

From Section 2: Looking to God for All We Need

“Keep me safe, my God, for in you I take refuge. I say to the Lord,
‘You are my Lord; apart from you, I have no good thing.’” Psalm 16:1-2

God Is the Best Thing

“Keep me safe, my God, for in you I take refuge. I say to the Lord, “You are my Lord; apart from you, I have no good thing.” Psalm 16:1-2

Look at that last phrase: “Apart from you, I have no good thing.” No good thing. Nothing. Nada.

Perhaps this one phrase best sums up why God called David a man after His own heart (1 Samuel 13:14). David loved God. David knew God. He found satisfaction only in God. He knew the help he needed would only come from God. For David, there was simply no life without God because God was the Source of All Good, and the greatest Good, Himself. We don’t know which of the many difficult events in David’s life gave rise to this psalm, but it was something that David knew no other helper would do but God. David takes captive the fears of his heart and the danger of the circumstances with reminders of who God is, what He has done, and what He promises to do.

If I could ask for any verse to be the banner over my life and the beat of my heart, it would be this verse. To seek God because He is not only the source of every good thing, but because He, Himself, IS the best good thing. To live a life that daily declares the goodness of God, in all that He does, in all that He plans, regardless of how mysterious or difficult what He chooses might appear. To be content fully in Him and desire to be fully obedient to Him. And, that even if everything that I hold dear (and see as good) is stripped from me, that I would still stand firm in the goodness of the Lord. To this end, I pray for myself and others.

To this end I strive to live, as God gives grace. And it is only by grace – God’s unmerited gift to us. Because THIS kind of heart, THIS kind of life is the work of the Lord that we call sanctification: being transformed into the likeness of Jesus. And as far as I’ve ever observed, it takes a lifetime to God’s grace to grow it within us. And it will never fully bloom until heaven, when God takes us, His imperfect, sinful people, and changes us completely to be like His Son in the twinkling of an eye. What a day that will be!

What I Need Most, What Ministry Needs Most

This seeking after God is more than simply a prayer for me to grow, personally, for my own good. If 40+ years in the ministry has taught me anything, it is that seeking after God is the lifeblood of being in the ministry and staying in the ministry. It is how God equips us, sustains us, and binds us together in unity with Him, with our husbands, and with God’s people. Apart from God, there is no good thing. Period.

Every day in ministry is another day of the Devers’ learning this. But we are far from alone. We stand on far greater shoulders of the godly pastors and wives in the past. Ray Rhodes, Jr. author of Yours Til Heaven, a biography about the Spurgeons wrote this: “To know God as He is revealed in the Bible and to walk closely with Him was the essence of Charles and Susie’s spirituality. A desire to know and follow God motivated them in the spiritual disciplines of Bible reading, prayer, family and congregational worship, and meditation on Scripture. True spirituality was a matter of joyful obedience and the necessary glue that cemented the Spurgeons’ love and hopeful outlook even when the high waves of controversy, sickness, and loss crashed heavily upon them.” –regarding pastor Charles Spurgeon and his wife, Susannah. (p.43)

The Spurgeons learned this, the Devers are still learning this, and I can promise you, that if you are in the ministry, you have or will be learning this, too. That only through God, can weak, sinful people like our husbands shepherd their families and God's people as He calls them to. And only through God, can we, their weak, sinful wives, support our husbands and live and love our families and God's people happily alongside them.

And this is why I cannot imagine doing a series of talks for pastors' wives without a look at seeking after God and how to grow in godliness. That's like trying to travel to a distant city without a roadmap in a car without an engine.

In this section, I'd like to:

- Remind you of how we seek God;
- Encourage you with 10 ways God uses your seeking Him to bear good fruit, especially as a pastor's wife.
- Think about why seeking God builds the unity you and your husband need in the ministry
- Look at how God grows us as we seek Him
- Offer 10 ways to help you seek the Lord while in the ministry

From Section 2: Looking to God for All We Need

*"Keep me safe, my God, for in you I take refuge. I say to the Lord,
'You are my Lord; apart from you, I have no good thing.'" Psalm 16:1-2*

How We Seek After God: The Three Food Groups

You've no doubt heard of the four food groups that nourish our bodies: fruits and vegetables, grains, dairy, meats and proteins. If you are mothers, you probably spend your life in these, making sure your kids get some of all these with (most) every meal, or talking yourself into counting the pickles on your kids' fast food chicken sandwich on those days when you just don't have the energy to snap those green beans, like I have from time to time. Why do we have that running checklist in our heads? Why do we rationalize pickles on chicken sandwiches? Because we know that food is the building blocks of our kids' health. We want to build well so they can live well.

But now, I'd like to think about the three food groups that nourish our relationship with God. so we know Him better and grow to be like Him: God's Word, God Himself (His Spirit and by Prayer) and God's People. Let's look at each.

1. We Seek Him Through the Bible, His Word

God's Word is frequently pictured as the spiritual food for our hearts and is even more important than the physical food that keeps our bodies alive:

"He humbled you, causing you to hunger and then feeding you with manna, which neither you nor your ancestors had known, to teach you that man does not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of the LORD." (Deuteronomy 8:3)

These are the very words that a very hungry Jesus used against Satan's temptation to cut short the fast His Father had allowed by making bread with supernatural power. Knowing God's Word that we might obey Him even trumped severe hunger pangs.

We feed on the food of God's Word as we:

- Read God's Word daily (Deuteronomy 17:17-20);
- Meditate on it day and night (Joshua 1:8);
- Study it with another person (Acts 8:30-32); and,
- Gather together to hear the preaching of God's Word each week (Acts 13:14).

Daily... day and night... each week... on our own... with a prayer partner... with the whole church... we need to take time in God's Word for it to nourish us. Food doesn't fuel your body unless you ingest it. God's Word is the same. We need to take time to look at what it says, what it means, and how to apply it to our lives. It means praying it and turning it over in our minds and asking God to use it to work in our hearts and in our lives.

And when we do, we find that, indeed, God's Word is unlike any book we will ever read. Not only because it only is the inspired Word of God and we know we can always trust it to tell us what is true about God, His plans and how He wants us to live. But because this is no simple pen, ink and paper book. This is the living Word of God. God's Holy Spirit uses it powerful to grow God's likeness (godliness) in our heart and

our life.

“For the Word of God is alive and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.” (Hebrews 4:12)

“No one is changed by an unread Bible... The first thing the child of God has to do morning by morning is to obtain food for his inner man. Now what is food for the inner man? Not prayer, but the Word of God; and here again, not the simple reading of the Word of God, but considering what we read, pondering over it and applying it to our hearts. (Spiritual Disciplines)

2. We Seek Him through Fellowship with Him, by His Spirit, through Prayer

“I **said** to the LORD.” (Psalm 16:2)

Psalm 16, the whole thing, highlights the second of what I call the three, major spiritual food groups: prayer. With 75 psalms attributed to David, it's no wonder that we know more about David's prayers than anyone else's in the Bible. We see David seeking after God in his happiest days and his darkest nights. He brings his needs, his emotions, his fears, his sins, to God. He bursts into songs of praise and thanksgiving. He expresses his righteous angry over God's enemies. He confesses with humility his own sin and asks for forgiveness.

“Prayer is in one sense an expression of a Christian's unbroken relationship with the Father.” (Spiritual Disciplines) David's prayers certainly were that. And following David's example, our prayers are meant to be that, too.

The ACTS of Prayer

Prayer is so much more than just God for what we need. I've often found the classic “ACTS” acronym helpful for my prayers:

A: Adoration Praising God for who He is.

C: Confession Telling God our sins and asking His forgiveness and His help to repent.

T: Thanksgiving: Thanking God for Jesus and for all of His other good gifts.

S: Supplication: Asking God to act in us and around the world for our good and His glory.

These full-bodied meditations help me get my head out of the fog and gaze up at who God is: so holy, so powerful, so wise, so good! They help me take humble look at myself and see the sin that clings to my heart and life. They help me remember what God has done already and be grateful. They round out and even correct my short-sighted, sometimes obsessive, focus on the day's immediate concerns with God's bigger perspective and God's bigger plans.

And the funny thing is that often if I dwell on the A,C, and T. first, God has many times already crossed off my many of my “S” requests, having used those first meditations to give me the very wisdom, peace, contentment, joy, etc. that I was needing to ask Him for. Because as much as I needed those specific “things”, in looking at Him first, I find what I need in Him. And it makes me want to go back to “T” again and spend my day thanking Him that “all that I needed His hand has provided, great is His faithfulness!” (excerpt from Great Is Thy Faithfulness, William M. Runyan)

“Whom have I in heaven but You? And there is none upon earth that I desire besides You. My flesh and my heart fail; But God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever... it is good for me to draw near to God.” -- Psalm 73:25-26, 28

God nourishes our relationship with Him as we:

- Pray regularly (Matthew 6:11, Psalm 55:17)
- Pray continually (1 Thessalonians 5:17)
- Pray for each other (Acts 1:4; Acts 2:42)
- Pray on our own (Matthew 6:6)
- Pray with a few others (Matthew 18:20)
- Pray as a church (Acts 12:5)
- Pray for the church (Acts 6:24)
- Pray for our enemies (Matthew 5:44)
- Pray for the gospel to be taken to the world (Matthew 9:38)

In times of trouble, one friend used to regularly say to me, “Jesus is alive!” Sounds basic, but sometimes I go around acting like Jesus is my imaginary friend. The world around us certainly thinks that. But oh, my friend was right! Our God is God! He rules over all! His plans are unstoppable! Everything we read about Him in the Bible really are true. Sometimes I just have to stop and remind myself this. When I pray, I am not just speaking into empty space as a therapy crutch! I am speaking to the LORD, the great “I Am Who I Am.”

And listen to what this “Great I Am” promises His people:

To be near them: “The Lord is near to all who call on him.” (Psalm 145:18).

And to answer them: “I sought the Lord, and he answered me.” (Psalm 34:4)

“God not only has spoken clearly and powerfully to us through Christ and the Scriptures, He also has a Very Large Ear continuously open to us. He will hear every prayer of His children, even when our prayers are weaker than a snowflake. (Spiritual Disciplines)”

Don’t let the constant accessibility we have to God stop you from appreciating the immense privilege God has given us through Jesus. (Ephesians 2:18) The God of the entire universe desires to know us! And because He desires to know us, we can have confidence that as we seek Him, we will find Him. And as we find Him, He will act. He will help us to know and enjoy Him more. He will change us to be more like His Son. And He will make His delight to be the joy of our heart and the beat of our life.

3. We Seek Him as We Fellowship with His People

“I say of the holy people who are in the land, “They are the noble ones in whom is all my delight. Those who run after other gods will suffer more and more. I will not pour out libations of blood to such gods or take up their names on my lips.” --Psalm 16:3-4

No wonder David delighted in God’s people more than any other people. Like him, they sought the Lord. They desired to know and obey Him. When tempted with the world’s way, when burdened with trouble, when struggling to keep going, David had people like Abigail, Jonathan, and the prophet Nathan to help him to persevere and act wisely.

But many times, we think of seeking God as mainly a PERSONAL process—a sort of “Jesus and me” thing. But when you look at Scripture, it becomes clear that God sees seeking Him as a PEOPLE process—a body of Christ thing. God didn’t just choose INDIVIDUALS for Himself from before the creation of the world. He chose a PEOPLE for Himself. This people, He called the Body of Christ. This people who will be His bride. And in the life to come, we will all live together, a city of people, one with our Savior, one with each other forever. (Revelation 21:10-11)

But before that Day, God intends up to gather together and help one another seek God and grow to be like Jesus. And just like God intended the parts of a body work together, so He intended for believers to be an integral part of us all growing in godliness.

“Consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.” --Hebrews 10:24-25 Here are two of my favorite Bible verses that encourage us to seek God, through prayer and His Word:

“Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things. Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me—put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you.” --Philippians 4:4-10

“Therefore, as God’s chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity. Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful. Let the message of Christ dwell among you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom through psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit, singing to God with gratitude in your hearts. And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.” --Colossians 3:15-17

But to whom were these written? You guessed it! CHURCHES – groups of God’s people gathering together! In English, perhaps this is more difficult to realize because “you” singular is spelled just like “you” plural. But were you to put on your Greek translation glasses, you would see immediately that most of the verses we take individually, are really to be understood corporately, in the context of God’s people committed to loving each other and equipping each other in a local church. That’s because God’s people are to minister to one another, helping each other grow up in maturity into Christ.

And look at Ephesians 4:

“[Christ] gave some to be ... pastors... to equip the saints for the work of ministry, to build up the body of Christ, until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of God’s Son, growing into maturity with a stature measured by Christ’s fullness. --Ephesians 4: 7,11-13, CSB

Pastors are frequently called ministers or said to be called into the ministry; but in the Bible, ministry is actually a word used for all of God’s people, not just men who are pastors. Pastors are equippers, but God intended for all of us to be a part of feeding each other the spiritual food we need.

We feed each other God’s good food as we:

- Build one another up (Matthew 6:11, Psalm 55:17)
- Pray for one another (1 Thessalonians 5:17)
- Speak truth in love to one another (Acts 1:4; Acts 2:42)
- Listen and discuss preaching (Matthew 6:6)
- Confess our sins to one another (James 5:16)

- Share with one another (Galatians 6:2)
- Confront, exhort and rebuke one another (Hebrews 3:13)
- Talk about God to each other as we go through our lives (Colossians 4:6)
- Teach each other how to live out God's Word (Titus 2)
- Sing and praise God together (Colossians 3:16)
- Use the gifts God gives us to serve one another (1 Peter 4:10-11)

God's plans to seek Him and grow us to be more like Jesus as individuals is inextricably connected to the local church. We need to not only seek to know and be known by God, as individuals, but as His people to grow together as He wants us to grow. Sitting under preaching, speaking in the hallways, discussing books, singing hymns, praying for one another, sharing over a phone call, living life out with each other and in front of each other, using the special gifts God gives us, using the ordinary gifts God gives us, God using our strengths and most definitely our weaknesses to encourage and build one another up. Growing up into Christ is a group project for God's people! We are to feed each other!

"The most powerful ongoing Christian witness has always been the speaking of God's Word by one who is living God's Word (Spiritual Disciplines)."

Food Groups Casserole

Now I know I've presented these three food groups as if they were being served on one of those paper plates with dividers that keep different food separate. But the truth is, it is almost impossible to keep these foods apart. They work together more like a spiritual casserole than individual dishes. God's people are constantly using God's Word and praying to grow.

And, just like there are cookbooks filled with casserole recipes, combining different foods for different flavors, so it is with God's people, God's Word and prayer. Your personal devotion times may be one combination, while you're gathering together in your church's worship service may be another. There are times when you will be preaching God's Word to yourself or to a friend. There will be times when you read a sermon or sing a hymn. The possibilities are endless. The promise of growth is great. Just keep on eating! This is one place where you can't become overweight from too much eating!

Questions for You

1. How do you choose what to study in the Bible? Is there any certain tool or structure that has especially helped you to seek God in your times in the Word?
2. Have you ever used the ACTS prayer acronym to guide your prayer time? If so, how has this been helpful to you?
3. Have you thought about fellowship with God's people being an important way that we seek God? Share an experience of how God's people have helped you seek God and grow closer to Him.
4. How have you seen the "food group casserole" at work? How has your time in God's Word, with Him in prayer, and your time with God's people worked together to help you seek God and grow in godliness?

From Section 2: Finding All We Need in God

*"Keep me safe, my God, for in you I take refuge. I say to the Lord,
'You are my Lord; apart from you, I have no good thing.'" Psalm 16:1-2*

How God Grows Us As We Seek Him

God Grows Us Slowly

"With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day"-- 2 Peter 3:8 And sometimes it feels just like that. We ask and seek for God to work, but change comes so slowly.

Think Stalactites, Not Instant Potatoes

God's Word; God, Himself; God's people. Three very powerful ways for us to grow in godliness and to grow up into our head, Jesus Christ. These have been the same three sources of good food that God has continued to use to help me grow in godliness. But being on this "diet" of good food, did not work instant results in godliness. My former love of my own way and my own understanding wasn't just a pile of trash that I put out for the collector to come take away on bulk trash day. Picked up once and gone forever. Replaced by the shiny, new, good godliness.

No. My sin issues, was much more like the dandelions my stepdad tried to rid our backyard of. They thrived on an extensive root system that lay invisibly underground, ready to sprout up again and again. I might tear out one flower, even by its roots, but another little yellow head was sure to pop up somewhere else.

Why couldn't I just DO what I was supposed to do! Why couldn't I just BE what God wanted me to be? Was I really a Christian? Did I need to ask God to save me (yet again)? Why couldn't godliness "stick" and stay "stuck"? That's really what the last 40 years or so have been about. Learning that while the Lord loves to save us in an instant, He loves to grow us in godliness (that is, sanctify us) over a lifetime... and finish it off in "Gloryland" with Him.

And while it is "bad news" that godliness isn't grown instantly, it is "good news" to understand what to look for; and that what we long for is promised. ""Conformed" and "renewed" are the other two verbs of process frequently used to described how God grows godliness in His people. Another one is "transformed", that Paul uses here in 2 Corinthians 3:18:

"And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit."

"Transformed, one degree of glory to another" These are all verbs of change... just not instant change. They are verbs of process, and process requires time and perseverance. "Are being" that means it is happening and we can count on it. So, the reality that we are not what we were, yet we are not what we want to be, is not a mistake but part of God's plan. The truth is, the Lord loves to grow things. Just look around you and you can see in everywhere. Not just in us, but in nature, too. It's the same thing. God loves to grow things. He could have made giant sequoia sampling in such a way as to grow its 250 feet overnight. But instead, He chose for it to take 500 to 750 years to finish growing.

It's the same thing with God's people. He sprouts us through His Holy Spirit, then He chooses to change us through a growth process. This can feel really frustrating, if you want instant change. But it's really encouraging, if you're discouraged with how slowly you are growing in godliness. It may be going slowly, but it may be going exactly how it's supposed to go. 70 or 80 years feel like such a long time to grow. You might wish you were a gadfly who goes through the whole process of life in a day. But God knows just what he's doing, and just be glad you're not a giant Sequoia!

God Has Woven Our Growth into His Plans

Donald Whitney in his book, Spiritual Disciplines of the Christian Life, cites three catalysts that God uses to grow godliness in His people: people, circumstances and spiritual disciplines. Spiritual disciplines are eating and absorbing the good food of we talked about already. These we can plan into our schedules in a deliberate way, hence the word "discipline." And the other two—people and circumstances—those are much more rogue factors from our perspective. They are what we call "life."

As God's Word says, James 4:14-15: "

You do not even know what will happen tomorrow! What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes. Instead, you ought to say, "If the Lord is willing, we will live and do this or that."

But while the pages of our life are not frequently opened to us ahead of time, they are not only laid open before the Lord, but planned out. And not only planned out, but planned out for our good and God's glory. And that means that we can have confidence that God truly is able to fulfill His promise to make us godly, using the very means of all of the people and circumstances of our lives.

As Paul says,

"We know that all things work together for the good of those who love God, who are called according to his purpose. For those he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, so that he would be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters. And those he predestined, he also called; and those he called, he also justified; and those he justified, he also glorified. -- Romans 8:28-30

"All things work" because it is God who calls. "All things work" because it is God who planned. "All things work" because He has woven them together to bring about our Christ-likeness and the Christ-likeness of His people.

Paul Tripp sums up what God calls us to do in light of what He has planned: "I do not write my own story, it has been written for me. My job is to live inside of the plot that God has written for me in the way that I have been called by him to live."

Everything We Face in Life Is Really God Making Another Ring on the Tree

If indeed this is true, do you realize how that turns everything in our lives as a catalyst to seek God and grow to be more like Jesus Back to the giant sequoia analogy... because everything we go through comes through the sovereign, wise, loving hands of God, we can know that He will use it to make another "ring" of godliness on our little tree. Every person, every circumstance, it is ALWAYS growing season with our God. Nothing wasted. Nothing left undone. It might not feel good. I might prefer to not experience it. I might look forward to when these days are done. But God is up to good! He is forming me!

James 1:2-4:

"Count it all joy, my brothers, when you fall into various temptations, knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. Let endurance have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing."

And what does he say comes from endurance? Being made perfect and complete lacking in nothing. Many trials to produce much fruit. Fruit usually takes time to go from flower to ripe.

My experience with godliness is a big “Amen” to this truth! Godliness has been a matter of slowly-but-surely growth. It has been a lifetime in the making as God expands the circumstances in which like David I cry, “Apart from you I have no good thing.”

So yes, when I became a Christian, I confessed God as the King of the universe and of my life. Yes, I turned away from living life my own way and turned to Jesus to be my Savior then. Yes, I knew God’s forgiveness and enjoyed the Holy Spirit’s work in my heart at that time. I could tell you that God alone is good and His plans are perfect. I could tell you that He is the most wonderful person we can ever know, and God’s Word is powerful and living and able to work wonders in us.

I knew godliness was important. I knew we were to desire it. But while those first expressions were heart felt, as life’s difficulties came, my godliness—my desire to love what God loves and want what He wants most of all—reminded me of the morning glory flowers along my back fence. When the sun was out and life was good, I opened my little flower face and boasted and trusted in the radiance of the Son. But come night fall, when life was hard and God’s ways felt “unkind” and certainly unfathomable, I wanted to close my little flower face and shut my boastings of His glory.

All these years of being a Christian and I still feel like I am only on the outskirts of godliness in some ways. “Prone to wander, Lord I feel it. Prone to leave the one I love. Take my heart, Lord. Take and seal it. Seal it for Thy courts above!” -- Come Thou Fount of Every Blessing

All that I DO know of godliness in my life has been only of the Lord’s doing, as he has been slowly transforming me. He has kindly used people and circumstances to bring about His metamorphosis. With each dark day, has come God’s faithfulness to sustain my faith, to help me trust Him more, and to help the cry of my heart look more like the cry of David’s.

But it has taken a life’s worth of clinging to God in times of great weakness to appreciate the power and the sweetness of His love for me and that the best place to be every day (not just on hard days) is dependent upon Him (John 14:5). A life’s worth of decisions to see how true His Word is and to choose it over my own way. A life’s worth of observation to see that the best this world has to offer is unsatisfying, if it is not from God’s hand, and the rich contentment that comes from but little if it is.

A life’s worth of God’s plans seeming to hijack my best of plans to trust even His most mysterious providences are far better than anything I could even imagine. A life’s worth of fighting difficulty to see that it is only in the deep roots of a relationship with God, the promises of His Word, and the prayers and encouragement of His people was the nourishment to endure can be found. And a life’s worth of ministry to be the perfect center stage for many of these lessons about godliness and much of the change He has made in my heart.

As much as I wish my experience was unusual and I wish I could tell you to just do a certain three things and you will have instant godliness, it is simply not the case. God loves to grow things. And often very slowly. Slowly, but surely, trial after trial, year after year, God has used both the good days, and even more, those dark days to grow my confidence in Him and His good ways. Even in his perfect (slow) timing.

Understanding this gives us hope and patience, for ourselves, for our husbands, for every church member. We are like the hamburger buns at Fuddruckers: on display from mixing and kneading to shaping and rising to baking. Always somewhere on the path to what God is making us. And there is always something of God's good work that we can see and encourage each other with. Like Paul, we can keep on striving to seek after God, that we might know Him better and He might make us like Jesus.

"Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect, but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own. Brothers, I do not consider that I have made it my own. But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus." --Philippians 3:12-14, ESV

And we strive WITH CONFIDENCE because of His promises to us:

"Being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus."--Philippians 1:6