

Words that Sting

As iron sharpens iron, so a friend sharpens a friend. Proverbs 27:17 NLT

When I first began preaching, the feedback I received was gracious and encouraging. However, about a year into my preaching duties, I received an invitation to lunch from an acquaintance at church. We met, and after ordering he pulled out a notebook. He explained he had a list of criticisms about my preaching he wanted to share with me.

And that's what we talked about the entire lunch. He was a pleasant, respectful hammer. And I was the nail.

It was the first criticism I ever received. I smiled and nodded because the Bible says a wise person doesn't hate correction.

Why does it have to say that?

I don't remember all of his points, but I remember that some of them hit the bull's-eye. Some I didn't agree with, and others left me unsure. By God's grace the lunch went well, and we parted as friends.

But it rattled me.

Ever receive criticism? What's the best way to respond? When I look at Scripture, I see the answer depends on the criticism. Criticism may be **accurate, inaccurate, or actually an attack** on our words, actions, or even our identity.

After David committed his sins against Bathsheba and Uriah, God knew he needed correcting. But our Lord didn't send an angel or speak in a thunderous voice from the sky.

He sent Nathan, the prophet. He sent a person. "As iron sharpens iron, so a friend sharpens a friend" (Proverbs 27:17 NLT). When criticism is accurate, God is using that person in your life for good. For *your* good.

It's time to change. To repent. These are *good* things.

But what if the criticism isn't accurate? We'll look at that tomorrow.

Submitted by:

Spencer Bernard
Evergreen Churches
Bloomington, Minnesota

One-Year Bible Reading

Isaiah 62:6-65:25
Philippians 2:19-3:3
Psalm 73:1-28
Proverbs 24:13-14

Don't Get Defensive – 2

... the Jewish believers criticized him. Acts 11:2 NLT

A few years ago a story circulated online about a church and their new pastor. On his first visit to the church, the pastor disguised himself as a homeless man. The church didn't welcome him. They were rude to him; they wanted him to leave. He then revealed who he was and preached to his new church about compassion for the poor.

The Facebook comments were scathing against this hypocritical church. But there was one problem: the story wasn't accurate. That's what the Snopes.com site says. This can happen in relationships too.

In the book of Acts, we find a time when the Lord tells Peter in a dramatic vision to no longer consider Gentiles as unclean and unworthy of the gospel. Peter then gives the gospel to a Roman soldier named Cornelius, and he and others receive the Holy Spirit. They even authenticate it by speaking in tongues. But not everyone's happy: "But when Peter arrived back in Jerusalem, the Jewish believers criticized him. 'You entered the home of Gentiles and even ate with them!' they said" (Acts 11:2-3 NLT). So how does Peter respond? He doesn't get defensive: "Then Peter told them exactly what had happened" (Acts 11:4 NLT). He fills them in. He explains the vision he received from God, and why he did what he did. Their response? "When the others heard this, they stopped objecting and began praising God. They said, 'We can see that God has also given the Gentiles the privilege of repenting of their sins and receiving eternal life'" (Acts 11:18 NLT). *When criticism is inaccurate, explain.*

OK, very nice, but isn't this an obvious point? Wait a minute. Switch roles. Put yourself in the place of one of the Jews criticizing Peter. They didn't ask him questions before criticizing. Had they done that, they wouldn't have been critical. And there it is. That's the lesson for us.

Submitted by:

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One-Year Bible Reading

Isaiah 66:1-24
Philippians 3:4-21
Psalm 74:1-23
Proverbs 24:15-16

Open a Can of Incredible Hulk? – 3

A gentle answer deflects anger, but harsh words make tempers flare. Proverbs 15:1 NLT

What should we do when criticism feels like an attack? What is the best response? I bet we've all experienced this. It hurts, and the natural response is to fire back.

To open a can of Incredible Hulk on 'em.

And that's a great way to make matters worse.

When we return fire, tempers flare. Everything escalates. Nothing good happens. So how should we respond when we're attacked?

Grace. When we give grace, wonderful things happen.

If your enemies are hungry, give them food to eat.

If they are thirsty, give them water to drink.

You will heap burning coals of shame on their heads, and the Lord will reward you. Proverbs 25:21-22 NLT

At first glance, this looks like a way to get them back: "Yeah, I'll heap burning coals on them! That'll show 'em."

But this isn't about revenge. It's about love.

When someone sins by using criticism to tear us down, the best thing for them is to experience shame. Shame for what they've done. This can lead to godly repentance. When we return love for hate, it ministers to them. It helps them. Grace leads them towards repentance.

Beautiful words. Hard to do. But God gives us help. How? "And the Lord will reward you" (Proverbs 24:22).

Don't underestimate God's rewards. They're pretty amazing.

So respond with love, like Jesus did on the cross when He said, "Father forgive them, they don't know what they do."

Grace. Like the grace you and I received.

Submitted by:

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One-Year Bible Reading

Jeremiah 1:1-2:30
Philippians 4:1-23
Psalm 75:1-10
Proverbs 24:17-20

The Ditch of Old Identities – 4

See how very much our Father loves us, for he calls us his children, and that is what we are. 1 John 3:1 NLT

Criticism hurts. But why do we sometimes hurt more than we should? Criticism intended to help feels like a punch in the stomach. What does it mean when criticism hurts too much?

One of our needs as humans is to feel like we're good and worthwhile people. We find something to make us "good." The athlete finds his worth in sports, the successful person builds her worth on accomplishments, the attractive person on beauty, the musician on applause. The list goes on.

Wherever we base our worth becomes our identity. And when criticism pokes our identity, it wounds us.

The symptoms of this are anger or defensiveness. Or despair.

But with Jesus we have a new identity. "See how very much our Father loves us, for he calls us his children, and that is what we are" (1 John 3:1 NLT). Our identity is in Christ, and no criticism can touch that. That means we are no longer defined by our successes or failures. We are no longer our accomplishments. We are children of God, adopted into His family.

We may be struck down, but we are not destroyed.

But there's a problem.

Many of us know our identity is in Christ, but it's not in our hearts. It's cerebral, in our minds, not life-changing. We're stuck in the ditch of our old identities. What do we do?

My heart does better when I spend daily time with the Lord, reminding myself who I am. I'm a child of God, not because of anything I did. It's because of what Jesus did. I'm loved. Accepted. Adopted.

The answer is to relive the Gospel often. Remind yourself. Revisit it: "but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think" (Romans 12:2b NLT).

Submitted by:

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One-Year Bible Reading

Jeremiah 2:31-4:18
Colossians 1:1-17
Psalm 76:1-12
Proverbs 24:21-22

The Focus of the Wise

Stop regarding man, whose breath of life is in his nostrils; for why should he be esteemed? Isaiah 2:22

During their long trek in the wilderness, God led the Israelites to Meribah where there was no water. Immediately the Israelites turned on Moses and Aaron because there was no water there . . . just as they had turned on them so many times before! Initially, Moses and Aaron did the right thing—they went to the Lord in prayer. God met them in their seeking of Him. He told Moses to speak to a prominent rock in the area so that the rock would pour forth an abundance of water.

Here is where Moses erred. He took his eyes off of the goodness of the Lord and the joy of honoring Him, and he began to focus on the people and their continual mistreatment of him and Aaron. Such great anger brewed in his heart that he struck the rock with his staff, two times, instead of speaking to the rock as God had commanded him. Because God shows no partiality, even to a servant who had previously been so faithful to Him, the Lord told Moses he would not enter the Promised Land due to his disobedience.

This is a warning and an exhortation to us to keep our focus on the goodness of the Lord in Jesus Christ and on honoring Him—not on the way people are treating us! When we focus on how people are treating us, rather than on the glory of the Lord, we will invariably act foolishly. When we keep our focus on the wonderful nature of our God, on Jesus' saving work on the cross, and on God's precious promises to us, then we think wisely. As we behold God's glory in Jesus Christ, our hearts are moved to see Him greatly honored through us. Then we live wisely.

Submitted by:

David Brandts
New Life Church
Cincinnati, Ohio

One-Year Bible Reading

Jeremiah 4:19-6:15
Colossians 1:18-2:7
Psalm 77:1-20
Proverbs 24:23-25

Sunday, October 7

Feeling Good

*As for me, my life has already been poured out as an offering to God.
2 Timothy 4:6a NLT*

I was out for a walk, and a six-year-old neighbor biked up. Skipping the pleasantries, he got right to the big news.

"I'm a first grader." It was the middle of summer, so I clarified.

"You mean you're going into first grade this fall?"

"Yeah, I graduated kindergarten."

"How does it feel graduating to first grade?"

He paused for a moment to reflect. "It feels good."

It feels good to accomplish something. To persevere when things are difficult. To finish instead of to give up. The Apostle Paul is a great example of perseverance. His difficulties read like a nightmare: prison, a shipwreck, beatings, abandonment, and constant opposition. Wow.

But Paul finishes well. He compares his life to a poured out offering. What a cool word picture: wine poured out of a cup over an offering. Nothing left. He gave all he had.

But giving all you have hurts. It *doesn't* feel good

Maybe you're in a difficult season right now. You wonder if you can keep going. Ministry feels like crawling in the mud under barbed wire. A recent criticism feels like a punch in the stomach. There's yet another health issue. A core family announces they're leaving the church.

Keep going. Pour your life out. It's worth it. How do I know . . . ?

So, my dear brothers and sisters, be strong and immovable. Always work enthusiastically for the Lord, for you know that nothing you do for the Lord is ever useless (1 Corinthians 15:58 NLT). Let that freshly sink in.

The Lord sees all you do for Him. He values it. He'll use it. Rewards are waiting for you. And that feels good.

Submitted by:

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One-Year Bible Reading

Jeremiah 8:8-9:26
Colossians 3:1-17
Psalm 78:32-55
Proverbs 24:27

Yes, It Matters

His offering consisted of a silver platter weighing 3¼ pounds and a silver basin weighing 1¼ pounds (as measured by the weight of the sanctuary shekel).

Numbers 7:79 NLT

This fine verse, in the second longest chapter (by number of verses) in the Bible, refers to an offering from Ahira, from the tribe of Dan. After reading 78 verses before it, and noting that this is the twelfth time the exact same quantities of the various offerings were given for the dedication of the tabernacle in the wilderness, we ask God, "Why? Why would You repeat the same things twelve times? Wouldn't it suffice to say, 'Then the children of Israel brought offerings to Moses in dedication of the tabernacle?'"

Yes, but then we would miss a very important point!

It did not matter whether someone was from the tribe of Judah or Issachar or Zebulun or Reuben, or another. God saw. God cared. It was not a problem for God to put into eternal Scripture the very same language twelve times.

Sometimes we think that the deeds of the leaders are great, but the deeds of the newly saved or immature are not great. Numbers 7 would indicate otherwise. It does not matter what family you are from or what church you are a part of or whether or not your gift is just like everyone else's. What **you** give is remembered, valued, and accounted for by God. God notices *every* gift **you** give, and *every* effort **you** offer in faith.

God is into details. God is into remembering good things. He has all the time of eternity to remember them and to glory in them. Heaven won't run out of ink, paper, or time for recounting the deeds that you do in faith. You shall not lose your reward!!

Submitted by:

Bob Hibbing
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Decorah, Iowa

One-Year Bible Reading

Jeremiah 6:16-8:7
Colossians 2:8-23
Psalm 78:1-31
Proverbs 24:26

Monday, October 8

Two Kinds of Judgment

*For it is time for judgment to begin at the household of God; and if it begins with us, what will be the outcome for those who do not obey the gospel of God? And "If the righteous is scarcely saved, what will become of the ungodly and the sinner?"
1 Peter 4:17-18*

Both a judge trying criminal cases and a father of children exercise judgment, yet the motive and the purpose of their judgments are quite different! One is after justice in regard to the one being judged, while the other is after the welfare of the one he judges!

God is a judge in both senses. To the one who rejects God's Son and His atoning death, God is a judge who will enact justice. However, to the one who has received Jesus as Savior and Lord, God judges only as a Father. The judgment of God on the one who has put his faith in Christ is *never* a judgment that leads to condemnation, but rather a judgment, born out of love, that leads to cleansing and joy!

Submitted by:

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Cincinnati, Ohio

One-Year Bible Reading

Jeremiah 10:1-11:23
Colossians 3:18-4:18
Psalm 78:56-72
Proverbs 24:28-29

Something—Anything

[Jesus said,] "For the gate is narrow and the way is hard that leads to life, and those who find it are few." Matthew 7:14 ESV

A friend gave CT Studd, missionary to China, a tract reportedly written by an atheist (*No Retreat*, by CT Studd, page 39-40). It read as follows:

Did I firmly believe, as millions say they do, that the knowledge and practice of religion in this life influences destiny in another, religion would mean to me everything. I would cast away earthly enjoyments as dross, earthly cares as follies, and earthly thoughts and feelings as vanity. Religion would be my first waking thought, and my last image before sleep sank me into unconsciousness. I should labor in its cause alone. I would take thought for the morrow of eternity alone.

I would esteem one soul gained for heaven worth a life of suffering. Earthly consequences should never stay my hand, nor seal my lips. Earth, its joys and its griefs, would occupy no moment of my thoughts. I would strive to look upon eternity alone, and on the immortal souls around me, soon to be everlastingly happy or everlastingly miserable. I would go forth to the world and preach to it in season and out of season, and my text would be, WHAT SHALL IT PROFIT A MAN IF HE GAINS THE WHOLE WORLD AND LOSE HIS OWN SOUL?

Studd said, "I at once saw that this was the truly consistent Christian life."

The thought of living the "truly consistent Christian life" may strike us as overwhelming. However, if we truly believe in an eternity impacted by people's acceptance or rejection of Christ, it seems that we should at least try something—anything—to hold out a hand to a lost and dying world.

Submitted by:

Steven L. Nelson
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One-Year Bible Reading

Jeremiah 12:1-14:10
1 Thessalonians 1:1-2:8
Psalm 79:1-13
Proverbs 24:30-34

Thursday, October 11

Missional Living

Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day He visits us.

1 Peter 2:12 NIV

Living each day looking for opportunities to share God's love with others, I am a missionary right here where I live. Whether I am bringing a flower to a neighbor (just because), or taking time to stop what I'm doing to talk to someone, or inviting a neighbor to a meal, I am doing it for God. Wherever my day brings me, I am consciously looking to see what God wants me to do for Him. I do small things which God can then use in His time, for His glory.

Are you looking for ways to serve God today? Or are you so busy "serving God" that you don't have time for God? I can get so busy with life and doing things "for God," that I have actually asked God not to give me anything else because I don't have time. This is wrong!

My time and the things I am doing should never be more important than what God wants me to do right then. If I am serving God, and He points out something else for me to do, I need to go do it. He'll work it all out in the end.

When things are so busy, it's usually me not listening to God asking me to let go of something. This doesn't mean break your promises and leave people hanging. But maybe promise less, and hold onto plans loosely. Be willing for God to make changes. Be willing and looking to be used by God today.

Submitted by:

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Clarksville, Maryland

One-Year Bible Reading

Jeremiah 16:16-18:23
1 Thessalonians 4:1-5:3
Psalm 81:1-16
Proverbs 25:6-8

The Gospel and God's Holiness

This was to demonstrate His righteousness, because in the forbearance of God He passed over the sins previously committed; for the demonstration, I say, of His righteousness at the present time, so that He would be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus. Romans 3:25-26

In the gospel of Jesus Christ is the most vivid display of the nature of our God, including His holiness! Jesus was treated as the most contemptible criminal, though He was the only innocent man who has ever lived. He was lashed so severely that his back would have looked like a plowed field flowing with blood. He was nailed to a cross and hoisted into the air with only those nails to use as leverage to lift Himself up so as to be able to take in a breath. His nerves sent electrifying charges of hot, searing pain from both his pierced extremities and from His lacerated back rubbing up against the coarse wood of the cross as He lifted Himself. God, the Father, in the midst of Christ's overwhelming pain and grief, separated Himself from His Son. Alone and utterly forsaken, the Lord of the universe and the King of all kings died.

Why did all of this happen? Because Jesus Christ was receiving what we deserve for our apathy, irreverence, and rebellion against our Creator. He did this, in love, so that all who turn from sin to faith in Jesus might be forgiven and reconciled to God while He remains holy and just. In the suffering, in the cross, and in the death of Jesus we see, in the least restrained way, the holiness of our God!

If we can only be saved through faith in Christ and what He suffered, what will happen to those who reject His precious sacrifice of Himself? Woe to any man who thinks he will stand before God's holy judgment without the Savior as his ransom and his righteousness, yet joy to those who have Jesus in that day!

Submitted by:

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Cincinnati, Ohio

One-Year Bible Reading

Jeremiah 14:11-16:15
1 Thessalonians 2:9-3:13
Psalm 80:1-19
Proverbs 25:1-5

Friday, October 12

Why Did Jesus Say That?

And He said to him, "Why are you asking Me about what is good? There is only One who is good; but if you wish to enter into life, keep the commandments."

Matthew 19:17

Why did Jesus tell the rich man to keep the commandments to have eternal life? In the story the young man boasted, "All these things I have kept; what am I still lacking?" Jesus replied, "If you wish to be complete, go and sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me." That doesn't make sense to those of us who received eternal life by grace through faith. Therefore, what are we missing in His narrative?

First of all, we all know that no one is that good! No one has kept all the commandments, especially when we understand it is not just our actions that are sinful, but also our thoughts and motives. Jesus said, "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall not commit adultery'; but I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart" (Matthew 5:27-28). Furthermore in James 2:10 we read, "For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles in one point, he has become guilty of all."

Secondly, we know that doing good works won't get anyone to heaven. That is not what Jesus was saying. He had insight into the man's heart and knew that his possessions were his god and kept him from having eternal life with God.

In both cases Jesus was trying to help this self-righteous man understand his sinful nature and inability to save himself. Whom do you know who needs to understand their sinful nature and inability to earn eternal life? Ask God to help you humbly tell them how you came by grace alone, through faith alone, to Christ alone—and they can too!

Submitted by:

Stephen Scott Nelson
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Atlanta, Georgia

One-Year Bible Reading

Jeremiah 19:1-21:14
1 Thessalonians 5:4-28
Psalm 82:1-8
Proverbs 25:9-10

Wonder

I tell you the truth, I haven't seen faith like this in all Israel! Matthew 8:10 NLT

In Matthew 8, we find the account of a Roman centurion pleading with Jesus to heal his servant. Jesus offers to go to his home, but the soldier says no, he's not worthy to have Jesus in his home. It amazes Jesus when he asks Him to heal the servant from a distance. Then Jesus turns to His followers, who wouldn't think much of this centurion. Why? He wasn't a Jew. But Jesus shocks them with this: *"I tell you the truth, I haven't seen faith like this in all Israel! And I tell you this, that many Gentiles will come from all over the world—from east and west—and sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob at the feast in the Kingdom of Heaven. But many Israelites—those for whom the Kingdom was prepared—will be thrown into outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth"* (Matthew 8:10b-12 NLT).

Stop. Imagine hearing this. Since you can remember, you've been told you are one of God's chosen people. A child of Abraham. Your place in Heaven is assured. Guaranteed. Your reservation is confirmed. Or is it?

If the Jews took Jesus' words to heart, this had to be unsettling. Many Gentiles will sit down with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob? Many Israelites won't? What's going on here?

Jesus doesn't explain. The only clue they have to go on is that Jesus sure liked that Roman guy's faith. That's a good clue.

But why won't Jesus clarify?

Maybe He wants them to wonder first. I think our Lord likes to do that. He prepares us for what He wants to say by first letting us ponder a bit. It helps us to seek Him, to ask Him. To knock and keep knocking. To hunger for what He has to say to us. To *really* listen.

What have you been wondering about lately?

Submitted by:

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One-Year Bible Reading

Jeremiah 22:1-23:20
2 Thessalonians 1:1-12
Psalm 83:1-18
Proverbs 25:11-14

Monday, October 15

Flourishing

But I am like an olive tree flourishing in the house of God; I trust in God's unfailing love for ever and ever. For what you have done I will always praise you in the presence of your faithful people. And I will hope in your name, for your name is good. Psalm 52:8-9 NIV

Years ago when we moved into our just-built house, we admired the many full-grown trees on our lot which were quite close to our home. We were glad for the shade and the instant look of a "mature" property.

About six months later, a landscaper pointed out that the very tips of some of our tallest trees were turning brown. He explained that it was possible that the root systems of these trees were disturbed by the preparation of the lot and the building of the house. He said time would tell to see if the trees were able to overcome the damage or not.

As it turns out, they were not able. Very slowly, the areas of deadness on the trees expanded, and multiple times we had to hire tree trimmers to remove the dead or dying trees. Our trees were not flourishing!

We also planted a small fig tree when we moved. We purchased it at a deep discount because it was too mature for the pot it was in. The roots were wrapped in circles inside the pot, and it was impossible to transplant the tree without disturbing them. It had a rocky start and looked nearly dead for several years. But now it is a beautiful, fruitful tree with bright green leaves up to the very top. This tree flourished at our house.

How about you? Are you flourishing? It's okay to have a rough start as long as you begin to grow over time. As indicated in the verse above, we flourish by trusting in God, praising Him, and hoping in Him. Doing these things daily nourishes our roots and makes us grow and become healthy from our "trunks" to our "tips." Spend some time with Him today and begin to flourish!

Submitted by:

Carl Baum
Clemson Community Church
Clemson, South Carolina

One-Year Bible Reading

Jeremiah 26:1-27
2 Thessalonians 3:1-18
Psalm 85:1-13
Proverbs 25:16

Holding the Pot

For the body is not one member, but many. If the foot says, "Because I am not a hand, I am not a part of the body," it is not for this reason any the less a part of the body. But now there are many members, but one body. 1 Corinthians 12:14-15,20

Now one of the tasks I chose for myself as grandmother-in-residence in Braşov, Romania, last spring was cherry-picking. Cherry harvesting mainly consisted of leaning over the railing on the balcony off the children's bedroom into the big sour cherry tree in the backyard. Over the course of my visit the grandchildren and I donned the art smocks (our son-in-law David's worn-out long sleeved shirts) and worked away at plucking the beautiful, bright red cherries off the heavily-laden branches.

This chore was pleasant and easy for me, but a little frustrating for Lewis with his shorter four-year-old's arms and legs. Either leaning from the balcony or reaching up from the ground, Lewis was at a disadvantage.

How Coen (9) and I wanted Lewis and Elena (6) to help was by holding the pot we had borrowed out of the kitchen. Balancing on a railing while pulling branches closer, leaning far out, and coming up with a handful of five or six cherries was fun if one had a handy pot to deposit them in.

Sadly, no one wanted to hold the pot. The glamor was all in the picking. Understandable. We grown-ups tend to think the same way. The Christians we admire the most are the ones bringing in the harvest by handfuls. They are the ones books are written about. How many of us are willing to serve in the background, like Ben Brady of Oakridge Community Church who helps with the children's ministry for the European Annual Missionary Retreat? Or like Dan Caffrey in our church who has done the sound for decades? How many of us are willing to be "the foot" instead of "the hand"? But the support system for churches and missionaries is absolutely necessary! Together, the whole body brings in the harvest.

Submitted by:

Doty Vanderhorst
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One-Year Bible Reading

Jeremiah 23:21-25:38
2 Thessalonians 2:1-17
Psalm 84:1-12
Proverbs 25:15

Tuesday, October 16

Roots

They are like trees planted along the riverbank, bearing fruit each season. Their leaves never wither, and they prosper in all they do. Psalm 1:3 NLT

One thing I love about living in Ohio is the change of seasons. The newness and growth of spring. The bare feet and sunshine of summer. The crisp days and breathtaking color of fall. The first snow of winter and fires in the fireplace. There are also seasons of life: college years, new career, marriage, babies, changes in ministry, illness, empty nesting, retirement. I love the promise found in the above verse that we can bear fruit in every season. I have been in a season of immense change recently that at times seems bewildering. This verse also assures us that our leaves won't wither. I must admit that I have felt pretty dry and withered lately and wondered why that promise didn't seem true for me. Then I read the verse that precedes it: *But they delight in the law of the Lord, meditating on it day and night* (Psalm 1:2 NLT). It struck me that verse 3 is not a blanket guarantee. The promise is for those who delight in God's law. His law is more than the things He asks me to do. It is also His decisions for my life, His authority, His control.

I realized that I have been frustrated by some of God's plans lately for my family, our church, and my job. As I prayed and pondered about this, I saw that the trust and delight come from meditating on truths from the Bible that remind me of God's character and His faithfulness in the past. He is good and loving and will never abandon me. That is what I need to sink my roots into when circumstances erode my foundation.

What about you? How green are your leaves? Are there hopeful blossoms, or are you shriveled and drooping? Maybe it is time to check what your roots are anchored in.

Submitted by:

Kelly Lewis
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Lewis Center, Ohio

One-Year Bible Reading

Jeremiah 28:1-29:32
1 Timothy 1:1-20
Psalm 86:1-17
Proverbs 25:17

Lifting Our Eyes

I lift up my eyes to the mountains—where does my help come from? My help comes from the Lord, the Maker of heaven and earth. Psalm 121:1-2

We are blessed to live in the great state of Utah. We have such incredible, natural beauty all around us. Have you ever seen our mountains? They are unbelievable—the snow, clouds, sunrises, and sunsets! Living in a city with such amazing creation all around us is a privilege. But it's easy for us to get used to the mountains that we see daily. Recently, a friend from out of town asked me just that, "Do you get used to the view?" I said, "Sadly, yes, I do." It is human nature to take things for granted.

Have you heard of the mountains we gaze at right here in the Salt Lake Valley? Grandeur Peak, Mt. Olympus, Twin Peaks, and Lone Peak soar up from 8,000 to 11,000 feet above sea level. We are literally gazing up over a mile when we look to the top of some of these peaks. These massive mountains are made of limestone, quartzite, and granite.

Psalm 121 says our strength comes from the God who made those mountains. This isn't some pagan, naturalistic worship of the mountains. This is lifting our eyes to the mountains and remembering our God made them! We don't look to creation for strength. We look to the Creator.

Some Christians minimize the creative power of God. They might say thing like "Yes, God has unlimited power, but He didn't create those mountains." There are theological implications to our view of creation. If we reduce God's creative power, we reduce His power to help us when life is hard. This psalm is essentially telling us, "You need help? Look at those mountains. The God who **made** them can help *you!*"

Submitted by:

Josh Whitney
The Rock Church
Draper, Utah

One-Year Bible Reading

Jeremiah 30:1-31:26
1 Timothy 2:1-15
Psalm 87:1-7
Proverbs 25:18-19

Friday, October 19

New Tires

Therefore I, a prisoner for serving the Lord, beg you to lead a life worthy of your calling, for you have been called by God. Always be humble and gentle. Be patient with each other, making allowance for each other's faults because of your love.

Ephesians 4:1-2 NLT

I hate buying new tires. Maybe you love it, I don't. There's nothing fun about it. New tires don't change my life. They look like the old ones. Good ones are expensive—and they're always plain black.

So I cringe when the car-tech tells me I need a new set, which happened a while back. We're trying to make our SUV last as long as possible, so thinking long-term I bought the best set. That cost me a lot of money.

But it didn't ruin my day. Why not?

Because I know stuff wears out. (Thanks a lot, Adam and Eve.) This was an expected expense. I had a budget for it. In Ephesians, Paul reminds us to live a life worthy of our calling. How? Start bold ministry initiatives? Write a best-selling Christian book? Run for president? Post a verse on Facebook?

Nope. Paul wants us to be patient with people's faults.

Wham. Right where it hurts.

How? How do I do this? Especially with _____?

Make allowance. Kind of like buying new tires. It's a real bummer when caught off-guard, but do-able when expected. Like budgeting for car maintenance, make allowance for your friends' faults. Expect it. Pray before those encounters. Lean into the Holy Spirit's help. Remember, that friend is precious. Made in the image of God. None of us are perfect. There may be others praying to be patient with you because you bug them.

Moi . . . ? Oui.

Make allowance.

Submitted by:

Spencer Bernard
Evergreen Churches
Bloomington, Minnesota

One-Year Bible Reading

Jeremiah 33:1-34:22
1 Timothy 4:1-16
Psalm 89:1-13
Proverbs 25:23-24

Faultfinder

These are grumblers, finding fault, following after their own lusts; they speak arrogantly, flattering people for the sake of gaining an advantage. Jude 16

Then the Pharisees and some of the scribes came together to Him, having come from Jerusalem. Now when they saw some of His disciples eat bread with defiled, that is, with unwashed hands, they found fault. Mark 7:1-2 NKJV

Once I had a job as a faultfinder. That was not my title, but it was part of my job description. You see, I was a painting contractor. It was my duty to look for faults in my work or my employees' work, to look for every missed spot and fix it. I wanted the quality of my work to reflect my relationship with Christ and to give me an opportunity for the gospel. The problem with this job requirement is that it could spill over into all of my relationships! I could come home and be a faultfinder with my children, my spouse, or my friends. What did I do to overcome my fault of being a faultfinder?

I noticed how easy it was to look for others' mistakes and shortcomings. God reminded me how He covered all my faults with His sacrifice and love. I remembered the verse "Above all, keep fervent in your love for one another, because love covers a multitude of sins" (1 Peter 4:8). Then I asked God to help me do the same with my friends and my wife and my children. I also started to look for what they had done well and to praise them for it. Even more importantly, I began to praise them for who they were, their characters: being a kind person, a servant, being humble, faithful, or compassionate.

Are you a faultfinder? If so, ask God to forgive you and empower you to praise others instead. I think you will like the change of focus. Believe me—others will be glad you changed too!

Submitted by:

Stephen Scott Nelson
Atlanta House Church
Atlanta, Georgia

One-Year Bible Reading

Jeremiah 31:27-32:44
1 Timothy 3:1-16
Psalm 88:1-18
Proverbs 25:20-22

Saturday, October 20

The Land of Offense

. . . and while being reviled, He did not revile in return; while suffering, He uttered no threats, but kept entrusting Himself to Him who judges righteously. 1 Peter 2:23

Without realizing it, many of us live in a dark tunnel that I call the Land of Offense. Light is just around the bend, but most of those living there don't see the light.

In the Land of Offense you make others responsible for your happiness. If someone causes you discomfort, you feel justifiably angry and offended. Whole families live there. Office workers live there. Some politicians live there and even talk show hosts.

I know. I was born there. Glimpsing light, I ventured out and was amazed. It was so different outside! Those outside the tunnel weren't constantly being offended, nor were they bound by a fear of offending others.

How did I get out? I saw light from people who weren't bothered by things that would have offended me. They were anchored in confidence from God, not people. They grieved disappointments yet still had compassion. They worked toward improvement in relationships but also trusted that every hardship would be used by God for good. They gleaned truth from criticism yet remained objective because their happiness didn't depend on people's admiration. I learned from their light. I came out.

I still revisit the tunnel from time to time, and it's still a dark place. Whenever I exit, I want to shout, "We don't have to stay in the tunnel of the Land of Offense!" You don't *have* to be offended by offenses. Let the Righteous One judge others so you don't have to. Come out of the tunnel.

Submitted by:

Rita Bergen
Cornerstone Community Church
Lenexa, Kansas

One-Year Bible Reading

Jeremiah 35:1-36:32
1 Timothy 5:1-25
Psalm 89:14-37
Proverbs 25:25-27

Unreasonable Love

The very fact that you have lawsuits among you means you have been completely defeated already. Why not rather be wronged? Why not rather be cheated?

1 Corinthians 6:7 NIV

I view myself as a nice person. I don't honk my horn at other drivers. I don't yell at people, cuss, or slam doors. Someone would have to push me pretty far before I would unleash my anger. Not that I'm perfect, but I think I'm nicer than average.

My guess is that most of us view ourselves in a similar manner. We might blow up if someone pushes us over a certain limit, but we are nice up until then, and we think that limit is set at a good place.

God, on the other hand, might not set limits in quite the same place. The limits He sets seem quite unreasonable to me. Jesus spoke of loving our enemies and turning the other cheek (Matthew 5:38-45). In 1 Corinthians 6:7, Paul wrote about how there are times that we should be willing to be wronged or cheated. In 1 Peter 2:20-23, Peter discussed how we were called to follow in the steps of Jesus, who did not retaliate when being mistreated.

We might be tempted to point out that it is wrong for us to be mistreated. That's a good point. That is probably why Paul called it being **wronged**.

I draw a line between loving someone and letting them have it, and I think I draw that line in a reasonable place. God, on the other hand, draws that line in a different place—a place that seems unreasonable to me. To love like God loves, I need God's help. He has called me into a form of love that is foreign to me, and I want to align my ways to His.

Submitted by:

Steven L. Nelson
The Rio Church
El Paso, Texas

One-Year Bible Reading

Jeremiah 37:1-38:28
1 Timothy 6:1-21
Psalm 89:38-52
Proverbs 25:28

Tuesday, October 23

Four Sons Dead – 2

Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, this he will also reap. For the one who sows to his own flesh shall from the flesh reap corruption.

Galatians 6: 7- 8a

You reap what you sow. We looked at that truth in Jacob's life yesterday. It is also seen in David's life. Up until Bathsheba, David lived a life for God. He loved and served God with all he had. With his sin with Bathsheba, David planted sin which sprang up one hundredfold. David repented, but the harvest of sin was still there.

David sleeps with Bathsheba, and, when she gets pregnant, David tries to deceive Uriah, Bathsheba's husband. Deception doesn't work, so David has Uriah killed. The seeds are planted: let the harvest begin.

David's son by Bathsheba sickens and dies. Then, like David with Bathsheba, his son Amnon takes a woman and sleeps with her when he shouldn't. Amnon's rape of Tamar leads to his death by Absalom (David's son and Tamar's brother). Absalom is then estranged from David for three years. After David brings Absalom back to Jerusalem, he refuses to see him for two years. These two years of unforgiveness add up to five years for Absalom to stew and plot. Absalom ingratiates himself with the Israelites and four years later openly declares himself king. Chased out of Jerusalem by his own son, David flees. This rebellion ends only with Absalom's death. Even in David's old age another son, Adonijah, rebels and is killed by Solomon. Four sons dead. You reap what you sow.

Lord, I am sobered looking at David's life. He was a man after Your own heart, but even he reaped what he sowed. Lord, let me be wise about what I sow.

Submitted by:

Shirley Ferguson
Oakridge Community Church
Clarksville, Maryland

One-Year Bible Reading

Jeremiah 42:1-44:23
2 Timothy 2:1-21
Psalm 92:1-93
Proverbs 26:3-5

Sowing and Reaping

Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, this he will also reap. Galatians 6:7

In the Old Testament, Jacob is a prime example of sowing and reaping. He persuades a famished Esau to give him his birthright as firstborn twin for a serving of stew and then deceives his father into getting Esau's blessing, thus sowing trickery and deceit.

Jacob leaves his family and flees to his uncle Laban, and it is here that he reaps his harvest of deception. Laban tricks Jacob with Leah as a wife, making him work 14 years to earn Rachel. After this Laban changes Jacob's wages every time he turns around, ten times to be exact.

After escaping Laban, Jacob reaps the mother lode when his sons sell off his son Joseph and deceive him, telling him that Joseph is dead. Jacob is deceived for 22 years.

J Vernon McGee talks about this in his *Walk Through the Bible*. He says, "Here is the man who is clever, who thought that he could get by with sin, but God didn't let him get by with it because God has made it very clear that whatsoever a man sows, that shall he also reap." McGee goes on to talk about how Jacob deceived his father and was in turn deceived by his father-in-law. Through trickery, Jacob, the youngest, received the eldest's birthright, and through trickery he was given the elder daughter instead of the younger. He covered his hands with goat's hair to deceive his father. Then later Jacob's sons dipped Joseph's coat in goat's blood to deceive their father.

God takes sin seriously. The deceit sown early in Jacob's life harvested years of heartache and deception. As you come to those decisions of life, choose wisely. Choose God. Be careful what you sow because surely you will reap.

Submitted by:

Shirley Ferguson
Oakridge Community Church
Clarksville, Maryland

One-Year Bible Reading

Jeremiah 39:1-41:18
2 Timothy 1:1-18
Psalm 90:1-91:16
Proverbs 26:1-2

Wednesday, October 24

You will Reap a Good Harvest! – 3

For the one who sows to his own flesh shall from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit shall from the Spirit reap eternal life. And let us not lose heart in doing good, for in due time we shall reap if we do not grow weary.

Galatians 6: 8-9

Sowing and reaping don't only count with negative things. You can also sow good and reap blessings. Yesterday we looked at David and Bathsheba. So often we can get sidetracked by this great sin of David's. But looking at his early life we see the David who became the man after God's heart. Many of the psalms were written while David was running from Saul. Through all his trials throughout his life, David trusted God, and he reaped many blessings.

I also think of Ruth. Leaving behind all she had to go with Naomi, she sowed faithfulness. Ruth chose to leave with Naomi and to go into poverty and a land not her own. God honored Ruth's faithfulness by not only blessing her with a husband, but He also allowed Ruth to become David's grandmother and be part of the lineage of Jesus.

Daniel also comes to mind. Exiled to Babylon, Daniel remained true to God. He followed the Jewish law and God blessed him. When he was given a position of power and prestige, Daniel still remained faithful. Even when his life was threatened, Daniel chose God. His Lord rescued Daniel from the lions and his enemies. Daniel was blessed, and God's name was glorified.

How can you sow goodness today? Don't give up! Keep doing good—you will reap a harvest.

Submitted by:

Shirley Ferguson
Oakridge Community Church
Clarksville, Maryland

One-Year Bible Reading

Jeremiah 44:24-47:7
2 Timothy 2:22-3:17
Psalm 94:1-23
Proverbs 26:6-8

Is Agreement Always Possible?

I plead with Euodia and I plead with Syntyche to agree with each other in the Lord. Philippians 4:2

My wife Rita and I discussed the issue for hours, but we still had differing viewpoints. Since we already had grown with the Lord, we didn't yell or hit each other, but it was frustrating not to be able to convince Rita that I was "right." We asked each other many questions, trying to understand the other's perspective and feelings. We used analogies. God's Word was our guideline. But we still differed. We both believed God's desire is for unity in a marriage (and all kinds of relationships), but if two people have different convictions about something, what can be done?

In today's verse the key for agreement is found in the phrase "in the Lord." When I put my hope in the Lord, I recognize that He is ultimately in control. Under His leadership there are many opinions that I can lay aside in order to show God's sacrificial love for the other person. I do not compromise core doctrines (such as salvation through faith by grace), but I can yield many of my viewpoints to have unity in my marriage.

When Jesus faced the ultimate extreme of people being against Him, "He entrusted Himself to Him who judges justly" (1 Peter 2:23 NIV). Jesus put His hope in His Father, and in the same way we can put our hope "in the Lord" to take care of us.

So I laid aside my personal preference and told my wife I would cooperate with her conviction so that we could move ahead in unity. *And other times she has done the same thing for me.* When other people see us at these times, it appears we are in agreement, but really it's because one or both of us are agreeing "in the Lord."

Submitted by:

Mike Bergen
Cornerstone Community Church
Lenexa, Kansas

One-Year Bible Reading

Jeremiah 48:1-49:22
2 Timothy 4:1-22
Psalm 95:1-96:13
Proverbs 26:9-12

Saturday, October 27

Loving the Limelight

They love the place of honor at banquets and the chief seats in the synagogues, and respectful greetings in the market places, and being called Rabbi by men.

Matthew 23:6-7

"What in the world is *the limelight*?" some of you may be asking. "The limelight" is attention, fame, or recognition given to someone. "Loving the limelight" means seeking attention or recognition from others.

The Pharisees loved to be honored by men and constantly sought praise and respectful greetings in the market place, but they failed to seek the praise that came from God. Their pride and insecurity controlled their every thought and action. That's why they were so irritated with Jesus! The attention had been siphoned off of them and poured on this self-proclaimed Messiah. The respect they once relished was all going to this uneducated carpenter's son from Galilee. They were insanely jealous to the point where murdering this man was necessary to regain the limelight. That's what pride can do to all of us.

Here is the difficult part. How are you doing with the limelight? Are you like the Pharisees who craved attention, or are you fine when not recognized because you live for God's approval? Have you ever made a sincere effort to serve others and then realized no one noticed or appreciated your hard work? I love to live with nothing to lose and nothing to prove.

We can see through the lie and defeat our selfish nature. The lie is that I need the approval, recognition, and praise of others to live and thrive. The truth is, I am loved by my precious Savior, and that is enough. Living in a place of contentment with Christ takes vigilance on our part. By reading God's word and trusting Him to lead us, as well receiving the encouragement and prayers of the saints, we can live in Christ's limelight!

Submitted by:

Stephen Scott Nelson
Atlanta House Church
Atlanta, Georgia

One-Year Bible Reading

Jeremiah 51:1-53
Titus 2:1-15
Psalm 99:1-9
Proverbs 26:17

"Hey, That's My Wife Singing . . ."

As the Scriptures say, "If you want to boast, boast only about the Lord." 2 Corinthians 10:17 NLT

The Starbucks I'm at is playing a "Best of the Eighties" playlist. "Human" by the Human League flows out of the speaker above me. Looking up from my book, I listen to my wife singing on the track. She used to sing background vocals on many hit records.

"I'm only human . . ."

I want to tell someone. Maybe tap a stranger on the shoulder and say, "Hey, that's my wife singing!"

I did that once.

I was at the counter ordering, and an old song Lisa sang on was playing. Pointing to the speakers, I told the barista.

"Hey, that's my wife singing."

"Cool, good for you."

Uh oh... She thinks I'm nuts.

I almost responded with "No, no, it's true! You gotta believe me . . ." but then an image of being escorted out by security flashed in my mind.

This time I stayed quiet.

But I wanted to boast. We all want to. Who doesn't want a little glory for our accomplishments, or the success of those dear to us?

But this verse gives us a healthy perspective: "When people commend themselves, it doesn't count for much. The important thing is for the Lord to commend them" (2 Corinthians 10:18 NLT).

What matters is God's opinion. When we live for His praise, rather than people's applause, it helps us relax. We don't have to make sure people know cool stuff about us. No need to impress. We can rest.

Plus, I think the Lord was enjoying Lisa's singing right along with me.

Submitted by:

Spencer Bernard
Evergreen Churches
Bloomington, Minnesota

One-Year Bible Reading

Jeremiah 49:23-50:46
Titus 1:1-16
Psalm 97:1-98:9
Proverbs 26:13-16

Sunday, October 28

Royal

Therefore it is against the Lord that you and all your company have gathered together. What is Aaron that you grumble against him? Numbers 16:11 ESV

In the book of Numbers 16 we read about some men who rebel against Moses and Aaron. They are angry because they think Moses and Aaron are making themselves out to be more holy than the rest of the Israelites. These men are envious of the *position* Moses and Aaron have among the congregation of Israel. Instead of going to the Lord, however (with humble and thankful hearts for being His chosen people), they grumble and rebel. They are not satisfied with their relationship or position with God. They want position among men. They want to be recognized as great in Israel.

What these men don't understand is that Moses and Aaron haven't set themselves up in their respective positions. God has. They also don't realize that they are not grumbling and rebelling against Moses and Aaron alone; they are grumbling and rebelling against God Himself.

Not all Christians are called to do and be the same. God has made us all different parts of the same Body (1 Corinthians 12:12). We need to remember who God says we are. We need to meditate on our identity in Christ. 1 Peter 2:9 (ESV) tells us we are "a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that we may proclaim the excellencies of him who called us out of darkness into his marvelous light." Did you catch that? As a Christian, you have what the rebellious men in Numbers 16 wanted—a royal priesthood that only God can give. He freely gives us His royal inheritance and a relationship with Him.

Instead of grumbling against God, let's thank Him that we are His chosen race, His royal priesthood, His holy nation, His own possession.

Submitted by:

Billy Johnson
The Rock Church
Draper, Utah

One-Year Bible Reading

Jeremiah 51:54-52:34
Titus 3:1-15
Psalm 100:1-5
Proverbs 26:18-19

Greatness

About that time the disciples came to Jesus and asked, "Who is greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven?" Matthew 18:1 NLT

Lisa and I are going to her class reunion in a couple of weeks. We went to the same high school, so I know many people who will be there. I already know what I'm wearing. Blue sport coat, jeans and V-neck white T.

How vain is that? I'll probably edit that part out later.

People are like that. We're competitive, expressed in different ways. Our house, job, accomplishments, talents, appearance, whatever. We want to be the best. The best at *something*. The disciples were the same. They competed over status. Who would be the greatest?

But what did Jesus do? "*Jesus called a little child to him and put the child among them. Then he said, 'I tell you the truth, unless you turn from your sins and become like little children, you will never get into the Kingdom of Heaven. So anyone who becomes as humble as this little child is the greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven' (Matthew 18:1-4 NLT).*

Wait a minute. You'd think Jesus would point to Himself and say, "I'm the greatest." Why did He spotlight this little kid? In those days kids had zero status. Parents regarded them as property, the opposite of "great." A kid would never argue with the disciples about being the greatest.

And there it is. Jesus *is* pointing to Himself. Jesus created the world and yet entered it in the humblest way possible. Instead of claiming greatness, He allowed himself to be arrested, beaten, whipped, and spat on. Though sinless, He died a criminal's death on the cross.

Jesus helped His disciples to see His nature by giving them a surprise. He showed them a child, the least among them. And in that child, we get a fresh look at the beautiful humility of our Savior.

Wow. A child. Greatness.

Submitted by:

Spencer Bernard
Evergreen Churches
Bloomington, Minnesota

One-Year Bible Reading

Lamentations 1:1-2:22
Philemon 1:1-25
Psalm 101:1-8
Proverbs 26:20

God Wants to *Bling* You!

My son, hear the instruction of your father, and do not forsake the law of your mother; for they will be graceful ornaments on your head, and chains about your neck. Proverbs 1:8-9 NKJV

Let's start with this: everyone wants to look good. No matter what in-born beauty or handsomeness we may possess, we all want to maximize our attractiveness.

You don't have to look far to see to what lengths people will go to adorn themselves. For those who can afford it, jewelry features diamond earrings, diamond necklaces, gold or silver or platinum bracelets, and various gems everywhere. Celebrities can rent million-dollar necklaces for their moments in the spotlight. *Bling!*

Here's a less expensive way to shine—and to live longer: honor your father and your mother. The Apostle Paul tells us, "Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. 'Honor your father and mother,' which is the first command with promise: 'that it may be well with you and you may live long on the earth'" (Ephesians 6:1-3 NKJV).

People who honor their parents have a light in their eyes and a glow in their countenances that no gem or precious metal can effect. The reverse is also true (and I've seen it multiple times): the light goes out when a person dishonors his or her parents: "*Whoever curses his father or his mother, his lamp will be put out in deep darkness*" (Proverbs 20:20 NKJV).

(To those who grew up with an abusive parent, I say this: Forgive the bad and focus on the good. I know this is easier to say than to achieve, but all effective counseling is designed with this as a goal.)

God wants to "bling" us. All we need to do is to honor our parents and their instructions in our lives. When we hear, follow, and honor our parents, God will bling us and we will be attractive witnesses for Jesus!

Submitted by:

Tom Dunham
Cottonwood Community Church
Grand Forks, North Dakota

One-Year Bible Reading

Lamentations 3:1-66
Hebrews 1:1-14
Psalm 102:1-28
Proverbs 26:21-22

Wednesday, October 31

Whose Kingdom?

Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; a man's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions. Luke 12:15 NIV

Halloween can be a candy paradise for kids! I remember the years that our kids would go scavenging through the neighborhood in costume, gathering goodies, reaping enough treats to keep their sweet tooth satisfied with small daily doses until Christmas! Part of their excitement was dumping out each of their bags upon returning home and surveying their personal acquisition of sugary treasure . . . It was a satisfying evening of "work" for them with rich rewards. Candy was in the house for days to come!

The Bible tells us about a man who also liked to accumulate. In this case, it was large crops that equated to large amounts of capital. Larger crops required larger barns. It was his savings plan: "plenty of good things laid up for many years" (Luke 12: 19 NIV). In his thinking, he was prepared and secure for all of his tomorrows.

Little did this man know what his future held, however. He had no tomorrow. He died that night. Instead of many years, his days were cut short with his savings plan left behind, doing nothing for his eternity.

It is so easy to adopt this man's mindset. Our world tells us, "Accumulate! Gather up resources for yourself; think about YOU. What will make life easy, secure, and most comfortable for you today and for all your retirement years to come?"

This mindset, however, does not take into account the most important area of wealth. Being rich toward God means letting Him satisfy your heart and serving Him with an eye toward what will really last, rewards with eternal dividends. Make it your goal to be rich in those things that God considers of greatest value, seeking first *His* kingdom, not yours!

Submitted by:

Dawn Bovenmeyer
Stonebrook Community Church
Ames, Iowa

One-Year Bible Reading

Lamentations 4:1-5:22
Hebrews 2:1-18
Psalm 103:1-22
Proverbs 26:23