



Weekly Devotionals & Notes

February 18-23



“A Stubborn Azalea”

Monday, February 18 Read Psalm 1

It’s important to remember that the “law” referred to in v.2 is not some list of rules but the Torah, the first five books of the Bible, which detail the story of God and God’s people, God’s nature and the nature of sin...as well as rules for a faithful and harmonious society. With that in mind, what does it mean to *you* to “meditate on His law, day and night?” _____

_____ In what ways do you follow this prescription?

Tuesday February 19 Read Jeremiah 17:5-10

Jeremiah points out our tendency to give God lip service while really putting our trust in ourselves and our things and he contrasts them with those who depend on God for their life and sustenance. Reflect on some of the ways we deceive ourselves (v.9) into putting our own likes, goals and desires ahead of God’s in our lives?

What are some ways to counter this tendency?

Wednesday, February 20 Read Luke 6:17-26

Jesus’ message resonated with the poor, the humble and the lowly...and it still does (think of the phenomenal growth of the church in Africa). As you read Luke’s version of the Beatitudes and think about the other readings you’ve done this week, why do you think the prosperous

Sermon notes for “A Stubborn Azalea”

February 17, 2019

1. **Abundant life only comes when it is nourished by the source of that life.**

2. **If we are to grow as God desires, we must be deeply rooted...**
 - A. **in the Word.**
See 2 Timothy 4:3

 - B. **in worship.**
See 1 John 4:16

 - C. **in service.**
See Matthew 5:37-40

and powerful don't always get it? _____

Why are some of these difficult states (hungry, poor, etc.) the starting point for real blessings?

Thursday, February 21 Read 1 Corinthians 15:5-20

Paul here reminds the Corinthians that the Resurrection and the subsequent knowledge that we have nothing to fear from the inevitability of death, is really a source of confident living today. To be a "resurrection people" doesn't mean we believe in an historical event but rather we live because Christ is alive with us today. How might resurrection living be different from just ordinary, daily life? _____

Discuss it with God in prayer today.

Friday, February 22 Read Matthew 5:21-37

Jesus calls us to live beyond mere rule keeping and legal limitations and to embrace a life of grace and a growing Christ-like nature. We can't live up to this on our own but we can strive towards it knowing we have already been redeemed by the cross and are therefore not condemned for our failings. What is the difference between moral rules and living as those who are already redeemed? _____

How can the world tell the difference and how do we share such good news? _____

Saturday, February 23 Read Psalm 119:1-8

Just read this psalm through slowly and reflectively, remembering your readings and meditations for this last week. What insights has God shown you?

How are you going to respond? _____

Take some time today to express your thanks to God for his gracious love.



Small Group Discussion Guide

February 18-23

1. Begin by reading Psalm 1, and discuss the questions from February 18 .

- *What are some of the “waters” that God uses to nourish your faith and growth?*
- *How can we become more deeply rooted in these?*
- *What might be some of the reasons we drift away from the source of real living? What might be the warning signs of such a drift?*

2. Read Luke 6:17-26 and discuss your answers from Wednesday’s reading. Then reflect on the following:

- *Christianity-in terms of numbers– is on the rise in Africa and the developing world and declining in the Western industrialized nations. Given Jesus’ teaching here, why do you think that might be happening?*
- *“Worship” is about putting God’s priorities ahead of our own (lit. Worth-ship). From this passage, what are God’s priorities? How are the “woes” in this passage to be seen as warnings against setting other things or priorities up as ‘false gods?’*

3. From the sermon notes and from your readings, what does it look like to be “deeply rooted” in..

A. in the Word.

- *Read 2 Timothy 4:3. Where do you see evidence of “itching ears” in today’s world and among modern church goers?*
- *How can we counter this tendency?*

B. in worship.

- *Read 1 John 4:16. What does this tell us about both the nature of God and of His priorities? What does it suggest about how we should order our own lives and discipleship?*
- *Are there ways to move our understanding of “worship” beyond just the Sunday service?*

C. in service.

- *Read Matthew 5:37-40. What does this tell us about the nature of Christian living and what challenges might this place before us?*