

Planning Ahead!

Business Meeting: Today at 4:00 p. m.
7th Annual Ladies' Day: just 2 weeks away! Saturday, January 30
25th Annual "Last-Saturday-in-February" meeting: just 6 weeks away! Saturday, February 27.

January Birthdays

5 John Aguiar 14 Juanita Small

January Anniversaries

8 Bob & Debbie Pescador

Read through the Bible in 2016!

(Submitted by Mike McKnight)

Each weekly bulletin for the next twelve months will include suggested chapters to read so that we might read through the entire Bible during 2016.! **This week's "schedule":**

- **Day 18** - Genesis 19-21 Monday
- **Day 19** - Genesis 22-24 Tuesday
- **Day 20** - Genesis 25-26 Wednesday
- **Day 21** - Genesis 27-29 Thursday
- **Day 22** - Genesis 30-31 Friday
- **Day 23** - Genesis 32-34 Saturday
- **Day 24** - Genesis 35-37 Sunday

Regular Meeting Times

Sunday.....9:45 a.m.
Sunday.....10:45 a.m.
Sunday.....6:00 p.m.
Wednesday.....7:00 p.m.

Preacher:
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Daily Devotionals?

By Mike McKnight

How do you start your day? Are you like me...the alarm clock goes off and in a semiconscious state you stumble out of bed? Does the warm water of the shower help bring you to your senses and then it hits you that you have only so much time to get things together and get out the door? How do you end your evenings? After dinner, do you get things cleaned up and then joyfully head for the couch, turn on the TV and allow yourself some much deserved down time because the day's events have been overwhelming? And let's not even talk about how busy our days can be, where every second seems to be committed to an over-scheduled agenda by a demanding boss, kids and social pressures laying out an unattainable standard, saying your life has to look a certain way or else you should be very unhappy. (Do you remember that old commercial, "... Calgon, take me away ..."?)

This might not sound like you or your life, but I bet that you can at least relate a little bit. The reason I mention this is because I want to ask you a question...where do you fit God into your day? Hopefully you are disciplined and have committed to a schedule where "God is penciled in" and that spending quality time with Him is a priority. After asking this question over the years to brethren who need help with issues of faith, the answer more times than not is that God cannot be found in their "Day Planner".

So let's talk "devotionals". Honestly, I can't say that I really like the term "devotional", if for no other reason than it was a term that started out some years back being used by mainstream religious groups. Not that I am better than anyone else...it's just that I have a problem with jumping on anyone else's band wagon when it comes to the Lord. For example, when the "W.W.J.D." ("what would Jesus do?") wrist bands were so popular a few years back, I experienced a streak of cynicism whenever the topic was brought up. The funny thing about it is that the message is a good message. We need to be examining every facet of our lives asking that very question.

How have I seen my Savior respond to me in my life? What has been revealed to me in the Bible that provides me with a clear understanding of His character and standards for living that I can follow? Asking ourselves, "What Would Jesus Do?" is exactly what He wants us to ask, yet because it was put on a wrist band, it's hard for me to accept.

It is the same with the term "devotional." Why not just say study, or meditate, pray or dedicate time to drawing closer to our Lord? When it comes right down to it, that is what a devotional is supposed to be...time devoted to growing closer to God. So, for the rest of this article, I will use this term, even though I find myself stubborn about it.

So let's talk "devotionals". Do we do them? Are they part of our daily routine? Whether we're a morning person or a night owl, do we make time to draw closer to the Lord in study, prayer and meditation? While there are many rewards to implementing a daily devotion, I believe there are three key benefits to enhancing our spiritual growth by participating in them.

First, when we establish the habit of spending time in God's Word each day, we gain direction to make the right choices. In Psalm 25 the writer asks for instruction and guidance to know God's ways.

- 4 *"Make me know Your ways, O Lord; Teach me Your paths.*
- 5 *Lead me in Your truth and teach me, For You are the God of my salvation; For You I wait all the day."*

Listen to David's request, "make me", "teach me", "lead me"; "for You I wait all the day." David is asking God to show him how he can know all of His ways. This should be our desire as well and we need to acknowledge that the only way to accomplish this is to devote time each day in His word, meditating on scriptures and asking God for guidance.

Second, spending time in God's Word provides us endurance to continue in God's ways. The Hebrew writer encourages us in chapter 12 to "fix our eyes on Jesus" so that "we will run with endurance":

- 1 *Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us,*
- 2 *fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.*

Committing to a daily devotional redirects our minds and hearts towards our Savior. We need this; we need this so badly, especially when we consider that we live in a world 'jam packed with sin'. Don't get me wrong, there is never ending beauty to be found in this world that reveals our Creator's love, wisdom, power and authority. However, satan is present here also and he rules many hearts. We are constantly being subjected to temptation, witnessing the horrific events brought on by sin. If nothing else, we must acknowledge that evil is ever present and continual. We must stay vigilant to keeping our faith ever strong! A scheduled daily "devotional" is Faith Strength Training for the Christian. It builds us up and gives us the ability to withstand temptation, allowing us to "run the race of faith" with endurance.

Third, setting aside time for daily devotion increases our desire to be like Christ. In John 17:17, Christ prays that His disciples be sanctified by the truth...to be separated unto God through the knowledge of His truth. In Romans 12:2, Paul urges brethren to be "transformed by the renewing of your mind" and that renewing can only come from devoting time to God. In Ephesians 5, Paul instructs us to be imitators and followers:

- 1 *"Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children;*
- 2 *and walk in love, just as Christ also loved you and gave Himself up for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God as a fragrant aroma."*

The only way that we can become like our heavenly father or walk in the footsteps of our beloved Savior is to focus on what He has given us. A portion of His Spirit can only be found in His word, His holy scriptures.

Study, prayer, meditation...we cannot have a healthy, productive faith without them. So, how is my relationship with God? Do I want to be closer to the One who loves me and has given me everything? Let's devote ourselves to Him everyday in a way that is profitable for us and those whom we love.