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As iron sharpens iron, so one person sharpens another. Proverbs 27:17

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Words of Inspiration from Some People You May Have Heard Of

“Every moment is a fresh beginning.” – T.S. Eliot

“Nothing is impossible, the word itself says ‘I’m possible!’”
– Audrey Hepburn

“You can’t use up creativity. The more you use, the more you have.”
– Maya Angelou

“In the middle of a difficulty lies opportunity.” – Albert Einstein

“Start by doing what’s necessary; then do what’s possible; and suddenly you are doing the impossible.” – Francis of Assisi

“A journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step.”
– Confucius

“Look for something positive in each day, even if you have to look a little harder some days.” – Unknown

“We know what we are, but know not what we may be.”
– William Shakespeare

“I’ve missed more than 9000 shots in my career. I’ve lost almost 300 games. 26 times I’ve been trusted to take the game winning shot and missed. I’ve failed over and over and over again in my life. And that is why I succeed.”
– Michael Jordan

“Words to Grow By”

LINDA LEWIS, GMI DIRECTOR OF
COMMUNICATIONS

Joy in Expectancy

Remain expectant every day for God to bring to pass what you are believing for, no matter how long it takes. This is one of the things that will keep you flowing in joy. Don’t be discouraged. You’re almost there. What God is giving you requires preparation, focus, commitment and patience! Discouragement is the enemies favorite tool to use against you. He knows there is greatness inside of you. Kick the devil in the teeth! Don’t ever give up! And **always** remember, **The Joy of the Lord Is your strength!**
Nehemiah 8:10



Samuel BY PASTOR MIKE HERNANDEZ, CHURCH OF THE HARVEST

Every month this year Pastor Mike gives us a look at a different man of the Bible.

This month we are going to look at the life of the last Judge in Israel and that person's name was Samuel. However, instead of walking through his life, I want us to examine three moments in his life and see what we can learn from them.

Samuel was dedicated to the Lord from birth. His mom, Hannah, made a vow to God that if He would give her a son, that she would give that son back to Him. So once Samuel was weaned, Hannah brought him to the temple and gave him to Eli, the Priest, to raise (1 Samuel 1).

The first moment of Samuel's life we will examine happened when he was a child.

“Now the boy Samuel ministered to the Lord before Eli in those days; there was no widespread revelation.” - 1 Samuel 3:1.

One night when Samuel was sleeping, God called to him. However, because Samuel didn't know how to hear the Lord's voice yet, he thought Eli called him. This happened three times before Eli figured out that it was the Lord calling Samuel.

“Therefore Eli said to Samuel, ‘Go, lie down; and it shall be, if He calls you, that you must say, ‘Speak Lord, for Your servant hears.’ So Samuel went and lay down in his place. Now the Lord came and stood and called as at others times, ‘Samuel! Samuel! And Samuel answered, ‘speak, for your servant hears.’” - 1 Samuel 3:9-10

This is an important moment as Samuel is learning to hear the voice of the Lord. This is a moment we all must encounter. We all need to learn to hear the voice of the Lord. What I love about this moment is the simplicity of Eli's instructions. To hear from God, we must simply ask the Lord to speak and then listen!

In my many years of ministry, I have heard people say that they haven't heard from God. I always want to ask them if they are listening because what I have realized is that God is always speaking to us. In my own life, I have learned if I am not hearing from God, it's typically because I have sin in my life or I am not listening.

“But your iniquities have separated you from your God; and your sins have hidden His face from you so that He will not hear.” - Isaiah 59:2

Sin separates us from God so if we have sin, we need to confess and repent. If we have dealt with sin and still aren't hearing, it's typically because we aren't listening. God speaks to us in many different ways, but in my life, God speaks to me mainly through the Scriptures. This is why reading the Bible every day is critical to my relationship with God. If I'm not reading the Bible, I'm not listening to God.

We can also hear from God through prayer. I have never heard God's audible voice, but I recognize His voice in my thoughts and feelings. If my thoughts and feelings align themselves to Scripture, then I know they are from God. If my thoughts and feelings are contrary to Scripture, then I know they are not from God. God's voice always aligns with the Scripture, as they are His Words.

Samuel Cont.

Our attitude in our relationship with God should be like Samuel, “Speak Lord for your servant hears.”

The second moment of Samuel’s life we want to examine occurs after he has anointed Saul to be the first king of Israel. God, through Samuel, told Saul to destroy Amalek (1 Samuel 15:3). Instead of obeying God, Saul destroyed the people of Amalek, but kept the king and the best animals alive. At first, Saul thought he had obeyed God but when Samuel asked him about the animals, Saul blamed the people. Saul never took responsibility for his disobedience (1 Samuel 15:1-21).

“So Samuel said, ‘Has the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed than the fat of rams.’” - 1 Samuel 15:22

This verse and this moment tells us how important obedience is to God. God wants our obedience more than our sacrifices. A sacrifice in those days was either part of worship or part of the remittance of sins. Sometimes we think as long as we worship God in song or go to church, we can do whatever we want. That is not how God sees it. God gives us commands to obey, not advice to follow. This idea is not popular in our current culture, but the Bible gives us the “Ten Commandments” not the “Ten Suggestions”.

So how are you doing in obeying God? You are the only one who can answer that question. If you feel convicted by your disobedience, then repent and ask God to forgive you. He is faithful and just to forgive us of our sins, no matter the sin. Remember, obedience is better than sacrifice.

The final moment of Samuel’s life we will examine happened when he was sent by God to anoint a new king of Israel. When Samuel went to Bethlehem, he looked at Jesse’s oldest son and thought that he would be the next king of Israel.

“But the Lord said to Samuel, ‘Do not look at his appearance or at his physical stature, because I have refused him. For the Lord does not see as man sees, for man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart.’” - 1 Samuel 16:7

Have you ever been judged based on your appearance? We all have. Whether it is the color of your skin, your hairstyle, your clothes or your age, people make a judgment of you before they even talk to you. We encounter this all the time because people look at the outward appearance.

This is not the case with God! God looks at our hearts! God wants our hearts to be pure and clean. Once we ask for forgiveness and make Him the Lord of our lives, He doesn’t see our past. He doesn’t see our mistakes. He doesn’t see all the sin. He doesn’t label us based on our past. He is concerned with our hearts and He is concerned with our futures. Be encouraged, God doesn’t look at our appearance, but instead, He looks at our hearts!

So in looking at the life of Samuel, we learn that we need to ask God to speak to us and then listen, that obedience is better than sacrifice and finally, that God is more concerned about our hearts than our outward appearance. My prayer for you is that you will apply these lessons into your life and draw closer to God!

Forgiveness (Part One) BY BEVERLY BROWN, GMI VOLUNTEER/WRITER

Let's talk about something we hear preached and talked about so much it often becomes tedious to hear again. It has almost become mundane and its importance seemingly lessened.

But I assure you it is as important today as ever. I'm talking about forgiveness.

You might even think, "I don't need to read this because I don't have anyone I haven't forgiven."

Hopefully, what I say will be thought provoking for you.

Forgiveness is important for both Christians and non-Christians, because the principle is the same for both.



So why forgive?

The most important reason is how it affects you.

Unforgiveness leads to resentment. Resentment leads to bitterness. Bitterness leads to hatred. Hatred ends up destroying us. It eats us up inside.

It can become your whole focus in life. When you hold unforgiveness toward someone, it can affect how you deal with everything in life.

It colors every thought and action, often causing you to miss out on the happiness and blessings around you. Even things not related to the person or incident. It filters responses.

Someone might ask a simple question or make an innocent remark, and you find yourself lashing out at them because there is an underlying sense of anger caused by unforgiveness.

Unforgiveness, bitterness and hatred can and sometimes does manifest in you physically.

In contrast, forgiveness gives you peace, while improving your spiritual, emotional and, many times, physical well-being.

When you forgive, a weight feels as if it's been lifted off your shoulders.

It releases you from the hold that person and their actions have over you. It benefits not only you, but those you love as well.

If forgiveness is so beneficial then what are some reasons we don't or won't forgive?

One reason is you may think the person does not deserve to be forgiven. And in the natural sense, that may be true.

Sometimes you have the idea that to forgive them means condoning what they did. In your mind, it feels like you excuse whatever it was. This is not the case.

Remember, forgiving them benefits you more than it does them. Because you forgive them does not mean you accept or condone what they did. It just means you are not going to let them and whatever they did control you and your thoughts and emotions anymore.

As Christians, we don't deserve for Christ to forgive us but He does. The Bible states that if we confess our sins, He is faithful to forgive us of our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness. Now understand, this does not automatically mean there will be no consequences for our sins. Sometimes there are still consequences even though forgiveness has already taken place. It is important to receive Christ's forgiveness. And forgive yourself. Forgiving yourself might be one of the hardest things you can do.

How does one achieve forgiving others? We will address this in next month's article.

Each day is a gift. Don't waste today with unforgiveness and bitterness.

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From the Yard: Words of Inspiration from Your Brothers and Sisters Who Are Still Incarcerated

Show Me How to Live

By Christina B. – Topeka Correctional Facility

Father, I need you to WALK closely beside me
 Lead me, direct and guide me
 Teach me how to live my life
 And how to ravel along successfully
 Stepping into blessings and avoiding the curses
 How do I live for you? The way you want me to?
 I've lived my life contrary to your word
 And now I need your help to live the opposite way



I can't do this alone
 Please don't leave me on my own
 By everyone else, I have been abandoned
 And I've wandered far away from home
 I can't get the past to accept me back
 My whole life has fallen through the cracks
 All my happiness is gone

And I can barely carry on
 Please reach down and fix my heart
 It is wicked to the core
 Poisoned and rebellious
 Shattered, ripped and torn
 I have nothing left to offer
 Nothing more to give
 God shed your light upon me
 And show me how to live

"Amen"

Women Empowering Women

We have a new section that we will feature each month called "Women Empowering Women". It was inspired by the new addition of readers at Topeka Correction Facility for Women. Our Communications Director, Linda Lewis, was led to share monthly words of inspiration for our female readers. Here we go...

Today's food for thought:

Girls compete with one another.
Women empower other women.

When women support one another,
Incredible things can happen.

So today:
Be yourself
Accept yourself
Value yourself
Forgive yourself
Bless yourself
Express yourself
Trust yourself
Love yourself
Empower yourself

Then and only then can you become women empowering women! *1 Thessalonians 5:11*



Write Us

We would love to hear from you. If you have a testimony, a prayer request or a question about your walk with the Lord, send us a letter. We would love to pray or rejoice with you.

Maybe you are a writer and you have a spiritual word of encouragement for the readers of our newsletter. We would love to review your article to see if we can use it in our newsletter. We also like to share poems from the more artistic saints.

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A Little Humor



Word Search

Twelve Disciples

P	B	R	S	E	P	N	N	S	S	A	D	U	J
H	A	O	O	I	E	O	I	P	N	I	P	O	L
I	H	M	A	S	T	M	R	T	I	P	H	M	T
L	E	M	T	T	E	I	E	W	F	N	P	H	T
I	M	W	H	A	R	S	Y	I	E	H	M	H	E
P	A	E	O	G	D	I	S	C	I	P	L	E	S
F	T	R	M	E	A	H	H	S	T	F	O	P	E
O	T	D	A	T	E	L	E	S	N	E	R	H	S
L	H	N	S	R	I	H	I	A	C	A	H	L	S
L	E	A	M	H	Y	C	L	L	Y	S	N	E	A
O	W	E	C	H	U	A	L	E	E	I	T	L	H
W	N	E	L	A	H	E	R	M	A	E	N	C	R
J	J	A	M	E	S	T	N	E	T	S	E	T	P
H	H	A	E	H	M	S	N	H	H	T	A	H	E

- PRAYER
- DISCIPLES
- ANDREW
- PHILIP
- FISHERMEN
- GALILEE
- BOAT
- TEACH
- MATTHEW
- NETS
- JOHN
- THOMAS
- JAMES
- JUDAS
- FOLLOW
- SIMON
- PETER

Closing Words LONNIE JOHNSON, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, GROWTH MINISTRIES INC

What's on your mind?

The mind is one of the great mysteries of the world. It is capable of receiving, maintaining and responding to unlimited thoughts several times a day. It is the center of our being. It is in our head that we make all our decisions about life. What do I wear today? What do I eat? What route will I take to work? The mind is a key element to our heart (soul) along with our emotions and our will. The things we allow into our "heart" affect what we think about, what decisions we make and how we feel about life.

So what do you allow into your mind? What do you listen to? What do you read? What do you watch? What do you daydream about? What are some of your daily goals? What do you desire? What influences you?

There was a time in my life when all my reasoning, actions and thoughts were controlled completely by what my flesh wanted. Even after salvation we can still be driven by ungodly forces or desires. Today we have to look to the Lord to show us what we need to be focused on. The bible says in **Proverbs 23:7** "**For as a man thinketh in his heart so is he...**" What we think about the most will drive who we become. The bible also gives us examples of some of the things we should be thinking about in **Philippians 4:8** "**Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.**"

When those old thoughts of lust, hatred, mischief, deceit, foolishness, shenanigans and other ungodliness enter into our thoughts we have to renounce them. Focus on something good. Think about a loved one that you care about or maybe think about your favorite verse. Be sure to tell the devil that you are covered by the blood of Jesus today and those thoughts no longer have a place in your life. You can command that those thoughts leave your mind by the authority of the Name of Jesus and the Power of the Holy Spirit. The bible tells us to protect that region where our mind resides. **Proverbs 4:23** "**Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it.**"

What must I do to be saved?

If you have never accepted Christ as your Lord and Savior, or if you have turned away from Him living a life of unrighteousness and wish to be connected to Him, then take a moment and say this prayer.

"Lord, I confess that I am a sinner and ask for your forgiveness. I believe that your son Jesus died on the cross for my sins and was resurrected with all power. I invite Jesus to be the Lord of my life and your Holy Spirit to come into my heart to guide me for the rest of my days. Amen."

Romans 10:9 says that *if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.*

If this is you, please write Growth Ministries and we will gladly help you start your new life in Christ.

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