



Week #3: "A Heart Healthy Diet"

Daily Devotions for January 29-February 3, 2024

Monday, January 29 Read Psalm 1

The key to this psalm is found in v. 3 and its reminder that when we are deeply rooted in God's life-giving presence, we become spiritually strong and healthy. Such deep roots are vital if we are to withstand challenges and temptations. What are some of the practices in which you engage in order to plant deep roots? Where is your spirituality a bit shallow? Discuss these with God in prayer today.

Tuesday January 30 Read Matthew 15:1-20

"Holiness of Heart" refers to cultivating that special connection to God that causes good things to come from us. Look closely at vv.18-19. In what ways have you ever experienced the truth of these words in yourself? Why were the Pharisees seemingly more concerned with outward show and external practices, even if these were not necessarily easy? What does this say about how we understand ourselves and the challenges of real spiritual growth?

Wednesday, January 31 Read Isaiah 56:1; 6-8

This passage contrasts with the criticism quoted from Isaiah 29:18 in yesterday's reading. In real practical terms, what is the difference between praising God with our lips and praising God with our hearts. According to today's passage, what does God require from people in order to connect with them? How do we cultivate such traits?

Thursday, February 1 Read Genesis 45:1-15

Joseph's brothers had done him a profound injustice and caused immense suffering. If anyone was justified in taking revenge it was Joseph! Yet he *chose* to forgive instead. How did Joseph's decision affect the future of his family? His own future? Our future? Why is God, deeply rooted in our lives, necessary for true forgiveness and peace.

Friday, February 2 Read Ephesians 4:11-16

New doctrines and new ways of living are always being presented both in religious and secular life. According to this passage what is our fundamental purpose in life? What part do you see yourself as being called to play in building up the Body? Where are you fulfilling that and where are you needing more growth?

Saturday, February 3 Read Psalm 133

Read this psalm through a few times. Why is unity such a thing to be desired and celebrated? What does that tell us about God and about ourselves? What does this tell us about humanity in general?



Lesson #3: "A Heart Healthy Diet"

Small Group Study & Discussion Guide

Sermon Notes for

"A Heart Healthy Diet" January 28, 2024

- 1. We cannot live into the challenges of discipleship unless we cultivate a deep heart connection to God.**

"But the words that come out of your mouth come from your heart. And they are what make you unfit to worship God." -Matthew 15:18

2.A healthy heart is nourished by...

A. ...a rich diet of scripture.

"All scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness."-2 Timothy 3:16

B. ...regular, disciplined prayer- both public and private.

"Pray without ceasing."-1 Thessalonians 5:17

C. ...constant Christian fellowship.

"Not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more as you see the day drawing near."- Hebrews 10:25

Part I. Pernicious Roots

- 1. Share:** *An old computer programming maxim has very ancient roots: "Garbage in-garbage out." At the heart of his reforms was Wesley's understanding that our call to be 'holy' requires setting ourselves apart from the ways of the fallen world. He suggested this happens in two areas: holiness of heart (our internal connection to God) and holiness of life (our external practices of witness and service). Today we reflect on how we cooperate with the Spirit to cultivate that internal separateness. Discuss the following with your group:*

- **Read Matthehw 15:1-20.** Look closely at vv.18-19. In what ways have you ever experienced the truth of these words in yourself? Why were the Pharisees seemingly more concerned with outward show and external practices, even if these were not necessarily easy? What does this say about how we understand ourselves and the challenges of real spiritual growth?
- **Look at Sermon note #1.** In our modern world, what are some aspects of "garbage in" that seem to shape people and society? Remembering the definition of "holy" what does this suggest about our personal walk with God and how that is to be strengthened?

Part II. Reclaiming Vile-tality

- 1. Look at Sermon note#2. Discuss the following:**

- What does a "rich diet of scripture" look like and how is that different from a "light snack" or even "biblical junk food?" Read 2 Timothy 3:10 & 13-17. In light of this, what is the purpose of *knowing* scripture?
- What does it mean to "pray without ceasing?" How do you understand prayer and would you say you have a healthy (and a regular and disciplined) prayer life? Why, in terms of cultivating a holy heart, is this so important?
- Read Ephesians 4:11-16. In light of all we've discussed before, why does Paul regularly put such emphasis on the health of the gathering (the *eklesia* or 'church')? Why do so many nominal Christians see commitment to the Body as less important than "being saved?" What does that say about where we are rooted?