

Week 34 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

For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him. Colossians 1:16

Now it is required that those who have been given a trust must prove faithful. 1 Corinthians 4:2

Reflect

What is your compelling "Why?" Why work, why play, why be in relationships, why give, why eat, why live? The "Great Why" is that we are made by God for God. But underneath that is another "Great Why"...we live to be found faithful to all God gives us to be and to do. All of our lives are our "trust" from God.

Respond

Why is it that different people can do the exact same thing and one find it meaningful and the other find it meaningless? Is it mostly personality or mostly perspective? Personality changes slowly if at all, perspective can change quickly and make a huge difference in your life day to day. You are doing what you are doing right now(reading, praying, thinking)...partly to gain or to maintain a right perspective. Apply your "Great Why" to the many "Whats" of your life today. Ask God to help you see and live with his perspective.

Day 2

Read

“Now fear the LORD and serve him with all faithfulness. Throw away the gods your forefathers worshiped beyond the River and in Egypt, and serve the LORD. But if serving the LORD seems undesirable to you, then choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your forefathers served beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you are living. But as for me and my household, we will serve the LORD.” Joshua 24:14-15

Reflect

This is Joshua's final charge to the people. He led them many years through many difficulties and he remained faithful to the end of his life. Now his long faithfulness gave him moral and spiritual authority to deliver a strong challenge to the next generations. These are not mere words, they are his personal testimony.

Respond

If you have failed to be faithful, or believe you have failed to be faithful...turn away from unfaithfulness and turn towards the Lord right now. Part of the compelling "Why" of our faithfulness is that we want to be positioned to bless others who will look to us for encouragement and challenge. Today...be faithful for the glory of God and the good of others. Consider the fact that God wants to use you to encourage others to be found faithful.

Day 3

Read

Then Nehemiah the governor, Ezra the priest and scribe, and the Levites who were instructing the people said to them all, "This day is sacred to the LORD your God. Do not mourn or weep." For all the people had been weeping as they listened to the words of the Law. Nehemiah said, "Go and enjoy choice food and sweet drinks, and send some to those who have nothing prepared. This day is sacred to our Lord. Do not grieve, for the joy of the LORD is your strength." Nehemiah 8:9-10

Reflect

The people of Israel had returned to the land of promise after long years of exile. They listened to Ezra read the Word of God to them and began to weep. They saw how far they had wandered from the truth and what it had cost them and they began to weep. But this was not a day to weep, this was the day God was restoring them. They were to celebrate not grieve. The joy of the Lord was to be their strength. It was not a time to focus on their own failings but rather on God's faithfulness.

Respond

Focus your attention on God's faithfulness today. You may be aware of your many failings but perhaps God wants you to set aside your sorrow for his joy. His joy becomes our strength when we live free and forgiven lives because of what Christ has done for us. Guilt saps our strength. Grace renews it. Will you let the joy of the Lord be your strength today?

Day 4

Read

Psa. 1:1 Blessed is the man or woman who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked or stand in the way of sinners or sit in the seat of mockers. But his delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night. He is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither. Whatever he does prospers.

PS 92:12 The righteous will flourish like a palm tree, they will grow like a cedar of Lebanon; planted in the house of the LORD, they will flourish in the courts of our God. They will still bear fruit in old age, they will stay fresh and green, proclaiming, "The LORD is upright; he is my Rock, and there is no wickedness in him."

Is 61:3. They will be called oaks of righteousness, a planting of the LORD for the display of his splendor.

Reflect

Trees are a persistent analogy in Scripture. They can represent judgment (trees chopped down) or the thriving life as in these verses. The thriving life is like a thriving tree. They both have deep roots and ample nourishment and they both produce fruit or other good things like shade or oxygen or homes for animals. The thriving tree and the thriving life also have in common the fact that the good they produce is for the blessing of others not self. The tree doesn't eat it's own fruit or enjoy its own shade. The "joy" of the tree is the good of others.

Respond

Joy is available to everyone. Joy is in relationship with God and is experienced by us as we give our lives away for others. Joy doesn't always feel "fun." Joy isn't "easy." But joy is real, powerful and available. Joy is often counter-intuitive. What we think will work (serve self)... never does. What doesn't seem like the path (sacrifice for others)...actually is. Evaluate your strategy for joy. You have one but if it is not working perhaps you need to adjust it to the reality of how God has made you. God wants you to be a tree planted for his glory. A glory revealed in the good of others.

Day 5

Read

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

Heb. 12:2 Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up. Galatians 6:9

Reflect

Here is the definition of love and joy...to sacrifice ourselves for others. This is clearly the case in scriptures but personal experience and human history bear this out as well. Why is it that so many continue to try what has always failed...to find love and joy through selfish thinking and living? We must train our hearts and minds for love and joy just as we train our muscles for physical skills. We train for love and joy by continually thinking about what is actually true. "This is what love is...this is what joy is." We train for love and joy by making tangible investments in the lives of others without waiting for them to reciprocate. Christ-like love and joy will not "fall" on us from heaven. We must pursue them with our hearts, minds, emotions, and choices. We pursue these things by pursuing the good of others not merely the good of ourselves. Are you weary of "giving" and feel like there is no joy coming your way? Clearly "joy" can be a complex thing. It can be hard to separate from things like feelings of sadness, or physical exhaustion. But "joy" is a reality for humanity, it originates in God. It is not to be pursued as a thing in itself but it is a result of the pursuit of God. You can be physical and emotional tired, this is normal. But we must not become weary to the point of giving up on joy. This means we have given up on the pursuit of God.

Respond

Are you tired physically, emotionally, spiritually, relationally? Tell God, it's okay to be tired. Have you become weary to the point of "giving up?" That is not okay. You must rouse yourself against this. Cry out to God. Talk to a friend. You will reap a harvest...but you cannot give up.

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.