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### LET US KNOW...

If you have a change in address, phone or email, have a loved one who is or hospitalized, have a new baby, would like a pastoral visit, or if you would like a special prayer during the prayers of the church on Sunday, please contact Pastor Koepp or the church office.

### DO YOU...

want to put something in the bulletin or newsletter?

Have a prayer request? Birth/Anniversary/Graduation announcements?

If so, please submit the information as you want it to appear in the bulletin or newsletter by the deadlines listed below to the church secretary at [immanuellutheran@iowatelecom.net](mailto:immanuellutheran@iowatelecom.net).

Deadline for submitting in the weekly bulletin is Thursdays by noon.

Deadline for the monthly newsletter is the 15th of each month.

For those of you without email access, please call or submit your written request to the church secretary.

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# NEWSLETTER FOR

August 2021

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### *A Letter From the Pastor*

#### ***"Unusual? Maybe Not So Much"***

The anniversary of the Derecho happens this month, I find myself thinking of Luke 7, **"Soon afterward [Jesus] went to a town**

**called Nain, and his disciples and a great crowd went with him. As he drew near to the gate of the town, behold, a man who had died was being carried out, the only son of his mother, and she was a widow, and a considerable crowd from the town was with her. And when the Lord saw her, he had compassion on her and said to her, "Do not weep." Then he came up and touched the bier, and the bearers stood still. And he said, "Young man, I say to you, arise." And the dead man sat up and began to speak, and Jesus gave him to his mother. Fear seized them all, and they glorified God, saying, "A great prophet has arisen among us!" and "God has visited his people!" And this report about him spread through the whole of Judea and all the surrounding country."**

During the course of our everyday lives, we at times experience unusual hardships. There are many things that happen in the course of our lives that we do not expect. It could be a flood, a tornado, a fire, a car or machinery breaking down. We are also met with unusual tragedies. It could be a sudden severe illness, reoccurring illness, addiction, a family hardship, or even a sudden death. Jesus Christ, in His earthly life, came across these types of tragedies as well. As He approached the small village of Nain, not too far from the city of Capernaum, He met with a group who had experienced a tragedy.

As He and His disciples and a crowd were traveling along the road, rejoicing and no doubt talking of the great miracle that Jesus had just performed, the healing of the Centurion's servant, they come across a funeral procession. In this sad band of people, there is a mother who had just lost her son. She had lost her husband, as the text points out that she is a widow, and now she has lost her son. As Luke points out, it is her only son.

There is a considerable amount of grief that this one woman is going through. There would not only be the grief over the loss of her son and husband, but there would be concern for her future as well. There were very few women in those times and in those places of the East that would be able to support themselves. She would have to rely upon those who had not expected to provide for her and give herself to the generosity of a brother-in-law or some one from her own clan. With so much sadness and so much uncertainty, she walks in the funeral procession to lay her son in the ground.



It is here, that she meets with our Lord. We read in our text the Lord had compassion on her. The literal meaning of this word is very graphic. It means complete outpouring of inward parts. In other words, His insides were literally turning for compassion for this woman. With this compassion, Jesus tells the woman not to weep and then touches the bier, the vessel used to carry the dead boy. Touching this would have made Him ceremonially unclean, but Christ gives life to the dead

boy. He brings cleanness where there is uncleanness. He brings life where there is death. This boy who no longer belonged to his mother because he had already passed away, is given back to his mother. We hear in verse 15 that Jesus gave the boy to his mother. This care and compassion is echoed again as He hangs on the cross and He speaks to His mother and the disciple whom He loved, "Son behold your mother and mother behold your son."

This care and compassion that God has for His creation we see throughout the Scriptures, and we have but one example in our reading at Nain, and this is typical of His concern in the whole history of mankind. Jesus tells us that "not one sparrow will fall to the ground without your Father's will...and even the hairs of your head are all numbered."



God's care and compassion for His fallen creation is beyond our comprehension. That gut-wrenching, heart-turning compassion that God has for us is so great that He sent His only Son to die for us. Brothers and sisters in Christ Jesus, we are like the dead boy. We are dead in our trespasses and sins. All of us have sinned and have fallen short of the glory of God. Because of our sin, we deserve nothing but punishment and everlasting death. In our sinful state, we are cut off from our Heavenly Father. Because of our sin, that relationship with Him is severed and there is nothing that we can do to fix it. The dead cannot raise themselves!

Just as it took a miracle driven by compassion to raise the dead boy on the road by the village of Nain, so it takes a miracle of the same compassion to raise our dead-in-sin bodies. With the Words of Christ on that road, "Young man, I say to you, arise," that boy was raised from the dead and given back to his mother. With the words on the cross, "It is finished," the payment for sin, for our sin, was paid in full. With the words, "I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit," you were buried with Christ and made alive in Christ Jesus.

Through that washing of water and word, your sinful Adam was drowned, and you were given a new life, a new Adam. At the font, you were made into a new creation. You were brought into His family. You were made an heir in His Kingdom.

Just as the boy was given back to his mother. So through the blood of Christ, by His Word and His Work, you are given back to your heavenly Father. Through Christ's death and resurrection, that victory over death and the grave is yours. In verse 16 of our text we hear the people proclaim, "God has visited his people!" The Lord has visited His people and He has not only visited His people, but He took on our flesh and abided with us. This visit was not just a passing, few day trip. This visit was and is. This visit continues even today. Christ is with us, He is with His people through His Word and Sacraments.



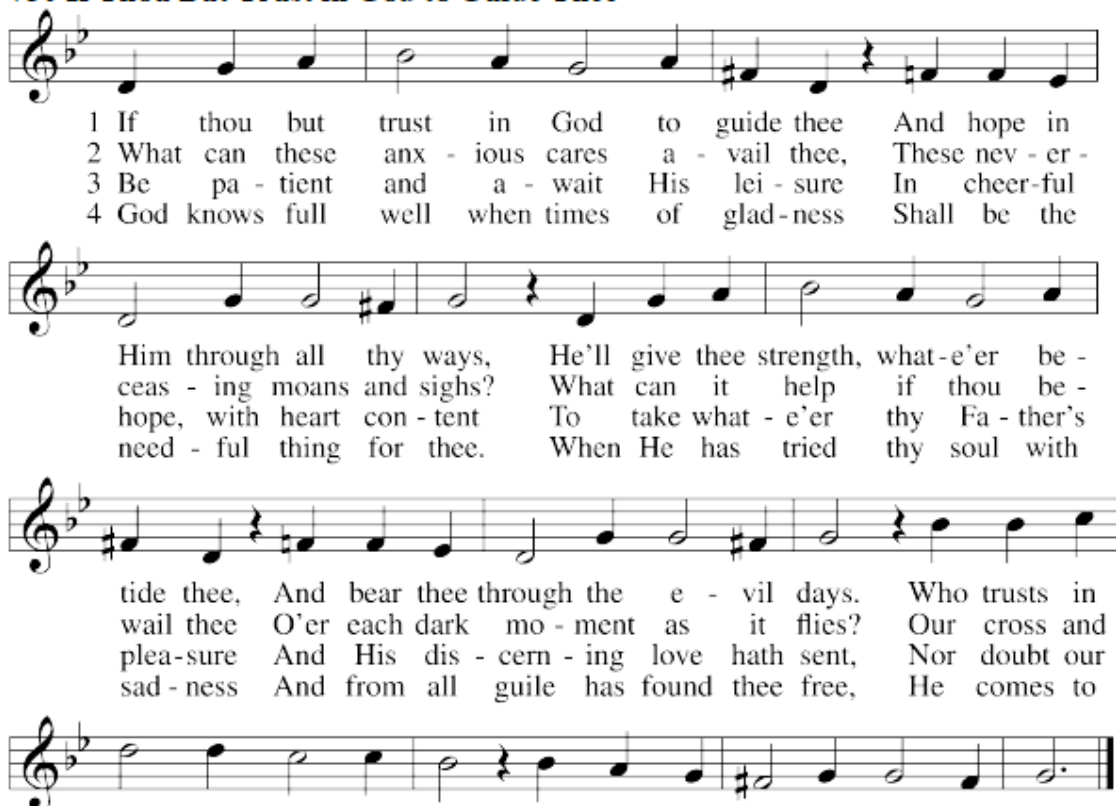
God has visited His people, but God never leaves His people. He never leaves you. The care and compassion that He had for His fallen creation, He has for you. He sent His son to restore that relationship that He desire to have with you. A relationship as Father and Child that is only partially realized by us now, but will be fully realized on the last day. As Christ raised this only son of a widow, He foreshadowed His Resurrection. Not only His, but ours as well. On the last great day, when Christ comes again in all His glory, He will speak to us, "I say to you, arise!"

And we will join him in everlasting righteousness, innocence, and blessedness.

Although we have hardships in this life, even though we will be faced with many unusual tragedies and some tragedies that are not so unusual, I want to remind you of these words from Psalm 138, "The Lord will fulfill his purpose for me; your steadfast love, O Lord, endures forever." His love, His compassion, His faithfulness for us, is steadfast. He will never leave us nor forsake us.

Join me in singing throughout this month:

**750 If Thou But Trust in God to Guide Thee**



1 If thou but trust in God to guide thee And hope in  
2 What can these anx - ious cares a - vail thee, These nev - er -  
3 Be pa - tient and a - wait His lei - sure In cheer - ful  
4 God knows full well when times of glad - ness Shall be the

Him through all thy ways, He'll give thee strength, what - e'er be -  
ceas - ing moans and sighs? What can it help if thou be -  
hope, with heart con - tent To take what - e'er thy Fa - ther's  
need - ful thing for thee. When He has tried thy soul with

tide thee, And bear thee through the e - vil days. Who trusts in  
wail thee O'er each dark mo - ment as it flies? Our cross and  
plea - sure And His dis - cern - ing love hath sent, Nor doubt our  
sad - ness And from all guile has found thee free, He comes to

God's un - chang - ing love Builds on the rock that naught can move.  
tri - als do but press The heav - ier for our bit - ter - ness.  
in - most wants are known To Him who chose us for His own.  
thee all un - a - ware And makes thee own His lov - ing care.

**5 Nor think amid the fiery trial**  
That God hath cast thee off unheard,  
That he whose hopes meet no denial  
Must surely be of God preferred.  
Time passes and much change doth bring  
And sets a bound to ev'rything.

**6 All are alike before the Highest;**  
'Tis easy for our God, we know,  
To raise thee up, though low thou liest,  
To make the rich man poor and low.  
True wonders still by Him are wrought  
Who setteth up and brings to naught.

**7 Sing, pray, and keep His ways unswerving,**  
Perform thy duties faithfully,  
And trust His Word; though undeserving,  
Thou yet shalt find it true for thee.  
God never yet forsook in need  
The soul that trusted Him indeed.

*Text and tune: Public domain*



*Greetings in the name of our Lord Jesus from Orphan Grain Train, Central Iowa Branch 23, Clemons, Iowa!*

*Dear Friends at Immanuel,*

*Thank you for your generous donation to Orphan Grain Train. Our latest shipment was sent April 13th to Lithuania. We plan to send another load in late spring or early summer. We continue our mission of serving our Lord by providing for the needs of peoples all over the world, both in other countries and here at home. This is only possible because of individuals and groups like you who support us materially, financially and prayerfully. Please continue to include us in your prayers and we pray that God will bless*

*you as you serve your Lord. We always welcome visitors. We are here every Tuesday morning from 8:00-12:00. Coffee is at 10:00am sharp.*

*In His Love and Service,  
Bonnie Berrey, Secretary*







***A HUGE thank you to all who contributed items for the  
Gifts From the Heart box for the LWML National Convention***

These are the totals from the convention (Immanuel contributed to these totals):  
Baby items for Assurance for Life (a pregnancy center in Lexington, KY):

- 122 large boxes of diapers
- 368 small packages of diapers
- 883 burp cloths and bibs
- 3033 clothing items
- 1187 toys, teethingers, and pacifiers
- 480 blankets

MOST Ministries (Mission Opportunities Short Term)

- 6008 pairs of glasses
- Over 1000 Witness Bracelets

Concordia Seminary, St. Louis and Concordia Theological Seminary, Ft. Wayne  
\$33,270 in gift cards for their food banks and co-ops  
plus 444 other gift cards that did not have the money value marked.

***Your gifts will help spread God's Word  
and minister to His people.***





# HELLO, *August*

## The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod LCMS Stewardship Ministry

When it comes to stewardship, a favorite Bible verse is the account of the widow's mite (Luke 21:1–4). It's a moving account. Our Lord praises the seemingly small gift of two copper coins given by a poor widow above the abundance of gifts given by the rich, saying, "Truly, I tell you, this poor widow has put in more than all of them" (Luke 21:3). And that is usually where we stop. But the text goes on. "For they all contributed out of their abundance, but she out of her poverty put in all she had to live on" (Luke 21:4).

"She put in all she had to live on." She gave everything. She held nothing back. She trusted that the Lord who made her and all creatures; who gave her everything she had; who redeemed her from her own sin, from death, and the power of the devil; who called her by the gospel and enlightened her with His gifts of Word and Sacrament; would continue to do this. He would provide her with all that she needed for this body and life because that is the character of the God she had.

But this is not why we give small gifts. Her gift, though it appeared small, was actually large. When we are tempted to give small gifts, it is precisely because we want them to be small! We don't trust the Lord to provide for us. We give small gifts because we lack faith in the One who created us, redeemed us, sanctifies and keeps us in the one true faith. We give small gifts because we doubt that God will really give us what we need and desire. We give small gifts because we are not content with what God has already given.

We are not slaves, children of the slave woman, under the Old Covenant (Galatians 4). We are adopted sons of the free woman. And since we are sons, we are also heirs. And heirs receive the inheritance. For everything is already ours in Christ. And thus, moved by the willing spirit of adoption, we do the will of God in financial matters far beyond all that done by those under the Old Covenant who were forced by legal demands.

So, what have you decided to give? How do I decide what to give? Let the Scriptures be your guide.

We are to give proportionally to what we have received from God's giving to us (Luke 12:48; 1 Corinthians 16:1–2, 2 Corinthians 8:12). But you have not been set free to give nothing. See that you excel in the grace of giving (2 Corinthians 8:7)!

We are not free to live selfishly outside the Gospel, without regard for God who gives us all good gifts, without generosity for our neighbor who needs us and our gifts, without supporting the community of faith in which we live, without care for our spiritual fathers and those who teach and help raise our children in the faith, and without resources for the poor and needy.

In short, we are not free to live unto ourselves, hoarding what God has given us only for us. For love is the fulfillment of the law (Romans 13:10). And the sum of the law is this: Love God and love your neighbor (Matthew 22:34–40). We love because He first loved us. We give because He has given to us.

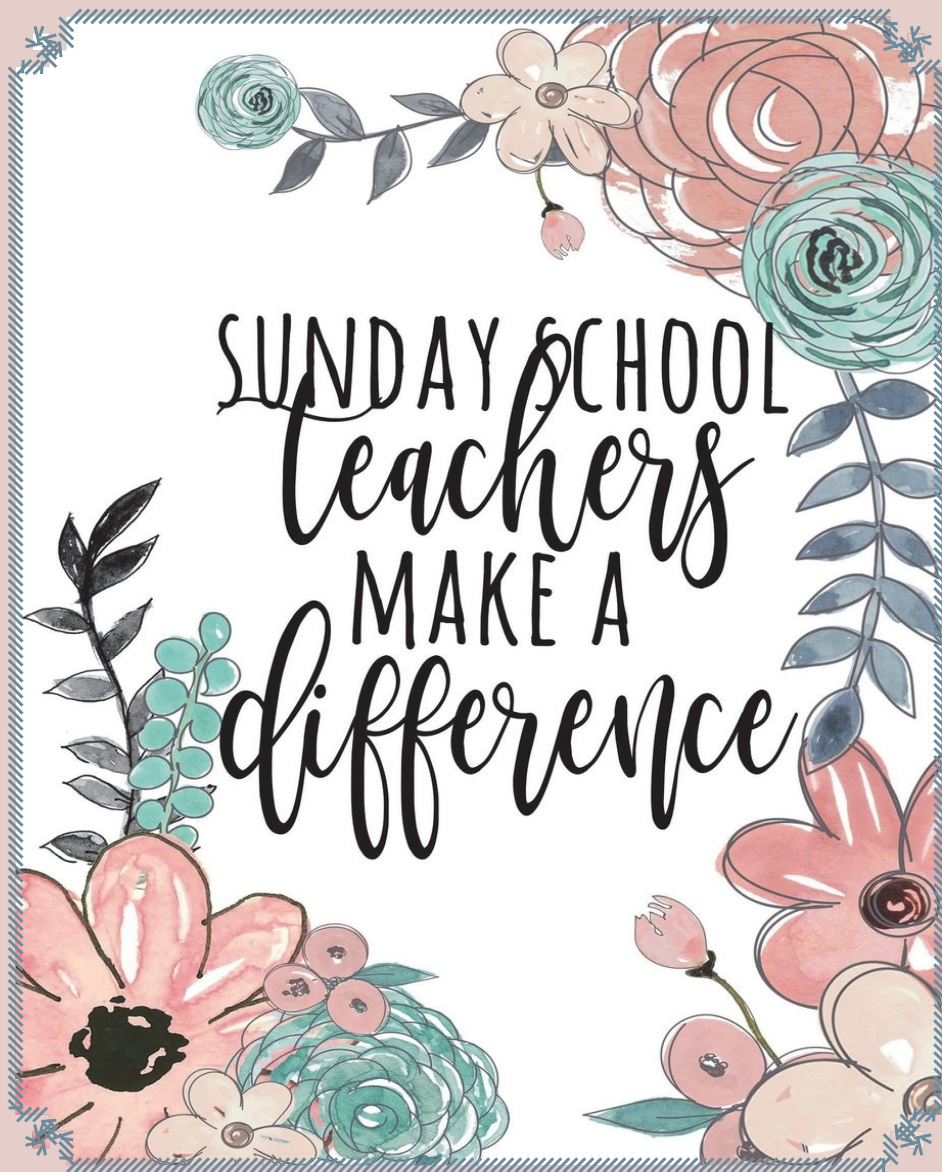
Luther once said, "Possessions belong in your hands, not in your heart" (LW 14:240). There is a reason your 10 fingers spread apart. With your hands you catch God's gifts for what you need and let the rest fall through your fingers to your neighbors – your family, your friends, your community, your church.



If anyone is interested and willing to teach yearly,  
monthly, or weekly, the Board of Education  
is wanting and willing to be flexible in scheduling teachers.

For more information, contact the Board of Education-

Danielle McDonough  
Sherry Baker  
Markie Koepp



# ***Finding Your Strengths in the Lord***

**by Bailey Becker**  
**July 16, 2021**



***God has blessed us all with different talents, and sometimes, it might feel like other people's abilities are better or more useful than your own. I know I have felt like this at times, and I recently felt this when I was with my family and our pontoon boat broke down.***

## **Struggling to Find Your Strengths**

My family has a small lake house, and every summer we go out on the water to swim, fish, and float. Our boat is from the 1990s, and it isn't always the most reliable. We have broken down before, but we had never broken down this far from the dock.

We had set out for the afternoon with eight people, a dog, floaties, fishing poles, and coolers full of food and drinks. We decided to take a lap around the lake before stopping to swim, but we didn't make it around the lake. We had just reached the farthest point from our dock when the boat sputtered and stopped running. All of us just froze and looked around, fearing that we might be stuck out on the water.

## **Discovering Your Strengths**

Although there were eight people on the boat, there were only four paddles, and we started to realize how difficult it was going to be to get back to shore. We started debating who was going to swim back and who would have to paddle. But then the boat started to take on water.



During our discussion, we had all moved to the front of the boat, and there had been too much weight there. Now part of our stuff was floating in the water, and our dog was trying desperately to get in the lake. We quickly rearranged how we were standing on the boat, caught the dog, and tried to get the remaining water out of the boat.

I am a horrible swimmer, and I would probably have had a panic attack if I had to swim that far, so it was decided that I needed to stay and help paddle. I grabbed a paddle and got to work, but I wasn't helping move the boat very much. I don't have much upper body strength, and that made it very difficult for me to paddle for that long.

As I paddled, I felt more and more discouraged as I struggled to keep up with the others. I began feeling weak and useless. These thoughts consumed my head as we headed back to the dock: *I can't swim back because I am such a bad swimmer, and I can hardly paddle back because I'm weak. So, what am I good for?*

I'm sure many of us have had this thought, and I've also had this thought when I'm trying to spread God's Word. I'm not a very confident person, and when I get nervous, I talk a lot and I talk really fast. I also get especially nervous when I talk about a particular topic that people have different views on. So I'm extra anxious trying to spread God's Word with nonbelievers and individuals in other religions.

My words come out rushed and jumbled, and most of the time, the other person looks very confused when I'm done talking. This look of confusion makes me wonder if I'm really helping God at all or if I'm just making people more confused and unsure of Him.

## **Using Your Strengths**

I have found that I have other talents I can use to benefit God. I love talking and I love reading, so I volunteer to read the Scripture verses during the service at my church. The verses act as my script, and all I have to do is read off the paper. I enjoy doing this, and I'm spreading God's Word in a way that utilizes my strengths.

God has given each of us a unique set of skills, and every one of them is useful. It might take a while to discover what your strengths are, but they are all necessary and beneficial no matter how big or small. I challenge you to push yourself out of your comfort zone just a bit and try to seek out other ways to serve the Lord.

For example, if you also get nervous when you're talking, then maybe volunteer to do something that doesn't involve talking. You can help during the offering collection at your church, help upkeep a church campus by weeding flower beds or cutting grass, or volunteer to clean the sanctuary. These jobs all help the Church to continue spreading the Word of God, are necessary tasks, and are usually in need of volunteers.

If you are searching for ways to utilize your strengths, then reach out to your pastor, church secretary, or other congregation members to see how your gifts can be used to help. We are all capable of serving the Lord, but we all have different ways of doing it, and one way is not more valuable than the other.

We finally made it back to the dock after about 45 minutes of paddling. That wasn't the first time I've had to paddle that boat back, and it won't be the last. But I don't criticize myself now when I'm paddling back, because swimming and paddling aren't my strengths. And that's okay—because God gave each of us our particular strengths for a reason.



*Written by  
Bailey Becker*

***Home grown on a local farm right here in St. Louis, Bailey Becker is a copywriting intern at Concordia Publishing House. She attends the University of Missouri-Columbia and is majoring in journalism with a minor in history. When she isn't talking non-stop, you'll find her reading, hiking, listening to music, or anything that involves being outside.***

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## Qualities of a “Good” Christian

*by Jennifer Gross  
July 26, 2021*

“Let’s go, push yourself!” the exercise instructor yelled. “We didn’t come here to be mediocre!” I laughed, or possibly just grimaced, and clumsily attempted the physical feat she demonstrated so easily. After class, I joked that given my age and lifelong lack of coordination, I aspire to be mediocre.

If you have played a sport, taken exercise classes, or worked with a personal trainer, then you have probably heard similar encouragement. Doing a little more at each workout makes us stronger and more fit. But the drive to always be better, faster, and stronger isn’t limited to the fitness world. We hear the same messages at our jobs, in our schools, and even in advertising. Just walk into a bookstore. The ever-growing “self-help” section testifies to the human longing to improve ourselves.

### ***What Is a “Good” Christian?***

This desire flows into our spiritual lives. We all want to be “good Christians,” with whatever behaviors we think that involves. A good Christian reads through the Bible every year. A good Christian doesn’t yell at his or her kids. A good Christian wouldn’t be bored at church. A good Christian prays faithfully, and never wonders what to eat for lunch.

2 Peter 1:5–7 says:

***Make every effort to supplement your faith with virtue, and virtue with knowledge, and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with steadfastness, and steadfastness with godliness, and godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love.***

That's quite a list!

When I read verses like this, it's easy to feel that I can never measure up. I try to read my Bible and pray every day, but sometimes I don't. And when I go back to whatever devotional or reading plan I started, the self-recriminations start: *I've missed how many days? I should have done better. Ugh. Why can't I get my act together?*

### ***A Book of Rules?***

When I was a kid, I heard the cheerful cliché that “Bible” stands for Basic Instructions Before Leaving Earth. For a long time, that's all I thought the Bible was—a book of life lessons and rules. Rules that I could never live up to. When read through that lens, the lists of virtues, the fruits of the Spirit, and what are meant to be encouraging exhortations all sound like condemnation.

But the Bible is not a self-help manual. It is not even about us. It is the story of who God is and what he has done for us. And when I read the Bible to get to know God and his ways, I can drop all of the self-focused ways I strive to be a “good” Christian.

Let's look at that passage from 2 Peter again. It doesn't start with “make every effort.” It starts here:

***His [Christ's] divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us to His own glory and excellence, by which He has granted to us His precious and very great promises, so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire. For this very reason, make every effort . . .” (2 Peter 1:3-5b)***

Jesus, through His life, death, and resurrection, has already given us what we need for godliness, whether we're “good” Christians or not. We “make every effort” to participate in the gifts of grace, life, and power that we already have, thanks to Jesus.

### ***Aiming to Know God***

When I'm striving to be a “good” Christian, and trying to prove myself to God or others, I'm going to fail every time.



When my greatest aim is to know God and how He loves us—well, I’ll still fail. But I run to God when I sin, instead of berating myself and running away. I want to read the Bible, pray, and love others better. I don’t do this to earn points on a nonexistent scorecard. I do it to participate in the life and godliness that Jesus has already given me.

When I begin with God’s grace instead of my self-improvement, I notice how kind God is and how tender He is with His people—even when they sin, even when they fail, even when they can’t see God in the face of Jesus and put Him to death. You see, it doesn’t matter if we are “good Christians” because there is no such thing. There is only the grace and forgiveness and love of Jesus.

Pushing myself harder might work in my barre class—but thanks be to God, Jesus loves mediocre Christians.



*Written by  
Jennifer Gross*

*Jennifer Gross is a women’s ministry leader in her local church and a stay-at-home mom to two teenage daughters. She’s passionate about digging into Scripture, telling and listening to stories about God’s work in our lives, and encouraging others to go deeper with God. As a former copy editor, she has surprisingly strong opinions about commas, semi-colons, and idioms.*

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