I love Jesus for lifting this burden from my shoulders. I am so relieved not to be "in charge" in such situations. Jesus gave us his Holy Spirit in order to enable us to do all he has commanded us to do. That really makes it easy. All we have to do is believe, accept, stop worrying and speak up!

Isaiah 4:2-6; Psalms 20, 21; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18

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Good News Daily

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Sunday, November 29

Matthew 25:1-13 *"Therefore keep the watch, because you do not know the day or the hour."* (v.13 NIV)

In this parable of the ten bridesmaids, Jesus draws a very clear distinction between those deemed "wise" and those deemed "foolish" in the kingdom of God. The wise ones are prepared for the groom's coming no matter what time, day or night, he should arrive. The foolish ones have not made the necessary preparations and when, at the last minute, they realize their short sightedness they try and borrow from the wise. But it is too late and they are shut out from the wedding banquet.

Getting ready for Christ's coming is a daily, lifelong process that we must each do for ourselves. Nobody can give us spiritual maturity. We cannot borrow our faith from our friends, nor can we inherit a personal relationship with Christ. We must do it ourselves. We must make our own preparations. We must seek God out for ourselves each and every day.

Dear Father, help us to draw close to You and abide in You so that if this day is our last, we are ready to join You in heaven.

Isaiah 1:1-9; Psalms 146, 147; 2 Peter 3:1-10

Monday, November 30

Isaiah 1:10-20 *"Stop bringing meaningless offerings."* (v.13)

Isaiah, great prophet of God, speaks timeless words of judgment and rebuke to the rebel residing in each of us. Though these words were specifically written to the people of God who had turned away from God, they are just as piercing today as they were in 700 BC. Sin is still around, and Christians daily are confronted by it. We choose God or we choose sin. And when we have chosen sin, God is ready to forgive and cleanse us from it if we confess and repent.

What are the "meaningless offerings" that Christians present to the Lord today? Sometimes it is our many hours of volunteer work, or our achievements in the workplace, or our years of teaching Sunday School, or our generous financial gifts to the Church. While all of these may be wonderful expressions of our faith, they are meaningless in terms of securing our relationship with the Lord. What He wants of us is our total trust. He desires to be one with us and that means complete submission to His will, and absolute dependence upon His strength.

Psalms 1, 2, 3; 1 Thessalonians 1:1-10; Luke 20:1-8

Tuesday, December 1

Psalm 5 *For surely, O LORD, you bless the righteous; you surround them with your favor as with a shield.* (v.12)

This passage presents such a lovely, comforting picture. Imagine yourself completely surrounded by an invisible shield that protects you from all manner of evil. That is the blessing of being right with God (righteous); you are drenched in His goodness, saturated with His favor. At such times of being obedient and truly walking with the Lord, He smiles on us and showers us with His blessings. What a joyful experience. As David writes in verse 11, "But let all who take refuge in you be glad; let them ever sing for joy."

How nice of God to give us such wonderful blessings in exchange for our choosing to depend on Him. Thank You, Lord.

Isaiah 1:21-31; Psalm 6; 1 Thessalonians 2:1-12; Luke 20:9-18

Wednesday, December 2

Psalm 119:1-24 *I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you.* (v.11)

The farther along I go in my journey with the Lord, the more strongly this verse resonates in my soul. It is a simple precept: The best deterrent against sin is to have God's word hidden in my heart.

When God's word becomes so interwoven in my life that I constantly and joyfully apply God's precepts, sin loses its luster and I am not so easily tempted. That is why daily reading of the Bible is so important. But it must not become a rote exercise nor thought of as an antidote to sin, in and of itself, because it only becomes "hidden in our hearts" when we approach our Bible study in prayer, seeking the guidance of the Holy Spirit to reveal God's truth to us and to inspire obedience.

Dear Father, forgive us our neglect of Your precious word, and create in us a thirst for Your word and a yearning to be who You created us to be.

Isaiah 2:1-11; 1 Thessalonians 2:13-20; Luke 20:19-26

Thursday, December 3

Isaiah 2:12-22 *Stop trusting in man, who has but a breath in his nostrils. Of what account is he?* (v.22)

No matter how talented and powerful we may consider ourselves and others, we can never, ever, be on the same plane as God. How do you describe the power of the Creator of the universe? Can man ever come close to attaining the abilities of God? Can we, apart from God, ever attain immortality?

Isaiah really puts it all in perspective here, and explains how (v.17), "The arrogance of man will be brought low, and the pride of men humbled; the Lord alone will be exalted in that day." The Lord will judge everyone, and the proud and haughty will find out they were sadly mistaken about what is important in life.

So let us ask the Lord to forgive us when we trust only in mortal man who has no power to save us from sin or to give us eternal life. Help us, Lord, to put our whole trust in You.

Psalm 18:1-20; 1 Thessalonians 3:1-13; Luke 20:27-40

Friday, December 4

1 Thessalonians 4:1-12 *Therefore, he who rejects this instruction does not reject man but God, who gives you his Holy Spirit.* (v.8)

It has taken me a while to come to understand that when I sin, my sin is against God Himself; it is not just a matter of harming myself or some other person when I commit a sin. It is much more far reaching than that. My sin hurts God; it saddens and disappoints Him, and it may even make Him angry at times.

Likewise, as Paul states here in his letter to the early church at Thessalonica, the instructions that were given believers about how to live a holy life were God's idea, not Paul's or any other disciple's. In this passage Paul is speaking specifically to sexual sins. Verse 7: "For God did not call us to be impure, but to live a holy life." And that is why He gave us the Holy Spirit. The Spirit is the power of the resurrected Christ who can work in us and give us the power to resist sin.

Praise God for equipping us for obedience!

Isaiah 3:8-15; Psalms 16, 17; Luke 20:41—21:4

Saturday, December 5

Luke 21:5-19 *"But make up your mind not to worry beforehand how you will defend yourselves. For I will give words and wisdom that none of your adversaries will be able to resist or contradict."* (vv.14-15)

Even though the context of this passage is Jesus' discourse on the end times, the truth is applicable (as the Bible always is) in any situation where we are called to defend our faith in the risen Lord. We do not and, indeed, must not worry about what to say. Why? Because Jesus is giving us a promise that he will give us not only the right words, but wisdom as well, so that our opponents will be left speechless. What a wonderful promise!