

A Verse to Live by

“So prepare your minds for action and exercise self-control. Put all your hope in the gracious salvation that will come to you when Jesus Christ is revealed to the world. So you must live as God’s obedient children. Don’t slip back into your old ways of living to satisfy your own desires. You didn’t know any better then. But now you must be holy in everything you do, just as God who chose you is holy. For the Scriptures say, “You must be holy because I am holy.”

1 Peter 1:13-16 (NLT)

January Prayer Focus

This month I will pray this over each of us and I ask that you would join me in praying this prayer: Stir up our church to sense your divine calling for all of us, as Your church, to make You known in this world. In Jesus name, amen. Commit to praying this every day for the rest of January.

Recommended Scripture Reading

Galatians 5 - This chapter teaches us what living by the Spirit looks like.

Hebrews 12 - this is a great chapter to motivate us and remind us to get rid of the things that hold us back- such as relationships, sins, bad habits, etc.

2 Peter 1 - A good chapter that teaches us about our calling and what that looks like.

Church On Fire!

Eleventh Street Church of God | January 2023 Prayer Newsletter

God is Calling You

Hello my dear friends. How I have missed writing this newsletter. I hope you are doing well, and feel the presence of God in your life. If no one has told you lately, I'll say it, I love you and I think you are pretty special. This month, being the beginning of the new year, has many of us thinking about new year's resolutions. I thought it was a great time to write about our calling. We hear this all the time, "God called me" or "I am praying to hear what God is calling me to do". But what exactly does this mean, and how do we know what our calling is? Have you ever wondered.. What if I miss my calling? Let's try to answer some of those questions.

Did you know that in the Bible, it is spelled out for each of us what we are called to do? Now before you think, "I don't remember reading that in the Bible", let me explain. Firstly, all Christians are called to live a holy life. In 2 Timothy 1:9, Paul writes, "He has saved us and called us to a holy life—not because of anything we have done but because of his own purpose and grace." (NIV) God is calling us first to a "who" before we ever "do". Our first priority is to fulfill our calling of who we are supposed to be as a Christian. The Greek word for holy, is hagios, which means to be set apart, to be different. "So you must live as God's obedient children. Don't slip back into your old ways of living to satisfy your own desires. You didn't know any better then. But now you must be holy in everything you do, just as God who chose you is holy. For the Scriptures say, "You must be holy because I am holy." (1Pet. 1:14-16)

We may preach the best sermons, give the best Sunday school lessons, be a wise board member, etc. but if we are dishonest, unfaithful to our spouse, cruel to our kids, selfish, or any other unrepentant sin, we are not living a holy life. Thus, we are not fulfilling our calling. Because our calling is first to be holy, not to be a leader or important. "Therefore I, a prisoner for serving the Lord, beg you to lead a life worthy of your calling, for you have been called by God. Always be humble and gentle. Be patient with each other, making allowance for each other's faults because of your love. Make every effort to keep yourselves united in the Spirit, binding yourselves together with peace." (Eph. 4:1-3 NLT) I can almost feel Paul's intensity as he writes this to the believers in Ephesus. He begs them, us, to live a life worthy of our calling. And that calling is to be holy, not to be significant, important, or popular. Your calling is more about who you are than what you do.

We are also called to be like Jesus, "Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children. And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God." (Eph. 5:1-2 ESV) Feeling inadequate yet? I know I am. That's a tough calling indeed. But it is something ALL of us believers are called to, "Whoever claims to live in him must live as Jesus did." (1 Jn. 2:6 NIV) These verses can leave a Christian feeling overwhelmed, incapable, or like it is an impossible requirement God put on us. Well, it is, without the Holy Spirit. God in His infinite wisdom and love, gave us the Holy Spirit, "But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you." (Jn. 14:16 ESV) That Holy Spirit

is the same spirit that raised Christ from the dead, "And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies because of his Spirit who lives in you." (Ro. 8:11 NIV) Don't worry my friend, you are in good hands, "His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence," (2 Pet. 1:3 ESV)

So what does a holy lifestyle look like in our daily lives? We know we cannot achieve holiness on our own. We need the Holy Spirit to fulfill this calling and to live like Jesus did. I defer again to the Apostle Paul, "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control." (Ga. 5:22 NIV) These are the attributes of a holy life. But it's more than this, it is also letting go of the sins that we once indulged, "Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires." (Ga. 5:24)

Now what about our personal calling, the job or task we are supposed to do? How do we know what God is calling us to do? Priority one is to make sure, "Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving." (Col. 3:23-23 NIV) So whether it is in the nursery, being a homemaker, your job, owning your own business, being a pastor, live so holy you are glorifying God while you do it. Let's get something out of the way. I think the thought or feeling of being insignificant holds many of us back from doing things. The size of your calling does not determine the significance of your impact. Remember, the same Holy Spirit that raised Christ from the dead is in you! It is impossible for you and your contributions to be insignificant. We are told in Scripture that each of us are given a gift, to use to bless each other and to glorify God, "As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace: whoever speaks, as one who speaks oracles of God; whoever serves, as one who serves by the strength that God supplies—in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ." (1 Pet. 4:10 ESV) Your gifts and talents often show in the strengths you have, so consider the things people say you are good at, the things that you feel passionate about. Pray and fast, asking God to guide and lead you where He wants you. "This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us. And if we know that he hears us—whatever we ask—we know that we have what we asked of him." (1 Jn. 5:14-15 NIV)

If you are afraid you won't know if you are hearing from God or just your own desires, we are assured, "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me." (Jn. 10:27 ESV) If you are living a holy life, reading your Bible and praying regularly, then your calling will find you. Don't worry my friend, God will let you know.

Watching God Work,

Carolyn Abel