



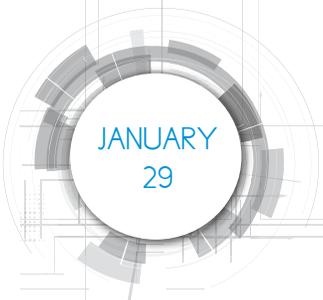
HOME

DAILY DEVOTIONAL



DAILY DEVOTIONAL

Welcome to Willow Creek Huntley's journey of faith. Please join us every day for forty days—to read, to reflect, to pray. We're honored to be in this together.



JANUARY
29

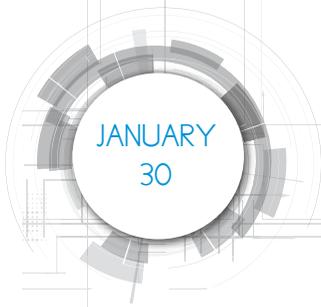
1 CORINTHIANS 12:12 & 27

**The body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts;
and though all its parts are many, they form one body.
So it is with Christ. ...Now you are the body of Christ,
and each one of you is a part of it.**

Want to know one of my biggest struggles? Trying to be good enough, smart enough, “enough” in any way that matters—all by myself. The reality is I’m simply not. And that’s a good thing! This past year, God has been teaching me that I need to grow in leaning on others; He does His best work when I own up to my need and humbly ask for help—lots and lots of help! After all, we need each other. You are good at many things that I’m not. (And others are good at the things that you are not.) Especially in this exciting season God has us in, I’m praying that He will show us how beautiful it is when we acknowledge that and grow in this together. That’s what being the “Body of Christ” is all about. While it’s tempting to try to go at it alone, we are way, way, way, way better together!

Todd Katter
Huntley

Reflect upon and pray about: What part has God called you to play in this church family? If you know, thank God for the ways He’s gifted you. If you don’t know yet, pray for clarity of mission and courage to take your next steps.



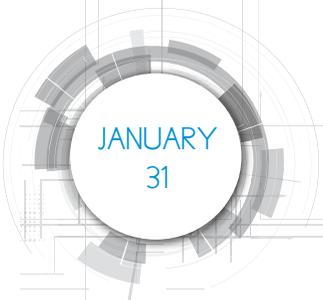
PROVERBS 18:16

**A gift opens the way and ushers
the giver into the presence of the great.**

I've come to discover that giving is a personal journey—an exciting, sometimes daunting, always-rewarding journey. For me and my husband, there's still a long way to go. I think generosity will always be something we are growing in and aspiring to be surrendered to. When we've been invited to give, a tension, an excitement, and a sense of privilege have all been mixed with a bit of worry and contemplation. Each time we've had such an opportunity, we realized that we were being invited to be a part of something meaningful, important, special. Even if we are uncertain about leaps of faith with "our" earnings, we're ready to trust God and are excited about being a part of something great and bigger than us. Bring on the next leg of the journey!

Lee Morgan
Huntley

Reflect upon and pray about: When you hear the words "giver" or "giving," how do you feel? Pray about whatever those words stir up in you.



JANUARY
31

DEUTERONOMY 1:29-31

Then I said to you, “Do not be terrified; do not be afraid of them. The Lord your God, who is going before you, will fight for you, as he did for you in Egypt, before your very eyes, and in the wilderness. There you saw how the Lord your God carried you, as a father carries his son, all the way you went until you reached this place.”

When I read this passage, I find myself standing in the shoes of the Israelites. Perhaps they were discouraged, daunted by the unknown and by the magnitude of the task ahead of them. I’ve been in that very same place many a time. And I love the way their wise leader chooses to pour courage into their troubled hearts—by imploring them to remember. In terrifying times, we are invited to remember what God has already done, the practical and the extravagant ways He has shown up, and the obstacles and valleys of darkness He has faithfully brought us through. These are some of my most treasured stories, those I keep close at heart to remind myself of God’s power, presence, and precious care.

May your memories of God’s provision and strength carry you when doubt and fear come knocking at your door.

We can choose fear. Or we can choose to let God carry us. God always carries us through.

Eileen Lauer
Huntley

Reflect upon and pray about: What are some of the practical or extravagant ways that God has shown up in your life? Thank God for His provision.



FEBRUARY

1

MATTHEW 5:14-16

You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.

Every Sunday, before each service, I gather with teams, and we pray—for that day, for our church, for our church family, and for guests. Each week, as we pray, somebody will inevitably say, “Let us reflect You” or “Help us shine Your light” or “Be light in us today and every day.” We pray, again and again, to be that city on the hill.

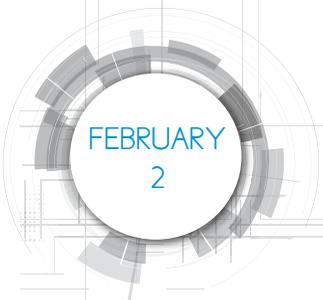
We are a church who prays consistently and intentionally to reflect His light and His glory in compelling, winsome ways. Rarely do we have the opportunity to share the Gospel. Often—in fact, all day, every day—we have the opportunity to radiate His light to others. Our words, our actions, and our love are meant to shine Him out.

As we prepare to build a permanent home for our church, I pray that we continue, collectively, to be His bright light into our community, like a city on a hill that cannot be hidden, so that people will want to come and experience for themselves the greatness of our good, faithful, generous, holy God.

Lisa Uidl

Lake in the Hills

Reflect upon and pray about: Over the last few days, where have you seen God’s light shine into the world? Pray that God might shine brightly through you.



FEBRUARY

2

PHILIPPIANS 4:6-7

Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything,
by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving,
present your requests to God. And the peace of God,
which transcends all understanding, will guard
your heart and minds in Christ Jesus.

I am not a stranger to anxious thoughts, especially about money. At times, I was fearful that I would lose what I had, or that I wouldn't get what I thought I deserved. I began dealing with financial uncertainty in unhealthy ways. These verses resonate with my struggles. They command me to not be anxious, and they offer me a better plan for living: surrendering outcomes to God through prayer. God has supplied me with what I need through powerful ways that I did not expect, understand, or deserve. I am still sometimes prone to forget God's provision, becoming self-reliant and anxious. I pray that, in this season, our church family will experience God's peace through thanksgiving and surrender and through regular reminders of God's faithfulness.

Jim Butler
Lakewood

Reflect upon and pray about: When have you been self-reliant or anxious? Pray that God would grow you in trust and surrender.



FEBRUARY

3

MATTHEW 6:9-10

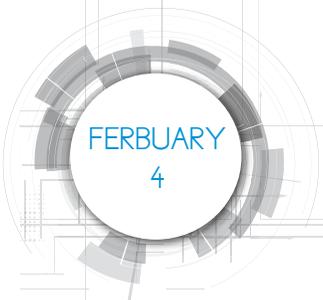
**This, then, is how you should pray: Our Father in heaven
hallowed be your name, your kingdom come,
your will be done on earth as it is in heaven...**

Last year, in doing a book study, one of the most impactful things I took away was the part where the author was explaining that, in the short time that Jesus walked the earth, He only did what His father asked Him to do. He only did the Father's will. That's it; nothing else. He didn't busy himself to the point of exhaustion. Sometimes, He said no. He was intentionally quiet and still so that He could hear from His Father. Most often, I just want this life to go according to my plan and my schedule. Sometimes, I forget to include God in my planning; I just go on, controlling and organizing my life. I know it's no accident that His plan is almost always different from mine. He always knows what's best for me, and His timing is always perfect. God, I want to offer myself as a doer of Your will. Not my way but Your way. Not mine but Yours. Help me to always remember that You are on the throne, and I am not.

Meghan Watson

Huntley

Reflect upon and pray about: What parts of your life are hard for you to give over to God's will? Again, pray that God would grow you in surrender and trust.



FEBRUARY

4

PSALM 25:9

He leads the humble in what is right,
and teaches the humble his way.

1 THESSALONIANS 5:17

...pray without ceasing...

Why pray? Because Jesus teaches us that it is the right thing to do; it is His way. He prayed to His Father, so we also humble ourselves and begin a never-ending conversation with our God. We have access to the power of prayer at every moment. That truth is written in the Bible, and the perfect example of one who prayed is Jesus. When we humbly bow our heads and place our trust in God, we can believe that He hears our prayers and will answer. As people of prayer, we—BELIEVE that God hears us; TRUST that He knows what is best for us; Place our HOPE in Him and Him alone; WAIT on Him and ANTICIPATE His answer to our prayers.

He is the God of all comfort who comforts us (1 Corinthians 1:3-4) and the God who meets all our needs (Philippians 4:19).

Ultimately, we PRAISE Him for His presence in our lives and for the good gifts that He gives (James 1:17).

Therefore, we DRAW NEAR to God with a sincere heart in the full assurance that our faith brings (Hebrews 10:22).

Ruth Groth

Elgin

Reflect upon and pray about: Does humility—humbly expressing your need—come easily to you? Does prayer? Pray that God would grow you in humility and in faith.



FEBRUARY
5

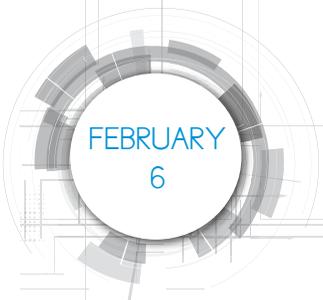
EPHESIANS 3:20

**God is able to do exceedingly, abundantly,
above and beyond all that
you could ever dare to hope, ask, or think.**

Go ahead: dare to hope! You may be surprised by all that God can and will do. God desires each one of us to have an abundant and bountiful life on this earth. Jesus is omnipotent—He has unlimited power, able to do anything! My personal testimony is that He often exceeds my requests, always responding in His perfect timing. He may deny a specific request because He has something better in store for me. So I encourage you to hope for your dreams to come true, ask for your needs to be fulfilled, and think limitlessly about the future's possibilities. It excites me to think of how He will exceed our requests as we break ground on our church's permanent home. What would you hope for, ask for, or think about—if only you dared? Hope it. Ask it. Think it! Trust Him. Believe in the possibilities that come with our generous and omnipotent God.

Sherry Rosacker
Huntley

Reflect upon and pray about: Where have you lost hope? Bring your truth and need, whatever those are, boldly before the Lord in prayer.



FEBRUARY

6

EXODUS 4:2

Then the LORD said to him [Moses], "What is that in your hand?"

God asks Moses this question shortly after the famous burning-bush encounter. Moses received incredible and shocking news from God. Incredible: God heard the cries of His people—the Hebrews enslaved in Egypt—and will liberate them. Shocking: God has decided to use Moses to enact this. Moses is not thrilled. In fact, he persists in arguing with God as to why he is unqualified and ill-equipped. And God asks, "What is in your hand?" Moses holds an ordinary shepherd's staff—it's likely beat up, dirty, and well-worn. But with God's power, the ordinary becomes *extraordinary*. God transforms that staff into a snake and back again. Moses later stretches it toward the Red Sea. The waters divide. The Hebrews escape Pharaoh's army. Pretty impressive for an everyday, splintered old stick, wouldn't you say?

Our God today still operates that way. He calls you and me to be a part of His liberation plan for creation. He isn't concerned if you feel unqualified—He can take what seems ordinary and make it much, much more. So what's in your hand? Maybe it's literal, like the staff. Or maybe it's your resources, talents, energies, relationships, and opportunities. Dare to surrender them in prayer, and see what God does in and through you.

Andrew Thomas

Crystal Lake

Reflect upon and pray about: Where do you feel unqualified or ordinary? Bring your truth before the Lord, trusting Him to move in and through you.



FEBRUARY

7

JEREMIAH 29:11-13

For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the LORD, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. Then you will call on me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you. You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all of your heart.

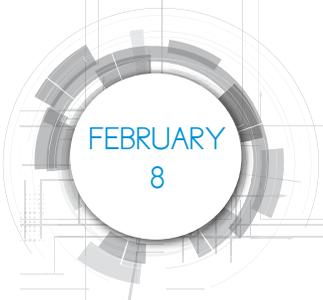
These verses are a powerful reminder for me, for my family, and for our church now and into the future that God knows what He has in store for us—and that it is SO good! Too often, I feel like I have to have it all figured out, that I have to have the best plan, and I worry about what will happen if I don’t. How freeing it is to know that the God of love has the very best plan. He knows my future; He knows your future; He knows the future of our children; and He knows the future of our church!

There is such truth in the second verse: “You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all of your heart.” God has this insatiable longing for a deep and close relationship with each one of us. These words are a precious reminder of His promise, but He asks us to make the first move toward Him. In this time, I am praying that God’s promise of faithfulness will be so evident as we seek Him personally, as a family, and as a church body.

Shannon Swift

Huntley

Reflect upon and pray about: Where have you seen evidence of God’s faithfulness in your life or in our church family’s life? Pray prayers of gratitude.



FEBRUARY

8

MATTHEW 6:33

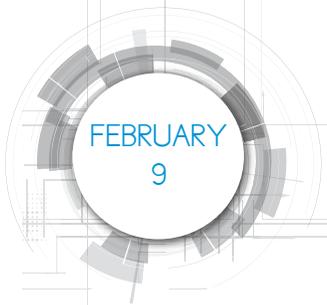
**But seek first his Kingdom and his righteousness,
and all these things will be given to you as well.**

In my younger days, I was anxious about a lot of things. I worked hard to try to control things and take care of myself and my needs. Now, as a senior citizen, I've learned, and I'm different! What I've found is that the more I'm with God—the more I pray, the more I serve, the more I trust—the more peace I have. As I pour myself out, God fills me back up. It's amazing!

In my later years, in some ways, I have fewer resources—less money, less strength, and so on. Still, I am able to give generously in every way because I know that God provides and blesses. He always does. God always gives back more than I could ever give away. It's just the truth. The more I give, the bigger the return. I am SO excited for this permanent-home journey. We get to see what God can do when we trust Him, when we let go of our anxiety and fear, when we come before God and receive His peace.

Susanne Baade
Huntley

Reflect upon and pray about: What in your life is causing you anxiety and fear? Pray for freedom and peace.



FEBRUARY

9

HEBREWS 13:5A

Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you.

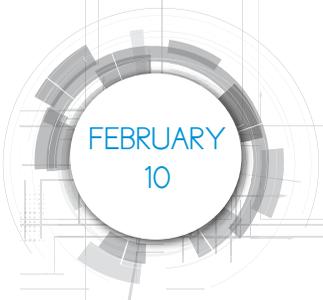
My husband, John, and I attended Willow Huntley from the beginning. We'd attended South Barrington for years before. Our daughter attended North Shore. Huntley's opening was a wonderful surprise to us! We were thrilled to be part of a new Willow Creek location so near to our Del Webb home. From day one, we served on a Welcoming Team. John was in the early stages of Alzheimer's at the time, but his friendly heart and his big smile were great fits for our team. We loved making new friends. We loved finding a home here.

Having that home here became even more important to me when John went Home to be with Jesus. This place and its people have truly been family to us—and now to me. We are a church family—in this together, and God with us. I am so excited about our permanent home location, and I am so looking forward to what God is going to do there. I know that God is going to bring people, and we are going to be ready to welcome and love each and every person who comes through our doors. We serve such an awesome God. Not only does He never forsake us but He takes care of each one of His children.

Donna Kissane

Huntley

Reflect upon and pray about: Think about a recent time when you felt alone or forsaken. Pray that Jesus' words would take root in your heart and grow you in faith: I will never leave you nor forsake you.



FEBRUARY
10

PROVERBS 3:5-6

**Trust in the LORD with all your heart
and do not lean on your own understanding.
In all your ways acknowledge Him,
and He will make your paths straight.**

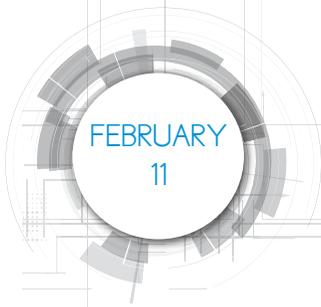
Trust and lean—these are the two words that jump out at me from this passage.

As a wife, mom, daughter, and friend, I have wanted to impact the lives of my loved ones in a positive way. If I could just influence the situations surrounding them and me, the outcome would have to be good, right? I've learned that trusting in God means giving everything and everyone to Him. Give it ALL! Not just the people and things I can't handle. Not just the things that seem to be outside of my control. Trusting Him with all aspects of my life is essential.

To lean means to rest on something or someone. To rest fully in the Lord can be so liberating, but it can also feel like an unknown or uncomfortable space to be in. God's plans are so much greater than anything I could imagine. Leaning on Him while accepting His love and grace is an important step towards my life's true purpose.

Melissa Schmit
Huntley

Reflect upon and pray about: Are there any aspects of your life that are hard for you to trust God with? Anything you are holding back? Lean into your good, good Father in prayer and in trust.



FEBRUARY

11

PSALM 16:11

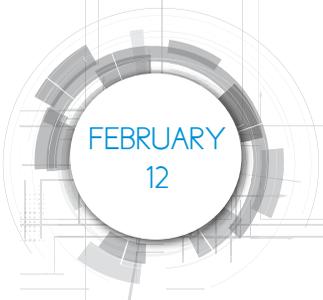
**You make known to me the path of life;
you will fill me with joy in your presence,
with eternal pleasures at your right hand.**

I went through many years of longing for something more in life. While I have a wonderful and loving wife, children that are spectacular, a good career, and a nice home, there was always a feeling of emptiness. There were times in life when I tried to fill the void with thrill seeking, both healthy and unhealthy at times. There simply seemed like there should be more to life. This passage reminds me of the emptiness that is now filled. Today, giving praise to God, my life is what I would refer to as soul-filled. Situational challenges still continue, of course, but I praise God daily for his love, forgiveness, and direction. My prayer in this season is that our church and community would experience the kind of healing and love that only our Creator can give.

Dan Toynton

Huntley

Reflect upon and pray about: Bring your empty places before God, naming them in His presence. Pray for His healing love to fill you, abundantly.



FEBRUARY
12

LUKE 2:8–15 (NASB)

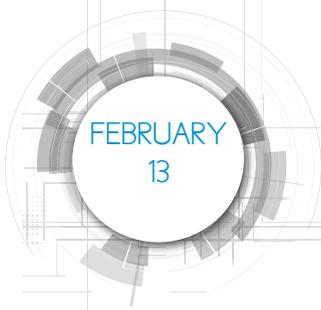
An angel of the Lord suddenly stood before [the shepherds], ...and they were terribly frightened. But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid; ...I bring you good news of great joy which will be for all the people; for today...there has been born for you a Savior, who is Christ the Lord....You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger."...There appeared...a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among men with whom He is pleased."... The shepherds began saying to one another, "Let us go straight to Bethlehem then."

As I recently read the Christmas story to my kids, the events surrounding the shepherds particularly stood out to me. Think about the swing of emotions they must have cycled through. Imagine how their hearts pulsed with fear, doubt, excitement, and expectation. The message of the Good News had come; however, these shepherds were not content to just hear the message; they wanted to experience it for themselves. Faith, hope, and joy spurred them to abandon the open fields of familiarity and race into the presence of the King of Kings.

God's invitation to enter into His presence rings true today just as it did that night in the outskirts of Bethlehem. It cuts through the noise and normality of our lives. We, too, will wrestle with a range of emotions as God extends the opportunity to experience Him in new ways. Nevertheless, let us press forward in trust and expectation, knowing He, Emmanuel, is doing a good work in and through us.

Matt Kidd
Huntley

Reflect upon and pray about: Reflect upon the "noise" and the "normality" of your life. What emotions are stirred up in you? Press forward in trust, expectation, and prayer, knowing that Emmanuel is at work in you, too.



ISAIAH 43:19

**Behold, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs forth;
do you not perceive and know it and will you not
give heed to it? I will even make a way in the
wilderness and rivers in the desert.**

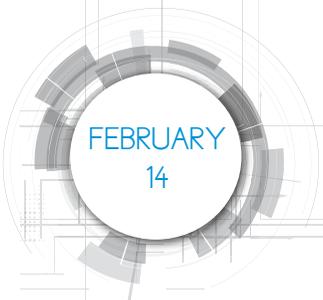
I grew up attending Willow in South Barrington. Truth be told, I only came to Huntley so that I could complete a graduate school project here. It took me a while to feel connected—to feel “like family.” I didn’t feel like that at first, but I didn’t worry much about it because I never planned to stay. Still, I just kept showing up.

When two women from my small group invited me to sit with them, Huntley began to feel like home. Serving with the events team, on a Welcoming Team, and in Promiseland helped, too. And attending women’s groups and events helped. Slowly but surely, I began to know people, and people began to know me. When I finished graduate school, people here celebrated with me. When I recently suffered a loss, people here mourned with me. It takes time to form relationships. People at Willow Creek Huntley have invested time in me. God’s people showed me what a church home is.

God is always doing something new. He always makes a way. I can’t wait to see what He does in our new home.

Jane Brennan
Gilberts

Reflect upon and pray about: What is the “wilderness” of your life right now? Pray about it with expectation, trust, and thanksgiving.



FEBRUARY
14

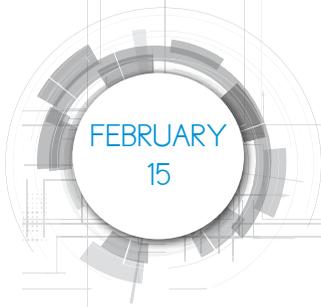
PHILIPPIANS 1:6

**I am sure of this, that He who began a good work in you
will bring it to completion at the day of Christ Jesus.**

My husband, Craig, and I attended this church from the beginning. We used to attend South Barrington and were foster parents to a five-year-old boy. We'd see Craig's parents, who live in Huntley, on Sundays; it made sense to make the switch. It was wonderful to see our little guy in a smaller Promiseland class as he delighted in greater attention. A year later, after he went home to his mother, I joined Promiseland. In early childhood, it was a pleasure to serve under Rampi. For the last couple years, I have served in late childhood. I switched to make greater connections and build relationships—and I have been so richly blessed. The kids receive teaching that makes the Bible alive for all of us. And it is so fun and a great privilege to watch their excitement in practicing until they memorize the monthly Bible verse. My dream is to watch the kids I have grown to love mature in the love and knowledge of our Lord, becoming vessels for His kingdom! I'm praying for the work that God will do through Promiseland (and all of our ministries) in our permanent home!

GG Haywood
Lombard

Reflect upon and pray about: What ministry is close to your heart? Pray for the work that God might do in it and through it in our permanent home.



FEBRUARY
15

PSALM 130:5-6

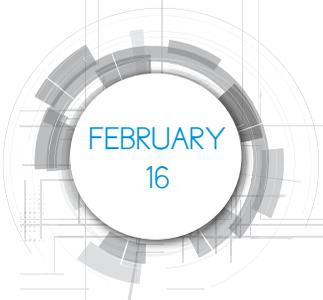
**I wait for the Lord, my whole being waits, and in his word
I put my hope. I wait for the Lord more than watchmen wait
for the morning, more than watchmen wait for the morning.**

Waiting is one of the most difficult things that God asks us to do. While we are always in a hurry, He never is. And so we wait. Sometimes, as we wait, we may begin to doubt that He really is listening to our prayers. But God desires for us to have faith and trust in Him alone. I try to remember that God is more concerned about my character than my comfort. I try to remember that I am His.

I believe that God showers favor and blessings upon His children, but I also believe that He really wants our “whole being”—our attention, love, faith, trust, body, and soul—to rest in Him. He alone is meant to be our hope. If you have waited a very long time for God to answer, take heart, because He is working behind the scenes to provide all that you need at just the right time. Morning will come.

Kim Smith
Algonquin

Reflect upon and pray about: What are you waiting for? Where do you need “morning” to come? Bring your whole being—your attention, love, faith, trust, body, and soul—to rest in Him in prayer.



FEBRUARY
16

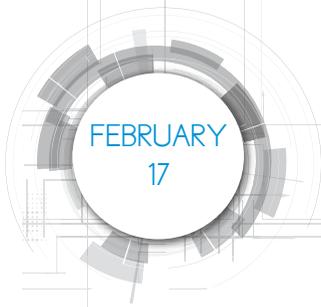
JOHN 1:29

The next day John saw Jesus
coming toward him and said,
‘Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away
the sin of the world!’

My prayer is that all who attend Willow Creek Huntley will have their lives changed, just as mine was, through their experiences here. This church changed my life in two significant ways: first, my church is truly my family. I've come to know people who have prayed for me and shared life with me. We are truly "like family." Second, I have the privilege and honor of serving my church on the Prayer Team and on the Care-Pastor Team. These serving opportunities are soul-satisfying. Willow Creek Huntley is my church!

Dennis Persyk
Hampshire

Reflect upon and pray about: Close your eyes and picture a moment, or moments, at Willow Creek Huntley where you felt completely, happily, "like family." Pray that sense of belonging and connectedness over all of our church and also over our footprint. Pray that we would grow in our desires to invite and include everyone, always.



FEBRUARY

17

PHILIPPIANS 4:13

I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.

It gives me confidence to know that there is someone—God—who is so much bigger and stronger than I am. Keeping that in mind, I can muster up the courage to face the challenges of life. I may not always succeed. I may not always get it right, but while I am here in this world, I am aware that I am not alone. Christ is with me.

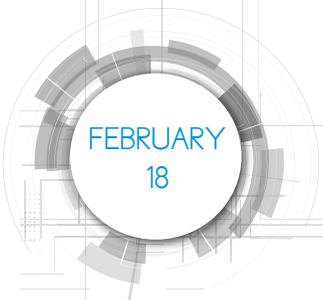
Whenever I reach out for His helping hand, I am grateful for His grace and mercy on me.

I believe that, with Christ, there is no such thing as an “impossible” mountain. God strengthens me. God will strengthen us. I am so excited to see how Christ strengthens us, as individuals and as a church, as we journey toward our permanent home.

Carole Anderson

Huntley

Reflect upon and pray about: Is there an “impossible” mountain or even a manageable “boulder” in front of you? Pray that it would be Christ’s strength that moves you through—and to Him be the glory.



FEBRUARY
18

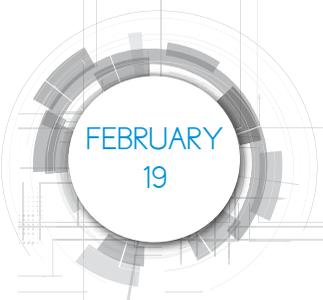
MARK 12:31

**Love your neighbor as yourself;
there is no greater command than this.**

This verse is Christ's call to action, to follow His example. If we truly love our neighbors as much as ourselves, we will want to do something to make their lives better. We can and should do that on a daily basis in all sorts of interactions. I have long known that my primary spiritual gift is helping, and I have found many opportunities to do so, but I also needed a focus, a passion. The sign on the Compassion & Justice table in our lobby says, "Love Your Neighbor. Find out how." And that is it, really: I needed to be intentional about how I could serve others. For me, it became Kids Hope (a school mentoring program). My prayer for this season is that our church will be known for loving our neighbors outrageously. May each member of our family listen for God's prompting to love our neighbor in need daily and to also identify and engage in an area of passion to serve others systematically. We're all intentionally created differently to serve as God has called us. May you find your call and follow your Savior.

Lynne Sell
Huntley

Reflect upon and pray about: What about today's devotional reading encouraged or challenged you? Bring your thoughts and heart before God in prayer.



FEBRUARY
19

DEUTERONOMY 8:17-18

You may say to yourself, "My power and the strength of my hands have produced this wealth for me." But remember the LORD your God, for it is he who gives you the ability to produce wealth.

1 CHRONICLES 29:14

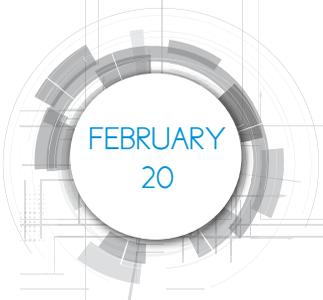
But who am I, and who are my people, that we should be able to give as generously as this? Everything comes from you, and we have given you only what comes from your hand.

For years, my husband and I lived in financial chaos: poor decisions, bad credit, bankruptcies, and borrowing from family and friends to "fix" things. We survived paycheck to paycheck. We "tithed" if we could "afford" to give. I'm not sure how that began. As a child, I learned to tithe. Dad was the pastor of a small country church and worked a full-time job. Mom took in sewing. We never had much. We lived simply on a farm. But all of us kids knew that the "tithe" envelope was never touched—even when we were down on food. The tithe was for God; He would provide. He always did.

My whole world turned upside down when my husband of 34 years passed away suddenly. I was left on my own with two houses—one for sale and one to move into. No savings, no retirement fund, and no investments. I had mounds of debt and just \$18 to my name. I was scared. But the short story is this: I entered a crash course in dependency and surrender. I didn't know where to turn, so I turned to God. He provided for me every step of the way.

Audrey Stull
Huntley

Reflect upon and pray about: Do you need a way out of financial chaos? Financial Peace University begins at Willow Creek Huntley on Monday, March 13. Pray about your participation. Pray that God will fill that classroom with any people who need His financial peace.



FEBRUARY
20

1 TIMOTHY 6:6-7

**But godliness with contentment is great gain.
For we brought nothing into this world,
and we can take nothing out of it.**

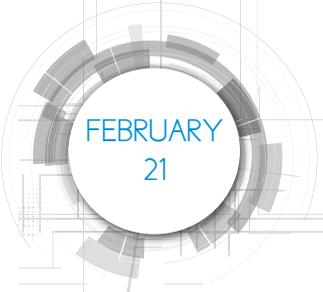
Contentment can be elusive when we're constantly bombarded with media messages touting all that we should have. We enter this world with nothing and—whether we recognize it or not—God provides everything, from our very breath to all of our tangible needs.

As newlyweds, we were hired to help start a social-service program in Pennsylvania; it was ill-conceived and never launched. Living off the community food bank and with a plastic cooler for a refrigerator, we were confused and anxious. Yet we learned contentment as we witnessed God's miraculous workings. Church members embraced and cared for us, and we found new jobs. More than once, unexpected money allowed us to pay all of our bills exactly to the penny, resulting in a zero balance in our checkbook! We formed precious, life-long friendships.

Contentment isn't feeling secure in our abundance or our well-being. It's the peace and freedom from worry we experience when we fully trust God's provision, surrender our circumstances to Him, faithfully steward our resources, and are thankful for all that we have.

Bob & Sarah Holcombe
Hampshire

Reflect upon and pray about: Does the word "contentment" describe you? Pray that God's peace and freedom would replace any confusion or anxiety you might have around your finances or physical needs.



FEBRUARY
21

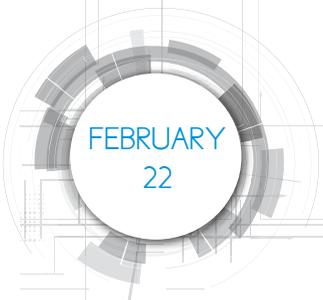
LUKE 12:34

For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

Treasure. Those things we value are not necessarily of value. Stuff, status, approval. Treasure has a way of consuming its consumer. Driven by fear and need, greed and worry, my heart is forever treasure hunting. Gravitating to that which “glitters” but offers counterfeits for my deepest need, leaving me bereft, empty. Despite what I’d like to believe, my heart can only hold so much. I know this and still struggle to fill it with treasure of true value. If only I could... If only I were... If only I had... Trivial pursuit is exhausting. Jesus’ answer is a loving reminder of my worth in the Father’s eyes—more than sparrows and ravens. Enough so that the ever-changing number of hairs on my head is known. My purchase. His blood. Beckoning me to seek Him as my true treasure. There, sheltered in Him and with Him, my heart is safe. At rest.

Sharon Martin
Woodstock

Reflect upon and pray about: What do you treasure? Where is your true treasure? What is consuming you? Pray that, even if just for today, you would find your shelter and hope in God and God alone.



FEBRUARY
22

EPHESIANS 2:4-5

But God, being rich in mercy,
because of the great love with which he loved us,
even when we were dead in our trespasses,
made us alive together with Christ—
by grace you have been saved.

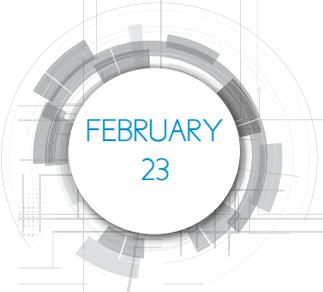
Who am I? Most of my life, I have struggled with this question. Do I matter? Do other people think the thoughts that I think? What can I do to be enough? Before I found Christ in my life, these questions played over and over in my mind. What if people knew the real me?

As I began attending church regularly and began taking some risk in regards to being known, barriers began to fall away. Other people shared mutual struggles, and I began to feel less alone and less lonely. As I grew, took classes, and joined a small group, I realized more and more that God's love for me is truth. It really is! And I think a lot about the fact that if I were the only person left in this universe, Jesus would have still died for me. For me! That is who I am and how much I am loved. I am so grateful!

Patty MacNally

Lake in the Hills

Reflect upon and pray about: Are you seen and known here? Have your barriers fallen away? If so, thank God for the community that God has placed you in. If not, pray for your next steps toward an ongoing, transformational community.



FEBRUARY
23

JEREMIAH 33:3

**Call to me and I will answer you and tell you
great and unsearchable things
you don't know.**

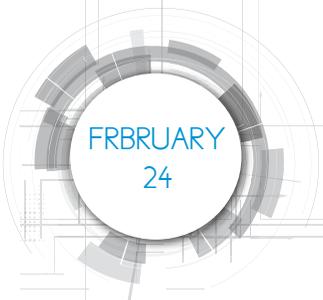
From a very young age, I learned to rely on myself for most things. Not knowing where else to turn, I looked to myself for answers to life's challenges. Eventually, I began to lean into some destructive habits and addictions. I never knew about God or His love for me. So, instead of turning to God, I turned to other sources of comfort. Along my journey, I was blessed to meet Jesus and embark upon the most beautiful, restorative relationship I've ever known. Through His love, faithfulness, and compassion—and with the help of great Christian counselors, recovery groups, an amazing family, and God-loving friends—I now rest on the scripture of Jeremiah 33:3. I call to God; He answers me; He shows me new ways of being and living—ways I once didn't know.

I pray that, in this glorious season, all who are a part of Willow Huntley would call to Him and turn towards the love and support of God and our church community. Nobody needs to walk alone.

Karen Rud

Lake in the Hills

Reflect upon and pray about: Are you walking alone in any area of your life? Call out to God. Ask Him to guide your steps. Ask Him to show you new ways of being. Pray for the courage to listen as He guides.



FEBRUARY
24

EPHESIANS 6:18

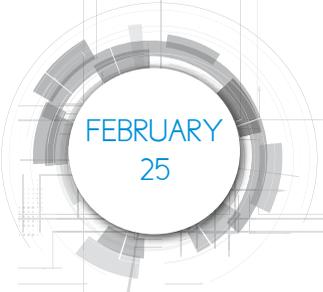
**Pray in the Spirit at all times and on every occasion.
Stay alert and be persistent in your prayers
for all believers everywhere.**

It is easy to believe that prayer is a practice that can only be done in times of gathering or ceremony. It is, however, something that can be done at any time. Prayer can be done even at the simplest of times—while driving to work, over coffee with a friend, or when you first wake up. Similarly, you can lift anything up to God. In fact, He wants you to engage in a daily conversation with Him. Lift up your joys, your worries, and even your hopes to Him, and He will listen. Pray specifically, and the Lord will answer specifically.

Father, I pray for our church family and their relationship with You. I ask that they will have the courage to come closer to You than ever before. We thank You for Your immeasurable love in our current home and ask for Your continued blessing in our future home. All this we pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

Nick Penev
Lakemoor

Reflect upon and pray about: We know that God has called us to reach everyone, always. This begins with doing what Ephesians 6:18 commands us to do. Today, pray in the Spirit at all times and on all occasions that God's immeasurable love would come to be known throughout our community.



FEBRUARY
25

MATTHEW 28:8-10

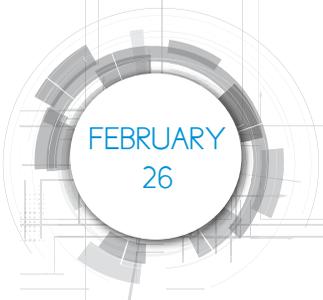
Then he told his servants,
“We have a wedding banquet all prepared but no guests.
The ones I invited weren’t up to it.
Go out into the busiest intersections in town
and invite anyone you find to the banquet.”
The servants went out on the streets and rounded up
everyone they laid eyes on, good and bad, regardless.
And so the banquet was on—every place filled.

I began attending Willow Creek Huntley a little over two years ago. I visited one Sunday, and Todd was greeting people at the door. I was impressed; lead pastors greeting people is not common. I met Todd for coffee and liked him a great deal. (We both love *The Ragamuffin Gospel*.) I then met with Shannon Swift and Lisa Uidl and enjoyed meeting them both. I started serving in the weekly tear-down teams and in Alpha. I also lead a small Bible study and volunteer in Promiseland. I serve wherever and whenever I can. I believe it’s what God calls each of us to do.

The Lord has put into my heart the need to bring all kinds of people into our fellowship. I believe that all people should be embraced fully and made to feel welcome at the “banquet.” God loves every one of His children—no exceptions! Whom do you feel called to bring to the banquet? God celebrates when every place is filled.

Dean Grove
Crystal Lake

Reflect upon and pray about: Are there any “kinds” of people that you resist loving? Any people that you refuse to embrace fully? Pray that you would show deep love and hospitality by welcoming them to the banquet—and loving them well when they arrive.



FEBRUARY
26

JAMES 4:8A

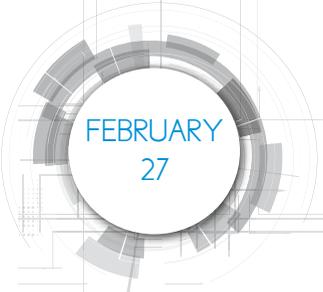
Draw near to God, and He will draw near to you.

As I reflect on this verse, I love the vision of drawing near to God. I have found that Willow Creek Huntley is a place where I am encouraged to do just that. Through small groups, messages, and opportunities to share and build relationships with others, we are drawing nearer to God, and He is drawing nearer to us. I think that this encourages a sense of belonging and comfort with each other and with God.

Lord, thank you for bringing me peace and a new understanding of what it means to have a relationship with you.

Kathy Persyk
Hampshire

Reflect upon and pray about: Imagine yourself drawing near to God. Imagine His loving arms around you. Rest in His embrace and thank Him for His love.



FEBRUARY
27

MATTHEW 28:8-10

You, God, are my God, earnestly I seek you;
I thirst for you, my whole being longs for you,
in a dry and parched land where there is no water.

I'd love to say this verse defines my walk with God. I, however, know how quickly I sometimes forget I am always "where there is no water." I am all too quick to look for and turn to things that seem necessary, important—material objects, relationships, work, or hobbies. Life moves so fast that, sometimes, I just forget how thirsty I am.

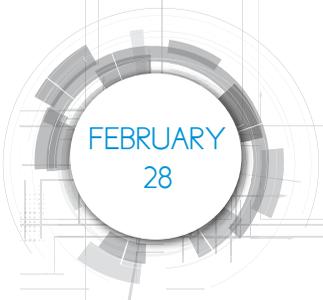
The first marathon I ran fell on the hottest Chicago Marathon day on record. Organizers cancelled the race halfway through because water was running out. Over the 26.2 miles, on every turn, I hoped to see a water station. I remember how badly I needed a drink and how the hope of getting water was all that compelled me to take each step.

Living a life truly in pursuit of God is to live realizing how impossible it is to live without Him. It's understanding just how thirsty we are for His grace, guidance, and goodness. It's realizing that we aren't thirsty just when we feel thirsty; we are thirsty all the time. The incredible thing is that He is a God who doesn't withhold Himself from us. As we earnestly seek Him, thirst for Him, and long for Him, He meets us and quenches our thirst.

Pat Brennan

Lake in the Hills

Reflect upon and pray about: Do you thirst for God? Do you know others who thirst for Him—maybe without even knowing it? Pray for God's grace, guidance, and goodness to fill you up. Pray that God would meet you, and those who are seeking Him, quenching your thirst.



FEBRUARY
28

1 PETER 4:10 (NLT)

**Each one should use whatever gift he has received
to serve others, faithfully administering
God's grace in its various forms.**

The Gallup organization recently released sobering statistics about our happiness and satisfaction. Fewer than one in five adults worldwide can be considered "thriving" in levels of purpose or well-being. And the vast majority of U.S. workers (over 67%) are either "not engaged" or "actively disengaged" in their jobs. I can relate to both. When I explored why, I landed on another sobering truth: I was unhappy and unsatisfied because I wasn't living as God uniquely created me to live. Instead of joyfully receiving my giftedness from the Creator of the Universe, I'd look around and wish for something different. I wanted what others had. I had gift remorse.

Imagine putting a lot of thought and creativity to finding the perfect gift for a loved one. You give it joyfully, with anticipation and excitement. But the response you get is underwhelming, halfhearted. Or the gift is never used. You're hurt. I've done that to God. Just like every fingerprint is unique, our Creator wired each of us uniquely, wonderfully, and purposefully. Each of us has a collection of gifts and talents ordained, blessed, and inspired by Him. God's divine plan for us is to use that collection—joyfully—to honor and glorify His Kingdom.

Jeff Madsen

Gilberts

Reflect upon and pray about: What gifts has God given you? How have you used them? How are you using them today? Have you ever wished that you were gifted differently? God has gifted you on purpose for a purpose. Pray that God would use your gifts mightily in this season.



JOHN 8:32

Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.

Lloyd and I helped start Willow Crystal Lake. We were then excited to be part of Willow Huntley's launch. It was unlike any church we'd been a part of. It immediately felt like home; we became part of a church family. We've always felt loved, accepted, and cared for. We both joined the Compassion & Justice Ministry; I later left it to become active in Promiseland. We've also led our small group for five years.

In the past year, our lives changed drastically. Lloyd fell off a ladder, injuring both legs. I'd just had neck surgery. He needed four surgeries. He was hospitalized 29 days, in rehab 45 days, and in a hospital bed at home for 4 months. Then I had two more surgeries. God was faithful; our beloved church family and small group became His hands and feet every step of the way! Meals, prayers, gifts, texts, phone calls, cards, visits, a ramp for Lloyd, help moving, and more love than we could have imagined were provided!

We dream for our church to keep growing, reaching the lost. We pray it will make a huge difference in a hurting world. We pray that those we reach will spread the Good News as well! God's hand is on Willow Huntley. We are blessed to have a staff with such hearts for God.

Mary Westover

Woodstock

Reflect upon and pray about: What are your prayers for our church? Pray them, in confidence, right now!



MARCH
2

CORINTHIANS 12:9

But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest in me.

Weakness is fragility. Limits. So even what I would like to think of as my strengths are weak. And my first instinct is to feel that You, God, must be ashamed of me over them. The limits of my faith. Of my love. Of my hope. Of my gifts. Everything. But it's not true, then, is it? If Your power is made perfect in my weakness, that is. And denying my weakness is shutting You out, isn't it? And then I'll feel like You abandoned me because I was fooled into thinking that I could, and should, do it without You, and You actually would like it—like me—better that way. Is that human, trying to have at least something that I am infallible or unbreakable in because I think You'll want nothing to do with me otherwise? But that won't bring me closer to You, and it won't make You proud of me, and it won't make You love me more. And thinking that it would is just another weakness, then. But if it isn't even what You want, for all the love, trying is silly of me. I may grow older. I may learn. I may mature. I may go on to do "harder and harder" things because of You. But I will not outgrow the need of You.

Sam Michel
Hoffman Estates

Reflect upon and pray about: How has God graced your life—especially in your weakness? Thank God for His power and grace, for all the ways He moves in and through you.



JOHN 3:1

**For God so loved the world that He gave
His one and only Son, that whoever believes in
Him shall not perish but have eternal life.**

Out of the entire Bible, this is my favorite passage.

Contained within those few words, words that Jesus spoke one dark night to a wondering Pharisee named Nicodemus, is the very essence of God's relationship with us and of ours with Him. It is His love story. God loves the world. God loves people. God loves us as individuals, just as we are. He loves us when we believe and receive His gift of eternal life. He loves us when we don't—even when it breaks His heart. He loves us when we love Him. He loves us when we hate Him or are indifferent to Him. His love is unchangeable. His love is relentless. His love is eternal. He loves us. So how are we, who believe, supposed to respond to this kind of love? Because we are His, we are meant to become like Him. We are meant to pour ourselves out. We are meant to become the carriers, the proclaimers, the givers, the servants, the lovers who choose to take His love to everyone, everywhere. We are called to pour out our lives in loving service to believers and unbelievers, to seekers and stragglers, to lovers and haters; to everyone, always.

That is our calling. It is hard and good and right.

John Thomas
Cary

Reflect upon and pray about: Close your eyes and imagine all of the times and places where you have seen or experienced God's incredible love. Pause and rest in each image that comes to mind. Then, ask God where He is calling you to pour yourself out today. Be sure to listen for His response.



ISAIAH 58:10B-11 (NLT)

**Then your light will shine out from the darkness,
and the darkness around you will be as bright as noon.**

We came to Huntley because of a billboard near our home. We sought a new church; my church of 18 years had begun to feel like a country club. We hoped for a place that would welcome anyone, independently of social or financial status. We wanted to see God, not people, glorified. We were amazed at how friendly people at Willow were. Everyone was welcomed and made to feel like an important part of the church right from the start. Now I'm honored and privileged to be part of the Prayer and Alpha teams—teams that care for the spiritual lives of others.

I would like to see the church as an ambassador for our Savior in a dark world where the Gospel is the only light. I pray that, the darker it gets, the brighter Willow will shine. I pray people keep finding love and acceptance here. The church was always meant to be a place where broken and wounded people can come and be healed. I pray Willow continues to attract new believers who see how we love each other. I pray no one can truthfully say a bad word about us because of our love and service to our community and the world. I strongly believe in the church's mission work; it brings practical help and the Gospel to others around the world.

Clare Best

Hampshire

Reflect upon and pray about: Picture the dark places of our world, of your world. Is there a particular darkness that God might be calling you to shine light upon? Pray about all the ways we might shine brightly into the dark and hurting places surrounding us that need God's love.



1 THESSALONIANS 5:18

Give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.

I grew up in Berlin, Germany. Among many endearing qualities associated with the cliché Berliner is the response you might get when you ask, "How are things going?" More often than not: "Can't complain!"

I am grateful to all the people in my life who taught me that gratitude is more than the absence of reasons to complain. And I think maybe that's what Paul was saying. Giving thanks in all circumstances is about what, or rather whom, we fix our eyes on. It's about acknowledging that circumstances don't rule us. We belong to the One who rules over them all. I know, easier said than done. When I don't follow through, it's not because I don't know; it's a matter of practice. I have a friend who constantly teaches me what it looks like. Countless times, we've driven around a corner, seen this amazing view, and my friend will have said, "I love you, God!" It's a habit, an attitude, a positive "knee-jerk reaction." I believe the secret lies in being thankful in the small everyday moments. It's a work in progress, but it's a fun journey to be on. And I think it's an important part of our HOME journey. We have so much for which to give thanks.

Berit Nehlsen

Crystal Lake

Reflect upon and pray about: What are your circumstances? Can you complain? Whatever they are, give thanks to God right now—for your life, for our church, for your everything.



MARCH
6

ISAIAH 55:1

Hey, everyone who thirsts!
Come to the waters;
And you who have no money,
come, buy and eat. Yes, come,
buy wine and milk without money and without cost.

It's a big word: COME. What state do you need to be in before coming to Him? A few years ago, I was in a state of big-time need, moving to a new state with my family. I didn't want to, yet, based on everything—from circumstances to prayer—I felt God was calling me to COME. I found myself brought to a place of full surrender, but my heart didn't want to. My pride got in the way. Here, I was in a new town and home. Here, I was starting over. God said, "COME to me. Come. I'm right here." He drew me to friends I never would have searched out on my own. They taught me to sit, be silent, and listen. I started listening and trusting that God was drawing me deeper into faith, closer to Him.

I believe God is always whispering, "Come. Come, sit, and listen to me. I've got everything you need. You don't need to lift a finger to get the only thing that will satisfy you." We all try to fill those empty spots, but we are never satisfied. Don't wait. COME to Jesus. Sit with Him every day. Talk with Him. Journal your conversations with Him. He will fill you up to overflowing with the richest of things you never imagined you needed or wanted!

Mariei Kindl
Huntley

Reflect upon and pray about: Come to Jesus—right now. Sit with Him. Talk with Him. Journal if you like. Let Him fill you up to overflowing with His riches.



EPHESIANS 2:19 (MSG)

That's plain enough, isn't it? You're no longer wandering exiles. This kingdom of faith is now your home country. You're no longer strangers or outsiders. You belong here, with as much right to the name Christian as anyone. God is building a home. He's using us all—irrespective of how we got here—in what he is building.

My wife, Jessica, and I started attending services at Willow Creek Huntley in February of 2014. We had moved to Huntley and were looking for a new church closer to home that we could grow with. From the moment we walked through the doors, we were welcomed by so many kind and inviting people. We couldn't believe how many took the time to welcome us, introduce themselves, and ask us about ourselves. The worship was exactly what we were looking for, and the sermon spoke to our hearts. By the end of the first service, we knew with utmost certainty that Willow Creek Huntley was the church God was leading us to. We have had the opportunity to get connected through serving in Promiseland, Student Impact, and with the Compassion & Justice team. We are also connecting through our terrific small group and by attending different Bible studies and classes throughout the year. We're expecting our first child, and we're blessed that this will be her church home and family. We know that God led us all here.

Our dream for Willow Creek Huntley is that the new building fits the needs of the different ministries throughout the church, that everyone finds a place to serve God, and that our church will be seen as welcoming to those throughout the community that need a place to call home.

Casey Badgerow

Huntley

Reflect upon and pray about: What dreams for Willow Creek Huntley is God shaping in you? How will He use you to make those dreams come true? Pray about it!



MARCH
8

1 JOHN 5:14-15 (MSG)

My purpose in writing is simply this; that you who believe in God's Son will know beyond the shadow of a doubt that you have eternal life, the reality and not the illusion. And how bold and free we then become in his presence, freely according to his will, sure that he's listening. And if we're confident that he's listening we know what we've asked for is as good as ours.

My life was always an uphill climb with the peak endlessly out of reach. Of course, that was back when I sought my validation through a variety of earthly sources. I was a prisoner to ego. But then I began going to church regularly and hearing a different message about validation. I learned who God is and how immense His feelings are for me. I learned that He loves me so much that He gave me the gift of His sacrifice. I realized then I was free. I understood that I was free to serve God as He designed me to serve Him. So I asked Him, "What is my mission; what do you want me to do?" I found how true it is that He is listening and, in His own time and in His own way, He's answering. He is directing me through life in ways I could have never imagined years ago. I'm so often humbled that He chose me, designed me, and that He had a plan for me. It's through the community of the church that I learned that I didn't need to climb anymore because the hill had already been climbed for me.

Brian Olsberg
Hampshire

Reflect upon and pray about: God chose you. God designed you. God has a plan for you. What is your mission? What does God want you to do? Pray. Surrender. Listen. Obey. Follow.



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