

QUIET TIME GUIDE
FOR Thursday 8/7/08
FROM JACK MILLWOOD

Greeting:

Are you familiar with Vacation Bible School? I guess it all depends on your church background and where you grew up. Where I grew up and in my background Vacation Bible School or VBS as it was called was an annual highlight of every child's life. For one week out of the summer the local church would have an all out blitz to reach children for Christ and to teach them biblical principles. When I was a kid times were a little different. We would have a Bible School parade. We would decorate cars and put kids in the back seat and they would hang out the windows as we drove through the neighborhood. The cars were all decorated with home made signs about VBS. The adult drivers would honk their horns as the drove through the neighborhood and the kids would scream at the top of their lungs "Come to Bible School." We would toss candy and gum to any kid on the street as we went along. Then during the week we would meet at the church and for about four hours have classes for the kids. The church was decorated with all kinds of fun paraphernalia. The kids would do little projects, arts and crafts, that they could take home and show mom and dad what they had learned. The reason Bible School is on my mind today is that we are in the middle of Bible School this week at Crosswater. Every morning they all meet in a big assembly and sing and scream. Today they are dressed up as tacky tourists. You would not believe some of the outfits some of our adults have on. I am beginning to wonder who Bible School is for, the kids or our wacky adults. I make a point to be in the opening assembly each morning to get to know the kids and meet parents as they come in and out of the building. That allows me to be a part of my favorite time in VBS. It is when they do the pledges. Do you remember the pledges? Some of you are old enough to remember when kid's in elementary school started the day each morning saying the pledge of allegiance to the American flag. Quick, can you say the pledge of allegiance to the American flag? Shame on you if you can't! At VBS each day the kids not only say the pledge of allegiance to the American flag but they also say the pledge of allegiance to the Christian flag and then to the Bible. I love the pledge to the Bible. It goes like this. *"I pledge allegiance to the Bible, God's holy word. I will hide it's word in my heart that I may not sin against God."* That is a good pledge. I thought about it for several reasons today. One of course is that I just finished saying it with the children. The second is that we are now starting to read Psalm 119 as we work our way through the Psalms in our quiet times. Psalm 119 is a psalm on the Bible, God's holy word. The pledge is actually taken right out of Psalm 119. For the next several days we will be reading Psalm 119. Before we start reading Psalm 119, I would like to tell you a couple of special little tidbits about the Psalm. For one, it is the longest chapter in the Bible. It is 176 verses long. Obviously we will not be reading it all today. It is actually divided up by the Hebrew alphabet. For example verses 1 thru 8 are called "Aleph," the first letter in the alphabet. It is like our English letter "A." Verses 9 through 16 are entitled "Beth," basically like our letter "B." Verses 17-24 are called "Gimel" which sounds a lot like our "G." Each section of this Psalm is titled that way from Alpha, the first letter to Omega, the last letter. In Hebrew each section actually starts with the corresponding Hebrew letter. The chapter is about God's word. In essence God's word is

the final, all encompassing, word from Alpha to Omega or from A to Z. It is full and complete and has everything we need for living. By the way, this is the middle chapter of the entire Bible as well. There are many more fascinating tidbits about this wonderful Psalm. Perhaps we will learn more as we go along. For now let's begin with Aleph, verses 1-7.

Scripture for today:

Psalm 119: 1 "Joyful are people of integrity, who follow the instructions of the LORD. 2 Joyful are those who obey his laws and search for him with all their hearts. 3 They do not compromise with evil, and they walk only in his paths. 4 You have charged us to keep your commandments carefully. 5 Oh, that my actions would consistently reflect your decrees! 6 Then I will not be ashamed when I compare my life with your commands. 7 As I learn your righteous regulations, I will thank you by living as I should! 8 I will obey your decrees. Please don't give up on me!"

Life Application:

Psalms teaches us that the way to be a person of *integrity* is to "***follow the instructions of the Lord.***" This is such an important truth for us to learn. Today everyone has an opinion on what is right and what is wrong. There are more theories about life than books can contain. Everyone has their own path they suggest we follow. New fads and ideas come along on a daily basis. The Psalmist says that truth is found in God's instructions, not people opinions. I do not know how much time you spend in the Bible but it should be a lot. The quiet times should simply wet your appetite to know the Bible. The messages you hear on a Sunday at church should be like special meals but you need to be daily digesting the Scriptures. It is here that you learn how to live your life. It is God's instruction book for life. This Psalm makes a promise. It says, "***Joyful are those who obey his laws and search for him with all their hearts.***" Do you get that? The way to be happy is to not only know what God says but to do what God says. The Bible promises inner happiness and peace to the person who diligently "***with all their heart***" seeks to follow God's instruction. This is far from trying to see how little we can get by with. The person who will find happiness is a person who "***searches***" for God's direction. There should always be a little bit of dissatisfaction within us, wanting to know more and grow more. It is a spiritual hunger. It should be present in our hearts. The Psalmist uses two words, "***compromise***" and "***careful.***" He talks about a person who will not compromise what God says. He can be a compromising person and easy to get along with but there are certain absolutes in his life and they are the instructions that God gives in his word. This person is very "***careful***" to do what God says. Listen to how seriously he takes this. He says, "***Oh, that my actions would consistently reflect your decrees! 6 Then I will not be ashamed when I compare my life with your commands.***" He wanted his life to mirror the Bible. He wanted to be a walking Bible.

Spiritual exercise:

Here is a spiritual exercise for the day. Compare your life to the Bible. Does it match up? Is there a consistency between what you believe and how you live? We often talk about thanks and giving thanks. He says this is how we can give thanks, "***As I learn your righteous regulations, I will thank you by living as I should.***" By living as you should

you are giving thanks to the Lord. What a concept. Give thanks to the Lord today and do it by doing what he says. That may be the very definition of the word gratitude. How can we say we are grateful to the Lord if we violate or contradict his word with our lives? I love the way this Alpha section ends. He says, "***Please don't give up on me!***" No ones life perfectly matches up with God's word. That is our goal. That is where we strive to be and how we aim to live. But the Psalmist knew that God was a God of mercy and grace and never gives up on us. If as you look to see how you measure up to God's instructions today, you find yourself below the standard do not lose heart. Find his heart. As him to forgive you of your failures and ask him to help you line up with his word.

Thought for the day.

LEARN God's word and DO God's word!