

POCKET LENT

*Thoughts to carry with you during
the season of Lent*



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All Scripture passages are from the NIV unless noted otherwise

Lent [lent]: a period of 40 days (Sundays excluded) prior to Easter Sunday beginning with Ash Wednesday. Lent is a time when Christians prepare for Easter by practicing a period of spiritual discipline. This usually means giving something up that the person feels challenges their relationship to God. The idea is to remove obstacles that prevent us from truly experiencing God in our lives.

Lint [lint]: tiny shreds or ravelings of yarn or pieces of thread. Lint is often found in the filter on clothes driers and more often, in the bottoms of pockets.

Pocket Lent [pok-it lent]: a series of practical life lessons based on the season of Lent that you can stick with you.

How to use this small group study:

The Pocket Lent devotionals are designed to give you something to *stick in your pocket* each day. Every lesson contains:

Pocket Passage

Each passage is intentionally short to make reading the Bible enjoyable and to keep people from feeling overwhelmed with a lot of Scripture.

Discussion

Take a few minutes by yourself or with a group to discuss the passage and its impact on your life/lives today.

Pocket Prayer

A short prayer related to the message.

The bottom of each page has a place to write down thoughts that may come to mind as you meditate on the day's topic.

Don't let the simplicity of the topics fool you. These may be simple concepts but if we creatures of God could master them, we would not need a savior. Let the conversation grow as the Spirit leads.

Blessings,

Pastor Eric

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LOVE, IT'S NOT AN OPTION

Pocket Passage

“A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.”

~ John 13:34-35

Discussion

Jesus made the command to love one another. This is not the first time we see this command in Scripture. In the Old Testament, in Leviticus 19:18 the people of Israel are commanded, *Do not seek revenge or bear a grudge against anyone among your people, but love your neighbor as yourself. I am the LORD.*

- What does seeking revenge or bearing grudges have to do with loving your neighbor as yourself?
- Why does Jesus call his command a “new” command if it is already in Leviticus?
- Compare the passage in John with Leviticus, how are they different?
- Is it possible to bear a grudge with a person and, at the same time, love them as yourself? Why/why not?
- How did Christ love?
- How can we love like Christ in our lives today?
- Where can you demonstrate Christ’s love in your home, work or church?

Pocket Lent Devotional

Pocket Prayer

Loving God, you have commanded us not to bear grudges but instead to love one another. Give us a spirit of forgiveness that we may forgive others and be set free from the trap of seeking revenge or holding grudges. Fill us with your love that we may extend it to others. May your love through us and our actions demonstrate how you are a God of love. In the name of Christ who loved us, Amen.

Thoughts

THE "F" WORD

Pocket Passage

"If your brother or sister sins against you, rebuke them; and if they repent, forgive them. Even if they sin against you seven times in a day and seven times come back to you saying 'I repent,' you must forgive them."

~ Luke 17:3-4

Discussion

We've all had someone harm us in one way or another. Perhaps they lied to us or said something mean during an argument. Maybe someone stole from you; an item or an idea. Perhaps you were on the receiving end of gossip. Maybe it happened recently. Maybe it happened years ago.

We live in a society that values justice. For every crime there should be an equal punishment. What about the forgiveness that Jesus says we must offer?

In another passage Jesus says the following:

"And whenever you stand praying, forgive, if you have anything against anyone; so that your Father also who is in heaven may forgive you your transgressions ~Mark 11:25-26. (New American Standard)

- According to this passage, how many times should we forgive someone?
- Should there be a limit to our forgiveness? Why/why not?
- When should we forgive?
- Does forgiveness mean that justice should not be served? Why/why not?

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- How does forgiveness help us in our relationship with the person(s) we forgive? How does it help us in our relationship with God?
- Is it ever ok to withhold forgiveness? Why/why not?

Pocket Prayer

God of forgiveness and grace, you have forgiven us. Please give us the Spirit that we may forgive others. Let us not confuse grace and justice. Help us to rise above our feelings and extend Your grace. In the name of Christ, who gave us his life, Amen.

Thoughts

SUMMING IT UP

Pocket Passage

So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets.

~ *Matthew 7:12*

Discussion

“He made me so mad that I yelled at him.”

“She asked a dumb question so I gave her a dumb answer.”

He’s been saying bad things behind your back; you should tell everyone what he did at last year’s Christmas party.”

What goes around comes around. This is the rule by which the world lives. If someone does something to hurt you, you have a right to hurt them back. But this is not the rule that Jesus taught. Jesus said that we should treat others the way we ourselves would want to be treated. It doesn’t matter how they have first treated us. We don’t base our behavior on other people. We base our behavior on Jesus Christ.

- Is it difficult or easy to respond with kindness to someone who has been hurtful? Why/why not?
- It’s been said that Jesus is our measuring stick. What does that mean?
- Is the Golden Rule a rule on how to respond to people or how to initially treat people? Discuss the difference.
- Give an example of how someone treated you unexpectedly nice. How did that make you feel?
- What is a good and merciful action you can do today?

Pocket Prayer

Dear God, it is not always easy to love others. We aren’t always loveable. But you have extended your love to us even when we don’t deserve it. Give us a Spirit of love, that we may treat others

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as we ourselves would want to be treated. Help be more concerned about doing your will and not being held hostage by our own emotions. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Thoughts

DO, LOVE, WALK

Pocket Passage

He has shown you, O mortal, what is good.

And what does the LORD require of you?

To act justly and to love mercy

and to walk humbly with your God.

~ *Micah 6:8*

Discussion

Have you ever wondered what God wanted from you? Are your expectations big or small? Does God want you to build an empire to honor him, or does he want you to live a life as an example to others regardless of what step you're climbing on the social ladder?

God has given each of us spiritual gifts. Our gifts differ from one another. So it makes sense that God has some expectations of one person that he may not have of another.

There are some things that God requires from all of us. We see them in Micah 6:8.

- According to this passage, what are we required to do?
- Are these actions required for salvation? If not, then why are they required? If so, what purpose does the cross serve?
- In verse 4, God states what he has done for us. Discuss why God would state what he has done prior to listing his "requirements" for us.
- What does it mean to "act justly," to "love mercy," and to "walk humbly with God"? Give examples.
- In verses 6-7, the author lists possible ways to please God. Are these ways reasonable or possible?
- What is easier to do, the author's suggestions in verses 6-7 or God's requirement in verse 8? Why/why not?

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- How can you live out these three requirements before we meet again next week?

Pocket Prayer

God of mercy, justice, and humbleness, sometimes we trick ourselves into thinking that we can earn your love by doing a good deed. Yet what you desire is a lifelong process of acting justly, loving mercy and walking humbly with you. Lead us with your Spirit as we seek to be the people you have created us to be. In Christ we pray. Amen

Thoughts

ENCOURAGE ONE ANOTHER

Pocket Passage

Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen. And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.

~ *Ephesians 4:29-32*

Discussion

Have you ever watched a sports movie? Of course you have ☺... there's a million of them: Rocky, Facing the Giants, Hoosiers, Friday Night Lights, Remember the Titans, and the list goes on. Even though there are variations to the story lines the premises tend to be pretty similar. An athlete or a team needs to overcome the odds in order to win, or at least feel accepted. In most cases the difference doesn't come down to skill, it comes down to encouragement.

Rocky needed Adrian (Adriaaaaaane!), the Hoosiers needed to believe in themselves, football players need a coach to unite them and encourage them. Most sports movies it turns out, aren't really about sports, they're about people learning to work together, encourage each other and growing.

The Ephesians passage above is part of a larger section sometimes referred to as *Living as Children of Light* or *Instructions for Christian Living*. Consider the following questions for discussion:

- Why should we not allow unwholesome talk come from our mouths?
- What are examples of unwholesome talk?

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- What does Paul mean by “do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption”?
- Do you think the athletes in any of the movies mentioned would be successful if they didn't have someone to encourage them? i.e. Could Rocky continue without Adrian?
- How do we forgive one another when we don't feel like forgiving one another?
- Does forgiving someone come out of our feelings or does it come out of responding to God's commands?
- How do feelings help or prevent us from offering (or receiving) forgiveness?

WHAT CAN I DO TO HELP?

Mark 10:42-45

Pocket Passage

Jesus called them together and said, "You know that those who are regarded as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."

~ Mark 10:42-45

Discussion

The world's view of greatness and Jesus' view are different. The world sees power as having the authority to tell other people what to do. Jesus says that in order to be first, one must be last and even a servant of all.

Ever have a boss that liked telling you what to do but would not help you do it? Or a coworker who didn't seem to remember getting hired as an intern before working their way up? How about the person who refuses to help by using the phrase, "That's not my job"?

Working with others often requires submitting to one another. Discuss how Jesus' definition of being first can fit in with the world's definition of great.

- What does it mean to "lord it over" someone?
- Have you ever had someone refuse to help by stating, "That's not my job"? How did that feel?
- How can a person be great if they place themselves last?
- How can the phrase, "What can I do to help" improve a situation at work; at home?

Pocket Lent Devotional

- What was the greatest thing that Jesus ever did? Did that come from a place of asserting authority over others or submitting himself to others? Explain.
- If Jesus is a servant to others, what does it mean to be a Christian today?

