

Devotions – October 4-10, 2015

By Karen Carter

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Sunday, December 27, 2015

Let God Illuminate Your Mind

Text: Psalm 19:8

“The precepts of the LORD are right, giving joy to the heart. The commands of the LORD are radiant, giving light to the eyes.”

The Psalmist writes: “The commands of the LORD are radiant, giving light to the eyes.” God can put an idea in your mind that changes the direction of your life. Marconi had an idea from which came the radio. Bell had an idea from which came the telephone. God, who is the creator, gives creative ideas to people all the time. But you must act on them. Otherwise He may give them to someone else. Is it time for you to ask Him for one of His ideas for your life? It is well and good that you believe that God is wonderful; equally wonderful is that God believes in you! Instead of looking at your present situation and thinking, “I guess my life is as good as it’s ever going to get,” start asking, “LORD, what do You have in mind for me?” If you let it, life can beat you down and make you feel low, lost, lacking, and definitely limited in ability and potential. If you act on those feelings and thoughts instead of what God says about you in His Word, you’ll never move forward and fulfill what He put you on the earth to do. You say, “God never gave me any such great idea.” Perhaps it is because you never asked for one! He gives them to seeking hearts, prepared hearts, faith-filled hearts, and obedient hearts. Here is a profile of the person to whom God gives great ideas: “His delight is in the law of the LORD, and on His law he meditates day and night. Whatever he does shall prosper.” (Psalm 1:2, 3)

We pray: *Heavenly Father, what’s next in my life? Give me an idea on which I can act; I trust You to use me. In Jesus’ name, Amen.*



Monday, December 28, 2015

Simply Serving

In his book “The Pursuit of Excellence,” Ted Engstrom writes, “I was cleaning out my desk drawer when I found a flashlight I hadn’t used in years. I flipped the switch but wasn’t surprised when it gave no light. I unscrewed it and shook it to get the batteries out, but they wouldn’t budge. Finally, after some effort, they came loose. What a mess! Battery acid had completely corroded the entire inside of the battery. The batteries were new when I put them in, and I’d stored them in a warm, safe place. But there was just one problem: those batteries weren’t made

to be warm and comfortable. They were designed to be used. It's the same with us: You and I were made to be turned on. Constantly remind yourself that first and foremost you're called to be God's servant. That way, interruptions won't frustrate you. "Whenever we have opportunity, we have to do what is good" (Galatians 6:10). Be sensitive and spontaneous; otherwise great opportunities to serve may pass you by. "Never tell your neighbor to wait until tomorrow if you can help them now" (Proverbs 3:28). Look for small tasks nobody else wants to do. Then do them as if they were great things. God sees it all. Make yourself available. Don't fill your time with pursuits that limit your availability. Be ready to jump into service at a moment's notice. Allow God to change your plans without becoming resentful. As a servant, you don't get to choose where you'll serve. God does.

Let us pray: *Heavenly Father, help me to serve no matter what or when it is. Help me to be ready and available to do Your will. In Jesus' name, Amen.*

Tuesday, December 29, 2015

Stop Trying to Second-Guess God



"For My thoughts are not your thoughts; neither are your ways my ways," declares the LORD.

Are you doing what you believe to be God's will but things aren't working out as you expected? God has a different perspective—a better one. It's okay to question Him, but not to double and second-guess Him. In His word He says, "My thoughts are not your thoughts; nor are your ways my ways." When God told Moses he was going to deliver the Israelites from Egypt, Moses was all for it. But things didn't go as Moses thought: Pharaoh made their lives harder for a while. So, instead of becoming a hero, Moses lived through a season of being criticized and misunderstood. Later, when other things didn't turn out as Moses expected, he got discouraged and complained, "Lord, how can you mistreat your own people like this? Why did You even send me if you were going to do this to them? (Exodus 5:22) Moses didn't understand the results of his obedience because God didn't tell him exactly how things would turn out. Usually our frustrations have very little to do with what God does or doesn't do, and everything to do with our mistaken ideas about what we think He should do. When you assume (or try to analyze God), you always end up frustrated. Jesus told His disciples, "You don't really know what I am doing, but later you will understand." (John 13:7) It's only in looking back that you see how the Lord has led you. He is the best at what He does, and His track record proves it. So, trust God and stop trying to second-guess Him.

Let us pray: *Heavenly Father, even when doing Your will my way runs into conflict with Your way. Help me just to do it Your way (and save a lot of aggravation for both of us.) In Jesus' name. Amen.*



Wednesday, December 30, 2015

Seeing the Hand of God in It

Text: Matthew 26:50

Jesus replied, "Friend, do what you came for." Then the men stepped forward, seized Jesus, and arrested Him.

Jesus looked at Judas in Gethsemane and said, "Friend, do what you came to do."

It's hard to imagine what Jesus saw in Judas that made him worthy to be called 'friend.' But Jesus sees something good in every bad situation. And it would help if we did the same. How? Again, Jesus gives us guidance. He didn't place the blame on Judas; He saw another force at work. "This is ... the time when darkness rules." (Luke 22:53) Judas wasn't acting alone, and neither are your attackers. Paul says, "Our fight is not against people on earth but against the rulers and authorities and the powers of this world's darkness, against the spiritual powers of evil in the heavenly world." (Ephesians 6:12) Those who attack and betray us are victims of a fallen world. We can't place all the blame on them. Jesus found enough good in Judas to call him 'friend' and He can help us to do the same with those who hurt us. Even though Judas didn't understand or intend to, he played a vital role in ushering Jesus into His destiny. Of the 98 words Jesus spoke at His arrest, 30 of them were about the purpose of God. "It must happen this way to bring about what the Scriptures say ... All these things have happened so that it will come about as the prophets wrote." (Matthew 26:54-56) Jesus understood that His immediate struggle was part of a much greater plan. He saw the hand of God at work in it. If you pay careful attention, you will see His hand at work in your struggle, too.

Let us pray: *Heavenly Father, give us the wisdom and patience to see Your hand in the struggles in our lives. In Jesus' name. Amen.*



Thursday, December 31, 2015

Confront Your Fear

Text: I Corinthians 2:5

"...So that your faith might not rest on men's wisdom, but on God's power."

One of the greatest breakthroughs in modern psychology is the Law of Reversibility. It works like this: when you feel a certain way, you act accordingly. And when you don't feel like doing something, but you do it anyway, that same dynamic creates the feeling consistent with your actions. Dallas Willard put it like this: "You can live opposite of what you profess, but you can't live opposite of what you believe. Invariably what you believe is revealed by what you do." Because fear is a learned response, it can be unlearned. There are two kinds of courage. The first kind calls for action. President Andrew Jackson said, "Take time to deliberate, but when the time for action arrives, stop thinking and go in. One man with courage makes a

majority.” The second kind calls for patience: the tenacity to keep persevering after you’ve done your best and before you’ve seen results. Often the difference between a hero and a coward is that a hero hangs in there five minutes longer! When you tackle your problems head-on, ‘not in human wisdom but in the power of God,’ your confidence rises until you reach a point where you’re no longer controlled by fear. William Cowper wrote: “God moves in a mysterious way His wonders to perform. He plants His footsteps in the sea and rides upon the storm. Ye fearful saints, fresh courage take; the clouds ye so much dread, are big with mercy and shall break in blessings on your head.”

Let us pray: *Heavenly Father, help me overcome my fears with the wisdom and strength that can only come from You. In Jesus’ name. Amen.*

Friday, January 1, 2016

Trade-offs



Text: Philippians 3:8

“What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ.”

NO matter how hard you try, you can’t have it all. Life is too short! There are trade-offs you must be willing to make. In Matthew 19 we read the story of the man who wanted to follow Christ, but he didn’t want to give up his lifestyle. Paul, on the other hand, said, “I consider everything a loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ.” There are some trade-offs in life that are worth making: 1) Approval for accomplishment. For people-pleasers and approval-junkies this means realizing that rewards are like smoke; they evaporate quickly. Awards turn to rust. Financial gain is quickly spent or lost. You need to come to a place where “doing good” means more to you than “looking good.” 2) Security for significance. Greatness doesn’t lie in what you earn or own; it lies in what you give your life to accomplish. Instead of merely focusing on making a living, ask God to help you make a difference! 3) Exploration for expertise. Too many of us like to dabble, but the problem with dabbling is that you never really become great at anything. True, when you’re young you should try new things and see where your strengths and interests lie. But as you get older you must become more focused. You will go far in life if you “specialize” in something. If you study the lives of great men and women, you will find that they were single-minded and tenacious. So, once you have found what God created and called you to do, stick with it and let the rest go.

Let us pray: *Heavenly Father, help me shed the things that are not part of the “main thing” You would have me do and stay focused on what is really important. In Jesus’ name. Amen.*



Saturday, January 2, 2016

What Do You Treasure Most?

Text: Matthew 6:21

“For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”

If your house were burning down and you could only save one thing, what would it be? It's a decision made every day, and it's never easy. There will always be things we grieve about giving up because of their essential value in our lives. If you want to know what yours are, look at how you spend your time and your money. It's a dead give-away. Jesus said, “Where your treasure is ... you will most want to be.” Your ‘treasure’ can be relationships you would do anything to keep, a career that is central to your identity, or your investments for the future. These things are fine, indeed. The Bible says that wise people look ahead and plan. But it is where you are investing in eternity that really matters. “The rich young ruler asked Jesus, ‘What shall I do to inherit eternal life?’ ... Jesus said ... ‘Sell all you have and distribute to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and, come, follow Me.’ But when he heard this, he became very sorrowful, for he was very rich.” (Luke 18:18-23) In essence, Jesus was asking this man who was rich and successful, “Would you give it all up to follow Me? Would you forfeit it for a few years in order to have much more for eternity? Instead of building a career, would you spend your life building My kingdom?” Jesus wants to be “front and center” in your life. And when you put Him there, He promises, “All your other needs will be met as well.” (Matthew 6:33) Are you willing to put Him to the test?

Let us pray: *Heavenly Father, I now realize that my most prized treasure is not something but Someone! In Jesus' name. Amen.*

