

Today, Here, Now

A man was given the job of painting the white lines down the middle of a highway. On his first day he painted six miles; the next day three miles; the following day less than a mile. Then, the foreman asked the man why he kept painting less each day. He replied, "I just can't do any better. Each day I keep getting farther away from the paint can."

A song often sung in church includes the words "Come, now is the time to worship." I've spoken to some who object to these words on the basis that we should not limit ourselves to worshipping only at certain times. I think their objection misapprehends the word "now." Just like the painter who didn't understand the need to keep the paint can close by, some Christians don't understand the need to stay close to God. The time to worship is now, because every moment is when we can say it is "now."

The Bible has a lot to say about this concept. In this week's passage, we will see how God works daily to build his church and our role in showing the world who God is.

Monday – God's Work in the Church

1. Please read Acts 2:47 (focusing on the last half of the verse). What was God doing in the church?
2. Verse 47 says people were added to the church. Who was doing the adding? Why do you think Luke credited God as opposed to Peter, the apostles, or other believers?
3. What were these people being saved from?

Making it personal: Are you one of the people God has added to his church? If you are not sure of your salvation (your relationship with God), turn yourself over to God now and ask him to accept you and forgive you. Then you're in.

Tuesday – It Starts with God: "And the Lord . . ."

"It's not about you... In the same way you cannot arrive at life's purpose by starting with a focus on yourself. You must begin with God, your Creator." Rick Warren – "The Purpose Driven Life"

1. Take a close look at the beginning of Acts 2:47b and compare it with the first four words of the Bible found in Genesis 1:1. What similarity do you see between the two passages?
2. Now, read John 1:3. Has anything ever come into being apart from God?

Digging Deeper - Isaiah 44:6-8 is a powerful statement of God's unique nature and existence. Is there anyone else who can claim to have begun what God has begun? How do the truths in this passage help you as you consider your own accomplishments and endeavors?

Wednesday – Adding On: "... added to their number . . ."

"The choice to follow Jesus – the choice to grow – is the choice for the constant reassurance of fear. You've got to get out of the boat every day." John Ortberg – "If You Want to Walk on Water, You've Got to Get Out of the Boat"

1. Please read Matthew 28:16-20. How far did Jesus' authority extend? What did he tell the disciples to do with that authority?
2. Verse 17 gives an interesting view of Jesus' followers. Can you identify with their situation? In what way can you identify? Are you dealing more with doubt or desire to worship, or both?
3. First, the Bible tells us that his followers' faith was mixed with doubt, and then it says that Jesus passed on the instruction to bring people to him. What does this passage tell you about whether you need to dispel all doubt before you are able to tell people about your relationship with God?

Making it personal: Have you ever thought that you needed to deal with all your doubts before you could serve Jesus? Try serving God first and see what that does to your doubts. As you grow closer to God, you'll probably find that the doubts don't seem all that big any more.

Thursday – An Every Day Thing: "... daily . . ."

"This is the day the LORD has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it." Psalm 118:24

1. Acts 2:47 tells us that God acted daily to bring people to him. What does this reveal about God's priorities? What does it reveal about God's involvement in the "everyday" of our lives?
2. A daily occurrence happens, of course, every single day. Now look at Hebrews 3:13. What does it tell you to do daily? For how long? Why?

Digging Deeper – Throughout the Bible, we are called to live in "today." Read John Ortberg's quote from Wednesday above, paying attention to his reference to "every day." Knowing that God is working *today* to save people for himself and to encourage his children, is there some way God is calling you to join him in what he is doing today?

Friday – Savings Account: "... those who were being saved."

1. Compare Mark 10:45 with Psalm 55:16-18. What similar themes do you see? According to Mark 10:45, who provides the ransom David is asking for in Psalm 55? Do you think David felt there was anything he could do to rescue himself? How did Jesus say he would do it?

Text insight: Romans 6:23 says we really do have something to be saved from: the death that follows sin. This death is not the physical death we all will experience. It is the spiritual death of eternal separation from God and his total goodness.

2. Now look at Ephesians 2:8-9 and Psalm 121:1-2. Where does our salvation come from? How? Does any effort of your own play a part? What would you say to someone who claimed to have earned their way to a right relationship with God? How would you describe to someone the gift from God noted in Eph. 2:8?

For the Weekend: Spend time in prayer asking God to show you how you can tell others about your relationship with him. Remember, God is the one who brings people to himself, and he uses us to do it. Thank him for those you know he has added to his church.