

Devotionals from God's Daily Word Ministries

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Evidence of God

2-1-06

There are many people today who remain just outside the gate of eternal life. They have heard the gospel message but are still not convinced of its absolute truth. They may concede that religion is a "good thing" but they need more proof before actually committing their life. Going to church on Sunday is one thing, but walking with Jesus every single day?

How many of us are like those standing outside the gate, refusing to commit? We tell ourselves that if God would give us signs like He gave Abraham and Moses, then all doubt would be removed and we would follow in true obedience. But we wouldn't. Jesus said we must first follow before we will truly know; "If anyone chooses to do God's will, he will find out whether My teaching comes from God or whether I speak on My own" (John 7:17). God has revealed Himself. He has called us to follow - to step out in faith - and receive a wonderful confirmation of His truth.

My own life is my greatest "sign" pointing to God. I've never seen the Red Sea part nor audibly heard God's voice in a burning bush - I've never seen water changed to wine, a blind man made able to see or a lame man made able to walk - but when I look back at the "mud and mire" (Psalm 40:2) from which I've been saved, I see an absolutely clear miracle. And as I walk with Jesus day in and day out...I KNOW!

In addition, Paul reminds us that all the wonders of creation are a sign of God's Hand.

Romans 1:20

"For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities - His eternal power and divine nature - have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse."

There are signs of God all around. Yet sadly, our senses are too often closed. We cry out for evidence, yet we see, hear, smell, touch, and taste evidence every day - He is here with us in infinite detail.

It's not surprising that the world fails to recognize the evidence; "the sinful mind is hostile to God" (Romans 8:7). The world lives in darkness and is blind to Heavenly wonders, but we no longer belong to the world; "He has rescued us from the dominion of darkness" (Colossians 1:13). We now must walk in the Light and "see" according to what the Light reveals.

God is calling us into a life of continual and passionate devotion. Let's begin to worship Him every moment of every day as we see His glory in the flowers, trees, and stars; as we hear His beauty in the songs of a bird and the cry of a baby. We're surrounded by an abundance of Spiritual signs - confirming signs that He is real! Let's step through the gate with full commitment and continue our walk in humble submission. Let's live to glorify His name and open our senses to the true evidence of God.

Have A Great Day!

We Are The Created

2-2-06

We spend a great deal of our time and energy attempting to create various areas of our life. We strive to create the ideal work environment in order to provide the necessary resources to create the ideal social and home life. We plan the details of our free time in hopes of creating the ideal leisure; we even go so far as working hard to create the ideal "religious" experience.

Psalm 100:3

"Know that the Lord is God. It is He who made us, and we are His; we are His people, the sheep of His pasture."

No amount of our own effort will ever create the "ideal." For if we are striving to create, we are chasing after the world's elusive, ever changing, false definition of what is really ideal and fulfilling. Our only hope at finding the true ideal is in understanding we are the created, not the Creator. The absolute best in life begins with knowing whose life we really live; "I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me" (Galatians 2:20). Our life belongs to Christ and it must be left with Him to create the life He desires.

Jesus is the only One who has ever truly been in the creation business; "All things were created by Him and for Him" (Colossians 1:16). We were created by Jesus for His sovereign purpose; "We are the clay, You are the potter; we are all the work of Your hand" (Isaiah 64:8). Somehow we've begun to consider ourselves as the work of our own hands. We try to create a life according to the world's system and fulfill "needs" and "rights" based on this false world view.

The truth that will set us free is that our needs are extremely small and we actually have NO rights - at least not in this world; "You are not your own; you were bought at a price" (1 Corinthians 6:19-20). We have been purchased with the blood of Jesus and given eternal life as joint heirs with Christ in God's Kingdom. We have the "right," the privilege, and the great honor of praising Him for all eternity. We need and deserve nothing more.

If we truly want the ideal, we will stop trying to create our life and place every area in the Hands of a loving Creator. God defines and shapes the ideal, and it is ours for the asking. The ideal job, home, marriage, ministry, fun, and friends are all ours - but only through releasing our rights, redefining our needs, and humbly understanding that we are the created.

Have A Great Day!

John 4:1-4 - Lesson #34

2-3-06

Our last lesson on John closed the third chapter - a focused chapter which taught the absolute supremacy of Jesus and the way of Salvation through faith in the sacrifice of God's "only begotten Son" (John 3:16). Everything Jesus did during His brief three year earthly ministry was for a very focused and direct purpose - to reveal, declare, and glorify God on the way to the cross.

At the end of chapter two, we saw that many Jews heard and wanted to follow Jesus, but He knew their belief was not sincere (John 2:24-25). He was then approached by Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews, and began to teach about being born again. Now in chapter four, we see Jesus intentionally travel to minister to someone who is the complete opposite of Nicodemus, teaching us that only God knows the heart, but that the gospel message is for all to hear.

John 4:1-4

"Therefore, when the Lord knew that the Pharisees had heard that Jesus made and baptized more disciples than John (though Jesus Himself did not baptize, but His disciples), He left Judea and departed again to Galilee. But He needed to go through Samaria."

The Pharisees were well aware of the ministries of Jesus and John. And this increased popularity of Jesus would definitely command their attention. But Jesus wasn't interested in a confrontation with the Pharisees (at least, not yet), nor was He particularly interested in developing a large following. Jesus had clear focus in His ministry, so He gathered His disciples and traveled north. But right between Judea in the south and Galilee in the north lie the region of Samaria.

Jesus could have done as most Jews of His day and just avoided Samaria. After all, the Samaritans came from the northern tribes of Israel that split the kingdom after the reign of Solomon. These were the same people conquered by the Assyrians in 720 BC who then intermarried with surrounding nations and destroyed the purity of their heritage. They were the same people who quarrelled with the true Jews when they returned from Babylonian captivity to rebuild the temple in Jerusalem. And they were the same despised people who then turned and built their own Temple on Mount Gerizim.

Yes, Jesus could have gone around and no one would have blamed Him. How could anyone expect to minister in Samaria? The Samaritans only believed the first five books of the Bible - and their Bible was even changed to say Abraham sacrificed Isaac on Mount Gerizim! But Jesus was never very concerned about these details. He had an appointment to keep with a young woman who needed to hear the message of eternal life, and through the process teach us some wonderful truths.

There is never a good reason not to share the love of the Gospel message. No people too "low" nor place too "dirty." All need to hear! Let's be determined to never let social, racial, economic, or even religious differences, hinder us from sharing His truth. Let's maintain a focused desire to take His Word to ALL.

Have A Great Day!

Created To Do His Will

2-6-06

In the message "We Are The Created" we were reminded that God is the Creator and we are the clay being molded by the loving hands of the Potter; "We are all the work of Your hand" (Isaiah 64:8). Our Father is shaping us to the likeness of His Son; but what is our purpose during this shaping process?

Our transformation begins the moment we trust in Jesus, and we soon learn that our Salvation is never earned by "doing" anything; "For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith" (Ephesians 2:8). But we also learn that eternal life is for those who do God's will - following Him is not an optional part of the Christian walk. We cannot truly accept Jesus as Savior without also beginning a journey of trust and walking in His steps. Faith means trusting Him enough to follow!

1 John 2:17

"The world and its desires pass away, but the man who does the will of God lives forever."

We generally like the idea of "new birth" when we think of being born into God's Kingdom as His child. But we become uncomfortable when we hear: "You are not your own; you were bought at a price" (1 Corinthians 6:19-20). We get uneasy when we read; "You have been set free from sin and have become slaves to God" (Romans 6:22). There is no Salvation without a voluntary and willful transfer of ownership - and we need to face the difficult truth that this means a transfer of control.

Giving up control is never easy. It can be extra scary to face the unknown from the passenger seat; and it can be an offense to our pride to move over and allow someone else (even God!) to drive. The roots of "self" go very deep. But as we completely release and trust, God brings us to that wonderful place of peace where we can say; "Whom have I in Heaven but You? And earth has nothing I desire besides You" (Psalm 73:25). We will find great joy in a complete surrender to the will of our Heavenly Father.

We must release everything to Him and seek Him, and Him alone, with all our heart. But as we do, He will mold what we release and show us how to use ALL for His glory; "For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works" (Ephesians 2:10). He will give us the tools to accomplish His will, and in the process meet every one of our needs and fulfill our deepest desires.

He is the Potter and we are the clay. He is the Creator and we are definitely "the created." But we have been created with an awesome purpose. We have been given gifts, talents, and abilities, which when given back to God are used to bring Him glory and honor. This IS our purpose! We have been created to glorify His Name as we love Him and trust Him with all our heart. Let's bring Him glory and honor as we walk in the understanding that we have been created to do His will.

Have A Great Day!

Too Much of Us

2-7-06

Gideon lived during a time when Israel was ruled by judges. This was the period after the death of Joshua and before Saul was anointed king - a period lasting approximately 325 years. During this time, the people continually wandered away from God and were oppressed by various groups. But God always rose up a leader (a judge) who would deliver the people and lead them back to Himself - at least for a short while.

The oppression by the Midianites was so severe that many people of Israel lived in caves and had to harvest their crops in secret. When the people cried out to God for help, He chose to use Gideon; "'But Lord,' Gideon asked, 'how can I save Israel? My clan is the weakest in Manasseh, and I am the least in my family'" (Judges 6:15). God wanted His Children to know that true deliverance is only through His strength and by His grace. By using Gideon to save the people, God was able to teach a lesson of trust.

Judges 7:2-3

"The Lord said to Gideon, 'You have too many men for Me to deliver Midian into their hands. In order that Israel may not boast against Me that her own strength has saved her, announce now to the people, "Anyone who trembles with fear may turn back and leave Mount Gilead.'" So twenty-two thousand men left, while ten thousand remained."

God wanted His message to be absolutely clear. His grace and power would not be obvious if the army had any hope of victory by their own strength: "But the Lord said to Gideon, 'There are still too many men'" (Judges 7:4). Gideon's army started with 32,000 but he was not sent into battle until the army was shrunk to only three hundred. These were impossible odds! But God always reigns supreme in the impossible: the battle was completely victorious!!

This is a hard lesson, but God is never interested in the "wonderful" things we can do for Him. He is pleased only by our obedience and our trust. In fact, God allows many of our great endeavors to fail simply because they are being pursued without giving Him absolute control. We are never to rest in our own strength and ability; rather, we are to continually step out and rely on God. Several hundred years after Gideon, the prophet Isaiah gave this same message: "Woe to those who trust in the multitude of their chariots and in the great strength of their horsemen, but do not look to the Holy One of Israel" (Isaiah 31:1).

God will lead us into victory, but we must give Him our total trust. When we walk in His victory, we will have the joy of witnessing His mighty hand and find true fulfillment in bringing Him glory and honor. His victory is never by our strength, savvy, cunning, or intelligence. It is only as we trust Him to work in and through the empty vessel of our life. True victory will only be won as we go into battle with ALL of Him and without too much of us.

Have A Great Day!

Here am I - Send Me 2-8-06

In the beginning of Isaiah's ministry, he was allowed to see a vision of God seated on the throne in Heaven. He was allowed to witness the full majesty of God and hear His Heavenly praise; "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord Almighty; the whole earth is full of His glory" (Isaiah 6:3). The vision of God was so pure and so holy that Isaiah was immediately confronted with his own sinful condition; "I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips" (Isaiah 6:5).

But God comforted Isaiah by letting him know his sin had been removed; "Your guilt is taken away and your sin atoned for" (Isaiah 6:7). God had a purpose for revealing Himself to Isaiah: He was looking for a messenger to deliver His Word to the people of Israel; "Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?" (Isaiah 6:8).

If we were asked such a question, we might be tempted to request a few details before answering. We might like to know where we would be sent and what we would be doing. But Isaiah had just experienced the full glory of the Lord. He had seen absolute perfection, recognized his utter sinful condition, and received complete forgiveness from a loving Father. With this understanding of the One who was asking, Isaiah had only one reply.

Isaiah 6:8
"And I said, 'Here am I. Send me!'"

Isaiah had no way of knowing his reply would be the start of sixty years of ministry. He had no way of knowing the many hardships his answer would cause, nor the many joys he would experience through walking in the presence of God; but he knew the One who was calling...and that was enough!

As a child of God who has seen and understands His glory, there should be only one response when our Father calls. There's no need for lengthy questions regarding the how, why, or what. When the Creator of the Universe calls, we can assume He has made a wise and perfect choice.

God never makes mistakes and will never call us without also providing the tools to accomplish everything in His plan: "And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work" (2 Corinthians 9:8). We have received His forgiveness and are seeking to abide in the glory of His presence. We must now learn to trust Him more and follow wherever He leads.

God always calls the right person for the job and always provides all we need to fulfill the calling. When God calls, let's trust Him and boldly answer: Here am I - send me!

Have A Great Day!

It is Written 2-9-06

The Bible is a precious gift. It's God's Word written by human hands, but inspired by the Holy Spirit. These words tell of the creation of the Universe and God's first "breath of life" into man (Genesis 2:7). They tell of man's first sin, his separation from God, and the long process of being brought back into a right and loving relationship with the Father - a process made complete through faith in Jesus Christ. These are the words God chose - the lasting words which reveal His nature and eternal plan - the words of truth which provide "everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of Him who called us" (2 Peter 1:3).

We can carry His Word as an offensive weapon used to battle the enemy; "the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God" (Ephesians 6:17). But His Word is also used as a fine surgical tool; "Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joint and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart" (Hebrews 4:12). His Word can purify and refine.

But for God's Word to have its intended purpose in our life, we must accept it as absolute truth, "not as the word of men, but as it actually is, the Word of God" (1 Thessalonians 2:13). The Bible is not just a collection of interesting stories and somewhat profound writings, it is God's Word! We are to receive His Word in faith and apply it with power and authority.

Jesus began His ministry on earth when He was thirty years old. He was baptized by John in the Jordan River and then led into the desert and tempted by the devil. Each time the devil tried to tempt Jesus away from the path which God established, Jesus resisted by directly applying the Word of God.

Matthew 4:4

"Jesus answered, 'It is written: Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.'"

Three times the devil tempted - and three times Jesus answered, "It is written!" When Jesus spoke these words with complete faith and as absolute truth, there was no room for debate; "The devil left Him, and angels came and attended Him" (Matthew 4:11).

Yes, we have been given a precious gift. We have the words which are able to prepare our heart for the gift of eternal life. We have the words which can yield a life of contentment and peace - a life with purpose. But this gift is only for those who believe and obey. Let's fully accept and apply God's Word today. Let's trust with all our heart so we can face any trial or temptation with a steadfast assurance. His Word is truth and the final authority in every situation! Let's answer this world with a bold confidence by KNOWING that it is written!!

Have A Great Day!

John 4:5-8 - Lesson #35
2-10-06

Jesus left Judea in order to avoid a confrontation with the Pharisees. Becoming entangled in debates about nonessential matters would have detracted from laying the foundation of the gospel message; "But He needed to go through Samaria" (John 4:4).

We have seen that it wasn't essential to travel through Samaria. There were other routes, even preferable routes to a true Jew who despised the Samaritans. So to say Jesus "needed" to go through Samaria can only mean the need was Spiritual - Spiritual in regard to the person He knew He would meet.

John 4:5-8

"So He came to a city of Samaria which is called Sychar, near the plot of ground that Jacob gave to his son Joseph. Now Jacob's well was there. Jesus therefore, being wearied from His journey, sat thus by the well. It was about the sixth hour. A woman of Samaria came to draw water. Jesus said to her, 'Give Me a drink.' For His disciples had gone away into the city to buy food."

This area of Samaria had a rich heritage to the Jewish people. The land was first purchased by Jacob (Genesis 33:19) and then given to Joseph as an inheritance (Genesis 48:22). The bones of Joseph were eventually buried on this same plot of land when the Israelites were brought into the land of Canaan (Joshua 24:32). Jacob's well can still be seen today and is located at the foot of Mount Gerizim.

The sixth hour refers to noontime. Certainly after traveling during the heat of the day it would be normal to be thirsty and weary. And that is precisely the significance of this passage. We see the Son of God, the Creator of the Universe, experiencing normal human sensations. The gospel of John continually portrays Jesus as fully God and fully man; "the Word became flesh and dwelt among us" (John 1:14).

We next see a woman of Samaria come to the well by herself. It would not be normal to come at this time of day, and certainly not normal to come alone. Perhaps she was avoiding other women, perhaps she was not welcomed. These possibilities will become more clear as we read her life story.

Jesus initiated the conversation with a simple request, "Give Me a drink." At first we see nothing unusual in this request. It was hot and no one would refuse a drink to a traveler. But the woman did not see an ordinary traveler, she saw a Jewish rabbi. A rabbi would never initiate a conversation with a woman, and a Jew would NEVER drink from a Samaritan cup! No, this Jesus was no ordinary traveler.

I wonder how ordinary we seem in our travels today. How much do we behave and react just like the ordinary world? We have not been called to be ordinary. We must look past the artificial boundary lines and minister with the true love of Christ. We are called to give the entirety of our life because He first gave His life for us. Let's give our all and begin to live a life far beyond the ordinary!

Have A Great Day!

Cast Out The Net 2-13-06

Very early in life (almost from birth) we are trained to be successful according to the world's definition of success. We are driven by goals and accomplishments from the day we take our first steps and ride our first bike. As we grow older, we are pressured to accumulate knowledge and "things" in order to prove our success. In our Christian walk, Jesus calls us to a new definition of success - one determined not by what we accomplish, acquire or understand, but by our simple yet complete obedience.

The disciples walked and talked with Jesus, but they still faced many challenges with faith and obedience. One morning after fishing all night without a catch, Jesus called from the shore.

John 21:6

"He said, 'Throw your net on the right side of the boat and you will find some.' When they did, they were unable to haul the net in because of the large number of fish."

The disciples were successful that morning. But we must understand that the large number of fish did not define their success. They would have been successful even if the net remained empty. Oh how I wish more in ministry could grasp this truth! The disciples were successful the moment they were obedient and cast the net on the right side of the boat.

One thousands years earlier, King Saul was told to "attack the Amalekites and totally destroy everything that belongs to them" (1 Samuel 15:3). But Saul allowed the Amalekite king and the best livestock to survive. He tried to hide his disobedience by telling the prophet Samuel that the animals were for a sacrifice to God: "But Samuel replied: 'Does the Lord delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as much as in obeying the voice of the Lord? To obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed is better than the fat of rams'" (1 Samuel 15:22).

In any task we undertake for God, it's easy to become discouraged by our apparent lack of success. We often feel inadequate; and those feelings increase when our goals seem to be elusive. But we must remember: the outcome of the task is minor compared to our obedience. We have almost no ability to determine how our efforts fit into God's plan. God doesn't need our fish! He can accomplish His plan with the rocks if He chooses; but He desires our willful obedience and trust. He desires a people who will love Him with all their heart, soul, mind, and strength.

Let's take our eyes off the accomplishment of the "catch" and what we can produce. Rather, let's focus on walking each step according to His leading. Let's love Him with an uncluttered heart and concentrate all our effort on obeying His call to cast out the net.

Have A Great Day!

Never Let Them Forget

2-14-06

After wandering through the desert for forty years, Joshua led the nation of Israel across the Jordan River and set out to conquer the land of Canaan. Joshua had seen God lead the nation out of slavery in Egypt. He had witnessed the parting of the Red Sea and God's provision of food while in the desert. As the Israelites were led into the promised land, Joshua and the entire nation saw God answer their prayers and give them many victories in battle.

During this time of conquest, the nation was relatively united as they worshiped and served God. This generation had first hand experience of His majesty and power; of His love and concern for His children. However, when Joshua and the current generation died, things quickly changed.

Judges 2:10

"After that whole generation had been gathered to their fathers, another generation grew up, who knew neither the Lord nor what He had done for Israel."

In a single generation, the people forgot! In a single generation, the people lost their respect for God, their desire to worship, and their belief that the Lord was the one true God. How could a generation who walked in fellowship with God fail to transfer the message of truth? How could parents who knew God with such intimacy fail to teach their children who He was and how to love Him? How could an entire nation forget their purpose for existence was to honor God and be a light to the world?

We who have been brought into the Light of Christ must diligently share our faith with others; "Tell it to your children, and let your children tell it to their children, and their children to the next generation" (Joel 1:3). Our children and our friends will never receive the gift of eternal life on the basis of our faith; they must be told of God's love and come to Him through a deep and personal faith in Jesus.

We all know specific individuals who desperately need to know of His saving grace. We all know fellow believers who need to be encouraged in their faith; "And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds" (Hebrews 10:24). Our churches are often gatherings for the depressed and troubled who have forgotten (or never heard) of the miraculous and loving works of God. May we never become silent about what He has done and continues to do!

We must never lose the awe of the incredible gift we have been given in Jesus. His sacrifice radically change our eternity! We must allow the understanding of this gift to so fill our hearts that we are compelled to share His on-going gift with those we love and those God places in our path. We who have begun our walk with Christ should continually share our walk with others. We serve an AWESOME God - let's be a light to the world and never let them forget.

Have A Great Day!

Contend For The Faith 2-15-06

In the message "Never Let Them Forget" we were challenged to continually share God's miraculous gift with those He places in our path. We considered this mainly from the aspect of sharing what God has done in our life and continues to do as we walk with Him. But we are also responsible to share the absolute truth about God and His plan; to do this, we must KNOW what we believe!

Jude wrote only one short letter (25 verses) of the Bible. He began the letter with a desire to encourage his fellow believers with the joy of Salvation. But as he sat down to write, he realized God was directing him to write a different message.

Jude 3

"Dear friends, although I was very eager to write to you about the salvation we share, I felt I had to write and urge you to contend for the faith that was once for all entrusted to the saints."

There is great joy in our Salvation - a joy which must be shared. But we have been entrusted with the truth of the gospel message, and this truth is often under attack.

As we draw closer to God and begin to understand His perfect holiness, we are also made aware of the utter sinfulness of man and our hopelessness without Jesus. Each of us are born with a sin nature; and if left to ourselves, we would become "filled with every kind of wickedness" (Romans 1:29). It's not surprising how much evil abounds in the world. To a large degree, the world has rejected the Light of Christ and is living in an empty and confusing darkness.

The church is definitely not immune to the darkness of the world. We are attacked from those who are openly outside the church; but we are also under attack from those who have "secretly slipped in among you" (Jude 4a). These are people who claim to be called by God, but live an immoral life and "deny Jesus Christ our only Sovereign and Lord" (Jude 4b). They seek to cause division and "follow their own ungodly desires" (Jude 18). We are told to fight this form of attack by strengthening our faith; "build yourself up in your most holy faith and pray in the Holy Spirit" (Jude 20).

Yes, we must know the truth, protect the truth, and share the truth. If we are to become a light which leads others to the saving grace of Jesus, we must not allow the gospel which has been entrusted into our care to become distorted for personal gain or diluted for greater acceptance. We can personally fight this battle on a daily basis by drawing closer to the presence of God and knowing Him better through study and prayer; and we can fight as groups of believers as we encourage one another to live without compromise. Let's test all teaching against His Word; let's share the absolute truth of our Lord and Savior and be prepared to stand as we contend for the faith.

Have A Great Day!

True Love of Christ 2-16-06

In the last hours of His earthly ministry, Jesus spoke with His disciples and gave a command which was considered new: "A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another" (John 13:34).

Should this command really have been new? Shouldn't the disciples have known they were to love one another? Or is it possible to spend three years with a Master Teacher and yet not grasp that learning must translate to action and that we teach truth by first being an example of truth? If we desire to teach love we must first be loving; to teach the concept of grace we must first be gracious, and in order to "make disciples of all nations" (Matthew 28:19) we must begin by first being a true disciple!

As I continue to study and learn the wonderful truths of God's Word - and as I diligently try to teach these truths to others - I never want us to stop at simply being better educated: "Do not merely listen to the Word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says" (James 1:22). I'll be the first to admit that I fall short in many ways, but we must strive to make His Word real and apply it in all areas of our life.

Our Spiritual growth must never be measured by how much we know, but by how much we are transformed - by how much the Word penetrates to the innermost part of our heart. We have all been blessed by God's love far more than we deserve. We must now better understand this love and then learn how to become His expression of love to others.

Ephesians 3:17-19

"I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge."

The ultimate expression of love was that God gave His Son to an undeserving world so "that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life" (John 3:16). This is a love we will never fully understand.

Paul had such a deep appreciation for the love contained in God's plan of Salvation through the sacrificial gift of Jesus that he was often completely overwhelmed; "When I think of the wisdom and scope of God's plan, I fall to my knees and pray to the Father" (Ephesians 3:14 NLT). When we begin to truly grasp His love, all we can do is say, Thank You!

Let's pray for a greater understanding of His love and then return His love through a devoted life of worship. Let's make His love real by demonstrating love to those He places in our path. Let's begin to grasp, and then give back and share, the true love of Christ.

Have A Great Day!

John 4:9-10 - Lesson #36
2-17-06

We have seen Jesus make a purposeful journey into Samaria and, while resting beside a well, ask a woman for a drink.

John 4:9-10

"Then the woman of Samaria said to Him, 'How is it that You, being a Jew, ask a drink from me, a Samaritan woman?' For Jews have no dealings with Samaritans. Jesus answered and said to her, 'If you knew the gift of God, and who it is who says to you, "Give Me a drink," you would have asked Him, and He would have given you living water.'"

We have already examined the enormous tension which existed between the Jews and Samaritans during the time of Christ. We see this tension in the response of the Samaritan woman. She was surprised that she was being spoken to by a Jewish Rabbi, but her response was mixed with a large dose of sarcasm - "How can you, a mighty Jewish Rabbi, speak to me, a lowly swine of a woman?"

It's wonderful to see that Jesus doesn't waste any time addressing her inappropriate reply. It was well within His right - certainly within His right as the Son of God, but also within His right as a Rabbi, even within His right as a mere man. Jesus could have put her in her place. But instead, He immediately moved the conversation to the next level - a level which would call her to a place by His side.

Notice the similarity to the conversation with Nicodemus in Chapter three. Both times Jesus looked past the initial comments and led the discussion directly to Spiritual matters. Also notice how Jesus looked past the social status of both individuals. Nicodemus was on the highest step of the Jewish ladder and this Samaritan woman on the absolute lowest, but each received full attention and a clear call to eternal life.

It's certainly no accident that these two meetings are recorded one right after the other. The message is clear, the gospel is for ALL; "for the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost" (Luke 19:10). In both cases, Jesus simply saw an individual who needed to hear the truth.

In the conversation with Nicodemus, Jesus spoke about being born again. This had significance to a Jewish leader in terms of a completely new way of life, but Jesus was making a call to a Spiritual understanding. In the case of the Samaritan woman, Jesus spoke of living water - also a term with significance.

In one sense, all water was life-giving. Since it was not so readily available, water was extremely precious as well as essential. The water from this particular well provided life for the whole area. But there was also a deeper meaning to water; "Therefore with joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation" (Isaiah 12:3). Jesus spoke of living water as a precious gift from God. Let's truly hear the One who is calling and take His gift of living water into a very thirsty world.

Have A Great Day!

Only One is Needed

2-20-06

The news is filled with stories of pain and heartache, of frustration and confusion. It seems everywhere we turn, people are crying out for help and simply existing from day to day. This is NOT the life God intended! The abundance of trials we see today is not necessarily a reflection of a drastic change in the world; rather, it's likely the result of our eyes being opened and our heart becoming more sensitive to His Spirit. This is a call which requires a bold response.

Over the last several years, God has performed a radical change in my life. I no longer see with the same eyes and my definition of "important" has been completely transformed. I try to live each day in submission to the Spirit of Christ and seek to glorify Him in all I do. The result has been a wonderful peace and contentment. I'm often overwhelmed with the blessings of God and can't help but praise Him for being set free.

But there are times I begin to doubt and become tentative with my message. I question whether the peace I've received is truly available to those who are in such pain. Can the miracle which occurred in my life really happen in the life of others? I now confess this doubt to you as sin! God has transformed my life and led me to this ministry for the purpose of proclaiming His truth: He came to set us free, but freedom is only found through submission and devotion.

Martha had become irritated that her sister Mary was sitting at the feet of Jesus rather than helping her prepare the meal. In fact, she was so bothered she approached Jesus and said: "Lord, don't You care that my sister has left me to do the work by myself? Tell her to help me!" (Luke 10:40). But Jesus very patiently replied:

Luke 10:41-42

"Martha, Martha, you are worried and upset about many things, but only one thing is needed. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her."

The world continually tries to tell us what's necessary and important - but it's a lie! And we never really understand nor see the deception until we consistently make the time to worship at the feet of Jesus and hear Him say; "You have now chosen what is better."

No matter what this day may bring, we must live each and every moment in devotion to our Lord. No matter what our circumstances, we CAN be set free! We may need to adjust our priorities and eliminate some things which consume our time and clutter our thoughts; but true worship at His feet is worth it ALL. Let's take a stand for Christ, faithfully proclaim His truth to the world, and build our life on His solid foundation. Many things may seem important, but only one is needed!

Have A Great Day!

New Every Morning 2-21-06

God loved us so much that He gave His Son as a sacrifice for our sins, that through faith we might be brought back into a full and intimate relationship with our Heavenly Father for all eternity. I think we often forget the magnitude of this love: we were dead and He provided us a way to live!

Lamentations 3:22-23

"Because of the Lord's great love we are not consumed, for His compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is Your faithfulness."

God has expressed His absolute love and compassion through the forgiveness found in Jesus Christ. This forgiveness is total and complete for those who believe. When we place our trust in Jesus, we are washed clean - we become "a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come" (2 Corinthians 5:17). And we continue to be washed clean "every morning."

We all have days when our sinful nature wins a battle and we stumble. We have a day when our anger, pride, fear, or lust is brought to the surface and we "do what we do not want to do" (Romans 7:16). We may need to seek forgiveness and earn back trust from those we've hurt, but God's forgiveness and love is free for the asking; "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins" (1 John 1:9). We may lose some of the battles, but through Jesus, the war has been won.

Since we have been washed clean - and continue to be washed clean - we must stop walking as though we are still soiled. We are children of God and in the process of being conformed to the likeness of His Son. This process of growth and maturity - of victorious transformation - must continue each and every morning. We must shed the heavy burdens of past failures (and the fear of future disappointments) and walk in the freshness of His forgiveness.

Is our relationship with God fresh and new? Do we still comprehend the magnitude of love encompassed in the gift of forgiveness? Or have we grown complacent and cold? When was the last time our love for God was so fresh on our heart that we couldn't help but say THANK YOU!?

We are invited to a relationship with our Heavenly Father - an intimate relationship which involves loving and being loved; a relationship which allows us to walk in victory for His glory and to be guided by the power of His Spirit. Let's give Him our all and receive His all in return. Let's rise up in His strength and determine to make our relationship of love new every morning.

Have A Great Day!

Foundation of Truth

2-22-06

Six hundred years ago, there were groups of people who believed the earth was flat. In fact they didn't just believe the earth was flat, they "knew" the earth was flat. Because of this belief, they also believed it was impossible to sail around the world. Of course, their view was warped and limited since it was built upon knowledge which was not based in truth.

What knowledge and "facts" form our view of the world today? We probably have a better understanding of the physical workings of our world, but what knowledge determines how we view our life? Do we begin with the unlimited power and sovereignty of God, an understanding of eternity, the consequences of sin, and the saving grace of Jesus Christ?

If we allow our beliefs to be formed by the world system, our view of life will always remain limited. Rather than seeing God's loving hand at work in our life and clearly recognizing His tools of transformation, we will see only unnecessary suffering and the apparent absence of God; "The fear {or holy reverence} of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge" (Proverbs 1:7).

Clearly, God is calling us to a closer and more meaningful relationship: calling us to love Him and trust Him more. But we will never truly grow closer until we examine the foundation of our beliefs; "In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth" (Genesis 1:1). The entire Universe, and certainly our life, was formed by God and continues to exist because of His grace. To believe anything less is to fail to understand God and fail to believe His Word.

Spiritual understanding is gained through the guidance and power of the Holy Spirit as we diligently pray and study God's Word. Initially, our prayers may seem empty and His Word full of disjoint stories which don't seem to apply; but if we continue to seek with all our heart, He will reveal His truth and we will soon begin to understand.

Proverbs 2:3-5

"If you call out for insight and cry aloud for understanding, and if you look for it as for silver and search for it as for hidden treasure, then you will understand the fear of the Lord and find the knowledge of God."

God has gifted us with the ability to learn, the power to seek, and the freedom to choose how we use our time. Let's use His gift to find the knowledge of God based on the reverence of His name. Let's build a world view which is consistent with God's Word and will stand the test of eternity. Let's refuse to limit God, and forevermore base our lives on the foundation of truth.

Have A Great Day!

Clear Line of Communication

2-23-06

Communication is a key part of any relationship. Without proper communication, a relationship will slowly drift apart and feel isolated. This is true of friends and married couples, and certainly true in our relationship with God.

Without communication, we begin to drift and will soon be unable to even recognize His voice. When faced with sudden burdens we will feel alone. We may awkwardly call out to God but find our communication line has become noisy, filled with distractions. It's difficult to receive direction or comfort when we can't even hear or understand what God is saying.

To keep the communication lines clear, we must develop the habit of continually talking with God; "Pray continually" (1 Thessalonians 5:17). We cannot limit prayer to those times of great need. David was in the habit of morning prayer; "In the morning, O Lord, You hear my voice; in the morning I lay my request before You and wait in expectation" (Psalm 5:3). But we must also learn to talk with God throughout our day so we are prepared for those times of extra need.

Jesus never suffered from a breakdown in communication with His Father; "I and the Father are one" (John 10:30). And yet, when faced with major decisions or burdens, Jesus still set aside special time to talk with God.

Luke 6:12-13

"One of those days Jesus went out to a mountainside to pray, and spent the night praying to God. When morning came, He called His disciples to Him and chose twelve of them, whom He also designated apostles."

There are always going to be times in our Christian walk where we need dedicated time with God - times which involve "critical" or "crisis" situations. This time is greatly enhanced if we have already been walking in daily communion with the Father. Our "crisis" prayers may be more intense and contain a heightened sense of urgency, but at least we will know the One to whom we pray - we will know His voice and understand His ultimate plan for our life.

Our Heavenly Father desires to light our path by giving daily guidance. Let's develop the habit of continual prayer so we will follow His leading and walk each step in praise. Let's KNOW Him during the trivial and mundane portion of our day so we will be prepared to know Him during the urgent. Let's prioritize our life to ensure we have a free and clear line of communication.

Have A Great Day!

John 4:11-12 - Lesson #37
2-24-06

The conversation beside a well continues, between a Jewish Rabbi and a Samaritan woman. We need to be reminded how unusual it was for this conversation to even take place. If we miss the severe tension between the Jews and Samaritans we miss the main point of this section of Scripture. It is not an exaggeration to say the Jews despised the Samaritans. It is said the Pharisees would pray that no Samaritans would be raised at the resurrection. And later in the Gospel of John, we will see the Jews insult Jesus by calling Him a Samaritan with a demon (John 8:48).

But Jesus, a man on a mission, the Son of God come to reveal and declare the glory of the Father, broke through the established boundary lines of His day and offered this woman an eternal gift - the gift of living water.

John 4:11-12

"The woman said to Him, 'Sir, You have nothing to draw with, and the well is deep. Where then do You get that living water? Are You greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well, and drank from it himself, as well as his sons and his livestock?'"

Jesus had appealed to her curiosity by speaking of living water, but as was the case with Nicodemus, the Samaritan woman completely missed the Spiritual implications and focused purely on the realm of the physical. To her, living water meant water from a moving stream - water which was almost always superior to the water of a stagnant well. And if this Rabbi could produce living water, she was interested.

However, this must be a weak offer because she sees Jesus without anything which would hold water. So she proceeds to question His sincerity, "Are you greater than our father Jacob...?" This was a question with an implied answer of no, and was also used to establish the Samaritan claim to Jewish ancestry - a "Who do you think you are?" type of question.

Having eyes which are focused on the physical keeps so many people from responding to the call of Christ. Many people in the world are focused on simply trying to survive, wondering when their next meal will arrive. But many others are so entangled in their "stuff" that any thought of Spiritual matters have been pushed far, far away. They may attend church every week, maybe even read the bible - maybe even study! - but the Word of God has no impact on their life! "He who received seed among the thorns is he who hears the word, and the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and he becomes unfruitful" (Matthew 13:22).

We must not allow our physical circumstances to consume, control, or define our life. We are called to a life in Christ - a life of eternal joy which has nothing to do with the comforts of this world. Let's begin the process of untangling our life so we can receive His gift and truly drink.

Have A Great Day!

A Living Sanctuary 2-27-06

Our Heavenly Father desires our life to be FILLED with praise and worship. When we gather together with other believers for church services, we generally begin with songs of praise. We praise God for His love and faithfulness, and for the gift of His Son. We worship Him for His awesome majesty as we prepare our hearts to receive His Word. These are wonderful times, but they are only a small part of God's true desire for our life.

Ephesians 5:19-20

"Speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. Sing and make music in your heart to the Lord, always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ."

As Paul wrote these instructions to the Ephesians he never said, "give thanks only during your worship service," or, "make music in your heart only when you gather together with other believers." He clearly instructed "always" and "for everything." The "music" of praise and worship to God should always reside in our heart.

This can be a real challenge without a shift in the way we view our life - a shift from the way we've been "trained" by the world. We absolutely must learn to "trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding" (Proverbs 3:5). Though the world teaches us to "take charge of your own destiny," we are called to release control to our Lord and patiently trust. For it's only through faith and trust that we can praise in ALL situations, even through our confusion and pain.

One of my favorite praise songs contains the words: "Lord prepare me to be a sanctuary; pure and holy, tried and true. With thanksgiving, I'll be a living sanctuary for You." The word sanctuary means: "A place set aside as sacred and holy, especially a place of worship." The meaning of this song then becomes: Lord prepare my life to be a sacred and holy place of worship!

There can be no greater ambition for the Child of God. With a proper understanding of eternity and the saving grace of Jesus, our life only has real purpose as we live each day to bring Him glory and honor - as we live each moment in praise and worship, no matter what circumstances our day may bring. The way we walk through our trials as well as how we accomplish our daily tasks, ministry activities, or times of prayer and study should all be done through a heart devoted to worship.

Let's allow the "music" of our heart to sing out with praise and worship - not just for a few set hours each week, but every day with every word, thought and deed. Let's patiently trust in all areas of our life and ask our Father to teach us to live as a living sanctuary.

Have A Great Day!

His Perfect Way

2-28-06

In the message "A Living Sanctuary" we considered our call to praise and worship ALWAYS; and that this can only occur as we trust God with all our heart and release control into His hands. We seem to often come back to this theme - maybe it's because this is one of our major struggles.

The world definitely trains us to take control. There even seems to be special rewards for those who can say, "I did it my way!" But the truth is, "my" way will always fall short of God's desire. Our biggest struggle is often finding the balance which keeps us on His path and traveling at His pace. Lack of faith causes us to lag behind, and our pride and desire to control causes us to try and push ahead.

2 Samuel 22:31

"As for God, His way is perfect; the word of the Lord is flawless. He is a shield for all who take refuge in Him."

These words are part of a song of praise King David sang to God. Several times in his life David ventured out to do things his own way. Yet time after time he found that walking down God's path was not only the best way, it was the perfect way. We must obviously learn this same lesson. We are given many options - many roads to travel as we seek a better way - but His narrow road is the only way to true life...the only road to peace and true contentment.

Living by God's way requires constant renewal of faith and trust. It first requires faith in Jesus for the forgiveness of sin, and then complete trust as we continue down His path. While God's way is definitely perfect, it's not always easy to understand. His way will often conflict with what we just "know" is best; "The man who thinks he knows something does not yet know as he ought to know" (1 Corinthians 8:2). These times of apparent conflict are times to humbly increase our faith and better learn how to trust.

But the "wisdom" of the world will continually battle against this trust. Jesus said, "do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear" (Matthew 6:25). The world's wisdom says we will soon be hungry and naked; but God's wisdom says that as we trust Him with all our heart, we will soon find rest and peace; "But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well" (Matthew 6:33).

God has gifted each of us in unique and wonderful ways. But our gifts must be used along His path, for His glory, or they become nothing but "filthy rags" (Isaiah 64:6). Let's stop seeking our way, with our goals and our desires. Instead, let's daily release to the guidance of the Holy Spirit and boldly follow where He leads. Let's trust and walk each and every step according to His perfect way.

Have A Great Day!