



## Weekly Devotionals for March 4-9

### Monday, March 4 Read Psalm 19

The very nature of creation is to extol God's glory and the purpose of His people, the psalmist tells us, is to actively seek to draw closer to God. How does the psalm tell us that closeness is achieved and what are some means by which you draw ever closer to God? What causes you to feel distant from God and why?

### Tuesday, March 5 Read Exodus 20:1-17

The first four commandments (and the longest, most detailed part of the text) are concerned with our relationship to God. Yet most people remember the last six- the "thou shalt not's"-better. Why do you suppose that is? Is it in some way easier to avoid stealing than truly honoring God with our devotion, undivided worship and reverent awe? Why or why not?

### Wednesday, March 6 Read John 2:13-22

It is important to recognize that the money-changers and livestock dealers were performing what most people saw as an essential service. Faithful worship, however, had become a business and a means of personal advancement. What are some ways we still tend to shift dedication to God towards individual gratification? Put another way, in what ways do we put God and God's concerns first and in what ways do we put our own wants and needs in the top slot?

### Thursday, March 7 Read Psalm 1 & Corinthians 1:18-25

We often second guess God in our discipleship. "He wouldn't really want me to do that!" we say or "I'm sure that is meant for someone else." Like the folks in this passage we demand signs and surety rather than recognize the death of self-centeredness that is a big part of the message of the cross. What does it mean in the way you live your life to "proclaim Christ crucified" each day? In what ways does that lifestyle clash with the rationalizations and world logic of those around you?

### Friday, March 8 Read Isaiah 55:1-9

God's ways are often hard for us to comprehend (see vv.8-9) but is our inability to understand God an excuse for not seeking Him or striving to know His ways? Why or why not? According to Isaiah, what makes one "wicked" and what make one blessed? What might God be saying to you personally through this prophecy?

### Saturday, March 9 Read Psalm 63:1-8

This is a hymn of total dedication and commitment. What makes the psalmist so passionate about God? How does this song reflect your own faith experience and in what ways is the psalmist's experience different from your own? What do you think accounts for the difference?

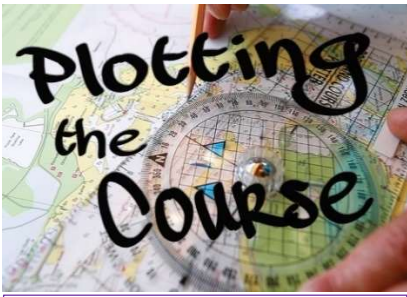
### Sermon Notes

#### "Obstacles & Distractions"

March 3, 2024

John 2:13-22

- 1. Following Christ is a journey of constant growth through sin and failure.**
- 2. We can move through sin and failure when we...**
  - A. Slow down: Can I take a step back and prayerfully reflect on who I am in Christ?**
  - B. Prepare for change: What is absolutely essential if I am to be Christ's ambassador?**
  - C. Focus on the Goal: Where does God want to lead me?**



## Week #3: "Obstacles & Distractions"

### Small Group Discussion Guide

#### Part I. Taking in Our Surroundings

**1. Look at Sermon note #1 and with that in mind, read John 2:13-22.**

**Share:** "It is important to recognize that the money-changers and livestock dealers were performing what most people saw as an essential service. Faithful worship, however, had become a business and a means of personal advancement." Discuss the following:

- What are some ways we still tend to shift dedication to God towards individual gratification? Put another way, in what ways do we put God and God's concerns first and in what ways do we put our own wants and needs in the top slot?

#### Part II: Plotting Our Course

**1. Look at Sermon note #2 and discuss the following:**

- What does it mean to know 'who I am in Christ' and what are some ways we can slow down and come to understand this better?
- Read 1 Corinthians 1:18-25. What does it mean in the way you live your life to "proclaim Christ crucified" each day?

**2. Read Exodus 20:1-17** Share: "The first four commandments (and the longest, most detailed part of the text) are concerned with our relationship to God. Yet most people remember the last six- the 'thou shalt not's'-better. Discuss the following:

- Why do you suppose that is? Is it in some way easier to avoid stealing than truly honoring God with our devotion, undivided worship and reverent awe? Why or why not?
- How is this the most fundamental aspect of change we really need to prepare for?

**3. Read Psalm 63:1-8** Share: This is a hymn of total dedication and commitment.

- What makes the psalmist so passionate about God?
- How does this song reflect your own faith experience and in what ways is the psalmist's experience different from your own? What do you think accounts for the difference?

**LEN**   
Pray Fast Give

*If you are currently practicing some or all of the Lenten disciplines of prayer, fasting and giving, use this space to reflect on what you are discovering on this journey.*

**Praying:** What obstacles and distractions are hampering or limiting your prayer life? Discuss this with God.

**Fasting:** How has fasting/sacrificing helped you slow down and reflect more?

**Giving:** Has giving helped you to understand yourself a bit better in terms of your relationship to god and if so, how?