

FAMILY matters



Mount Calvary
baptist church



Daily Devotions

calvarywv.com/family

Monday, September 17th

IN THE WORD

Resolving Conflict

Genesis 13:5-9

French novelist and playwright Alexandre Dumas once had a heated quarrel with a rising young politician. The argument became so intense that a duel was inevitable. Since both men were superb shots they decided to draw lots, the loser agreeing to shoot himself. Dumas lost. Pistol in hand, he withdrew in silent dignity to another room, closing the door behind him. The rest of the company waited in gloomy suspense for the shot that would end his career. It rang out at last. His friends ran to the door, opened it, and found Dumas, smoking revolver in hand.

“Gentlemen, a most regrettable thing has happened,” he announced. “I missed.”
(Today in the Word, Moody Bible Institute, Jan. 1992)

Like Dumas and the young politician, Abram and Lot were also quarreling as a result of the many livestock and possessions they both acquired that would not allow them to occupy the same land. Abram told Lot to pick the land he wanted, and Abram would go the opposite direction. Lot picked the plain of Jordan and Abram went to the land of Canaan. Abram took the “high road” because he loved his nephew and wanted to resolve the conflict between them quickly.

LIVE IT OUT

Place peace before personal desire. Take the initiative to resolve conflict in the relationships in your life.

--Adam Stotler

Tuesday, September 18th

IN THE WORD

Moving Forward

Genesis 12:7-9

In the late 1990s, Pete Peterson was appointed U.S. ambassador to Vietnam. Peterson had served six years as a prisoner of war in the dreaded "Hanoi Hilton" prison camp. When asked how he could return to the land where he'd endured years of starvation, brutality and torture, he replied, "I'm not angry. I left that at the gates of the prison when I walked out in 1972. I just left it behind me and decided to move forward with my life."

God called Abram to a land He would show him. God promised to make a nation from him, to make his name great, and promised that all would be blessed through him. Abram moved forward when he obeyed and followed the course that God laid out for him to follow.

On Abram's journey he set up his tent on a mountain that faced Bethel on the West and Ai on the East then built an altar to the LORD. Bethel means House of God and Ai stands for ruins.

Abram *pitched* his tent (temporary structure) and *built* (permanent structure) an altar to worship the LORD. As Abram's tent faced the East it was facing his past; his home Ur; the Tower of Babel and the soon to be Babylonian Empire; all being heaps of ruins. Abram, then turns to face God (Bethel) and gives his life (sacrifice at the altar) to the LORD to be obedient unto Him. Notice how Abram turns from his past, forgets everything to follow God.

LIVE IT OUT

Is there something or someone from your past (east) that is holding you back from what God expects of you?

- What is hindering your relationship with the Lord?
- What changes do you need to sacrifice before the Lord?

--Adam Stotler

Wednesday, September 19th

IN THE WORD

Get Alone with God

Genesis 13:18- 14:16

On a plane before takeoff the stewardess gives instructions on what to do in case of an emergency. One of the instructions is to put on your own air mask before helping someone else put on theirs. The reason for this is, a person can't help anyone if they are unconscious. Therefore, a person must take care of their self-first, so they'll be able to help others.

Before the emergency of rescuing Lot occurred, Abram spent time with the LORD by building an altar. This shows that he spent time getting alone with God seeking Him in worship. Afterwards, his nephew Lot was captured in Sodom during a battle between a variety of kings. The four kings who won the battle captured Lot and took all of his possessions with them.

For Abram to rescue Lot it would have drained him physically, emotionally, and spiritually. It would have drained Abram physically because of the long trek he

made to go get Lot back. One can only imagine that it emotionally drained Abram because of the worry of what might happen to his nephew, the uncertainty of going into battle and the stress flaring up inside thinking that if Lot never moved to Sodom that this incident would have never happened. It would have been spiritually exhausting for Abram to witness the wickedness he would have encountered on this rescue mission.

If you haven't noticed yet, people can be draining. Maybe it's your family member who keeps asking for a handout. Maybe it is a co-worker who seems to annoy you in every little way. Maybe it's the phone call that woke you up in the middle of the night. Maybe it's from those you live with that seem to be pulling you in every direction.

Whatever the source may be, and whatever situation may be, God gives you opportunities daily to pour into people by showing His love and giving encouragement. In order to do this though, you must get alone with God on a daily basis by being in His Word and in prayer, so that you can be filled up so that you may be a blessing to others in their “case of an emergency.”

LIVE IT OUT

Fill up before you pour out.

--Adam Stotler

Thursday, September 20th

IN THE WORD

Consequences of our Choices

Genesis 12:10-20

Can you remember a time when you told a “white lie” or “half-truth”?

Abram thought he could get away with telling a half-truth to Pharaoh about his wife so that he could get rich from inheriting livestock in Egypt and not be killed by the Pharaoh. Technically, Sarai was Abram’s half-sister (Genesis 20:12) but Abram lied about their relationship because of his selfishness although God already promised him everything he needed. After lying, Abram gave Sarai over to the Pharaoh of Egypt to have as a wife. Lying and his humiliation are evident of the consequences of Abram’s sin.

LIVE IT OUT

You can endanger yourself and others by the choices you make in life so think before you act.

--Adam Stotler

Friday, September 21st

IN THE WORD

You Have no Idea

Exodus 34:8-10

A man once was about to endure a court case in which he had no idea what to do or what to say in court. What this man needed was a defense attorney to stand between him and the judge.

Today you read that Moses in essence was a defense attorney standing in the gap for the people of God who had no idea that he was pleading for God to have mercy upon them for the sin they caused.

God called Moses on Mt. Sinai for a second time to write down the Ten Commandments.

While up on the mountain, God came down from heaven to meet with him. God's presence, His glory, made Moses fall to the ground to worship Him. Moses realized that he was unworthy to even be in the presence of God let alone utter a word. However, Moses prayed that God would go before them on their journey to the Promised Land (Canaan) because before, God was not going to due to the sinfulness of His people (Ex. 32-33). But because Moses spent 80 days on Mt. Sinai, and the people had no idea what Moses was doing or what was going on. Moses was interceding in prayer for God's people pleading God to have mercy on them. As you read on, the people of God completed the tabernacle for God to dwell among them.

LIVE IT OUT

Interceding means to plead with or cause to encounter. Just as Moses prayed and interceded for the Israelites, make it a priority to spend time in prayer lifting up your loved ones, and interceding for them.

--Adam Stotler

Saturday, September 22nd

IN THE WORD

A Legacy that Matters

Deuteronomy 4:1-9

The late Billy Graham said that “the greatest legacy one can pass on to one's children and grandchildren is not money or other material things accumulated in one's life, but rather a legacy of character and faith.”

Before the Hebrew people went into the Promised Land of Canaan, Moses told them what legacy needed to be passed down through the generations. He reminded the people what God did for them and what He will continue to do when they stay true to God's statutes. Moses reminds them that the LORD God is above any other gods and He demands obedience.

LIVE IT OUT

The best legacy that you can leave your family is to constantly tell and remind them of who God is, what He did for you, and what He continues to do in your life. Your family needs to hear your testimony and be taught of the ways of the LORD. Let your life be an example of God's unconditional love and mercy.

Prayer

LORD Jehovah let my life and family be pleasing to You. Remind us of who You are, what You accomplished for us through Your Son Jesus and what You still continue to do in our lives. Let us please You LORD in our faithfulness and help me raise up this family to be obedient to You, follow and love You, and please You all the days of our lives. Amen.

--Adam Stotler



Sunday, September 23rd

IN THE WORD

I See That Eye Roll

Proverbs 31, Galatians 6:4-5(NIV)

No one ever told you just how hard it would be. That the challenges are more daunting than you could have imagined, that it would be much more chaotic and louder, and that you can never complete the assigned task in the time given. Even if you consider yourself a patient person, well, you might wanna get a book on the patience of Job. **Parenthood** – your first encounter with little terrorists. No, in all seriousness, even though the above is true (well maybe not the terrorist part). Every season – babies, toddlers, school age, teens, young adults, and then adult children – can be hard. BUT, the love you have is deeper than you could have ever imagined and the joy and happiness more abundant!!

One thing I wish someone would have prepared me for, before becoming a mom, is that there are an imaginary set of measurements to which we will be compared if we are going to be a great mother or father. The truth is nothing good can come from our measuring ourselves to other flawed humans. I am so grateful that Facebook, Instagram and Pinterest weren't around when my kids were younger. I would have lived in mommy guilt, and had thoughts of failure, and struggled with jealousy and insecurities, more than I already did.

When my kids were little, I went to a Women of Faith Conference with a group of ladies. One of the speakers Lucy Swindoll gets up to speak to us and she says, "I want to talk to you about the Proverbs 31 woman." *I rolled my eyes so hard and let out a sigh and thought: seriously I already feel like a failure and you want us to look at the life of the Biblical Superwoman, the Susie-homemaker, good with*

money, can sew, smart, her husband and children tell her she's the best wife and mother. I just left 3 screaming kids, a laundry room running over, a dog who had eaten all the Halloween candy and maybe even the parakeet – back home with my poor husband. As I had no more than thought that and did the eye roll, Lucy says “I see you rolling your eyes.” I quickly looked at the giant jumbotron to see if the camera had been on me and I was now full-screen rolling my eyes and disrespecting Lucy Swindoll in front of 5000 women. Whew, I wasn't, she was making the point that we all get defensive and feel inadequate when we think we need to be the Proverbs 31 woman to measure up.

When God put the chapter of the Proverbs 31 in the Bible, He did not put it there for us as a comparison or scorecard. He put it there as a goal, as something for which to strive. He didn't want us to be discouraged, but to be challenged.

LIVE IT OUT

- Do not play the comparison game. It is a game that no one wins.
- Moms & Dads, you are always, always more than the sum of your imperfections.
- Instead of measuring your parenting success against impossible worldly standards.... instead of looking at others and comparing your faults to their successes, pray and trust that God will help you to do your best.
- God chose you to parent your children and He doesn't make mistakes.

--Lisa Heller

Monday, September 24th

IN THE WORD

LEAVE IT

Psalm 46:10

Have troubling thoughts abruptly woken you up? Or your mind is racing so much that you can't even fall asleep? Your body yearns for rest, but you can't stop the parade of issues, demands and tasks that keep marching around your brain – deadlines, responsibilities, the needs of your family, bills, laundry, fears of failure, health issues...the list goes on and on. Instead of choosing to give these burdens to the Lord and leave them there, I find that I keep picking them back up.

Psalm 46:10 "Be still and know that I am God." The command to "Be still" in this verse comes from the Hebrew verb "*rapha*", which means "to be weak, to let go, to release". I don't think it's in my DNA to be still, my personality is to become impatient, take the bull by horns, believe the illusion that I am in control. I am finally realizing that this attitude is robbing me of the peace that is promised by God.

So, I am learning the command of LEAVE IT. This is a command that we give to our dogs when we don't want them to take something or we want them to leave something alone. It is a very powerful command as it keeps them safe from putting anything dangerous in their mouths or taking something that isn't theirs (which can cause them discomfort if they get another one of my husband's shoes).

So, I will lay down to go back to sleep and drown out the parade of burdens on my mind with one of my favorite songs by Natalie Grant, and I will just LEAVE IT all in the more-than-capable hands of King of the World.

*Just a whisper of Your voice can tame the seas
So who am I to try to take the lead
Still I run ahead and think I'm strong enough
When You're the One who made me from the dust
When did I forget that You've always been the King of the world?
I try to take life back right out of the hands of the King of the world*

*How could I make You so small
When You're the One who holds it all
When did I forget that You've always been the King of the world?*

LIVE IT OUT

- Give God your thought-robbing concerns and leave it.
- Smile, knowing God is in control.
- Rest in the comfort that the King of the world wants to give you His perfect peace and love.

--Lisa Heller

Tuesday, September 25th

IN THE WORD

Meet the Stock Family

Genesis 37 – 50, Philippians 1:6

Recently I was at a store looking for an 8 x 10 Frame for my granddaughter's one-year old picture. As I was picking up different frames and trying to figure out which one to get, I noticed all the stock pictures that are in the frames. You know the ones, pictures of the ideal looking family. You could look down a whole aisle of picture frames and every picture seems to show perfection. The perfect vacation, the perfect family gathering (you know where everyone is getting along and smiling), the perfect child's birthday, a grand retirement party, etc...It's like these photos are screaming we have the perfect life and are the ideal family. No problems, no tension, just happy lives all the time. I heard a speaker at a conference refer to all the photos in the frames as "The Stock Family". The Stock Family has no tragedy, no drama; they just live happy, well-adjusted lives. One could easily begin to think, "Why can't I have that?" If only "my spouse", "my kids", "my job", "my parents", "my finances", "my past" "my whatever" was like the life of those in the picture (The Stock Family) then all would be perfect. Not

that we shouldn't strive to do or be better in areas of our lives, but if we hold too tightly to an ideal picture of family, we set ourselves up for disillusionment. We can convince ourselves that God can't use us because we don't measure up to The Stock Family. But guess what...it's not about a picture, it's about a story.

God is at work telling a story of redemption through your family. Nowhere in the Bible is the perfect family described. As matter of fact, if you look at all the heroes of the Bible you won't find one of those heroes with a family life that God holds up as the ideal family. This doesn't mean that we should become satisfied with the failures and cracks in ourselves. We must keep growing and striving to be like Jesus.

I think the story of Joseph, he of the coat-of-many-colors fame, proves my case. No doubt he was a hero of the book of Genesis and was exactly where God wanted him to be. The path he took to get there though, WOW! Here are the Cliff's Notes:

- His brothers hated him (he may have had an issue being a little self-centered)
- His brothers sold him and told their father he had been killed
- He became a slave
- He was wrongly accused and put into prison
- He was forgotten by a "friend" and left in prison even longer

What Joseph had going for him was in being diligent in whatever his circumstances. In the end, Joseph was the picture of God's redemptive work, providing salvation to his family through his suffering and eventual position of honor.

I want people to see the story, not the picture that God is telling through my life and the life of my family. So instead of saying "cheese", I would say keep turning the pages of this story because He is still working on me, *and you*.

LIVE IT OUT

- You are not disqualified from being used by God because you or your families have had situations or circumstances that are far removed from that “ideal picture”.
- God doesn’t use perfect pictures, He uses broken people.
- God qualifies us based on our relationship to Him and our salvation in His Son.

--Lisa Heller

Wednesday, September 26th

IN THE WORD

Pack a Lunch

John 6: 1-14

Have you ever heard of “The Butterfly Effect”- it is the theory that a butterfly could flap its wings and set molecules in motion which move other molecules and in turn would be eventually capable of starting a hurricane on the other side of the world. It is actually a proven theory known as The Law of Sensitive Dependence Upon Initial Conditions. I think Butterfly Effect sounds better though. The point I take away is that even the smallest things we do can set events into motion that have a ripple effect. This can be encouraging news, if you sometimes wonder if what you are doing matters.

Of course, my mind goes directly to those who serve in ministry, particularly the ministries that involve babies, kids, and teens. These ministries can seem to take the longest to see the harvest of our labors. It can seem like such a small thing to show up in a child’s life week after week. You may not get everything on your small group leader notes done with them, or you might only get to wipe noses or cuddle crying infants. You might not get through all your discussion questions with teens when the conversation takes a different turn. Take heart, Jesus used something as small as the faithfulness of someone packing a brown bag lunch to perform a miracle that is talked about still today.

We all know the story in John chapter 6 where Jesus feeds the 5000. A multitude of people had gathered, there is issues of needing to feed all these people, the disciples say it would take over a year's wages to feed this many, but here is a boy with a lunch of two fish and five loaves of bread. Think about it... somebody packed this little guy's lunch, and somebody taught him about Jesus behind the scenes because when he met Jesus, he was willing to give up his lunch to Him.

Don't ever wonder if the time you are investing in the lives of kids and teens matters, it does!! You are just as called by God as the Apostle Paul was in Acts 9. The time and the things you do now to build into the lives of kids and teens may seem as small as the flapping of those little butterfly wings, or as mundane as packing a lunch, but it will have the same unbelievable effect, not only to change their lives but to potentially change the world around them.

Side note: The Butterfly Effect doesn't just apply to folks in children and teens ministry, the time and energy you are putting into what God has called you to do, will not come back void. Keep on keeping on!

In 2 Chronicles 15:7 Azariah is telling Asa and others to not give up. Their work has a reward. And Paul writes in Thessalonians, "do not grow weary in doing good." 2 Thessalonians 3:13.

LIVE IT OUT

- Keep teaching kids and teens to recognize who Jesus is (little boy with the lunch knew who Jesus was)
- Keep modeling faithfulness to your group of kids and teens (they may not remember everything you say, but they will remember you showed up)
- Keep in mind at the end of the day, you and I are just called to "pack a lunch" (Psalm 102:18 God will do far more through you than you may ever see in your lifetime.)

--Lisa Heller

Thursday, September 27th

IN THE WORD

Tick-Tock (In His Time)

Ecclesiastes 3:1(NKJV)

Over a year-and-a-half ago in our Children's Ministry, we began to utilize curriculum from Lifeway called "The Gospel Project". The premise of the material is that we are exploring through the entire Bible from beginning to end. We have completed our journey through the Old Testament, where everything that is recorded serves the purposes of pointing forward to the time when Jesus would come to earth. Now, we are exploring the life of Jesus on earth, and gaining the perspective of how the entire New Testament is about Jesus and the spread of his message.

By taking a "beginning to end" approach, we experience the way that God has worked through the timetables of history. When worshipping our God who has no beginning and no end, who is not subject to time and the 24-hour rotation of the earth, we do it with the awe of knowing that He has perfect timing in how He fulfills what we know as history.

God sent Jesus, His Son, to be born into a time in our history specifically designed for the birth of the Gospel. Alexander the Great had previously conquered, spreading Greek philosophy and language as a unifier of the Middle East. Rome took over later, providing military oversight and strength, which generated economic stability, and drove a penchant for building roads to everywhere that they wanted to spread their commercial endeavors. God, as the architect of history, interjected His Son into this world with a language that would allow messages to be shared broadly, peace that would temporarily provide stability, and roads that would serve to deliver a newly born Gospel Message throughout the developed world.

Ecclesiastes 3:11 He has made everything beautiful in its time. Also, He has put eternity in their hearts, except that no one can find out the work that God does from beginning to end. (NKJV)

Ecclesiastes 3:14 I know that whatever God does, it shall be forever. Nothing can be added to it, and nothing taken from it. God does it, that men should fear before Him. (NKJV)

On the wall in our Kids' Celebration room, you will find a poster of one of our core beliefs that children need to know, and that is that "I can trust God no matter what". We can trust that God's timing – in our lives, in our church, in our country, and here on earth – is perfect. And remembering that is important, especially when we get impatient.

LIVE IT OUT

- Trust God's timing, He is the Time-Maker after all
- Believe He will complete what He has started, and it will be beautiful
- Know His timing will be just as impeccable when it comes to His Second Coming

--Lisa Heller

Friday, September 28th

IN THE WORD

What I Learned from the Weakest Strong Man

1 Corinthians 10:11-13, Judges 16

It whispers to us, piques our interest, ignites our passions; and then, it can cause us to fall all too quickly. Temptation is like stepping into the quicksand of sin and then sinking fast. We spent several weeks studying the life of Samson in Children's Ministry this past June.

I found myself being very judgmental of Samson. I mean really, he had everything going for him. A birth announced by Angels (you can count on one hand how many times that has happened), superhuman strength, and an amazing purpose

that God called him to do. Yet, he squandered it all away with thoughtless actions and petty offenses (ok, let's be real, a love for ladies). So Samson, one of the strongest men in history, showed such weakness when it came to temptation. His physical strengths and feats of grandeur were unfortunately not matched by his moral qualities.

This is when for me, I can always count on the Holy Spirit to give me a smackdown. In my heart I start to recall the temptations to which I have succumbed. I will claim the Fifth and move on without incriminating myself, but I know I would be in good company as all of us have fallen prey to Satan's attempts to interrupt our relationship with God. It might be easy to start inserting what we might think as the Top 20 most common temptations, because then we might be able to sit back and say well I am not tempted like that. Satan tempts us according to our weaknesses and personality. For Samson, he loved the ladies. Perhaps for you or me it is succumbing to fear and worry, or one more pair of shoes, or the newest power tool, or more time on social media (yes, I went there). Satan will use whatever he can to keep your mind and life distracted from fulfilling the mission and purpose to which God has called you.

Here is the good news though, for Samson and for us. Even in Samson's brokenness (if it has been long time since you have read the story of Samson you may want to refresh your memory of how broken he was), and in his blinded state he could still see that God had a purpose for his life. It's funny how it sometimes takes being broken or blinded physically or emotionally to see God more clearly. Samson called out to God and God forgave him and put him back on the mission He had set for him.

LIVE IT OUT

In thinking back through what we covered, I learned the following lessons from the life of Samson:

- Are we guarding our heart and being ever-vigilant of what may be a weakness or temptation for us?
- Remember that God will give us the strength to resist.
- In our brokenness, God is strong.
- Forgiveness leads us to God.

--Lisa Heller



Saturday, September 29th

IN THE WORD

The Underestimated Child Called to be an Extraordinary King

Read: 1 Samuel 16:1-13

Samuel, along with David's Father Jesse, felt that a king must have a certain appearance. However, God looks at what is more important, the heart. Samuel was a feared person throughout the land of Israel. The text states in verse 4 that the people trembled when Samuel entered the town. Samuel was God's prophet and he had the ear of the king. People exercised restraint and respect in his presence. I can only imagine how David's brothers would have responded if they knew David would be king before Samuel's announcement. I cannot help but picture them ridiculing their brother and mercilessly teasing him. Oppositely in the presence of Samuel they would remain silent, showing him respect.

David's father did not see the point of bringing David from the field to be introduced to such an important national leader, nor did he expect his youngest to be named king. Maybe you have felt neglected or left out of the conversation? David's brothers were probably thrilled to have been able to avoid being named the family's shepherd, but what they failed to see God molding David's heart while he was working in God's creation. David might have felt forgotten by his family, but he always felt the watchful eye of God on his life.

Responsibilities remind us of our limitations. David discovered while protecting the sheep from wild predators that this was a task he did not want to attempt to do alone. David gives God the praise for His help in giving him victory over the lion and the bear (1 Sam. 17:37). David learned that to succeed in overwhelming odds, you must rely on a strength that is greater than your own. David's brothers

believed they were better men than David, but David believed God makes us all better men. David grew a heart of dependence on the Lord during those early years of being a forgotten shepherd. That lesson served him extremely well after he became a king!

LIVE IT OUT

We all have probably been underestimated at times. Quite possibly we have perhaps underestimated ourselves. It is imperative that we never underestimate God. He can help us carry out the responsibilities we are given, whether that is the responsibilities of a shepherd or the responsibilities of a king. Maybe there is an area of your life where you are feeling overwhelmed. Have you considered asking God to show you what he can do with your situation? Asking alone is not enough. You must trust Him to be present with you in the moment, because you are never alone.

--Tim Campbell

Sunday, September 30th

IN THE WORD

David's Sibling Rivalry!

Read: 1 Samuel 17: 12-29

1 Samuel 17:29, And David said, what have I done now? Is there not a cause?

David was sent by his father to bring supplies to the soldiers and to check on his brothers on the battlefield against the Philistines. The armies arose to meet each other on the battlefield and in the excitement, David left the supplies with a responsible person. He rushed to the front lines to greet his brothers. Naturally his brothers did not feel David should be there at this moment. What made them more upset was David's confidence that someone could defeat the Philistine champion. Only David's three oldest brothers were sent to war and now the

youngest brother is the only one not afraid of the Philistine giant, Goliath. David's brother Eliab accused him of being proud and rebellious to even come down to the battle front. To put David in his place Eliab reminds David that he is a simple shepherd and he should get back to his sheep (17:28). To put this in a difference perspective, he is basically saying, "David you do not belong here with us".

David's response reveals the nature of David's heart. "Is there not a cause?" David is pointing out that it is not a question of if, but when will someone put a stop to this giant who is defying God. David probably felt that his brothers, and not him, should be stepping up for this task. He is not rebelling but demonstrating faith in midst of everyone else's fear. It is natural to look up to your big brother and even expect him to fight on your behalf. I know my brother did that for me more than once while I was growing up. I remember there were some high school kids sitting in the back of the bus that were picking on me when I was in middle school. My brother was driving to school at this point, but I told him what was happening and so he chose to ride the bus with me the next day. He went to the back of the bus and he told the kids to move and they moved. Then he called me back to sit with him. Those kids never picked on me again. David's brother probably viewed himself in that way. This made David's courage seem so offensive to him because he regretted his inaction but at the same time was fearful of Goliath.

LIVE IT OUT

Eliab was afraid, but David had faith. David's faith was born from the conviction that God would fight for Israel. Maybe you have felt fear so strong that it prevented you to act. Possibly you have allowed your fears to direct the life of your family members. Out of fear maybe you responded in an unkind way to someone else. We all have our role to play in the family, but convictions and God's leading should be our priority. It was David's conviction that directed his steps and, in this instance, he not only was a leader to his brother but a leader for his nation. Have you confirmed your convictions on the Word of God? Are you standing on those convictions with boldness? Your family will always benefit when you put God first in your life!

--Tim Campbell

Monday, October 1st

IN THE WORD

David and His Best Friend

Read: 1 Sam. 19:1-10; 20:1-13, 17

Good friendships are hard to find and even harder to maintain. There are many things you might desire from a friendship but one of the most important qualities is loyalty. Sometimes friendships grow apart when our interests are divided. If Jonathan desired the crown he would have helped his father kill David. Jonathan was the next in line of Saul's descendants to be king of Israel. Saul was blinded by jealousy and lust for power. Saul could not fathom the bond of friendship that David and Jonathan enjoyed. No one would have faulted Jonathan if he was jealous of David, but Jonathan viewed his friendship with David as invaluable.

There is a big difference between being jealous *of* someone and being jealous *for* someone. The main difference between the two is love. God is jealous for us because he loves us. He does not want anything to come between us and Him (Ex. 20:5; 2 Cor. 11:2). The text says that Jonathan loved David as he loved his own soul. Because of this great love, Jonathan made a pact to protect David at all cost even if this meant defying his father. There was a moment when Saul threw a spear at Jonathan because Jonathan sided with David (1 Sam 20:30-33). It was love that maintained Jonathan and David's bond even in the worst of circumstances. Love and loyalty seem to go hand in hand. How can you have one and not the other?

LIVE IT OUT

Loyalty can be defined as allegiance and devotion. Saul believed that his daughter Michal and his son Jonathan would have greater allegiance to him because he was their father. We might think that as well, but we must realize Michal and Jonathan were doing God's will in protecting David's life. In marriage there is a shift of allegiance from mother and father to our spouse. I still love my parents and respect them, but I am more devoted to my wife. I obey the scriptural

command to leave mother and father and be joined to my spouse (Gen. 2:24). The great news is that as we devote ourselves to God, we will always grow closer to one another in our marriage. Saul lost his children's loyalty because he put them in a position to have to follow God's will over his. If you find a lack of loyalty in your life, examine what expectations you have placed on others and see if those things align with the Word of God.

--Tim Campbell

Tuesday, October 2nd

IN THE WORD

The Value of Quick and Decisive Discipline

Read: 2 Samuel 13:1-33

A terrible crime was committed in the King David's household by the king's son. By today's standard Amnon would have been arrested sentenced to prison. However, in this case Amnon's dad was the judge. To compound the situation, David's daughter, Tamar was the victim! As judge, King David failed to provide justice for his daughter. Tamar believed her father would allow her to marry her brother because Amnon and Tamar had different mothers. David complicated his family first by not following God's instructions recorded in the book of Deuteronomy 17:17 where God says to not have multiple wives. David did not obey God by being the husband of one wife which shows us the conflict that can arise when God's rules are not followed. Absalom and Tamar had the same parents while she and Amnon had the same father. Because of the closer familial bond, Absalom was the most determined to see justice for Tamar.

The text reveals that David was indeed angry with Amnon but did not issue any formal punishment. Absalom waited for two years before he took matters into his own hands. It is quite possible that David hesitated to punish Amnon out of guilt for his own transgressions with Bathsheba. Parents should not let their own guilt determine what is best for their children's upbringing. Parents frequently make decisions influenced by guilt over losing a job, getting a divorce, or to try to make up for an explosive temper. The tendency is to let them off the hook because we

have done something worse. The problem is the message you are teaching your child is that they can get away with sin. It also teaches the victim that they do not deserve justice. Imagine how Tamar felt knowing that her father the king, the only person with the power to help, just let it go. We have probably all seen cases where a parent pleads for their child to be shown leniency by the court after their child committed a horrible crime. Some of their plea comes from the deep love they have for the child, but some of it is coming from the guilt they feel in their own parental shortcomings.

LIVE IT OUT

One thing I have learned in parenting is that prolonging discipline is a mistake. It is a parenting error to wait too long after the bad behavior has occurred. It is also unhelpful to make the punishment last several days or weeks on the child. It is better for the punishment to be fast, so that healing can begin quickly. As my daughter gets older, I moved into grounding her as a form of punishment. Once she said to me, “Dad can’t you just spank me instead?” I asked her why she would choose a spanking instead of grounding and she said because then it is over with and I can go play. It is detrimental to let wrong behaviors go unpunished, but it is also wrong to issue a punishment that does not fit the crime. That prevents restoration and peace from returning to your family. David wanted his family to move on, but that was not possible without there being a consequence for Amnon’s sin. If you want to restore harmony to your home you must exercise discipline, but at the same time, be quick and decisive with discipline for everyone’s sake.

--Tim Campbell

Wednesday, October 3rd

IN THE WORD

Two Wrongs Do Not Make a Right

Read: 2 Samuel 13:37-39; 14:1-23

2 Samuel 14:28, And Absalom dwelt two full years in Jerusalem, but he did not see the King's face.

Joab was David's military general and advisor. He deserves the Oscar for best director. He knew the situation with David and Absalom was unhealthy. He also knew what David needed do. At the same time, he also knows it is not his place to say anything. Joab uses an actress to tell a family story that was very similar to the one David was dealing with personally. After dramatically telling her story she asks the king for help. David offers to protect her son and to make sure he gets to be with his mother. Joab wanted David to bring Absalom home, but he needed David to see that in his heart it was the right thing to do.

After Absalom took justice into his own hands and killed his half brother Amnon, he fled for fear of what his father might do to him. The text says that David was comforted by Amnon's death which shows the guilt he was feeling by his inaction. If you can recall from yesterday's reading that David allowed 2 years to go by with no punishment for Amnon. Now David has allowed 3 years to pass without making an effort to contact Absalom. Since Joab can see the toll this is taking on David, he convinces David to bring Absalom home. However, David then lets two more years go by without speaking to his son. Adding the time together shows us that David did not speak with Absalom in five years. David's first mistake was not exercising justice concerning Amnon. Then he does not exercise mercy concerning Absalom. In continuing to read the narrative we learn that Absalom rebels and leads a revolt against his Father. I cannot help but wonder if David handled the whole situation differently, Absalom would have submitted to his Father's reign.

LIVE IT OUT

We all know from experience that life is not fair. However, as parents we should try to be as fair as possible. I remember a friend saying that when she and her brother both wanted the last piece of pie, that her dad would make one of them cut it and the other got to pick first. That was one wise father! Our children should see that we strive to treat them equally in both our rewards and our punishments. Sometimes I will ask my children what they think is a fair punishment. They often say something easy because they want off the hook. After asking questions about how their sibling was punished for a similar indiscretion they usually they catch on and then they admit that they were trying to go easy on themselves. I want them to know that I take no pleasure in punishing them, but that I am trying to be fair. I will share times with them when I was punished and how I learned from that experience. Ask yourself if your punishment is too easy or too harsh and try to find a good balance. This way your child will sense your love and still learn a valuable lesson.

--Tim Campbell

Thursday, October 4th

IN THE WORD

Departing Words from an Aged Saint

Read: 1st Chronicles 28:1-8

1st Chronicles 28:9, As for you, my son Solomon, know the God of your father, and serve Him with a loyal heart and with a willing mind; for the LORD searches all hearts and understands all the intent of the thoughts. If you seek Him, He will be found by you; but if you forsake Him, He will cast you off forever.

God granted David favor and allowed him to witness for the first year of Solomon's reign before his death. This one verse was part of David's speech given

as preparation to Solomon's coronation. David is drawing from King Saul's experience when he says God will cast him off if he forsakes the LORD. Saul through disobedience lost the throne, despite his greatest efforts, and could not retain it. This account is similar to one we find during the Patriarchal period in Genesis with Esau. He gave up his birthright and even with all his tears, he could not undo what he had done (Hebrews 12:16). Likewise, Solomon did not heed his father David's advice and as a result God let Solomon know the kingdom would be divided after his death because of his sin (1st Kings 11:9-12). Thankfully, Solomon did learn before his life was over what truly matters and shared that wisdom in the book of Ecclesiastes.

The advice David gives Solomon is to have a loyal heart and a willing mind. Both of these things are necessary attributes for any leader, especially for a disciple of Christ. Jesus warned his disciples to not have a divided heart. He said that no man can serve two masters. Jesus even went on to say that a man putting his hand to the plow and looking back was not fit for kingdom work. David also points out to Solomon that he cannot sneak anything past God. Kings can hide their intentions from their subjects and even use deception as a political or military strategy. However, God sees all and knows all. Sometimes our good intentions are used to excuse mismanaged words or actions. We say, "I didn't intend for it to be taken like that" or "I never meant to be gone that long". We often think that if our intentions are good that bad behavior will be forgiven. We also think if our intentions are bad, none are the wiser. In either instance, we must remember that God is never fooled (Eccl. 12:13-14).

LIVE IT OUT

The best way to keep your intentions pure is to always seek the Lord. The Hebrew word for loyal is "shalem". It comes from the idea of uncut stones. This is the reason the temple used only uncut stones to show devotion to God (1 Kings 6:7). "Uncut" means undivided, which is a good example of single devotion to God. The Hebrew word for willing is "chaphets" which means to delight or find pleasure. David was telling Solomon that an undivided heart takes its greatest pleasure in God himself. When you go on a date, there is an eagerness to please the person who you are taking out. You try to think of a fun place to go and topics to discuss

that will make for great conversation. When we seek God we are trying to discover what is important to Him and what would be pleasing to Him. When we are pursuing Him in this way, our intentions improve in every area of our life. Keep God at the helm steering the ship of our soul. Make a point this week go on a date with God to discover He wants to see more of in your life.

--Tim Campbell



Friday, October 5th

IN THE WORD

Finding Joy In Chaos

1 Thessalonians 5:16-18

Do you ever struggle with feeling joyful when you are tired and constantly on the go? Between work, school, kids, ministries you are involved in, or whatever else you have piling up on your schedule, it can be hard to feel anything besides stress. It can be difficult to have joy when you are living in constant chaos. However, God wants so much for us than just running around barely staying afloat. Every day, God showers us with blessings, but we often miss them when we are too busy focusing on our busy schedules.

In order for us to find joy in all our circumstances, first, we need to pray and ask God to open our eyes to see all that He has blessed us with. Next, if we focus on finding things to thank God for we will start noticing that it is easier to be joyful. The Apostle Paul is a great example of having joy in any circumstance. Paul was joyful even while he was in prison. If Paul can have joy in his grueling circumstances, then we also can find joy in the midst of our chaos.

LIVE IT OUT

Take time today to thank God for giving you things and opportunities to keep you busy. Next, try and look for all the ways God blesses you just today. You will probably be surprised by the many blessings you receive that often go unnoticed.

--Kayla Ball

Saturday, October 6th

IN THE WORD

Dealing with Anxiety

1 Peter 5:6-7

Can you think of a time when you have felt anxious or worried? More than likely, you can recall many times where you have dealt with anxiety. In fact, some of you have probably dealt with these feelings just today. While some may struggle with it more than others, anxiety is a common thing that we all deal with at some point.

God knew that we would have run-ins with feelings of worry or anxiety which is why, in 1 Peter 5, He gives us direction on how to handle it. The first thing we are to do is humble ourselves before the Lord. We will never be able to handle our anxieties without first giving up our pride and realizing that we are inadequate of dealing with these feelings on our own. Next, we need to pray and ask God to help us give Him complete control over our worries and fears. Lastly, we must trust that God is powerful enough to help us overcome these burdensome feelings. God cares deeply for us and wants us to trust Him with all of our problems and fears whether they are big or small.

LIVE IT OUT

Take time today to thank God for caring enough about us that we can come to Him with all our troubles and worries. Whenever anxiety comes creeping into our minds, whether from stress at work or home or fear of what is to come, we can always depend on God to help us handle these feelings. Don't let pride be what keeps you from dealing with anxiety. God has called us to live our lives trusting that He can handle anything life throws at us.

--Kayla Ball

Sunday, October 7th

IN THE WORD

Standing Strong In Your Faith

Daniel 3:16-18

Think of a time when your faith has been tested. Did you stand strong in your faith or did you give in and allow the enemy to sway you otherwise? Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego had their faith put to the test when the King ordered them to bow down and worship the golden idol he had built. Even though their lives were at stake, they stood strong in their faith. They told King Nebuchadnezzar that God could save them from the fiery furnace, but **EVEN IF** He didn't they still would not give up their faith in the one true God.

They knew that God was all-powerful and could spare their lives. However, they also knew that God could choose not to save them, but that didn't matter to them. Their faith was so strong that they were willing to die for it.

It can be difficult to stand strong in our faith when the world is pushing us to do otherwise. Every day, the enemy is trying to find ways to make us turn away from God. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego proved that it is possible, even in the face of death, to stand firm in our beliefs and follow the one true King.

LIVE IT OUT

We must prayerfully seek God everyday so He can give us the strength to withstand the enemy. MercyMe has a popular song on the radio right now called “Even If” which describes perfectly what Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego went through and how God has the power to save us. Read carefully the lyrics to the chorus below and, if you are able, take time to listen to this song if you are unfamiliar with it.

“I know You’re able and I know You can
Save through the fire with Your mighty hand
But even if You don’t
My hope is You alone
I know the sorrow, and I know the hurt
Would all go away if You’d just say the word
But even if You don’t
My hope is You alone”
-MercyMe ‘Even If’

--Kayla Ball



Monday, October 8th

IN THE WORD

God Speaks – We Should Listen

I'm known for a loud voice and a boisterous laugh. I get people saying to me all the time that I talk too loud. Sharon constantly tells me to "quiet down!" I know that it can be distracting at times but so can just the busy schedules we keep in our jobs and activities. They get loud too don't they? More often than not we find ourselves consumed in the "noise" of our daily lives that our attention for spiritual things kind of get lost or delayed. We all need to quiet down some.

There is a special verse in the book of Psalms I've tried to use that helps me in this situation. Psalms 46:10 says, "Be Still and Know I am God." It's tough to find a way just to stop and be still. But this verse asks us to do that very thing. Stop, take a break, be quiet and meditate on the Lord Jesus. I've heard it said and better yet, experienced it myself that if I shut up – He will speak up! It might come in the running of water in a river while fishing with my boys. For you it could be the birds chirping in the tree, children laughing, the wind blowing, or in the best place, His Word that speaks directly to us.

God always has a "Word" for us. It's that notion or thought that just comes to mind to read your bible, make that phone call or visit, make plans to go to church, volunteer, give some money to one soliciting on the street. Think about itcan you think of something that happened today in thought, action or deed that you might now consider was God's way of getting your attention? I believe we miss so many opportunities to hear God speak due to our not becoming "Still." God does speak; just become still and listen!

LIVE IT OUT

Make time each day to let God speak to you by reading his Word.

Become still, close your eyes and just listen to the sounds of your surroundings –
Find God

--Richard Brooks

Tuesday, October 9th

IN THE WORD

NO GREATER JOY

Third John Verse 4

Family! I can relate to our study and series on Family Matters because it's just that - FAMILY MATTERS! I am a husband of twenty years and the father of two boys that together defines us as a family I strive everyday to provide the very best for them. I secured a home for their safety, a job that provides the finances to pay the bills, dependable transportation to get them to work, school and church. I try to meet every need that I can identify, whether it's a ball glove, hip clothes, Air Jordan basketball shoes, discussing teenage girl issues or how to deal with their mother. It's a tremendous responsibility and one that requires a great deal of attention. All of this is good and part of the make-up of a family unit. Though its sometimes challenging and sometimes uncertain most of the time it's fun and brings joy to me knowing they are happy.

However, I've learned there is a much greater joy that can be had. Proverbs 24:3 says, "Through wisdom is a house (or family) builded; and by understanding it is established." Providing the physical needs and wants of my family is a good thing but the most important NEED they have is to have a relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ! What matters is to be part of the family of God. I have tried in both word and deed to show my boys what living for the Lord is. As parents we are charged to bring up our children nurturing and counseling them in the ways of His

Word. Through our attempt to live for the Lord, taking them Sunday School and have them hearing Gods word taught in worship services; my boys have found that joy by accepting Christ as their savior. That matters!

As I enter my home each day I am greeted with a bible verse written over the entrance way to my living room that says: “ I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth.” (Third John 1:4) What is truth, I hope you might ask? Its Jesus! He said,” I am the way, the truth and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.” (John 14:6)

There is no greater joy that a family can ever experience than knowing Christ as Savior and Lord. Join me, have a Family that Mattersaccept Him! There is NO GREATER JOY!

LIVE IT OUT

Meet with your family at a time when your all together and share third John 1:4 and let them know how there is no greater joy in your mind or heart that could be better than knowing they have accepted Christ as Savior.

--Richard Brooks

Wednesday, October 10th

IN THE WORD

JOYFUL NOISE

PSALM 100

This is a Psalm of Praise! It's a call to come before him in Worship! Nothing could be more appropriate in my mind in bringing Worship to the Lord through SINGING! I smile when it reads Make a joyful NOISE unto the Lord. I can recall numerous times while singing, my voice produced what only could be described as a noise. Don't laugh, I have heard many of you at times and trust me, we could all improve! But the noise God is asking of us is that we in attitude “come before

his presence with singing"! It's a time to devote our lives together in service and obedience, acknowledging that "He is God, and He hath made us"that with our voices shouting our praise of Him, not in harmony of musical notes but of unity of heart loving Him. It says we are like sheep in a pasture who are cared for by the shepherd.

There is a call to come to his gates, this place of public worship with thankfulness and praise for who He is and remembering what He has done for us. Verse 5 says "The Lord is Good. We know that, so we should with thankful hearts express that joyfully before Him in unity of worship. I've learned He doesn't need me, I need Him. We should use this time to devote ourselves to His service and as best we can be expressing in song the glory that is due Him.

As we sing our praises and present our joyful noise we need again to remember as it says, His mercy is everlasting. God is so good; he provides mercy every day and in every situation. His truth and promises endureth to all generations. Let's depend on Him and be thankful for all He has done for us.

I believe that when we lift our voices in praise and thanksgiving whether in public worship or in the privacy of our own hearts, He takes that noise and makes it into perfect harmony and accepts it as worship unto Him. So, let us sing unto the Lord, make noise together and bless his name!

LIVE IT OUT

Dedicate each day to find time to sing or even hum unto the Lord a special song you have memorized. It could be Jesus Loves Me, or some traditional or contemporary song that you use to "MAKE A JOYFUL NOISE". And if you can't do that then you can always pick up your bible and read in one in the book of Psalms. I believe it will bless you.

--Richard Brooks



Thursday, October 11th

IN THE WORD

Blessed are the believers

Read Luke 1:39-45

When Mary travelled to be with Elizabeth in the early days of her pregnancy with Jesus, she no doubt was looking for comfort and understanding. I am sure she found these in her three-month stay with her elderly relative but in addition to Elizabeth's other words she spoke these words to Mary:

"And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what was spoken to her from the Lord." Luke 1:45

Not only for her, but for you and I, there is the enduring promise of blessing to those who believe. We as Christians often times have our struggles with belief. We also should not be shocked that those on the outside have a problem with belief is well. After all, the gospel asks us all to believe:

- God became a man
- Jesus was born of a virgin
- He lived a 100% perfect life
- He healed the sick, raised the dead and performed numerous miracles
- Even though He is God he was killed by man
- Even though He was dead he came back to life after 3 days
- He literally rose into the sky and now resides in heaven
- He will one day return to the earth He left

LIVE IT OUT

But believe we should and blessed we will be if we do. To believe requires a choice on our part to do so. To believe is to know and accept that He is at work and act accordingly! Are you looking for some blessings? Then believe!

--Jesse Waggoner

Friday, October 12th

IN THE WORD

Traveling?

Read Luke 2:41-52

Where are you traveling? Maybe you have trip or two planned, or perhaps you are committed to just staying home. No matter your plans, you are going to do some traveling, a lot of traveling. In fact you are on the move as you read this. Not so sure? Consider this: right now the earth is spinning on its axis with you on it, at a speed of about 800 miles per hour. It doesn't feel like you are moving because everything around you, above you and under you is moving at the same speed and direction as you. If that is not enough movement, consider this: the earth travels around the sun at a speed of about 67,000 miles per hour! You are going somewhere; you have no choice.

Spiritually it is the same, you are always moving. You are either making progress in your walk with God or you are digressing. Even Jesus is described as making progress; "And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men."(Luke 2:52) If He needed to make progress, we certainly do.

LIVE IT OUT

I hope you will join me in being committed to going in the right direction. You can insure this by being in the Word of God regularly – you also should be part of a church that teaches the Word in a way that touches life. These will help keep you between the lines as you navigate the road ahead.

--Jesse Waggoner

Saturday, October 13th

IN THE WORD

100 Year Journey to Joy

Read Psalm 16:1-11

She was nearing the century mark. Time had ravaged her body and robbed her of even the mobility to leave her tiny home. The silent thief of Alzheimer's disease had stolen the best part of her mind.

I knew from the often-repeated stories that she was an orphan, her mother dying in the process of giving birth. She was raised by friends of the family, never enjoyed the company of a brother or sister. She never married, never knew the companionship of a loving husband or the tender touch of a nursing baby. She never traveled, and she saw the ocean only once in her 100 years.

She was never able to finish high school as the need for an income outweighed the need for an education. She worked in a factory making shoes. She has no retirement, no savings and, apart from the family of church, no one to care for her. She survives on a small Social Security check and prayer.

In spite of a spotty memory and confusion, you would know that she has something money and achievement cannot purchase. Her spirit was one marked by an inner strength, a peace that goes beyond my ability to understand.

In spite of it all, she is content. In fact, she is joyful and thankful, rather than petty and bitter. She is always focused on what God has given her and not for a second

on what God chose for her to do without. Her only disappointment is that God has seen fit to leave her here so long when she wants to go home.

LIVE IT OUT

Why not take a few moments and take a look at the joy level of your life? Please do not confuse joy with happiness. The comings and goings of happiness are determined by the circumstances of this life. Joy is determined by our being in His presence and is independent of the circumstances of life.

--Jesse Waggoner

Sunday, October 14th

IN THE WORD

Graveside Words

Read John 11:20-27

Today, I stood beside an open grave. The casket had been placed over it awaiting the words I would say before it was lowered and covered and we all slowly walk away. Multiple sets of eyes look at me from the faces of grieving family and friends. Not one of them planned to be here until just a day or so ago, and it is really not a comfortable place for any of us to be. In the brief moment before the committal service begins, a brief flash of clarity forces its way into my thoughts.

I have nothing to say....

In spite of the fact that in multiple decades of pastoral ministry I have made this trip more times than I can recount and I have done my duty. However, I am starkly aware that my mind cannot manufacture words for such an occasion. Even without glancing down there is the comfortable reassuring feel of the leather cover of the book I hold in my hand. It is from this source that some measure of sense about the giving and losing of life can be gained. In its pages

there is a recipe for the tonic of hope; there is the healing serum that can heal a broken heart. What I have to offer a tear-filled widow, dazed children, and confused grandchildren must not come from one who is simply a participant in life but from the giver of life.

I run my fingers down the page to find the place where Jesus spoke as He approached the burial site of His friend Lazarus. I sense relief that what can be said and needs to be said has been granting comfort and hope for twenty centuries. I merely provide the vocal apparatus to give sound to the message from the One who conquered death; One who once occupied a grave and evacuated one as well; One who through His sacrifice opened the way to a permanent home on the other side. I read...

"I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live. "And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die." (John 11:25-26)

A few more words are spoken, a prayer is offered and the service is done. I close my Bible, I greet the family a final time, push my reading glasses into my suit pocket, walk among the previously filled graves and the ones yet to be used. I whisper a prayer of thanksgiving that because of Him, some day when someone stands beside my grave, I will live.

LIVE IT OUT

Give thanks today for the hope of the resurrection for your loved ones and for yourself when the time comes for you.

--Jesse Waggoner