

October 2015 Devotional from National

A God Honoring Life

God's desire is that His followers become like His Son in how we think, speak, act and react. How is that possible? How can we, as followers of Jesus, become like Him? Mostly by our active, moment by moment, obedience to the Word of God empowered by the Spirit of God who dwells in our hearts. Paul tells us in Romans 8:29 that,

God knew what he was doing from the very beginning. He decided from the outset to shape the lives of those who love him along the same lines as the life of his Son. The Son stands first in the line of humanity he restored. We see the original and intended shape of our lives there in him. (The Message)

James tells us in his letter to examine our faith by considering our inward attitudes as we reflect on His Word and our outward actions as we respond to His Word. Let's look at James 1:19-27 that outlines the God-honoring lifestyle in which we must consistently be engaged if we are to be like Jesus. For God's Word to take root in the soil of our hearts, we must:

(1) Receive God's Word Humbly (1:21) - Ingest it

We should read God's Word with a welcoming spirit and a submissive heart. Why? ***"He guides the humble in what is right and teaches them His way"*** (Psalm 25:9). The road to true wisdom is found in humbling ourselves before the Lord (Proverbs 11:2). The Lord declares, ***"This is the one I esteem: he who is humble and contrite in spirit, and trembles at my word"*** (Isaiah 66:2b). C. H. Spurgeon encourages us to: (1) Handle the Word with deep reverence (2) Always have it ready (3) Understand its meaning (4) Learn to appropriate Scripture to ourselves (5) Stand by the Scriptures, whatever they may cost you. God's Word is absolutely essential in defending His Sonship, defeating temptations and directing our ways.

(2) Reflect on God's Word Inwardly (1:19) - Internalize it

We must obey the Word, not just know the Word. Knowing the Bible by itself is no measure of spirituality. Obedience is the yardstick of our spiritual condition. James gives us three needed character traits if we are to model Jesus in our relationships:

(a) A Listening Ear (:19a)

The scriptures encourage us to listen more than we speak (Proverbs 23:19). Isaiah, God's spokesman to the land of Judah, tells his people to ***"Give ear and hear my voice, Listen and hear my words"*** (Isaiah 28:23). Listening is not only crucial to hearing from God, but also in our conversations with others. When we are so eager to talk about ourselves, it's hard to find out what the other person is wanting to say. People who are considered the best conversationalists, ask questions and let others talk. It's interesting to note that when business firms are searching for leaders, they look for those who are good listeners. I've also found that a listening ear is essential in being effective in sharing my faith.

(b) A Guarded Tongue (:19b)

The tongue is such a powerful tool and shouldn't be used without careful forethought. It is much like the rudder on a ship in that a slight change in the rudder can cause the ship to veer off course and end up on the rocks. The Book of Proverbs gives us excellent advice on guarding out tongues:

He who guards his mouth and his tongue keeps himself from calamity (Proverbs 21:23).

October 2015 Devotional from National

When words are many, sin is not absent, but he who holds his tongue is wise (Proverbs 10:19).

Life and death are in the power of the tongue, and those who love it will eat its fruit (Proverbs 18:12a).

The tongue that brings healing is a tree of life, but a deceitful tongue crushes the spirit (Proverbs 15:4a).

Our family has memorized the following verse and I encourage yours to do the same: ***A soft answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger (Proverbs 15:1).***

In summation, Psalm 39:1a reads, ***“I will guard my ways so that I may not sin with my tongue.”***

(c) A Controlled Temper (:19c)

Our anger must be controlled and only used in the right circumstances. Righteous anger may be used in bringing those who violate God into a loving and restorative relationship with Him. However, anger in most cases, comes from an attitude of “self” found in the fallen nature of man. James 1:20 states, ***The anger of man does not produce the righteousness of God.*** Unrighteous anger wounds people, wrecks friendships and can destroy family relationships. It displeases God and prohibits our ability to learn from Him. In addition, it gives birth to wrath. We read in Proverbs 11:29, ***A fool gives full vent to his anger, but a wise man holds it in check.***

(3) Respond to God’s Word Outwardly (1:22) - Initiate it

Knowing God’s Word is no measure of spirituality. Obedience to His Word is the yardstick of our spirituality. Knowledge of God’s Word without obeying it is worse than worthless. We read in Luke 11:28, ***“blessed are those who listen to the word of God, and keep it.”*** Memorizing God’s Word can be a great help and may seem very impressive. However, God’s Word must be acted upon and put it into practice. We read in 1 John 3:18, ***Little children, let us stop just saying we love people; let us really love them, and show it by our actions.*** To quote Theologian Donald W. Burdick, ***“The purpose of listening to truth is to act upon it.”***

In summary, when we recognize that God is the source of our spiritual life and submit to the Holy Spirit’s direction, we will lay aside everything that displeases Him and:

- (1) Receive His Word humbly,
- (2) Exercise self-control, especially in regard to our tongue and temper, and
- (3) Obey His Word by serving others, especially those in need.

Being like Jesus means loving people---all of them, exactly where He has placed us---where we live (in our homes), where we work (in the marketplace), and where we walk (in our neighborhoods).

APPLICATION:

What character trait will you commit to develop and put into practice to honor God?

What is one specific thing you could do this week to honor God at home, at work, or in your neighborhood?

Dave Dagwell

October 2015 Devotional from National