

OUR KING IS COMING



NUGGETS
DECEMBER 2020

Cultivating Holiness - Part 4

"Be ye holy; for I am holy".
1 Peter 1:16

We have previously studied three aspects on practical keys to promote holy living: first, "desiring the sincere milk of the Word", second, "considering ourselves dead to sin", and third, "praying and working in dependence upon God for growth in holiness". I now offer a fourth suggestion on this topic, "Fleeing worldliness" and "seeking fellowship within the church". Please reference the aforementioned three articles on the particulars for vital keys in stimulating spiritual growth.

First, we must be on guard against the appearances of the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life, and all forms of sinful worldliness as they 'knock on the door' of our hearts and minds. Even allowing them to roam around in our minds, we become their prey. "Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king's meat, not with the wine which he drank: therefore he requested of the prince of the eunuchs that he might not defile himself" (Daniel 1:8). The material we read, the recreation and entertainment we engage in, the music we listen to, the friendships we form, and the conversations we have all affect our minds and ought to be judged in the context of Philippians 4:8, "Whatsoever things are true, honest, just, pure, lovely, and of good report, think on these things". We must live about the world and not be of the world while yet in the world (Romans 12:1-2).

Second, we must seek fellowship within the church. The church ought to be a fellowship of mutual care and community. Converse and pray often with believers whose godly walk you admire. "They that feared the Lord spoke often to one another" (Malachi 3:16), and "He that walks with the wise will be wise" (Proverbs 13:20). A Christian life lived in isolation from other believers will be defective; usually such a believer will remain spiritually immature. Let us remember Paul's exhortation to "comprehend with all saints" (Ephesians 3:18).

– Chuck Wetzel, December 2020



- 1 Alice Davis (B)
Natalie Baker (B)
- 2 Gail Sarrge (B)
- 4 Barb Strong (B)
- 11 David Lanning (B)
- 15 Liz Lloyd (B)
- 18 Kurt and Kathy Brennan (A)
Lois Overacker (B)
- 24 John Sikorski (B)
- 28 Casey and Connie Rosenberger (A)
- 29 Bill Davey (B)
Mark Davey (B)
- 30 Kyle Caslin (B)

Weekly Reflection

Read through the passages from this week .

Paraphrase what you learned about hope this week.

What did you observe from this week's text about God and His character?

What areas do you need to address in your life based upon what you studied?

What specific action steps can you take this week to apply the passage?

Mistletoe and the Kiss of Death

There are 2,564 song lyrics that mention mistletoe according to lyrics.com. 'Kissing balls' and sprigs of mistletoe suspended overhead attempt to catch hapless victims unawares. How did it come to be associated with Christmas and kissing? Mistletoe and kissing seem like opposites given that it is extremely poisonous and parasitic. Mistletoe, that is, not kissing. Then again...

Mistletoe contains two virulent toxins found in its leaves, stems, and berries. It attaches itself to shrubs and trees, growing in dense clusters, sucking moisture and nutrients from its host, and eventually causing its death. Attempts to remove it only cause it to reappear elsewhere on the tree as its roots grow invisibly inside the tree. Some parasites benefit their host, but I found no benefits mistletoe provides.

So what's the connection with Christmas? Not much. Mistletoe is mentioned in Greek and Norse mythology and was used in Celtic and Druid sacrifices. It was ascribed magical and superstitious qualities because it remained evergreen through the winter after the host tree lost its leaves. It is another example of pagan solstice practices being adopted into Christian holiday traditions just because they occur about the same time of year.

Mistletoe sounds a lot like sin. Attractive, yet sucking the life out of its host, insidious roots secretly networking their way throughout the organism, attempts to humanly eradicate it are fruitless; pretty, but poisonous; offering no benefit in return for its nurture, and eventually causing death (Romans 6:23).

This is the message of Christmas! A cure for sin! "...for He will save His people from their sins." (Matthew 1:21). "...Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners..." (1 Timothy 1:15). Read also Ephesians 2:1-10, Colossians 2:13, and Romans 5:6 – 6:14. Jesus is the opposite of mistletoe. He gives life instead of sapping it (John 10:10), forgives and cleanses us from sin (1 John 1:9), and removes it and makes us new (2 Corinthians 5:17).

Freed from sin's pernicious kiss of death to eternal life (John 3:16)! What a Christmas gift!

-Susie Baker

Women Who Worship

The Morning Star

"I am the Root of David...the Bright Morning Star" (Revelation 22:16).

On long winter mornings, I look out of my kitchen window and stare into the frigid, lingering darkness. Will the daylight ever come? It is the long dark of winter that oppresses the heart and mind! But against that cold, black background glitters a jewel of joy, a diamond of hope on the horizon--the morning star! The planet Venus is called the Morning Star, the Day Star. With its regal brilliance, it reveals itself in the deep darkness of the predawn, a harbinger of the coming day.

We live in a world where the darkness of sin may often oppress us. Into such a world God sent His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. His incarnation, over two thousand years ago, was like the rising of the Morning Star, a Light shining out against the black background of this world's sin. His first coming was foretold in this very way: "A Star will come out of Jacob..." (Numbers 24:17). The Lord Jesus Himself declared, "I am the root and the offspring of David, the bright Morning Star." Christ's coming was a wonder: He Who dwelt in that blessed realm where there is no darkness, where all is bathed in the light of God's holiness, should enter the darkness of this sin-curse earth and race! He was the Day Star of Hope, a harbinger of the dawn of atoning grace.

In a personal way, the Lord Jesus wants to enter into each human heart, to drive away the darkness of sin. Forgiveness, hope, joy, peace, eternal life--the light of His presence brings these to the one who will receive Him by faith (John 1:12, Revelation 3:20). Has the Morning Star risen in your heart? Is His light abiding in your soul? If you have never personally received Christ into your heart and life, what a gift you might have this Christmas (Romans 3:23)! And now we look for His return, the promised coming again of the Morning Star who will bring us into eternal day! Even so, come Lord Jesus!

© Dorothy Davis

Steps:

1. Pray for focus.
2. Read twice.
3. Mark key words, repeated words, mark what seems to JUMP OUT at you as important, and write down questions you have over words or phrases.

Answer questions using connected scripture and study Bible notes.

5. What does this teach me about God?

6. Application:

1. How do I need to think differently?

2. What behavior(s) do I need to stop doing?

3. What behavior(s) do I need to start doing?

Friday January 1st

In-depth family or small group Bible Study.

Background: It is a new year! Romans 12 gives us a great list of instructions on things we ought to be doing as a Christian. Look through this list and record some things you need to start doing this year!

Romans 12:1-2, 9-21

1 I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. 2 Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.

9 Let love be genuine. Abhor what is evil; hold fast to what is good. 10 Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honor. 11 Do not be slothful in zeal, be fervent in spirit, serve the Lord. 12 Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer. 13 Contribute to the needs of the saints and seek to show hospitality. 14 Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them. 15 Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep. 16 Live in harmony with one another. Do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly. Never be wise in your own sight. 17 Repay no one evil for evil, but give thought to do what is honorable in the sight of all. 18 If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all. 19 Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord." 20 To the contrary, "if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink; for by so doing you will heap burning coals on his head." 21 Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good."

Connie's Corner

Peace - our nation needs it. Our souls desire it. The angels proclaimed it! As we celebrate Christmas and usher in a new year, let us remember and be thankful that the Bethlehem born King makes possible our peace with God.

Cranberry Orange Christmas Cake

A moist orange zest cake with fresh cranberries and a sweet cream cheese orange frosting.

2 1/2 cups flour
1 3/4 cups sugar
1 1/2 tsp baking soda
1 tsp baking powder
3/4 tsp salt
1 cup oil (canola or similar)
1 cup fresh orange juice
3 large eggs
1 cup full fat sour cream
1-2 tsp orange zest
1 1/2 cups fresh cranberries

Frosting:
1 cup butter, softened
8 oz. cream cheese, soft
4 cups powdered sugar
1 tsp orange zest
2 TBSP orange juice

Whip butter and cream cheese for 4 minutes until fluffy - add sugar, zest, and juice.

Preheat oven to 350°. In a large bowl stir together flour, sugar, baking powder, baking soda, and salt. In another bowl, cream oil, orange juice, eggs, sour cream and orange zest. Fold in dry ingredients, mixing only until combined. Cut cranberries in half and toss in a bowl with flour (to keep from sinking in the batter). Pour into three 8" or two 9" greased pans. Bake for 19-22 minutes. Let cool for 15 minutes before removing from pans. When cool, frost.

Cranberry Pecan Brownies

1/4 cup butter, 1/2 cup brown sugar, 2 eggs, 1/4 tsp salt, 1/2 cup pecans, 1 cup semi-sweet chocolate chips, 2 tsp. vanilla, 1/2 cup flour, 1 cup cranberries.

In a medium saucepan, melt butter; add chocolate chips stirring until combined. Remove from heat; stir in sugar and vanilla. Cool a bit, then whisk in eggs, followed by flour and salt. Stir in cranberries and pecans before baking. Bake at 325° for 25-30 minutes.

Question & Answer:

Why are there different genealogies for Jesus?

Both Matthew 1 and Luke 3 contain genealogies of Jesus but --they are different. Luke's genealogy starts at Adam and goes to David, Matthew's genealogy starts at Abraham and goes to David. When the genealogies arrive at David, they split with David's sons: Nathan and Solomon.

Most Bible scholars believe that Luke gives the genealogy of Mary (who was also of the royal Davidic line), while Matthew traces the family of Joseph. Thus by both His mother and His legal father, Jesus had a right to the throne of Israel. While Matthew traces Christ's lineage through Joseph, his legal father (see Matthew 1:1-17), Luke traces it through Mary, beginning with Mary's father, Heli. (Men in ancient times often regarded their sons-in-law as their own sons.)

Notice too, that Luke starts with Mary and goes backwards to Adam. Matthew starts with Abraham and goes forward to Joseph. The intents of the genealogies were obviously different which is clearly seen in their styles. Luke was not written to the Jews, Matthew was. Therefore, Matthew would carry the legal line (from Abraham through David) and Luke the biological line (from Adam through David). Also notice Luke 3:23, "... being supposedly the son of Joseph, the son of Heli,". The designation "supposedly" signifies the Marian genealogy since it indicates that Jesus is not the biological son of Joseph.

In the Joseph genealogy there is a man named Jeconiah. God cursed Jeconiah (also called Coniah), stating that no descendant of his would ever sit on the throne of David (Jeremiah 22:30). But Jesus, of course, will sit on the throne in the Kingdom. The point is that Jesus is not a biological descendant of Jeconiah, but through the other lineage - that of Mary. Hence, the prophetic curse upon Jeconiah stands unbroken. But, the legal adoption of Jesus by Joseph reckoned the legal rights of Joseph to Jesus as a son, not the biological curse. This is why we need two genealogies: one of Mary (the actually biological line according to prophecy), and the legal line through Joseph.

Pastor Richard M. Lloyd from

Note: Much of this is gleaned from CARM.com (Christian Apologetics and Research Ministry)

Thursday December 31st

Theme: Rest

Scripture: Luke 5:16 "But he would withdraw to desolate places and pray."

Connected Scripture: Matthew 14:23; Mark 1:35,45; 6:30-32

The word "desolate" means remote. This verse written by Luke doesn't just refer to one specific time, it is phrased like it is to make the point that this is something Jesus would do often. He would withdraw from people, find a remote location without any distractions, and just pray.

This pattern is something you and I need to implement in our life. First of all, we need to spend time away from people. For some of you this is great news! For some who enjoy the company of others, this is a hard but necessary step. Next, you need to find a remote place. No people, no technology, no work to do, a place where you have nothing to do but think. Lastly, you have to talk with God. These times of refreshment keep our hearts pure and our affections focused on God.

What do these scriptures teach me about God?

How does this apply to my life?

Personal Prayer: Take eight minutes to Adore God, Confess sin, Thank God for what He has given you, and the Stuff that is on your mind.

Family Prayer: Have one or more people ask God to help apply what you have learned, thanking God for specific things and the requests you have.

Wednesday December 30th

Theme: Rest

Scripture: Matthew 11:28-30 "... for my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."

Connected Scripture: Jeremiah 6:16; Matthew 23:4; 1 John 5:3

This passage often bothers me. I come across it and think to myself, "this is not true! The Christian life is hard! It would be much easier to stop living a moral life. It would be easier to watch sports all night, stay home on Sundays, and stop serving. If I stopped following Jesus I wouldn't have to serve other people or leave my comfort zone to witness or exhort. Why would Jesus say following Him is easy!?"

Have you ever thought the same things? I am sure you have. We need to remind ourselves of the context. Jesus had referred to the Pharisees as ones laying heavy burdens on the people by mandating many moral rules and regulations. Jesus is comparing his way of life to theirs. Jesus gives us freedom from oppressive religious systems and removes the burden of guilt, shame, and many other things. Yes, the Christian life is hard. But in comparison to other religious systems, and the burden of sin, it is freeing!

What do these scriptures teach me about God?

How does this apply to my life?

Personal Prayer: Take eight minutes to Adore God, Confess sin, Thank God for what He has given you, and the Stuff that is on your mind.

Family Prayer: Have one or more people ask God to help apply what you have learned, thanking God for specific things and the requests you have.

Sunday November 29th Sermon Notes

Series or Message Title: _____

List all Scripture Used: _____

Notes:

What is ONE THING you took away from today's sermon:

Monday November 30th

Theme: Hope

Scripture: Genesis 8:20-9:17 "...I establish my covenant with you, that never again shall all flesh be cut off by waters of the flood, and never again shall there be a flood to destroy the earth..."

Connected Scripture: Isaiah 54:9-10; Matthew 6:25-33; Colossians 1:16-20

How many times did God say in this passage, "Never again?" When the Bible repeats itself.... it's important! Here we have our first symbol of hope, the rainbow. God promises to preserve the earth until it is time for it to be renewed. We are reminded of this every-time we see a rainbow.

There are a lot of things to be afraid of. Our world today is very fearful of the fact that our planet is deteriorating. We shouldn't dismiss these concerns as we were created to be good stewards of God's creation. However, vs. 22 states that we do not have to worry that seasons or harvests will cease this side of eternity. God promises to preserve His creation and us. Praise the Lord today for the hope you have in a God that preserves his creation and you!

What do these scriptures teach me about God?

How does this apply to my life?

Personal Prayer: Take eight minutes to Adore God, Confess sin, Thank God for what He has given you, and the Stuff that is on your mind.

Family Prayer: Have one or more people ask God to help apply what you have learned, thanking God for specific things and the requests you have.

Tuesday December 29th

Theme: Rest

Scripture: Ezekiel 20:10-16 "... and profaned my Sabbaths, for their heart went after their idols."

Excerpts are taken from an article "Do You Fear a Day of Rest?" by Adam Mabry on desiringgod.org

"By forgetting to stop, we forget God. Restlessness — the refusal to lay down our work so we can open our arms to God — means that our busy hands are always full. This robs God of glory — his weighty significance in our lives. Holy time given to a holy God makes us more wholly aware that we are not gods — we neither create nor save ourselves. God does. If we won't stop to experience the glory of God in rest, we won't be able to glorify him in work either... By working without Sabbath rest, the work of their hands became the idols of their hearts. Ezekiel continues, ". . . because they rejected my rules and did not walk in my statutes, and profaned my Sabbaths; for their heart went after their idols" (Ezekiel 20:16). Our hearts are not neutral. Chances are, if we're not finding our rest in God, we're wrongly finding it somewhere else. Tell me, if you imagine a regular day of actual rest, does it make you feel anxious? Your fear of stopping might reveal what you're really worshiping. Because anxiety is very often the evidence of unbelief. "

What do these scriptures teach me about God?

How does this apply to my life?

Personal Prayer: Take eight minutes to Adore God, Confess sin, Thank God for what He has given you, and the Stuff that is on your mind.

Family Prayer: Have one or more people ask God to help apply what you have learned, thanking God for specific things and the requests you have.

Monday December 28th

Theme: Rest

Scripture: Exodus 5:4-9 "... But the number of bricks that they made in the past you shall impose on them, you shall by no means reduce it for they are idle..."

Connected Scripture: Exodus 20:2,8-11; Hebrews 4:9-10

"How have you been?" "Oh you know, busy, real busy! You?" "I get it, same here, life is crazy!" Does this sound like any conversation you have had recently? It probably does, because somewhere we have equated busyness with godliness.

Busyness was mandatory in the Egyptian empire. Pharaohs believed they were divine, and each Pharaoh tried to outdo the other in building and innovations. To honor the deity - was to work, work, and work to show your allegiance. Slaves were brought in to do the hard labor necessary to make a Pharaoh's name great. The Jews were caught in this culture where they worshipped work. The Jews were not allowed to rest or even be idle, obedience was exhausting. The Lord set them free from this cycle, and made rest mandatory. Don't buy into the lie that busyness is godliness!

What do these scriptures teach me about God?

How does this apply to my life?

Personal Prayer: Take eight minutes to Adore God, Confess sin, Thank God for what He has given you, and the Stuff that is on your mind.

Family Prayer: Have one or more people ask God to help apply what you have learned, thanking God for specific things and the requests you have.

Tuesday December 1st

Theme: Hope

Scripture: Genesis 15 "... On that day the Lord made a covenant with Abram, saying, "To your offspring I give this land..."

Connected Scripture: Genesis 12:1-4; Romans 8:28; 2 Peter 3:9

Have you ever second-guessed the will of God? Abram responded quickly and decisively to the command God gave Him in Genesis 12. In Genesis 15 some time has elapsed and God still had not delivered to Abram what he had promised. In this passage God makes a covenant with Abram that mimics similar covenants made between people at this time. The symbolism is lost on us, but to Abram it was powerful.

This year has caused many of us to question God. The pandemic, the rules regarding the pandemics, riots, social injustice, seeming persecution, and any semblance of respectable behavior has led to a crisis of morality. But remember, God's plan is perfect. As Peter states, God's slowness to fulfill promises ought not to frustrate us. He is still on the throne, and He will deliver us! Also, keep in mind God made this promise 4,000 years ago - and Abram's offspring are still waiting for it to come true! We. Can. Wait.

What do these scriptures teach me about God?

How does this apply to my life?

Personal Prayer: Take eight minutes to Adore God, Confess sin, Thank God for what He has given you, and the Stuff that is on your mind.

Family Prayer: Have one or more people ask God to help apply what you have learned, thanking God for specific things and the requests you have.

Wednesday December 2nd

Theme: Hope

Scripture: Ephesians 1:7-14 "... were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of His glory."

Connected Scripture: Ezekiel 36:26-27; 2 Corinthians 1:20-22; Ephesians 4:30

In your family, was there a tradition of opening one of your presents early? Some do it the night before, some allow it the morning of. My parents put one present in our stocking so that when we got up at 4am on Christmas morning we would have something to play with so they could sleep in.

Jesus gives us one of our presents early - the Holy Spirit. There is SO MUCH to look forward to when we get to heaven and when we get there it will be like opening all of our presents in rapid succession. But for now the Holy Spirit is our "seal" and "guarantee" of great things to come! Interestingly, the word "guarantee" can be translated "down payment." What a present He is! The Holy Spirit renews us, comforts us, teaches us, prays for us, guides us, and prepares us for Jesus. There is so much we hope to see someday soon in heaven. But until that day comes, enjoy the early present Jesus gave us in the Holy Spirit.

What do these scriptures teach me about God?

How does this apply to my life?

Personal Prayer: Take eight minutes to Adore God, Confess sin, Thank God for what He has given you, and the Stuff that is on your mind.

Family Prayer: Have one or more people ask God to help apply what you have learned, thanking God for specific things and the requests you have.

Sunday December 27th Sermon Notes

Series or Message Title: _____

List all Scripture Used: _____

Notes:

What is ONE THING you took away from today's sermon:

Weekly Reflection

Read through the passages from this week .

Paraphrase what you learned about hope this week.

What did you observe from this week's text about God and His character?

What areas do you need to address in your life based upon what you studied?

What specific action steps can you take this week to apply the passage?

Thursday December 3rd

Theme: Hope

Scripture: Revelation 21:1-8 "... He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away..."

Connected Scripture: Romans 8:18-23; 2 Corinthians 4:17; 1 Peter 1:1-6

This is one of my favorite passages in the Bible. This is the fulfillment of what Paul is talking about in Romans 8. I especially love that phrase above, "for the former things have passed away." All of what you and I have to experience right now, will be gone. No more pain, no more loss, no more loneliness, no more frustrating work, everything will be at peace and Christ will be on the throne!

What adversity from your life is now in your distant past? There are many things I had to endure that I can thankfully say are in the past. They are a memory that I know I will never have to live through again. This will be true of us in eternity. We will remember what we went through, what we struggled to do, the tears, fears, and sleepless nights. But they will all be distant and the reality of our surroundings will inspire us to rejoice at the goodness of our Savior!

What do these scriptures teach me about God?

How does this apply to my life?

Personal Prayer: Take eight minutes to Adore God, Confess sin, Thank God for what He has given you, and the Stuff that is on your mind.

Family Prayer: Have one or more people ask God to help apply what you have learned, thanking God for specific things and the requests you have.

Friday December 4th

In-depth family or small group Bible Study.

Background: Studying hope makes us... hopeful! Hope ought to inspire us to chase our goals, to prepare ourselves for eternity, to finish well. Peter talks about what we ought to do based on our hope. This passage blends clear teaching about God with clear instruction for us to do. Enjoy studying this passage together as a family/group!

1 Peter 1:13-21 "13 Therefore, preparing your minds for action, and being sober-minded, set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ. 14 As obedient children, do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance, 15 but as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, 16 since it is written, "You shall be holy, for I am holy." 17 And if you call on him as Father who judges impartially according to each one's deeds, conduct yourselves with fear throughout the time of your exile, 18 knowing that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold, 19 but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot. 20 He was foreknown before the foundation of the world but was made manifest in the last times for the sake of you 21 who through him are believers in God, who raised him from the dead and gave him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God."

Steps:

1. Pray for focus.
2. Read twice.
3. Mark key words, repeated words, mark what seems to JUMP OUT at you as important, and write down questions you have over words or phrases.

Answer questions using connected scripture and study Bible notes.

5. What does this teach me about God?

6. Application:

1. How do I need to think differently?

2. What behavior(s) do I need to stop doing?

3. What behavior(s) do I need to start doing?

Friday December 25th

In-depth family or small group Bible Study.

Background: Merry Christmas! If you are doing this on Christmas, I am impressed! This passage explains what Jesus did to come down to earth. The fact that God came down as a man is incredible, and much ink has been spilled to explain how that works. This passage is the best one to explain what Jesus did when He came. Have fun looking at connected scriptures and study notes to explain this deep truth.

Philippians 2:5-10 "Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, 6 who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, 7 but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. 8 And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. 9 Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, 10 so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth."

Steps:

1. Pray for focus.
2. Read twice.
3. Mark key words, repeated words, mark what seems to JUMP OUT at you as important, and write down questions you have over words or phrases.

4. Answer questions using connected scripture and study Bible notes.

5. What does this teach me about God?

6. Application:

1. How do I need to think differently?

2. What behavior(s) do I need to stop doing?

3. What behavior(s) do I need to start doing?

Weekly Reflection

Read through the passages from this week .

Paraphrase what you learned about hope this week.

What did you observe from this week's text about God and His character?

What areas do you need to address in your life based upon what you studied?

What specific action steps can you take this week to apply the passage?

Thursday December 24th

Theme: Love

Scripture: Luke 1:26-38 "... Behold, I am the servant of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word..."

Connected Scripture: Isaiah 7:14; Matthew 6:24; 1 Peter 2:16

I mentioned on Monday that Joseph was my favorite Christmas character because of the sacrifices he made in his life. Mary's story is very similar. She was looking forward to a predictable working class life. Then, God showed up. He asked her to do something incredible! I want to draw your attention to the word "servant" in the main passage. This word "servant" carries the idea of "slave" that we talked about last month during a sermon. Notice again how she says it, "I am the servant of the Lord." She didn't "pray about" the calling God placed on her life. She said yes, because she already recognized she was a slave of God.

How about you? Do you feel like your life lacks meaning or purpose? It may be because you don't see yourself as a "slave of God." If you want to do great things for God, you must be willing to do the ordinary work of a "slave of God."

What do these scriptures teach me about God?

How does this apply to my life?

Personal Prayer: Take eight minutes to Adore God, Confess sin, Thank God for what He has given you, and the Stuff that is on your mind.

Family Prayer: Have one or more people ask God to help apply what you have learned, thanking God for specific things and the requests you have.

Wednesday December 23rd

Theme: Love

Scripture: Matthew 2:1-12 "... wise men from the east came to Jerusalem, saying, "Where is he who has been born king of the Jews?..."

Connected Scripture: Psalm 72:10; Revelation 4:9-11

The wise men are a mysterious part of the Christmas story. Here is what Expositors Bible Commentary has to state about them, " The "Magi" (magoi) are not easily identified with precision. Several centuries earlier the term was used for a priestly caste of Medes who enjoyed special power to interpret dreams. Daniel (Dan. 1:20; 2:2; 4:7; 5:7) refers to magoi in the Babylonian Empire. In later centuries down to NT times, the term loosely covered a wide variety of men interested in dreams, astrology magic, books thought to contain mysterious references to the future, and the like. Some Magi honestly inquired after truth; many were rogues and charlatans." Whoever they were, they thought it worthwhile to sacrifice their time to pursue truth and money to give generous gifts. During the Christmas season, and throughout the year, we often don't give our time to pursuing what is true and worshipping Christ. Let the magi be a lesson to us!

What do these scriptures teach me about God?

How does this apply to my life?

Personal Prayer: Take eight minutes to Adore God, Confess sin, Thank God for what He has given you, and the Stuff that is on your mind.

Family Prayer: Have one or more people ask God to help apply what you have learned, thanking God for specific things and the requests you have.

Sunday December 6th Sermon Notes

Series or Message Title: _____

List all Scripture Used: _____

Notes:

What is ONE THING you took away from today's sermon:

Monday December 7th

Theme: Peace

Scripture: 1 Samuel 19:1-7 "... And Jonathan spoke well of David to Saul his father and said to him, "Let not the king sin against his servant David, because he has not sinned against you, and because his deeds have brought good to you..."

Connected Scripture: Matthew 5:9; Romans 14:19; 1 Timothy 2:2; James 3:18

Today we are going to look at establishing peace in a politically hostile environment. In our world today we see not only disagreement, but anger and even violence between sides. In Israel at the time of the reading above King Saul was losing popularity to the rising star David. Saul wanted him dead, David wasn't backing down, and Saul's son Jonathan was caught in the middle.

Jonathan's boldness to confront his dad to do the moral thing is a great example for us. Jonathan's boldness continued as he helped to protect David. As we deal with a politically divisive world we must focus on these two things. First, wisdom to discern when God's commands are being violated. Secondly, boldness to take the action! Our goal ought to be the same as Jonathan's - to bring about peace.

What do these scriptures teach me about God?

How does this apply to my life?

Personal Prayer: Take eight minutes to Adore God, Confess sin, Thank God for what He has given you, and the Stuff that is on your mind.

Family Prayer: Have one or more people ask God to help apply what you have learned, thanking God for specific things and the requests you have.

Tuesday December 22nd

Theme: Love

Scripture: Matthew 1:18-25 "... When Joseph woke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord command him: he took his wife..."

Connected Scripture: John 19:26-27

Joseph is my favorite character in the Christmas story (outside of Jesus). Maybe it is because I am a husband and a father, but I think his sacrifice is incredible. Joseph was a carpenter who had a predictable but bright future ahead. He could marry his fiancée, carry on the family business, and live in the town he was accustomed too. A life that would be hard work but predictable. Then, God decides to do something. Joseph willingly agreed to support Mary in what God called her to do. He took her as his wife and lost his reputation as a result, he moved, he hid his family when their lives were threatened, and then he led his family well spiritually after that. Many scholars believe Joseph died before Jesus did, that is why John had to care for Mary. But now Joseph enjoys the honor of having cared for the Son of God. Also, another son of his, James was a leader in the early church and wrote a book of the Bible. You never know what fruit your sacrificial investment in the lives of others will bring.

What do these scriptures teach me about God?

How does this apply to my life?

Personal Prayer: Take eight minutes to Adore God, Confess sin, Thank God for what He has given you, and the Stuff that is on your mind.

Family Prayer: Have one or more people ask God to help apply what you have learned, thanking God for specific things and the requests you have.

Monday December 21st

Theme: Love

Scripture: Isaiah 11:6-9 "The wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the young goat..."

Connected Scripture: Isaiah 65:17-25; Hosea 2:18; Revelation 21:4

As we referenced on Sunday perfect love is such an exciting thing about what is awaiting us. This perfect love will be seen all throughout creation. Even animals that have been predators ever since Genesis 3, will now be at peace with one another.

It is hard to wrap our heads around this love. No more locked doors, no more keys, no more passwords, and no more secrets. For all of eternity we all will function in complete trust and compassion. The purity of the relationship you now enjoy with Christ will be shared with everyone. In some ways the Church is the beginning of this utopia. We ought to be able to trust one another and encourage each other in our weaknesses. Your family should strive to be like this also. Ask yourselves, "What does our family need to do to be more trusting and open?"

What do these scriptures teach me about God?

How does this apply to my life?

Personal Prayer: Take eight minutes to Adore God, Confess sin, Thank God for what He has given you, and the Stuff that is on your mind.

Family Prayer: Have one or more people ask God to help apply what you have learned, thanking God for specific things and the requests you have.

Tuesday December 8th

Theme: Peace

Scripture: Genesis 50:15-21 "... As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive..."

Connected Scripture: Isaiah 55:6-9; Romans 12:19; Ephesians 4:26-27; 1 Timothy 5:8

The next area of establishing peace we will look at is within our families. You think your family is messed up - don't forget about the family of Joseph. Favoritism, kids from multiple mothers, imprisonment, attempted murder, and this is just what is recorded in scripture. If you are not familiar with Joseph's family take the time to read the end of Genesis, starting in Chapter 37.

In our main text for today we see the end of the story, after all of the sins had been committed. We see Joseph rising above his circumstances and seeing what happened from God's perspective. God had allowed the abuse and worked through it to save many people. You can't control harmful actions of your family, but you can forgive and look at how what you have gone through can be used to save others!

What do these scriptures teach me about God?

How does this apply to my life?

Personal Prayer: Take eight minutes to Adore God, Confess sin, Thank God for what He has given you, and the Stuff that is on your mind.

Family Prayer: Have one or more people ask God to help apply what you have learned, thanking God for specific things and the requests you have.

Weekly Reflection

Read through the passages from this week .

Paraphrase what you learned about hope this week.

What did you observe from this week's text about God and His character?

What areas do you need to address in your life based upon what you studied?

What specific action steps can you take this week to apply the passage?

Thursday December 10th

Theme: Peace

Scripture: Luke 2:8-14 "... Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased!"

Connected Scripture: Isaiah 7:11-14, 9:6-7; Romans 5:1; Ephesians 2:14-17; Colossians 1:20

This event would have terrified these poor shepherds! There they were, enjoying a relaxing evening after they got their sheep to bed catching up on social media, watching the news, and doing a little online shopping. Then BAM - an event that had never happened in history before appears right before them. The announcement of peace needs some explanation. Here is what Expositor's Bible Commentary states, "The NIV's "on earth peace to men on whom His favor rests" is preferred to the KJV's "good will toward men." God's peace is not given to those who have good will, but to those who are recipients of God's good will or favor."

What do these scriptures teach me about God?

How does this apply to my life?

Personal Prayer: Take eight minutes to Adore God, Confess sin, Thank God for what He has given you, and the Stuff that is on your mind.

Family Prayer: Have one or more people ask God to help apply what you have learned, thanking God for specific things and the requests you have.

Friday December 11th

In-depth family or small group Bible Study.

Background: This week we looked at lots of difficult circumstances and how to have peace in the midst of all of them. We often wonder, "How can I get to being peaceful?" We want peace, but it seems allusive. This familiar passage of scripture walks us through steps on how to get the peace of God walk through this passage with your family and find the steps to arrive at peace.

Philippians 4:4-7

"4 Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice. 5 Let your reasonableness be known to everyone. The Lord is at hand; 6 do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. 7 And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Steps:

1. Pray for focus.
2. Read twice.
3. Mark key words, repeated words, mark what seems to JUMP OUT at you as important, and write down questions you have over words or phrases.

4. Answer questions using connected scripture and study Bible notes.

5. What does this teach me about God?

6. Application:

1. How do I need to think differently?

2. What behavior(s) do I need to stop doing?

3. What behavior(s) do I need to start doing?

Friday December 18th

In-depth family or small group Bible Study.

Background: God made some specific promises to Israel about what is coming for them in His kingdom. Use the correlated scripture references in your study bible to look at the old covenant and this new covenant. Spend some time discussing what it will be like to have complete perfect knowledge of God!

Jeremiah 31:31-34

31 "Behold, the days are coming, declares the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah, 32 not like the covenant that I made with their fathers on the day when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, my covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, declares the Lord. 33 For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the Lord: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be my people. 34 And no longer shall each one teach his neighbor and each his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord,' for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, declares the Lord. For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more."

Steps:

1. Pray for focus.
2. Read twice.
3. Mark key words, repeated words, mark what seems to JUMP OUT at you as important, and write down questions you have over words or phrases.

4. Answer questions using connected scripture and study Bible notes.

5. What does this teach me about God?

6. Application:

1. How do I need to think differently?

2. What behavior(s) do I need to stop doing?

3. What behavior(s) do I need to start doing?

Weekly Reflection

Read through the passages from this week .

Paraphrase what you learned about hope this week.

What did you observe from this week's text about God and His character?

What areas do you need to address in your life based upon what you studied?

What specific action steps can you take this week to apply the passage?

Thursday December 17th

Theme: Joy

Scripture: Luke 1:46-56 "And Mary said, my soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my savior..."

Connected Scripture: Psalm 34:2-3; 35:9; 69:30; Isaiah 61:10

Mary is one of the hero's of the Bible. She wasn't a prophet, she didn't lead Israel anywhere, she wasn't a leader in the early church, she didn't die a famous martyr's death, she was a mom. God chose her to nurture and care for His only son. The task wasn't easy as from the moment she became pregnant her life was filled with adversity. But the understanding in this passage of what was in her womb is incredible. She knew what her child would do, and what God had done.

You never know when God is going to call you into adversity for His glory. Make sure you are ready with a spirit of joy when God uses your suffering for his glory.

What do these scriptures teach me about God?

How does this apply to my life?

Personal Prayer: Take eight minutes to Adore God, Confess sin, Thank God for what He has given you, and the Stuff that is on your mind.

Family Prayer: Have one or more people ask God to help apply what you have learned, thanking God for specific things and the requests you have.

Monday December 14th

Theme: Joy

Scripture: Psalm 95 "Oh come, let us sing to the Lord; let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation!...."

Connected Scripture: Psalm 66:1-4; 81:1, 98:4; Ephesians 5:18-21

C.S. Lewis once stated, "I think we delight to praise what we enjoy because the praise not merely expresses but completes the enjoyment; it is its appointed consummation." I don't need to add any commentary to this powerful sentence as it can stand along to reinforce the scripture listed for today, but I will.

There are times we love something so much we have to tell someone about it. Our first love, a favorite meal, or our church ;). To praise something feels like we are giving back to it what it has given to us. If you think about it, singing is weird. Most of us only do it in church. Therefore singing seems to be more routine than a joyous celebration of Christ's actions and character. As you sing Christmas carols this year, make sure your voice is completing the joy you have in your heart and mind for the Lord.

What do these scriptures teach me about God?

How does this apply to my life?

Personal Prayer: Take eight minutes to Adore God, Confess sin, Thank God for what He has given you, and the Stuff that is on your mind.

Family Prayer: Have one or more people ask God to help apply what you have learned, thanking God for specific things and the requests you have.

Tuesday December 15th

Theme: Joy

Scripture: John 15:1-11 "...that your joy may be full."

Connected Scripture: John 6:56; 1 John 2:6; Philippians 1:11,

Jesus wants us to have joy! He came to secure us joy, and we will live in a world of joy soon. Joy is allusive if we don't do what this broader section commands. Here is what Expositors Bible Commentary has to state about this section; "Love is the relationship that unites the disciples to Christ as branches are united to a vine. Two results stem from this relationship: obedience and joy. Obedience marks the cause of their fruitfulness; joy is its result. Jesus intended that the disciples' lives should be both spontaneous and happy rather than burdensome and boring. Obedience in carrying out his purpose would be a guarantee of success, for Jesus never planned failure for his disciples. Joy logically follows when the disciples realize that the life of Christ in them is bringing fruit—something they could never produce in their own strength."

What do these scriptures teach me about God?

How does this apply to my life?

Personal Prayer: Take eight minutes to Adore God, Confess sin, Thank God for what He has given you, and the Stuff that is on your mind.

Family Prayer: Have one or more people ask God to help apply what you have learned, thanking God for specific things and the requests you have.