

Daily Family Devotions

The thought begins in the Bible verse;
please take the time to read it first.

FRIDAY

“WHAT DO YOU DO WITH A HURT?”

SCRIPTURE: Luke 23:32-34; Acts 7:58-60

Possibly one of the hardest things which a Christian must learn to do is to face injury or undeserved hurt objectively: leaving self out of it.

Our first reaction when we are betrayed or injured in some way is to be angry, resentful, hostile. This is natural – the natural reaction of a person who is not familiar with the divine dynamics of setting self aside as secondary to others.

People seldom hurt us because of something we have done to them. As a rule, their hostility often stems from another strictly personal source – or it may be the result of a chain reaction – someone hurts them, they lash out at you; something goes wrong, they take it out in irritation.

Christ’s way of reacting will accomplish three things: it asks “why?” and by focusing our attention on the needs of the other person – in seeing the hurt and trouble there, we forget self for the moment; it reverses negative action into positive, loving action, for we seldom can see another’s problem without wanting to reach out to help; and when we reach out a helping hand, anger will drop away from us like a loose cape . . .

The old adages – “Two wrongs don’t make a right . . . turn the other cheek . . . heap coals of fire on their head” are deep psychological, spiritual insights into human relationships.

Prayer: Lord, only love like Thine can turn hot anger into the warmth of love. Teach me the secret of this divine alchemy, I pray. AMEN

SATURDAY

“WHEN GRIEF TURNS RANCID”

SCRIPTURE:

II Samuel 19:1-8

Matthew 6:16-18

Grief is a natural emotion in anyone who loves and suffers a loss. But grief – like many good things – can become rancid and wrong if we hold it too long.

In this passage, David is grieving over the loss of his son, Absalom – a son who had never brought anything but rebellion and injury to his father’s household. But David’s grief has become selfish; so immersed is he that he thinks only of himself while his people – who have just risked their lives to win a battle his own son had started against him – wait for their king’s thanks. Weary and spent, they see only his self-pity for himself.

God always stoops to us when our grief is fresh and pure; He, too, has lost a son. But grief held too long becomes self-pity and – like rancid oil – becomes offensive to both people and God.

Is your grief still eating like acid in your heart? What is the specific point of your grief – a loss which cannot be replaced? Anger that it should have happened to you? Anger toward God for letting it happen? Or simply a masochistic desire to go on suffering?

Be honest. Take a good look. Give it to God and begin to make something of the life you still have.

Prayer: O Father, it is so easy to enclose myself in a capsule of solitary self-pity. Teach me that all of my life is in Thy keeping and only as I surrender it all, can I know peace. AMEN

MONDAY, JANUARY 17, 2022

“WHEN IS IT WRONG?”

SCRIPTURE:

Matthew 23:23-28

A teenage girl was apprehended by the police for stealing a valuable piece of jewelry from a friend of her mother’s. When her parents were informed that she was being held for theft, they were outraged . . . “She is not a thief! She didn’t need the jewelry – she has all the money she can possibly need.”

What constitutes wrong? Is an act any less wrong because the person accused of it is “nice”? What is a nice person – one who is popular, wealthy, educated?

A drunkard in skid row is looked on with disgust – but tolerated with amusement at a “nice” party. The same act of immorality which brings looks of distaste in a tenement, suddenly loses its coarseness in “polite” society. Lying, infidelity, godlessness and dishonesty are never taken lightly by God, nor weighed according to who commits them – for these are indications of a person’s spiritual or inner state. Jesus was looking through the rich robes of the Pharisees when He condemned their hypocrisy – straight to the heart of the matter, to the soul, which was dying of spiritual malnutrition.

How much of your conduct is being excused because you are a “nice person”? If you stood in rags – or before Christ – how would it appear then?

Prayer: Father, teach me that You always look at the heart, and that men, too, soon learn to know what lies beneath the niceties of life. Grant me purity and honesty before Thee. AMEN

TUESDAY

“COALS OF FIRE TO WARM YOU”

SCRIPTURE:
Romans 12:17-21

In certain middle-eastern countries, especially in Jesus’ time, the women would arise before light to begin to bake their flat loaves of bread. In every village, a young boy was chosen to distribute the live coals – one to each woman – to ignite her individual fire. The container of coals was carried on a turban on his head, and since the mornings were often chilly and he had little else to warm him, the task was held to be an honor and much sought after, and only the most deserving boys were selected.

But there was another reason this was held to be an honor. It was believed that the seat of wisdom and spiritual grace was in the head, and so the boy was doubly blessed since the warmth of the coals stimulated not only his physical well-being but his spiritual and mental as well.

So when Paul quotes, “Heap coals of fire on their heads – ”*, he was not referring to vengeance. He was talking of the unexpected warmth of love in a cold world, of stimulating forgiveness and quietness, wisdom, and understanding where there is only human anger and bitterness. Such an act is not easily forgotten . . .

**Proverbs 25:22*

Prayer: God, help me to be such a person, who can make an enemy feel the kind of love that melts anger and bitterness. Make my love spontaneous, not self-righteous; help me really to feel the love that leads to release of all enmity and hate. AMEN

WEDNESDAY

“YOUR IMAGE AS AN IDOL”

SCRIPTURE:
Luke 19:35-42, 45-46

In this passage, Christ had just finished entering Jerusalem as the king of the Jews. If ever it was a time to guard the people’s image of Him, it was now.

Yet the first act He did on dismounting was to go into the temple, overturn the tables of the money changers, and drive the dealers out of the court. Why should Jesus turn against His own people? Why did He not take a whip to the Roman slave traders in the marketplace?

Because Jesus had been sent first to His own people, as their ruler – to make them an example of purity, Godliness and obedience in a world that was anything but this. He had the right to chastise His own, for they had been told of His coming – they alone had been prepared for a Messiah. Yet they had forgotten it was for this spiritual leadership, for this unique role He had come.

In acting as He did, He remained true to the image God desired Him to present; yet how easy it would have been for Him to have bowed to the ambitions of a restless people! How easily He could have become another social revolutionary.

Are we falling to this temptation today – afraid of ruining our popular image before the crowd, rather than uphold God’s will for us?

Prayer: O God, please make Thy will clear to me that I may always serve Thee first and not men’s whims. AMEN

THURSDAY

“WOULD YOU TRADE IT?”

SCRIPTURE:
Hebrews 12:1-11

Have you ever put yourself in the position of Christian martyrs – and wondered what you would have done in their place? Could you have held up – would you have *wanted* to? How easily would you have traded your faith for “safety” or “life”?

Perhaps you are already answering that question today without knowing it. Those Christians who died in the Roman arenas were not “instant heroes.” All great struggles are first waged in the heart before they are proven on the battleground, and so their battles had already been won or lost in those tense, lonely weeks before the gates were opened to the lions.

The courage Christ displayed before the crowds on Golgotha was forged on His knees the night before as He agonized with God, and wrestled – as you wrestle, with your fears.

Today, those agonizing decisions you are having to make are giving you already the strength you never thought you would have, making you the kind of person you once looked at with awe.

For each small victory you win is taking you closer to the “cloud of witnesses” who surround you now, or who have gone on before – people who did not trade their faith, their God for popularity, wealth or safety. The more you fight to keep your Christ – the closer He will keep you.

Prayer: Dear Lord, help me to realize that courage comes from conviction – and that strength comes with daily, faithful exercise of trust in You. I want to be one of the strong ones. AMEN