

10 Devotionals for Pastors

*A free gift to my brothers in ministry,
wherever you are serving the Lord.*

— Pastor Rodney Coe

rodneycoe.com/for-pastors

"Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up." — Galatians 6:9

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The Sermon No One Heard

Sometimes we wonder if preaching is making a difference. We know God wants us to have faithfulness in ministry, but Monday mornings make us wonder if we are doing what God wants.

In 1799, a young Quaker preacher named Stephen Grellet rode for days through the wilderness of upstate New York to preach to a camp of lumberjacks. When he arrived, the camp was empty. Pots hung over cold fires. Tools lay scattered. Not a soul in sight.

But Grellet had a peculiar conviction — when God laid a sermon on a man’s heart, that sermon belonged to the Lord. So he climbed up on a stump and preached his heart out. To nobody.

He rode home, figuring it had been a strange divine errand he’d never understand.

Pastor friend, have you been there?

You poured yourself into a sermon and watched half the pews sit empty. You labored over a Bible study, and three people showed up. You prayed over a soul for years and saw no fruit. And somewhere in a quiet moment, you wondered — did any of it matter?

Listen to what Jesus said in Luke 12:2 — “For there is nothing covered, that shall not be revealed; neither hid, that shall not be known.”

A.T. Robertson tells us “covered” is in the perfect passive tense — sealed up tight, locked down good. And Jesus says even that is going to come uncovered. Every hidden act of faithfulness. Every whispered prayer. Every sermon preached to an almost-empty room.

W.A. Criswell used to say the Lord keeps better books than the IRS. Heaven has a ledger. Nothing slips past Him.

Years after that lonely sermon, Stephen Grellet was walking down a London street when a stranger grabbed his arm. “I’ve been searching for you a long time,” the man said. He told Grellet there had been one man in that camp after all — the cook, hiding in the woodshed. He’d heard every word. He’d given his life to Christ. He’d gone back and told the lumberjacks. Souls were saved. A movement began.

All from a sermon preached to “nobody.”

Pastor, your faithfulness is never wasted. Not the empty pew sermon. Not the unanswered prayer. Not the kindness no one noticed. Heaven is keeping books, and one day, what you whispered in obscurity will be shouted from the rooftops of glory.

Keep preaching. Keep praying. Keep showing up.

Keep looking up!

Pastor Rodney

Related devotionals: Fight discouragement · Eisenhower's D-Day faith · James 3:1 teachers

Did You Quit Too Soon?

At fifty-one years old, Dwight Eisenhower considered himself a failure.

Let that sink in. The man we remember as a five-star general and the 34th President of the United States once looked in the mirror and saw a man with no future. One biographer put it this way. He had given his life to the army, had no savings, no accomplishments he could point to with pride, and nothing but a small pension waiting for him.

Had he died in 1941, no one would remember his name.

Could you imagine if he had quit? What if he had turned in his papers and walked away?

Here's what Eisenhower didn't know: God had a much bigger plan. That's how God works. He's a big God with a long view, and He doesn't punch the same clock we do.

But so many of us never get there. We feel passed over. Underappreciated. Cast aside. We look at where we are instead of where God is taking us. And somewhere along the way, we start operating in our own strength, living life our own way, and wondering why nothing fits.

Friend, God is not done with you.

The Bible says, "It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up" (Ephesians 4:11–12, NIV).

Catch that word — prepare. God is preparing you. You have a gift that builds up the church, but it has to be shaped before it's sent. And shaping takes time.

Maybe that's our problem. We want to be the general before God has finished preparing us to lead the army. We want the title before the training is done.

Eisenhower waited. And when the moment came, he was ready. He developed the plan we know as D-Day, Operation Overlord. It was originally scheduled for May 1944, but had to be pushed back to June. They didn't have enough landing crafts. Even the plan had to wait for the right time.

Then on June 6, 1944, it happened. And the world changed.

Maybe your operation isn't ready yet either. Maybe God is still working on a few things — in the plan and in you. That's not failure. That's preparation.

So don't quit. Don't retire from the calling. Your D-Day will come. And when it does, victory is already assured.

Keep looking up.

Heaven is closer than you think.

May God bless your day.

Pastor Rodney

Related devotionals: [When you feel stuck](#) · [The sermon no one heard](#) · [Burn the ships](#)

3 Ways to Fight Discouragement

“Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.” — Matthew 5:4

The Weight of Discouragement

Discouragement doesn't knock politely. It crashes through the door uninvited.

It shows up after the diagnosis you weren't expecting. After the relationship that fell apart. After the job you didn't get. After the dream that died. After you've given everything you have and it still wasn't enough.

To mourn means to have a broken heart—to feel totally discouraged and defeated.

Maybe that's where you are right now. Maybe you're reading this with tears in your eyes and a weight on your chest that won't go away. Maybe you've been faking smiles while your heart is breaking.

If that's you, I want you to know something: Jesus sees you. And He promises that those who mourn will be comforted.

Comforted means to “come alongside” someone and bring encouragement. It means you're not alone in this.

1. Take a Good Look at the WHOLE Picture

Too many times in life, people become discouraged because they fail to see the big picture.

When you're standing six inches from a canvas, all you see is one brushstroke. You can't tell if it's beautiful or ugly because you're too close to see what the artist is creating.

That's what discouragement does. It zooms us in so close to our problem that we lose perspective on everything else.

Society makes this worse. We live in a culture that amplifies the negative. Turn on the news and it's 24/7 disaster coverage. Scroll social media and everyone's life looks perfect except yours. Check your notifications and it's one criticism after another.

But here's what we forget: There are many more good things going on in God's kingdom than bad.

2. Take a SHORT Look at the Problem

Now, let me be clear: There are real tragedies in life.

We cannot dismiss the loss of someone we love. We cannot minimize genuine heartbreak. We cannot pretend that real pain doesn't exist.

However—and this is crucial—most of the time, what people think is earth-shattering works out

through time spent with God.

Let that sink in. Most of what feels catastrophic today won't feel that way a year from now. Most of what seems impossible right now has a solution you just haven't seen yet.

The Story of General Lee and the Oak Tree

After the Civil War, General Robert E. Lee was having dinner with a prominent Kentucky family. The lady of the house was distraught and asked for his help with a problem.

Her problem? The majestic oak tree in her front yard—a tree that had been there her entire life and her parents' lives before her—was dying because of war damage.

What should she do with this tree that held so much history and meaning?

General Lee's response was shockingly simple: "Cut it down and forget about it."

Harsh? Maybe. But also freeing.

Don't Hang On to Dead Things

Some people will hang onto their problem for months and years. They'll water it, fertilize it, give it sunlight, and help it grow into something even bigger.

And if you're not careful, they'll drag you into it, and now you have their problem too.

3. Take a CLOSE Look at Yourself

If you're going to come alongside someone who's discouraged, you better know yourself first.

Be careful, because you have to know your strengths and weaknesses before you try to help others.

Why? Because hurting people hurt people. Drowning people pull others under. If you're barely keeping your own head above water, you're not in a position to be someone else's lifeguard.

This isn't selfish—it's wise.

Discouragement is real. Pain is real. Heartache is real.

But so is God's love. So is His comfort. So is His promise that those who mourn will be blessed.

And remember: The kingdom of God hasn't shut down. Heaven is still open. Jesus is still on the throne. And you are deeply, desperately, unconditionally loved.

Keep Looking Up!

Heaven is closer than you think.

May God bless your day.

Pastor Rodney

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no one heard

The Men Who Preached From the Saddle

They didn't have a church building. They had a horse and a Bible. And that was enough. The circuit rider preachers who sparked frontier revival across America didn't wait for perfect conditions — they just rode.

Imagine riding a horse through mud so deep it swallowed your boots. Through rain that soaked you to the bone. Through summer heat that blistered your neck and winter cold that numbed your fingers around the reins. No GPS. No paved roads. No hotel at the end of the trail. Just you, your Bible, and whatever God put in your mouth to say when you got where you were going.

That was the life of a circuit rider.

In the late 1700s and early 1800s, the American frontier was spiritually starving. Towns were scattered. Churches were scarce. And most trained ministers wanted nothing to do with the wilderness. But a handful of men said yes anyway. Men like Francis Asbury, a Methodist bishop who never pastored a single church but rode an estimated 270,000 miles on horseback and preached over 16,000 sermons across the backwoods of America.

Let that sit for a moment. Two hundred and seventy thousand miles. On a horse.

He slept in barns. He preached in one-room cabins and open fields. He forded rivers, endured fevers, and outlasted blizzards. And he wasn't alone. Hundreds of circuit riders crisscrossed the frontier, carrying the gospel to people who had no other way of hearing it. They planted churches in places that didn't have post offices yet. They baptized converts in creeks and married couples under oak trees.

Most of them died young. The average life expectancy of a circuit rider was barely past forty. But the churches they planted and the fires they lit shaped the soul of a nation.

Romans 10:15 says, "How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!"

I think about those feet sometimes. Cracked. Calloused. Saddle-sore. Not beautiful by any earthly standard. But stunning in heaven's eyes.

We live in an age of convenience. We can livestream a sermon from our couch. And that's not a bad thing. But somewhere along the way, I think we forgot what it looks like to sacrifice comfort for the sake of someone else's soul.

The circuit riders didn't wait for an invitation. They didn't wait for a salary. They didn't wait for comfort.

They just rode.

Maybe it's time we did the same.

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Related devotionals: [The Cane Ridge Revival](#) · [Praying for revival](#) · [The sermon no one heard](#)

When the Heat Couldn't Stop the Fire

“When the Day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. Then there appeared to them divided tongues, as of fire, and one sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.” (Acts 2:1-4)

In 1801, twenty thousand people gathered in the brutal Kentucky heat for what became known as the Cane Ridge Revival, and the spiritual fire that fell there changed American Christianity forever. They had no air conditioning, no microphones, no programs.

They had something better: desperate hearts and a God who was ready to move. What Cane Ridge and Acts 2 teach us is that revival has never waited for comfort. It waits for surrender. But twenty thousand people did the opposite.

They traveled for days. On horseback. In wagons. On foot. They carried bedrolls and cast-iron skillets and a hunger in their souls they couldn't explain. They converged on a tiny meetinghouse in Bourbon County called Cane Ridge. In a building that could barely hold five hundred. And God met them in a field with no shade.

No microphones. No worship band. No screens. No program. Multiple preachers stood on stumps and wagon beds and proclaimed the gospel simultaneously. And the Spirit fell so powerfully that frontier men who hadn't prayed in years dropped to their knees and wept.

Entire families came to faith. Skeptics who came to mock walked away changed. The revival lasted nearly a week. Historians estimate three thousand people gave their lives to Christ. The same number found in Acts 2:41.

No comfort. No production. Just surrender.

And here's the thing that gets me—it wasn't the first time God worked that way. Flip back to Acts 2, and you'll find a hundred and twenty believers crammed into a borrowed upper room in Jerusalem. No ventilation. No cushioned seats. Just ten days of desperate, unified prayer. And then, suddenly, a sound from heaven. A rushing wind. Tongues of fire resting on each of them. The Spirit filling them to the brim.

God didn't wait for the thermostat to be right. He waited for the hearts to be right.

I wonder sometimes if we've gotten it backwards. We wait for the perfect building, the perfect budget, the perfect circumstances.

God has never once said, “I'd love to send revival, but the conditions aren't ideal.” He's always been

drawn to the desperate, the uncomfortable, the people who want Him more than they want convenience.

At Pentecost, the fire fell in a room with no ventilation.

At Cane Ridge, the fire fell in a field with no shade.

Maybe the question isn't whether God is willing to show up. Maybe the question is whether we're willing to quit being comfortable and start asking for fire.

Lord, send it again.

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Related devotionals: Francis Asbury circuit riders · Praying for revival · Alvin York's faith

Do You Want to Be a Teacher?

Do you really want to be a teacher?

“My brethren, let not many of you become teachers, knowing that we shall receive a stricter judgment.” James 3:1

What is it that you can do for God? What does God want you to do?

Does He tell us by means of a dream he has placed in our hearts?

You might not know exactly what God expects of you or what your dream is, but you can trust God, who gives the dream.

My wife and I homeschooled our four boys. (Well, she is much more so than I). People have praised and ridiculed us for doing this. Having seen our children in public school and having homeschooled them, I can honestly say that the quality of a student’s education depends on one thing: the quality of the teacher.

You can legislate and administrate, but if the teacher fails to educate, the student will not learn very much. I had teachers who made a difference in my life in elementary, middle, high school, and college.

Some teachers can make the most boring subjects exciting, and others can make the most exciting subjects boring. I guess that is why teachers and pastors have so much in common.

You have heard the phrase “to whom much is given, much is expected.” That is actually a loose translation of Luke 12:48. James reemphasizes that verse in James 3:1. The Bible says that teaching comes with awesome requirements and great responsibility.

The requirement is not that many should do it. It is a calling from almighty God. We must teach the truth and realize that God will judge us more strictly.

We have a greater accountability to God. The responsibility is to be mature Christians and to watch what we say. We are to watch the words we use. We all stumble, and I must confess that we all say the wrong thing at times, but our words matter.

I have been deeply blessed to have had Christian teachers in my life. I have had teachers who have gone the extra mile, and I am eternally grateful.

Notice the verse again, “My brethren, let not many of you become teachers, knowing that we shall receive a stricter judgment.” James 3:1

Evidently, everyone wanted to be a teacher of the Word in the church at Jerusalem. These verses speak specifically to pastors and Sunday school teachers, but they also imply implications for a school

teacher and a parent.

The word means “instructor” and comes from a root meaning “to teach.” The conclusion then is that anyone who has the responsibility to instruct another must realize this is a calling from God. We are all called as parents to train or instruct our children in what God expects of them.

Teachers are under a special obligation not only to practice what they preach but also to ensure that what they teach is true.

The Pharisees and religious scholars of Jesus’ day did not practice what they preached. Jesus said this about them in Matthew 23:3, “Therefore whatever they tell you to observe, that observe and do, but do not do according to their works; for they say, and do not do.”

He said, ” Do what they say to do, but don’t live like them. How sad it is that we live in a day when morality is no longer a requirement for teaching in many instances.

The world would say that sexual sins or character failures are no longer an issue when picking a teacher. I believe character counts. Sin is still sin, and God says this is serious business.

There will come a day when everyone stands before God, and on that day, we cannot say we didn’t know. We have been entrusted to teach our children and teach others about the things of God.

Keep looking up!

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What is Your Light Bulb Moment?

March 1927. A young Scotsman stood at the crossroads of destiny.

He had his orders. Crystal clear. Unmistakable. God had called him from Scotland to America. But there was a problem.

He didn't know how. Didn't know when. Didn't know where.

All he knew was that his Chief—capital C—had spoken.

So, he went.

April 5, 1927. The young man stepped off the boat onto American soil. In his pocket, not much money. In his heart, a dream bigger than the Atlantic he'd just crossed.

He took a job in New Jersey. Just to survive. Then, he started teaching a men's Bible class in Birmingham, Alabama. Nothing fancy. Just a Scottish immigrant sharing what he knew about God.

The men loved him. Week after week, they showed up to hear this young man talk about faith and purpose and the God who keeps His promises.

Then came the acceptance letter. Columbia Theological Seminary in Decatur, Georgia. A door had opened. But seminary costs money. Money, he didn't have.

That's when the envelope arrived.

The men from his Bible class had written. They knew God had called him. They knew the road ahead would be hard. The enemy would fight him. Discouragement would knock on his door.

So, they wrote him a check. For the entire first year.

You cannot out-dream God.

The young Scotsman graduated. Took a pastorate. Then another. Each step, not knowing where the path led. Just following the Light that had been turned on in Scotland years before.

And then it happened.

New York Avenue Presbyterian Church in Washington, D.C. called. Not just any church. The church. The church of presidents. Abraham Lincoln had sat in those pews.

The young Scotsman said yes.

He thrived there. His sermons echoed through the halls of power. His prayers moved hearts. And then came the ultimate honor—Chaplain of the United States Senate.

The boy from Scotland was now praying for America's leaders. Opening sessions of Congress with words that called a nation back to God.

He served until his death at forty-six. Far too young. But his legacy? His legacy thundered on.

His name was Peter Marshall.

And perhaps you've heard of his wife—Catherine Marshall—who wrote his story in a book that sold millions. *A Man Called Peter*.

That Scottish immigrant who stepped onto American soil with nothing but a calling and a promise? God didn't give him a roadmap.

He gave him something better.

He gave him His presence. And He said, "I'm with you."

That was enough.

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Burn the Ships: What It Means to Move Forward with God

In 1519, the Spanish explorer Hernán Cortés landed on the shores of the New World with a small army and an impossible mission. He was vastly outnumbered. His men were afraid. And the temptation to retreat was real.

So Cortés did something that changed the course of history. He ordered his men to burn the ships. Every single one of them.

There would be no sailing home. No plan B. No escape route. The only direction left was forward. And because there was no going back, his men found the courage to press on — and they conquered an empire.

Now, here's why that story matters to you and me.

We, too, are on a mission. We are marching as Christians through a land that is not always friendly to our faith. And every single day, we face the same temptation those soldiers did. The temptation to turn around and go back to what feels safe.

The children of Israel knew that temptation well. After miraculously leaving Egypt, they were headed to the Promised Land. The place God had sworn to give Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. They had heard about this place for generations. It was finally becoming a reality.

But then their faith faltered.

While Moses was on the mountain talking with God, the people made a golden calf and started talking about going back to Egypt. Back to slavery. Back to the very place God had just delivered them from.

Why? Because it's always easier to stay where we are than to go through the hard places God is calling us to walk through.

But friend, God doesn't call us backward. He calls us forward.

To grow in our walk with the Lord, we have to endure some things — struggles, trials, seasons that require patience and perseverance. Think about it: how strong would our faith be if God allowed us to go through life without a single obstacle?

When trials come, we have to see them for what they really are: God's refining process. He knows exactly what He is doing. He knows exactly what we need to strengthen our trust in Him. There is always a bigger picture, even when it doesn't make a lick of sense to us in the moment.

And in those difficult days, we must hold on to this: trials come to everyone. God still loves us. He is

still for us. And He is still with us — right through the fire.

So burn the ships today. Mark the day. Set a course to move forward with God and don't look back.

That is what the Christian life is all about — pressing forward. Jesus put it plainly in Luke 9:62:

“No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for service in the kingdom of God.”
(NIV)

And Paul echoed it when he wrote:

“But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.” — Philippians 3:13–14 (NIV)

Are you ready for what's ahead? Whatever is behind you — the failures, the regrets, the comfortable places that kept you from growing — let it burn. Heaven awaits, and the best is yet to come.

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Related devotionals: Eisenhower's D-Day faith · When you feel stuck · Making the right choice

Can God Still Move?

It was the last day of the Feast of Tabernacles — the biggest celebration on Israel’s calendar. The priests had marched to the Pool of Siloam, filled a golden pitcher with water, and carried it back to the altar while the crowd chanted Psalm 118:25: “Save now, I beseech thee, O Lord; O Lord, I beseech thee, send now prosperity.”

The water symbolized God’s provision — the way He’d sustained Moses and the people in the wilderness. It pointed back to Hezekiah’s tunnel in Jerusalem. It carried deep theological weight. And right in the middle of it all, Jesus stood up and said something nobody expected.

“If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water” (John 7:37-38).

Not a trickle. Not a tap. Not a stream. A river.

Here’s what stops me in my tracks. A few years ago, the Baptist Press published an article from the 2022 Southern Baptist Convention Annual Church Profile. It reported that SBC membership had been in steady decline since 2006 and hit its lowest number since 1978. Only 18.5 percent of Southern Baptist churches were growing. Over 42 percent had plateaued. And 39 percent were declining.

So can God still move? I believe the answer is an absolute yes — but I also believe we have to ask ourselves an honest question: Have we made room for Him to?

Jesus didn’t offer that living water to perfect people. He offered it in the middle of a religious ceremony that had become routine. The Pharisees were arguing doctrine. The Sadducees were fighting for influence. And right there, in the noise and the politics and the tradition, Jesus said, “Come to Me.”

Adrian Rogers once said, “The reason so many of us are not filled with the Spirit is that we are too full of ourselves.”

That’s the real problem. It’s not that God has stopped moving — it’s that we’ve filled up the space where He used to work. Our schedules. Our preferences. Our plans. When I come to Jesus every day and learn to trust and rely on Him completely, there’s less room for me and more room for Him.

Does our prayer life demonstrate a dependence on Jesus? Does it indicate a thirst for revival? Jesus says, “Whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours” (Mark 11:24).

God hasn’t changed His mind. He’s waiting on us to change ours.

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Related devotionals: [When did prayer begin?](#) · [Does God hear me?](#) · [The Cane Ridge Revival](#)

Poured Out: When Obedience Costs Everything

When does obedience cost us? Philippians 2 is one of my favorite chapters in the Bible. When you read it, you see what it means to be poured out. Notice verses 7-8:

“Rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death — even death on a cross!” Philippians 2:7-8

THE MOST STAGGERING SENTENCE IN SCRIPTURE

I have read Philippians 2 hundreds of times. And still every single time I reach verse 7, something inside me goes quiet. “He made himself nothing.” The Greek word there is *ekenosen*. He emptied Himself. He poured Himself out.

Theologians call this the *kenosis*. But it is more than a doctrine to be studied. It is a love story to be lived. The eternal Son of God, with all the rights and radiance of heaven, chose to lay them down and take on the limitations of human flesh, all so that He could walk the road to Calvary in your place and mine.

A UNITY BUILT ON SACRIFICE

Paul does not open this passage with theology. He opens it with community. Look at verses 1 and 2. He speaks of encouragement, comfort, fellowship, tenderness, and compassion. He is painting a picture of what the church is supposed to look like: a people who are “one in spirit and of one mind.”

But here is the honest truth. That kind of unity does not come cheap. It is not the product of a good potluck dinner or a well-run membership class. The unity Paul is describing is only possible when people are willing to be poured out for one another. Just as Christ was poured out for us.

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE Poured OUT?

To be poured out means you bring your gift, your energy, your time, your attention, and you lay it at the feet of someone else’s need. It means that when the choice comes between your comfort and someone else’s flourishing, you choose theirs. Not because you are weak, but because you have been gripped by the love of a Savior who did exactly that for you.

In verse 8, Paul uses a phrase that always humbles me: “obedient to death.” Jesus did not merely tolerate the cross. He obeyed His way to it. Step by step. Prayer by prayer. He walked in perfect obedience, not because it was easy, but because it was right. And that obedience became the doorway to our salvation.

YOUR CROSS IS SMALLER — BUT IT IS REAL

Friend, I want to be honest with you. Your cross is not Calvary. But it is real. It might be a difficult marriage you are committed to staying in. It might be a prodigal you are still praying for. It might be a calling that costs you more than you expected. Whatever it is, Philippians 2 says this: look at what Jesus did, and keep walking.

Because here is the glory of it all. The One who emptied Himself is also the One who was raised and exalted and given the Name above every name. The pouring out was not the end. The resurrection was. And that same resurrection power is alive in every believer who chooses the way of the towel over the way of the throne.

Keep Looking Up!

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