



FAMILIES IN TRUTH

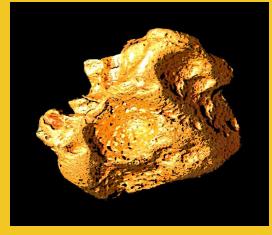
What if...

DAILY DEVOTIONS

We Look for the Good?

Philippians 4:8-9

Paul knows the key to finding peace, and he gladly shares it with his friends in Philippi. It is directly related to what you allow your mind to think about. Will you take his wise advice? Only you can choose what you think about.



Day #1: Gold Standard

This month (November 2013), the price of gold is about \$1250 per ounce. That comes to a whopping \$20,000 per pound! By comparison, garden soil costs about 40 cents per pound. Can you guess the reason for the price difference?

Experts say that if we melted down all the gold that has ever been found, it would only fill up 3 1/2 Olympic-sized swimming pools! Compare that to the all of the dirt there is on earth! It's safe to say that there is immeasurably more dirt than gold. Some people spend their entire lives digging through dirt to find gold.

This week, we read Paul's wise words which tell us to seek out these things:

Finally, my brothers and sisters, always think about what is true. Think about what is noble, right and pure. Think about what is lovely and worthy of respect. If anything is excellent or worthy of praise, think about those kinds of things. - Philippians 4:8

Sometimes it feels like there is immeasurably more worrisome, fearful, hurtful, unfair, crummy stuff in our lives than the good things that Paul lists out. That's because we live in a world where sin is present. But it won't always be that way. (More on that later this week!)

But for now, the good news is that believers are not left on our own to try to look for the good. Paul (who lived this out better than just about anyone) said:

I can do everything by the power of Christ. He gives me strength. - Philippians 4:13

No one could ever accuse Paul of having an easy life! Among other things, Paul was stoned, beaten, arrested, thrown in prison, shipwrecked, and bitten by a poisonous snake! But to look for the good, Paul made a habit of listening to the Spirit of Jesus every day (Acts 13:4, 16:6, 19:21).



Looking for the good sometimes feels like digging for gold in a heap of dirt. But remember that you can do it with Jesus' help! He is the embodiment of all these characteristics.

Day #2: Feed Peace

Imagine two identical plants. You put one in a closet with no windows and forget about it. You don't give it any plant food or water. But you put the other plant outside in the sun, give it plenty of plant food and water. You even talk to it because plants "breathe in" the carbon dioxide that we breathe out.

What do you think will happen to those two plants? The one you don't feed will shrivel up and die, and the one that is well-fed will grow and thrive! There's no limit to how big the second plant can grow.

Now imagine PEACE and ANXIETY as two plants in your mind. You feed the peace plant by thinking about things that are true, noble, right, pure, lovely, worthy of respect, excellent, and praiseworthy (Philippians 4:8). You nurture peace by reading your Bible, knowing God's good promises, praying, encouraging and blessing others. Then peace will fill your mind.

But you feed the anxiety/fear/worry plant by watching negative, sinful, scary TV shows, movies, and video games, and always finding the bad in every person or situation. Complaining and gossip are also food for this plant. The result will be uncontrollable growth of fear and worry in your mind.

So starve the bad thoughts! Don't feed them or water them. Resist them and they will shrivel up. When a fearful thought pops into your mind, take it to Jesus immediately. "Lord, I am thinking about _____. What do You say about it? What do You want me to think?"

I keep every thought under control in order to make it obey Christ. - 2 Corinthians 10:5b


With your parent's permission, go outside and find a healthy plant with broad leaves. Use a permanent marker to write these words on some of the leaves: true, noble, right, pure, lovely, worthy of respect, excellent, praiseworthy (Philippians 4:8)

Day #3: Lie Detector

The first thing Paul tells us to think about is truth. There's a good reason for that: We are surrounded by lies.

Let's look at one of the first lies ever recorded. In the garden of Eden, God warned Adam not to eat the fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. God said, "If you eat its fruit, you are sure to die." (Genesis 2:17) That was completely true!

But the devil, disguised as a serpent, told Eve, "You won't die! God knows that your eyes will be opened as

Day #3 continued:

soon as you eat it, and you will be like God, knowing both good and evil." (Genesis 3:5)

With these words, the devil lied about God (implying that God is a liar and that He did not have Adam and Eve's best interest at heart) and Satan lied about Eve (implying that she was not yet like God, even though the Bible says God created her in His image). Satan is clever and crafty in the ways that he lies to us and about us.

But God gives every believer a special tool in order to search out the truth! When a gold-digger looks for gold, he uses a metal detector. Jesus sent the Holy Spirit to fill everyone who believes in Him. The Holy Spirit is like our truth detector! Jesus said:

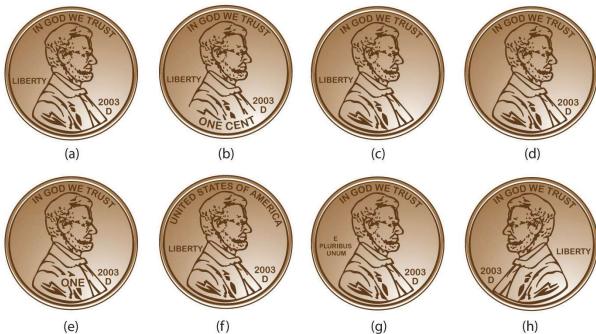
But when the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all truth. - John 16:13a

The Holy Spirit gives you a gentle nudge. He tells your heart what's true and what's not.

* When you hear something that troubles you, don't ignore that feeling. That lack of peace is most likely the Holy Spirit pointing out a lie. Compare what you heard to the Bible. Pray about it. Ask your parent or Bible teacher about it. Find the truth because when you seek truth, you'll find peace!

Day #4: The Real Deal

How many times have you seen a penny? Hundreds? Maybe thousands? Without looking at a real penny, can you pick which of these is an accurate drawing?



Okay, now check your answer by looking at a real penny. Did you guess correctly? The point is that we have to really study something (on purpose) in order to know if it's the real deal.

That's the way it is with the truth! We have to take time to study God's word so we will know the real truth, and therefore recognize a lie when we hear one.

For example, what if someone said, "Nothing good can come out of this situation!" If you really know God's word, you would know that's a lie, because:

...God causes everything to work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to His

Day #4 continued:

purpose for them. - Romans 8:28NLT

Or what if you overheard someone say, "That person is just worthless." If you really know God's word, you would know that's a lie, because:

God created human beings in His own image. In the image of God he created them; male and female He created them. - Genesis 1:27

And what if someone on the playground called you a nasty name? If you really know God's word, you would know that's a lie, because:

(Lord) You are the one who put me together inside my mother's body, and I praise you because of the wonderful way you created me... - Psalm 139:13-14 CEV

* God's word is chockfull of truth! Study it so your mind will be lie-proof! You study it and the Holy Spirit reminds you what you have learned (John 14:26). It's a perfect plan!

Day #5: Streets of Gold

What is the street in front of your house made of? Most of the roads in America are made of pavement these days. Have you ever been on an old dirt road? In days gone by, all the roads were dirt, and in some places, they are still that way.

Earlier in the week we said that looking for the things that are true, noble, lovely, excellent, etc, is a bit like looking for gold. You have to dig through a lot of dirt to find it. But Paul says it is worth the work to find something so valuable.

Toward the end of the Bible, God gave one of the disciples a clear vision of what heaven is like. Read how John describes the streets there:

I saw a new heaven and a new earth... The main street of the city was made out of pure gold, as clear as glass.
- Revelation 21:1a, 21b

Isn't it amazing that even the streets in heaven are made of gold? It's a great symbol of how different heaven is from the world we live in now.

In heaven there is no sin, no sadness, no trouble, and no tears! (Revelation 21:4-8) In heaven, we won't have to look through any of the "dirt" we struggle with on earth! We will be surrounded by what's true, noble, right, pure, lovely, worthy of respect, excellent and praiseworthy.

In fact, when we keep our mind off of the bad stuff and focus on the good stuff now, we are living with a heavenly mindset. We are living as citizens of heaven (Philippians 3:20).

* When do you notice a lack of peace in your life? What can you do to be sure you are looking for the good during those times? Consider keeping a notebook full of the good things God has shown you.