

Devotionals from God's Daily Word Ministries

January 2007

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Walk Humbly

1-8-07

Seven hundred years before Jesus walked the earth, the prophet Micah wrote words given to him by God; words that tell what God expects from His Children.

Micah 6:8

"He has showed you, O man, what is good. And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God."

God loves us so much that He gave His Son so we may be restored to Him and receive the gift of eternal life (John 3:16). When we begin to understand the fullness of His love and place our complete trust in Jesus for the forgiveness of sin, it's natural to ask: "What do You now require of me Lord?" But as we search the Scripture, we find no additional "requirements" for our Christian walk which are not summed up in the words of Micah.

As we live by faith, we must "act justly" by doing what is fair and right; "Anyone who does not do what is right is not a Child of God" (1 John 3:10). This means we live with integrity and "love your neighbor as yourself" (Mark 12:31).

God requires that we "love mercy" by showing compassion and forgiveness for others; "judgment without mercy will be shown to anyone who has not been merciful" (James 2:13). It also means we live with a continual thankfulness for God's mercy toward us. An understanding of God's merciful forgiveness of our sins should compel us to forgive and show mercy to others. Without God's mercy, we would all be lost.

The final requirement is for us to "walk humbly" with our God. The word humble means to place a low value on "self." This is not a very popular concept in our "me-first" generation. We are trained to achieve, acquire, and rise higher than we believe possible; but God calls us to submit and walk with Christ continually exalted above all else in our life; "He must become greater; I must become less" (John 3:30).

True humility is required for proper worship and thankfulness before God. We did NOTHING to deserve eternal life and yet we have received - we are made worthy and given value without having done anything to earn our Salvation. This ought to produce a never ending stream of praise from our heart and cause us to focus less on ourselves and more on the needs of others.

All we have and ALL we are has been given to us by a loving God who created the Universe and accepted us into His Kingdom through faith in His Son. Let's glorify Him with every step we take - and with each step of faith, let's remember to act justly, love mercy, and walk humbly.

Have A Great Day!

Our Unconditional Love

1-9-07

When we become a Child of God, through faith in Jesus for the forgiveness of sin, He loves us in spite of our failures - in spite of the way we stumble and sometimes fall. But what type of love do we give in return? Do we have a continual love which remains through good and bad, or do we love only during our "scheduled" times and only when the conditions of our life are favorable for worship?

The prophet Habakkuk ministered during the same general time as Jeremiah, Daniel, and Ezekiel. This was a time when the southern kingdom of Judah was being invaded by Babylon and eventually taken into captivity. There was great wickedness, sorrow, and fear in the land. Habakkuk asked God many of the same questions we might ask today: "How long, O Lord, must I call for help, but You do not listen? Or cry out to you, 'Violence!' but You do not save?" (Habakkuk 1:2).

Habakkuk was frustrated that God appeared slow in answering his prayers and was allowing so much evil to go unpunished. Yet through these many trials, Habakkuk developed a deep and unwavering love.

Habakkuk 3:17-18

"Though the fig tree does not bud and there are no grapes on the vines, though the olive crop fails and the fields produce no food, though there are no sheep in the pen and no cattle in the stalls, yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will be joyful in God my Savior."

Habakkuk presented his heart-felt and anguished concerns; but regardless of the outcome, his love for God would remain unchanged. Even if every one of his prayers seemed to go unanswered, he was determined to love God with all his heart. This same love was expressed by Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego before they were thrown into the furnace. They knew God could save them, but their love did not depend on being rescued: "But even if He does not {save us}, we want you to know, O king, that we will not serve your gods or worship the image of gold you have set up" (Daniel 3:18). They loved God simply because He was God!

We know there will be times when the world around us seems to fall apart - times when our life begins to crumble and the heat of the furnace seems very real. There will also be many times when we just don't understand God's plan or timing. Our path may seem unclear and His timing painfully slow. When this occurs, we must strive for a love that doesn't fade or waver - a love which isn't weakened by heat or torn by the force of the wind.

Our Heavenly Father is our only true source of comfort and strength; "He alone is my rock and my salvation: He is my fortress, I will never be shaken" (Psalm 62:2). He has given His very best; let's return our ALL in a life of unbroken worship. Let's faithfully give Him our unconditional love.

Have A Great Day!

All His Energy

1-10-07

When the Apostle Paul met Jesus on the road to Damascus, his life was forever changed. Prior to meeting Jesus, Paul was "breathing out murderous threats against the Lord's disciples" (Acts 9:1). After the encounter with Jesus and being filled with the Holy Spirit, Paul "began to preach in the synagogues that Jesus is the Son of God" (Acts 9:20).

Paul had been given the task of preaching the gospel of God's grace through faith in Jesus - and he would do so for the remainder of his life. But Paul would endure many trials along the way. He faced those who desired to take his life and others who simply refused to listen to his message...but he continued on.

Colossians 1:29

"To this end I labor, struggling with all His energy, which so powerfully works in me."

Paul "labored" and "struggled" with the task he had been given. But rather than rely on his own strength and abilities, Paul learned to labor with the energy of Christ.

The word Paul used for "energy" refers to the active working of God's power. Paul used this same word to describe the power all believers have received from God; "That power is like the working {energy} of His mighty strength, which He exerted in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at the right hand in the Heavenly realms" (Ephesians 1:19-20).

God has provided a power like the energy which flowed through Jesus and raised Him from the dead. This is a remarkable gift - yet one we seldom use. With His energy we receive clear direction; we are focused and accomplish all He desires. Without His energy we wander from task to task, become exceedingly weary, and never accomplish anything of eternal value.

There will be times of overwhelming adversity when God simply takes charge and directly fights the enemy. But, for the majority of our journey, God directs us to continue the daily labor of accomplishing His work. Jesus said the burden of this work will be greatly eased as we learn to attach ourselves to Him and walk by His side; "For My yoke is easy and My burden is light" (Matthew 11:30).

We only fail when we fail to trust; "I can do EVERYTHING through Him who gives me strength" (Philippians 4:13). God's provision will always be sufficient to continue down His path. We can do all things and find great fulfillment as we attach ourselves to Christ and labor with all HIS energy.

Have A Great Day!

Remember The Basics

1-11-07

As we continue down God's path of sanctification, "being transformed into His likeness" (2 Corinthians 3:18), moving from milk to solid food (Hebrews 5:12), and growing in grace and "all spiritual wisdom and understanding" (Colossians 1:9), it's wise to return often to the basics of our faith. As we learn more of our Heavenly Father and ponder His "deeper truths," we must never forget that "God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life" (John 3:16). The truth of all scripture is that God loves us and is inviting us to join Him for all eternity.

The Apostle Peter understood the importance of fundamentals. He wrote his second letter to warn us against false teaching and to remind us that, as we step out in faith, we have been given all the necessary tools to accomplish what God desires for our life; "His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness" (2 Peter 1:3).

When we place our trust in Jesus for the forgiveness of our sins, we receive everything we need to live a victorious life; "so that through them you may participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires" (2 Peter 1:4). The real challenge of our Christian walk is not in acquiring new and "greater" gifts, but in learning how to best utilize what we have already received.

Peter also wanted us to remember that Salvation is not the end of our journey; rather, it's the beginning of a long and wonderful walk which begins in faith and continues by growing ever closer to Christ. Since we have been given such a wonderful gift, we should "make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, love" (2 Peter 1:5-7). We must continue to grow such that the end result - the highest quality of our Christian life - is love!

Peter believed these to be fundamental truths, but truths which were necessary to often repeat!

2 Peter 1:12-13

"So I will always remind you of these things, even though you know them and are firmly established in the truth you now have. I think it is right to refresh your memory as long as I live."

To ensure we don't wander down side paths filled with self-effort and self-importance, or stumble in the world's temptation of corruption and evil desires, we must continually return to the starting point of our faith. We must never forget that God loves us and desires to walk with us each and every day. All that we do must be directed by God and accomplished with the tools He has provided. Let's dig deep at every opportunity, but let's remain lovingly close to His side and always remember the basics.

Have A Great Day!

A Childlike Amazement

1-12-07

In the message "Remember The Basics" we saw the importance of returning often to the fundamental truths of our faith. We are called to grow and mature, but never to "grow" such that we are led away from the simple and unchanging truth: God loves us so much that He provided a way to restore a right relationship with Him through faith in His Son. Jesus died so we could live! Does this awesome act of love still amaze us, or have we "matured" to more "important" matters?

Matthew 18:3

"And He said: I tell you the truth, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven."

When my daughter was four years old, I read her the story of young Samuel. While discussing this story, my daughter showed me the excited faith God wants us to maintain.

As a young boy, Samuel was ministering with an old priest named Eli. One night God called to Samuel, but Samuel thought it was Eli's voice. Eli said he didn't call and told Samuel to go back to bed. After God called a few more times, Samuel realized Who was calling and answered: "Speak, for Your servant is listening" (1 Samuel 3:10). God then gave Samuel a message - but the message was all about Eli.

My daughter asked, "Why did God speak to Samuel if the message was really to Eli?" We talked about how we must be ready and willing to hear God. I said Eli may have had some problems or distractions in his life which kept him from hearing God, so God spoke His message through a child. I said little kids (like her) can often hear God better than old people (like me).

"But, I don't hear God talk to me," she said, with a little disappointment in her voice. I explained how God doesn't usually speak so we can hear Him with our ears; rather, His Spirit speaks to our heart and we hear Him as we listen to our heart. Her little eyes widened, "Like today when I was going to sit on one of the baby toys - Jesus told my heart I was too big and shouldn't do it so I listened to what He said."

I encouraged her that this is exactly how God speaks to us, we just need to learn how to listen and then obey. My daughter thought for a moment and then slowly shook her head in amazement: "Wow! That's sooooo cool!!"

Heavenly Father, I pray that Your Word never becomes just an interesting collection of stories. You created us, loved us, and will one day call us Home to be with You for all eternity - and Father, that's sooooo cool!! Help us to come into Your presence with a thankful and loving heart. Strengthen our faith every day and allow us to continually look on You and Your wonders with a childlike amazement.

Have A Great Day!

God's Thermal of Encouragement

1-15-07

Many of us have experienced that low Spiritual valley where we thought the sun would never shine again. Some were sent quickly into the valley by a very specific event. Others drifted slowly to the bottom and can't say by what path they arrived. In either case, we wandered in this gloom until something began to lift us to new heights.

Isaiah 40:29-31

"He gives strength to the weary and increases the power of the weak. Even youths grow tired and weary, and young men stumble and fall; but those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint."

An eagle seems to fly effortlessly through the air with only an occasional flap of the wings. These great birds are experts at finding areas of rising air called thermals which allow them to soar without using any of their own energy.

God uses Spiritual thermals to lift up those who hope and trust in Him. Those who believe the truth of His Word and diligently search for the rising currents through prayer and undeterred worship will be freed from the heavy baggage which prevents upward flight - they will be lifted up by the guidance and strength of God's Spirit.

If we find ourselves back in the valley today, we must continue to seek Him with all our heart and trust that our thermal is on the way. He has promised to strengthen us and cause us to soar once again! And if we're currently flying high in our communion with God, we must give praise and honor to our Heavenly Father; but we must also recognize there are many others in the valley who desperately need a lift - many who are searching and feeling overcome with darkness. As we soar, we must understand that we are never called to fly alone.

God has chosen to use people to accomplish much of His work on earth. He could have chosen other methods; "If they {the people} keep quiet, the stones will cry out" (Luke 19:40), but He chose us. We are to "encourage one another daily" (Hebrews 3:13). Why? Because there is a valley full of people waiting and hoping for that rising current to lift them up and set them free. We can be a rising current for others with simple words or acts of encouragement which show them God's love and gently lead them back toward His peace.

We have been adopted into the "Family" of God...and our Family needs each other very much! Let's dedicate ourselves to soaring high by worshipping God in absolutely every area of our life. Let's continue to rise to new heights and always look for others in need of God's thermal of encouragement!

Have A Great Day!

Knowing Christ

1-16-07

The Apostle Paul had a definite passion to serve God. Even before his conversion on the road to Damascus, Paul strictly observed God's law; "as for legalistic righteousness, faultless" (Philippians 3:6). But after being confronted by Jesus, his focus forever changed; his passion remained, but his every desire now centered around faith in Jesus and the good news of His gospel message.

Philippians 3:10

"I want to know Christ and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in His sufferings, becoming like Him in His death."

Paul pursued an intimate relationship with Jesus and sought to be identified with His death and resurrection. He knew the only way to experience the power of Jesus was to live as a new creation whose sinful nature had been crucified with Christ; and as a new creation, he continually desired to know his Creator.

Truly knowing Jesus Christ is much more than simply knowing "about" Him. We can fill our head with every possible biblical fact and still never know Christ. To know Him is to love Him with all our heart, soul, mind and strength; to trust Him regardless of our circumstances, and to draw close to His side in our joy as well as our suffering. Nothing else in life has any real meaning; "I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord" (Philippians 3:8a).

Paul's passion for Jesus allowed him to loose his hold of all worldly attachments; "I consider them rubbish that I may gain Christ" (Philippians 3:8b). This uncontested supremacy of Jesus allowed Paul to be "content in any and every situation" (Philippians 4:12). By giving himself fully to knowing Christ, Paul gained true contentment and peace.

We have the same ability to know Christ today. We are also promised the same results! Peace and contentment will NEVER be achieved through more possessions, activities, or relationships - these are ALL temporary and will fade away with time. Our life will only be truly content when we give ourselves to Jesus and love Him without reservation; we will only be filled with His peace as we seek to know Him.

We may never be asked to give up much for the sake of the gospel; but then again, we may be asked to give up everything! Either way, our heart must always hold loosely to the things of this world. Anything which cannot be released has effectively become a god and crowds the throne which MUST be reserved for the King of Kings. Let's reconsider our priorities - where we spend our time and what commands our thoughts and consumes our energy. Let's give ourselves fully to Him and make sure nothing has become more important than knowing Christ.

Have A Great Day!

Plant and Water

1-17-07

In the message "God's Thermal of Encouragement" we saw how God promises to lift up those who hope and trust in Him. We must understand that this promise does not depend on the difficulty or darkness of our situation. No matter how hopeless our circumstances may appear, hope in Christ is sufficient and we must trust Him with all our heart - He WILL lift us high and send us soaring! We also considered how we are called to provide lifts of encouragement when others are drifting in the valley of despair.

The Corinthians believed in Jesus and were strengthened in their faith through the efforts of multiple people. Paul reminded them that although many may have provided influence and guidance, it was God who did the real work.

1 Corinthians 3:6

"I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God made it grow."

My grandparents loved the Lord and each other very much. They were married for sixty-five years, lived most of their life in a small farm house, and died a few miles from where they were born. In my youth, their lives were the foundation upon which I could stand when all else was crumbling. God used their love, and years of patient watering, to soften my rebellious heart and call me to His side.

When I entered full time ministry I had little knowledge of the Bible, but God gave me an understanding that He is in control. His call on my life was relatively simple: I was to freely cast out the seeds of His Word and trust Him with ALL my heart. This call has never changed. God said His Word "will not return to Me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it" (Isaiah 55:11). I am to plant and water, and trust God to grow exactly all He desires.

I received the following note in response to the message God's Thermal of Encouragement:

"Your message came at a time when I am in the valley. I live in Zimbabwe and currently we are facing a lot of challenges. I've been really drawn down, my Christian walk was affected, my prayer life was affected. I really felt as if I was alone in everything I was facing. Basically I've been trying to do everything with my own strength. But after reading your message I realized that my strength comes from the Lord and He will lift me up from this valley that I'm in, all I have to do is keep calling upon Him."

Indeed, God's Word does not return empty! No matter what our current circumstances, we must obediently plant His message and continue to water with encouragement at every opportunity. Many people are walking in a Spiritually dry land and we may be the only bit of Jesus they see or hear...or read. Some seeds take a long time to germinate, and some plants can take years to fully mature and bear fruit. Let's minister with our focus always on the glory of God. He will produce the growth in His timing, according to His plan. Let's join His work by simply, and faithfully, continuing to plant and water.

Have A Great Day!

Scatter The Seed

1-18-07

In the message "Plant and Water" we considered our call to join God in His work by planting the seed of His truth and watering with encouragement at every opportunity. We were also reminded to keep our focus on God as we "work" since He is the One Who makes all things grow.

We see this same principle in the parable of the farmer who scatters seed onto four different types of soil.

Luke 8:5-8

"A farmer went out to sow his seed. As he was scattering the seed, some fell along the path; it was trampled on, and the birds of the air ate it up. Some fell on rock, and when it came up, the plants withered because they had no moisture. Other seed fell among thorns, which grew up with it and choked the plants. Still other seed fell on good soil. It came up and yielded a crop, a hundred times more than was sown."

Usually, this parable is considered from the aspect of the different types of soil. The farmer represents anyone who plants the seed of God's Word into someone's life, and the different soils represent the different types of people who hear the gospel message. There is encouragement in these verses for us to be well tilled soil, free of weeds and ready to receive the Word of God. However, let's consider this parable from the aspect of the farmer.

In the days of Christ, fields were planted by scattering or throwing out seed over all areas of a field. In this parable, the farmer is never criticized for waste as he throws seed on the path, in the weeds or on the rocks. Planting day had arrived and it was the farmer's job to simply scatter the seed; he was not required to evaluate the soil. And there was no special technique required for planting. As long as the seed was scattered over a wide area, it would reach the good soil and produce a bountiful crop.

We have been sent out as farmers into the fields of this world with God's Word in our hand and written on our heart; "go and make disciples of all nations" (Matthew 28:19). As we consider what to do with our seed, we must remember that the condition of the soil should never be our primary focus. God has entrusted us with a life changing message and it's His desire for this message to be "scattered" to all!

There is definitely a time for tilling soil, pulling weeds, and digging out the rocks that hinder our Spiritual growth and the growth of those within our care; but in the field which God has placed us today, the time is always right for planting. Let's share His message of love and forgiveness, of Godly unity and peace. A new day has arrived! Regardless of our perception of the soil, let's pick up our bag, put on our boots, and be determined to scatter the seed!

Have A Great Day!

Imperishable Seed

1-19-07

In the message "Scatter The Seed" we considered our call to "scatter" God's Word to as many people as possible without becoming preoccupied with the condition of the soil. We also saw how our technique or ability had little to do with yielding a Spiritual harvest; all growth is by the grace of God and we must simply be faithful farmers who plant the seed.

However, we are definitely responsible for the type of seed we are planting. The deceptive enemy of this world is very good at helping and encouraging us to plant weeds and seeds which never bear fruit. It does no good to scatter seed which has no hope of germination and growth.

As we walk out into the field, we must remember that God's message of Salvation is not about a new set of regulations; we are not saved by trying extra hard to live according to God's commandments. His commands are an essential guide for our Spiritual walk, but no amount of obedience will ever result in the transformation which identifies us as a child of God - our effort will never yield eternal life - and we hinder the harvest when we spread such a message!

When Jesus was talking with Nicodemus, He said, "no one can see the Kingdom of God unless he is born again" (John 3:3). He then said this second birth is not of the flesh but of the Spirit. When we believe in Jesus for the forgiveness of our sin, God's grace gives us a Spiritual birth as a new creation; "The old has gone, the new has come!" (2 Corinthians 5:17).

Peter wrote to those who already believed in Jesus. They had been "born again" and had become "new creations" in Christ, but they had come under great persecution for their faith. Peter encouraged them (and us) to remember the eternal nature of our second birth.

1 Peter 1:23

"For you have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring Word of God."

Our first birth resulted in our physical bodies - praise God! But, one day, these earthly vessels in which we live are guaranteed to run down and stop functioning - we were birthed of a perishable seed. In contrast, our second birth is of a seed which does not perish - a seed which results in eternal life.

We must never settle for a "good" life nor allow our message to stop with good morals and "right" living. These are also perishable seeds which will fade away and lead to death. True life which is abundant and eternal is only found by His grace through faith in the forgiveness of Jesus Christ. Let's plant a true message of our need to be born again. Let's always ensure we are scattering imperishable seed.

Have A Great Day!

So We May Know

1-22-07

In the message "Imperishable Seed" we saw our need to plant a message of truth; "no one can see the Kingdom of God unless he is born again" (John 3:3). The Word is clear: only those who have been born of the Spirit by grace, through faith in Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of sin, will be given eternal life. But something as important as eternity begs another question: How do we know when we have been born again?

1 John 5:11-13

"God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life. I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life."

John wrote this first letter to define the changes which ought to take place in the life of a Christian. The believers understood that "all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23). They knew "the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 6:23). They had been told the importance of turning from their sin; "repent, and turn to God so that your sins may be wiped out" (Acts 3:19), and they clearly understood the significance of Jesus' death on the cross; "God presented Him as a sacrifice of atonement, through faith in His blood" (Romans 3:25).

The believers knew it was through faith in the sacrifice of Jesus that they were forgiven and transformed by His Spirit; but, though they knew the process, they still wrestled with knowing if they were saved.

John provided several indicators of a life which truly believes in Jesus. He said those who are born again will obey the commands of God (1 John 2:3-5), and will not continue to live in sin (1 John 3:9). He said a born again life is characterized by love: "We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love our brothers. Anyone who does not love remains in death" (1 John 3:14). John also said our love should not just be with words, "but with actions and in truth" (1 John 3:18).

The born again transformation occurs in our heart and spirit, but John is saying that becoming a new creation ought to result in change. We are not the same! And while the growth of many new creations can be painfully slow, over time there ought to be some form of fruit - all healthy creatures grow!

But if the evidence of being born again is missing, please remember that we cannot generate change by trying harder. Self effort never produces eternal life. Rather, we must return to the cross and consider the darkness of our sin and the brilliance of His love; "we love because He first loved us" (1 John 4:9). For only at the cross is there forgiveness and the power to transform. Let's truly receive the forgiveness offered through faith in Jesus and live with a victorious assurance that we are born again. Let's trust the truth of His Word, which has been given into our hands so we may know.

Have A Great Day!

An Active Love

1-23-07

In the message "So We May Know" we looked at some indicators of a "born again" life. We saw that such a life should be characterized by love; "we know that we have passed from death to life, because we love our brothers" (1 John 3:14). Although loving others will not save us, John forcefully states that if we are truly saved we will love one another; "whoever does not love does not know God" (1 John 4:8).

It's interesting to note that in the five chapters of 1 John, the word love is used 46 times. If love is this important, we ought to understand what it means.

1 John 3:16-18

"This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down His life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers. If anyone has material possessions and sees his brother in need but has no pity on him, how can the love of God be in him? Dear children, let us not love with words or tongue but with actions and in truth."

John is saying that Jesus set the example for love and that our love for others is a direct result of the love of God within us. As we love God and surrender our life to Jesus Christ, His love fills us and overflows into the lives of those around us. If love for others is lacking, we must lay down our life and increase our love for God; a true increased love for God will certainly increase our love for others.

John also makes it clear that a Godly love for others is not simply an emotional "feeling" or gentle and kind words. When we begin to understand God's love for us - when we catch even a glimpse of His mercy and love in giving us His Son - we will be compelled to express our love with meaningful action such as meeting physical needs, readily forgiving when wronged, and showing Godly compassion when others are hurting. God so desired to be with us for all eternity that He gave His Son and loved us all the way to the cross. We are to love others in this same manner, "because He first loved us" (1 John 4:19).

Our love for God is demonstrated by our real love for others. Jesus made this clear when He said; "whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for Me" (Matthew 25:40). We are actually loving and serving God as we love and serve others: "I was hungry and you gave Me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave Me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited Me in, I needed clothes and you clothed Me, I was sick and you looked after Me, I was in prison and you came to visit Me" (Matthew 25:35-36).

Love must be an integral part of our Christian walk. Love must be directed up; "love the Lord with ALL your heart" (Mark 12:30), and love must be directed out; "love your neighbor as yourself" (Mark 12:31). Let's love as Jesus loved us! Let's look for ways to love with more than words - let's love with an active love.

Have A Great Day!

Calling God A Liar

1-24-07

God desires that we know Him in an intimate and personal relationship. He has revealed Himself and provided a way to know Him through the life and sacrifice of His Son; "Anyone who has seen Me has seen the Father... Don't you believe that I am in the Father, and that the Father is in Me?" (John 14:9-10). As we grow in our faith and begin to know Him better, it becomes essential to know the promises of His Word. But it's even more important to believe His promises are true! We may say we believe God's Word is true, but do our actions reflect our belief?

1 John 5:10

"Anyone who believes in the Son of God has this testimony in his heart. Anyone who does not believe God has made Him out to be a liar, because he has not believed the testimony God has given about His Son."

Yes, our old nature sometimes clouds our ability to clearly see the truth; and yes, some of God's truths can be hard to accept and actually put into practice. But, we either believe His words and begin to take steps to apply them in our life, or we do not believe and call God a liar by the way we live.

It may be difficult, but we must confront our beliefs and begin to make them real. When we face a trial and don't know which direction to turn, do we believe the words, "Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make your paths straight" (Proverbs 3:5-6)? Do we really believe that as we trust Him, He will remove the confusion and guide our steps?

When our circumstances seem out of control, do we believe "in all things God works for the good of those who love Him" (Romans 8:28)? Do we really believe that as we continue to love Him, God works for the good in All things (regardless of our understanding)? And when we feel alone, do we really believe God's promise to always be near; "Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you" (Hebrews 13:5).

How about the promises of being content (Philippians 4:12), or being given the peace of Jesus (John 14:27), or the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23) - can we really "do everything through Him who gives me strength" (Philippians 4:13)? Parents, have we given up hope for our children or do we believe, "Train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it" (Proverbs 22:6)?

God's Word is true and His promises are real!! Let's praise Him all the rest of our days and let our lives demonstrate we REALLY know and believe. Let's make sure our actions and decisions, fears and anxieties, hopes and dreams, are governed by truth and NOT based on calling God a liar.

Have A Great Day!

Nothing Can Compare

1-25-07

In the message "Calling God A Liar" we saw how the way we live directly reflects our true belief. If we do not follow His commands and trust His promises, we do not believe His Word and have effectively called God a liar. But as we draw near and give ourselves more fully into His hands, we learn that His promises are not only true, they are better than we imagined.

When Abraham was over eighty years old, God taught him a lesson on trusting His promises. Abraham became frustrated with God because there was no one to inherit his possessions: "You have given me no children; so a servant in my household will be my heir" (Genesis 15:3). But God had other plans and made a promise to Abraham.

Genesis 15:4-5

"'This man will not be your heir, but a son coming from your own body will be your heir.' He took him outside and said, 'Look up at the heavens and count the stars - if indeed you can count them.' Then He said to him, 'So shall your offspring be.'"

Abraham waited many years for God's promise to be fulfilled. Finally, when he was one hundred years old, Isaac was born. And through Isaac came Jacob, and through Jacob came the sons who formed the twelve tribes of Israel. Abraham was looking for someone to inherit his "stuff," but God's promise gave him an entire nation.

God gives many promises to us today, but they all flow from the promise first stated by Jesus; "For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life" (John 3:16). We must not pass lightly over these words, for none of the other promises even apply until we have believed this basic truth.

We cannot move on to the promises of peace and contentment until we trust in the promise of forgiveness through faith in Jesus. When we begin to understand the significance of the gift of eternal life, we will know that nothing the world can offer will EVER compare to the promises of God...and NOTHING else will last. This is the only path to true peace. If we could better understand and really believe, perhaps we would spend less time and effort on pursuits which contain no lasting value - perhaps we would have less anxiety about that which God controls.

Jesus Christ shed His blood for the sin of those who believe. His promise is greater than any worldly pleasure and outweighs all worldly trials; "For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all" (2 Corinthians 4:17). As we walk through this world, with all its pulls and temptations, let's hold tightly to His promise and always remember...NOTHING can compare!

Have A Great Day!

John 7:37-39 - Lesson #79
1-26-07

During the middle of the Feast in Jerusalem, Jesus began teaching in the temple and was quickly involved in such a confrontation that "the Pharisees and the chief priests sent officers to take Him" (John 7:32). But they would not succeed because it was not yet His time and He still had many important messages to deliver.

John 7:37-39

"On the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, 'If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.' But this He spoke concerning the Spirit, whom those believing in Him would receive; for the Holy Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified."

The Feast of Tabernacles was a memorial to how God had provided for the Israelites while they wandered in the desert. A daily ceremony was performed where the priests would pour water on the altar. This was to remind the people of how God had supplied water from a rock during their time of need (Numbers 20:7-11) and also to acknowledge God's goodness in supplying adequate rain for the following season.

In this context of the people thanking God for His provision of water, Jesus stood up and literally shouted! They did good to thank God for their water, but Jesus had something so much better!! For those who would come to Him and believe, He would provide a thirst quenching gift which would flow for all eternity. This is similar to what He told the Samaritan woman at the well: "but whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst" (John 4:14).

All through the gospel of John, Jesus demonstrated that He was the Son of God who would provide for all needs during His coming Kingdom, as was promised through the prophets; "Everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; and you who have no money, come, buy and eat" (Isaiah 55:1). But since John was writing many years after Jesus was resurrected, he could add an explanation of what was meant by rivers of living water.

The Holy Spirit was "given" on the day of Pentecost, fifty days after the Passover when Jesus was crucified; "And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance" (Acts 2:4). This event marked the beginning of the Church and the beginning of the Holy Spirit being given and personally dwelling within all who believe.

The Holy Spirit is the very presence of God residing within our heart. He is a gift which Jesus said is even better for us than Himself; "It is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I depart, I will send Him to you" (John 16:7). The Holy Spirit has been poured out for those who believe and will flow from our heart for all eternity. Let's come to Him thirsty and ready to drink. Let's receive His gift and flow with a river of living water.

Have A Great Day!

His Devoted Slave

1-29-07

We often consider our need to more fully submit our life to God and the leading of His Spirit - to place our life in His hands and release our "self" control. We desire to be in His perfect will and serve Him with all our heart. But does our desire to serve go so far as to consider ourselves a slave?

Romans 6:20-22

"When you were slaves to sin, you were free from the control of righteousness. What benefit did you reap at that time from the things you are now ashamed of? Those things result in death! But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves to God, the benefit you reap leads to holiness, and the result is eternal life."

Slavery has many negative connotations; but, in truth, we are all born into slavery - born a slave to sin. The only way to be set free from the mastery of sin and death is to ask for a transfer of ownership and become a slave to God. Our new Master then has the grace and power to shatter the bonds of sin and give us the gift of true freedom. We are never free unto ourselves, never our own master. Many live under the illusion of freedom, but we are either a slave to sin or a slave to God. If we refuse to be directed by God, we will absolutely be directed and controlled by the sinful pulls of the World.

If we are struggling to break the bondage of sin, we must first stop fighting. This is not a battle we can win with our own strength! The only way to be set free is to submit our life to God and receive forgiveness through faith in Jesus. Submission is not just an optional requirement for the "mature" Christian; rather, submission is the essence of a saving faith which begins by acknowledging we cannot save ourselves but must submit to the grace of God. Submission then continues as we daily trust in His grace to live according to the ways of His Spirit.

Romans 8:5-6

"Those who live according to the sinful nature have their minds set on what that nature desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires. The mind of sinful man is death, but the mind controlled by the Spirit is life and peace."

God is sending out His call around the world today. In the stillness of our heart we've heard Him call us to a closer and more intimate relationship - a more consistently submitted life of true devotion and praise. But He is requiring us to make a choice: "Choose this day whom you will serve" (Joshua 24:15). We have been offered freedom from the power of sin and death. Let's fully embrace His gift, submit to the leading of His Spirit, continue to submit at every opportunity, worship Him with all our heart, and forever become...His devoted slave.

Have A Great Day!

Reaping The Whirlwind 1-30-07

The Spiritual decline of God's chosen people in the Old Testament includes some of the saddest passages in the Bible. God dearly loved the children of Israel, but they continually rejected Him and turned away.

God appointed King David to unite the nation and focus their worship on the One True God. David made plans for the construction of a temple and King Solomon built the temple a few years later. But toward the end of Solomon's reign, "his heart was not fully devoted to the Lord his God" (1 Kings 11:4). The Spiritual decline began with the leadership and then flowed quickly down to the people.

When Solomon died, the nation of Israel divided and the northern kingdom immediately began to pervert their worship: "The king made two golden calves {and said} 'Here are your gods'" (1 Kings 12:28). After almost 200 years of continual disobedience, the northern kingdom had hardened their hearts so that repentance was no longer even possible; "their deeds do not permit them to return to God" (Hosea 5:4). God is ready, willing, and able to forgive every sin; but continual disobedience removes the desire to draw near and seek His forgiveness. After so many years of false worship, the people would not return to God and would now experience His wrath.

Hosea 8:7

"They sow the wind and reap the whirlwind."

The people of Israel had planted evil seeds into their lives and the lives of their families for many years - now the time had come to harvest the destruction they had planted. Soon after Hosea spoke these words of God, the Assyrian army invaded and destroyed the northern kingdom.

God demonstrated His love for us long before we ever loved Him; "while we were still sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8). This love was unconditional love since we did absolutely nothing to deserve His favor. But if we do not receive His love, through faith in the sacrifice of Jesus, and allow His Spirit to begin to transform us from within, we too will one day feel His wrath.

The wind of unbelief and lack of trust, false worship and a cold heart, will one day yield an eternal whirlwind which cannot be stopped. And the wind of open sin in the lives of Spiritual leaders, or the Spiritual compromise in the lives of parents, can lead many generations down a path of destruction.

Let's plant and nourish seeds of truth and love which will thrive in His presence for all eternity. Let's trust Him with a faith which walks into the unknown without fear because we know He is by our side. Let's determine once and for all to live an uncompromising life which brings glory and honor to God; and on the great day of harvest, let's joyfully enter His embrace without reaping the whirlwind.

Have A Great Day!

Stop Sowing The Wind

1-31-07

In the message "Reaping The Whirlwind" we were encouraged not to sow the wind of unbelief, because a life without faith and the saving grace of Jesus will one day reap an eternal whirlwind of fire. The message of sowing and reaping has critical application for the eternal destiny of many around the world. We must guard against those who sow seeds of false teaching which lead away from the true eternal forgiveness of Christ. But this message also has direct application for our daily walk with our Lord.

We know there are times when we face severe trials which have nothing to do with what we have sown. Jesus made this clear when He said: "In this world you will have trouble" (John 16:33). We live in a sinful world and often reap the consequences for what others have sown; and for these troubles, Jesus wants us to find our comfort in Him: "But take heart! I have overcome the world" (John 16:33).

But we must also understand that many of our trials, and the trials of those around us, are often the result of a multitude of small steps taken outside the will of God.

Galatians 6:7

"Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows."

It's foolish to think we can continually walk outside God's will and not face consequences down the road. God dearly loves us and is patiently waiting for us to turn our heart to Him...but God cannot be mocked. Continuous deviation from His path can lead to a long and painful time of wandering.

We must learn this lesson and clearly teach it to others: Obedience in the little things is important! There is nothing too small to justify a lack of obedience. "Whoever is dishonest with very little will also be dishonest with much" (Luke 16:10). We must learn and teach, very early in life, the importance of honesty and truth, the value of submission and respect for authority. The wind of disobedience begins almost imperceptibly small with "innocent" lies and "harmless" acts of disrespect, but over time it grows until the whirlwind of consequences becomes inevitable.

If we are currently reaping a whirlwind which we know has been sown by our own hands, we must repent and seek His forgiveness, love Him and obediently trust Him with ALL our heart, and ask for the strength to endure. The whirlwind will end, but only in God's perfect timing. And if we know we have been sowing the wind of disobedience and yet see God's hand restraining the whirlwind, we also must repent and seek His forgiveness, love Him and obediently trust Him with ALL our heart...and thank Him for His mercy!

Let's honor Him by only sowing that which glorifies His name. Let's closely examine our life and the lives of those within our care, and be absolutely determined to stop sowing the wind.

Have A Great Day!