

Good News Daily

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Sunday, May 22

James 1:2-8, 16-18 *Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds. (v.3 NIV)*

Trials both teach and test me. Jesus modeled the proper responses to trials from the wilderness days at the beginning of his ministry to his end on the cross. Through trials I learn the essential lessons of humility before God's majesty. I learn detachment from inordinate desires (addictions great and small that separate me from God). I learn by having to practice the compassion, forgiveness, and other virtues he demonstrated in his humanity.

But why must I experience such suffering and sacrifice to learn these lessons? I have the Bible and many mentors to guide me. Why can't these be enough?

As a retired professor I have the utmost respect for books and lectures. But I have learned that the best teacher is almost always hands-on experience, especially if it is really challenging experience. It can be easy to forget or rationalize away what I learn from books and lectures. It's much harder to forget what I did—right and wrong—during trials, and what I learned as a result.

Leviticus 25:1-17; Psalms 93, 96; Luke 12:13-21

Include in your prayers: Our country; for wisdom and guidance for our leaders and the leaders of all nations; for our armed forces and their families, especially those now in danger and any continuing to struggle, including Cameron Fraser; for our enemies; for peace – especially in Ukraine, justice and reconciliation in all places where there is conflict, especially among the peoples of the Middle East; for Haiti and Bondeau; and for Todd and Patsy McGregor and their work with SAMS training missionaries.

Monday, May 23

Colossians 1:9-14 *For this reason, since the day we heard about you, we have not stopped praying for you. We continually ask God to fill you with the knowledge of his will through all the wisdom and understanding that the Spirit gives. (v.9)*

It is important for me to make a distinction between understanding and wisdom. I believe that understanding comes through actions of my intellect using reason. But understanding is not enough. When I understand intellectually, I am doing the work without much of God's help. In my weakness I can warp His teaching by rationalization. One can use the intellect to rationalize about anything, including slavery and unjust war.

Wisdom is about spiritual good judgment and what follows from that, such as compassion, hope, reverence for God, and forgiveness. It is non-rational (but not irrational). The Holy Spirit infuses wisdom supernaturally if I am receptive. In these cases, God is doing most of the work. My part is to exercise great care in being truly open and not mistaking my emotions and imagination for His wisdom. This often requires a great deal of discernment and struggle for me.

When done right, understanding and wisdom act in concert and as checks and balances. They are essential to my Christian practice.

Leviticus 25:35-55; Psalm 80; Matthew 13:1-16

Include in your prayers: Ricardo Acuña, Rick Anderson, Lou Augone, Kay Bailey, Liz Bardin, Wally and Evelyne Bates, Ray Browne, Helen Bruner, Bill Buttner, Linton and Gloria Chung.

Tuesday, May 24

Matthew 13:18-23 *"Listen then to what the parable of the sower means." (v.18)*

The parable of the sower has a different meaning for me than what I understand to be the traditional one. In my version, I am the sower. The land is my lived life with its God-given potential to spread the Good News by word and action. My life has included all four categories of people described by Jesus in terms of land.

As I grew into early adulthood, I was a careless farmer. I permitted others and myself to tread many paths through my land making parts of it unproductive. I created rocky altars on it to worship my ego and worldly things. I allowed thorns to grow. Spiritually, my sight was dim, my mind uneducated, and my hearing weak. I was ill equipped to scatter any seed.

Finally, God intervened. The Holy Spirit began instructing me and has since strengthened my spiritual sight and hearing. I began eliminating needless paths and removing rocks and thorns. Most times these tasks have been too hard for me alone; God has shouldered most of the burden. There remains much to do.

Leviticus 26:1-20; Psalm 78:1-39; 1 Timothy 2:1-6

Include in your prayers:, Shirley Connell, Robert Connell, Ray Constable, Christian Darby, Joe and Connie D'Alessandro, Dave and Marion Downing, Charlie Gasperino, and Jenne GlenDening.

Wednesday, May 25

Psalm 119:97-120 *You are my refuge and my shield; I have put my hope in your word.* (v.114)

These are stressful days. At times it seems that anxiety is almost unbearable. I worry about my loved ones, my future, and the state of the world. Pressure builds until I am sure that I am drowning in a sea of apprehension.

Experience has taught me that only God can be my refuge from the turbulence that swirls around me. When trials mount, I temporarily withdraw and seek refuge. I ask God to buttress my memory, my heart, and my mind. The Holy Spirit touches my memory, reminding me that in the past most things have tended to work together for good in this life. There is reason to hope in God's promises. I appreciate my Lord's infinite love for me and that I can safely surrender my heart. Thus reassured, I am receptive to the Holy Spirit's coaching on alternatives to my issues. All of this provides the shield I need to guard against the slings and arrows of the world as I emerge from my refuge.

Leviticus 26:27-42; Ephesians 1:1-10; Matthew 22:41-46

Include in your prayers: Hank Hawken, Pam Heatley, Tom Henry, Sally Honeyman, Mary Imle, Cindy Islip, Arlene Joseph and her daughter, Jacqui Kapinowski, Jeff LeFevre, and Elaine Mariggio.

Thursday, May 26

Psalm 47 *For the LORD Most High is awesome, the great King over all the earth.* (v.2)

Faith is the bedrock upon which the psalmist built this mighty tribute to God. My faith proclaims God's awesome greatness and kingship.

The implication of my faith is that nothing escapes God's attention and care. This helps me be detached from trials. I believe God gives me these to practice strengthening my resolve for whatever lies ahead. I know that the Lord will bring good from evil if not in this life, then in the next.

Faith also helps me be detached from success. I am humbled by any success I may have knowing that the great King made it possible. Success, too, brings lessons I will need to learn for the future—here or in the next life.

Things I can see or touch did not create the bedrock. It exists in my intellect only by inference; logic alone is not equipped to account for it. It is a gift of the Holy Spirit infused in my heart. I pray to this awesome King to strengthen this bedrock day by day.

Daniel 7:9-14; Psalm 8; Hebrews 2:5-18; Matthew 28:16-20

Include in your prayers: Bob Montheard and Pam DeFelice, Darcy Munoz, Peter Pawlikowski, Jim and Jerre Rannie, Sally and the Thomas family.

Friday, May 27

Matthew 7:22-27 *"Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock."* (v.24)

Here begins Jesus' story of two people. One built his house on rock, the other on sand. It's my story, too. In my early thirties, while I was still toying with the idea of taking Christianity seriously, I began having the strangest daydream. I had no other word for the vision at the time.

In my imagination I saw a majestic home in the mountains built mostly of rock. I somehow knew that the house was ancient and that it would remain long after my death. The vision persisted over many days; I couldn't shake it. The oddest part was that it was not a dwelling I would want for myself. My ideal was a half-timber home bordering a beach.

Then one afternoon I was reading in Matthew and came upon Jesus' story. Suddenly I realized the immediate implication for me. The emotional impact of God's gracious invitation to seek a true Christian life was so great that it sent me to my knees with tears and prayers of thanksgiving.

1 Samuel 2:1-10; Psalms 85, 86; Ephesians 2:1-10

Include in your prayers: Howard Smith, Allison Spencer, Rob Steiner, Roger Thomas, Phil Toren, Keith van Cleave, Dianne Warley, Wendy Williams, Peter and Mirabelle Wrist, and Bunny Wullschleger.

Saturday, May 28

Matthew 7:28—8:4 *A man with leprosy came and knelt before him and said, "Lord, if you are willing, you can make me clean."* (v.2)

This short, simple story is similar to many other tales of Jesus' healing and other miracles. And it is just as exasperating. The professor in me wants to know what is behind these and other phenomena, and not just who, what and where.

For instance, exactly how did this healing happen? I have no idea. No one has. We can speculate, but there are no satisfying objective answers.

Why this leper at this time? The simple answer that the leper asked in faith is not satisfying. Other faithful people in great need ask for help all the time and nothing noticeable happens immediately, if ever.

My spiritual advisor had an answer to my vexing situation. It applies to many issues involving my Creator and my Christian life. Also, it is the best piece of spiritual advice I have ever received and the hardest to practice. He told me that sometimes I had to "stop intellectualizing and just embrace the mystery."

Numbers 11:16-17, 24-29; Psalms 87, 90; Ephesians 2:11-22

Include in your prayers: Clay, Debbie, JoAnn, Marguerite, Marty, and Peggy.

by Herbert Kierulff

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