
Compiled by Jan Nelson

My thoughts this morning are centered around some scriptures in Ephesians, and remind me that God is at work in and through me...He gives me what I need to accomplish what He wants me to do, I need to be willing to follow His plans and trust Him for guidance and power to do His will through the Holy Spirit who dwells in me. He doesn't call the equipped, He equips the called. Amazing!

"Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us, to Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen" Ephesians 3:20-21

The key phrase in this scripture is "the power that is at work in us". Where is His power? In us. How does that power work? Through us. What a remarkable thing that our great God should give us His Holy Spirit to dwell in us and to work in and through us.

"For it is God who works in you to will and to act according to His good purpose,"
Ephesians 2:13

The verb translated "works" gives us the English word energy. The devil is at work energizing unbelievers (Ephesians 2:1-3), but the RESURRECTION POWER OF GOD is at work in believers energizing them for ministry (Ephesians 1:19-20) This is how God "works out" His purposes in this world (Ephesians 1:11) Yes, He could send legions of angels, but He deigns to use His own children to accomplish His purpose in this world. The main thing is that we are available to Him 'in season and out of season.'

Have a great day...as you ponder the privilege and responsibility that God has given us...to be His ambassadors here on earth and do His work, with the help of the Holy Spirit, who makes His home in us!! Bless and be blessed today!

As we are bombarded by ad campaigns for new cars, precious gems and super sales on everything imaginable, it is easy to forget that the tradition of gift-giving goes back to the Christ child -- the ultimate gift to a world in need- and the gifts of the wise men to the Christ child.

First, the most precious gift of the Savior is the gift of a God of All Comfort who gives us strength in this life by sharing in our trials. And He walks beside us and savors our times of joy and celebration. He is unchanging no matter the political climate or challenges of the day. A well grounded faith will be tested but won't go out of style.

Second, we believers have been placed at a tipping point in the 21st century and have a responsibility to our country and culture. In addition to remaining true to our faith and deepening our relationship with the Almighty, we are called to act.

"You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven." -- Matthew 5:14-16

Savor the season, bask in the joy of the gift of the baby Jesus and reflect on the words of the Savior during his ministry on earth. May God bless you as you commit to a renewed dedication to the Biblical values we share. May you have a blessed New Year! (Carol Bauer)

Looking back at 2013, it is hard to not get discouraged: The Supreme Court overturned thousands of years of history and religious teaching by accepting a radical redefinition of marriage. The trial of abortionist Kermit Gosnell highlighted the horror of the culture of death that exists in America today. And the controversy involving Duck Dynasty's Phil Robertson shows just how far America has been pulled from our moral foundation.

America is at cultural crossroads. But no headline, no sorrow of life should turn our hearts from the love of God and the greatest gift ever given! (Gary Bauer)

Practical Tips:

Frost-Free Windshield – Nothing's worse than having to chip away at ice on your car windows when it's freezing outside. So eliminate the frost on your windshield with a little preventive care. Wipe your windshields and windows with straight white vinegar after you park for the evening to help keep ice and frost at bay. Not only will your car thank you, but your skin will, too.

Kids Shoe Saver – Kids can be very hard on tennis shoes. Whenever their leather or canvas shoes start working a little ragged, use 1 tablespoon of Soft Scrub cleaner on a clean smooth rag and wipe the scuff marks, chewing gum, play dough, and dirt from the smooth part of the shoes. Don't use on colored shoes because there is a small amount of bleach in Soft Scrub.

Credit Card Care – If you're afraid to carry your credit card with you for fear that you might use it, but you're more uncomfortable leaving it at home in case you have an emergency, there's a solution. Place the credit card into a small, credit-card-sized envelope and seal it. On the outside in large red letters, write "For Emergency Only". Underneath, write 'Remember Your Debt'. This plan should stop you from using plastic when you shop, but you'll know if you're ever in trouble it will still be there to help. (from Everyday Cheapskates Greatest Tips c2005 Mary Hunt)

Lines from Lila:

My thoughts and reminders came today from something I was reading from Heartlight. It was a reminder to always put on my armor each morning when I dress. God gave me his armor but He doesn't dress me in it every day, I have to do that myself. The article talked about when the writer was in the military and they were landing on a beach to take the enemy there....he got quite a ways into the rush and his leader noticed he did not have his helmet, his duty belt which held his ammo, first aid kit, bayonet, etc. and then he noticed he didn't even have his rifle. He had rushed into what he was to be doing without arming himself with the weapons/armor he must have to accomplish what he was there for. So a reminder to me...do I put on God's armor each morning or do I rush into the day without armor and open myself to Satan's, darts?

"Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand." Ephesians 6:10-13

This tells me I have to "take up" the armor...which reminds me it doesn't just attach itself to me, I have to actively take it up...put it on! But it is always available for me to use. And in the next verses of Ephesians 6, it tells me what the armor is.

"Stand therefore, having girded your waist with truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace, above all, taking the shield of faith and the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints..." Ephesians 6:14-18

This armor God provides will help me stand against anything the devil and followers can throw at me. God is stronger than the devil, so if I am clothed with His armor, Satan's darts cannot penetrate and get to me. What encouraging verses....since Satan is running

rampant trying to devour us all....we can rest assured that with God we can and will defeat him...

Thank You Lord!! for providing a way out for us and protection from Satan's darts and may I be reminded every morning to put on the whole armor (not just part of it) before I start into my day...Praise the Lord for His care and provision for our every need, even to His armor against the evil one... In Jesus' name, amen.

Have a safe day, knowing you have God's armor on...which will keep you safe from Satan's evil plans...which means your day will be more peaceful...remember to put it on every morning before you venture into your day.

(from When God Calls Me Blessed by Anita Corrine Donihue)

This morning's reminder is about prayer, (my lifeline and instant communication with my best friend!!) and my relationship and response to Him. I have read several things concerning prayer and conversing with God...so many reminders but will share a few words that really caused me to "pause and ponder". Conversations with God must be a two way thing...speaking to and listening to God...otherwise they are like talking to a person who only talks and never lets anyone else get a word in edgewise. Like when we listen to someone, not really hearing but just waiting for them to finish so we can talk.

"When we are willing to have a two way conversation with God, we are getting to know the heart of God. It is then He gives us the privilege of realizing what He is concerned about. Finally, after keenly tuning our ears to God in prayer, we are able to visualize the wonderful call He has for us to acknowledge. He may show it to us in bits and pieces, or we may see the marvelous plan He has for us all at once. Either way, we must be willing to obey. It is then He is able to use us to represent His voice, His hands, and His feet to reach out to others and spread His love and good news. That's what we as God's children are placed on this earth to do.

Jesus wants to be our best Friend. He wants us to sit with Him and listen. He invites us to walk and talk with Him. He urges us to follow Him wherever and whenever He leads us. What a full, triumphant life we experience when we do so!!"

"Show me thy ways, O Lord, teach me thy paths. Lead me in thy truth, and teach me; for thou art the God of my salvation, on thee do I wait all the day".

Psalm 25:4-5 KJV

*"O Lord, I know the way of man is not in himself;
it is not in man who walks to direct his own steps"
Jeremiah 10:23*

*"Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us; we implore you on Christ's behalf, be reconciled to God ...for He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him."
2 Corinthians 5:20-21*

Have a wonderful day....using the open line to God, at any and all times!! It will make a big difference...(I speak from experience...there is a big difference in my day when I talk often to Him, vs. the days I find myself caught up in "life" and do not! I highly recommend making every day one in constant communication with our Lord!)

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Sharing my thoughts this morning...from some well-known Scriptures that came to mind early today and the things they reminded me of once again. Sometimes I need reminded of things I know and have known for years...but still find it good and even necessary to pause and ponder them again so I don't slip away from what I know to be the truth! God has provided all I need to live the way He intended for me to. Also, I am reminded that Satan will do His best to cause me to ignore or put aside what I know and do my own things...so I need to be constantly on guard against his deceitful ways that he can make seem so convincing are right...But will not get me to the final goal that I am striving for, Heaven. The choice of who I listen to is mine.

*"Let us be self-controlled, putting on faith and love as a breastplate,
and the hope of salvation as a helmet."
1 Thessalonians 5:8*

Someone has written...."Self-control is the ability to control your own behavior, especially your reactions and impulses. You alone are responsible for your choices, decisions and actions. God has given you the Holy Spirit to help you live as you were designed to live, a productive fulfilled life. No matter what others do or say, you have the power to do what is right. God has given you all the tools you need to come out on top."

Galatians 5:22-23 gives us a list of what the Spirit will give to our life, if we will let Him. "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control...against such there is no law." Who doesn't want these things as a part of our lives??? The writer continues in verse 24 "And those who are Christ's have

crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit, Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another."

Those attributes will not only give us a peaceful and happier life for ourselves, but will also affect how we treat others and respond to all the circumstances around us.

"Prepare your minds for action; be self-controlled, set your hope fully on the grace to be given you when Jesus Christ is revealed." I Peter 1:13

May you have a beautiful day today.... as you rejoice at the love God has for you in sending His Son to be sacrificed on Calvary for your sins...and rising again so that you might follow Him and spend eternity with Him!! Who doesn't want that?

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I don't know about you but I have made some choices in the past that I wish I hadn't made, as there were consequences for me or for others because of them.

This morning I have been thinking on God's gift of freedom of choice, and how wise God is! Bear with me as they are rather long and may sound like a sermon...but actually are my reflections and meditations to myself, shared.

Our God could have made me like a robot and controlled everything I do, but He chose to give me the choice of returning His love and serving Him or going off to do my own thing and suffering the consequences. I, as His child am like all children, who often think parents aren't up on the latest and so really don't know what they are talking about...thus they choose to not pay attention to their parents or adult caretakers and in so doing often suffer really difficult consequences.

Sometimes the parents are aware and sometimes they aren't...but my Heavenly Father knows and sees everything...so I cannot hide. But even when I rebel or ignore Him and His love, or the loving people He has surrounded me with, He still remains faithful and wants me to return. (Luke 15) Nothing I can do or say will separate me from His love. I find that so encouraging and motivating to show Him my thankfulness by serving Him in every way I can.

Who wouldn't be thankful for one who took all the consequences for my sin on Himself even to the point of a horrific death as a final sacrifice for sin...and who wouldn't love and be grateful and follow such a person to the very end? Add to that the fact that "the end" is a wonderful home in Heaven with God and all those who love and follow Him!

Many verses I read in the Bible and in some devotionals remind me of how very much He loved me and what a wonderful plan He has for my life. He wants only good for me and if I

will just trust Him He will give me all I need. What a blessing to contemplate as I begin a new year with Him.

I reflect back over my 79 years and see His hand in everything all throughout those years. Perhaps at the time I didn't see it but in retrospect I can. (So may I ask that you take my word for it, He is there with you also, in the big and the small, on an ongoing minute by minute way? Trust Him and follow his word.) As I have said before, the boat won't sink if Jesus is in the boat with me. But I have to ask Him to get in the boat with me and then stay with Him. And if I need to get out of the boat and walk on the water...I can only do that when I have my eyes focused constantly on Him, as Peter discovered when he took his eyes off of Jesus and saw the storm and the waves, became frightened and sank!

I actually have two primary choices from which all others will come; they are whether to serve God or Satan. There is no in between.

*"Choose this day whom you will serve...
but as for me and my household, we will serve the Lord.
Joshua 24:15 NRSV*

"From the mundane to the life altering, we make choices every day. Do you wish you could see into the future and know which direction your life will take if you make this or that choice? Perhaps it's for the best that we don't have that option. But you can put your trust in the One who does. Listen to the Lord, choose Him. When you do, it will be much easier to make the right choices for your life. No matter how good or bad your choices have been in your life, there is really just one choice that matters. That is the choice of where you will spend eternity. God has given you a free will, and He expects you to use it. You must choose Him consciously, intentionally choose Him or you will be making a choice by default, a choice against Him. The Bible says it's a *life and death* matter. Your free will is His gift to you. Use it wisely.

"Choose life and not death..." I Kings 18:32

May your day be a peaceful and stress-free one, as you make the choice for life...God is with you and only He can make your day peaceful and without stress. If you have made choices you regret, remember if you are His child...all of your past history of choices, except the one to become His child...were left in the waters you were immersed in. He remembers none of it...your slate is wiped clean and you start again as a new creature ...He is quick to forgive if you ask...as the new year begins, begin trusting Him and making choices that will be pleasing to him and beneficial to you now and in eternity.

“Dear Father, help me this year to be glad of life, for it gives me the chance to love and to work and to play, to look up at the stars; to be satisfied with my possessions, but not contented with myself until I have made the best of them; to covet nothing that is my neighbor’s except his kindness of heart and gentleness of manners; to think seldom of my enemies, often of my friends and every day of Christ.” - Henry Van Dyke

Be blessed today; stand strong in the faith, knowing the peace of Christ that really does go beyond human understanding.

***“For God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of his Son, that without ceasing I make mention of you always in my prayers”
Romans 1:9***

From Lesa Brassette:

Ann Voskamp sure has a way with words! I think she may be a lot smarter than me because sometimes I have to read what she writes more than once to fully absorb what she’s saying. But when the lightbulb comes on, and I fully grasp what she is saying, it sure seems like my heart goes, “WEEEEEE”! Her book, One Thousand Gifts, is fantastic. Her website: www.aholyexperience.com is encouraging and inspirational. I hope you will find a connection with her words that will draw you closer to our Heavenly Father. Here are a couple of examples of her work:

