

GROWTHguide

FOR THE WEEK OF NOV. 1 2015

"Loving God as He Intended"



THIS WEEK'S SCRIPTURES

Scripture: Mark 12:25-31, Deuteronomy 6:4-5, Leviticus 19:18, Acts 3:19 and Psalm 139:13,17-18

REFLECTION AND STUDY

MONDAY

Jesus began the day teaching the crowds who had gathered and was interrupted first by the Pharisees and the Herodians, who challenged him with questions about taxation in an attempt to trip him up. And then it was the Sadducees who wanted to debate his views on the resurrection of the dead. Now one of the teachers of the religious law asks Jesus, "Of all the commandments which is the most important?" Jesus goes right to the heart of life itself with his response in Mark 12:29-31.

Ask yourself, "What is the most important thing you should do today?" How would you respond? Would you say it is to check your emails, update your Facebook, call your parents/children, pay your rent, go shopping, go to the bank, or to get a project finished?

Pray and ask God to show you clearly what is important.

TUESDAY

Jesus says we are to love God with our whole being and to love our neighbor—but to love them as we love ourselves. Doesn't that sound somewhat counter-cultural to discipleship? The words "love yourself" are coming from Jesus, the same person who said to forget what the world tells us, that putting ourselves second is really better. He said to, "*Empty yourselves and follow me.*" But now, when confronted by the religious scholar, Jesus instructs that we are to love God and love our neighbor. But in so doing, we can't love God and we can't love our neighbor until we first learn to "love **ourselves.**"

Think about how you treat yourself. Do you treat yourself with the same love that you treat others?

Pray and ask God, who loves you, to help you love yourself as He does.

WEDNESDAY

Some of us spend so much love on God and others that we become depleted and have no love for ourselves. Like a mathematical equation, if one part of the formula is flawed, the whole formula is flawed. That's why people who don't love themselves have a hard time loving others, and why people who can't forgive themselves have a hard time forgiving others. Maybe it is because they don't understand how much God loves them.

- Do you ever have a hard time forgiving yourself?
- Do you ever feel like you're spending all your love on others and have none left for yourself?

Pray and ask God to open your heart to receive all of God's transforming love. Ask him to let you see yourself through his eyes.

THURSDAY

We do ourselves a grave disservice when we can't find it within ourselves to love what the Bible says is God's greatest creation: us. All throughout Scripture there are references of this incredible love God has for us. God's love is so great that He sent His Son, Jesus, to demonstrate it. Yet when we demean ourselves, we challenge that love and negate that Jesus bore our sins on the cross as a testament of love. Maybe this is you? You might be right on the fringe of the Kingdom and not even know it. The reason you can't get there is you don't love yourself. Why? For many of us we listen to the voices of the wrong people. Instead of voices that renew hope and restore encouragement, we hear the voices of the critics who hide in the shadows casting doubts and fear upon us.

Is there anyone in your life who is telling you, "You aren't good enough?" Jesus says, "It's time to no longer be bullied or believe the lies you are being told."

Pray that God would help you accept his words of love and begin loving yourself.

FRIDAY

Seeds of Greatness author, Dennis Waitley wrote, "There is no opinion so vitally important to your well-being as the opinion you have of yourself." That is why Jesus told us that how you love yourself is how you will love God and your neighbor. It begins when you believe God loves you. Johann Wolfgang Von Goethe said, "If God had wanted me otherwise, he would have created me otherwise." That was echoed by Minnie Smith when she said, "I am as my creator made me and since He is satisfied, so am I." You are God's greatest creation. Never forget, you are a masterpiece of the almighty God. You are not an accident, you are indeed part of the greater plan. You are an intentional creation of God. He not only made you 'who you are' but he has also given you the pathway to be 'what you are.'

Pray and thank God for making you. Ask Him to help you see that you are beautifully and wonderfully made by a creator who loves you.

SATURDAY

Think about it: you are indeed a miracle! Only God could have made you who you are. Engineers have never been able to duplicate the person you were created to be. Never, ever let anyone tell you that you are a mistake. Instead, believe you are a divine creation, one which God spoke into being. You were created by the same God who fashioned the Great Barrier Reef, sculpted the Rocky Mountain with his hands, scooped out the Grand Canyon with his fingers and cast the Milky Way in the heavens. You are as unique as a snowflake or sunset, and you are precious to God because of your uniqueness; your Creator made you unique. Jesus said, "You are close to the Kingdom..." Some of us are standing outside the doorway to the Kingdom because we haven't forgiven ourselves for something. Something you have done, or think you have done, is standing in the way of your entrance into the Kingdom. You continue to deny and judge yourself through the lens of what happened in the past. If you haven't asked God to forgive you yet, then you need to today.

Read Acts 3:19. Why do we repent of our sins to God? So our sins may be wiped away. If God wipes out our sins, if God removes them as far as the east is from the west, then we have no business dredging them up. Jesus said, 'You're almost there, right on the border of God's Kingdom.' Stop believing the words of those who want to hurt you. Repent of your sin. Believe you are indeed God's greatest creation. When you learn to love yourself, the Great Commandment is indeed, fulfilled.

Pray and ask God to help you truly accept His forgiveness, and to forgive yourself as He has forgiven you.

SUNDAY

Today is your "Sabbath" and a time for reflection. How has God been speaking to you over the week? Use what the Lord has said to you to remold and reshape your life. If you are having trouble hearing God's voice, slow down or even stop what you are doing so that the busyness of life's demands do not squelch the whispers of God's language of love upon your heart.