

WEEKLY DEVOTIONS AT GLENKIRK



The DEVO

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TOLD

OCTOBER 1 – 5, 2018

MONDAY

Mark 4:7, 18, 19

When we moved to Southern California, our family moved into a house with a large backyard. Since I love fruit and fruit trees, I decided to plant six fruit trees there. I thought that in this way I would have an abundance of fruit. My thinking was that the more trees I planted, the more fruit I would have. Since the trees were young saplings about an inch in diameter, I thought there would be plenty of space for six trees.

Today, twenty years later, I realize that I had made a serious mistake. The full-grown trees are much larger than I had estimated. The trees are now fighting each other for space. The sides of the trees are shading each other so that not much fruit can grow on the sides of the trees; only on the front and back of the trees is there fruit. I wanted an abundance of fruit and I ended up with less fruit than I anticipated. More trees became less fruit.

This is a picture of the Christian who allows his life to be overcrowded with the cares of life so that his life is unfruitful. The cares of life are normal and healthy. However, when one allows them to crowd into his life to the point of being overwhelming, one's spiritual fruitfulness is stifled.

The seed planted among thorns is a picture of the worries and cares of life choking believers so that they are unfruitful. These are people who

become Christians but never grow in their faith because of their preoccupation with the demands of life. They remain infant believers throughout their lives. They could be churchgoers for years and yet never develop a deep faith. Their lives are so crowded with the worries of life that no spiritual fruit results.

The worries of this life—trying to succeed on the job, earning enough to pay the bills, the challenges of raising a family, and other demands of life—are normal stresses. However, a Christian can allow these demands to take over one's life, trying to do too much, making schedules that are too full, being too busy in church, but not nurturing one's spiritual life so that one's spiritual growth is stunted.

QUESTION

How crowded is your life? Is there room for spiritual growth?
Is more resulting in less?

PRAYER

Lord, give us eyes to see the pressures of life in their proper perspective. Guard us against the danger of allowing them to overwhelm us. Remind us to place the worries of life into Your hands so that we can live lives that bear fruit for You.

TUESDAY

Mark 4:7, 18, 19

When I was a college student, I sensed God's call for me to enter the ministry. Later, I told my mother that I was planning to study to become a minister. My mother, a non-Christian, first-generation immigrant to the U.S., who together with my father worked very hard to support their family of seven children, reacted very strongly. "You are crazy! How are you going to support your family? How will you educate your children?" From that day forward, she would continually harp on me about the foolishness of this decision.

Halfway through my first year of seminary, Satan began to use the words of my mother to plant doubts in my mind. I began to worry about the financial stresses that a pastor might have to go through. My concerns were so heavy that I decided to drop out of seminary to give more thought to the question of whether I should become a pastor. However, the following school year I returned to the seminary convinced of the Lord's call and assured that He would provide for the needs of my family.

Now as I look back over the many years, I see how time and time again God has richly blessed my family. The Lord was always there for us. As the Lord cared for the birds of the air and the lilies of the field, He faithfully provided for us. He has provided exceedingly abundantly above all that we might have asked or thought.

The worries of this life had created in me a fear for the future and would have resulted in my missing God's call for my life. My life would have been like the seed planted among thorns. I would have allowed the worries and cares of this life to choke me and prevent me from bearing spiritual fruit for the Lord. I would have been stunted in my spiritual growth and not much use to Him.

The Lord has great blessings ahead for each of us. Let us not let the worries of this life prevent us from receiving the Lord's best. Let us trust Him and be willing to stick out our necks for Him. Let us take risks for Him. He will come through for us! He has proved Himself faithful time and time again.

QUESTION

Are the worries of this life preventing you from stepping out in faith to obey the Lord? Are you afraid of what might happen if you obey Him? Test Him! Taste and see that the Lord is good.

PRAYER

Lord, the cares of this life weigh heavily on us. We struggle each day with worries. Teach us to cast our cares upon You for You care for us. Teach us to trust You on a daily basis.

WEDNESDAY

Mark 4:7, 18, 19

A well-known pastor in China had gone through much persecution from the government. The book, *Heavenly Man*, describes some of this persecution. Over the years, the Lord had taught him that he must put the priority of his family over his ministry. This was a difficult lesson for him to learn because under persecution the Christians in China had become stronger in their faith and in their zeal for the Lord. In their zealousness to serve the Lord, they tended to give lower priority to their families. Their ministries were uppermost while their families came a distant second. This was a common practice.

However, this pastor was convicted that his family must come first. Therefore, in meetings of pastors and church leaders he would speak out that the family must come before ministry. Since many of the leaders thought otherwise, they would argue with him and give him a difficult time. However, he would stick to his convictions.

The concept that the family must come before ministry is clearly taught in 1 Timothy 3:4, 5, where Paul outlines the requirements for church leaders. *“He must manage his own family well and see that his children obey him with proper respect. If anyone does not know how to manage his own family, how can he take care of God’s church?”*

The idea of putting ministry before family is a result of the deceitfulness of twisted thinking. The deceitfulness of worldly thinking makes one think he is putting God first when in reality he is harming God's cause by neglecting his family. The deceitfulness of worldly values can cause one to have wrong priorities and not realize he is wrong.

The seed planted among thorns is a picture of one who has allowed the deceitfulness of worldly values to twist his thinking so that his priorities become reversed. In turn, he becomes a person bearing less spiritual fruit.

Many people give higher priority to their jobs over the welfare of their families. Or they seek to satisfy their own selfish ends over the needs of their families. The practice of wrong priorities is common. Many have succumbed to the lure of worldly values and as a result bare no fruit for the Lord. They might not realize their wrong priorities until it is too late. Then there are regrets.

QUESTION

Have you taken a look at your priorities? Have the allures of the world twisted them? Based on the way you live, what would one conclude is your first priority? What changes do you have to make? Will you do it?

PRAYER

Lord, help me to be very honest with myself, to see myself the way you see me. Help me to see those areas in my life where my thinking has been twisted by worldly values. Help me to change.

THURSDAY

Mark 4:7, 18, 19

There was a man who taught an adult Sunday school class. He was well liked and much admired by the congregation. Everyone thought he was such a mature Christian who displayed fine Christian character. However, his family could not stand him. He was such a tyrant at home, so demanding and unyielding, that his wife wanted to divorce him.

What was his problem? He had compartmentalized his life. Christ had come into his heart, but He was allowed into only certain compartments of his life. His family life was off limits. His faith did not affect his family life. He had a divided heart, some parts for Christ while other parts were reserved for himself.

The Lord wants obedience from the heart and not just outward service. *“Does the LORD delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as much as in obeying the voice of the LORD? To obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed is better than the fat of rams.”* (1 Samuel 15:22). In this passage Saul obeyed the Lord partially but not completely. He had a divided heart.

Christ has come into our lives to give us new, undivided hearts for Him. In Ezekiel 11:19 the Lord says, *“I will give them an undivided heart and put a new spirit in them. I will remove from them their heart of stone and give them a heart of flesh.”* We are to follow Christ with our whole hearts. He is to be Lord over our entire lives.

The deceitfulness of worldly values can cause a divided heart, a compartmentalized life. We think we are obeying the Lord when we really are not. The values of this world can twist our minds into thinking we are living for the Lord when in reality we are living for self. We can become like the seed planted among the thorns when we allow the deceitfulness of worldly values to capture our hearts. As a result, even though there is visible outward obedience, there is no spiritual fruit. It has been choked by the thorns.

In a military ship there are watertight doors for sealing each compartment to prevent spreading damage caused by an enemy attack. Sometimes we seal off compartments in our lives and do not allow the Lord to penetrate those areas. When we do so, we may be clinging to worldly values that have twisted our thinking.

QUESTION

Is Christ controlling the whole of your heart? Or are their compartments, such as your family life, that are sealed off from Him? What changes do you have to make in your life?

PRAYER

Lord, forgive me when I have a compartmentalized life. Forgive me when my faith does not affect my family life. I want my faith to affect my marriage and the way I relate to my family members. Lord, help me to consistently do this.

FRIDAY

Mark 4:7, 18, 19

In some cultures of the world, wife-beating is acceptable. In Pakistan a popular TV personality watched by millions gave instructions to men on the proper way to beat their wives. “Do not beat your wife where the bruises on her body will be visible to the public. Only beat her on those parts of her body that will be covered by her clothing.”

It is a sin for a man to beat his wife. However, in some cultures this sin has become embedded in the culture and is no longer seen as sin. A man can beat his wife and do so with a clear conscience.

1 Timothy 4:2 describes people “*whose consciences have been seared as with a hot iron.*” Sin has become such a common practice that it becomes the new norm. Parades are held and legislation is passed to promote a sinful lifestyle. Romans 1:32 describes these people: “*they not only continue to do these very things but also approve of those who practice them.*” They become promoters of sinful practices that have become embedded in the culture and no longer seen as sin.

In the U.S. there are sins that have become embedded in the culture and often are not seen as sin. Materialism, heavily embedded in the American culture, has become acceptable and the new norm for many. It is easy for Christians to get caught up in this so-called norm of accumulating things and living for possessions—and to do it with a clear conscience.

Individualism, where one's highest priority is to do what is best for one's self, where one lives to please one's self at the expense of commitments to marriage, family, and other relationships, has become the new norm for many. "If I am not happy in my marriage, I may leave." Commitments to parents and family are much weaker in the U.S. than in many other cultures of the world. It is easy for American Christians to naturally fall into this way of thinking and to do so with a clear conscience.

This is a picture of the seed planted among the thorns. The deceptive values of the world become a part of the culture. Christians may easily fall into what is culturally acceptable. Their consciences becoming seared and are no longer sensitive to sin. We must be alert to this serious danger.

QUESTION

Are you blindly following the dictates of your culture? Are you able to recognize when your culture diverts from God's standards?

Are you willing to stand up against the values of your culture when they go against Scripture?

PRAYER

Lord, help me to see when materialism protrudes into my life.

Pinpoint specific areas in my life that need to be changed. Help me to see when I might be neglecting important family relationships.

Help me to give them the priority they deserve.



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