



Week Five Devotion

Day 1

Rejoice always, pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.

1 Thessalonians 5:16-18

I read a news story recently about a man in Laos whose name was Gate. He and his family heard about the Gospel of Jesus in a neighboring province and placed their faith in Christ. Gate's wife, who was gravely ill, prayed and received a complete healing. However, Gate's family experienced hardship after hardship when they returned to their own village. They were rejected by their family and driven out of town (and off their own land) because they placed their faith in Jesus and would not let go. Despite this hardship, Gates and his family remain firm in their faith because they know the power of the Lord.

This story is all too common around the world. Many people place their hope in Christ only to feel the rejection of family and friends. It is only because of the experience that we have had with God, through his faithfulness and deliverance, that we can bring ourselves to rejoice in prayer through all circumstances as Paul instructs.

Consider this: Think of a time in which God has answered your prayer. How did that help you remain faithful when things became difficult at another time?

Day 2

For whatever was written in earlier times was written for our instruction, so that through perseverance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.

Romans 15:4 NASB

On a mantle, I have my father's dog tags. They are a reminder to me not only of his memory, but of the bravery he showed during the Vietnam war and which he was awarded the Air Medal. It reminds me that no matter how difficult the situation, that we have it in ourselves to show courage under fire. Many of us hold onto items that remind us of the past. It could be a song that stirs up emotions because we attach a memory to that song in our mind.

Paul reminds us that the Bible provides us with not only instruction for our lives but is a source of hope for our lives. When trouble comes, and trouble does come, we can reflect on stories in the Bible of those who have survived horrific events. We can find inspiration from those who suffered both for circumstances they created for themselves or found themselves in at no fault of their own and yet, God continued to let them know of His love, grace, and mercy for them.

If we see the Word of God as simply rules to live by, we miss its greatest message. A story of Jesus, from page one to the very last, whose life provides an opportunity for us to live a life that we are destined to live, as an image bearer of our creator. A person with purpose. And no matter what life throws at us, we can open the scriptures and be reminded of His love for. How incredible to know we can find hope in his Word whenever we remember to look for it.

Consider this: Think of your favorite Bible passage or story. Have you thought about why this is your favorite? Next time you read your Bible, began to think how what you're reading provides you with encouragement in your walk and growth in Christ, not just information to learn.

Day 3

But the father said to his servants, 'Bring quickly the best robe, and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet. And bring the fattened calf and kill it, and let us eat and celebrate. For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found.' And they began to celebrate.

Luke 15:23-24 ESV

We often think of celebration as a non-productive activity. We work hard to arrive at a goal and, if we have time, we can celebrate briefly before moving on to the next goal. But this is not the pattern modeled for us in the Bible. The angels celebrate when a person comes to faith (Luke 15:10), the father celebrated when his prodigal son returned (see above), and Paul instructed the Philippians to "rejoice in the Lord always" (Philippians 4:4). There is never a time in which God is too busy bringing about His Kingdom that He can't stop and celebrate. Why is that? What makes celebration so important to the process?

Coming together to celebrate is not just a nice thing to do; it is absolutely essential. Celebration cements the ties that bind us and keeps our memories of the past alive. Celebration allows us to be together for the purpose of appreciating all that we have and gives us space between accomplishing the goals of the past and taking on the challenges of the future. Celebration is essential.

Consider this: Take some time today to celebrate the things the Lord has done in your life. Maybe it is past struggles that you've been able to leave in the past or a loved one who finally came to faith. No matter what it is, take some time to thank God and celebrate all He has accomplished.

Day 4

Do not fear, for I am with you;
Do not look anxiously about you, for I am
your God.
I will strengthen you, surely I will help you,
Surely I will uphold you with my righteous
right hand.

Isaiah 41:10 NASB

Prior to the rise of the Coronavirus, there was already an epidemic growing among youth and adults in the form of anxiety and depression. If anyone was on the cusp of struggling with either or both, today they may be full-blown and in the thick of it. What is comforting is that these states of being are nothing new; God has repeatedly said he will meet people right where they are, and with the tenderness and comfort that only he can offer. If you read the verses above again you can hear it.

God has declared the end from the beginning, existing outside of space and time, and yet incredibly, he is present with us at this very moment. When he tells us not to fear it is always because of his nearness and his character. "I am with you." "I am your God." "I will help you." "I will uphold you with my righteous right hand."

We are often like Peter, willing to step out on the water in faith because Jesus is with us, but we get distracted and dismayed by the storm. Yet Jesus did not let Peter sink. He stretched out his righteous right hand and took hold of him (Matthew 14:30-31), and Jesus holds us still today.

Consider this: There is no authority greater than our God. What does that mean to you at this moment?

Day 5

7 Lamedh

Your word, Lord, is eternal;
it stands firm in the heavens.
Your faithfulness continues through all generations;
you established the earth, and it endures.
Your laws endure to this day,
for all things serve you.
If your law had not been my delight,
I would have perished in my affliction.
I will never forget your precepts,
for by them you have preserved my life.
Save me, for I am yours;
I have sought out your precepts.
The wicked are waiting to destroy me,
but I will ponder your statutes.
To all perfection I see a limit,
but your commands are boundless.

Psalm 119:89-96 (NIV)

When you think about the Sun what comes to mind? For me I begin thinking about how it is bright, hot, painful to look at, feels great when its cold, feels bad when its hot. But you know what I don't end up thinking about most of the time? Everything the Sun does. It rises every single day in a very predictable way, it warms up the planet and gives life giving energy to plants which in turn give energy to us. It heats up the surface of the sea creating rain and we even absorb vitamins through its light. It helps improve mood to the point where studies have proven it's light can help with depression. Its is reliable, life giving, and has existed since the beginning of the earth. The bible and the truth of God is just like the Sun. It is steadfast and gives life, it gives us warmth and joy when we are in darkness. The more we spend time with God's word the more we inscribe them on our hearts and accept the life giving energy that only it can provide. Lamedh is a prayer celebrating the faithfulness of God and his provision.

Consider this: Take 10 minutes and list as many things that you are thankful to God for. Think back on all the times he has been faithful and reflect on how God has come through for you in this past.