

Good News Daily

July 17-23, 2016

Sunday, July 17

Psalm 63 *O God, you are my God, earnestly I seek you; my soul thirsts for you, my body longs for you, in a dry and thirsty land where there is no water.* (v.1 NIV)

The first thoughts that popped into my mind as I read this verse were questions: "God, do I hunger and thirst for You only when my land is thirsty and dry? Do I also hunger and thirst for You when my soul is satisfied by the bountiful springs of living water that only You can provide? Am I as consistent in seeking to interact with You when I am aware of Your presence as I am when I am not as aware? And, do I pursue that seeking on a daily basis regardless of where I am or who I am with?"

These questions are challenging and the answers are not derived through analysis. They are revealed as I interact with God and with others. Yesterday's answers may not apply to today's experiences. Today's answers unfold as I walk through the interactions of today.

Lord, thank You for being with us when the land is thirsty and dry, and when it is not.

Joshua 6:15-27; Psalm 98; Acts 22:30—23:11; Mark 2:1-12

Birthdays: Alexander Chin, Sebastian Taylor and Lionel Vilsaint

Anniversaries: None

Monday, July 18

Matthew 26:36-46 *Then Jesus came with them to a place called Gethsemane, and said to His disciples, "Sit here while I go over there and pray." And He took with Him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and began to be grieved and distressed.* (vv.36-37 NASB)

The experience of waiting on the Lord for his response and action is sometimes viewed as a personal experience independent of other people. After reflecting on the passage from Matthew 26, I recognized the importance of involving others in the waiting process.

When Jesus prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane, he asked his disciples to accompany him: he allowed them access to his feelings; he expected the disciples to be supportive and alert as he prayed. Even though Jesus' relationship with his Father was personal, his life with respect to others was communal: he participated in relationship with God and with people. We, as Christ-followers, are encouraged to follow that example.

As we wait on You, Lord, please help us interact not only with You but also with those whom You have called to come alongside. Please help us to live, not as individual islands or hermits, but as members of Your living community of faith.

Joshua 7:1-13; Psalms 41, 52; Romans 13:8-14

Birthdays: Andrew Nachtwey

Anniversaries: None

Tuesday, July 19

Romans 14:1-12 *As for the man who is a weak believer, welcome him [into your fellowship], but not to criticize his opinions or pass judgment on his scruples or perplex him with discussions.* (v.1 AMP)

A number of years ago when I was a young adult, I began participating in the activities of a congregation in which I had only a superficial acquaintance with any of the members. While I was helping someone prepare a meal in the church kitchen, the person told me that God had brought me to that church to help with the children's ministry. Since I had no experience with children and no desire to work with children, I felt perplexed as to why she flooded our conversation with those assertions. I did not know how to respond politely to this person whose strength of opinion was stronger than her willingness to converse appropriately with a new acquaintance. In that circumstance, I was a weak believer. Although I eventually forgave the person for her lack of manners, it was many months before I was able to feel comfortable in her presence.

Lord Jesus, please help us be encouragers; may our speech be gracious; may it always strengthen and enrich those with whom we interact.

Joshua 8:1-22; Psalm 45; Matthew 26:47-56

Birthdays: Norm Carroll, Liberty D'Angelo and Akielya Simon

Anniversaries: None

Wednesday, July 20

Psalm 119:49-72 *This is my comfort in my affliction, that Your word has revived me.* (v.50 NASB)

I appreciate the Lord's promise that He will never leave us or forsake us; He has promised to be with us always. I find comfort when I remember this promise during times when I am feel overwhelmed by strong feelings, such as anger, disgust, fear, grief, hopeless despair, or shame. My focus is shifted away from the difficult situation and becomes centered on Him. I am not alone or without resource to help; God is with me.

When I feel overwhelmed and am also aware of God's presence with me, I often recall a prior situation when I was challenged by one or more of these strong feelings. I remember the situation and how I felt. I remember becoming aware of His presence and experiencing His comfort. That reality influences my current situation so that I am no longer encapsulated by my feelings—I have been set free.

Jesus, I thank you that you are God-With-Us. You provide comfort in affliction; your word truly revives. Thank you for transforming our lives.

Joshua 8:30-35; Romans 14:13-23; Matthew 26:57-68

Birthdays: David Bacon, Myriam Cook and Anais Palmer

Anniversaries: None

Thursday, July 21

Matthew 26:69-75 *But he denied it falsely before them all, saying, I do not know what you mean.* (v.70 AMP)

When I was a child, an incident occurred at summer camp in which I was accused falsely of a wrongdoing. Even though several people insisted that I was lying, I knew that I was not. When I was ordered to swear on a Bible that I was telling the truth, I refused; my parent had taught me not to swear on the Bible. I refused to disobey what I had been taught.

When false witnesses testified against Jesus, he spoke truth. When Peter was accused by people who spoke truth, he denied falsely. When I was confronted by false accusers and spoke truth, the accusers did not believe me. In each of these situations consequences occurred that were associated with the person's confession.

Thank You, Lord, that whether we speak truthfully or whether we speak falsely, You are aware. Thank You for forgiving us when we speak falsely. Thank You for standing with us when we speak truthfully and are persecuted.

Joshua 9:3-21; Psalm 50; Romans 15:1-13

Birthdays: David Bailey Jr., Simone Champagnie, Veneita Dempster, Carlos Larrazabal and Shauna Peart

Anniversaries: None

Friday, July 22

Romans 15:14-24 *In union with Christ Jesus, then, I can be proud of my service for God.* (v.17 GNT)

Sometimes I am motivated by my own desire to accomplish something for God. When I yield to that temptation, I end up working to accomplish the goal in my own strength. When the goal is achieved then I want others to be aware of *I have done for God*; the focus is on me and not on Him. I am reminded that God's plan is not that I work independently of Him but, rather, that I work in conjunction—in fellowship and partnership—with Him and in response to His motivation and enablement. When I work in union with Him, I can be proud of my service for God; the focus is on Him and not on me.

Lord Jesus, please help us discern the areas in which you are calling each of us to work; please help us develop the ability to work in partnership with you.

Joshua 9:22—10:15; Psalms 40, 54; Matthew 27:1-10

Birthdays: Nicolas D'Esposito, Luke Scott and Tricia Williams-Cepada

Anniversaries: Mr. & Mrs. Tyson Jones and Terri-Ann King

Saturday, July 23

Romans 15:25-33 *For it has been the good pleasure of Macedonia and Achaia to make some contribution for the poor*

among the saints of Jerusalem. They were pleased to do it; and surely they are in debt to them, for if those Gentiles have come to share in their [the Jerusalem Jews'] spiritual blessings, then they ought also to be of service to them in material blessings. (vv.26-27 AMP)

When I first read these verses, I thought about the responsibility that is associated with being a recipient of a gift and how, after we have received a gift, we are often confronted by opportunities to give to someone else. For example, a cycle of giving is initiated, or continued, that can be compared to the passing of a baton from one member of a relay team to another member of that same team; the giving and receiving continues until all team members have run the race. In that sense, giving and receiving have been intertwined; each person has been blessed to be a blessing.

Please open our eyes, Lord, to see areas in which we might distribute to others from the bounty of material and spiritual blessings we have received. Help us to respond with open hands and hearts to the people and the needs to which You draw our attention. Help us to be effective members of Your team. Freely we have received, and freely we want to give.

Joshua 23:1-16; Psalm 55; Matthew 27:11-23

Birthdays: Isiah Bowers, Sabrina Coburn, Allison Grabin, Richard Konior and Christopher Lacey

Anniversaries: None

by Elizabeth Ann Franks

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