



PASTORS DEVOTIONAL
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Celebrating Diversity



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The Value Of A Yoke
Jesus Gives Us Rest!
Matthew 11:28

*We celebrate Black History Month and the beginning of Lent, as we observe **Ash Wednesday on the 26**. Over the years, Blacks have had to endure the yoke of racism in America by the hands of those who found it hard to embrace diversity. However, it was Christ who took our yoke upon Himself giving us the strength to preserve throughout history.*

*I may not know what burden you're carrying right now, and I may not know what's weighing you down. But I do know the answer. Jesus says, "**Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me ... for my yoke is easy, and my burden is light**" (Matthew 11:28-30 RSV).*

*The value of a yoke is that it lightens the load and makes the workload half as heavy. When Jesus says to take his yoke upon you, He's saying I will share your problems. I will share your load. I will take your stress upon myself and bear it with you. Jesus uses three verbs in this verse: **come, learn, and take**. "Come to me. Team up with me. Then, learn how I do it.*

When you yoke up with Christ, you move together with him. You move in the same direction and at the same speed, because He bore our sins on Calvary, and we now have eternal life. God bless you!

Christ has promised to give you rest!

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Day 1: Prayer for Black History Month

Read Psalm 90:1

When we celebrate Black History Month, we honor the culture of our brothers and sisters. We remember the legacy of those who came before us – who not only paved the way but carried the bricks on broken backs that then built that road. We remember the songs, stories, and fiery hope of old men and little girls, granny midwives and marvelous musicians, great orators and leaders, entrepreneurs and innovators – those who are earth-tone brown, black as night, fair like the sands of Egypt. We are kings and queens. We are descendants of royalty.

O God. To you we offer our prayers, our praise, and our supplications. When it's too hard living, we remember you are the great "I am" and our source of strength and purpose for each new day. Help us in our advocacy to honor you with our work for justice, healing, and peace in our day. God, help us to value diversity beyond variety. Help us value diversity with a vision for a progressive future that acknowledges our strength together as well as the power, creativity, ideas, and part that we all bring when we are all welcome – to come to the table and taste and see that the Lord is good.

Help us labor on until we all can sing, for good and right reasons: Oh happy day! Amen. [By Kierra Stuvland]

Thought for today: Give your burdens to Jesus and rest in Him.

Day 2: Lord, Lord, Open Unto Me

Read Philippians 4:6-7

Open unto me, light for my darkness
Open unto me, courage for my fear
Open unto me, hope for my despair
Open unto me, peace for my turmoil
Open unto me, joy for my sorrow
Open unto me, strength for my weakness
Open unto me, wisdom for my confusion
Open unto me, forgiveness for my sins
Open unto me, tenderness for my toughness
Open unto me, love for my hates
Open unto me, Thy Self for myself
Lord, Lord, open unto me.

Written by Howard Thurman, From Meditations of the Heart
Thurman who was born in 1899 and raised in the segregated
South. He is recognized as one of the great spiritual leaders of
the 20th century renowned for his reflections on humanity and
our relationship with God.

Thought for today: There are days when we can bring before God a deep and glad laughter of joy and gratitude. There will be other days when we can only muster a bitter, angry complaint. If it is honest, be confident that God will accept whatever it is we truly have to lift up before him, and He will make it serve His purpose and your good.

Day 3: Why Did You Make Me Black?

Read Genesis 1:26-27

Lord, Lord *by RuNett Nia Ebo*

Why did you make me Black? Why make someone,
The world wants to hold back? Black is the color of dirty
clothes, The color of grimy hands and feet, Black is the
color of darkness, The color of tire-beaten streets.

Why did you give me thick lips? A broad nose and kinky
hair? Why did you make me someone, Who receives the
hated stare?

Black is the color of the bruised eye, When someone
you love gets hurt. Black is the color of darkness, Black
is the color of dirt. How come my bones are thick, and
my hips and cheeks are high? How come my eyes are
brown. Not the color of the daylight sky?

Why do people think I'm useless? How come I feel so
used? Why do some who see my skin, think I should be
abused? Lord, I just don't understand, What is it about
my skin? Why do some folks want to hate me, and not
know the person within? Black is what people are
"listed," When other want to keep them away, Black is
the color of shadows cast, Black is the end of the day.

Lord, you know my own mistreat me, and I know this
isn't right. They don't like my hair or the way I look,
They say I'm too dark or too light. Lord, don't you think
it's time, For you to make a change? Why not redo crea-
tion, and make us all the same?

Thought for today: You are a royal priesthood!

Day 4: God Answers

Read Genesis 1:26-27

Why did I make you Black?

Get off your knees and look around,
Tell Me, what do you see? You aren't made in the image
of darkness, I made you in the likeness of me!

I made you the color of coal, from which the diamond is
formed, I made you the color of oil, the black gold that
keeps people warm. I made you from the rich, dark
earth, that can grow the food you need,
your color's the same as the Panther's, known for her
beauty and speed.

Your color is like the Black Stallion, a majestic animal,
he, you aren't made in the image of darkness, I made
you in likeness of me! All the colors of a heavenly rain-
bow, can be found in every nation, and when all of these
colors were blended well, you became my greatest crea-
tion! Your hair is the texture of lamb's wool, such a
humble creature is he, I am the Shepherd who watches
them, you are the color of midnight sky, I put the star's
gleam in your eyes, a smile hides behind your pain,
that's why your cheeks are high.

You are the color of dark clouds formed, when I send my
strongest weather, your lips are full so when you kiss,
your stature is strong, your bones are thick, to withstand
the burden of time; the reflection you see in the mirror?
The image looking back is Mine.

**Thought for today: You are wonderfully and fearfully
made by God!**

Day 5: Under Attack — Rest

Read Psalm 23:5 (NIV)

Our civilization is losing its civility. The world is getting ruder! One of the things that's causing that is the internet, because it allows people to hide behind the screen and say things online that they would never have the courage to say to others face-to-face. By doing this, they are revealing the smallness of their hearts. Great people make people feel great, but small people belittle people and they make fun of others because they think it will make them feel better.

How do you handle rude people? You don't. You let God handle them. You let God be your defender. King David understood this. He knew what it meant to be attacked emotionally, verbally, and physically. He was anointed by the prophet Samuel at a young age to be the next king of Israel, but he didn't become king right away. And that's why Saul, the reigning king, wanted to kill him, and why David hid in caves while being distrusted, pursued, and in constant danger. Yet, David never said a bad word against the king. He never retaliated, because God was preparing him to be the king after his own heart.

David says in **Psalm 23:5**, ***"You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies."*** (NIV). Does it sound like David was stressed out? No! He didn't have to use up all his energy defending himself because he trusted God to be his defender.

Thought for today: Remain silent before your accusers and trust in the Father to take action.

Day 6: Only God Can Provide

Read Romans 8:32

The major cause of stress in your life is worry. You worry because you wonder if you will have what you need when you need it. But anytime you expect other people to meet your needs instead of God, you're going to be frustrated and disappointed, because nobody can meet all your needs. Only God can do that.

Some people find their security in their job, and when they lose their job, they lose their peace of mind. Others put their security in their marriage. Then their spouse dies or they go through a divorce, and they ask, "Who am I? What is my identity?" Or maybe they put their security in their money. There are a lot of ways to lose money.

Be careful putting your security in anything that can be taken away from you. You can lose your job, your health, your reputation, your spouse, and your mind. But you cannot lose your relationship to Christ. When you put your security in that promise, you can trust God to meet all your needs according to **Romans 8:32**. If God loved you enough to send Jesus Christ to die on the cross, don't you think he loves you enough to take care of every other need in your life? Yes! Of course he does.

Every time you start to get stressed out, pause and say, "**The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want**" (Psalm 23:1 ESV).

Thought for today: Want a cure for stress? Look to God to meet your needs.

Day 7: Just Say Yes!

Read 2 Corinthians 1:15-20

God's Promises Never Fail. The promises of God are yes and amen. It's in the Bible, **2 Corinthians 1:20** NJKV. *"For all the promises of God in Him are Yes, and in Him Amen, to the glory of God through us."* God's Word contains literally thousands of Bible promises waiting to be claimed in faith. But sometimes we may become bogged down by the disappointments and trials of life and slip into seasons of doubting and questioning our hope. We begin to doubt if God is really good to us. But tasting the goodness of God is often as simple as opening our hearts to receive what He has promised through Christ.

As you continue your daily journey of reflecting on some of the promises of God in 2018, may you always be reminded of how He sees you. The Lord is full of mercy and grace and He overflows with love towards His children. Everything that He does is motivated by His eternal, unending kindness. May the Holy Spirit give you a deeper revelation of the character and nature of God this new year and may He dismantle any misconceptions of your Heavenly Dad that cause you to see Him as distant and angry.

If you feel discouraged or unworthy today, but have said yes to salvation, then you have also said yes to God's promises, His goodness, and His eternal glory.

Thought for today: Say yes to the promises of God for your life. Say yes to His glory, goodness, and grace and thank Him for your salvation in Christ Jesus.

Day 8: Make God Smile Today

Psalm 119:33-34

God smiles when you obey him wholeheartedly.

That means doing whatever God asks without reservation or hesitation. You do it without delay. Every parent knows that delayed obedience is really disobedience. God doesn't owe you an explanation or reason for everything he asks you to do. Understanding can wait, but obedience can't. Instant obedience will teach you more about God than a lifetime of Bible discussions. In fact, you will never understand some commands until you obey them first.

Obedience unlocks understanding.

Often we try to offer God partial obedience. We want to pick and choose the commands we obey. We make a list of the commands we like and then obey those while ignoring the ones we think are unreasonable, difficult, expensive, or unpopular. "I'll attend church, but I won't tithe." "I'll read my Bible, but I won't forgive the person who hurt me." Yet partial obedience is disobedience. Wholehearted obedience is done joyfully, with enthusiasm. The Bible says, "Obey him gladly" (Psalm 100:2 TLB). This is the attitude of David.

Any act of obedience is also an act of worship. Why is obedience pleasing to God? Because it demonstrates that you really love him. Jesus said, "If you love me, you will obey my commandments" (John 14:15 GNT).

Thought for today: God smiles when you obey Him wholeheartedly.

Day 9: Feed Your Hungry Soul

Read John 6:35

If we're honest, we're all hungry. We're starving for something to sustain us, to preserve our hope, to strengthen us through trials, to help us conquer sin. We're starving for food that will fill us for the everyday fight of faith.

Do you notice that you don't have to teach babies to put things in their mouth? They are born with a natural instinct to feed themselves. But you do need to teach them what to feed themselves.

We were all created with a natural spiritual hunger for God. However, we must learn how to fill our hunger. There are things that we will try to put into our souls that will never satisfy us. The only true remedy to the deepest longing in our being is God—because we were created to hunger after Him.

Look for God's promises when you read the Bible, specific promises, and feed your hungry soul. Eat them. Eat them every day and throughout the day. Eat full meals. Eat snacks. Eat planned meals. Eat spontaneously. And as you do, you will become more like God.

Thought for today: As you become more like him, you will experience more of the abundant life he has given you

Day 10: You Are A Royal Priesthood

Read 1 Peter 2:9-10

Christ Jesus has made all who are in Him the priesthood that God always intended His people to be. You no longer need to rely on an intermediary who needs God's grace too. Instead, the Lord has become the mediator between Himself and His own in the person of the God-man Jesus Christ (9:15).

Peter explains in today's passage that you are that royal priesthood who need none but Christ to stand between you and the Father (1 Peter 2:9-10). No believer has greater access to the Creator than any other. Pastors and elders are appointed to teach the church the will of God from His Word (1 Tim. 3:1-7), but they do not represent you before the heavenly throne like the Levitical priests did under the administration of the old covenant.

In Christ, there is a true priesthood of all believers. All of who trust in Jesus alone for salvation have free access into His presence. The janitor who does his work to the Lord is in no worse position spiritually than the most gifted preacher on the planet, because all Christians have been declared righteous servants of the creator God.

Thought for today: You have been chosen as people of God's possession to proclaim His excellence and to be the visible evidence of His marvelous, life-changing light.

Day 11: All Things New

Read Revelation 21:5

Each of us can recount at least one painful experience from childhood or describe mistakes we made early in life. For some of us, the resulting wounds are deep. But when we open ourselves to receive God's love and forgiveness, then we can forgive ourselves and extend that forgiveness and mercy to those who have hurt us. We can receive the assurance that, even in death, we belong to God.

Leave the past behind and learn to trust God daily and experience how good He is. It is through our trials that God reveals Himself to us, and He is the only one who can bring us into a place of sweet peace.

The real hope and promise of Christian faith lies in the bold declaration of our Lord: "**Look, I am making everything new**" (Rev. 21:5). For all three ways in which we are wounded, God extends the healing gift of grace to us, offered in Christ Jesus, who came to us as Immanuel, "**God with us.**"

What Jesus heard when coming up from the waters of baptism is exactly what God wants to communicate to every soul: "***You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased.***"

Thought for today: Thank God that Jesus has come to make all things new and for the peace that comes only from Him.

Day 12 : Eternal Sacrifice

Read Isaiah 25:1

Christ's suffering and death was not a play—it was a profound and eternal sacrifice. The prophet Isaiah wrote several hundred years before Christ came, vividly describes the suffering that Jesus would endure. As we read the details, we noticed the reason for His death. Isaiah said that just like sheep, we had gone astray and turned to our won way. But thank God It is sobering to realize that our sins required the sacrifice that only Christ could make.

The more we realize the incredible love that motivated Christ to make this awesome sacrifice, the more determined we should be to live for Him faithfully. We serve a God who at the end, after everything has fallen and everything has changed, will stand. In all of our confusion, suffering, and hopelessness, we have the enduring promises of serving the one who will always be greater.

It's easy to become discouraged in this life, but when you adjust your perspective to view everything against the backdrop of a victorious Savior, you can face absolutely anything with great confidence and peace.

In Christ, you can have the confidence of a victorious outcome—no matter how great the obstacles you face.

Thought for today: Christ has given you the assurance of walking in victory.

Day 13: Trust Him More

Read Proverbs 3:5-6

We live in a world where trust must be earned and seems to be in short supply. But Solomon, the famous king who wrote Proverbs, knew that trust is exactly where you must start. Most of us have faced disappointments, which have taught us that we can only depend upon ourselves. But living the life God has called you to means unlearning that lesson. Instead, you're meant to rest in God's understanding. But sometimes trusting Him completely like that can be tough. So, each day, consciously lay aside your own plans and expectations—and surrender to His plans.

Life works best when you remember the true source of our blessings—God—and focus on the things that please Him. ***“Do not be wise in your own eyes; fear the LORD and shun evil.”*** (Proverbs 3:7).

When you face a difficult world each day, you can sometimes wonder if God even cares. Why do bad things happen? Where is God when I need Him? Solomon reminds us that God never takes a break or leaves you to fend for ourselves.

When you constantly lean your heart toward Him, and chose what He would, you receive His comfort and guidance, and your paths become straighter.

Thought for today: You must continually trust Him more than your experience or reasoning.

Day 14: Promise of Hope and Joy

Read 1 John 1:5-7

The first picture of God that John wants to put before us is this picture of God as light. “God is light and in him is no darkness at all.” It means that if you draw near to God, you do not find a dark and foreboding truth. You find freedom and hope and joy.

Light is the promise of hope and joy. Darkness is the threat of despair and misery. And God is light and in him is no darkness at all. This is the message that John heard from Jesus, and Jesus came into the world to reveal it. It’s the foundational message of this book.

Walking in the light is the opposite of walking in darkness. It means seeing reality for what it is and being controlled by desires that accords with God’s light. If God is light, and in him is no darkness at all, then He is the bright pathway to the fulfillment of all your deepest longings. He is the deliverer from all dark dangers and obstacles to joy. He is the infinitely desirable One.

Sin left a dark spot on our hearts but Jesus’ life-giving light obliterates those dark places and makes us healthy and whole. He allows us to be people of light, reflecting His goodness and proclaiming His truth.

Thought for today: Walking in the light means seeing things the way God sees them and responding the way He does.

Day 15: You Have The Power

Read Hebrews 10:23

When external circumstances come, doubt rears its ugly head, right? Sure does. The enemy attempts to manipulate your thinking and use the contradictory circumstances to build a case against your faith in the perfection of God's word.

If we're not careful, we will question what God has spoken to us, revealed to us, and assured us of in His word. Suddenly, that once strong hope for our positive outcome will begin to fade, because of the negative evidence we perceive with our natural eyes.

But be encouraged today to hold onto your faith despite what obstacles come to challenge you. Though your eyes and your circumstances can play tricks on you, God's word remains sure, stable, unshakeable, and always trustworthy.

To help you cling tightly to your confidence in God, put Hebrews 11:1, into your cup of inspiration. It says, "*Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see.*" [NIV]

We don't have to question whether or not God will do what He said He would. He has proven Himself to be faithful and true. When God makes a promise, we don't have to wonder if He will follow through — we are the forgetful ones!

Thought for today: Thank God for the Holy Spirit who gives you the power to become faithful.

Day 16: Don't Be Anxious

Read Matthew 6:24-34

One of the greatest things about Jesus is that he does not want his people to be anxious. The main point of today's text is that God does not secure his kingship by cultivating anxiety. On the contrary, the aim of God's kingship is to free us from anxiety. God doesn't need to keep us anxious in order to establish his power and superiority. Instead he exalts his power and superiority by working to take away our anxiety.

What are you feeling anxious about today? Finances; relationships; family issues; health; lack of a job; stepping out on faith? Anxiety doesn't get you anywhere. It doesn't do you any good. Whatever problem is causing you to feel anxious, you can be sure your anxiety will not lessen the problem. It will only make you miserable while you try to deal with it.

Remember that your heavenly Father knows your needs. When you are anxious and worried, you doubt the power of God who knows your every need. It's like saying, "I hear you," "but I don't trust you." Or, perhaps you don't think he has the heart of a loving Father. Anxiety shows that we are too close to the world and too far from God. So don't be anxious — the world has nothing eternal to offer, and your loving heavenly Father knows your needs now and forever.

Thought for today: Jesus does not want His Followers to Be anxious.

Day 17: Worship Daily

Read Psalm 100

God delights to manifest His presence and power to a people who are truly praising and worshipping Him. And when His presence and power come, we hear His voice; we see miracles; people are healed; lives are changed; and transformation takes place from the inside out.

That is what Psalm 100 is all about — being grateful. It is a call to worship, a call to give thanks, a summons to fill our hearts and homes and auditoriums with the sweet-smelling aroma of gratitude to God. The structure of the psalm consists of a call to worship in vv. 1-2, the cause for worship in v. 3, another call in v. 4, and yet another cause in v. 5.

In other words, the worship described here is something that took place in the Temple because that is where God's manifest presence was revealed, behind the veil in the Holy of Holies. But now each individual Christian as well as the church corporately is the temple of God, and thus *we are always in God's presence because God's presence is always in us.*

Make worship a daily part of your life and relationship with the Lord, and not only when you go into a church building. You are God's temple!

Thought for today: Bless the Lord at all times!

Day 18: Walking In Purpose

Read Ephesians 4:22-23

In the New Year, make every effort to learn how to leave your past behind. Why? Because a preacher once said, “**Your destiny is bigger than your pride.**” Trust in God’s truth that He can make everything new, when you do your part.

What Paul was saying to the Church at Ephesus is the same Word for us today. Even though they had regrets, made mistakes, and failures, Paul reminded them in this text that they can still overcome any negative situation or pain from the past. Just get with God and say, “Yes, this happened in my life. But You God, are on my side. I know You have a good plan for me.”

If you want to walk in your purpose, you must (1) **have a Vision.** Remember what happened to the Israelites in the desert? They wandered there for forty years because they couldn’t see God’s vision for their life. ((2) **Learn from the past.** Never let circumstances keep you down, no matter how painful they may be. And (3) **Embrace the present.** Are people in your past positive or negative? Only you can decide.

Learn to encourage yourself in the Word. That’s what David did in Psalm 27:13-14. Even during his troubles, he said, “...Wait for the Lord; be strong and take heart and wait for the Lord” (NIV).

Thought for today: Forget the former things and do not dwell in the past (Isaiah 43:18-19).

Day 19: God's Amazing Love

Read Ephesians 3:17-19

One thing that does not change from year to year, is God's amazing love. Are you glad about this?

Have you ever stopped for a moment to just think of the amazing love it took for God to send His only Son to die a cruel death for your sins.? Paul speaks of the breadth, and length, and depth, and height. This covers all directions. He speaks to the Ephesians and all Christians today, to comprehend and know the love of Christ.

Being a child of God does not make all your sorrow, and pain, and suffering go away. “ **In this world, you will have tribulation, but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world,**” says Jesus in **John 66:33**. You also have the blessed assurance that God will not forsake you or leave you (Deuteronomy 31:6), even in these turbulent times.

God is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us. Let's give Him the glory and thanks for this great promise in His Word.

Continue to abide in His love. He surely loves you and gave His life that you might live.

Thought for today: Thank God for His amazing love that never change.

Day 20: In Due Season

Read Galatians 6:9

The Bible says that even Jesus needed time to grow and increase in wisdom, stature and in years before He was ready to make a global impact through His three-year ministry (Luke 2:52).

Perhaps better than anyone else, Paul, who wrote this letter to the Galatians, experienced heart aches and disappointments. You will go through spiritually dormant seasons. These are the seasons when God seems silent... when your dreams and visions for the future seem lifeless. But although you may not see or feel anything exciting, it doesn't mean nothing is happening. Sometimes a lot has to happen on the inside before you are ready to handle the future God has for you. Paul encouraged the Galatians, and all believers, to remember the joyful harvest we will reap if we persevere in doing good.

You will reap in due season. In **Ecc1 3:1**, Solomon reminds Christians that, "In everything there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven: (KJV). In other words, there is a set season or time for everything. You work and labor, but the harvest comes from God. And it comes in due season.

Thought for today: If you believe you are in a "due season" then just let the joy of the Lord be your strength and be encouraged!

Day 21: Walk By The Spirit

Read Galatians 5:16

Have you ever felt something alerting you to pay attention or pulling you in a particular direction? Perhaps you were listening to a sermon and you sensed God telling you to follow Him in obedience. Or maybe you walked into a restaurant and were filled with dread, as if you should leave quickly.

Unlike people, the Holy Spirit is a trustworthy guide who will never lead you astray and knows the path ahead much better than you do. Apart from Him, you cannot live a godly life. Galatians 5:16 instructs you to, “Walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh” (NASB).

The Holy Spirit empowers you to resist sin and obey God. But He does so much more: He also helps you to understand Scripture, pray, and enables us to fellowship with the Lord. He will never advise you to do anything that contradicts Scripture. If you are a believer, then most likely these feelings were the prompting of the Holy Spirit, who always guides you to understand and accept the Father’s will. He is the One speaking to your heart, warning you about danger and encouraging you to submit to God’s purposes.

When you surrender your sinful nature to the cross, you produce spiritual fruit. These fruits are proof of the Spirit working within you — love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.

Thought for today: Rely on God’s Holy Spirit to guide you each day.

Day 22: Salt

Read Matthew 5:13

Salt is a dietary mineral, used for flavoring and preservation - needed by all known living creatures. If abused, it can be harmful. However, it is also detrimental to have no salt intake because it regulates the water content in our bodies.

Jesus calls us the salt of the earth because our lives enhance and give meaning to our existence. Before salvation, we were like grains of sand, too numerous to count. But after receiving Christ, we were transformed to something distinctive in taste, texture, and aroma. Jesus used salt to describe how Christians are needed to bring balance and hope to an otherwise dying world.

The question Jesus asked however is, "What good is salt if it has lost its flavor?" In other words, if a Christian has lost his or her gusto and fervor, then what's the difference between the old grain of sand they once were and the so-called salt they are now? The answer is: very little. If we are not careful, trials can cause us to become weary. And just like salt can become diluted in water, we can become diluted (or altered) by our life experiences.

Jesus compared believers to salt for a reason. Here are three to meditate upon today: (1) salt is enduring; (2) salt is a symbol of purity; and (3) salt preserves life. You must be willing to keep a true commitment to Him as a disciple, even when life is not running smooth.

Thought for today: God is calling on you to help preserve the entire world. Are you ready for the challenge?

Day 23: Significance In Serving

Read 1 Peter 4:10

To experience significance in life, you must serve with others in ministry. Ministry just means doing good to other people. Significance does not come from status or a hood ornament on your car or a logo on your shirt. Significance does not come from a bigger salary. Significance does not come from sex. Significance comes from service. Significance comes when you start thinking about other people more than yourself and you give your life away. You cannot be selfish and significant at the same time.

The Bible says in **1 Peter 4:10**, “**Each of you has received a gift to use to serve others**” (NCV). The talents you were given are not for your benefit. God gave them to you for the benefit of the people around you. You are shaped for significance, and you find that significance by using your gifts and talents and abilities to serve other people.

You're not meant to serve God by yourself. You're meant to serve God on a team. You're meant to serve God in a family, in a small group, in a church. You're meant to serve God in relationship.

Christians are better together!

Thought for today: Be good servants of God's various gifts of grace.

Day 24: Depending On God

Read Proverbs 3:5

We know this scripture quite well. Then why is it so hard for Christians to trust in the Lord with all their hearts? Perhaps the cares of this world has blocked out our child-like faith. Notice how easy it is for children to trust? We have to go back to that place and let go of all the "grown-up" barriers we have placed between ourselves and God over the years.

In order to fully depend on God, we must trust Him the way a child is prone to trust a loving parent. We will need to unravel our misgivings about God and see Him as the loving Father that He is to all who know Him. Let me suggest the following 4 things that can help us get back to that place of total trust. How can you grow your faith?

1. **accept God's love.** I know this sounds cliché, but let it sink in that God loves you. Meditate on it. And know that the cross where Christ died is the demonstration of just how much God loves you (Rom. 5:8).

2. **God is bigger than your circumstances.** How do you know when your faith is growing? When your faith is built on God's character and faithfulness, rather than on your circumstances.

3. **Keep your mind pure.** OK. So an unhealthy thought popped into your head. It may have come from the world, or from your mind, or from something you encountered earlier in the day. But that doesn't mean you have to believe it. Kick that thought to the curb and move on to wholesome thoughts.

Thought for the today: Begin today learning to depend more on God.

Day 25: Need Peace?

John 14:27

No doubt about it—we live in a troubled world. Whether it's the rising cost of medicine, the state of our economy, a political upheaval, or the most recent crime headline scrolling across your screen, the news can be depressing. But you don't need to be depressed! No matter how dark the outlook, Jesus said to let not your heart be troubled or afraid. Why? Because He is the Prince of Peace, and the peace He gives surpasses all understanding.

Keep in mind also that Jesus was about to face the cross when He spoke these words to His disciples. He put aside His own burden, and now turns to comfort and encourage them. When you face trouble in this world, Jesus still cares and wants to comfort you too. He says to keep these things in mind when life gets hard. When we face troubled times:

Things are seldom as big or scary as they seem. Patience and perseverance can make your problems manageable. Prayer is vital, too. After you pray and wait, often it becomes clear what you can do to solve a problem.

Trust God for what you can't understand. He is still in control! Jesus said, "Do not worry about tomorrow" (**Matthew 6:34**). Despite the tempest that may rage around you, Jesus promises peace.

Thought for today: Keep your mind stayed on the one who can give you perfect peace.

Day 26: Following The Shepherd

Read John 10:27

Jesus is the most important and controversial person in all of history. His name stirs up hatred in some people and radical devotion in others. He claimed to be the Son of God, and as a result, every person on earth must decide what to do with Him.

Jesus didn't leave us the option of ignoring Him or washing our hands of the matter. There are really just two choices: believe Him or reject Him. Rejection will result in judgment and eternal separation from God.

As Believers in Christ, we also have to decide what to do with Jesus. Faith in Him isn't just the way to eternal life in heaven; it is also to be our way of life here and now – on earth.

If you believe in Jesus, follow Him. Christ's sheep hear His voice and submit to His leadership. Notice first of all who His sheep are: They are those who hear His voice and follow Him. And when Jesus says, "I know them," this means at least that he knows us by our name; that is, he knows us individually and intimately. We are not some anonymous people who are lost.

Worship Him on your way to work; taking a morning walk; watching a sunrise early in the morning. Share Him with others. They may need to know this wonderful God who rescued you and transformed your life.

Thought for today: Follow the Shepherd.

Day 27: He Gives You Joy

Read Romans 15:13

It is True Joy can only come from God, who fills us not only with Joy, but Peace, the third Fruit of the Spirit. We receive it by trusting in Him. Christians should always find reasons to be joyful. Joy isn't just a smile or a laugh. It comes from deep within and doesn't leave quickly. When we have the Joy of the Lord, we will know it and so will others.

Rejoice with others. Let others have their joy and not bring them down when they are excited about good things. The only thing worse than not having Joy is stealing someone else's Joy. We know all too well, that we also have an adversary who makes it his business to steal our Joy.

Ask God to fill you with His Joy. You may think that joy is automatic, but it is God who fills you with true Joy. God's Word says, "You have not because you do not ask" (John 15:16). God's Holy Spirit produces Joy. We hear common expressions like, he jumped for joy; he is our pride and joy; or I wept for joy. But in the biblical context, Joy is a product of Christ-likeness, and not an emotion (not the same as being happy), which is only temporary.

Seek God through His Word and prayer, and you will receive His Joy.

Thought for today. The devil can't live where Jesus resides.

Day 28-29: Repent

Read Romans 15:13

Do you want to repent? You first have to get fed up, then own up to your sin, and then offer up your life in sacrifice. Finally, you celebrate.

In the story of the prodigal son, it's important to notice the father's response: ***"But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him . . . The father said to his servants, 'Quick! Bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. Bring the fattened calf and kill it. Let's have a feast and celebrate'"*** (Luke 15:20, 22-23 NIV).

The prodigal's father is like your heavenly Father. No matter what you've done, when you come home to God, he wraps you in his love. He gives you his best and says, "All is forgiven! Go get the robe. Go get the shoes. Let's have a feast! My child has returned to me."

You come home to celebration, not condemnation. And God wants you to join him in celebration as you give him your praise. You celebrate your transformation by simply saying, "Thank you, God. Thank you for your grace. Thank you for your love. Thank you for your goodness. I lift up my praise!"

The Bible says in **Psalm 68:4**, ***"Sing to God, sing praises to his name; lift up a song to him . . . his name is the Lord"*** (ESV).

Thought for today: Celebrate what God has done in your life and thank him through song.

February 26, 2020



Ash Wednesday
Remember that you are dust,
and to dust you shall return.

~Ecclesiastes 3:20

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