

midst of a dark world. By imitating the life of Christ and asking ourselves “If Christ were living my life, what would he do today?” we will imitate a good, holy, and perfect life.

Daniel 6:16-28; Psalm 30, 32; Luke 5:27-39

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Sunday, April 26

1 Peter 1:7-11 *Concerning this salvation, the prophets, who spoke of the grace that was to come to you, searched intently and with the greatest care.* (v.10 NIV)

I am struck by the statement of this verse “the prophets...searched intently and with the greatest care.” When it comes to the Scriptures and diligently seeking God’s face and listening for His voice, I am sometimes embarrassed with God by my lack of “searching intently and with the greatest care.” Often it is more of a casual or a convenience search—perhaps a few minutes each morning or a quick review of a daily devotional. I know I am not taking enough time to still my heart and listen for His voice. But I want to *increase* my hunger for Him, to want to be with Him more, to seek His truths and especially to hear His voice in my life. It is in setting aside my heart and my time with Him that I receive His infilling for my day. He stands at the door, or our heart, and knocks. Lord, increase our passion for you so that we will desire to search for you intently and welcome you into our life today with joy.

Daniel 4:1-18; Psalms 148, 149, 150; John 21:15-25

Monday, April 27

Daniel 4:19-27 *Beltshazzar [Daniel] answered, “My lord, if only the dream applied to your enemies and its meaning to your adversaries!”* (v.19b)

This story is about King Nebuchadnezzar and a dream that he wanted interpreted, and how Daniel came to him with the interpretation. Daniel’s statement above indicates that the dream is about the King, not somebody else. The insight for me is that so often I hear God’s word and can so easily apply the meaning, the warning, or the truth to others. How often have I said (or thought) ‘*he or she*’ needs to hear this, ‘*they*’ need to obey God is this matter. And how often, God must be saying to me “Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother’s eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye?” (Matthew 7:3). As with King Nebuchadnezzar’s dream, the words we hear from God are meant for us and not for us to judge others. May we hear God’s word with a renewed openness and moldable heart and spirit so He can truly change *us*.

Psalm 25; 1 John 3:19—4:6; Luke 4:14-30

Tuesday, April 28

Psalm 26 *Test me, O Lord, and try me, examine my heart and my mind; for your love is ever before me, and I walk continually in your truth.* (vv.2-3)

It seems a little scary to pray and ask the Lord to test us, try us, and examine our hearts. Personally, I am not confident about what all He may find in the dark corners of my heart, or whether He will be pleased. There is a beautiful song with lyrics that say “Break my heart O God” which I was often hesitant to sing, not certain of what He might bring to break my heart. But if I am ever going to be pure of heart and mind, and holy as He is holy, I do need to ask Him to test, try, and examine me. I will clearly see where I still fall short in becoming what He created me to be. So in faith and trust, in His love for us, we must ask the Lord to reveal where we are falling short, confess our weaknesses, and, as David says, walk continually in the truth. Let your light shine within the dark places of my heart, Lord!

Daniel 4:28-37; Psalm 28; 1 John 4:7-21; Luke 4:31-37

Wednesday, April 29

Psalm 38 *All my longings lie open before you, O Lord; my sighing is not hidden from you. O Lord, do not forsake me; be not far from me, O my God. Come quickly to help me, O Lord my Savior* (vv.9, 21-22)

What a comfort to know that all my longings lie open before the Lord and my sighing is not hidden from Him. He knows my struggles, my frustrations, and my weaknesses. He knows I have good days and not-so-good days—that life is not all joyous and pain free. He hears my heart when I cry out to Him to help me, to be near to me, to walk with me, and to hold me during my deepest times of trouble. One of my favorite prayers is:

You are God, even in stress filled times. On my own I could feel overwhelmed, but Scripture tells me You care about every detail of my life. Right now the stress I feel most intensely is (fill in the blank). Show me steps I can take, and give me the courage to take them. Calm my spirit, Lord, as I trust You to bring good out of this situation. Amen.

Daniel 5:1-12; 1 John 5:1-12; Luke 4:38-44

Thursday, April 30

Luke 5:1-11 *Simon answered, “Master, we’ve worked hard all night and haven’t caught anything. But because you say so, I will let down the nets.”* (v.5)

This is the story of Jesus telling Simon Peter to try again to catch fish. Peter’s response is above. The outcome, in verse 6, says “when they had done so, they caught such a large number of fish that their nets began to break” and in verse 9, “For he and his companions were astonished at the catch of fish they had taken.” My encouragement in this is to keep trying! How many things in my life seem like a long unfruitful, frustrating,

unproductive night of fishing—praying for a loved one’s salvation, always feeling that I am falling short, wishing I could be more like Him—and yet Jesus says to try again! I love Peter’s statement “because you say so, I will.” When I know the Scriptures and deepen my own trust in the Lord, I can say “I don’t see this working Lord, but, because you say to, I will persevere and continue to try again, knowing that you are Lord over all things.” Is there anything in your life where you feel tired and want to give up? Try again!

Daniel 5:13-30; Psalms 37:1-18; 1 John 5:13-21

Friday, May 1

Daniel 6:1-15 *Now when Daniel learned that the decree had been published, he went home to his upstairs room where the windows opened toward Jerusalem. Three times a day he got down on his knees and prayed, giving thanks to his God, just as he had done before.* (v.10)

Although the king loved Daniel, he was influenced by others to issue an edict that no one could pray to any god or man other than the king for 30 days. Daniel continued doing what he knew was right in his heart, which eventually led to the famous lion’s den story. Daniel was not influenced by the godlessness of the society, but continued to seek and serve God and live a righteous life. What an example for us all. Our society today does not follow the principles and commandments that God has given us. Do we compromise our faith and water down that which we know to be right in order to fit in? God calls us to a holy life, the narrow path: “But small is the gate and narrow is the road that leads to life, and only a few will find it” (Matthew 7:14). We shouldn’t be surprised to find that what we believe is not popular—it wasn’t with Jesus either, but we are to follow His example and be holy in an unholy world.

Psalm 105:1-22; 2 John 1-13; Luke 5:12-26

Saturday, May 2

3 John 1-15 *Dear friend, do not imitate what is evil but what is good. Anyone who does what is good is from God. Anyone who does what is evil has not seen God.* (v.11)

Imitate what is good and not what is evil. In our lives today, we can be easily tempted to imitate evil in a variety of ways—retaliation (they deserve it), unforgiveness (I can’t forgive them for what they did), stealing (everybody does it), and the list goes on. Jesus on the other hand asks us to imitate him, “If someone strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if someone wants to sue you and take your tunic, let him have your cloak as well” (Matthew 5:39-40). A prayer I love is “Lord, help me not only to ‘know,’ but also to ‘show’ that for me, to live is to live for Christ.” Jesus has shown us the Father and has given us the Bible as our handbook of life. May we seek to imitate his goodness and be lights in the