



Betty M. Hockett

As I begin to write this week of readings that will appear several months from now, I rest on the verge of beginning the second year into my ninth decade. Amazing, I think. *That's not nearly as old as my maternal Grandma seemed to me when we celebrated her eighty-first birthday long ago.*

As I recall Grandma's life at that time, it did not include nearly as much engagement in life as mine does. She led a mostly sedentary life with few interests outside of her family, although she retained a wonderful fund of knowledge about our family history. If only I could remember the fascinating stories she told when she visited us.

Of course, the culture of aging has changed in the last sixty years, and we older folks now have so many more ways of reaching out beyond ourselves. I don't, however, take advantage of all the technology presently available. In fact, I am behind the times, enjoying the simpler life with a computer, books to hold as I read, digital pictures that family and others send, and phone calls on the land line. Soon, though, I will plunge into learning how to skype.

I thank the Lord every day that he gives me a wonderful, fulfilling life, even if I do not choose to keep up with more advanced technology. I know he is the same as he was for Grandma, for my parents, for me, and for succeeding generations.

BIBLE READING: Psalm 119:89-97

Re-reading a favorite book for the umpteenth time, knowing what happens next in the story, and anticipating the character's response brings pleasure akin to meeting an old friend. Reading familiar Bible stories or looking up a particular verse that holds special meaning from times past also brings delight with added blessings, encouragement, and guidance.

Preparation for these readings took me back to Scriptures that remind me how God still has things for me to learn as well as to remember from past learnings. This week I will share some of those favorite Scriptures and a bit about the circumstance which originally made them become like new best friends.

I pray that you will take time to review your own favorite, life-changing Scriptures. Remember the circumstances that brought those verses to your attention and the difference they have made since then.

I admit that daily life has a way of encroaching on time to read the Scriptures. Recently, while reading verses suggested for the next Sunday's morning worship service, words from Luke 8:14 struck a not-so-good chord in my heart: "Now the ones that fell among thorns are those who, when they have heard, go out and are choked with cares" (NKJV). Daily cares sometimes tend to squeeze out my daily Bible reading time. I determine once again to change that minor chord into pleasing harmony.

SONG: Wonderful Words of Life

PRAYER SUGGESTION: Lord, forgive me for letting daily life sometimes rob me of the new things you want to teach me from your Word. Teach me new truths as I strive to remember old truths.

—Betty M. Hockett

*BIBLE READING: Jeremiah 33:3; Psalm 32:8;
Isaiah 30:18-21*

Last July our daughter and son-in-law, along with their son, returned from three more years of ministry in Kenya. They planned to live in Newberg for their year of homeland ministry assignment. At such times we locate a house for them to rent and have their furnishings all in place, ready for their arrival. Each time God has always directed our searches and provided exactly the right home. We had no reason to think this time might turn out differently.

Time passed, however, and I began to feel a bit panicky because we had not yet found the right house. One morning I prayed, “Lord, help me know who to ask about having a house for rent.” Almost instantly he replied, “Call Bill.” In a few minutes, I called Bill and asked if they had rented their home yet. He replied, “Yes, we have. Just yesterday, though a friend told me that they have a house for rent.” I knew his friend, and so I called him.

As it turned out, my husband and I drove out to look at the house later that day, meeting our son there. After a walk-through with the landlord, we agreed, “It’s perfect.” By day’s end we e-mailed our family in Kenya, including details and pictures, and received their confirmation: “Great. We’ll take it.”

Whew! What a relief. God spoke to me clearly that morning, no doubt about it. Not audibly, but almost. God so often gives clear leading in matters both great and small. We can never go wrong if we listen to his voice and then obey.

SONG: He Leadeth Me

PRAYER SUGGESTION: Lord, thank you that we can trust you for clear leading, no matter what our request entails.

—Betty M. Hockett

*BIBLE READING: Genesis 2:2; Exodus 34:21;
Isaiah 28:12; Mark 6:30-32*

Twice in my younger years I took on too many duties, not understanding the need for mental and physical rest, and ended up sick. As a busy mother of three and a pastor's wife heavily engaged in our congregations, I found that time to let myself be at rest in mind and body to be almost non-existent.

Many times I said to myself, *Oh, that I had the wings of a dove! I would fly away and be at rest* (Psalm 55:6). Finally God helped me understand the importance of actual rest, even amid much busyness. I learned to promise myself little vacations: *When I finish this job, I'll take a fifteen-minute vacation and sit down to read.* That simple decision made my daily work go faster and kept me from total exhaustion, mentally or physically.

Then God helped me discover another truth: just because a *person*—such as committee chairman, Sunday school superintendent, or someone else—asked me to do something didn't mean I needed to say yes. Only if *God* asked me was I required to say yes. Since that revelation (which gave me wonderful freedom to say no), I have turned down countless requests but, under God's guidance, have accepted many.

Jesus thought rest was important, so why did I not pay attention? Doing more than I should and getting sick wasn't God's idea for my life. I thank the Lord for Scriptures that back up what I learned. Though I've seen eyebrows raised when I have explained why I don't take up every offer to do something, I stuck by God's instructions to me.

SONG: Blessed Quietness

PRAYER SUGGESTION: Thank you for the blessing of quietness when I allow my mind and body to rest.

—Betty M. Hockett

BIBLE READING: Psalm 37:1-8

Many years ago Dr. Ezra DeVol (a respected Friend whose life-story I wrote and titled, *Outside Doctor on Call*) stood in Sunday morning worship to testify. Time has erased from my mind the context of his testimony, but the third command in Psalm 37:3 as he quoted it from the *New King James Version* has stayed with me: “Feed on his faithfulness.” I have long forgotten the reason those words emphasized at that particular time meant so much to me, but “feed on his faithfulness” remains with me.

Those four words bolster my faith in times laden with discouragement, special financial need, physical stress, weariness, anxiety, questioning, sadness, or burdens for others. I can say with King Solomon in 1 Kings 8:56, “Praise be to the Lord, who has given rest to his people Israel just as he promised. Not one word has failed of all the good promises he gave through his servant Moses.”

The Israelites got into trouble because they forgot what God had done for them: miraculously-provided manna, water from a rock, guidance day and night as they trudged along. “Now the people complained about their hardships in the hearing of the Lord, and when he heard them his anger was aroused” (Numbers 11:1).

Feeding my soul and spirit by remembering God’s faithfulness in times past helps me over the hump of whatever is going on at the moment. Just to recall that not one of God’s good promises has failed encourages me. It’s no wonder that the hymn “Great Is Thy Faithfulness” is my all-time favorite.

SONG: Great Is Thy Faithfulness

PRAYER SUGGESTION: Gracious heavenly Father, your faithfulness is boundless. Help me feed on that blessed thought, no matter the situation of this present moment.

—Betty M. Hockett

BIBLE READING: Psalm 98:4-6; 100:1-5

The county ministerial association to which my husband belonged met one Saturday morning every month for breakfast. Different participants took turns hosting the meetings. I don't remember how many times Gene's turn came to host the breakfast in which I cooked for and served the group. The situation I do recall remains as clear as yesterday, a time when I muttered and grumbled about this responsibility.

In the midst of my complaints the Lord said to me almost as plainly as if he had spoken aloud, "Serve the Lord with gladness." Well! That brought down my mutters and grumbles to a halt and put a whole new color on the situation. When meeting day arrived, I enjoyed cooking and serving scrambled eggs with coffee cake.

In later years, I have learned that Psalm 100:2 has a twin in Galatians 6:9: "Let us not become weary in doing good." Colossians 3:17 binds those two verses together, making an unforgettable reminder: "And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus." An improved attitude always makes a difference in how we view a situation.

Scripture so often becomes a wonderful attitude changer, softening the perceived hardship and adding strength to weariness. The availability of these Scriptures leave no doubt that God knew all along how much we would need these reminders.

SONG: Turn Your Eyes Upon Jesus

PRAYER SUGGESTION: Thank you, kind Father, for Scriptures that make everyday life easier, even though that moment's situation may not change.

—Betty M. Hockett

BIBLE READING: Isaiah 43:1-3a; 2 Corinthians 1:3-7

My dear mother battled cancer for several months, but died a few months before my twenty-eighth birthday and a few weeks after her fifty-eighth birthday. As an only child I had no siblings to share the grief my father and I felt. God knew the depth of my heartache. The Isaiah verses in today's reading became a mainstay to help me understand that God would not leave me comfortless as I traveled this difficult path. He kept his promises, and I grew stronger in my faith. After my mother's death, a good friend's mother also passed. The Lord showed me the Corinthian verses in today's reading, reminding that he graciously guided me through my sorrow, and I could share the same hope with my friend.

In more recent years I wrote the following poem:

Death
Sometimes
it comes suddenly,
unplanned, unexpected.
Stunned, friends and family grieve,
ask, "Why?"

Sometimes
it comes slowly,
expected, perhaps longed for.
Pain and sorrow engulf
Those left behind.

Always balm of compassion,
tenderness, mercy
soothes aching hearts
God's gift.

SONG: Through It All

PRAYER SUGGESTION: Lord Jesus, giver of hope in the midst of sorrow, thank you for the comfort you promise. Thank you for your presence, mercy, and grace in the dark hours of heartache.

—Betty M. Hockett

BIBLE READING: Isaiah 43:14-21

Our first international mission trip took us to Bolivia. A few weeks before departure day, the Lord showed me Isaiah 43:19 from the *New King James Version*: “Behold I will do a new thing.” What did that mean? I already believed in missions, so God didn’t need to change anything that way. My husband, Gene, and I frequently discussed what the *new thing* might be.

I had never flown in a small plane, but that was only half the story: I did not ever intend to do so. Then, one day, while considering our mission work team’s assignment in Bolivia, I thought about World Gospel Mission’s small plane in Santa Cruz. Much to my complete amazement, I said to myself, *I wish we could fly in “Wings of Peace” while we’re in Bolivia.*

When Gene returned from work that evening, I said, “I can’t believe I’m saying this, but I wish we could fly in the *Wings of Peace*.” He smiled and replied, “That’s interesting. Today I heard that our work project will be out in Ascension, a jungle village, instead of in Santa Cruz. We’ll have to fly there in the *Wings of Peace*.”

A few weeks later, I climbed into the *Wings of Peace* with great anticipation and settled back, feeling entirely at ease. Our seasoned missionary pilot provided special blessings for us when we flew over the territory where Bolivian Friends from the north had recently gone to homestead.

The *new thing*: a change in my attitude about flying in a small plane. God knew I needed that mental preparation ahead of time.

SONG: I Need Thee Every Hour

PRAYER SUGGESTION: Lord, thank you! You know exactly what we need for every situation.

—Betty M. Hockett