



Theme: Authentic FAith in a World of Artificial Intelligence


"Don't Check Your Brain at the Screen"


We have a great new way for you to get these Meditation Moments each day directly to your phone. Just text "**med moments**" to **970-426-0700** to receive the **daily Meditation Moment** each morning and start your day grounded in faith and peace.

Weekly Memory Verse:

² Don't copy the behavior and customs of this world but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will learn to know God's will for you, which is good and pleasing and perfect. – Romans 12:2

Meditation Moments for Monday, February 9 – Read **Proverbs 1:7, 20-25, Matthew 23:37-39, and John 1:9-13**. We can easily think "faith" means naively believing any idea given to us by a so-called expert, or even a machine in today's world. But the book of Proverbs linked faith with "wisdom." The opening paragraph of Proverbs ends by declaring that the first principle of knowledge is awe for Yahweh, the Hebrew word for God. The unwise person despises wisdom and discipline, and "knowing" isn't expressed merely in being able to find an answer to something using a computer, having a high IQ, or getting a high score on a college entrance exam or school report card.


 Jesus claimed that he embodied Proverbs' pictures of wisdom. He associates himself with divine wisdom in several passages in Matthew, Mark and Luke. This theme is developed further in the John and the letters of Paul. When Jesus declares that "something greater than Solomon is here" in Matthew 12:42 and Luke 11:31, he is claiming to possess wisdom greater than the author of the wisdom book of Ecclesiastes. How did Jesus' claim to embody true wisdom point his followers to the value of clear, critical thinking?


 Doesn't "fear of the LORD" suggest a "don't ask questions" view of faith? Not at all. In Proverbs 1:7 and throughout the book, the fear of the Lord means to respect and believe in the Lord. It takes careful thought to choose to respect

and believe God as the ultimate source of all true wisdom. What evidence has led you to seek to build your life on God's wisdom?

Prayer: *Lord God, I am not afraid of you, AND I seriously wish to honor and respect you as my Creator, my Savior and the Lord of my life. May I find wisdom in your Word and true life in a relationship with you. Amen.*


Tuesday, February 10 - Read **Romans 12:1-5**. The apostle Paul told the Roman Christians their appropriate service to God was to offer themselves as a "living sacrifice." They couldn't do that by copying the perfection that is lifted up, and sometimes worshipped, in "this world." The words "this world" can be translated also as "this age or time." In Galatians 1:4, Paul called it "the present evil age." It is an age that often lies to us about what truth is or is not. The phrase, "transform you into a new person," is about allowing God to help us see things as God sees them. Roman culture's "common sense" didn't fit with God's way of life. To live God's way, they needed to let God transform their thinking. We do too as world often mirrors that of ancient Rome, with a desire to know everything.


 Sooner or later, when we let God transform us, we ourselves become agents of transformation. In our homes, schools, neighborhoods or workplaces, we begin to see things that aren't quite as God wants them. What steps, large or small, have you taken to transform attitudes or practices in your settings? Where might you have the chance now to transform things for the better?

 Paul encourages us to be honest about ourselves, recognizing that we are not perfect, so don't get caught in the trap that we think we are. We have learned in this series that even AI admits it makes mistakes. It's interesting that Paul connects this idea of not being arrogant with the idea that the body needs many parts to survive. In what ways have you found yourself believing you know better than others? How have these beliefs separated you from other people? Can you think of a time that you have missed with others, and God, has to offer because you have thought your knowledge is perfect? Are you willing to admit you were wrong, or you might be wrong, and ask for God's forgiveness?

Prayer: *Dear God, I offer myself to you. That's a little scary—I'm not always sure just where it might lead. But I'm learning to trust you, and so I commit myself to being a "living sacrifice" for you, leaning into your good, pleasing, and perfect will. When I get things wrong, help me to turn back towards you and receive forgiveness. Amen.*


Wednesday, February 11 – Read **Acts 15:12-19** and **17:10-12**. Acts recorded the history of the early church. Today's passages showed the first church leaders navigating a complex cultural and spiritual challenge. But their willingness to face issues openly and honestly led to a resolution that honored the Bible's major principles without bogging the church's mission down in contested details. We find two key principles they followed that can help us navigate our challenges today: identifying top priorities and humble diligence.


 The early church might have split over the issue of circumcision. Jewish and Gentile believers had distinct views about how the church should handle it. How did they tackle the issue? They listened; they thought critically. James named the top priority in Acts 15:19, “we shouldn’t create problems for Gentiles to turn to God.” Clarify the top priority behind your deepest beliefs. How could focusing on the top priority help you work with people you may disagree with on secondary priorities?

 The Berean Jews in Acts 17 were humbly diligent. Paul and Silas challenged deeply held beliefs about their faith and identity. How did they react? Acts 17:11 says they did so with “great eagerness” and daily study “to see whether Paul and Silas’ teaching was true.” The Bereans humbly kept an open mind and diligently did their homework. How do you respond when someone (or something) tests a strongly held belief? How could the Bereans’ example help you face such challenges positively?

Prayer: *Lord Jesus, you are my most deeply held belief. I want to live for and love others as you did, including those whose beliefs are different than mine. Help me to remember that you, and your example, are my top priority today. Amen.*

Thursday, February 12 – Read **Leviticus 24:18-20** and **Matthew 5:38-45**. In the ancient Middle East, revenge often went beyond the initial injury to things like, “you hurt me, I’ll kill your child.” The law of proportional revenge in Leviticus 24 (also in Exodus 21 and Deuteronomy 19) was more merciful than most. It stopped unlimited reprisals and made revenge relative— “an eye for an eye.” But Jesus wasn’t bound by that. He taught his followers to practice a more radical, difficult response: “Love your enemies,” which seemed to challenge the prevailing and literal reading of the Hebrew Bible.


 The Bible is more than just a big book of inspirational verses and some dos and don’ts. It’s a story. And like any story, it requires proper context. The Bible we have today has been translated across multiple languages and was originally written in a culture much different than our own. Without proper context, we can easily read the Bible in ways it was never intended to be used. How can you learn to better relate all the Bible’s “pieces” to the big story it tells about God and God’s ways?


 We think of ourselves as more tolerant than in the ancient world. But we still sell T-shirts and bumper stickers with sayings like “I don’t get mad—I get even.” How does replacing a wish for revenge with an ideal of mutual love and service change human relationships for the better? In what ways did Jesus’ teaching speak to the spirit in which you deal with others?

Prayer: *Lord Jesus, please keep leading me into the quality of love Jesus taught. Let me measure even Bible texts against the three great commandments Jesus said are essential: Loving You, Loving Others as myself, and sharing the Good News. Amen.*

Friday, February 13 – Read **Acts 22:3**, **Deuteronomy 21:22-23**, and **Galatians 3:10-14**. In Acts 22, Paul said he had learned from Gamaliel, the greatest rabbi of his day. Deuteronomy 21 likely was a passage that at first led him to reject Jesus as the Messiah.

But in Galatians 3 he used his education in a more critically thoughtful way. Eventually, Paul makes a theologically nuanced and complex argument that parts of the Law no longer applied to Jesus' Gentile followers. He certainly did not hold a kind of "God said it, I believe it, that settles it" approach to interpreting scripture.


 Scholar E. P. Sanders, in his book *Paul: A Very Short Introduction*, helped us see how skillfully Paul applied his rabbinic learning in Galatians: "[Paul] cited the only passages which combine 'right-' and 'faith', and the only passage which combines 'curse' and 'law.' The modern reader requires a concordance [or computer!] to learn this, and an ancient would have needed a mastery of the text equal to Paul's." How did God use Paul's learning to guide all Christians' deeper understanding of the good news?

 Paul answered teachers who said, "Genesis 17:10 means God won't accept any man who's not circumcised." His answer ranged across all the Hebrew Scriptures, with varied voices and themes sustaining his God-given big idea— "the blessing of Abraham would come to the Gentiles through Christ Jesus." Like Jesus, Paul said one solitary bit of Scripture can't block God's main message of love and acceptance. How can his example inform a whole range of church conflicts?

Prayer: *O God, Master and Guide, I need your help today and every day as I dig more deeply into the Bible. Equip me more each day to love you and my neighbors with my heart, soul, mind, and strength. Amen.*

Saturday, February 14 – Read **John 5:35-40, Matthew 22:35-38, and 1 Corinthians 8:1-3.**

Jesus challenged the Pharisees in Jerusalem, some of the world's top experts on the Hebrew Scriptures. Many of them could recite huge sections of the Bible from memory. Yet Jesus said they missed the focal point of the Bible's story—they wouldn't recognize him as God among them. Missing that focal point, Jesus said, just a vast technical knowledge of the Bible could not bring them life. Jesus came as the Word made flesh to reveal the heart, character, and will of God. It is Jesus who serves as the final Word by which other words of scripture are to be judged.

 Pastor Frederick Buechner wrote in his book, *Whistling in the Dark: A Doubters Dictionary*, "Jesus said the one supreme law is that we are to love God with all our hearts, minds, souls, and our neighbor as ourselves. 'On these two commandments depend all the law and the prophets' is the way he put it (Matthew 22:40), meaning that all lesser laws are to be judged on the basis of that supreme one. In any given situation, the lesser law is to be obeyed if it is consistent with the Law of Love and superseded if it isn't... A legalistic religion like the Pharisees' is in some ways very appealing. All you have to do in any kind of ethical dilemma is look it up in the book and act accordingly. Jesus... says all you have to do is love God and your neighbors. That may seem still more appealing until, in dilemma after dilemma, you try to figure out just how to go about doing it." How does Jesus' teaching make clear the importance of a faith willing to think critically, rather than one that just seeks to blindly follow a book of rules?

Prayer: *Lord Jesus, lead my mind and heart beyond rigid ideas and frameworks and simple answers that come from a machine. Meet me as I come to the Bible, speak your life-giving word into my heart and guide me to live out your love. Amen.*