

Ice Cream Company's Sweet Feat

The Canadian company Chapman's isn't just known for making delicious ice cream, but also for taking care of its employees and the world at large.

For instance, a fire burned down their factory in 2009, leaving operations stalled and workers unemployed for several months. As reported by *Goodable*, Chapman's continued paying their employees anyway and even gave them Christmas bonuses.

On the world stage, Chapman's put together 1,600 first aid kits for Ukrainian refugees overseas after the Russian invasion. And when Canada began welcoming some of these refugees, Chapman's "rented an apartment building, cleaned it, painted it, furnished it, and turned it into housing" for them.

Upon the company's 50th anniversary in 2023, Chapman's committed to another good deed. They created a new ice cream flavor—Cold Brew Coffee—and used the profits "to provide water purification systems to Indigenous families in need."

So kudos and happy anniversary to Chapman's! May the sweetness of their ice cream and acts of kindness flourish.

Learn to do good; seek justice, rescue the oppressed. (Isaiah 1:17)

Guide business owners in doing good, Father.

Swimming Lessons Save Lives

At the age of five, Cullen Jones nearly drowned on a water ride at Pennsylvania's Dorney Park. This incident led his parents to enroll him in swimming lessons, a decision that not only helped him conquer his fear of water, but also opened doors to competitive swimming—and even the Olympics.

In an interview with *NBC News*, Jones recalled witnessing a swim meet at age eight and declaring to his mother, “This is what I want to do.” Since then, he has become the first Black American to set a world swimming record, during the 2008 Olympic Games in Beijing in the 4 x 100 freestyle event.

Jones remains dedicated to helping children learn how to swim, especially those in the Black community who are three times more likely to drown. “We are trying to save lives here,” he noted.

Jones now travels the country as part of the USA Swimming Foundation's Make a Splash Tour, which educates parents and children on the significance of swimming—and offers free or low-cost 30-minute swimming lessons.

**Bless the Lord...all that swim in the waters.
(Daniel 3:79)**

Lord, bolster the efforts of those who seek to save lives.

Teen Models Effective Leadership

Michelle Zou, a senior at Robert F Kennedy High School in Queens, New York, has a simple word to describe what she loves about soccer: teamwork, both on the field and off. That's what has made her an impressive leader, reports *NY1 News*. She understood the strengths and weaknesses of her team members and led her girls' varsity soccer team to the playoffs in 2023.

During the pandemic, Zou joined Bring Change to Mind, a club dedicated to raising awareness and offering support to teenagers facing mental challenges. Organizing group meetups and movie nights on Zoom, she helped combat the isolation experienced during those difficult times.

When pandemic restrictions eased, Zou collaborated with her school's service club and other schools to organize the Flushing Lunar New Year parade, a celebration that connected them to their culture and showcased their achievements.

As Zou moves on to Stony Brook University to study biology, her quiet leadership will undoubtedly continue to bring her community together.

**When you have fulfilled all your duties...receive
a wreath for your excellent leadership.**

(Sirach 32:2)

*Teach me to be a respected and worthy leader,
Creator.*

America the Beautiful

America the Beautiful is one of our most appealing and patriotic hymns, and it was born on the Fourth of July.

The words were written by Katharine Lee Bates, a teacher who was inspired by a trip she made across America. In her diary for July 4, 1894, she wrote glowingly of the beauty of the fertile prairies, a beauty that she recalled in some of the words of *America the Beautiful*.

The poem was published for the first time a year later on Independence Day. And, as you know, it contains these lines: “America, America, God shed His grace on thee, and crown thy good with brotherhood, from sea to shining sea.”

Freedom means little without brotherhood (and sisterhood, of course). Let’s all keep working at our ideals to make America a beautiful place of liberty and justice for all.

Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called children of God. (Matthew 5:9)

Father, guide us in building bonds of brotherhood and sisterhood with each other.

'That's An Angel'

Ohioan Haily Moss-Strong was driving home from a Fourth of July party when she happened to notice “black smoke above the trees.” After initially thinking it might be a “rogue firework,” the 23-year-old drove towards it, just to be sure. Her sharp instincts led her to a house in Fairfield Township, where the garage was lit up in flames. Haily instantly ran to the front door, banging and shouting, “Your guys’ garage is on fire!”

Josh Ellis and his fiancée, Brittany Downing, were just starting to smell the smoke coming from their garage when they heard Haily knocking. After Ellis opened the door and confirmed what was happening, he and Downing lost no time in hustling their nine children out of the house. Thanks to Haily, all 11 members of the Downing-Ellis clan made it out alive. “That’s an angel,” Ellis told *WLWT News*. “She saved our family, no exaggeration about that.”

“Obviously, I was happy to be able to help them out and to get them out okay,” Haily concluded after a grateful Facebook post from Downing resulted in their meeting face-to-face, “but it was great to see them in person...It was really beautiful.”

Rescue...the needy...deliver them. (Psalm 82:4)

God, thank You for the earthly angels who walk among us.

For Love and Buttercup

For 19-year-old Emily Bhatnagar, there were no better or more faithful friends to her than her books as she grew up in Maryland. Little did she know that her literary companions would become the cornerstone of what is now an annual charitable book drive.

Affectionately named “For Love and Buttercup,” this charity has distributed a staggering 15,000 books to various children’s hospitals throughout the Washington, D.C. area.

It all began in 2019, when Bhatnagar’s father, Mike, was diagnosed with stage four thyroid cancer. He has since turned the corner to recovery, but Emily and her family didn’t know that then. Despite all the hardship Emily endured, she couldn’t help but empathize with the countless children who grappled with the same illness as her father. Thus, “For Love and Buttercup” was born.

“I got such a huge response,” Emily told *Today.com*. “I thought about how [buttercup flowers] represent everything pure and innocent and happy in the world. That’s exactly what I want these kids undergoing chemo treatment to feel... innocence.”

Blessed are the pure in heart. (Matthew 5:8)

Jesus, may I always work to protect the innocence of youth.

The Heart of the Matter

Though Karen Hill Crowell's life intersected with that of Thomas Cutinella in a tragic way, hope and joy were the ultimate results.

While in her 20s, Karen was diagnosed with congestive heart failure and faced certain death without a transplant. Around that time, reports New York's *Daily News*, 16-year-old Thomas was killed following a helmet-to-helmet collision during a high school football game. Thomas's heart was then donated to Karen, thereby saving her life.

Though heartbroken at her loss, Thomas's mom, Kelli, welcomed Karen into their family. "We developed a close bond over the years," Karen said, noting the Cutinellas also attended her wedding. And when Karen became pregnant with her daughter Colette, Kelli was thrilled!

Kelli said, "The first heartbeat [Colette] ever heard was Tom's. This validates that Tom's heart was incredibly strong when he passed along the gift of life...We hoped for Tom to be a dad. Now, through this gift of life, he was able to do that."

**You have turned my mourning into dancing.
(Psalm 30:11)**

Teach me to see life as a gift, Creator.

A Vocation of Healing

Most of us take the ability to eat by ourselves or walk down the street for granted. But that is not the case for those who have endured strokes, diseases, or injuries that have left their bodies somehow impaired. That's why Elizabeth Kloczko's work—her vocation, really—is so important.

Several years ago, journalist Bob Brody spent half a day with Kloczko at her job as senior occupational therapist for NYU Langone Medical Center's Rusk Institute of Rehabilitation. Her patients included a make-up artist with a limp arm due to lupus, and a podiatric surgeon with a spinal cord injury.

With a background as a classical ballet dancer, wrote Brody in New York's *Daily News*, “[Kloczko] knew the human body intimately enough to guide her patients with studied grace.” And by lovingly but patiently challenging each of them with various exercises, she slowly moved them toward achieving a level of independence once again. Recalling the experience, Brody observed, “I saw struggles translated into triumphs.”

**The physician heals and takes away pain.
(Sirach 38:7)**

Guide those struggling with physical infirmities to healers with kind and compassionate hearts, Father.

Planting Spiritual Seeds for Teens

Sherry Antonetti's teenagers attend Mass with her, but they don't particularly like it. Writing for *AmericaMagazine.org*, she admits her kids struggle with their faith and often wear ripped jeans and shorts to church. Still, she is happy they show up at all and hopes that spiritual seeds are being planted that will eventually lead them to embrace God and faith.

Antonetti also knows it's easy for others in the pews to judge her teens by the way they're dressed. Yes, she wishes their clothes were more formal, too. But she suggests, "Instead of judging them, say a prayer to St. Monica for the family. In the meantime, smile each time you see a teen or college student in the pews, no matter how they look. Do not become the rationale they use to stop coming."

Regarding her hopeful approach, Antonetti concludes, "Light attracts. Joy invites. Love reveals. We must bring all three gifts to the altar. Christ will do the multiplying, and we will have a church brimming with squirmy teens and toddlers, and we will rejoice that we are overflowing with people."

Train children in the right way, and when old, they will not stray. (Proverbs 22:6)

Help teens to embrace Your love, Father.

Waffle House Friendship Changes Lives

Kayzen Hunter, age eight, enjoys eating with his family at their local Waffle House in Little Rock, Arkansas. He especially loves his waiter, Devonte Gardner, who he always greets with a high five and a joke.

As they got to know each other, Devonte revealed that he had moved his wife and two children into a motel because their apartment didn't have heat and was infested with rats, roaches, and mold. Plus, Devonte didn't have a car to drive to work.

Kayzen convinced his mom to start a *GoFundMe* to raise money for Devonte to buy a car. He wrote, "Devonte is one of the most joyous and positive people you've ever met!!...I hope your heart is as BIG as mine and you will help me spread kindness in the world. Any amount helps!!"

Though Kayzen's initial goal was \$5,000, he raised \$100,000, allowing Devonte to get a new apartment and car for his family. Devonte is saving the rest of the money for his children's education and future. He told *Today.com*, "[Kayzen] has a very huge heart, and I'm thankful he came into my life."

Let no one despise your youth, but set the believers an example in speech and conduct.
(1 Timothy 4:12)

May our children be models of generosity, Messiah.

An Irish and African Reunion

In Mankon, Cameroon, during the 1980s, girls did not receive the same educational opportunities as boys, unless they attended Our Lady of Lourdes Secondary School, which was run by the Holy Rosary Sisters from Ireland. These caring nuns provided love, structure, and discipline to their female students as they nurtured and encouraged their potential.

In 2023, 21 of these former students traveled to Ireland for a reunion with the Sisters, who had given them the foundation for a bright future. They met at the airport, where they embraced and even sang together in moments of pure joy.

Sister Mary Neville, who served as principal, recalled to *RTÉ News*, “The girls were anxious to make the best of their opportunity, and they worked very hard. I found them very conscientious and responsible people.”

Former student Dr. Claire Minang said, “[The Sisters] made us understand that we matter, that we are enough as women in this masculine world...They gave us everything we needed to excel in the world...That’s why we’re so grateful.”

I will instruct you and teach you the way you should go. (Psalm 32:8)

Bless teachers who improve their students' lives, Lord.

Cheer is Catching

Many studies support the psychological observation that “emotions are contagious.”

When we’re with a cheerful person, we feel more cheerful. When we’re with a sad person, we feel sad.

Psychologists found that people who express their emotions freely, through facial expressions and body language, are more likely to pass along their mood to others. Those who express emotions less readily are more easily affected by the moods of others.

But we all respond to other people’s feelings, unconsciously and almost instantly.

It’s easy to see why a sense of humor is important. It not only makes us feel more cheerful, but our feelings spread to those around us. So, do your best to be of good cheer.

For everything there is a season...a time to weep and a time to laugh. (Ecclesiastes 3:1,4)

Help me to be cheerful, Gracious God.

Pay It Forward

Now that rules allow student-athletes to make money for the use of their names and images, Indiana University basketball player Anthony Leal will finally be able to fulfill his dream of helping his sister, Lauren, financially. “I don’t expect anything in return,” he told *CBS News*. “I know she’ll pay it forward.”

Student-athletes can get gifts from boosters, make deals with companies, and arrange endorsements. A business major, Anthony has even started his own real estate company. He reports saving up more than \$50,000 to pay off Lauren’s student loan debt.

Her brother’s gift has taken a load off Lauren’s shoulders, allowing her to pursue her dream of becoming a physician’s assistant. She said, “Freedom would be the best word for that... I can go full steam ahead in my future and what I want to accomplish, what I want to do, without having that just weighing me down and holding me back...It’s surreal, it’s incredible.”

I take pleasure in...agreement among brothers and sisters. (Sirach 25:1)

May we be grateful for the many gifts we’ve been given, Lord, and share them with others.

Roma Downey's Life Lessons

“Everywhere you turn, the world seems divided,” says actress and author Roma Downey. “I want to encourage people to reach out and help a brother, help a sister.”

Downey, 63, told *AARP: The Magazine* there are eight lessons she's learned during her life:

- **Grow from grief.** Her parents died when she was young and that gave her empathy for others' suffering.
- **Don't postpone joy.**
- **Believe in fate.** “I was looking for a job when a role in *Touched by an Angel* turned up.”
- **Find a Family.** Biologically related isn't necessary.
- **Drink Tea.**
- **Lend a Hand.** When she and her siblings were bored as kids, their father said, “Well, go do something for somebody else.”
- **Keep Learning.**
- **Light the Way.**

What life lessons have you learned?

Whoever pursues righteousness and kindness will find life and honor. (Proverbs 21:21)

*Allow me to “help a brother, help a sister,”
Jesus.*

To Be Made Well, Part 1

Amy Julia Becker has endured several painful physical ailments during her life. But as she discovered, there were emotional and spiritual components to her suffering as well—and without addressing those, she couldn't find true healing.

When Amy Julia was a high school sophomore, she was diagnosed with a paralyzed stomach, a rare condition. In essence, her stomach wasn't processing food, leading to extreme weight loss. Over the next five or six years, she endured hospitalizations and medications that didn't solve the problem. It wasn't until Amy Julia treated her ailment holistically that a change occurred.

During a *Christopher Closeup* interview, she recalled that while receiving physical therapy and massage for her stomach, she began talking to the therapist about her friends and family. That relational aspect of the sessions woke up Amy Julia's insides by integrating her body, mind, and spirit, allowing her to finally move past her stomach issues.

Life was good for 10 years, until stress brought another ailment into her life, and she needed to relearn an old lesson.

May your spirit and soul and body be kept sound. (1 Thessalonians 5:23)

Help me better integrate body, mind, and spirit, Creator.

To Be Made Well, Part 2

Over the next 10 years, Amy Julia Becker got married and had three children, including a daughter named Penny, who has Down syndrome—and about whom she wrote the Christopher Award-winning memoir *A Good and Perfect Gift*. When life got stressful again, Amy Julia found herself suffering from severe lower back pain. Having forgotten the holistic healing lesson of her youth, she once again addressed this problem solely on a physical level at first.

Finally, Amy Julia went to see a professional named Anne about stretching exercises. They sat on a yoga mat, and Anne asked why she was there. Amy Julia explained that she might have a problem with her spinal alignment. Anne responded, “Anytime I hear someone use the word ‘alignment,’ I think there’s more likely something that’s not aligned in your life than not aligned in your body.”

That comment got Amy Julia talking about the ways her life felt out of alignment. “As I talked over that next hour,” she said, “we did not do one yoga pose...I really felt my back release...That moment [reminded me] the body, mind, and spirit are connected.”

**Put a new and right spirit within me.
(Psalm 51:10)**

Help me recall the lessons You already taught me, Lord.

To Be Made Well, Part 3

As a writer and speaker who shares her Christian faith, Amy Julia Becker reflected on the body-mind-spirit connection she had experienced, resulting in a new view of Jesus's healings in the Bible. In her book *To Be Made Well*, she reflects on the story of Jesus healing the woman who had been bleeding for 12 years (Mark 5:25-34), after she touched the hem of His garment.

Amy Julia realized that more than just a physical healing occurred. After her bleeding stopped, Jesus called the woman forward and publicly announced, "Daughter, your faith has healed you. Go in peace and be free from your suffering."

This was Jesus's way of restoring this woman to God and to the community. "This was a woman who was on the margins of society," Amy Julia explained on *Christopher Closeup*. "And she was bleeding for 12 years...There would be...some sense of being rejected...For Jesus not only to have the power go out from Him that cures her, but then to call her forward and listen to her is to honor her. It is to say, 'You have a voice'...and to tell everybody, 'She is a daughter.'"

**If I but touch His clothes, I will be made well.
(Mark 5:28)**

Help me to be made well, Jesus.

To Be Made Well, Part 4

Another lesson Amy Julia Becker learned from this new view of Jesus's healings is that we are all beloved by God, no matter what our physical condition or state in life. This was a particularly difficult idea for Amy Julia to absorb because she was always a person very focused on intellectual achievement.

Giving birth to her daughter Penny, who has Down syndrome, opened her eyes to a more holistic way of looking at people and the world. During a *Christopher Closeup* interview about her book *To Be Made Well*, Amy Julia observed, "Especially in modern Western culture, we have such a sense of needing to prove ourselves through what we do. And for many people living with disabilities, that's essentially impossible.

"So, if we're able to say there's a belovedness and a value to you intrinsically, there's so much beauty and hope for all of us in that, because it means, I don't have to prove it...and strive constantly...It's something I can receive, this sense of belovedness being bestowed upon each of us, rather than something that we have to earn. That's a real gift."

Beloved, since God loved us so much, we also ought to love one another. (1 John 4:11)

*Help me accept the gift of being loved by You,
Father.*

To Be Made Well, Part 5

In raising her daughter Penny, who has Down syndrome, Amy Julia Becker came to see that society's view of people with disabilities needs to change. "My own biases against people with disabilities was to think that was a poor life, a sad life," she said. "Penny has opened my eyes, but also my heart, to a broader understanding of my own humanity and that of everyone around me as well."

For instance, Amy Julia once met a nonverbal teenager who had Down syndrome and autism. Her initial reaction to the girl was, "I can see her needs, but I can't see her gifts." After spending time with the girl, however, Amy Julia saw her "bring peace and gentle touch to the people she was with."

Now, Amy Julia approaches everyone she meets with the view that person can be a gift to her and others. She also asks how she herself can be a gift to them.

Ultimately, Amy Julia prays that all people find the healing they need through acceptance of their own belovedness before God and the goal of being "agents of healing in the world."

God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong. (1 Corinthians 1:27)

Open my eyes to the beauty of other people's gifts, Creator.

One Small Visit

Anisha Abraham was only a few months old in 1969, when her parents and grandmother were on a road trip that took them through the town of Wapakoneta, Ohio, the home of astronaut Neil Armstrong, who had recently returned from the moon.

Though the Abrahams, who were immigrants from India, stood out in their native attire, they decided to explore the town. When they passed the house of Armstrong's parents, Anisha's mother and grandmother decided to knock on their door and congratulate them on their son's accomplishment.

As reported by the *Washington Post*, the Armstrongs warmly welcomed the Abrahams into their home. It turned out that Neil, who had visited India on a world tour, was visiting his parents that day and joined in on the conversation. He even took a photo of the Abrahams with his parents on their front porch.

Anisha's friend, Jo Chim, turned this story into the short film *One Small Visit*. She describes the movie this way: "It's a story between two very different families finding connection and a shared humanity; a testament to taking leaps of faith and small acts of openness and kindness that make a difference."

Extend hospitality to strangers. (Romans 12:13)

May we all find our shared humanity, Creator.

Transplant Patient Offers Heartfelt Help

One of the happiest days of Denise Redeker's life led to one of the most shocking. In 1992, Redeker gave birth to a son and soon after discovered that she was suffering from postpartum cardiomyopathy, an extremely rare form of heart failure. For the next 20 years, reported *Costco Connection* magazine, Redeker managed her disease. And in 2018, she finally received a heart transplant that saved her life.

During a post-transplant checkup, Redeker overheard a man in her doctor's office saying his transplant had been delayed because he couldn't afford to pay for housing near the hospital that would perform the surgery. Because follow-up appointments are crucial after transplants, patients who don't live in the area need to make accommodations.

Redeker felt distressed at the man's situation, so she created the Heartfelt Help Foundation to raise money for "heart transplant recipients in Northern California to assist them in finding clean and safe housing post-surgery." She is thrilled that she can make a difference and help save lives.

Relieve the troubles of my heart, and bring me out of my distress. (Psalm 25:17)

*Guide transplant patients toward healing,
Holy Spirit.*

A Light on an Angel Wing

Nearly 20 years ago, Sister Ave Clark, O.P., survived a debilitating accident in which a runaway train hit the car she was driving in Queens, New York. After a year of hospitalization and rehab, Sister Ave was giving a talk in a parish when a man approached her and said he was glad she was doing well.

Sister Ave didn't recognize him, so he revealed that he was a volunteer ambulance worker who was at the scene of her accident. The paramedics told him that she was in shock and her blood pressure kept dropping, so he needed to talk with her to keep her mind and spirit alive. He kept telling Sister Ave, "You're not alone. You're going to be alright."

Sister Ave believes that man was "a light on an angel wing" in her life. During a *Christopher Closeup* interview about her book of the same title, she noted, "What is the light that we all need that comes down? At times, hope, comfort, encouragement...So I think that light on that wing gently comes to earth through all of the words, deeds, and actions that you and I have."

My angel is with you. (Baruch 6:7)

May the light on an angel wing grant me comfort and guidance in times of distress, Lord.

A Celtic's Wisdom

As his team faced possible elimination in the NBA's Eastern Conference Finals in 2023, Boston Celtics head coach Joe Mazzulla was asked what he was doing to keep from being consumed by worry about the next game. He responded with a combination of wisdom and perspective.

Coach Mazzulla said, "I met three girls under the age of 21 with terminal cancer, and I thought I was helping them by talking to them, [but] they were helping me. And so, having an understanding about what life is really about and watching a girl die and smiling, enjoying her life—that's what it's really all about."

"The other thing," Mazzulla continued, "is you always hear people give glory to God and say 'thank You' when they're holding a trophy. But you never really hear it in times like this. And so, for me, it's an opportunity to just sit right where I'm at and just be faithful. That's what it's about."

Your steadfast love is before my eyes, and I walk in faithfulness to You. (Psalm 26:3)

Father, grant me perspective on what truly matters in life.

A Couple That Laughs Together

Ever since she hit the best-seller list with her late-in-life memoir *About My Mother*, author Peggy Rowe has been an in-demand speaker. John, her husband of 62 years, usually accompanies her to her appearances.

At a recent talk, one audience member asked the inevitable question: what was her secret to staying married for 62 years?

Peggy responded, “Hey, our marriage is just like anybody else’s. It’s not all hugs and kisses and bluebirds and happiness. We have our moments!”

At that point, John, who was sitting in the front row, turned to the audience, made a face, and nodded enthusiastically. The crowd erupted in laughter!

“And here you have it,” Peggy said. “The secret to our lasting marriage...a sense of humor. Even after your wife starts wearing flannel pajamas and wool socks to bed—there is humor. Even after you notice the cracking sound her jaw makes whenever she chews—there is humor. Long after he starts ‘picking’ his teeth at the table and brings you birthday flowers that have to be dusted—there is still humor!...Long live humor!”

God has brought laughter for me. (Genesis 21:6)

May I always maintain a good sense of humor, Father.

Strengthening Your Mind

Though we often assume our memories will get worse as we age, neuroscientist Dr. Richard Restak disagrees. In his book *The Complete Guide to Memory: The Science of Strengthening Your Mind*, he explains that there are “stumbling blocks” which affect how much we remember.

For instance, reports *The San Diego Tribune*, if you can’t recall the name of someone you met at a party, it might be because you were distracted, not because your memory is faulty. If you can train yourself to pay better attention and truly focus on the people in front of you, this problem may quickly improve.

Dr. Restak also points out the danger of storing all your contact information in your phone instead of remembering phone numbers or email addresses in your head.

To boost memory, Dr. Restak advises readers to engage in daily “memory challenges,” such as putting your grocery list in your pocket and seeing if you can remember it all without looking. He also suggests playing memory games, such as naming all the U.S. Presidents.

I consider the days of old, and remember the years of long ago. (Psalm 77:5)

May I remember Your love and goodness always, Abba.

Nonviolence and Courage

Louise Degraf, a 73-year-old Tennessee woman, believed in nonviolence—and she adhered to that belief in extreme circumstances.

Many years ago, an armed, escaped convict broke into her home, threatened her and her husband, and demanded something to eat. She told him that he would first have to put his gun down. “I’m a Christian woman,” Degraf told the intruder. “I don’t want any violence.”

When the man put the gun down, she fixed breakfast for him. In the meantime, police arrived on the scene. Mrs. Degraf went out to speak to them and told them the man would come out peacefully. But first he had to be allowed to finish his breakfast.

That lady had a lot of spunk! She just didn’t like violent solutions.

Each of us should try to resolve conflicts peacefully whenever we can. Our efforts may not always work, but they are still worth the effort. Keeping the peace is everybody’s business, every day.

Put away violence...execute justice and righteousness. (Ezekiel 45:9)

Prince of Peace, guide our steps in the way of peace.

Making Good Medicine

The late Dr. Jane Carswell was a special kind of family doctor. So special, in fact, that she was the first woman ever named family doctor of the year by the American Academy of Family Physicians.

In her 22 years of service as a physician in North Carolina, Dr. Carswell went far beyond the call of duty. Besides providing the normal health care of a private practitioner, she also tended to community needs.

Through her leadership, a home for battered women was established. She helped set up shelters for troubled teens, as well as a retirement community for senior citizens.

Good citizens like Dr. Carswell often lead the way in helping others. But leadership is a skill that can be learned and developed by anyone. Perhaps there are ways you can take the lead in bringing help and hope to people in need.

We are what He has made us, created in Christ Jesus for good works. (Ephesians 2:10)

How can I lead in doing good, Counselor?

Friendship at the Breakfast Club

Many years ago, Bob Bennett of Denver, Colorado, assembled a group of breakfast companions for himself. Every Saturday morning, he and 20 other members of the Widowed Men's Breakfast Club would meet to eat and talk.

He got the idea when he realized that other widowers like himself had depended on their wives for socializing. "Just getting men out of the house is half the battle. The club gives them a new social life of their own," explained Bennett.

They acted as a support group for the bereaved, but also talked about practical matters, such as tips for cleaning the house, cooking, and shopping.

One way to deal with our own problems is to reach out to others with the same difficulty. Such mutual recognition and support can ease a burden. It might even help you get on with your life.

Father of orphans and protector of widows is God in His holy habitation. (Psalm 68:5)

Loving Father, help those enduring grief nurture relationships that bring light and healing to their lives.

Camp Helps Youngster Find Healing, Part 1

Because her mother suffered from mental health issues and her father was incarcerated, Maria was taken in by her grandmother as a child. Not having her parents around left Maria feeling lonely, while her rough neighborhood made her anxious. The only person she felt safe around was her grandmother.

Maria's grandmother tried to get her to talk about her feelings, but the little girl wouldn't open up. Then, at age eight, Maria got a scholarship to Pine Valley Camp, which is sponsored by Prison Fellowship's Angel Tree program. Their motto is, "Fun builds the bridge to the heart of a kid."

As reported by *PrisonFellowship.org*, the girl soon grew to feel so safe with her counselors—many of whom also had a parent in prison—that she opened up to them about her fears and anxieties. They also helped her realize she was a child of God.

Maria said, "[Camp] helped me to recognize my issues rather than hiding from them and face those, and bring God into it."

More tomorrow...

Let us consider how to provoke one another to love and good deeds. (Hebrews 10:24)

Show Your love to children of the incarcerated, Lord.

Camp Helps Youngster Find Healing, Part 2

Maria returned to Pine Valley Camp each year, because it helped her grow in self-confidence and spiritual strength. She came to realize that she now needed to make a positive difference in the lives of her seven siblings, who still lived with their mother despite her mental health issues.

Maria took her brothers and sisters out for walks and ice cream, coaxing them to share with her their own fears and anxieties. She also convinced them to attend Pine Valley Camp, where they received support from the counselors. In fact, Maria went on to become a counselor there. She also accepted her incarcerated father's request to have a relationship with her.

Regarding Prison Fellowship's Angel Tree camping program, Maria said, "When these kids are out in the city and they don't have a connection to God and they don't have people in their life that are investing in them, this is such an important place, because they get to come here, and they're invested in, and they learn about Jesus."

It is to such as these that the kingdom of God belongs. (Mark 10:14)

Send children the emotional and spiritual support they need to survive and thrive, Savior.

Gratitude Takes Work

It's easy to forget to say prayers of gratitude, notes Kerry Weber at *AmericaMagazine.org*. We often turn to God in times of trouble, but when things go our way, we might take all the credit and forget to thank God for His role in our success.

An antidote can be found in St. Ignatius of Loyola's Daily Examen, in which he urges his fellow Jesuits (and all who pray the Examen) to be thankful twice a day. This can be helpful in creating a habit of gratitude, even when we're not feeling it.

Kerry concludes, "Gratitude as a practice takes work; it reminds us that sometimes challenges can be a source of gratitude, and that even in the midst of hard times there is often much to be thankful for: the comfort of a friendship, the communion of the saints, the forgiveness of sins, life everlasting. This sort of gratitude leads us toward greater freedom, the sort of freedom that allows us in prayers of petition to ask not for our will but God's. I am often reminded of the words of Dag Hammarskjöld, who wrote: 'For all that has been, Thank You. For all that is to come, Yes!' Let us be grateful for the opportunity to offer that yes."

**Give thanks in all circumstances.
(1 Thessalonians 5:18)**

Lord, may we strive to live with grateful hearts.