

appnotes

DAY 1 READ MATTHEW 6:25-34

1

Have you recovered from Christmas and New Year's yet? We spend so much time finding the perfect gifts for the people we love, cleaning the house, cooking and baking, and preparing to travel or host guests, that we often feel stressed by it all. Christmas isn't the only time of year we feel stressed, though. Mortgage payments and car payments, clothes and food – all of these very necessary pieces of life can weigh heavily on our minds. Jesus has words of encouragement for all of us: God takes the time to provide for the birds of the air and the lilies of the field, and He cares for us so much more! God loves us so much that He sent His Son to die for us, and if He is willing to go to such lengths, won't He take care of everything else? If we seek His kingdom first, we'll have everything we need!

DAY 2 READ PSALM 90:1-12

2

How many times have you heard yourself say, "Time flies!"? When we see our children accomplish something new, we remember how little they used to be and realize how quickly they are growing up. After we've spent months planning the perfect vacation, we watch the days of our vacation slip away. Moses recognized this truth centuries ago, and he says this about life: "Soon it is gone and we fly away." So what do we do? Do we fill up our lives with parties and fancy dinners and vacations, to get as much out of life as we can? We need to ask ourselves, what kind of legacy do I want to leave behind? Moses says, "Teach us to number our days, that we may present to You a heart of wisdom." We have to wise-up, or we'll waste our lives.

DAY 3 READ DEUTERONOMY 8:10-18

3

If you've ever gone on an overseas mission trip, you may have been surprised at the way people with so little can be filled with so much joy. In America, we have been blessed with so much. It doesn't need to make us feel guilty, but it should make us grateful! In today's reading, Moses is encouraging the people of Israel as they prepared to enter the Promised Land. They would have a life of ease and prosperity, but his words also give a warning. A life of prosperity carried with it the possibility that their eyes would see what they had and not the God who provided it. We might fall into the same error, but the answer now is the same as it was then: "Remember the LORD your God, for it is He who is giving you power to make wealth." If we keep first things first, we will cultivate hearts of gratitude, no matter where we live!

DAY READ PHILIPPIANS 3:1-14

4

How do you know when you're successful as a follower of Christ? Are there items on a list to check off? Are we doing well if we can go days without being angry, covetous, or selfish? In Philippians, Paul lists all of the ways he was a successful Jew. But then Paul says, "But whatever things were gain to me, these things I have counted as loss for the sake of Christ." Paul spent his entire life following all the rules, learning the Law by heart, and zealously pursuing what he believed God wanted from him. But what God wanted from Paul – and all of us – was to pursue Christ. We do that by reading God's Word, the Bible; by connecting with other believers in a church and a smaller group; and by talking with God through prayer. Pursuing Christ fully is the most successful Christian life!

DAY READ HEBREWS 12:1-3

5

Athletes who compete professionally or at the Olympic level live with a singular focus. Their schedules revolve around workouts, their diets balance carbs and proteins, and their friendships often reflect these same values. Most of us don't live with such discipline, but the writer of Hebrews uses a long distance race as a metaphor for living the Christian life. We, too, must live with discipline as we pursue Christ. "Let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles." But avoiding sin is only part of the equation, just as an athlete knows practice and workouts will only get them so far. We must also run with endurance, not giving up when life puts up a fight. And just as the athlete works for a prize, we, too, will be rewarded if we live the Christian life with a singular focus.

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