

Making the Most of Wednesday, September 16

“A time to laugh” — Ecc. 3:4

Between 6:00—9:00 AM: We’ve been somber lately, but the Bible says we can’t be that way all the time, even in a turbulent year like 2020. Here’s a “funny” for you, and it introduces today’s theme.

First, meet the writer, Cora Frazier. She’s a regular contributor to a large national magazine. She wrote a humor piece last week that made me laugh and think. It’s called “Opt Out.” Here’s an excerpt. By the way, I did some editing since this is a *family* Prayer Guide. I hope you enjoy it.



Dear Moderators,

I see that, according to your privacy policy, I have to inform you via letter of my intention to “opt out” of certain services.

I would like to opt out of Social-Security-number sharing with organizations that rehabilitate people who have been acquitted of identify theft.

I would like to opt out of any and all news alerts related to “influencers,” North Korea...[and] any headline with the words “fire,” “burn,” raging” or “unsustainable levels.”

I would like to opt out of responding to texts asking me to come over and help with crafting projects.

I would like to opt out of intergenerational badminton tournaments.

I would like to opt out of any office event promoted as “fun.”

I would like to opt out of emails that begin “Dear All.”

I would like to opt out of any illness ending in “itus,” “-oma,” “-ia,” or “-us.”

I would like to opt out of frown lines, laugh lines, smile lines, and crow’s feet.

I would like to opt out of aging. I would like to opt out of death.

As much as we’d like to opt out of affliction on the menu of life,” it’s not possible. The box is already checked. Someone opted us in (“we are destined for this”). Let’s reflect on a passage from 1 Thes. 3 that talks about the pressures on believers. Here’s a quick historical background. When Paul wrote this letter, the Thessalonians were grieving friends who had died. What’s more, they were squeezed between the Jews and the authorities. It was a smoky, September day in their souls. Paul wrote to say “Jesus is coming, so turn that frown, upside down!” But first, here’s truth about present life we must face.

1 Therefore when we could bear it no longer, we were willing to be left behind at Athens alone,

2 and we sent Timothy, our brother and God's coworker in the gospel of Christ, to establish and exhort you in your faith,

3 that no one be moved by these afflictions [squeezings]. For you yourselves know that we are destined for this.

4 For when we were with you, we kept telling you beforehand that we were to suffer affliction [squeezing], just as it has come to pass, and just as you know.

5 For this reason, when I could bear it no longer, I sent to learn about your faith, for fear that somehow the tempter had tempted you and our labor would be in vain.

What afflictions have come to you? Where is the tempter tempting you to opt out of faith, hope and love?

BETWEEN 9:00-12:00 PM: Squeezing reshapes us into the image of our Savior. So it's a good thing that opting out is never an option. Here's another non-negotiable: we can't opt out of the powerful call of God. Let's illustrate it with more humor. My family just watched "The Princess Bride" and had a great laugh. There's a scene where the hero Westley is "mostly dead." So his friends Inigo Montoya and Fezzik bring him to Miracle Max, played by Billy Crystal. After some ministrations, Max simply puts his ear to the motionless Westley and shouts, "Hey, you in there!" At that moment, Westley revives. What's the point?



Our Miracle Maker has done the same for us. If you believe in Jesus, God said to your dead heart "Hey, you! Wake up! You're special and you're mine" ("For we know, brothers loved by God, that he has chosen you" — 1 Thes. 1:4). Yes, he put his lips to our ears and invited us to life, significance and a space in his Kingdom that's come and is still coming. In other words, he *called* us. What does this verb mean? To summon someone or announce your desire for his or her presence. It has a nuance of authority, like when you say to your kids, "Come here," or "Dinner's ready." But there's more to it than that. There's an additional sense of being selected to receive a special benefit. What's more, there's no staying asleep when God speaks to our hearts. The call itself raises the spiritually dead. Let's focus on four verses in Paul's two letters to the Thessalonians that mention the "wake-up-and-walk-with-me" call of God. Meditate on each verse that mentions this invitation to eternal life, forgiveness and significance.

1. The first verse concerns the destination of the called man, woman or child. What is it? Imagine it.

ESV **1 Thessalonians 2:12** *we exhorted each one of you and encouraged you and charged you to walk in a manner worthy of God, who calls you into his own kingdom and glory.*

2. The second verse talks about God's purpose behind the call. What is it? Is this your purpose too?

ESV **1 Thessalonians 4:7** *For God has not called us for impurity, but in holiness.*

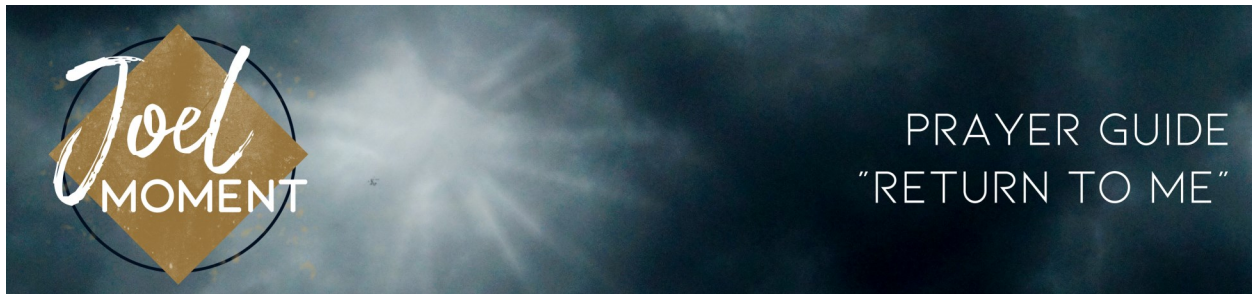
3. The third verse talks about the character of the one who issued the call. Identify and celebrate him.

ESV **1 Thessalonians 5:24** *He who calls you is faithful; he will surely do it.*

4. The fourth verse makes a connection between believers' prayers and God's call. What's the link?

ESV **2 Thessalonians 1:11** *To this end we always pray for you, that our God may make you worthy of his calling and may fulfill every resolve for good and every work of faith by his power,*

Our prayers should include but go deeper than MRIs and pathology reports. Needs related to faith and follow-through are always the most urgent. This is how Paul prayed for his fellow believers. Write in the names of three fellow believers below, utter a prayer for them that resembles Paul's in verse 11.



BETWEEN 3:00—4:00 PM: Join the **Joel Moment Prayer Gathering**. Go to [Zoom.com](https://zoom.com) and enter Meeting and Password.

BETWEEN 5:00-9:00 PM: We heard about intense squeezing today in our Joel Moment. I’m sure you have much to think about. Earlier today in the Prayer Guide, we considered God’s call, his gracious “Hey you, wake up!” that came when you first heard and responded to the news about Jesus. It’s not a one-time call, but continues each day as the Holy Spirit calls us to deeper followership and friendship.

OK, I think we’ve had enough words today. Here’s an idea: Google the song “I Hear the Savior Calling” which I heard on YouTube. Here’s an image so you know if you’ve found the right song. Go to sleep, thanking God for having “*made you alive together with him...*” (Col. 2:13).





FRED STONEHOUSE [A word about his conversion and the burden he carries regarding Matthew 24.]

- 1 Jesus left the temple and was going away, when his disciples came to point out to him the buildings of the temple.
- 2 But he answered them, "You see all these, do you not? Truly, I say to you, there will not be left here one stone upon another that will not be thrown down."
- 3 As he sat on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to him privately, saying, "Tell us, when will these things be, and what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?"
- 4 And Jesus answered them, "See that no one leads you astray.
- 5 For many will come in my name, saying, 'I am the Christ,' and they will lead many astray.
- 6 And you will hear of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not alarmed, for this must take place, but the end is not yet.
- 7 For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, and there will be famines and earthquakes in various places.
- 8 All these are but the beginning of the birth pains.
- 9 "Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and put you to death, and you will be hated by all nations for my name's sake.
- 10 And then many will fall away and betray one another and hate one another.
- 11 And many false prophets will arise and lead many astray.
- 12 And because lawlessness will be increased, the love of many will grow cold.
- 13 But the one who endures to the end will be saved.
- 14 And this gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.
- 15 "So when you see the abomination of desolation spoken of by the prophet Daniel, standing in the holy place (let the reader understand),
- 16 then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains.
- 17 Let the one who is on the housetop not go down to take what is in his house,
- 18 and let the one who is in the field not turn back to take his cloak.
- 19 And alas for women who are pregnant and for those who are nursing infants in those days!
- 20 Pray that your flight may not be in winter or on a Sabbath.
- 21 For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been from the beginning of the world until now, no, and never will be.
- 22 And if those days had not been cut short, no human being would be saved. But for the sake of the elect those days will be cut short. ²³ Then if anyone says to you, 'Look, here is the Christ!' or 'There he is!' do not believe it.
- 24 For false christs and false prophets will arise and perform great signs and wonders, so as to lead astray, if possible, even the elect.
- 25 See, I have told you beforehand.
- 26 So, if they say to you, 'Look, he is in the wilderness,' do not go out. If they say, 'Look, he is in the inner rooms,' do not believe it.
- 27 For as the lightning comes from the east and shines as far as the west, so will be the coming of the Son of Man.
- 28 Wherever the corpse is, there the vultures will gather.



- 29 "Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken.*
- 30 Then will appear in heaven the sign of the Son of Man, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.*
- 31 And he will send out his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.*
- 32 "From the fig tree learn its lesson: as soon as its branch becomes tender and puts out its leaves, you know that summer is near.*
- 33 So also, when you see all these things, you know that he is near, at the very gates.*
- 34 Truly, I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all these things take place.*
- 35 Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.*
- 36 "But concerning that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father only.*
- 37 For as were the days of Noah, so will be the coming of the Son of Man.*
- 38 For as in those days before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day when Noah entered the ark,*
- 39 and they were unaware until the flood came and swept them all away, so will be the coming of the Son of Man.*
- 40 Then two men will be in the field; one will be taken and one left.*
- 41 Two women will be grinding at the mill; one will be taken and one left.*
- 42 Therefore, stay awake, for you do not know on what day your Lord is coming.*
- 43 But know this, that if the master of the house had known in what part of the night the thief was coming, he would have stayed awake and would not have let his house be broken into.*
- 44 Therefore you also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect.*
- 45 "Who then is the faithful and wise servant, whom his master has set over his household, to give them their food at the proper time?*
- 46 Blessed is that servant whom his master will find so doing when he comes.*
- 47 Truly, I say to you, he will set him over all his possessions.*
- 48 But if that wicked servant says to himself, 'My master is delayed,'*
- 49 and begins to beat his fellow servants and eats and drinks with drunkards,*
- 50 the master of that servant will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour he does not know*
- 51 and will cut him in pieces and put him with the hypocrites. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.*



GROUP PRAYER PROMPT #1 (8 min.): Let's thank King Jesus for coming to our pallets, speaking to our hearts, and summoning us to rise and follow. His call was pure grace. He didn't have to walk by our bedsides and make us alive (*"...those whom he called, he also justified; and those whom he justified he also glorified"* — Rom. 8:30b). Let's praise him, Living Saints.

Group Prayer Prompt #2 (8 min.): In the Joel Moment just now, Fred called us to readiness by sharing a passage that can only be described as alarming. Let's pray now that we'll persist in faith until the end, because we've been called to share his troubles before we share his throne. Pray for young believers.

GROUP PRAYER PROMPT #3 (8 min.): Let's pray for human needs, because they're important to God, that is, food, clothing, shelter, jobs, healing, forgiveness, reconciliation, peace, education, justice. Pray also for Shepherd's Table Food Pantry, because Tim says the cupboards are getting bare because we've given out a lot. But God answered our prayers back on July 8. He'll do it again! See below to respond.

Here's how to "share your bread" with the hungry with Valley Church's Shepherd's Table Ministry:

1. Contact ministry leader Tim Gildersleeve at (650) 383-8097 or info@valleychurch.org and tell him how you'd like to provide food.
2. Shop for the items on the list below and make arrangements for Tim and his team to pick them up. (Social distancing will be honored.)
3. Consider other ways to serve (e.g., driving bags of food to the homes of people in need, befriending those who receive the food who are interested in having a friend).

Vegetables:

Cans of peas
Cans of green beans
Cans of corn
Pinto beans
Cans of kidney beans
Cans of garbanzo beans
Instant mashed potatoes
Baked beans

Fruits:

Cans of fruit
Dried fruit
Fruit cups

Beverages:

Fruit drinks
Sports drinks
Snapple
Coffee and tea
Cocoa mix

Meats:

Spam and ham
Cans of tuna
Cans of chicken
Cans of turkey
Cans of chile
Cans of stew

Pasta:

Spaghetti
Pasta
Pasta sauce
Cans of tomato
Macaroni and cheese
Cans of tomato sauce

Misc. Items:

Rice
Grocery gift cards
Popcorn
Peanut butter
Mayo
Salt and flour

Oil and vinegar
Jelly/jam and Jell-O
Cake mixes
Syrup