

Daily Readings

Please note: This week we look at our priorities. These passages are recommended for your daily reading. Each of these passages deal with different aspects of making God's way a priority for your life and family.

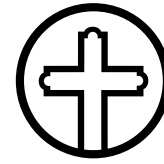
Monday, July 7 – *Matthew 6:33.* “Seek first the kingdom of God, and all these things shall be added unto you.” This passage is one of the greatest promises in the New Testament. In other words, when we honor the ways of God, God honors us. As you look at the week ahead, what are the priorities that you are seeking? Are you willing to dedicate them to God?

Tuesday, July 8 – *Psalms 37:1-6.* “Trust in the Lord, and do good.” The psalmist reminds us that no matter how bad things may seem, God will never forget us. At the beginning of the day, write down your greatest fears on a small piece of paper. Place these cares as a marker at Psalm 37 in your Bible. At the end of the day, review them and read this passage again. Are they different?

Wednesday, July 9 – Read *Psalm 139:1-16.* The psalmist reminds us that God knows all there is about us. Find a quiet place. Read this passage out loud. As you listen to your own voice, hear God's assurance and encouragement.

Thursday, July 10 – Read *Jeremiah 29:11-13.* In this passage, we are promised a future with hope. “For surely I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord, plans for your welfare and not for harm, to give you a future with hope.” Read this passage at each meal today. Make it your prayer at the end of the day. Discuss this passage with someone you trust. Share with each other the future you see in each other. Answer the question, “Does your trust in God show in your actions?”

Friday, July 11 – Read *Luke 10:38-42.* Luke tells us the story of the sisters Mary and Martha hosting a dinner party for Jesus. Martha works in the kitchen while Mary sits listening to the words of Jesus. An argument ensues between Mary and Martha concerning Mary's lack of help in preparing for the meal. Martha appeals to Jesus for help. She wants Jesus to instruct her sister to help her. Instead, Jesus says, “Martha, Martha, you are worried and distracted by many things; there is need of only one thing. Mary has chosen the better part, which will not be taken from her.” What do you believe is the “better thing”? Can you identify the distractions that keep you from focusing on your faith and your family? What are they?



TRIETSCH

August 17, 2008

Study Guide & Daily Readings

Family Ties

Discovering a God-Led Family Life

“True North”

Erasing Boundaries

Joshua 24:14-15

The Word from the Bible version The New International Version

“Now fear the LORD and serve him with all faithfulness. Throw away the gods your forefathers worshiped beyond the River and in Egypt, and serve the LORD. But if serving the LORD seems undesirable to you, then choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your forefathers served beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you are living. But as for me and my household, we will serve the LORD.”

The First Priority

The challenge of allegiance is placed before Joshua. He is asked for exclusive loyalty. **“Now fear the LORD and serve him with all faithfulness. Throw away the gods your forefathers worshiped beyond the River and in Egypt, and serve the LORD.”** (Verse 14) Joshua recognizes that there are other alternatives. These gods from other cultures were a constant temptation to the Hebrews. Although Yahweh was known as a gracious creator, the Hebrew tribes were forbidden from making images that would restrict the identity and action of Yahweh. The gods of other tribes were represented by defined images that represented these gods's action in the community. They controlled the harvest, the weather, the movements of nature, and the action of war as well as peace.

Yahweh acted through the Word of law and through the actions of the community. Yahweh demanded absolute obedience and promised providential care. The Hebrew tribes were often tempted to turn to the more defined promises of the pagan gods that offered solution to circumstantial problems.

Joshua saw the easy, shallow, circumstantial answers of the pagan gods as temporary. The empty solutions of these gods were nothing more than the community's effort to control their own destiny. The worship of the pagan gods offered no real future.

Joshua indicates his choice with the words, **“But as for me and my household, we will serve the LORD.”**

The Challenges of the 21st Century

With our knowledge of nature and science; the thought having a god of the sun, moon, stars, rain, river or any other aspect of nature is unthinkable. The challenges to our commitment and priorities are more subtle and dangerous, but motivated by the same human need. Ultimately, we want to be in control of our destiny. We seek the things that we believe will create ease and independence. Our values suffer the gradual erosion of tiny compromises over time. Often, we do not realize the depth of compromise until it is too late; losing what is most important to us.

Joshua was dealing with pre-scientific challenges to what he believed. In a similar manner, we deal daily with challenges to not so much to what we believe, but to actions associated with our beliefs. We want to control our future and get impatient with God. We too easily trade our time, attention, resources, and loyalty to the temporary, shallow promises of modern life.

Finding a True North

The natural magnetic force of the North Pole gives us a directional indicator that never changes. Just as there is a “true north” that never changes, we believe there is the one God of all creation that never changes. The more we are influenced by the forces of culture and the expectations of society, the greater our chances of losing touch with “true north.”

Daily attention to our faith keeps our moral and spiritual compass unaffected by the pressures of the world. Nothing substitutes for weekly worshiping with family and friends, daily prayer, the accountability of relationships with Christian friends and attention to those who are in need. These activities are the “exercises” that strengthen our spiritual health. Without them we are like an athlete that tries to compete without practice.

Making Family a Priority

When it comes to family, most people clearly feel that family is top priority. Most would even put family above their own health. They would put family ahead of their own life. But when you ask them to really look at their lifestyle and where they give their time and their primary attention and focus, you almost always find that family gets subordinated to other values – work, friends, and private hobbies.

As followers of Christ, our families are the top priority. Every spiritual discipline leads us back to strengthen the relationships of our family. While career and hobbies can lead us away from our families, the “true north” of our faith in Christ leads us back again and again to the needs of our families. The values expressed in Galatians 5 – love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness, faithfulness and self-control are essential to family life.

Discussion Questions

Please note: These questions are intended to be used in any way that is helpful for you. You may use them as a means of personal reflection. Or you may want to use them as a family to further discuss the issues of making your family a priority.

- Look at your calendar and your check book – What do these tell you about your priorities?
- Finish the phrase based on your family activities – As for me and my house, I will serve...
- Ask family members: How important is family to us? How much time did we spend last week doing family activities: How do we feel about it? Are we making family a priority in our lives?
- Measure your time this week. How much time did you spend with God? How much time did you spend with family?