

VOL. 9

BETWEEN THE LINES

a frontline devotional

DEDICATION

This devotional is
dedicated to all those
who choose to follow
Matthew 6:33 every day.
“Seek First The Kingdom
of God.”

Thank you to our faithful
Youth Staff who, by the power of the Holy
Spirit, poured out of themselves to
complete this amazing devotional as a tool
to equip the body of Christ through
the power of the Word!

...taking it by FORCE!
Paulie & Nikki



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PREFACE

What you'll find in this devotional are revelations that the Holy Spirit has given us for our personal lives. This isn't us talking down to you. These are specific answers that we were seeking from the Lord, principles applied to our lives to change our attitudes, our relationships, our stewardship--mere examples of the revelation you can receive on your own time, talking to the Lord and studying His Word. We're scattering the seed that grew out of those revelations as we pass them on to you. Our hope is that they fall on good ground and produce a spiritual harvest in your life.

Allow these devotionals to ignite a change, because just a small fire from Heaven can consume all your troubles and light up the path for your future. Always be seeking the Lord for answers in your life and be patient, recognizing that He is eager to share His wisdom with you. He almost never answers the way we're expecting, but He always gives the exact answer we need. Be ready for it.

Pursue your purpose in Him,
Anthony B.

ABUNDANTLY; TO THE OVERFLOW OF LIFE!

**“THE THIEF COMES ONLY TO STEAL
AND KILL AND DESTROY. I CAME THAT
THEY MAY HAVE LIFE AND HAVE IT
ABUNDANTLY.”
- JOHN 10:10**

ADDITIONAL READING: JOHN 10:1-18

Take a moment to think about when you asked Jesus to come into your heart... The Savior of the World came to give life to YOU!! Jesus came to give YOU life! In John 10:10, Jesus states “I have come so that they may have life, and have it abundantly. The TLB version reads, “My purpose is to give life in all its fullness.”

You have a Savior that has saved you from the thief that came to steal from your soul, and He gave His abundant life to you. Jesus came to this earth for the purpose of giving you life in abundance and fullness!!! Think on that for a moment: to give YOU a life, here in this day, that is abundant. The definition of abundance is an extremely plentiful and over sufficient quantity or supply. That is a life that is overflowing! Do not think of abundance in only material things, like lots of clothes or the new and best devices. However, think of fullness in ourselves. Not full of yourself (lol), but fullness inside your soul. Your soul is the part of you that is your thoughts, your emotions, and your will. Is there a part of your soul that needs fullness? A function in the Lord's saving grace is to give life to you that is full, not empty. Romans 15:13 says we can have “hope that is overflowing.” Philippians 1:9 says we can have “love that overflows.” That is a soul that is full! Jesus came to make you complete, and He gave us a life without voids; life in abundance! There are times we may “feel” a place in ourselves that is scarce, so take this need to your Savior. Ask Him to show you how full He has made you to be today.

Walk with the King,
Nikki

THE CREATOR

“YOU ARE WORTHY, O LORD, TO
RECEIVE GLORY AND HONOR AND
POWER; FOR YOU CREATED ALL
THINGS, AND BY YOUR WILL
THEY EXIST AND WERE CREATED.”
- REVELATION 4:11

ADDITIONAL READING: PHILIPPIANS
4:19, COLOSSIANS 1:16, ROMANS 4:17,
LUKE 18:27

One of the attributes of God that I am in awe of, is the fact that God is THE CREATOR. When we think of someone who is “creative,” we think of them as being able to put things together in a beautiful or innovative way. But God is greater than that. He doesn’t just gather things that were already made when He creates. He didn’t go and get a big pile of dirt from somewhere in outer space and roll it into a ball when He created the Earth. God created dirt. He created light, air, water, plants, man and animals. It was all created by Him, and it was all perfectly put together. When God designed plants, He created them to take in carbon dioxide, and through the process of photosynthesis, produce oxygen. Then, He created humans and animals to breathe oxygen and release carbon dioxide. It is a perfect design.

What God creates and designs, He fits together perfectly! It really is amazing! God also used His perfect design when He created you. God designed who you are and what you were created for. He knows what you need today, and what you will need in the future. Because God is the Creator, if there’s something you need, He can not only provide it, He can create it! Here are just a few examples of how God specially created something for His people:

·God created a longer day by making the sun stand still so that Joshua and the Israelites could defeat their enemies in a battle. – see Joshua 10:7-14

·God created enough food so that the disciples could feed 5,000 people with 5 loaves of bread and 2 fish - and there were 12 baskets of leftovers! – see Matthew 14:13-21

·God created a pathway for Moses and the Israelites to escape the Egyptian Army through the Red Sea – see Exodus 14:15-22

If you find yourself beginning to stress because you can't see how you will have what you need, don't lose sight of the fact that God is the Creator. Just because you can't see it, and even if it is humanly impossible, it doesn't mean God cannot provide it. God doesn't need something that already exists or is even humanly possible to bring you His provision. As Creator, He can create and design what you need and bring it into existence!

Be salt and light,
Miss Dawn

GOD GOES TOO

“BUT THE PERSON WHO IS UNITED TO THE LORD BECOMES ONE SPIRIT WITH HIM.”

- 1 CORINTHIANS 6:17

ADDITIONAL READING: 1 JOHN 4:4,
PHILIPPIANS 4:13

If you have joined yourself to God by receiving Jesus as your Lord and Savior, everywhere you go today God goes too.

As a believer you need to start becoming more conscious of that. You need to train yourself to be constantly aware of God inside of you, talking to you, teaching you, helping you, empowering you, and enduring with you Himself.

We need to remind ourselves that we are one spirit with Him. That means every time we face a problem, every time you face an evil spirit that tries to influence and hinder your life, God is facing it too. When you meet those things, remember and be encouraged that God is with you and that He has already overcome them!

Confession for today: “I am united to the Lord and I have become one spirit with Him. Everywhere I go today God goes, because God is in me. The power and wisdom of God is in me and I have the victory of God in me.” [Say that to yourself throughout each day, and develop a habit of thinking that way... I believe if you do, you will get an awareness of the reality of God living in you].

Stay Connected
Mr. George

GOD, THE ULTIMATE BLANKET

“GOD IS OUR REFUGE AND STRENGTH, AN EVER-
PRESENT HELP IN TROUBLE.”

- PSALM 46:1

“UNDER HIS WINGS, SHALL YOU TRUST AND FIND
REFUGE.”

- PSALM 91:4

ADDITIONAL READING: 2 CORINTHIANS 1:3-4

The Lord is our blanket! I know many of us growing up had a blanket, or I’m sure most of us called it our ‘blankie’ when we were toddlers. What did this blankie represent? It represented comfort, peace, had a calming effect on us, and was very familiar. Where would you bring this blankie? You would bring it everywhere you went, right? Because no matter what unfamiliar place you went, doctors’ offices, school, or relatives’ houses, you knew all you had to do was hold on or wrap yourselves in your blankie and everything would be okay when things became scary or unfamiliar! This is the same when it comes to God and His Holy Spirit that He sent to comfort us! God is the ultimate blanket or blankie. He will never leave us nor forsake us, and He is the same yesterday, today and forever! When things start to come up in our lives that are uneasy, unfamiliar, or even intimidating to deal with or approach, we must grab on to God’s Word and wrap it around us. Use the Word, your prayer life, and your time in worship as a blanket to comfort you! Read the tales in the Bible as testimonies that God never abandons His people!

Now, most of us that can read this devotion most likely no longer have our blankie... at least I hope, in the natural. Let’s parallel this with growing in our faith and being able to comfort others as we get older in the spirit. As we get older, we might not need the blanket as much. We learn that these situations that you faced as a child have been taken care of and are not as bad as you thought. From these lessons, you can then turn around and comfort others in times of distress because you know a God who takes care of all our needs, desires, and troubles (2 Corinthians scripture above). God is there for you. As you grow and advance yourself in the spirit, be open to the Holy Spirit directing you to help and save the lost and dying world around.

Confession for today: “Lord, you are my refuge and my comforter in times of trouble. No matter what revolts against me today I will prevail because you take care of your righteous!”

God is good... all the time... all the time...

Joey

FILLED WITH POWER

“FOR HE WAS A GOOD MAN [GOOD IN HIMSELF AND ALSO AT ONCE FOR THE GOOD AND THE ADVANTAGE OF OTHER PEOPLE], FULL OF AND CONTROLLED BY THE HOLY SPIRIT AND FULL OF FAITH (OF HIS BELIEF THAT JESUS IS THE MESSIAH, THROUGH WHOM WE OBTAIN ETERNAL SALVATION). AND A LARGE COMPANY WAS ADDED TO THE LORD.”
- ACTS 11:20-24

You are filled with the power of the Living God! Do not let the enemy put any doubt in your heart about who you are in Jesus and who Jesus is in you! In these scripture verses, Barnabas was called a man who was full of and controlled by the Holy Spirit and full of faith. If you have accepted Christ as your Lord and Savior, you too have the same power as Barnabas and all the faithful men from the book of Acts.

Remind yourself of the following verses when the who, what, when, where, and how questions start to come, and the enemy tries to tell you that you are not strong enough or good enough to be used by God. Questions like... Who am I to speak? What can I do or say to change that situation? When will I know it's time to speak out? Where will the words come from? How can I speak into that persons life? You need to answer each question with the Word that tells you "who" you are in Christ:

Matthew 5:13-14 (AMPC) - “You are the salt of the earth, but if salt has lost its taste (its strength, its quality), how can its saltiness be restored? It is not good for anything any longer but to be thrown out and trodden underfoot by men.”

Acts 1:8 (AMPC) - “But you shall receive power (ability, efficiency, and might) when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you shall be My witnesses in Jerusalem and all Judea and Samaria and to the ends (the very bounds) of the earth.”

Matthew 10:19 (AMPC) - “But when they deliver you up, do not be anxious about how or what you are to speak; for what you are to say will be given you in that very hour and moment.”

John 14:16 (AMPC) - “And I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Comforter (Counselor, Helper, Intercessor, Advocate, Strengtheners, and Standby), that He may remain with you forever.”

Purpose in your heart that you are going to allow your life to be used today as the Light of Jesus, and bring change to a dark world!

Confession for today: “Lord, help me today to realize with boldness that I have already been filled with the power of the Holy Spirit, and because of this power I can boldly speak the Word into every situation in my life that I need to see a change take place!”

Seek Him First!
Paulie

KEEP THE WORD CENTRAL

**“... WHO SET ASIDE THE WORD OF GOD, THEREBY
DEPRIVING IT OF FORCE, AUTHORITY AND
MAKING IT TO NO EFFECT.”
- MATTHEW 15:6**

The words force and authority stood out to me in this scripture when I read it the other day. I have been all the more aware of the moments when the enemy might distract me to the point where I consider the mighty nature of the Word of God as secondary to what my five senses are perceiving. A definition of aside is, “away from one’s thoughts or consideration, or away from some position or direction.” The Word is the most powerful tool that we have as believers to utilize. It is a sword to wield, a declaration, a battle cry, and in Psalms it says the Lord has exalted it above His Name. Let this be a call today to you and I to keep the Word in its rightful place in our every moment: central in our hearts, minds, and on our lips.

Regardless of what we are facing, the Sword of the Spirit, the Word of God, has a precise mark to hit as we speak it. As we exercise use of the Word in faith, it has great force against any adversary. Force is defined as “strength or power exerted on an object.” We can exert force against and upon every situation, and not be steamrolled by circumstance. I am so thankful today that the battle is not ours and the solution is not ours to discover. The Lord gives us wisdom to act, to speak and to respond, but this has nothing to do with our flesh and everything to do with His Spirit leading us. When we confess the Word, we apply a force, the same force that created the universe, to our situation. Authority is defined as “the power to determine and settle issues and disputes; the right to control and command.” The authority we have been given is the same that Jesus had when He walked on earth! It is the power to settle and command in the Name of Jesus and according to His will.

Be encouraged today to keep central the Word of God, so it can have its mighty effect in your life. Others will see and experience the nature of the force and authority that the Living Word of God has!

Your sister in Christ,
Niki

NOAH, A JUST MAN

“SO THE LORD SAID I WILL DESTROY MAN WHOM I CREATED, FROM THE FACE OF THE EARTH - BOTH MAN AND BEAST AND CREEPING THINGS AND THE BIRDS OF THE SKY. FOR I AM SORRY THAT I HAVE MADE THEM, BUT NOAH FOUND GRACE IN THE EYE OF THE LORD.”
- GENESIS 6:7 & 8

One of the meanest, most damaging lies that the devil ever told was that you are not important. Don't ever believe that lie- YOU ARE IMPORTANT.

Every born again child of God has a part to play in God's plan. God has something for you to do that no one else can do like you can. If you don't take your place and do your part, things just won't be quite right. You may be thinking that you are just one person. What could I possibly do that could be so significant? Read Genesis Chapter 6 and see how one obedient person named Noah saved His family from destruction.

Noah didn't live and do what everyone else was doing at that time. God had spoken to him by faith. He obeyed, and because of that he ended up being the only thing that stood between mankind being totally destroyed.

The next time you are tempted to shrug off the instructions of God and be disobedient, or think what you do doesn't matter, remember Noah. God is counting on you to carry out your part of His plan, whether you understand it or not, because you are an important part in the Kingdom of God...You truly are!

Confession for today: “In the Name of Jesus, Holy Spirit please show me the importance of my life in the Kingdom of God. Help me to take my rightful place and carry out the plans God has for me. Help me not to follow the distractions of this world, but be focused on the plans that God has for me. Amen”

Stay Connected
Mr. George

COMPLACENCY

“THEN DAVID SPOKE TO THE MEN WHO WERE
STANDING BY HIM, 'WHAT WILL BE DONE FOR THE
MAN WHO KILLS THIS PHILISTINE AND REMOVES
THE DISGRACE [OF HIS TAUNTING] FROM ISRAEL?
FOR WHO IS THIS UNCIRCUMCISED PHILISTINE
THAT HE HAS TAUNTED AND DEFIED THE ARMIES
OF THE LIVING GOD?'”
- 1 SAMUEL 17:26

ADDITIONAL READING: 1 SAMUEL 17

Now we all know the story of David and Goliath. Basically this teenager, David, beat the Philistine's champion, Goliath, and led Israel to a great victory. Now what most of us don't realize is that Goliath had been taunting the Israelites for forty days. Over the course of those forty days, the Israelites became complacent within Goliath's disrespect of God and them. Comfort and safety was of high value to the soldiers. The soldiers chose personal safety over the glory of God. The soldiers lived in fearful inaction, while Goliath actively and repeatedly issued his “usual defiance” against them and their God. They weren't asked to step out of comfort once, but many times. Every time they were asked in the 40 days, they chose comfort over God's Glory.

Not only were the Israelite soldiers complacent, but their King Saul was complacent as well. As the king, it was Saul's responsibility to lead his soldiers into battle as well as defend the name of the Lord. Saul's inaction trickled down to his soldiers, which allowed Goliath to continue his mockery for so long. Saul's complacency also had more personal effects. Saul's complacency helped paved the way for David to be king.

It's important to ask ourselves who we are most like in this story. Are we like the soldiers, allowing other people's decisions and complacency to influence our own? Are we like Saul, allowing our own complacency to make us lose out on what God has given to us? Are we like David, immediately moving into action to seek to defeat our enemies? We have to move out of our complacency and be secure in the knowledge of God's protection, and run unafraid into the battle zone.

Love and Nuggs,
Amanda

WHERE IS YOUR F.A.I.T.H? (PART 1)

“FIXING OUR EYES ON JESUS, THE PIONEER AND PERFECTER OF FAITH. FOR THE JOY SET BEFORE HIM HE ENDURED THE CROSS, SCORNING ITS SHAME, AND SAT DOWN AT THE RIGHT HAND OF THE THRONE OF GOD.”
- HEBREWS 12:2

ADDITIONAL READING: MATTHEW 10:39

There are times in life where you may begin questioning your faith in God. I remember a period of my life where I was struggling with my faith in God as my creator. It wasn't that I didn't believe that He was the Creator of all things, I doubted His purpose for creating me. I felt purposeless, unworthy, and distant from God. I was struggling and felt like I was failing in my walk of faith. Ultimately, these feelings of inadequacy about myself turned to doubt. Doubt came in because I was looking for a place to focus my frustration. These feelings of doubt and frustration were something I battled for a long time and I knew something had to change. It was during some quiet time, while I was preparing to share at youth that I finally asked the Holy Spirit why this was such a struggle. He gave me this acronym for Faith:

- F**ocus– A center of activity, attraction, or attention
- A**ction– The accomplishment of a thing, usually over a period of time
- I**nseparability– Seemingly always together; very intimate
- T**rust– Assured reliance on the character, ability, strength, or truth of someone or something
- H**unger– A strong desire

At the point in my life when I was struggling with my faith in God as my creator, I was shown so clearly that my focus was on the wrong thing. Even in my desire to seek God for help, I was focused on my feelings and not on the true character of God. I had to take the time to reset my focus so that I could truly come to see that I was created in the image of God. There are still times in my life where those feelings of inadequacy and doubt try to steal my focus. It is in those moments that the Holy Spirit reminds me to reset. If you are struggling with your faith in God as your creator, take some time today to hit the reset button. Focus your attention on Jesus, the perfecter of your faith!

Find peace in His embrace,
Jasmine

DO EVERYTHING AS UNTO THE LORD

“SO WHETHER YOU EAT OR DRINK OR WHATEVER YOU DO, DO IT ALL FOR THE GLORY OF GOD.”
- 1 CORINTHIANS 10:31

“WHATEVER YOU DO, WORK AT IT WITH ALL OF YOUR HEART, AS WORKING FOR THE LORD, NOT FOR HUMAN MASTERS.”
- COLOSSIANS 3:23

Now I know everyone loves to get up Monday morning and head off to work or school! You show up with a huge smile on your face and leap for joy as the homeroom bell rings or as you punch in...most likely not! But what we must remember is that God wants everything we do to be unto the Lord, SO HE CAN BLESS IT! God is not going to bless complaining and lack of effort! This is something that was implemented into my life at a young age through my parents. I always saw my dad doing everything to perfection, whether it be ironing his shirt for the job or changing the brakes on his car on the weekend. It seemed to me that my dad always did things with a spirit of excellence. I asked him one day when I was young, why! Doesn't it stink to go to work or change the brakes on your car? He said, "Yeah sometimes it does, but the Lord can't bless that time or effort unless you do it with a spirit of excellence." This statement hit me like a ton of bricks and changed my mindset on school, work, and any daily activity I performed. Maybe this is why I try so hard in youth group sports... I am unsure still. Hahaha.

Defining excellence - The quality of being outstanding or extremely good. God wants you to do everything in your life extremely well! He wants you to take on each day with the best effort and attitude you can, SO HE CAN BLESS YOU! It doesn't matter if school is horrible or going to work can be a drag, you have to do it no matter what, so you might as well do it with a spirit of excellence! Having this spirit of excellence will not only help your emotions throughout the day, but it will enhance your performance, too. When this occurs, it will open doors for promotions, scholarships, and elevation in your life physically as well as spiritually! Think of it as if you are doing it for God! Taking a test for God, making a sandwich at work for God, writing an essay for God, holding a meeting at work for God... you get the idea. He is right there watching, so do it as unto God always!

Prayer starter: “God help me to have a spirit of excellence in everything I do especially in _____.”

God is good... all the time... all the time...
Joey

"WHY DO YOU SLEEP, O LORD?"

PSALM 44:23 - "AWAKE! WHY DO YOU SLEEP, O LORD?
AROUSE YOURSELF, CAST US NOT OFF FOREVER!"

MATTHEW 8:24, 25 - "AND SUDDENLY, BEHOLD, THERE
AROSE A VIOLENT STORM ON THE SEA, SO THAT THE
BOAT WAS BEING COVERED UP BY THE WAVES; BUT HE
WAS SLEEPING. AND THEY WENT AND AWAKENED HIM,
SAYING, LORD, RESCUE AND PRESERVE US! WE ARE
PERISHING!"

MARK 4:38 - "JESUS WAS IN THE STERN, SLEEPING ON
A CUSHION. THE DISCIPLES WOKE HIM AND SAID TO
HIM, 'TEACHER, DON'T YOU CARE IF WE DROWN?'"

PSALM 78:65 - "THEN THE LORD AWAKENED AS FROM
SLEEP, AS A STRONG MAN WHOSE CONSCIOUSNESS OF
POWER IS HEIGHTENED BY WINE."

We might come to a point in our walk with God where we feel like saying, "God, why aren't you intervening in this craziness? Why are you sleeping? Don't you care about us?"

God's reply is simple, "Why aren't you resting in my presence like I told you? Where on earth do you think your strength comes from? Nowhere on earth! It comes from resting in MY presence! You think you need to struggle at a time when you really need to rest, and you grow lax at a time when you need to pursue Me even deeper. Nothing earthly can give you the strength you need for your life. Only My presence can strengthen you. Only My right hand can uphold you! Come to Me and I will give you rest."

Even King David didn't have the strength within himself to solve his problem in 1 Samuel 30. He was robbed of all he had, including his family! But the Word says, "he found strength in His God." All the men around David reacted to the situation in their own way: blaming David for what happened and planning to kill him. But David did not react. By not reacting, he was able to lean on the Lord for what he needed. Sometimes, the hardest thing for us to do is stop ourselves from reacting. But in tough situations that are more than we can handle, that's our only job. Don't react to the situations around you! React to what God has done. React to His love and His goodness to you. React to Who He is and all that He's poured into your life. You don't have to take control, because the Lord is not sleeping. He's right by your side, waiting for you to let Him step in.

Pursue your purpose in Him,
Anthony B.

SPIRITUAL STAMINA

“LET US RUN WITH ENDURANCE AND ACTIVE PERSISTENCE THE RACE THAT IS SET BEFORE US.”

- HEBREWS 12:1

Definition of endurance: The fact or power of enduring an unpleasant or difficult process or situation without giving way.

I have never been a fan of going for a run or jog. It always seemed so boring to me. Why run just to run? Even when I ran in high school with my lacrosse teammates during conditioning training, it felt so aimless and arbitrary. But I sure was thankful for all of those early mornings and late night runs with the team once the season actually started. Even though at the time it just felt like I was running for no reason, my body was gaining endurance and stamina. When it came time to play I was able to stay in the game as long as the coach needed me to.

Similarly, in the spirit we need to be ready in and out of season [2 Timothy 4:2] and maintain our stamina, so that when things get tough we don't give in to the lies of the enemy. Hebrews 12:1 describes endurance as “active persistence.” I love that description because sometimes we may find ourselves just going through the motions in our walk with the Lord, especially when there isn't something challenging us. We have to make a choice to be active in the spirit and pursue God; pursue a relationship with Him. That way when trouble does come, which it always will because of the sinful world that we live in, we can stand firm through the trial without giving way. What's even better is that in James 1:3 it says that “the testing of our faith produces endurance,” so as we persevere through trials, we grow in our faith and gain more endurance!

Confession for today: “Dear heavenly Father, thank you for another day to live for You. Please forgive me if I have become lax in my pursuit of a relationship with You. Help me kick it up a notch in the spirit so that I can be ready for whatever comes my way and stand firm against the attacks of the enemy, in Jesus' name, amen.”

Let your light shine,
Bre

DON'T WASTE TIME WONDERING

**“THEREFORE DO NOT BE FOOLISH, BUT
UNDERSTAND WHAT THE LORD’S WILL IS.”
- EPHESIANS 5:17**

Have you ever wondered about whether or not you were praying in agreement with what God desires for you? You would be absolutely right if you thought that you cannot expect God to do something that is opposite of what He wants for you.

The best way for you to find out what He wants for you is to grab your Bible and study what God wants for you!

God has made some very specific promises in His Word, and it is His desire to fulfill every one of them in your life. Think of it this way, your Bible is a record of all that God has for you. Everything that He has given to you has been written down in that book. So, the smartest thing you can do is find out what’s in it. Don’t leave it shut so that when you get into a bind you hit your knees, crying for God to help you because you don’t know what He wants you to do. Rather, get your Bible out and find out what His promises are to you. Find out how you need to change to be in agreement with what is written there – because His Word is His Will!

Many people don’t do that. They try to change God’s plans instead of changing their own plan, but God will never change. His Word says that He is the same yesterday, today, and forever and so are His plans for you. So don’t waste time wondering if your prayers are in line with what God wants. Get in the Book and base your prayers on it. Then get ready - the answer is on the way.

Confession for today: “I will not be foolish and I will understand and know what the Lord’s will is for me by studying His Word.” Remember, your words are powerful weapons!!

Hugs,
Miss Lois

ROSE COLORED GLASSES

“FINALLY, BROTHERS, WHATEVER IS TRUE,
WHATEVER IS HONORABLE, WHATEVER IS JUST,
WHATEVER IS PURE, WHATEVER IS LOVELY,
WHATEVER IS COMMENDABLE, IF THERE IS ANY
EXCELLENCE, IF THERE IS ANYTHING WORTHY
OF PRAISE, THINK ABOUT THESE THINGS.”
- PHILIPPIANS 4:8

What if we thought about all that is around us as favorable, good, and being lovely? If we take a pair of rose colored glasses and put them on, seeing everything as positive, that is what we would see. You can make a typical day turn from dull and diluted to energetic and enriched by how we are looking at it. If you meditate on Philippians 4:8, you can see life this way.

This can be hard when situations are adverse or difficult. Maybe there is an issue taking place that has been hurtful over and over again, or you are facing a continual crisis. How can we say this is a good thing when we are struggling? Make a decision toward a positive outlook. Flip an unfavorable situation to see how God may use it (Romans 8:28) by saying, “Lord, this situation is devastating, but I am giving it to you to make something beautiful from what is ugly.” In troublesome times it is extremely challenging to think about things that are good, but as we put on the Holy Spirit’s glasses we will see the circumstance is in the process is becoming lovely. We can learn about ourselves from this process because when we feel weak, He is strong (2 Corinthians 12:9). Maybe we will understand more about God’s love and faithfulness through it, that He never leaves us (Psalm 46:1-3). This will bring spiritual growth or maturing to our lives by walking through it, so we are no longer immature in our attitude (Ephesians 4:11-16).

Seeing how God is molding us in our lives will cause us to see each situation in lives how God sees it, which is excellent!

Walk with the King...
Nikki

GETTING TO KNOW GOD

“BUT WITHOUT FAITH IT IS IMPOSSIBLE TO PLEASE AND BE SATISFACTORY TO HIM. FOR WHOEVER WOULD COME NEAR TO GOD MUST [NECESSARILY] BELIEVE THAT GOD EXISTS AND THAT HE IS THE REWARDER OF THOSE WHO EARNESTLY AND DILIGENTLY SEEK HIM [OUT].”
- HEBREWS 11:6

ADDITIONAL READING: ROMANS 10:17, MATTHEW 17:20, & HEBREWS 11:1-40

In Hebrews 11:6, it tells us that in order to draw near to God and have a relationship with him, we need to understand and conform to three very specific criteria.

First, we need faith, because without faith it is impossible to please God! But what is faith? (Read Hebrews 11:1) Where does it come from? (Read Romans 10:17) How can we apply faith to our lives? (Read Hebrews 11:1-40) I have always loved reading Hebrews 11 in its entirety. It is a very powerful chapter in the Bible that proudly lists the great men and women of the Old Testament who held firm to their faith in God. If you want to know more about what faith can accomplish, read Hebrews 11 in the New Testament, and then find and study each of those accounts in more detail in the Old Testament! Build your faith!

The second criteria necessary for us to have a relationship with God is to believe that He exists, which takes faith! How can we have a relationship with someone if they aren't real? If this is an issue for you, spend time in the Word and in prayer every day, and never miss an opportunity to attend church or to have godly fellowship with believers! Increase your faith to believe THAT GOD IS!

Lastly, Hebrews 11:6 says that it isn't enough to just believe THAT GOD IS, but also to believe WHO HE IS! We need to understand the nature of God.

Recently, I had a conversation with someone who was raised Catholic. They told me that their idea of God was that He was always watching, ready to strike with lightning and brimstone if they ever did anything wrong. They had a false perception of WHO GOD IS! Then 40 years ago, a Christian friend of theirs explained to them that we serve a loving God who desires to know us intimately and have a personal relationship with each and every one of us. This conversation changed this person's life, and put them on a path of building a long lasting relationship with God, which has lasted 40 years and is still going strong!

What is the state of our faith? Do we believe THAT GOD IS? Do we understand WHO GOD IS? The answers to these 3 questions are what define our walk and relationship with Him. Are we investing our time wisely in answering these questions and in getting to know God?

Fight the good fight of faith!
Jamie

THE BURDEN OF CHANGE

“LORD, MY HEART IS NOT HAUGHTY, NOR MY EYES LOFTY; NEITHER DO I EXERCISE MYSELF IN MATTERS TOO GREAT OR IN THINGS TOO WONDERFUL FOR ME.”

- PSALM 131:1-3

Many people refuse to face the Truth in their lives because they think that if they admit that their actions are frowned upon by an all-powerful Creator, they would have to change who they are, their inward selves...but that kind of change has never been the job of humanity. Deep, inward change is really only made possible through Christ's sacrifice and intimacy with the Holy Spirit. There are some things you just can't will into existence. It's the Lord's responsibility to change us from the inside out, not ours. This is why so many have a hard time admitting to sin in the first place. They know they couldn't bear the responsibility of changing their sinful impulses, so why bother trying? Might as well just accept sin for what it is and move on. And in a way they're right. That is logic and reason. Without God, they have nothing but that.

Today, we see the natural progression of this acceptance-logic: tolerance of sin, giving birth to celebration of it (as Ted Shuttlesworth Jr. pointed out). If only people would recognize that it's Christ's responsibility to change them--He actually bore their burden on the Cross!--then perhaps their sins would be easier to confess before the Lord.

This is why it's so important for us to understand what behaviors we're not able to change by sheer willpower. When urges creep up to try to make us act against what we know the Word says, recognize that sin-impulse for what it is! It's something humanity has no power over, and the enemy wants us to wear ourselves out trying to overcome it so that we throw our hands up and say, "What's the use?"

But we won't wear out when we understand that the burden of change falls on Christ, because He took it on the Cross. He said, "Come to me all who are weary and overburdened and you will find rest for your souls." We get so overburdened trying to overcome, or even just "live with" our shortcomings. But our sense of duty and responsibility should lie not in changing ourselves or just living with it.

Our duty lies in coming to Christ, accepting the Truth for what it is, committing to that quiet time alone with Him, and letting Him into our hearts to make the change as we find rest and peace in Him. If a month goes by, or a year goes by, or God-forbid years go by, and it doesn't seem like those sinful impulses have subsided, then you've neglected to give Him that consistent, quality time you need.

Remove all distractions from your quiet time and submit to His still, small voice.

Pursue your purpose in Him,
Anthony B.

PURSUE GOOD

“...SO RUN FROM ALL THESE EVIL THINGS.
PURSUE RIGHTEOUSNESS AND A GODLY LIFE,
ALONG WITH FAITH, LOVE, PERSEVERANCE,
AND GENTLENESS.”

- 1 TIMOTHY 6:11

ADDITIONAL READING: 1 CORINTHIANS 10:13,
EPHESIANS 6:10, ROMANS 8:1

God’s Word tells us that we are to run away from things that are evil and pursue, or run after, things that are good. So, what do you do when you find yourself running after the wrong things?

Remove anything from your life that draws your attention away from God.

Does that mean you have to get rid of your phone, your television, and your computer? Not necessarily. But, you may have to remove songs or apps from your phone, or turn off a show or movie that is causing you to meditate on the wrong things. Wrong thinking leads to wrong actions. What you think, you will become (see Proverbs 23:7) so remember that if you want to pursue the right things, you’ll have to focus your attention on the right things.

Understand that God still loves you when you make a mistake.

When we make mistakes, it doesn’t cause God to stop loving us. God brings conviction so that you will turn to Him and repent, because He loves you and wants you to break free from sin. Condemnation will discourage you and make you feel like God doesn’t love you. It makes you feel hopeless and it will keep drawing you back to the sin that makes you feel condemned in the first place. God will empower you to overcome sin, so don’t allow condemnation to keep you from turning to Him to receive His love and forgiveness.

Never look back.

Once you have removed wrong influences, repented from sin, and received God's forgiveness, don't turn back to sin. Keep feeding your spirit with God's Word, prayer, and worship. The stronger your spirit becomes, the more power you'll have to overcome the sinful nature of your flesh. Remember, what you feed will lead! Keep your spirit well fed, so that your flesh isn't able to take the lead.

God will always make a way of escape when we are tempted. So when you are presented with an opportunity to sin, look for the way out. Don't just walk away from sin, run from it!

Confession for today: "Father, I am sorry for going after things I know are not pleasing to You. I ask You to help me to remove anything from my life that is leading me away from You. Forgive me and make me clean. Thank you for loving me and giving me the power to walk away, giving me an escape from every temptation. Help me, by Your power to run from things that are evil in Jesus' name."

Be salt and light,
Miss Dawn

WHERE OUR STEPS FALL DETERMINES WHO IS CONFRONTING ATTACKS AGAINST US

“ARISE, O LORD! CONFRONT AND FORESTALL
THEM, CAST THEM DOWN! DELIVER MY LIFE
FROM THE WICKED BY YOUR SWORD.”
- PSALM 17:13

As our steps are held closely to His paths, we can be sure that the Lord hears us when we call upon Him. He inclines His ear and hears our speech. He keeps, guards, and hides us in His shadow from everything that rises up against us (Psalm 17:5-8). When we lift up a prayer for deliverance from what is besetting us, we can be sure that The Lord hears and moves on our behalf.

Sometimes what tries to beset us is inner turmoil: confusion, a lack of peace, weariness, or discouragement. At times, the emotional realm pitches a tent in our souls and manifests as sadness, anxiety, anger, etc. We all have also experienced external schemes of the enemy against us, coming in the form of a person, a specific plan of the enemy, an attack against our health, our finances, our property, or our family. With any of these things that try to enclose on the believer comes a declaration, a banner that we can hold up that says this ungodly thing cannot remain, because I am a citizen of heaven (Acts 22:25) and have rights purchased by the Blood of Jesus Christ!

We do not face attacks alone, but Almighty God is here in our midst, waiting for the extension of faith and confession of His Word, so that He can fight our battle for us. The Lord confronts and forestalls every demonic manifestation that tries to form against us. As those devices dissipate under the power of the Lord, we are people who stand for what is noble, and devise noble things on our righteous path (Isaiah 32:8). These noble plans are inspired by the Holy Spirit and bring about His plan and blessings over our lives. There is no room for wickedness when our steps hug and cling firmly to His paths!

Your sister in Christ,
Niki

WHAT AREAS AREN'T YOU FEEDING IN YOUR LIFE?

“THEN HE TOLD THIS PARABLE: ‘A MAN HAD A FIG TREE GROWING IN HIS VINEYARD, AND HE WENT TO LOOK FOR FRUIT ON IT BUT DID NOT FIND ANY. SO HE SAID TO THE MAN WHO TOOK CARE OF THE VINEYARD, ‘FOR THREE YEARS NOW I’VE BEEN COMING TO LOOK FOR FRUIT ON THIS FIG TREE AND HAVEN’T FOUND ANY. CUT IT DOWN! WHY SHOULD IT USE UP THE SOIL?’”

- LUKE 13:6-7

I always wondered why Jesus told this parable and then basically left it unexplained, until recently when I heard a message by T.D. Jakes regarding this fig tree. What Bishop Jakes said was that God created the earth and everything in it to operate in cycles or seasons. We all know about the cycle of precipitation and condensation that occurs on earth and we know that the clouds let down water as rain but the earth sends water back up to the clouds as vapor. Bishop Jakes points out that plants operate by a similar principle; the soil provides nutrients to the plants and in return the plants grow, bear fruit, and give back in many ways to the soil. In this verse, the fig tree represents an entity that is going against God’s cycle. Three years without fruit suggests that the tree just continually takes from the soil and never gives anything in return. Jesus was showing us that we have to identify these things in our lives and deal with them. What I have been looking at in my life since hearing this message is what are the areas, situations, or people that are sowing into me that I am not giving back to? Am I being sown into by God, family, or friends and ignoring my duty to follow God’s cycle and sow into them?

Take action:

Can you identify areas in your life that you aren’t feeding but have been feeding you?

What can you do to give attention to those areas/people?

Believing with you,
Yvonne

TREASURES IN HEAVEN

“DO NOT GATHER AND HEAP UP AND STORE UP FOR YOURSELVES TREASURES ON EARTH, WHERE MOTH AND RUST AND WORM CONSUME AND DESTROY, AND WHERE THIEVES BREAK THROUGH AND STEAL. BUT GATHER AND HEAP UP AND STORE FOR YOURSELVES TREASURES IN HEAVEN, WHERE NEITHER MOTH NOR RUST NOR WORM CONSUME AND DESTROY, AND WHERE THIEVES DO NOT BREAK THROUGH AND STEAL; FOR WHERE YOUR TREASURE IS, THERE WILL YOUR HEART BE ALSO. THE EYE IS THE LAMP OF THE BODY. SO IF YOUR EYE IS SOUND, YOUR ENTIRE BODY WILL BE FULL OF LIGHT. BUT IF YOUR EYE IS UNSOUND, YOUR WHOLE BODY WILL BE FULL OF DARKNESS. IF THEN THE VERY LIGHT IN YOU [YOUR CONSCIENCE] IS DARKENED, HOW DENSE IS THAT DARKNESS!”

- MATTHEW 6:19-23

After reading these verses I want you to ask yourself a few questions today:

Where are your thoughts coming from?

What do you think about the most?

Are your thoughts heavenly minded or earthly minded?

What are you seeking... the things of earth or the things of heaven?

Where is your heart...is it focused on earth or focused on heaven?

The concern of Jesus in this passage is the effects that money, possessions, and material things can have, which will all cause a man to lose his soul. We have to understand that nothing on this earth is secure or lasts because it all ages, decays, and wastes away the moment we get our hands on it. Earthly possessions and things of this earth are all what the Bible calls temporal and corruptible, but what Jesus has to offer is permanent and eternal. Christ's desire for us is to center our lives around Him and heaven so we can have life and security with Him for all eternity. Like I talked about in the devotional earlier this month: where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. We must make a conscious effort everyday to not be concerned so much with earthly things, but instead be focused on growing in our spiritual walk daily.

Confession for today: “Holy Spirit, help me be heavenly and spiritually minded on a daily basis so I do not allow the things of this world to control any part of my life. Lord, give me the ability to keep my focus on the things of the spirit and not get caught up in the ways of the world that will never last forever like my walk with You will!”

Seek Him First!

Paulie

DO ALL THINGS

“I CAN DO ALL THINGS THROUGH CHRIST WHO
STRENGTHENS ME.”
- PHILIPPIANS 4:13

During the summer of 2001, a then 13-year-old Steph Curry had a terrible game at the AAU national championships in Tennessee. In Curry’s mind, he was terrible, not big enough, strong enough, or quick enough to compete against the best 13-year olds in the country. As he sat in his hotel room, he remembers not even being that upset about it. For Curry, in that moment, his basketball dream was over. But it was also in that moment that his parents (his father Dell played in the NBA) sat him down and gave him the most important talk of his entire life. Here is what they said...

“No one gets to write your story but you. Not some scouts. Not some tournament. Not these other kids who might do this better or that are better. None of those people, and none of those things, gets to be author of your story - just you. So think real hard about it, take your time and then go and write what you want to write, but just know that this story – it’s yours.”

Today, we know Steph Curry as one of the top 5 basketball players in the world. He has this scripture verse written on the side of his sneakers. Even if we don’t know the full extent of Curry’s personal relationship with Jesus, when you research what he has achieved, you have to consider this scripture verse has had a profound effect on his life, as well as the conversation he had with his parents back in the day. In looking at our scripture verse - Paul wrote these words while facing some of the worst trials of his life. Despite the threat of pain and death, he realized that God gives us strength in ways that go beyond the good times and the everything-is-okay moments. And it’s there that we can truly do “all things.” Here are 3 surprising ways this happens:

Through trials - Christ gives us the strength to not only endure the tough times, but also to grow during them. Through contentment - Jesus gives us the strength to see beyond our present circumstances and to trust in Him to provide everything we truly need. Through victory - We can face any situation and be content no matter what happens, because Jesus died on the cross, rose again, and all He accomplished gets credited to our account.

We will live a lifetime and never come close to experience 1% of what Paul endured, but in our every day lives, there will come many moments where it may seem it can't get any tougher. Maybe you will feel like a 13-year old Steph Curry – this is as good as it is going to get, or as good as I will be. In the end, you write your story - through every trial and through every circumstance, where the possibilities are limitless in claiming YOUR victory in doing all things through Jesus!

Confession for today: “Today Jesus, through every trial and circumstance, I will declare victory in Your name to do all things. There is nothing on this day I can't accomplish. I know that my life is filled with potential beyond anything I can image because I give You all the glory and honor.”

Living for Today,
Mr. Tom

WHERE IS YOUR F.A.I.T.H? (PT. 2)

“FOR THIS VERY REASON, ADDING YOUR DILIGENCE [TO THE DIVINE PROMISES], EMPLOY EVERY EFFORT IN EXERCISING YOUR FAITH TO DEVELOP VIRTUE (EXCELLENCE, RESOLUTION, CHRISTIAN ENERGY), AND IN [EXERCISING] VIRTUE [DEVELOP] KNOWLEDGE (INTELLIGENCE).”

- 2 PETER 1:5

ADDITIONAL READING: 2 PETER 1:5-9

Focus– A center of activity, attraction, or attention

Action– The accomplishment of a thing usually over a period of time

Inseparability– Seemingly always together; very intimate

Trust– Assured reliance on the character, ability, strength, or truth of someone or something

Hunger– A strong desire

An important aspect of faith in God is focus. If our hearts aren't focused on the things of God, it is easy for us to stray away from them. One way to gauge what you're focusing on is to evaluate what you spend your time doing. That brings us to our next word in our acronym for faith: Action. The word action is the accomplishment of a thing usually over a period of time. You can have faith in God, but if you aren't putting it to action, you will waste the full potential of its power. There are many examples of people putting their faith into action in the Bible. They focused on the power of God's Word and used their knowledge of it to ignite their faith through God-centered works. In my life, I had to realize the full potential of my faith in God. In my previous example of my struggle with my self-image and faith in God as my creator, I had to realize that over the years I was getting comfortable with struggling in that area. Sometimes I would use my faith to combat it and other times I would just let those feelings wash over me. When we are inconsistent in putting our faith to action, we run the risk of getting comfortable with a life filled with struggle. Don't get comfy with the struggle! Put your faith into action by speaking His Word over yourself, sharing your faith with others, and living a life according to God's Word. As you consistently put your faith into action, you will see growth in many areas of your life and your faith in God will explode!

Find peace in His embrace,
Jasmine

BLOOD EVIDENCE

“BEHOLD! I HAVE GIVEN YOU AUTHORITY AND POWER
TO TRAMPLE UPON SERPENTS AND SCORPIONS, AND
[PHYSICAL AND MENTAL STRENGTH AND ABILITY]
OVER ALL THE POWER THAT THE ENEMY [POSSESSES];
AND NOTHING SHALL IN ANY WAY HARM YOU.”
- LUKE 10:19

Growing up in the church I often heard people say “I plead the blood” while they were praying for someone or encouraging someone who was facing something difficult. I heard it so much that I started saying it without really knowing exactly what it meant. It sounded good and people that I trusted said it, so I did too. At the time I had no idea, but it is a very powerful statement. When a lawyer is pleading their case, they are presenting evidence to support their claim. We are doing the same thing when we plead the blood of Jesus. The blood that He shed on the cross is our evidence and the only evidence that we need to prove that we are no longer guilty. The redemptive power of the blood frees us from our sins, our sickness, our shame, and any other charges that the enemy may try to bring against us. When we plead the blood of Christ we are invoking all of the power and authority that comes with it. Luke 10:19 says that God has given us authority and power over all the power of the enemy. That is why we can stand up against the enemy with confidence and say “nothing shall in any way harm me. I am covered in the blood; now back away from me Satan.” It’s why Satan and all his minions have to obey!

If you don’t already, I would encourage you to plead the blood over yourself and your family every day. Remind the enemy of the authority and power that you have been given through the blood of Christ and command that he stay away.

Confession for today: “God I thank you for making a way so that I could be redeemed from the curse of the law and sin through the precious blood of Jesus. I plead the blood over myself and my family today. I confess Your word as it says in Luke 10:19 that You have given me power and authority over the enemy and that nothing shall harm me or my family. I am covered and protected because of the blood, so enemy you must flee!”

Let your light shine,
Bre

YOUR BROTHER'S KEEPER

“BRETHREN, IF ANY PERSON IS OVERTAKEN IN MISCONDUCT OR SIN OF ANY SORT, YOU WHO ARE SPIRITUAL [WHO ARE RESPONSIVE TO AND CONTROLLED BY THE SPIRIT] SHOULD SET HIM RIGHT AND RESTORE AND REINSTATE HIM, WITHOUT ANY SENSE OF SUPERIORITY AND WITH ALL GENTLENESS, KEEPING AN ATTENTIVE EYE ON YOURSELF, LEST YOU SHOULD BE TEMPTED ALSO. BEAR (ENDURE, CARRY) ONE ANOTHER’S BURDENS AND TROUBLESOME MORAL FAULTS, AND IN THIS WAY FULFILL AND OBSERVE PERFECTLY THE LAW OF CHRIST (THE MESSIAH) AND COMPLETE WHAT IS LACKING [IN YOUR OBEDIENCE TO IT].”

- GALATIANS 6:1-2

When I was in basic training, my favorite part was learning how to read maps and navigating terrain with a map and a compass. NOT!!! Actually, I was terrible at it and I was not the only one. One day, my drill sergeants decided to split us up into groups of 5 and send us out to try to get to a certain point, but using different routes. However, my wonderful drill sergeant put all of us who were struggling to learn the maps in one group. After about 2 hours of playing pass the map to the guy who thinks he knows where he’s going, and climbing half way up a massive mountain, I finally suggested that we stop and regroup. The soldier in my group holding the map at the time said that he believed we needed to go back down the mountain, which we had done twice already, and insisted that if we listened to him in the first place we would not be in this situation. I then asked to look at the map and he said there was no need because he knew what to do. Although everything in me wanted to continue up the mountain on my own, I reluctantly headed back down with the group. When we got to the bottom, I knew we were still lost, and I asked for the map again. I looked at the map and realized that he was looking at the map upside down the whole time. At that very moment my drill sergeant came down the mountain behind us and saw me holding the map upside down and I ended up getting in trouble for leading us wrong the whole day.

Like this situation, there may have been times in the past where you were with friends and going into a situation where something felt off, but you still just went along with it and things ended badly. Sometimes it is hard to speak up when the majority is ready to just go with the flow, but God’s Word says that it is our responsibility to speak up. Galatians 6 says that because we are Spirit-filled, it is our job to bring restoration to those caught in sin. We are not to be overbearing or condescending, but to be gentle and carry each other’s burdens. We must be attentive to ourselves but as brothers and sisters, we are called by God’s Word to have each other's backs as well.

MARKETPLACE

“WHILE PAUL WAS WAITING FOR THEM IN ATHENS, HE WAS GREATLY DISTRESSED TO SEE THAT THE CITY WAS FULL OF IDOLS. SO HE REASONED IN THE SYNAGOGUE WITH BOTH JEWS AND GOD-FEARING GREEKS, AS WELL AS IN THE MARKETPLACE DAY BY DAY WITH THOSE WHO HAPPENED TO BE THERE. A GROUP OF EPICUREAN AND STOIC PHILOSOPHERS BEGAN TO DEBATE WITH HIM. SOME OF THEM ASKED, “WHAT IS THIS BABBLER TRYING TO SAY?” OTHERS REMARKED, “HE SEEMS TO BE ADVOCATING FOREIGN GODS.” THEY SAID THIS BECAUSE PAUL WAS PREACHING THE GOOD NEWS ABOUT JESUS AND THE RESURRECTION.”
- ACTS 17:16-18

In this verse we see that Paul is moved by concern and compassion for the people who were worshiping idols. He began to speak out in their churches and in their streets. He determined to make any area that he could find people in his marketplace for souls. He decided that he would not be confined by the fact that he was an outsider and that the people did not understand what he was trying to say.

A lot of times, this is what holds us back from seeing our surroundings as a marketplace: we fear people’s reactions. But in reality this verse shows us that when Paul set aside any fears he had, he was able to rattle cages and get responses from the people. In this scenario they said he was “advocating foreign gods” and often, people are afraid of what they don’t know. They will act rash and lash out because they fear the unknown.

What we can do in our marketplaces today is show people the peace of God, the joy of God, the compassion of God. This will allow people to come to you without fear, to see you as a symbol of good, and people do not often fear what is good. Think of it this way, if you are in school, have a family, and play a sport, those are three different marketplaces.

Think of each one as a balloon, and in order for you to fulfill your purpose, you need to tie that balloon to the Word of God. What does that mean? It means that you should be praying for and applying the Word to each marketplace you are a part of. Then you will see amazing things happen in your marketplaces.

List your marketplaces:

Now, find a scripture that you can pray and speak about that marketplace daily (Google is a great tool for finding scriptures about specific topics) Write those scriptures below and refer back to this list until you have them memorized!

Believing with you,
Yvonne

PROMISES

“THEN CALEB QUIETED THE PEOPLE BEFORE MOSES AND SAID, “LET US GO UP AT ONCE AND TAKE POSSESSION OF IT; FOR WE WILL CERTAINLY CONQUER IT.” BUT THE MEN WHO HAD GONE UP WITH HIM SAID, “WE ARE NOT ABLE TO GO UP AGAINST THE PEOPLE [OF CANAAN], FOR THEY ARE TOO STRONG FOR US.”
- NUMBERS 13:30-31

According to Merriam-Webster, promise means to pledge to do, bring about, or provide. So when God promised the Israelites the land of Canaan, He was pledging to provide them with that land. The Israelites were all on board with that promise until they decided to listen to a group of men over The Word of the Lord. Everyone knew that Canaan was where the Lord was bringing them. They even sent scouts into the land to see what it was all about. When the spies came back, ten of the twelve gave the rest of the people an “evil report.” They began telling the rest of the Israelites how mighty the people in Canaan were, and how they couldn’t defeat them. Joshua and Caleb kept reminding them of God’s Promise and how He had delivered them up until now, but the Israelites were having none of it. God was not pleased with the Israelites and said, “But as for you, your dead bodies will fall in this wilderness. Your sons shall be wanderers and shepherds in the wilderness for forty years, and they will suffer for your unfaithfulness, until your corpses are consumed in the wilderness. According to the number of days in which you spied out the land [of Canaan], forty days, for each day, you shall bear and suffer a year for your sins and guilt, for forty years, and you shall know My displeasure [the revoking of My promise and My estrangement because of your sin].” The Israelites chose to listen to man instead of believing the Promises of God. As a result, not only did they miss out on God’s promise, they suffered in the desert for forty years. Sometimes we choose to believe the words of man rather than The Word of the Lord. As a result, we miss out on God’s blessing because we chose to put our faith in something else. We must always remember that no matter how well intentioned people are, we must put our faith in God first and foremost. As you go through your week, ask yourself, “am I listening to the Word of the Lord or the Word of Man?”

HE'LL BE LISTENING

“NOW THIS IS THE CONFIDENCE THAT WE HAVE IN HIM, THAT IS WE ASK ANYTHING ACCORDING TO (IN AGREEMENT WITH) HIS WILL, HE HEARS US. AND IF WE KNOW THAT HE HEARS US, “WHATEVER WE ASK, WE KNOW THAT WE HAVE THE PETITIONS THAT WE HAVE ASKED OF HIM.”

- 1 JOHN 5:14, 15

Have you ever been in prayer and suddenly wondered if God was even listening? I would like to show you how to know that God is listening once and for all, but be warned, I am not going to tell you that God will listen to any old doubtful, self-centered prayer that you say to Him. He has only promised to listen to prayers that agree with what the Bible says. The Apostle John says when you pray like that you will know that you have the “petitions” you desire of Him. The word “petition” is defined as, “a formal written request addressed to a sovereign superior,” and that is exactly what you need when you are praying about something serious. How do you put together a solid, Bible-based petition?

First, you will have to roll up your sleeves and dig into the Bible. Find scriptures that apply to your situation and make them the basis for your petition. Second, get in prayer and talk with the Holy Spirit. Let Him help you with the details. The best way to do that is to spend time praying in other tongues (Romans 8:26-27). And remember – He wants you to know what He desires for you. So, while you are praying, listen! Last of all, write it down. Make a formal request by writing down every promise you found. Also, as you are listening to the Holy Spirit for details, write down what He says to you!

Take your time and let the Holy Spirit develop your prayer. Let the truth He gives you begin to work in you. Get your petition firmly in mind. Then, when you are ready, present it to God. After you have presented it to God, be diligent in keeping a guard on your Words...speak only words that come in line with your desires and your petition.

Confession for today: “I have confidence in God, that if I ask anything according to His will, He hears me and I have the petitions I ask of Him.”

Hugs,
Miss Lois

WHO YOU GONNA SERVE?

“NO ONE CAN SERVE TWO MASTERS; FOR EITHER HE WILL HATE THE ONE AND LOVE THE OTHER, OR HE WILL BE DEVOTED TO THE ONE AND DESPISE THE OTHER. YOU CANNOT SERVE GOD AND MAMMON [MONEY, POSSESSIONS, FAME, STATUS, OR WHATEVER IS VALUED MORE THAN THE LORD.”
- MATTHEW 6:24

The Decision - The choice between two kinds of masters is faced by everyone, everyday! We have to choose only one master because when both masters call at the same time, we have to make a choice of who we are going to listen to. We will, by human nature, automatically favor, serve, help, and love one; and while doing so we are disfavoring, rejecting, and showing disrespect and hatred for the other. If we are trying to balance serving God and the world, our flesh will always eventually win; Matthew 26:41 says, “Keep actively watching and praying that you may not come into temptation; the spirit is willing, but the body is weak.”

It's impossible to serve two masters at once, so each day we must make the right choice of who is going to be our master. The choice is clear. We can serve God or allow material things to take over and serve our flesh. There are only two investments we can make: earthly treasure or heavenly treasure, and every man without exception has committed his life to one of these two treasures. The choice we make usually consumes all that we are and all that we think about.

If we choose God as our master, He promises several great things to us in His Word:

All the necessities of life are fulfilled by Him - Matthew 6:33 “But first and most importantly seek (aim at, strive after) His kingdom and His righteousness [His way of doing and being right—the attitude and character of God], and all these things will be given to you also.”

Freedom from anxiety & worry - Philippians 4:6-7 “Do not be anxious or worried about anything, but in everything [every circumstance and situation] by prayer and petition with thanksgiving, continue to make your [specific] requests known to God. And the peace of God [that peace which reassures the heart, that peace] which transcends all understanding, [that peace which] stands guard over your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus [is yours].”

Joy and contentment - John 15:11 “I have told you these things so that My joy and delight may be in you, and that your joy may be made full and complete and overflowing.”

Abundant and eternal life - John 3:16 “For God so [greatly] loved and dearly prized the world, that He [even] gave His [One and] only begotten Son, so that whoever believes and trusts in Him [as Savior] shall not perish, but have eternal life.”

To me the choice is clear who I would want to serve, but we all have to make this choice on our own, so make sure you make the right one today!

Seek Him First!
Paulie

THE OBVIOUS CHOICES

“NOW THE DOINGS (PRACTICES) OF THE FLESH ARE CLEAR (OBVIOUS): THEY ARE IMMORALITY, IMPURITY, INDECENCY, IDOLATRY, SORCERY, ENMITY, STRIFE, JEALOUSY, ANGER (ILL TEMPER), SELFISHNESS, DIVISIONS (DISSENSIONS), PARTY SPIRIT (FACTIONS, SECTS WITH PECULIAR OPINIONS, HERESIES), ENVY, DRUNKENNESS, CAROUSING, AND THE LIKE. I WARN YOU BEFOREHAND, JUST AS I DID PREVIOUSLY, THAT THOSE WHO DO SUCH THINGS SHALL NOT INHERIT THE KINGDOM OF GOD.”
- GALATIANS 5:19-21

As you go through your day, you are constantly faced with choices. From the moment you wake up until the time your head rests back on your pillow, you have to make decisions that change the progression of your day. The choices we as Christians choose to make in a lot of situations may be the exact opposite of the choices those around us decide to make. Are you mindful of the things that come out of your mouth during the day, or do you let the language of those around you dictate your speech? Are you kind to the people around you regardless of their appearance or social status? Do you hang out with people that are known to be bad influences? The answer to all these questions and more like them are obvious, yet sometimes we still decide to make the wrong decisions. The fact of the matter is, as children of God we know better. Galatians 5 tells us that the practices of the flesh are obvious. This means they are not hidden from us. We know what they are and know how and when to stay away from those involved in them. If you find yourself, or others in your circle of friends, giving into these practices of the flesh, it is your responsibility to seek God and with the help of the Holy Spirit examine yourself, so that you may be transformed into the child of God you are called to be. Galatians 5 goes on to say that you are also to support your friends when they find themselves caught in these practices, as well. We are not to look down on them or yell at them for their wrongdoing, but to approach them in love. Spend time with God and in His Word daily. Build up yourself and those around you with the things of the Spirit and turn away from the things of the flesh, and every day the right choices will become easier to make.

Stay Strong and Carry On,
Carrington

IT'S ALIVE

“HE SAID TO THEM, BECAUSE OF THE LITTLENES OF YOUR FAITH [THAT IS, YOUR LACK OF FIRMLY RELYING TRUST]. FOR TRULY I SAY TO YOU, IF YOU HAVE FAITH [THAT IS LIVING] LIKE A GRAIN OF MUSTARD SEED, YOU CAN SAY TO THIS MOUNTAIN, MOVE FROM HERE TO YONDER PLACE, AND IT WILL MOVE; AND NOTHING WILL BE IMPOSSIBLE TO YOU.”

-MATTHEW 17:20

ADDITIONAL READING: HEBREWS 11:1, ROMANS 10:17

Why didn't God go smaller than a 'mustard seed' when describing something in the natural to represent faith? Why didn't He say, "As small as a grain of sand?" The answer is because a mustard seed is the smallest known seed. Seeds represent potential, and most importantly, a seed is alive! God wants us to treat our faith as living! When something is alive it exhibits certain traits; living things develop and grow, they interact with their environment, and they reproduce and spread out from their original source of origin. Our 'living faith' fits all of the above!

When we feed our faith with the truth of God's Word on a daily basis, it WILL develop, it WILL mature, and it WILL grow. Think of faith as if it is a muscle. Muscles require fuel, and they need to be used regularly in order to develop and increase in strength! If we aren't feeding our faith or applying it by actively speaking out good confessions, our 'living faith' will atrophy, wither, and eventually become too weak to be of any use to us. It is up to us to keep our faith fed, active, and strong!

Are we allowing our 'living faith' to interact with the environment around us? Matthew 17:20 tells us that we can move mountains and that nothing is impossible to us!

We as believers, just like the mustard seed, have so much potential within us! But unless we release that potential by applying our ‘living faith’ in the miracle working power of God to accomplish whatever needs to be done, our faith will remain dormant. Don’t let doubt choke out your ‘living faith!’ We should all strive to have a ‘reflex of faith’ as we speak the truth of God’s Word first and foremost over every situation, great or small!

Is our ‘living faith’ reproducing and spreading? Romans 10:17 tells us that faith comes by hearing what is preached from the Word of God. When we share the Gospel, the living Word on the inside of us, it has the power to change the hearts and minds of the people we meet. Through our good witness, we are facilitating the reproduction and spreading of our ‘living faith!’

Don’t waste the potential of your ‘living faith.’ Feed it, develop it, use it, and share it with the world!

Fight the good fight of faith!
Jamie