

Faithbuilders Devotional Series

Through the Bible in a Year
A Daily Devotional

March

Pastor Mike Fast & Pastor David Curtis

Day 90 – March 31st

Judges 1:1 - 3:30 – The Next Generation

I do not know a great deal about my ethnic heritage. In recent years my mother has become involved in much genealogical research which has provided limited knowledge. Now I know that my heritage is mainly European, but somewhere down the line the distinctiveness of that European heritage was lost. Now I don't think this was intentional, it simply wasn't handed down or taught to the next generation. The simple truth is that, if someone living as a foreigner doesn't teach their culture to the next generation, then it will be lost.

Remembering that we are living as aliens in this world, it is imperative that we teach our faith to the next generation. According to Judges 2:10, Israel failed to do so, in spite of the command Moses had given them in Deuteronomy 6:1-9.

So what are you doing to ensure that our faith is not lost and the next generation is not absorbed into the rest of the culture? Tell your story; tell of what God has done for you. Don't leave it to someone else. Don't let the next generation forget what a mighty God we serve.

My Prayer List:

Taking every thought captive to Christ: _____

Day 89 – March 30th

Joshua 22 - 24 – In the World, not of the World

“I have given them your word. And the world hates them because they do not belong to the world, just as I do not. I do not ask You to take them out of the world, but to keep them from the evil one.” – John 17:14-15

The Israelites failed to fully wipe out the Canaanites from the land. Thus the survivors of these nations were living amongst the Israelites. Joshua warns them in 23:12 to avoid marrying any of these survivors because they would be a snare and a trap, making it difficult for Israel to follow God.

As children of God who are in the world but not of the world we face similar difficulty. The relationships that we form with people, both Christians and non-Christians alike, greatly impact our life. The more intimate the relationship, the more impact it will have which is why Joshua knew to warn the Israelites not to intermarry.

Because we live in this world as foreigners, we must exercise wisdom in the formation of our relationships. Consider your relationships. How are you currently being influenced by these relationships?

My Prayer List:

Taking every thought captive to Christ: _____

Day 60 – March 1st

Numbers 6:1-27; 10:1-36 – Dedicated to Sacrifice

The Nazirite vow was a special way for an Israelite to dedicate one’s self to the Lord, and he knew that it came with certain restrictions. We even see this practiced by the Apostle Paul who shaved his head because of a vow (Acts 18:18).

Not every Israelite would make a Nazirite vow, but every believer who is indwelled by the Holy Spirit is already dedicated to the Lord. We do not operate with a list of restrictions like one who has taken a Nazirite vow. In fact, we operate with a higher standard. Romans 12:1 says that we are to be a living and holy sacrifice. We show our dedication by not copying the ways of the world. We are then to be transformed by the renewing of our minds. This is different than being the same person with some additional rules. It is a change of the entire person. When we come to faith in Jesus it is more than a ticket to Heaven. It is dedicating our whole life to the Lord. Have you truly dedicated your whole life to the Lord?

My Prayer List:

Taking every thought captive to Christ: _____

Day 61 – March 2nd

Numbers 11-13 – Whining and Complaining

I have overseen a few short term mission trips with teenagers, and am preparing for the next one right now. It has been my experience that the most important rule for keeping the group together and focused is that there is no complaining. Anytime you choose to follow the Lord’s leading there will be some form of sacrifice associated with it. Whining or complaining communicates an unwillingness to make that sacrifice.

It is obvious here that many of the Israelites and the foreigners who were with them had reached their limit of personal sacrifice and had begun to complain. They were prepared to return to slavery in Egypt because the sacrifice was too great.

Returning to slavery may sound silly to us. Personal freedom is worth the sacrifice, isn’t it? While this may be true, how often are we tempted to return to being slaves to sin because the sacrifice of following Christ is too great? As you follow Christ, remember his sacrifice, and what he gave up to secure your salvation.

My Prayer List:

Taking every thought captive to Christ: _____

Day 88 – March 29th

Joshua 19:49 - 21:45; 1 Chronicles 6:54 - 81 – The Merciful and Gracious God

Our God is a god of justice and righteousness who cannot allow sin to go unpunished. This has been very evident in the readings of the law where we see God’s high standards of holiness and moral living. However, our God is also “the merciful and gracious God.” He is “slow to anger and rich in unfailing love and faithfulness” (Exodus 34:6). I think that the concept of the cities of refuge is a wonderful example of these character traits of God.

In the Noahic Covenant in Genesis 9, God declares that anyone who commits murder must be killed (Genesis 9:5b-6). Now in Joshua 20 we see God exercising grace and compassion on those who have killed unintentionally.

As Christian brothers and sisters we continue to live with a sin nature that creeps up on us now and then. Fortunately the Merciful and Gracious God who established the cities of refuge is that same God whom we can go to for grace and forgiveness when we sin.

My Prayer List:

Taking every thought captive to Christ: _____

Day 87 – March 28th
Joshua 18:1 – 19:48 – Future Blessing

Right now you and I are living as foreigners or aliens in this world. We long for the day when our Savior will call us home. The Israelites taking possession of the Promised Land can be viewed as a picture of our future entrance into Heaven. Their time in the wilderness then would be parallel to our time in this broken and fallen world. Their crossing of the Jordan River the image of Christian baptism, and then the receiving of the Promised Land is like our receiving of God’s blessings in Heaven.

In today’s reading we see how the remaining tribes of Israel receive their allotment of land. It was not based on their requests or wishes, but it was solely based on God’s guiding of their casting lots.

As I ponder how this parallels the blessings God has in store for us, his children, I realize three truths. First, I will not be able to tell God what blessing or reward I want. Second, the decision to bless is entirely the Lord’s sovereign choice. And third, no matter what blessing the Lord gives, it will be absolutely amazing and perfect in every way.

My Prayer List:

Taking every thought captive to Christ: _____

Day 62 – March 3rd
Numbers 14-15 – Missed Blessings

The report from the spies truly tested if Israel trusted God for their protection. Already struggling with the level of sacrifice expected of them, they decided the prospect of engaging the inhabitants of the Promised Land wasn’t worth it. The people ignored the fact that the Lord was with them (Num. 14:9).

You might find it easy to criticize their lack of faith as I often have. The harsh reality is that we do the very same thing sometimes. We size up a situation and decide the cost is too great and, instead of trusting in the Lord’s protection and provision, we make a fear-based decision and miss out on God’s blessings.

Why are we prone to fear? The Apostle John tells us that perfect love casts out all fear (1 John 4:18). As broken yet redeemed people our love for God is being perfected. As this process continues fear is diminished and love will increase. As God’s faithful love continues to work in our lives, our love for Him grows, and our willingness to sacrifice and follow Him grows as well.

My Prayer List:

Taking every thought captive to Christ: _____

Day 63 – March 4th
Numbers 16-18 – Rebellion of Korah

God’s justice is not often talked about in our churches. We would much rather talk about His love and mercy and grace. The story of Korah, Dathan and Abiram is a vivid reminder that our God is a just God who cannot let sin go unpunished. These men were challenging the leadership of Moses and Aaron, and worse, they were in rebellion to the Lord.

For me, the difficult part of this passage is that the families were punished as well. This is an illustration of God’s very own description of himself in Exodus 34:7, “I will show unfailing love to many thousands by forgiving every kind of sin and rebellion. Even so I do not leave sin unpunished, but I punish the children for the sins of their parents to the third and fourth generations.”

As unfair as it may seem we see the impact parental sin has on children lived out every day. Some will walk away from the Lord because of the sins of their parents. To those who are living with the impact of a parent’s sin, know that there is grace available in Jesus to break that bondage of sin.

My Prayer List:

Taking every thought captive to Christ: _____

Day 86 – March 27th
Joshua 15:20 – 17:18 - Contentment

In Joshua 17:14 – 18, the tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh, who are descended from Joseph, come to Joshua to complain about the amount of land they have received. To me it seems as though Joshua is very considerate in his response, giving them a couple of options and then encouraging them to drive out the remaining Canaanites in order to receive more land.

I don’t think my response would have been as understanding as Joshua’s. When it comes to receiving God’s blessing it seems rather presumptuous to complain about the amount that God gives. This attitude represents a lack of contentment with God’s provision and blessing.

Even though this world is not our home, God’s blessings and provision in this world are very real. Do you sometimes find yourself ill content and complain to God regarding his provision for you? If so, remember these two things: first, as co-heirs with Christ, our full inheritance is not in this life but in the life to come; and second, God’s provision in this life is real and is fully sufficient for all our needs.

My Prayer List:

Taking every thought captive to Christ: _____

In Numbers 22:20, God says, “Go,” and yet verse 22 says, “God was furious that Balaam was going.” Why?

How can we be sure our faith is passed down to the next generation?

Without trying to sound too “churchy,” what can motivate you? (money, status, etc.)

What can you do to help pass on our faith?

If we want our worship to Him to be a very pleasing sweet aroma, then what must our worship be like?

How does knowing that God has a plan and purpose for everything affect your life on a day-to-day basis?

List the good and bad to not knowing God’s plan for your life.

Is faith the only thing that tells you God is always with you?

How are God’s blessings in this life the same as what we will receive in Heaven?

How are they different?

How would our outlook be different if we viewed God’s provisions and blessings in this life the same way we view our future Heavenly rewards & blessings?

How can God be both a God of wrath, justice and holiness as well as a God of mercy, compassion and loving-kindness?

Why are the relationships we form with unsaved friends so important?

What type of relationships with unsaved persons should we avoid? Why?

What does it mean for you to be in the world but not of the world?

Why would Jesus pray that we remain in this world?

Day 64 – March 5th
Numbers 19-21 – Rationalizing

Is that fair? Moses has been antagonized by these people for 39 years. He has just buried his sister, Miriam. All he does is hit a rock to silence the complaints, and next... Moses is in serious trouble. His punishment meant he would not enter the Promised Land.

Isn’t that the way we often read this passage? Don’t we try to justify the situation? In actuality, we may not fully understand the situation.

In this instance, Moses was the leader, and example. Moses was also told by God exactly what to do. “Take the staff”—most likely not the staff of 40 years earlier, but the budding staff of Aaron the priest from the Ark of the Covenant. “Command the rock”—which even the word for “rock” is different than the one used in the Exodus 17 passage (where striking the rock was what God wanted).

The emphasis of Exodus 17 was judgment, foreshadowing the smitten Christ on the cross. The emphasis of Numbers 20 was on priestly work, foreshadowing the exalted Christ.

May we take seriously the following of the determined commands of God.

My Prayer List:

Taking every thought captive to Christ: _____

Day 65 – March 6th

Numbers 22-24 – Your Treasure Is Where Your Heart Is

In today’s passage Balaam looks pretty good on the outside. However, we are reminded that “the heart reflects the person” (Prov. 27:19).

As we continue reading Scripture we find that Balaam’s heart was far from right. Balaam was guilty of leading others astray (2 Pet. 2:14-15), and willing to do anything for money (Jude 11), and responsible for tripping up others to sin (Rev. 2:14).

In the very next chapter, 25, we will read of how Moab seduced Israel to defile themselves before God. Apparently this was the result of Balaam’s suggestion. When we get to chapter 31 we will see that, not only did Balaam advise Moab of this, but he also moved into Moab. Balaam took allegiance with the enemies of God’s people and died at God’s hand there as well.

Balaam knew God’s power and even heard His voice. Yet, his heart did not yield. His heart was not softened toward the God he heard. The only personal changes Balaam was ready to make were those that would affect his pocketbook.

What’s in your heart?

My Prayer List:

Taking every thought captive to Christ: _____

Week 13 – March 26th – April 1st

Joshua 12:7 - 24:33; Judges 1:1 - 6:40; 1 Chronicles 6:54 - 81

The theme for this week is ‘living as foreigners.’ In John 17:14, Jesus says that we who are His followers are not of this world. We are going to explore some of the ways in which Israel’s early years living in the Promised Land parallels our experience of living as God’s children in a broken and sinful world that is not our home.

Bible Discussion Guide:

With God’s help Caleb conquered giants to receive God’s blessing. What are some of the ‘giants’ that you need to conquer in your life?

What can you do to experience victory in defeating these giants?

How would you define contentment?

In what ways do you struggle with being content in God’s provision?

Day 84 – March 25th
Joshua 10:1-12:6 – Lessons Learned

Joshua’s list of conquests is quite impressive. But as you read the list you see they were truly God’s conquests. Time and again you read of how “the LORD fought for Israel.”

The land was promised for Israel, but the inhabitants chose to stay and fight. God brought judgment on the wicked and fought for His chosen. Eventually, “the land finally had rest from war” (11:23).

The primary reason things went well for Israel was because “Joshua did as he was told, carefully obeying all of the LORD’s instructions” (11:15).

Aside from the lessons of obedience there are other things for us to recap. Oftentimes Joshua and Israel made memorials to the LORD. We regularly need reminding of certain things. This passage reminds us of the facts that, only with God’s help do we win our battles; God is our protection and refuge; God’s chosen will ultimately win; God has plans for us which are “good and not for disaster, to give you a future and a hope” (Jer. 29:11).

My Prayer List:

Taking every thought captive to Christ: _____

Day 66 – March 7th
Numbers 25-26 – Counted With Whom

Perhaps it’s a baseball cap, sweatshirt, bumper sticker, or something else we utilize that gives evidence that we are identified with the winning team. We love to be part of the winning team. If you can only be counted with one group, which one will it be? Therein lies the conundrum. Human nature, being what it is, would prefer to be counted with each popular group. Yet that’s not possible.

Do you want to be numbered with God’s elect? It will mean persecution (2 Tim. 3:12). It will mean being disliked by the world (Matt. 10:22; John 15:18; 17:14).

Yet, because of the hope eternity holds for us, as well as the outstanding benefits even now, such as peace and contentment, we would still choose to be counted with God’s elect.

Conversely, here is an amazing thought: because of Christ’s love for us “He was counted among those who were rebels” (Luke 22:37). Unjustly (yet prophetically—Isa. 53:12), in order for us to be counted with Him, He was identified as the One crucified between the transgressors, taking on our sins.

My Prayer List:

Taking every thought captive to Christ: _____

Day 67 – March 8th
Numbers 27-29 – Grandma’s Fudge

Try to recall one of your favorite aromas. It has to be a smell that was more than just sweet, but also comforting. For me, it’s Grandma’s fudge.

Grandma made the best fudge, which we would drizzle on our vanilla ice cream (actually I would make every attempt to drown my ice cream in her fudge). When my brothers, sister and I would smell Grandma’s fudge on the stove we knew something special was coming. And, it was more than just the wonderful fudge; it was Grandma showing us her love.

Today’s passage describes regular offerings to the Lord. Yet, a phrase that appears in nearly every paragraph is that it would be “very pleasing to the LORD.” In the Hebrew, this phrase conjures up the description of something pleasant, delightful, sweet, and yet also comforting, or restful. Meaning, this is more than something that smells good, it creates an emotion of satisfaction.

Now, apply this to our worship of our Lord. In order to be very pleasing it must be genuine, sincere, deliberate, careful, acceptable, appropriate, and transparent.

My Prayer List:

Taking every thought captive to Christ: _____

Day 83 – March 24th
Joshua 7-9; 1 Chronicles 2:7 – Repercussions of Our Sins

Thirty-six men died for the sin of Achan, not to mention the death of his family. Achan disobeyed and stole plunder that had been set apart for the LORD.

In fact, his actions and the disaster he brought on Israel are recorded in the book of the Chronicles, one thousand years after it happened. Not only did the sins of Achan affect others, but it became his legacy.

I remember hearing Dr. James Cecy ask those at a large gathering to consider how many people would be affected if you chose to sin by having an adulterous affair. People started writing down some of the obvious names within their close circle, but then he stated, “When you get to 300 let me know.”

How many could your sin affect? Could it even affect children not yet born? Quite possibly.

It’s not just adultery or plundering from God, but cheating, lying, and any other area in which we choose not to follow God’s rules. Disobeying God may damage more than we can imagine.

My Prayer List:

Taking every thought captive to Christ: _____

Day 82 – March 23rd

Joshua 3-6 – Admiring God’s Handiwork

Although I was a small child I remember listening to a conversation my grandpa was having with a man. “It’s been said,” the man hypothesized, “that the depth of the Red Sea where Israel crossed was only two inches deep.” Grandpa replied, “Well, praise the Lord, God could drown a whole army in two inches of water.”

The miracle of Israel crossing the Jordan (ch. 3) has been explained by some as only a natural phenomenon like a mudslide. Others have said that the fall of Jericho (ch. 6) could be explained with a natural phenomenon such as an earthquake.

I believe we waste our time when we spend more time trying to explain how God precisely accomplishes His tasks, and less time being astounded at God’s incredible power. We know God’s plan is being carried out regardless of the manner. But what concerns me are the small hidden ways we retract some of the credit from God, somehow attributing to Him just a little less of the awe and wonderment.

My Prayer List:

Taking every thought captive to Christ: _____

Day 68 – March 9th

Numbers 30-31 – Pinky Swear

Do you ever remember a day when your childhood friends made you cross your heart, and then make sure your fingers weren’t crossed, and then they would finally believe your words were true?

Some grown-ups apparently need the same prodding. Jesus was condemning the Pharisees for declaring their pledge wasn’t good if they swore by the Temple and not by the gold in the Temple, or if they swore by the altar instead of by the gift on the altar (Matt. 23:16-18).

In Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount, He directs us to forget swearing “by God” or “by Heaven” or whatever else, but instead just let your “Yes” and “No” be enough (Matt. 5:33-37).

God knows the damage broken promises can bring. We see it everyday: broken marriage vows, broken pledges of purity, broken financial oaths and broken promises. God wants us to avoid unnecessary pain in our personal life, in our family life, in our church, or our business, by being people of our word.

We can rest in the fact that God keeps His promises and His Word is truth.

My Prayer List:

Taking every thought captive to Christ: _____

Day 80 – March 21st
Deuteronomy 31:30-32:52; Psalm 90 – Songs of Obedience

Music plays an amazing part in our lives. We listen to it as we drive, as we relax at home, as we watch a movie we hear it in the background, we hum melodies as we work, we worship through music each week.

I have found myself sitting in a restaurant singing the words to a song over the speaker that I have not heard in 20 years, and even then I did not think I sang it that much back then. Words through song stick with us in a unique way. Often memorizing words come easier when accompanied with music. God knows the power of song.

God told Moses to write down the words to the song and teach it to the Israelites. That very day, in immediate obedience, Moses wrote the words and taught Israel the song (Dt. 31:22).

The songs of Moses were effective ways of reminding Israel of the power of God and their history with God. The songs prayerfully encourage us to walk closely with God, our Rock. And may our songs be heard by others.

My Prayer List:

Taking every thought captive to Christ: _____

Day 70 – March 11th
Numbers 34-36 – God’s View

Envision the most analytical person you know (it may be you—it’s not me). Everything has a place and everything is in its place. Everything is planned out and scheduled right down to the minute.

The chapters today remind us that God had things extremely planned out. God was meticulously concerned with and involved in the distribution of the Promised Land. God had specific instructions as to where the boundaries would be; what the portions would look like; how certain cities would function; and what property rules would entail.

Our God has not changed over the years. God has a plan for us as He did for Israel. It is good to be the child of a God who has a plan, free from chaos and coincidence.

It’s reassuring to read words like; “I know the plans I have for you,” says the LORD” (Jer. 29:11); “You chart the path ahead of me” (Ps. 139:3); “the LORD determines our steps” (Prov. 16:9).

God’s perspective is as far as the Heavens are from the earth different than ours (Is. 55:9).

My Prayer List:

Taking every thought captive to Christ: _____

Week 11 – March 12th – 18th
Deuteronomy 1-25

During this week you will read over two thirds of Deuteronomy. Some of it will be repetitive to portions of Exodus and Leviticus. This is where the name for the book comes from. In Greek *deutero* means second, and *nomos* means law, therefore the name Deuteronomy means second law or second giving of the law.

And our theme for this week is New Beginnings, for as Moses reiterates the law, Israel is on the verge of a grand new beginning in the Promised Land.

Bible Discussion Guide

Why do you think it was important for Moses to deliver the law again to Israel?

What does that reveal to us about our own need to study God’s Word?

The March 12th devotional speaks of remembering our life before knowing Christ. How would you describe your life before you knew Christ?

What has the new beginning that faith in Christ brought, meant for you?

Day 79 – March 20th
Deuteronomy 29:2-31:29 – True to Your Promise

In this passage are written Moses’ last words. More than just words, they were challenges for the people. Moses petitioned Israel to commit to following God. He reminded them they had made a covenant with God; a contract to obey Him.

When you consider a relationship with God today, do you think of it as casual or compelling? Would you consider your actions incidental or intentional?

When we accept the salvation of God we surrender our life to God. We surrender our will as we yield to His. We commit to Him everything we are and everything we have. It is not a passive relationship, but an active one.

God’s call for obedience from His people rings as true today as it did ages ago.

“The LORD your God will delight in you if you obey His voice and keep the commands and laws written in this Book of the Law, and if you turn to the LORD your God with all your heart and soul” (Dt. 30:10).

My Prayer List:

Taking every thought captive to Christ: _____

Day 78 – March 19th

Deuteronomy 26:1 - 29:1 – Blessings and Curses

The late John Vernon McGee once mentioned the difference between people who are “woefully ignorant” and those who are “willfully ignorant.” There are some who do not yet know the truth, and there are others who know it but reject it.

Today’s passage describes the curses for the willfully ignorant. These are the consequences for those who willfully disobey God’s word.

It is similar to God telling them not to touch the hot stove, but they do anyway, and He tells them exactly what they will feel. The commands are in place for their protection, physically and spiritually.

On the other side, there are blessings for obedience. “If you fully obey the LORD your God” (Dt. 28:1) in all areas (generosity, raising children, worshipping God alone, honoring parents, honesty, etc.), then you will be blessed in all areas.

To walk in the peace and favor of God is a noticeable blessing. We should also keep in mind that God’s blessings for us are not limited to our lifetime on earth.

My Prayer List:

Taking every thought captive to Christ: _____

The March 13th devotional speaks of receiving the Lord’s discipline. How have you seen the Lord’s discipline in your life?

How has it been a benefit to you?

What does it mean to live by the grace of God?

Having been saved by grace, are you now living by a system of works and rules?

What do you need to change in order to live by grace?

How has the community of faith been a blessing to you?

What is it about being a part of a community that is easy or difficult for you?

How can forgiveness bring a new beginning?

How would life be different if we saw everything, including people as being God's possession?

How can regular time in the Bible put you in a better position to obey God?

Do you agree that we experience a new beginning every time we open God's Word? Why or why not?

How would life be different if we all took the time to help when we see someone in need?

Israel had several "songs:" some of history, some of praise, etc. God created music. List some of the purposes of music.

What are some of the notable traits of leadership Moses and Joshua possessed?

Take some time to consider the repercussions of a sin. If you chose to disobey God in a certain area, how many people would you affect? Think long and hard, and think 20 years out as well.

Our disobedience does not change the plans of God (Job 42:2), but what does it change?

Week 12 – March 19th-25th

Deuteronomy 26-34; Joshua 1-12:6; 1 Chronicles 2:7; Psalm 90

In each of these various passages there is a constant theme: obedience. There are illustrations for us as to what obedience produces and, in turn, what disobedience produces.

There are also lessons on leadership, lessons on communication, lessons on consequences and their “ripple effect,” and lessons on the sovereignty of God.

In its entirety, it produces a week truly focusing on the impact of our choices, and describing the necessity for those choices being in line with God’s desires and instructions.

Bible Discussion Guide:

Describe “willfully ignorant” and “woefully ignorant” as it pertains to the unsaved.

List numerous blessings this side of Heaven in obeying God.

List numerous blessings eternally in obeying God.

Day 71 – March 12th

Deuteronomy 1:1 - 3:20 – Remembering the Past

The first three chapters of Deuteronomy recap the last forty years of wilderness wanderings. The whole book is Moses’ final message to Israel and, in this opening section, his purpose is to remind them of how they got to this point.

Remembering our past is an important part of moving forward into the future. For Israel, remembering what God had done was essential. When Israel forgot the mighty deeds God had done in rescuing them out of Egypt, His provision in the wilderness, and His placement of them in the Promised Land; then Israel would stray from their covenant relationship with Him.

Remembering is important for us too. Christians can forget how lost in sin we were before receiving Christ. This forgetfulness is dangerous because it can develop within us a sense of entitlement to God’s grace. Then we begin to see ourselves as righteous when, without the work of Christ, our righteousness is like filthy rags. Rather, if we can remember how sinful we truly are, then we will see God’s grace as the unmerited favor that it is.

My Prayer List:

Taking every thought captive to Christ: _____

Day 72 – March 13th

Deuteronomy 3:21 - 5:33 – Whom He loves He disciplines

Deuteronomy 4:26-31

foreshadows the future collapse of Israel and subsequent captivity in Babylon. God’s covenant faithfulness toward Israel is so great that He does not abandon them even when they are in violation of the covenant. What a comfort it is to know that God does not abandon those whom He loves. And yet even though He does not abandon, He does discipline those whom He loves. So what does discipline from the Lord look like?

I recently realized that I have allowed my body to get out of shape. So in response, I have begun to again discipline myself to train my body through exercise at the gym. This is what James speaks of when he says that “When our faith is tested, your endurance has a chance to grow. So let it grow, for when your endurance is fully developed, you will be strong in character and ready for anything” (James 1:3-4). God’s discipline of us is through various trials in order to build up our spiritual endurance or our faith and trust in Him. Will you submit to God’s discipline and allow it to accomplish a beautiful work in your life?

My Prayer List:

Taking every thought captive to Christ: _____

Day 77 – March 18th

Deuteronomy 21:10 - 25:19 – Random Acts of Kindness

Today’s reading was full of a variety of laws and regulations for Israel to do when they entered the Promised Land. All of these laws were important for them to remember as they prepared to cross the Jordan River and experience a new beginning.

As I read through this passage, a seemingly insignificant command really jumped out at me. In Deuteronomy 22:1-4 we see the command to not ignore a neighbor who needs help.

There’s a principle here for helping others that continues to apply today for we see this principle at work in the New Testament as well.

In James 2:15-16 we are told that words of blessing without meeting a real physical need will not accomplish anything.

Then in Matthew 25:31-46, Jesus adds to this principle by saying that when you minister to the needs of others, you are ultimately ministering to the Lord Himself. And if you ignore these needs, then you are refusing to help the Lord. Are you willing to help meet other’s needs, or will you be found pretending not to see?

My Prayer List:

Taking every thought captive to Christ: _____

Day 74 – March 15th
Deuteronomy 10-12 – Place of Worship

Why was God so concerned with having centralized locations for worship? I think that there were two main reasons for this. First, the sacrificial system foreshadowed the coming sacrifice of Christ and having the sacrifices performed in a central location made it less likely for changes or variations to take place which would cause it to lose this great meaning.

Second was the role of community. Having a centralized place for worship brought an aspect of community that would be lost if everyone was able to worship at their own home.

Community is important for us as well. While Jesus declared that there is no longer one and only one place for worship (John 4:21), the need and value of worship in community is still present (Hebrews 10:25). Without community we risk isolation and discouragement in our Christian lives. We also miss out on the biblical instruction and correction that comes from our elders and the accountability that is present in community. Are you valuing the community of faith and its role in your life?

My Prayer List:

Taking every thought captive to Christ: _____

Day 75 – March 16th
Deuteronomy 13:1 - 16:17 – Canceling of Debts

Every seven years Israel was to have a fresh start or a new beginning financially. It was not a total reversal of someone's financial outlook, but it was an opportunity for them to have a fresh start. This was accomplished in two ways: the first was the canceling of financial debts that a fellow Israelite had incurred. The second was granting of freedom to anyone who had willingly entered into servanthood.

Why would God place this provision in His law? The first reason is that God was demonstrating that all of Israel's wealth (Leviticus 25:23) and their very lives ultimately belonged to Him (Leviticus 25:55).

Because God 'owned' the land and they owed their lives to him as their redeemer, it was within His right to place these provisions on them. A second reason, I think, was to reinforce the concepts of forgiveness and redemption. This process that would occur every seven years was a picture of God's grace and forgiveness of sin. How do you view your possessions and your very life? Will you be willing to view them as belonging to God, the Author and Sustainer of life?

My Prayer List:

Taking every thought captive to Christ: _____
