

Are You Doing The Small Things? part 2

Psalm 112:

1 Praise the Lord!

How joyful are those who fear the Lord and delight in obeying his commands...

7 They do not fear bad news;

they confidently trust the Lord to care for them.

Does this describe you? How do you handle “bad news”? When you realize the last check you wrote will bounce. Or maybe when you’re called into your boss’s office after a day when you know you made a poor decision? How about when you’ve had an ugly dispute with your spouse who brought up the “D” word and they were serious? Or when you receive an intimidating letter from the IRS?

Does the passage in Psalm 112 resemble you?

If it does, and bad news doesn’t phase you, then you have found the peace that truly passes all human understanding.

If this does not resemble you, and you cannot relate to it, then let’s discuss an additional “small thing” that is essential in bridging this gap from who you are now to this “gold standard” of a believer given in Psalm 112. This peace is not something one can get from reading self-help books. It cannot be found in a yoga class or a zen garden. While some methods, such as these, may provide temporary relief, they do not compare to the peace that only our Heavenly Father can provide.

Peace, of course, is a spiritual fruit:

Galatians 5: 22 There is no law against these things! But the

Holy Spirit produces this kind of fruit in our lives: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,

How is this fruit produced?

John 15: 5 "Yes, I am the vine; you are the branches. Those who remain in me, and I in them, will produce much fruit. For apart from me you can do nothing."

Isn't this a fantastic verse? We're actually told how spiritual fruit is produced. But wait, what does it really mean to "remain in Christ"?

How do we "remain in Christ"?

I think I know, and I am convinced that it is in these "small things", exercised day after day, week in and week out, after many months and in some areas only after years can significant growth be seen.

Consider the oak tree, which begins as a humble acorn. It takes many years to grow to its full height and you wouldn't want to sit around watching it grow. It would be like watching paint dry. But it grows, little by little and over time it becomes gigantic. It was designed that way and so are we.

In this microwave, drive-thru, cell phone and ATM culture we seem to want to go to church, pay for a fully grown "tree of spiritual growth" and bring it home. That "tree of spiritual growth" starts at home, daily.

Here is my favorite Psalm that illustrates this growth:

Psalm 1

*2 But they delight in the law of the Lord,
meditating on it day and night.*

*³ They are like trees planted along the riverbank,
bearing fruit each season.*

*Their leaves never wither,
and they prosper in all they do.*

Do you see the connection to John 15? Last week the “simple thing” was reading the Word of God. Today it is prayer.

Prayer and Reading the Word go hand in hand.

They feed off each other. Reading His Word drove me to a greater, richer prayer life. God gave me a voracious appetite for reading the Word as a result of my sincere and diligent prayers. Prayer prepares my heart to receive His Word. The knowledge of Him, what He likes and dislikes have helped sharpen and enrich my prayers. Picture two vines growing together, intertwined as they continue to grow. This is how I see these two disciplines in my life. They are both maturing. I get more out of my Bible reading now than I did last year and my prayer life is more pervasive throughout my daily activities.

There are many different ways to pray and variations of it so I'd like to refer to a passage so that we are on the same page.

Matthew 6: 5 “ But when you pray, go away by yourself, shut the door behind you, and pray to your Father in private. Then your Father, who sees everything, will reward you. When you pray, don't be like the hypocrites who love to pray publicly on street corners and in the synagogues where everyone can see them. I tell you the truth, that is all the reward they will ever get.

Don't be like them, for your Father knows exactly what you need even before you ask him “When you pray, don't babble on and on as people of other religions do. They think their prayers are answered merely by repeating their words again and again.

This is the type of prayer that matters most. Taking the time to be in His presence, seeking Him in prayer alone, can never be underestimated. But I know for myself it is what I lack the most.

How important is it?

Luke 10: 38 But Martha was distracted by the big dinner she was preparing. She came to Jesus and said, "Lord, doesn't it seem unfair to you that my sister just sits here while I do all the work? Tell her to come and help me." Her sister, Mary, sat at the Lord's feet, listening to what he taught. As Jesus and the disciples continued on their way to Jerusalem, they came to a certain village where a woman named Martha welcomed him into her home.

41 But the Lord said to her, There is only one thing worth being concerned about. Mary has discovered it, and it will not be taken away from her." "My dear Martha, you are worried and upset over all these details!

Reading the Word and meeting him alone in prayer is sitting at the Lord's feet. What does Jesus say?

"There is only one thing worth being concerned about."

This makes it clear to me, from my understanding Jesus' statement, that if there is ANYTHING that I do that is worth being concerned about from day to day is "Did I spend time at my Lord's feet today?". How do you read it?

When I meet with Him I usually like to get on my knees, in a prostrate position. I don't know why, but I think this helps me meet Him with humility. This is my conviction, not to put it on anyone else, but this is what works for me. You could sit, lie face down, kneel at your bed, whatever you feel most comfortable for you. Not comfort in a physical sense, but

comfort in a spiritual sense. Some days I am too tired and just lie on the bed and pray. This is not something to be dogmatic or legalistic about. God simply wants you to meet with Him and meeting with Him on a regular, consistent basis is essential for spiritual growth.

“...let your words be few.” Ecclesiastes 5:2c

I don't necessarily know what I want to say to Him or ask of Him. There are times that I don't have anything to say, but I feel a great desire to meet with Him anyway. I close my eyes, am still and take deep breaths. Slowing down and being still like this helps me to think and maybe prepare my words for Him. I usually start with “I praise your name”, or it's never a bad idea to just start thanking Him and let the list go on for everything you have to be thankful for.

Psalms 50: 23 But giving thanks is a sacrifice that truly honors me. If you keep to my path, I will reveal to you the salvation of God.”

Once you start a dialog with Him pray whatever comes to mind and let it go.

Cast thy burden upon the LORD

Psalms 55: 22 Give your burdens to the LORD, and he will take care of you. He will not permit the godly to slip and fall.

If you are anxious, tell Him. If you are scared, let Him know. If you don't know how to solve a problem, ask for His help. Don't be in a hurry to leave. Pretend that you are a six-year-old that had a bad day with the other kids on the playground. As a young child, you run to your Father with all your needs, anxieties, questions, and strange feelings that you cannot express.

Unload on Him as any child would and make it a habit. After a

while, after you begin doing this, the idea to pray will change from “I have to pray” to “I really desire to pray.” You will find that you will desire it more and more, rather than as an obligation. Then if you stop doing it for any reason, maybe when taking a vacation, you will miss it dearly and He will teach you just how important it really is to maintain your peace of mind.

Remember that Jesus is humble, gentle and very patient.

He is not like some harsh taskmaster that likes scolding us. He has been good to me and I’m certain you’ll see that for yourself.

For those of you that are incessantly worrying about something right now, I want to give you an exercise that has helped me tremendously.

I’d like you to meditate on these two verses:

Philippians 4: ⁶ Don’t worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need, and thank him for all he has done. ⁷ Then you will experience God’s peace, which exceeds anything we can understand. His peace will guard your hearts and minds as you live in Christ Jesus.

God promises that if you meditate on this verse, storing it in memory, you will take on a new way of living. A way that is peaceful. This is what letting go is all about.

Fall into the arms of a great and loving God, the One who created you uniquely for His good purposes.

Will you join me at His feet?

“Dear Father in heaven, you are so good to me. Thank you for calling me to know you on a more intimate level. Help me to

remain in you and hold me tight. I need you now more than ever and I thank you in advance for leading me to a closer walk with you. In Jesus' name, Amen."