



DEVELOPING THE FUTURE

14-Day Devotional

To be used in preparation for the 2015 Thank Offering for the World
Evangelism Fund

"Future generations will hear about the wonders of the Lord." Psalm 22:30b, NLT

CHURCH OF  THE NAZARENE

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The whole earth will acknowledge the Lord and return to him.

All the families of the nations will bow down before him.

For royal power belongs to the Lord.

He rules all the nations.

Let the rich of the earth feast and worship.

Bow before him, all who are mortal,

all whose lives will end as dust.

Our children will also serve him.

Future generations will hear about the wonders of the Lord.

His righteous acts will be told to those not yet born.

They will hear about everything he has done.

Psalm 22:27-31, NLT¹

All stories in this devotional are real examples of God's work through and in the Church of the Nazarene. These stories were previously written for and published in Engage Magazine, and are featured by permission. To read more stories of God's work around the world, visit engagemagazine.com.

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Day One

Read Psalm 22:27-31.

One of the best tongue-in-cheek quotes is, “Never let the truth stand in the way of a good story.” Whether it is fiction or non-fiction, many folks have enjoyed, and even made a lucrative career, from telling interesting stories.

The Bible is full of captivating stories. When we hear them, we listen and learn of the great things that God has done through the ages. But the Bible is not the only place that we hear God’s stories.

In Costa Rica and in other places across the globe, people like Laura Mata-Bolandi are finding that relating the Bible in a storytelling format and asking listeners to retell the story increases memory and comprehension. People are actively engaged, rather than passively listening to a sermon. Even the unchurched enjoy taking part in Bible storytelling sessions.

God is continually revealing new and imaginative ways to spread the gospel. For centuries, people have gathered with a thirst for the saving knowledge the Bible contains. No matter the means or our age, the appetite for stories of God’s glory at work remains strong.

- Which biblical story inspires you?

- Have you ever told a story to make a point or to assist in achieving a goal?

Read Laura’s story in English at bit.ly/lauraincostarica.

Day Two

Read Psalm 22:27-31.

An act of disobedience nearly cost thirteen-year-old Elysee Bayishime of Rwanda his life. In 1994, Rwanda was torn apart by civil war; civilians were ripped from their homes, never to be seen again.

Ignoring his father's command about chores, Elysee wandered from home one night. He was kidnapped and nearly killed by a soldier before he escaped. He later recalled praying to God as the soldier held a knife to his face. Although his life was temporarily saved, Elysee and his family struggled to survive for many years afterward.

Finally, Elysee heard the gospel preached at school. He realized that Christ had been with him through all of the hardships. Elysee found friendship and support in a Church of the Nazarene. He completed university studies, married a longtime friend, and revived a dormant church in a new country.

Many nights young Elysee had called upon Christ for help. His faith had sustained him through many trials. That faith showed him the pathway for service to the Lord, and, in the end, revealed God's plan for his life.

- Do you believe that God has revealed a plan for your life?

- Which hardships has your faith sustained you through?

Read Elysee's story in English at bit.ly/elyseeinrwanda.

Day Three

Read Psalm 22:27-31 and Psalm 23:4.

It can be easy to feel sorry for ourselves. A disappointment, a financial burden, a strained relationship...these might encourage self-pity and worry. In some cases, we despair because there is no apparent way out.

How silly we are. Consider those who have been caught up in the Syrian civil war. Many have lost everything due to violence. They have been driven from their homes and seen family members murdered. Living as refugees in tents, exposed to the elements and criminals, they are without hope or a future.

Into this sordid world stepped Pastor Fadi and a few people of God, often carrying little more than a comforting touch and a prayer. Sometimes, that is all that is needed to build a new relationship and to turn others toward the one, true God.

The God of the universe is alive and well. He lives everywhere: in the most beautiful and bountiful of places, and the most poor and squalid of places. He is with us always, to the end of the age. When there is nothing else, there is everything in God.

- How has God showed his presence to you in the worst of times?

- How does your relationship with God alleviate worry and give you comfort?

Read Pastor Fadi's story in English at bit.ly/pastorfadi.

Day Four

Read Psalm 22:27-31 and Isaiah 54:13.

Living in Nepal, Sajita's father and brother were racked with debilitating mental sickness. Her brother was aggressive and attacked without provocation. Sajita and her family were overwhelmed. Nothing solved their problems.

Then, Sajita met some visiting Christians. She was encouraged by their message and committed her life to Jesus Christ. Sajita became a spiritual leader and, one day, brought her brother to church. Although mentally clouded initially, when the service ended, her brother was alert and aware of his surroundings. Following the service, he was vulnerable to relapses into madness.

One day, Sajita's brother, out of his mind, attacked several church leaders visiting near him. The leaders restrained him and prayed over him all night. By dawn, he was sane and in his right mind.

Today, Sajita's brother and father are healed. They attend church, and Sajita's brother has accepted Christ as his savior. Because of Sajita's thirst for knowledge of Jesus, her brother and father were healed. She continues to share the gospel in her area. Her life has been changed, and through her there has been a rich harvest of redeemed souls.

- How do miraculous works of God build our faith?

- Can all believers expect God to work miracles in their lives?

Read Sajita's story in English at bit.ly/sajitainnepal.

Day Five

Read Psalm 22:27-31 and Proverbs 3:5-6.

Prema searched for purpose early in life. The people of India valued many gods and idols. She couldn't understand so many gods having dominion over life. She knew that there must be a supreme God.

After marriage, Prema endured severe headaches. Her family sought to alleviate the pain. Doctors could find no cause, and visits to shrines and temples provided no relief. During a visit to another shrine, she heard about Jesus. She met a pastor who prayed for her, and Prema trusted in Jesus. Her headaches faded and disappeared.

Invigorated, Prema scoured the Bible. Its words saturated Prema like a sponge. Prema and her children attended the local Church of the Nazarene. She accepted Christ as her savior and now works to introduce her neighbors and relatives to Jesus.

Before Prema first heard the name "Jesus", she knew that a single God must exist. She was driven to search for an all loving, all-encompassing God who was more than empty idols. Through her search, she was brought face to face with the most magnificent discovery of all.

- How difficult do you think it would be to believe in something that you do not know anything about?

- Does God's word provide answers to followers of all of the world's religions?

Read Prema's story in English at bit.ly/premainindia.

Day Six

Read Psalm 22:27-31.

Many of us are all too familiar with the frustration of a task that doesn't seem to go the way it should. In working with our hands or with life events, we can see the entire process laid out before us, every step outlined. We're sure that we'll savor the fruits of our skill and determination, and thrill in our victory. In reality, this seldom happens. We accept smaller victories, won through difficulty.

Kent and Kathleen Pelton have learned that frustration is a stop on the pathway to success. They are missionaries in Chiang Mai, Thailand, a place often referred to as "hard soil." Through years spent trying to grow ministry, they have met with continued indifference and resistance for the word of God. Still, they have learned to see success in small victories. Cherishing each new triumph, they are reminded that heaven rejoices as much for a single saved soul as for thousands.

So, take heart! Frustration is another tool for understanding our relationship with God. Remember, and think of that the next time that you stub your toe along the way.

- What factors might influence people in different regions of the world to be more receptive to the word of Christ than others?

- Why should we never give up trying to reach those around us?

Read the Peltons' story in English at bit.ly/peltonsinthailand.

Day Seven

Read Psalm 22:27-31 and John 14:13-14.

The Bible is full of miracles. Between the burning bush, Egyptian plagues, and wall of Jericho, it seems as if God threw Old Testament miracles around like baseballs. Where are those miracles today? Although the miracles may not be as prominent now, God, miraculously, is with us every day, eagerly anticipating our earnest calls to Him.

A certain pastor in Hawaii arrived to bless a baby and found that the child had been dead for ten minutes. While someone called 911, the pastor prayed fervently to God. For five minutes, he asked God to restore the baby to life. Suddenly the child awakened and smiled. The ambulance arrived and whisked the baby off. The next day, the baby's mother held the child in her arms. The baby had been released from the hospital with no apparent problems.

Some things we will never understand, but we trust that God is in charge. He hears our prayers and loves us enough to listen to them. He may not be knocking down many walls these days, but His reality is revealed to us in more ways than we realize.

- Do you believe that God selects the time and place of miracles?

- Does it take a miracle to solidify one's belief and faith in God?

Read the full story in English at bit.ly/hawaiianbaby.

Day Eight

Read Psalm 22:27-31 and Romans 5:8.

What is a perfect church? Do you believe that a perfect church exists? Probably not. Churches are inhabited by human beings, desperate for God's word, love, and grace. Christ did not come to save the righteous, but to save the lost.

Maria was asked to start a church in central Europe. Her parishioners are pimps and prostitutes, often unemployed and uneducated. Maria does not righteously browbeat them or talk down to them. Instead, she respects them and tells them of God's desire that they live holy lives. The entire congregation smokes, and she includes smoke breaks during sermons so they can focus on the message. Maria's humble approach is paying off. The pimps and the prostitutes ask questions, request prayer, and confess their sins. They are forsaking their professions for more honest pursuits.

Churches are places where broken people are repaired by the Holy Spirit, where dirty people come to be washed clean. They are places where all people are in community with God. Maybe the perfect church is the one that seems, upon first impression, to be the most imperfect.

- How do you view those in your church who are educated or well dressed?

- What is your perception of a perfect church?

Read Maria's story in English at bit.ly/mariaineurope.

Day Nine

Read Psalm 22:27-31.

Pastor Lloyd Solomons knows the struggles young people face in Johannesburg, South Africa. Born into a non-Christian home, he had no father. His mother passed away when he was eight. Living with his grandmother and seven siblings was a challenge. He joined a gang for a sense of family and belonging.

Lloyd felt his life had no purpose. Finally, he ran headlong into the outstretched arms of the Boundary Road Church. The people loved and supported Lloyd. They built him up and enabled him to leave gang life behind. The church encouraged Lloyd's walk with the Lord. Lloyd handed his life and his future to God, and he put his trust in Him. Today, Lloyd pastors the Boundary Road Church of the Nazarene. The church is alive, and it pulses with energy from the youth and young adults who worship there.

Lloyd was born into a situation that seemed to offer no pathway for success. From the depths of darkness and out of despair, God molds and shapes new lives. Pastor Lloyd Solomons is proof of that.

- How are young people more receptive to someone who has walked in their shoes?

- Why is it important to emphasize young peoples' ministry?

Read Lloyd's story in English at bit.ly/lloydinafrica.

Day Ten

Read Psalm 22:27-31 and Matthew 25:40.

Everywhere, there are those who are scorned, outcast, or persecuted as inferior to others. In Albania, Vera Broli labors to bring the word of God to the Roma people. The Romas Vera ministers to live in a garbage dump. They forage and scavenge to eke out their existence. They are scorned, verbally abused, and physically attacked. Vera faithfully ministers to them. She attends a nearby church, learns from the Bible, and shares that knowledge on her weekly visits to the dump.

Jeta, from the Kombinat Church of the Nazarene, felt God calling to her to assist Vera in her work. Soon, she joined Vera. Together they share God's word and God's love. Vera and Jeta have seen the Roma begin to trust God to provide. In one example, several children prayed to God for help, and then found money in some trash.

As all of God's children, the Roma are precious in His sight. Vera Broli recognizes this, and her dedication and selflessness has brought the Roma new hope as members in the community of Christ.

- Why does God allow some people to suffer at the hands of others?

- How can God help you to rid yourself of personal prejudices or bigotries against others?

Read Vera's story in English at bit.ly/verainalbania.

Day Eleven

Read Psalm 22:27-31 and Psalm 68:32.

Have you ever been so happy about something that you have shouted for joy? Perhaps you have been so filled with good news or excitement that you have let loose a spontaneous squeal or, maybe, burst into song? These are moments to be cherished, for there is nothing that makes a spirit soar as highly and freely as a glad heart.

In Jesus' time, songs of praise to the Great I Am were limited to a few who had heard Him speak and had believed his message. Today, glad hearts who have heard that same message inhabit countries in every corner of our planet. Millions of hearts sing out with praise and joyfulness at the promise that He has given to us.

Still, there are many who do not yet experience the joy of knowing Christ on a personal level. It is our mission to introduce them to Him, so that their hearts, too, may be filled with gladness. Then, they may join in song with the worldwide chorus of Christians everywhere.

- Why does being filled with God's love bring joy to a person?

- How do you know that the people around you have glad hearts?

Read the devotional story in English at bit.ly/worldchoir.

Day Twelve

Proverbs 3:27.

For three years, physical therapists Pilar Tuestas and Adán Sánchez struggled to provide children from the jungles of Peru with adequate medical services. The doctors worked with local Nazarene children's ministries, but their success was stalled by a lack of equipment. After hearing about their needs, Nazarenes in the United States were moved by God to provide the needed funds.

On March 23, 2015, a celebration of thanksgiving with children, parents, and community and ministry leaders took place. Thirteen new wheelchairs had been donated for use by disabled children! The gift was especially welcome to one mother who had waited seven years for a wheelchair for her child. Together, they praised God and offered thanks for the generous gifts.

It is obvious that even deep in the Peruvian jungle and out of sight from most people, God provides for those in need. His hand still moves in wondrous ways.

- What need might God use you to fulfill?

- How does a gift empower the giver, as well as the recipient?

Read the wheelchair story in English at bit.ly/Peruwheelchairs.

Day Thirteen

Read Psalm 22:27-31 and Psalm 90:4.

As God's mysterious plan is revealed to us, His perfect timing frequently leaves us in wonder at the miracles that He has made. In the African village of Kafubu, Pastor Aimé Mutombo wished to build a new school. With a friend, he purchased a plot of land to build on, but they did not have enough money to start construction.

Over three years later, a local missionary was visited by his brother-in-law, Andy. Andy felt a call to build the desired school. After returning home to the United States, Andy was approached by a church friend who had called by God in a vision to assist Andy. A fundraiser was soon organized, and more than \$11,000 (USD) was received for construction of the new school in Kafubu.

Yes, it may be an oft used phrase, but, God does work in mysterious ways, and He will use each of us to accomplish His purpose through His perfect plan. We may grow discouraged when the wait is long and the path is difficult, but He is with us always if we will have the patience to wait for Him.

- Does God's timing frustrate you, or are you encouraged to be patient by your trust in God's wisdom?

- How has God responded to your patience and faithfulness?

Read the full story in English at bit.ly/kafubuschool.

Day Fourteen

Read Psalm 22:27-31 and Matthew 7:7.

Doris had been working as a domestic in Hong Kong for many years. Separated from her family in the Philippines, she depended on friends for support. Through one friend, Doris was introduced to the Church of the Nazarene, and she soon committed her life to Jesus Christ.

Doris' most fervent prayer was that her husband and family in the Philippines would also find new life in Jesus. She longed for them to be able to attend a Bible study class. Soon, the church in Hong Kong began to actively assist Doris in realizing this goal.

A Bible study was begun in Doris' Philippine home, and a new church, the "Mango Church", was formed. The church often gathers under a mango tree outside the home, and local pastors take turns presenting the gospel and leading Bible studies.

From humble beginnings and unfailing faithfulness, Doris realized her desire for her husband and sons to become believers in Christ. For now, Doris remains in Hong Kong, but, she carries the hope that someday soon she'll return to the Philippines and join her family in worship at the Mango Church.

- Why is no situation too difficult or hopeless for God to bless?

- In what way does God answer every believer's prayer?

Read Doris' story in English at bit.ly/dorisinhongkong.