

Food for Thought

For the week of November 23, 2014

(Questions and Scriptures for further personal study)

1. It's comforting to know that "God always meets us where we are," but he also doesn't want us to stay there. What help do the following verses give us to enjoy God's acceptance and patience without becoming complacent?

Hebrews 5:11-13

Psalm 103:13-14

James 4:17

2. Throughout the Bible there are numerous instances where, like Gideon, followers of God substituted religious rituals and obligations for an authentic relationship with him. In the passages below, what rituals or obligations were they focused on instead of trusting God?

Isaiah 1:13-17

Micah 6:6-8

Hosea 6:6

Ironically, in most cases the rituals described were practices God had instructed the Israelites to do to help them focus and depend on him. What religious rituals or practices could you become more committed to rather than having an authentic relationship with Christ?

Looking back at the passages, what could be some indicators that our religious practices have become a meaningless ritual?

3. This weekend we heard five life lessons from the life of Gideon. Which one is the biggest need in your life right now?

What step could you take to begin working that lesson into your life?

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Hebrews 5:11-13

Warning Against Falling Away

11 We have much to say about this, but it is hard to make it clear to you because you no longer try to understand. 12 In fact, though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you the elementary truths of God's word all over again. You need milk, not solid food! 13 Anyone who lives on milk, being still an infant, is not acquainted with the teaching about righteousness. [NIV]

Psalms 103:13-14

13 As a father has compassion on his children,
so the Lord has compassion on those who fear him;
14 for he knows how we are formed,
he remembers that we are dust. [NIV]

James 4:17

17 If anyone, then, knows the good they ought to do and doesn't do it, it is sin for them. [NIV]

2. Throughout the Bible there are numerous instances where, like Gideon, followers of God substituted religious rituals and obligations for an authentic relationship with him. In the passages below, what rituals or obligations were they focused on instead of trusting God?

Isaiah 1:13-17

13 Stop bringing meaningless offerings!
Your incense is detestable to me.
New Moons, Sabbaths and convocations—
I cannot bear your worthless assemblies.
14 Your New Moon feasts and your appointed festivals
I hate with all my being.
They have become a burden to me;
I am weary of bearing them.
15 When you spread out your hands in prayer,
I hide my eyes from you;
even when you offer many prayers,
I am not listening.
Your hands are full of blood!
16 Wash and make yourselves clean.
Take your evil deeds out of my sight;
stop doing wrong.
17 Learn to do right; seek justice.
Defend the oppressed.
Take up the cause of the fatherless;
plead the case of the widow. [NIV]

Micah 6:6-8

6 With what shall I come before the Lord
and bow down before the exalted God?
Shall I come before him with burnt offerings,

with calves a year old?
7 Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams,
with ten thousand rivers of olive oil?
Shall I offer my firstborn for my transgression,
the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?
8 He has shown you, O mortal, what is good.
And what does the Lord require of you?
To act justly and to love mercy
and to walk humbly with your God. [NIV]

Hosea 6:6

6 For I desire mercy, not sacrifice,
and acknowledgment of God rather than burnt offerings. [NIV]

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