

The Weekly Word

May 1-7, 2017

April showers have brought May flowers. As you enjoy the beauty of spring, I pray you enjoy the beauty of God's Word speaking into your life Happy reading...

Grace and Peace, Bill

To hear the Bible read click this link... <http://www.biblegateway.com/resources/audio/>.

Monday, May 1: 1Samuel 17- Train yourself for battle...

The story of David and Goliath is a classic. Everyone knows this story.

I found myself wondering how desperate Saul must have been that he let an unknown young shepherd represent all Israel in a duel against a trained fighting champion.

Whatever can be said about David and his abilities or cockiness (see 32-37), the heart of the story is David's total dependence on the Lord.

David said to the Philistine, "You come against me with sword and spear and javelin, but I come against you in the name of the LORD Almighty, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied. This day the LORD will deliver you into my hands, and I'll strike you down and cut off your head. This very day I will give the carcasses of the Philistine army to the birds and the wild animals, and the whole world will know that there is a God in Israel. All those gathered here will know that it is not by sword or spear that the LORD saves; for the battle is the LORD's, and he will give all of you into our hands" (45-47)

David exhibits a dependence upon the Lord that goes beyond mere words. Clearly he has lived what he spoke. Faith in the Lord is embedded deeply in David. How and when this happened we can only guess.

David stands as an example of deep and abiding faith. He gives us an example of how we, as Christ-followers, should stand when we confront evil and the forces of darkness in our world. However, to stand like this will not happen overnight. It must be honed and developed in one's life.

God whispers to me... "Train yourself for battle. Learn to trust Me in little things so that when the giants you face grow larger and larger, you will have a developed faith that will stand as David stood."

Life will not grow easier for the Christ-follower. Am I training myself for godliness? Am I growing my faith muscles so that they will be tried and ready when the day demands?

How about you... are you training yourself in godliness?

Lord Jesus, Holy Spirit... train me, I pray. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Tuesday, May 2: 1Samuel 18- the cesspool of jealousy...

Can you be happy for friends or coworkers who succeed and are rewarded for their success?

Can you be happy for friends or coworkers who succeed and are rewarded for their success even when you are not meeting with as much success? When they are succeeding and you are not?

This is the story of Saul and David. This chapter doesn't give us much of a look into David's heart, but it gives us a grand and sad view of Saul's heart, a heart wracked with jealousy.

With every success by David, Saul grew more and more jealous. Saul could not stomach that David, his subordinate, was getting more praise than he was. Saul grew fearful for his future and his kingship.

Jealousy destroys any chance of working together, any chance of a relationship and even worse, it gnaws at one's inside, corroding relationships. Jealousy is a cesspool that destroys life.

God drew me inside... inviting me to see if the green monster of jealousy was alive and well in my life.

I needed to look at some places in my life...

Colleagues: As a pastor, I know many other pastors. Some churches are thriving, others not so much. Am I jealous of pastors with more impressive 'credentials' or churches with larger budgets or staffs or congregations? How about you? What goes on inside of you when you look at fellow coworkers who are rising on the corporate ladder faster and higher than you? Is jealousy at work??? A deep look now and then is good for the soul.

Friends & relatives: Am I jealous of friends or family who seem to have more of the 'good life' than I do. Am I envious of their trips or toys or families or homes or health or...

Advertisements: do I allow advertisements to sow discontent in my life?

It is only by taking time to look inside that I can see if the green monster of envy and jealousy are eating away at my insides!

Lord, help me to be honest with myself as I look inside my life. Thank you, Lord, for this call to self-examination. I love You, Lord. Through Jesus, I pray. Amen.

Wednesday, May 3: 1Samuel 19- Friendship and love...

Both Jonathan and Michal put their relationship with their father Saul aside because of their love for David. What was it about David that engendered such loyalty?

Recently I read the book *Unleader* by Jane Overstreet. The book compares the leadership of Saul and David. And Jane used these stories to make the case that David knew how to love and be vulnerable with people. His caring personality, she suggested, was part of what drew people to David. Where Saul remained aloof and distant David grew close to others.

Her lessons flood my thoughts as I read this chapter. Am I (are you) the kind of person others would sacrifice for?

Would people stick their neck out for you or me?

If not, what kinds of things do I need to change to grow to be that kind of person?

If yes, are there things I can do to grow better at caring for people and thus grow to be even a better friend or family member?

We have been created for relationships. Am I growing in my ability to cultivate relationships?

Lord, half of the great commandment is 'love your neighbor as yourself'. Guide me and lead me to become a person who loves others as You would have me love them. I pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

Thursday, May 4: 1Samuel 20- Friendship...

Not every friendship is built on formal covenants. Then again, not every friendship is between rival heirs to the same throne.

Jonathan and David model friendship at its best, two men who really care for each other and will be there for each other.

I remember reading somewhere that if a person has a couple of true friends then they are lucky.

I began musing on friendship... true friendship. A true friend is someone who cares for you, the real you. They know you on a level that goes way below the surface. A true friend is someone who can look you in the eye and say anything. If they confront you on an issue you will listen because you know they want the best for you. (I get that you may not take their advice but you will receive it). A true friend may encourage you, but their encouragement will not be hollow praise to get on your good side. Instead, their encouragement will build on truth and because they want the best for you.

I have found that a real friend is someone you can talk to and someone you can be with in silence... it is not activity alone that bonds the friendship. Presence is the bond of the friendship.

As I mused on friendship, a verse of Scripture slowly began to appear in my mind. Like an old time Polaroid picture the verse took a few moments to become clear in my head.

One who has unreliable friends soon comes to ruin, but there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother (Proverbs 18:24).

I have generally associated the 'friend who sticks closer than a brother' with Jesus. Although that may not be the precise interpretation of the text, I believe it is true.

Jesus will be for us that true friend... that friend who speaks truth and encourages honestly and relentlessly

...who is always there for us, no matter what. When we blow it, he will stick to us... speaking truth, yes, but doing so right beside us. When we have a victory he will celebrate with us and not seek to steal our joy.

...who is present with us all the time.

When Jesus called His disciples 'friends' (John 15:14), Jesus made a powerful statement. The same one who is Lord and God and to be worshiped, calls us 'friend'!

Do you know the friendship of Jesus? I pray you do.

Oh, Jesus, Lord and Savior... I sit here this morning feeling blessed that You have called me friend. I pray for my family, I pray for my friends, I pray for my neighbors and acquaintances, I pray for my world that everyone would come to know the blessings of your Lordship and Your friendship. I pray in Your name, Jesus. Amen.

Friday, May 5: 1Samuel 21- Selfishness is a large doorway to sin...

Is there ever a time when doing something unlawful is the right thing to do?

This is a difficult question; certainly motivation must be taken into account at some point. And yet, as humans we seem to have an infinite ability to justify ourselves so caution must be maintained.

In today's account we have David fleeing for his life and taking the consecrated showbread for food. The showbread was only lawful for priests to eat. What's more, Jesus points to this event as an example that the Sabbath was made for man not man for the Sabbath.

One Sabbath Jesus was going through the grainfields, and as his disciples walked along, they began to pick some heads of grain. The Pharisees said to him, "Look, why are they doing what is unlawful on the Sabbath?" He answered, "Have you never read what David did when he and his companions were hungry and in need? In the days of Abiathar the high priest, he entered the house of God and ate the consecrated bread, which is lawful only for priests to eat. And he also gave some to his companions." Then he said to them, "The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath. So the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath" (Mark 2:23-28, see also Matthew 12 and Luke 6).

I have much more pondering to do on this. However, one thing I know for certain, caution is warranted because I know my heart and my heart is bent toward selfishness. And selfishness is a large doorway to sin.

Lord, give me eyes for You, to love You and serve You with all my might and body and soul. And when I find myself in ethical dilemma lead me into Your will, which will love and neighbors. I pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

Commented [HP1]: Don't understand??

Saturday, May 6: 1 Samuel 22- Check-ins with the Lord ...

I don't always think my best when I am in crisis mode. When things are heated and pressures are bearing down I sometimes enter a reaction mode. It struck me that David, certainly in crisis mode, also wove in time to speak with and listen to the Lord.

After seeking safety for his family we read, *From there David went to Mizpah in Moab and said to the king of Moab, "Would you let my father and mother come and stay with you until I learn what God will do for me?"* (3).

So apparently David reacted and then checked in with the Lord.

What a practical and deeply God loving way to live.

God gives us brains, which we are to use. Cultivating regular check-ins with the Lord is brilliant, so that we maintain our connection with the Lord and if we need to make a correction to decisions we have made we can do so quickly and seamlessly.

Having my daily (for me morning) time with the Lord is a bedrock of my life. However, David is reminding me that regular check-in with the Lord throughout the day builds my relationship with the Lord and allows me to smooth out any miss steps quickly.

Thank You, Lord God, for Your servant David, for the life he lived and the example of faithful living that he was. Help me to emulate the good in him as I continue to grow and mature in You. I pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.

Sunday, May 7, 2017, Sunday Worship

If any of my thoughts or the Bible readings spark questions send an email reply and I will do my best to answer all questions from people on the list... I will answer personal questions privately; general questions will be answered in a subsequent email installment.

If you are reading along with me from the PCOG website you can send questions or request being placed on the weekly email list by emailing Lisa at office@pcogonline.org.

Click here for a link to my sermons on the web. Sermons are generally posted within 2 days.