Weekly Bible Reading - April 2019

//Mar 31//

James 2

This passage in James 2 takes on two significant issues-the sin of showing favoritism and the relationship of faith to works.

- James tackles a problem common in his day as well as in ours today - the preferential treatment of the rich compared to the poor. James sets up a scenario that is not hard to imagine in our world today. Can you find a time in your life that is similar to the one described by James? Do we prefer people in the church who can bring with them money, assets, and influence over a lowly person who has little to offer by the world's standards?
- How is your faith these days? Are there tangible works in your life which come from your faith in God? Do your actions support that faith?

//Apr 7//

John 3

Nicodemus comes to visit Jesus at night and learns that he must be born from above (also translated born again) and that to enter the kingdom of God a person must be born of water and the Spirit. The role of the Spirit in the lives of believers is the most important and distinguishing aspect of being a follower of Jesus.

- Compare the water/Spirit rebirth taught by Jesus with the baptism of John the Baptist. See Mark 1:4, John 1:33 and Acts 19:3-5 and Acts 18:24-26.
- Compare the teachings of Peter in Acts 2:36-46 and Paul in Titus 3:4-7 with the teaching by Jesus to Nicodemus on how to enter the kingdom.
- Have you been born from above by the water/Spirit experience taught by Jesus?

//Apr 14//

John 12 - Preparations for Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection

The setting of John 12 is the final week of Jesus' life on this earth before he offers His life as the Savior of the world. Chapter 12 offers the full spectrum of reactions that people had to Jesus during His time on earth and by extension the reactions we see from people today.

- Mary comes to Jesus and anoints Him with expensive perfume worth more than a year's wages. Do you know someone who has, or have you ever, shown Jesus extravagant love that Mary showed to Him?
- Jesus rides into Jerusalem on a donkey, the foal of a donkey. Would you have followed Jesus in His day if a donkey was the best He come up with as a ride? How much does the building, what the preacher wears, what the members drive influence how people decide what church to attend?
- Verses 24-26 give us the formula for Jesus entering into God's glory. Jesus is going to die just like the seed that enters the ground, but His death leads to a plentiful harvest of souls for God. Like Jesus, we, too, must die, but our death is to this world, and the things it has to offer. Are you willing to give up your life for Jesus like He did for you?
- Verse 37 tells us that even with all the miracles Jesus did, most of the people did not believe in Him. Would you have believed in Jesus in His day or would you have followed with the crowd and not believed? Does your faith in Jesus lead you to testify about who He is or do you keep silent like some who believed but were afraid to publicly acknowledge him?

//Apr 21//

John 20 and 1st Corinthians 15 - The Resurrection!

No day in history has more significance to believers than the day Jesus rose from the grave. It provides proof of His claim as the Son of God. It demonstrates His power over death and gives us hope that death no longer has control over our lives.

- John's account provides details not found in the other gospels. Let yourself be absorbed in Chapter 20 as John gives you his eyewitness accounts of that day.
- Paul moves from the events of the resurrection Sunday to what it means in the lives of believers in his day and for us today. List all the negatives for believers if the resurrection was not true.

//April 28//

Hebrews 12:1-3, Galatians 2:1-2, 1st Corinthians 9:24-27, Galatians 5:6-7 and 2 Timothy 4:6-8

I have had running, racing, and endurance on my mind over the past 5 months as I have been training for a marathon on April 27th. After reading all the passages by Paul, I feel that if he lived today, you would find him pounding the pavement training for a race. He used this analogy many times in helping us understand our faith walk with God.

- Read these passages as a group and let them encourage you to persevere in your faith.
- How is your training in the Lord going?
- Are you running aimlessly or do you have purpose and intentionality to your spiritual life?
- Has your race been somehow interrupted, and do you need to get started again? Once we lose our conditioning, it can be difficult to start again. The key, however, is to just start even if only in small ways.
- We all want to be able to say with confidence, like Paul, that we have finished the race and have kept the faith. The prize is not an engraved medallion or trophy, but truly special—a life forever with God and our brother, Jesus.

So, keep up the training, and run the race set before you with all the effort to win.

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