

A DEEPER DIVE

January 4, 2025

Micah 6:8—He has shown you, oh mortal, what is good. And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God. – NIV.

Prayer Focus – Each day this week as you meet with your savior, lift up in prayer the places in the world where there is war, destruction, and little hope. Also pray for the missionaries that you know of and support. Pray for our nation and our leaders, and also your local church and community. Pray daily for our Pastors and Elders. Finally, follow the instruction in Philippians 4:4-7 make your prayer personal. Remember 1 Peter 5:7.

Monday: Reading – Matthew 5:27-30; 15:10-20; 1 John 2:15-17

Consider this –

Genesis 3:1-8 retells, in a rather perfunctory way, the first occasion of lust in the history of humankind. We don't get the inner dialogue, or thoughts, that were going on in the minds of Eve, or Adam. All we know is that Eve desired, ate, and gave. We aren't told at all what Adam, "who was with her," was doing all this time—just that she gave the "forbidden fruit" to him, and he ate it. There is a lot of conjecture about Adam's part, but that's all we are told. It doesn't take too long (four verses later) for the "blame game" to be put into full gear. Adam blames Eve, and Eve blames the serpent. Down through the ages this story plays out over and over. John sums up the problem in 1 John 2— "all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—is not of the Father, but of the world." God's people, in the OT, and, now, in the church, are supposed to be different, set apart. In what way are you living the life of someone who is set apart, and living differently than the unbelievers around you?

Tuesday: Reading – Matthew 5:27-30; Exodus 20:4.

Consider this –

It's interesting that Jesus says, in Matthew 5, "you have heard that it was said, 'you shall not commit adultery.'" It's interesting because of who originally said this, in Exodus. Jesus doesn't say, "the LORD said," but "you have heard it said." Why do you think he words it this way? After making that statement, how does Jesus take a "deeper dive" into that statement? Wiersbe says that, "inner desires can quickly lead to ...forbidden sin... The eyes and the hands must be kept under control." In this age of easy access to media and the internet how has our world made violating what Jesus says in Matthew 5 way easier?

Wednesday: Reading – Matthew 15:10-20; Psalm 101; 119.

Consider this –

Jesus was not afraid of confronting those who were abusing power. In this section he chastises the Pharisees, to the extent that his disciples warned him that the Pharisees would be offended by what he was saying—did Jesus back down? In this section, he talks about what comes out of the mouth comes from the heart, and that is what is defiling. So how do things get into the heart? The NKJV study notes comment that "through the eyes, ears, and other senses" things get into the heart. What do you spend your time reflecting on or listening to, or watching? Read what David says in the Psalms mentioned above. Are there things in your life that cause you to bring things into your heart or mind that are not pleasing to the Lord?

Thursday: Reading – 1 John 2:15-17

Consider this –

What must we always be on guard against? There are many behaviors and temptations that the Bible warns against. We can even hear the Word of the Lord every Sunday morning, forget what we heard by Sunday afternoon. It is possible to become hardened in our hearts toward the Word of God when we do not allow it to change us. C.S. Lewis in Book 3, chapter 8 of *Mere Christianity*, says “the utmost evil is Pride. Unchastity, anger, greed, drunkenness and all that are mere flea bites in comparison: it was always through Pride that the devil became the devil: Pride leads to every other vice: it is the complete anti-God state of mind.”

Friday: Reading – Matthew 5:27-30; 15:10-20; 1 John 2:15-17

Consider this –

N.T. Wright, in his commentary on Matthew says this. “The motivations which point toward actions give themselves away in thought and words which come bubbling up from the depths of the personality, showing that, whatever outward purity codes the person may keep, the innermost self of that person needs to be changed if they are to be what God intends and wants...Jesus does not offer the remedy...Ultimately he himself is the remedy.” What does fulfilling “purity codes” or some kind of outward rule following lead to? Why was Jesus so harsh against the Pharisees who lived like this? What happens to us when we try to live up to these rules, or try to make others live up to them? How can pride in this kind of outward spiritual life lead to self-righteousness, and looking at others with contempt?

Saturday: Reading – Matthew 5:27-30; 15:10-20; 1 John 2:15-17

Consider this –

Wiersbe says that, “by ‘the world’ John means all that belongs to this life that is opposed to Christ. It is Satan’s system, society opposed to God and taking the place of God...Anything in our lives that...makes it easy for us to sin is worldly, and must be put away...Living for the world means losing everything...But if we live for God, we will abide forever... There can be no true fellowship without love. Unless we love God and God’s children, we cannot walk in the light and fellowship with God.” What worldly things are hard for you to “put away”? These are not just material things, but attitudes, thoughts, or whatever takes God’s place.

Sunday: Go to church with the anticipation of hearing from the Lord.

Questions? Comments? Email me, Steve Callaway, at stvc13@gmail.com.