

Friday – Valentine’s Day

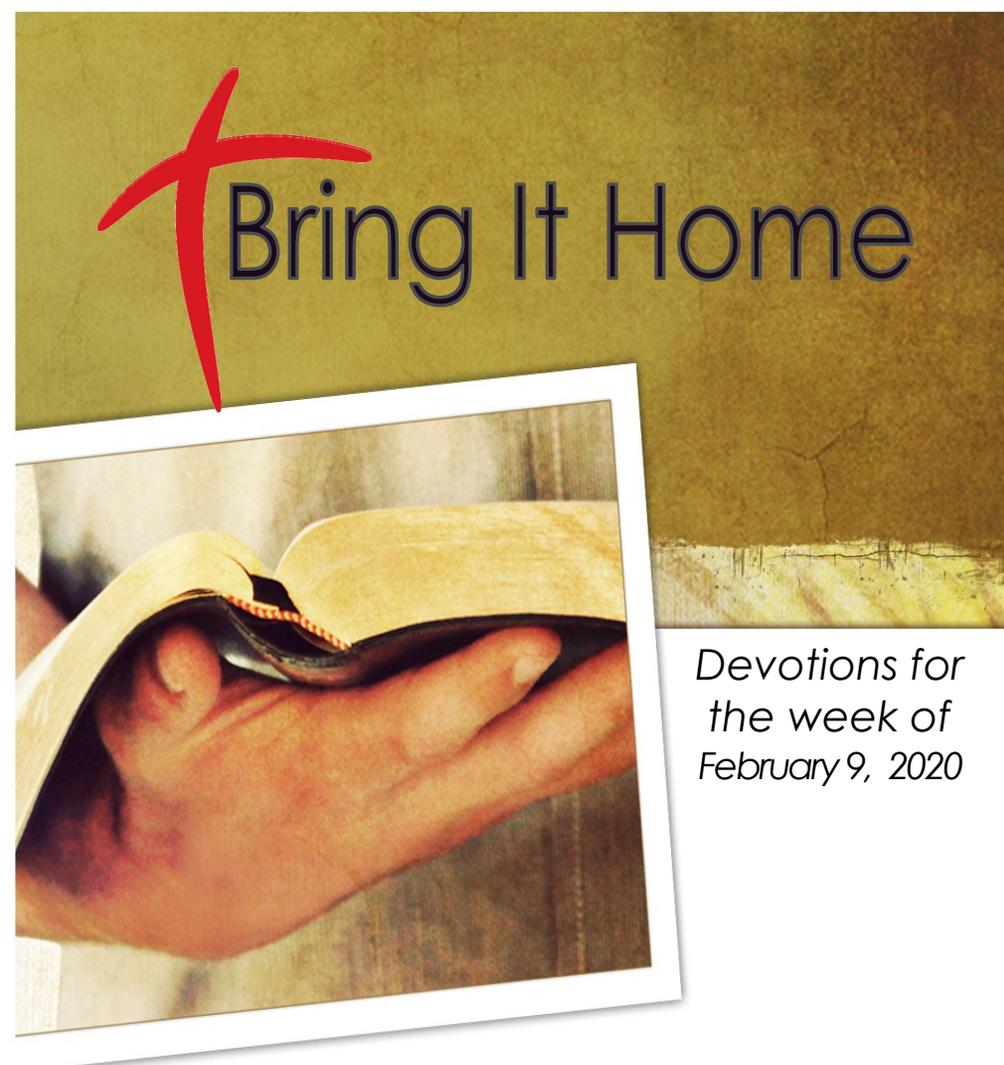
Straight from Google: In the King James Version, love is mentioned 310 times – 131 times in the Old Testament and 179 times in the New Testament. In the New American Standard Version, love is mentioned 348 times – 133 times in the Old Testament and 215 times in the New Testament. Now read Matthew 5:13—*You are the salt of the earth. But what good is salt if it has lost its flavor? Can you make it salty again? It will be thrown out and trampled underfoot as worthless.* What’s love got to do with it? You probably know the song, “And they’ll know we are Christians by our love, by our love. Yes, they’ll know we are Christians by our love.” Try this: Christian love is the salt of the earth. God has made us to be salty; and if we aren’t, what good are we? The Good News is that while salt, NaCl, cannot be made salty again, God’s love is able to revive us and restore our saltiness. Pray for His revival and strength in those times that life seems difficult and flavorless. To God you are never worthless. Never! *So let us not become tired of doing good. At just the right time we will reap a harvest of blessing if we don't give up.* (Galatians 6:9) Beloved, let us love one another.

Saturday – Light and Illumination

Read Matthew 5:14-20. Let there be light! On the first day of creation God commanded light and saw that it was good. God’s light is always good, whether the light of a new day or the light that illumines His Word. That light drives out darkness seems simplistic, but think about your life and faith. As I do, the words of a song come to my mind—“Once when I was a rover, I gambled my life and I lost, for I gambled with One who is God’s only Son. It was from death to life that I crossed.” We move from darkness to light. No gamble! We understand “being in the world but not of it.” Yet, we are **in** the world. Jesus wants our light to shine and gives us instructions in today’s verses: 1) Be a beacon *glowing in the night for all to see*. Your beacon may guide the lost. 2) Don’t hide your light. As God gives opportunity, speak your faith. *Like apples of gold in settings of silver is a word spoken at the right time.* (Proverbs 25:11) 3) Put your light on a stand. When the crowd is going the wrong direction, take a stand. 4) Let your light shine whatever the circumstance—*[God] wants everyone to be saved and to come to know the truth.* (1 Timothy 2:4) Our words and deeds may be woven into the story of another’s salvation. *Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect.* (1 Peter 3:15) Ready, set—shine!

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This week’s *Bring it Home* devotions were written by Eva Knight
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Devotions for
the week of
February 9, 2020

What Now?

- Keep thinking about some of “the deep things of God.”
- Strive to be in the Word and in prayer and in worship regularly to let the Spirit continue to equip you with the “mind of Christ.”
- Be open and particularly attentive this week to the opportunities the Lord will put before you to share and show His love.

Monday – Words and Actions

This week with our *Revealed* series, we continue to explore more of the ways that God reveals Himself to us. Read Isaiah 58:1-5. Have you heard the line, “What you are doing speaks so loudly that I can’t hear a thing you are saying”? God uses Isaiah to thunder that message to His people. *Shout! A full-throated shout! Hold nothing back—a trumpet blast shout! Tell my people what’s wrong with their lives. (The Message)* And what’s wrong? Religiosity that is “show” only. *You humble yourselves by going through the motions of penance (verse 5)* while fighting, quarreling, and oppressing others. Today sackcloth and ashes would be hard to find, but issues related to making a show of faith are as deeply embedded now as they were in Isaiah’s day. In fact, they call each of us to examine our lives. Why is it that we do what we do and say what we say? As I write, I smile remembering a friend who wanted to put a Christian symbol on her car—until she was reminded that this might involve carefully observing the speed limit for the sake of her Christian witness. Please feel free to laugh before getting down to the very serious business of examining your deeds and words. Prayerfully ask God to reveal areas of dissonance and to forgive the sin involved. Then move forward in His strength to live a life that, with or without words, speaks your faith in Christ.

Tuesday – Create in Me a Clean Heart, O God...

Read Isaiah 58:1-9. Look, look, look! There are promises in these verses: salvation, healing, guidance, protection, and *when you call, the Lord will answer, “Yes, I am here.” (verse 8)* Awesome! Yet, as usual, be cautious in taking a few lines out of context. Read the entire section. We can be sure that God will keep His promises, but He says, *If you do these things...* What things? Acts of justice, charity, and generosity. An end to lies and gossip. God gives us free will—what will we choose to do? The Message translation titles verses 1-2, “Your Prayers Won’t Get Off the Ground,” and begins verse 3 with, “*Well, here’s why.*” The bottom line in life and prayer is a vital relationship with God—not an outward show of piety but action from the wellspring of His love within our hearts and minds. Can we do this? Not perfectly, but Christ paid the price so that we can step boldly forward to try to live the life He’s called us to live because He forgives our failures. Our salvation comes by faith in Him. Today pray with the words of Psalm 51:10-12—*Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from thy presence; and take not thy holy spirit from me. Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation; and uphold me with thy free spirit. Amen!*

Wednesday – Abraham Lincoln’s Birthday

Scholars acknowledge that Abraham Lincoln knew the Bible well and called the nation to prayer and fasting during the crises of his Presidency. On this, his 211th birthday, his prayer for the nation seems as relevant now as it was during the Civil War. Let us pray:

“Almighty God, Who has given us this good land for our heritage; We humbly beseech Thee that we may always prove ourselves a people mindful of Thy favor and glad to do Thy will. Bless our land with honorable ministry, sound learning, and pure manners. Save us from violence, discord, and confusion, from pride and arrogance, and from every evil way. Defend our liberties, and fashion into one united people, the multitude brought hither out of many kindreds and tongues. Endow with Thy spirit of wisdom those whom in Thy name we entrust the authority of government, that there may be justice and peace at home, and that through obedience to Thy law, we may show forth Thy praise among the nations of the earth. In time of prosperity fill our hearts with thankfulness, and in the day of trouble, suffer not our trust in Thee to fail; all of which we ask through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.”

Thursday – Questions and Understanding

Sometimes the best answer to a question is another question; and sometimes the way to consider a Bible passage is through another passage. In John 14:16-17, Jesus tells us that although He is leaving us to return to the Father, believers will never be alone. The Holy Spirit will come and lead us into all truth. Now read Paul’s words to the Corinthians in 1 Corinthians 2:1-16. At any age or spiritual stage, the Holy Spirit is our teacher. The message of salvation is simple enough for a child to understand; and yet, its wisdom beckons believers to a lifetime of contemplation and study. It is the Holy Spirit, the third person in the mystery of the Trinity, who *searches out everything and shows us even God’s deep secrets. (verse 10)* My college required a year of Bible study (it no longer does) for the sake of understanding Western civilization (no longer emphasized). I plowed through Bible pages with no more spiritual insight than my history assignments inspired—*people who aren’t Christians can’t understand...it sounds foolish to them.* It is the work of the Holy Spirit to call us to Christ. I give thanks that I listened. When I did, the Bible read like a novel, God’s love story to believers. Got doubts? Doubts might be the beginning of wisdom, the prompting of the Holy Spirit. Listen—*Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you. (Matthew 7:7 KJV)*