

[Monday]
God gives love... share it!

Pray... Ask God to help you understand what you read today. Ask Him to teach you.

Read... Matthew 26:69-75
John 21:15-19
Acts 2:36-41

No matter our family heritage, extreme attractiveness, superpowers, works of righteousness, eye color, or fancy cars—it is only by the merciful LOVE of God that we are declared in right standing before God. The story and life of the Apostle Peter demonstrate the power and mercy of God's love. We will briefly look at several snapshots of Peter's life—a small yet profound picture of how God's love messed up Peter's life: Matthew 26:69-75 (Peter denying Jesus three times), John 21:15-19 (in fullest measures, God forgiving and reconciling Peter to Himself), and Acts 2:36-41 (a restored Peter used in Kingdom building). Peter was not a man of education, nor was he born into an influential family, but Peter did have a willing heart to say "yes" to Jesus. He made mistakes, a lot of them... and he kept making mistakes all the way through life. So how then do most Christian scholars and historians claim the church was built upon the rock of this Peter? God's merciful love. God demonstrates His LOVE in that it is not something we can earn or attain to, but it is a gift that is given through the shed blood of Jesus on the cross for our sins. He forgives us. He redeems us. He fills our need and places us on a mission to share His love with others.

Think... Three times Peter denied that he knew Jesus. Three times Jesus asked Peter, "Do you love me?" Why do you think Jesus did that?

Describe Peter's character in each passage. What were the major differences? What stayed the same? To what or whom do you attribute the changes in Peter's character?

Has Christ changed your character? How? Where in your life are you like the old Peter? Where are you like the new?

Pray... Ask God...

Thank God...

Listen to God...





[Tuesday]

God gives direction... take action!

Pray... Ask God to help you understand what you read today. Ask Him to teach you.

Read... 2 Chronicles 34:1-4, 14-33
James 1:22

The story of Josiah is characterized by his strong desire to follow God. His immediate ancestors had turned away from the LORD. Even so, in 2 Chronicles it says he “followed the ways of his father David,” who was a man after God’s own heart. From where did this desire come? We don’t know. But we do know it changed his life and influenced the lives of all those under his command in Israel. King Josiah was sure to include two very important steps in making a change for God. First, he let the Book of the Law of the LORD change him, his heart, and his life. Second, he didn’t let it stop with just him—he brought the entire kingdom into a renewed covenant with God. Just like Josiah, we need to include both steps in our spiritual journeys. It is important for us to be leaders among those around us and to help them develop a right way of living, but in order to do that we need to make sure we are living according to those standards and letting God work in our hearts too. How can we ever be used to change others if we are not willing to be changed ourselves?

Think... When you read God’s word, are you finished as soon as you’re done reading, or do you let it shape, mold, and challenge you? Do you do what it says?

What keeps you from acting on God’s directions? How can you combat those things?

What does God use to provide direction in your life?

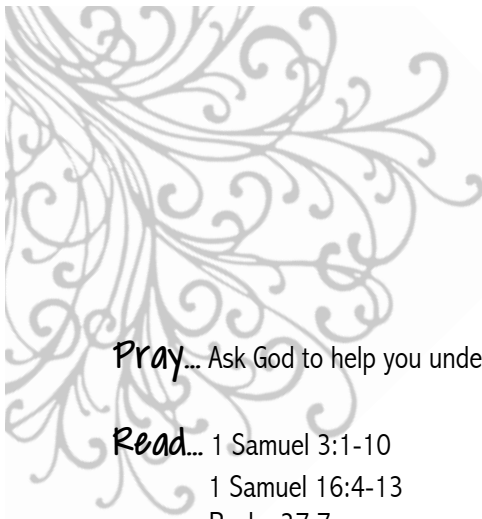
How does God use you to provide direction in the lives of others? Think of the child you sent to camp this week—how can you give godly guidance to him or her?

Pray... Ask God...

Thank God...

Listen to God...





[Wednesday]
God is a voice... open ears!

Pray... Ask God to help you understand what you read today. Ask Him to teach you.

Read... 1 Samuel 3:1-10
1 Samuel 16:4-13
Psalm 37:7

The story of Samuel is a story about listening and hearing God's voice. Interestingly enough, the first time he hears God speaking to him, he doesn't recognize it is coming from God. Sound familiar? As Samuel grows up, he is taught and learns how to discern the voice of God and how to hear and understand what He says. It was not a natural habit he picked up somewhere in his childhood—it was something in which he had to be trained and raised, and it took a lot of practice. By the time he is older, he knows the voice of God so well he can make decisions based not on his own judgment or understanding, but completely on faith and trust that the LORD's will is being done. He will not settle for what he thinks is best, but waits for the LORD's voice. Even though God doesn't often speak to us out loud like He did to Samuel, we can still hear His voice through scripture, the Holy Spirit's prodding and leading, and through other people who speak God' truth into our lives.

Think... What does it mean to “be still and know that [He is] God”? How can you do that today? What does it look like?

What are some things that make it hard to be still? What keeps us from hearing God? What can you do about it?

Thinking back on your relationship with God... What events or times in your life could have been ways God has been trying to communicate with you? Remember God can communicate through other people, through nature, through scripture, and in many other ways.

Is there something in your life for which you need an answer or direction from God, but haven't gotten one yet?

Pray... Ask God...

Thank God...

Listen to God...





[Thursday]

God is my reason for joy... look up!

Pray... Ask God to help you understand what you read today. Ask Him to teach you.

Read... 2 Samuel 6
1 Samuel 23:14-19
Psalm 16:7-11

Have you ever been so excited about something you couldn't sit still—you had to run around and tell people or do a happy dance? What causes you to burst into such a joyful celebration? For King David, it was God. In the first story you read today, King David and his men were bringing the Ark of the Covenant back to Jerusalem, where it belonged. It had been taken by their enemies many years before, so returning it was a reason for celebration. David rejoiced in the LORD through dancing so much that his wife was ashamed of him, but God was all he focused on. The second story takes place at an earlier time in his life, before he is king and when he is being hunted by King Saul. His circumstances were awful, but it was in those years that David wrote many of his psalms to the LORD, including Psalm 16. Even when running from Saul and hiding in a cave, David sang songs of joy and praise to God. His secret? "I keep my eyes always on the LORD" (Psalm 16:8). He did not—and we cannot—reap joy from circumstances. Instead, joy comes from our Father in heaven. In order to receive it, we need to look up at Him, not around at our surroundings. There are all sorts of things on this earth to distract us from God and our source of joy, so if we want to receive it, we need to keep our eyes always on the LORD, too. God is both the source of our joy (He gives it to us) and the object in which we delight, or the object of our joy (we have joy in who He is). In essence, He is the reason for our joy, so keep looking up!

Think... What is the difference between having joy and being happy? Can you have one without the other?

What things in your life distract you from God, and therefore keep you from having joy? Do these things change when life is going well versus when things are not so great?

Do you remember when you first believed in God or accepted Christ? How did it feel? Is the presence of God still an occasion for dancing in your life?

Make a list of some things that bring you joy. If they don't seem "godly," remember that God is the giver of all good things.

Pray... Ask God...

Thank God...

Listen to God...





[Friday]

God gives courage... know Him!

Pray... Ask God to help you understand what you read today. Ask Him to teach you.

Read... Esther 3:8-11
Esther 4:11-5:8
Esther 7:1-10

We often forget the meaning and significance of our daily lives. We do the mundane. We do what we have to do: brush our teeth, go to the grocery store, find the kids Halloween costumes, and on and on the list goes. This is all done without little thought to a Great God who knows me, who cares for me, and who has a plan for what is best in my life. Yes, God is in control. You were born to your parents for a reason... you go to work and have that boss or those employees for a reason... you have your spouse and children for a reason. The story of Esther teaches the great meaning and significance to our daily lives. The events of her life were not by chance—they were orchestrated by the master design of God! He knows you and cares for you. You just took a look at an incredible story that included Haman's wicked plot, Ester's decision and course of courageous action, God's providence, Esther's responsibility, and the punishment of the wicked. We are each given an environment in which to live. This looks different amongst us, but there is a purpose in each. Esther faced an incredible situation within her environment—and this was by the design of God. He gave courage. She responded. She knew God. She accepted His help. Consider this: What if Esther did not take the courage given by God? Answer: The person of Jesus never would have been born! What happens in our lives if we do not freely accept the courage of God? Perhaps we cannot answer, but we can decide, today, that we will get to know Him so that we might live by the LIMITLESS courage of our God.

Think... Do you believe God has put you in your position "for such a time as this"? What might that time be right now—at work, with your family, at church? Why might God have you here now?

What keeps us from developing courage in our lives today? What causes fear and doubt in your life?

What takes courage for you specifically? How can you acquire and build that courage?

Pray... Ask God...

Thank God...

Listen to God...

