

December 16 – A Must-Read Bestseller!

READ

2 Timothy 2:1-4:18

2 Timothy 3:16-17, *“All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful to teach us what is true and to make us realize what is wrong in our lives. It corrects us when we are wrong and teaches us to do what is right. God uses it to prepare and equip his people to do every good work.”*

THINK

Since the German goldsmith, Johannes Gutenberg, created the first printing press in 1440, an estimated 15 billion Bibles have been produced. That's almost two Bibles for every person on earth today! It's the most sold (and stolen) book of all time. And for thousands of years, in every corner of the world, it's the most discussed, dissected, and debated literature known to man.

So, how is such an ancient book relevant to our lives in 2021? What makes it more than just another self-help book? For starters, God Himself inspired every single word. Its illustrations may be from the ancient world, but human nature — like God Himself — never changes. Just think about it: have sexual impurity, moral relativism, self-absorption, pride, lust, anger, vulgarity, violence, and other sins simply vanished over time? NO! Take a look around; they're just as much a problem today as they have ever been! It's in the pages of Scripture that we find the solution to our human pollution — the death, burial, and resurrection of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Through Him, our sin is forgiven, and our lives are forever changed.

The Bible wasn't merely written for our information; it was written for our transformation. God doesn't want us to read it like a good mystery novel and walk away. We're to study it, chew on it, filter our decisions through it, and live it out. God uses it for our correction, protection, and perfection. The more we read and apply what we've learned, the more we reflect Christ through our words and actions. As we mirror our perfect and holy Savior, our lives will fire on all cylinders and be made effective for our ultimate purpose — to glorify our great God!

PRAY

Dear Lord, Thank You for revealing Yourself to me through Your Word. Help me to trust the very words You have inspired and rely on Your absolute truth. Grant me wisdom and understanding to apply what I've learned that I may live life to the full in a manner pleasing to You! Amen.

December 15 – Lead By Example

READ

1 Timothy 6:11-21

Titus 1:1-3:15

2 Timothy 1:1-18

Titus 2:7-8, *"In everything set them an example by doing what is good. In your teaching show integrity, seriousness, and soundness of speech that cannot be condemned, so that those who oppose you may be ashamed because they have nothing bad to say about us."*

THINK

Out of all you know about the Bible — no matter how much or how little — chances are, you haven't spent a considerable amount of time thinking about a man named Titus. But though he didn't lead armies and isn't known for dramatic miracles, God deemed him important enough to include in the New Testament because of his commitment to the local church.

Titus was a Greek Gentile convert known for being a man of integrity who was willing to step in and make it happen — as a peacemaker when there was a misunderstanding, as an encourager when there was frustration, and as an advocate for those in need. Paul described him as his "true child in a common faith." Though they came from starkly different backgrounds, they were united because of their faith — a faith that crossed all cultural lines. They were like family!

Around 65 AD, the churches in Crete were dealing with false teaching and corruption. Titus' assignment was to remain there and lead by example as he restored order, appointed solid leaders, and rooted out the teaching of unsound doctrine to further Christ's mission.

Like Titus, when we seek to set an example with this combination of faith, integrity, godliness, and passion for sharing the hope of Christ, we are set apart as "true children of God in our common faith." The peace and confidence this produces within us causes others to lean in and want to know more about Jesus and why we believe what we believe!

PRAY

Lord Jesus, Thank You for the peace and confidence I have through the sound teaching of Your Word. Help me lead by example as I seek to live in a way that makes non-believers want to know more about You. Amen.

December 14 – Invest in the Best!

READ

1 Timothy 3:1-6:10

1 Timothy 6:7, *“For we brought nothing into this world, and we can take nothing out of it.”*

THINK

To “invest” is to knowingly and willfully put effort, time, or resources into something we deem important. We all invest in certain things. If you’re a student, you might pour your heart into making good grades, excelling in extracurricular activities, or creating a social media presence. If you’re an adult, you may put the most effort into your career, family, or favorite hobbies. But regardless of our age or stage in life, our most significant investment should be in what matters most — God’s eternal kingdom!

In what are you most heavily invested? Because the Bible tells us to fix our focus on Jesus and align our priorities with His. And one of our most rewarding investments is within the local church! Through serving, leveraging our God-given talents and abilities, and being faithful with our tithes and offerings, we are part of extending the reach to people still living apart from God and setting an example for others as they see Christ at work within us.

The truth is, our outward appearance will fade, and all we toiled to gain on earth will one day be left behind — from dust we came and to it we’ll return. Therefore, live your life in pursuit of God, invest in the eternal, and shine Christ’s light wherever you go! Not only will you please God, but you’ll also receive invaluable heavenly rewards on the day you come face-to-face with the brilliant blaze of His glory!

PRAY

Dear God, Thank You for showing me what truly matters. Help me to invest in the best each day — Your kingdom. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

December 13 – Not Today, Satan!

READ

James 4:1-5:20

1 Timothy 1:1-2:15

James 4:7-8, *“Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Come near to God and He will come near to you.”*

THINK

"The devil made me do it" is a common phrase. Now, it's true that Satan is very clever, and he knows exactly what buttons to push and what weaknesses to exploit in us. But, he can't force us to do anything; he can only tempt us to go astray.

So, how do we resist? First, don't take the bait! Change the channel, close the web browser, ignore the text. In fact, if something or someone in your life is a constant source of temptation, remove it! Why give the enemy any leverage? Second, resist the devil by being vulnerable and transparent with a friend, parent, or leader that can help you take healthy steps to eradicate any triggers that lead to sin. Remember, we're only as sick as our secrets! Third, focus on God's promises to help you resist when Satan persists:

1. You are not alone in your temptation, no matter how ashamed or isolated you feel.
2. You will not be tempted beyond what you can stand, even if it feels overwhelming.
3. God will provide a way out.
4. Humble yourself and turn to God for help. You will see that He's instantly by your side.

The question is not IF we will be tempted, but WHEN. Are you ready to see the devil flee? If so, say with confidence, "Not Today, Satan!"

PRAY

God, Thank You for the promise that when I am tempted You are right there, ready to help me overcome. Give me the discernment to avoid the following situations that lead to sin _____ and side-step Satan's schemes altogether. In Jesus' name, Amen.

December 12 – Tip of the Iceberg

READ

James 1:1-3:18

James 1:19-20, *“My dear brothers and sisters, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry, because human anger does not produce the righteousness that God desires.”*

THINK

Icebergs are giant pieces of ice floating in the ocean. But, what we can see with our eyes is just a tiny part of what lies beneath the surface. Anger is like an iceberg — we can easily see the tip, but it’s difficult to see the underlying emotions that often stem from fear, frustration, and disappointment. Essentially, anger is a secondary response to a primary emotion.

When we start to feel that familiar surge of raw emotion swirling inside, what should we do? Today’s verse gives us two helpful tools: show self-control and listen well. How do we exhibit self-control when the match of fear and frustration ignites the flames of anger? Press PAUSE and ASK: “What’s this really about? Why am I mad?” Then CHOOSE not to give in to our initial reaction or lash out at others.

How do we listen well? We stop crafting responses in our heads and LISTEN intently to UNDERSTAND their perspective. And, we LISTEN for God’s voice as we pray so we can UNDERSTAND the action we need to take.

Don’t let secondary emotions like anger cloud the real issue. When you deal with what lies below the surface, you’ll find that the “tip of the iceberg” quickly dissipates, allowing you to move forward and navigate through the peaceful waters of faith.

PRAY

Dear God, Please show me what underlying emotions are surfacing as anger. Help me to press pause, listen well, and seek Your perspective before reacting. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

PRAY

Heavenly Father, I can't thank You enough for Your generosity and provision. I want to help extend the reach of the local church. I pray for seats to be filled, hearts to be touched, and lives to be forever changed through Your House and my offerings to You. In Jesus' name, I pray, Amen.

December 11 – The Premise of the Promise

READ

Philippians 2:12-4:23

The Premise:

Philippians 4:18, *"I have received full payment and have more than enough. I am amply supplied, now that I have received from Epaphroditus the gifts you sent. They are a fragrant offering, an acceptable sacrifice, pleasing to God."*

The Promise:

Philippians 4:19, *"And my God will meet all your needs according to the riches of his glory in Christ Jesus."*

THINK

Who is the better father: the one who just gives his kids everything they want or the one who teaches, guides, and gives generously to his kids — when it's good for them? Obviously, it's Dad #2! In the same way, God is a loving Father. Unlike a cosmic genie, who only exists to grant us our wishes, He cares for us deeply and wants us to reflect His character and experience His blessings. That's why every time God gives us a promise, there is a premise.

Philippians 4:19 is a power-packed verse. The opening conjunction, "And," is key to understanding this promise. The Philippians were in need, yet they gave sacrificially to support Paul's ministry. So in his letter, Paul is thanking them for their consistent financial support and assuring them that, due to their generosity, God would meet their needs out of "His glorious riches."

Another remarkable quality about this verse is Paul's use of the word "my." He didn't merely reference God, he made it personal. God wasn't the God or a God giving to believers and non-believers alike. No, in a sense, this was a family matter. As a child of God, Paul was writing to his brothers and sisters in Christ. And from his personal experience, he was assuring them of God's faithfulness.

We should all collectively seek to imitate the faithfulness and generosity of the Philippian Church. If God is 'our' God, then it's our duty to give. Are you helping to reach those desperately in need of life change? Are you part of what God wants to do in and through the local church? Because there's no better or more rewarding place to be than within the provision of God's greatest promise!

December 10 – I Can't Change!

READ

Philemon 1:1-25

Philippians 1:1-2:11

Philippians 1:6, *"I am certain that God, who began the good work within you, will continue His work until it is finally finished on the day when Christ Jesus returns."*

THINK

Dysfunction exists in all of our lives — no one is entirely immune. Does it mean we all come from highly dysfunctional families? No, but we've all been guilty of "dissing" God's function in our lives emotionally, psychologically, and spiritually. Self-sufficiency and pride lead us to think we know what's best; we think we can handle everything on our own. But this "I want to run the show" mindset is the root of our problem.

When we double down and leap headlong into trying to fix ourselves, we'll be nothing but disappointed. Why? God never intended for us to navigate life on our own. We're incapable of shouldering the burden of accumulated baggage and making lasting change without Him. It only leads to fear, frustration, fatigue, and, ultimately, failure. So, it's silly to think we're better equipped to deal with life issues than the author of life — God.

What we keep from God keeps us from God; however, success happens when we confess! Right now, admit aloud, "I can't change!" Doesn't it feel so freeing to say? The moment we agree with God about what He already knows is the moment real and lasting change begins. God will cast out fear! He will bring peace to frustration! He will provide rest from fatigue!

So, stop "dissing" God's function and confess because, with Jesus, failure isn't an option. In Him, we win! And through Him, we live in the light of His unending mercy and amazing grace.

PRAY

Heavenly Father, I need Your help. Show me areas where I allow self-sufficiency and pride to dictate my actions. Stir within me the desire to surrender what I can't change to Jesus. And thank You for Your transformational power at work within my life today. In Jesus' name, Amen.