



Serve

2007

Fall Devotional

free

The Best is Yet to Come!

FreeToServe

i

You hold in your hand a very special 33 day devotional guide. It is precious and unique because each day is written by one of our own Immanuel's saints! During these next days we are inviting each of you to join with us as members of Immanuel's family to seek the Lord with all your heart. As we together meditate in His Word, and seek His power and presence in prayer, we will be changed from "one degree of glory to another degree of glory" (I Cor. 3:18).

Each day, during your prayer time, ponder the following questions before Him:

- Lord what is your will for my life?
- How can I more effectively love and serve You?
- Jesus, Immanuel's is Your church, what do You want to do through me to accomplish Your will and Your purposes in this wonderful church family?

Praise and thank Him for the privilege to make a difference in people's lives and to further His will and His Kingdom purposes for this time.

Be assured that you are loved, and that you are being prayed for by your pastors!

Much joy and love,



Pastor Dotty Schmitt

Immanuel's Church

The Best is Yet to Come!



The Best is Yet to Come!



2007 Fall Devotional

*“Let no debt remain outstanding,
except the continuing debt to love one
another, for he who loves his fellowman
has fulfilled the law.”*

Romans 13:8

DayOne

1

Free To Serve— The Best Is Yet To Come

“I meditate on Your precepts and consider Your ways I recounted my ways ... ”

Psalms 119:15; 26

There is real joy in knowing that family and friends are using the same daily devotional I’m using (one heart, mind, and spirit). But I realize that though all are reading and meditating on the same passages of God’s word and the insights of the devotional, we are not all impacted in the same way.

I have developed the habit of reading the entire chapter, and sometimes the preceding or following chapters surrounding a passage of scripture used as a basis for devotions. In one of our recent readings “preserve my life according to Your word” (Psalms 119:37), the focus of that particular passage was not what captured my attention but two other passages that shot arrows deep into my heart.

When I read scriptures describing the life and ways of Jesus and consider His ways, especially the three years of His ministry on earth, I have come to understand that His ministry was so effective because he was “free to serve” the Father in whatever way the Father desired. He was not weighted down, hampered, distracted or made ineffectual because of the cares and concerns of this world. Why? For two reasons: He only did those things His Father did and spoke those things His Father spoke. He had no

concerns about today or tomorrow because the Father provided all of His needs. Jesus didn’t need to keep a calendar, conduct long planning meetings, worry about operational funding, food on the table, rent, utilities, dressing for success, making the right contacts, etc. He simply stayed connected to His Father, listened to His voice and obeyed.

When I consider Jesus’ ways and recount mine, by comparison, I really do fall far short of His glory, especially since we all are called “to walk in His ways.” I know that I am excessively weighted down by the cares and concerns of this world, including many of those “good works” we call ministry. When I count up all of the time I spend reading and answering emails, and voice mails, talking on my cell phone, planning for meetings, meeting, thinking about the results of meetings, juggling family, Church, ministry, personal interests, family finances, the need for chill out time, etc., etc., (you get the picture), I realize I’m not free to serve ... but I’d like to be. I’ll bet you’d like to be too! So what’s the key: staying connected to the Father! I mean really connected ... real intimacy! Like Jesus, let the Father set the priorities (mine and yours), let Him schedule the days, let Him order the footsteps, provide the wisdom, and grant the favor. In other words, really rest in Him. He can and will provide our needs so we can be “free to serve.”

Prayer: Father, I thank You that it is in You I live and move and have my being. I acknowledge that without You I can do nothing, so let all of my striving in my own strength cease. Today and everyday fill me to overflowing with the power of Your Holy Spirit. In His power break all of the earthly bondages that hold me down or prevent me from being what You desire me to be. Set me free to soar on wings like an eagle ... set me free to serve. I ask this in the Name of Your Precious Son Jesus, who is my Lord. Amen

DayTwo

2

Faithful Service: The Desire Of My Heart

"Well done, good and faithful servant"

Matthew 25:21

The desire of my heart is to stand before the Lord and hear Him say, "Well done, my good and faithful servant." My heart often pains when I think of the hours that I have wasted in my life. We are all given a measure of time in which to live on this earth and I want to live and use the time He has given me in a way that is pleasing to Him and brings Him honor and glory.

When I think of all that the Lord has done for me, it is overwhelming. He has given me salvation, deliverance, baptism of the Holy Spirit, gifts of the Spirit, mercy, grace, protection, guidance, healing. He's given me His life, His nature, and His ability. He caused me to be prosperous. All things are mine. My attitude is in view of all You have done for me, what do You want me to do for You? The least I can do is to present my body as a living sacrifice. "I beseech you, therefore, brethren by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service" (Romans 12:1-2).

In Matthew 25, in the parable of the talents the servant says to the Master "Lord this is what I've done with what You've given to me". He recognized that his talents came from his Master, and that they had been entrusted to him, and that he was responsible to produce a result. Will we be able to say the same thing to the Master when He comes? "This is what I have done with what You have given me." May it be much fruit! Will the Master say to you and me "Well done, good and faithful servant?"

Often service to the Lord requires sacrifice. It can be inconvenient and often comes at times when we want to be doing other things. It requires our time, energy, and sometimes our money. But oh, it is worth it! We have to put aside the "self-stuff", and be filled with "His-stuff", so that we can be His "good and faithful servants."

Prayer: Father, Thank You for ALL that You have given to us. We want to stand before You and hear You say, "Well done, good and faithful servant." We offer You our bodies as a living sacrifices to serve You all the days of our lives. We serve You because You are worthy and we love You. Help us to always walk in love setting aside ourselves to serve others. May our hearts be pure in our devotion to You and in our desire to serve You. Circumcise all that hinders us from becoming Your good and faithful servant. Amen



Meditate on Luke 11: 1-12

Rosemary Parisi, Deacon
Women's Ministry

DayThree

3

What's On Your Mind?

"Do not be conformed to this world (this age; fashioned after and adapted to its external, superficial customs), but be transformed (changed) by the (entire) renewal of your mind (by its new ideals and its new attitude), so that you may prove what is the good and acceptable and perfect will of God, even the thing which is good and acceptable and perfect (in His sight for you)."

Romans 12:2 (Amplified)

It's been 20 years now and I still have an unshakable desire to walk in the supernatural on a daily basis. I hear about it all the time; but inwardly, I long to enter the realm of Kingdom living that changes the world! Our struggle has always been in the area of finances, even when we tithed faithfully. Then the Spirit of God spoke to my heart: "Listen. I know what obstacles are holding you back. I am going to reposition you for an outpouring of My treasury in this hour." I thought, "What obstacles?" And "How was I going to overcome what I didn't understand?"

My husband and I began to seek financial education and soon realized that God was changing the way we think about money. Our scripture admonishes us "to be transformed by the renewing of our minds." When our thoughts are renewed by the Word of God, we take on the character of God. The more we begin to think like Him, the more we become like Him. As a man thinketh, so is he (Prov. 23: 7a).

So then, having the mind of God, can we not move in the supernatural realm and live a life without limits? The passage continues, "...so that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God." When we have the mind of God we can prove (physically demonstrate) the good, acceptable and perfect will of God. God's power (the same power that raised Jesus from the dead) is available to us and God expects us to move in it! A transformed mind and the limitless power of God: these are the essential elements that will enable us to live life without limits – that's walking in the supernatural every day!

Our minds are being renewed in the area of finances. There are no tangible results yet, but we are already experiencing a measure of freedom. For we shall know the truth and the truth shall make us "free." Putting feet to our faith, we are starting to walk in the liberty wherewith we have been set free – free from fear, free from financial bondage, free to give, free to serve, free to move in the supernatural things of God – FREE! Truly, eyes have not seen, nor have ears heard what God has yet in store for us! So what's on your mind? God often blesses us in the area where we struggle the most.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, by Your power, grant us the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of who You are, and the ability to live a life of obedience as doers of Your Word and not hearers only. May our minds be transformed with Kingdom thinking so that we can prove (physically demonstrate) Your good and acceptable and perfect will here on earth as it is in heaven.

Meditate on 2 Corinthians 9: 6-15

Angela Gracey

Deputy Church Administrator • Women's Ministry



DayFour

4

Door Of Hope For The Valley Of Trouble

"But I will court her again and bring her into the wilderness, and I will speak to her tenderly there. There I give back her vineyards to her and transform her Valley of Trouble into a Door of Hope. She will respond to Me there, singing with joy as in days long ago in her youth after I freed her captivity in Egypt. In that coming day," says the Lord, "she will call Me, 'My Husband' instead of 'My Master.'"

Hosea 2:14-16

Prayer: Heavenly Father, embrace our children with Your love. Court them and speak tenderly to them until they cannot resist Your love. They will respond to You and we will once again hear them singing with joy as in the days of their youth. We proclaim that as they know Your love, they will no longer only call You 'My Master' but will call You, 'Jesus, My Husband.' Deliver them from the captivity that they find themselves in. Transform their Valley of Trouble to a Door of Hope.

During our journey of life and with the Lord, we encounter disappointments, grief, sorrow, hope deferred. We wonder where is God? Where is His voice I used to hear. Is He going to leave us in this Valley of Trouble?

We bring our children up to love and serve the Lord, but then see them wander away for various reasons. Some of our children have known the Lord in great intimacy from childhood. Others have only known Him as a hard taskmaster.

Then as adults, they too have their Valley of Trouble, disappointments, grief, pain and possibly hope that has been deferred. No one completely knows the heart of another. Some have made choices that have had dire consequences and we parents wonder if their destinies will ever be fulfilled. Others have opened the door to the enemy and he has gladly come in and tried to steal from them what they have known in the Lord.

How we wish we could spare them the mistakes we have made. We want them to avoid some of the choices they are making, as we have lived long enough to know where it could lead.

Don't give up! Our God is still on the throne. He is a covenant keeping God. Even when we are unfaithful, He is still faithful. He can reverse and restore everything stolen from our families, restoring back to the way He meant them to be. I once heard it said that the justice of the Lord can rewind situations and circumstances, like rewinding a movie back to a certain point.

As parents, our place is to proclaim over our children all that God intended for them. To call forth the will of the Lord in them. Don't become weary in well doing, for we shall reap if we faint not.

We see how much we love our children, even with our imperfect love. How much more does our Heavenly Father love them with His perfect love.

DayFive

5

My Treasure Is In Him

“Do not store up for yourselves treasures 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 you treasure is, there your heart will be also.”

Matthew 6:19-21

On the morning of November 11, 2006, I entrusted my apartment to two contractors who were sent by my management company to repair the tiles in my shower. Little did I know that days later I would look on the shelf in my closet and find the treasure chest with over \$500 gold coins that I had been saving for years for my son had been stolen. I was in total shock; I felt violated. I immediately began to pray, and the Lord spoke to my heart and told me to call the police and inform the rental office. Instead of questioning God as to why it happened, I again commenced worshipping and praising Him because He is my strength. The Lord took me to Matthew 5:4 where it says, “Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you.”

My son and I began to pray that the Lord would forgive this person, turn him from his wicked ways, and use him as a testimony to draw others to Himself. I asked the Lord to replace the anger that was trying to stir in my heart towards this person with His love, and He did. The beauty of this situation was showing my son how to handle situations God’s way versus my way, which was worth the money stolen. It turned out that the contracting company had encountered a similar problem with one of the employees, and a month later the owner wrote me a check for \$500.

Over a period of five months, many trials came my way. I realized later that a diamond ring and some gold bracelets had also been stolen; someone had transferred over \$15,000 from my credit card; my physical health began to fail; but in the midst of my storms, the Lord took me to the book of Job. It reminded me that in spite of my love for the Lord “...man is born to trouble as surely as sparks fly upward...” (Job 5: 7), and “submit to God and be at peace with Him and in this way prosperity will come to you.” (Job 22:21)

During these trials the Lord had given me peace. The stolen jewelry didn’t matter, the credit card issue was resolved, and the Lord spoke to my heart Matthew 6:19-21, revealing to me that my treasures were no longer in material things, but in Him.

Prayer: Thank You Lord for delivering me from the things of this world. Thank You for teaching me that the advancement of Your Kingdom is far greater than acquiring material things. For Your Word says, “No one can serve two masters.” (Matthew 6:24).

DaySix

6

We Serve A Faithful God

"But You, O Lord, are a compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness."

Psalms 86:15

Oh, a baby shower! What a joyous occasion! The little mom to be waddles to the fellowship hall with all her girlfriends laughing and talking. So much excitement! I wonder when the baby will come? I wonder how her labor will be? Will it be a girl or a boy? Every one is so happy!

Everyone but me, that is. I'm trying so hard to smile. I am happy for her, I even made the cake for the shower. A sweet little pink and white teddy bear cake. But the tears begin to well up in my eyes. I can't help it, a tear runs down my cheek.

In my heart, I hurt. The ache inside me is so painful, I long for a child of my own. I don't understand. Why Lord, why? Why not me? Why can't we have a baby? We've been trying for so long. When God, when?

I have to admit that night, I didn't handle the celebration very well. I left quietly and cried all the way home. But as always, I ran to my heavenly Father and cried out to Him. We settled a few things that night.

God is a faithful and trustworthy God. He knows me and He knows the anguish I go through. He loves me unconditionally. He hears me and answers my prayers. Sometimes He says yes, sometimes He says no, but always He has my best in mind. Jeremiah 29:11, "'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.'"

Prayer: Perhaps there is something in your life today that you have been crying out to God about. Pray with me now: Lord, You are a faithful God. I trust You with every area of my life. Lord I confess I don't understand Your ways, but this moment I choose to believe You have my best in mind, that You do plan to prosper me and not harm me. Lord You are my hope and my future. In Jesus Name I pray.

Meditate on Ephesians 3: 14-20

Elaine Lewis, Pastor
Media Marketing

DaySeven

7

The God Of Hope

“For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord. Plans to prosper you and not harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.”

Jeremiah 29:11

March 2005 my husband died after a very brief illness. Where did that leave my future? Where was my hope for my tomorrows? My husband and I had so many plans for our future. Work the Lord had put on our hearts to do. What now?

I remember in those first days following my husband’s death, trying to make sense out of what had just happened. In my anguish and total dependence I ran to the Lord. I cried out that I don’t understand but I’m going to trust You anyhow. I remember talking with the Lord about my daughter. I needed to get her through high school and off to college. Then whatever He wants me to do and wherever, I am willing. My life is not my own. It belongs to Him.

God knew He was going to take my husband home. He also knows all of my tomorrows, for He wrote each one of them. He knows my future and that has given me hope.

I have entered a new season in life where I fully understand that I am not in control. God is in control of all things, including my life and the lives of those I love. My heart is totally committed to the Lord. I am looking ahead with great expectation as to what the Lord will do in my life and through my life. A heart that is truly surrendered to the Lord is “free to serve”.

Prayer: Father, I thank You for loving me. I thank You for the privilege of experiencing to a greater degree how deep Your love is for me. I thank You for carrying me through a time of devastation and bringing to the other side wanting to serve You and loving You more than I knew I could. Thank You Lord for the plans and purpose You have for my life. For I know that they are good because all that You do is good. May I walk in Your plans and purpose victoriously, to Your glory. Amen.

DayEight

8

Prayer: Lord I thank You for the words of Paul. I will believe that no matter what I go through, whatever I might be afflicted with, I will not be crushed. Lord, though I might be perplexed, I will not despair; though I may be persecuted, Lord, I thank You that I will not be forsaken. God I know that as Your scripture says, "You have given me a treasure in this jar of clay, that I might reveal Your all-surpassing power. So today, Lord, I trust You. No matter what comes into my life, You will give me Your endurance. I will take those pressures, those things that I feel are like thorns, and allow those things to be made into diamonds for You. In Jesus' Name, Amen."

If Paul Had A Bumper Sticker

"But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us. We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed. We always carry around in our body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be revealed in our body."

2 Corinthians 4:7-10

We know if the Apostle Paul were in our area, he would surely have an Immanuel's Church and Camp Sonshine bumper sticker on his donkey. However, as I study his letters to the churches, I believe he would have a third sticker that probably says "Stuff Happens ...but God is Faithful". Throughout Corinthians, Paul writes paradoxes that show; yes, in this life "stuff" will happen but God is always faithful.

Paul writes that we are afflicted in every way but not crushed; we are perplexed, but not despairing; he says I am persecuted, but not forsaken. Again, "stuff" is happening, but in the midst of that, he reveals the faithfulness of our God. He goes on to say, "I am struck down but I'm not destroyed; I'm sorrowful, but then he says I'm always rejoicing; he says I'm poor, yet I'm making many rich". Finally he says, "I have nothing, and yet I possess everything".

So, what can we ascertain from Paul's many paradoxes? Is he just oblivious to everything that's going on? How can he say all this "stuff" is happening and yet, God is so faithful? In Chapter 6 of II Corinthians, there is an interesting word in the

Greek New Testament, hupomone, which has been translated as endurance. There is actually no English word to accurately translate hupomone. It is not talking about the kind of endurance where you get into bed and pull the sheets over your head and say, "somehow I'm going to hold on to the Lord until this thing passes". It's not the kind of endurance when you bow your head and fold your hands in passiveness and say, "I'm just going to resign myself to somehow get through this"; but rather, it's the kind of endurance that turns "stuff" into diamonds. The type of endurance that takes the pressures of life and transforms our hard rocks in such a way that something beautiful happens. That's the kind of endurance that God can place in our lives when the pressures come. That's the kind of endurance that enables us to not just simply survive, but to thrive as those different things, the "stuff," comes up in life.

The Psalmist David would also probably have the same bumper sticker on his chariot. In I Samuel 30, David comes home, his house has burned down, and he has lost his family. A lot of "stuff" has happened to David; yet in the midst of it, he writes that he will trust in the Lord. What gives David the ability to say that? I Samuel 30:6 states that after this horrible "stuff", David found strength in the Lord his God. He had prayed and God infused endurance into him that turned his "stuff" into diamonds!

DayNine

9

Trust God For The Best

"You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives."

Genesis 50: 20

Joseph had a life filled with ups and downs. He was loved by Jacob and Rachel, but was despised by his brothers. They were jealous of Joseph, of his special ability to interpret dreams, and his tendency to report their evil conduct to their father. His brothers sold him into Egypt, and he must have been heartbroken. It is instructive to bear in mind that after Joseph was sold into slavery, he never got to see his mother Rachel again. Sometimes we go through painful experiences and may wonder why God allows certain things to happen, but we can always trust in God's care for us. Joseph had a lot of stages in his life. His story portrays him as one with prophetic insight, a prisoner and ultimately Prime Minister of Egypt. We should keep in mind that God was with him at every stage of his life and throughout all his experiences.

Maybe you are going through tough times at the moment and it seems as though God has turned His back on you. Jesus felt the same way when He hung on the cross. But Jesus declared "It is finished." If we wait for the Lord, He will set us free! Our deliverance will enable us to serve with a keen sense of God's ability to see us through our personal storms. Joseph told his brothers that "what they meant for evil, God meant for good." It may be easy to see our condition as the Lord's disapproval of us, but it is specifically at times like these that we need to draw closer to God and hear His voice.

So often what matters most in life is not the events or circumstances of our lives, but our individual responses to them. God can and does turn things around for His children. Even when people intend evil for us, God has the power to bless us through them. God cares for us, and hence we can expect His best!

Prayer: Dear Father, we bless You for all You mean to us. You watch over us with eyes of love. May our hearts continue to give You all the glory even when we do not know why we are going through tough situations and circumstances. May we always trust You, knowing that all things work together for those who love You. Continue to fulfill Your will and purpose through us, in Jesus name. Amen.

DayTen

10

Free To Serve In Peace

“Continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to His good purpose. Do everything without complaining or arguing, so that you may become blameless and pure, children of God without fault in a crooked and depraved generation, in which you shine like stars in the universe.”

Philippians 2:12-15

Prayer: Father, help us pray for everything so that we do not fall into disappointment, anger, or frustration. Help us trust in You, God, knowing that You are doing Your perfect will in us. Dear Lord, help us submit to You and serve You faithfully, humbly, joyfully, and patiently. Help us in our marriages and in the raising of our children. Help us in our very walk so that our countenance will show You off, and thus inspire others to walk likewise. We thank You for Your love, Your faithfulness, Your mercy, and Your grace. Keep us focussed on You, Lord. In Jesus' Name we pray. Amen!

Anything worth doing is worth praying about. If it isn't worthy of prayer, then it isn't worthy of disappointment, anger, or being upset should it NOT turn out as we had hoped. If we did pray and trust God, there's no reason to be upset, for regardless of how things appear, God is faithful and can be trusted!

Likewise, it serves no Godly purpose to display your "great aggravation" to your brother or sister in Christ (James 1:20). If something they have done offended you, bring your complaint to God, and ask Him to settle the matter righteously. Then, armed with the presence of the Lord, we can go to that brother or sister and explain our concern with peace; knowing that if we are right, they will soon realize it as the Lord speaks to them... and if perchance we are wrong, then we will soon realize it as the Lord speaks to us!

Simply put, our God is above our situations, above our brothers and sisters, above our pastors and leaders. We must bring all of our concerns to God and start treating Him like He is in charge! Thus we place all of our faith and trust in Him for all things.



Meditate on Psalms 37

Wardell & Rosi Parker

Technical Arts • Graphics Design • PPT Ministry

DayEleven

11

The Power Of Blessing

"Blessed are all who fear the LORD, who walk in His ways. You will eat the fruit of your labor; blessings and prosperity will be yours"

Psalms 128:1-2

As a covenant-keeping God, the blessings in our lives reflect His gracious character. All blessings come from God's heart alone for He is a God of love, kindness, and goodness.

In Scripture, the words "bless" and "blessings" appear nearly six hundred times. "Blessing", "to bless", "to be blessed" means to request of God the bestowal of Divine favor; to confer prosperity or goodness or happiness upon; to receive God's goodness and announce it to others.

While God Himself is the Source of all blessing, it can also be proclaimed through His official representatives—and as children of God—we are His official representatives! We are called His royal priesthood (1 Peter 2:9). We are His sons and daughters with the life of Christ active within us.

In order to bless others from a full cup, we must first speak blessings over our own life. In 1 Chronicles 4, Jabez asked God for His hand of blessing, and Scripture singles him out above all of his brothers to encourage us to move with that same boldness. Jabez cried, "Oh that You would bless me indeed and enlarge my territory! Let Your hand be with me and keep me from harm so that I will be free from pain." My favorite part of this

whole account is the very next statement that reads, "And God granted him his request." That is the promise-keeping God that we serve and He desires to grant your petitions as well.

What kind of blessings should we declare?

First, we can speak the living-giving, powerful Word of God: "I bless you with the joy of the Lord which is your strength" (Nehemiah 8:10). "I bless you with the fear of the Lord that is the beginning of wisdom, and knowledge of the Holy One which is understanding" (Proverbs 9:10). This is the primary blessing that I declare over my children. If they walk with the fear (respect and honor) of the Lord and with knowledge of Him, then their paths in life promise to be straight.

Second, we can proclaim the powerful Names of God: "I bless you in the Name of Jehovah-Shalom, the God of peace. May peace and order fill your life, breaking chaos and disorder." "I bless you in the Name of Jehovah-Nissi, God is your Strength and He fights on your behalf."

I declare over you the blessing that God Himself directed His priests to speak over His people. "The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make His face shine upon you and be gracious to you; the Lord turn His face toward you and give you peace" (Numbers 6:24-26).

Prayer: Lord give me a desire to seek Your favor in my life and in the lives of those around me. May I be filled to overflowing with a fresh revelation of the Your unconditional love for me. Bless me richly with a respect for You that is the beginning of wisdom, and a knowledge of You, the Holy One, which is understanding. Amen.

DayTwelve

12

On My Knees

"The Lord is my strength and my shield; my heart trusts in Him, and I am helped. My heart leaps for joy, and I will give thanks to Him in song.

Psalms. 28:7

In this life we take many abilities for granted, until we lose one. Kneeling to pray is one of them, for when I became unable to do so because of my Multiple Sclerosis affliction of 26 years, I asked God to allow me to get down again on my knees and get back up. The following experience just lets me know, I'm close, but I'm not there yet, for the best is yet to come!

It was Saturday morning and my husband, who helps me up in the morning, had gone to pick up our daughter from the airport. Before he left, he told me to stay in bed and continue to rest. I prayed traveling mercies for them both and went back to sleep. I was awakened by the phone ringing, and a friend wanted to come by and retrieve her kids' bikes that had been stored in our garage for a few years; it was yard sale time. "Would it be okay if I came in thirty minutes," she asked? Certainly! I'll be up and out of bed by then," I replied.

Prayer: Father, no matter what befalls me, let me always trust in You. Help me to continue hiding Your Word in my heart and standing on it. Amen.

However, getting out of bed and transferring into my wheelchair isn't an easy task, but I know who to ask for help, Jesus. I prayed and began speaking Ps. 28: 1, "To You I call, O Lord my rock; do not turn a deaf ear to me." I managed to pull myself up, maneuvered my body and sat on the side of the bed. I pulled my wheelchair as close to me as possible to transfer, but when I went to do so, I slid off the bed and ended up on my knees. "Thank You Lord that I'm on my knees, but I didn't expect to get here quite this way!" I prayed again, "Hear my cry for mercy as I call to You for help" (Ps. 28:2). Please get me up.

The Spirit reminded me that my friend would be here soon. Of course, God knew this was going to happen and already had in place my rescue. I called Mom and gave her an update of the morning events, and asked her to answer the doorbell when it rang. My friend arrived, was brought to my room first, saw my predicament, asked if she could lift me into my chair, and did so. I thanked her, raised my hands and gave praise to God!

DayThirteen

13

Freely You Have Received... Freely Give

"As you go, preach this message: 'The kingdom of heaven is near. Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse those who have leprosy, drive out demons. Freely you have received, freely give.'"

Matthew 10:7,8

On September 11, 2001, as the twin towers of the World Trade Center became deadly infernos, burning against the New York City skyline, many first-responding emergency personnel were understandably overwhelmed. Of those who survived, many would later report feeling a sense of utter inadequacy as they stood at the feet of those two crumbling twin giants wondering what they could possibly do to help. The need was so great, the flaming giants so large, that some felt, just as the ten spies who accompanied Joshua and Caleb on their clandestine expedition, that the mission before them was indeed impossible. (Num. 13)

Likewise, when we look at the issues facing our world, community and church, we may be tempted to conclude that our "little bit" is insufficient to meet the tremendous need at hand. We may feel, as we survey our "giants" that we just don't have enough - time, talent or tender - to give and serve in a meaningful way. But God specializes in taking what we deem to be small and insignificant, and multiplying it to meet great needs through His great grace!

Jesus made this clear when He praised the poor widow for her willingness to freely give, though her gift, in the eyes of some, might have seemed hardly worth noting. (Mark 12:41-44) Jesus also used the "little bit" carried by a little boy in his small lunch bag to feed a starving multitude! In the same way, He will take whatever we offer Him out of a cheerful heart (2 Cor. 9:7) and multiply it to carry out His will in our church, community and the world.

In Matthew 10, Jesus was preparing to send His twelve disciples away for a life-changing ministry experience. But, before they embarked upon their missionary excursion, He readied them for their journey with a few parting instructions. He commanded them to strip themselves of many of their creature comforts, encouraging them to travel light. Then, with all of their resources left behind, He sent them out, exhorting them to give as they went, reminding them that since freely they had received, freely then... they should give.

It's not how much we have to give that matters most, but that we freely offer it to the Lord out of a cheerful and joyful heart. The Lord is great at taking our little and turning it into His much!

Prayer: Father, I thank You for every resource You have given me – my time, my abilities and my finances. From You I have freely received, so to You, I gladly and freely give. Help me to maintain a proper perspective on what I have and how to share it freely. Amen

Meditate on Malachi 3: 1-12

John A. Thompson, II

Building Maintenance • Rite of Passage Ministry



DayFourteen

14

From Spiritual Marshmallow To Spiritual Rock

"When they had finished eating, Jesus said to Simon Peter, 'Simon son of John, do you truly love Me more than these?' 'Yes, Lord,' he said, 'You know that I love You.' Jesus said, 'Feed My lambs.'"

John 21:15

The book of John ends with the story of Jesus reinstating Peter. As the scriptures tell us, Peter had denied Jesus three times. Despite all of his promises to do otherwise, when the pressure was on, Peter allowed his insecurities to get the best of him. Peter had the best intentions; after all didn't he show his love for the Lord by cutting off Malchus' ear? (John 18:10-11). Surely if he was able to be brave and brandish a sword to protect his Lord in front of Roman Soldiers, he would have no problem standing up for his Lord in other situations. But the pressure became too great, and as John chapter 18 tells us, this impulsive, emotional, cowardly man caved and betrayed our Lord.

How many times could this exact situation be true of you and me? How many promises have we made to the Lord? How many emotional outbursts have we had, swearing our undying loyalty to Jesus, only to have our insecurities get the best of us in times of pressure?

How sad for Peter (and you and me) if the story would have ended there. Gratefully, the Lord did not allow Peter to wander off and wallow in self pity. John chapter 21 tells us that a loving and merciful Jesus went back to Peter and restored this broken, defeated man.

But what would have happened if Peter had run away after he denied Jesus? What would have happened if he would have stopped Jesus and said "I don't want to listen to what You have to say!" Instead of allowing Jesus to determine the outcome of His future, Peter could have allowed shame and condemnation to determine the outcome of his future.

If you read the first 12 chapters of Acts and 1st & 2nd Peter, you will see that Peter goes on to be one of the most outspoken Christians in the New Testament. His outspoken proclamations of who Jesus is and what He's all about changed the lives of everyone he came into contact with.

There are times all of us fail Jesus. And as if the guilt of failing Him isn't enough, Satan is right there to beat us down with shame and condemnation. But just as Peter had a choice, we are also presented with a choice. Our loving Savior desires to forgive us and restore us. Are you willing to let Him restore you in His love?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, forgive me if I have allowed past mistakes to keep me from being all that You have created me to be. I no longer want my future to be determined by past failures and by past mistakes. Help me to receive Your forgiveness and love and empower me to take Your message of unconditional love and forgiveness to a hurting world.

DayFifteen

15

Through It All You Can Make It

"But now be strong, O Zerubbabel," declares the LORD. "Be strong, O Joshua son of Jehozadak, the high priest. Be strong all you people of the land," declares the LORD, "and work. For I am with you," declares the LORD Almighty."

Haggai 2:4

We are living in a time when there appears to be no solutions to the world's many problems: Middle East fighting, ineffective diplomacy, indiscriminate terrorism, and ever-present poverty. We even lament the state of employment, health care and retirement here at home, the greatest country in the world. Alas, many have lost hope.

But I have good news! In spite of all of this, what we experience every day even with the turmoil in our lives, God wants us to focus on Him rather than on our surroundings or situation. When we focus on Him, we draw strength, we draw courage, and we have hope. Why?? Because when we focus on Him, His word comes alive in us and we begin to walk in victory.

Romans 8:31 tells us that if God is with us, who can be against us? Know that the Lord has a plan for our life and that our circumstances are only temporary. Know that our night WILL be overcome by daylight, our sorrow WILL be replaced by gladness, and our regrets WILL be replaced by anticipation. For we know that in all things God works

for the good of those who love Him, who have been called according to His purpose (Romans 8:28).

God loves us and in Romans 8:37, we see that Paul was convinced that NOTHING could separate us from this love. However, there is a saying that "LOVE IS what LOVE DOES". Our Father demonstrates His love to us every day. We should be mindful of the fact that no matter how bad a situation currently is, only God's hand of righteousness prevented it from being worse.

In Genesis, we see that God used the trials and tribulations of Joseph to position him to help others. Likewise, through our trials, He can put us in the right place at the right time to further His purpose in our lives.

So what does this all mean? It means that we can trust God. He will not leave us nor forsake us, even though it may seem that way to us. This is why faith should be a vital part of our lives. Do not give up on God! He has a plan for our life and is working that plan out through all the experiences and circumstances that we encounter.

Prayer: LORD Bless us so that we may see Your handiwork in every area of our lives and that we may learn to trust You and stand on Your word. Give us peace in the midst of the turmoil encircling this world and let us walk in victory. Amen.

Day Sixteen

16

“Give To Get, To Give!”

“But King David replied to Araunah, “No, I insist on paying the full price. I will not take for the LORD what is yours, or sacrifice a burnt offering that costs me nothing.”

1 Chronicles 21:24

When I was a senior in high school, I was exposed to the principle of “giving to get, to give” for the first time. At the time I had saved about \$1000 which would pay for my first year at a Bible College I had chosen to attend. I was convinced that the Lord was leading me to give that money into the work of His Kingdom, so I did, trusting Him to provide for my college education.

About a month later my high school band director asked me about my college plans. He told me that a local community college was looking to offer a scholarship for a trumpet player and he wanted to recommend me. I of course accepted and was awarded a full scholarship for two years at the college.

When my family and I attended my high school awards ceremony (to receive the two-year music scholarship) we were surprised to learn that a local Foundation had awarded me a two-year scholarship based solely on character, which gave me money for books, commute and even meals.

But the blessing continues! During the summer after my second year of college, while I was up in Tennessee visiting Elaine, my mother called me to tell me that I received a letter from the Foundation who awarded me the second scholarship. I asked her to open it and read it over the phone. The letter indicated that the scholarship had been extended another year and increased by three times the original amount! This paid for my third year of college.

The Lord gives, and when we give back, He gives even more so we can give even more back to Him. Giving truly does allow us to be Free to Serve!

Prayer: Father thank You for meeting my needs, and giving me more so I can in turn give back to You and to Your Kingdom, so others can receive Your blessing! You are a good God, who is always considering me, Your child.

Meditate on Luke 6: 12-38

Brad Lewis
Executive Pastor



DaySeventeen

17

Awareness Of His Presence

"You have made known to me the path of life; You will fill me with joy in Your presence...."

Psalms 16:11

In June 2006 the Lord challenged me to give Him one hour and allow Him to guide the time. I would like to share what He told me about the Awareness of His Presence.

Tonight is the beginning of many seasons together. You will fall down before Me with your face to the ground, and I will pour out My love on you. Many mountains will be flattened; many depressions will be filled in as the way is made straight. Your heart is being softened, prepared for Me, for My Presence. Delight in Me. Take pleasure in worshipping Me. I'm always near.

See how patiently you wait to hear My voice. You expect to hear Me speak. You trust that what you hear is My voice. Expect Me to speak to you during the day. Wait patiently for My voice and trust that you're hearing Me correctly. You see how easily the words flow; expect that same ease throughout the day. Wait for it even when there are interruptions or breaks in the flow. Listen for My voice—not searching, just being open to hear. Let Me fill your days

with whisperings in your ear. Don't strain for it, just expect it.

Countless hours are spent in empty pursuits and fruitless effort oblivious to My presence. This is the enemy's way of sidetracking you and wasting the precious time you've been given to be alive. Why do you think it's so hard to maintain awareness of My presence? There's a battle going on to keep you from coming into that intimacy, telling you it's too hard, in fact impossible to maintain awareness of Me. As you realize that's a lie, you'll begin to be victorious in being aware of My presence. I'm here. I love you. I delight in you. I don't leave you and come back. I'm always here with you.

Bring Me into the center of your life. Let Me fill your waking hours with My voice. Greet Me in the morning and talk with Me throughout the day. I'm always talking to you.

Prayer: Lord, cause me to listen throughout the day for Your voice. Let me hear You speaking as I go about my day. Open my ears to hear. Lead me minute by minute. Let Your words permeate my heart that I may walk in an awareness of You that will transform my life.

Meditate on Psalms 18

Carol Wilkinson

Administrative Assistant to Pastor Charles • Dance Ministry



DayEighteen

18

For this reason... God's Plan... Marriage

"The Man said, "Finally! Bone of my bone, flesh of my flesh! Name her Woman for she was made from Man." Therefore a man leaves his father and mother and embraces his wife. They become one flesh. The two of them, the Man and his Wife, were naked, but they felt no shame."

Genesis 2: 23-25

In the film, "The Princess Bride", the Impressive Clergyman begins his sermon on the wedding day of Prince Humperdink and Buttercup with the following words. "Marriage. Marriage is what brings us together today." The impact of the scene is lost without the audio and video, but the sentiment remains. Marriage is what brings us together in our reading today.

Since God could not find a companion or helper suitable to Adam, we see that in vs. 21 of Genesis 2, that God put Adam into a deep sleep and from Adam's rib, He created woman. Adam was overjoyed with God's plan and then we see the first institution created by God - Marriage. *"Therefore a man leaves his father and mother and embraces his wife. They become one flesh. The two of them, the Man and his Wife, were naked, but they felt no shame."*

Knowing that marriage was the first thing on God's heart after Creation should be enough for us to pay attention to this most valued relationship. For further emphasis of the importance that God places on marriage, this Genesis Scripture is quoted, no less than six times, in the New Testament, both by Jesus and the Apostle Paul. God places high value

on our marriages and our relationships. Isn't it curious that Jesus' first miracle is found in John chapter 2 at the wedding of Cana of Galilee? After turning the water into wine, the best wine, the Scripture declares that in this miraculous act, Jesus showed forth His glory and that His disciples believed in Him. All at a wedding, thereby affirming God's heart and the importance He places on this most cherished relationship of marriage.

Consider this Scripture from Ephesians 5:29-33 (The Message): *"No one abuses his own body, does he? No, he feeds and pampers it. That's how Christ treats us, the church, since we are part of His body. And this is why a man leaves father and mother and cherishes his wife. No longer two, they become "one flesh." This is a huge mystery, and I don't pretend to understand it all. What is clearest to me is the way Christ treats the church. And this provides a good picture of how each husband is to treat his wife, loving himself in loving her, and how each wife is to honor her husband."*

The marriage relationship then goes much farther than "just the two of us." It is a great mystery Paul proclaims, but it is the way of Christ and His church. Our lives together in covenant reflect a microcosm of Christ and His kingdom.

How is your relationship with your husband/wife? Is your relationship reflecting the glory of God and Christ's way with His church? How did you answer? If we are honest with ourselves, we all have a long way to go. Let us examine ourselves and commit one to another as we pray.

Prayer: Thank You Lord Jesus for Your great love to us. Thank You that Your mercy is new every morning and that Your faithfulness extends to the heavens. Thank You that You are faithful and just to forgive us of all sin and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. Help us now to return to our first love and that Your love would invade our marriages and our families. Show forth Your glory and let Your glory be our rear guard. We agree as one flesh, in the authority of Your Name. Thank You! Amen!

Meditate on Ephesians 4:25-5:1-32

Jamie Dixon, Pastor

Marriage Ministry • Pastoral Care



DayNineteen

19

Practice, Practice, Practice

"But seek ye first the Kingdom of God, and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you."

Matthew 6:33

There comes a time when we have to believe that the Word is true, and that we can depend on it. I clearly remember the first time that Matthew Chapter 6:33 challenged me to do just that.

What do you do when you find yourself in the midst of change? A divorce that you never anticipated, having to refinance your home from a 3% to 11% interest rate in order to maintain a stable environment for your child, and then learning that your job was relocating to another state—all faith builders.

I probably would have handled any one of the above circumstances in my usual manner. But, the Lord, whose timing of events in our lives is perfect (Jeremiah 29:11), knew that I would fall apart and eventually discover that I could do nothing, accomplish nothing, and be nothing without Him. He took the "I" out of my life and allowed the "We" (the Lord and me), to enter in. Oh, how He loves us and refuses to leave us to ourselves.

It is in seeking His will, and the practice of communicating daily in conversations with God, that we strengthen our faith walk. He says to us, "If you love Me, you will obey what I command" (John 14:15). But, if we are going to obey His commands consistently, it is going to take practice.

Matthew, chapter six deals with Kingdom Living and "We" started looking first, at my giving. But, how could I tithe when I was head of household? I had a house and all of its expenses, an efficiency apartment, travel expenses back and forth to check on my son, etc. But, the more I stayed in His Word and trusted Him, though figures didn't add up on paper, there was always more than enough! Practice!

Seeking the Kingdom of God and His righteousness required discipline and obedience. That meant, not only sharing with Him who promised me that He would never leave me nor forsake me, and to be strong and of good courage (Joshua 1). But, I soon discovered that my life was an open book (the devil will use anything we try to hide against us). I, who didn't like being touched, started hugging and sharing personal life experiences. But, when I let anxiety in, and I did, I remembered His Word to "be anxious for nothing;" and when I couldn't sleep, I repeated Psalms 127:2, "for He giveth His beloved sleep." More practice! Increased faith!

Today, think about some of your faith building encounters with the Lord. Do you see them as opportunities to practice or reasons to fall? Just remember, yesterday, today, and forever - He is faithful!

Prayer: Father, we thank You for Christ Jesus, our Lord. He has given us strength and considered our faithfulness, and has appointed us to His service. (1 Tim. 1:12)

Meditate on Colossians 3: 1-18

Margaret Bell, Minister
Women's Ministry



DayTwenty

20

What Have You Been Eating?

"Death and life are in the power of the tongue and those that love it will eat the fruit thereof"

Proverbs 18:21

As believers, we need to be careful what we are eating spiritually.

The bible tells us that our tongue carries in it the power of life and death, (blessings and curses) and those that love it, (people who continually speak either blessings or curses over their lives), will reap the consequences of what they sow into their own lives with their words. Words carry the power of life and death.

Prayer: Dear God, please forgive me for speaking the lies of the enemy. I chose today to believe and confess Your word over my life. I thank You Lord for giving me Your life giving power to change my situation. I believe what Your Word says and speak Your promises in faith over my life!. In Jesus name, Amen.

In the beginning, God spoke everything into existence, He simply spoke the words and the world was created. Just by the power of His words, all that we see was formed from what is not seen, His word. The funny thing is we have that same life giving power living in us. For when God created man, He created us in His image and in His likeness. (Genesis 1:26) He gives us that same ability to speak life into existence. Are you speaking life into existence? Do you speak words of encouragement and hope?

Whether you chose to believe it or not, your words do have power. We all know of someone who, when asked how he is doing, he says, "I think I'm getting sick" and sure enough when you see him the next day, he really is sick. The same is true for our friends who chose to speak God's blessings over their life and it seems that they are always blessed.

It is very important that we as believers be conscious of the words that we speak. For, "out of the same mouth come praise and cursing..." (James 3:10) Therefore we have to make a conscious decision to speak words that agree with what God's Word says. Let our mouths be filled with praise and thanksgiving!

We have the power (life giving power) to change our situation. So, if you don't like the way things are looking right now, change what you're eating and speaking. Change the words that you confess over your life. Refuse to speak the lies of the devil and chose to speak God's truth and promises over your life and your situation will change.

DayTwentyOne

21

“A Season Of Increase”

Now to Him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to His power that is at work within us, to Him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen

Ephesians 3;20,21

I believe that we are living in one of the most exciting times in human history. The Spirit of the Lord is hovering over the earth about to release the greatest outpouring of His glory that the world has ever seen. We are already beginning to see the early signs of its beginning. As the Lord searches the earth for places for His glory to dwell, the cry of our hearts is that Immanuel's Church will become a footstool where His glory will become manifest as He dwells in the praises of His people.

As worshippers, we magnify the Lord, and life Him up through praise. We conquer the enemy and change our circumstances through the dance. We press into the deep places of intimacy with our bride groom in worship. We throw ourselves without reservation into this expression of love, and find ourselves overcome by His glory, the presence our Father. In the presence of His glory, we are changed.

In the Old Testament, we see a model of worship that has captured my heart. We see an army of worshippers numbering over 600 that keep vigil before the Ark of the Covenant. They are Levites. They are called. They are skilled. They are appointed. They are consecrated before God. They are

charged with leading the nation of Israel in the worship of Jehovah. They go out before the army to usher in the presence of the Lord that gives God's people the victory in battle. This anointed army of worshippers rotate in and out of the temple day and night where they sustain the most beautiful worship before the Ark of the Covenant. They are assigned with the task of keeping worship flowing into the temple of the Lord day and night. What an awesome responsibility!

Dare we dream of such a Levitical army in our midst once again? Could it be that God is calling us to return to a time of continual worship before His throne as we prepare for our wedding day? I believe that God is calling the church to an unprecedented place of corporate intimacy with the bridegroom. In order to fulfill the calling that God has put before us as “last day Levites”, we will need an army of worshippers.

We believe that we are walking into a season of INCREASE as He builds us into a Levitical Army. Much will be required of those who are called to this ministry, but much will be poured into them as well. God's increase will be in us and through us. There will be increase in numbers of those who will respond to the Lord's calling. There will be increase in resources needed to accomplish the task. There will be increase in anointing. There will be increase of fruit. But, most of all, there will be an increase of HIS GLORY.

Prayer: “Thank You Father for the season of increase that is upon us.”

DayTwentyTwo

22

Thinking Supernaturally

"...No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love Him – but God has revealed it to us by His Spirit."

1 Corinthians 2:9, 10

Recently, the Lord powerfully spoke into my spirit through this above Scripture: "I want to radically change the way you think, hear, and mentally perceive and understand the eternal unseen realm of My Kingdom. I want to heal the areas in which your faith has been crippled and scarred through unbelief, doubt, disappointment, and discouragement. I want you to more radically live in the realm of the supernatural until the miraculous is your normal way of life and of thinking." I awfully sat in the quiet of my meditational time with the Lord and allowed this Scripture and His Words to my mind wash over me.

Prayer: Thank You, Lord, for the beauty of Your presence and power in my life! I totally and joyfully yield my mind and thoughts to You. Thank You for opening my eyes and my mind to the awesome unseen realm of the Spirit. May I today see, think, and speak from the eternal, supernatural realm of Your Kingdom!

Soon after this, someone gave me a copy of Bill Johnson's "The Supernatural Power of a Transformed Mind". I always knew that the mind was a very powerful gift from the Lord for He told us to love Him with all our heart, soul, and mind. As we totally yield our mind and thoughts to the transforming power of His Spirit, and of His Truth, we begin to think biblically and see life from His perspective. He then transforms the way we think, speak, live and even spend our money. Ponder Romans 12:2. "Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—His good, pleasing and perfect will."

All over the earth, our God is speaking into the earth that the time of revival and harvest is at hand. He is determined to have us free to serve, love, obey and worship Him with passion, purity and power! Consider the exciting invitation of this verse as you boldly pray today! "Call to Me and I will answer you and tell you great and unsearchable things you do not know"—Jeremiah 33:3—He is longing for us to move in the realm of the supernatural, and to believe Him for the "impossible"!

DayTwentyThree

23

Wisdom's Reward

Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore get wisdom: and with all thy getting get understanding.

Proverbs. 4:7

At this very moment you might think you need money, healing, deliverance or release from some burden. May I suggest that what you really need is God's wisdom imparted to you, for "wisdom is the principal thing." To be free from burdens, faith for the anointing of wisdom will bring your reward. Right now, activate the anointing. Say: "In the Name of Jesus, I believe I receive wisdom for ..."

What is wisdom? Wisdom is God's Word, Jesus (Luke 11:49; I Cor. 1:30). Wisdom and understanding work together and are given by God (James 1:5) with the power to set the believer free. Because wisdom is an anointing, the power of the Holy Spirit is available to reveal the truth of anything you need to know (I John 2:20). Are you drawing on the wisdom of God for the solutions to life's challenges? Or are you seeking to be free from some yoke apart from the wisdom of God's Word?

Some years ago, I heard the Spirit of the Lord say to me: "In simplicity is My wisdom revealed." From meditating on this Word from the Lord, I was led to I Cor. 2:9-10: "Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him. But God has revealed them to us through His Spirit." For believers, God's wisdom is not hidden from us, but for us. I learned that this was one of the rewards of praying in the spirit.

When you have activated the anointing for receiving God's wisdom, take a moment, pray in the spirit, and ask God for the interpretation of your prayer (I Cor. 14:13). Listen, you may be getting a simple solution that sets you free from the burden of a problem.

Get ready for wisdom's reward. Consider Proverbs 24:27. "Prepare thy work without..." The work without is the time spent putting the Word of God in the heart. The work we are called to do is to believe the Word (John 6:29). "...and make it fit for thyself in the field..." The work within is the change in our thinking, renewing the mind. "...and afterwards build thine house." This is the work of applying the Word and remaining steady until you receive your reward. To maintain your freedom, use the anointing of wisdom to wage war. Then become a house of purity, prayer, power, and praise!

Prayer: Father God, thank You for Your Word, the spirit of wisdom, and the anointing that sets free from all that would hinder Your purposes and plans. I declare I am filled with the wisdom of God which leads to making wise and prosperous decisions in all areas of life. I have the reward. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Meditate on Proverbs 3

Carol Griffith

Administrative Assistant to Pastor Beverly



DayTwentyFour

24

A Child's Example

"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."

Hebrews 12:1

Recently I heard a very inspiring, yet true story from my ten year old daughter's friend. As I drove the girls home after their annual end of year sports day at their school, my daughter's friend began reminiscing about the previous years event. "Last year I didn't win any ribbons", she said, "but Mary ripped her ribbon in half and gave me one of the halves." "I still have it", she continued.

When I first heard these words my initial response in my heart was to think that it must have been a very cheap ribbon if this girl, Mary, could rip it in half, but then I smiled to myself and my heart was just overwhelmed as I marvelled at how selfless this young girl "Mary" had been. Pride, prejudice and ego evidently had all been stripped away and thrown off, so that Mary, only nine years old at the time was free to serve her Heavenly Father by choosing to share her victory with her friend. You normally think of a child as being very self centered and selfish, so I, as an adult was very humbled to hear of such a wonderful display of God's love from a child. This was an act of love that even a year later my daughter's friend not only remembered but shared with others as well. What a testimony!

I believe Mary understood the Father's heart! As long as we finish the race we are all winners! Our God is the God of Finishers not the God of Quitters! He and His great cloud of witnesses are all cheering us on to the finish line. Because our God is the Victor we are all victorious. All we have to do is finish the race He has set before us. We all get a magnificent ribbon beyond our wildest imagination (Heaven) if we remain in Him.

I believe we can learn a tremendous lesson from Mary. Let us too throw off everything that weighs us down, slows us down or changes our focus from running the race. Whether it is debt, pride, ego or doubt, we must strip it away so that we are free to serve!

Prayer: Please help us to throw aside everything that prevents us from fully and freely serving You. We want to run this race with patience so that we might finish it well! Amen!!

DayTwentyFive

The Best Is Yet To Come

"You have saved the best till now"

John 2:10

It is true that "the best is yet to come," for the work of our God is always "from one degree of glory to another," from "one measure of faith to a greater measure of faith." God's tomorrows are always better than our today's as we go "from grace to grace." The best is yet to come!

But it is also true that the best is NOW! Jesus transformed the wedding at Cana by revealing His glory, as He turned the water of the humdrum into the sparkling new wine of His Spirit—and He did it "NOW!" "You have saved the best till now."

We all have visions (at least we all should!). We all should have dreams—divine imaginings of what great things God has in store for us in the days to come. We should all see our future days as bright as the promises of God! But it is important that we capture some of that confidence, some of that faith, and bring it into the present! God wants to deepen our walk with Himself today. He wants to enlarge our effectiveness and our ministry today. He wants to impart divine healing and divine health to our bodies today. He wants to bless our finances today. It is true "an hour is coming," but it is also true that "it now is."

The key to experiencing God's miracles "now" lies in Mary's words: "Do whatever He tells you." And the wedding servants did exactly that! They obeyed Jesus, and they obeyed Him explicitly—"they filled [the stone water jars] to the brim." When our obedience is delayed or half-hearted or incomplete, we can expect no great present miracles from God. But when we respond to our Lord's will fully and immediately, He works wonders—now! "You have saved the best till now!"

So, as we face the future, we do so in faith. The best is yet to come. And as we face the challenges and opportunities of today, we can also declare in faith—the best is now! Amen!

Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank You that You have blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenlies in Christ Jesus! Thank You that You have stored up for us all that we shall ever need! And thank You that Your grace is sufficient for us THIS DAY! Thank You that the best is yet to come, and thank You that the best is also now! For this we bless You in Jesus' Name. Amen!

25

Meditate on Luke 1: 26-56

Charles P. Schmitt, Senior Pastor
Co-Founder, Immanuel's Church



DayTwentySix

26

Expect New Things

"This is what the LORD says— He who made a way through the sea, a path through the mighty waters, who drew out the chariots and horses, the army and reinforcements together, and they lay there, never to rise again, extinguished, snuffed out like a wick: 'Forget the former things; do not dwell on the past. See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it? I am making a way in the desert and streams in the wasteland.'"

Isaiah 43:16-19

As we go into our church capital campaign, let us apply these same Biblical principles to our own personal lives to bring about the changes we seek. We too will then be free to pursue our dreams and goals in life. We can select one or more areas of our lives that we want to see changed and commit it to the Lord. Then, take the correct actions and steps that our Father shows us.

We started to make definite changes in the way we conduct ourselves as a church from a business standpoint about a year ago. Change was required by everyone on staff. These changes have really put us in a firm direction heading toward our goal, to pay off all debt and to become free to serve the Lord in so many more areas.

As you narrow your sights to what you want changed in your life the Lord will also give you special promptings and leadings. Godly people will also help you accomplish your goals. Even as the church works together to accomplish our goals, we too need to have some trusted godly friends who will pray into our goals and encourage us, especially

on days when the enemy tries to steal our joy and dreams. The important thing to remember is the past is the past and He calls us to press forward toward the mark (our personal goal). Make each day a day of new beginnings. The Lord will meet you and raise you up in victory over any situation, and He will do a new thing in your life.

As you work your way through your situation, keep a journal and record what the Lord has done for you. Record how He has paved your way. Keep your eyes on the goal; don't look back. Refuse the enemy any ground. So often, when our dreams seem to be fading it is really a matter of us personally not completing the changes that are necessary as the Lord leads. Frequently, Satan reminds us of our past failures and tries to discourage us in moving ahead.

As Abba Daddy heals areas in our lives and leads us forward be mindful to not allow any thing or any one to revive the past. Remember to "Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding" (Pro 3:5) and to "Commit your way to the LORD; trust in Him and He will do this: He will make your righteousness shine like the dawn, the justice of your cause like the noonday sun" (Ps 37:5).

Know dear friend that just as we pray for victory in our church goal we also pray for victory in the accomplishing of your goals.

The best is yet to come!

Prayer: Father, I come to You now to first of all commit my plans, hopes and dreams to You. And I trust You to set my course straight as I seek Your guidance. Help me Lord keep the past in the past and to focus on the present and work on the things that need to be done knowing that if You are with me I will not fail. Lord You have my future in Your hands and I insist on remaining steadfast in my belief that You do have a hope and a future for me and my plans will not fail but that I will have Victory in You. As Immanuel's is set free so I shall be set free. Thank You Father. Amen.

Meditate on Philippians 3: 7-21

Tootie Benninghoven, Pastor

Pastoral Care • Small Group Ministry • Hope For Tomorrow



Day TwentySeven

27

The Power Of Perseverance

“So do not throw away your confidence; it will be richly rewarded. You need to persevere so that when you have done the will of God you will receive what He has promised. For in just a very little while, “He who is coming will come and will not delay. But my righteous one will live by faith. And if he shrinks back, I will not be pleased with him.” But we are not of those who shrink back and are destroyed, but of those who believe and are saved.”

Hebrews 10:35-39

In times of frustration and consternation, this Scripture is a great source of hope and encouragement. Sometimes we feel that the answers to our prayers and the earnest desires of our hearts are going unanswered and unmet. At those times, this passage can serve as an oasis in a very dry place. This Scripture reminds us that “He who is coming will come and will not delay” (verse 37); He is always on time.

We are also challenged to believe Him. “Now the just shall live by faith; but if any man draw back, My soul shall have no pleasure in him (verse 38, KJV). In these verses, the writer gives us a strong admonition to persevere in trusting our Lord and His promises.

Then, in verse 39, we are further encouraged that we are His faithful, diligent children; “But we are not of those who shrink backbut of those who believe and are saved.” Our God is faithful. As we trust Him and persevere, we will be greatly rewarded. His promises will be fulfilled in us and through us. Be greatly encouraged; the best is yet to come!

Prayer: We thank and praise You, our Lord and God, that You are ever faithful and that You will do exactly what You promised in Your word. Help us to stand in the face of adversity, knowing that if we are obedient to do Your will, we will receive what You have promised and we claim every promise of Your word this day, in Jesus’ precious Name.

Meditate on Ephesians 1: 15-23

Allen Bruce
Finance Council



DayTwentyEight

28

A Letter From God, To You!

"The LORD appeared to us in the past, saying: 'I have loved you with an everlasting love; I have drawn you with loving-kindness'".

Jeremiah 31:3

My child, before time began, I knew you. Before there was light, I loved you. And I still do. I made you and know everything about you. You're on My mind every minute of the day. I know your hurts, your joys, your secrets. Yes, I know everything you have done... And I still love you. I want you to know Me as Your Father. I want you to know just how wonderful life really is. My arms are open wide for you.

What you owed Me has been paid in full. I want you to be with Me forever. I will never lie to you, or play mind games with you. I will never bring up past sins I have forgiven to degrade you. I am Your father. And I will never leave you. I will always be with you... at school, at work, at home. In the silent corners of your mind, when you don't feel loved, I am with you. You see, you are special to Me. I want you to know how much I love you, and I want you to really understand what I have done for you.

Prayer: Thank You for loving me, accepting me, and always being with me.

You are My chosen child, adopted to be the heir of all I have. When you are scared or have questions, come to Me. I accept you just as you are. And because My compassion for you is so deep, I won't settle for leaving you the way you are. With love, I will mold you and change you, and transform you to be like My Son, Jesus. Please ask My Son Jesus into your heart. You will never be sorry.

In the meantime, trust Me and enjoy being My child. I love being your Father!

"How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are! The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know him." (1 John 3:1)

DayTwentyNine

29

Free To Flow

"On the final and climactic day of the Feast, Jesus took His stand. He cried out 'If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink. Rivers of living water will brim and spill out of the depths of anyone who believes in Me this way, just as the Scripture says.'"

John 7:38

Recently, while walking in a beautiful garden, I came upon a lovely sight. There was a large clay pot, quite plain looking by itself. From somewhere inside, a pump powered a continuous stream of water that filled and spilled out over the pot completely encasing its ordinary clay sides with a beautiful flow of rippling streaming water. The effect was glossy, gleaming, light-reflecting beauty. I prayed to be like that clay pot, filled to overflowing with God's life, His living water.

A couple of weeks later, I went back to capture the pot on film. There it sat, dry looking and lifeless. What a different scene! As I examined it, I noticed that the pot was full to the brim. Nothing seemed to be moving except a tiny little trickle of water that ran down one side. I listened and heard the intermittent sound of the pump trying to operate. It must have been clogged somewhere. There was nothing exceptional about the pot anymore, yet it was full of water. He wants us not only full, but overflowing to others.

How is your connection to God these days? Have you become clogged with hurts, offenses or the distractions of life? Are cares and disappointments hindering the flow of His joy in you? If you're feeling dull and lifeless, it may not be because you're empty. You may just need to spend some time with the Master and let Him unstop the tubes. When your connection with Him is clear and steady, He'll not only activate continuous streams of living water in you, He may just dip in a ladle and serve up some new wine!

Prayer: Thank You for this treasure that we hold in earthen vessels! Thank You for Your life in us that can flow as streams of refreshing to those around us in this dry and thirsty world. How we long for You to serve up Your life through us in power! Draw us continually, connect with us deeply, show us clearly anything that hinders our relationship with You, and with others. Grant us conviction and quick repentance when we miss the mark. Without You, we can do nothing. With You, all things are possible! To You, be all honor and glory! Amen.

Meditate on John 4

Terry Golden

Administrative Assistant to Pastors Guy, Jamie & Cecil



DayThirty

30

Freedom Through Forgiveness

"Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you."

Colossians 3:13.

Real freedom, freedom to serve, cannot come until one has forgiven others. Totally! To hold offenses binds us, and keeps us from moving freely. Both spiritually, and even physically, we will experience the bondage of unforgiveness.

"I can't go to the family picnic due to the hurt a relative has caused me", or "that sales person was so rude I can't go in there, even if there's a sale going on. I was rude back to them. I'm too embarrassed". No real freedom there.

My mother holds a true picture of what forgiveness looks like in action. She would be the first to say that there were offenses on both sides of my parents' marriage. But, it was a pretty big offense that ended their marriage.

Prayer: Thank You, Lord, for the gift of forgiveness.

My mom, knowing the Scripture as she does, and not wanting to alienate us children from our father, knew she did not want to hold onto this tremendous hurt or grudge. The pain was too much, and the cost of family members' pain was too great. She knew she had to forgive and to ask forgiveness from my father for not holding up her end of the marriage.

Now, this did not happen over night, nor in a week, or even a month. It took years of deliberately saying, "I forgive, I forgive, Lord, with Your strength, I forgive." Then, working in that belief, she started to invite him and his fiancée to her house whenever we kids were home, and even invite them to holiday events.

To this day, I am proud to say that when our family gets together, we all get together - my dad and his wife, and sometimes her children from another marriage, my mom and her new husband, and sometimes with his children, and us kids with our families. With love, acceptance, and respect, which comes only from the Father above, can this picture be made, and only when someone is willing to risk extending true forgiveness can healing take place. It was truly due to this decision to forgive that the whole family is "Free to Serve" our LORD and one another, and future generations are blessed rather than bitter.

DayThirtyOne

31

Unique

"You can easily enough see how this kind of thing works by looking no further than your own body. Your body has many parts—limbs, organs, cells—but no matter how many parts you can name, you're still one body. You are Christ's body—that's who you are! You must never forget this. Only as you accept your part of that body does your "part" mean anything."

1 Corinthians 12:12, 27

Our younger son loves anything pertaining to nature. Because of this we have often visited the National Aquarium where we are reminded of the awesome wisdom and creativity of our God! Who could imagine so many different forms of life – each unique, each serving a specific purpose?

On one of our outings, we were led into a simulated tropical rain forest. As we observed the plant and animal life we were startled by an extremely loud call from directly overhead. I looked up to see what type of huge bird had let out such a blast. To my surprise it was no larger than a robin. I couldn't believe that sound had come from such a little bird. Just then it sent out another blast as if to answer my suspicions. That tiny bird made its presence known in spite of its small size!

What an object lesson for the Body of Christ! Each of us has been given gifts and abilities specifically distributed according to our uniqueness. Some will find themselves before kings, others in the marketplace, still others in places that by the world's standards are less honorable.

Yet we are encouraged in 1 Corinthians 12:22-25 to take heart. Every part of the Body is necessary for its function. Multitalented individuals are no more important than ones grappling to find significance. Not one of us is superior to another. Not one of us is unnecessary. Our little bird "friend" was secure in its purpose. It was not jockeying for a higher position. Neither was it hiding in the foliage ashamed. Though small it boldly proclaimed the message that it was designed to give.

Let's not play the world's game of rating each other's significance based on occupation, possessions, beauty or neighborhood. Rather, let's live with the understanding that each of us is unique and has been given a task by God to bring honor to His Name and harmony to His Body, through whatever gift(s) we may possess.

Prayer: Father, thank You for the gift(s) that grace my life. From this moment onward I will use what I have been given – whether great or small, for Your glory. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

DayThirtyTwo

32

Free To Serve

"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. Consider Him who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart."

Hebrews 12:1-3.

Prayer: Dear Father in Heaven, I come to You this day, in the Name of the One who redeemed me, Jesus Christ of Nazareth! Father, I come with the desire to be wholly Yours, to have an undivided heart. I come with the desire to be greatly used by You to win people to Your Kingdom and to be a conduit of Your love to those who are hurting. Thank You for Your forgiveness and healing. May You be glorified. In Jesus Mighty Name! Amen!!

Being free to serve is much more than entering into the joy of offering our finances to help our church become free from debt—becoming free to serve, is truly a tale of two kingdoms.

One kingdom is the Kingdom of Our God, full of light, love, peace, joy, forgiveness, reconciliation and salvation! We, as children of God, belong to this kingdom. Jesus tells us that the Kingdom of God is at hand – always present. As we choose to move through life in "kingdom walking and thinking", His kingdom and presence advances through us.

Yet, there is "another kingdom" which also waits, ready to be advanced through us. This kingdom operates in sin, darkness, bitterness, unforgiveness, envy, jealousy, etc. As children of God, we no longer belong to this kingdom. Yet, many times, we advance this kingdom in the earth through our daily choices. Which kingdom are we advancing?

As a body, Immanuel's Church, desires to advance the Kingdom of God in our world. The Free to Serve campaign has the goal to set the church free from the debt so it can go forth! Likewise, as children of the Most High God, we desire to advance the Kingdom of our Father, yet, we often bound by the fetters of our own sin and fear. Let us all work together and grab hold of that to which the Lord has called us! Let us throw off every sin that so easily entangles us, and let us run a good race! As we repent our Father makes us whole. We then advance the KINGDOM OF OUR GOD in our lives, in our world, and bring glory to our Father in heaven!

Let this Free to Serve Campaign, not simply be a gathering of finances, but let all of us have our own heart "campaigns" and together advance the Kingdom of God, putting the "other kingdom" under our feet, in doing so, we will all become Free to Serve!



Meditate on Psalms 19

Lori Ramsey
Worship Arts Ministry

DayThirtyThree

33

Out Of The Control Of Darkness

"For He rescued us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son,..."

Col 1:13

Most Christians will acknowledge that their sins are forgiven but have great trouble in believing that they are presently in another dimension. That is the dimension of the Kingdom of Christ! The Father has removed us from the domain of darkness. We have been translated, moved from one place to another. The principles that govern our lives are now changed. We are no longer subject to the principles that work in the everyday lives of the general population. We have a new ruler and new rules. The laws of the Kingdom of God now apply to us.

Let's consider the law of provision. In the everyday world most believe that they must work hard to provide for themselves. We fret and fuss to get ahead, rising early and retiring late. We work ourselves to the bone sacrificing joy and family to scratch out

our livings. Jesus taught a whole different concept of provision. In Matthew 6, we find the exhortation not to worry about provision but the seek His Kingdom and His Righteousness and provision would be the by product. In other words we would find a new source of provision if we converted all the energy we apply to seeking to provide for ourselves to seeking His Kingdom. The Father cares for us. We are more valuable then the creation itself and He has provided for everything in it. He will provide for us!

Of course I am not saying that we do not work, earn wages, run businesses or make investments. What I am saying however is that the redeemed know that they and their labors are not the source of provision. If you want provision to flow toward you, seek Him and live the way He lives. You are no longer under the dominion of the work-a-day world. Your Father is lavish and generous. He wants better for you than you want for yourself. Enjoy the fruit of His provision. Give and it will be given unto you!

Prayer: Father, thank You, for rescuing me from the domain of darkness. The stress of providing for myself is more than I can handle. You are my provision. You are all I need. If I have You then I have all things. Today, I confess that all I need comes from Your generous hand not my hard work. I rest in Your provision and delight to be generous because I will have abundance when I walk with You.

The Best is Yet to Come!

The Best is Yet to Come!

Serve

free



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