



THIS WEEK'S SCRIPTURES

1 Timothy 6:6-9; John 15:1; Psalm 100; Matthew 5:14-16

REFLECTION AND STUDY

DAY 1

Last week Pastor Bob introduced our two strategic initiatives:

- #1 Introduce Jesus to 20,000 persons in a 5-miles radius of our church, so that they experience Jesus and share Him.
- #2 Follow Jesus' lead to reach out to those experiencing poverty and strive to reverse it's effects on our community.

- How do you feel about these Holy Spirit inspired initiatives? Excited? Apprehensive? Fired-Up?
- Spend some time visualizing yourself living out these two initiatives. If you are in a group share with each other what you can see.

Thank God for his direction. Pray for our leaders and each other.

DAY 2

Pastor Bob shared a very personal example of a time he and Patti had been irresponsible with their spending and decided to shift their priorities towards the church. There are many reasons our spending priorities can get out of order. Discontentment is one of the most common. We live in a world where we are bombarded with wanting the newest and the best. **Read 1 Timothy 6:6-9.** How can less stuff result in greater contentment? The answer is found in an observation regarding the nature of appetites: If you feed an appetite, it grows. Satisfying an appetite does not diminish it. It expands it. To diminish an appetite, you have to starve it. Make intentional choices to be content with your present circumstances and possessions. Make note of your spending this week and be conscious of your wants and your needs. Practice being content with what you have by saying no to the little extras and impulses.

- Do you ever doubt God's provision in your own life? Why? What usually changes your mind when you're feeling that way?

Thank God for his provision. Pray that you would be mindful of your spending. Pray that God would bring to light an areas of your spending that need correction.

DAY 3

Read John 15:1. The power of community is undeniable. The church as a whole can produce a tremendous amount of fruit when we are many branches together on a vine. What kind of fruit can we produce? We read in Galatians that *"The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self control"* (Galatians 5:22-23a NIV). I don't know about you, but I'd like to be more loving. I'd like to be more joyful. I'd like to be more at peace, no matter what happens to the economy. I'd like to be more kind to people who are mean to me. I'd like to be a good person. I want to be faithful, not unfaithful. I want to keep my promises. I'd like to be gentle with people who are not very gentle. And I'd like to have more self-control. The fruit of the Spirit is the evidence that you are spiritually connected. Imagine the impact if a church full of "fruit-filled" people left the walls of the churches and formed relationships in the community outside of the church!

- How do we stay connected to each other?

- How do we, together, stay connected to the vine?
- How do we, together, connect others to the vine?

Thank God for your community inside and outside of the church. Pray for each other and pray that you would bear the fruit of the spirit by staying connected to the body and to God.

DAY 4

Read Psalm 100. What a beautiful picture of worship the psalmist describes. Worship is always about entering. Entering into grace, with thanksgiving, entering to share with others, but most of all, entering into the Lord's presence in a special way. But our entering is not the basis of worship. Instead, worship is about the Lord's faithfulness, goodness, and enduring grace. We come to God like so many before us, with God waiting for us. We come to praise him for all he has been, all he is, and all he will be. We come to enter and worship. We can do this simply because God is faithful, through all the generations, to wait for us to come. You can freely worship God however you feel comfortable because he is worthy of it all and he is waiting for you! When God is speaking to your soul, don't be afraid to worship Him with all that is within you. Who knows?! You might even free someone else from their own self consciousness to worship Him with all that is within them as well! Make yourself at home.

- Do you feel free to worship with all that is within you?
- How does your Sunday worship extend throughout the week?

Praise God for the freedom to worship. Thank him for his love and faithfulness. Thank him for being there waiting for you when you worship.

DAY 5

At our Charge Conference on Wednesday, our District Superintendent, Rev. Dr. Lewis, had us all stand in a circle and hold hands. She had us gently squeeze the hand of the person to our left and then the person to our right. She told us that squeezing each other hands reminded us that we are not alone, we cared about each other and that we are alive. We are surrounded by a community of people without a church home that would like to have someone hold their hand and tell them that they are not alone, there is someone who cares and remind the that they are still alive and there is hope. What an important mission. Inviting people to join you at church is sometimes uncomfortable, but push past the temptation to let your discomfort in extending an invitation stop you from inviting someone at all. Consider the possibility that your moment of boldness to reach out, could change their eternity. **Read Matthew 5:14-16.**

- Who can you think of who needs to know that God is FOR them?
- Who you could invite to join you at worship?
- Who can you invite again who may have said no in the past? Maybe this is the time they say yes.

Pray for specific people in your life who need to know that God is FOR them, and ask God to give you an opportunity to invite them. Pray that when God gives you the opportunity to invite someone to St Paul, that you would have the courage to extend that invitation.

DAY 6

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.