



Gordon Crisman

I am a retired banker, dedicated walker (can't run anymore due to knee issues), and addicted to coffee. My wife, Cleta, and I have been married for forty-nine years. We have five grown children (and four wonderful in-law kids!) and six grandchildren. We recently downsized to a home in Wilsonville, Oregon, and attend Sherwood Community Friends Church. In spite of Cleta's initial misgivings about me being around the house all day after retirement, we have been enjoying our friendship even more. We love being with family, traveling together—especially road trips—and spending time at the beach. We also enjoy being involved with George Fox University where we met fifty years ago. Go Bruins!

Recently, as I was thinking about the various ways Jesus has affected my life, I put together a partial list of those for which I'm especially thankful. They are the basis for this week's devotional thoughts. I hope that as you meditate on them anew, they will inspire you to think more deeply about the significance of what Christ has done for us.

BIBLE READING: Hebrews 9:11–15

Charles Lindbergh was a famous American aviator who in 1927 (at the age of twenty-five) was the first person to fly solo across the Atlantic Ocean. He instantly went from the obscurity of an air mail pilot to become a world-famous celebrity. He and his wife had six children, but it was the kidnapping of their twenty-month-old firstborn son, Charles Lindberg Jr., on March 1, 1932 that rocked the world in what was called “the crime of the century.” A handwritten ransom note demanding \$50,000 was left in the child’s room and subsequently paid. Approximately two months later they found the baby’s body, which had been left in a grove of trees in a neighboring town.

There have been many novels written and films produced such as *Taken*, *Ransom*, and *Silence of the Lambs* with the theme of a kidnapping and ransom demand. As a spouse or parent they are chilling to read or watch as you think of being the one whose loved one is held hostage.

Thoughts of being held hostage should not be new to us as humans and especially as followers of Jesus. Since the fall in the garden, we have all been held hostage by Satan and the effects of sin in the world. Being a hostage can take different forms, but each of us has experienced being held hostage in one form or another. But, guess what. Jesus paid the ransom for our sin on the cross, and it was the most expensive ransom ever paid—his own life. We are now free!

SONG: Amazing Grace (My Chains Are Gone)

PRAYER SUGGESTION: Jesus, words cannot express my deep gratitude to you for paying the ultimate ransom for me and setting me free.

—Gordon Crisman

BIBLE READING: Galatians 3:10–14; Isaiah 61:10

In my almost forty-year banking career, one of our main lines of business was granting loans to folks wanting to buy or build a home. Unfortunately, sometimes borrowers ended up in circumstances where they couldn't make payments and became severely delinquent. A clause in the law of real property debt allows a specific period of time for the borrower to reclaim property after foreclosure, if they can come up with the money to repay the debt. This clause, which dates back to Old Testament times, is called the right of redemption and provides a way for an owner to redeem or reclaim their property.

I have known people who have the gift of taking an old car, a piece of furniture, or an old run-down house and completely restoring it to its original condition, perhaps even better than it was when it was new. The redeemed item can be truly amazing and valuable. I have often wished that I had that gift, but unfortunately, the closest I can get is to admire other people's work.

But no earthly restoration project can compare to the ultimate redemption that Jesus accomplished by freeing us when he died on the cross. We are completely restored in Jesus' eyes. The right of redemption period lasts our entire lives and is not contingent on us paying anything back. That doesn't mean that we never fall short again, but because we live in repentant dependence upon Jesus, he only sees us as his redeemed, wearing his robe of righteousness!

SONG: Redeemed

PRAYER SUGGESTION: Lord, help me today to comprehend the depth of what it cost you to redeem me.

—Gordon Crisman

BIBLE READING: Daniel 3:9–28

In August 2010 near Copiapó, Chile, a mine collapsed, trapping thirty-three miners twenty-three thousand feet (almost a half mile) below ground for sixty-nine days. Seventeen days after the accident, a note was found taped to the drill bit that came back to the surface that said, “We are well in the shelter, the 33 of us.”

The area the miners were trapped in was 540 square feet, but ventilation problems forced them to move into a tunnel. As you can imagine, they experienced a variety of problems due to heat, humidity, lack of food and water, severe anxiety, desperation, depression. At one point, those who were coordinating rescue efforts were able to get a video mini-camera down to the miners who sent back a recording. The rescue efforts were the lead story of virtually every media outlet, including television, radio, newspaper, and the internet. Most of the miners testified that a “deep religious faith powered the rescue and that their prayers were answered.”

It’s hard to imagine a more horrific situation that would necessitate our being rescued. If you are reading this as a Christian, however, you may remember feeling some of the same things that the miners felt—anxiety, desperation, and depression—before you accepted Christ as Savior. Even now, we might identify with the uncertainties of what lies ahead that the miners had. We can rejoice in the lyrics from today’s song: “Savior, He can move the mountains [or cave-ins]; My God is mighty to save, He is mighty to save.”

SONG: Mighty to Save

PRAYER SUGGESTION: God, you truly are mighty to save. Please help me remember today and every day how you saved me, and continue to save me every moment.

—Gordon Crisman

BIBLE READING: John 14:23

I have often reflected on the various teachers I had through grade school, high school, college, and professional classes. No doubt the reason some might not be on my list of favorites was due more to my lack of attention and dedication than anything they may or may not have done.

I especially remember my Sunday school teacher when I was in early grade school. She conveyed that she really cared about us as well as giving us a good biblical base. My seventh and eighth grade teachers, both men, had a lasting impact on me both as teachers and coaches. They were infinitely patient with a young man who was not always attentive. In high school, my football and basketball coaches were great role models as well as great coaches. My college economics professor was a standout who made potentially boring subjects come alive as he brought the lesson down to a practical level that stays with me to this day.

What was Jesus like as a teacher? He took ordinary men and women, inspiring them with his leading and teaching, to become the foundation of the early Christian church. Certainly the miracles he performed caught their attention, but more than that, he loved them and taught them in parables that made the subject matter something to which they could relate. We also know he spoke to groups of four thousand and five thousand with riveting clarity. Jesus' teaching is as relevant today as it was two thousand years ago. Spend time meditating on his words today.

SONG: Thy Word (Amy Grant)

PRAYER SUGGESTION: Teacher, help me learn from you. Help me know your heart for the people with whom I will come in contact today.

—Gordon Crisman

BIBLE READING: 1 Peter 5:7

In high school I had a job assisting men who were shearing sheep. I came to learn that you would not find sheep at the animal Mensa meetings. (Is there such a thing as a Mensa meeting for animals?) While they seemed to lack the intelligence of a dog or cat, they were great followers. They would follow anyone who was willing to lead them, and whose voice they recognized. There are stories in the Bible of men who started out as shepherds but became great later in life.

What were the qualities that made David a great shepherd? He cared for his flock, he was loyal to his flock, he knew his flock, and he protected his flock. Aren't those the same qualities we see in him later in life, starting with the time he protected Israel against Goliath and the Philistines?

How about Jesus as a shepherd? Was it a coincidence that shepherds were among the first humans on earth to learn that our Savior was born? We are told to cast our cares (anxieties) on him, because he cares for us. He knows us even better than we know ourselves. He protects us from the enemy who prowls the earth, looking for those he can deceive and devour.

In our world today there are many wannabe shepherds, looking to entice people to follow them. Keep looking to the true Shepherd who has our best interests in mind.

SONG: Savior, Like a Shepherd Lead Us

PRAYER SUGGESTION: God, we depend on you daily as our shepherd to help us stay on track. Thank you for the gentle nudges you give us when we veer into thoughts or actions that would be harmful.

—Gordon Crisman

BIBLE READING: John 15:9–15

I have had some amazing friends in my life. In second grade, our family moved to a new town, and I made friends with a boy in my class who became my best friend. We were close friends through high school. We played sports, fished, and explored together, sharing our thoughts and concerns. We went to different colleges, so life pulled us apart, but today—sixty some years later—we remain friends. I had good friends in college with whom I am still in contact. As an adult, I have some especially good friends who are a very important part of my life. My best friend is my wife, Cleta. We have been married for forty-nine years. She truly sees the best in me and loves me—even when I'm not at my best.

Jesus says in John 15:15 that “I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master’s business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I have learned from my Father I have made known to you.” Quakers were so taken with this verse that we now call ourselves Friends (as in friends of Jesus). There is almost no better compliment than for Jesus to call us his friend and make known to us everything he learned from his Father.

Reach out to Jesus today. He wants to be your friend.

SONG: What a Friend We Have in Jesus

PRAYER SUGGESTION: Jesus, what a privilege that you would call me your friend and want me to know what you are up to on this earth. Help me to return the friendship.

—Gordon Crisman

BIBLE READING: Mark 3:31–35

I grew up in a home with one brother, who was two years younger than me. We did lots of things together: We played sports and swam in the Umpqua River just a stone's throw from our home. In college we took up surfing with a few other friends, and that became our passion for a while. When I married Clela, I had the good fortune of gaining three new brothers (in-law).

According to Mark 6:3, Jesus had four brothers: James, Joseph, Judas, and Simon. Tradition has it that Jesus' brothers were skeptical of Jesus' ministry at first, but later they became part of the Christian movement. Mark 3:31–34 describes Jesus' mother and brothers standing outside the room where Jesus was teaching. When told that his mother and brothers were outside, Jesus asked, "Who are my mother and my brothers?" He then looked at those who were seated around him and said, "Here are my mother and my brothers! Whoever does God's will is my brother and sister and mother." Most Bible scholars agree that the intent of Jesus was not to embarrass or put down his biological family who were likely well known to his listeners. Rather, his intent was to encourage his listeners (and twenty-first-century believers as well) to do God's will, and we will be his family.

Romans 12:1–2 says "Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God.... Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will."

SONG: The Family of God

PRAYER SUGGESTION: God, I give myself to you today as a living sacrifice. Help me to know and to do your will.

—Gordon Crisman