

Daily Readings

Please note: Below we have chosen other introductory passages from the letters of Paul and from the book of Acts. These passages remind us that the finding God involves connecting with God's people and God's purpose in this world. The Study Guide readings allow you to dig deeper.

Monday, August 2 – Read Acts 2: 43-47. The action and patterns of the early church were simple. They were united in their cause. They took care of everyone's needs. They met and ate together weekly. The attitude of the gathering was positive as they gave credit to God, praising His Name and seeking favor with all people. What can you do or what phone call can you make to bring greater unity to our church?

Tuesday, August 3 – Read I Corinthians 1: 10-17. Here Paul introduces this letter with an admonishment against quarrelling. He is concerned about the church at Corinth for their lack of unity. Unity is a theme that he continues throughout this letter as strives to encourage this church toward unity. What person do you need to seek out today and ask forgiveness? What person do you need to forgive? How can this forgiveness bring unity to the Church?

Wednesday, August 4 – Read Philippians 1: 3-11. Paul begins this great letter written from prison with a prayer of thanks for the church at Philippi. This great letter of faith and promise starts out with the encouraging words, "I am sure that the one who began a great work in you, shall bring it to completion." What work has God begun in you? How is God now moving to bring it to completion?

Thursday, August 5 – Read Colossians 1: 9-14. Use this great passage as a prayer for the day. Pray for God's strength. Give thanks for what God is doing and what God is going to do in your life.

Friday, August 6 – Read Timothy 1: 3-7. Remember that God has a special plan for you and for this church. Claim what God is doing in your life and in the life of this church. Claim the "power, love and discipline" that is ours through Jesus Christ. Where do you need power to life more fully? Where do you need love? Where do you need discipline?



STUDY GUIDE & DAILY READINGS

Sunday, August 1, 2010

Questions for God

How do you experience joy and contentment?

I pray, read the scripture and worship.

What am I missing? (Week 1 of 5)

Philippians 4:4-10 — The Word from the Bible (Today's New International Version)

Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice. Let your gentleness be known to everyone. The Lord is near. Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Finally, beloved, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is pleasing, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. Keep on doing the things that you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, and the God of peace will be with you.

Acknowledgment of the Philippians' Gift

I rejoice in the Lord greatly that now at last you have revived your concern for me; indeed, you were concerned for me, but had no opportunity to show it. 11Not that I am referring to being in need; for I have learned to be content with whatever I have.

What am I missing?

Every Christian at one time or another loses touch with God. For most of us, it is hard to explain. Some use the word "feel". While others might describe this condition as feeling separated from God. The Bible is full of characters that struggled with this same question: Where is God?

Here are some of the questions we received this summer on this issue:

- Lord, are you happy with me?
- Do I make you happy?
- Why did God choose me?
- God, when I had gone against your wishes and made many bad choices, why did you not only stay by my side but bring others on my journey of fixing my life?
- Why is it so hard to stay on track and do the right thing; reading the Bible, no focus on self?
- Why do I worry and stress over things? I have so much anxiety and fear.
- Even though I study and pray, I do not really feel God's presence. Why?

In Paul's letter to the church at Philippi, he shares with this church the great joy of serving Lord. We can learn much about connecting with God by reading the whole letter, but just focusing on chapter four gives us some insight to Paul's understanding of connecting with God. It's not easy. There is no real formula. For each person, this connection with God will be different. There will be highs and lows. But the joy Paul shares has no parallel in scripture.

Paul writes this letter from prison late in his life and ministry. He addresses two people directly, in chapter four (Euodia and Syntyche) who are probably arguing about some issue. "Rejoice," he says. Interesting words from a man, who has been unjustly accused, unfairly imprisoned, suffered many hardships, and is facing his own execution.

The deep faith of Paul was not won over night, but the result of a life long experience of the highs and lows of following God. Neither will our faith instantly materialize. Faith is a gift from God that grows over time through the trials and joys of this life leading to eternity. It is this faith that leads Paul to say in 4:12-13, "I know what it is to have little, and I know what it is to have plenty. In any and all circumstances I have learned the secret of being well-fed and of going hungry, of having plenty and of being in need. I can do all things through him who strengthens me."

Philippians 4:4-11 (from the Interpreter's Concise Commentary)

4:4 This exhortation to rejoice is one of several references to rejoicing (1:18-19; 2:17 -18, 28; 3:1; 4:10) and joy (1:4; 2:2, 29; 4:1) often cited as evidence for the unity of Philippians. Paul frequently uses these words elsewhere, however. The only significant parallelism is the appearance of the phrase rejoice in the Lord both here and in 3:1.

4:5 The significant note of this verse is that Paul believes the Lord is near. By this he means the coming from heaven mentioned in 3:20 and described in 1 Corinthians 15:51-57 and 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18. Paul clearly expected to see this event in his lifetime.

4:6-7 Praying is to be done with thanksgiving for what has already been received; this will be an effective antidote to anxiety. God's peace, which transcends comprehension because it is given in the midst of difficulties – just as salvation is begun here and now – will guard the thinking of the readers in Christ, since such peace is grounded in the meaning of the cross.

4:8 This oft-quoted verse asks the readers to think about ("fill all your thoughts with," New English Bible) those things which are worthwhile. The several items were commonplace virtues in Hellenistic morals. Paul takes them up and commends them without explicit Christianization. In this way he shows that Christianity can appropriate sound ethical principles recognized by society in general.

4:9 Paul urges imitation of himself (cf. 3:17). Not the peace of God (verse 7) but the God of peace is promised as the accompanying presence.

Today's Sermon

Today's sermon will focus on finding a connection with God. At the heart of our faith experience is this connection. Only Christianity claims that one can have an intimate relationship with God. So how is that connection made and how is it kept? These passages lead us into that connection.

Developing an intimate relationship with God is never easy. It is a jagged road full of bumps and detours. But God never gives up on us. It is in the deepest hours in the struggle of the night that we learn more about God than any other time. These challenges make it possible for us to experience the heights of God's glory and presence.

How can I get it? How can this be mine? Paul outlines three critical aspects of the Christian life and faith. First, worry about nothing. Second, pray about everything. Third, be thankful for anything. We will find in these three factors the equation that will lead us to the peace of God that will guard our hearts and minds through Jesus Christ.

Prayer Focus

Trietsch is a praying church. This morning, as you worship, one of our prayer volunteers is praying for everyone in each section of our worship center. We believe that prayer changes lives and hearts for good and for God.

We invite you to join these volunteers by praying for those persons around you. We believe these prayers will have an immediate impact on those for whom you are praying.

The following prayers are for inspiration as you pray this week to seek the will of God.

Remember... someone is praying for you. Have a great week!

Confederate Soldier's Prayer *(found in a soldier's pocket after he died on the battlefield)*

***I asked God for strength that I might achieve,
I was made weak that I might learn humbly to obey,
I asked God for health that I might do greater things,
I was given infirmity that I might do better things,
I asked for riches that I might be happy,
I was given poverty that I might be made wise,
I asked for power that I might have the praise of others,
I was given weakness that I might learn the need for
God,***

***I asked for all things that I might enjoy life,
I was given life that I might enjoy all things,***

***I got nothing I asked for, but everything I hoped for,
Almost despite myself, my prayers have been answered,
I am among all people most richly blessed.***

The Serenity Prayer

***God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot
change... Courage to change the things I can... and the
wisdom to know the difference.
Amen***

This prayer, attributed to Dr. Reinhold Niebuhr in 1932, has been an integral part of Alcoholics Anonymous. The basis of this prayer is found in living one day at a time, enjoying one moment at a time, and accepting hardship as the pathway to peace. It assumes that the world is incomplete and broken and there are things we cannot change. Life will be both painful and joyful. The acceptance of this pain is an act of faith that God in Jesus Christ is making all things new and whole again. As we surrender to God's will, we find the joy more consuming and the pain more bearable. We find in God's will release from anxiety and fear and confidence in knowing the creator of the universe loves us and will never leave us.

***Invite someone to worship this week. You will be glad you did.
God is doing great things through the ministries of Trietsch.***