

Week 32 Daily Devotional

I. Prayer to enter the Lord's presence:

Be still for a moment. "Lord, I give the day that is now past to you. It is yours. I give the day that is to come to you; help me to see where you are working and to join you there. Speak to me during these moments. I commit them and myself to you."

II. Prayer of Confession:

"Lord, you are faithful to forgive me and cleanse me of my sin when I confess it to you. I confess my sin(s) of _____. Thank you for forgiveness." (1 John 1:9)

III. Prayer of Thanksgiving:

Choose to be thankful, speak out loud of what God has done.

"Thank you, Father, for _____. Fill my heart and my mouth with gratitude throughout this day."

IV. Scripture Reflection

Day 1

Read

Matt. 25:31 “When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his throne in heavenly glory. ³² All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. ³³ He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left. “Then the King will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. ³⁵ For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, ³⁶ I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.’ “Then the righteous will answer him, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink?’ ³⁸ When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? ³⁹ When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?’ “The King will reply, ‘I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me.’ “Then he will say to those on his left, ‘Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. ⁴² For I was hungry and you gave me nothing to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, ⁴³ I was a stranger and you did not invite me in, I needed clothes and you did not clothe me, I was sick and in prison and you did not look after me.’ “They also will answer, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or needing clothes or sick or in prison, and did not help you?’ “He will reply, ‘I tell you the truth, whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me.’ “Then they will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life.”

Reflect

This passage does not prescribe the path to salvation it describes the results of salvation. We are not saved by our benevolent actions or lost for lack of such actions. We are saved by grace through faith. The saved person will act in ways that reveal true internal transformation. This transformation will always be revealed in tangible acts of love for others. In this passage the common denominator for those being helped is that they had nothing to offer the giver. So this was no "transaction", no "you scratch my back, I'll scratch yours", it was symbolic of "purer" giving. Giving that marked a changed heart.

Respond

It is unlikely that you have time or opportunity to be involved with the hungry, the ill, those in prison **and** the homeless. However this passage is not a checklist. It is a heart check. Christian...Christ lives in you, will you let him work through you to love those in need? Today, check your heart. Do you live with a ready "yes" to whatever Christ may call you to do?

Day 2

Read

1 Cor. 13:3 If I give all I possess to the poor and surrender my body to the flames, but have not love, I gain nothing.

"This is how we know what love it, Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for each other." 1 John 3:16

Reflect

Giving apart from the gospel in the end gains nothing. All who receive material gifts will someday lose them at death or before. If we don't know Christ then all our acts of service will evaporate at our death. The gospel defines love, "Jesus laid down his life for us." The gospel centers our activities of love on eternity. Of course people need our practical acts of service, we often need them from others. But what people most need is the gospel.

Respond

Pray for those in your life who are far from God. What role has God given you in their life? What influence do you have? How can you be more intentional to show the love of God to them? Have you been courageous in sharing the gospel with them?

Day 3

Read

Matt. 5:38 “You have heard that it was said, ‘Eye for eye, and tooth for tooth.’ ³⁹ But I tell you, do not resist an evil person. If someone strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also. ⁴⁰ And if someone wants to sue you and take your tunic, let him have your cloak as well. ⁴¹ If someone forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles. ⁴² Give to the one who asks you, and do not turn away from the one who wants to borrow from you. “Be careful not to do your ‘acts of righteousness’ before men, to be seen by them. If you do, you will have no reward from your Father in heaven. “So when you give to the needy, do not announce it with trumpets, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and on the streets, to be honored by men. I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in full. But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your giving may be in secret. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.

Reflect

In the sermon on the mount Jesus does not deliver a "new law" to take the place of the law Moses received on Mt. Sinai. Jesus is showing the kind of heart that was always intended in God's commands. Don't see these as rules to be obeyed but as challenges to your heart. If you are called to give, do it joyfully. If someone is unkind to you, forgive them fully. If someone demands from you and you are called to serve and they are ungrateful, refuse to throw a personal pity party. This is about what God is doing in our hearts more than about what we are doing in our actions. Clearly what happens in our hearts will show up in our lives but the focus here is at the core of our being. God is making us into certain kinds of people...we are "becoming" his. From this "being" will flow wise and good "doing." But we will must not "do" in order to feel good or look good...we are to be people who "do" because God is good and he is doing a good work in our hearts.

Respond

Today or sometime this week...look for opportunities to serve and love others in ways that you cannot get credit for. It may be simply sending an anonymous letter of encouragement or paying for someone's coffee without them knowing. It may be something much more involved than either of those. The point of this "activity" is to intentionally train your heart to give for the glory of God and the good of others...period.

Day 4

Read

1Th. 4:11 Make it your ambition to lead a quiet life, to mind your own business and to work with your hands, just as we told you, ¹² so that your daily life may win the respect of outsiders and so that you will not be dependent on anybody.

2Th. 3:6 In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, we command you, brothers, to keep away from every brother who is idle and does not live according to the teaching you received from us. ⁷ For you yourselves know how you ought to follow our example. We were not idle when we were with you, ⁸ nor did we eat anyone's food without paying for it. On the contrary, we worked night and day, laboring and toiling so that we would not be a burden to any of you. ⁹ We did this, not because we do not have the right to such help, but in order to make ourselves a model for you to follow. ¹⁰ For even when we were with you, we gave you this rule: "If a man will not work, he shall not eat." **11** We hear that some among you are idle. They are not busy; they are busybodies. ¹² Such people we command and urge in the Lord Jesus Christ to settle down and earn the bread they eat.

Reflect

The church at Thessalonica was focused on the Lord's return. They took the reality of the "end" seriously but it seems they didn't understand what it meant to do that effectively and with balance. Some took the fact of the second advent of Christ as an opportunity to be lazy. They let others take care of them. I can imagine someone saying "Why should I plant a field, Jesus is returning soon." Then, "I'm not going to work in the harvest, the end is near." But when it was time for dinner, and Jesus had not returned...they were sitting at the table, fork in hand eating the fruits of the labor of others. This, of course, was wrong. Paul was very direct...if you won't work, you don't eat. This would not apply to people in legitimate need. Widows, orphans, the sick... in the New Testament these and others like them were to be cared for. The "foolish needy" were not to be helped because it further embedded folly in their hearts and souls. It is not enough to be generous and kind...we must be wise in our giving. Unwise giving in the end, is not truly loving or kind.

Respond

The call to wise giving is not an excuse to harden ourselves against those in need. In fact wise giving is much more costly than unwise giving. Wise giving demands that we enter into the lives of others. We cannot simply give them a "hand out" we are to give them opportunity for relationship with us and with God. Clearly you cannot do this with everyone but you can do this with someone. Who has God put in your life that you could invest more deeply in? Perhaps it is someone very different than you. Perhaps it is someone whose "neediness" annoys you and pulls on you. Give wisely. But Give.

Day 5

Read

Acts 3:1 One day Peter and John were going up to the temple at the time of prayer — at three in the afternoon. ² Now a man crippled from birth was being carried to the temple gate called Beautiful, where he was put every day to beg from those going into the temple courts. ³ When he saw Peter and John about to enter, he asked them for money. ⁴ Peter looked straight at him, as did John. Then Peter said, “Look at us!” ⁵ So the man gave them his attention, expecting to get something from them. Then Peter said, “Silver or gold I do not have, but what I have I give you. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk.” ⁷ Taking him by the right hand, he helped him up, and instantly the man’s feet and ankles became strong. ⁸ He jumped to his feet and began to walk. Then he went with them into the temple courts, walking and jumping, and praising God.

Reflect

This man wanted money, he had lost all expectations for healing. He was now living day to day...he was surviving. He wanted Peter and John to help him make it to one more meal. Then he would enter again into his begging for someone to help him survive the day. We must not take this desperate situation lightly, for a person who is trying to survive day by day it is hard to contemplate the larger picture. Thinking long term is easier on a full stomach than an empty one. Peter and John really didn't have any money on them, however they could have gone to the Christian community and gotten some. Maybe later on they did help this man with money for food and shelter. But on this day money for one more day was not his greatest need. He was healed of his physical infirmity but this was a sign pointing to something, or someone greater. The healing of his body pointed him towards the healing of his soul.

Respond

Do you wish you had more to give to a needy world? More money, more time, more peace? You have been made an ambassador of Christ. You have been commissioned by Jesus to go and tell others of the good news of the gospel. Give money, give time, give whatever God calls you to give. But above all give the gospel to people. Pray now for those you know who are far from God. Pray that they would believe the gospel.

V. Prayer for others:

Pray specifically for the concerns of your life and the lives of others.

VI. Prayer of commitment:

“Lord God, I commit to love you with all my heart and with all my soul and with all my strength and with all my mind and to love my neighbor as myself. Empower me today to love you and others with everything that I am.” (Luke 10:27)

This Month's Scripture Memory:

Philippians 2:3-7

Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others. Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness.