

The Weekly Word
November 21-27, 2011

I hope you have a wonderful Thanksgiving this week. In your list of things to be thankful for, remember God's Word! Happy reading...

Grace and Peace, Bill

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

Monday, November 21: 2Corinthians 10- Surface or substance?

You are looking only on the surface of things. These words from verse 7 started wheels turning within. How often I live on the surface alone, not asking or observing the deeper things. I realize this is a bit of a bounce off of the text, but I seemed to hear God saying look below, contemplate deeply the life you live.

I am so blessed, my family is healthy and we all get along. There are no real tensions that prick at us. How often I pass over this, missing how blessed we are by the Lord. By not pausing to think on these things, I miss seeing the mighty hand of God at work. I think that is what the Lord wants me to realize today. His hand is so great! *Thank You, Lord.*

Even though I read God's Word daily, I can go through seasons where I forget to ponder the wonder of a God who would put His Word into written form so that I, and fellow believers, might have His Word with us. What a treasure God's Word is and yet sometimes I take it for granted. And I take the fact that I can read and I have finances such that I can purchase a Bible for granted. This pops into my mind as yet another thing God wants me to realize today... God is so good. *Thank You, Lord.*

And so it seems, Lord, that You want me to slow down and think deeply about life and to stop rushing from thing to thing, activity to activity. This constant rush of life, in which I generally find myself, allows me only enough time to look at the surface of things alone. And I am all the poorer because I don't take the time to think deeply...

Lord, this is a surprising word, thank You. Now please help me to slow my internal motor so that I take time to think and ponder. And in so doing, see the wonder of Your hand at work in my life and in the world around me. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Tuesday, November 22: 2Corinthians 11- What are your boasts

Boasting, we all do it. Some of us may be braggadocios, boasting and bragging about most things. We may even be bombastic, loud and obnoxious in our boasting and bragging. Others of us are more quiet, even reserved, but touch on certain subjects and we, too, will boast.

People boast about cars and homes –possessions. Others boast about universities attended or degrees earned. Job titles and athletic prowess are other common sources of boasting. Parents boast about their kids... 'my daughter has lead in the school play,' 'little Johnny sleeps through the night and he is only 6 weeks old.' We can and often do boast about things...

Paul makes a fascinating statement about boasting. *If I must boast*, he writes, *I will boast of the things that show my weakness* (30). And so he boasts about beatings and hardship and trials...

How radically different Paul was. He truly marched to the beat of a different drum.

I wondered about Paul's comment, *I will boast of the things that show my weakness*. What's the deal with that? I have read the Scriptures enough times so that I know where he is going. He will boast in his weakness because when he is weak, God is strong.

I am fascinated and spurred on by how Christ-centered Paul really is. What motivates him is whatever gives most glory and honor to God.

Boasting generally seeks to bring honor to the boast-er, but not Paul. Even in his boasting, he seeks to bring honor to the Lord. Wow, I have so much still to learn about living for God's honor and glory all the time...

O, Lord, I have so much to learn, so many places in my life to grow. Continue to work with me. Continue to challenge me through Your Word. I pray this through my Savior Jesus; in His name. Amen.

Wednesday, November 23: 2Corinthians 12- Who gets the glory?...

Sometimes God doesn't heal. A person of sincere faith prays and yet God chooses not to heal, but rather allows us to live with, suffer through and even die from a sickness and injury. Why does God do this? I don't know, I wish I did but I don't.

As I read about Paul's non-healing, I wondered about this whole issue again. One question that this passage seemed to answer for me is this, "Can God receive honor and glory when He doesn't heal?"

Well, with the apostle Paul as an example, the answer is apparently, YES.

To keep me from becoming conceited because of these surpassingly great revelations, there was given me a thorn in my flesh, a messenger of Satan, to torment me. Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me. But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me (7-9).

In his weakness, inadequacy, and non-healing, Paul boasts in Jesus whose power becomes obvious in and through Paul. Since it cannot possibly be Paul himself who accomplished what he does, it is obviously God through Paul who gives the strength, wisdom and power for Paul to do what he does. So Paul points people to God. To GOD be the glory!

God gets the glory when we give God the glory. The question that erupts in my thoughts is this, "Do I give God the glory in good times and in bad? Do I point to Jesus as the one who gets me through the tough times or do I take the honor for myself or whine and complain against God?"

O, God, forgive me. There are times I whine and complain rather than seeing Your hand giving me strength in a hard time. I complain. Why can't my life be easy???? Forgive me, please.

And forgive me, too, when I usurp Your rightful place and seek to take the glory when it is You who deserves it. O, God, may Your grace be sufficient for me. Amen.

Thursday, November 24: 2Corinthians 13- Take aim...

There were two wonderful devotional verses for me as I read this chapter. Verse 5, *Examine yourselves to see whether you are in the faith; test yourselves. Do you not realize that Christ Jesus is in you--unless, of course, you fail the test?* and 11, *Finally, brothers, good-bye. Aim for perfection, listen to my appeal, be of one mind, live in peace. And the God of love and peace will be with you.* Verse 11 stuck and I found myself pondering the practical advice Paul gives in that verse.

Aim for perfection, I know I will never achieve perfection, but at least for me I am blessed to have such a lofty goal. It will keep me striving... striving to be the man God wants me to be. It keeps me striving to live more and more Christ-like as I walk with the Lord longer and longer. Goals motivate me and this is a goal I can work on my entire life...

Live in peace. There is so much strife in this world, within families, communities, work places, countries, churches and so on. Strife sucks the life out of me. I imagine it does the same to you. As I ponder this simple command, I balance it with Romans 12:18 *If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone*. I find the *If it is possible* helpful because I can only control my actions and thoughts. Sometimes the other person will make peace, but even if they don't, I can choose to live peaceably. I know when I do, my life is better for it.

And the God of love and peace will be with you. God rewards right behavior and having God with me is reward itself...

Thank You, Lord, for calling me to a higher way to live, for spurring me on to faith and good deeds, for setting the bar high. And for providing the Holy Spirit who gives me strength to do the things You call and ask me to do! Lord, I pray that I will know Your presence in my life as I go about my days... in Jesus' name. Amen.

Friday, November 25: Matthew 1- How to make a godly decision...

It is refreshing for me to be back in the NT. Advent begins Sunday so it is doubly good to be reading one of the Gospels of Jesus.

For some reason I connected with Joseph as he had an agonizing decision to make. How should he deal with an apparently unfaithful betrothed? Watching Joseph, I saw a godly man navigating decision highway.

Step 1: integrity & righteousness. Joseph lived his life in light of his faith in God and over the years he developed personal characteristics that honor God. Verse 19 reads: *Because Joseph, her husband, was a righteous man and did not want to expose her to public disgrace, he had in mind to divorce her quietly*. As he considered his options, he weighed his options against general God-honoring living.

Step 2: he remained open to God's voice and leading. His mind set on one godly course, Joseph remained open to the Holy Spirit, listening for God's leading and direction. In this case the Spirit showed him another course to follow. Verse 20, *But after he had considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit*.

Step 3: obedience. Joseph obeyed the voice and direction of God. Verse 24 records, *When Joseph woke up, he did what the angel of the Lord had commanded him and took Mary home as his wife*. This step comes as no surprise since obedience is the faith-filled response God desires from those who will follow Him.

Reviewing these steps, #2 –remaining open to God's voice and leading is crucial for me. I have spent years working to grow in godliness. I am far from perfect but it has been a many year pursuit for me. I would like to think that with this important decision I seek to do the godly thing. Where I falter is that once I come to a course of action, I can lock in on my decision rather than remain open to the continual leading of the Spirit. Turning off listening to and for God's voice, is never good...

Lord, thank You for this word and direction this morning. Please help me to take it to heart and to build this pattern into my life. Lord, I want to be a man who pleases You with my life and in my decisions. Following your lead is key. Amen.

Saturday, November 26: Matthew 2- Recipe of a sin...

Herod caught my eye as I read today. Eventually he would perpetrate a dastardly crime, being considered, in our time, a mass murderer. What fascinated me was watching the sin-idea grow.

It seems for Herod that jealousy was the initial seed. I am certain from my own life that thousands of emotions can birth a sin but for Herod this time, it seems to be jealousy. Herod was disturbed that a potential rival –another king- was born in his realm.

Jealousy simmered for a while as Herod listened to the rumors bounce around the court. A murderous idea hatched. What if I can find this rival king? I could kill him. So, on the pretense of state business, he invited the Magi for an audience. These unsuspecting foreign dignitaries are pumped for information and asked to continue their search. *“Go and make a careful search for the child. As soon as you find him, report to me, so that I too may go and worship him”* (8). It was a rouse, and it almost worked.

The Magi were warned not to return to Herod so Herod’s single murder grew into mass murder. *“If I can’t find and murder my rival then I can kill all the children his age in his birth region of my realm.”* And so another mass murdering tyrant is added to history’s list.

Here in brief is Herod’s sin-recipe:

- ✓ Start with an initial sin-filled seed (jealousy)
- ✓ Simmer the seed until you create a good stock
- ✓ Make adjustments to taste, add ‘spice’ and other ingredients until the ‘stock’ thickens into a dastardly ‘stew’...

I’m not Herod, nor have I become a mass-murderer. However, I can, all too easily, follow the same recipe, allowing sin to brew in my life. Sometimes through a wound, other times a human nature flaw, I allow a negative thought to plant a sin-seed. Rather than nipping it in the bud, I let this seed simmer. It seeps into different areas of my life and the sin-seed thought becomes a sin-filled action. I am not immune from this.

Pondering Herod, I sense a strong warning from the Spirit, *“Bill, the best opportunity to overcome is to interrupt the recipe at the early stage. Don’t allow yourself to simmer the seed into stock. This is one way you can grow more faithful in Me.”*

Lord God, forgive me. Too often I allow a sin-seed to stay and simmer in my life. Nothing good comes from this. Help me, Lord, to recognize these situations and Lord, please give me the faith to act appropriately, to confess the sin-seed and seek your forgiveness early.

O, Holy Spirit, I cannot do this on my own. Help me to listen for Your voice, Holy Spirit, so that I may walk in the way of righteousness for Jesus and the Father’s sake, in Whose name I pray. Amen.

Sunday, November 27, 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.