadership inspiration and the pattern I look to. In the workplace, I strive daily to emulate how Jesus led. Jesus’ example teaches me that people are the priority. Jesus immersed himself in the lives of the people He led. He related to each person in a way they could understand. He used life lessons (parables) to teach godly principles. He called His disciples “friends” (Luke 12:4). When correction was needed, Jesus did not demean but spoke to point others in the right direction, to bring their thinking in line with the truth. As a compassionate leader, I can move the work forward by extending comfort, hope, and constructive correction to those I lead.

This is a time of year when people are generally kinder, more compassionate toward others. However, Christians are uniquely qualified to extend comfort, hope, and constructive feedback throughout the year, including to those we lead.

Father, in my leadership roles, help me lead others toward You by demonstrating Your ways of truth and love with compassion. In Jesus’ name, amen

God Is Full of Mercy

Remember not the sins of my youth, nor my transgressions: according to thy mercy remember thou me for thy goodness' sake, O LORD (Psalm 25:7, *KJV*).

Scripture: Psalm 25:1-10

Song: “Unto Thee, O Lord”

As a young Christian, I tended to be very impatient. I will never forget the time I was in a slow-moving line at a fast-food restaurant. Finally, I was second in line. Plenty of time had passed to review the overhead menu. However, the person in front of me asked, “Do you have hot chocolate?” My mouth opened, and I said loudly, “Do you see hot chocolate on the menu?” The individual looked at me but took no other action.

In that moment, God’s mercy allowed me to see how I was acting. Thankfully, He protected me at the same time. Impatience was the root of my unkind words and was causing me to act in ways that did not represent Jesus. Recognizing what could have happened made me realize I needed to change. I asked God to forgive me for my behavior, and I began my journey toward becoming more patient and extending mercy to others.

Developing behavior that pleases God is a lifelong process. For me to change, I needed to commit to reading and applying biblical principles to my everyday life. The result of keeping my commitment has been greater patience and mercy toward others. And as I show patience and mercy, God reciprocates in ways I could never have imagined.

Father, sometimes I am impatient and lack mercy. I do not want to behave this way. Please help me change. In Jesus’ name, amen.

No Shame

O keep my soul, and deliver me: let me not be ashamed; for I put my trust in thee (Psalm 25:20, *KJV*).

Scripture: Psalm 25:11-22

Song: “Psalm 34”

It was a few hours after midnight when a Christian woman I know woke up and felt the need to pray. She prayed and fell back to sleep. At four o'clock that morning, her alarm clock buzzed. She had agreed to give a ride to friend who worked an early shift. Along their route, an oncoming car crossed over the line. Both cars were totaled, but she and her friend sustained only minor injuries. The woman believes that her midnight prayer is the reason they are alive.

Living for God does not mean we have a force field around us that keeps out all harm. Sometimes tragic things happen to Christians. However, faith in God and belief in His Son, Jesus, carries us through the hard times. In fact, Romans 8:34-39 lets us know that no matter what we are facing, there is nothing that can come between us and God's love. That Bible passage includes the range of human experiences and lets us know that, because of Christ, we have victory in every circumstance.

Sometimes we don't understand why certain things happen. Not every situation turns out the way we would like. However, it is profoundly comforting to know that we can put our trust in God and rely on Him to be with us and carry us in His love.

Father, I believe You love me. No matter what life brings, I will trust in You and not be ashamed. In Jesus' name, amen.

The Error of Arrogance

He spake this parable unto certain which trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others (Luke 18:9, *KJV*).

Scripture: Luke 18:9-14

Song: “Thy Loving Kindness”

Employee morale had been low for many years. The manager ruled with an iron fist. Good employees who voiced their concerns found themselves being escorted out by security. The manager’s sense of absolute power seemed to increase with each passing day . . . until a wrongfully terminated employee filed a lawsuit and won a large settlement. Suddenly, the manager “retired.” Sadly, this scenario is not uncommon in the business world.

Looking down on others and treating them with contempt is definitely not what Jesus taught and lived. Jesus made it clear to His disciples that He did nothing on His own: He patterned His life after God the Father (John 5:19). God is sovereign over all, yet He does not act harshly toward us, nor does He throw us away when we displease Him. Instead, He draws us to himself with His lovingkindness. He also expects us to show lovingkindness to others.

As we enter the New Year, we can prayerfully seek to walk with humility and be more loving and kind toward others. We never know what someone may be going through, and it’s amazing what a kind word can do to lift someone’s heart and make their day better. Proverbs 16:24 tells us, “Pleasant words are as an honeycomb, sweet to the soul, and health to the bones” (*KJV*).

Father, I want to grow in humility and kindness, no matter what my position or station is in life. In Jesus’ name, amen.

Keep Crying Out

They which went before rebuked [the blind man], that he should hold his peace: but he cried so much the more, Thou Son of David, have mercy on me (Luke 18:39, *KJV*).

Scripture: Luke 18:35-43

Song: “Sweet Hour of Prayer”

Babies have a way of letting us know they need something: they cry. Telling an infant to be quiet is fruitless. The longer the need goes unmet, the louder and more urgent the cries become, and they cease only when the baby’s desire is satisfied.

In today’s Scripture, a blind man used that same approach. He cried out to Jesus, and when those around him told him to be quiet, he cried all the louder. Jesus heard the man’s voice above the crowd and healed him. Prayer is the means we have as Christians to cry out to God. Jesus encouraged His disciples to pray and even taught them *how* to pray (Matthew 6:5-13).

Since 1872, science has dabbled in experimentation that attempts to measure the efficacy of prayer. And while these attempts have not concluded much, Christians who spend time in prayer are well-acquainted with its benefits. Those who don’t understand our prayer life may try to discourage us, seeing prayer as fruitless or even ignorant. But nothing could be further from the truth. Prayer is something we can do any time, any place. And when we can’t speak our prayers out loud, we can pray from within our hearts. God’s listening ear is not limited by our posture, situation, or ability to speak.

Father, I value being close to You. I commit to praying more; help me keep my commitment. In Jesus’ name, amen.