Pretty soon he will be able to get down on his own, but for now he asks for help. Sometimes, Lincoln wakes up early in the morning, and I am able to spend a few moments with him on our front porch. The step off of the porch onto the sidewalk is a big one, and his little legs just cannot quite span the distance.

So he asks in his own special way, a kind of gibberish that we all seem to understand somehow. He stands at the edge of the step, reaches his chubby little hand out for me, and begins pleading.

"Do you want help getting down? Uh-huh! Uh-huh!"

It will not be long before he is running off this step, and charging out into the front yard on his own. But for now, I am more than happy to grasp his little hand in mine, and hold him steady as he ventures off into the flowers and dirt.

It is amazing, how he transforms when he grabs my hand. This fifteen month old was a timid, cautious, fearful little boy standing at the edge of the abyss. Now he is a self-confident, ambitious ball of energy; throwing himself off the step with abandon, trusting that his secure grip in daddy's hand will ensure a safe landing.

You know, it is not his powerful grasp that makes him safe. He is quick. He is a smart little booger, but there is little real strength in those rotund fingers. The safety in this particular maneuver lies in daddy's strong grip. And thanks to his confidence in that grip, he leaps into the air, ready for adventure.

There are some things in this life that we face that are just too big for us right now. Challenges that we struggle with, circumstances that are just too big of a leap for our little legs. I want to remind you today that we have a good Heavenly Father, One whose hands are strong enough to hold on in those moments where our strength is certainly not sufficient. Our safety, our peace of mind is not rooted in our ability to make the leap or stick the landing, but in His ability to keep us steady in spite of the circumstance.

I also want to remind you today that many of the impossible leaps that you are staring down may one day become manageable hurdles for you. You need to remember that you are still in the middle of your story- the final chapter of your book has not yet been written. You are not finished yet- Romans chapter eight reminds us that we are all moving inexorably towards complete and total restoration. Again in 2 Corinthians we are reminded of how we are growing "from glory to glory," as we navigate the struggles of this life. The 'big step' you are facing down today may one day soon become a simple stride! But until that day comes, hold tight to the One whose grip is secure.

But whenever anyone turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away. Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. And we all, who with unveiled faces contemplate the Lord’s glory, are being transformed into his image with ever increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.

2 Corinthians 3
“What do I do with my anger?”

A youth asked this because he believes if he doesn’t get help with his anger, he will end up in prison.

“Be angry and do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, and give no opportunity to the devil.” Ephesians 4:26-27, ESV

Jack Nicholson and Adam Sandler made a comedy titled “Anger Management,” but in reality anger is no laughing matter. A person can do a lifetime of damage in just a few seconds of uncontrolled anger. I’ll never forget a young man I knew that would have been a professional tennis player, but could not get his temper under control. He ended up killing a man on a golf course with a nine-iron and later died in prison.

So what do you do with anger?

God tells us that in our anger, we should not sin. I love how the King James reads, “Be ye angry, and sin not.” God understands that anger is a natural feeling just like pain. Jesus was angry at times, but he didn’t sin in his anger. God knows that it’s not a question of if you get angry, it’s when you get angry. So the real issue is what will you do with that anger? Sin, or find release in Christ?

Psychologists tell us to stop and count to ten when angry. Really not bad advice, but it needs more direction. When you are angered, your body starts firing off all kinds of adrenal chemicals that can launch you into fight-or-flight mode. This is a dangerous and critical juncture. That’s why counting to ten is good advice for the purpose of lowering your heart rate so your bloodstream doesn’t pump those fight-or-flight chemicals so quickly to your brain and body to the point you physically lose control and hurt somebody. So slow down, count to ten, breathe deeply, and maintain a prayerful attitude that says, “I will not sin in my anger.”

Everyone needs a release valve for anger because repressed anger turns into depression and/or manifests in other horrible forms. Your best relief is to find relief in Christ. Pastor Jon told this young man, “What do you do with your anger? Ask Jesus! Jesus, what do I do with my anger?” The answer that God gives you will bring release and peace. Anger demands action; when we choose a healthy response to anger, we will experience a good outcome.

God also tells us to not give the devil a foothold with anger. A good rock climber can get a foothold strong enough to torque the whole weight of his body on the thickness of a dime. Anger gives Satan enough of a foothold to torque your flesh enough to do a lifetime’s worth of damage.

Lastly, God gives us simple preventative maintenance concerning anger and also how to handle a tense situation.

"Know this, my beloved brothers: let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger; for the anger of man does not produce the righteousness of God.” James 1:19-20, ESV
As our chaplains work with residential youth on a daily basis, it is common for us to encounter severe need. We hear reports of families in crisis, siblings in danger, family court cases in limbo, addiction, abuse, and abandonment. These kids are navigating severe difficulties early in life.

I often repeat the same phrase to myself as I encounter child after child carrying these heavy burdens; ‘it is never a bad time to pray.’ One-on-one prayer with hurting kids is one of the most simple and direct means of ministering to these youth. We find ourselves offering to pray with them often.

We are reminded in Ephesians chapter six that the problems we are facing are more than emotional, behavioral, or cognitive challenges; ours is a spiritual battle. James encourages us that ‘the prayer is a righteous person is powerful and effective.’ While it is easy to focus on other aspects of the situation at hand, prayer brings us to the heart of the spiritual battle at hand.

Because of the great need of the children and teens we serve, I am excited to share with you a new opportunity that has been presented to us. Days of Hope is partnering with a local organization that focuses on training and equipping believers to pray effectively for needs in our community.

Carol Hudler from the Holy Ground Prayer Center will be joining us this fall for a day of training. Carol will be helping us organize a team of believers who will agree to intercede in prayer for the youth we serve.

Due to privacy concerns, we are unable to simply send out a prayer list of names and issues that kids are struggling with. But we will be developing a means of anonymously sharing needs and mobilizing folks from all over the country to pray for these needs as they arise.

Would you consider joining us in this endeavor? Are you willing to connect with a team of believers who respond to the crisis in a child’s life?

If you are willing to be a part of this prayer support team, please contact us and let us know!
Days of Hope is a not for profit, inter-denominational Christian ministry that seeks to address the spiritual needs of children and teens who are receiving residential psychiatric care at institutions in central Missouri. We work alongside many dedicated professionals including educators, therapists, doctors and nurses, child care workers and so many more who strive to help these at-risk youth. The children we serve have been deeply scarred by every imaginable form of abuse, abandonment, addiction, neglect, and harm.

We are supported by the prayer and gifts of individuals and churches in our community.

Together we strive to passionately communicate the love of God to hurting kids in a gentle way.