

Week 35 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

Mark 12:30 "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength."

Reflect

Jesus said this is the first and greatest commandment and that it sums up the entire will of God. This should be self-evidence because if we loved God with all of who we are then we would be positioned to do everything he wants done and to become all he wants us to become. This simplifies and clarifies the will of God but it certainly doesn't make it "easy." In fact this is impossible for humans apart from the grace of God at work in our hearts. This four-fold description...heart, soul, mind, and strength are words intended to communicate that every part of us, all that makes us who we are...is to be fully focused on loving God. Loving God with our full being is the life-long process of collaborating with the Holy Spirit to become more like Christ. The Bible calls this process "sanctification" or "holiness." It means to more and more become set apart completely for God.

Respond

In your prayer time commit yourself to God by committing to him the various components that make you "you." Your thoughts, your physical body, your will, your emotions, your gifts and strengths, your dreams and plans...give him all of you. Do you feel afraid of what might happen if you fully commit yourself to him? Will fear keep you from harm? Will fear create a more positive future for you? Will fear of full commitment lead to a thriving life? In faith, give all of yourself to him.

Day 2

Read

1 Timothy 1:5 The goal of this command is love, which comes from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith.

Reflect

"Command" here is not a single instruction but rather the whole of the message Paul delivered. The goal of all of God's word is love that flows from the heart. God is after real inner transformation. Learning more about God (theology) should have as its singular goal to better love God. When people talk about wanting to "go deep" they sometimes fail to understand that "depth" is not merely comprehending more complex ideas but rather living a more "set apart" life.

Respond

Do you come to your daily devotions with the goal of loving God more? Do you understand that the practical result of loving God more will be the practical love for others expressed as you live out your life? Ask God to grow your love for him. Ask him to show you what it means in your life now...to love him by loving others. Tell him "yes" to loving him by loving others.

Day 3

Read

1Kings 11:4 As Solomon grew old, his wives turned his heart after other gods, and his heart was not fully devoted to the LORD his God, as the heart of David his father had been.

Reflect

Solomon was a confusing and confused person. He was confusing because several times in Scripture God applauds his faith and devotion to the covenant. But then Solomon would directly and blatantly disobey the covenant will of God. His story is confusing because Solomon lived a confused life. He went back and forth between trusting his own considerable intellect and trusting God's even more considerable intellect. In the end, his "self-trust" led to his own downfall and eventually to the downfall of his Kingdom. He did what made sense to him rather than what made sense to God.

Respond

Is there a specific area of your life you have reserved for your own intellect? That is, do you have a part of your life, be it ever so small, that you are doing what you think is best even though you have an idea that God disagrees with you? This will not prove to be sustainable. This area will become like a hole in the hull of a ship...more and more water will pour in over time. Repent, turn away from trusting self in this area. God is smarter than you and he is better than you. Trusting him is good for you.

Day 4

Read

Proverbs 26:12 "Do you see a man wise in his own eyes? There is more hope for a fool than for him."

Reflect

In Proverbs a "fool" is not a person with a low IQ but rather a person who is morally deficit. Likewise wisdom is not merely being smart but it is living by faith. Proverbs says that "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom." Fear is best understood as "awesome respect." It is the fear that shapes choices, behavior. So the hopeless fool here is the person who thinks they can do whatever they want with their lives and there will be no consequence. They have no fear of God. If a person consistently lives as if they are smarter than God (wise in their own eyes) they will suffer the fate of the fool who lives as if there is no God. It is unlikely that you would be reading this if you truly believed you are "wise in your own eyes" or if you lacked a healthy "fear of the Lord." However if the line of destruction is being "wise in our own eyes" then the life of thriving is to move far from that line and farther into the beautiful land of confidence in God.

Respond

Very often being wise in our own eyes is more subtle than outright rebellion to God. It is refusing to believe the input of others or refusing to acknowledge the tangible outcomes of our own foolish attitudes and actions. Is God speaking to you through others right now? What is he saying? Is God speaking through outcomes of your own attitudes and actions? Are there negative consequences that you are blaming on others when in fact the fault is your own propensity to trust self? This may be hard to admit, but if this true of you will you understand that God is inviting you to his joy. Will you respond?

Day 5

Read

Mark 12:30 "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength."

Reflect

This not just a prescription of how we are to act this is a description of how we are designed. To love God is how God has made us to thrive. It is like someone telling you to put gasoline in your car. That is a prescription of what must be done but it is also a description of how the car is built to function. We should do things that will help us love God more fully in all aspects of our lives(read the Bible, pray fellowship, worship, etc.) but at the same time we cannot begin to think that loving God is merely a set of actions. Love for God is how we are designed but sin has broken that design. Now the life long process of sanctification is to restore us to our original design specifications. By all means do the things that will help you grow in love but as you "do" things never forget that the reason for the "doing" is "being." We want to become people who love God with our entire beings.

Respond

Rejoice in the opportunity God has given you to become like Christ. Name the many things he is using (good and bad) to shape you into the image of Christ and ask him to help you rejoice in HIM in all of these things.

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:

Colossians 3:12-14

Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.