

Solution for Life



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We trust this letter finds you well. Our theme is Day by Day because in talking with others we've heard this ringing true as they lived through 2020 and presently. Having to live in a "day by day" mentality has been a different experience for all of us. Some found living moment by moment was how they were able to keep themselves from fear. Others felt trapped by it. For me, each day felt like I was writing a new page in my story book that was completely different from anything I could have expected. How has your story unfolded and how have you seen God in the midst of all the monumental changes? Let's take time to reflect on our stories and be encouraged that Jesus is present, even when we are facing things we have never faced before. In 2021, how will Christ fill our stories with His presence and hope?

Jessie Westlund

What Ifs | by Daniel Westlund

When I was a junior in high school my sister, Jean, encouraged me to go to college. So I began the process of applying to IT at the University of Minnesota. I was accepted into the engineering school and graduated with a degree in Civil Engineering, the study of the science behind building highways, bridges, waterways, dams, and buildings. This was my vocational choice for my life. However, God's call on my life was for something much different, something I said I would never do - be a minister of the Gospel. My personality tends toward being very logical, pragmatic and planning out every detail of my day and life. I was like the person described in James 4:13, "Now listen, you who say, "Today or tomorrow we will go to this or that city, spend a year there, carry out business and make money."

I had my own plan, but God had a different plan. James states to the person who thinks they are in control, "Why, you do not even know what will happen tomorrow. What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes. Instead, you ought to say, 'If it is the Lord's will, we will live and do this or that.' As it is, you boast and brag. All such boasting is evil." (James 4:14-16). I knew this was me and I had to learn a different way of living that was based on the Word of God, a lesson not easily learned.

Jesus, in the Sermon on the Mount, teaches how we are to live life. One passage in Matthew 6:25-34 talks about worry and life. Jesus ends by telling us, "Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough

trouble of its own." The uncertainty of life is real, and we have all experienced it sometime in life. There are so many uncertainties and "what if" questions. How did I learn to deal with them? The Bible states, "Your Word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path." (Psalm 119:105) "Who, then, is the man that fears the Lord? He will instruct him in the way chosen for him." (Psalm 25:12) "Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make your paths straight (direct your steps)." (Proverbs 3:5-6)

This was a different way of living and meant spending time in the Word of God. It was an important truth I had to learn and follow. To daily spend time reading and reflecting on the Word

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Solution for growth

Human Logic | by Stephen Westlund

It is always dangerous to apply our human logic to the ways of the Almighty. Our logic says, "If He is God, He can do anything. And if I trust Him, and love Him, and live for Him, then He will surely do for me what I ask, because He is my friend after all. But why then... why are there seasons of life that are so hard? God, you are God! It shouldn't be this hard!" Human logic.

Human logic does not represent the logic of the Almighty. The Word of God teaches us that His ways are higher than our ways. His thoughts are higher than our thoughts. His logic is higher and bigger than us. So, when we look out at the world around us, especially when it does not make sense, we cannot use our logic to understand what God is doing. We must take a step back and consider that there is a higher way at work.

When God delivered His people, the people called by His Name out of slavery, He led them through a wilderness. Our logic says, "If God delivered them, then they were free. Free to do whatever they pleased." But this was not the case. God's deliverance from slavery was a journey through the wilderness. It was a journey that required

utter and complete dependence on the Almighty. The wilderness is a holy place. It is a place the Almighty takes you to prepare you for something bigger. It is a place of refinement. It is a place where we learn to seek Christ and Christ alone. He has led many of us into the wilderness in recent days. He is preparing us for something bigger. He is preparing us to take hold of the Promised Land and live the remainder of our days on earth in the peace and

He is preparing us for something bigger.

the presence of Almighty God in the glory and splendor of His kingdom!

When God brought His people into the Promised Land, the Word of God tells us that they took possession of it "little by little." So, He set them free from slavery, then He refined them, then He gave them the Promised Land little by little.

Wait, what? Little by little! Why didn't He just do it all at once? He is God! Surely, He could have done this! He is God, how could He let a worldwide

pandemic happen! Doesn't He know what this pandemic has taken from me? How could He let my guy lose the election? Doesn't He know what the other guy is going to do? Human logic.

The word of God teaches that He gave the Promised Land to His people little by little because the people needed time to grow stronger. "I will not drive them out before you in a single year, so that the land does not become desolate, due to lack of attention, and the wild animals of the field do not become too numerous for you. I will drive them out before you little by little, until you have increased and are strong enough to take possession of the land." (Exodus 23:29-30)

Deliverance, refinement, growth... this is the way the Almighty leads. Where are you? Are you in bondage to anything? Seek the Almighty for deliverance. Have you been set free? Let the refining work of Christ in you be complete. Are you entering the Promised Land? Let the Lord work in and through you little by little. At times, it may feel like a slow and arduous process, but I promise, in the little by little, you are like a shining light to the world around you lost in human logic.

Unresolved | by Kristen Alewine

You know what was great about 2020? Being forced to slow down and thoughtfully examine my life. You know what was NOT great about 2020? Being forced to slow down and thoughtfully examine my life. Turns out it's not as pretty as I would have liked. I don't know if it's the age of technology we're in (I just read that the average human now has an attention span shorter than that of a goldfish), my personality, or just plain human tendency, but I seem to have lost the ability to follow a thought all the way through. Having fewer things on my schedule has made me

realize how much I use busyness as an excuse not to examine how I'm feeling or what I'm doing. Can't think about that right now, I have so many things to get done! But I think, really, I just don't want to because it feels scary. Who knows what I might find if I start digging.

Fight it as I might, 2020 became the year of digging. And I think it might just be the beginning. It's a little weird to write about it while in process, seeing as I don't know the ending yet. Things feel so much cleaner when you can end with, "And the moral of

this story is..." But I'll tell you the middle and maybe you can find the moral for me.

I think it's accurate to say that last year brought out a LOT of feelings in a LOT of people and those feelings were turned into actions that were put on display in a very public way, whether on the news or just in our own social media circles. I found myself frequently frustrated by the way Christians were behaving (breathe easy, this story is not political, nor is it about anyone but me) and it made me start to compare that behavior

with scripture and with Jesus. This led me to see that my faith has been about being on the “correct” side of all the divides - I listen to Christian music, I read Christian books, I do Christian things. I’m not suggesting these are bad. What I am suggesting is that it’s easy to feel like we’re living for Jesus when we surround ourselves with all the things that have his name on them. It’s very comfortable. But it can also be to our detriment because we’re much less likely to pick apart something labeled “Christian” and can easily end up adopting ideas and attitudes that originate in a marketing department rather than in scripture.

It’s made me feel very vulnerable to peel away some of these security blankets. But that’s what my day-by-day process has been for the last handful of months. At times it’s been a freeing experience, and at others it’s felt so unsteady. I’ve cried a lot. I sometimes wonder if I really know Jesus as much as I think I do, or if it’s mostly

just an American-Christian-Culture version of him. One thing I know is I’m deeply grateful that this covenant God has made with me is not based on the strength of my faith, but on the strength of his faithfulness. He’s got a much better track record than I do. It gives me the freedom to ask questions, to examine, to dig, and to not panic when I find that I’ve not been thinking correctly about something.

I hope that as you, too, are taking things one day at a time that you pay attention to your pain points, to things that prick your conscience, and to nagging questions that are easier to brush away. Bring them to God. You may end up with answers you never expected!



Solution for caring

Moment by Moment, One Person at a Time

by Jessie A. Westlund

In a time of masks, isolation, fear, sickness, and uncertainty, the people around us have many needs. Christ cared by always helping the individual person as well as the larger crowd. I love to read about people who have cared well for others. It is always a reminder to me that anyone can love and care for those in need. I found the story of Irena Sendler, a Polish nurse and social worker in 1943, who organized two dozen workers to help smuggle children from the Jewish ghetto during the Holocaust. Irena gave the children new Gentile names to protect them. She kept a record of their Jewish names and buried it in a jar under a tree so someday they could be reunited with their families. It is estimated she alone saved 400 and the group saved 2500 children and found homes for them. Irena made a difference in what looked like an impossible situation. Throughout history, God has used people like this woman

to care for others in need. Each time I hear one of these stories I think of Christ. Every good and perfect gift comes down from the Father above. I think of the words of Jesus, “I came to seek and save the lost,” Luke 19:10 and to “... bind up the brokenhearted, to comfort all who mourn, give a garland of beauty instead of ashes, joy instead of mourning, and praise instead of a spirit of despair.” (Isaiah 61:2-3) It is a privilege to be a child of God and be His hands, carrying out the loving care of Christ.

He will lead us to be his instruments of caring, and that leading will look different for each person. The key is to listen to him and give acts of kindness wherever we can. Often it will be one person at a time because He loves individuals, but there may be times it will be to a larger number. As Dan and I asked the Lord, “What would you have us do in these days

of great need both in 2020 and now in 2021?” God led us regularly to specific people. Sometimes the need is prayer, other times it is counseling or comfort through the grief of having lost a loved one. Others seek help to understand why there’s so much turmoil and uncertainty. Still others have financial needs or are looking for help with finding a job. God loves people and it is a blessing day by day to assist.

These and many other ways are how God uses people. We may not be an Irena, but when we are available, He will use us. As we seek to be His servants He will use all of us in some way to touch a person day by day. Join us as we seek to be used daily.

You may be one who has a need. Please reach out to us. We are available to minister to you.

Solution for the future

Watch and Pray | by Daniel Westlund

When a new year begins, I take time to reflect on the previous year. 2020 has not been a normal year in the lives of people around the world. In January of 2020 I was seeking the Lord on what to write in this section of our newsletter. The Lord spoke to me, through the Holy Spirit, "Change." I did not understand, so I asked again. I received the same message, "Change."

In 2020 we have all experienced and witnessed change that now continues in 2021. I have heard and read that there is going to be a new normal. Perhaps, like me, you have been asking yourself, "what does that mean and what will it look like?"

As a believer in Christ, we must always remember God is in control and has said, "Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you. So we

say with confidence, the Lord is my helper; I will not be afraid. What can man do to me?" (Hebrews 13:6)

Change will continue, life will go on in 2021. "Just like in the days of Noah, so also will it be in the days of the Son of Man. [Christ's return] People were eating, drinking, marrying and being given in marriage up to the day Noah entered the ark. Then the flood came and destroyed them all. It was the same in the days of Lot. People were eating and drinking, buying and selling, planting and building. But the day Lot left Sodom, fire and sulfur rained down from heaven and destroyed them all." (Luke 17:26-29) "Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives as you wait (look) eagerly for the day of God to come (speed its

coming)." (II Peter 3:11-12)

In the midst of all the change taking place in our world we need to understand life will go on. However, as in the days of Noah and Lot there will be an increase of wickedness, people will turn away from faith, only having a form of godliness. Jesus gives us a completed picture of these days in Matthew 24:1-14.

We have a choice in the midst of all the change taking place today; will we turn away from Christ or will we press into Him, standing firm in Christ until He comes? Christ warns, "Be always on the watch, and pray that you may be able to escape all that is about to happen, and that you may be able to stand before the Son of Man. (Christ)" (Luke 21:36) DSW

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of God, and apply God's truth to my life one day at a time. Learning how to deal with the 'what ifs,' the uncertainties and the worries of life. My personality did not change and I still am logical and pragmatic, but now the plans of my life are built on the Word of God. In life we have the "what ifs," different bridges to cross. Everybody has had them. Each day I ask the Lord for His guidance, so I do not have to build bridges I will not be crossing, the ones built by "what ifs." I only want to put my time and energy into the bridges the Lord has ordained for me to cross. Living one day at a time knowing God has all my tomorrows.

Each day I tell the Lord, "I love you and I trust you with all my heart. To you, O Lord I lift up my soul; in you I trust, O my God" (Psalm 25:1). My challenge to you is to learn to make the Word of God the foundational plan for life and trust, living life one day at a time, and leave the 'what ifs' of life in God's hands.

Bulletin Board

Gatherings:

Due to the nature of 2020, we had to cancel a number of planned events. We've met with small groups where it was considered safe. Studies we have done are Daniel, Philippians, and Making Christmas More than a Season. Like everyone else, we are using many different means of communication to assist in caring for people.

Printed Word:

Presently we are developing a new booklet called "Your Story Matters." It is a collection of stories and reflections from a number of people who have grown and seen God's hand through all we have been through in recent days.

Message: from Dan and Jessie

Dear Friends,

In 2020, and now 2021, we have been living in changing times that are extremely difficult. However, Jesus is near every moment of every day. We do not know what lies ahead but we do know God Almighty is in control. When you read about how He worked with His children in the Old Testament, we see Him coming near and giving detailed instruction on how to live and move through life. As we turn to Him, read His Word, and trust Him, He will take care of us day by day as He always has in the past.

We pray you will experience His presence in your lives and be encouraged by it. Jesus loves us and wants to be our personal friend. That is why He gave His life for us.