

SUNDAY

April 22, 2012

READ: Matthew 7:24-27

OBSERVATIONS AND QUESTIONS: The context for this passage is Jesus, giving the sermon on the mount. In verse 24, what two things does He say that it takes to become a wise man? What do the metaphorical components relate to (i.e., what is the rain that he talks about, etc.)? Of the two things you identified from verse 24, which one is missing in the second part of Jesus' illustration (vs. 26)?

KEY CONCEPT: Wisdom involves not only information and understanding, but its correct application to life situations as well.

QUESTIONS TO PONDER: Have you ever been in a situation where you knew what to do about something, but failed to act on that knowledge? What was the consequence of that failure? Did you resolve after that situation to be more proactive in the application of what you knew? How does this relate in your faith journey...in what you understand about how to live from God's perspective? Have you made decisions in opposition to what you knew to be taught in the Bible? What did you learn from that experience, and how has it changed your decision making?

PRAY: Wisdom combines knowing what is right, and the courage to act on that knowledge for the ultimate, best outcome...not the short-term benefit in a situation. Delayed gratification for the greater good is one example of wisdom. Today, ask God to help you take Jesus' message from the sermon on the mount and apply it in your life. When situations arise where you know what God has said about something, move in that direction rather than making decisions for your short-term benefit or pleasure.

MONDAY

April 23, 2012

READ: James 1:19-21

OBSERVATIONS AND QUESTIONS: What three things does James say we should do? Why? What steps does he say we can take to help us carry out his advice? What do you think he means by the phrase "the word planted in you?" What does it have the power to do?

KEY CONCEPT: Satan is able to use our emotions to get us to react quickly and improperly in ways that break apart or damage the relationships that God desires to remain intact. The Holy Spirit is able to help us react in a healthier way if we allow Him to work in our hearts.

QUESTIONS TO PONDER: Are you generally one who is "quick to listen, slow to speak, slow to become angry?" If so, why do you think you are that way? If not, would you like to be more like the person in James' description? Have you seen that human anger can indeed lead to unrighteousness in your own life circumstances?

What does it take for a person to "get rid of moral filth and evil" in their life? Have you ever taken steps to do that? Have you experienced a change in your life as a result? Why does James say we need to have a humbleness in our spirit as we accept God's word?

PRAY: Today's devotion tackles the issue of autonomy. Submitting our desires and reactions to God's perfect plan for us...humbly putting aside our desire to say "Yes, but..." and saying "Yes, Lord." If you want God's help to change your heart and mind so that your life can experience His transforming work, ask Him to enter in and help you make those changes today.

TUESDAY

April 24, 2012

READ: James 1:22-25

OBSERVATIONS AND QUESTIONS: How does James 1:22 compare to Matthew 7:24 which we read on Sunday? In verses 23-25, what is the practical difference in someone's life when they act on what they have learned from the Bible?

KEY CONCEPT: God wants every part of us. Not just our mind...but the commitment of our hearts and our resources. Being willing to yield all of ourselves to Him helps to establish the Kingdom of God on earth.

QUESTIONS TO PONDER: Confucius wrote: "I hear and I forget. I see and I remember. I do and I understand." How does that saying compare to today's reading?

Have you ever experienced a new level of understanding of God when you actually put into practice something that you had learned from Scripture? When did that happen - at work? In a family situation? On a mission trip? What was the new dimension that was learned...and what blessings did you experience as James describes in verse 25?

PRAY: You might want think of the difference between just listening to the Word and actually applying it in your life like seeing something in two dimensions vs. three...such as the difference between looking at a picture of a triangle vs. walking up next to the great pyramids in Egypt. Today in your prayers, ask God to help you live into your biblical knowledge...applying your life fully to what you have learned about God and His values.

WEDNESDAY

April 25, 2012

READ: Galatians 5:19-26

OBSERVATIONS AND QUESTIONS: What are the works of the flesh? What are the fruit of the Spirit? What is Paul's warning in verse 21?

KEY CONCEPT: The power of the word of God to transform lives is freely available to those who desire it by receiving Jesus Christ into their lives as their leader and the forgiver of their sin.

QUESTIONS TO PONDER: What role does the Bible play in helping us move from the works of the flesh to the fruit of the Spirit (see 1 Peter 1:22-23)? How have you seen God's hand at work in your life helping you move from one side of the ledger to the other? When you experience God's work in your life, how do you react - to Him - and to others (do you tell others about it)?

As you read the list of the fruit of the Spirit, can you see how God has been transforming you in any of these character qualities? Which of them do you still need help with or desire to develop further?

PRAY: Our God is in the business of restoration and reconciliation. If your life has sin, dysfunction, and relationship turmoil...know that God's desire is for you to experience His loving restoration. Come to Him in prayer today with an open and honest heart about those things. As you enter into the [40 Days of the Word](#), commit to reading the Bible daily and listening for what God wants to tell you.

THURSDAY

April 26, 2012

READ: 2 Corinthians 5:17

OBSERVATIONS AND QUESTIONS: How do we become a new creation? What happens when that happens?

KEY CONCEPT: God offers us a new opportunity for life...a do-over...wiping the slate clean. He is a God of 2nd chances. Indeed, we desperately need it, whether we realize it or not.

QUESTIONS TO PONDER: A general contractor is hired to demolish an existing structure and build something brand new in its place. A potter remolds his clay to fashion something different from what he had started to create. God created the world, then sent a flood so that he could start over again...and yet sin crept back in.

What is God's plan at this point in time to make all things new in this world? In our lives?

If you have experienced Jesus Christ's redeeming work in your life, how is it evident to others? What is the difference in your life now, as opposed to your life before you knew Jesus? Would others know that you are a Christian by how you live your life? Does your life validate what you say with your mouth? In other words, do you just "talk the talk", or do you also "walk the walk"?

PRAY: Nothing is hidden from God's sight. We cannot fool Him, no matter what we say...because He looks at our heart. Today thank God that He knows it all, and still loves us anyway! Tell Him what He knows about you already - confessing it - and asking Him to help you walk a new path with Him from this point forward.

FRIDAY

April 27, 2012

READ: Matthew 28:18-20

OBSERVATIONS AND QUESTIONS: At what point in Jesus' time on earth is this happening? What is the significance of what He is saying?

KEY CONCEPT: Jesus calls us to be part of His commission to reach the world with the Gospel message. Part of that commission is communication of His word...and the importance of obedience to it.

QUESTIONS TO PONDER: Think of some of the best teachers you have ever had. From school, from the workplace, from church, etc. What are some of their characteristics that cause you to consider them excellent in what they do?

Consider how Jesus taught...through parables and asking questions. Not just by making proclamations. Why are those methods effective in communicating truth to people? What have you learned "at Jesus' knee" by way of these methods?

How can you best follow Jesus' command to "teach them to obey everything I have commanded you" using these and other methods to share the word of God with people who have not yet put their lives behind the lead of Jesus? When and how will you start?

PRAY: The Bible tells us that the Holy Spirit will give us words to use when we need them (see Luke 12:11-12). If you feel ill equipped to share God's truth with others, in faith take a step...even a small one...to begin to share with others what God has revealed to you through the Bible.

SATURDAY

April 28, 2012

READ: Ephesians 6:10-18

OBSERVATIONS AND QUESTIONS: In what way does Paul give the Ephesians some practical advice? Is it still relevant to us today? What insights does this passage give to more fully understanding what challenges we are up against...and how to deal with them? What are the components of the armor of God? What is the only offensive weapon that is a part of the armor?

KEY CONCEPT: The armor of God, which includes the Bible, is vitally important for Christians. It will help us to be receive and use God's power to live victoriously in the world we live.

QUESTIONS TO PONDER: Have you thought about the spiritual dimension of your life...what is happening behind the scenes? What do you think of what Paul says in this passage? Does it make sense? Do you believe it?

Have you put on the whole armor of God before...systematically looking at each of the parts that Paul writes about, and praying for God to incorporate them into your life? If so, how has that made a difference? Which parts of the armor do you need to reinforce? How have you experienced using God's Word as a sword to defeat attacks of the enemy?

PRAY: When you are under spiritual attack, it is good to have memorized key Scriptures that you can use immediately through prayer. If you have never done this...it's not too late to start! As we go through the 40 Days in the Word series this spring, commit to memorizing the Bible verses that are provided. Today, pray for God's help in planting these verses not just in your mind, but deep in your heart as well.



**LOVE THE WORD. LEARN THE WORD.
LIVE THE WORD.**

**Personal Devotional Guide
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