

The Upper Room^[1] devotional reflection for Thursday, April 8, 2021 comes to us from Glenda Moore of Illinois

1 Peter 5:1-11 *1 To the elders among you, I appeal as a fellow elder and a witness of Christ's sufferings who also will share in the glory to be revealed: 2 Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care, watching over them—not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not pursuing dishonest gain, but eager to serve; 3 not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock. 4 And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that will never fade away. 5 In the same way, you who are younger, submit yourselves to your elders. All of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, because, "God opposes the proud but shows favor to the humble." 6 Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time. 7 Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you. 8 Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. 9 Resist him, standing firm in the faith, because you know that the family of believers throughout the world is undergoing the same kind of sufferings. 10 And the God of all grace, who called you to his eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little while, will himself restore you and make you strong, firm and steadfast. 11 To him be the power for ever and ever. Amen.*

"Gather Your Elephants"

Newborn elephants are susceptible to attacks from predators like lions and hyenas. As a mother elephant gives birth, the herd gathers to protect her and the newborn.

My daughter's family is going through a difficult time. For us, gathered elephants symbolize the protection her community gives her by their prayers. A small wooden elephant sits by my kitchen sink. My daughter's friend gave her two small elephant figurines when she moved away, know that the days ahead could leave my daughter vulnerable. The elephants serve as a reminder that she is not alone. When she feels overwhelmed by her situation, the elephants remind her of the community that will support her with prayer whatever comes her way.

When a hard day hits, my daughter gathers her community by texting me, her sisters, and her friends who immediately surround her with prayer.

Scripture tells us to be alert because evil prowls like a roaring lion. But God has not left us defenseless in our times of vulnerability and pain. In those times, we can ask others to gather around us and pray for God's powerful presence to bring relief.

Prayer Focus: Friends who Pray for One Another

Prayer: Dear Lord, help us to share our struggles with those who surround and encourage us through prayer. Amen.

Thought for the Day: Today I will support a friend through prayer.

---Glenda Moore

Friends –

I truly appreciate this story about the gathering elephants who surround and protect a mother elephant who is giving birth. I also appreciate Glenda Moore's reflection about gathering elephants being like friends and family gathering to support someone who is struggling through prayer.

Both of these stories reminds me of the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s theology the Beloved Community. Others call this the Body of Christ, which when gathered, becomes God incarnate in our world in the present day. When we become the Beloved Community, we are empowered to serve God's world and people, in a way that no individual can possibly provide on his or her own.

--Pastor bea

¹ <https://www.upperroom.org/>