



# 2025 Weekly Devotions

Week of: August 11<sup>th</sup> -17<sup>th</sup>

Sermon: August 10<sup>th</sup>



SMYRNA BAPTIST CHURCH  
building community • equipping believers • serving Jesus



August 11

**Psalm 1:1-3**

Sunday was a unique day of worship for us at Smyrna. I pray that you enjoyed watching our children lead us as they presented the product of their Worship Arts Camp week. That being the case, this week does not really offer a “sermon” to elaborate upon which means that Pastor Robert and I have the wonderful opportunity to write about... whatever we want!

In keeping with our hopes of giving you something to chew on and in light of the place we are at on the calendar, we thought it would be helpful and prudent to take some time to cement in your mind the value of time around the Word together. Specifically, we wanted to take a week to emphasize the way in which our Sunday night discipleship opportunity and our midweek gatherings (AWANA, youth, Bible study) are helpful to your growth as a believer.

Today’s text lends itself quite nicely to this driving goal as we are reminded that the man (or woman) of God who is blessed is the one who not only reads the Scriptures on occasion but meditates upon the truths of the Bible “day and night”. The word translated “meditate” in verse 2 is sometimes rendered “imagine” or “muse”. The various translations give us a bit of a clearer picture as to what the Psalmist has in mind here.

Just as an imaginative person lingers over his or her ideas with a desire to perfect and mold their ideas, so a faithful man or woman of God lingers over the Bible, working diligently both to understand and apply the text to their lives. The picture here is one of fascination and dedication. The one who is most blessed by the Word is the one who is constantly immersed in it, both in reading its pages AND in taking the concepts and dwelling upon them throughout the day.

How does this square with a midweek Bible study or a Sunday night class? The answer is that the more exposure you have to the Word and the more time you are immersed in its truths, the more likely you are to consider what you have heard throughout the week! Stated differently, if you are only exposed to truth on a Sunday morning, you are much less likely to be meditating upon truth “day and night”. This is part of the motivation behind Points to Ponder! Your pastors desire you to continue to think about the truth of what was delivered. Additionally, this is a primary reason for our gathering together to learn more of what God has said.

August 12

### **Joshua 1:8**

Joshua 1 describes one of the most monumental transitions in biblical history. The opening verses describe the scene nicely as Moses has passed away and Joshua takes the mantle of leadership as the children of Israel stand on the precipice of entering the long anticipated Promised Land. Verse 8 lands within the context of a larger section which details the instructions of God that were given in order to educate and guide Joshua in his new role as the human leader of the Jews. What interests me here is the content of the instructions in verse 8. We would anticipate some last words of guidance regarding military strategy or some “brass tacks” thoughts on how to lead and guide a large group of people. Instead, we read the Lord’s admonition to meditate and obey all of the “book of the Law” (which constituted the totality of the Scriptures available to the people at that time).

Even in the midst of chaotic and turbulent times, the Lord was intent that His people and, specifically, the leader of His people be dedicated to the study of His Word. Notice here two things about this text, first there is the admonition to study. Joshua and the Jews were to meditate upon the law “day and night”. This means that there was to be a constant and unending pursuit of the truth of the Word. It is as if the Lord is saying that there should not be a moment in the day in which His Word is far from the minds of His people. Second, notice the admonition to obedience. The Lord was not attempting to create mere scholars who knew the ins and outs of the text, instead His goal was to saturate the people of God in truth so that they could walk in what was given to them! Scripture has not been provided for our mere intellect, instead we must seek to understand the truth so that we can apply what has been given!

The grace of God is made clear in this passage as we come to the promise that is given by the Lord to those who heed this command. God says that obedience to His exhortation will result in prosperity and “good success”. What does this mean? It means that those who heed God’s instructions could expect His intervention and Divine favor. Obviously, there is a stream of pseudo-Christian thought that has taken these words (and others like them) and suggested that God had jet planes and mansions chiefly in mind. While we do not deny the fact that God does often bless us financially and materially, it would be wise to realize that the great blessing of God upon His people is not material but relational. Indeed, verse 9 reminds Joshua that his courage to do all that was commanded is undergirded and strengthened by the fact that God would be with him wherever he might go. Folks, the Lord speaks and directs through His Word and those who consistently meditate and apply what has been said will be richly blessed. This is our desire for you, and it is why we continue to pour into preparation for time around the Word together believing that these times of study will lead to meditation which leads to rich blessing!

August 13

**Psalm 77:12**

One principle of history is that the greatest indicator of the future is the past. Many people have applied this principle by stating that those who refuse to study history are doomed to repeat it! Haven't we seen evidence of this in our day? Consider, for example, the people in New York City who, evidently, are interested in electing a socialist as a mayor because of the same promises that socialism always promises yet never delivers. Closer to home, how many times have you observed a young person wandering down the same well-trodden road of youthful foolishness only to realize that the path does not lead to pleasure but pain? It can be heartbreaking to see people repeat the same mistakes but the principle of history repeating itself can also be a great encouragement.

At Smyrna, we are constantly attempting to remind people that the loved ones they are praying for who are currently far from God are not outside of the Lord's saving grip. How do we know this? In part because of the past! We have seen people saved from horrible backgrounds, we know that the Lord is mighty to redeem those who are far off and these past occurrences give us great hope and cause for faith for future blessing.

In Psalm 77, we read a word of resolve that, I believe, is given for this exact reason as the Psalmist commits to ponder the "mighty deeds" of the Lord. Typically, the term "mighty deeds" in the Psalms refer to the Lord's mighty works of salvation. The Lord mightily parted the Red Sea; He was strong in toppling the walls of Jericho and He was faithful and mighty to provide manna for the people in the midst of an arid desert.

The point here is that those deeds were not undertaken exclusively for the people in the moment, instead the Lord has done those things in history for our meditation today. Why? Well, when you and I consider all that God has done before, we have reason for hope and joy today! This is another reason for our time in the Word. The Bible reminds us of who God is and what He can do. It draws our minds away from the difficult circumstances and fixates our mental gaze on the One who has proven that He is able to overcome even the most challenging obstacles.

When you and I take a moment to step out of the rat race of life, when we re-center our minds and hearts on the God that we worship, we have reason for hope, even in trial and pain! This is why it is so crucial for us to dedicate time to study and meditation. We must carve out time to return to the identity and work of the Lord and, as we do, we can be assured that the Lord's past work is the greatest indicator of the joyous might He will unveil again in the days to come.

August 14

**Psalm 143:5-6**

As a child, my father had a very strange habit... he drank Tab. I don't know how many of you even remember that horrible diet soda, but it was a staple of my childhood. Tab was the first foray into diet soda drinks, and it was awful! There were a few moments in my early years when I was compelled to take a swig (out of total thirsty desperation) but my dad loved Tab. I can remember asking him many times why he would subject himself to such a horrible tasting drink and his answer was always the same. Dad loved soda but he didn't love the sugar which meant he was motivated to drink something that, at first, didn't taste great. However, over time, he began to love Tab because it was an "acquired taste". The more he drank this soda, the more he craved the same taste.

My point for today is fairly simple. While I am not comparing the Word of God or our relationship with God to Tab (that would be heretical and totally irresponsible), I am saying that there is something to the human condition in which we grow to further love what we constantly pursue and taste. Those of us who have a passion for the Word of God can attest that our love of the Scriptures has continued to deepen over the years. Whereas I used to read the Bible and think that I loved what God has revealed, I now realize that my passion for the Word has continued to deepen as I have drunk more and more truths which satisfy my thirsty soul.

Stated differently, those who continue to ingest the Word of God will find that the desire for more grows. Psalm 145 makes this connection quite nicely. In verse 5 David writes about his meditating upon the deeds of the Lord (remember yesterday's devotion?) and verse 6 tells us that his meditation has resulted in a thirst for the Lord like a "parched land".

Folks, those who have tasted and seen that the Lord is good through a study of what He has revealed and done in history will realize that nothing else can satisfy and when they come to the conclusion that the Lord is good and holy and desirable, their thirst will continue to grow. The world is full of those who thirst but only those who thirst for the truth of the Word will find a wellspring of life-giving water. Our hope is that you would continue to imbibe the Word of God, and our goal is to give you a drink multiple times a week. While we know that you must continue to drink in your private lives, I can think of no better way to spend a Sunday evening or Wednesday night than to gather around the wellspring of life that is the Word of God and drink deeply from its springs with your brothers and sisters in Christ.

August 15

**2 Chronicles 12:1-2, 5; 13:12; 24:18-19**

I am writing from the book of 2 Chronicles today not simply to show that within the pages of this often neglected book lies some wonderful truth and instructions for us today. I am actually writing in view of the concept of spiritual growth or maturity from the angle of faith and obedience in the protection and provision of the Lord for our lives. Various passages have been chosen from several chapters that all encapsulate the same message. I hope you will enjoy a little dive into this book today because I plan to be in it again tomorrow.

The main thrust of today's "point to ponder" is that great spiritual gain lies in faithfulness to the Lord, especially in hard times. The author of Chronicles (both books) reveals to us that much of the turmoil, wars, defeats, and judgment against Israel and Judah came because of their disobedience to the Lord. For example, it is written "When the rule of Rehoboam was established and he was strong, he abandoned the law of the Lord, and all Israel with him. In the fifth year of King Rehoboam, because they had been unfaithful to the Lord... (2 Chron. 12:1-2). It then goes on to say, "You abandoned Me, so I have abandoned you to the hand of Shishak" (v. 5). We should never expect personal, spiritual growth if we abandon the Lord - causing us to lose His favor and grace.

Consider how foolish the idea is that we can neglect our bodies and expect to remain in shape. No one would argue the point that reckless spending will lead to financial freedom and security. We all see the wisdom and value, even if it goes unheeded, in making wise decisions that will help us reach an intended goal. The same logic holds true as it relates to our spiritual development. One cannot neglect the means of grace God has provided for growth and expect to grow. One surely cannot expect to reject Christ through disobedience or neglect and expect to walk in His favor or grow in His likeness. We see this lived out consistently in the life of Israel and Judah.

The author, possibly Ezra, continues in the 13<sup>th</sup> chapter with these words of admonition, "Do no fight against the Lord, the God of your fathers, for you cannot succeed" (v. 12). Dear ones, it is best if we simply walk in consistent obedience and trust with our Lord. He is trustworthy, dependable, and more than able to handle everything that comes our way. There exists no enemy stronger than our Defender and no situation that confuses Him. It is utterly foolish to consider abandoning Him for shelter or refuge in something or someone less than He is. You will not succeed! Don't waste your time and miss opportunities to grow as you exercise faith which leads to more grace that causes spiritual growth in you.

Allow me to point out one more beautiful truth about our God's patience and effort to keep us on track, for He knows that is where grow we will grow. It says in 24:18-19, "And they abandoned the house of the Lord...Yet He sent prophets among them to bring them back to the Lord...but they would not pay attention." Isn't that incredibly sad? Please focus as we close today on God's amazing love that prompts Him to offer guidance through His teachers, preachers, and His Word. Stay in it my friends and growth will surely come.

August 16

**2 Chronicles 15:1-2, 7; 16:9; 20:12-17**

Yesterday the focus was on the loss of blessing and reward due to disobedience and faithlessness. Today, I want to look at the positive side of this discussion as it relates to obedience, trust, and faithfulness which leads to favor and reward. You might think that we should not focus on what we “get” from faithfulness, but I beg to differ. There are plenty of times in our lives when we struggle to love the Lord as much as we should which leads to the struggle to be faithful. In these times, it has helped me to simply remember the cold hard facts that there are rewards for obeying Him and troubles when I don’t. That may sound unspiritual, but the fact remains that it is true.

The author of 2 Chronicles wrote these telling words, “But you take courage! Do not let your hands be weak, for your work shall be rewarded” (v. 7). This follows the reminder that as we seek the Lord, we will find Him (v. 2). In the next chapter he went on to write, “For the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to give strong support to those whose heart is blameless toward Him” (2 Chron. 16:9). Asa, the king of Judah, had turned to the pagan king of Syria for help instead of remaining faithful to God which resulted in the loss of blessing in contrast to the victory that Judah had won against the Ethiopians and Libyans when they relied on God for protection and provision. The point here is that God loves to shower His favor on those who turn to and remain with Him at all times rather than abandoning Him because of fear or uncertainty.

I write today as a reminder that as you seek to grow in wisdom and stature before the Lord, it is imperative that you walk in faithfulness and obedience before Him. I am often frustrated when talking to folks who wonder why they aren’t growing as Christians or why God is not moving in favorable ways in their lives. Why would He dear ones if you habitually live your life and make decisions apart from the wisdom and counsel of His Word? Let’s take another look into our text for today from the twentieth chapter of 2 Chronicles.

Here we have the story of king Jehoshaphat of Judah, a good king for the most part, facing a formidable foe in the Ammonites and Moabites. The enemy appeared greater than Judah and victory was unlikely. Jehoshaphat prayed humbly to God and led the nation to do the same. In humility he stated, “We do not know what to do, but our eyes are on you” (20:12). The response to their faith and dependence upon God moved the heart of God to action. He spoke through the prophet Jahaziel, “Do not be afraid and do not be dismayed at this great horde, for the battle is not yours but God’s” (v. 15). He went on to say, “Stand firm, hold your position, and see the salvation of the Lord on your behalf” (v.17). Dear ones, isn’t that a beautiful example of the power of God and the love of God for His people. He enjoys putting His glory and might on display on our behalf. Why would anyone choose to ignore this truth?

As we close today, please remember that your job in discipleship and spiritual growth is simply to pursue Him and knowledge through prayer, Bible study, and involvement with the body of Christ. He will do the transforming work in your heart and mind. Position yourself properly and faithfully before the Lord, stand firm, and watch Him change you for His glory and your good.

August 17

**2 Peter 1:3-15**

As we close this week of “points to ponder” thinking about spiritual growth, I have good news. The Bible contains a truth that is meant to encourage us and prompt us to perseverance in the disciplines of grace believing all the while that we will surely grow. Peter wrote it this way, “His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us to His own glory and excellence, by which He has granted to us His precious and very great promises, so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature...” (2 Peter 1:3-4). This means simply that we have what we need to become what we hope to be as followers of Christ.

With this truth firmly in our hearts and minds, we are to proceed to the next part of the chosen passage for today. Peter writes, “For this very reason, make every effort to supplement your faith with virtue, and virtue with knowledge...” (2 Peter 1:5). Beloved, I hope that you will see we are summoned to spiritual growth in the Word, we are promised help in the endeavor, and we are simultaneously encouraged to get to work at it. Spiritual maturity should not be viewed as an option or a reality reserved only for elite Christians. No dear ones, we are all indwelt by the Holy Spirit and are thus equipped to grow in the Lord Jesus.

Note that we begin with faith as we must and this descriptive list of virtues ends with love (v.7). I think it is telling that genuine saving faith ends or demonstrates itself in love. Paul stated that genuine faith works through love so it would stand to reason that the list of virtues in Peter’s letter would begin with faith and culminate in love. The order or sequence of the virtues, beyond the first and last one, probably does not matter as much as the reality of the need for a believer’s life to progressively reflect the character of God to the world.

Peter admonishes us to “make every effort” to develop your faith with these Christian virtues. Friends, I have to ask you today if you are indeed making every effort to grow in the Lord? Could you honestly say that you are taking full advantage of the opportunities afforded you to grow as disciples of Christ in your personal life and as a member of Smyrna Baptist? Do you look more like Christ this year than you did last year? Friend, if the answer is no, then for goodness’ sake please do something about it. Choose to work diligently to learn more about Jesus, to become more committed to self-denial, and to jump in the deep end of discipleship here with the rest of us.

Remember that our great God has given us everything we need to become all that He wants us to be. None of us are in this alone and I hope that you know by now that I don’t mind being transparent about my own struggles and propensity to serve my flesh. I am continuing to pursue Christ and to examine myself to see where I need to work a little harder. Let us commit together to spur one another on to good deeds and love for the Lord. Strive with us dear church family to grow and to mature as children of God.