

word4U2day

2022/04/01

Hebrews 10:38 NCV

Living by faith

Living by faith is something we learn to do by practising it every day. Before we become Christians, we only have our own intelligence and abilities to rely on. But those things will only take us so far, and no further. But when we welcome God into our lives, we can trust Him for the wisdom, guidance, resources, and ability we need to fulfil His will for our lives. The Bible tells us, 'It was by faith that Noah heard God's warnings about things he could not yet see. He obeyed God and built a large boat to save his family.' (Hebrews 11:7 NCV). When Noah built the ark, he must have trusted what God had told him, because when he started there was no sign of rain. Living by faith doesn't always make sense. It doesn't mean our problems will just disappear. Sometimes faith changes our circumstances. But at other times it changes our perspective by giving us the courage and strength to hold on and keep hoping when we're expecting bad news, can't see a way out, or don't know the next step to take. Faith gives us the stamina to keep going, confident that God will work things out on our behalf. Paul tells us, 'Faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see' (Hebrews 11:1 NIV). Living by faith means 1) obeying God and believing He will never let you down, 2) following in the footsteps of ordinary people who did extraordinary things for God, and 3) using your faith because you know it's the only currency heaven recognises. When the Bible says, 'Those who are right with me will live by faith,' it doesn't mean little, sporadic bursts of faith; it means making faith a lifestyle.

Phil 1-2; Luke 21:1-11; Ps 31:14-24; Pro 9:1-3

2022/04/02

Galatians 5:22 TLB

Choose peace

Panic and anxiety are often our first reactions to conflict and problems. In those initial moments, choosing peace seems impossible. Our subconscious whispers, 'If you really care, you will worry.' But an experienced counsellor writes: 'Don't panic! No matter what the situation or circumstance, we usually have...a moment to breathe deeply and...let peace flow through our body and mind...Panic, not the task, is the enemy.' Anxiety just empowers and enlarges the problem. Our best resource for problem-solving is always peace. Fear and anxiety block solutions; answers flow more easily and naturally from a peaceful state of mind. And God's peace is always available to us. It's one of the fruits of the Spirit. Paul wrote, 'When the Holy Spirit controls our lives he will produce...in us...peace' (among other things). Jesus said, 'Do not let your heart be troubled, nor let it be afraid. [Let My perfect peace calm you in every circumstance and give you courage and strength for every challenge.]' (John 14:27 AMP). That means we can choose peace over inner conflict. In the same verse, Jesus also said, 'Peace I leave with you; My [perfect] peace I give to you' (v.27 AMP). But just because Jesus left us His peace doesn't mean it'll automatically function in us. We first need to accept that peace. When we lose our peace, it's harder to hear from God. Paul said, 'Let the peace of Christ [the inner calm of one who walks daily with Him] be the controlling factor in your hearts' (Colossians 3:15 AMP). So instead of getting anxious and panicky when we face challenges today, let's try to choose the peace God promises.

Phil 3-4; Luke 21:12-24; Ps 18:1-29; Pro 9:4-6

2022/04/03

Romans 6:14 MSG

Beware of weeds

One of the most important jobs in a garden is getting rid of weeds; if they're left, they get out of control, choke the other plants, and quickly take over. Gardeners know to beware of weeds and remove them as soon as they appear. There's a spiritual parallel here: unless we're firm, decisive, and uncompromising with sin, it'll take over our whole life. The Message paraphrases Paul's words like this: 'Our old way of life was nailed to the cross with Christ, a decisive end to that sin-miserable life – no longer captive to sin's demands! What we believe is this: If we get included in Christ's sin-conquering death, we also get included in his life-saving resurrection. We know that when Jesus was raised from the dead it was a signal of the end of death-as-the-end. Never again will death have the last word. When Jesus died, he took sin down with him, but alive he brings God down to us. From now on, think of it this way: Sin speaks a dead language that means nothing to you; God speaks your mother tongue, and you hang on every word. You are dead to sin and alive to God....That means you must not give sin a vote in the way you conduct your lives. Don't give it the time of day. Don't even run little errands that are connected with that old way of life. Throw yourselves wholeheartedly and full-time – remember, you've been raised from the dead! – into God's way of doing things. Sin can't tell you how to live. After all, you're not living under that old tyranny any longer. You're living in the freedom of God' (v.6-14 MSG). So today, let's say no to sin and weed it out of our lives.

Josh 2:1-24; Acts 9:20-30

2022/04/04

Joshua 1:9 NKJV

Courageous (1)

God knew the battles Joshua would have to fight in order to conquer the promised land, so He told Joshua three times: 'Be strong and of good courage.' Whenever we move forwards, at some point we'll come up against obstacles that block our path. It can be so disheartening to feel we've been making good progress, only to be stopped in our tracks. But rather than seeing obstacles as enemies (even if that's how they feel), let's try to think of them as resources that we can use to our advantage. Every obstacle we face reveals our strengths and weaknesses. They also shape us and make us wiser and more confident when we overcome them. The poet Ralph Waldo Emerson wrote: 'Whatever you do, you need courage. Whatever course you decide upon, there is always someone to tell you that you are wrong. There are always difficulties arising that tempt you to believe your critics are right. To map out a course of action and follow it to an end requires some of the same courage that a soldier needs. Peace has its victories, but it takes brave men and women to win them.' Whenever we leave our comfort zones and step out in faith to follow God, we'll be tested. But we'll also discover opportunities to reach heights we thought were beyond us and go further than others who had more talent but settled for the easier option. In *The Message* paraphrase, Paul tells us: 'Every detail works to your advantage...So we're not giving up. How could we! Even though on the outside it often looks like things are falling apart on us, on the inside, where God is making new life, not a day goes by without his unfolding grace' (2 Corinthians 4:15-17 MSG). Let's not give up when we face obstacles and problems, and instead tackle them with courage and God's help.

Lev 1-4; Luke 21:25-38; Ps 18:30-50; Pro 9:7

2022/04/05

John 8:32 NKJV

Courageous (2)

Jesus said, 'You shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.' It takes courage to face a painful reality. It's easier to bail out of a troubled situation than to stay and work your way through to a better place. It's easier to give in to despair and self-pity than to treat a setback as a learning opportunity and start again. It takes guts to stand up

for your convictions when you're under fire. But somebody once said, 'Unless you stand for something, you'll fall for anything.' The truth is, whenever you're willing to stand for something or try something new, somebody will take a shot at you. The English word *courage* is related to the French word *cœur*, meaning 'heart'. Hence the phrase 'don't lose heart'. It's easy to be brave when we're feeling strong, but it's much harder when we're feeling weak and inadequate. But that's exactly the time when we need courage the most. General Omar Bradley said, 'Bravery is the capacity to perform properly even when scared half to death.' The courage he's talking about isn't a hollow, 'fake it till you make it' mindset. Courage means saying, 'If God promised it, I believe it' and choosing to move forwards despite the obstacles. If you need an injection of courage today, read and think about these verses: 1) 'Be strong and do not give up, for your work will be rewarded' (2 Chronicles 15:7 NIV). 2) 'Energise the limp hands, strengthen the rubbery knees. Tell fearful souls, "Courage! Take heart! GOD is here, right here, on his way to put things right and redress all wrongs. He's on his way! He'll save you!"' (Isaiah 35:3-4 MSG).

Lev 5-7; Luke 22:1-13; Ps 26; Pro 9:8-9

2022/04/06

2 Timothy 1:7 MSG

Security

If we want to be good demonstrators of God's love, good motivators, and good role models, we first need to be secure in our identity. Paul told Timothy, 'God doesn't want us to be shy with his gifts, but bold and loving and sensible.' We must be certain that God called us, equipped us, and guaranteed our ultimate success in fulfilling His plan. It's important that we keep all this in mind when people stop liking us, when things don't go the way we expect, when our morale dips, and when others reject us. If we feel insecure, fear will eventually get the better of us and prevent us from reaching our full potential. We need to try and see the reality now, while keeping hold of our God-given vision of what can be. We shouldn't settle for keeping things the way they are, because God constantly wants us to break new ground for Him. Being dissatisfied with the way things are doesn't mean having a bad attitude or complaining; it has to do with a willingness to be different and step out of what's 'normal'. A person who won't risk change is someone who fails to grow. Many people are more comfortable dealing with old troubles than doing what it takes to find new solutions; risk seems dangerous to them. We might draw our security from the fact that we're used to the old ways of doing things; but real security comes from following and trusting God's plans, because He knows what the end result will be. The best attitude for life is one that comes from being secure in who we are in God's eyes and knowing what He's called us to do.

Lev 8-10; Luke 22:14-23; Ps 50:1-15; Pro 9:10-11

2022/04/07

John 4:34 CEV

Jesus' work philosophy (1)

Over the next couple of days, let's take a look at Jesus' work philosophy – His attitude, values, and beliefs – on how to get things done. The principles He lived by call for these: 1) *Being clear about our assignments*. Jesus said, 'I must finish the work that he gave me to do.' He understood that being focused really helps us maximise our skills and recognise opportunities. If we're talented, energetic, and active, but we're still not seeing definite results, it's worth considering if we're lacking focus. When Nehemiah was rebuilding Jerusalem's walls, his enemies said, 'Come, let us meet together' (Nehemiah 6:2 NKJV). That's when Nehemiah sent back this message: 'I *am* doing a great work, so that I cannot come down' (v.3 NKJV). 2) *Prioritising tasks in the order of their importance*. When we don't do what has to be done according to its importance, jobs start to arrange themselves according to their urgency. And when that happens, we can miss some great opportunities. The Bible says Jesus 'needed to go through Samaria' (John 4:4 NKJV). To the disciples, this probably looked like a diversion because it wasn't the shortest route to where they wanted to go. But there was a woman in Samaria Jesus wanted to redeem; a vessel through which He reached the entire city with the gospel. Jesus was clear about His priorities, and we need to be too. 3) *Creating a definite timetable*. In other words, set deadlines and stick with them. Jesus knew He had only three-and-a-half years to get

the job done, so He made every day count. One of the biggest lies we tell ourselves is, 'I'll get to it later.' Instead, let's allow Jesus' work philosophy to become our master plan.

Lev 11:1-13:37; Luke 22:24-38; Ps 50:16-23; Pro 9:12

2022/04/08

John 9:4 NKJV

Jesus' work philosophy (2)

Like the rest of us, Jesus sometimes got tired (see John 4:6). But He was never stressed out by the job He had to do. He was led, but never driven. He knew what needed to be done and the amount of time needed to do it, and He picked a team to help accomplish it. Three of them – Peter, James, and John – were in His inner circle. It wasn't that He showed favouritism; He just recognised the particular gifts of the people He worked with and what He needed from each of them to get the job done. An important step towards accomplishing something big is knowing the kinds of people we'll need around us. In other words, we need to know who should be on our team. Jesus spent three-and-a-half years training His disciples before delegating responsibility to them. Was He afraid they would make mistakes, outshine Him, or make Him look bad? No; He told them, 'He who believes in Me, the works that I do he will do also; and greater *works* than these he will do, because I go to My Father' (John 14:12 NKJV). Jesus was a team player who got things done through others. But even when we break a task down, strategically plan it, and recruit brilliant people, we need one more component to succeed: teamwork! Teamwork is the glue that brings people together – and keeps them together. There are more than a billion Christians in the world today. And it all started two thousand years ago with one man who had a vision, a man who recruited and trained a team to fulfil that vision. Let's approach our work according to His work philosophy and see the difference it can make.

Lev 13:38-14:57; Luke 22:39-53; Ps 4; Pro 9:13-18

2022/04/09

Ezekiel 36:26 NIV

Softened heart

When we've been hurt, it's natural that we'd try to put up barriers to protect ourselves. But we need to be careful that our protective shell doesn't turn into a 'heart of stone' that's resistant, unmoved, and doesn't even let God in. Author Kristen Armstrong writes: 'The only thing more painful, and with...more serious ramifications than a broken heart, is a frozen one....Paul warns us [about] allowing our hearts to harden. "They are darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to the hardening of their hearts" (Ephesians 4:18 NIV). A soft heart is not weak or naive. To the contrary, wisdom, experience, and faith make for a strong heart, weathered by compassion and seasoned with mercy. A hardened heart is not protected, it's merely encased in injury.' A hardened heart makes us immune to God's promptings. We lose compassion for the needs He's trying to show us. We miss opportunities to make a difference in the lives of those around us because our hardened hearts won't allow us to be moved by feelings of sympathy. We can't empathise with those who are hurting. God softens our hearts with love. He might allow us to go through a season of testing, and while we may see it as nothing but a struggle, He sees it as an opportunity to break through the heart of stone and replace it with one that's pliant, tender, and ready to respond to Him. Kristen continues: '[God] wants to give you a heart of flesh. With His love you can emerge from a painful season of loss with a heart that is yielding, porous, and ready to receive the gifts He has...for you.'

Lev 15 -17; Luke 22:54-62; Ps 25:1-7; Pro 10:1

2022/04/10

Matthew 12:34 NCV

What 'colour' is your tongue?

When Mary Southerland came down with a raging fever, her doctor suspected viral meningitis. In the course of examining her, he checked the colour of her tongue. Mary was puzzled. Why did that matter? The doctor told her that the tongue can actually tell us a lot about our health. And a similar idea applies to our spiritual health. The Bible tells us, 'The mouth speaks the things that are in the heart. Good people have good things in their hearts, and so they say good things. But evil people have evil in their hearts, so they say evil things' (v.34-35 NCV). Our heart, our attitude, our outlook, and our temperament are all reflected by our tongue through the words we speak and the way we say them. Mary Southerland wrote: 'The tongue is a spiritual thermometer that reflects the condition of the heart...Words are power tools that can build...encourage...destroy and cause confusion. We have all been hurt and even defeated by words spoken in anger or words rising out of a wounded heart...If my words are boastful, my heart is insecure. If my words are filthy, my heart is impure and if my words are critical, my heart is filled with pride and anger...Solomon said, "A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in pictures of silver" (Proverbs 25:11 KJV)...The right word, spoken at the right time and in the right way can bring order in the midst of confusion and light on a very dark path. "Good people know the right thing to say" (Proverbs 10:32 NCV). God gives us spiritual "radar" so we can assess a situation and speak the right word for that circumstance. We just need to check the "radar screen" before we speak.'

Matt 21:1-16; Ps 118:19-29

2022/04/11

Galatians 6:2 NKJV

A safe place to unload

Have you ever said something you wish you could take back, held on to a grudge and been reluctant to forgive, or struggled to pass your worries over to God? The author Chuck Swindoll wrote: 'All this stuff caves in on us...and we wonder how anybody could ever love us...especially God. When we start thinking like this, we need to turn our mind to the "one anothers" in the New Testament. Love one another, build up one another, live in peace with one another, confess your sins to one another, speak to one another, admonish one another, comfort one another, pray for one another. "Bear one another's burdens." Imagine two mountain hikers. One...has a...light pack...while the other poor soul...is...loaded down...It could be a long-standing grudge...[or] a broken relationship...That pack could be loaded with unpaid bills. The question is, Where can...[they] go to unload?' We all need a safe place to unburden ourselves of our troubles. Just sitting in church with any number of other people isn't going to do it. We can (and should) tell God about everything that's weighing down our minds, but He's also placed people around us to share our worries face-to-face, to help us make sense of the chaos of our problems, and to support us on our journey through them. There's an old saying: 'A problem shared is a problem halved.' Other people may not necessarily take our burden from us, but there's something powerful and liberating in sharing our worries. So who's your safe place? Who are the trusted people in your life that will listen without judging or causing embarrassment? And could you be the trusted friend, the 'safe place' for someone else?

Lev 18-19; Luke 22:63-71; Ps 25:8-15; Pro 10:2

2022/04/12

Romans 12:3 PHPS

Willpower

Generally speaking, we tend to overestimate our capabilities. We like to think we can do it all, and do it better than anyone else. But no matter how disciplined we are or how hard we try, without a 'sane estimate of [our] capabilities', we're setting ourselves up for a fall if we overestimate ourselves. Author John Ortberg said: 'Willpower

is...finite...You don't get separate stockpiles for different areas...That's why a long list of New Year's resolutions is almost certainly doomed...It takes a whole lot of willpower...For most of us...our wills get depleted...more quickly than our bodies.' John Ortberg suggests these: 1) Schedule your most important tasks for when your willpower is strongest. For many people, that's the morning, but it can vary. We should try to be aware of times when we're more decisive, and less likely to be swayed by temptations (big or small), and try to do important tasks at those times. 2) Spend willpower wisely by not taking on too many tasks at once, even after you've prayed about them. God generally works through our will, so we need to be careful in how much we rely on our willpower. We don't want to spend it all and have none left for God. 3) Set goals – but not too many. If we have too few, we tend to drift; but having too many means we worry more about them, accomplish less, and struggle emotionally and physically. 4) Remember that the one act of our will that replenishes willpower instead of depleting it is surrender to God. God meant for prayer, solitude, worship, and meditation to be done in a way that restores us.

Lev 20:21; Luke 23:1-7; Ps 25:16-22; Pro 10:3

2022/04/13

1 Chronicles 21:1 NIV

Responsibility (1)

Fresh from a major victory over the Philistines, King David made a major mistake. Instead of trusting God for his next battle, he conducted a census to measure his military power and determine his chances of winning. And this mistake cost the lives of seventy thousand Israelites. This story teaches us three very important lessons about responsibility: 1) *Leaders are Satan's special targets.* He knows that in order to easily get to others, he can go through their leader, so he'll use every strategy he has to bring a leader down. 'Satan rose up against Israel and incited David to take a census.' The census sounded like a good idea, but it wasn't God's idea – He saw it as an act of arrogance and unbelief. 2) *Don't be presumptuous.* We mustn't allow past victories to make us overconfident about our next battle or our skill level. There'll never be a time when we don't need God. The fact that God had just granted David a great victory should have made him more, not less, dependent on God. Paul wrote, 'Not that we are competent in ourselves to claim anything for ourselves, but our competence comes from God. He has made us competent' (2 Corinthians 3:5-6 NIV). 3) *Listen to wise counsel.* Joab, one of David's generals, warned him he was making a grave mistake. 'The king's word, however, overruled Joab' (1 Chronicles 21:4 NIV). We may each have great gifts, but no single one of us has all the gifts. Where we have weaknesses, others may have strengths. 'Victory is won through many advisors' (Proverbs 11:14 NIVUK), so let's listen to the people God has put in our lives to guide and protect us.

Lev 22:23; Luke 23:8-17; Ps 32; Pro 10:4

2022/04/14

2 Corinthians 3:5-6 NIV

Responsibility (2)

David was 'on a roll'. He kept winning battle after battle. It seemed like everything he touched was successful. But success can go to your head, and David wasn't exempt. He started wondering, 'Just how strong are we?' At that point, he conducted a census and discovered he had 'one million one hundred thousand men who could handle a sword' (1 Chronicles 21:5 NIV). That could tempt any of us to think, 'With an army this size, and given our track record of success, who needs to pray for God's help or ask Him for a plan?' That was the point at which God stepped in and judged David, and seventy thousand Israelites died needlessly (see v.14 NIV). So here's another aspect of responsibility and leadership that we need to be aware of: our mistakes have the potential to hurt others. We're not just accountable to those who have authority over us; we also have responsibility to those who we have authority over. If our good decisions have the ability to bless and guide people, our bad decisions have the potential to harm them. 'David said to God, "Was it not I who ordered the fighting men to be counted? I, the shepherd, have sinned and done wrong...let your hand fall on me and my family, but do not let this plague remain on your people"' (v.17 NIV). God graciously answered David's prayer, and judgment was lifted from Israel. We need God's guidance for our own sake, the sake of the people around us, and to give us the grace to accept responsibility when we make a

mistake or fail. We shouldn't try to hide our failures, blame others, or run from God. Instead we should acknowledge them, grow through them, and go on to become wiser.

Lev 24-25; Luke 23:18-25; Ps 69:1-6; Pro 10:5

2022/04/15

Matthew 27:29 CEV

He did it for you

In the old hymn *When I Survey the Wondrous Cross* are the words, 'See from His head, His hands, His feet, sorrow and love flow mingled down. Did e'er such love and sorrow meet, or thorns compose so rich a crown?' Jesus wore a crown of thorns so we could wear crowns of glory. In Scripture, thorns represent sin. In Eden when Adam and Eve disobeyed God, He said, 'The ground will be under a curse...[...it] will produce thorns' (Genesis 3:17-18 CEV). Later He told Israel that unless they removed their enemies from the land, 'they will be like...thorns in your sides' (Numbers 33:55 NCV). Solomon warned: 'Corrupt people walk a thorny, treacherous road' (Proverbs 22:5 NLT). And Jesus warned, 'You can detect them by the way they act, just as you can identify a tree by its fruit. You need never confuse grapevines with thorn bushes' (Matthew 7:16 TLB). Author Max Lucado wrote: 'The crown of thorns Jesus wore represented all our sins. As we were caught in the brambles of envy, anger, shame, discouragement, guilt, bitterness, and unforgiveness, so Jesus, who knew no sin, became "an atoning sacrifice for our sins" (1 John 4:10 NIV). Not once did Christ use His supernatural powers for personal comfort. With just a word He could have transformed the hard earth into a soft bed...hurled the spit of His accusers back into their faces...and paralysed the hand of the soldier who braided the thorns. But He didn't. Instead, "He cancelled the record of the charges against us and took it away by nailing it to the cross"' (Colossians 2:14 NLT). And He did all of it with you in mind. Jesus gave His life for you.

Gen 22:1-18; Luke 23:26-49; Ps 22; Isa 53

1 Corinthians 15:55 NLT

The resurrection; God's 'sting' operation

In a 'sting' operation, law enforcement agents set the criminal up in order to bring them down. That's like what happened to Satan at the cross. For three days it seemed as though Satan had won. Then Jesus rose from the dead and turned his plans upside down: 'He disarmed the spiritual rulers and authorities. He shamed them publicly by his victory over them on the cross' (Colossians 2:15 NLT). The thing Satan feared most, the birth of a church with the power to change the world through the gospel, had come true. 'The rulers of this world have not understood it; if they had, they would not have crucified our glorious Lord' (1 Corinthians 2:8 NLT). Christ's enemies even tried to stop the truth of the resurrection from getting out: 'They decided to give the soldiers a large bribe. They told the soldiers, "You must say, 'Jesus' disciples came during the night while we were sleeping, and they stole his body.'" If the governor hears about it, we'll stand up for you so you won't get in trouble.' So the guards accepted the bribe and said what they were told to say' (Matthew 28:12-15 NLT). The resurrection is the ultimate proof that Jesus is Lord, and we can be sure of our salvation when we believe in the resurrection. 'If you declare with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and if you believe in your heart that God raised Jesus from the dead, you will be saved. We believe with our hearts, and so we are made right with God. And we declare with our mouths that we believe, and so we are saved' (Romans 10:9-10 NCV).

Lev 26-27; Luke 23:50-56; Ps 69:7-21; Pro 10:6-7

2022/04/17

1 Corinthians 15:4 NLT

The decision for Jesus

'Christ died for our sins, just as the Scriptures said. He was buried, and he was raised from the dead on the third day, just as the Scriptures said. He was seen by Peter and then by the Twelve. After that, he was seen by more than 500 of his followers at one time...Then he was seen by James and later by all the apostles. Last of all, as though I had been born at the wrong time, I also saw him' (1 Corinthians 15:3-8 NLT). Well-respected people such as Christian authors C.S. Lewis, Lee Strobel, and Alister McGrath were atheists who ended up putting their trust in Christ after exploring and examining the evidence. If Jesus was who He claimed to be, God incarnate, taking upon Himself human form, dying for our sins and rising again, then they knew they had a life-changing decision to make: either accept Him or reject Him. And we must make that same decision. Peter told his listeners on the day of Pentecost: 'You nailed him to a cross and killed him. But God released him from the horrors of death and raised him back to life' (Acts 2:23-24 NLT). They said, 'What should we do?' Peter replied, 'Each of you must repent of your sins and turn to God' (Acts 2:37-38 NLT). That day three thousand souls were won to Christ and the church was launched. Jesus died for our sins and rose again to represent us as an advocate before God's throne. If you haven't already, make today the day to accept Him as your Lord and Saviour, knowing that He'll give you an abundant life now, and eternal life in heaven.

1 Cor 15; Luke 24:1-12

Colossians 3:13 CEV

Learning to forgive

We shouldn't rush into an important or potentially lifelong relationship without taking time to really get to know the other person. None of us are perfect, and we're dealing with other imperfect people, so if we want to build successful, strong relationships, we'll need to try focusing on the other person's strengths instead of their weaknesses. An important skill in relationship building is learning to forgive. Forgiveness can be harder when the offence is big. Small offences can usually be forgiven quickly. Big ones involve a healing process, but until we decide to forgive, the process can't even start. Paul wrote: 'Be gentle, kind, humble, meek, and patient. Put up with each other, and forgive anyone who does you wrong, just as Christ has forgiven you. Love is more important than anything else. It is what ties everything completely together' (v.12-14 CEV). One author puts it this way: 'If you don't like something, change it. If you can't change it, change your attitude. Don't complain.' In other words, when it comes to facing facts we can't change, we should pray for grace in learning to live with them. (However, if we're in any kind of relationship where we're being hurt, emotionally, physically or mentally, we should seriously consider getting out and getting help from someone we can trust.) Forgiving others and trusting God to deal with their faults is the right thing to do. We're not designed to carry the physical and mental stress that comes with holding on to resentment. And on top of that, 'You might be needing forgiveness before the day's out' (Galatians 6:1 MSG). So let's be willing to forgive.

1 Cor 1-3; Luke 24:13-24; Ps 56; Pro 10:8-9

2022/04/19

2 Corinthians 5:19 NIV

Disunity and reconciliation

God created us to have unbroken fellowship with Him and with each other. That's why Satan's first scheme was to separate us from God, and from each other. Using things like pride, stubbornness, confusion, resentment, and selfishness, he drives wedges and promotes disunity. What starts out as a misunderstanding can end in angry stand-offs or toxic silences that last for hours, days, and sometimes years. We might think that it's nothing to do with anyone else because it doesn't affect them, but the truth is that the fallout from a major disagreement can't be contained. A grudge against one person can begin to infect every relationship in our lives in some way, and it's often because the disagreement becomes the focus of our lives and we're determined to prove we're right and the other person is wrong at every opportunity. It's a serious problem that needs a divine solution. Paul wrote, 'God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people's sins against them.' Sin destroyed our relationship with God, but He took the initiative by giving Jesus 'as a ransom [a price paid] for many' (Mark 10:45 NIV) in order to reconcile us to Himself. Reconciling means bringing back together what belongs together. God doesn't count 'people's sins against them', but that doesn't mean He trivialises or ignores our sin debt. He cancelled it at the cross

and stopped holding it against us. And it didn't end there. He made us 'Christ's representatives' (2 Corinthians 5:20 MSG), calling us 'to settle our relationships with each other' (v.19 MSG). Sometimes that means practising humility, becoming the reconciler, taking the initiative, and ending the grudge. Are you ready to do that today?
1 Cor 4-6; Luke 24:25-35; Ps 43; Pro 10:10

2022/04/20

Proverbs 24:16 NIV

Getting back up

Have you ever seen a child learning to walk? Falling down is an important part of the process. Getting back up again is crucial to developing the child's balance and muscles. Every horse rider will face a fall, usually when they least expect it, but they know it's important to get back on the horse, readjust what they're doing, and try again. It's a learning experience. A boxer isn't disqualified because they get knocked down; they're disqualified because they don't get back up. Even the most skilful boxers know they'll go down at some point, so they learn the art of falling safely and getting up quickly. Children, riders, and boxers all learn this: it's all about getting up again. The Bible tells us that falling happens to righteous people and unrighteous people. Believers aren't immune from falling. It's getting up again that sets them apart: 'Even If good people fall seven times, they will get back up. But when trouble strikes the wicked, that's the end of them' (v.16 CEV). Unrighteous people stay down, but righteous people get up again. In Scripture, some of God's greatest servants fell into personal failure. Abram lied to Pharaoh about his wife, Sarai (see Genesis 12:11-17). Jacob deceived his father and stole his brother's birth right (see Genesis 27:17-29). In anger, Moses disobeyed God by striking the rock (see Numbers 20:7-12). But instead of being disqualified, they 'were all commended for their faith' (Hebrews 11:39 NIV), because they acknowledged their sins and received God's forgiveness. In other words, they fell, but they got up again. And when we fall, we can get up again too. That's the 'faith' part of our journey. Staying down is *failure accepted* – getting back up is *faith activated*.

1 Cor 7-9; Luke 24:36-44; Ps 127; Pro 10:11

2022/04/21

John 11:26 MSG

Eternal life

At the graveside of His friend Lazarus, Jesus told his grieving sisters Mary and Martha two important things. First, He told them, 'Your brother will rise and live again' (John 11:23 NCV). And second, He said, 'Everyone who lives believing in me does not ultimately die at all. Do you believe this?' (v.26 MSG). Having an exemplary character, giving generously to charity, going to church, and so on, are all great things to do (and the right things to do), but it's putting our trust in Christ that gives us the absolute assurance of resurrection and eternal life. Jesus conquered death and the grave for each one of us. There might be people reading these words who have recently lost loved ones and are fighting tears of sorrow right now. Jesus understands our grief like no one else can. He's touched by the feelings of our weaknesses and struggles (see Hebrews 4:15). There might be people reading who are frightened of all the unknowns of death. If that's how you're feeling, try putting your trust in Jesus and in these words: 'There are many rooms in my Father's house; I would not tell you this if it were not true. I am going there to prepare a place for you. After I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me so that you may be where I am' (John 14:2-3 NCV). When we trust God, there's no reason to fear what lies beyond death, because He's already there, waiting to welcome us. Inexplicable, unending joy will be ours forever, thanks to Jesus, so we can exclaim with Paul, 'O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?' (1 Corinthians 15:55 NLT).

1 Cor 10-11; Luke 24:45-49; Ps 130; Pro 10:12

2022/04/22

Philippians 4:4 NCV

Full of joy, always

Paul wrote, 'Be full of joy in the Lord always. I will say again, be full of joy.' Why did Paul repeat himself? Because joy is the fuel we run on, and unless we maintain it, we can run out. That means we need to regularly check our 'fuel gauge' to make sure we're not being drawn into negativity and doubt. Jesus is a joy giver, and when we stay connected to Him, we can experience His joy regardless of our circumstances. In John 15:11, He said, 'I have told you these things so that you can have the same joy I have and so that your joy will be the fullest possible joy' (NCV). When we really think about it, we have so many reasons for joy – God has forgiven our sins, He guides and protects us, He loves us more than we could imagine, we have a place in heaven...and so many more. In prison, Paul had so much joy that his jailers were won to Christ and a church sprang up in Caesar's household (see Philippians 4:22). People are always more influenced by our attitude than our theology. When they see us rejoicing in hard times, they'll start to wonder what our secret is and think, 'Whatever that person has, I need it'; they'll become more open and receptive to the truth. The happiness the world offers us is only a reaction to our circumstances, whereas the joy that comes from living for Jesus lifts us above our circumstances. So let's focus on His joy, draw on His joy, and demonstrate His joy to the world today.

1 Cor 12-14; Luke 24:50-53; Ps 103:1-12; Pro 10:13

2022/04/23

Isaiah 43:19 NCV

Letting go

There are so many times in life when we need to let go of something we care about. We might have to leave a job we love. We could have been working on a project and now need to hand it over for someone else to take to the next level. Maybe we've been a mentor or advisor, but the person has reached the point where they don't need us anymore. We might be teaching someone, but our knowledge has reached its limit and now they need to move on and learn from someone with greater skill. God might even tell us to let something go without us understanding why. Letting go isn't easy. It can make us feel unwanted or rejected, our pride can take a hit, or we might think we're not good enough. Even if we've given up something we hate, it can leave a void in that makes us feel strangely empty. But there are things we can do to regain our joy and find reasons to celebrate. We can: 1) Rejoice that we played a part in the development and growth of the person or project. 2) Be proud that we've made a difference. 3) Pray for the person, the project, those who were working with us, and those who are going to take things even further. 4) Trust God to place the person or project in the right hands. 5) Look forward to the next thing God has in mind for us. It can be helpful to remember these words: 'Do not think about the past. Look at the new thing I am going to do. It is already happening. Don't you see it?' (Isaiah 43:18-19 NCV). When we let go of one thing, God already has the next thing lined up.

1 Cor 15-16; Matt 1:1-17; Ps 103:13-22; Pro 10:14

2022/04/24

Romans 6:16 NCV

Avoid the traps

Paul wrote, 'The person you obey is your master. You can follow sin, which brings spiritual death, or you can obey God, which makes you right with him.' When it comes to sin, the Bible draws a line and tells us not to cross it. That's because if we cross it once, we'll find it much easier to cross again. Paul talked about 'the person you obey', but we could also replace 'person' with 'temptation', or say 'the thing you obey is your master.' Whether our particular temptation is something like alcohol, drugs, pornography, gambling, or even something that seems less damaging, like spending a lot of time on social media or taking the car for short journey that we could have walked, we start out believing we're in control of it, and end up realising it's got us trapped. One of the biggest lies we tell ourselves is, 'I can stop whenever I want to.' But often the damage has already started. *Spiritually*, we can lose our confidence before God. *Personally*, we can lose our sense of self-worth. *Publicly*, we can lose respect and influence with others. And if we're not careful, even good things can hurt us. A strong work ethic can lead to neglecting family and friends. Vegging out in front of the TV can slow our spiritual growth. Even too much caution and thoughtfulness – which are

good qualities – can prevent us from stepping out in faith and fulfilling our God-given potential. When God says *no*, He isn't trying to make life difficult or boring; He's protecting us. If something has the potential to trap you, don't do it. But if you're already feeling trapped by a temptation or habit, don't lose hope. Turn to God and He'll set you free. Gen 6:9-8:4; Matt 24:37-51

2022/04/25

1 Samuel 18:9 NLT

Insecure leaders

We may never have an 'official' leadership role, but there are all kinds of opportunities to be role models for the people we interact with each day and the people who look up to us in some way, so it's important that we try to show the qualities of a good leader. One of the best tests of good leadership is how we respond to somebody else's success. Do you rejoice, or secretly resent them? King Saul sent David out to fight Goliath, but when David succeeded and the Israelites began to congratulate him, Saul couldn't handle it. 'From that time on Saul kept a jealous eye on David.' David's success made Saul feel insecure about himself. Insecurity can prevent us from being good role models and leaders. That's because insecure leaders tend to do these things: 1) *They don't provide security for others*. To be a good leader, we must try to give our followers confidence in themselves. We should encourage them and help them grow, and it's difficult to do that if we're feeling insecure about ourselves. 2) *They take more than they give*. Insecure leaders look for validation, acknowledgement, and love from the people who look up to them, rather than instilling those things in others. 3) *They limit people*. Insecure leaders see others as potential competitors who might threaten their position, so they might try to make others doubt their own abilities to reduce the threat. In order to be good leaders and role models, we need to be secure in who we are – and that comes from God. 'The Father has loved us so much that we are called children of God' (1 John 3:1 NCV). And He says to us, 'You did not choose me; I chose you' (John 15:16 NCV).

Dan 1-2; Matt 1:18-25; Ps 127; Pro 10:15

2022/04/26

Psalms 15:5 NIV

Fall prevention

In *The Message* paraphrase we read, 'For people who hate discipline and only get more stubborn, there'll come a day when life tumbles in and they break, but by then it'll be too late to help them'" (Proverbs 29:1 MSG). King Solomon was said to be the wisest man who ever lived. He wrote these words, but sadly he didn't live by them, so he 'crashed and burned'. And if it could happen to Solomon, it could happen to any of us. So how can we guard against falling? We need to avoid favouring gifts and skills above character. There's often a tendency to celebrate and reward someone's gift and overlook their character; but both must be developed, not just the gifts and skills part. In Psalm 15, David gives us eight traits to look for in a leader worthy of respect: 1) They have integrity. 2) They don't take part in gossip. 3) They don't harm others. 4) They speak up against wrong. 5) They honour those who walk in the truth. 6) They keep their promise, even at personal cost. 7) They're not greedy to profit at the expense of others. 8) They're strong and stable. David concludes his psalm by saying those who do these things 'will never be shaken'. Even if we're not leaders, we should pay attention to this list, because every one of those traits is worth developing, whatever our role in life. And by working on these things, we'll have some of the best protection from falling. We also need to stay close to God and learn to recognise His voice by talking and listening to Him every day and getting into His Word regularly. That way, we'll have the best guidance system to help us avoid falls that could take us down.

Dan 3-4; Matt 2:1-12; Ps 7:1-9; Pro 10:16

2022/04/27

Proverbs 11:3 NIV

Strive for integrity

Jesus said, 'Love your neighbour as yourself' (Matthew 19:19 NIVUK). But in order to love yourself, you must first be able to respect yourself. And self-respect is based on personal integrity. Author Ted Engstrom tells the story of a high school basketball team in his book called *Integrity*. The team had been having a great season, winning 21 games and losing only five. In the final, they had a dramatic victory, coming from behind to win the game. But later they realised that one of the players, who had played for just 45 seconds at the end of a single match, was actually ineligible to compete. The team was way ahead in that particular game, so the player couldn't really have affected the outcome, but their coach, Cleveland Stroud, reported the mistake anyway and surrendered the trophy they'd won at the final. Stroud had this to say: 'We didn't know he was ineligible at the time; we didn't know it until a few weeks ago. Some people have said we should have just kept quiet about it, that it was just forty-five seconds and the player wasn't an impact player. But you've got to do what's honest and right and what the rules say. I told my team that people forget the scores of basketball games; they don't ever forget what you're made of.' Every word and action will either add to or take away from our character, so it's important that we choose the honesty route. That's what the Bible means when it says, 'The integrity of the upright guides them, but the unfaithful are destroyed by their duplicity.' So today, strive for honesty and integrity in everything you do.

Dan 5-7; Matt 2:13-23; Ps 7:10-17; Pro 10:17-18

2022/04/28

1 John 5:14 NLT

Have confidence in your prayers

A leader wrote these words: 'My dad was a busy man...to get him at work you had to go through a switchboard unless you knew his private number. He gave it to a few business partners, but all of his kids had it...We knew, no matter how busy he was, we could call anytime on his direct line. I've the same thing...my kids know my number...they can call me anytime for anything. And you know what? No voices sound sweeter to me than my kids' voices. When one of them says, "Hi, Dad," it doesn't matter what I'm juggling...they're an absolute priority...Now multiply that out exponentially – and listen to me. Nothing sounds sweeter to God than your voice saying, "Hello, Father." There's nothing going on in the cosmos that would keep Him from directing His full attention to your conversation or your request.' That means when God is your Father, you can call Him anytime. He's never more than a prayer away. Jesus said: 'Ask, and God will give to you...If your children ask for bread, which of you would give them a stone? Or if your children ask for a fish, would you give them a snake? Even though you are bad, you know how to give good gifts to your children. How much more your heavenly Father will give good things to those who ask him!' (Matthew 7:7, 9-11 NCV). We can talk to God without having to beg or resort to flattery because we're 'confident that he hears us whenever we ask for anything that pleases him. And...he will give us what we ask for' (1 John 5:14-15 NLT). So pray confidently, knowing that your loving heavenly Father hears and treasures every word.

Dan 8-10; Matt 3:1-17; Ps 144:1-8; Pro 10:19-21

2022/04/29

Philippians 2:4 NCV

Being unselfish

Unselfishness does three things for us: 1) *It improves the quality of our lives*. It gives us more appreciation for life and a glimpse of its higher values. Seeing people in need and giving to meet those needs puts a lot of things into perspective. John Maxwell wrote: 'There is no life as empty as the self-centred life. There is no life as centred as the self-empty life.' If we want to improve our world, we should focus our attention on helping others. 2) *It makes us part of something greater than ourselves*. In the mid-1980s, the pharmaceutical organisation Merck & Company developed a medication to cure river blindness, a disease that infects and causes blindness in millions of people. Most of the people it affects live in developing countries. It was a good product, but the potential customers couldn't afford it. But Merck produced the drug anyway, and decided to give it free to anyone who needed it. They gave away more than 250 million tablets. George W. Merck, the company's president, said, 'We try never to forget that medicine is for the people. It's not for the profits. The profits follow, and if we have remembered that, they have

never failed to appear.’ The lesson in this for us is instead of striving to be great, we should try to be part of something greater than ourselves. 3) *It creates a legacy.* When we think unselfishly and invest in others, we have the opportunity to create a lasting difference that will go on for the whole of our lives and beyond. The Bible says, ‘Do not be interested only in your own life, but be interested in the lives of others.’ Let’s make that our goal.

Dan 11-12; Matt 4:1-11; Ps 144:9-15; Pro 10:22-23

2022/04/30

Colossians 4:3 NCV

Make the introduction

We’re called to introduce others to God, but we don’t always feel confident in talking theology or answering the difficult questions. Fortunately, there are plenty of other things we can do to show a friend or loved one who God really is. Here are some ideas: 1) *Let them join you when you pray.* This will help them to understand that prayer is how we build a lifelong friendship with God. It isn’t anything scary, formal, or complicated (although we can all struggle with prayer occasionally). It’s simply a conversation with a loving Father. God said, ‘When they call on me, I will answer; I will be with them in trouble. I will rescue and honour them’ (Psalm 91:15 NLT). 2) *Show them what God is like.* We influence others’ concepts of God, and they understand Him through the interactions they have with us. So our behaviour should always reflect God, such as never being too busy to listen, giving encouragement, never belittling or being harsh, and showing love in everything we do. 3) *Help them to see God at work.* When people are encouraged to see God at work in the lives of others, they’ll begin to discern Him at work in their own lives too. They’ll begin to realise that He cares about them, and they can always turn to Him for support and guidance. 4) *Don’t just tell them to go to church – take them.* Church can be daunting for someone who’s never been before, or who might have had a bad experience of church in the past. Having a friend with them to act as guide, helper, and explainer can make all the difference in giving them a positive experience and seeing that church should be a warm and welcoming place of fellowship and connection.

Jam 1-2; Matt 4:12-25; Ps 94:1-11; Pro 10:24-26

2022/05/01

Ecclesiastes 5:2 NLT

Making commitments

When writing about the topic of making commitments and keeping them, the author of Ecclesiastes was very clear about the right way to handle them. In *The Message*, his words are paraphrased: ‘Don’t shoot off your mouth, or speak before you think...When you tell God you’ll do something, do it – now. God takes no pleasure in foolish drive. Vow it, then do it. Far better not to vow in the first place than to vow and not pay up. Don’t let your mouth make a total sinner of you. When called to account, you won’t get by with “Sorry, I didn’t mean it”’ (Ecclesiastes 5:2, 4-6 MSG). That means we mustn’t be impulsive, we should listen as much as we speak, get as much information as we can, and then ask God for wisdom and guidance before making a commitment. People often say what they think others want to hear, but that can end up causing a lot of trouble. We must be very careful not to promise something we can’t actually deliver. And if we do make a mistake and over-promise, we need to be honest and admit our mistake as soon as possible, rather than trying to cover it up or make excuses. We might make a commitment based on our emotions, perhaps because we feel sorry for the person who’s asking, or because we want them to like us more. But true commitment doesn’t work like that. Emotions are constantly changing, but commitment has to be absolutely solid. It should be based on integrity. Real dedication shines through in times of trouble and adversity, and goes the distance when it’s based on godly values. So before we make a commitment, let’s take time to think it through and get God involved.

2 Kings 4:42-44; Mark 6:30-44

2022/05/02

Philippians 4:19 ESV

Check who you're depending on

God is the source of all our blessings, but sometimes He'll use other people as instruments to bless us. It's right for us to thank people when they've done something we appreciate, but we mustn't forget that God's the centre and the source; if we do, we can begin to depend on people rather than Him. We might get upset with a tutor because we didn't get the grade we think we deserved for an assignment, or get angry with a friend or family member because they refused to lend us some money or help us with something. If any of these scenarios sound familiar, it could be a sign that you're relying on people and not God. Let's think about these Scriptures: 'You may say to yourself, "My power and the strength of my hands have produced this wealth for me."' But remember the LORD your God, for it is he who gives you the ability to produce wealth' (Deuteronomy 8:17-18 NIV). 'When God gives someone wealth and possessions, and the ability to enjoy them...this is a gift of God' (Ecclesiastes 5:19 NIV). 'She doesn't realise it was I who gave her everything she has' (Hosea 2:8 NLT). All these verses remind us that God is the true source. We usually put effort into relationships that are rewarding, and that's important information because when we recognise God as the source of all love and blessings, we'll commit to nurturing our relationship with Him. That's why Jesus said, 'Seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well' (Matthew 6:33 NIV). When we pursue God, sow generously into His kingdom, and trust Him to meet our needs, our faith will grow and we'll notice His hand and blessings everywhere.

Jam 3-5; Matt 5:1-12; Ps 94:12-23; Pro 10:27

2022/05/03

2 Corinthians 10:5 NIV

Monitoring your mind (1)

If a thief came to your house, you wouldn't invite them in and let them have free rein to steal and destroy whatever they liked. You'd call the police and have them arrested. And that's what we need to do when wrong thoughts come to our minds. We must stop them and take them captive before they take us captive. The best time to do that is the moment the first wrong thought tries to enter our minds, because when we allow a thought to have space, we empower it, and give it a chance to overcome us. The Bible says, 'Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you' (James 4:7 NIV). On our own, we don't have the power to resist Satan. But the moment we call on God and submit our will to Him, we're more than a match for Satan, because we have God's strength and power to rely on, not just our own. We get to decide who'll control our minds: 'The mind governed by the flesh is death, but the mind governed by the Spirit is life and peace' (Romans 8:6 NIV). When a thought keeps turning over and over in your mind, ask yourself, 'What direction is this thought leading me in? Is it towards something spiritually harmful, or towards "life and peace"'? If you realise you've failed to keep a wrong thought out, don't give up. Take an honest look back and ask yourself, 'What was I thinking that led to it getting through? Was I around people who had a bad influence on me? Was I in the wrong place, or the wrong mindset? Have I been neglecting God at all recently?' In the long run, monitoring your mind will really pay off.

Num 1-2; Matt 5:13-26; Ps 35; Pro 10:28-29

2022/05/04

1 Corinthians 2:16 NIV

Monitoring your mind (2)

Did you know there's a natural mindset and a spiritual mindset? If we want to live in a way that really honours and reflects God, we need to develop our spiritual mindset. The Bible says: 'The person without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God...and cannot understand them because they are discerned only through the Spirit...But we have the mind of Christ' (1 Corinthians 2:14, 16 NIV). As we tune our lives to the pitch of God's Word and consciously submit ourselves to His will every day, He'll plant His thoughts in our minds. And that's a massive advantage! For example, someone criticises you and your feelings get hurt. In that moment God speaks to you and says, 'Yes, your feelings are hurt, but we can deal with that together. I love you, and the way I see you isn't at risk. The person who criticised you might see a flaw, but you don't have to pretend to be perfect or try to please others. I'll help you use this experience as a chance to grow!' Even though there are elements of pain in these kinds of thoughts, with God's perspective they energise us rather than trapping us and bringing us down. They're true, they give us something to stand firm on, and we realise that if we can keep our minds centred on them, the right feelings and actions are more likely to flow from them. We'll start to live out the promise, 'You will keep in perfect peace all who trust in you, all whose thoughts are fixed on you!' (Isaiah 26:3 NLT). Instead of focusing on our critics, we should focus on God, on our spiritual growth, and on what we can learn from the experience.

Num 3:1-4:33; Matt 5:27-37; Ps 2; Pro 10:30-32

2022/05/05

2 Corinthians 2:15 NLT

Clean away the sin

When food in your fridge has gone bad, you know the moment you open the door. And it's the same with our lives. Have you ever met someone for the first time and just felt there was something a bit 'off'? People can often sense when they come into contact with someone who's carrying sin that hasn't been dealt with. Jesus spoke some harsh words to Peter: 'Get away from me, Satan! You are a dangerous trap to me. You are seeing things merely from a human point of view, not from God's' (Matthew 16:23 NLT). Peter's sin was pride. He openly contradicted Jesus (see Matthew 16:22). There are sins of the spirit and sins of the flesh. Peter's sin was one of the spirit, whereas David's was one of the flesh that showed itself in adultery and murder. Later David wrote, 'Cleanse me from secret faults. Keep back Your servant also from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me' (Psalm 19:12-13 NKJV). God doesn't want us to become so self-absorbed and introspective that we're constantly condemning ourselves, but He does want us to learn to be sensitive to sin and deal with it immediately. The Bible gives us three ways to stay clean in a spiritually polluted world. 1) *Walking in the light* (see 1 John 1:7). That means striving to be honest in everything we do. 2) *Being accountable*. We each need someone in our lives who's mature and trustworthy, gracious enough to put up with our faults, and honest enough to confront us if we're wandering off God's path (see Ecclesiastes 4:9). 3) *Dealing with your sin right away* (see Psalm 32:3-5). When we become conscious of sin, it should lead to a confession of sin, which will result in cleansing of sin. Then we must get back up and go on with God!

Num 4:34-6:27; Matt 5:38-48; Ps 37:1-7; Pro 11:1-2

2022/05/06

1 Timothy 4:15 NKJV

Be passionate! (1)

In 2 Kings 13 we read: 'Elisha said: "Pick up the arrows and hit the ground with them." Jehoash grabbed the arrows and hit the ground three times, then stopped. Elisha became angry at the king and exclaimed, "If you had struck it five or six times, you would completely wipe out the Syrians. Now you will defeat them only three times"' (v.18-19 CEV). Elisha had given Jehoash, the king of Israel, a plan from God for not only defeating his enemy, but also eliminating him permanently as a future threat. But the plan depended on two important things. First, being fully obedient. Second, being passionate. Jehoash passed the first test but failed the second. He was obedient to what God, through Elisha, told him to do, but he didn't go far enough, and he didn't put his heart and soul into it. He settled for less than God had planned for him. Maybe he was tired or distracted. Maybe he didn't listen carefully to the prophet's instructions. Maybe he thought 'token obedience' would be as effective as wholehearted obedience. The Bible doesn't tell us. But we do know that he forfeited God's best because he wasn't passionate enough. The

lesson here is that it's not enough to just say, 'I've obeyed God.' We must also obey Him wholeheartedly. If we don't, we might end up compromising our future and failing to experience the whole of what He has in mind for us. Paul explained it to Timothy with these words: 'Meditate on these things; give yourself entirely to them.' In other words, when God tells us to do something, we need to be passionate and enthusiastic about it.
Num 7; Matt 6:1-18; Ps 37:8-15; Pro 11:3

2022/05/07

Psalm 39:3 CEV

Be passionate! (2)

David wrote, 'I felt a fire burning inside, and the more I thought, the more it burned, until at last I said: "Please, LORD, show me my future"' (v.3-4 CEV). Passion is like fire; unless you feed it and tend it, it'll die. Try asking yourself this question: on a scale of one to ten, how wholehearted are you about serving God? Before you answer, think about these Scriptures: 'Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength' (Deuteronomy 6:5 NIV). 'Blessed are those who keep his statutes and seek him with all their heart' (Psalm 119:2 NIV). 'Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding' (Proverbs 3:5 NIV). 'You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart' (Jeremiah 29:13 NIV). 'Fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you' (2 Timothy 1:6 NIV). "Return home and tell how much God has done for you." So the man went away and told all over town how much Jesus had done for him' (Luke 8:39 NIV). 'Since you are eager for gifts of the Spirit, try to excel in those that build up the church' (1 Corinthians 14:12 NIV). 'To this end I strenuously contend with all the energy Christ so powerfully works in me' (Colossians 1:29 NIV). 'Forgetting what is behind and straining towards what is ahead, I press on towards the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenwards in Christ Jesus' (Philippians 3:13-14 NIVUK). All these Scriptures can be reduced to one sentence: be passionate about what God has called you to do.

Num 8-10; Matt 6:19-34; Ps 37:16-24; Pro 11:4

2022/05/08

2 Chronicles 25:2 NIV

Be passionate! (3)

The enemy of passion is indifference. That's when we go through the motions, but our focus is broken by other things. It's not that we've said no to God; it's that we haven't said a definite and passionate yes to Him. In the Old Testament, King Amaziah 'did what was right in the eyes of the LORD, but not wholeheartedly.' Passion doesn't disappear overnight. It happens when we neglect and take things for granted. We might think lack of passion doesn't matter too much, but Jeremiah warns about 'a curse on anyone who is lax (negligent, slack, slipshod) in doing the LORD's work!' (Jeremiah 48:10 NIV). The Bible tells us one source for a loss of passion: 'This people's heart has become calloused; they hardly hear with their ears, and they have closed their eyes' (Acts 28:27 NIV). The word 'calloused' refers to hard, dead skin that slowly builds up on the soles of your feet until you can't walk properly or without pain. Jesus told the first and last two churches in Revelation: 1) 'I hold this against you: you have forsaken the love you had at first. Consider how far you have fallen! Repent and do the things you did at first' (Revelation 2:4-5 NIVUK). 2) 'I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot. I wish you were either one or the other! So, because you are lukewarm – neither hot nor cold – I am about to spit you out of my mouth' (Revelation 3:15-16 NIV). So with those verses in mind, let's resolve to be passionate about God's plans!

Jonah 1:10-2:10; Matt 12:38-42

2022/05/09

Hebrews 11:21 NKJV

Leaning on your own staff

The Bible says, 'Jacob, when he was dying...worshipped, leaning on the top of his staff.' Imagine that each time Jacob had an experience with God, he took a knife and cut a mark into his staff as a reminder of what happened, starting at the bottom and working right up to the top. One mark might symbolise the night he wrestled with God and his name was changed to Israel (see Genesis 32:28). Another might represent the night God showed him a vision of a ladder reaching up to heaven with angels on it. Jacob's staff represented a lifetime of experiences with God. So it's not surprising that as he was dying, he worshipped God while leaning on his staff. Now think about the story of the Shunammite woman in 2 Kings 4. Her son suddenly became ill and died, so Elisha sent his servant Gehazi ahead with his staff to let the woman know he was coming. But when Gehazi placed the prophet's staff on the dead boy, nothing happened. It was only when Elisha arrived that the child was restored (see 2 Kings 4:32-35). The truth is, you can't lean on anyone's 'staff' but your own. You can't stand on anyone else's experience with God but your own. When it's time to face challenges, you can only lean on the faith you've developed during your personal journey with God. That's why it's so important for us to be faithful and consistent in our spiritual journeys. By leaning on his staff when he was dying, Jacob declared, 'My God who preserved, protected, and prospered me up till now will take me the rest of the way.' And when we lean on our faith in God, we can be certain He'll be with us for the whole journey.

Num 11-13; Matt 7:1-14; Ps 37:25-31; Pro 11:5-6

2022/05/10

Philippians 3:14 NIVUK

Aim for the target

Paul wrote: 'I press on towards the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenwards in Christ Jesus. All of us, then, who are mature should take such a view of things. And if on some point you think differently, that too God will make clear to you' (v.14-15 NIVUK). Paul's description paints a picture of a Christian aiming for a goal or a target. In Paul's day, a target would have been hit by an arrow. If you've ever tried hitting a target with an arrow, you'll know this: 1) *Your aim must be unbroken by distractions.* When you have the bullseye in your sight, something as insignificant as taking a breath at the wrong moment can make you miss the mark you're aiming for. So Paul's saying: 'Forget what's behind you and around you and stay focused on winning the prize.' He isn't referring to your salvation. Jesus already purchased that and gives it to you freely by His grace. Paul's talking about fulfilling your God-given destiny and getting the reward that waits beyond it. 2) *Your arrow has to have the right amount of power behind it.* Otherwise, it'll start to drop off before it even reaches the target. In life, your power comes from the Holy Spirit. Jesus said: 'You shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth' (Acts 1:8 NKJV). So today, aim for the target that God's set out for you!

Num 14-15; Matt 7:15-29; Ps 37:32-40; Pro 11:7-8

2022/05/11

Matthew 25:21 NKJV

Be faithful

In Scripture, to be faithful means to be steady, stable, dependable, and consistent. Do these attributes describe you? They should, because faithfulness is very important to God. 'A faithful person will be richly blessed' (Proverbs 28:20 NIV). Jesus said, 'Many are called, but few chosen' (Matthew 20:16 NKJV). Why is that? Because talent might open the door and get us the job, but it's our character and faithfulness that will keep us there. When it comes to faithfulness, God will test us in two ways: 1) *Our faithfulness in someone else's vision.* 'If you are not faithful with other people's things, why should you be trusted with things of your own?' (Luke 16:12 NLT). If we're critical, caustic, complaining, competitive, or constantly comparing ourselves with others, we won't be fit and ready for what God has in mind for us. Faithfulness calls for serving with love and humility. 2) *Our faithfulness in small things.* 'The master said, "Well done, my good and faithful servant. You have been faithful in handling this small amount, so now I will give you many more responsibilities... To those who use well what they are given, even more will be given...But from those who do nothing, even what little they have will be taken away"' (Matthew 25:23, 29 NLT). God wants to know He can trust us, and we prove it by how well we serve others and by our faithfulness in small things. These are

biblical principles that don't just work in spiritual things, but in everyday life too! So today, take a few moments to prayerfully ask yourself the question, 'Am I faithful?' When you are, be ready for God to do some amazing things with you!

Num 16-18; Matt 8:1-17; Ps 44:1-8; Pro 11:9

2022/05/12

2 Timothy 3:16 NIV

God's DNA is in His Word

On a cold day, have you ever tried breathing on your hands to restore warmth and life? That's like what happens when you meditate on God's Word, because 'all Scripture is God-breathed'. Imagine you were at a party where people have been blowing up balloons. With the right equipment, it would be possible for a scientist to work out which balloon was yours because your DNA (the genetic code that makes you unique) is contained in your breath. If we apply that idea to reading the Bible, it gives us a better understanding of how vital it is to our spiritual lives. John tells us 'the Word was God' (John 1:1 NKJV), so whenever we take in God's Word, we're also taking in His attributes. That's why the devil will try to keep us so busy that we don't have time to read the Bible. The truth is, there are many things we struggle with that could be helped or removed completely from our lives if we developed a real hunger for God's Word. Job said, 'I have not departed from the commandment of His lips; I have treasured the words of His mouth more than my necessary food' (Job 23:12 NKJV). Jeremiah, who was so dejected that he became known as 'the weeping prophet', said, 'Your words were found, and I ate them, and Your word was to me the joy and rejoicing of my heart' (Jeremiah 15:16 NKJV). Jesus experienced every test and trial; He even faced down the devil himself, declaring 'The Scriptures say, "People do not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God"' (Matthew 4:4 NLT). Today, let's get God's Word into us – it's His breath; it's His DNA.

Num 19-21; Matt 8:18-34; Ps 44:9-16; Pro 11:10-11

2022/05/13

Numbers 1:1 NIV

Good leadership

Would you like to be a leader one day? Whether it's part of our job, pastoring a church, mentoring someone younger or less experienced, or taking the lead in a group project, at some point we might feel God calling us to step up to leadership. Today, let's think about some of the qualities that make a good leader so we can pray and build on them for the future. Moses is a biblical example of a good leader. *1) He understood the importance of planning.* He spent forty days praying and fasting on a mountain, refusing to leave until he understood what God wanted him to do. Then he came back and shared it with the people so they could get a glimpse of the vision. *2) He was patient.* The Israelites spent a lot of their time in the desert complaining and grumbling about their situation, the food, and Moses himself. But instead of getting angry with them, Moses was patient with them, and talked to God about their complaints. (He wasn't perfect though – after they complained about a lack of water, in frustration he called them 'rebels' and disobeyed God's command to speak to the rock (see Numbers 20:2-12) *3) He turned to God for wisdom.* There are many times in the Old Testament that tell of Moses taking a concern or a problem to God and turning to Him when help was needed. And God shared His wisdom with Moses and gave him solutions. *4) He was humble.* We know this from Numbers 12:3: 'Moses was very humble – more humble than anyone else on the face of the earth' (NLT). He knew his own strength alone wasn't enough for the calling God had for him, so he leaned on God's strength and stayed close to Him.

Num 22-24; Matt 9:1-13; Ps 44:17-26; Pro 11:12-13

2022/05/14

Exodus 8:10 NKJV

Don't wait

In Exodus, every plague that God sent to Egypt mocked one of their gods. For example, the Egyptians worshipped a goddess who had the head of a frog...and one of the plagues God sent was a lot of frogs! Finally, Pharaoh called for Moses and basically said, 'All right, I give up.' But when Moses asked him, 'When do you want me to get rid of the frogs?' Pharaoh's response was 'Tomorrow.' Why didn't he say 'Now'? Why would he wait any longer to have the frogs removed? But we sometimes do the same. We put off changes that we know would be good for us, like swapping some healthier foods into our meals, taking a step back from an unhealthy relationship, starting a Bible reading plan, and so on. Maybe we're unconcerned. Maybe we're too tired to change. Maybe we're scared because we don't know what impact the changes will have, or what exactly is involved. Maybe we're just too proud and stubborn. Whatever the reason, we procrastinate. NASA engineers know that most of the fuel used in a rocket launch is burned during the first few seconds of lift-off. It takes an enormous amount of energy and thrust to move the rocket off the launch pad. Once it's moving and headed for orbit, it needs less fuel and is easier to control. It has conquered inertia. It's one thing to know God can solve our problem and change our lives, but it's another to overcome our inertia and let Him begin to do it now. We keep saying, 'One day...' The truth is, Jesus has the power to make changes in us today. He'll give us the power to begin and the power to keep going. It's never too late for Him to get to work in our lives.

Num 25-26; Matt 9:14-26; Ps 57; Pro 11:14

2022/05/15

Philippians 2:12-13 NLT

Show your salvation

The Bible says, 'Work hard to show the results of your salvation, obeying God with deep reverence and fear. For God is working in you, giving you the desire and the power to do what pleases him.' It seems a bit confusing – if God's already at work within us, why do we need to put so much effort in? The Bible doesn't say, 'Work for your salvation.' To work for something means to earn it, deserve it, and merit it, but the Bible teaches us that salvation isn't something we have to earn or work for. It's a free gift from God, given by His grace (see Ephesians 2:8-9). When Paul wrote, 'Work hard to show the results of your salvation,' he's talking about something like a spiritual 'workout'. When we exercise, we develop and tone the muscles God has already created us to have. To 'work hard to show the results' here means to grow and make the most of what we've been given. What Paul's saying is this: develop your spiritual life. God has a part in our spiritual growth, and we also have a part. First, He gives us the eagerness to please Him; our part is to recognise that feeling and choose to act on it. Then He provides the power; our part is to access that power, flip the switch, and let it flow through our lives to fulfil His will for us. And we can do that by spending time praying and reading God's Word each day, sharpening and strengthening each other through fellowship, and exercising the gifts God has given us. The truth is, He's already done His part; now it's up to us to do ours.

Gen 2:7-25; 1 Cor 15:39-55

2022/05/16

2 Timothy 3:16 NLT

How God changes us (1)

One of the ways God changes us is *through His Word*. 'All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful to teach us what is true and to make us realise what is wrong in our lives. It corrects us when we are wrong and teaches us to do what is right. God uses it to prepare and equip his people to do every good work' (v.16-17 NLT). If we're serious about bringing change in our lives and growing into a more Christ-like character, we have to get into the Bible. We need to read it, study it, memorise it, meditate on it, speak it, and apply it. Regularly reading God's Word, studying it, and thinking deeply about it can bring strength to a weak faith, comfort to a broken heart, and joy to an anxious mind. And when we put what we've read into action, the Word of God can completely turn things around by encouraging change and helping us to grow our faith. There's a constant struggle going on between our spirits, which are God's

and our sinful human flesh. 'Our sinful selves want what is against the Spirit, and the Spirit wants what is against our sinful selves. The two are against each other, so you cannot do just what you please' (Galatians 5:17 NCV). If we let our flesh win each time, we'll never be able to change. But every time we surrender to God's Spirit within us, He'll help us take another step towards a more Christ-like character. The Bible says, 'Faith comes by hearing, that is, hearing the Good News about Christ' (Romans 10:17 NLT). The *Spirit* of God uses the *Word* of God to make us more like the Son of God.

Num 27-29; Matt 9:27-38; Ps 62; Pro 11:15

2022/05/17

Romans 8:28 PHPS

How God changes us (2)

Another way God changes us is *through circumstances*. Problems, pressures, disappointments, sorrows, hardships, and stress always get our attention. C.S. Lewis said, 'Pain insists on being attended to. God whispers to us in our pleasures...but shouts to us in our pain.' The J.B. Phillips translation of Romans 8:28-29 reads: 'To those who love God, who are called according to his plan, everything that happens fits into a pattern for good. God, in his foreknowledge, chose them to bear the family likeness of his Son.' God won't always take us out of bad situations, but He will use them to bring about change within us. The interesting thing about how God uses circumstances is that their *source* makes no difference to Him. We might bring problems on ourselves because we didn't listen to God or didn't seek His wisdom in the first place. Sometimes they're caused by other people, and sometimes the Enemy causes things to happen to us. But the source of the circumstances is irrelevant. God can and will use them all. He's saying, 'I will make it fit into my plan for your life, to make you more Christ-like.' That means we can learn something from every circumstance we find ourselves in, if we have the right attitude towards it. Hebrews 5:8 tells us that 'Even though Jesus was the Son of God he learned obedience by what he suffered' (NCV). If God used the challenges, conflicts, and circumstances of life to prepare His own Son for His destiny, He'll surely do the same in our lives. Jesus understands how hard it can be, but instead of trying to escape our circumstances, let's remember God's at work through them, learn from them and use them to grow stronger.

Num 30:1-32:24; Matt 10:1-10; Ps 22; Pro 11:16-18

2022/05/18

Proverbs 4:23 GNT

Think right, live right

Someone once said, 'You're not what you think you are, but what you think – you are.' Lasting change always begins with new thinking. We become Christians by repenting of our sins and putting our trust in Christ. The Greek word for *repentance* is *metanoia*, and it means 'to change your mind'. We're not changed by willpower, but by the transforming power of God's Word when we use it to renew our minds each day. The Bible clearly teaches that the way we think determines the way we feel, and the way we feel determines the way we act. That means if we want to change our actions, we have to go right back to the source and change the way we think. Think about a time you acted with anger. You acted that way because you felt angry. And those feelings of anger stemmed from angry thoughts. The same idea applies to resentment, worry, lust, and other destructive or damaging thought patterns. Jesus said, 'You will know the truth, and the truth will set you free' (John 8:32 NLT). When we base our lives on truth, when we live with the right kind of thoughts, rather than misconceptions or false beliefs, and when we base our lives and thinking on God's Word – we will be set free. We'll find old, unhelpful habits, feelings, and actions beginning to fall away. When we only focus on removing bad thoughts, we leave a gap in our minds that can let the bad thoughts back in. But when we replace bad thoughts with good, scriptural ones, God fills our minds and empowers us to live the lives He has planned for us to enjoy.

Num 32:25-33:56; Matt 10:11-20; Ps 72:1-11; Pro 11:19-21

2022/05/19

Psalms 119:15 ESV

What does it mean to meditate?

Another word for meditation is rumination. Rumination is what a cow is doing when she chews her cud. The cow eats grass, chews all she can, and then swallows it. It sits in one of her stomachs for a while, and then a little later, she burps it up. The cow chews on it some more and swallows it again. She's pulling every bit of nourishment from the grass. And meditation is simply *thought digestion*. Meditation doesn't mean putting your mind in neutral and thinking about nothing. It's actually the opposite – it's thinking seriously about what you're reading. For example, you start by dwelling on one verse of Scripture and ask, 'What does this mean for my life?' 'What's God telling me through these words?' Talk to yourself about it, ask questions about it, and talk to God about it. The Bible says this: 'Keep your minds on whatever is true, pure, right, holy, friendly, and proper. Don't ever stop thinking about what is truly worthwhile and worthy of praise' (Philippians 4:8 CEV). And Colossians 3:16 says, 'Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly' (KJV). Another lesson we can learn from the cow is that she can spend up to eight hours a day eating and ruminating in order to extract every nutrient she possibly can. It's not a quick process. It takes time. And we need to devote time every day – at least 10 to 15 minutes, and more if we can – to sit down somewhere that's free from distractions, read a portion of the Bible, think deeply about what we've just read, and then talk to God about it in prayer. That's the best starting point for spiritual change and growth.

Num 34-36; Matt 10:21-31; Ps 72:12-20; Pro 11:22

2022/05/20

Psalms 119:105 NKJV

Love God's Word

The author of the Psalms highlights two important things that Bible reading does for us: 1) *It shows us our spiritual condition*. In Bible times, roads were unpaved and dusty, so when guests went into a house, they took time to wash the sand, dirt, and grime from their feet. That's what Bible reading does. It gives us time to pause, reflect, and shed some of the messiness of everyday life. David said, 'How can a young man [and an older one] cleanse his way? By taking heed according to Your word' (v.9 NKJV). 2) *It shows us the direction we need to go*. Your word is...a light to my path.' When we're facing an important decision and don't know which way to go, God will guide us through His Word. David, who loved God's Word and meditated on it constantly, prayed, 'Teach me to do Your will, for You are my God; Your Spirit is good. Lead me in the land of uprightness' (Psalm 143:10 NKJV). Many of the mistakes we make could be prevented if we stopped long enough to seek God's guidance. He knows what lies ahead. We don't. So 'commit your way to the LORD, trust also in Him, and He shall bring it to pass' (Psalm 37:5 NKJV). We need to cultivate a taste for God's Word. The psalmist said, 'I will delight myself in Your commandments, which I love' (Psalm 119:47 NKJV). 'Your word is very pure; therefore Your servant loves it' (v.140 NKJV). Today, let's ask God to give us a love for His Word.

Titus 1-3; Matt 10:32-42; Ps 75; Pro 11:23

2022/05/21

1 John 4:18 NKJV

God's love for you

We naturally tend to be drawn to people who love us, so why do we sometimes find it difficult to go to God in prayer? It can be because we need a fresh revelation of His love for us! Paul prayed that the Ephesian church would 'be able to take in...the extravagant dimensions of Christ's love' (Ephesians 3:18 MSG). The word 'extravagant' means going above and beyond all that's expected or deserved. The truth is, God couldn't love you any more than He does right now. If we want an idea of how much God loves us, we should think of the cross. Even if you were the only person who ever lived, Jesus would have died just for you. And you don't need to earn His love. You can't. It's

completely unconditional. You didn't do anything to deserve it, and when you mess up, He doesn't withhold His love or stop loving you as much. 'Absolutely nothing can get between us and God's love' (Romans 8:39 MSG). When you accept His unconditional love, you can feel secure in acknowledging your weaknesses and seek His help, grow strong, and use the talents He's given you. When you believe God loves you based on who you are in Christ, you have the ultimate self-esteem – born of God's esteem for you. And since His is the only 'perfect love', it removes your 'fear'. So, what are you afraid of? That you won't get what you need or you'll lose something you have? John tells us: 'His perfect love for us eliminates all dread...If we are afraid, it...shows...we are not fully convinced that he really loves us' (1 John 4:18 TLB). Ask God today for a fresh revelation of His love for you, bearing in mind that whatever He loves, He prizes, protects, and provides for.

Jonah 1-4; Matt 11:1-19; Ps 88:1-9a; Pro 11:24-26

2022/05/22

1 Timothy 2:1 NIV

Intercession

Paul wrote: 'I urge then, first of all, that petitions, prayers, intercessions and thanksgiving be made for all people – for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness. This is good, and pleases God our Saviour, who wants all people to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth' (v.1-4 NIV). *Intercession* means 'to mediate between parties with a view to reconciling those who differ or contend'. It happens every day in the court system when lawyers intercede on behalf of their clients. It also happened in Scripture. When Israel made a golden calf and worshipped it, Moses interceded with God on their behalf, saying: 'Oh, what a great sin these people have committed!...But now, please forgive their sin – but if not, then blot me out of the book you have written' (Exodus 32:31-32 NIV). And it worked. God told Moses, 'Go, lead the people to the place I spoke of, and my angel will go before you' (v.34 NIV). Later when Israel turned again to worship false gods, Samuel said, 'Assemble all Israel to Mizpah, and I will intercede with the LORD for you' (1 Samuel 7:5 NKJV). So that day, God sent a loud thunder over the Philistines and confused them so much, they were defeated (see 1 Samuel 7:10). Interceding for others can be lonely, and it's also hard work. Epaphras was described as 'wrestling in prayer' for the people of the Colossian church (see Colossians 4:12 NIV). But there's so much value in intercessory prayer. Could you be an intercessor for someone today?

Gen 24:1-51; 2 Cor 6:14-7:1

2022/05/23

Romans 13:14 NIV

Dress for success

First impressions are important, so we're often encouraged to 'dress for success'. But as redeemed children of God, our first concern shouldn't be how we look to others, but to God. Just like a mirror reflects our physical appearance so that we can make adjustments, the Bible reveals our spiritual condition and tells us what to do about it. James wrote: 'Anyone who listens to the word but does not do what it says is like someone who looks at his face in a mirror and, after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like. But whoever looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom and continues in it – not forgetting what they have heard, but doing it – they will be blessed in what they do' (James 1:23-25 NIV). It's important to spend time every day in the Scriptures; otherwise, we'll run around spiritually threadbare. Paul wrote, 'Clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the flesh' (Romans 13:14 NIV). Author Chuck Swindoll wrote: 'The number one enemy of change is the hard-core, self-satisfied sin nature within you. Like a spoiled child, it has been gratified and indulged for years, so it will not give up without a violent temper tantrum...The flesh dies a slow, bitter, bloody death – kicking and struggling all the way down.' Lasting change takes place in first gear, not overdrive. In the journey of lasting change, we should expect occasional setbacks and refuse to let them throw us off course. And if we feel like giving up, we should ask God to help us get back on track. He will do it, and give us all the help we need.

Heb 1-4; Matt 11:20-30; Ps 88:9b-18; Pro 11:27-29

2022/05/24

2 Corinthians 4:7 NCV

Self-worth

When we don't feel good about ourselves, we constantly live with a sense of insecurity. We'll keep looking to others for approval, and if we don't get it, our sense of worth shrivels, and we spend our time living far short of our God-given potential. So instead of relying on other people's opinions and acceptance, we need to base our self-worth on God's opinion. He loves and accepts us just the way we are. Putting our trust in His opinion will help us battle every feeling of insecurity. It's fine for us to have a good opinion of ourselves. We know we should value other people because God values and loves them, and that applies to ourselves too. However, we must be careful that we don't become arrogant and think we're more worthy than others. The Bible cautions about having an over-inflated opinion of ourselves. But we must also be careful that we don't go to the other extreme. Living in continual self-rejection is an open invitation to Satan. The Bible says he's like a roaring lion who goes hunting for someone to devour (see 1 Peter 5:8). Paul wrote, 'Nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature' (Romans 7:18 NLT), but that means the good qualities we do possess are evidence that God is at work in our lives. The Bible says, 'We have this treasure from God, but we are like clay jars that hold the treasure. This shows that the great power is from God, not from us' (2 Corinthians 4:7 NCV). So today, instead of focusing on your flaws and feeling insecure because you're not perfect, try to recognise the 'treasure' of God's presence, power, and potential that live within you.

Heb 5-8; Matt 12:1-14; Ps 93; Pro 11:30-31

2022/05/25

Luke 8:48 NKJV

Use your faith

The Bible says: 'Now a woman, having a flow of blood for twelve years...touched the border of His garment. And immediately her flow of blood stopped...Jesus said, "Somebody touched Me, for I perceived power going out from Me." Now when the woman saw that she was not hidden...she declared...she had touched Him and how she was healed immediately' (v.43-44, 46-47 NKJV). There are three important lessons for us in this story: *1) Recognise and then seize your moment of opportunity.* This woman realised that Jesus was visiting her town and was determined not to miss the chance she had. There are 'God moments' in life when we have to rearrange our priorities, overcome fear, and rely on our faith to ensure we don't miss God's best. *2) Be willing to try a different approach.* Because of the large crowd, the woman couldn't get Jesus' attention, so instead she touched the hem of His garment, and was healed. Many times, faith calls for stepping into the unknown, doing something we've never tried before, and discovering God's grace at work in ways we never expected. *3) Set an example for others to follow.* Until this time, no one in Scripture had been healed by touching Jesus' garment, and this woman's faith opened a door for others to follow her example. 'People brought all their sick to him and begged him to let the sick just touch the edge of his cloak, and all who touched it were healed' (Matthew 14:35-36 NIV). God looks for people who are willing to break with tradition, or the 'normal' way of doing things. And when He finds them, He uses them to unlock new dimensions of His power so others can be blessed and made whole.

Heb 9:1-11:16; Matt 12:15-21; Ps 97; Pro 12:1-3

2022/05/26

Philippians 2:3 CEV

Selfishness

Paul wrote, 'Consider others more important than yourselves. Care about them as much as you care about yourselves and think the same way that Christ Jesus thought' (v.3-5 CEV). That kind of thinking doesn't always come easily to us, but Jesus showed us how to do it. Hanging on the cross, He took time for the condemned criminal hanging next to Him (see Luke 23:39-43). As Stephen was being stoned, he prayed for those who were killing him,

asking God not to lay the sin at their door (see Acts 7:60). Paul and Silas were beaten and wrongly imprisoned, but that didn't stop them taking time to minister to their jailer. Even after God sent a powerful earthquake that broke their chains and opened their prison doors, they stayed to minister to their captor. It must have been so tempting to escape while the opportunity was there. It would have been easy to look out for themselves and not worry about anybody else. But their act of love moved the jailer to ask how he could be saved, with the result that he and his entire family accepted Christ (see Acts 16:25-34). In a world whose philosophy is often 'look out for number one', we need God's help every day to overcome feelings of selfishness. And when we do, other people will notice that we're different, and they'll want to know why. Just think how many of your friends and loved ones could come to know God if you refused to judge, unfairly criticise, or ignore them, and instead, consistently showed that you genuinely love them! 'Consider others more important than yourselves', and be ready to have conversations about the One who makes us different.

Heb 11:17-13:25; Matt 12:22-37; Ps 47; Pro 12:4-6

2022/05/27

Job 14:14 NCV

Not the end (1)

After 616 AD, the first Christian missionaries came to the courts of King Edwin in Northumbria, in the north of England. In his great hall, ablaze with the light of many torches, they presented the gospel. The king listened, then consulted his advisors. One nobleman said: 'Life is like a banquet hall. Inside is light...fire...warmth and feasting, but outside it is cold and dark. A sparrow flies in through a window at one end...and out through a window at the other end. That is what life is like. At birth we emerge from the unknown, and for a brief while we are here...with a fair amount of comfort and happiness. But then we fly out into the cold...dark...unknown future. [Can] this new religion...lighten that darkness for us[?]' When we believe in the resurrection, we can answer, 'Yes!' An illness or a tragic accident can end life as we know it. But we also know that death isn't really the end. 'If Christ weren't raised, then all you're doing is wandering about in the dark, as lost as ever. It's even worse for those who died hoping in Christ and resurrection, because they're already in their graves. If all we get out of Christ is a little inspiration for a few short years, we're a pretty sorry lot. But the truth is that Christ has been raised up, the first in a long legacy of those who are going to leave the cemeteries' (1 Corinthians 15:17-20 MSG). When we put our trust in God, the end of life on earth is just the beginning of a glorious new life with Christ in heaven!

1 Kings 1-2; Matt 12:38-50; Ps 45; Pro 12:7-9

2022/05/28

2 Corinthians 5:1 MSG

Not the end (2)

The law of conservation of energy and the law of conservation of mass both tell us that neither energy nor matter can be destroyed. They can be transformed into other things, but they can't cease to exist. The amount of energy and the number of atoms that existed at the time of creation still exist in the universe today, just in different forms. So what if we applied the same idea to our souls? When we die, what happens? The Message paraphrases 2 Corinthians 5 this way: 'When these bodies of ours are taken down like tents and folded away, they will be replaced by resurrection bodies in heaven – God-made, not handmade – and we'll never have to relocate our 'tents' again. Sometimes we can hardly wait to move – and so we cry out in frustration. Compared to what's coming, living conditions around here seem like a stopover in an unfurnished shack, and we're tired of it! We've been given a glimpse of the real thing, our true home, our resurrection bodies! The Spirit of God whets our appetite by giving us a taste of what's ahead. He puts a little of heaven in our hearts so that we'll never settle for less' (v.1-5 MSG). When we die, we just leave a lesser form of life and step into a greater one. It's like taking off an old, worn, and dirty set of clothes and swapping them for the most beautiful outfit we could imagine. Think of it like this: our *last* day on earth will be our *best* day ever! How amazing is that!

1 Kings 3-5; Matt 13:1-9; Ps 128; Pro 12:10-11

2022/05/29

Philippians 1:23 MSG

Not the end (3)

In a 1909 lecture, William Jennings Bryan said: 'Christ gave us proof of immortality, and yet it would hardly seem necessary that one should rise from the dead to convince us that the grave is not the end. If the Father deigns to touch with Divine power the cold and pulseless heart of the buried acorn and to make it burst forth into a new life, will He leave neglected in the earth the soul of man, made in the image of his Creator? If He stoops to give to the rosebud whose withered blossoms float upon the autumn breeze, the sweet assurance of another springtime, will He refuse...words of hope...when the frosts of winter come? If matter, mute and inanimate, though changed by the forces of nature into a multitude of forms, can never die, will the spirit of man suffer annihilation when it has paid a brief visit like a royal guest to this tenement of clay? No, I am as sure that there is another life as I am that I live today!' Paul wrote: 'As long as I'm alive in this body, there is good work for me to do. If I had to choose right now, I hardly know which I'd choose. Hard choice! The desire to break camp here and be with Christ is powerful. Some days I can think of nothing better' (v.22-23 MSG). So no matter how difficult, or how blessed, our lives are right now, the best days are still ahead, when we'll get to experience the joy of heaven and spend eternity with God.

Gen 1:1-2:3; John 1:1-18

2022/05/30

Psalms 17:15 NCV

Not the end (4)

Through centuries of history, there have always been people who believed in some kind of future life. Ancient Egyptians believed that they would travel to the afterworld; some Native Americans believe that they are reunited with their ancestors when they die; Muslims believe in Paradise. Belief in some kind of afterlife is seen across different countries and in different cultures. But whatever form they think the afterlife will take, so many people, in the past and in the present, believe that death isn't the end of our story. The psalmist was certain of it: 'LORD, save me by your power from those whose reward is in this life. They have plenty of food. They have many sons and leave much money to their children. Because I have lived right, I will see your face. When I wake up, I will see your likeness and be satisfied' (Psalm 17:14-15 NCV). The psalmist looked forward to the time when he would meet God face to face. That would be his reward, more precious than any earthly gains he could gather during his life. In Revelation, John got a glimpse of what a heavenly life with God would be like: 'I heard a loud shout from the throne, saying, "Look, God's home is now among his people! He will live with them, and they will be his people. God himself will be with them. He will wipe every tear from their eyes, and there will be no more death or sorrow or crying or pain. All these things are gone forever"' (Revelation 21:3-4 NLT). When we accept Jesus as our Saviour, we can be sure that there's a place for us in heaven where we can experience God's presence like never before!

1 Kings 6-7; Matt 13:10-23; Ps 101; Pro 12:12-13

2022/05/31

Hebrews 2:14 NCV

Not the end (5)

The thought of death can be scary, but we don't need to be trapped by this fear. The Bible says: 'Since these children are people with physical bodies, Jesus himself became like them. He did this so that, by dying, he could destroy the one who has the power of death – the devil – and free those who were like slaves all their lives because of their fear of death' (v.14-15 NCV). Through the resurrection, Jesus proved He has power over death, and that by believing in Him, we need not have any fear of it. We can look forward to an even better life in heaven. Paul wrote: 'When our dying bodies have been transformed into bodies that will never die, this Scripture will be fulfilled: "Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?" For sin is the sting that

results in death, and the law gives sin its power. But thank God! He gives us victory over sin and death through our Lord Jesus Christ. (1 Corinthians 15:54-57 NLT). The chapter ends with these words: 'Be strong and immovable. Always work enthusiastically for the Lord, for you know that nothing you do for the Lord is ever useless' (v.58 NLT). Jesus' resurrection guarantees that we each have a place in heaven. There is hope, even right to the last second of our earthly lives, because when we put our trust in God, we know we'll be reunited with Him. Death has no power to scare us, no victory over us, because we are God's redeemed children.

1 Kings 8-9; Matt 13:24-35; Ps 108; Pro 12:14

2022/06/01

2 Corinthians 5:2 NCV

Not the end (6)

Dr Elisabeth Kübler-Ross and Dr Raymond Moody Jr, two well-known psychiatrists, researched the cases of over five hundred people who came back to life after being pronounced dead by their doctors. The people in the study described either a place of beauty, wonder, joy, and peace, or they described something dreadful. And although their bodies were real, they reported floating outside them. After being confirmed 'dead', some who were blind were able to see. They talked about people who came into the room, what they looked like, and what they did while they were there. But when these people were brought back, the ones who were blind could no longer see. In his book *Life After Life*, Dr Moody wrote: 'A doctor told me of his experience in attending a man who had been pronounced clinically dead. He succeeded in resuscitating the man, who then sued the doctor for bringing him back into this miserable existence from the glory he had experienced. One woman, describing her situation after she had suffered a respiratory arrest, reports that the doctors trying to resuscitate her were pounding on her body trying to get her back while she was over them, looking down, and saying, "Leave me alone!"' The apostle Paul explained why: 'We know that our body – the tent we live in here on earth – will be destroyed. But when that happens, God will have a house for us. It will not be a house made by human hands; instead, it will be a home in heaven that will last forever. But now we groan in this tent. We want God to give us our heavenly home' (v.1-2 NCV). When we believe in God, death isn't the end. It's just a new beginning.

1 Kings 10-11; Matt 13:36-46; Ps 113; Pro 12:15-17

2022/06/02

Proverbs 18:21 NKJV

Say what God says

Here are two very important rules for us to live by: 1) Don't speak without thinking. 2) Don't say things that contradict God's Word. The Bible says, 'Death and life are in the power of the tongue.' Our words have the power to hurt or the power to help. 'People in the land who ask for blessings will ask for them from the faithful God. And people in the land who make a promise will promise in the name of the faithful God, because the troubles of the past will be forgotten.' (Isaiah 65:16 NCV). There are two important things to learn here: 1) *Your own words have more power to influence you than anyone else's words.* In the end, it's not what others say that matters, it's what you tell yourself when they've stopped talking. You always have the last word! 2) *You won't be able to move into what God's planned for your future if you're living in the past.* You can't undo your past, so try not to relive it over and over in your head. God said, 'Forget what happened before, and do not think about the past. Look at the new thing I am about to do' (Isaiah 43:18-19 NCV). Come into agreement with Him and start saying what He says about you. What you say from the time you get up in the morning until you go to bed at night doesn't just influence your day; it influences your whole outlook and the direction of your life. If you've been praying and asking God for specific answers, make sure what you say lines up with what He says. And whenever you speak, make sure your words reflect God.

1 Kings 12-13; Matt 13:47-58; Ps 82; Pro 12:18-19

2022/06/03

Psalm 37:8 NLT

Recognising triggers

A weapon can either protect or destroy; it all depends on who is using it. Anger works the same way; that's why it's good to learn what our particular triggers are. Some of the most common triggers surface at these times: 1) *When our rights (or someone else's) have been breached.* Anger isn't always a bad thing. Sometimes the problem that infuriates us the most is the one God's calling us to help solve. This world is a better place because of people who said 'this isn't right,' and devoted their lives to fighting disease, poverty, corruption, and injustice. Anger prompted Jesus to purge the temple of extortionists, and cheating money lenders. The Bible says, 'If you are angry, be sure that it is not out of wounded pride or bad temper...don't give the devil that sort of foothold' (Ephesians 4:26-27 PHPS). 2) *When we're frustrated because things aren't going our way.* A news report told the story of a man who went hunting on his mountain bike. When it broke, he got angry and shot it to pieces. That makes no sense! One author wrote that, 'Anger is a wind which blows out the lamp of the mind.' 3) *When we're under constant stress.* Paul writes, 'Have a sane estimate of your capabilities' (Romans 12:3 PHPS). By cramming too much activity into too little time, we set ourselves up for stress. Like a violin string that's pulled tighter and tighter, we'll eventually end up snapping. Then we'll feel guilty and think we're not good enough. There'll always be something to go wrong in life, so let's try to anticipate challenges and allow time for the unexpected. And most importantly, 'Do not lose your temper – it only leads to harm.'

1 Kings 14-15; Matt 14:1-12; Ps 117; Pro 12:20-22

2022/06/04

Philippians 3:10 NLT

Knowing Jesus

Paul said, 'I want to know Christ and experience the mighty power that raised him from the dead. I want to suffer with him, sharing in his death.' Let's take an in-depth look at this verse. 1) 'I want to know Christ.' There's a difference between knowing someone and knowing about them. We can learn all about Jesus' life, the miracles He performed, what others said about Him, and so on. But what really makes the difference in our lives is having a personal relationship with Him. 2) 'And experience the mighty power that raised him from the dead.' What's dead in your life that needs to be raised? There's no problem that Christ's resurrection power can't handle. And we access that power when we make intimacy with Christ our top priority. 3) 'I want to suffer with him, sharing in his death.' We'd be more comfortable if the verse ended after the words, 'the mighty power that raised him from the dead'. But the truth is, if we want intimacy with Christ, we must be willing to 'suffer with Him'. For Paul, it meant being beaten, betrayed, and beheaded. But it brought a level of intimacy with Jesus that can't be experienced any other way. If you've ever walked through suffering with another person, you'll have experienced the way the experience brings you closer together. We'll never experience true intimacy with somebody by telling them, 'I only want to share the good times with you.' The strongest relationship bonds often come from the suffering we go through together; the trials that cause us to know, love, and trust each other in a newer, deeper dimension.

1 Kings 16:1-18:15; Matt 14:13-21; Ps 121; Pro 12:23-24

2022/06/05

Hebrews 11:6 CEV

Keys to prayer (1)

Just like the right key opens the door, there are scriptural truths that can act as keys to prayer. For the next few days, let's look at them. *Faith.* 'Without faith no one can please God. We must believe that God is real and that he rewards everyone who searches for him' (v.6 CEV). God doesn't necessarily respond to our needs. If we look around, we'll see that everyone has some kind of unmet need. So what does God respond to? Our faith! But Satan will try to fill our

minds with doubts. And when he does, we need to examine our hearts. You can believe God's Word in your heart even when your mind questions it. So let's stand on what's in our hearts instead of what's in our heads. Sometimes doubt begins with distraction. When we're distracted from God's promises, we can start to doubt. And as we focus more and more on our problems, our faith begins to waver. When that happens, we need to refocus like a laser on God's promises, and give nothing more than a glance at our problems. That doesn't mean we should deny them, just that we don't give them more attention than they need. The Bible says: 'When you ask for something, you must have faith and not doubt. Anyone who doubts is like an ocean wave tossed around in a storm. If you are that kind of person, you can't make up your mind, and you surely can't be trusted. So don't expect the Lord to give you anything at all' (James 1:6-8 CEV). If we stay anchored to God's Word, we won't be as likely to drift all over the place when things begin to change in our lives.

Lev 23:15-22; Acts 2:1-18

2022/06/06

1 John 5:14 NIV

Keys to prayer (2)

Knowing God's will. John wrote: 'This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us. And if we know that he hears us – whatever we ask – we know that we have what we asked of him' (v.14-15 NIV). One of the surest ways to know we're praying according to God's will is to pray according to His Word. We can use the Scriptures to back up what we're praying for. Say, 'Lord, you promised it in your Word, and I'm believing you for it.' Sometimes there are things we want to pray for, but we aren't sure whether those things are God's will for us according to Scripture. In that case, we need to ask God to give it to us if it's His will, and to help us be satisfied with His decision if He says no. Saint Augustine prayed, 'Grant that I may do Thy will as if it were my will, so that Thou mayest do my will as if it were Thy will.' D.L. Moody put it this way: 'Spread out your petition before God, and then say, "Thy will, not mine, be done." The sweetest lesson I have learned in God's school is to let the Lord choose for me.' We might have to wait, because God's timing is part of His will. But be patient; if God says it'll happen, it *will* happen. We might not see it yet, but God has promised and it's on the way. And remember, if He doesn't give us what we asked for, it's usually because He wants to give us something better. Our part is to walk with Him in faith and keep a good attitude.

1 Kings 18:16-20:43; Matt 14:22-36; Ps 116; Pro 12:25

2022/06/07

James 4:3 CEV

Keys to prayer (3)

Right motives. The reason we pray is much more important than the words we say. The motive is the *why* behind the *what*. And having a pure heart that loves God and loves people is always acceptable to Him. On the other hand, selfishness is unacceptable, revenge is unacceptable, manipulation and control are unacceptable, jealousy is unacceptable, pride is unacceptable, and praying to win the lottery is unacceptable. In fact, anything that's selfishly based is an unacceptable motive. Somebody once asked a little boy if he said his prayers every night. He thought about it for a second and replied, 'No, some nights I don't need anything.' Does that sound familiar at all? The first and most important reason for prayer is to develop an intimate relationship with God. Think about it: how much would a friendship grow if you only spoke to your friend when you needed something? Probably not very much. And the same principle applies to prayer. Jesus said, 'If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you' (John 15:7 NKJV). When we focus on 'abiding' in Christ, we'll get a response to our 'asking'. James wrote, 'Your prayers are not answered, because you pray just for selfish reasons.' The truth is, we're all naturally self-centred. That's why we need to purify our hearts on a regular basis – and means having a check-up of our motives for praying. It might be difficult, or even painful at first, but it's so worthwhile in growing our prayer life and relationship with God.

1 Kings 21:22; Matt 15:1-14; Ps 124; Pro 12:26

2022/06/08

Hebrews 4:16 NLT

Keys to prayer (4)

Boldness. Boldness isn't arrogance, presumption, or a sense of entitlement. It's a type of confidence that's based on who you are in Christ. Paul wrote, 'Let us come boldly to the throne of our gracious God. There we will receive his mercy, and we will find his grace to help us when we need it most' (v.16 NLT). As God's redeemed children, we have a right to approach Him at any time. And understanding that enables us to overcome Satan's attempts to make us feel unworthy. It removes our natural inclination to say, 'I know God can do it, but it's hard to believe He'll do it for me.' That's how we think when we feel unworthy. But the amazing truth is...Jesus has made us worthy! (See Colossians 1:12.) 'We will find grace to help us when we need it most,' and grace is simply undeserved favour. In other words, God will give us what we don't deserve when we're confident enough to ask Him. Plus, we're asking in Jesus' name, not our own. We're presenting to the Father all that Jesus is, not all that we are. Another important truth is that when we have hidden sin in our hearts, we can't pray with confidence. Unconfessed sin locks us in and shuts God out (see Psalm 66:18). But the good news is, when we ask God to reveal our sins, He will. And when He does, we need to deal with it straight away. God will help. If He reminds us of a situation when we didn't do the right thing, we shouldn't try to ignore or hide it. Instead, we should acknowledge it, receive His forgiveness, and then pray with renewed confidence.

Rev 1-4; Matt 15:15-28; Ps 129; Pro 12:27-28

2022/06/09

2 Corinthians 9:7 NKJV

Be a giver

The film *Schindler's List* tells the story of one man's efforts to rescue who he could out of a desperate situation. Oskar Schindler was the director of a munitions factory in Poland during the Holocaust, and he decided to use his position to save Jewish lives. By employing them in his factory, Schindler rescued many condemned Jews from the gas chambers. But it was expensive to keep them employed, and little by little he sold his personal property to keep his factory going. At the end of the story, the Nazis are defeated, and the full impact of Schindler's efforts is revealed as the dead are counted and the living make it back to freedom. In one scene of the film, as Schindler is kneeling by the railway tracks that had carried thousands to their deaths, he had a startling realisation. He could have saved a few more! If only he hadn't kept hold of the few things he still owned. If only he had known when the war would end, he would have done more. Oskar Schindler is credited with saving more Jews during World War II than any other single person. He was a hero. But all he could think about was what he didn't do. He wished he had done more. A powerful lesson in Schindler's story is this: even generous and joyful givers will look back on their lives and wish they had done more. There are also others who gave less than they could have given, or who never gave at all. We all have different levels of what we can afford to give, whether that's time, money, or some other resource, but let's not waste an opportunity to give when God prompts us, and give with joy. 'God loves a cheerful giver.'

Rev 5-9; Matt 15:29-39; Ps 16; Pro 13:1

2022/06/10

Daniel 3:29 NKJV

The fiery furnace

The story in Daniel 3 of the three Hebrew children in the fiery furnace teaches us these four lessons: 1) *Doing God's will can attract opposition.* We mustn't expect everyone to appreciate what we're doing. Look at Jesus: 'In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it' (John 1:4-5 NKJV). 2) *God will be with us in times of trouble.* When Nebuchadnezzar looked into the fire, he said, 'I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire; and they are not hurt, and the form of the fourth is like the Son

of God' (Daniel 3:25 NKJV). Instead of destroying them, the fire destroyed the ropes that bound them, setting them free. It may look like circumstances have got us locked in, but God will defend us and bring us out of it victoriously. 3) *It's our test that produces our testimony.* People will be watching us. The things they're trusting in don't work, and they might be wondering if what we're trusting in does. Our faithfulness to God and His intervention on our behalf will touch their lives in ways that preaching and theological arguments never will. Everyone in Babylon knew what the Hebrew children believed. But they wanted to know, 'Does it work when you're in the fire?' It does! 4) *Great trouble can lead to great blessing.* 'Then the king promoted Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego in the province of Babylon' (v.30 NKJV). When we prove that we're faithful in times of trouble, God will bless us in so many ways.

Rev 10-14; Matt 16:1-12; Ps 48; Pro 13:2-3

2022/06/11

Acts 2:8 NIV

Discover who you're called to reach

The Bible tells us: '[The disciples] were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and began to speak different languages by the power the Holy Spirit was giving them. There were some religious Jews staying in Jerusalem...each one heard them speaking in his own language. They were completely amazed at this. They said, "Look! Aren't all these people that we hear speaking from Galilee? Then how is it possible that we each hear them in our own languages?"' (v.4-8 NCV). What they were witnessing was fulfilment of an Old Testament prophecy: 'I will pour out my Spirit on all kinds of people' (Joel 2:28 NCV). So what can we learn from this? When we're filled with God's Spirit, He'll equip each of us to reach a specific kind of person or group of people in a way they'll understand. Psalm 33:15 says: 'He fashions [our] hearts individually' (NKJV). God doesn't ask each of us to reach every type of person. Instead, He's created us to have a heart for certain groups more than others. And that's okay, because that's how He designed us. So, how do you find out who He wants you to reach out to? Start off by asking yourself these questions: 1) *Who do you find it easy to talk to?* Maybe you feel uncomfortable talking to adults, but you get on great with children. 2) *Who do you feel the most compassion for?* It might be homeless people, asylum seekers, victims of violence. Chances are that your answers to these two questions are where your heart and calling lies, and that could be where God's leading you to reach out to people.

Rev 15-18; Matt 16:13-28; Ps 132:1-10; Pro 13:4-6

2022/06/12

2 Timothy 2:13 NIV

God's faithfulness

God's faithfulness to us doesn't depend on our faithfulness to Him. The Bible says, 'If we are faithless, he remains faithful.' Our mistakes might take us out of God's will, but they'll never take us to a place where we're beyond His reach. Author Catherine Marshall told the story of a personal struggle she experienced while writing a novel called *Gloria*. She started the book in 1969, but then she had to abandon the project two-and-a-half years later. She described the shelved manuscript as feeling 'like a death in the family'. Her confidence shattered, she decided to spend some time at a retreat house in an effort to understand and reconcile her conflicting thoughts and feelings. While there, she reread the Bible story from Numbers about a time when poisonous snakes filled the Israelite camp. The people recognised the snakes as punishment for their sin, and cried out in repentance. God told Moses, 'Make a [bronze] snake and put it up on a pole; anyone who is bitten can look at it and live' (Numbers 21:8 NIV). Catherine realised that just as the Israelites took what had hurt them, lifted it up to God, and were healed, we can take our mistakes and sins, lift them up to God in prayer, and trust Him to heal us. She wrote, 'When any one of us has made a wrong (or even doubtful) turning in our lives through arrogance, lack of trust, impatience, or fear – God will show us a way out.' Even when we stray from God, He loves us so much that He'll draw us back again. 'If we are faithless, he remains faithful.'

Ezek 37:1-14; Matt 27:50-53; 1 Thes 4:13-18; Eph 1:19-20

2022/06/13

Exodus 18:18 NIV

We can't do it all

Helping others is something we're called to do. The Bible says that we should care about the 'interests of the others' not just our own (Philippians 2:4 NIV). But sometimes we can take this too far. We try to be everything for everyone, seeing it as our responsibility to help everyone with their problems. And that can be dangerous because we can end up feeling overwhelmed. Instead we need to remember that we're part of the body of Christ (take a look at 1 Corinthians 12:12-31), so all of us have a responsibility to be there for other people, but we can all offer different things. Sometimes God will use us to help others, and at other times He'll use someone else. It doesn't always have to be us. Moses had to learn this when he was leading the Israelites. He was wearing himself out physically, emotionally, and spiritually trying to keep up with the demands of two million Israelites and be the one everyone turned to when they needed answers to their problems. That's when his father-in-law told him, 'You cannot handle it alone. Listen now to me and I will give you some advice' (v.18-19 NIV). It takes wisdom, maturity, and humility to ask for help or to say no to helping when someone is in a bad place. When we take on too much, we can end up not helping anyone because we can't cope ourselves. What Moses was doing wasn't good for him, and it wasn't good for the people depending on him. Sometimes we may need to guard ourselves from becoming overwhelmed by too many people offloading their problems onto us. And doing that is a sign of strength, not weakness.

Rev 19-22; Matt 17:1-13; Ps 132:11-18; Pro 13:7-8

2022/06/14

Proverbs 19:20 NIV

Who's advising you?

You're really good at lots of things. And there's probably something that you can do better than most people. But without the help of others, it's possible that you'll never be as good as you could be. It's very difficult (even impossible) for us to reach our highest potential without a good and trusted adviser. World-class tennis player André Agassi valued his trainer even when he'd reached the top levels of his game: 'Tennis requires subtle adjustments crucial to winning and my coach, Gill, is the best at making them. The older I get, the more valuable he becomes.' Age and experience don't necessarily make us better or more skilful; sometimes they just deepen the rut we've found ourselves in. In life, just as in the sports world, we'll never reach a point where we don't need good input. Even if we've reached the top of our skill, or job, or sport, good advice is always valuable. We might make the mistake of measuring ourselves against others instead of our own God-given potential, and in the end we never become what we could have been. Self-evaluation is important, but the evaluation of others is crucial. A good coach measures our performance against our strengths, not somebody else's. That's because they understand what we're capable of and they'll push us to reach for it. Good coaches are constantly on the scene, observing, and getting involved. They walk with us and take a personal interest in every success we have, big or small, celebrate with us when things go well, and encourage us when things don't go to plan. Ruth needed Naomi and Timothy needed Paul. We all need an advisor – who's yours?

2 Kings 1:1-4:17; Matt 17:14-27; Ps 143; Pro 13:9-10

2022/06/15

1 John 1:3-4 GWT

Unconditional joy

When joy is missing from our lives, power is also missing (see Nehemiah 8:10). The truth is, we shouldn't base our happiness on what's happening around us; instead, it should be dependent on our relationship with Jesus. John said, 'We can be completely filled with joy' (1 John 1:4 GWT). Pastor Reimar Schultze wrote: 'John did not say this when all was well, but when...everything had turned to shambles. 1) All his fellow apostles had been murdered. 2)

Rome had destroyed the temple [so]...not one stone was left upon another. Flavius Josephus, an eyewitness wrote, "The multitude of those that...perished exceeded all the destructions men or God ever brought upon the world." 3) Many Jews and Christians became refugees. Average life expectancy was about forty years and 25 per cent of the people in Rome were slaves. 4) John himself lived as a condemned criminal on the Isle of Patmos. He had no earthly comforts;...no assurance of living another day. When the cup of misery was full, God commissioned [him] to show the world the absolute power and triumph of Christianity over everything...[John's] writings, in reference to our daily walk, put a capstone on all that heaven intended to reveal in the Word: if we have apostolic fellowship, our joy will be full. You do not need pleasant circumstances for this to happen.' The psalmist said it best: 'In Your presence is fullness of joy; at Your right hand are pleasures forevermore' (Psalm 16:11 NKJV).

2 Kings 4:18-6:33; Matt 18:1-9; Ps 80:1-11; Pro 13:11-12

2022/06/16

Proverbs 6:2 NIV

Words of wholeness

Author Stormie Omartian wrote: 'Early in my walk with the Lord I spoke many negatives..."I'm a failure," "I'm ugly," "Nothing ever goes right," "Nobody cares about me," ...[Then] the Holy Spirit spoke to my heart..."Death and life are in the power of the tongue" (Proverbs 18:21 NKJV). I had been speaking words of death, not life. One clear example had to do with my speech problems. I'd had them since childhood and was teased about them all through school...[When] I was old enough to afford professional help, I worked with a speech therapist...I practised day after day, year after year, to gain...little improvement...I still lost my voice...halfway through each [speaking] engagement..."I'll never be able to speak right," I cried...But as I spoke those words...the Lord [said]: "You're bringing death to your situation because you're not speaking the truth...Do not speak what you think...or what seems to be truth...speak what you know to be the truth of my Word..."The stammering tongue will be fluent and clear' (Isaiah 32:4 NIV)...'I have put My words in your mouth'" (Isaiah 51:16 NKJV)...Soon after, when I was asked to speak at a...women's meeting, I took my fears...to [God]...and...spoke [His] truth instead of voicing my own negative opinions....My talk went so well...an entire speaking ministry opened up...The Bible says, "You are snared by the words of your mouth" (Proverbs 6:2 NKJV). That includes [your self-talk]...Wipe [out] words of hopelessness, doubt, and negativity from your vocabulary. [They] may seem harmless...but [they] affect your body and soul...Speak words that reflect the wholeness you desire.'

2 Kings 7-9; Matt 18:10-20; Ps 80:12-19; Pro 13:13-16

2022/06/17

Hebrews 11:17 NKJV

Letting go isn't always loss

In Genesis 12, God told Abraham to leave his country, his family, and his security. When he said yes to God, he travelled along an unknown path to an unknown destiny based on the strength of God's promise. Without hesitating, the seventy-five-year-old patriarch 'went, as the LORD had told him' (Genesis 12:4 NIV). Now fast-forward twenty-five years and Isaac is born; the miracle son who would fulfil God's promise that through Abraham's descendants 'all the nations of the earth shall be blessed because Abraham obeyed my voice' (Genesis 26:4-5 ESV). Then God makes a heart-wrenching demand: 'Take your son, your only son, whom you love – Isaac – and go to the region of Moriah. Sacrifice him there as a burnt offering' (Genesis 22:2 NIV). And in obedience to God's Word, 'the next morning Abraham got up and loaded his donkey. He took with him two of his servants and his son Isaac' (v.3 NIV). God's promised blessing hung on Abraham's willingness to let go of what he loved most. Holding on to Isaac would have been natural and understandable, but it would have short-circuited the promised blessing. Are you clinging to something that's blocking God's blessing? Is it a particular friendship, your reputation among people you're close to, power, possessions, comfort, or habits? Abraham's willingness to sacrifice Isaac was the ultimate act of faith. 'By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac.' How could he do it? 'Abraham reasoned that if Isaac died, God was able to bring him back to life' (Hebrews 11:19 NLT). Abraham believed that, with God, letting go never means losing, but getting back something better.

2 Kings 10-12; Matt 18:21-35; Ps 73:1-16; Pro 13:17-19

2022/06/18

Isaiah 43:18 NLT

Clutter

Many of us have a drawer, a loft, or a cupboard under the stairs where we can stash clutter and hide away things we don't want others to see. It might hold broken things that we intend to fix 'one day', stuff that we haven't got round to throwing away, and things that we just don't know what to do with. And we also have lofts, basements and cupboards in our minds where we store and hide away mental and emotional 'clutter', and it's hard for us to thrive until we begin the process of clearing it out. We're talking about things like 1) regrets we have over past mistakes, 2) grudges we hold on to when we feel we've been wronged, and 3) hurts we hide under clouds of anger, scepticism, and isolation. Clinging to hurts and nourishing grudges can eat away at our souls, consume our happiness, and halt our progress. It keeps us trapped in the past. And just like sorting through the junk in a house, once we clear out the clutter of the past, letting go of the things we don't need and fixing the things that still have value, we get a clearer view of the good things we have in our lives right now and can appreciate them even more! Clearing out the clutter comes down to following these two Scriptures: 1) 'Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors' (Matthew 6:12 NKJV) and 2) 'Forget all that – it is nothing compared to what I am going to do. For I am about to do something new' (Isaiah 43:18-19 NLT). So today, deal with the clutter, and look forward to what God's going to do!

2 Kings 13-15; Matt 19:1-14; Ps 73:17-28; Pro 13:20

2022/06/19

Lamentations 3:22 NCV

Connect with the Father

Today is Father's Day, a chance for us to celebrate and say thank you to our dads and the father figures in our lives. But it can be a time of sadness or resentment if we haven't had a good experience of a father or our relationship has broken down. But however we feel about our earthly fathers, we always have a heavenly Father who we can rely on. Take a minute to check on your relationship with Him. Is it strong and constant? Or do you need to rebuild your relationship and reconnect with Him? Even if we've neglected or rejected Him, God's ready to welcome us back with His arms wide open. Just like the prodigal son's father in Luke 15, God will celebrate the moment we come back. He loves us more than we could deserve or imagine. The Bible tells us: 'The LORD's love never ends; his mercies never stop. They are new every morning; LORD, your loyalty is great' (Lamentations 3:22-23 NCV). 'God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life' (John 3:16 ESV). 'God is so rich in mercy, and he loved us so much, that even though we were dead because of our sins, he gave us life when he raised Christ from the dead. (It is only by God's grace that you have been saved!)' (Ephesians 2:4-5 NLT). God's love for us never stops or weakens. Whatever your relationship with God is like at the moment, take the opportunity today to thank Him for His amazing love. Reconnect with Him, and be assured that He's delighted to have you as His child.

Est 4:9-5:3; Heb 4:7-16

2022/06/20

John 6:63 NKJV

God speaks through His Word

God will speak to you through His Word. Jesus said, 'The words that I speak to you are spirit, and they are life,' but that doesn't mean we can pick out the feel-good Scriptures and ignore the rest. To grow in faith, we must spend time each day reading *through* the Bible. We can't just decide that one verse applies to us and another doesn't. *All* Scripture is inspired by God and is useful to teach us what is true and to make us realise what is wrong in our

lives...God uses it to prepare and equip his people to do every good work' (2 Timothy 3:16-17 NLT). A fire is made up of three things: heat, fuel and oxygen. If just one of those things is taken away, the fire goes out, and the warmth and light it brought disappear. It needs all three to keep going and keep growing. It's the same with our spiritual growth. When God's Word, an open mind, and a receptive heart get together, something exciting is going to spark! We all need regular exposure to Scripture. Without it, we won't properly hear what God is saying to us, and we'll always be dependent on somebody else's interpretation. Imagine having to communicate with a friend or a family member like that? It would be difficult, if not impossible, to develop a close, strong relationship. The same idea applies to our relationship with God. So today, spend time with your Bible and let God speak to you personally through His Word.

2 Kings 16:1-18:16; Matt 19:15-30; Ps 139:1-6; Pro 13:21-23

2022/06/21

1 Thessalonians 2:13 NKJV

Seeds

When we read God's Word and believe it and act on it, it's like seeds growing inside us. Those seeds have life. We don't have to understand the process they go through to grow, we just have to water, nurture, and protect them. And it's the same with Scripture. Paul writes, 'You welcomed it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which also effectively works in you who believe' (v.13 NKJV). Remember the phrase 'effectively works in you'. God's Word is self-sustaining; it doesn't need validation from others. In the New Testament, when Jesus was walking on the water towards His disciples, Peter said, 'Lord, if it's you...tell me to come' (Matthew 14:28 NIV). Jesus gave him one word, 'Come' (v.29 NIV), and Peter started walking. The other disciples probably didn't believe Peter could do it, because they didn't really understand who was speaking to him. 'They thought [Jesus] was a ghost' (Mark 6:49 NIV)! This story contains an important lesson for all of us: when God speaks to us through His Word, we mustn't expect everybody to understand, agree, or support us. It's natural for us to want people to see what we see, understand our perspective, and believe in what we're doing. But in this Scripture, God prepares us for rejection by those who don't understand what God has told us. Other people's opinions can make us doubt what God's said to us. Sometimes He'll confirm what He told you through others, and sometimes He won't. But as long as you feed on His Word and believe it, it 'effectively works in you'.

2 Kings 18:17-20:21; Matt 20:1-16; Ps 139:7-12; Pro 13:24

2022/06/22

Galatians 6:2 NLT

Support system

Astronauts have all kinds of equipment full of support systems to keep them alive and safe. And it's the same in our relationships. Everyone needs a support system. We're not designed to live life alone. Sometimes when others disappoint us, we might say, 'I'm better off on my own!' But that's a mistake. It's the sheep who strays from the rest of the flock that gets caught by a wolf. One of Satan's strategies is to isolate us so he can break us more easily. 'A person standing alone can be attacked and defeated, but two can stand back-to-back and conquer. Three are even better, for a triple-braided cord is not easily broken' (Ecclesiastes 4:12 NLT). When we have a good support network of friends and loved ones, we can share our burdens, find encouragement, and be uplifted when we face disappointments. Support gives us a sense of connection and acceptance, which are core human needs. It provides a place to be vulnerable, where we can feel safe in saying, 'I don't know,' or 'Can you help me,' or 'I need a hug.' This type of support is God's way. We don't always find it in our own families, but we can turn to the family of God. Finally, don't forget to show appreciation towards those who support you. Support doesn't just work one way: 'Share each other's burdens.' We mustn't get so engrossed in our own problems that we forget others have problems too. Take time to ask about them and about any concerns or worries. It's in the give-and-take of supporting each other that we grow and fulfil our God-given potential in life.

2 Kings 21-23; Matt 20:17-28; Ps 139:13-24; Pro 13:25

2022/06/23

Psalms 37:21 NIV

Empowered to give (1)

Sometimes we might feel nervous, or even fearful, of giving. Especially when we're giving money. We can think of money as security and protection, and as soon as we give it away, we lose our safety net. But actually when we trust God, the opposite is true. Our sense of freedom and security increases when we give, because giving is a declaration that our security rests in something other than our bank balance and our potential to earn more. Giving is an act of confidence in God. The more we're willing to trust Him and give when He nudges us, the less insecure we'll feel about giving. The Bible says: 'One person gives freely, yet gains even more; another withholds unduly, but comes to poverty. A generous person will prosper; whoever refreshes others will be refreshed' (Proverbs 11:24-25 NIV). It might sound counterintuitive to us, but from God's perspective it makes sense. Paul wrote: "'A few seeds make a small harvest, but a lot of seeds make a big harvest.'" Each of you must make up your own mind about how much to give. But don't feel sorry that you must give and don't feel that you are forced to give. God loves people who love to give. God can bless you with everything you need, and you will always have more than enough to do all kinds of good things for others' (2 Corinthians 9:6-8 CEV). In *our* hands, a pound will never be worth more than a pound. But when we sow it into *God's* kingdom, it'll begin a harvest that has the potential to bless so many people in ways we couldn't have imagined. So if God prompts you to give, take a step of faith, trust Him to meet your needs, and sow confidently into His kingdom.

2 Kings 24:25; Matt 20:29-34; Ps 144:1-8; Pro 14:1-4

2022/06/24

Genesis 22:16-17 NKJV

Empowered to give (2)

God won't ask us for what we don't *have*, but sometimes He will ask for the one thing we really want to *keep*. It reveals if there's anything we value or depend on more than Him. Abraham was tested like nobody else in history. But he passed the test and was blessed like very few others in history. Imagine God saying to you, 'Take now your son, your only son...whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I shall tell you' (v.2 NKJV). So many questions would swirl through your mind. But Abraham trusted God. In fact, his faith was so strong that he would be described as 'the friend of God' (James 2:23 NKJV) and 'the father of all them that believe' (Romans 4:11 KJV). When the test was over (and Isaac wasn't sacrificed), God said this to Abraham: 'Because you have done this thing, and have not withheld...your only son...I will bless you, and...multiply your descendants as the stars of the heaven and as the sand which *is* on the seashore... In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice' (Genesis 22:16-18 NKJV). So now the question is: what's God asking of *you*? Are you struggling with giving it? Are you withholding what He wants, or are you handing it over confidently? Isaac was the hardest seed Abraham ever had to sow, but that seed produced a harvest of blessing greater than anything Abraham ever dreamed of or thought possible. What's God asking you to do today? When you say *yes* to Him, you'll get to see the amazing things He can do and just how far His blessing can reach.

Hosea 1-5; Matt 21:1-17; Ps 144:9-15; Pro 14:5-8

2022/06/25

Matthew 6:26 NKJV

Sparrows

Jesus said: 'Look at the birds. They don't plant or harvest or store food in barns, for your heavenly Father feeds them. And aren't you far more valuable to him than they are? Can all your worries add a single moment to your life? And why worry about your clothing? Look at the lilies of the field and how they grow. They don't work or make their

clothing, yet Solomon in all his glory was not dressed as beautifully as they are. And if God cares so wonderfully for wildflowers that are here today and thrown into the fire tomorrow, he will certainly care for you. Why do you have so little faith?...These things dominate the thoughts of unbelievers, but your heavenly Father already knows all your needs. Seek the Kingdom of God above all else, and live righteously, and he will give you everything you need' (v.26-33 NLT). And here are some more scriptural promises to stand on when we're not sure if God will provide for us: 'Fear the Lord, you his godly people, for those who fear him will have all they need' (Psalm 34:9 NLT). 'Blessed is the man who fears the LORD, who delights greatly in His commandments. His descendants will be mighty on earth; the generation of the upright will be blessed. Wealth and riches will be in his house...He will not be afraid of evil tidings; his heart is steadfast, trusting in the LORD' (Psalm 112:1-7 NKJV). God recorded these promises in His Word so that you could read them over and over, use them to rise above worry, and live your life with joy and confidence in Him.

Hosea 6-10; Matt 21:18-32; Ps 8; Pro 14:9-12

2022/06/26

Luke 22:32 NKJV

Jesus prays for you

Jesus said, 'Simon, Simon! Indeed, Satan has asked for you, that he may sift you as wheat. But I have prayed for you, that your faith should not fail; and when you have returned to Me, strengthen your brethren' (v.31-32 NKJV). We all go through times of failure because of our own weaknesses or particular temptations. We might end up doing things we always said we'd never do, and never thought we'd be capable of. But temptation and fear are powerful things, and both can lead us along a path we never intended to take. But we're not alone. Even the people who were closest to Jesus made mistakes. Peter swore that he would never deny Jesus, but he did. And not just once but three times. There's no doubt that Peter loved Jesus, but because his weakness took over, he turned his back on Him. It was a massive load of guilt to carry, and he 'went out and wept bitterly' (v.62 NKJV). But Jesus knew in advance it would happen and told Peter that He would be praying for him. Here's an amazing thought: *when you sin, Jesus prays for you!* 'Therefore He is also able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them' (Hebrews 7:25 NKJV). Picture this: you're struggling with a sinful habit, but at the same time, Jesus presents His cleansing blood to the Father and begs Him for help and mercy on your behalf. And because we know Jesus' prayers are totally in line with His Father's will, His prayer for you will succeed. And however long it takes, He'll work with you until you're restored.

Exo 34:29-35; Mark 9:2-27; 2 Cor 3:7-18

2022/06/27

John 10:10 KJV

You're full of potential

The things we experience as we go through life can sometimes make us different from the way God intended us to be. If we're not careful, the people, activities, and entertainments we choose to spend our time on can end up leaving us with regrets and feelings of hopelessness. When we lose our sense of self-worth, it gets difficult to believe God could love us – but He absolutely does. He knows that hidden inside each of us is a person who can do great things for Him. That's why He stirs our hearts – it's to let us know that He's at work in our lives. Our part is to respond to Him in faith, and dare to believe that He can make each one of us 'a new creation' (2 Corinthians 5:17 NKJV). We need to shift our thoughts from our own weaknesses to His power, and trust in Him rather than our limited strength. Jesus knows about every mistake we've ever made, and He wants to mend the broken parts of our hearts and make us whole again. But to do that, He needs to have access to every area of our lives. When He comes into our hearts, we're changed, and we'll be empowered to reach the potential He sees within us! David's sins became a national scandal. But when God forgave and restored him, he wrote: 'Praise the LORD, my soul, and forget not all his benefits – who forgives all your sins and heals all your diseases, who redeems your life from the pit and crowns you with love and compassion, who satisfies your desires with good things (Psalm 103:2-5 NIV).

Hosea 11-14; Matt 21:33-46; Ps 17; Pro 14:13-16

2022/06/28

Psalms 27:14 NKJV

Wait for God!

When we become impatient and react without thinking, we can do damage to ourselves and others. Sometimes when we pray and God doesn't respond quickly enough, we decide to take matters into our own hands and things get worse as a result. When God tells us to wait, He's saying, 'Trust me with the timing, the ways and means, and you will get a better result.' David wrote: 'I would have lost heart, unless I had believed that I would see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living. Wait on the LORD; be of good courage, and He shall strengthen your heart; wait, I say, on the LORD!' (v.13-14 NKJV). It can be difficult to wait for God. It's much easier in the heat of the moment to lose our calm. But take a moment to stop and look back. How did any hasty and prayerless decisions you made in the past turn out? Probably not very well, and definitely not as well as they could have done if God had been brought into them. A decision made without God's involvement might give us some temporary relief, but for a permanent solution, we must pray and ask for His guidance and wisdom. When we act impulsively, we often do things that we end up regretting and having to apologise for. Impulsiveness got King Saul into serious trouble. Instead of waiting for the prophet Samuel to arrive and the priests to offer a peace offering to God, which would ensure their victory over the Philistines, Saul grew impatient, took over the role of the priest, and offered the sacrifice himself. When Samuel asked him why, he replied, 'I felt compelled' (1 Samuel 13:12 NKJV). Then 'Samuel said to Saul, "You have done foolishly...now your kingdom shall not continue"' (v.13-14 NKJV). So, make sure you always wait for God.

Jer 1-3; Matt 22:1-14; Ps 21; Pro 14:17-20

2022/06/29

Proverbs 23:7 NKJV

Mind your mind

When we're young, we're often told, 'Mind your manners.' If we try to get involved in something that doesn't concern us and cross the line between helping and interfering, we might be told, 'Mind your business.' But here's some advice that applies to all parts of life: 'Mind your mind.' Proverbs 23 gives us six principles to live by when it comes to thinking: 1) *Your thoughts determine your character.* 'For as he thinks in his heart, so is he.' Before we tell a lie, we let it come into our mind and think like a liar for a brief time. Before we give in to a temptation, we let the desire to do that thing rule our thoughts for a moment. So if we don't want to do something, we must try to stop our thoughts dwelling on it. 2) *Don't waste your thoughts on people who don't value them.* 'Do not speak in the hearing of a fool, for he will despise the wisdom of your words' (v.9 NKJV). 3) *The first person you must learn to lead is yourself.* 'Apply your heart to instruction, and your ears to words of knowledge' (v.12 NKJV). We can't set an example to others if our own self-control is lacking. 4) *Be sure your role models are people with good values and integrity.* 'Do not let your heart envy sinners' (v.17 NKJV). 5) *Stay confident that the vision God has given you will happen.* 'Be zealous for the fear of the LORD all the day; for surely there is a hereafter, and your hope will not be cut off' (v.17-18 NKJV). 6) *Stay committed to what you know is right.* Don't get side-tracked. 'Hear...and be wise; and guide your heart in the way' (v.19 NKJV). Our thoughts have power. Let's do our best to ensure they line up with God's thoughts as much as we can.

Jer 4-6; Matt 22:15-22; Ps 59:1-8; Pro 14:21-22

2022/06/30

2 Samuel 23:5 NLT

How are you treating your family?

Have a think about how you are at church, school, or workplace versus how you are when it's just you and your family. Is there any difference? Do you tend to have more patience or kindness when you're dealing with people you

don't know? Are you willing to help those outside your home, but inside you tend to ignore or roll your eyes when someone needs a hand with something? Although we love our family, we're often more inclined to be helpful, cooperative, and compassionate – in other words, show love through our actions – towards those outside our families. We might think it doesn't matter too much. But God sees who we are in every situation, and expects us to show love to everyone. In 1 Timothy 5:8 we read: 'Those who won't care for their relatives, especially those in their own household, have denied the true faith. Such people are worse than unbelievers' (NLT). God puts a lot of importance on our attitude to our family and how we care for them, and the first place we should be practising compassion and kindness, patience and gentleness, is in our homes. God designed families to be places of love and support, and we should be able to share our frustrations after a stressful day, find rest when we're tired, and find encouragement after a disappointment. But it works both ways – we also need to do our part in providing support, giving encouragement, and treating our loved ones with compassion. If you're aware that you've taken your family for granted recently, pray this prayer: 'Father, thank You for my family. Help me to contribute to an atmosphere of love and acceptance in my home, and if I become impatient or neglectful of my family, give me a nudge back in the right direction. Amen.'

Jer 7-9; Matt 22:23-33; Ps 59:9-17; Pro 14:23-24