

⁶I called in my affliction, and ¹the LORD heard me
and saved me from ¹all my troubles.
⁷The angel of the LORD encamps around those who ¹fear the LORD,
and de- ¹livers them.
⁸Taste and see that the ¹LORD is good;
happy are they who take ref- ¹uge in God!
⁹Fear the LORD, you saints ¹of the LORD,
for those who fear the ¹LORD lack nothing. R

SECOND READING: Galatians 4:4–7

A reading from Galatians.

⁴But when the fullness of time had come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, ⁵in order to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as children. ⁶And because you are children, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba! Father!" ⁷So you are no longer a slave but a child, and if a child then also an heir, through God.

GOSPEL: Luke 1:46–55

⁴⁶And Mary said,
"My soul magnifies the Lord,
⁴⁷and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,
⁴⁸for he has looked with favor on the lowliness of his servant.
Surely, from now on all generations will call me blessed;
⁴⁹for the Mighty One has done great things for me,
and holy is his name.
⁵⁰His mercy is for those who fear him
from generation to generation.
⁵¹He has shown strength with his arm;
he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts.
⁵²He has brought down the powerful from their thrones,
and lifted up the lowly;
⁵³he has filled the hungry with good things,
and sent the rich away empty.
⁵⁴He has helped his servant Israel,
in remembrance of his mercy,
⁵⁵according to the promise he made to our ancestors,
to Abraham and to his descendants forever."

Daily Bible Readings:

These readings are related to the Lectionary readings for this Sunday. Try to take time each day to read the assigned Bible passage.

Sunday	Luke 12:49-56	Jesus the cause of division
Monday	John 7:1-12	People divided about Jesus
Tuesday	John 9:13-34	Pharisees divided on Jesus
Wednesday	Acts 14:1-7	Division at Iconium
Thursday	1 Corinthians 1:10-17	Paul writes about division
Friday	Hebrews 10:23-25,35-38	Persevere in the Lord
Saturday	Psalms 35	Contend, O Lord
Sunday	Luke 13:10-17	Jesus heals on the Sabbath

Scripture Verse for the Week:

Let us look only to Jesus, the One who began our faith and who makes it perfect.

– Hebrews 12:2a (NCV)

- Cut out & carry with you.
- Say at each mealtime.
- Read at bedtime.
- Commit to memory.

Prayer for this Week:

Lord Jesus, please help me to trust in you when times are hard. Keep me from falling away from you. Amen.

For Throughout the Day:

Lord Jesus, my Savior, help me to keep my eyes fixed on you today. Amen. (Hebrews 12:2)

A Blessing to Share:

May God give you a faith that keeps on going. May he keep your eyes fixed on Jesus. Amen. (Hebrews 12:1-2)

Mealtime Refrain:

Let us run the race of faith that is before us:

Let us never give up. (Hebrews 12:1)

Mealtime Prayer:

Lord, with food you feed us and with love you lead us.

Thank you for giving all we need for living. Amen.



Faith Talk:

- Who has been an encouragement to you in your life? How? (Share your story with your household or small group).
- Hebrews 11 lists people of faith who encourage us by the way they have trusted God. Who or what encourages you in your faith?
- How can you be an encourager of other Christians?

Devotional Practices:

Hebrews 12:1 speaks of Christians being surrounded by a "a great cloud of witnesses". In your home devotion times this week, consider those people who have been faith witnesses to members of your household. Write their names down on pieces of white card and cut into cloud shapes. Make a mobile (you could use a coat hanger as a frame) to hang in your home as a reminder of these people. Thank God for them in your home prayer times.

Service:

Plan to surprise someone in your congregation who has encouraged you with an encouragement visit or gift. Prepare a bouquet of flowers or a plate of treats to give them, or organize a small celebration party for them. Share with them when and how they have encouraged your household in following Jesus.

Rituals and Traditions:

Hebrews 12:1 encourages us to "get rid of everything that slows us down" from following Jesus. Join in a household ritual of repentance this week. Place a stone or rock on your table to symbolize things in your lives that keep you from living and acting the way Jesus wants you to (e.g. being rude or nasty to each other, lying about something we did or did not do, taking something that doesn't belong to us, not helping others). Pass the rock around, with each person sharing something they would like to say sorry to God for. When each person has had a turn, say the following prayer. *"Dear Jesus, please forgive us for those times when we don't follow you. Help us to fight against sin and to keep our eyes on you. Amen."* Then throw the rock away to symbolize God's removal of our sins through Christ.

Parent Toolbox: Clouds of Witnesses

Each Christian community is called to be a "cloud of witnesses" to its own children and youth – a community that cheers them on and inspires them through faith-full words and actions. Children and youth who know they are valued unconditionally by loving adults in their congregation learn the nature of God's love, and have substantial support systems to carry them through the teenage years. **For Discussion:** Does your congregation understand itself as a "cloud of witnesses" to its youth and children? In what ways can you work to connect your children with faith-full adults who can encourage and inspire?