

FEBRUARY 2011

GOD-365

A DEVOTIONAL & PRAYER JOURNAL



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Source of Scripture

The following Bible translations are used in this devotional and prayer Journal:

King James (KJV)

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FIRST EMANUEL BAPTIST CHURCH
“THE CHURCH WITH VISION AND THE FAITH TO ACT”
PROVERBS 29:18 JAMES 2: 18

About First Emanuel Baptist Church

We are celebrating our 125th year in 2011 and our 22nd year under the leadership of Dr. Charles Joseph Southall, III. Pastor Southall is the 7th Pastor of First Emanuel Baptist Church. We are located in New Orleans, Louisiana and our State’s Capitol, Baton Rouge, Louisiana. For more information about us, please visit our website. You may also contact us as follows:

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Tuesday, February 1, 2011

“What’s Love Got to do With It?”

Our devotion focus this month is the depth of God’s love. John 3:16 says, *“For God so greatly loved and dearly prized the world, that He [even] gave His only begotten (unique) Son, so that whoever believes in (trusts in, clings to, relies on) Him shall not perish (come to destruction, be lost), but have eternal (everlasting) life. AMP*

All of God’s work has been motivated by the love He has for the people that He created. God took special measures presenting the ultimate example of love in His Son.

I Corinthians 13 give us a pristine picture of how love does and does not act. The word charity in the Greek is translated *agape*, in English love. This passage of scripture lists several attributes or characteristics a person may possess but if love is absent then all those great attributes are worthless.

Romans 8:35 ask who shall separate us from the love of Christ? The word separate in the Greek is *chorizo* (meaning to put asunder or cause to depart). It goes on to delineate various experiences a child of God may encounter which may bring about the impression that God has abandoned us. However, Romans 8:37 answers the question set forth in verse 35 saying nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors (Gk. *Hupernikao* -- gain a decisive victory) through him that loved us.

Love is such a vital part of a practicing Christian’s life, that Jesus commands in Mark 12:31 that, “. . . Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these.” This was given after He gave the first commandment in verse 30 to love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength.

I John 4:18 There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love.

What fears are hindering me to love?

Lord, you have shown me Your love, now I commit to sharing that love with/by:

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Wednesday, February 2, 2011

**“HE LOVES ME,
HE LOVES ME NOT”**

Song of Solomon 8:7 *Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it: if a man would give all the substance of his house for love, it would utterly be contemned. KJV*

As a young girl, I would pick sunflowers (helianthus) from yards and pluck off each petal while reciting to my own little rhythm, *he loves me, he loves me not, he loves me, he loves me not, he loves me, he loves me not* and if the last petal was “he loves me not”, I would simply pick another flower and start the process all over. At times I would even manipulate the outcome by counting all the petals on the flower to establish if I should start with he loves me or with he loves me not in order to produce the outcome I wanted. I was determined that my imaginary he would love me.

A noteworthy fact about the sunflower is that at sunrise, the faces of most sunflowers are turned towards the east. Over the course of the day, they follow the sun from east to west, while at night they return to an eastward orientation.¹ What if we were to adopt this wonderful behavior of the sunflower and arise with our faces toward the Son, commit to following the Son throughout the day and trust that the Son would return us safely to our orientation?

We are so wonderfully blessed to experience the unconditional love of God in spite of our shortcomings and disobediences. His love for us is so great that **Romans 8:5** tells us that God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Webster’s Dictionary defines

commend as: to entrust for care or preservation.

The essence of today’s verse is that nothing can be done to destroy true love and that true love is too valuable to be purchased. We need not attempt to manipulate the heart of God in order for Him to love us for the very nature of God guarantees his love. In order for us to experience true love, God has entrusted his love to his people.

Let us pray: Father God, thank you Lord for loving me and giving me the love needed to do your will.

Thursday, February 3, 2011

“DO YOU REALLY LOVE ME?”

John 21:15 *So when they had dined, Jesus saith to Simon Peter, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my lambs.*

16 *He saith to him again the second time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my sheep.*

17 *He saith unto him the third time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? Peter was grieved because he said unto him the third time, Lovest thou me? And he said unto him, Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee. Jesus saith unto him, Feed my sheep. KJV*

Today we read the Lord asking Peter the same question three times. However, according to some commentaries, the Lord and Peter were speaking of two different types of love. The Lord’s question was do you *Agapas me* or do you truly love me? And Peter’s answer was I *phileo you*, an

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expression of a brotherly kind of love. The third time the Lord questioned Peter's love, he went to his level and asked him do you *phileo me* and Peter's response, remaining the same, was I *phileo you*. Perhaps Peter was required to answer this question three times because he denied the Lord three times. **Luke 22:54-62.**

It is evident in our reading today that in order to tend to the Lord's flock; we must first love the Lord. Without that qualification, one is not worthy of tending to the sheep (the mature followers) and lambs (the young followers) of God. A confirmation of Peter's love was required inasmuch as he denied even knowing the Lord.

Our relationship with our Savior is ownership worthy. He battled for us and won simply because of His immeasurable love for us.

"Sunday is our best day for business," says somebody. Well then, so much more opportunity for you to make a greater sacrifice to prove your love to Jesus. -Spurgeon

Let us Pray: Lord let me never deny that I know you, let me not be ashamed to share your goodness with those whom I come into contact and to allow my life be an example of what having a personal relationship with you looks like.

Friday, February 4, 2011

"LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR"

Romans 13:8, 10 *Owe no one anything except to love one another, for he who loves another has fulfilled the law. Love does no harm to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfillment of the law. NKJV*

Isn't it amazing that all it takes is love to fulfill the requirements of the law as outlined in this particular chapter. If you are unsure exactly what the law is, the law is whatever God said. All those do's and don'ts maybe fully satisfied simply by loving one another. Love is a very powerful force. The Greek word for power is *dunamis* which is where we get our English word, dynamite. We understand the power and force of dynamite. True love carries this type of explosive power, which is able to blow through any wall, or obstacle, which would come between man and God.

I Peter 1:22 says, "*seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently.*" This is not love that is feigned or artificial. This love can't be faked; it's genuine and pure. We have now been purified throughout our souls by obeying the Word of God through the Spirit let us now love our brother/sister with a deep love.

This importance of loving our neighbor is of such magnitude that God says it's impossible to love him without us loving one another. He even goes as far as to say that if we say we love Him and not our brother, then we are a liar. **I John 4:20**

If you neglect your love to your neighbor, in vain you profess your love to God; for by your love to God, the love to your neighbor is begotten, and by the love to your neighbor, your love to God is nourished. -- Francis Quarles

Let us Pray: Lord sometimes it is hard to love my brother/sister as you have commanded. Please Lord help me to love as you have said I should for I do not want to be labeled a liar. Help me to move from any

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past hurts or disappointments that would hinder me fulfilling this command.

any other way. Strengthen me to follow the Leader with sincerity of heart. Thank you Lord for granting my petition.

Saturday, February 5, 2011

“FOLLOW THE LEADER”

Ephesians 5:1 *Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children;*

2 *And walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweetsmelling savour. KJV*

The Apostle Paul, in his letter to the church at Ephesus, admonishes Christians to be followers of God as dear children. Children are very easily led, not putting up too much of a fuss, usually obeying those in authority.

I remember as a child playing follow the leader and everywhere the leader went a group of children would follow that leader -- under stairways, around cars, through patches of dirt and around light posts, etc. This is how the Lord desires us to follow Him through his Word, no stammering. Just follow the directions and instructions of the Leader. Of course, if there's something we don't quite understand and need clarity, we are to ask according to **James 1:5**.

Paul further adds that we should walk in love. The Greek word for walk is *peripateo* which is translated to live or to be occupied with. We should be occupied with love and whatever we do should be done out of love. If we operate out of love then the likelihood of causing injury to the Body of Christ is severely diminished.

Let us Pray: Father, I desire to operate out of love, walk in love and live this life that you have given me according to love. Strengthen me to dismiss any desire to live

Sunday, February 6, 2011

“LOVE ME TENDER”

Isaiah 40:11: *He shall feed his flock like a shepherd: he shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young. KJV*

He shall feed His flock like a shepherd. A shepherd is required to be patient with the flock, taking his time with the flock; the shepherd patiently gathers the lambs protecting them in his arms, holding them in his bosom, close to his heart, and gently leading the young (those who are still on milk, not yet able to digest meat) to a place of safety.

O what a tender-loving God we serve! Can you feel the tenderness of the tenor of this scripture? Can you feel the love that exudes from these words? His love covers us, protects us, shields us and secures us. Thank you Lord!

Let us Pray: My God, my Father, my Shepherd, thank you for loving me tenderly and for gently leading me from a destructive path and bringing me to a place of safety and then securing me, sealing me and calling me Your own. ***Hallelujah!***

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Monday, February 7, 2011

“WHAT MANNER OF LOVE IS THIS?”

Ephesians. 3:14-19 *For this cause, I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus, of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named. That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man; that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all fullness of God. KJV*

In our devotion today, we see Paul revealing his physical position as he approaches God the Father. Paul says he bows his knees unto the Father of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named. This family represents the angels in heaven, the saints in paradise and the believers here on earth.ⁱⁱ In his petition to God, Paul asks that the people would be *strengthened and reinforced with mighty power in the inner man by the Holy Spirit [Himself indwelling your innermost being and personality] (Amp).*

Paul further prays that Christ may dwell in the hearts of the saints by faith. The Greek word for dwell ~ katoikeo translates *to house permanently*. This is not a temporary experience of feeling the presence of the Holy Spirit, but it would be a permanent residence of the Spirit. It's through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit that we would be rooted and grounded in love in order to comprehend (interpreted apprehend) with all the saints (God's devoted people, the experience of that love) what is the breadth of the love of Christ-Embracing all

mankind; and length-From everlasting to everlasting; and depth-not to be fathomed by any creature; and height-not to be reached by any enemy.ⁱⁱⁱ

In verse 19, Paul says that we should know the love of Christ which passeth (goes beyond the normal mark) knowledge in order that the inner man may be crammed with the fullness of God.

Let of Pray: As I bow before you this day Father, thanking you for allowing me to know your love by experiencing your love, let my inner being be crammed with your fullness and none other.

Tuesday, February 8, 2011

GOD IS ABLE

Romans 16:25 *Now To him that is of power to stablish you according to my gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began, KJV*

Promises have been made and promises have been received. They have been forgotten and they have been ignored, and sometimes extenuating situations prevent performance of these promises. God is able to do what he has promised. Unlike promises made by man, God's promises are true and he fulfills every one. His promises are revealed throughout the Bible. For example, God promised to make Abraham's descendants into a great nation **Genesis 12:2**; like the stars in the sky, too numerous to count **Genesis 15:5**. God's blessings are beyond man's imagination. Abraham believed God's promise **Genesis 15:6**. He believed that God was able. He did not doubt God. He consistently trusted God. A

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promise is of no value if the one who makes it is not willing to implement or does not have the ability to fulfill that promise. There are no shortcomings in the Lord's ability. God's supernatural power is astonishing.

Abraham's faith was strengthened because he believed God was able to fulfill that which he promised. He was confident God is who he says he is, and does what he says he will do **Romans 4:13, 16**. Although man might experience a hesitant faith, God is truly faithful **2 Corinthians 1:18-20**. Jesus Christ is the personification of God's faithfulness. God's promises are fulfilled in Christ. He is the proof that God keeps His promises. In the name of Jesus Christ and through Christ is the fulfillment of God's promises.

Let Us Pray: Dear Lord, We come unto you in prayer because one of the great promises in the Bible is that you answer prayer. We see your power displayed throughout the universe and our souls declare how great, able and powerful you are. Thank you for your supernatural interventions and works of miracles in our lives. Thank you for the great and mighty things you show us each day. In Jesus' Holy and Powerful name we pray, Amen.

Wedday, February 9, 2011

INNER CHARACTER

1 Samuel 16:7: "... for the Lord seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the out appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart." *KJV*

An assessment is a calculation of the value of something or someone based on various factors. Assessment of each other is usually derived from factors or characteristics such

as educational accomplishments, social standards, physical features, financial status, etc. However, these kinds of outer characteristics do not always reveal what a person is really like or their true value. These types of factors can be superficial indicators of the inner character. God does not look at people the way man looks at people. He looks beyond those outward characteristics and looks at the heart. The heart confirms a person's genuine sincere character. God looks at pleasing and impressive aspects of the heart. He understands every heart and the purpose of every thought.

The book of 1 Samuel explains that as the Prophet Samuel reviewed the sons of Jesse to select a king for Israel, the Lord warned him against being concerned with outer looks alone, but to be guided by inner character. This text also presents David who was selected as the next King, not because of his physical characteristics, but because of his inner character. Many people invest much time and money to maintain particular physical qualities that society currently admires. Yet, even more should be done to develop that inner character. Everyone can observe outer characteristics, but God knows what the heart really looks like. What are you doing to improve your inner character?

Let Us Pray: My Lord, My Redeemer, give me a clean heart so I may serve Thee; Lord fix my heart so that I may be used by Thee; Lord give me a clean heart, and I'll follow Thee. Amen

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Thursday, February 10, 2011

SHOUT TO THE LORD

Psalm 117: 1-2 *O praise the Lord, all ye nations: praise him, all ye people. For his merciful kindness is great toward us: and the truth of the Lord endureth forever. Praise ye the Lord.*

Shout to the Lord, all the earth, let us sing Power and majesty, praise to the King; Mountains bow down and the seas will roar at the sound of Your name. I sing for joy at the work of Your hands, Forever I'll love You, forever I'll stand, Nothing compares to the promise I have in You.

Songwriter: Darlene Zschech

Praise is offered for who God is personally. Praise to God is expressed externally through everyday actions, also inwardly in our thoughts. Praise God as Creator, Sustainer, and Redeemer. Praise is recognizing, appreciating, and expressing God's greatness. Praise begins in hearts that are truly devoted to God and bursting with love for Him. Praise is showing reverence and gratitude to God. Our praise is recommendation to others that God is worthy to be praised, and our delight in Him is magnified.

Let Us Pray: My Jesus, my Savior, my Lord, there is none like you. All of my days I want to praise the wonders of your mighty love. You are my comfort, my shelter, my tower of refuge and my strength. Let my every breath and all that I am never cease to worship you. Amen

Friday, February 11, 2011

THE SPIRIT OF EXCELLENCE

Philippians 3:14 *I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. KJV*

When we submit to God's Will, He dwells with us, nurtures us, and by means of His love and effort enables us to develop the character of Jesus Christ. Excellence is in the character of Christ. Excellence is not in the perfections of this world, but in the pursuit to be like Jesus in all aspects of our lives. The character of Jesus can be manifested in believers in Christ through the Holy Spirit. His Holy Presence activates abilities and potentials that extend beyond our limitations and wildest imagination, and elevates us to higher levels of service. However, to achieve excellence, we must maintain faithful persistent preparation. We must grow in the knowledge of our Lord and focus on our relationship with Him.

Paul views the quest for spiritual excellence of the believer as being related in principle to the preparation of the athlete. Both involve being dedicated and steadfast in achieving a goal. The athlete's sustained proper focus, activities, exercises, and drills enhance performance. That which interferes with athletic progress is disregarded. Similarly, the believer should yield totally to the Will of the Lord Jesus Christ and turn from distractions that hinder being an effective Christian; achieving excellence.

Let Us Pray: Gracious Lord, nurture and nourish us with your abiding and ministering presence. Empower us to use abilities and potentials to magnify you, to reflect you and

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to serve you in every way. In the name of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, Amen.

Saturday, February 12, 2011

HAVE YOU SEEN HIM?

Song of Solomon 3:1 *By night on my bed I sought him whom my soul loveth: I sought him, but I found him not. KJV*

In the 1970's a popular R&B group called the Chilites had a popular hit record entitled "Have You Seen Her?" The young man in the song pines over his lost love. He misses her so much that he sees her image everywhere he goes. Throughout the song he emphasizes how empty his life is without the woman he loves. He does not understand why she has left him.

The woman in the above referenced scripture has a lot in common with the man in the 70's tune; she too has lost the object of her love, God. She went to bed and assumed that He was with her. It is not until she decides to reach out to Him that she realizes that the Spirit of the Lord is not present. Did God abandon her? No, for he has promised never to leave us or to forsake us. **Hebrews 13:5** Then what happened? Why can't she find the lover of her soul? The answer is sin. Our sinful ways causes separation between us and God. When Saul disobeyed God, God rejected him as King and His spirit departed from him. God caused Samuel to anoint David as the new King of Israel. **I Samuel 15; 16:14** When we sin, we are telling God that we are rejecting His plan for our lives.

The first Adam's sin caused all men to die but the second Adam's (Jesus') death made us all alive. **I Corinthians 15:22** While sin causes separation between God and the believer, it is important for Christians to understand that we do not lose our salvation

because of sin. Once saved always saved. John 10:29 Oftentimes we are like the woman in the scripture, we are so caught up in doing our own thing. Sometimes it is not until tragedy strikes that we even acknowledge that we are outside the will of God. When we find ourselves outside of God's will we must follow the example of this woman, don't stay there, rise up and quickly remove yourself spiritually if not physically from where you are. Follow David's example and confess your sin before God and then ask him to restore you. **Psalm 51.** God desires to be in continuous fellowship with us. Once you have confessed your sin and He who is just has cleansed you from all unrighteousness follow the advice that Jesus gave to the woman caught in adultery, "Go, and sin no more. **I John 1:9; John 8:11.** Some of the readers may argue that avoiding sin is easier said than done because God is perfect and his standards are so high; then follow Paul's advise and just continue to press daily toward the mark of a higher calling. **Philippians 3:14.**

Let Us Pray: Father, I recognize that I am the sheep of your pasture and that I sometimes stray into sin. Lord, I ask that at these times that you trouble my spirit and like the good shepherd that you are, and that you would guide me back into your will. Amen.

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Sunday, February 13, 2011

LOVE.COM

Genesis 24:2-4 *And Abraham said unto his eldest servant of his house, that ruled over all that he had, Put, I pray thee, thy hand under my thigh: And I will make thee swear by the Lord, the God of heaven, and the God of the earth, that thou shall not take a wife unto my son of the daughters of the Canaanites, among whom I dwell: but thou shall go unto my country, and to my kindred, and take a wife unto my son Isaac. KJV*

In the age of modern technology many single people are trying all sorts of ways to alleviate their loneliness. Some have subscribed to websites; others to speed dating, while others have sought the help of family members and friends to introduce them to eligible singles. Each day we are bombarded with commercials from the various websites extolling their success in bringing couples together. Many of the websites guarantee that they will find you someone compatible with your profile within six months. It may surprise many of you to know that matchmaking is nothing new.

In **Genesis 24**, Abraham has grown old; he charges his servant to travel to his home land and take a bride for Isaac from among his kinsmen. Abraham makes it clear that his servant is not to choose a bride from the daughters of the Canaanites among whom he dwells. Abraham understood God's charge to his people, *"Be ye not unequally yoked with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? And what communion hath light with darkness"*
2 Corinthians 2:14 Are you seeking a mate? If so, where are you conducting your search? Or, have you already found that special someone? Does he or she match your spiritual profile?

It is important to note that Abraham's servant goes beyond keeping his oath to his master; he prays to his master's God to aid him in selecting the proper wife for Isaac. And God answered the servant's prayer and behold Rebekah appeared and did all according to his prayer. **Genesis 24:15**. When they returned home Isaac took Rebekah into his mother's tent, married her and loved her. And Isaac was comforted after his mother's death. Whether you are single, engaged or married, we should always remember to lift our partners in life and our relationship to God; for God is love. I John 4:8

Let Us Pray: Lord God, help me to realize that there is no love without you. Holy Spirit as I journey through this life, please give me discernment in all of my relationships that I may walk towards the light and that which is righteous. Amen

Monday ay, February 14, 2011

TRY SLEEPING WITHOUT...

Proverbs 3:24: *"When thou liest down, thou shalt not be afraid yea, thou shalt lie down and thy sleep shall be sweet." KJV*

Alicia Keys sings a song entitled *"Try Sleeping with a broken heart."* Throughout the song, pleasurable memories of the "ex" are shared. The songwriter eventually declares that instead of holding on to broken dreams, the love that was shared will be the lingering memory. The repetition of how a broken heart handles going to sleep without the one you love – *"tonight I'm going to try to make it without you..."* -- stirs up thoughts on how devastating it would be to go to sleep without the promise of rest. It is a fact that a broken heart will give you many restless nights. You go to bed tired, wrestle

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in your sleep tired, and wake up tired, and your heart is still broken. This type of “restlessness” is not perpetual because a broken heart eventually mends and your pattern of restful sleep returns. But there is one type of “restlessness” that we cannot afford to slumber. A Christ-less rest brings on eternal “restlessness.” Without Christ we cannot “rest in the Lord and wait patiently for him...” **Psalm 37:7** A Christ-less life means **Psalm 4:8** is not applicable to us: “*I will both lay me down in peace and sleep, for thou Lord, only makest me dwell in safety.*” You see the weary that are in Christ find rest for their souls – “*come unto me, all ye that labour, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.*” **Matthew 11:23.**

Let Us Pray: Lord my God, give me rest. I thank you for granting me peace. I thank you for holding me during sleepless, restless, and loveless nights. I release unto you the burdens that weigh me down. I thank you for the incredible love that you have for me. I bless your Holy & Righteous name. Amen.

Tuesday, February 15, 2011

WHAT IS IT?

I John 4:16: “*And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him.*” *KJV*

What is it that causes a parent to standby a wayward child? Why would you extend a hand of kindness to someone you know has done or spoken ill will against you? How is it possible to give the life of someone you cherish and adore in exchange for the life of someone who is sinful, disobedient, one with no care or concern for their brethren? The answer to these questions is simple.....LOVE.

One of God’s most simple directions is for us to love one another. Not only love one another, but to do so without conditions, or stipulations. We should not love if, but because. That’s why a parent can love a wayward child: “*For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church.*” **Ephesians. 5:29.** That’s why we can love those who spitefully use us: “*But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which spitefully use you, and persecute you;*” **Matthew 5:44.** It’s the only reason why God could send His son to die for us. (“*For God SO LOVED the world that he gave His only begotten son...*” *John 3:16*)

Does your love come with conditions or stipulations? If so, think about this. What if God only loved us *if* we were always good, *if* only when we showed compassion toward each other, *if* we didn’t slander each other, *if* we were kind to one another, *if* we always lived according to His commandments? I don’t know about you, but I am so glad God loves me because and not if.

Let Us Prayer: Father, thank you for blessing me this day, not because of any goodness in me, but simply because you love me.

Notes:

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Wednesday, February 16, 2011

JESUS, LOVER OF MY SOUL

Psalm 27:5: “For in the time of trouble he shall hide me in his pavilion...”KJV

Jesus, lover of my soul, Let me to Thy bosom fly, while the nearer waters roll, while the tempest still is high! Hide me, O my Savior, hide – Till the storm of life is past; safe into the haven guide, O receive my soul at last!...

“...Cover my defenseless head with the shadow of thy wing...”

Thou, O Christ are all I want, More than all in Thee I find; Raise the fallen, cheer the faint, Heal the sick and lead the blind. Just and holy is Thy name – I am all unrighteousness; false and full of sin I am, Thou art full of truth and grace.... (Charles Wesley)^{iv}

To hear this hymn song in the tradition of First Emanuel Baptist Church (pre-Katrina) on a Wednesday night at the end of Bible Study is an experience that words cannot adequately explain. Picture us. We are encircling the sanctuary. Hands locked together. There is no room for Satan to infiltrate our ranks because there are so many of us together – on one accord with praise pouring from our lips in adoration of Jesus, the lover of our souls. No matter what occurred from the final benediction on Sunday to 8:15 p.m. Wednesday night, we feel comfort and sheltered from all harm because we are back together again in the sanctuary. The electricity of the presence of the Spirit of the living God intensifies when we hear the voice of Pastor Southall above all other voices sing “*Hide me, O my Savior, hide – till the storm of life is past...*” The conviction, passion, and anointing of those vocals gives us peace in knowing that we are indeed covered by the blood of Jesus

the Christ. We are convinced that our “defenseless heads” are covered with merely “the shadow of God’s wing.” We can now openly, humbly, and full of faith beg God to “leave me not alone, still support and comfort me!”

Only the sheep of the shepherd can hear God speak through the shepherd. Only those that love the lover of their souls can follow the man of God as God leads him. Only those that love God will be obedient to the shepherd’s voice. Pastor we love you and thank God for your spiritual guidance. We bless the day that God breathed the breath of life into your nostrils and you became a living soul! HAPPY BIRTHDAY PASTOR SOUTHALL!

Let Us Pray: God our Father, we are so grateful for the gift you have given us through Pastor Southall. Please continue to anoint his head with your knowledge and wisdom. Grant him the desires of his heart Lord. Continue to guide him in his leadership capacities outside the four walls of First Emanuel. May we show love, respect and appreciation for the position as our spiritual leader. We love and adore you Lord and thank you for the experience of Pastor Southall in our lives. In the name of Jesus we pray, Amen.

Notes:

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Thursday, February 17, 2011

SOMETHING HAPPENS WHEN YOU SHUT THE DOOR

Matthew 6:6 *But thou, when thou prayest enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret: and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly.*

Do you have a secret hour of prayer? That time of day when it's just you and God. No outside distractions, no ringing phones, no television on in the background. It's just you and God.

There was a time in my life when I thought, what's the big deal? If God already knows what I'm going to say or ask for in my prayers, why do I need to go through all the formalities of reading, praying and spending time alone with Him. After all he already knows if he is going to grant my prayer request or not. While it is true that we can pray anytime and anywhere, there is NOTHING that can take the place of that magical time we spend alone with God. Many times during this period I feel that no one else exist but me and the Father. It is during these times that I feel like all His attention is on me and only me. Think about it. God is so awesome that he can make you feel like you have all His attention, yet on the other side of the world, down the block, across town, in another state, some one else is spending time with him and they are feeling the same way. As we continue to go forth in this year, let us not get slothful or neglectful in our daily time we spend with him.

Let Us Pray: God our Father, we thank you for allowing something to happen when the door shuts. We praise you for all the doors that have shut in our lives that no man can open, and we praise you for all the doors in

our lives that have open that no man can close. We also thank you for being in more than one place, at one time, handling more than one prayer request. Please continue to allow something to happen as doors continue to shut in our lives. We pray as one door shuts, BREAKTHROUGH, OVERFLOW continues to happen. IN THE NAME OF JESUS. It is our prayer, AMEN.

Friday, February 18, 2011

ALL

Deuteronomy 6:4-5: *Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is our Lord: And thou shall love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might.*

It's been a little over a year since that horrific earthquake in Haiti. I recall that immediately following the earthquake, I had a hard time watching the news reports. I was glad however, that I did watch one particular report because of the inspiration I received when I witnessed selfless love for God. The cameras focused on a makeshift community of believers. I call the people believers because of what I saw each display – pure praise. I could not understand the words for they sang in their native tongue, Creole. All I know is that they were dancing, singing, clapping and smiling. I thought to myself “in the midst of this tragedy, they can praise God – what a wonderful lesson of love.”

The worship of God that I witnessed truly embodies the devotional scripture for today. The Haitian people had nothing but the clothes on their backs, but because of their unwavering faith and love for God they were able to praise with all their heart, all their soul, and all their might. The only way we can love is with “all.” Let us prepare ourselves today to examine ourselves and to

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petition God to free ourselves to praise and worship him with “all of our heart, all our soul and all our might.”

Let Us Pray: Lord, I do love you. I love my family, I love my friends, and I love my children. I want to make sure however, that I love with “all.” Teach me this day to love unselfishly, unconditionally, and without expectation of anything in return. I thank you for the example of love in Christ Jesus. In Jesus’ name I pray, Amen.

Saturday, February 19, 2011

FIRST LOVE

Revelation 2:4 *Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love. KJV*

We hear couples all the time complain that the other has discontinued what he or she did to capture and mesmerize the others’ attention. The buzz phrases for a disgruntled relationship are: “He used to...she always...now it’s hardly ever or never.” It would be so magical if we could just kiss what has now turned into a frog or pot belly toad and that attentive handsome prince and/or sweet voluptuous princess reappears. Well, it’s not that easy with relationships. If a couple is not careful, complacency, competition, or disinterest can creep in. Then tragedy strikes because no special effort is made to please the other. A routine sets in and before you know it – the feeling that you had when love first set in is far...far...far away.

When the Church at Ephesus was chastised for leaving its first love, Jesus provided a remedy: *“Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his*

place, except thou repent.” Revelations 2:5 KJV

A church without a flame is dead. A marriage without love is doomed. If Jesus gave the church an opportunity to repent from falling away from its original purpose, then why can’t you as a husband or wife repent and rekindle the flame? Today is dedicated for prayer, reflection, and fasting for all marriages - happy marriages, young marriages, old marriages, stale marriages, or broken marriages. Seek God for healing, restoration, and freshness in all marriages.

Let Us Pray: Father in heaven. We thank you for ordaining marriage. We know Lord that many times we have allowed the world to define “love” when the world knows nothing about love. Renew freshness within us individually and as husband and wife. We thank you Lord for restoring our “first love”. In Jesus’ name we pray, Amen.

Sunday, February 20, 2011

LOVE, PEACE AND SOUL

Matthew 5:9 *Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God. KJV*

In the 70’s the popular dance show “Soul Train” was hosted by Don Cornelius. He would always end every show by blowing a kiss to the viewing audience and wishing them “Love, Peace and Soul”. Have you ever stopped to consider how important the concepts of love and peace are to your soul?

When God created man he breathed the breath of life into him and man became a living soul. **Genesis 2:7** It is our soul and spirit that makes us like his image. Exactly what is the image of God? **I John 4:8** tells us that God is love. **I Corinthians 14:33** tells us that God is not the author of

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confusion, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints. Therefore, as children of God, we should exhibit the same spiritual DNA as our Father in heaven.

A child of God is not a talebearer; he does not sow seeds of discord among the brethren, and he does not bear false witness against his neighbors. A child of God endeavors to keep the peace; in times of conflict he is quick to offer reconciliation, and in bonds of love he will forgive his trespassers seventy times seven. Does your spiritual DNA resemble God or that of the enemy?

Let Us Pray: Father God, I understand that in this life the conflicts will be many and confusion and strife will be ever present, however Lord, you and you alone are sovereign. Help me Father, through the power of your Holy Spirit to speak a word of peace to my fellow man when confusion seeks to divide the brethren. Give me a message of love that will bring your people together in those times when the enemy has sown seeds of discord. Amen.

Monday, February 21, 2011

THE LAST PIECE OF CAKE

Romans 5:8 *But God commendeth his love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. KJV*

In the 2001 movie “The Brothers”, four close friends share their different views of love, marriage, dating and commitment. The women in their lives also come together to shed light on how women view the same issues. In one very memorable scene, the mother of one of the young men gives the ladies a few words of wisdom; she says, ‘You’ll know that he loves you if he gives you the last piece of cake’.

When I was growing up, love was measured by allowing someone to have the first or the last bite. While this all seems such an easy way to measure someone’s affection, there’s still one small problem; whether you give someone the first or the last bite, the fact remains that it was never your all or your only.

When God sent his son to die for our sins, he gave his all; he gave his ONLY begotten son. **John 3:16.** Only means single, exclusive, no more. God’s gift to us is exclusive in that it was meant to redeem mankind. His gift was singular; there was only one virgin birth. His gift was not to be repeated; there is no longer a need for a blood sacrifice.

Anyone can give their first or last piece of cake to someone that they may love, but would you give your only piece of cake to someone unworthy; someone who had cheated on you, and rebelled against you? I dare say not, however God did! The gift of salvation is made all the more precious because it cost God everything; his only begotten Son. Real love goes beyond the first or the last; real loves gives its all.

Let Is Pray: Father, I thank you for redeeming me. Please never let me forget the cost of my salvation. Help me to understand that true love has no boundaries or limitations; true love gives its best, its only, it gives its all. Amen.

Tuesday, February 22, 2011

GET UNDER THE COVER

Proverbs 10:12 *“Hatred stirreth up strifes; but love covereth all sins.” KJV*

I’m not that familiar with today’s top musical artists. I’ve listened to some of their lyrics and I must confess that I can’t identify

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with the message that's in their songs. I like old school jams. The words are easy to understand and I can easily identify with the message that is in the song.

In the 80's, the R & B group, Larry Graham and The Graham Central Station had a hit single called "Love". The chorus of the song said, "Love covers a multitude of sin". How true! The Lord, Jesus Christ chose to die not just for my sins, but for the sins of all mankind. That means that he died for every person who had ever lived; every person that was alive at the time of the crucifixion and every person that would be born until the end of time. His blood covered every sin that we have committed against God and every sin that we may commit in the future. How awesome!

As a small child I loved to crawl into bed with my mother. On cold mornings she would always say get under the cover. There was always a feeling of warmth and security when I would snuggle with her beneath the covers. The same is true when I consider Calvary; there is warmth and security in the blood of Christ.

The world is a cold and lonely place without Jesus. Our adversary, the devil continues to stir up strife in our lives. He loves nothing better than putting our sins on blast before God. When the enemy brings charges against me, I must confess that sometimes I am guilty as charged, but I am so grateful that the blood of Christ blots it out. Are you covered by the blood? If not, I would advise you to get under the cover.

Let Us Pray: Lord, I am grateful for the protection of your precious blood. Father, I know I don't deserve your protection; I could not afford such an assurance package if it had been for sale. I know that it was your love that covered me. Thank you for covering me. Amen.

Wednesday, February 23, 2011

HE THAT IS WITHIN US

Titus 1:16: *"They profess that they know God; but in works they deny him, being abominable, and disobedient; and unto every good work reprobate."* KJV

How often do you display love towards your brothers and sisters or show them that you care? The bible says, in **Titus 1:16:** *"They profess that they know God; but in works they deny him, being abominable, and disobedient; and unto every good work reprobate."* That means that we, as Christians, must do more than proclaim to the world that we are followers of God, but we must allow our actions to emulate what we proclaim. It is time for us to step up! There is too much distraction hindering our relationship with God.

If we say that we desire or aspire to be like God, why don't we show love towards his children? If we are a part of the body of Christ, why do we slander each to the point where we don't come to church for God anymore? Why do we belittle our brothers and sisters based on appearance – lifestyle -- social or economic status – or their past? The bible says that God is love. Considering that, we must re-evaluate ourselves thoroughly. This will not be an "over-night" process or an easy victory, but the reward will be great.

We are to show others our commitment to God through our works. For if we do not, we mislead those that are not in the body of Christ, and that can prevent someone else from knowing Jesus. Therefore, let the God in you shine bright that all might see the God within you. If love says give love, be smart enough to listen!

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Let Us Pray: Dear Heavenly Father, I thank you for reminding me that you are love; and that if we want to be like you, we must love like you. Lord, I ask that you teach me how to love like you want me to love Lord God. Father forgive me if I have displeased you or have served you incorrectly. I will not belittle my brothers and sisters based on their social or economic backgrounds or their appearance; but I will love them because you said to love them. Today I start anew. Amen

Thursday, February 24, 2011

LORD DON'T CUT ME OFF!

Isaiah 48: 9: *“For my name’s sake I defer my anger, for the sake of my praise I restrain it for you, so that I may not cut you off.” NRSV*

Wow, God is scolding Israel while at the same time assuring Israel he is their God. In God’s scolding, God let’s the people understand that he knows the personalities, character, and temperament of his people. God calls the people “obstinate” and says their necks are as “iron sinew” and there “foreheads are as brass.” **Isaiah 9:4.** In other words, God is calling Israel stubborn, rebellious, stiff-necked and hard-headed. God acknowledges that he should be angry with the people, but God is putting his anger on hold. God’s attitude is *I AM God* -- Praise me!

God let’s the people know that at any moment he can “cut them off.” God even reminds the people the path he elects to “purge & prune” his people is not harsh – *“See, I have refined you, but not like silver; I have tested you in the furnace of adversity;”* **Isaiah 48:10, NRSV.** God has an agenda. God’s agenda is to redeem Israel from the oppressor – Babylon. God, as God, knows

he can chastise Israel, but his chastisement will not be in the form of allowing his people to stay under the foot of an oppressor. After all, God is God. God is sovereign. It is not characteristic of the Almighty to allow his people to be defeated. God said: *“My glory I will not give to another.”* **Isaiah 48:11, NRSV**

As we reflect on the mercy, grace, glory, majesty, power, authority, dominion, and control of our God, **Let us Pray:** Father in Heaven, I bow down before you. Only you Lord are Holy. Only you God are the most high. I sing praises to you. I look forward to the manifestation of the miracles and promises in my life. I thank you for your tender mercies. I thank you that you are not a God that tempts your people. Have mercy Lord on my soul. In the name of Jesus I pray, Amen.

Friday, February 25, 2011

THE SEASONS OF LIFE

Acts 1:7 *“And he said unto them, It is not for you to know the times or the SEASONS, which the Father hath put in his own power.” Acts 1:7*

One morning, in mid January, while sitting on my patio having my morning coffee I surveyed my surroundings and through human eyes all I could see was signs of death. Every plant was brown and withered. The grass was brown, the trees were bare and everything just seemed lifeless and dismal. One plant had been reduced to nothing but sticks. Every leaf had fallen off and I immediately became discouraged. When I thought about all the hard work I had put into my little garden it made me think, *“what’s the use if they are all just going to end up dying during winter.”* As I continued to sit there somewhere in the

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distant background I heard birds chirping and I looked up and even though it was cold, the sun was shining. That's when it hit me! This was just a season, one that would soon be replaced by another season for just as sure as the days kept rolling along, spring would eventually come and with it, hope anew. Just as nature has seasons, so do our lives. In the winter of our lives, when troubles are mounting every way we turn, when nothing seems to be going in our favor we are sometimes so numbed by it all we seem lifeless. But praise be to God spring will come and we will be renewed! Spring will be followed by summer which represents our mountain top time. This is the time when we are aligned with God's word and the blessings are flowing abundantly. Our children are in line, finances are in order, our households are thriving and even the problems we may have had on the job have been resolved. Summer is followed by fall which is a time of preparation for the impending winter months that are sure to follow. When we are experiencing the various seasons of our lives let us hold on to one thing, no matter what season we are in, God is there! **II Corinthians 4:16** During the winter of our lives when everything seems dreary and dismal, when we can't see the beauty in the flowering plants, when life feels cold and dark, that's when God does some of His best work and our spirits are renewed! **Titus 3:5**

Let Us Pray: Thank you God that no matter what season I'm in or what difficulties I may be experiencing, you are there. During these times let me see and feel your presence with the assurance that it's only a season and as long as I keep my eyes focused on you, I will make it to Spring and life will be renewed. Amen!

Saturday, February 26, 2011

WHEN YOU LOVE ...

John 17:9-11: *"I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me: for they are thine. And all mine are thine, and thine are mine; and I am glorified in them. And now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to thee, Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou has given me; that they may be one, as we are one."*
KJV

When you love you want to shelter your love from the harshness of this world. When you love you make a commitment to become one with your love. When you love you are careful to make sure your love is protected. When you love your heart is on overload with compassion. When you love all thoughts are on how you can keep your love close. And finally, when you love you make preparations and secure provisions for the time when you will not be able to be with the one you love.

Jesus' prayer for his disciples is the ultimate expression of love. Jesus prays to the Father to keep, guard, protect, and unite those God placed under Jesus' authority to teach, preach, and shepherd while walking on this earth. What makes this expression of love so awesome is how Jesus grafts us into this prayer. *"I ask not only on behalf of these, but also on behalf of those who **will** believe in me through their word...As you, Father, are in me and I am in you, may they also be in us,... The glory that you have given me I have given them, so that they may be one, as we are one, I in them and you in me, that they may become completely one, so that the world may know that you have sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me."* **John 17: 20-24** NRSV. Throughout

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Jesus' final prayers to the Father he keeps reminding the Father about the love they share between each other -- a love that is shared before the foundations of the world **John 17:24**. This is an incredible prayer which demonstrates the blind love God has for us. Think about it, God loved us before he moved on the face of the waters **Genesis 1:2**. God loved us before the earth was stained with the first drop of a murder victim's blood. God loved us knowing that his creation – man – would fall and he would have to sacrifice his Son to redeem his love back to him. When God loves, God loves!

Let Us Pray: Father, I thank you for a love that is so overwhelming it leaves me speechless. I thank you Father that I never have to question whether I am loved. I thank you for your darling son Jesus who presented me to you in love. I thank you for answering your Son's prayer. Lord I love, adore, and give all glory and honor to you. In the name of Jesus I pray. Amen.

Sunday, February 27, 2011

THE MEASURE OF LOVE

John 21:15 "...Simon, son of Jonas, lovesth thou me more than these? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my lambs." *KJV*

I don't know about you, but love is not something that I take for granted. I'm a firm believer that if you truly love someone that you should have no problems expressing your love. I know what you're thinking, "I'm just not good with words". Have you tried Hallmark? They have a card for almost everyone and just about everything. What's your excuse now? I'm not romantic. If you never say "I love you" or put your love into

action; how's anyone going to ever know that you love them? Do you expect them to read your mind? Even Jesus who knew all things, because he was as much God as he was man, required evidence of his disciple's love.

Simon was fishing with his brother, Andrew, when he first encountered Jesus. It was at this moment that He calls them to follow him and become fishers of men. **Matthew 4:18, 19**. Simon was leader among leaders, remember he was the one who declared that Jesus was the Christ. Afterward Jesus changed his name from Simon to Peter and declared that he would be the rock upon which He would found his church. **Matthew 16:15-18**. We all know Peter's story: he was the only disciple with enough faith to get out of the boat and walk on water. **Matthew 14:28-33**; he was the one who cut off the high priest's slave's ear in the Garden of Gethsemane **John 18: 10, 11**; he denied Jesus three times **Matthew 26:69-75**; and the old man who ran to the sepulcher to see evidence that Christ had risen from the dead **John 20:1-8**.

Peter was part of the inner circle throughout Christ's ministry. He was there at the transfiguration **Matthew 17:1-8** He was present when Christ appeared to his disciples in the upper room. **John 20: 19**. So, why is it now that Christ is questioning Peter's love? It's because Peter has left his commission and returned to his old life; he is fishing for fish and not souls.

In the world love is measured by things, i.e. flowers, candy, jewelry, etc... We prove our love to Christ by keeping his commandments. Before leaving earth, Jesus gave the great commission to all believers; we teach all nations and baptize them in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Ghost. **Matthew 28:19**. What has Jesus called you from and commissioned you to? Are you

