

The Challenge To Make A Difference

August 1

"I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called." Eph. 4:1

When have you stopped to give thanks for your career? Your career places you in an elite group that states what you choose to do for earning a livelihood. You expect your career to pay your bills, provide for family responsibilities and provide a certain standard of living. You probably also expect your career to provide certain less-tangible rewards as titles and social standing.

PREVIEW

Do you have a **calling**? Consistent with the way most people hear this term, a calling involves a clear sense of being commissioned by God for a task. It is your pursuit of the sovereignty of God concerning who you are and what you are doing with your life. It is the sense that God's hand is on you and he has genuine pleasure in what you are doing.

The real secret to fulfillment in one's life is to have career and calling merged together. I believe God has given you an opportunity to make a difference in the world. I am convinced God wants you to *change* the world and see your job, business or profession as an extension of the kingdom of heaven.

INNERVIEW

The sense that one's career is also a holy calling should not startle us. If slaves-become-Christians were counseled to "render service with enthusiasm, as to the Lord and not to men and women, knowing that whatever good we do, we will receive the same again from the Lord" (Ephesians 6:7-8), then surely you are

supposed to be the best employee or employer the Acme Widget Company has ever seen. If not, why not?

Above paycheck or promotion, do something that contributes to the good of your world. Let your routine tasks reflect the character and excellence heaven is building into your life. Understand that your work is inseparable from your spiritual life and reflects its authenticity. When your faith cleanses and consecrates your workplace to God, you have found a calling larger than your career.

REVIEW

Paul refers in Ephesians 4:1, "I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye, walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called". First, he states that he is in Nero's prison, but he is not Nero's prisoner. He is a prisoner of the Lord. He further states, because of this, he is expected to walk worthy of his vocation. What is his vocation? It is using who you are and what you do to help transform lives to the Glory of God. Your job is where you work to provide payment for bills and be able to participate in your vocation.

Solomon put it this way: "There is nothing better for mortals than to eat and drink, and find enjoyment in their work. This, I saw, is from the hand of God; for apart from him who can eat or who can have enjoyment?" (Ecclesiastes 2:24-25).

How will you change the world today? God is ready to be your partner.

Daily Sunshine In The Son

Praise God For: His joy

Thank God For: those who encourage others

Ask God's Forgiveness For: missed chances to bless

Ask God To Help: bus riders and car commuters during the winter

Ask God To Supply Our Need For: boldness to witness for him

DIGGING DEEPER AND REACHING HIGHER:

Have you considered ways to spur someone toward love and good deeds? Write down a plan of action and follow through with it!

Journal for Digging Deeper:

Lord, today I thank You for:

Thank You for these answers to prayer:

I pray for the needs of others, especially

Today, Lord, I need

The Promise To Remember A Kindness

August 2

"But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light." 1Peter :9

"I'll never forget what you've done for me! It has made all the difference, and if I ever get the chance to repay your kindness . . ."

Have you ever this statement to a surgeon, attorney, teacher or mentor? Perhaps you expressed that sentiment to someone who was your tenth-grade best friend or college roommate. Maybe it was your mother, father, sister or brother. I suspect we have all made those sincere declarations.

PREVIEW

But here's the tough question: *Have you carried through?* The emotional expression of gratitude for kindness is easier than remembering to pay back or perhaps to pass along similar goodwill when circumstances change.

In 1867, Columbia, South Carolina, was trying to recover after the devastation of the Civil War. The New York Firemen's Association learned the city was still using bucket brigades to fight fires. So New Yorkers raised money to buy Columbia a fire wagon. When it was lost during shipment, the same people took up yet another collection and sent a second one.

INNERVIEW

City officials spoke with one voice to thank New York for its gift and vowed never to forget so great a kindness. A former Confederate, Col.

Samuel Melton was so dumbfounded by the generosity of men who had only a few years earlier served in the Union Army, that he spoke on behalf of South Carolina's capital city and promised to return the favor "should misfortune ever befall the Empire City."

In the aftermath of September 11, students at White Knoll Middle School led a drive to raise the \$354,000 necessary to replace one of the fire trucks lost that day. Spurred on by the historical anecdote just related, the South Carolina Remembers Fund received a total of \$510,000.

REVIEW

During the Macy's Thanksgiving Day parade in New York in 2001, four students made good on Columbia's 134-year-old promise. "When we presented the check of \$354,000 to Mayor Giuliani," said Staci Smith, "he had the biggest smile on his face." The extra money will be used to upgrade the truck or to buy other firefighting equipment needed by the New York Fire Department.

Spend a few minutes today reviewing your personal life history for any outstanding debts you owe persons for kindnesses received. If something specific comes to mind, let the story of some middle-school children remind you to carry through in some practical way with your promise never to forget.

Daily Sunshine In The Son

Praise God For: His strength

Thank God For: friends I have been able to bless

Ask God's Forgiveness For: not helping when I could have

Ask God To Help: the blind and deaf

Ask God To Supply Our Need For: someone to assist

Thank You for these answers to prayer:

DIGGING DEEPER AND REACHING HIGHER:

Choose a Psalm and sing it to your own melody as an offering of worship to the Lord. Write down ways in which worshipping with other believers encourages you. Share your thoughts with someone this week.

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I pray for the needs of others, especially

Journal for Digging Deeper:

Lord, today I thank You for:

Today, Lord, I need

Why Bossing Isn't A Blessing

August 3

"Care about each other as much as you care about yourselves."-Philippians 2:4a (LB)

"I'll show 'em who the boss is!" he said. Thus, began a process that angered each person in the sales group. It also led to the resignation within thirty days of the first- and fourth-highest annual producers for last year.

"I hope he's satisfied now," said one of the team members who stayed — only because of a tough employment market in her field. "He proved he could have the last word on everything. He also cost us the biggest accounts our company has had for years and placed the remaining employees in an impossible situation for this year's bottom line. We're all looking for ways to get off this sinking ship."

PREVIEW

Sound familiar? Have you ever dealt with a similar situation? The unpleasant reality is insecure and/or selfish people just do not make good leaders. Whether in business, family or church situations, the rise of a woman or man to a position of authority means trouble for everyone in the group. The reason why this is true seems obvious: *Most people seem to understand power in terms of the right to boss, browbeat and bully others.*

INNERVIEW

People with a deficient concept of leadership have a tendency to put distance between themselves and their group. They worry about "image. Most of them are big on intimidation tactics. They are stingy with praise and

generous with criticism. In their own words, they like to "keep people guessing" about what comes next. There tends to be much turnover in businesses, divorces in families and divisions in churches operating with this style management.

Occasionally you learn about an environment that operates by a different set of leadership principles. You are sometimes fortunate enough to teach at a school or work for that person. People feel empowered rather than micromanaged. They sense trust rather than suspicion. They are treated with respect rather than contempt and condescension. In these environments, they both thrive at their tasks and remain intensely loyal to their leaders.

REVIEW

Today much is said concerning value-driven leadership, servant leadership, or spiritual economics. Whatever we call it, it is simply the modern re-discovery of the Golden Rule and the leadership style of Jesus. "The Son of Man came not to be served but to serve," he said (Mark 10:45).

If you want to upgrade your environment, learn to use the power you wield for **blessing** instead of **bossing** . This strategy honors both God and others.

Praise God For: His kindness
Thank God For: the world's givers

Daily Sunshine In The Son

Ask God's Forgiveness For: being more of a taker

Ask God To Help: cab and bus drivers

Ask God To Supply Our Need For: strength to help others

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DIGGING DEEPER AND REACHING HIGHER:

Have you contacted someone whom God has put on your heart? Have you been an encouragement to people just as you have been encouraged by God and others?

I pray for the needs of others, especially

Journal for Digging Deeper:

Today, Lord, I need

Lord, today I thank You for:

Making The Ordinary Extraordinary

August 4

"Simply let your "Yes be Yes and your No be No." -Matthew 5:37 (LB)

It is hard to believe, but it is true. *The food is so-o-o-o- delicious in an Oregon school's cafeteria that teachers, staff members and even U.S. Forest Service employees dine-in and place takeout orders daily.*

PREVIEW

Hey, I remember the meals served in *my* school's cafeteria. Friday's menu was always fish sticks. Ketchup was the favorite vegetable at the table where my buddies and I ate. We always laughed about "mystery meat." The mashed potatoes were made from powder rather than real spuds. Hotdogs were always considered a gourmet treat when served.

So why is food service different for students in the McKenzie School District? Bernadette Fleischer, a gourmet restaurant chef, began working for the school district after her restaurant burned in 1993. Food service funds are maintained separate from the district's overall budget. Ms. Fleischer generates extra funds to food service by preparing dinner entrees for purchase once a week therefore providing staff members, teachers, and parents a break from their kitchens.

INNERVIEW

"This week I had orders for thirteen lasagnas," she told a reporter last week. "A big one costs \$10, and we sell a smaller one for \$6. It helps make enough money to pay wages and benefits for the people who work in the kitchen."

Ms. Fleischer reminds me of people I've known who make life better for others by using their special gifts. A woman who is a talented artist paints murals throughout the hallways of her third-grader's school. A musician-father contacts his buddies for a benefit concert to provide new uniforms for the marching band at his daughter's high school. A man who manages an electrical supply store gives his time, skill and donates fixtures to replace the outdated light fixtures in his church's meetinghouse.

REVIEW

After Ms. Fleischer's restaurant burned, she had an option to feel sorry for herself. However, she put her gift to work in an unlikely setting, for an audience that could appreciate her expertise. The result speaks for itself.

Stores, offices, dens, playrooms, nurseries and classrooms are fairly predictable and ordinary. Then a creative soul comes and places his special talents to work. The ordinary suddenly becomes extraordinary.

Look around. Think outside the box. Don't wait to be asked if there is something within your power that could turn the routine into the spectacular?

Daily Sunshine In The Son

Praise God For: His love

Thank God For: daily blessings

Ask God's Forgiveness For: taking His blessings for granted

Ask God To Help: enemies forgive

Ask God To Supply Our Need For: His love for mankind

Thank You for these answers to prayer:

DIGGING DEEPER AND REACHING HIGHER:

Have you reached out to others for support as you strive toward you personal and spiritual goals? Can you encourage someone else who is trying to achieve victory? Choose who it will be.

Journal for Digging Deeper:

I pray for the needs of others, especially

Lord, today I thank You for:

Today, Lord, I need

An Act of Encouragement In A Crisis

August 5

"If God is for us, who can be against us?"-Rom 8:31 NIV).

Bernie Williams has played with the New York Yankees since 1991, and that's longer than any other player on the fabled baseball team's current roster. The switch-hitting center fielder plays his defensive position gracefully to chase what appears to the world as base hits and he suddenly turns them into fly-ball outs.

PREVIEW

Bernie steps to the home plate with a piece of lumber in his strong hands. On any given pitch, he can crush an opposing pitcher's best offering into the seats of Yankee Stadium or any other ballpark in the major leagues. In Game 5 of the 2001 American League Championship Series, he swung at a fastball and catapulted it into left-center field for a two-run homer in a 12-3 win over the Seattle Mariners, placing the Yankees into the World Series.

I mentioned Bernie's name because even if you are a baseball or Yankee-hater, you will enjoy this story. In the midst of the death, heartache and tears of New York City after the events of Sept.11, Yankee manager Joe Torre carried some of his players to a National Guard Armory where families of the missing persons were supplying materials to make possible DNA identification.

INNERVIEW

"We didn't know how we'd be received, so we waited outside the armory in a van and had someone give us a feel of when to enter," Torre said. "All of a sudden the people looked up and

opened their arms to us. The most touching moment was when Bernie (Williams) went up to one woman and said, 'I don't know what to say, but you look like you need a hug.' And he hugged her."

You're right. Bernie Williams probably wasn't at risk for that hug, but you might be in today's workplace. Sexual harassment is sometimes imagined and often real. But there are other ways to acknowledge and affirm our brothers and sisters in the human family. Handshakes, high-fives, memos, just a simple "Thank you," or a sincere "Can I help?" will do. *There's not one of us who doesn't need the rest of us.*

REVIEW

Playing professional baseball must be fun. Getting a game-winning hit has to be exhilarating. Encouraging and comforting fellow-strugglers is sacred.

You may see someone today whose heart needs a lift; hug your mate or high-five a buddy. Welcome the new person. It will be a spiritual moment for both of you.

Daily Sunshine In The Son

Praise God For: His sacrifice for us
Thank God For: the perfect gift
Ask God's Forgiveness For: my selfishness
Ask God To Help: friends put friends above self
Ask God To Supply Our Need For: self-denial

Thank You for these answers to prayer:

DIGGING DEEPER AND REACHING HIGHER:
What does it mean that God "sanctifies" you? Describe ways in which you see His peaceful work of sanctification in your life.

Journal for Digging Deeper:

I pray for the needs of others, especially

Lord, today I thank You for:

Today, Lord, I need

When Lost Things Cannot Be Recovered

August 6

“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” -1Jno 1:9

There is always something special about receiving a personal item, heirloom, keepsake or treasured souvenir that was lost. There is a sense of relief. There is the joy of having things restored to normalcy.

PREVIEW

Bill Murphy of Avon Park, Florida, had such an experience recently. During a camping trip 26 years ago, Bill lost his size 15 high school class ring. His wife, Jill, was able to give it back to him on their 21st wedding anniversary.

The story begins with Ron and Terry Stewart of Oliver Springs, Tennessee purchasing a campground. Ron, who likes to tromp around with a metal detector, was indulging his hobby on their new property. One day as he swept the ground, his metal detector signaled a find. As he dug around in the soil, he found a ring with Avon Park Red Devil, Class of 1975. The ring bore the initials W.L.M.

INNERVIEW

Ron and Terry searched to find its owner. A bit of research located the school, and they e-mailed the high school, located 65 miles south of Orlando. The person who received their inquiry checked the school yearbook for 1975, found a photo of William L. (Bill) Murphy, and consulted with another teacher about the possibility that the class ring just might belong to him.

The other teacher was Jill Murphy, Bill's wife, who just happens to be the swim coach at Avon Park High School. She confirmed the ring belonged to her husband. Bill had indeed lost his ring shortly after receiving it. He had always known he lost it on a camping trip to Tennessee, but he had given up any hope of ever seeing it again.

With its owner identified, the Stewarts mailed the ring to Jill Murphy at the school. She kept everything a secret, however, until October 12, 2001, their 21st anniversary. On that day, she gave her husband a very special surprise by placing the ring on his hand.

REVIEW

According to Jill, her husband was "stunned" when he opened the box and saw its content. Now there is a sense of relief and a sense of delight.

While you and I smile at Bill Murphy's good fortune, perhaps we should reflect on how uncommon it is to have lost items returned. Rather than seeing this story as a promise of so unlikely an outcome, maybe it should remind us to be extra careful with things we know have great value such as personal integrity, a friend's trust, a child's respect, your family's love or your immortal soul.

Guard such holy things because once trifled with, they seldom can be retrieved.

Daily Sunshine In The Son

Praise God For: His patience

Thank God For: wise teachers

Ask God's Forgiveness For: not acknowledging to self my weaknesses

Ask God To Help: patch differences between friends

Ask God To Supply Our Need For: courage to confess faults

DIGGING DEEPER AND REACHING HIGHER:

What ineffective weapons of this world are you using to fight a spiritual battle? Consider writing your own prayer incorporating the pieces of God's full armor as described in Ephesians 6:10-18. Commit to praying it daily. Journal what happens.

Lord, today I thank You for:

Journal for Digging Deeper:

Thank You for these answers to prayer:

Today, Lord, I need

I pray for the needs of others, especially

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When Honesty Is Tested

August 7

"I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well. -Psalms 139:14

Ascension Franco Gonzales was sitting alone last Monday night, by a Los Angeles bus stop. As an armored truck passed, Gonzales saw a clear plastic bag tumble onto the street.. The guards riding inside the armored truck were totally unaware that part of their load had fallen.

PREVIEW

Mr. Gonzales looked and saw bundles of \$20 bills. He ran into the street and recovered the clear bag and the loose bundles of \$20 bills. The 22-year-old man actually feared for his life thinking someone would see him with the clear bag and kill him for its contents! Gonzales began walking and looking through trash cans for something opaque enough to cover the bag of money.

With the money concealed in a sack, he took a taxi home. He told eight of his friends what had happened and they tried to help him decide what to do. Gonzales, after all, is not a wealthy man. He makes \$1,300 per month washing dishes and sends \$800 each month to his family in Mexico. He is an undocumented immigrant living in the United States whose money has been used by his family to pay for an indoor toilet and a cousin's funeral.

INNERVIEW

In the meantime, the armored truck company discovered \$203,000 cash money was missing. Police began a fruitless search. The possibility

of an inside job at the company was being discussed. There were no clues that would have reasonably led to Mr. Gonzales having the money.

"Are you going to keep it?" asked his friends, "Are you going to return it?" Gonzales wrestled with the question. On Tuesday morning, the TV news broadcasted a story about the missing money. This is the part of the report that Gonzales remembers most vividly: The announcer asked, "Is there anyone in Los Angeles honest enough to hand in so much money."

REVIEW

Around 11:00 a.m. Gonzales called the police. Officers came quickly and counted the cash, finding all the money there. "I am surprised and pleased," said a detective. What a sad commentary that such honesty astounds us.

Question: *What would you have done?* More important question: *What do you do with company postage, office long distance, petty cash, or other items at your disposal each day?* The real test of honesty is in the little things of life.

Good character isn't *created* in moments of crisis or novel opportunity, just *revealed*. And honesty, like all virtues, is a habit learned through practice.

Daily Sunshine In The Son

Praise God For: salvation

Thank God For: losing His life for me

Ask God's Forgiveness For: embracing the wrong things

Ask God To Help: the fearful let go

Ask God To Supply Our Need For: surrendered lives

Journal for Digging Deeper:

DIGGING DEEPER AND REACHING HIGHER:

Have you seen God's divine power demolish strongholds in your life? Write about your greatest need and ask God to do His supernatural work within .

Lord, today I thank You for:

I pray for the needs of others, especially

Thank You for these answers to prayer:

Today, Lord, I need

An Unread Love Letter

August 8

“So then, each of us will give an account of himself to God” - (Romans 14:12)

James Bracy wrote his wife a love letter, and she received it a few days ago. Nothing unusual about that, you say? What if I add the fact that it was written 46 years ago? As you might expect, there is more to this story!!!

PREVIEW

In 1955, Mr. Bracy was stationed in California with the U.S. Army. He wrote Sallie Bracy at her parents' home in Virginia. He placed the required six cents of postage on his letter and mailed it at the post office. His letter was found last month by a construction crew in the process of dismantling the old building. It apparently fell between two walls in the mail room and remained there undiscovered for all these years.

Was Mrs. Bracy disinterested because so much time had passed? “No! If anything” she said, “it means more to her now than when he wrote it so long ago.” What if we felt that way about heaven's "love letter" to us?

INNERVIEW

During National Bible Week in 1998, Jay Leno did one of his occasional on-the-street interviews. "Can you name one of the Ten Commandments?" he asked. "God helps those who help themselves?" offered someone. "Freedom of speech?" guessed another.

"Name one of the apostles," Leno challenged his audience. They couldn't come up with even one. Then he asked if they could name the

Beatles, and with one voice they shouted, "George, Paul, John, and Ringo!" Recent surveys indicate that biblical illiteracy isn't uncommon in America. One survey has 12% saying Noah was married to Joan of Arc. Another revealed that only 42% of those quizzed could identify who preached the Sermon on the Mount.

REVIEW

Is it because the Bible is such an ancient document? Is it because we have a mistaken notion of what we'd find there? Are we just too busy to read or study?

Sallie Bracy cherishes her husband's four-page letter from 46 years ago. It is more precious than anything in her scrapbook because of the unusual and circuitous route by which it reached her. I feel something similar to that about my Bible. Yes, it was first written a long time ago, however it has survived centuries against the determined efforts of many to destroy it. Then, when I finally pick it up to read, I discover it tells a love story that involves you and me.

If time with the Holy Scripture is not part of your routine, may I suggest you begin with the Gospel of John? I think you'll be thrilled by what you find there.

Daily Sunshine In The Son

***Praise God For:** His little messages
Thank God For: Changed attitudes
Ask God's Forgiveness For: petty irritations
Ask God To Help: siblings love each other
Ask God To Supply Our Need For: correction*

Thank You for these answers to prayer:

***DIGGING DEEPER AND REACHING HIGHER:**
 What situations are you allowing to block God's joy in your life? Ask God to take away the joy blockers from your life and give you courage to conquer them. Find at least one opportunity today to bring joy to a joyless situation.*

I pray for the needs of others, especially

Journal for Digging Deeper:

Today, Lord, I need

Lord, today I thank You for:

The Power Of A Nagging Conscience

August 9

“Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already been made perfect, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me.- Phil. 3:12

"I took this piece from the Acropolis a long time ago," said the note. "I am very sorry. Please return it to where it belongs."

The note of apology was unsigned, and its author's identity remains a mystery. It was received earlier this year accompanied with a small piece of marble at the Greek consulate in Houston. The episode was announced by the Greek Ministry of Culture in Athens last month. The ministry said the rock would be entrusted to the archaeological service to determine the area of the ancient Acropolis to which it should be restored.

PREVIEW

Stories like this one may become rare. It is *conscience* that causes people to write apology notes and return purloined items. Conscience is not being cultivated by this generation. It is considered a liability rather than a moral virtue.

Conscience is an internal monitor of behavior. It functions much as a blinking red light on your car's instrument panel. When your engine overheats or the oil needs changing, sensors warn you. When you tell a lie or break a promise, the inner discomfort you feel is a warning against the corruption of your character.

INNERVIEW

The tricky thing about conscience is this: *Refusing to heed its warnings dulls its sensitivity and eventually disables it altogether.* The Bible calls this process "hardening the heart." And a hard heart is the ruin of virtue.

Pornography is *not* free speech. Obscene speech is *not* one's right of personal expression. Lying is *not* acceptable so long as you are not caught. It is *not* right to turn a blind eye to racism, child abuse, poverty, and other forms of insult to the image of God that attaches to every human being.

REVIEW

The best way to keep your conscience intact is to pay attention to it. The workplace is still under God's sovereignty and requires integrity. People in your family are to be treated with dignity and respect. When your conscience tells you a moral boundary has been crossed, it is doing yourself a favor, uncomfortable as the feeling is, by inviting yourself back onto spiritually safe ground.

"While I kept silence, my body wasted away through my groaning all day long. For day and night your hand was heavy upon me . . . Then I acknowledged my sin to you, and I did not hide my iniquity; I said, 'I will confess my transgressions to the Lord,' and you forgave the guilt of my sin" (Psalm 32:3-5).

Daily Sunshine In The Son

**Just in case your conscience calls today,
determine now not to hang up.**

Praise God For: enduring the Cross
Thank God For: the spiritual wisdom of friends
Ask God's Forgiveness For: hanging on to hurts
Ask God To Help: children caught in custody battles
Ask God To Supply Our Need For: friends who challenge us

DIGGING DEEPER AND REACHING HIGHER:
Write a prayer using Jeremiah 33:3; in your prayer, call on Him to reveal where He wants you to serve Him.

Journal for Digging Deeper:

Thank You for these answers to prayer:

I pray for the needs of others, especially

Today, Lord, I need

Lord, today I thank You for:

Six Secrets For Successful Living

August 10

"Any enterprise is built by wise planning, becomes strong through common sense, and profits wonderfully by keeping abreast of the facts."- Proverbs 24:3 (LB)

"We have heard the message, just as they did. But they failed to believe what they heard, and the message did not do them any good."
Hebrews 4:2

It does not take a rocket scientist to figure out that our nation is obsessed with success. Everywhere you look, you can see information teaching us how to be successful. If it is not a "How to" book at the bookstore, it is a "How to" commercial teaching us how to be successful with our money, relationships, business, appearance or any area of our life. Even on the Internet, a search revealed 886,612 hits about "success." What does the Bible teach about this? After all, God's Word is the Owner's Manual for all of humanity.

The Bible Teaches That Successful People:

FENCE THEIR FEELINGS. They live by the commitments they have made and not by their feelings. Most accomplishments are the result of people who do what is right even when they do not feel like it. Moods must be managed. "Loosing self-control leaves you as helpless as a city without a wall." Proverbs 25:28

MIND THEIR MOUTHS. They engage their minds before they accelerate their mouths. "Keep what you know to yourself, and you will be safe; talk too much and you are done for."
Proverbs 13:3

ANCHOR THEIR ANGER. How well do you weather the storms that tempt you to lose your

cool? "It is wise to be patient and show what you are like by forgiving others." Proverbs 19:11

MANAGER THEIR MINUTES. Take control of your clock. Set your own schedule. Give attention to your agenda. **REMEMBER:** If you do not determine how you will spend your time, someone else will decide for you! "Act like people with good sense and not like fools . . . Make every minute count." Ephesians 5:15-16

INVEST THEIR INCOME. Learning to live on less than what you make personally and investing the difference is essential to successful living. A budget's value is that it tells your money where to go rather than leaving you wondering where it went! "The wise man saves for the future, but the foolish man spends whatever he gets." Proverbs 21:20

HONE THEIR HEALTH. Maintaining and improving your physical condition has a direct correspondence to how much you accomplish and how long you can enjoy your ministry achievements. "Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit...So use your bodies for God's glory."
1 Corinthians 6:19-20

"We have heard the message, just as they did. But they failed to believe what they heard, and the message did not do them any good."
Hebrews 4:2

Praise God For: being Truth

Thank God For: truth that sets us free

Ask God's Forgiveness For: lack of honesty

Daily Sunshine In The Son

Ask God To Help: Alzheimer's victims

Ask God To Supply Our Need For: courage to live the truth

Thank You for these answers to prayer:

DIGGING DEEPER AND REACHING HIGHER:

Is there a specific time you tend to put God on hold or turn the volume down? What are some of the great and unsearchable things God has told you lately?

Journal for Digging Deeper:

I pray for the needs of others, especially

Lord, today I thank You for:

Today, Lord, I need

The Secret To Evaluating Your Success

August 11

“And let the peace of God rule n your hearts, to hich also ye are called I one body; and be ye thankful. –Col. 3:15

“I don’t know about you, but I am running hard for the finish Line! I am giving it everything I have! No sloppy living for me! I am staying alert and in top condition. I am not going to get caught napping, telling everyone else all about it, and then missing out on it myself.” This is the message of I Corinthians 9:26-27.

We all want to be successful, however it is how we define success for ourselves. For some, success is measured in the amount of dollars in our bank accounts; for others, success is measured by how we can serve others around us. Yet many have no clue how to even begin to measure their success. Here are a few questions to ask yourself about your success:

1. What is the mission (purpose) of your life?

A purpose propels you forward. It is the anchor from which you create a plan. A mission gives you focus and perspective.

2. How does what you are doing and how you are doing it, fit your personality?

Struggles occur when we are moving against the current of what is in alignment with our being.

3. Do you enjoy doing what you do?

Is it fun, or a pain in the neck? Do you look forward to doing it again, and for how long?

4. If you are paid for what you do, is the compensation adequate (according to your measure)?

When we feel inadequately paid for the work we do, we get resentful and angry. Both emotions are reactions to how we view ourselves and our value.

5. If you don't get paid for what you do, does it matter to you?

Doing what is fulfilling and fun brings a bigger value to our own lives than money.

6. Is your mission (purpose) congruent with what you are doing?

Living by our values in our work keeps us focused and propelled forward rather than dragged.

7. Have you made peace with those aspects of your work that you detest?

Consider what options you have available to you so you d not have to handle this unpleasantly yourself: Delegate, outsource, or eliminate it altogether.

8. Are you measuring your success by your own yardstick?

Evaluating whether success is our definition or someone else's is vital in putting it in perspective.

9. Are you giving your service/product your signature?

Daily Sunshine In The Son

One aspect of being successful is knowing that what we offer is truly our own. Becoming close and personal with our clients creates a sense of connection which brings fulfillment and satisfaction.

10. Are you being genuine in your interactions with people?

Taking an active interest in the people you meet opens up new ideas and acceptance of things outside of your comfort zone. People intuitively sense a sincere person from a phony.

Thank You for these answers to prayer:

- Praise God For:* being Truth
- Thank God For:* Gospel Ministers
- Ask God's Forgiveness For:* hiding the truth
- Ask God To Help:* truth be shared and received
- Ask God To Supply Our Need For:* boldness to speak truth

I pray for the needs of others, especially

DIGGING DEEPER AND REACHING HIGHER:
*Tell God your understanding of how He views you.
Describe how because of these truths your life is different from the way it was in the past.*

Journal for Digging Deeper:

Today, Lord, I need

Lord, today I thank You for:

Consciously Clearing The Clutter

August 12

And whatever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him. –Col. 3:17

“I don’t know about you, but I am running hard for the finish line! I am giving it everything I have! No sloppy living for me! I’m staying alert and in top condition. I refuse to be caught napping, telling everyone else all about it, and then missing out on it myself.” This is the message of ***I Corinthians 9:26-27***.

One of the common denominators of successful people is a single-minded focus, allowing them to concentrate on first things first. Ralph Waldo Emerson wrote in *The Conduct of Life*, "Concentration is the secret of strength in politics, in war, in trade, in short, in all of human affairs." While many people squander their physical and mental abilities, successful people learn how to focus, concentrate and persist. Yet even those with a clear sense of purpose sometimes lose their focus and their ability to concentrate on priorities. Why? I have found it is usually the result of too much internal clutter. I have identified four types of clutter that I strive to keep out of my life. The benefit is that I am more able to concentrate on that which I do best.

- **Emotional clutter** - This is the relational baggage that can accumulate when we don't forgive those who have wronged us, when we hold a grudge, or when we carry a chip on our shoulder because of a grievance long past. The price of holding on to emotional clutter is too high. Not only will it steal energy

from your focus, but it has serious emotional and spiritual consequences as well.

- **Administrative clutter** – Years ago, I discovered the need for a system to help me deal with multiple projects and multiple deadlines. I have at least 20 things to accomplish in the next three days, and I will be able to complete them because I have learned to organize. I do not waste time looking for things or wondering what comes next. There is nothing magical about my system. Find one that works for you and do it.

- **Calendar clutter** - This is simply mastering the basic principle of time management. You must prioritize your work and spend your best effort on that which will yield the most return. Take a few moments to start listing all the things you have done in the last 24 hours that gave you no return whatsoever. Why did you do them? Do they need to be done at all, or can someone else better do them for you? I have not mowed my lawn in over 30 years. Some people enjoy working in the yard,. I don't. Why would I give a couple of hours a week to something that has no payoff for me when I could give those same hours to concentrate on my priorities?

- **Trivia clutter** - I always lose at Trivial Pursuit™ because I don't commit to memory anything that I can find quickly in a book or from someone else. It is not that I have a bad memory, I just do not see the value in allowing insignificant things to detract me from

Daily Sunshine In The Son

my focus. Most people try to live in the path of a flood of trivial phone calls, emails, and meetings. I recommend removing the trivia.

With clutter-free living, you will find your focus clear and your anxieties diminished. More importantly, you will see a level of productivity previously never experienced. You are set free to concentrate on what you were created to accomplish!

I pray for the needs of others, especially

Praise God For: helping me be honest
Thank God For: young people who want to what is right
Ask God's Forgiveness For: mishandling the truth
Ask God To Help: young people to learn honesty
Ask God To Supply Our Need For: commitment to truth

DIGGING DEEPER AND REACHING HIGHER:

List some areas of your life that are not pleasing to God right now. Give God permission to make the necessary changes in your life so that it will be pleasing to Him.

Today, Lord, I need

Journal for Digging Deeper:

Lord, today I thank You for:

Thank You for these answers to prayer:

Daily Sunshine In The Sun

More Grief Than Gusto

August 13

“Brothers, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on...” –Phil. 3:12,13

The Old Testament book of Ecclesiastes is a call for God's creatures to discover the true meaning of life. It begins by reminding us of some common mistakes people make in their pursuit of happiness. A refrain is heard after the description of each one: It is "meaningless," a mere "chasing after the wind." Scott Wenig tells of an enterprising lady in New York City who provides new meaning to that refrain.

PREVIEW

In a city of eight million cats and eleven million dogs, burying a deceased tabby or pooch can be challenging. Few people in a city of high-rise apartments can dig a grave in their backyards and graves in pet cemeteries are pricey. So the lady in question decided to offer a service to her fellow city-dwellers and earn money in the process. This is her ethically dubious procedure.

INNERVIEW

She would place an occasional ad in the newspaper that read: "When your pet dies, I will come and take care of the carcass for you for \$25." When she received a call, she would purchase an old suitcase for a couple of dollars at a nearby Salvation Army store. When she arrived at the house or apartment, she placed the deceased pet in the clean suitcase.

She would ride the subway, sit her suitcase down, and act like an absent-minded woman who was paying no attention to her belongings. It seldom took long for one of the many thieves working the subways to spot the suitcase, position himself nearby, and snatch it as the doors opened at the next stop. She would dutifully look up and yell, "Stop! Thief!" The shrewd thief would simply glide away with his prize, occasionally looking back to smirk his contempt at another dull-witted victim who had been bamboozled by his smooth technique.

Wouldn't you like to be a fly on the wall when those "clever" souls opened those suitcases? Don't you hope some of them had cronies around and had bragged on how easy it was to rob the mindless woman on the subway before opening the bags to display their contents? *Oops. Gotcha!*

REVIEW

When we pursue happiness in the things of this world, we look very much like those subway thieves in New York. Drugs, affairs, greed, stealing, lies and abusing trust all make their appeal by holding out the prospect of instant gratification. So we grab one with a silly expectation of bliss. It never delivers.

Next time your eye or heart is drawn to an easy-but-forbidden prize, think about the subway lady. You could be about to open a nasty crate of trouble.

Thank God For: bold Christians

Ask God's Forgiveness For: my embarrassment of Him

Ask God To Help: Christians in the minority

Ask God To Supply Our Need For: creative ways to witness for Him

DIGGING DEEPER AND REACHING HIGHER:

List how many of your goals are the same as God's goals. How might your life be different if you sought His

Daily Sunshine In The Son

direction while planning the next hour, day, week, month, and year?

Journal for Digging Deeper:

Lord, today I thank You for:

I pray for the needs of others, especially

Today, Lord, I need

Thank You for these answers to prayer:

When Paying Attention Pays

August 14

“Blessed be the name of the Lord from this time forth and for evermore. From the rising of the sun unto the going down of the same, the LORD’s name is to be praised. –Psa. 113:2,3

"If life isn't teaching you anything, you're just not paying attention." This became crystal clear to me as I recently read an internet mail received. It listed things the author had learned from the process of living. I have edited and added a few things that have come to my own attention, as well. I think this article makes a profound point.

- * *I've learned* that life is tough but that God's strength is sufficient.
- * *I've learned* that no matter how serious your life requires you to be, everyone needs a friend with whom to kick back and act goofy.
- * *I've learned* that love, not time, heals all wounds.
- * *I've learned* that money can't buy class or happiness or peace.

PREVIEW

- * *I've learned* that the best classroom in the world is simply to sit at the feet of an elderly man or woman and listen.
- * *I've learned* that to ignore the facts does not change them.
- * *I've learned* that I can always pray for someone, even when I don't have the strength or resources to do anything else for them.
- * *I've learned* that when you harbor bitterness, happiness docks elsewhere.
- * *I've learned* that when you hold a grudge against someone for a real or imagined offense, you are only letting that person continue to hurt you.
- * *I've learned* that I can forgive, even when my enemy isn't asking for pardon.

REVIEW

- *I've learned* that when you're in love, you can't hide it — even if you try.
 - * *I've learned* that a smile is the easiest and least expensive way to improve your looks.
 - * *I've learned* that just one person saying "You've made my day!" makes my day.
 - * *I've learned* that loving is more fundamental to happiness than being loved.
- So what has life been teaching you lately? If nothing comes to mind, maybe it is because you are not paying attention.

INNERVIEW

- * *I've learned* that the Lord didn't do everything in one day, so it must be all right for me to accept that I can't either.
- * *I've learned* that I often can't choose how I feel, but I can always choose what I do about my feelings.

Praise God For: His firmness
Thank God For: saying no when I need it

Daily Sunshine In The Son

Ask God's Forgiveness For: my resistance to His Will

Ask God To Help: teens and parents to better communicate

Ask God To Supply Our Need For: open communication

DIGGING DEEPER AND REACHING HIGHER:

List how many of your goals are the same as God's goals.
How might your life be different if you sought His

Journal for Digging Deeper:

I pray for the needs of others, especially

Lord, today I thank You for:

Today, Lord, I need

Thank You for these answers to prayer:

Choosing Success Successfully

August 15

"I don't try to please myself but him who sent me." -John 5:30

It is so easy to forget what really matters in life. We tend to think that titles, power, and money make all the difference. So many of us would like to have the position in the company, athletic prowess, or beauty that another has. So we set our life courses accordingly. And we accumulate degrees and plaques. We focus on making more money. We starve and sweat to have a trim body.

PREVIEW

There's nothing intrinsically evil about any of these things. But are they the main ingredients to a life well-lived? Do they make a lasting difference? Will they have any value for eternity?

Here's a little quiz that might help make the point I have in mind:

- * Name the six wealthiest people in the world.
- * Name the last five Academy Award winners for best actor and actress.
- * Name the four most recent Heisman Trophy winners.
- * Name the last three winners of the Miss America pageant.
- * Name two people who won the top prize on Who Wants to Be a Millionaire?

My guess is that you weren't able to answer all five questions. Maybe you couldn't answer three — or even one. Me either! But these are the people who are the best of the best in their fields. It's surprising how quickly we forget things that seem so important at the time they happen. The applause dies down. Things that seemed so significant at the moment fade from

memory and are forgotten.

Now here's another quiz for you. See if you do any better on it:

INNERVIEW

- * Name six teachers who helped you during your educational career.
- * Name five people with whom you enjoy spending some of your free time.
- * Name four personal heroes whose life stories have inspired you.
- * Name three people who have helped you through some difficult time.
- * Name two people you can always trust to honor a confidence.

I'll bet you did better generating answers to this set of questions than the first one. Why? The people who really matter in our lives aren't the ones with awards and money but the ones with character and compassion. Shouldn't this insight be instructive to all of us about what to pursue with our lives?

REVIEW

Don't climb the ladder of success only to find you've leaned it against the wrong wall. I think it was the late Erma Bombeck who once wrote: "Don't confuse fame with success. Madonna is one, and Helen Keller is the other."

Daily Sunshine In The Son

Praise God For: His forgiveness

Thank God For: loving confrontation

Ask God's Forgiveness For: taking others for granted

Ask God To Help: teens and parents to better communicate

Ask God To Supply Our Need For: open communication

Ask God To Supply Our Need For: minds filled with His thoughts

DIGGING DEEPER AND REACHING HIGHER:

A life unplanned and unchecked is prone to return to failure-ridden patterns. What three things could you do today to keep your focus on God?

Journal for Digging Deeper:

I pray for the needs of others, especially

Lord, today I thank You for:

Today, Lord, I need

Thank You for these answers to prayer:

The Discipline To Dress UP or DOWN

August 16

“Everyone with good sense wants to learn.” Proverbs 18:15 CEV

A Minneapolis-based research firm reports that 80% of the companies it surveyed cited casual dress as the most popular perk, topping both on-site childcare and flexible scheduling. It has been the trend for about a decade now for companies to permit casual dress either daily or once a week. Now there is new research to the effect that there is an emerging downside to casual dress.

PREVIEW

People are abusing the privilege and sabotaging the work environment. "Business casual" has become simply "sloppy" in some workplaces. The so-called corporate image has suffered in some firms. Some argue that the trend toward dressing down has gone so far that it has encouraged less quantity and quality of work and fostered environments ripe for sexual harassment.

We humans seem to have an uncanny ability to live at the extremes. The once standard business dress of suits and ties for men and skirts, hose and dress shoes for women generated one extreme. The men's suits became Armani and the shoes became Manolo Blahnik. Competition among employees, intimidation to clients and extravagance had a negative effect on the work environment. So the idea of business casual was born. The idea was to break down hierarchical barriers and boost morale. Soon attire ranging from spandex to sweat pants and cutoffs to revealing T-shirts arrived at work.

INNERVIEW

It is the abuses that create the problems. Forfeiting a happy medium between extremes, the workplace is now embroiled in the discussion of how to dress. In the meanwhile, someone needs to get the work done!

Sounds like the way we do family, doesn't it? Some Moms and Dads become so worked up over hair and earrings that they lose sight of what really matters with their kids. They become wardens instead of role models and critics instead of adult teachers. On the other hand, some husbands and wives are so excessive about either social climbing or making their statement against the establishment that they forget both to enjoy life and each other.

REVIEW

Sounds like church too, doesn't it? Some pursue reverence to the slight of relevance; thus they do church in formal, stuffy, irrelevant-to-life ways. The other extreme is to press so hard for relevance that the holy gets compromised.

The issue really is not dress, is it? It is *human nature*. The ability to avoid extremes is a helpful index to a person's good judgment and solid character.

Journal for Digging Deeper:

Daily Sunshine In The Son

I pray for the needs of others, especially

Lord, today I thank You for:

Today, Lord, I need

Thank You for these answers to prayer:

Knowing What It Takes

August 17

“And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose”—Rom. 8:28

It was a spectacular performance. Tiger Woods, the world's top-ranked professional golfer, notched another place in the record books on a course which has hosted the sport for more than 500 years. At storied old St. Andrews, Woods finished at 19-under-par 269 to become the youngest person ever to win all four of golf's major tournaments. On July 23, 2000 he won the Grand Slam at age 24.

PREVIEW

As he began the final day of the British Open with a six-stroke lead and a date with golfing destiny, he said, "I know what it takes to play in a final round of any tournament. You cannot allow yourself to look ahead at the final outcome, because if you do not take care of the present, the final outcome may not be what you want."

That's not only good advice about playing golf but about life in general. If you don't take care of the present, the final outcome may not be what you want.

INNERVIEW

Most people have a plan for their financial futures. They may not be doing a good job sticking to it, but they know it is necessary to save something from today's paycheck in order to have something tomorrow. Or maybe you have a plan for weight control. The reason you

are passing on the gravy or dessert is that you do not want the extra pounds and girth they

will add. Life's desirable outcomes depend on acting responsibly in the present.

* If you want good health in your 60's and 70's, pay attention to things like diet, smoking and exercise in your 20's and 30's.

* If you want friends tomorrow, think about how you are treating people today.

* If you want to pass along a good name to your children, pay attention to what your conscience is telling you today.

* If you want to accomplish something worthwhile before you die, take some risks today to position yourself for the noblest dream in your heart.

* If you want a stable, intact home, honor your family commitments today.

* If you want to live with self-respect, a clear conscience and confidence about eternity, be sure about your relationship with God, now!

REVIEW

What Tiger Woods understands about championship golf is true of the really important things of your life. You will be wiser than most today by leaving the past to the infinite mercy of God, trusting the future to his good providence and engaging yourself fully in paying attention to your tasks at hand.

Regrets over the past may dishearten you. Fear of the future can paralyze you. Taking care of the present is far more likely to yield a happy outcome.

Daily Sunshine In The Son

Praise God For: His firmness

Thank God For: saying no when I need it

Ask God's Forgiveness For: my resistance to His Will

Ask God To Help: teens and parents to better communicate

Ask God To Supply Our Need For: open communication

Lord, today I thank You for:

DIGGING DEEPER AND REACHING HIGHER:

Write a love note to God and tell Him what He means to you today.

Journal for Digging Deeper:

I pray for the needs of others, especially

Today, Lord, I need

Winning By Losing

August 18

“And be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ’s sake hath forgiven you”.—Eph. 4:32

Kay Poe and Esther Kim have been best friends since they were seven years old. Among other things they have in common, the two young ladies from Houston both compete at the highest levels in tae kwon do. How good are they? Esther and Kay advanced to the finals in the Women's Olympic Flyweight division at the 2000 U.S. Olympic Team Trials on May 20, 2000 in Colorado Springs.

PREVIEW

"I don't think of her as just a friend. I think of her more as a sister," Kay says. "We've grown up together and we always push each other and help each other out the best we can in training." What a story was unfolding! Reporters and photographers were poised to record the outcome of so intense a competition between two girls who have been close for so long. But a sports story would soon be overshadowed by a far more important friendship story.

Kay had dislocated her left kneecap in her semi-final match of the round robin tournament. Though ranked number one in the world at her sport, it was questionable that she could compete against her best friend. She could barely stand, so it was a foregone conclusion that Esther would win, travel to the 2000 Olympic Games in Sydney and represent the United States in the international competition. These two women had trained and worked toward this competition for so long.

INNERVIEW

On the day of the match, Esther Kim shocked the crowd by forfeiting rather than defeat her friend in an unfair competition. In allowing the better tae kwon do fighter to represent the United States in Sydney, she won a personal battle over ego and selfishness. Amidst frequent stories of cheating and taking unfair advantage in order to win at any price, Esther showed how to win by losing.

"Even though I didn't have the gold medal around me," said Esther, "for the first time in my life, I felt like a real champion." Her generosity of spirit was honored with the Citizenship Through Sports Award and with an all-expenses-paid trip to the 2000 Olympic Games from the International Olympic Committee.

REVIEW

In the Bible, Paul wrote about giving up certain "rights" for the sake of people he loved (see 1 Corinthians 9:1-15). Parents do it all the time for their children and occasionally friends make magnanimous gestures like Esther's.

The next time you are inclined to bemoan the selfishness of the masses, recall this story of a twenty-year-old athlete's largess. The next time you have the chance to show magnanimity, let it inspire you to rise to the level of her example.

Daily Sunshine In The Son

Praise God For: His Spirit
Thank God For: good fathers
Ask God's Forgiveness For: neglecting time with Him
Ask God To Help: children who miss their fathers
Ask God To Supply Our Need For: strength for each day

DIGGING DEEPER AND REACHING HIGHER:
Describe the last time you told someone in pain about the healing love and compassion of the Lord.

I pray for the needs of others, especially

Journal for Digging Deeper:

Lord, today I thank You for:

Today, Lord, I need

Thank You for these answers to prayer:

Looking Like Jesus In Desperate Times

August 19

"Sharp words cut like a sword, but words of wisdom heal."- Proverbs 12:18

The day after Carl Joseph came to town the local newspaper in Hazelton, Pennsylvania carried the headline, "Man Who Looks Like Jesus Arrives."

Joseph has wandered through forty-seven states and thirteen countries over the last nine years. A picture of him in the *Washington Post* looks very much like the Jesus of movies and storybooks. He has the standard look of a Hollywood Jesus of Nazareth with flowing hair, beard, head at an angle, and white robe.

PREVIEW

He is a 39-year-old man with Catholic background who sometimes hitchhikes but usually walks everywhere on bare feet. A *Post* story said: "He owns nothing but the robe and blanket he wears on his back and never takes money for any reason. For food and shelter, he relies on the goodwill of people he meets along the way. Somehow, he is always immaculate, down to the fingernails."

The controversial man who was once arrested in Toledo for trespassing at an adult theater draws big crowds. They listen to him for hours on his typical theme of God's love and grace. When he stops, hands go up. "Why do children die?" asks one. "Are angels real?" another inquires. "How can we be happy?"

INNERVIEW

Joseph doesn't claim to be Jesus but he tries to model his life on Jesus' example. People trust him with their innermost thoughts. They tell

him about their drug addiction or depression. They ask him to pray with them.

I'm not urging you to give up business attire for white robes and go everywhere on bare feet. Maybe he's just "nutty." But there is more to the story . . .

A woman who had lost custody of her two sons because of drug addiction asked to talk to the man, and he obliged her. She has remained drug clean since that day. A physician asked him to speak with a woman whose husband was dying and he consented. They prayed together and she found peace in coping with his death. We need someone to challenge our cynicism and invite us to focus on God.

REVIEW

The task of Christians is to furnish a sense of what it is like to have Jesus roaming the world. Wherever we go, the winsome aroma of his presence should surface. Chaos gives way to calm, fear to hope and indifference to unfeigned concern. People begin to trust you, ask you to pray for them and take heart from your concern. Such a presence changes situations and people for the better.

Your task today is to re-create Christ's presence. Treat people so they will know that someone who "looks like Jesus" took the call, handled a complaint, sensed the anxiety or shared the grief. The secret is not clothing; it's attitude.

Daily Sunshine In The Son

Praise God For: His strengthening presence

Thank God For: earthly pleasures

Ask God's Forgiveness For: hanging on when I should let go

Ask God To Help: prune our dead branches

Ask God To Supply Our Need For: grace to let go

Thank You for these answers to prayer:

DIGGING DEEPER AND REACHING HIGHER:

If you are right now facing some seemingly hopeless situations that are keeping you from running your race, think about God's faithfulness to you and then write about your circumstances from that perspective.

Journal for Digging Deeper:

I pray for the needs of others, especially

Lord, today I thank You for:

Today, Lord, I need

The Burden of Boredom and The Space To Grow

August 20

"And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God"-Rom. 8:27

One of the common complaints of people in our time is the monotony and boredom of life. I have a sneaking suspicion this slant on life contributes to what we call "burnout." I suspect it also plays a role in certain high-risk behaviors ranging from driving too fast to getting caught up in a marriage-destroying affair or experimenting with drugs.

PREVIEW

Monotony and boredom are self-inflicted wounds to the human spirit. If you have a routine, lackluster and sometimes tedious job, that does not mean you have to live a routine, lackluster and tedious life. Maybe you need to change jobs. But that's not always possible or necessary. Maybe you simply need to give yourself some additional space to grow.

Perhaps you have seen cucumbers growing inside soda bottles or pumpkins in gallon jugs. Young plants placed inside containers grow to the contained space. They take on the contours and limits of their surroundings.

INNERVIEW

I understand this theory works with animals too. Place a young fish whose species normally grows reasonably large into a tiny aquarium, and its full adult size will be suppressed because of the strictly limited space it was given.

The same thing is true of people. We grow to the intellectual space we have. We take on the dull or positive contours of our emotional

environments. We are big-hearted or parsimonious due to the spiritual influences that mold us. But this is not to say that we are the helpless victims of circumstances beyond our control.

Regardless of your job or current life predicament, you can choose the setting for your soul. You can give yourself some room to grow.

REVIEW

For your body: eat sensibly, get enough sleep, exercise regularly and avoid tobacco and alcohol. For your mind: read good literature, listen to inspirational-educational cassettes in your car, expand your vocabulary and shun the pollution of pornography and vulgarity. For your spirit: worship, meditate on Scripture, invest yourself in service to others and refuse to live in the spiritual bondage of cynicism or bitterness over a "bad break" life has dealt you.

To be a big-hearted, great-souled person is not the unanticipated destiny of a privileged few. It is the preordained outcome for anyone who chooses to look beyond limitation to possibility and learn to see an opportunity in every problem.

"Those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength" (Isaiah 40:31a).

Praise God For: being my pillar of strength

Thank God For: the support of friends

Ask God's Forgiveness For: my self-reliance

Ask God To Help: those who have been deserted

Ask God To Supply Our Need For: strong friends

Daily Sunshine In The Son

DIGGING DEEPER AND REACHING HIGHER:

List areas of your life in which you suffer guilt and condemnation. Ask God to help you give each of those areas to Him-for good-so that you can be free.

Journal for Digging Deeper:

I pray for the needs of others, especially

Lord, today I thank You for:

Today, Lord, I need

Thank You for these answers to prayer:

When The Out Look Determines Outcome

August 21

“Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, in all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another, in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord”. –Col. 3:16

Attitude is not *everything*, but I'm convinced it is more important than most of the things we attribute to our daily outcomes. The person inclined to whine that others have received more breaks or to excuse his failure or poor performance by blaming someone else is likely sabotaging himself with a poor outlook.

PREVIEW

Many events of your life are simply the hand you have been dealt. You can't change the fact that you were born in that place and with certain givens for your appearance, IQ or natural skills. Education and training can open some doors for you, but they cannot change your past, make you taller and more athletic or alter the fact that some people are unfair in the way they treat you.

The one thing you can change is how you choose to respond to your life circumstances. Even Jesus could not control what other people thought and said about him. However, he refused to allow them to dictate his spirit and behavior.

INNERVIEW

There is a section in John Baillie's, *A Diary of Private Prayer* that reads . . .

Teach me, O God, so to use all the circumstances of my life today that they may

bring forth in me the fruits of holiness rather than the fruits of sin.

Let me use disappointment as material for patience;

Let me use success as material for thankfulness;

Let me use suspense as material for perseverance;

Let me use danger as material for courage;

Let me use reproach as material for longsuffering;

Let me use praise as material for humility;

Let me use pleasures as material for temperance;

Let me use pains as material for endurance.

What can turn negatives as disappointment, anxiety and criticism into positive outcomes?

What can keep success, praise and gratification from becoming pride? Your attitude makes the difference.

REVIEW

When any given day begins, countless things are headed your way which you have no control. It may be bad weather or someone's bad temper, a deadline that will not budge or a client equally resistant to change. The one factor you can control, through it all, is your attitude toward them.

Your attitude today will make all the difference in everything that matters.

Praise God For: His Holy Spirit

Daily Sunshine In The Son

Thank God For: carrying my burdens
Ask God's Forgiveness For: carrying my burdens alone
Ask God To Help: those weighed down by life
Ask God To Supply Our Need For: His strength

DIGGING DEEPER AND REACHING HIGHER:
What negative thoughts overwhelm you at times?
Write a prayer of faith, asking the Holy Spirit to release you from this burden.

Journal for Digging Deeper:

I pray for the needs of others, especially

Lord, today I thank You for:

Today, Lord, I need

Thank You for these answers to prayer:

Clearing A 'Poopy' Perspective

August 22

"And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also; knowing that tribulations worketh patience; (4) and patience, experience; and experience, hope". - Rom. 5:3,4

I entered my car last Tuesday morning and began to back out of the driveway. It was obvious that my windshield had been targeted by a bird the night before and was he ever a good shot! My direct line of sight to everything on the road in front of me was through a blob of bird poop.

PREVIEW

In a matter of seconds, I was laughing. It dawned on me that unless I cleared my windshield of my blurred line of sight, I would be tempted to see every person or situation through, shall we say, "stuff."

Have you ever had a load of anger dumped on you that you knew wasn't deserved? You were smart enough to figure out that someone had taken their anger at the boss or another employee on you. Even so, knowing what had happened did not take all the hurt out. Maybe you have done the same thing to someone who phoned you at a particularly tense time or just after you had received bad news.

INNERVIEW

Has someone been rude to you because you were the salesperson or you represent a company where they had a previous bad experience? Have you been the next customer in line after a clerk had someone chew them out? Have you ever realized that you were being racist or sexist in a story you had started to tell? You are beginning to get the picture, aren't you?

I'm not sure I know how to deal with the problem I'm raising with you. It helps to understand that the person is misdirecting his anger at you, but it doesn't take away the offense. The best each of us can do today is to keep our own line of sight relatively clear. If things were tense at home over the weekend or as you left for work this morning, resolve that you will not take it out on the people around you right now. They don't deserve it, need it and may not handle it well.

REVIEW

Suppose, on the other hand, that something really unpleasant or stressful happens today at work. The great temptation will be to take a bad attitude with you at the end of the day and make your mate, children or friends pay for it.

Do you need to stop now and ask God to help you clean your spiritual windshield? Cleaning your spiritual windshield is better than continuing the day with a poopy outlook on life.

Journal for Digging Deeper:

Taking Time To Redeem Your Time

August 23

“See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, (16) Redeeming the time, because the days are evil”. Eph. 5:15,16

Search the pages of Scripture, and you will find one consistent truth in reference to living of our lives. That truth is this: Time is a limited resource that should be treasured.

The brevity of life is a theme that appears like a flashing beacon throughout the Bible. James says that our life is like a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes (James 4:14). What then should be our response to the brevity of life? Moses’ prayer is that God will “teach us to number our days and recognize how few they are; help us to spend them as we should.” (Living Bible Translation) Because time is brief, we should manage it as a valuable commodity.

Thus, the realization of life’s brevity leads to two very distinct desires: (1) to invest time wisely and (2) to spend time freely. Which application is “correct”? Actually, both applications are correct. Time is a limited resource. Some of it should be invested in spiritual pursuits: strengthening our spiritual life, leading other people to faith in Jesus Christ and ministering to the needs of others. Ralph Waldo Emerson summarized it well, when he lucidly lined, “The best use of time is to spend it on something that will outlast it.”(1

So far we have discovered that time is brief and therefore, valuable. Some of it is to be invested in eternal pursuits; some of it is to be spent on those things that bring fullness to our lives: family, work, friendships and recreation.

Sages and Time-Management experts have reminded us for years that we really never

can save time. We can only spend it. How effectively do you spend time? Do you plan time carefully? Do you treat your minutes and hours as the truly precious resources they are? And more importantly, do you spend your hours achieving the personal and professional goals most important to you?

When we consider our stressful lifestyle, time is not the problem. The problem is how we manage our time. Our stress will become worse if we do not make gutsy changes in our time and lifestyle choices.

Praise God For: reconciliation

Thank God For: peacemakers

Ask God’s Forgiveness For: strained relationships

Ask God To Help: bring peace to the world

Ask God To Supply Our Need For: tenderness

DIGGING DEEPER AND REACHING HIGHER:

What secret fears do you harbor? Write them down, lift them to God and claim His promise that you *will* trust in Him, no matter what problems you face.

Journal for Digging Deeper:

Daily Sunshine In The Son

Lord, today I thank You for:

I pray for the needs of others, especially

Thank You for these answers to prayer:

Today, Lord, I need

Establish Your Priorities

August 24

“See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, (16) Redeeming the time, because he days are evil”. Eph. 5:15,16

What things matter the most in your life? A survey in the December 11, 1995 issue of U.S. News and World Report found the following issues at the top of the average American’s priority list of values.

Issue Quotient

- 1. Family life 68%
- 2. Spiritual life 46%
- 3. Health 44%
- 4. Financial situation 25%
- 5. Their jobs 23%
- 6. Romantic life 18%
- 7. Leisure Time 14%
- 8. Their homes 11%

What are the results of ineffective time management?

- 1. We feel we are constantly rushing around.
- 2. We are never fully at peace, because there is always unfinished business requiring our attention.
- 3. We often force ourselves to make unpleasant choices, because we have over-committed ourselves and do not know how to free ourselves of obligations.
- 4. We are always rushing at the last minute to finish projects, or we frequently miss deadlines.
- 5. We postpone our own interest, hobbies and other important activities due to the “tyranny of the urgent.”
- 6. Our family, friends and colleagues suffer, because of our hectic pace.
- 7. We spend much of our time doing what we do not want to do and every

little time doing the things we wish we could do.

- 1. How many of those seven things are true in your life?

I am constantly rushing around.

_____ I am never fully at peace, because there is always unfinished business requiring my attention.

_____ I often force myself to make unpleasant choices, because I have committed myself and don’t know how to get out of obligations.

_____ I am always rushing at the last minute to finish projects, or I frequently miss deadlines.

_____ I put off my own interest and hobbies, and other important activities, due to the “tyranny of the urgent.”

_____ My family, friends and colleagues suffer, because of my hectic pace.

_____ I spend much of my time doing what I don’t want to do and very little time doing the things I wish I could.

- 2. Which is the most severe for you?

- 3. If you were to give yourself a letter grade on time management (A to F) what would it be?

Daily Sunshine In The Son

Praise God For: being our Savior
Thank God For: salvation
Ask God's Forgiveness For: choosing sin
Ask God To Help: those who don't know Him
Ask God To Supply Our Need For: deliverance from sin

DIGGING DEEPER AND REACHING HIGHER:
What difficulties have you and God walked through together? Write them down and record your praises for the lessons He taught you during those hard times.

Journal for Digging Deeper:

Lord, today I thank You for:

Thank You for these answers to prayer:

I pray for the needs of others, especially

Today, Lord, I need

Determining Your Priorities

August 25

“See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, (16) Redeeming the time, because he days are evil”. Eph. 5:15,16

Tom Landry, former coach of the Dallas Cowboys, was one of the top winning coaches in pro football. While addressing a group of college students, he was asked the secret of his success. “At the beginning of my career,” he replied, “I determined my priorities for life were God, family and then football.”

How do you determine which activities are important? You need to consider how each activity matches with your overall life goals and priorities.

We can compact the literature on time management into three categories.

1. Establish priorities in your life, set goals and identify what is important to you.

2. Free up time by delaying or saying no to low-priority items.

3. Remove items from your agenda by making effective decisions and delegating responsibility to others.

These actions will not be easy, especially if you have deeply ingrained time-wasting habits. It will take time to see significant changes, perhaps several weeks. And in the

short term, a program of better time management may actually increase stress (as any lifestyle change will), but the long-term benefits are rich.

Praise God For: His Forgiveness

Thank God For: the Gospel

Ask God’s Forgiveness For: not consistently sharing the Gospel with others

Ask God To Help: all receive Jesus

Ask God To Supply Our Need For: renewed strength

DIGGING DEEPER AND REACHING HIGHER:

Write a love note to God and tell Him what He means to you today.

Journal for Digging Deeper:

Lord, today I thank You for:

Daily Sunshine In The Son

Thank You for these answers to prayer:

Today, Lord, I need

I pray for the needs of others, especially

Priority Exercise

August 26

“See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, (16) Redeeming the time, because he days are evil”. Eph. 5:15,16

Rate the following items in terms of their importance to you. Write **H** for high-priority items, **M** for middle-level priorities, and **L**, for low-priority items. Be sure to fill in other high-priorities in your life not listed.

_____ Spiritual.
 _____ Career
 _____ Home life
 _____ Spouse (or other relationships)

_____ Children
 _____ School activities
 (Specifically):

_____ Church activities
 (Specifically):

_____ Yourself
 _____ Friendship (Specifically):

_____ Social functions
 (Specifically):

_____ Hobbies (Specifically):

_____ Exercise
 _____ Reading
 _____ Sleep
 Relaxation

Other:

There is no need to develop an exact sequence of priorities. It does help to obtain a sense of your top four or five priorities, then another handful in a middle echelon. Plan enough time in your weekly schedule for all high-priority areas and some midlevel items. Place low-priority items in the spare time category.

Praise God For: Christ our Redeemer
Thank God For: wise men
Ask God's Forgiveness For: half-hearted commitment
Ask God To Help: all who come to Him
Ask God To Supply Our Need For: recommitment to Him

DIGGING DEEPER AND REACHING HIGHER:
Write down one problem that is causing you to experience a lack of joy. Ask God to give you back your

Daily Sunshine In The Son

joy and to grant you a willing spirit to sustain you in the days ahead.

Journal for Digging Deeper:

I pray for the needs of others, especially

Lord, today I thank You for:

Today, Lord, I need

Thank You for these answers to prayer:

Establishing Time Priorities

August 27

“See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, (16) Redeeming the time, because he days are evil”. Eph. 5:15,16

You cannot develop a daily task list until first you have established some priorities. All tasks cannot be done at the same time or in one day. The tension you will face when deciding your priorities is the tension between what is most important and what is most urgent.

Priorities are established by asking, What will bring the most profit? What can help me become most effective? What will move me closer to the accomplishment of my long-range goals?

When deciding your priorities, ask these questions.

- How urgent is this task?
- How important is it?
- How often must it be done?
- Can someone else do it more effectively?
- Is it part of a larger task to which I am committed?
- What will happen if this task or project is not done at all?
- Is this the best way?

Our priorities are not necessarily static. Several reasons account for changes in priorities:

- Incomplete goal setting.
- A value given to another project without any kind of goal to support the project.
- No coordination of tasks.
- Disorganization.

- A firefighter mentality (tackling what is most urgent rather than what is most important).

Some people decide their priorities by using the ABC system. That is, a project or task needing to be done first is assigned an A. The second most important task is assigned a B, and so on. You can develop the prioritizing plan best suited for you.

Praise God For: seeing the big picture

Thank God For: putting my world together again

Ask God’s Forgiveness For: seeking Him last

Ask God To Help: straighten out the world

Ask God To Supply Our Need For: wholeness

DIGGING DEEPER AND REACHING HIGHER:

Write a prayer asking God to restore His joy to every area of your life.

Journal for Digging Deeper:

Daily Sunshine In The Son

Lord, today I thank You for:

I pray for the needs of others, especially

Thank You for these answers to prayer:

Today, Lord, I need

Take A Time Inventory

August 28

“See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, (16) Redeeming the time, because he days are evil”. Eph. 5:15,16

An inventory will show you whether or not you are spending your time on your priorities. You may find that you are using time on others priorities or worse, wasting time in purposeless pursuits.

BUDGET THE HOURS

Some of you budget your finances. Why not do the same thing with your time? Since both of them are limited resources, budgeting them makes good sense.

Take time to think about these priorities: God, relationships with other people, yourself (spiritual, intellectual, physical health and growth). Fill out the time you will be at work. Write in your priorities and then let all the rest fall into place. This is the only way to maximize the time you have.

The time management speaker set a Mason jar on the table and began placing rocks inside. "Is the jar full?" he asked. Everyone said, "Yes." "Really?" He took a bucket of gravel, dumped it in and shook the jar so the gravel sank in. He asked, "Is the jar full?" "Probably not," said most of his listeners. "Good!" He poured in sand. "Now-full?" "No!" shouted all. He poured a pitcher of water into the jar. Now it was truly filled. "What's my point?" he asked. "You may think your schedule's full, but you can always fit something else into it," a man said

"No!" said the leader. "It's this: put in the big rocks first or you'll never fit them in at all." (5)

Praise God For: darkness

Thank God For: creativity

Ask God's Forgiveness For: lack of rest

Ask God To Help: all who need a good night's sleep

Ask God To Supply Our Need For: down time

DIGGING DEEPER AND REACHING HIGHER:

Describe a time in your life when the faithfulness of God lifted you out of a spiritual desert.

Journal for Digging Deeper:

Lord, today I thank You for:

Budget The Hours (2)

August 29

“See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, (16) Redeeming the time, because he days are evil”. Eph. 5:15,16

Author C.S. Lewis said it this way. “Put the first things first and you’ll get the second things too. Put the second things first and you’ll get neither”.

The Bible says it this way:

"Your heavenly Father already knows all your needs, and he will give you all you need from day to day if you live for him and make the Kingdom of God your primary concern." Matthew 6:32, 33 (NLT)

In other words, go after the eternal things. Prioritize and put first things first and God will throw in all the rest.

What are the big rocks of life? Put God first by seeking him in prayer and reading about him in the Bible. Commit yourself to his cause and serve other people. Prioritize time with your family. Block out segments of your week to spend with your kids. Do it intentionally or you may never get around to it. Nurture your relationship with your spouse. Spend time communicating with one another. Search for activities that you both enjoy. Plan regular dates to keep the fire of romance burning. Take time for the people in your life. Don't forget to prioritize for yourself. Read for personal growth. Schedule regular consistent exercise. Develop your talents and abilities. Maybe you' have always dreamed of writing a book or playing a musical instrument. Perhaps there is a sport that interests you. Maybe you are an artist, painter, sculptor or woodworker. Find those things that energize you and make time for them.

Psalm 39 reminds us to be aware of how we use our time: My life is no longer than the width of my hand. ... human existence is but a breath. We are merely moving shadows and all our busy rushing ends in nothing. Psalm 39:5, 6 (NLT)

- Praise God For:* His friendship
- Thank God For:* childhood friends
- Ask God's Forgiveness For:* avoiding responsibility
- Ask God To Help:* the discouraged
- Ask God To Supply Our Need For:* friends

DIGGING DEEPER AND REACHING HIGHER: *What situations are you allowing to block God's joy in your life? Ask God to take away the joy blockers from your life and give you courage to conquer them. Find at least one opportunity today to bring joy to a joyless situation.*

Journal for Digging Deeper:

Daily Sunshine In The Son

Thank You for these answers to prayer:

I pray for the needs of others, especially

Lord, today I thank You for:

Today, Lord, I need

Implement Your Plan

August 30

“See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, (16) Redeeming the time, because he days are evil”. Eph. 5:15,16

Calling time a problem or tyrant is a misnomer because it focuses on the because it focuses on the symptoms rather than the disease. Time measures motion and change in activities determined by our decisions, and motivated by our goals and values. The tyranny of the urgent is more than a question about time. Tension and frustration mount when we are performing the wrong tasks or trying to cram too many of the right activities into a given period. (6)

Implementing your plan is not much of a challenge. The difficulty will come when you have to say "no" to urgency. Often other people will attempt to force their agenda on your priorities. Some of us simply need to be courageous enough to say "no" to the urgent requests of other people.

In his short time on earth, Jesus consistently resisted calls of urgency. On one occasion Jesus drew large crowds to hear his teaching and receive healing of their diseases. He healed them into the night, then went to bed. Before the sun rose the next morning he went off by himself to pray. As the day progressed people came from all over to be healed by Jesus. They had urgent request, but he was no where to be found. Eventually they found him and urged him to stay and meet their needs.

But he replied, "I must preach the Good News of the Kingdom of God in other places, too, because that is why I was sent." So he continued to travel around preaching in synagogues throughout Judea. Luke 4:43-44 (NLT)

Praise God for: His goodness!
Thank God for: the wonder of His love!
Ask God's forgiveness for: becoming an effective soul winner!
Ask God to help: me find words to praise Him!
Ask God to supply our need for : hearts stirred to praise!

DIGGING DEEPER AND REACHING HIGHER:
Ask God to show you areas of your life in which you still retain ownership. Ask God to make you willing to give up ownership to Him.

Journal for Digging Deeper:

Lord, today I thank You for:

Daily Sunshine In The Son

I pray for the needs of others, especially

Thank You for these answers to prayer:

Today, Lord, I need

Today, Lord, I need

I pray for the needs of others, especially

Implement Your Plan and Stick To It (2)

August 31

“See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, (16) Redeeming the time, because he days are evil”. Eph. 5:15,16

Jesus resisted the urgent to fulfill his mission. When the urgent requests of other people threaten to sap your time and the priorities you have established, learn to say no to requests.

Here are some simple steps

- Avoid desperate requests
- Screen your phone calls
- Put a limit on your "yes" –
- Ration your time
- Go with your gifts

Time doesn't have to be a stress producer in your life. Set your priorities and always put first things first. Make sure you're spending your time doing what matters most.

Make time to think- it is the source of power.
Make time to play- it is the key to freedom and relaxation.
Make time to read- it is the gateway to knowledge.
Make time to worship- it washes the dust of earth from your eyes.
Make time to help and enjoy friends- no other happiness matches this.
Make time to love- if you don't it will fade away.
Make time to laugh and pray- these are the two things that lighten life's load
Make time to be alone with God- he is the Source of everything.

1. Robert Jeffress, Guilt Free Living (Wheaton, Illinois: Tyndale House Publishers, 1995), 39.
2. A survey in the December 11, 1995 issue of U.S. News and World Report
3. David L. Lane "Taking Time To Redeem Time" taped sermon 1999.
4. Robert Jeffress "Say Goodbye To Regret (Sisters, Oregon: Multnomah Publishers, 1998) 93,94.

5. Stephen Covey, A. Roger Merrill, and Rebecca R. Merrill, First Things First (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1994), 88-89.

6. Charles E. Hummel, Freedom from the Tyranny of the Urgent (Urgent (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press) 131.

Praise God for: His excellence!

Thank God for: taking no shortcuts in building my character!

Ask God's forgiveness for: taking shortcuts!

Ask God to help: people pressured by deadlines!

Ask God to supply our need for : a commitment to excellence!

DIGGING DEEPER AND REACHING HIGHER:

How do you feel about your spiritual life? What does it mean to you that Jesus bought you with his life?

Journal for Digging Deeper:

END NOTES

Daily Sunshine In The Son

Lord, today I thank You for:

I pray for the needs of others, especially

Thank You for these answers to prayer:

Today, Lord, I need
