

Food for Thought

For the week of March 23, 2014

(Questions and Scriptures for further personal study)

1. Not too many of us want to be known as unwilling to help those in need especially when we have the capacity to do so. That's why the enemy works subtly, yet powerfully, to blind us to the benefits and simplicity of generosity and serving others. What motivations and/or strategies do the following verses give to encourage us to be generous and serve others?

2 Corinthians 9:6-9

Galatians 6:9-10

Matthew 25:31-46

Which of these verses catches your attention the most and why?

2. God's compassion for others is an important model (and additional motivation) to be generous and sacrificially serve those in need. How would you rate your compassion factor on a scale of 1-10? Would you say your compassion factor has changed over the years?

As you read the following verses about God's compassion, write down how each passage might help you improve or sustain your rating.

Micah 7:18-19

Jonah 3:1-10

Unfortunately, Jonah was not able to see God's compassion and he let it shape his life. Check out Jonah 4:1-3. Is there anything in your life that could keep you from being a more compassionate person?

3. Even when living a life of integrity and obedience we can find ourselves experiencing trials and suffering that can cause us to wonder if God really is at work or even present. How could the following verses help encourage and strengthen you during difficult times?

Romans 5:3-5

James 1:2-4

Romans 8:28-30

Hebrews 11:32-40

Food for Thought

For the week of March 23, 2014

(Questions and Scriptures for further personal study)

1. Not too many of us want to be known as unwilling to help those in need especially when we have the capacity to do so. That's why the enemy works subtly, yet powerfully, to blind us to the benefits and simplicity of generosity and serving others. What motivations and/or strategies do the following verses give to encourage us to be generous and serve others?

2 Corinthians 9:6-9

6 Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously. 7 Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. 8 And God is able to bless you abundantly, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work. 9 As it is written: "They have freely scattered their gifts to the poor; their righteousness endures forever." [NIV]

Galatians 6:9-10

9 Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up. 10 Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers. [NIV]

Matthew 25:31-46

31 "When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his glorious throne. 32 All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. 33 He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left. 34 "Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. 35 For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, 36 I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.' 37 "Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? 38 When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? 39 When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?' 40 "The King will reply, 'Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.' 41 "Then he will say to those on his left, 'Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. 42 For I was hungry and you gave me nothing to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, 43 I was a stranger and you did not invite me in, I needed clothes and you did not clothe me, I was sick and in prison and you did not look after me.' 44 "They also will answer, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or needing clothes or sick or in prison, and did not help you?' 45 "He will reply, 'Truly I tell you, whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me.' 46 "Then they will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life." [NIV]

Which of these verses catches your attention the most and why?

2. God's compassion for others is an important model (and additional motivation) to be generous and sacrificially serve those in need. How would you rate your compassion factor on a scale of 1-10? Would you say your compassion factor has changed over the years?

As you read the following verses about God's compassion, write down how each passage might help you improve or sustain your rating.

Micah 7:18-19

18 Who is a God like you, who pardons sin and forgives the transgression of the remnant of his inheritance? You do not stay angry forever but delight to show mercy. 19 You will again have compassion on us; you will tread our sins underfoot and hurl all our iniquities into the depths of the sea. [NIV]

Jonah 3:1-10

3 Then the word of the Lord came to Jonah a second time: 2 “Go to the great city of Nineveh and proclaim to it the message I give you.” 3 Jonah obeyed the word of the Lord and went to Nineveh. Now Nineveh was a very large city; it took three days to go through it. 4 Jonah began by going a day’s journey into the city, proclaiming, “Forty more days and Nineveh will be overthrown.” 5 The Ninevites believed God. A fast was proclaimed, and all of them, from the greatest to the least, put on sackcloth. 6 When Jonah’s warning reached the king of Nineveh, he rose from his throne, took off his royal robes, covered himself with sackcloth and sat down in the dust. 7 This is the proclamation he issued in Nineveh: “By the decree of the king and his nobles: Do not let people or animals, herds or flocks, taste anything; do not let them eat or drink. 8 But let people and animals be covered with sackcloth. Let everyone call urgently on God. Let them give up their evil ways and their violence. 9 Who knows? God may yet relent and with compassion turn from his fierce anger so that we will not perish.” 10 When God saw what they did and how they turned from their evil ways, he relented and did not bring on them the destruction he had threatened. [NIV]

Unfortunately, Jonah was not able to see God's compassion and he let it shape his life. Check out Jonah 4:1-3. Is there anything in your life that could keep you from being a more compassionate person?

3. Even when living a life of integrity and obedience we can find ourselves experiencing trials and suffering that can cause us to wonder if God really is at work or even present. How could the following verses help encourage and strengthen you during difficult times?

Romans 5:3-5

3 Not only so, but we[a] also glory in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; 4 perseverance, character; and character, hope. 5 And hope does not put us to shame, because God’s love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us. [NIV]

James 1:2-4

2 Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, 3 because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. 4 Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything. [NIV]

Romans 8:28-30

28 And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. 29 For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters. 30 And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified. [NIV]

Hebrews 11:32-40

32 And what more shall I say? I do not have time to tell about Gideon, Barak, Samson and Jephthah, about David and Samuel and the prophets, 33 who through faith conquered

kingdoms, administered justice, and gained what was promised; who shut the mouths of lions, 34 quenched the fury of the flames, and escaped the edge of the sword; whose weakness was turned to strength; and who became powerful in battle and routed foreign armies. 35 Women received back their dead, raised to life again. There were others who were tortured, refusing to be released so that they might gain an even better resurrection. 36 Some faced jeers and flogging, and even chains and imprisonment. 37 They were put to death by stoning; they were sawed in two; they were killed by the sword. They went about in sheepskins and goatskins, destitute, persecuted and mistreated— 38 the world was not worthy of them. They wandered in deserts and mountains, living in caves and in holes in the ground. 39 These were all commended for their faith, yet none of them received what had been promised, 40 since God had planned something better for us so that only together with us would they be made perfect. [NIV]