

MONDAY, July 6, 2009: *"The most basic question any Christian can ask is this: Who is ruling my life, self or Christ?"*
_Billy Graham

Today's devotional is centered around one of the great ironies of life: ***We are most susceptible to defeat after experiencing our greatest victories in life.*** Or put another way, when things are going good we are most prone to drift away from God.

History has shown that in every arena of life, whether it is sports, business, politics or our personal and family life, when people reach the pinnacle of success the most likely thing to happen next is for them to decline.

Consider how few repeat champions there are. Consider how few long-term great leaders and statesmen there are. The reason is that success is a dangerous thing. The trophies of "war" have a way of distracting people. They stop doing the things that got them to the top and stop paying the price that is required to keep them there.

What about you? Are you on a track for sustained growth and influence? Are you going to finish strong or are you heading for a train wreck that will derail your potential and possibilities. It is God's desire for you to finish strong and leave a legacy of a good name and changed lives.

However, that will not happen by accident. So as you begin this week, take a moment to prayerfully reflect on your life. Ask yourself some hard questions about the direction your life is taking.

Looking inward – how are you doing spiritually? How is your relationship with Jesus Christ? How are things with those you love the most? Outward appearances can be deceiving. How are things really?
SCRIPTURE: Deuteronomy 8:11-14; Psalm 103:1-5

TUESDAY, July 7, 2009: *(RE: The power of words) "I had always thought we used language to describe the world. Now I was seeing that was not the case. To the contrary, it is through language that we create the world, because it's nothing until we describe it. And when we describe it, we create distinctions that govern our actions. To put it another way, we do not describe the world we see, we see the world we describe."* _Joseph Jaworski, Synchronicity: The Inner Path of Leadership

Genesis 15:5 Then He brought him outside and said, "Look now toward heaven, and count the stars if you are able to number them." And He said to him, "So shall your descendants be."

You know what I've discovered, it is easier to talk about conquering fear than to actually conquer it! Fear is common to all men and women. It is something that we must deal with daily and it can be overwhelming sometimes. That may describe you today.

However, you do have a choice. God has a time-honored method that he uses to help us conquer our fear and it is illustrated in the life of Abraham. First, God comes to us in our dark hour (we know this because the stars were shining). So often in those dark seasons of the soul we can feel so alone – but have faith, God is there!

Second, He calls us to "**go outside**" (15:5) In others words, don't give in to paralysis! Don't lie down and quit! Think outside the box, go one more day, try one more time, knock on one more door – bottom line, surrender is not the option.

Third, "**look up**" (15:5b). Don't describe what is, describe what can be. Don't count the problems, count the possibilities. Change your focus and change your speech; look heavenward and keep believing that God is faithful.

SCRIPTURE: 2 Kings 7:3, Hebrews 6:13-20

WEDNESDAY, July 8, 2009: *"The Law of Connection: Leaders touch a heart before they ask for a hand."*
_John Maxwell

Proverbs 22:1 A good name is to be chosen rather than great riches, loving favor rather than silver and gold.

Today I encourage you to govern your life by the priorities given in this proverb. The first is: Choose integrity over material prosperity (good name vs. great riches).

Many people try to buy a good name. But a good name comes from the accumulation of living a life of integrity. Please do not confuse a well-know name with a good name, or a powerful name with a good name. A good name is not gained through popularity, position or power plays; it is earned – one decision at a time.

The second priority is this: Choose relationships over material (loving favor vs. silver and gold).

I've seen many people sacrifice their relationship with God and family for silver and gold and then try to make it up by giving money or gifts. Remember, love is spelled "t-i-m-e."

It is a huge problem, no matter how much silver and gold we may have, if we do not enjoy being with those we are given to love. It is a problem that we cannot ignore, for true happiness and wealth comes from healthy relationships – and money cannot buy that.

So dear children, stay focused on each other! Do not let life cause you to drift apart – stay connected. Stay connected to God as well. Meditate upon His word day and night (Psalm 1:2) for God is real and desires to be in relationship with you as much as anyone on this earth.

SCRIPTURE: Psalm 1, Proverbs 23:22,25

THURSDAY: July 9, 2009:
"Success in life is pretty much determined by one's ability to stop what he ought to stop and to start what he ought to start." _Charles L. Allen, Healing Words

Proverbs 22:4 By humility *and* the fear of the LORD *are* riches and honor and life.

Today as we read this Proverb, notice that humility alone (not thinking of oneself) is not enough; one must also "fear the Lord." "Fearing the Lord" means that we take Him into account. It means that He is the central factor and consideration when we make decisions.

In contrast, people that are not humble fear others. Because they are self-centered and self-focused they worry about what others may think or say. But to the person that lives a life of humility, they are concerned about what God thinks.

The by-product of fearing the Lord is balance. Keeping God as the focus of our lives keeps riches and honor and even life from becoming overly important. They are good things but not the essential things – God is. As long as we are at peace with Him we can enjoy the good things of life but not be ruled by them.

So my prayer for you and me is that God will help us to be humble – it makes a huge difference in the quality of our lives!

SCRIPTURE: Psalm 34:11-22; 111:10, Proverbs 14:26-27