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**THOUGHTS FROM JEREMY**

**The temptation of Jesus is a pivotal point in the life of Christ. It is chronologically placed after His baptism, and at the beginning of His earthly ministry. The circumstance of the temptation is not caused by God. However, God and Satan both want to use the circumstance to fulfill their purpose.**

**If God prevails in this event, it sets the foundation for Jesus’ ministry and mission to establish the Kingdom and save the world! If Satan succeeds in tempting him, he will destroy God’s plan for redeeming mankind. Whoever, Jesus allowed to guide and influence His approach to this circumstance determined the outcome. As we know, Jesus allowed the will of the Father to be His guide and did not give in to Satan.**

**When it comes to circumstances in our life, God and Satan are both hoping to use those circumstances to a desired outcome. God desires to use the circumstances in our lives to develop spiritual growth and Christian character. James emphasizes this as he encourages us in James 1:2-4, *“Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. And let endurance have its perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.”*  God wants to use our circumstances to bring us closer to Him!**

**In the same way, Satan wants to use our circumstances to bring us down. He wants us to look at the negatives and focus on them. When we do this, we can become full of anger, bitterness and fall into temptation. James reiterates the choice telling us we must follow God rather than Satan. He wants us to remember that Satan has no power over us. The power is in our choice. James 4:7-8a describes how this looks, *“Submit therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. Draw near to God and He will draw near to you.”***

**As we look at our current situation, there is a lot of potential for Satan to bring us down. Even more, there is potential for God to strengthen us in our faith. The choice is ours. Who will we allow to succeed in our circumstances?**

**Blessings,**

**Jeremy**

**Elder’s Corner**

Wow… Just, Wow!

**I believe a good name for an article with all that is going on in our world is “Wow, just, Wow.” Where does anyone begin to express their thoughts with all that is occurring? Somehow, we have created a National thought process that has several points of disagreement from kneeling football players to wearing a mask, to sending children back to school. We are required to be sociologists, epidemiologists, tutors, political strategists, and bloggers at the same time. Also, somehow this person named Karen has squeezed herself into everyday dialog. At times I must admit ignorance and ask questions like “who is Karen?”, “please tell me what this acronym stands for?”**

**A biblical concept that has been at the forefront of my mind a lot lately is one that is synthesized from a series of scriptures that suggest that, while we are in the world, we are not of the world. Romans 12:2 for an example*, “Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.”* Also, Jesus expresses this sentiment in John 15:19, *“If you belonged to the world, it would love you as its own. As it is, you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world. That is why the world hates you.”* 2 Corinthians 6:17 also states, *“Therefore, come out from them and be separate, says the Lord. Touch no unclean thing, and I will receive you."***

**Add to this, the concept of the church as being the bride of Christ, which means that for all the things described in the paragraph above, we are these things together.**

**This next thought gets a little harder to process, that the things that are going on in this world, are not of our world, because our world is the body of Christ. The body of Christ is inclusive, not segregating itself by any human, physical, social status, or ethnic differences. The body of Christ is unified, meaning that at all costs the individuals that comprise the body of Christ work to keep themselves connected. The body of Christ is submissive to Christ. Wives are submissive to their husbands. Children are submissive to parents. The physical church is submissive to its leaders. There is also respect for our city, state, and national leaders.**

**We in the body of Christ live at a higher elevation. Abandoning our higher ground to mud wrestle with the world is introducing a special brand of toxicity into this world for people of faith, because what the world sees is people who are using their faith as a stamp of approval for everything they do and every opinion they express. As such it has become easier than ever for non-believers to minimize or dismiss our influence.**

**I understand why someone who is a Christian would say “I am just like everyone else.” It makes you more accessible and it eases the tension between you and the world around you. But I have never heard of anyone becoming a Christian because the person who influenced them is just like everyone else. You are here to give people, even lost people, who loot stores some sense of hope that they can be right with God. You are their key, the key to the spiritual future of this lost world. You, the person you see in the mirror. Take a deep breathe, reread my article over and over, and press forward.**

***“Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already arrived at my goal, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me.”* Philippians 3:2**

**I am Vince Formica and I approve this message!**

***From a Woman’s Point of Vie******w***

**Recently I had the opportunity to sit down with Ronnie Cottrell to visit about the topic of leadership. Ronnie Cottrell is the varsity football coach at Mobile Christian School and has seen a lot of success throughout his life and career; he has also walked through many challenges in his lifetime.**

**One of the questions I asked him was about being positive in the midst of a negative situation – he responded with words that his father would tell him often *“When things seem to be at their worst, that’s when you have to be at your best!”* What a great reminder for all of us.**

**I try to teach my children, my students, and the runners I coach to have a mindset that sees challenges as something positive, an opportunity for growth rather than a setback. However, often through challenging situations we can let ourselves use those circumstances as a justification for not living up to our best.**

**There is no doubt that at this moment in time we are walking through challenging circumstances that can bring us to frustration and disappointment. The question is how will we respond? What will our influence be? Are we using the circumstances in our life as a justification for our un-Christ like behavior, or are we using these circumstances as an opportunity to grow in faith and show love to those who are hurting around us? The opportunity to be a burden or a blessing is available, you choose each day which you will be.**

**When Coach Cottrell shared those impactful words with me I was immediately reminded of the encouragement that James shares: “*Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything. If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you.”***

**I pray that you are encouraged to be at your best no matter what the day holds, because we know who holds each day! May the Lord bless you and keep you!**

 **Love,
Brittani**

TEEN NEWS

**Hello church fam!**

**I read an article recently that asked the question, “What are the top five most worrisome verses in the Bible?” and I got to thinking about what my top five worrisome verses are. I thought I would share them with you:**

* ***Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, and mind.* (Matt. 22:37)**
* ***Love your neighbor as yourself.* (Matt. 22:39)**
* ***Pursue holiness.* (Hebrews 12:14)**
* ***Abhor what is evil.* (Romans 12:9)**
* ***Preach the Gospel to everyone.* (Mark 16:15)**

**If you will notice, my top five worrisome passages are not that difficult to understand. They don’t have anything to do with the “mark of the beast,” the identity of “the man of lawlessness,” how the Holy Spirit indwells the Christian, the present and future state of the dead, or whether those “Styrofoam” wafers included in those individual communion packets are really unleavened bread (sorry for throwing in the last one).**

**No, my top worrisome passages are easy to understand. That is what makes them so worrisome to me. I can’t say, “But Lord, I didn’t understand what that passage meant. Had I properly understood it. I would have been obedient…” My list of worrisome passages is worrisome to me, not because of their difficulty to understand, but because of their clarity. The difficulty is not in understanding them, but in obeying them.**

**Maybe it would serve us well if we would spend less time on some questions and more time on others. What do you think?**

Your Partner in Ministry,

Paul Wisdom