

Devotions for February 4, 2018

LARGE-PRINT

Faith on the 50-Yard Line

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Sunday, February 4, 2018

Hebrews 11:1 reads, “*Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see.*” By faith we move forward knowing that there is a God who loves us, who created the world we walk upon, who sent His Son, Jesus Christ, to show us the way, the truth, and the life.

Jesus said, in **Matthew 21:21**, “*I tell you the truth, if you have faith and do not doubt...you can say to this mountain, ‘Go throw yourself into the sea,’ and it will be done.*” Faith is having strength, finding strength, in God and allowing God to work through us to “*accomplish more than we can ask or imagine.*”

Faith is understanding that your goal is God...your goal is to see your relationship with God grow. “*It doesn’t matter what we accomplish during our life,*” says Steelers guard Rich Tyiski. “*We’re all going to face judgment before God, then live through eternity. We need to choose where that’s going to be, heaven or hell.*”

Several football players were asked about their faith in the Path To Victory New Testament. This is what they say...

- *Few people in life reach the goal that God intended for them. God could force us to love him...But his desire is for us to choose to enter his kingdom. Most people won’t make that choice. Jesus urged people to “enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad the road that leads to destruction and many enter through it. But small is the gate*

and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it” (Matthew 7:13-14).

- *To make the right choice we must give control of our life to someone greater than ourselves. This starts by believing what God says about himself. “God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life” (John 3:16).*
- *One of the biggest things for a young person to realize is that God has a special plan for their life that’s better than anyone they might come up with on their own. The first step in God’s plan for you is to give your heart to Jesus.*
- *If you believe that God loves you so much that he allowed his son to take the punishment for every sin you’ll ever commit, you can begin a new life. But your acceptance of his love must be accompanied by repentance.*
- *Imagine running toward the wrong end zone. People who don’t accept God’s love are doing just that with their life.*
- *Repentance means admitting to God that you’re a sinner – someone who has, like everyone else in the world, fallen short of God’s perfection – and letting your life move in a new direction. “Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out” (Acts 3:19).*

Bengals mascot Brent Claiborne understands the change that comes to someone who has accepted God’s love. Claiborne states, *“When I’m not wearing the mascot suit, when it’s just me in my street clothes, my efforts to encourage people or make them smile don’t accomplish anything. On its own, without me in it, the suit is just a pile of furry material sitting on a cement floor in the stadium. But with a living person inside it, the suit becomes alive. This is how I feel after asking Christ to become part of my life. He’s living inside me, giving me a new life.”*

“Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened” (Matthew 7: 7-8).

Are you ready to ask God to come into your life right now and forgive your sins? If so, tell him. This new life is yours for the asking. *Jesus, thank you for wanting to have a relationship with me. I accept the forgiveness you’re offering and invite you to become part of my life. Please help me get to know you better. Amen.*

Monday, February 5 – Tuesday, February 6, 2018

Faith is knowing that God wants us to always do our best and always doing our best for God, not for the praise of others. Faith is knowing that God wants to change us into the likeness of Jesus Christ, His Son, and will give us the strength to make that change. Faith is setting God-sized goals, knowing that the only way we will accomplish those goals is with God’s help.

Shaun Alexander, 2005 NFL MVP, in his book, Touchdown Alexander, writes about ten principles for living a blessed life. I wanted to share these with you as you reflect this week on your faith, your relationship with Jesus Christ, the way you are living your life, and who around you need to know and hear about God’s great love. **Take time today and tomorrow to read through these scriptures.**

1. Put God First - **Matthew 6: 33-34**
2. Use Trials To Make You Successful – **James 1: 2-4**
3. Knowledge – Chase It & Use It – **Hosea 4:6**
4. Practice Humility – **Luke 14: 8-11**
5. Be Grateful & Trust In The Lord – **Proverbs 3: 5-6**

6. Discover Your Gift & Step Out – **I Corinthians 12: 4-6**
7. Be Slow To Judge & Quick To Forgive – **Luke 6: 37**
8. Know The Will of God & Be Willing To Wait For Him –
Jeremiah 29:11; Psalm 27: 14
9. Don't Play Games With Your Life – **Matthew 15: 8-9;**
Hebrews 10: 26-27; Matthew 7: 21-23
10. Leave the Results to God – **Psalm 37:4**

Go through these scriptures this week. Ask yourself: Am I putting God first? Do I allow my trials to make me bitter or better? Am I studying the Word? Do I get caught up in pride? Am I grateful for what I have? What are my gifts and am I involved in ministry, moving the church forward? Am I willing to wait on God's timing or do I want it now? Am I living my faith or just talking it? Am I trusting God with my future? Is there anyone I need to forgive? Is there anyone I am judging instead of reaching out to?

Wednesday, February 7, 2018

Read I Samuel 16: 1-13. God sends Samuel to anoint the new king of Israel. Samuel travels, as the Lord asked, to Jesse in Bethlehem and there stands before his eight sons. Samuel immediately assumes that Eliab, the oldest son, is the Lord's anointed one, the new king. Samuel assumes this because of his stature and appearance; yet, God says, *"I have rejected him. The Lord doesn't make decisions the way you do! People judge by outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the person's thoughts and intentions."*

Thomas Paine wrote, *"Reputation is what men and women think of us. Character is what God and the angels know of us."* J. B. Phillips, in talking about Jesus' Sermon on the Mount, writes, *"[Jesus] outlines the kind of character which is possible for any*

man, gifted or relatively ungifted, strong or weak, clever or slow. Once more we find Christ placing his finger, not upon the externals, but upon the vital internal attitude.” As God said to Samuel, “*the Lord looks at the person’s thoughts and intentions,*” not outward appearances. The Lord looks at our character.

How often have we watched, read about, or seen brought to film, true stories of men and women, football teams, underdogs, going against their opponent, against all odds, sure to lose, only to win? The difference wasn’t skill, or size, or experience; the difference was character. Tom Osborne, former coach of the University of Nebraska Cornhuskers, writes, “*Quite often the factor determining who finishes first, tenth, or fifteenth is largely a matter of character.*”

When God looks on the inside, your thoughts and intentions, what does He see? Pray that God cleanses & strengthens your heart! Pray that God increases your faith!

Thursday, February 8, 2018

Read Revelation 3: 7-13 & Joshua 1: 6-9. A huge part of football, a huge part of character, a huge part of walking in faith is courage. It takes courage to follow Christ. Acts 4:13 reads, “*When they saw the courage of Peter and John...they took note that these men had been with Jesus.*”

Kurt Warner, quarterback for the SuperBowl Champion Rams, says, “*Standing up for my beliefs, no matter what, is one more way I define being a person of integrity. It doesn’t matter if it’s in front of millions of people at the Super Bowl or one person in private; I try to stand true to who I am in the Lord. Your teammates will watch you...And your classmates and family members. It will take courage to do what you know is right when you’re being torn in different directions.*”

Jesus speaks to John about character in the believer. In Revelation 3:8, Jesus says, “*I know you have little strength, yet you have kept my word and have not denied my name.*” The phrase “*little strength*” describes most of us. Jesus asks us to do very difficult things at times, but he gives us the strength we need to be victorious. As one person said, “*We are called to be faithful, not successful.*” Ravens kicker, Matt Stover faces this every week of the season. He says, “*So many things go into kicking a field goal – the center who snaps the ball, the hold, the wind, the distance. I’ve learned I need to have something more in my life than football after I missed big kicks.*” Stover goes on to say, “*I’ve learned I need to have something more in my life than football after I missed big kicks. My life is built on the rock of my faith in Jesus Christ, not my performance on the field.*”

Dorothy Bernard said, “*Courage is fear that has said its prayers.*” Scott Peck said, “*Courage is not the absence of fear; it is the making of action in spite of fear.*” God gives us courage and continues, through our experiences, if we focus on Him, to build our character and make us into the men and women of God He created us to be, helping us to live our faith, to choose to do what is right. As God spoke to Joshua, God speaks to us, “*I will not fail you or abandon you.*”

Pray that God will give you the courage to live your faith on and off the field of life.

Friday, February 9, 2018

Read Matthew 16: 24-28. In The Message, Matthew 16:24 reads, “*Self-help is no help at all. Self-sacrifice is the way, my way, to finding yourself, your true self.*”

Tom Osborne writes, “*Players seemed to operate out of two primary stances. The ‘what is in it for me?’ attitude generally caused an athlete to be concerned with his own well-being, the*

amount of recognition he received, and what the team or organization was going to do to ensure his personal success. A player displaying the ‘what can I contribute?’ attitude, however, placed more emphasis on what he could do for his teammates rather than the individual attention and praise he might receive. One of the most difficult challenges of coaching, particularly in recent years, has been shifting the attitude of as many players as possible from self-interest to being team-oriented.”

Paul writes in Romans 14:7-8, *“For we are not our own masters when we live or when we die. While we live, we live to please the Lord. And when we die, we go to be with the Lord. So in life and in death, we belong to the Lord.”* He goes on to write, in Romans 15:2-3, *“We should please others. If we do what helps them, we will build them up in the Lord. For even Christ didn’t please himself...”*

How is your life showing self-less-ness? How are you showing self-sacrifice, putting others before yourself? What stance are you operating out of when it comes to North East United Methodist, to the church? Are you asking *“What is in it for me?”* or are you asking, *“What can I contribute?”* Pray and ask God to help you live a life of selflessness and self-sacrifice for others.

Saturday, February 10, 2018

Read Ecclesiastes 4: 9-12 and Ephesians 2: 11-22. Paul tells us in Ephesians that through Christ, all who believe become *“one body.”* All of us *“may come to the Father through the same Holy Spirit because of what Christ has done for us”* and together *“we who believe are carefully joined together, becoming a holy temple for the Lord.”* We are better together. Rudyard Kipling, in his novel, The Jungle Book, writes,

“Now this is the law of the jungle –

*As old and as true as the sky;
 And the wolf that keep it may prosper,
 But the wolf that shall break it must die.
 As the creeper that girdles the tree trunk,
 The law runneth forward and back –
 And the strength of the pack is the wolf
 And the strength of the wolf is the pack.”*

Solomon, the wisest man who ever lived, wrote in Ecclesiastes, “*A person standing alone can be attacked and defeated, but two can stand back-to-back and conquer.*”

Paul writes in Ephesians 4:16, “*Under his direction, the whole body is fitted together perfectly. As each part does its own special work, it helps the other parts grow, so that the whole body is healthy and growing and full of love.*”

We are commanded to “*love each other,*” “*encourage each other,*” “*admonish each other,*” “*pray for each other,*” “*greet each other,*” “*teach each other,*” “*serve each other,*” “*accept each other,*” “*honor each other,*” “*bear each other’s burdens,*” “*forgive each other,*” and be “*devoted to each other.*” It is together that we can build each other up, support one another, make each other stronger, and together, have God do “*immeasurably more than we can dream or imagine*” through us.

Are you involved in the church body, with others, in ministry and life? How are you part of “*the pack,*” the church TEAM, where together we find strength? Are you helping others to grow and stand against the trials and enemies of life? How are you living your faith with others?

Don’t forget to invite someone to church tomorrow!