

"Weekday Wisdom: Daily Reflections for Leaders and Administrators" is written for those who work in a Christian organization or serve as a Christian in the world of business, academics, or government. These devotional reflections will encourage and challenge you each day of the work week.

Weekday Wisdom: Daily Reflections for Leaders and Administrators

by Mark S. Sooy
and
Elisabeth A. Sooy

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WEEKDAY WISDOM

*Daily Reflections for
Leaders and Administrators*

Mark S. Sooy
and
Elisabeth A. Sooy

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Contents

| | |
|---|-----|
| <i>About This Devotional Book</i> | ix |
| January | 1 |
| February | 27 |
| March | 49 |
| April | 71 |
| May | 93 |
| June | 119 |
| July | 141 |
| August | 167 |
| September | 189 |
| October | 211 |
| November | 237 |
| December | 259 |
| <i>Topical Index</i> | 281 |
| <i>Scripture Index</i> | 283 |
| <i>Acknowledgments</i> | 287 |

July, Week 1 – Monday

Slip Away And Pray

“But He Himself would often slip away to the wilderness and pray.”

Luke 5:16

If we are not reading carefully, it’s possible to miss the habits of Jesus that might also help us in our daily living. One of these habits is that he would leave the disciples, leave the crowds, leave the city, and go off by himself to pray. He would go away to the wilderness and find someplace hard to find. There, He would rest in the presence of the Father and pray.

Apparently, Jesus did not have the same level of responsibilities that we have in our work. How could we ever just leave, turn off our cell phone and computer, and find a place away from work, away from our colleagues, away from modern life? That just wouldn’t be possible in our modern workplace!

Or would it? Maybe we could build it into our month, that for one day we would go to a lonely place to pray, to meditate, to think, and to be in the presence of God. And not only for us, but for those who work with us and for us. What it would be like? How would it change the culture of our institution or organization? How could it change our family or our church? Are we really so proud to think that we are busier than Jesus was during His ministry?

Prayer focus: *How could you include a focused prayer time into your schedule once a month?*

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Conduct And Speech

“Conduct yourselves with wisdom, let your speech always be with grace.”

Colossians 4:5-6

How you act. What you say. These are the qualities that give you influence with others. How you act must be represented in what you say, and vice versa. For there to be falsehood in either one is to risk losing an opportunity to share the love of Christ with someone. In order to have influence our talk and our walk must be consistent.

The greater context of these verses in Colossians teaches us several important things about having integrity in our actions and words. First, there must be a foundation of prayer (4:3). Second, it is vital that we have respect for all people (3:18-4:1). Third, we must be obedient in our attitudes and actions (3:5-14). In other words, integrity in our lives is dependent upon a fully formed character submissive to the lordship of Jesus Christ.

As we participate in God’s work in our lives, we will see a growing wisdom in our conduct. Our understanding of difficult situations will be reflected in appropriate actions, focused on the best outcome for all involved. We will also notice a greater grace in our speech. A grace that thinks before speaking, seeking to honor God in each word that we utter.

Prayer focus: *Are you submissive to the work of God in your life to refine your conduct and speech?*

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Broken Relationships

“And there arose such a sharp disagreement that they separated from one another, and Barnabas took Mark with him and sailed away to Cyprus. But Paul chose Silas and departed...”

Acts 15:39-40

Paul and Barnabas had such a “*sharp disagreement*” that they had to go in different directions with new companions. This suggests a heated argument, with John Mark as the center of that contention. Was this argument in a public place with others witnessing? Did John Mark himself hear them disagreeing? We can only imagine.

In Acts 13:13 we are told that John Mark left Paul and Barnabas, returning to Jerusalem. This was enough to earn Paul’s disdain for his desertion. Barnabas is more compassionate, but Paul is adamant that he’s not to be included in the next journey. God allows this situation to send two groups out instead of one, even in the midst of an argument. But God, in His grace, brought reconciliation years later. In his final letter, Paul tells Timothy, “*Pick up Mark and bring him with you, for he is useful to me for service*” (2 Timothy 4:11).

Have you ever argued with someone regarding the inclusion of a colleague or friend? Perhaps the disagreement seemed insurmountable and you were not able to reconcile. God can bring peace to troubled relationships, just as He did in this disagreement in the early church. Allowing Him to lead us, and continuing to examine our own hearts for purity, will ultimately restore any relationship that has been broken.

Prayer focus: *Ask the Lord to reveal any relationships that need to be restored in your life, and pray for the wisdom to address and heal them.*

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To Be Corrected

“Will the faultfinder contend with the Almighty? Let him who reproves God answer it.”

Job 40:2

God challenges the hubris of Job after he had questioned God’s motives. Job had lost almost everything, and he did not understand why God would allow such things to happen since Job had been faithful in his commitment to God and his dealings with men. He took God to task, assuming that God didn’t know what He was doing.

But after God reproved him, Job responded in humility and repentance. He recognized his limited view of his own life, and realized that God’s view was much deeper and wider. God knew what He was doing, was sovereign in His actions, and had no obligation to report to Job the reason that things happened the way they did. In fact, one peculiar aspect of the story of Job is that he never found out why things happened the way they did.

Leaders must also be ready to take this kind of correction. Granted, at times we will be corrected by God in personal matters. At other times, corrective measures may come from our governing board, our supervisor, or even one of our co-workers. Like Job, we must be ready to admit the fault and humbly receive the correction. We must seek to understand, the best we can, a bigger picture. But even if we don’t, our posture must be one of learning and willingness to change. As leaders, this will be a significant example to all those around us.

Prayer focus: *Pray for the courage and humility to take correction with grace.*

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July, Week 1 – Friday

The Precious Cost

“You were not redeemed with perishable things like silver or gold, but with precious blood.”

1 Peter 1:18-19

We know the story of Christ’s sacrifice so well that we may forget how expensive it really was for God to purchase our salvation. The concept of redemption in the Bible is surrounded by the idea of buying something. Twice in the Corinthian letters Paul states we were “*bought with a price.*” Here in our verse for today, Peter compares the purchase to being of more value than something bought with silver or gold.

And the thought of both Paul and Peter is that a clear understanding of the cost should lead us to live lives that honor God in both our attitude and our actions. Why? Out of thankfulness. Our obedient lives have nothing to do with retaining our salvation, as though we could lose it, but rather we live to honor God because we are thankful for His purchase and the ultimate price paid at Calvary.

How directly do you see your daily life as a “*sacrifice of praise*” (Hebrews 13:15-16)? Each and every action we take can be an expression of our thanks to God for His work through Christ on the cross, and ultimately in the restoration of our lives. He has redeemed us for an enormous price. Isn’t that worth our time and effort to be deliberately thankful in all that we do?

Prayer focus: *How can everything you do today be done in a way to be thankful for God’s work for you and in you?*

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The Gift Of Memory

“I shall remember the deeds of the Lord; surely I will remember Your wonders of old.”

Psalm 77:11

Memory is a precious gift. Our personal memories are full and keep us connected to family and friends, even when miles or years separate us. Those special events in High School or College, that still float around in the recesses of our minds, bring a smile and sense of pleasure when remembered. Our fond recollections of holidays spent with family keep the warmth of home and kin close to our hearts and minds.

We also have the gift of memories documented in a more permanent way. These might be photos or videos, or maybe letters exchanged with someone special. When we think about Scripture, we have a treasure trove of memories. The telling and re-telling of the stories of the Bible can sustain us when our own feeble memories fail to bring comfort, courage, or confidence into our lives.

The writers of the Psalms regularly use this gift of memory. They recite the tales of the exodus when God led Israel out of Egypt. They re-tell the stories of defeats of kings and nations as God demonstrated His choice of Israel as His people. The gospel writers share stories from the life of Jesus specifically to encourage the believer in living a life worthy of our Savior. As we remember, we can see God’s faithfulness in all circumstances. And when we do that, we can trust His faithfulness today.

Prayer focus: *What’s your favorite Bible story? What does it teach you about God’s faithfulness?*

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July, Week 2 – Tuesday

On Behalf Of Others

“On behalf of the sons of Israel Your servants, confessing the sins which we have sinned against You; I and my father’s house have sinned.”

Nehemiah 1:6

Nehemiah saw to the heart of things pretty quickly. As he heard about the welfare of Jerusalem, he found the wall broken down and the city lying in ruins. Not much had been done after the people of Israel were taken into captivity. The city had been destroyed, and a small remnant of the poor were left to fend for themselves.

What was Nehemiah’s reaction? A prayer of confession and beseeching God for forgiveness. It is interesting that Nehemiah took it upon himself to pray on behalf of the people of Israel, and most importantly, admitted to the guilt of the sin that led to the captivity in the first place. The sons of Israel had been disobedient and rebellious, and God had kept His promise of punishment as a result. For this, Nehemiah was truly sorry and asked for forgiveness.

You and I may not have the positional authority to pray as Nehemiah prayed in regard to our nation. However, we do have that kind of position in other ways. In our family, in our church, in our organization or institution. We can stand, or kneel, on behalf of the greater body and seek God’s face. We can confess sins and ask for forgiveness.

Prayer focus: *Do you need to pray on behalf of the greater body and ask for God’s forgiveness?*

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His Work His Way

“How great You are, sovereign Lord! There is no one like You, and there is no God but You, as we have heard with our own ears.”

2 Samuel 7:22

There came a time when Kind David was given rest by the Lord from all his enemies. David looked around at the splendor of his house and felt that it was not right for the ark of God to dwell in a tent. He spoke to Nathan who gave him permission to do *“all that is in your mind, for the Lord is with you”* (2 Samuel 7:3). However, Nathan discovered that he had spoken too quickly, and God spoke to clarify His desires.

God was pleased with David’s desire to honor Him, and pledged His love and an eternal throne for his family. However, in a dramatic plot twist, God chose to appoint David’s son to build the house after David! This could have been a disappointment to David, as his only desire was to honor God and give Him a better place in which to reside. However, David responded in humility and thankfulness for God’s provision and mighty blessing on his own family and the children of Israel.

Have you ever spent time and energy on a proposal or plan that gained approval from those working with you in your community or organization? But then God moved, and placed things on hold for an indeterminate time, or perhaps gave the leadership to a coworker? In times like this, can we be thankful for what God has given and then faithful to wait for His direction? David’s example is one that we can follow with humility.

Prayer focus: *Ask the Lord to build a desire to see His work done in His timing, regardless of your participation in the process.*

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July, Week 2 – Thursday

Encouragement

“And they have proved to be an encouragement to me.”

Colossians 4:11

When reading the New Testament, there is one undeniable truth that is demonstrated from page to page: relationships are the foundation of effective ministry. We can see this from the life of Jesus and the Apostles, in the prison letters from the hand of Paul, and through the words of Peter and other writers. Relationships and friendships are a key element.

We read lists of names at the end of Paul’s letters, and comments about the importance of friendships. In our verse from Colossians, Paul notes that some around him have proven to be encouraging to him. Finding himself under house arrest in Rome, we can probably assume some lonely days and feelings of abandonment. Yet, these friends encouraged Paul in his circumstances.

Not much has changed for us. You may be in an office serving an institution or organization that is large or small, decidedly Christian, or not so much. Sometimes you need encouragement. Sometimes you will need to encourage others. God will open these opportunities in your life. Embrace them fully, whether you are being a friend or need one.

Prayer focus: *What kind of opening is God creating for you today to be a friend or to receive friendship?*

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Reading Carefully

“If My people who are called by my name...turn away and forsake my statutes...I will uproot you from my land.”

2 Chronicles 7:14, 19, 20

Before you start reading this paragraph, it’s important to read the Scripture above closely. The attempt to trick you was deliberate. Many Christians would begin reading the first few words and assume they knew the rest of the verse because it is quoted so often, and skip reading it carefully. This verse is commonly and often quoted in error and completely out of context.

Included above is the fuller context of the passage. Certainly, God did tell the Israelites that He would hear them and heal their land, *IF* they were faithful. He also said that He would uproot them if they were unfaithful. Somehow, we never see that part of the passage on a bumper sticker or on the front of a bulletin.

It is vital that we quote Scripture accurately and fully, interpreting it in the context within which it was written. Not only do these verses contain direct consequences for sin, which are overlooked today, but it is clearly written to the nation of Israel and not any modern-day nation. When read fully and properly, we get a much clearer picture of God’s intended meaning.

Prayer focus: *What did you read in Scripture today? Read again and ask for wisdom as you seek meaning in the passage.*

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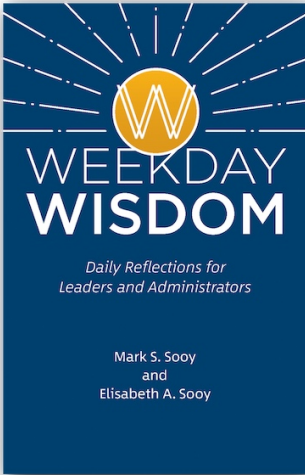
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