

A Verse to Live by

“Work hard so you can present yourself to God and receive his approval. Be a good worker, one who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly explains the word of truth.”

2 Timothy 2:15 (NLT)

January Prayer Focus

At the start of a new year, it seems appropriate for us to make some resolutions in our spiritual lives and our commitment to our church. 11th St. has a lot going on even if we are not meeting regularly. The children/youth ministries are growing, we want to eventually move to Faircrest, and evangelism is always our ministry. Continue to pray for our move to Faircrest. There is no denying it, a newer facility would be such a blessing and accommodate our members better. Let's rekindle that excitement for the new building and the possibilities that it brings. And remember to pray for the Board of Elders, Pastor and all our church leaders.

Life Application Challenge

Add some spiritual goals and resolutions to your list of goals this year. There is no excuse for any of us to not end 2021 with being a little closer to God and loving Him a little more. Pray for a fresh baptism of the Holy Spirit in your life. If right now you happen to be in one of those “summer” moments, use this time to grow closer to your Heavenly Father.

Recommended Scripture Reading

1 Peter 1-5 - This book is short but full of guidance to empower believers. An excellent book to start your year off on the right foot. Chapter 5 is especially good for the church in general.

Ephesians 6:10-18 - Reminds us to armor up, for the battle is real with eternal consequences.

Church On Fire!

Eleventh Street Church of God | January 2021 Prayer Newsletter

BEST
YEAR
EVER

MAKE THIS ONE COUNT

WINTERIZE YOUR SOUL

Happy New Year! Now that all the business of the Holidays is behind us, most of us are focusing on our resolutions for the new year. Lord willing, our goals will succeed. As most of us plan our year, we should include a plan for the inevitable, unthinkable or tragic. It seems almost morbid to plan for failure or tragedy... but we should. Depressing right? Not necessarily. I am not suggesting you build your life around possible tragedy; I am suggesting you prepare yourself and your family to be able to live through and rebound from troubles. Jesus warned us this life here would not be easy, "I have told you all this so that you may have peace in me. Here on earth you will have many trials and sorrows. But take heart, because I have overcome the world." (Jn. 16:33) Just as we prepare our yards, houses, and vehicles for the upcoming harsh weather of winter; let's winterize our souls to withstand the harsh troubles we **will** inevitably face at some point.

Troubles happen. We all should expect the unexpected. That's why we have life insurance policies. But have you thought about preparing your soul and your faith to withstand troubles? Are you confident your faith could withstand the loss of your career, financial losses, or the loss of someone very dear to you? These are questions you need to be able to answer. I hate to sound like a pessimist, but you will face a faith shattering event at some point in your life. We all do. For me it was the loss of my son. But we all will at some point face something that tests our faith; that will make us question "Is God even really there?" Strengthening our faith to withstand these times is necessary and wise, "The prudent sees danger and hides himself, but the simple go on and suffer for it." (Pr. 27:12) Could the faith you have today withstand the pressures of the unimaginable? If your answer is no, or I'm not sure; it is time to deal with that.

Have you noticed we tend to wait to pray or ask for prayer until after we have tried everything "in our own power" to fix the problem. We are warned to be careful trying to do tough things on our own, "There is a way that appears to be right, but in the end it leads to death." (Pr. 14:12) We panic, problem solve, stew, overthink things and then panic again. That is an exhausting cycle, and often solves very little or makes things worse. Our worrying intensifies, we project worst case scenarios and end up full of fear, defeat and tears. There is a better way.

Life has its seasons just as our world does. There are summer times of easier and more pleasant days, and there are winter times of dark, harder days. In the less demanding seasons of our lives we should take the time to study the Bible and read books that will deepen our knowledge and understanding of God. That is the time we should focus on researching and studying topics or passages in the Bible we may not understand. This is a great time to find answers to those questions you have always had. We can use these times to strengthen areas we are weak in, improve our spiritual gifts and grow closer to God. As the summer is a time of growth and multiplying in the physical world; we should use the "summer" of our lives to grow and deepen our relationship with Jesus. Use these times wisely and prepare; because "winter" will come and when it does you don't want to be left out in the cold with no protection!

Trying to build our spiritual strength and stamina while we are already in the midst of a trial is so much harder, and subjects us to even more pain. We are already overwhelmed and distracted, which makes it difficult to learn and grow. Don't wait for life to squeeze you and then try to learn how to handle it. Learn how to handle troubles first. Then when troubles come, and they will, you will be ready. Think of yourself as a soldier preparing for battle. Would you go on the battlefield with no training, no gear, no knowledge of how to fight or use a weapon? Of course not, that would just be stupid and the results would be disastrous. So why send your heart, mind, relationships etc. into the battleground for your soul without the proper training and armor? "Put on the full armor of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places." (Eph. 6:11-12) Don't kid yourself; our enemy is out for our souls and he means business. "Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour." (1 Pe. 5:8)

But there is good news for the children of God: there is always good news, "If God is for us, who can ever be against us?" (Ro. 8:31) His Word is our manual on how to fight these battles victoriously, persevere in troubles, and avoid the snares and schemes of the evil one. "Blessed be the Lord, my rock, who trains my hands for war, and my fingers for battle;" (Ps. 144:1)

Watching God Work,

Carolyn Abel