

Value for all Things

The auctioneer announced that a wallet containing \$10,000 had been misplaced and that the owner was offering a reward for the person who turned it in. "He'll give \$100 to whoever finds it," the auctioneer said from the podium. From the back of the hall a voice shouted, "I'll give \$150!"

One sign of good judgment is to know what something is worth. Some things are quite valuable, some are worthless, and a whole lot fall somewhere in between. I know I've made some good and not so good choices. That wool overcoat I bought at the thrift shop for \$20? It looked great and kept me warm winter after winter. Those earth shoes I got back in 1974? Wore them once, then they sat in the back of the closet. (If you don't remember earth shoes at all, look them up on the Internet. You'll have a good laugh.)

The Bible tells us that godliness has eternal value. This week we will discover how to pursue the qualities God desires us to have, how to focus on what is truly valuable, and how to receive the fulfillment of the wonderful promises God has for those who turn to him. In this way, the Bible says, we "participate in the divine nature" of God. How eternally valuable it is to participate in God's very nature as we grow closer to him.

This is the first in a series of messages on the Spiritual Disciplines. Without discipline, we will be forever stunted in our growth unto godliness. May God show us the joy of leading a disciplined life.

Monday – Receive with Thanksgiving

"A state of mind that sees God in everything is evidence of growth in grace and a thankful heart." Charles Finney, 19th c. American evangelist

1. Please read 1 Timothy 4:1-8. How do each of the concepts in this passage hinge upon verses 4-5?
2. According to James 1:16-18, what is God's relationship to that which is good? How is this reinforced by the idea that we are God's "firstfruits" in all creation (v. 18)?

Digging Deeper: In Acts 10:1-48, what did Peter learn from God about what is good and proper? Why do you think he had to hear the message three times (v. 16)? When have you needed to hear the truth more than once in order for it to sink in?

Tuesday – Real Value

"I will place no value on anything I have or may possess except in relation to the kingdom of Christ." David Livingstone, 19th c. Scottish missionary and explorer

1. Please read Paul's comments on godliness in 1 Timothy 4:7-8. If you heard Pastor Glen's message on Sunday, how did he define godliness? If you did not hear it, how do you think Paul would have defined it?
2. What is the value of godliness? How might godliness show up in your actions?
3. In Matthew 6:19-21, where does Jesus tell us real value can be found? What do you think he meant by storing up treasures in heaven? How does this relate to godliness?

Making it Personal: What sort of dedication and discipline do you find in Matthew 13:44-46? What would it look like for you to pursue your relationship with God that way?

Wednesday – Precious Promises

"God does not give us everything we want, but He does fulfill His promises...leading us along the best and straightest paths to Himself." Dietrich Bonhoeffer, 20th c. German theologian

1. Please read 2 Peter 1:3-4. Where do we need to look for everything we need for godliness (v. 3)? How can participating in the divine nature and escaping evil desires be characterized as precious promises?
2. What practical way does James 4:7 give us for escaping corruption and evil desires? What kind of discipline would this require?
3. In James 4:8, what do we learn about participating in the divine nature?

Making it Personal: Ask God to teach you how to draw near to him today.

Thursday – Effective and Productive in Christ

"Efficiency is doing things right. Effectiveness is doing the right thing." Zig Ziglar, American author and speaker

1. Please read 2 Peter 1:3-9. How do the qualities of verses 5-7 take shape in your life now? What steps are you taking to grow in them?
2. What do you think it means to be effective and productive "in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ"?
3. Making every effort (v. 5) can be easily misunderstood. After reading Philippians 2:13 and 4:13, comment on what Peter means when he says, "make every effort."

Prayer Focus: Ask God for the strength to empower your efforts for him today.

Friday – Richly Welcome in the Kingdom

"The atmosphere breathes rest and comfort and the many chambers seem full of welcomes." Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, *Masque of Pandora* (pt. V, l. 33)

1. Please read 2 Peter 1:3-11. What does the phrase "rich welcome into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ" mean to you?
2. What does Ephesians 2:8-9 teach us about how we became part of God's eternal kingdom? How does 2 Peter 1:9 complement Paul's teaching in Ephesians 2:8-9?

Digging Deeper: What happens to us if we forget what the Lord has done with our sins (2 Peter 1:9)? Take time to thank God for the complete forgiveness he has given you in Christ. If there are specific sins you would like to claim his forgiveness for, confess them and thank him for remembering them no more.

For the Weekend: Compare 1 Timothy 4:1-8 with 2 Peter 1:3-11, and identify which verses in each passage correspond in some way to one another (for example, 1 Timothy 4:1 mentions deceiving spirits and 2 Peter 1:9 talks of spiritual blindness, a condition that leads to being easily deceived).