

### Keeping the Goal in Sight

Tom Landry coached the Dallas Cowboys from 1960 to 1988 and had a career that included twenty consecutive winning seasons. He was respected by his players and his peers as being one of the most creative coaches ever, and his innovations are still used by coaches today. But for all his success, you almost never saw Tom Landry on the sidelines with a smile on his face. Whether his team just scored a touchdown or lost the ball in a fumble, he had the same expression: unbroken concentration as he spoke to his players and assistants or thumbed through the papers on his clipboard.

There's a story about this aspect of his coaching. During an interview, someone finally worked up the courage to ask Coach Landry why he never joined his players and coaches in celebrating a touchdown. Landry explained that he was not concerned with what had just happened on the field. He was concentrating on what they needed to do next. His time for celebrating was after they had achieved their ultimate purpose – winning the game. Until then, he wanted to work on the next play and not get distracted by the last one.

God wants us to keep the end in mind as well. Let's spend this week studying what we are to do as we approach that end, and what God has for us along the way.

#### Monday – The End

*"A virtuous and a Christianlike conclusion – To pray for them that have done scathe to us."* William Shakespeare, Richard III, Act 1 scene 3

1. Please read 1 Peter 4:7-11. What is the focus of verse 7? How does knowing that there will be an end impact your perspective and thoughts (being clear minded), and your actions (being self-controlled)?
2. How does being clear minded and self-controlled – and their lack thereof – affect a person's prayers?
3. What insights can you find in Philippians 4:4-8 about being clear minded and self-controlled?

**Making it Personal:** Pray that God will guide you in your thoughts and actions so that nothing interferes with your prayers.

#### Tuesday – Love Above All

*"Our love to God is measured by our everyday fellowship with others and the love it displays."* Andrew Murray, 19<sup>th</sup> c. South African missionary

1. Please read 1 Peter 4:7-11. What does verse 8 identify as our primary activity? Why? How does it cover over our sins?
2. According to Jesus in John 13:34-35 what is the ultimate purpose of loving one another? Is that purpose important to you? Why, or why not?
3. Why is love such a powerful witness to the world?

**Digging Deeper (optional):** Read 1 John 4:7-21 to see how God's love affects us, how we can in turn love others, and how that love then impacts how others see God.

#### Wednesday – Hospitable, Not Miserable

*"Hospitality should have no other nature than love."* Henrietta Mears, 20<sup>th</sup> c. American educator and writer

1. Please read 1 Peter 4:7-11. Is it easy or difficult for you to carry out verse 9? Why do you think that is?

**Text Insight:** In the culture to which Peter wrote, as in many parts of the world even today, hospitality was one of the chief virtues. Even enemies, if they arrived at your door hungry and tired, were to be fed and cared for. A failure to be hospitable was seen as a moral defect.

2. In Ruth 4:1-12, which man grumbled and which showed hospitality? What can lead two people to react to the same situation in such different ways? When have you seen this happen in your own life?
3. How did God bless Boaz's decision to care for and marry Ruth in Ruth 4:13-22?

**Making it Personal:** When have you experienced God's blessing after treating someone with kindness, generosity or hospitality? Ask God to will give you more opportunities to do so.

#### Thursday – The Gift You Get Is the Gift You Give

*"Do not think me mad. It is not to make money that I believe a Christian should live. The noblest thing a man can do is, just humbly to receive, and then go amongst others and give."* David Livingstone, 19<sup>th</sup> c. Scottish medical missionary

1. Please read 1 Peter 4:7-11. As you consider the quote by David Livingstone and verse 10, why does God give to us so generously?
2. In James 1:17, what is identified as the source of anything good we have in our lives? How does this help you understand the instruction to use these things to serve others?
3. What does Ephesians 2:8-10 tell you about the reason you were created and how you obtained eternal life with God? What does it mean to you to be created by God in order to do good works for him?

**Making it Personal:** How can you use what God has given you in order to serve others today? This week?

#### Friday – Word & Deed

*"The bitterest tears shed over graves are for words left unsaid and deeds left undone."* Harriet Beecher Stowe, 19<sup>th</sup> c. American author and abolitionist

1. Please read 1 Peter 4:7-11. How does verse 11 focus on words and actions? For what purpose?
2. Now look at James 2:1-13. What does James say about backing up words with action?

**Digging Deeper (optional):** Read Isaiah 58:1-14 and identify what was lacking from the peoples' religious expressions. What did God say they should be doing in addition to those expressions?

**For the Weekend:** Re-read 1 Peter 4:7-11 and compare the initial words of verse 7 with the final phrases of verse 11. How does everything that comes between them flow from one to the other? What does that tell you about your relationship with God?