

Spiritual Considerations...

Selected articles designed to assist in our Bible study and Christian walk.



Dave Phillips, editor

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Self-Motivation

Dave Phillips, Germantown

We do not exist in a vacuum, but rather in an environment in which we are affected by all that is around us. In the world of ideas, we are bound to hear ideas that sound so attractive we write them down and try to remember them. They become our clarion call - our rally cry to use as a main goal in life. To our dismay, we sometimes find that our "tried and true formula" has a few flaws.

While traveling, I enjoy listening to books on tape, sermons, singing, etc. I was re-listening to a favorite tape series by Earl Nightingale, entitled "Lead the Field." He said, "each of us has a tendency to underestimate his own abilities. We should realize that we have, deep within ourselves, deep reservoirs of great ability - even genius - that can be tapped, if we'll just dig deeply enough. It's the miracle of your mind." I believe in the power of the mind. I believe that we do often underestimate the power of the mind. But I find that to leave the thought at that place is very uncomfortable. To leave the focus on our own mind is a bit hollow. A sort of emptiness.

Ten times a particular phrase is mentioned in the Bible. The phrase is "strengthened himself." It is the thought of digging down deep inside and preparing oneself. Gen. 48:2 uses the phrase to describe Jacob "collecting his strength" to sit up in bed before visiting his son, Joseph. It is found seven times in 2 Chronicles while describing leaders preparing for conflict. In three of those times (12:1, 12:13, 21:4), the result was negative - the leaders disobeyed God. In four of those times (17:1, 23:1, 25:11, 32:5), the result was one that pleased God. They are all described as "strengthening themselves," but not necessarily in a way that pleases God. Self-motivation (or positive self-talk) does not necessarily result in action that is pleasing to God.

David, however, is described as one that "strengthened himself in the Lord" (1 Sam. 30:6). The unique difference is that he is described as strengthening himself "in the Lord." There's the difference. How does one motivate himself? How do we engage in profitable self-talk? When we do it in the Lord. David is described by doing it in these ways. First, he strengthened himself in the face of danger. The city of Ziklag had been raided and all the women and children had been taken captive. Everyone blamed David and they began calling for David to be stoned. In the midst of opposition, David found strength in the Lord. At times we can find strength nowhere else.

Second, David strengthened himself by making sure God was on his side. He prayed to God and asked for direction (1 Sam. 30:8). Though we will not receive the same type of answer David did (by vision, dream, or personal revelation - Heb. 1:1,2), we will receive an answer to our prayer. God works provisionally in our lives to work His will. It may be that we have been laboring "on our own," and because of this, have not been receiving a blessing.

Third, he acted faithfully on the response given to him. He took 600 men and began to chase the enemy. 200 became tired and rested by the brook while David took 400 men and rescued the women and children. They were all brought back safely. Don't you like happy endings?

A great victory was experienced by David not because he had a private time that caused him to reach deep inside and learn "who he was." He was victorious because he "strengthened himself in the Lord." Because he had the strength of the Lord, he could not fail.

Be Careful What You Say

(from Lake Forest bulletin, via Goodman Oaks bulletin)

I read about a little girl who, when asked her name, would reply, "I'm Mr. Sugarman's daughter." Her mother told her this was wrong, she must say, "I'm Jane Sugarman." Well, the preacher spoke to her in Sunday School Class and said, "Honey, aren't you Mr. Sugarman's daughter?" She replied, "I thought I was, but my mother says I'm not."

"No Ma'am, I Won't - Ever"
via "**The Covington Courier**" (Sept. 1, 99)

I saw him in the church building for the first time on Wednesday. He was in his mid 70's, with thinning silver hair and a neat brown suit. Many times I had invited him to come. Several other Christian friends had talked to him about the Lord and had tried to share the good news with him. He was a well-respected, honest man with so many characteristics a Christian should have, but he had never entered the doors of the church building.

"Have you ever been to a church service in your life?" I had asked him several years ago. He hesitated. Then with a bitter smile he told me of his childhood experience some fifty years ago. He was one of many children in a large impoverished family. His parents had struggled to provide food, with little left for housing and clothing.

When he was about ten, some neighbors invited him to worship with them. The Bible class had been very exciting. He had never heard such songs and stories before. After class was over, the teacher took him aside and said, "Son, please don't come again dressed as you are now. We want to look our best when we come into God's house."

He stood in his ragged, holey overalls. Then looking at his dirty bare feet, he answered softly, "No ma'am, I won't - ever. And I never did." He said, abruptly ending our conversation.

I'm sure that teacher meant well, but did she really understand the love of Christ? What if she had put her arms around that dirty, ragged little boy and said, "Son, I'm glad you are here, and hope you will come every chance you get to hear more about Jesus."

I reflected on the awesome responsibility a teacher, a preacher, or a parent has to welcome little ones in His name. How far reaching one's influence is. I prayed that I might ever be open to the tenderness of a child's heart and that I might never fail to see beyond the appearance and behavior of a child to eternal possibilities within that child.

Yes, I saw him in the church building for the first time on Wednesday. As I look at this immaculately dressed old gentleman lying in his casket, I thought of the little boy of long ago.

I could almost hear him say, "No Ma'am, I won't - ever."

Find the Books of the Bible?
(submitted by Jack Joyner from Germantown)

I once made a remark about the hidden books of the Bible. It was a lulu; kept people looking so hard for facts...and for others it was a revelation. Some were in a jam, especially since the names of the books are not capitalized. But the truth finally struck home to numbers of our readers. To others it was a real job. We want it to be a most fascinating few moments for you. Yes, there will be some easy ones to spot. Others may require judges to help them. I will quickly admit it usually takes a minister to find one of them, and there will be loud lamentations when it is found. A little lady says she brews a cup of tea so she can concentrate better. See how well you can compete. Relax, now, for there really are sixteen names of books of the Bible in this paragraph.

When I'm 64
(American Demographics, Jan. 1999)

Boomers begin reaching retirement age soon. The over-60 population will increase from 30 million to 50 million by 2015, and 65 million by 2030. Churches in the north and Midwest will lose older members as retiring boomers, like their parents, head to warmer climes. One-fourth of mobile retirees still go to Florida, but Gulf and Smokey Mountain states are the new hot spots. Challenge for churches: coping without them, coping with them, and how to tap this growing pool of volunteers.

Devotion
Douglas V. Steere

Devotion is not a thing that passes, that comes and goes, as it were, but it is something that extends over every instant of life and regulates all our conduct.