

MON.

November

28

Luke  
17:1-10

Jesus said to his disciples: “Things that cause people to stumble are bound to come, but woe to anyone through whom they come. . . . So watch yourselves” (Luke 17:1, 3a).

## FAITHFUL GUIDES

DUANE BRUSH

At an elementary school party, we played a game where we had to guide a blindfolded person through a crowded room with only our voice: “Stop,” “Turn left,” “Take two steps forward,” and so on. It required careful communication on the part of the person giving the clues, matched with alertness and obedience by the one being directed. Of course, every bump and stumble elicited laughter from class members. Sometimes, they even provided misdirection, confusing the poor participant. Successful completion required a clear focus, ignoring the constant distractions.

Welcome to life! “Things that cause people to stumble are bound to come,” Jesus affirmed (v. 1). However, He cautioned His followers not to cause “one of these little ones to stumble” (v. 2). He gave specific examples of these stumbling blocks: unforgiveness, lack of faith, and pride. All can become barriers to spiritual growth, leading to discouragement—even failure.

The life of faith is challenging enough without creating problems for those who are simply trying to find their way through. “Woe to anyone through whom they come” (v. 1). May our words, actions, and example faithfully direct others in the way.

*Weep o’er the erring  
one; Lift up the fallen;  
Tell them of Jesus, the  
Mighty to Save.*

“Rescue the Perishing” by  
Fanny J. Crosby

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**The LORD makes  
firm the steps of the  
one who delights in  
him; though he may  
stumble, he will not  
fall, for the LORD  
upholds him with  
his hand  
(Psalm 37:23-24).**

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**Please pray:**

For Christians in the Eurasia  
region who are persecuted  
for their faith.

TUES.

November

29

Luke  
17:11-  
19

One of them, when he saw he was healed, came back, praising God in a loud voice (Luke 17:15).

## LAVISH GRACE, SURPRISING PRAISE

DUANE BRUSH

Samaritans play an interesting role in Luke's Gospel. In 9:51-56, Jesus and His disciples were on their way to Jerusalem when they found themselves unwelcome in a Samaritan village. The disciples wanted "to call fire down from heaven" to destroy the village (v. 54). Jesus, however, rebuked their harsh reaction and detoured them to a more welcoming village.

The roots of this animosity are ancient. The Jews regarded themselves as the true descendants of Abraham. The Samaritans saw themselves as faithful preservers of a hallowed faith. Each despised the other. Given this attitude, it was probably a surprise when Jesus later used a Samaritan as an example of mercy and compassion (10:25-37).

Likely, few were surprised when Jesus compassionately responded to 10 lepers' call for healing mercy (17:11-19). It would have been no surprise when Jesus instructed them to "go, show yourselves to the priests" (v. 14). Also, there was no surprise when the group sprinted away to have their healing certified. What was surprising was that one returned to throw himself at Jesus' feet and thank Him, for "he was a Samaritan" (v. 16).

Jesus lavish grace still elicits surprising praise. Where will we see it today?

*Though didst accept  
their praises; Accept  
the praise we bring,  
Who in all good  
delightest, Thou good  
and gracious King.*  
"All Glory, Laud, and  
Honor" by Theodulpf of  
Orleans; tr. by John M. Neale

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**My lips will shout  
for joy when I sing  
praise to you—I  
whom you have  
delivered  
(Psalm 71:23).**

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**Please pray:**  
That many people in  
Albania will come to know  
Christ and receive the  
fullness of the Holy Spirit.

WED.

November

30

Luke  
17:20-  
33

Whoever tries to keep their life will lose it, and whoever loses their life will preserve it (Luke 17:33).

## REMEMBER LOT'S WIFE

DUANE BRUSH

Jesus' picture of the kingdom of God is so different from what His disciples expected, and, frankly, what we also often expect. We often envision the kingdom as something *out there*, something we can *see*. Jesus quashes all that: "The coming of the kingdom of God is not something that can be observed, nor will people say, 'Here it is,' or 'There it is,' because the kingdom of God is in your midst" (vv. 20-21).

We want something we can see and grasp hold of. Lot and his family were commanded, "Flee for your lives! Don't look back!" (Genesis 19:17; see vv. 1-29). Their kingdom, Sodom, was being destroyed for its great wickedness. Lot's wife, when faced with trust in God's word for an unseen future, looked back to the familiar and quickly passing, to her own destruction.

We are called to a kingdom: a kingdom within us, upon us, and awaiting us. A kingdom not of this world, fulfilled in the revelation of the Son of Man, who suffered death and was rejected on our behalf.

Don't look back. Don't cling to that which is fading. Instead, embrace that which will be preserved forever!

*Yes, amen! let all  
adore Thee, High on  
Thine eternal throne;  
Savior, take the pow'r  
and glory, Claim the  
kingdom for Thine  
own.*

"Lo, He Comes with Clouds  
Descending" by Charles  
Wesley and Martin Madan;  
based on John Cennick

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**Our Father in  
heaven, hallowed  
be your name, your  
kingdom come,  
your will be done,  
on earth as it is in  
heaven  
(Matthew 6:9-10).**

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**Please pray:**

For the development of  
Christian leaders in Albania.

THURS.

December

1

John  
17:6-19

I have given them your word and the world has hated them, for they are not of the world any more than I am of the world (John 17:14).

## GET YOUR GEAR ON

DUANE BRUSH

Maybe instead of a firm handshake and a box of tithing envelopes, we should give new believers a helmet and body armor. There are some places in our world where simply being a Christian can get you killed. In even more places, a believer in Jesus Christ will be the subject of scorn, derision, and rejection. Sometimes, a Christ-follower is simply dismissed as a person sadly afflicted with a simple-minded faith not adequate to the demands of contemporary life, an object of pity, tolerated but never taken seriously.

Jesus knew it was going to happen. He had warned His disciples earlier: "Remember what I told you: 'A servant is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted me, they will persecute you also" (15:20).

That is why Jesus prays for us, interceding on our behalf. Instead of the world's affirmation, we have the heavenly Father's care, the full measure of Christ's joy, protection against the evil one, and the sanctification (we are set apart, cleansed, kept, and empowered) by God's Word of truth. Come to think of it, we already have the armor. We just need to put it on! (Ephesians 6:10-17).

*Thro' days of toil  
when heart doth fail,  
God will take care of  
you. When dangers  
fierce your path assail,  
God will take care of  
you.*

"God Will Take Care of You"  
by Civilla D. Martin

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**Therefore put on  
the full armor of  
God, so that when  
the day of evil  
comes, you may  
be able to stand  
your ground, and  
after you have done  
everything, to stand  
(Ephesians 6:13).**

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**Please pray:**

That many people in Armenia will come to know Christ and receive the fullness of the Holy Spirit.

FRI.

December

2

John  
17:20-  
26

That all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me (John 17:21).

## UNITY IN CHRIST

DUANE BRUSH

It is estimated that nearly one-third of the world's population—some 2.3 billion people—are church members: affiliated with 4.7 million local congregations representing 45,000 denominations.\* Jesus' prayer "that all of them may be one" seems impossible until we understand the type of unity He prayed for.

This unity is the glory of our shared life in Christ: "Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me" (v. 21). This is a life characterized by mutual indwelling: a sharing of the quality and purpose of life. This is perhaps most clearly exemplified in the ideal marriage bond (Ephesians 5:31). Such a shared life reorganizes decision making; it is no longer "I" but "we." It redirects energies toward fulfilling a mutual will. Its highest goal is to honor the beloved by preserving the sanctity of that covenant. By this, Jesus concludes, "Then the world will know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me" (John 17:23).

That is much more than a name on a piece of paper. Where Christ's disciples abide in Him, they are truly one and He is glorified.

\*<http://www.gordonconwell.edu/resources/documents/StatusOfGlobalMission.pdf> (accessed December 2015)

*We are not divided;  
All one body we: One  
in hope and doctrine,  
One in charity.*

"Onward Christian Soldiers"  
by Sabine Baring-Gould

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**For just as each  
of us has one  
body with many  
members, and these  
members do not  
all have the same  
function, so in  
Christ we, though  
many, form one  
body, and each  
member belongs  
to all the others  
(Romans 12:4-5).**

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**Please pray:**

For the development  
of Christian leaders in  
Armenia.

SAT.

December

3

John  
18:28-  
38

Jesus answered, “You say that I am a king. In fact, the reason I was born and came into the world is to testify to the truth. Everyone on the side of truth listens to me” (John 18:37b).

## WHO IS KING?

DUANE BRUSH

Pilate didn't want to decide about Jesus. Why were these pesky Judeans bringing this man to him anyway? Was this a trap? “If he were not a criminal . . . we would not have handed him over to you,” they said (v. 30). But what were the charges? Roman law demanded charges. Pilate already suspected what the charge would be: “Are you the king of the Jews? ‘Is that your own idea,’ Jesus asked, ‘or did others talk to you about me?’” (vv. 33-34). The charge of insurrection, if proven, would lead inevitably to a cross.

“My kingdom is not of this world,” was Jesus' reply (v. 36). You cannot find it on a map. Jesus' kingdom is in the hearts of those who call Him “Lord.” A king rules where he is acknowledged, where his law is obeyed and his sovereignty acclaimed. Jesus is a king, whether Pilate, Caesar, the Jewish leaders or any other authority acknowledges it.

“I find no basis for a charge against him,” Pilate told the leaders (v. 38). Ultimately, he did have to decide, and so do we all. Not just “Is Jesus a king?” but “Is Jesus your King?”

*Jesus, my King, my wonderful Savior, All of my life is given to Thee.*

“Wonderful Savior” by J. M. Harris

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**Therefore, my brothers and sisters, make every effort to confirm your calling and election. For if you do these things, you will never stumble, and you will receive a rich welcome into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ (2 Peter 1:10-11).**

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### **Please pray:**

That many people in the Azores will come to know Christ and receive the fullness of the Holy Spirit.

SUN.

December

4

Psalm  
142:1-7

Listen to my cry, for I am in desperate need; rescue me from those who pursue me, for they are too strong for me (Ps. 142:6).

## HE HEARD MY CRY

DUANE BRUSH

I was in my early 20s, newly married, working and going to college. I was also a fairly new believer in Jesus Christ. However, I was also sick and weak. Severe joint pain, swelling, and weakness gradually limited my activity. Doctors offered little hope for my condition, diagnosed as a type of rheumatoid arthritis. Still, I tried to keep up as best I could.

One day, I opened the car door, but I couldn't raise my legs enough to get out. I placed both hands under my knees and one-by-one set my legs outside the car. I felt so weak and tired. I began to weep. "O God, unless You help me I don't know what I will do," I prayed.

Gradually my fears eased. I felt strength returning. An inner voice gave assurance, "It is alright. I am here. You will get better." I wiped my eyes and slowly stood. I did feel stronger. Over the next few weeks my strength returned, swelling subsided, pain eased. My blood tests showed improvement.

Now, more than 40 years later, I have not been troubled again by those symptoms. He heard my cry, and that made all the difference.

*Pass me not, O gentle Savior; Hear my humble cry. While on others Thou art calling, Do not pass me by.*

"Pass Me Not" by Fanny J. Crosby

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**For he will deliver the needy who cry out, the afflicted who have no one to help. He will take pity on the weak and the needy and save the needy from death (Psalm 72:12-13).**

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**Please pray:**

For the development of Christian leaders in the Azores.