

December 23 – Dancing in the Rain

READ

1 Peter 5:12-14

2 Peter 1:1-3:18

2 Peter 3:8-9, *“With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day. The Lord is not slow in keeping His promise, as some understand slowness. Instead He is patient with you...”*

THINK

We’ve all seen journals, mugs, and other items with positive quotes meant to warm our hearts. At face value, they make us smile. But when our hopes remain unfulfilled, seeing those inspirational sayings can feel like salt on an open wound — especially those about God’s timing! Deep down, we know that God’s timing is always perfect, that His delays are not denials; but in desperate times, stress breeds doubt and we want answers — NOW!

So, if seeing “Life isn’t about waiting for the storm to pass; it’s about learning to dance in the rain” makes you roll your eyes, you’re not alone! But as cliché as it sounds, it’s true. We’re always in one of three phases: heading into, in the middle of, or just emerging from a storm. So, “Learning to dance in the rain” basically means trusting God’s timing and finding joy in all circumstances.

God is never in a hurry. In fact, a day to Him is like a thousand years (and sometimes it feels like that to us, too), but God is always faithful. He’s never broken a single promise. The peace of His presence, protection, and provision are steadfast. So, trust that He has more incredible things in store for your future than you could ever imagine. Rejoice in His promises and believe in His timing. When you do, you just might find yourself dancing in the rain!

PRAY

Heavenly Father, Your promises are true and Your timing is always perfect. When I’m in distress or beginning to doubt, remind me of Your past faithfulness. I look forward to the great things You have in store for my future. Thank You for giving me the peace that allows me to “dance in the rain!” Amen.

December 22 – Worship or Waste?

READ

1 Peter 2:4-5:11

1 Peter 4:10-11, *“Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God’s grace in its various forms. If anyone speaks, they should do so as one who speaks the very words of God. If anyone serves, they should do so with the strength God provides, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory and the power forever and ever. Amen.”*

THINK

Imagine flipping through the news channels and the headline "Doctor Finds Cure for Cancer" immediately captures your attention. You lean in, turn up the volume, and watch the interview with this medical genius responsible for finding the cure. At first, your heart floods with joy and excitement, thinking about the fabulous implications for those currently battling some form of cancer. But then, in the middle of the interview, the doctor reveals that the cure has been sitting in a box on his mantle for twenty years. As frustration quickly elevates to anger, you ask, "How could someone waste such a precious gift? Think of all the lives that could've been spared and the difference he could have made!"

God has gifted every one of us with unique abilities and talents that He wants leveraged for His glory. He loves to watch His children do what He designed them to do. So, have you done an inventory of your giftedness? You might be a compassionate listener, or you may have an eye for detail. Perhaps the creative arts are your specialty, or you're great at organizing. You could be an incredible communicator or skilled at fixing things. Whatever your talents are, don't leave them on the shelf! When you use them, they become avenues for worship!

You may not have the scientific acumen to cure cancer, but you are equipped to make a difference in the lives of others! So, if you have an unused gift "sitting on a shelf," it's time to shake off the dust and put it to good use!

PRAY

God, Thank You for gifting me with unique abilities and talents. I never want to take them for granted. Help me to be more intentional about using them as an act of worship for Your glory. Amen.

December 21 – Following the Faithful

READ

Hebrews 13:1-25

1 Peter 1:1-2:3

Hebrews 13:7-8 *“Appreciate your pastoral leaders who gave you the Word of God. Take a good look at the way they live, and let their faithfulness instruct you, as well as their truthfulness.”*
(MSG)

THINK

Are you listening?

Have you ever tried to teach someone to do something, then realized every word you said went in one ear and out the other? It’s frustrating because you took the time to help them and they didn’t care to listen. Certain people are seemingly okay with repeating the same mistakes and lack the willingness to listen and learn from others. And, because they refuse to accept wise counsel, they miss out on experiencing God’s best for their lives.

Undoubtedly, God has placed seasoned believers around you for guidance. Maybe it’s your pastor, a family member, or a friend who encourages you in your relationship with Christ by sharing all He has done in their life. Whoever it may be, lean in and listen to what they have to say!

Any influencer who doesn’t tell you what you want to hear, but what you need to hear is invaluable and needs to be appreciated. Thank them regularly for all the time they have taken to help you. Because, without them, you wouldn’t be where you are today!

PRAY

God, Thank You for blessing me with wise counselors to help me pursue Your best for my life. When I become isolated by self-reliance, push me to step outside of my comfort zone and ask for their help. I know You will bless their leadership because of their willingness and desire to point others toward You! In Jesus’ name, Amen.

PRAY

Lord Jesus, I choose to fix my eyes on You. I want to run freely, unencumbered by past burdens. Therefore, guide my thoughts and decisions to do what's right in Your eyes! Amen.

December 20 – This Race Called Life

READ

Hebrews 11:1-12:29

Hebrews 12:1-3, *“Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer, and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before Him, He endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider Him who endured such opposition from sinners, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.”*

THINK

Every year, 50,000 contestants gear up to run the 26.2-mile course through all five boroughs of NYC. The best competitors hydrate, consume the proper nutrients, and work hard to eliminate any excess weight that might impede their speed and endurance. You may be thinking, "Wow, that's great! But why are you telling me this? I don't even like to run!" Well, whether you realize it or not, you're already running in a marathon called Life.

It's said that we are the sum total of our decisions — choices that either propel us forward or leave us lagging behind. And, unfortunately, many of us "choose" the latter. We inch forward, bearing the unnecessary weight of a backpack full of burdensome bricks like misplaced priorities, unconfessed sin, fear, toxic relationships, and past regrets. But Jesus didn't endure the cross for us to merely survive with the weighty consequences of bad decisions — He died to lighten our load as we thrive in freedom!

Training starts the moment we're willing to "throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles." And, right now, God's saying, "Take off your backpack and toss out the bricks!"

It's time to leave our backpacks on the track and fix our eyes on Jesus! As we learn to say "Yes" to God's best and "No" to unwise decisions, He heals our hearts and transforms our minds. And through the daily sustenance of God's Word, we lose the excess weight as we secure victory before a "great cloud of witnesses" sitting in the hallowed hall of fame cheering us on as we cross the finish line of faith!

You can spectate and cheer from the sidelines on the day you join your great mothers and fathers of faith in eternity. Until then, persevere! Keep on running this one and only race called "Life" with your eyes on your prize — Jesus — for the "joy set before Him" is yours that you "may not grow weary or lose heart!"

December 19 – Life’s Highway

READ

Hebrews 8:1-10:39

Hebrews 10:25, *“Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another – and all the more as you see the Day approaching.”*

THINK

The iconic song, “Life is a Highway,” has been enjoyed for years by people of all ages and stages of life. The song beautifully portrays our need for people who will stick with us when “the road is rough.” Why does that hit home for so many? Because God never intended for us to travel life’s highway alone.

Although it’s our tendency as humans, we weren’t created to navel-gaze and focus on ourselves 24/7. We weren’t meant to live in isolation. We were created for community! That’s why we must be intentional about spending time at God’s full-service filling station — the local church. Otherwise, we’ll be living life on “E” rather than hitting on all cylinders with a full tank, as God intended.

God is not a “side of the road” God with His thumb out, hoping for a ride. He is the ride and the road for true success. He wants us to navigate life with like-minded people heading toward the same ultimate destination – Heaven. And, He wants us to invite others to join us on the journey. When we do, we give God the glory He deserves.

PRAY

Dear Lord, Thank You for being the ultimate source of love and direction in my life. Help me to have intentional relationships with those who also live for Your glory and have a passion for Your house. Life is better together with You in the center. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

December 18 – Sink Your Teeth In!

READ

Hebrews 4:14-7:28

Hebrews 5:13-14, *“Anyone who lives on milk, being still an infant, is not acquainted with the teaching about righteousness. But solid food is for the mature, who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil.”*

THINK

It’s been said, “The Bible is shallow enough for a child to wade in, yet deep enough for an elephant to swim.” This means the gospel message of salvation is simple enough for small children to comprehend. But, in its entirety, the Bible is also so intricate that even the world’s most renowned scholars aren’t able to scratch the surface of knowing all there is to know. Why? God’s ways are infinitely more complex than we can ever fathom. Yet there are huge truths He wants us to discover and apply as we grow.

The moment we invite Jesus into our lives, we step into a lifelong process of learning how to walk in obedience to God. Over time, however, it’s easy to become complacent. In Hebrews 5:14, the author is admonishing those whose spiritual growth is stunted by laziness and inactivity. He’s saying, “You have teeth to chew on, digest, and live out God’s Word, so use them!” It goes to show that spiritual maturity isn’t natural — it’s INTENTIONAL. It takes work!

So, let’s be incurable learners, forever striving to sink our teeth into deepening our understanding of God’s Word, intentionally putting our faith to practical use so that we please Him in every way!

PRAY

Heavenly Father, Thank You for showing me how to live through the vast wisdom of Your Word. Help me to remain a steadfast learner as I seek to gain discernment. Guide me to take the necessary steps to stay on track with Your will for my life. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

December 17 – Rest Up

READ

2 Timothy 4:19-22

Hebrews 1:1-4:13

Hebrews 4:1 *“Therefore, since the promise of entering His rest still stands, let us be careful that none of you be found to have fallen short of it.”*

THINK

How much sleep do you get on a regular basis? Chances are, the answer is “Not enough!” According to a study performed by the CDC, more than one-third of Americans get far less than seven hours a night. So, why is getting enough rest so difficult? Could it be because our culture is all about “the next”? When will my NEXT paycheck come? What will my NEXT career move be? Will I be able to pay my mortgage NEXT month? Will my child have trouble making friends at their new school NEXT year?

When we focus too much on the NEXT rather than the NOW, it can cause us a lot of unnecessary anxiety and stress. It clouds our judgment and keeps us from living out our best today. So how do we find proper rest amid a life that pushes us to try and figure everything out in advance? We pause and remember the life-giving Source who directs our course — Jesus. In Him, we find true rest because He’s already in tomorrow, and He’s got it covered!

The “next” time you begin to worry, stop in the “now, “ and remember that Jesus is in control. He holds your life in the palm of His hand and will guide you through whatever is “next.” Today, find rest in Him and, as promised in Isaiah 40:31, “renew your strength, run and do not grow weary, walk and do not be faint!”

PRAY

Dear God, Help me to rest in the NOW. Remind me that I can trust You with each second of every day on this earth. I choose to not worry about what tomorrow will bring but to focus on the things You want to show me today. Amen.