

Lent 2011

WEEK 1: With God's help, I promise to nurture a growing intimacy with the Lord Jesus Christ.

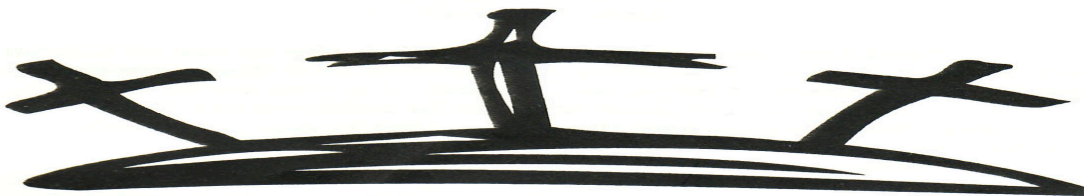
WEEK 2: With God's help, I promise to cultivate friendships with other believers.

WEEK 3: With God's help, I promise to practice purity in thought, speech, and action.

WEEK 4: With God's help, I promise to make family relationships a priority.

WEEK 5: With God's help, I promise to identify and address the hidden prejudices of my heart.

WEEK 6: With God's help, I promise to influence my world with the love of Christ.



SUNDAY-4/10/2011

Luke 10:25-37 (NIV)

²⁵ On one occasion an expert in the law stood up to test Jesus. "Teacher," he asked, "what must I do to inherit eternal life?" ²⁶ "What is written in the Law?" he replied. "How do you read it?" ²⁷ He answered, "'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind'; and, 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'" ²⁸ "You have answered correctly," Jesus replied. "Do this and you will live." ²⁹ But he wanted to justify himself, so he asked Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?"

³⁰ In reply Jesus said: "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, when he was attacked by robbers. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him and went away, leaving him half dead. ³¹ A priest happened to be going down the same road, and when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side. ³² So too, a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. ³³ But a Samaritan, as he traveled, came where the man was; and when he saw him, he took pity on him. ³⁴ He went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he put the man on his own donkey, brought him to an inn and took care of him. ³⁵ The next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper. 'Look after him,' he said, 'and when I return, I will reimburse you for any extra expense you may have.'

³⁶ "Which of these three do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?" ³⁷ The expert in the law replied, "The one who had mercy on him." Jesus told him, "Go and do likewise."

1. Who is your neighbor? It's easier to love and accept the "neighbors" that are like us, not so easy to love and accept those who are different than we are. Spend time in prayer right now identifying a neighbor whom you have a harder time loving. Why is that person harder to love?

2. The Samaritan in the story showed concrete evidence of loving his neighbor. List the ways that he did this.

3. Why do you think the priest and the Levite walked by the injured man without stopping to help him? List some of the reasons you have had for not helping a person in need. Do you think your reasons are so different from those of the priest and Levite?

TUESDAY-4/12/2011

Acts 10:34-35 (NIV)

³⁴ Then Peter began to speak: "I now realize how true it is that God does not show favoritism ³⁵but accepts from every nation the one who fears him and does what is right.

James 2:1-10 (NIV)

¹ My brothers and sisters, believers in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ must not show favoritism. ² Suppose a man comes into your meeting wearing a gold ring and fine clothes, and a poor man in filthy old clothes also comes in. ³ If you show special attention to the man wearing fine clothes and say, "Here's a good seat for you," but say to the poor man, "You stand there" or "Sit on the floor by my feet," ⁴ have you not discriminated among yourselves and become judges with evil thoughts?

⁵ Listen, my dear brothers and sisters: Has not God chosen those who are poor in the eyes of the world to be rich in faith and to inherit the kingdom he promised those who love him? ⁶ But you have dishonored the poor. Is it not the rich who are exploiting you? Are they not the ones who are dragging you into court? ⁷ Are they not the ones who are blaspheming the noble name of him to whom you belong?

⁸ If you really keep the royal law found in Scripture, "Love your neighbor as yourself," you are doing right. ⁹ But if you show favoritism, you sin and are convicted by the law as lawbreakers. ¹⁰ For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles at just one point is guilty of breaking all of it.

1. How would you define favoritism? What does the Bible have to say about showing favoritism?

2. Are you guilty of showing favoritism? If so, describe who, when, and why? What do you think God has to say about this?

3. Describe the people groups in our world today that may be considered "poor in the eyes of the world". (verse 5) What does this verse have to say about these groups of people?

4. Is this an easy or difficult topic for you to think about? Explain your answer and why you answered as you did.

WEDNESDAY-4/13/2011

Romans 10:8-13 (NIV)

8 But what does it say? "The word is near you; it is in your mouth and in your heart," that is, the message concerning faith that we proclaim: ⁹ If you declare with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. ¹⁰ For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you profess your faith and are saved. ¹¹ As Scripture says, "Anyone who believes in him will never be put to shame." ¹² For there is no difference between Jew and Gentile—the same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on him, ¹³ for, "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."

1. According to these verses, what is it that make us equal with others?

2. How does it make you feel to think that "the same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on him" when the "all" even means people that you don't necessarily think of as worthy of God's blessings? Is this ever an issue with you? Do you ever wonder why certain people receive God's blessings? Who are these people?

3. Memorize verses 11 through 13. Do you think that this verse would be helpful when dealing with hidden prejudices in your heart?

4. The above verses talk about confessing faith in Jesus as the basis for our equality with others. What do you think would be the reasons, according to the above verses, for treating even those who have not yet confessed faith in Jesus with kindness, respect, and equality? (hint: yet)

THURSDAY-4/14/2011

Romans 3:21-24 (NIV)

²¹ But now apart from the law the righteousness of God has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify. ²² This righteousness is given through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference between Jew and Gentile, ²³ for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, ²⁴ and all are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus.

1. Complete this verse: There is no _____ between Jew and Gentile, for _____ have _____ and _____ of the glory of God, and _____ are justified freely by his _____ through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus.

2. Rewrite the above verse in your own words.

3. According to the above verses what is another reason for our equality with others? (verse 23) Does looking at it this way put it into a different perspective for you? Does it make it easier to accept others who are different than you?

4. Write a prayer confessing your sin to God, particularly areas of prejudice that you are aware of. Thank God for saving you from you sin through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Ask God to work in your heart a love and acceptance for all people.

FRIDAY-4/15/2011

1 Corinthians 12:12-27 (NIV)

¹² Just as a body, though one, has many parts, but all its many parts form one body, so it is with Christ. ¹³ For we were all baptized by one Spirit so as to form one body—whether Jews or Gentiles, slave or free—and we were all given the one Spirit to drink. ¹⁴ Even so the body is not made up of one part but of many.

¹⁵ Now if the foot should say, “Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body,” it would not for that reason stop being part of the body. ¹⁶ And if the ear should say, “Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body,” it would not for that reason stop being part of the body. ¹⁷ If the whole body were an eye, where would the sense of hearing be? If the whole body were an ear, where would the sense of smell be? ¹⁸ But in fact God has placed the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be. ¹⁹ If they were all one part, where would the body be? ²⁰ As it is, there are many parts, but one body.

²¹ The eye cannot say to the hand, “I don’t need you!” And the head cannot say to the feet, “I don’t need you!” ²² On the contrary, those parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, ²³ and the parts that we think are less honorable we treat with special honor. And the parts that are unpresentable are treated with special modesty, ²⁴ while our presentable parts need no special treatment. But God has put the body together, giving greater honor to the parts that lacked it, ²⁵ so that there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other. ²⁶ If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it.

²⁷ Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it.

1. Circle all the words “all” and “many” every time they are used in the above verses. In your own words rewrite the point that these verses are trying to make.

2. What do these verses have to say about the hidden prejudices of our hearts? (Look especially at verses 22 through 26.) What does it mean to “give greater honor to the parts that lacked it”? How does this help you address the hidden prejudices of your heart?

3. Think of an experience in your life where verse 26, “If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it” had special significance to you. Do you find this verse to express the truth of your life? Why or why not?

4. Write a prayer asking God to help you show honor to those people whom you feel are the weaker, less honorable, unpresentable parts of the Body. Write out a plan to put this into practice in the near future.

SATURDAY-4/16/2011

The promise made for this week was "With God's help, I promise to identify and address the hidden prejudices of my heart."

1. Has the time you have spent in Scripture this week encouraged you in your desire and determination to identify and address the hidden prejudices of your heart? If yes, explain how it has helped. If no, why do you think it didn't help?

2. Which Scripture passage from this week was particularly meaningful to you? Why?

3. What is your plan to continue to identify and address the hidden prejudices of your heart? Write it down here.

4. Write a prayer asking God to reveal the hidden prejudices of your heart to you. Ask him to help you commit yourself to dealing with these prejudices once and for all.