

Wednesday

GENEROSITY: 2 CORINTHIANS 9:6-8

If I'm being perfectly honest, I'm a selfish person. Especially compared to how we're called to live generously. Paul calls us to sow bountifully in this passage. To me, this means using the resources available to me to give to others without fear of lack. Practically, it usually boils down to giving of my time or my money, both of which I am guilty of wasting. I want to come to a point which I fully believe and live like everything I have is God's. When I have a kingdom mindset, it becomes easier to think about loving others through generosity, spending my time and money with a purpose. It also becomes a much more joyful process—it's FUN to bless others when you realize you aren't losing anything!! My prayer for you [and myself] this week is that we take time with God asking how he wants to use our resources to bless others, and that we actually listen and obey. Even if it's something really small. Even if it seems like there's no way we could give that much. Let's get off our butts, close the Netflix tab, trust the infinite God we have with our resources, and be amazed at what can happen when we give generously.

-Emily Valdez

Thursday

PEOPLE/ INTERRUPTIONS: MARK 5:21-34

Do you ever feel like you're so busy you might explode? Just me? When I get overstressed, my first move is to lock myself away in a study room and tell my friends that I'll see them another time. Far too often, my work comes first and any little interruption or distraction can seriously throw me off. At the outset of this story, Jesus was pretty busy - He had just gotten into town, there was a crowd surrounding Him expecting great things, and He was on the way to heal a girl on her deathbed. I'm stressed out just thinking about the pressure. But, in the midst of all the chaos, He stops everything when he feels a tug on His hem. He made time to listen and care for this woman. If He had had ~~turn of attention~~ ^{no interruption} on His task, he might not have even felt her reaching for Him, but by being available to the Lord's interruptions, he was able to change her life. As someone who is trying to learn how to be more like Jesus, I feel pretty challenged by this story. How often have I maybe missed something the Lord was trying to do because I was too wrapped up in my own schedule? Where can I make space in my crazy life for God's interruptions? If you keep reading, you'll see that, even though it seemed like everything couldn't be accomplished in the time allotted, God's glory was multiplied in that one little interruption.

-Alexi Bolton

Friday

FORGIVENESS: EPHESIANS 4:32

I tend to forget just how much work forgiveness can be. I like to think I've forgiven someone for whatever it is they've done to me, but then I get washed over by a wave of anger thinking back to those events or even just thinking about that person. The best and most pure example of forgiveness was Jesus going to the cross and being crucified for the forgiveness of our sins. That took a little bit of time and effort, I'd say. Forgiveness is a process. It involves sacrificing ourselves for the sake of another person. We have to put aside our own selves, our own selfish spirits, and allow forgiveness to fill our hearts instead.

Most of us have heard the saying about who is actually hurt by holding a grudge. And it's true, far more often we are carrying a huge burden for no reason other than because it's what we've always done. Throughout this week, something or someone is more than likely going to pop into your head and make you angry. Take the time to think back on Ephesians 4:32 and start the process of forgiveness. It may not happen the first time you pray about it, but each time you think of it deliberately stop and pray for peace and forgiveness.

-Haley Smith

Monday

RETREAT FROM THE WORLD: MARK 6:30-31

Every summer during high school, I would go to church camp, along with a bunch of other students. The "camp" was held on the campus of a small Christian college in San Diego, California called Point Loma Nazarene University. Every year, I looked forward to camp with more anticipation and excitement than I did for anything else. Going there seemed so surreal at times, almost like a dream. Over the course of a seven-hour bus ride, my world would transform from the dry heat of Phoenix in late June to the green hills and cool breezes of the Pacific coast. But what truly made it awesome was its separation from all the things in my daily life. I was 350 miles away from home in a place that looked nothing like what I was used to. The separation allowed me, for one week each summer, to disconnect from the concerns of my daily life and refocus on God. Jesus asks the same thing of his disciples in Mark 6:30-31. After days and weeks of teaching and helping people, Jesus and apostles step away from the hustle and bustle of their normal routine to rest and refocus on the Lord. In each instance, me with camp and the disciples with their quiet place, believers were reinvigorated so that they could continue the on path that God had set. In closing, I leave this message. When you need rest and renewal in your walk with Christ, separate from your daily life, so that when you return, you may walk more closely to Him.

-Albert Godlesky