

Daily God Walk
Life of Christ Series

**Sermon on the
Mount - 2**

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All Scripture quotations are taken from the New International Version (NIV). All other translations used will be credited using these abbreviations:

(KJV) – King James Version

(NKJV) – New King James Version

(TLB) – The Living Bible

(TM) – The Message

New Hope Ministries

2232 Terrace LN

McKinleyville, CA 95519

paul@nhmresources.org

www.nhmresources.org

www.dailygodwalk.org

Using Daily God Walk to Lead A Small Group

We publish the Daily God Walk Study Guide Edition for those who want to use this devotional as a tool for leading small groups.

In the study guide edition there are four additional sections at the end of each devotion: Principle, Affirmation, Reflection, and My Thoughts. below is an explanation of how to use each of them in a small group discussion.

Principle: This is a principle pulled out of the devotion for the day. Ask the group to express how they can see this principle in the devotion then use that to kick off the discussion.

Affirmation: The affirmation is an example of how we can begin to internalize the principle of the devotion. We can repeat the affirmation in a prayer making it personal. We can also just repeat it throughout the day while giving thought to the principle.

Reflection: These statements and questions are designed to help guide discussion and make application of the devotion in the daily life of the participant.

My Thoughts: This section is just blank lines. Encourage your group to "Journal" their thoughts on the devotion each day. By writing out the thoughts that come from the devotion and the discussion on the devotion the individuals will find that their walk of faith is enhanced.

My experience is that we usually only make it through one or two of the daily devotions at one group setting, but it is good to encourage the group to work through the principle, affirmation, reflection and my thoughts section for each daily devotion at home.

For more information on using the Daily God Walk Study Guide Edition for small groups, go online at:

www.dailygodwalk.org/small-groups

We value your comments on the Daily God Walk. It would be a blessing if you sent us an email with your comments about our program. Email us at: paul@nhmresources.org

Day One

Doing Acts of Righteousness

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. - Matthew 6:1-2

Jesus wasn't calling them hypocrites because they gave to the poor, but because of the manner in which they gave. Too much of what the Pharisees and other religious leaders did was to impress and influence the common people. It could be that they didn't feel righteous so to compensate they continually tried to prove their righteousness.

It seems that in every group of believers there is that one person who, in his heart of hearts, does not feel accepted so he often tries to prove his righteousness by volunteering for every job in the church and giving to every cause. His works of righteousness are good and worthy works, but his motivation is not faith based; it is approval based.

The situation with the Pharisees was a bit more severe than that. They actually did not have benevolence in their heart which is shown by the way they extract everything they can from the poor requiring them to live by the law as they interpreted it.

Jesus called them hypocrites, actors, showmen. The good works they did was to demonstrate their righteousness and establish their authority as religious leaders - it was not done to benefit the needy.

Jesus was certainly not wanting to discourage us from giving gifts to the poor, but he is calling us to a righteousness which exceeds that of the Pharisees. He is calling us to respond to the needs of others with compassion, not with piety.

Yes, there are rewards for having compassion for those in need, but the focus is not to be on the blessing but the opportunity to serve another who has a need. Jesus is again speaking to the condition of our heart and asking if we truly love the world as he loves the world.

Prayer: Lord, grant me a compassionate heart. In Jesus name, amen.

Message: Jesus was certainly not wanting to discourage us from giving gifts to the poor, but he is calling us to a righteousness that exceeds that of the Pharisees. He is calling us to respond to the needs of others with compassion, not with piety.

Affirmation: I am committed to sharing my life with others because I am constrained by the love of God. I give of all my resources; my time, talent and finances.

Reflection: Can you think of some of the reasons people do things to appear religious or spiritual? It would be good to examine your own life to see what motivates you to give of yourself to others.

My Thoughts:

Day Two

Secret Giving Produces Heavenly Rewards

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.

- Matthew 6:3-4

Isn't that just a little impractical? I mean, how can a person give with one hand and not let the other hand know? How can the other hand keep from knowing? The absurdity of the idea is a clue that Jesus is giving us a metaphor to prove a point.

The idea is not that we are to deceive ourselves as to what we are doing, but that we are to do acts of righteousness with a true heart. It is not about keeping a record of what we have done or what we have given. We do those things out of a right heart not out of a desire to be recognized for our good works.

I have a friend, a Christian business man, who does a lot of good for the kingdom of God. He has a heart for missions and does a lot of good works through giving to missionaries. It is known that he gives, but he is also recognized for his humility in giving.

I have had many conversations with my friend about missions. Not one time has he swelled his chest and said, "I give great sums to missions." But I have seen him with tears in his eyes when he talks about the churches he has helped and the children he has fed.

That is what Jesus is talking about. It really isn't whether anyone knows we gave, or that we are purposely trying to keep our giving secret, but it is about our motivation for giving.

Even though Jesus mentions that the Father will reward those who give from a right heart, getting rewards is not the point he is making. The point is that there are needs and we are to do what we can to help those in need without consideration of whether there is a reward involved.

Most of us have never had a lot of money to give, but we do have a life to invest. My hope is that our lives will be invested in others that the kingdom may advance.

Prayer: Father, grant me the grace to keep a pure heart in the area of giving and serving that your name will be praised. Amen.

Message: Even though Jesus mentions that the Father will reward those who give from a right heart, getting rewards is not the point he is making. The point is that there are needs and we are to do what we can to help those in need without consideration of whether there is a reward involved.

Affirmation: I understand the rewards of heaven are the response of the Father to sincere giving from a pure heart.

Reflection: How do you feel about the idea of investing in a good work, or a ministry so that you will receive a good reward? What about those ministries who ask you to sow a seed in their ministry so you will have a good harvest of finances?

My Thoughts:

Day Three

Attitudes in Prayer

When you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the street corners to be seen by men. I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in full.

- Matthew 6:5-6

Have you noticed a trend in the way Jesus refers to the religious leaders? Remember in chapter five Jesus said, “Unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven.” Then he begins showing the inadequacy of the righteousness they projected.

He begins his expose of the Pharisees by saying, “You have heard... but I say...” In so doing he was demonstrating the difference between acting (pretending, or playacting) righteously and actually being righteous.

He takes his speech against those leaders to another level when he clearly calls them hypocrites. Jesus says they are hypocritical in the way they give and do acts of benevolence and they are hypocritical in their consecrations of prayer and fasting. They had clearly missed the point of righteousness and had become convinced that their rewards were based in what they were recognized as doing without consideration of the condition of their heart.

It was particularly onerous to God for the Pharisees to stand on the street corners and recite monotonous prayers that were designed to impress men rather than appeal to God.

In Luke chapter 18:9-14 Jesus told a parable of two men praying in the temple. One was a Pharisee who was comparing himself to others by listing his good works. The other one, a tax collector was praying, "Lord, forgive me for I am a sinner." He concluded this parable with, "I tell you that this man, rather than the other, went home justified before God. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted."

The grace of God is given to those who walk humbly before him. We must always remember that justification comes from and is a gift.

Prayer: Lord, I tend to judge others by what I am trying to be rather than by what I am. I'm just a sinner saved by Grace. In Jesus Name. Amen.

Message: When you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the street corners to be seen by men. I tell you the truth, they have received their reward.

Affirmation: My prayer comes from a heart hungry for God, not from a desire to be seen by men.

Reflection: Do you think Jesus was opposed to praying in public when talked about the way some people prayed? Or, was his rebuke of them deeper than just where a person prays? Give some thought to your motivation to pray and consider the way you might pray when with others.

My Thoughts:

Day Four

Pray... Our Father in Heaven

This, then, is how you should pray: “Our Father in heaven, hallowed by your name, your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one, for yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.” - Matthew 6:9-13

Jesus gave us this concise prayer in rebuttal to the babbling of many words like pagans who think they will be heard because of their many words (v7). He did not expect his followers to just recite this prayer, but he was giving them a pattern by which to pray. We will look at this pattern over the next few days.

He begins this prayer, which I call the Lord’s prayer directive, with “Our Father who is in heaven.” Now, if you want to be proper, using the King James version, you would say, “Our Father which art in heaven.” Personally, I like the more friendly tone of the NIV.

We aren’t too sure where, or what, heaven is, but most of us believe it is the spirit realm where God, our Father, dwells. We recognize him as the Father of creation and the initiator of relationship with man. It is he who has planned from the beginning to show himself to be our Father who is in heaven.

Our Father in heaven is truly father to us in ways that no one else can be. Many of us had good and healthy relationship with our father, but others of us do not have pleasant memories of that personage.

Whatever our memory of father in our past, our Lord, as our heavenly Father, is good to us beyond what any human could be. He will comfort us when we are hurting, forgive us when we are in disobedience, console us when we are mourning and deliver us when we are in bondage. He is everything to us that a father is supposed to be, but more.

The fact that he is our "Heavenly Father" puts him in a realm that no earthly father could reach. When we pray it is right to give homage to He who is the father of fathers and worship him.

Prayer: Thank you for being my eternal Father in heaven. And thank you for being more than any other father could be. Amen.

Message: Jesus gave us this concise prayer in rebuttal to the babbling of many words like pagans who think they will be heard because of their many words (v7). He did not expect his followers to just recite this prayer, but he was giving them a pattern by which to pray.

Affirmation: I have learned to use this prayer Jesus gave us as a pattern to use when approaching God.

Reflection: Give some thought to the pattern Jesus gives us in this prayer. First, adoration of the Father and the revelation of himself through his name. Then committing to do his will followed by petitioning him for our daily needs and seeking his strength and courage to resist temptation. The conclusion of the prayer is praise and worship. Follow this pattern in prayer and you will be blessed.

My Thoughts:

Day Five

Hallowed Be Your Name

“Our Father in heaven, hallowed by your name”

- Matthew 6:9

The names of God are not just arbitrary words given to a deity. They are expressions from him which reveal who he is and what he wants to be to us. God is more than words can express, but words are all we have to tell of his wonders.

“Hallowed be your name...” In every prayer we should take a little time to honor the awesomeness of God. Think of what he achieved in creation. How he rules the universe, yet how he considers each one of us and knows everything about us.

We are given hundreds of names and titles of God in the Bible, and each one of them gives us insight into who he is. Here are some of his basic names:

“Elohim” – This is a unique reference to the Lord God and projects the idea of the majesty of God.

“El Shaddai” – This is the term translated “Almighty God.” This name projects God as the all sufficient one.

“Jehovah” – Here God is shown to be the eternally self-existent one. He exists without the limits of time, and without dependence upon any other force. He is the only totally self-existent one in the universe.

Many books have been written on the names of God but none of them can compare with his names he has written on each of our hearts.

How does he write his names on our heart? Have you ever been sick and called out to him for healing?

Then he became Jehovah Raphe, The Lord who heals (Exodus 15:26). Or maybe you were troubled and had lost your peace when he showed himself to you as the Prince of Peace (Isaiah 9:6).

When you pray reflect upon what the Lord means to you and name him according to how he has blessed you.

Prayer: Lord, I thank you for revealing yourself to believers through your names, and I am grateful to know you as Savior. Thank you for Jeheshua (Jesus); the Lord our savior. Amen.

Message: In every prayer we should take a little time to honor the awesomeness of God. Think of what he achieved in creation. How he rules the universe, yet how he considers each one of us and knows everything about us.

Affirmation: I honor and give homage to the great God of heaven who has revealed himself to be the God who answers all of our needs.

Reflection: Establish the pattern of beginning your prayers by remembering the names of God that have been meaningful to you. Spend some time meditating on how God has revealed himself to us through his names.

My Thoughts:

Day Six

Your Kingdom Come

This, then, is how you should pray:... your kingdom come. - Matthew 6:9-10

The phrase, "Your kingdom come" at least implies that those who make this prayer are committed to the kingdom that God is establishing. Some would say this means that we are to pray for God to establish his kingdom, implying that without our prayers he will not do that. Others will say that we are to plead with God, "Please send your kingdom." I take a different view of this phrase.

I see an emphatic statement; "Your kingdom will come!" What seems to be the purpose of the phrase is that we are giving allegiance to the kingdom which he is establishing. The one praying is saying, "I am committed to the kingdom you are establishing on earth."

When we look at the phrase in this manner we realize that we have recognized God as our Father, His names as his revelation, and his kingdom as his will for us.

Praying "Your kingdom come" is also a confession. We are confessing identity with the kingdom he is establishing. We have heard much of the early confessions of the church, most notably, "Jesus is Lord." We have heard little of the confession, "Your kingdom come."

When we pray, "Your kingdom come" we are affirming our commitment to the principles he was teaching in the sermon from which this prayer was extracted. We are saying, "Yes, I know that in the

kingdom of God I am given the grace of righteousness that exceeds that of the Pharisees.”

We must understand that the only hope this world has is for the kingdom of God to be established here on earth. And, the kingdom has been established. It is in the heart of every believer. Now we pray, “Your kingdom has come” because it is here in you and I.

When we pray, “Your kingdom come,” we are committing to take the kingdom of God to those who need to hear the message.

Prayer: Lord, I am grateful that you have revealed yourself and your kingdom to me. I confess to being committed to your kingdom. In Christ's name I pray. Amen.

Message: When we pray, “Your kingdom come,” we are committing to take the kingdom of God to those who need to hear the message.

Affirmation: I have recognized God as my Father, His names as his revelation, and His kingdom as his will for me and the world. I am committed to taking this message to others.

Reflection: Three views of the phrase, "Your Kingdom Come," are mentioned in this devotion. Which view seems the most appropriate to you? Give some thought to what it means to you specifically to pray, "Your Kingdom Come."

My Thoughts:

Day Seven

Your Will Be Done

This, then, is how you should pray... Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. - Matthew 6:9-10

This is another confession of faith. When we pray, "Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven" we are going beyond recognizing the kingdom of God, we are committing ourselves to pursuing not only the kingdom, but his will also.

This prayer has far reaching implications. Committing to God's will on earth as it is in heaven is making a choice that reverses the effect of Adam and Eve choosing their will over God's will.

When we pray this confession of faith we are agreeing with God that the relationship between God and man was broken by sin and that we are, through faith in Jesus, the Christ of Redemption, doing our part to restore that relationship.

By making this prayer we are confessing that we are surrendering our will to the Father and seeking his will for our life in his kingdom and on this earth. This prayer is both a confession of commitment, and a request to know and understand his will.

When we make this prayer we are asking God to reveal his will for our life. We are saying, "God, I have entered your kingdom, now give me instructions on your will for me in your kingdom."

An aspect of kingdom life that is often not understood is that when we make the confession that "Jesus is Lord," we are given access to the kingdom. Life for us in the kingdom of God is to be just like life

for Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. God has set up the rules and we must be committed to his rules.

Some are already thinking, “We aren’t saved by following the rules, we are saved by grace through faith.” To that I would say, “Amen!” Now, by the grace of God we have gained entrance to the kingdom of God, our Garden of Eden. Our life in the kingdom requires a commitment to do the will of the Father so we pray, “Your will be done in me.”

Prayer: Lord, it isn’t easy releasing my life totally into your hands. Grant me the grace to truly surrender all my heart to you. In Jesus name, amen.

Message: Our life in the kingdom requires a commitment to do the will of the Father so we pray, “Your will be done in me.” By making this prayer we are confessing that we are surrendering our will to the Father and seeking his will for our life in his kingdom and on this earth.

Affirmation: I confess my need for God's will to be working in me so I pray, "Your will be done in me."

Reflection: God's will is being done and the way we participate, or fail to participate, in his kingdom plan reveals whether we are truly committed to doing his will. Give some thought to what it means to you pray this prayer.

My Thoughts:

Day Eight

Give Us Today Our Daily Bread

This, then, is how you should pray... Give us today our daily bread. - Matthew 9,11

When God was bringing Israel out of Egypt they were in the wilderness without sufficient food. God chose to feed them daily with manna from heaven. The interesting thing about the manna was that there could only be enough gathered for one day of food. If they tried to gather more than enough for one day what they gathered would spoil.

Remembering that Jesus said we should pray daily for our supply and trust God for both today and tomorrow. The principle at play here is about trusting God to be the supplier of all necessary things. Our challenge is that we tend to trust our own abilities instead of trusting God.

God knows that when he gives us more than is sufficient for the day we will tend to begin trusting the supply rather than the supplier. It seems that when we have more than is necessary we either want to hoard it up for a rainy day, as if God doesn't know when the rainy days are coming, or we use it frivolously for things that satisfy our sinful nature.

Studies have been done on the effect of winning the lottery has had on the winners. It is interesting that their first reaction is usually, "Our lifestyle won't change much, I may not even quit my job." That usually changes in a short time and indulgence begins to take over.

The studies showed that a large majority of the people who won great sums of money were devastated by their new found wealth and in a relatively short

period of time wound up in worse shape than they were in the beginning.

What does this have to do with today's message? When God gives us just enough for today we will continue to depend upon him as our source. God is wise and knows all things; he knows when we can handle more, but until then we must be content with our daily bread. Trust him today and he will take care of you today, and tomorrow.

Prayer: Lord, Help me to be content with the daily bread you supply and to continue trusting you for today. In Jesus name, amen.

Message: God is wise and knows all things; he knows when we can handle more, but until then we must be content with our daily bread. Trust him today and he will take care of you today, and tomorrow.

Affirmation: I am trusting God for my future as I trust him for today. I know that faith for tomorrow begins with faith for today so I am trusting him for my sustenance today.

Reflection: Why do you think God would give Israel a bountiful supply of manna, but require them to just take enough for one day? What was God trying to teach them by causing the manna to spoil when it was hoarded? Something to think about.

My Thoughts:

Day Nine

Forgive Our Debts

This, then, is how you should pray... Forgive us our debts. – Matthew 6:9,12

We used to sing a chorus some years ago that went like this, “I owed a debt I could not pay and he paid a debt he did not owe.” That is the case for all of us who have come to faith in Christ.

I like the way Luke recorded this part of the prayer. He writes, “Forgive us our sins, for we also forgive everyone who sins against us” (Luke 11:4). He clarifies the point that the debt for which we are asking forgiveness is our sins and the debts we forgive are the sins, or offences, others have committed against us.

Most of us have never robbed or caused great bodily harm to come to another, but we have all sinned. Sin is a part of the human condition and God has made a way for us to deal with our sinfulness through faith in Christ. The following is excerpted from “The Lord’s Prayer Directive,” an examination of this prayer:

“Forgive us our debts...”

We have sinned, and if we say we haven’t we are lying. Before you become upset with me for saying that, take note; it wasn’t me who said it. 1 John 1:8 says that very thing. But verse 9 of that same chapter says, “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.”

God has made provision in Jesus Christ to forgive all our sins, but we have to ask him. In fact, every day when we pray through this prayer we should spend

some time thinking through the previous day and ask God to bring to our mind anything we did, or thought about doing that we need to be cleansed of.

Then we should ask God to forgive us of those things. And he will because, "He is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins."

Prayer: I know I have sinned, and I need your forgiveness. Grant me repentance for all my sins and wash me clean of every wrong desire. In Jesus name I pray. Amen.

Message: 1 John 1:9 tells us, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness." So we pray, "Forgive us our debts."

Affirmation: I confess my sins and He is faithful to forgive me and He is purifying me from all unrighteousness.

Reflection: You and I have owed a debt we could not pay and He paid that debt for us. Is there anything we must do to be beneficiary of his gracious gift? When we ask, "Forgive us our debts," is He obligated to do that? Reflect on grace and forgiveness and what that means to you personally.

My Thoughts:

Day Ten

Forgive Us As We Forgive Others

This, then, is how you should pray... Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.

- Matthew 6:9,12

Have you found it difficult to forgive someone who has offended you? Have you tried and finally said to yourself, "It's no use, the wound is too deep"? I think most of us have been there at one time or another.

Many of us who have had difficulty forgiving have made this compromise; "I'll forgive them but I'll never forget it." Somehow we feel that we have fulfilled our responsibility if we can smile through gritted teeth as we shake their hand. Is that really forgiveness?

What if you overheard God talking to the angels about you and he was saying, "They've done some things that really hurt me. I'll forgive them, but I'll never forget what they have done." How would you feel about that? Would you feel forgiven?

When God forgives he forgets. The prophet Isaiah wrote, "I, even I, am he who blots out your transgressions, for my own sake, and remembers your sins no more" (43:25). How can God forget the awful things that man has done against him? It is because he is love, and love "is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs" (1 Corinthians 13:5).

The only way one can forgive and forget is to love as God loves. How can we love that way? We can only love as God loves by being fully submitted to him. We

must be born again, born by his Spirit into his kingdom.

The road to right standing with God is paved with forgiveness. God has forgiven you and I of horrible sins against him and his kingdom, now we must pass that forgiveness on to others.

When we live for him and his kingdom then we do not take offense at the offensive behavior of others. We just simply take their transgression to the Father and just as he has forgiven us so we forgive those who have offended us.

Prayer: Lord, it isn't easy to forgive those who are inconsiderate, and some that are malicious; grant me the grace to forgive others. Amen.

Message: When we live for him and his kingdom then we do not take offense at the offensive behavior of others. We just simply take their transgression to the Father and just as he has forgiven us so we forgive those who have offended us.

Affirmation: As an act of gratitude for what God has done for me I forgive others who have been offensive to me. I thank God for the grace of forgiveness and the ability to forgive.

Reflection: According to Isaiah when God forgives he forgets and remembers our sins no more. Then, in this prayer, we are called to forgive. How can we do that? How can we forgive others and forget the offense? Think about it.

My Thoughts:

Day Eleven

Deliver Us From The Evil One

This, then, is how you should pray... Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.

- Matthew 6:9,13

Do you remember the comedian who used to say, "The Devil made me do it"? That line was always good for a laugh, but God wasn't laughing. We cannot justify our actions by passing the blame on to someone, or something, else. That is called denial.

Temptation is a very real part of the human experience, but we often do not realize the source of our temptation. James writes, "Each one is tempted when, by his own evil desire, he is dragged away and enticed" (James 1:14). It really wasn't the devil - it was our own desires.

Remember the comic strip Pogo? This comic character was an alligator in the everglades swamp and every week he would impart his

brand of wisdom to all who read it. In one episode he was standing in the swamp ready to do battle and he was saying, "We have found the enemy and he is us."

The only way we can be tempted is when something we desire comes to our attention and demands that we respond to it. The only way to effectively deal with this temptation is to deal with the desire.

When we destroy the desire we destroy the temptation. God created systems in man that releases into our consciousness a sense of calm and well being giving us a generally pleasurable experience as humans. When we walk in his way these systems produce harmony and a balanced life, but when we pursue the

pleasurable sensation that comes from these systems then our life gets out of balance and our desire for pleasure overrides our desire for righteousness and we sin.

At this point our inner desires becomes the evil one. We must agree with Pogo - the enemy is us. God delivers us from our evil by living his righteousness through us. For that to happen we must be submitted to his will and committed to his kingdom. If the enemy is us then we should seek deliverance from ourselves.

Prayer: Lord, deliver me from the evil desire that rises up within me so that I am free to serve you in righteousness. In Jesus name, amen.

Message: The only way we can be tempted is when something we desire comes to our attention and demands that we respond to it. The only way to effectively deal with this temptation is to deal with the desire.

Affirmation: When I am tempted I examine my desires and deal with wrong desires by submitting them to God.

Reflection: How does the example of Pogo declaring, "We have found the enemy and he is us," relate to how we are tempted. Think of some ways you can effectively deal with the temptations you face.

My Thoughts:

Day Twelve

Thine is the Kingdom, the Power and the Glory

For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen. - Matthew 6:13 (KJV)

This final phrase in the prayer sums up our relationship with him. The kingdom is his; all the power is his; all the glory belongs to him. Where does that leave us? It leaves us subjects in his kingdom.

Isaiah spoke of one who would be the head of God's rule on earth. He wrote, "For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there will be no end" (Isaiah 9:6-7).

Jesus came to establish the everlasting kingdom of God on earth. This kingdom is headquartered in the hearts of those who would receive his message. All the power of God is vested in his kingdom and his power is given to the subjects of his kingdom. All the glory of God, all of the hope of God, is vested in his kingdom and the kingdom of God is in the hearts of men.

Do you understand what that means to we who are believers in Jesus, the Christ of Redemption? Follow this line of reason:

- Jesus proclaimed the kingdom - then gave the kingdom to those who followed him.
- Jesus declared all power rested in him - then sent his disciples to tarry until they too received the power.

- Jesus is the glory of the Father: “The Son is the radiance of God’s glory” (Hebrews 1:3) - The Glory of God is being manifest in believers: “We, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord’s glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory” (2 Corinthians 3:18).

His is the kingdom, and we are his kingdom. All of heavens power is invested in we who are the kingdom. All glory has been given to the kingdom. We have a kingdom responsibility to this generation.

Prayer: Lord, grant me grace to be a witness to your kingdom. Amen.

Message: Jesus came to establish the everlasting kingdom of God on earth. This kingdom is headquartered in the hearts of those who would receive his message.

Affirmation: Jesus is the king of the kingdom and I am subject to him. He has invested kingdom power and glory in me with the responsibility to re-invest his kingdom in others.

Reflection: As followers of Christ we have been given the kingdom of God: We are the kingdom of God on earth. Give some thought to what that means to you and I. How should that affect the way we think, the way we act and the way we speak? How has it affected you?

My Thoughts:

Day Thirteen

The Power of Unforgiveness

If you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins. - Matthew 6:14-15

Forgiving some sins against us isn't too hard. If I get the word that someone has been spreading negative gossip about me I can manage to forgive them, most of the time. But; if someone breaks into my home, steals my valuables and shoots my dog, I might find it difficult to forgive him for what he did to me and my property.

Our problem here is that Jesus didn't say, "forgive the easy stuff," he said, "forgive men when they sin against you." We must forgive any sin and all sins committed against us. If we don't those sins we have not forgiven will have a certain measure of control over our lives.

I know people, and you probably do too, who will say, "I just can't forgive them for what they have done to me." Then, as you watch them their very countenance is affected when they speak about the offensive person. The medical community has linked a number of diseases to the inability to release past hurts, which is essentially what unforgiveness is.

Unforgiveness not only affects us physically it also affects our relationship with others, but the most important effect it has is on our relationship with God. Jesus said that as long as we harbor bitterness and unforgiveness in our hearts we cannot be forgiven by God. That is pretty dramatic.

Unforgiveness then has the power to affect us physically and in our relationship with God and others. That seems to be a pretty big price tag for something that only affects us and doesn't affect the person who offended us at all.

There are some things that can only be forgiven by taking them to God and trusting his Grace. In fact, when we can take the attitude that the offense isn't really about me it is about the offenders own need for God's grace, it is easier to trust God with the whole thing.

Prayer: OK God, I get the message. I surrender my right to be offended so that you can deal with me, and with the offender. Amen.

Message: Unforgiveness not only affects us physically it also affects our relationship with others, but the most important effect it has is on our relationship with God.

Affirmation: I realize how unforgiveness affects my relationship with God, therefore I make every effort to forgive those who offend me so I can be in right relationship with God.

Reflection: Have you found it easy to forgive people of some things but very hard, if not impossible to forgive them of other things? How do you deal with forgiving the difficult people? Can you forget once you have forgiven?

My Thoughts:

Day Fourteen

Hypocritical Consecration

When you fast, do not look somber as the hypocrites do... But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, so that it will not be obvious to men that you are fasting, but only to your Father, who is unseen; and your Father who sees what is done in secret, will reward you. - Matthew 6:16-18

Some years ago a church in our town had outgrown its facility. The auditorium held about 2000 and it was full every week. The parking lot was also full. They had purchased land on a major thoroughfare with the objective of doubling their capacity.

A friend attended that church and, with pride in her church, along with a pious look, declared "We have to build you know. Our parking lot is full and people drive through every week then leave because there is no place for them to park. They need to be saved so we must build a larger facility lest they not find the Lord."

Quite a pious justification for spending about \$20 million to build a new facility in a town that had over 1000 churches already. This piety came from a woman that, to my knowledge, had never personally won anyone to Christ in her life.

It is interesting how many people there are who take great pride in "their church," but who would never think of taking a homeless person into their home, or allowing their business to become a place where needy people come to receive ministry.

That is the attitude Jesus was addressing here. He was saying that it was pride and ego, not spirituality, which causes people to grand stand over their piety.

The message Bible says it this way; “Don’t make a production out of it. It might turn you into a small-time celebrity but it won’t make you a saint... God doesn’t require attention-getting devices. He won’t overlook what you are doing; he’ll reward you well.”

Keep your consecration between you and God and he will honor what you do in ways that give him the glory.

Prayer: Lord, I tend to take pride in my devotion, and I know I shouldn’t, Grant me the grace to serve just because it’s right. Amen.

Message: Keep your consecration between you and God and he will honor what you do in ways that give him the glory.

Affirmation: The consecrations I make are to God alone and are not broadcast so everyone else will be impressed by my piety.

Reflection: Do you think Jesus literally meant that we should put oil on our head and wash our face when we fast? Or do you think he was addressing the principle of making your fast, or any consecration for that matter, between you and God alone? How is that principle applied when the leadership calls for the whole congregation to fast?

My Thoughts:

Day Fifteen

Is Your Treasure Temporal or Eternal?

Do not store up for yourselves treasure on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. - Matthew 619-21

Why do we tend to store up “treasure,” or in today’s vernacular, “put something away for the future”? Do you think it might be that we are just a little unsure of the future and we want to be prepared for whatever comes along? Or we might be looking forward to the time when we can retire and then live on what we have accumulated.

It is good to save for unexpected expenses and it is good planning to be prepared. The point that Jesus was making is not that things are evil, or that we should take a vow of poverty and have nothing, but the message is to not let things become the treasure of your heart.

Jesus said, “Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.” Another way of saying it is, “Where your heart is will be evidenced by where you invest your resources.” I know people who cannot afford to pay tithe or give to benevolent causes because by the time they make two car payments, a boat payment, and storage for the boat and RV, they are just barely making it.

Oh yes, I forgot the house that is in the right neighborhood, and the stylish clothes the kids demand. Also there is the “guilt payment” to the children. You know what I’m talking about; dad has the boat so out

of guilt he has to get the kids the latest electronic games, and maybe even a dirt bike.

God doesn't care what things you have, but he is very concerned about what things have your heart. He wants us to have treasure, but the treasure he has for us is the treasures in the kingdom of God. The first treasure he offers is eternal life. He then offers righteousness, joy and peace (Romans 14:17). The Lord actually delivers the treasure that the world of things promises, but falls short of producing.

Prayer: Lord, grant me the grace of surrendering my heart to your will so that my treasure will be in the eternal kingdom. In Jesus name, amen.

Message: God doesn't care what things you have, but he is very concerned about what things have your heart. He wants us to have treasure, but the treasure he has for us is the treasures in the kingdom of God.

Affirmation: I am careful to be certain the things I have do not have me. Rather, my hope is in the kingdom of God and his righteousness rather than in the earthly things I can accumulate.

Reflection: Do you think God is concerned about the extra things we have like boats and video games? What was the point he was trying to make when he said, "Do not store up for yourselves treasure on earth?"

My Thoughts:

Day Sixteen

Keeping Your Inner Light Bright

The eye is the lamp of the body. If your eyes are good your whole body will be full of light. But if your eyes are bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light within you is darkness how great is that darkness! - Matthew 6:22-23

Jesus is not speaking to people who have not known the Lord, or who have always been in the darkness. He is addressing people who have been enlightened, but who do not live by the light that is in them.

There is a catchword in the world of modern religious thought. That word is "enlightenment." The goal of many religions is to reach a state of enlightenment and as they live in that state they have peace and are in harmony with the universe.

One aspect of the message that Jesus is delivering is speaking to the concept that whatever enlightenment one might have it is a dim light if it hasn't removed the darkness inside their spirit, and we have to come to understand that the only way to being fully enlightened is to know Jesus, the Christ of Redemption and Reconciliation.

There are those who have come to Christ and received the light of his salvation, but who have not kept that light burning bright. There is an old song we used sing that had these words, "Turn your eyes upon Jesus and the things of this world will grow strangely dim in the light of his glory and grace." We have found that song to be very true.

The opposite is also true. When we have been given the light of God's grace through faith in Christ and we begin to focus our attention on the world around us,

the comforts and pleasures it affords, then the light of grace goes dim in our spirit.

What do we do when we realize darkness has come and our light is dim? Typically we go looking for a brighter light. The unfortunate reality for far too many believers is that they are looking for light in all the wrong places. More things, more friends and more creature comfort will not give you more light.

Prayer: Lord, there are many things of this world that tend to catch my eye but help me to focus on you that your light might shine in me. Amen.

Message: The unfortunate reality for far too many believers is that they are looking for light in all the wrong places. More things, more friends and more creature comfort will not give you more light.

Affirmation: I have learned that appeasing the desires of my flesh nature dims the light of God in me. Therefore, I keep my focus on the light which dispels all the darkness of my human nature.

Reflection: Think on the Scripture reading for this devotion. How can light become darkness? And, if we who are in the light of God's grace still do the works of darkness, how great is the darkness which influences us?

My Thoughts:

Day Seventeen

You Are Serving Something Or Somebody

No one can serve two masters. 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 both God and money. – Matthew 6:24

Often when a person finds a new position with another company they will hand in their resignation to their current employer. It is very common that when a person resigns his employer will make his termination immediate and tell them to surrender anything they have which belongs to the company.

Why will a company do that? Because they know a person cannot be loyal to two companies at once and if they have already accepted a position with another company their loyalty has changed.

That is what Jesus is talking about in this passage. As citizens in this world system all that we do is to propagate the system. We are committed to our natural life in every sense of the word. All of our efforts are geared toward ourselves, our family, and our ambitions.

When we come to Christ and surrender to his lordship we surrender our citizenship in this world system. From that point on we are to be wholly committed to his kingdom. That doesn't mean we sit around all day and mumble spiritual sayings, but it does mean that we no longer live for ourselves – we live for the kingdom of God.

Far too many believers today do not understand that. In fact, many Christian leaders promote the idea that the mark of a person of faith is that they are successful in this world system. It is taught that people

of faith should be wealthy and acquiring things is a sign of their faith.

Jesus was teaching that if our hope is in achieving what this world calls success then we are at odds with his kingdom. In the kingdom of God success is not achieved through acquiring but through giving. Jesus was our example of serving in the kingdom - are we willing to follow him in a life of surrender in the kingdom and serving as he served?

Prayer: Lord, the world can be very attractive. My natural tendency is to reach for things of the world, help me to aspire to serving you in the kingdom you brought to earth. In Jesus name, amen.

Message: Jesus was teaching that if our hope is in achieving what this world calls success then we are at odds with his kingdom. In the kingdom of God success is not achieved through acquiring but through giving.

Affirmation: My investments are in my eternal hope and my reward is far greater than any reward that can be gained by investing in the temporal things of this world.

Reflection: It is true that we are in this world, but it is equally true that we are not of this world. If our hope is in this world alone we are to be pitied (1 Corinthians 15:19). Remember, things are not a measure of spiritual success.

My Thoughts:

Day Eighteen

Trust is the Opposite of Worry

Therefore, I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more important than food, and the body more important than clothes?

- Matthew 6:25

Worry is one of the primary causes of many debilitating diseases. The anxiety produced by worry can cause ulcers and studies have shown that arthritis is made worse by worry. Worry and stress are often the cause of heart ailments.

What is the cause of worry? Most worry comes from fear of loss; fear of losing health; fear of losing employment, which leads to fear of losing home and security. The list of things to worry about is as long as life itself and as long as we have something to lose we will be worried that we will lose it.

The implied message that Jesus is trying to get across is that worry is the result of not trusting. He is saying that if we trust God and his ability to provide we will have nothing to worry about.

Jesus goes on to say in this passage, "Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they?"

We should note that verse 25 begins with, "Therefore." Jesus is linking verse 25 with what he had just said in verse 24. The point seems to be that if we put our trust in the things of this world then we are limited to what this world can provide; if we put our trust in God then we are given access to the vast resources of heaven - but we can't have it both ways.

Trusting the world system has us worrying about the government, the economic condition, our employment, our health, and anything else that we can worry about. Trusting God and his purposes for our life gives us hope and a secure future. We may not know what the future holds but we know who holds the future.

Prayer: Lord, most of the time I don't worry, but when I begin to trust the world system, I worry much. Grant me grace to trust you. Amen.

Message: If we put our trust in the things of this world then we are limited to what this world can provide; if we put our trust in God then we are given access to the vast resources of heaven - but we can't have it both ways.

Affirmation: All that I have, want and need in this world are just incidental to what I find in Christ. All of this world's goods I have can be lost in a moment, but what I have in Christ is good for eternity.

Reflection: If worry is not trusting, then, when we worry what is being said about our faith? Do you feel that it is consistent to "live in faith" and be stressed at the same time?

My Thoughts:

Day Nineteen

The Lord Will Provide

Do not worry, saying, “What shall we eat?” or “What shall we drink?” or, “What shall we wear?” For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. – Matthew 6:31-32

If God gives such attention to the appearance of wildflowers – most of which are never even seen – don’t you think he’ll attend to you, take pride in you, do his best for you? What I’m trying to do here is to get you to relax, to not be so preoccupied with getting, so you can respond to God’s giving. People who don’t know God and the way he works fuss over these things, but you know both God and how he works. Steep your life in God-reality, God-initiative, God-provisions. Don’t worry about missing out. You’ll find all your everyday human concerns will be met. – The Message.

It is easy to get so caught up in life that we lose sight of our life-source. Believers are stressed over how the government is being run and how the economy is going. Pastors are stressed over the congregation and their response to the ministry. And Jesus is just telling us to take a step back; get another perspective and realize that this is God’s business, we’re just standing in for him.

Conservatives are saying we are losing our freedoms; liberals are

saying we are destroying our planet; Believers are saying that things are so bad that we must be in the end times; and what does Jesus say? Jesus is saying, “Hey, take a chill pill. Relax! My father knows what is going on and he knows exactly what he is doing. Trust him and he won’t let you down.”

We need to just settle down and ask ourselves if we believe God is in control or not. If he is, then can we trust him to protect us and to provide for us? Logically we know that the answer is yes.

Then, knowing that is true we must practice believing it. If we are going to be running around guided by worry like the pagans, or Gentiles, or simply the citizens of this world system, then we are going

to miss the best that God has for us. Trust Him - He is trustworthy.

Prayer: Lord, I do tend to become stressed over the circumstances of my life. Grant me the grace to wholly trust you. In Jesus name, amen.

Message: Jesus is saying, "What I'm trying to do here is to get you to relax, to not be so preoccupied with getting, so you can respond to God's giving."

Affirmation: I have learned to relax in the sure knowledge that God is going to provide for all of my needs according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus (Philippians 4:19).

Reflection: "You heavenly Father knows that you need" these things. What a powerful statement. If in fact our Father knows we need them, why do we worry about having them? When God is in control we have nothing to worry about.

My Thoughts:

Day Twenty

*Seek Him First And
He Will Take Care of the Rest*

Seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. Therefore, do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.

- Matthew 6:33-34

Jesus concludes this part of his sermon by affirming that we can trust God to rule his kingdom well and that he is concerned about the subjects of the kingdom.

Christian leaders have done a disservice to believers by putting so much emphasis upon making a choice between heaven and hell that we have missed the point of living in the kingdom of God in the here and now.

Since the original sin in the Garden of Eden mankind has been on a quest to restore what was lost. His sin separated him from the peace of God and left him lost in a world full of dangers and pitfalls. Over the centuries man has traveled many paths trying to gain access to God's acceptance, to have peace and to be restored to harmony with creation, but he has been left disillusioned and disappointed.

Jesus came offering an opportunity to have in a moment what men had been trying to acquire for centuries. He was offering an opportunity to be born again - to be born into the kingdom of God anew.

Jesus was offering all who would believe the opportunity to be redeemed from the morass of despair, to be reconciled to God and restored to the person God had created man to be.

When Jesus said, “Seek first the kingdom” he was offering the opportunity of a lifetime. He was telling us that God recognizes the mistakes of the past and he was offering a solution to the condition those mistakes created. All we are asked to do to gain access to God’s kingdom is to surrender the will which got man into trouble in the first place.

Surrendering our will and seeking his releases kingdom blessing.

Prayer: Lord, I need your grace to give me strength to surrender my will to you and trust you for my future. In Jesus name, amen.

Message: When Jesus said, “Seek first the kingdom” he was telling us that God recognizes the mistakes of the past and he was offering a solution to the condition those mistakes created.

Affirmation: I have made it a practice to seek God, his kingdom and his righteousness before anything else. I don't worry about tomorrow because I know God has it all under control.

Reflection: Religion seeks to restore what was lost because of the original sin, but Christianity, through faith in Christ, is the only religion which actually answers that desire. Give some thought to what it means to be born again and how the righteousness of Christ now lives in us giving us peace.

My Thoughts:

Day Twenty One

Judging Presumes Intent and Denies Grace

Do not judge, or you too will be judged. For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you.

- Matthew 7:1-2

The key to understanding this passage is in the phrase, “with the measure you use, it will be measured to you.” After thinking this idea through I have come to the conclusion that the statement about judging is connected to the command about forgiving.

If we have unforgiveness toward another, then unforgiveness will be held out against us. If we presume that one who has offended us had evil intent, then we will be judged as if we had evil intent in our heart. Do you see how that works?

If we withhold grace from another then grace is blocked from covering our own sin. You and I need grace to cover our own sins, we can't afford to let our attitude toward others to become an obstacle to our own walk with God.

When we look at another with bitterness in our heart, or if we carry a grudge toward another, or if vengeance is our motive for condemning the actions of another, then we are just setting ourselves up to receive the same judgment.

Let's flip that coin and look at the other side. I have received grace, therefore I know its value. I extend grace to others because I want to see the same effect in their life as I have had in mine. I know the joy of being forgiven and I want that joy to be extended to others.

Grace abounds in us and joy exudes from us when we extend to others the same gift God has extended to us. If the measure we use for others is consistent with the measure that God has used with us then we have given grace to a brother, expanded the kingdom of God, and our reward is righteousness in his kingdom.

There is a reason the Psalmist wrote, “Great peace have they who love your law and nothing shall offend them” (Psalm 119:165). When grace and forgiveness is the law by which we live we have great peace.

Prayer: Lord, help me to look at others through the grace that you have extended to me. In Jesus name, amen.

Message: I have received grace, therefore I know its value. I extend grace to others because I want to see the same effect in their life as I have had in mine. I know the joy of being forgiven and I want that joy to be extended to others.

Affirmation: It is because I have known the joy of being forgiven that I extend to others the same grace.

Reflection: What is the difference between observing the actions of another to be wrong and placing a judgment of intent on their actions? How have you dealt with others who have appeared to be wrong?

My Thoughts:

Day Twenty Two

What About the Plank in Your Eye?

Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother's eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye? How can you say to your brother, "let me take the speck out of your eye," when all the time there is a plank in your own eye? - Matthew 7:3-4

Ouch! That one really hits close to home. If we are honest we sometimes find there is a disconnect between accepting responsibility for our own inadequacy and working with the shortcomings of others. Along that line, it is thought by many that the reason most psychologists enter the field is that they are actually trying to find answers to their own angst.

I think one of the reasons we hear of so many leaders falling into sin is that they are so busy dealing with the "bigger issues" of the kingdom that they haven't taken the time and made the effort to deal with the issues they face themselves.

Have you ever had someone who has obvious character flaws (like a plank in their eye) and they are trying to deal with you over some area of your life? We want to say, "What right do you have to tell me how to live?"

I was once a part of a group of ministers who believed it was a sin for a woman to wear pants. My views were changing and I wasn't saying anything to the ladies in our congregation who wore pants. One of the brothers came to me with this question; "Pastor, if you let women wear pants then how are you going to deal with them when they wear tight pants causing the men to lust after them?"

This man was asking the wrong question. He should have been asking how he was going to deal with the lust that came from his own heart when he saw a woman wearing tight pants. It seems to be the nature of man to want to get others “lined up,” but excuse themselves.

I have found it a good practice to daily pray as David prayed, “Hide not you’re your face from my sins and blot out all my iniquity. Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me” (Psalm 51:9-10).

Prayer: Lord, I find it easier to see the faults of others than to see my own. Help me to deal with the plank in my own eye. Amen.

Message: One reason believers fall into sin is that they are so busy dealing with the “bigger issues” of the kingdom that they haven’t taken the time and made the effort to deal with the issues they face themselves.

Affirmation: I have determined to focus on my own issues rather than worry about the how others are living because when I focus on others my own life gets out of balance.

Reflection: Give some thought to the example in this devotion of the man who didn't believe in women wearing pants because he thought it made him lust. Was the problem the woman wearing pants or the man with lust in his heart? How could you apply that to other issues?

My Thoughts:

Day Twenty Three

Don't Invest in Bad Stock

Do not give dogs what is sacred; do not throw your pearls to pigs. If you do, they may trample them under their feet, and then turn and tear you to pieces.

- Matthew 7:6

We've all heard of sacred cows, but here are a couple of other animals to consider; dogs and pigs. Most of us who have dogs will on occasion give them scraps from the table, but when we do that we do not normally feed them from our finest china, neither do we put it on a silver platter. And we would never take food from our children to feed the dog.

Along the same line we would feed a pig if we had one but we would not give them our precious jewels. Jesus is trying to help us establish some relationship boundaries in this passage.

Let's summarize what he has said about relationships in this message so far. He speaks of loving our enemies, turning the other cheek and forgiving all who offend us. Then chapter seven opens with the "thou shalt not judge others" command that has been used so often by the guilty in their own defense. He winds it up with warning us concerning worrying about the faults of others when we have issues of our own with which to deal.

In verse six he takes a left turn and begins to instruct his hearers to be careful to choose wisely the ones in whom they will invest themselves. Why is this particular instruction given at this point? I have an opinion that is based upon experience. Some people respond to the grace of forgiveness and kindness and will be so moved that their lives are forever changed.

There are others who will only take advantage of every kindness you extend and not be affected at all.

We must continue to invest in those who respond, even when they fail from time to time, but we are to become wiser in dealing with those who don't respond. We are to continue to be kind and forgiving, but we must also be wise and limit our exposure. After we turn the other cheek we should duck, turn around and get out of there. We must not invest in bad stock.

Prayer: Lord, Help me to be kind and forgiving as well as wise and careful with what you have entrusted to me. In Jesus name, amen.

Message: We must continue to invest in those who respond, even when they fail from time to time, but we are to become wiser in dealing with those who don't respond. We are to continue to be kind and forgiving, but we must also be wise and limit our exposure.

Affirmation: I invest in others until my investment becomes enabling. I am careful not to waste the resources God has given me upon those who will not respect the gift.

Reflection: How can we be loving and giving and at the same time saying "no" when others are just taking advantage of our generosity? What do you think of the sentence, "After we turn the other cheek we should duck, turn around and get out of there"? What is investing in bad stock?

My Thoughts:

Day Twenty Four

Ask, Seek and Knock

Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened.

- Matthew 7:7-8

One of the things I learned in sales is that if you don't ask someone to buy they won't buy. I can't tell you how many times, as a young salesman learning the trade, that I walked away from a potential sale without ever asking the person to buy.

The ask, seek and knock principle is not an exact parallel, but the principle is the same; you must ask to receive. Just as the young salesman often doesn't feel he is worthy of the sale, so many of us don't feel we are worthy of the Lord's attention. So we don't ask.

Then we do ask, but nothing happens immediately. What do we do now? Sometimes self-doubt kicks in and we will think to ourselves, "It's just as I thought; I am not worthy of his attention." That thinking will not give you the answer you seek.

Many times our sincerity is tested and the Lord is just checking to see if we are asking out of a passing whim or are we serious about getting an answer. If we are serious about getting an answer we will continue to seek until we find it.

I once saw a cartoon character standing with something in his hand that had been lost but recently found. The caption said, "Why is it that we always find something in the last place we look?" You might have to think on that one a bit. There is an answer; we find it in the last place we looked because we looked

carefully until we found it. Maybe Jesus is not just saying, "Seek and you will find it," He may be saying, "Keep seeking until you find it."

And finally knock. Find a door and knock on it. And keep knocking on it until it opens. The promise is not that if we sit back and wait he will give us the desires of our heart, but he is promising that if we are serious about walking with him and we are committed to knowing him, he will reveal himself to us.

Prayer: Lord, sometimes I waver because my faith is not always strong. Grant me the grace to continue to asking, seeking, and knocking.

Message: Many times our sincerity is tested and the Lord is just checking to see if we are asking out of a passing whim or are we serious about getting an answer. If we are serious about getting an answer we will continue to seek until we find it.

Affirmation: When I really want an answer from God I continue to seek until the answer comes. And when the answer comes I continue to knock at the answer door until it is opened and I have the fulfillment of my request.

Reflection: Give some thought to what it means to ask, to seek, and to knock. Can you think of times in your faith walk that you applied that principle to get answers?

My Thoughts:

Day Twenty Five

The Heart of a Father

Which of you, if his son asks for bread, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a snake? If you, then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask him!

- Matthew 7:9-11

Often the way a person views God is formed by the way they view their father. In a healthy home where the mother and father are reasonably well balanced emotionally and spiritually the children have a very good chance of developing a faith that sees God as a caring father.

I have seen it be the other way also. In a home where the parents were not good caregivers the children have a more difficult time seeing

God as a benevolent father. Over the years I have heard some very horrendous stories of abusive fathers, and the children of those fathers have a difficult time accepting God as Father.

There was a prostitute that my wife and I were ministering to some years ago. She had a three year old girl and didn't have any idea who was the father of the child. She had a picture of Jesus on the wall and when her daughter would ask about her daddy she would point to the picture and say, "That is your daddy honey."

The circumstances may not have been the best, but the concept was certainly good. Our Father, who is in heaven, whose name is hallowed, and who provides for us daily, cares for us deeply.

God, as our Father, desires to be our provider, but it is up to us to make the choice of allowing him to be the provider in our lives. The problem so many face is that they have become accustomed to looking in other places for their physical and emotional needs and don't feel that they need God.

That seems to work out OK when things are going well, but when we lose our health, or our economic situation goes bad, we need to have a source greater than ourselves. The Lord is saying that when we look in the right places we will find him. He is a loving Father.

Prayer: Lord, I tend to look in other places to find my provision, and I am often disappointed. Help me to trust you for my needs. Amen.

Message: God, as our Father, desires to be our provider, but it is up to us to make the choice of allowing him to be the provider in our lives. The Lord is saying that when we look in the right places we will find him. He is a loving Father.

Affirmation: I am trusting the Lord as my Father and I know He will not disappoint me.

Reflection: Many people have a hard time trusting God to do what He said He would do because they have been conditioned by their primary caregivers to not expect good things to happen. Think about how our caregivers treated us affects our ability to trust God.

My Thoughts:

Day Twenty Six

The Golden Rule

In everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets.

- Matthew 7:12

We have often heard of the golden rule, “Do unto others as you would have them do unto you,” but we have not heard as much about the rest of the verse, “For this sums up the Law and Prophets.”

When Jesus was asked about the most important commandments he replied, “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: Love your neighbor as yourself. All the Law and the Prophets hang on these” (Matthew 22:37-41).

The message seems clear: If we are to receive the benefits of the kingdom of God we must love God and others as ourselves. And, we are not to love in words alone but in deeds. When we love others we are going to treat them the way we would want to be treated and we will sacrifice our own wants and desires for the benefit of those whose needs are greater than our own.

It is very interesting to me that Jesus, when pressed, summed up the entirety of man’s relationship with God and others with these few words, “Do to others what you would have them do to you.” That is a noble ideal, but it is beyond the grasp of all but the greatest among us.

This concept is at the core of all the major religions of the world, yet we live in a time when we don’t see that kind of concern for others being manifest among people of faith.

We can only give out love according to the love we have. If our love is based in human response to human need then we will have compassion, until the need of others begin to interfere with our own goals and objectives, then our well of love begins to dry up. To love others in this way we must love God first, then receive his love for others.

Remember this; if you really want to obey God and follow his law, then you will do unto others as you would have them do to you.

Prayer: Father, far too often I love as man loves. Help me to love as you love so that your will and law is fulfilled. In Jesus name, amen.

Message: To love others in this way we must love God first, then receive his love for others. Remember this; if you really want to obey God and follow his law, then you will do unto others as you would have them do to you.

Affirmation: I know that when I love God, and his love abides in me, then I will love others and I will treat others as I would like to be treated.

Reflection: Give some thought to the last phrase of Matthew 7:12, "For this sums up the Law and Prophets." I Jesus saying that the whole purpose of the Law, and of the writings of the Prophets was to teach us to love one another?

My Thoughts:

Day Twenty Seven

The Broad Way and the Narrow Way

Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it. - Matthew 7:13-14

Most of us have heard people say that the Christian walk is easy when you walk it hard and hard when you walk it easy. I think that means when we have truly committed our life to Christ and our heart is submitted to him, then it becomes easy to stay on the narrow path; but when we are not fully committed the broad way seems to always be attractive to us.

I have done a lot of ministry among people whose lives have been greatly affected by addictive behaviors. Some were addicted to alcohol, some to drugs and other behaviors that controlled their life. When these people come to Jesus they tend to make the same radical commitment to him as they had to the behaviors that had kept them in bondage.

These people who have been restored from a terrible brokenness in their life have little problem committing to the narrow path because they have learned first-hand where the broad path leads. They learn the safeguards they must erect in their life to keep themselves from sliding back into the place where they had been.

Most of us have not been where those folks have been, but we have had our sin-nature to deal with and our sin nature draws us to the broad path. We must keep the same diligence and erect safeguards in our life to keep us on the narrow path.

God has placed his Spirit in the hearts of those of us who have believed and who trust him. It is his purpose to guide us into the fullness of kingdom reality - but he can only do that as we commit our ways to him and seek only his will. The narrow path requires that we give diligent attention to our faith walk, but the reward is life eternal and a blessed kingdom life now.

Prayer: Lord, grant me the grace to stay on the path which leads to life. Help me to commit my ways to you that I may walk in your way. Amen.

Message: God has placed his Spirit in the hearts of those of us who have believed and who trust him. It is his purpose to guide us into the fullness of kingdom reality - but he can only do that as we commit our ways to him and seek only his will.

Affirmation: I know the way which leads to destruction is the way of least resistance, therefore I have committed myself to the Lord God and his paths are my paths, even when that means sacrificing my will..

Reflection: It is so easy to go down the broad path. All we have do is just do what comes natural - but that is the path of destruction. Think about what it means to you personally to walk the narrow road which leads to life.

My Thoughts:

Day Twenty Eight

You Will Know Them By Their Fruit

Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves. By their fruit you will recognize them. Do people pick grapes from thorn bushes, or figs from thistles? – Matthew 7:15-16

A false prophet is not someone who does not agree with my doctrine. A false prophet is one who claims to be a sincere minister of God's word and who, in fact, is actually most concerned about promoting his own agenda. And his own agenda usually includes either gaining power, control, advantage over others or gaining a financial advantage.

Jesus is warning us to consider the fruit of a person's life before we commit to following them. He spent a good deal of time exposing the hypocrisy of religious leaders in his day and we would do well to observe some of the things he observed.

At one time when we were involved in an outreach ministry a friend recommended someone to us who could help us with the business end of the ministry. This person was supposed to have successfully managed a number of businesses and was good at making a business profitable.

In a short time we discovered that this man was actually trying to take the ministry from us and was also visiting places no minister should go and representing himself as owning our property. After doing a little investigation we discovered that he had lost his previous businesses due to unscrupulous practices and he owed gambling debts around town.

We went through some hardship in the early days of that ministry because we were not careful to discern a wolf in sheep's clothing. It is wise to look at the fruit of a person's life before you take seriously what they say.

We should all be cautioned to look at the fruit of our own lives as well. The fruit that grows on our tree of life is a representation of the life that is in us. What is your fruit like?

Prayer: Give me wisdom to look inside and examine my own life, and give me the ability to discern wolves in sheep's clothing. Amen.

Message: Jesus spent a good deal of time exposing the hypocrisy of religious leaders in his day and we would do well to observe some of the things he observed.

Affirmation: I am careful to look for the fruit of righteousness in the lives of those I choose to allow into my circle of influence. If their fruit is chaos, self-promotion and un-repentant sin, then I cannot participate in ministry with them.

Reflection: We are admonished to know people by their fruit, but we must be careful that we do not use that as an excuse to judge others. There is a fine line between observing the fruit of a person's life and making a judgment on them.

My Thoughts:

Day Twenty Nine

Is Just Crying “Lord, Lord” Really Enough?

Not everyone who says to me, “Lord, Lord,” will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. – Matthew 7:21

The term “TV Evangelist” carries a negative connotation. In many circles if you want to get people talking negatively just mention a TV preacher you were listening to. Unfortunately, there is good cause for the unbelieving public to be totally disenchanted with preachers on TV. I’m a believer and much of what I see upsets me.

Not to say that there are not many sincere ministers who preach a consistent message of faith and redemption who have found a place on TV. But, the reality is that there are too many of them who cry, “Lord, Lord, haven’t we done these great things in your name,” yet when it comes to walking in the humility that Jesus projected they fall short. This message is not a diatribe against TV preachers, but it is showing us that mixed among the sincere pastors and evangelists there are those whose “god is their stomach, and their glory is in their shame. Their mind is on earthly things” (Philippians 3:19).

The reality is that many of us face the same challenge on our own level. We try to provide for our own creature comforts while pleasing God at the same time. It seems easier to keep our faith on the periphery of our life while pursuing life on our own terms. When we are in church with other believers we find it easy to speak “Christianeze,” but in the workplace one has to look close to see any evidence of our faith.

In these concluding verses of the Sermon on the Mount Jesus seems to be calling people to be true to

the core believes. Putting on the show for others to see our spirituality earns nothing with God. Only those whose heart is pure and whose works are genuine acts of love will be recognized as true believers.

God is looking for servants whose only motivation is love from a pure heart and whose works show Holy Spirit inspired compassion.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, help me to guard against putting on a show for others to see. Let my works be true acts of love and compassion. Amen.

Message: Putting on the show for others to see our spirituality earns nothing with God. Only those whose heart is pure and whose works are genuine acts of love will be recognized as true believers.

Affirmation: I am not just crying, "Lord, Lord!" Jesus is my Lord and I keep my heart submitted to him so that my works are genuine acts of love.

Reflection: Here is a question seldom considered: Can a person believe their good works, and even miracles, are a sign of being a true believer when in fact everything they do has the motive of benefitting themselves? Think about it.

My Thoughts:

Day Thirty

House of Faith Built on the Rock

Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock. - Matthew 7: 24-25

When we read the words of Jesus, at least as his teaching was recorded by New Testament writers, we begin to realize that God is more concerned about what is inside a person than he is about their outward piety. We also learn that being the person Jesus asks us to be is far beyond the ability we humans possess.

We understand turning the other cheek, but we haven't learned to do that very well. The proverbial "going the extra mile" isn't too difficult the first time, but what about the second, or third, or tenth time? When Jesus said that our righteousness must exceed the righteousness of the Pharisees he was challenging us beyond our human ability.

So then, what is the answer? Are we to just give up and say, "It's too hard, no one can make it"? Or maybe we are just to conclude that we're not perfect, just forgiven and everyone has to sin a little every day. How are we going to live the life he prescribed?

Jesus gave the answer to Nicodemus in John 3, "No one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again." The love and grace based teachings of Christ do not make sense in terms of human reasoning, yet we cannot even participate in the kingdom of God unless we embrace these teachings.

We hear the teachings of Christ, we believe them and we embrace them. We are then born into his kingdom. Now we can build the house of our life on the solid rock of truth. We can do that because he has birthed his Spirit in us and we have become a new creation from the inside out.

We can say with the songwriter Edward Mote, "On Christ the solid rock I stand, all other ground is sinking sand."

Prayer: Lord, help me to keep my feet firmly planted on the rock of truth which is the teachings of Christ. In Jesus name, amen.

Message: We have heard and embraced Christ. Now we are born into his kingdom. We can now build the house of our life on the solid rock of truth. We can do that because he has birthed his Spirit in us and we have become a new creation from the inside out.

Affirmation: My life is built upon the solid rock of Christ and faith in his name. The storms of time and circumstance cannot destroy my life because my heart is set on the one who changes not.

Reflection: We must pay attention to Apostle Peter who wrote, "Be all the more eager to make your calling and election sure" (2 Peter 1:10). Another Scripture calls us to examine ourselves to see if we are in the faith. Search your heart to be sure your faith is truly in Christ the solid rock.

My Thoughts:

Promises From the Scripture

Anger

Psalm 145:8 (NIV) - The LORD is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and rich in love.

Nehemiah 9:17 (NIV) -But you are a forgiving God, gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in love. Therefore you did not desert them...

Ephesians 4:26 (NIV) - "In your anger do not sin": Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry,

Ephesians 4:31-32 (NIV) - Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.

Courage

Psalm 27:14 (K J V) - Wait on the LORD: be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart: wait, I say, on the LORD.

Isaiah 40:29 (NIV) - He gives strength to the weary and increases the power of the weak.

Isaiah 43:1 - ... "Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have summoned you by name; you are mine."

Phil 4:12-13 (NIV) - I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. I can do everything through him who gives me strength.

Psalm 31:24 (King James Version) – Be of good courage, and he shall strengthen your heart, all ye that hope in the LORD.

Comfort

Psalm 138:7 (NIV) - Though I walk in the midst of trouble, you preserve my life; you stretch out your hand against the anger of my foes, with your right hand you save me.

Psalm 18:2 (NIV) - The LORD is my rock, my fortress and my deliverer; my God is my rock, in whom I take refuge. He is my shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold.

Matthew 11:28-30 (NIV) - "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."

Psalm 46:1-3 (NIV) - God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear, though the earth give way and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea, though its waters roar and foam and the mountains quake with their surging.

Psalms 55:22 - Cast your cares on the LORD and he will sustain you; he will never let the righteous fall.

Hebrews 13:5 - ..."I will never leave you or forsake you."

Isaiah 41:10 - Don't be afraid, for I am with you. Do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you. I will help you. I will uphold you with my victorious right hand.

Matthew 5:4 - Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.

Doubts & Fear

Psalm 23 (NIV) - The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not be in want. He makes me lie down in green pastures, he leads me beside quiet waters, he restores my soul. He guides me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake. Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me. You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies. You anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows. Surely goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

Psalm 34:15 (NIV) - The eyes of the Lord are on the righteous and his ears are attentive to their cry.

Matthew 7: 7,8 (NIV) - Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find' knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened.

Matthew 7:9-11 (NIV) - Which of you, if his son asks for bread, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a snake? If you, then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask him!

Luke 12:29-31 (NIV) - Do not set your heart on what you shall eat or drink; do not worry about it. For the pagan world runs after all such things and your Father knows that you need them. But seek his kingdom, and these things will be given to you as well.

Philippians 4:13 (NIV) - I can do everything through him who gives me strength.

1 Thessalonians 5:24 (NASB) - Faithful is he who calls you, and he also will bring it to pass.

2 Timothy 1:7 (NIV) - For God did not give us a spirit of timidity (fear), but a spirit of power, of love and of self-discipline.

James 5:16 (NASV) - The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much.

Eternal Life

1 John 5:13 (NIV) - I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life.

Revelations 21:4 (NIV) - He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away."

1 Corinthians 15:51-54 (NIV) - Listen, I tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed-in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. For the perishable must clothe itself with the

imperishable, and the mortal with immortality. When the perishable has been clothed with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality, then the saying that is written will come true: "Death has been swallowed up in victory."

Revelations 7:15-17 (NIV) - Therefore, "they are before the throne of God and serve him day and night in his temple; and he who sits on the throne will spread his tent over them. Never again will they hunger; never again will they thirst. The sun will not beat upon them, nor any scorching heat. For the Lamb at the center of the throne will be their shepherd; he will lead them to springs of living water. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes."

Faith

Hebrews 11:1 (NIV) - Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see.

Ephesians 2:8-9 (NIV) - For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith- and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God - not by works, so that no one can boast.

2 Corinthians 5:7 (NIV) - We live by faith, not by sight.

Hebrews 12:1-2 (NIV) - Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us. 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.

Galatians 3:26 - You are all sons of GOD through faith in Christ Jesus.

1 Corinthians 16:13 - Be on your guard; stand firm in the faith; be men of courage; be strong.

Family Blessings

Deut. 4:40 (NIV) - Keep His decrees and commands, which I am giving you today, so that it may go well with you and your children after you and that you may live long in the land the Lord your God gives you for all time.

Deut. 26:11 (NIV) - You shall rejoice in all the good things the Lord your God has given to you and your household.

Psalms 115:12-15 (NIV) - The Lord remembers us and will bless us... he will bless those who fear the Lord - small and great alike. May the Lord make you increase, both you and your children. May you be blessed by the Lord, the Maker of heaven and earth.

Psalms 127:3 (NIV) - Sons are a heritage from the Lord, children a reward from Him.

Proverbs 14:26 (NIV) - He who fears the Lord has a secure fortress, and for his children it will be a refuge.

Proverbs 20:7 (NIV) - The righteous man leads a blameless life; blessed are his children after him.

Proverbs 22:6 (NIV) - Train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it.

Proverbs 31:28-31 (NIV) - The Proverbs 31 Woman - ...Her children arise and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praises her: Many women do noble things, but you surpass them all. Charm is deceptive, and beauty is fleeting; but a woman who fears the Lord is to be praised.

Ephesians 6:1-4 (NIV) - Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. "Honor your father and mother" - which is the first commandment with a promise - "that it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on the earth." Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord.

James 1:12 (NIV) - Blessed is the man who perseveres under trial, because when he has stood the test, he will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love him.

Fear and Fearfulness

1 John 4:18 - There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love.

Psalms 118:6 - The Lord is with me; I will not be afraid. What can man do to me?

Isaiah 12:2 - Surely God is my salvation; I will trust and not be afraid. The Lord, the Lord, is my strength and my song; he has become my salvation."

Forgiveness

Mark 11:25 (NIV) - And when you stand praying, if you hold anything against anyone, forgive him, so that your Father in heaven may forgive you your sins."

Matthew 6:14 (NIV) - For if you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you.

Luke 6:36-37 (NIV) - Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful. "Do not judge, and you will not be judged. Do not condemn, and you will not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven.

Guidance

Isaiah 30:21 - Whether you turn to the right or to the left, your ears will hear a voice behind you, saying, "This is the way; walk in it."

Psalms 48:14 - For this GOD is our GOD for ever and ever; he will be our guide even to the end.

Proverbs 3:6 - In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight.

Psalms 32:8 - I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will counsel you and watch over you.

Help

Psalms 32:7 - You are my hiding place; you will protect me from trouble and surround me with songs of deliverance.

Psalms 42:11 - Why are you downcast, O my soul? why so disturbed within me? Put your hope in GOD, for I will yet praise him, my Saviour and my GOD.

Psalms 91:10,11 - Then no harm will befall you, no disaster will come near your tent. For he will command his angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways.

Psalms 138:7 - Though I walk in the midst of trouble, you preserve my life; you stretch out your hand against the anger of my foes, with your right hand you save me.

Hope

Psalms 42:11 (NIV) - Why are you downcast, O my soul? Why so disturbed within me? Put your hope in God, for I will yet praise him, my Savior and my God.

Psalms 31:24 (NIV) - Be strong and take heart, all you who hope in the LORD.

Psalms 71:5 (NIV) - For you have been my hope, O Sovereign LORD, my confidence since my youth.

1 Peter 1:3 (NIV) - Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

Joy

John 15:11 - I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete.

Psalm 89:15-16 - Blessed are those who have learned to acclaim you, who walk in the light of your presence, O LORD. They rejoice in your name all day long; they exult in your righteousness.

Isaiah 51:11 - The ransomed of the LORD will return. They will enter Zion with singing; everlasting joy will crown their heads. Gladness and joy will overtake them, and sorrow and sighing will flee away.

Psalm 33:21-22 - In him our hearts rejoice, for we trust in his holy name. May your unfailing love rest upon us, O LORD, even as we put our hope in you.

Psalms 30:5 - ... weeping may endure for a night, But joy comes in the morning.

Psalms 16: 11 - You will show me the path of life; In Your presence is fullness of joy; At your right hand are pleasures forevermore.

Loneliness

John 14:18 - I will not leave you as orphans ; I will come to you.

Isaiah 58:9 - Then you will call, and the LORD will answer; you will cry for help, and he will say: Here am I.

2 Corinthians 6:18 - "I will be a Father to you, and you will be my sons and daughters, says the LORD Almighty."

Peace

Psalms 85:8 - I will listen to what God the LORD will say; he promises peace to his people his saints...

2 Thessalonians 3:16 - Now may the LORD of peace himself give you peace at all times and in every way...

John 14:27 - Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.

Philippians 4:7 - And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Isaiah 32:17 - The fruit of righteousness will be peace; the effect of righteousness will be quietness and confidence forever.

Prayer

Psalms 55:16,17 - But I call to God, and the Lord saves me. Evening, morning and noon I cry out in distress, and he hears my voice.

Matthew 6:5,6 - And when you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by men. I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in full. But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.

Matthew 6:7,8 - And when you pray, do not keep on babbling like pagans, for they think they will be heard because of their many words. Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him.

Matthew 18:19 - Again, I tell you that if two of you on earth agree about anything you ask for, it will be done for you by my Father in heaven.

1 John 5:14,15 - This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us. And if we know that he hears us - whatever we ask - we know that we have what we asked of him.

Philippians 4:6 - Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with Thanksgiving, present your requests to God.

Hebrews 4:16 - Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.

Hebrews 11:6 - And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.

Protection

Psalms 32:7 - You are my hiding place; you will protect me from trouble and surround me with songs of deliverance.

Psalms 37:3-4 - Trust in the Lord and do good; dwell in the land and enjoy safe pasture. Delight yourself in the Lord and He will give you the desires of your heart.

Proverbs 2:11-12 - Discretion will protect you, and understanding will guard you. Wisdom will save you from the ways of wicked men.

Proverbs 18:10 - The name of the Lord is a strong tower; the righteous run to it and are safe.

Daniel 3:17 - If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God we serve is able to save us from it, and He will rescue us from your hand, O king.

John 3:16-18 - For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son

into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through Him. Whoever believes in Him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God's one and only Son.

John 17:11 - I will remain in the world no longer, but they are still in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, protect them by the power of your name - the names you gave me - so that they may be one as we are one.

1 Corinthians 13:7 - Love... it always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.

Psalms 112:7 - He will have no fear of bad news; his heart is steadfast, trusting in the LORD.

Psalms 27:1 - The LORD is my light and my salvation - whom shall I fear?

Psalms 121:7,8 - The Lord will keep you from all harm - he will watch over your life; the LORD will watch over your coming and going both now and forever more.

Security

Psalm 28:15 (LB) - I will lie down in peace and sleep, for though I am alone, O lord, you will keep me safe.

Psalm 31:7 - You are my hiding place; you will protect me from trouble and surround me with songs of deliverance.

Psalm 138:7 - Though I walk in the midst of trouble, you preserve my life; you stretch out your hand against the anger of my foes, with your right hand you save me.

Isaiah 40:26 - Lift up your eyes and look to the heavens; Who created all these? He who brings out the starry host one by one, and calls them each by name. Because of his great power and mighty strength, not one of them is missing.

Isaiah 43:2 - When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they will not sweep over you. When you walk through the fire, you shall not be burned; the flames will not set you ablaze.

Habakkuk 3:19a - The Sovereign Lord is my strength; he makes my feet like the feet of a deer, he enables me to go on the heights.

John 10:29 - My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all. No one is able to snatch them out of my Father's hand.

Romans 8:37-39 - No, in all these things, we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Philippians 1:6 - Being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.

Philippians 4:11b-13 - For I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. I can do everything through him who gives me strength.

Jude 1:24-25 - Now to him who is able to keep them from stumbling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory in great joy, to God our Savior, who alone is wise, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and forever. Amen.

Seeking God

2 Chronicles 15:2 (NIV) - The LORD is with you when you are with him. If you seek him, he will be found by you, but if you forsake him, he will forsake you.

Deuteronomy 4:29 - But if from there you seek the LORD your God, you will find him if you look for him with all your heart and with all your soul.

Psalms 9:10 - Those who know your name will trust in you, for you, LORD, have never forsaken those who seek you.

Jeremiah 29:11-13 - For I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you. You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart.

Strength

Psalms 68:35 - The God of Israel gives power and strength to his people.

Isaiah 40:31 - But they that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint.

Job 17:9 - The righteous shall move onward and forward; those with pure hearts shall become stronger and stronger.

2 Corinthians 12:9 (KJV) - And he said to unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness.

Philippians 4:13 (NASB) - I can do all things through him who strengthens me.

Trust

Psalms 37:3-5 – Trust in the LORD and do good; dwell in the land and enjoy safe pasture. Delight yourself in the LORD and he will give you the desires of your heart. Commit your way to the LORD; trust in him and he will do this.

Proverbs 3:5,6 – Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your path straight.

Psalms 46:1,2 – God is our refuge and strength, an ever present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear, though the earth give way and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea.

Word of God

Romans 1:16 (NIV) – I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile.

2 Timothy 3:15-16 (NIV) – The holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness,

1 Peter 1:23 (NIV) – For you have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring word of God.

Acts 20:32 (NIV) – "Now I commit you to God and to the word of his grace, which can build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified.