**Meeting the Challenge**

Daily Bible Readings

**First Week**

**Sunday**

***You have been pretty good so far, you must be better***

**Revelation 2:1-7** *The Message to the Church in Ephesus*

“Write this letter to the angel of the church in Ephesus. This is the message from the one who holds the seven stars in his right hand, the one who walks among the seven gold lampstands:

**2**“I know all the things you do. I have seen your hard work and your patient endurance. I know you don’t tolerate evil people. You have examined the claims of those who say they are apostles but are not. You have discovered they are liars. **3**You have patiently suffered for me without quitting.

**4**“But I have this complaint against you. You don’t love me or each other as you did at first! **5**Look how far you have fallen! Turn back to me and do the works you did at first. If you don’t repent, I will come and remove your lampstand from its place among the churches. **6**But this is in your favor: You hate the evil deeds of the Nicolaitans, just as I do.

**7**“Anyone with ears to hear must listen to the Spirit and understand what he is saying to the churches. To everyone who is victorious I will give fruit from the tree of life in the paradise of God.

**Monday**

***“And we will do this, if God permits us …”***

**Hebrews 6:1-12**

So let us stop going over the basic teachings about Christ again and again. Let us go on instead and become mature in our understanding. Surely we don’t need to start again with the fundamental importance of repenting from evil deeds and placing our faith in God. **2**You don’t need further instruction about baptisms, the laying on of hands, the resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment. **3**And so, God willing, we will move forward to further understanding.

**4**For it is impossible to bring back to repentance those who were once enlightened—those who have experienced the good things of heaven and shared in the Holy Spirit, **5**who have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the power of the age to come— **6**and who then turn away from God. It is impossible to bring such people back to repentance; by rejecting the Son of God, they themselves are nailing him to the cross once again and holding him up to public shame.

**7**When the ground soaks up the falling rain and bears a good crop for the farmer, it has God’s blessing. **8**But if a field bears thorns and thistles, it is useless. The farmer will soon condemn that field and burn it.

**9**Dear friends, even though we are talking this way, we really don’t believe it applies to you. We are confident that you are meant for better things, things that come with salvation. **10**For God is not unjust. He will not forget how hard you have worked for him and how you have shown your love to him by caring for other believers, as you still do. **11**Our great desire is that you will keep on loving others as long as life lasts, in order to make certain that what you hope for will come true. **12**Then you will not become spiritually dull and indifferent. Instead, you will follow the example of those who are going to inherit God’s promises because of their faith and endurance.

**Tuesday**

***“The righteous shall live by faith.”***

**Hebrews 10:37-39**

**37**“For in just a little while,
    the Coming One will come and not delay.
**38**And my righteous ones will live by faith.
    But I will take no pleasure in anyone who turns away.”

**39**But we are not like those who turn away from God to their own destruction. We are the faithful ones, whose souls will be saved.

**Wednesday**

***“By faith we understand …”***

**Hebrews 11:1-3** *Great Examples of Faith*

Faith shows the reality of what we hope for; it is the evidence of things we cannot see. **2**Through their faith, the people in days of old earned a good reputation.

**3**By faith we understand that the entire universe was formed at God’s command, that what we now see did not come from anything that can be seen.

**Thursday**

***“God himself giving …”***

**Hebrews 11:4**

**4**It was by faith that Abel brought a more acceptable offering to God than Cain did. Abel’s offering gave evidence that he was a righteous man, and God showed his approval of his gifts. Although Abel is long dead, he still speaks to us by his example of faith.

**Friday**

***“He who had received … was ready to offer …”***

**Hebrews 11:17-19**

**11**It was by faith that even Sarah was able to have a child, though she was barren and was too old. She believed that God would keep his promise. **12**And so a whole nation came from this one man who was as good as dead—a nation with so many people that, like the stars in the sky and the sand on the seashore, there is no way to count them.

**13**All these people died still believing what God had promised them. They did not receive what was promised, but they saw it all from a distance and welcomed it. They agreed that they were foreigners and nomads here on earth. **14**Obviously people who say such things are looking forward to a country they can call their own. **15**If they had longed for the country they came from, they could have gone back. **16**But they were looking for a better place, a heavenly homeland. That is why God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared a city for them.

**17**It was by faith that Abraham offered Isaac as a sacrifice when God was testing him. Abraham, who had received God’s promises, was ready to sacrifice his only son, Isaac, **18**even though God had told him, “Isaac is the son through whom your descendants will be counted.” **19**Abraham reasoned that if Isaac died, God was able to bring him back to life again. And in a sense, Abraham did receive his son back from the dead.

**Saturday**

***“I intend to build a house for the Lord.”***

**1 Kings 5:3-5**

**3**“You know that my father, David, was not able to build a Temple to honor the name of the Lord his God because of the many wars waged against him by surrounding nations. He could not build until the Lord gave him victory over all his enemies. **4**But now the Lord my God has given me peace on every side; I have no enemies, and all is well. **5**So I am planning to build a Temple to honor the name of the Lord my God, just as he had instructed my father, David. For the Lord told him, ‘Your son, whom I will place on your throne, will build the Temple to honor my name.’

**Second Week**

**Sunday**

***“70,000 Laborers, 80,000 stonecutters and***

***3,300 supervisors did the work.”***

**1 Kings 5:13-18**

**13**Then King Solomon conscripted a labor force of 30,000 men from all Israel. **14**He sent them to Lebanon in shifts, 10,000 every month, so that each man would be one month in Lebanon and two months at home. Adoniram was in charge of this labor force. **15**Solomon also had 70,000 common laborers, 80,000 quarry workers in the hill country, **16**and 3,600 foremen to supervise the work. **17**At the king’s command, they quarried large blocks of high-quality stone and shaped them to make the foundation of the Temple. **18**Men from the city of Gebal helped Solomon’s and Hiram’s builders prepare the timber and stone for the Temple.

**Monday**

***“Concerning this house that you are building …***

***obey and I will keep my promise with you.”***

**1 Kings 6:1, 11-13**

It was in midspring, in the month of Ziv, during the fourth year of Solomon’s reign, that he began to construct the Temple of the Lord. This was 480 years after the people of Israel were rescued from their slavery in the land of Egypt.

**11**Then the Lord gave this message to Solomon: **12**“Concerning this Temple you are building, if you keep all my decrees and regulations and obey all my commands, I will fulfill through you the promise I made to your father, David. **13**I will live among the Israelites and will never abandon my people Israel.”

**Tuesday**

***“They brought their offerings before the Lord”***

**Numbers 7:1-3,10-11** *Offerings of Dedication*

On the day Moses set up the Tabernacle, he anointed it and set it apart as holy. He also anointed and set apart all its furnishings and the altar with its utensils. **2**Then the leaders of Israel—the tribal leaders who had registered the troops—came and brought their offerings. **3**Together they brought six large wagons and twelve oxen. There was a wagon for every two leaders and an ox for each leader. They presented these to the Lord in front of the Tabernacle.

**10**The leaders also presented dedication gifts for the altar at the time it was anointed. They each placed their gifts before the altar. **11**The Lord said to Moses, “Let one leader bring his gift each day for the dedication of the altar.”

**Wednesday**

***“… as God directed.”***

**Acts 7:44-49**

**44**“Our ancestors carried the Tabernacle with them through the wilderness. It was constructed according to the plan God had shown to Moses. **45**Years later, when Joshua led our ancestors in battle against the nations that God drove out of this land, the Tabernacle was taken with them into their new territory. And it stayed there until the time of King David.

**46**“David found favor with God and asked for the privilege of building a permanent Temple for the God of Jacob. **47**But it was Solomon who actually built it. **48**However, the Most High doesn’t live in temples made by human hands. As the prophet says,

**49**‘Heaven is my throne,
    and the earth is my footstool.
Could you build me a temple as good as that?’
    asks the Lord.
‘Could you build me such a resting place?

**Thursday**

***“You shall love the Lord, your God”***

**Deuteronomy 6:4-7**

**4**“Listen, O Israel! The Lord is our God, the Lord alone. **5**And you must love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your strength. **6**And you must commit yourselves wholeheartedly to these commands that I am giving you today. **7**Repeat them again and again to your children. Talk about them when you are at home and when you are on the road, when you are going to bed and when you are getting up.

**Friday**

***“Do what is right and good in the sight of the Lord”***

**Deuteronomy 6:10-19**

**10**“The Lord your God will soon bring you into the land he swore to give you when he made a vow to your ancestors Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. It is a land with large, prosperous cities that you did not build. **11**The houses will be richly stocked with goods you did not produce. You will draw water from cisterns you did not dig, and you will eat from vineyards and olive trees you did not plant. When you have eaten your fill in this land, **12**be careful not to forget the Lord, who rescued you from slavery in the land of Egypt. **13**You must fear the Lord your God and serve him. When you take an oath, you must use only his name.

**14**“You must not worship any of the gods of neighboring nations, **15**for the Lord your God, who lives among you, is a jealous God. His anger will flare up against you, and he will wipe you from the face of the earth.**16**You must not test the Lord your God as you did when you complained at Massah. **17**You must diligently obey the commands of the Lord your God—all the laws and decrees he has given you. **18**Do what is right and good in the Lord’s sight, so all will go well with you. Then you will enter and occupy the good land that the Lord swore to give your ancestors. **19**You will drive out all the enemies living in the land, just as the Lord said you would.

**Saturday**

***“Whatever you ask for in prayer and with faith …”***

**Matthew 21:21-22**

**21**Then Jesus told them, “I tell you the truth, if you have faith and don’t doubt, you can do things like this and much more. You can even say to this mountain, ‘May you be lifted up and thrown into the sea,’ and it will happen. **22**You can pray for anything, and if you have faith, you will receive it.”

**Third Week**

**Sunday**

***On being lukewarm***

**Revelation 3:14-22**

**14**“Write this letter to the angel of the church in Laodicea. This is the message from the one who is the Amen—the faithful and true witness, the beginning of God’s new creation:

**15**“I know all the things you do, that you are neither hot nor cold. I wish that you were one or the other!**16**But since you are like lukewarm water, neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of my mouth! **17**You say, ‘I am rich. I have everything I want. I don’t need a thing!’ And you don’t realize that you are wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked. **18**So I advise you to buy gold from me—gold that has been purified by fire. Then you will be rich. Also buy white garments from me so you will not be shamed by your nakedness, and ointment for your eyes so you will be able to see. **19**I correct and discipline everyone I love. So be diligent and turn from your indifference.

**20**“Look! I stand at the door and knock. If you hear my voice and open the door, I will come in, and we will share a meal together as friends. **21**Those who are victorious will sit with me on my throne, just as I was victorious and sat with my Father on his throne.

**22**“Anyone with ears to hear must listen to the Spirit and understand what he is saying to the churches.”

**Monday**

***“There is great gain in godliness…”***

**1 Timothy 6:6-10**

**6**But this is in your favor: You hate the evil deeds of the Nicolaitans, just as I do.

**7**“Anyone with ears to hear must listen to the Spirit and understand what he is saying to the churches. To everyone who is victorious I will give fruit from the tree of life in the paradise of God.

The Message to the Church in Smyrna

**8**“Write this letter to the angel of the church in Smyrna. This is the message from the one who is the First and the Last, who was dead but is now alive:

**9**“I know about your suffering and your poverty—but you are rich! I know the blasphemy of those opposing you. They say they are Jews, but they are not, because their synagogue belongs to Satan.**10**Don’t be afraid of what you are about to suffer. The devil will throw some of you into prison to test you. You will suffer for ten days. But if you remain faithful even when facing death, I will give you the crown of life.

**Tuesday**

***What Jesus said about giving***

**Luke 11:42-44**

**42**“What sorrow awaits you Pharisees! For you are careful to tithe even the tiniest income from your herb gardens, but you ignore justice and the love of God. You should tithe, yes, but do not neglect the more important things.

**43**“What sorrow awaits you Pharisees! For you love to sit in the seats of honor in the synagogues and receive respectful greetings as you walk in the marketplaces. **44**Yes, what sorrow awaits you! For you are like hidden graves in a field. People walk over them without knowing the corruption they are stepping on.”

**Wednesday**

***To be useful … be fruitful!***

**Matthew 21:18-20**

**18**In the morning, as Jesus was returning to Jerusalem, he was hungry, **19**and he noticed a fig tree beside the road. He went over to see if there were any figs, but there were only leaves. Then he said to it, “May you never bear fruit again!” And immediately the fig tree withered up.

**20**The disciples were amazed when they saw this and asked, “How did the fig tree wither so quickly?”

**Thursday**

***“If you are led by the spirit …”***

**Galatians 5:16-25** Living by the Spirit’s Power

**16**So I say, let the Holy Spirit guide your lives. Then you won’t be doing what your sinful nature craves.**17**The sinful nature wants to do evil, which is just the opposite of what the Spirit wants. And the Spirit gives us desires that are the opposite of what the sinful nature desires. These two forces are constantly fighting each other, so you are not free to carry out your good intentions. **18**But when you are directed by the Spirit, you are not under obligation to the law of Moses.

**19**When you follow the desires of your sinful nature, the results are very clear: sexual immorality, impurity, lustful pleasures, **20**idolatry, sorcery, hostility, quarreling, jealousy, outbursts of anger, selfish ambition, dissension, division, **21**envy, drunkenness, wild parties, and other sins like these. Let me tell you again, as I have before, that anyone living that sort of life will not inherit the Kingdom of God.

**22**But the Holy Spirit produces this kind of fruit in our lives: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, **23**gentleness, and self-control. There is no law against these things!

**24**Those who belong to Christ Jesus have nailed the passions and desires of their sinful nature to his cross and crucified them there. **25**Since we are living by the Spirit, let us follow the Spirit’s leading in every part of our lives. **26**Let us not become conceited, or provoke one another, or be jealous of one another.

**Friday**

***“There are varieties of gifts”***

**1 Corinthians 12:4-13**

4There are different kinds of spiritual gifts, but the same Spirit is the source of them all. 5There are different kinds of service, but we serve the same Lord. 6God works in different ways, but it is the same God who does the work in all of us.

7A spiritual gift is given to each of us so we can help each other. 8To one person the Spirit gives the ability to give wise advice; to another the same Spirit gives a message of special knowledge. 9The same Spirit gives great faith to another, and to someone else the one Spirit gives the gift of healing. 10He gives one person the power to perform miracles, and another the ability to prophesy. He gives someone else the ability to discern whether a message is from the Spirit of God or from another spirit. Still another person is given the ability to speak in unknown languages, while another is given the ability to interpret what is being said. 11It is the one and only Spirit who distributes all these gifts. He alone decides which gift each person should have.

12The human body has many parts, but the many parts make up one whole body. So it is with the body of Christ. 13Some of us are Jews, some are Gentiles, some are slaves, and some are free. But we have all been baptized into one body by one Spirit, and we all share the same Spirit.

**Saturday**

***“Faith without works is dead!”***

**James 2:13-18**

**13**There will be no mercy for those who have not shown mercy to others. But if you have been merciful, God will be merciful when he judges you.

Faith without Good Deeds Is Dead

**14**What good is it, dear brothers and sisters, if you say you have faith but don’t show it by your actions? Can that kind of faith save anyone? **15**Suppose you see a brother or sister who has no food or clothing,**16**and you say, “Good-bye and have a good day; stay warm and eat well”—but then you don’t give that person any food or clothing. What good does that do?

**17**So you see, faith by itself isn’t enough. Unless it produces good deeds, it is dead and useless.

**18**Now someone may argue, “Some people have faith; others have good deeds.” But I say, “How can you show me your faith if you don’t have good deeds? I will show you my faith by my good deeds.”

**Fourth Week**

**Sunday**

***“… in the strength of his power.”***

**Ephesians 6:10-18** *The Whole Armor of God*

**10**A final word: Be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. **11**Put on all of God’s armor so that you will be able to stand firm against all strategies of the devil. **12**For we are not fighting against flesh-and-blood enemies, but against evil rulers and authorities of the unseen world, against mighty powers in this dark world, and against evil spirits in the heavenly places.

**13**Therefore, put on every piece of God’s armor so you will be able to resist the enemy in the time of evil. Then after the battle you will still be standing firm. **14**Stand your ground, putting on the belt of truth and the body armor of God’s righteousness. **15**For shoes, put on the peace that comes from the Good News so that you will be fully prepared. **16**In addition to all of these, hold up the shield of faith to stop the fiery arrows of the devil. **17**Put on salvation as your helmet, and take the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

**18**Pray in the Spirit at all times and on every occasion. Stay alert and be persistent in your prayers for all believers everywhere.

**Monday**

***“He chose us … he destined us”***

**Ephesians 2:1-12** *Made Alive with Christ*

Once you were dead because of your disobedience and your many sins. **2**You used to live in sin, just like the rest of the world, obeying the devil—the commander of the powers in the unseen world. He is the spirit at work in the hearts of those who refuse to obey God. **3**All of us used to live that way, following the passionate desires and inclinations of our sinful nature. By our very nature we were subject to God’s anger, just like everyone else.

**4**But God is so rich in mercy, and he loved us so much, **5**that even though we were dead because of our sins, he gave us life when he raised Christ from the dead. (It is only by God’s grace that you have been saved!) **6**For he raised us from the dead along with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms because we are united with Christ Jesus. **7**So God can point to us in all future ages as examples of the incredible wealth of his grace and kindness toward us, as shown in all he has done for us who are united with Christ Jesus.

**8**God saved you by his grace when you believed. And you can’t take credit for this; it is a gift from God.**9**Salvation is not a reward for the good things we have done, so none of us can boast about it. **10**For we are God’s masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so we can do the good things he planned for us long ago.

**11**Don’t forget that you Gentiles used to be outsiders. You were called “uncircumcised heathens” by the Jews, who were proud of their circumcision, even though it affected only their bodies and not their hearts.**12**In those days you were living apart from Christ. You were excluded from citizenship among the people of Israel, and you did not know the covenant promises God had made to them. You lived in this world without God and without hope.

**Tuesday**

***“… to rebuild the house of the Lord”***

**Ezra 1:1-6** *Cyrus Allows the Exiles to Return*

In the first year of King Cyrus of Persia, the Lord fulfilled the prophecy he had given through Jeremiah. He stirred the heart of Cyrus to put this proclamation in writing and to send it throughout his kingdom:

**2**“This is what King Cyrus of Persia says:

“The Lord, the God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth. He has appointed me to build him a Temple at Jerusalem, which is in Judah. **3**Any of you who are his people may go to Jerusalem in Judah to rebuild this Temple of the Lord, the God of Israel, who lives in Jerusalem. And may your God be with you! **4**Wherever this Jewish remnant is found, let their neighbors contribute toward their expenses by giving them silver and gold, supplies for the journey, and livestock, as well as a voluntary offering for the Temple of God in Jerusalem.”

**5**Then God stirred the hearts of the priests and Levites and the leaders of the tribes of Judah and Benjamin to go to Jerusalem to rebuild the Temple of the Lord. **6**And all their neighbors assisted by giving them articles of silver and gold, supplies for the journey, and livestock. They gave them many valuable gifts in addition to all the voluntary offerings.

**Wednesday**

***About the offering!***

**Exodus 25:1-8** *Offerings for the Tabernacle*

The Lord said to Moses, **2**“Tell the people of Israel to bring me their sacred offerings. Accept the contributions from all whose hearts are moved to offer them. **3**Here is a list of sacred offerings you may accept from them:

gold, silver, and bronze;

blue, purple, and scarlet thread; fine linen and goat hair for cloth;

tanned ram skins and fine goatskin leather; acacia wood;

olive oil for the lamps; spices for the anointing oil and the fragrant incense;

onyx stones, and other gemstones to be set in the ephod and the priest’s chest piece.

**8**“Have the people of Israel build me a holy sanctuary so I can live among them.

**Thursday**

***“…everyone whose heart was stirred!”***

**Exodus 35:20-29**

**20**So the whole community of Israel left Moses and returned to their tents. **21**All whose hearts were stirred and whose spirits were moved came and brought their sacred offerings to the Lord. They brought all the materials needed for the Tabernacle, for the performance of its rituals, and for the sacred garments. **22**Both men and women came, all whose hearts were willing. They brought to the Lord their offerings of gold—brooches, earrings, rings from their fingers, and necklaces. They presented gold objects of every kind as a special offering to the Lord.**23**All those who owned the following items willingly brought them: blue, purple, and scarlet thread; fine linen and goat hair for cloth; and tanned ram skins and fine goatskin leather. **24**And all who had silver and bronze objects gave them as a sacred offering to the Lord. And those who had acacia wood brought it for use in the project.

**25**All the women who were skilled in sewing and spinning prepared blue, purple, and scarlet thread, and fine linen cloth. **26**All the women who were willing used their skills to spin the goat hair into yarn. **27**The leaders brought onyx stones and the special gemstones to be set in the ephod and the priest’s chest piece. **28**They also brought spices and olive oil for the light, the anointing oil, and the fragrant incense. **29**So the people of Israel—every man and woman who was eager to help in the work the Lord had given them through Moses—brought their gifts and gave them freely to the Lord.

**Friday**

***“… and all contributed.”***

**Luke 21:1-4** The Widow’s Offering

While Jesus was in the Temple, he watched the rich people dropping their gifts in the collection box. **2**Then a poor widow came by and dropped in two small coins.

**3**“I tell you the truth,” Jesus said, “this poor widow has given more than all the rest of them. **4**For they have given a tiny part of their surplus, but she, poor as she is, has given everything she has.”

**Saturday**

***Jesus asks and important question.***

**John 21:15-17**

**15**After breakfast Jesus asked Simon Peter, “Simon son of John, do you love me more than these?”

“Yes, Lord,” Peter replied, “you know I love you.”

“Then feed my lambs,” Jesus told him.

**16**Jesus repeated the question: “Simon son of John, do you love me?”

“Yes, Lord,” Peter said, “you know I love you.”

“Then take care of my sheep,” Jesus said.

**17**A third time he asked him, “Simon son of John, do you love me?”

Peter was hurt that Jesus asked the question a third time. He said, “Lord, you know everything. You know that I love you.”

Jesus said, “Then feed my sheep.

**Fifth Week**

**Sunday**

***The foundation of the church.***

**Matthew 16:13-19** Peter’s Declaration about Jesus

**13**When Jesus came to the region of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, “Who do people say that the Son of Man is?”

**14**“Well,” they replied, “some say John the Baptist, some say Elijah, and others say Jeremiah or one of the other prophets.”

**15**Then he asked them, “But who do you say I am?”

**16**Simon Peter answered, “You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God.”

**17**Jesus replied, “You are blessed, Simon son of John, because my Father in heaven has revealed this to you. You did not learn this from any human being. **18**Now I say to you that you are Peter (which means ‘rock’), and upon this rock I will build my church, and all the powers of hell will not conquer it. **19**And I will give you the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven. Whatever you forbid on earth will be forbidden in heaven, and whatever you permit on earth will be permitted in heaven.”

**Monday**

***Striving for unity***

**Ephesians 4:8-16**

**8**That is why the Scriptures say,

“When he ascended to the heights,
    he led a crowd of captives
    and gave gifts to his people.”

**9**Notice that it says “he ascended.” This clearly means that Christ also descended to our lowly world. **10**And the same one who descended is the one who ascended higher than all the heavens, so that he might fill the entire universe with himself.

**11**Now these are the gifts Christ gave to the church: the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, and the pastors and teachers. **12**Their responsibility is to equip God’s people to do his work and build up the church, the body of Christ. **13**This will continue until we all come to such unity in our faith and knowledge of God’s Son that we will be mature in the Lord, measuring up to the full and complete standard of Christ.

**14**Then we will no longer be immature like children. We won’t be tossed and blown about by every wind of new teaching. We will not be influenced when people try to trick us with lies so clever they sound like the truth. **15**Instead, we will speak the truth in love, growing in every way more and more like Christ, who is the head of his body, the church. **16**He makes the whole body fit together perfectly. As each part does its own special work, it helps the other parts grow, so that the whole body is healthy and growing and full of love.

**Tuesday**

***Making a decision for God***

**Luke 16:10-15**

**10**“If you are faithful in little things, you will be faithful in large ones. But if you are dishonest in little things, you won’t be honest with greater responsibilities. **11**And if you are untrustworthy about worldly wealth, who will trust you with the true riches of heaven? **12**And if you are not faithful with other people’s things, why should you be trusted with things of your own?

**13**“No one can serve two masters. For you will hate one and love the other; you will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and be enslaved to money.”

**14**The Pharisees, who dearly loved their money, heard all this and scoffed at him. **15**Then he said to them, “You like to appear righteous in public, but God knows your hearts. What this world honors is detestable in the sight of God.

**Wednesday**

***On Deciding what is***

**1 John 2:12-17**

**12**I am writing to you who are God’s children
    because your sins have been forgiven through Jesus.
**13**I am writing to you who are mature in the faith
    because you know Christ, who existed from the beginning.
I am writing to you who are young in the faith
    because you have won your battle with the evil one.
**14**I have written to you who are God’s children
    because you know the Father.
I have written to you who are mature in the faith
    because you know Christ, who existed from the beginning.
I have written to you who are young in the faith
    because you are strong.
God’s word lives in your hearts,
    and you have won your battle with the evil one.

*Do Not Love This World*

**15**Do not love this world nor the things it offers you, for when you love the world, you do not have the love of the Father in you. **16**For the world offers only a craving for physical pleasure, a craving for everything we see, and pride in our achievements and possessions. These are not from the Father, but are from this world. **17**And this world is fading away, along with everything that people crave. But anyone who does what pleases God will live forever.

**Thursday**

***The power of sharing***

**Acts 4:32-37** The Believers Share Their Possessions

**32**All the believers were united in heart and mind. And they felt that what they owned was not their own, so they shared everything they had. **33**The apostles testified powerfully to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and God’s great blessing was upon them all. **34**There were no needy people among them, because those who owned land or houses would sell them **35**and bring the money to the apostles to give to those in need.

**36**For instance, there was Joseph, the one the apostles nicknamed Barnabas (which means “Son of Encouragement”). He was from the tribe of Levi and came from the island of Cyprus. **37**He sold a field he owned and brought the money to the apostles.

**Friday**

***The reward of Faithfulness***

**Matthew 25:14-29** Parable of the Three Servants

**14**“Again, the Kingdom of Heaven can be illustrated by the story of a man going on a long trip. He called together his servants and entrusted his money to them while he was gone. **15**He gave five bags of silver to one, two bags of silver to another, and one bag of silver to the last—dividing it in proportion to their abilities. He then left on his trip.

**16**“The servant who received the five bags of silver began to invest the money and earned five more. **17**The servant with two bags of silver also went to work and earned two more. **18**But the servant who received the one bag of silver dug a hole in the ground and hid the master’s money.

**19**“After a long time their master returned from his trip and called them to give an account of how they had used his money. **20**The servant to whom he had entrusted the five bags of silver came forward with five more and said, ‘Master, you gave me five bags of silver to invest, and I have earned five more.’

**21**“The master was full of praise. ‘Well done, my good and faithful servant. You have been faithful in handling this small amount, so now I will give you many more responsibilities. Let’s celebrate together!’

**22**“The servant who had received the two bags of silver came forward and said, ‘Master, you gave me two bags of silver to invest, and I have earned two more.’

**23**“The master said, ‘Well done, my good and faithful servant. You have been faithful in handling this small amount, so now I will give you many more responsibilities. Let’s celebrate together!’

**24**“Then the servant with the one bag of silver came and said, ‘Master, I knew you were a harsh man, harvesting crops you didn’t plant and gathering crops you didn’t cultivate. **25**I was afraid I would lose your money, so I hid it in the earth. Look, here is your money back.’

**26**“But the master replied, ‘You wicked and lazy servant! If you knew I harvested crops I didn’t plant and gathered crops I didn’t cultivate,**27**why didn’t you deposit my money in the bank? At least I could have gotten some interest on it.’

**28**“Then he ordered, ‘Take the money from this servant, and give it to the one with the ten bags of silver. **29**To those who use well what they are given, even more will be given, and they will have an abundance. But from those who do nothing, even what little they have will be taken away. **30**Now throw this useless servant into outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.’

**Saturday**

***“According to their resources, they gave …”***

**Ezra 2:68-69**

**68**When they arrived at the Temple of the Lord in Jerusalem, some of the family leaders made voluntary offerings toward the rebuilding of God’s Temple on its original site, **69**and each leader gave as much as he could. The total of their gifts came to 61,000 gold coins, 6,250 pounds of silver, and 100 robes for the priests.

**Sunday**

***What a willing heart can do.***

**Exodus 35:29**

**29**So the people of Israel—every man and woman who was eager to help in the work the Lord had given them through Moses—brought their gifts and gave them freely to the Lord.