

WEEK 4 - THREE KEYS TO A MEANINGFUL LIFE

MONDAY – Hold on to what is good



1 Thessalonians 5:21 (NIV): *but test them all; hold on to what is good*

In his final greeting to the Church at Thessalonica, Paul gives various warnings and exhortations to the body of Christ, one being to: “.... **examine everything carefully**” and to hold fast to that which is good, genuine and true. Paul tells us that we need practice discernment and not accept at face value everything that we hear or read. None of us is right all the time and Paul is actually urging us to be critical thinkers.

God has set clear biblical standards for the Christian life, founded in the teachings of the apostles and prophets, and with Christ Jesus Himself as our foundation stone. And so the single and unique standard by which we are to test all things is through this Word of God.

In his sermon on the “Three Keys to a Meaningful life” Adam Hamilton uses the wonderful illustration of Jesus being like a colander that is used to wash vegetables. I see the colander as the phrase “What would Jesus Do?” so popular among young people some years ago. I strongly believe that if we use Jesus as our “colander”, filtering our actions by asking that very question “What would Jesus Do”, we are more likely to be able to follow Paul’s entreaty to “*Prove all things, hold fast that which is good.*” (1 Thessalonians 5: 21 (King James Version))

Reflection:

How effectively do I use Jesus as my “colander” for filtering my life decisions through the question “What would Jesus do?”



Prayer: Dear Lord and Heavenly Father, give me the power of discernment in all things and help me to live my life using Jesus’ life as the perfect example of how I can best serve You and all your people. AMEN

TUESDAY – Rejecting Evil



1 Thessalonians 5:22 (NIV): ...*reject every kind of evil*

Throughout scripture we are called to take strong action against the evil that sometimes motivates other people's actions. However, Jesus is clear on how we are to treat those who act with evil intent against us "*But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you*" (Matthew 5: 44 (NIV)).

A persistent theme, especially in the Old Testament and through the prophets, is the constant call to resist evil, to stop unjust practices, and to end oppression or lack of care for the vulnerable - widows, orphans, and foreigners in the land. Similarly, the Ten Commandments also make clear that we are to resist evil as it presents itself to us.

This biblical history helps us to understand why we are called to act to resist evil. Today, we are

called, amongst other causes, to witness against racism, abolish inequality and discrimination, to speak against the irresponsible use of the earth's resources and become good stewards of God's creation.

We need to remember that the Methodists in England played a major role in the abolition of slavery, the creation of the labour movement, and the radical reformation of the penal justice and prison code for the whole British empire. These founders of the Methodist movement did not simply avoid evil in their own lives, but they organized and worked with others to fight its ravages in society as a whole.

Reflection:

What am I doing to stand up against the evils of the world that we experience on a daily basis?



Prayer: "God, we thank You for the inspiration of Jesus. Help me to identify the evils of this world, and give me the strength, insight and fortitude to be part of the solution and not the problem. AMEN

WEDNESDAY – Rejoice always and pray continually



1 Thessalonians 5:16-18 (NIV): *Rejoice always, pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.*

As Adam Hamilton so aptly explains in his sermon on “Three Keys to a Meaningful life”, that these three entities are keys to unlocking a happier, healthier and more fulfilling spiritual life.

To rejoice always, doesn't mean that we are never allowed to be sad. But even while you are crying, you can still be joyful that you belong to Christ. Possessions are transitory and can only bring temporary happiness. However, because Christ will never leave us, if we are happy in Him then we will always be happy! And so we can rejoice even when sad.

To pray without ceasing doesn't mean that you need to be praying all day. But it does mean that prayer must happen every day in

our lives. We should never stop being “praying people”.

To give thanks in all circumstances reminds us to be thankful about everything. It's fairly easy to be thankful when things go well, but must we continue to thank the Lord when we get sick? No, but we do need to thank Him for caring for us, even while we are sick.

These things aren't easy to do, but God has given us the Holy Spirit to help us to rejoice always, pray without ceasing and give thanks in all circumstances.

Reflection:

Which of these three things do you find the hardest to do and why?



Prayer: Father, thank you for being such an integral part of my life and allowing me to have a personal relationship with You. Thank You for the blessings You've given me and my family. May I live a life of true joy as I see You at work around me today! AMEN.

THURSDAY – Encourage the faint hearted



1 Thessalonians 5:14 (NIV) *And we urge you, brothers and sisters, warn those who are idle and disruptive, **encourage the disheartened**, help the weak, be patient with everyone.*

There's no doubt that people need encouragement. Just ask any counsellor or clergyman and you'll get the same answer, there are many hurt people who have nowhere to turn, or no friend to talk to.

This is why it's so important to be an encourager. God made us to mix with others. We were made for this connection, and there is a universal need to belong somewhere. We all long for the warmth of love and acceptance from others. In the Bible we read in Proverbs 17: 22 (NIV), "*A cheerful heart is good medicine, but a crushed spirit dries up the bones.*"

Maybe you are feeling very discouraged and unable to smile about life? If so, then you need

someone to bring you encouragement, and that's where your local church is so important. Church is different to other organisations, because there you can be yourself and find encouragement from like-minded people.

If you know of a someone who is down, prayerfully consider what you might say or do to lift that person up. There may be very small things that we can do, that, combined with others, can have big results for people who are in need of a loving presence to help them in their time of need.

Reflection:

Do I know someone who is in need of my love and encouragement today?



Prayer: Dear Lord, there are so many hurting and needy people. We lift them up to You and ask that You would bless them, help them, heal them. Open our eyes and make us aware of the opportunities we have to bless others in need. May Your will be done in Jesus' name. AMEN

FRIDAY – Help the weak



1 Thessalonians 5:14 (NIV) *And we urge you, brothers and sisters, warn those who are idle and disruptive, encourage the disheartened, **help the weak**, be patient with everyone.*

Paul wanted the Thessalonian believers to realize why it was important for Christians to be sensitive to the needs of others. The fact was that some people were **weak**.

This is an important insight for all believers, as the Bible reminds us that no one exists in isolation. We are not to be selfish, keeping God's blessings for ourselves. In fact, we have been blessed so that we might be a blessing to others (Genesis 12: 2).

We need to recognize that we are often called upon to tend to the needs of people with a variety of problems, and that these people need someone like you, to reach out to them, pray for them, encourage them, and give them guidance.

When we encounter such people, we should not be like the priest and Levite in Jesus' parable, who coldly passed by the wounded man. Rather, we should be like the Good Samaritan, who took pity on the man and helped him (Luke 10:25-37).

Today, remember that God has blessed you with time, talent, wisdom and treasure. Be ready to use these gifts to serve others. If you see people who are weak, be ready to minister to them and help meet their needs.

Reflection

Who do you know who is weak and needs your God directed guiding hand in their lives?



Prayer: Dear God, renew my strength and fill me with Your energy so that I can help others during their challenging days. Be ever present with me Lord, so that I can represent Your wisdom and help those in need to rise up in Your name. AMEN.