Faith

Six Months

“Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in Heaven.” Matthew 5:16

While selling Christian books door to door one day, I started to wonder, “What if I was diagnosed with cancer and only had six months to live? What would I do?”

I knocked on the door and waited for a moment. It was a chilly day with a cool breeze sweeping down the street. Shivering, I waited. An older man opened the door and asked what I needed. After introducing myself, I jumped into my presentation.

The books didn’t interest him, so I asked if I could pray with him. He said yes, and then told me he had been diagnosed with cancer. Unsure of what exactly to pray for, I just went for it. It was a short prayer, and I don’t remember what I said, but the man was very blessed and seemed at peace.

As I walked away, the questions I asked at the beginning of this story came to mind. Many say if they only had 6 months left, they would change the world. Would they? What would I do? Wallow in self-pity and complain about how horrible my life was until I died? Or would I try to make an impact; be a missionary, fly planes, write a book, learn a skill, spend every spare moment with loved ones, run a marathon, or invent something?

Why wait until we are dying to make a difference? Live like you are going to die tomorrow. Throw yourself into the work God has given you now. Don't wait until your time on earth has expired. There are people for you to reach this very second. Work for God today!

~ Lincoln Gordon

See the book on Amazon.

Stuck

“For we walk by faith not by sight.” 2 Corinthians 5:7

June 23, 2018. A soccer team and their coaches decided to go to a cave after soccer practice. A few minutes after they entered the cave, heavy rainfall caused the cave system to be partially flooded. Efforts to find the group were delayed due to rising water levels and strong currents.

While they were stuck, parents, students, and teachers spent time singing and praying for the soccer players’ safe return. One week after they were trapped, the rescue efforts turned into a massive operation that brought worldwide attention involving international rescue teams. On July 2, British divers, John Volannthem and Richard Stanton, found the group alive and guided them onto a higher rock about four kilometers from the cave’s mouth (2.5 mi).

Rescue organizers discussed whether they should teach the group how to swim out or wait for the water to subside. After days of pumping water out of the cave, the rescue organizers decided they needed to hurry up the evacuation before the next monsoon rain. The rain was expected to start on July 11.

The rescue involved around 10,000 people including more than 100 divers, scores of rescue workers, representatives from about 100 governmental agencies, 900 police officers, 2,000 soldiers, ten police helicopters, and seven ambulances. A total of more than one billion liters of water were pumped out of the cave.

After their ordeal, the boys had lost an average of 2 kilograms (4.4Lbs) each but were declared in stable condition. Though they were pronounced healthy enough to go back to school, they still had to be quarantined for at least

a week while health workers tested them to determine if they had caught any infectious diseases due to the damp environment.

Even though the soccer team didn't know if they were going to survive, they still had faith. Because of this they were able to survive. It is the same in our walk with God. Without faith our spiritual lives will die. Faith is imperative to survive as a Christian.

~ Yanis Ferrier

Fun Fact: It took divers 9 days to find the boys and another 8 to rescue them all. (The Guardian)

See the book on Amazon.

Will You Take That Risk?

“Seek the Lord and His strength, seek His face continually.” 1 Chronicles 16:11

“Quickly! Get ice! We’ll have to take her to the hospital!”

This was not supposed to be happening. Here I was. Sitting on the ground, soaking wet, while everyone stared at my leg. Not to mention I was in terrible pain. I couldn’t keep myself from crying. Did I break my leg?

That Sunday, a group of students from Oklahoma Academy attended white water rescue training, hosted by Gideon Rescue Company. I was a little scared. When we arrived, I saw the river where we were to train. It was a canal of white water that fed into a calmer open area. There were also a lot of obstacles in the water.

My friends told me to relax. “You will have so much fun!” So, I shoved my fears away and decided to have fun. I put on a life vest while the director talked about safety. By that time, I was already excited to jump into the water. I wanted to get well-trained to be able to help other people when they needed it.

Things went great! We were learning how to go through the water and not hit the obstacles strewn throughout the canal. As you can imagine, it was kind of hard to keep my head up because the water was moving fast, and waves would often crash over my head. But I was confident. I thought, “One day I’ll be able to help someone desperately struggling in rough waters. I’ll be a hero!”

During lunch, everyone excitedly said how glad they were that they had come. I had to agree. This was so much fun! After finishing our delicious lunches, we had another safety briefing. We moved to the other side of the river, where the water was more intense, and there were more obstacles. We divided the group in two. One was to jump into the water while the other group would throw the rope at them to “save” them.

I felt the fear from earlier rising to the forefront of my mind. We had moved to the hard part of the river. I told my friend, “I’m going to get hurt.” He looked at me and answered, “Just follow me, it’s going to be okay.” I jumped.

The next thing I knew, water was pushing me forward. I could not get my head above it. My friend up on the bank yelled, “Do you want the rope?” “No, I’m fine,” I told her. Very quickly, I realized I couldn’t see my friend in front of me anymore. I was by myself. That distracted me, and I got disoriented.

As the water shoved me into one obstacle after another, I realized there was nothing I could do. I proceeded to hit every single one of the remaining obstacles. By the time I got to the end, there was a terrible pain in my leg. I tried to stand, but I couldn’t. One of the rescue trainers pulled me out of the water and put me on a chair. Everyone crowded around and started asking questions. They took me to the car and decided to take me to the hospital. By then, I had mostly stopped crying.

When we pulled up outside the hospital, I was carried inside and placed on a bed. A nurse X-rayed my leg and then scanned it again with a bigger machine. “Your leg is not broken,” the doctor told me.

I just had a contusion on my shin bone. It was going to take several weeks to heal. I couldn’t run. “It’s okay,” I told myself. “At least I didn’t break it.”

Looking back, I realize I denied the help offered me in the form of a rope. How many times have I denied God's help? How many times have I thought I'm strong enough to figure things out by myself and then I get hurt? I know it is hard to see the rope when water is churning all around us.

We have so much sin in our lives it is sometimes difficult to find Jesus. It does not matter though. He will always find a way to save us. Are you willing to take that risk; to look for Him when you are at your lowest?

Do not let the waves of sin block out your view of Jesus. He is reaching out to you. Take His hand and let Him lead you to safety.

~ Areli Tenorio

See the book on Amazon.

At the End of Every Rainbow

“May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost.” Romans 15:13

... A Pot of Gold

You have probably heard the saying, “At the end of every rainbow is a pot of gold.” You’ve probably also laughed at this phrase and brushed it aside. After all, this is an old wives’ tale. You probably haven’t gone looking for a pot of gold because you know it’s not there.

I previously believed this as well. Well, that is until I actually found the end of a rainbow.

I was walking through my living room. Many things were on my mind. It had just stormed, so I was inside working. Casually, I glanced out the window. Suddenly, something caught my eye. There, in my own backyard, was a rainbow. Specifically, it was the end of the rainbow.

I was blown away. Never in my life had I actually seen the end of a rainbow. (Just for the nerds out there, I realize rainbows don’t end, but from a ground perspective, they do.) But what really blew me away was the fact there was a pot of gold at the end of it. It wasn’t a literal pot of 24-karat gold, but it was literally a golden feeling of joy.

The happiness from seeing a rainbow end in my own backyard was priceless. It was an incredible experience. Now, back to the old wives’ tale. The whole concept behind

the saying is about the impossibility of finding true happiness. Just as real gold doesn't exist at the end of a rainbow, true happiness does not exist at the end of 'success'. Indeed, you will never find true happiness from secular success or 'rainbows'. But there is another type of 'rainbow' that does bring true joy when you discover the end; God's promises.

After Noah and his family hopped off the ark, I imagine they felt two things. They were probably relieved and slightly depressed at the same time. Yes, they were finally off the ark, but standing on the ugliest terrain they had ever seen. They needed some reassurance.

This is where God pops up and sends them the rainbow. Just when they needed Him, God gave them a rainbow.

If you remember, there was a pot of gold at the end of it. Once again, it was not gold nuggets but rather priceless happiness from His promises. It was just what they needed.

It is no different in our own lives. It is easy to get discouraged. When things start going wrong, it seems as if nothing will ever go right again.

When you are in the moment, remember there ***is*** a pot of golden happiness at the end of every promised rainbow.

Have faith that things do get better.

~ Christian Jagitsch

See the book on Amazon.

Never Give Up!

"It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed, because His compassions fail not. They are new every morning; Great is thy faithfulness." Lamentations 3:22-23

"What the new year brings to you will depend a great deal on what you bring to the new year." Have you ever set goals for yourself and then not reached them? Think about your last New Year's resolution. You may have resolved to eat healthier, exercise more, or to go to bed earlier.
But a few days in you forget.

The children of Israel forgot how God had blessed them. They turned to idolatry and evil. When Solomon's temple had been forgotten and again the Jews turned their eyes from God, Babylon came and took all they had.

It is easy to forget the good things in life. It's easy to forget our triumphs and remember vividly our mistakes.

This is why resolutions fail. Often, we think, "I didn't exercise today, I might as well stop." Humans lose faith in themselves very easily. But God has a solution.

In His infinite wisdom, God created us to love new beginnings. Each new day, new week, new month, and new year brings opportunities to change.

Forgive and forget is a motto the Bible promotes. Forgive yourself and live as if you hadn't messed up the day before.

Tomorrow is another day, so do not give up today.

~ Cameron Shurley

See the book on Amazon.

From Darkness To Light

“O my God, I trust in thee: let me not be ashamed, let not mine enemies triumph over me.” Psalms 25:1-2

Sometimes, negativity fills my mind. I fight with my thoughts to try and be more positive. Controlling our thoughts can be challenging.

I was restless. My mind, playing its game again, was trying to drag me down. I was exhausted and fed up with life. I was so desperate. I could not find the light. I wanted healing, but I could only see how broken I was.

Healing is a demanding process. At that time, I needed someone to sew me back together. But no one was there.

Then a thought came to me. When I was 5 my father told me, “God is always here, but sometimes you forget about Him.” It was true, and I had forgotten. I had someone!

“You, LORD, keep my lamp burning; my God turns my darkness into light. With your help I can advance against an army; with my God, I can scale a wall. As for God, his way is perfect: The Lord’s word is flawless; he shields all who take refuge in him.” Psalms 18: 28,30.

My Lord turns darkness into light. Isn’t this amazing? I say “I am weak”, and He says, “you are strong.” I say “I am ugly”, and He says, “I made you beautiful.” He says, “you are mine, and I love you.” I can feel His Love.

That was it. The beginning of a new era; new opportunities; new me. I’m not saying it is easy now. Trust me, it’s not. But each day I choose to trust God’s word instead of my own.

~ Areli Tenorio

Highest and Least

“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.” Jeremiah 29:11

John was 25 years old, making a six-figure salary, and working for a bank in New York City. He had it all; money, power, women, whatever he wanted. He wasted his life between parties, drugs, and alcohol.

Even though this man had everything a young man could ask for, he felt empty. A Bible appeared in his home one day. He found in it the truth and remedy for his deep emptiness. He eventually left all the money and fame to become a poor, happy missionary.

Why do we never know what makes us happy? When I first began to learn about Christ, one aspect of Him always puzzled me.

He had all the glory, honor, riches, and power. He was omnipotent and omniscient, not even constrained to the laws of science such as gravity, time, or dimension. He was and is God.

But because of one planet in one solar system, on the edge of one galaxy, He decided to reduce himself to the power of a gnat. That is just the beginning. God, in human form, was killed to give life to those who deserve death. We live because He died. He clothed himself in humanity’s filthy rags so we could wear His robe of righteousness.

When I grappled with this reality, my heart could hardly understand why. Why did He do all of this if He didn't have to? Our salvation would cost Him everything. He could have let us receive the consequences of our choices. Why did He suffer so much? Why did He subject himself to pain, a foreign entity to him. Before us, there was no pain.

For us, Christianity means losing everything to gain everything. Jesus says follow me, and I will give you rest, but He also says pick up your cross and follow me. When we vow to give our lives to Christ, we acknowledge we are nothing in ourselves. But in Christ, we are worth more than all the money on this Earth could buy. In Christ, our most hated, degraded trait can become our strength. In Christ, by setting aside our dreams, He gives us our greatest desires.

I hope you've seen that even though we are the least among created beings, the gnats on the face of the universe, with Jesus we can be everything. Higher than the highest thing we can imagine is God's ideal for his children. God's way is not always the most clear, logical, or natural to us. But it's the best way. ~ Juliette Karisira

See the book on Amazon.

The Sea of Life

“For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons.” Romans 8:14

Once, there was a ship sailing on the Sea of Life. It tossed to and fro upon the waves, shuddering and groaning under the strain. The Sea of Life is constantly inflamed by hurricanes of doubt, anguish, and heartache. Occasionally, with these storms, a calm lapses over the waters. But alas, the waves double in fury to sink both ship and passenger once the calm passes over.

We find two people on this ship: The captain and one passenger. They set sail many years ago, and have been struggling through the never-ending storm to reach a magnificent city in a better land. The captain, straining constantly to see through a dirty and broken telescope, is near to giving up. He’s been fighting the storm for many days.

At this moment, the passenger appears. Dressed in simple garments, the man seems unperturbed by the heaving ship and walks slowly but purposefully to where the captain is fighting the lurching vessel. Quietly, yet loudly enough to be heard over the storm, the man offers, “Shall I take over the ship?” The captain, insulted, answers with a less than polite tone, “No! I am the captain in command and am in need of nothing!” The man does not force himself, but steps aside and lets the captain continue in vain to struggle. Shortly, the ship dashes against a rock. The impact is powerful, and both the captain and passenger are injured.

The mysterious passenger, a skilled craftsman, repairs the damage to the ship. As they sail away, the man asks again, “Shall I take the helm?” Despite his pride, the captain apprehensively hands over the helm. Taking some of the blood he has shed, the man washes the dirty telescope,

improving on its original condition. As the ship plows through the water, the rocks slowly begin to disappear!

The captain, amazed at this phenomenon, becomes jealous of another man steering his ship better than he and jerks the helm back into his own hands. The man does not force himself and lets go willingly. Surprisingly, when the captain picks up the telescope, it is dirtier than ever before! As soon as the captain takes over the ship, the waves and winds intensify, and more rocks appear in the ocean. Again, the ship is dashed against the rocks. Again, the men are injured. Again, the humble passenger repairs the damaged ship. Again, he offers, “Shall I take the helm?”

Finally realizing his inability to reach their destination, the captain willingly hands over the command of the ship. The man grasps the helm with the hands of an experienced seaman and sails on. The captain questions the humble passenger in amazement, “Have you ever sailed before?” The man answers in his quiet way, “Yes, I have accompanied every person who has ever crossed this Sea.” “And have all made a safe crossing?” “No,” he replies, “Most have not trusted me in my knowledge of rebuilding their wrecked ships. Eventually, I had to leave them, and they sank to the bottom of the ocean, forever lost. They made a choice; I could do nothing more. But a few, like yourself, have placed complete trust in me and have crossed safely.”

The proud captain is humbled, and in deep contrition, pleads for forgiveness. The man forgives him, and together they continue on through the storm. Toward the end of their journey, the captain realizes the storm has abated. The vessel sails up to a beautiful shore, filled with wonderful sounds of birds singing songs of praise. What a change from the constant wind and lashing of the waves!

After many years at sea, the captain and the man depart from the worn old ship. As they approach, a shout is heard behind them. The ship, tired from all its travel and hardships, sinks out of sight. The captain was not at all sad to see the

ship go. He continued on with a light heart. Arriving at the city with his companion, the captain saw some that he recognized from his old country. They present the captain with new robes of shining white and a gold crown. “But what about my passenger? He was the one who brought me here safely,” the captain questioned.

The man, now dressed as the King of Kings and Lord of Lords, replies to the awe-stricken captain, “My son, your troubles are over. Come, and enter into the joy of this better land.”

Sin, pain, and trouble are experienced by every person on earth. Not of God’s choice are we without help, but of our own free will. The opportunity of assistance through perilous times knocks at our hearts’ door. The proud hold tight to the helm, but only the humble survive through the Sea of Life and reach the desired destination.

~ Nathaniel Wickey

See the book on Amazon.

Search Me, Oh God

“Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.” Psalm 139:23-24

It is hard to see the faults and defects in our own hearts. And trying to look for them ourselves can lead to discouragement and poor self-image. We need to ask God to come in and look. Don’t be afraid to lay your heart open to your Heavenly Father’s inspection. He looks, with the purpose of cleansing and renewing, not judging.

Now, while Jesus is still ministering in the Sanctuary, the Holy Spirit will point out the things in our lives we need to repent of. He will forgive and cleanse us if we confess. But more than that, He will take your hand and lead you into the right thoughts, actions, and habits that will give you a character prepared for Heaven.

Let’s take the opportunity now. Kneeling before God, let us plead with Him to cleanse our hearts and lead us in the right way. Let’s have the faith to trust He has forgiven and cleansed us, and then let’s strive to live a life of purity and loyalty to God. Let’s not be afraid and miss our chance to be cleansed. He loves us. We can trust Him.

~ Julie Shurley

See the book on Amazon.

On the Rock

“For thou art my rock and my fortress; therefore for thy name’s sake lead me, and guide me.” Psalm 31:3

The mountains loomed in awesome grandeur as I stood and looked upon their strong, permanent faces. The imposing boulders, steep inclines, and dangerous ledges, all manifested a picture of strength and majesty. They seemed to offer adventure to those who were strong and agile enough to crawl through the crevices and struggle up their valleys.

The challenge was too tempting, and I began to ascend. The higher I climbed, the harder the wind blew. The sound was unnerving. I stopped for a minute and enjoyed the view from the mountain peak. My mind drifted to the future. “Someday, Nathaniel, your faith will be tested. You will have to flee to the mountains to escape your persecutors. You will be hungry, exhausted, and physically alone. Today, you are hiking for exercise, but what about next time?”

Pondering these thoughts was sobering, and as I gazed upon the surrounding country, I silently prayed that I would remain faithful, no matter what might happen. As Jesus’ second return approaches, we must keep in mind that someday, we will be persecuted. However, God promises we will never be alone. Through our tribulation, Jesus will always be our mountain; He will be our safety and our fortitude.

~ Nathaniel Wickey

See the book on Amazon.

There Will be No More Rain

“As the Lord God of Israel liveth, before whom I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain these years, but according to my word.” 1 Kings 17:1

“There will be no more rain!’ Would you dare to confidently say this to the president? I couldn’t. I don’t know what will happen in the future. But in the Bible, there was one man who actually said that to the king.

This man was a Tishbite who lived in Gilead (1 Kings 17:1) and was a prophet. His name was Elijah. At that time, Israel was ruled by a king named Ahab, and he was disloyal to God. He was married to Jezebel, the daughter of Sidon’s king, and he worshiped Baal. One day, Elijah came to Ahab and prophesied, “There will be no more rain!”

Ahab was so stunned by this daring prophet that he couldn’t get his thoughts together until Elijah had left. There was no more rain from that day on.

After three and a half years, Elijah returned and said to the king, “Gather all Israel and the priests of Baal to Mt. Carmel.” When they gathered at Mt. Carmel, Elijah shouted, “God? Or Baal? How long are you going to hesitate between the two? Choose your god today. The one who answers with fire is the true God!”

Baal’s priests numbered 450. Elijah was alone but unafraid because he knew God was with him. The priests of Baal started to call on their god to burn their sacrifice, shouting and doing self-injury, but Baal was quiet.

Now came Elijah's turn. Elijah didn't make noise; he just knelt quietly and prayed, "Hear me, O Lord, that these people may know you are the true God, and you turned their hearts to you." Before he finished his prayer, heavenly fire came down and consumed everything, the sacrifice and even the altar. All the Israelites bowed before God. At Elijah's instructions, they killed the 450 priests of Baal. That day, God sent rain to the thirsty land. Elijah was the prophet who bravely stood alone when nobody else did. God used him to turn Israel back to Him.

Sometimes, true prophets can be lonely and endure hard times because nobody understands. At that time, if they endure through faith in God, God will use them as a tool to finish His work. The Bible tells us in the last days, there will arise many prophets. They might be true or false, but if you compare their words with the Bible, you can tell which ones are true. The true ones are not afraid to be excluded or alone. They have faith and do what is right no matter the cost.

~ Taylor Kim

We sincerely hope that you have enjoyed these devotionals as much as they have blessed us! If you did not take advantage of the additional free devotionals in your email, those are still available.

Please consider purchasing a copy of the full book. It is available with a soft cover or hard back. All profits go to supporting student activities in the communications department at Oklahoma Academy.

We wish you God's richest blessings!