

**The Summer Devotional Series is written by a variety of different Jacob's Well staff members, overseers and leaders, based on their real-world experiences. May the broad perspective and style minister to you throughout these summer months! You can also find the Summer Devotionals on our website [jacobswellchurch.church](http://jacobswellchurch.church).**

**Monday, July 8<sup>th</sup>** (Contributed by Sean Kaiser)

Read Philippians 1:20-26

*20 I eagerly expect and hope that I will in no way be ashamed, but will have sufficient courage so that now as always Christ will be exalted in my body, whether by life or by death. 21 For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain. 22 If I am to go on living in the body, this will mean fruitful labor for me. Yet what shall I choose? I do not know! 23 I am torn between the two: I desire to depart and be with Christ, which is better by far; 24 but it is more necessary for you that I remain in the body. 25 Convinced of this, I know that I will remain, and I will continue with all of you for your progress and joy in the faith, 26 so that through my being with you again your boasting in Christ Jesus will abound on account of me.*

The reason Paul wrote the letter of Philippians was to encourage and thank the believers living in the city of Philippi for a gift they sent to him while he was in prison for sharing the gospel. What are some things about this passage that stick out to you personally?

How do you think Paul can have this perspective of seeing both death and life as good options, especially when “life” means he will continue to suffer and be persecuted?

What do you think of verse 25 – that Paul wants to remain for the sake of the believers in Philippi?

What challenges you or encourages you about this passage?

**Tuesday, July 9<sup>th</sup>** (Contributed by Diana Peterson)

Nature is truly amazing. God has created some remarkable creatures. Consider poison dart frogs. They are striking and come in all types of patterns and colors. Two of my favorites are the red frog with small spots that looks like a strawberry and a more common one that is bright blue with black spots. The blue-ringed octopus is one of the most unusual things I have ever seen in the sea. The yellow creature displays royal blue rings filled with brown spots that stop you in your tracks. Perhaps one of the cutest animals ever to roam the planet is the slow loris. With its tiny ears and huge brown eyes, it's absolutely adorable. You want to pick it up and cuddle . . . but DO NOT. In addition to being truly stunning, the other common quality these animals share is that they are full of deadly poison.

It reminds me of Jesus's description of the Pharisees. They walked about with the appearance of being righteous, but they were manipulative and self-serving. They studied the scriptures and the Old Testament prophets but failed to recognize Jesus when they met Him. Jesus had no time for their hypocritical and deceitful practices. While they took great care to appear virtuous and honorable, inside they were corrupt and filled with death.

*“Now then, you Pharisees clean the outside of the cup and dish, but inside you are full of greed and wickedness. You foolish people.”* Luke 11:39

*Tuesday continued...*

How can we avoid becoming like the Pharisees? What does it look like to continually offer our hearts up to God for renewal and transformation?

*Jesus, you don't care how we look on the outside. You see right through that façade into our heart. Only you know if we are filled with life or death. Trying to appear Christian on the outside only will never lead to an eternal life with You. No matter how beautiful the cup is on the outside, drinking from a dirty vessel will make us sick, but you provide the cleansing and healing we need to become pure and healthy. Thank you for giving us the tools we need to become more like you and less like the Pharisees. Amen.*

**Wednesday, July 10<sup>th</sup>** (Contributed by Joshua Skoyen)

The Book of Ephesians features two of my favorite prayers in the Bible. The Apostle Paul is pouring out his heart for the Body of Christ in these passages. Today we will focus on Ephesians 1:15-23. I encourage you to read through this prayer slowly. Take a deep breath, settle your mind, and slowly consider what Paul is asking for. Every time I read these words I am reminded that there are greater riches, more profound truths, and a deeper intimacy available that I can only find in Jesus.

*For this reason, because I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love toward all the saints, I do not cease to give thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers, that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him, having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the working of his great might that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come. And he put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all.*  
Ephesians 1:15-23

**Thursday, July 11<sup>th</sup>**

“Lead, kindly light, amid the encircling gloom, lead me on. The night is dark, and I am far from home, lead me on. Keep my feet; I do not ask to see the distant scene; one step is enough for me.” *John Henry Newman (1801)*

*The Lord is my light and my salvation—whom shall I fear? The Lord is the stronghold of my life—of whom shall I be afraid?* Psalm 27:1

What fear in my life am I unwilling to name? Why might you be afraid to name the fear?

How does the Psalmist speak to fears in Psalm 27:1?

A stronghold is defined as a fortified place or a place of security. Do you know God to be your stronghold? In what way?

Is it enough for you to only have light for only the next step? What does it look like to allow God to hold the “distant scene” while you grasp His hand for the next step?

Spend some time telling God of your fear and ask for His help to lead you on.

**Friday, July 12<sup>th</sup>** (Contributed by Kristi Irvin)

It was Christmas Eve. The grandkids were tucked away in bed. The lights were turned down low. Our two daughters and their husbands were sitting together with us around the table. It was an exciting time, especially since our youngest daughter was five and a half months pregnant with her first child. “We have some unexpected news to share.” they began. “Our baby has a fifty percent chance of having Trisomy 21. Down Syndrome.” It’s a bit of a blur what was said next. There were questions, tears, sweet prayers and words of deep love and encouragement.

Sweet Anna Grace was born a few months later with Down Syndrome. She has brought joy upon joy into our lives! God has given me two amazing verses in this journey. The first is Job 33:4:

*“The Spirit of God has made me; the breath of the Almighty gives me life.”*

Such a comfort to know God has formed Anna. He alone has given her life, value, and worth. The second is Deuteronomy 32:4:

*“He is the Rock, His works are perfect, and all His ways are just. A faithful God who does no wrong, upright and just is He.”*

I think this verse needs a lot of exclamation points and emojis after it! :) I thank God over and over for making Anna. Who am I to understand the word “perfect”? God has given me confidence and peace knowing He’s faithful, upright, just, and does no wrong.

Have you been given unexpected news? Are you feeling shaken, vulnerable, uncertain? Through experience, I KNOW God has you close to His heart.

*“He tends His flock like a shepherd; He gathers the lambs in his arms and carries them close to His heart; He gently leads those that have young.”* Isaiah 40:11

What encouragement does this give you? Close by bringing your thoughts and feelings to the Lord in prayer.

