

Monday, October 16 - Read Joshua 1:8. Times of suffering and mourning are often associated with darkness. It is often in these times when the world does not seem to shine as bright as it once did. The sun does not seem to warm your skin as it did before. Colors are not as vibrant. Food often loses its taste and even the roses do not seem as fragrant. Everything seems darker. It is in these times that we need to cling to God and his word the most. Psalm 119:105 says, "Your word is a lamp unto my feet." It is God's holy word that leads us along the path when it is dark. It is scriptures that will guide us through the darkness back to the light. When we read and are reminded of God's promises, we realize that our despair is not as deep as we thought. We remember that God is with us in the darkness. Through his word we remember that he is faithful and will not forget his promises to us. Ultimately, it is through his word that the light of hope once again shines in our hearts and minds. Unfortunately, it is during trials that we tend to ignore or forget the things we need the most. During dark times, we often neglect the lamp that has been given to us. The Bible tells us to keep God's word on our hearts and minds. Today we are going to do an exercise to help us remember God's promises throughout the day. Take time to read these verses: **Revelation 21:4, Jeremiah 29:11, Isaiah 41:10, Psalm 9:9-10, John 16:33.**

Tuesday, October 17 - Read Romans 5:3-5. The apostle Paul said in Philippians 3:10-11, "I want to know Christ - yes, to know the power of his resurrection and participation in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, and so, somehow, attaining to the resurrection from the dead." Paul understood that as he suffered like Jesus, God was going to mold him to look and act more like Jesus. Therefore, the apostle Paul welcomed coming to the end of himself. That is the goal for us as well. The goal is not just to be able to endure times of mourning, because we know that God is with us. Not just to get through times of suffering because we know God is using it to shape our hearts and minds. But the goal is that we would come to understand how amazing it is to be transformed into the likeness of Christ that we would actually welcome suffering in our lives. That we would come to the end of ourselves, knowing there is a special blessing found only there.

Wednesday, October 18 - Read John 3:30-31. None of us like to feel empty in our souls. So we fill ourselves with whatever we can, to make sure we are always on full. Some get their fill through achievement and success. Others in riches and monetary possessions. Still others fill their souls with status. The list of fillers goes on and on. The problem with all of them is that they do not satisfy. The irony and sad truth is that most people spend their entire lives striving to fill themselves with things that only end up making them feel even more empty. The fact is that we were all created to live through and live with our creator. We were designed to live in communion with God. And when we are not living in close community with Him, being filled by Him, we feel empty. And even though we fill ourselves with everything other than God, it will never satisfy. On the flip side when we fill ourselves up with Him alone, we are completely satisfied and filled. However, most of us are already so full of the stuff that doesn't satisfy that there is hardly any room left for Him.

Thursday, October 19 - Read Ephesians 3:19. There is a story in the book of Ezekiel about four lepers who are stuck outside the city gate. The Bible does not tell us how long they have been there but we can know it was probably a good amount of time. At that time period people with leprosy were banished to live outside the city gates. They relied on the trash of the city, which was thrown outside the gate, for their food. Since the city had been in a famine, these lepers didn't have any trash to rummage through. Finally, one day they decided they could not live like this any longer. They said to each other, "If we stay there we will surely die." They end up going to another camp, and upon arriving, found that it had been deserted and there was a feast left behind! The lepers decided they were tired of living the way they were and changed. And it saved their lives. We too often settle for leftovers and trash to fill us rather than the presence of the creator of the universe. We do this because we are just used to it. We don't realize that there is a better way, that God's way is better. We are scared to move because this is all we have ever known. This way of living is familiar to us. We don't know how good the alternative really is. But just like the lepers, if we continue to settle for the fillers that will never satisfy, we too will slowly die from the inside out. We must realize that there is a treasure waiting for us as well. This treasure is not silver nor gold but the very presence of the almighty God. When we are filled with God, we are always satisfied. We are refreshed. We are strengthened. We are filled!

Friday, October 20 - Read John 4:13-14. Jesus is a gentleman. He waits to come in, only when invited. He doesn't force his way in. The greatest act of love is the fact that God has given us the ability to choose Him. God wants us to lovingly and freely choose Him. Every day we ask, "Who or what will satisfy and fill me?" Are we going to be filled with earthly, temporal, created things? Or are we going to choose to be filled with the almighty creator? Remember, he is standing right there. He is knocking and waiting. He desires to fill us. But we must make room for him. In the scriptures, water is used as a symbol for purity, refreshment, and life. It is also used as a symbol for God's presence. Take a few minutes and reflect on the fact that God desires to fill us with his pure, life giving, soul refreshing spirit and as you empty yourself, even now, he is already filling you with himself!