

FIRST things FIRST Daily Devotionals

Devotional Guide for January 20-26, 2025

These devotions are prepared for you each week by Pastor Kevin to use for your own personal devotions with the Lord, and are designed to prepare you for the message next weekend.

Monday, January 20TH "Integrity and uprightness"

Scripture: Psalm 25:21 NIV

King David, in this psalm, asks for help, guidance, and mercy, as he reflects on God's ways. He then pleads for gracious deliverance, as he needs God to address his troubled heart, his vicious enemies, and his many sins. David would encourage us to trust God to forgive our sins and grant us grace. As we live with "integrity and uprightness," we can also find our hope is in the Lord our God.

Question: Is there a sin in your past that you keep remembering and regret, that you need to confess to the Lord today?

Tuesday, January 21ST "Whoever walks in integrity"

Scripture: Proverbs 10:9 NIV

The believer who acts honestly and honorably, even when no one is watching, receives divine protection. No such safety net exists for the one who perverts their ways... let alone mishandles the Word of God. Anger is not a good conflict-resolution technique. Hatred does not help the matter—in fact, it only makes them worse and can stir up more conflict. On the other hand, love covers over a multitude of sins. Our love that we are to have for others enables us to extend to them the same grace that God extends to us. Our integrity thus "walks securely" in our journey of faith. Jesus, by His love, covers over all sin. We should show the same kind of love to others.

Question: Which comes more easily for you: walking the straight path of integrity or the crooked path of sin and selfishness?

Wednesday, January 22ND "Run in such a way to get the prize"

Scripture: I Corinthians 9:24-27 NIV

The apostle Paul uses the example of his own behavior to argue his point: he has rights on which he could insist, but he relinquishes such rights for the sake of the gospel. This shows the proper relationship between freedom and love. He uses athletic metaphors to picture the Christian life as rigorous, since it also requires believers to live out self-discipline and perseverance. Runners who compete in games go into strict training: they exercise self-control when they train for a competition.

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Athletes who competed in the games in Olympia had to swear an oath, confirming that they had abstained from wine, meat, and sexual relationships in the previous ten months. Runners focus on winning the prize, which in the games of Olympia was a crown, a wreath made of foliage. The goal of winning then determines an athlete's lifestyle. Paul applies the athletic analogies of a runner and a boxer to himself. As a gospel preacher, he focuses on reaching the goal and winning the prize that thus is characterized by self-control. He does not allow the desires and urges of his body to control his behavior. He maintains personal integrity in his faith.

Question: How do you "train" yourself for the race of faith?

Thursday, January 23RD "Fixing our eyes on Jesus"

Scripture: Hebrews 12:1-3 NIV

These first three verses in Hebrews ch.12 serve as a hinge between the discussion of faith in Hebrews 11:1-40 and now endurance (12:1-13). The "great cloud of witnesses" (v.1) are the people of faith reviewed in chapter 11. In a play on the Greek word for "witness"—meaning "commended" by God in Hebrews ch.11—this now sees these people as testifying to or commending to us the life of faith. Their examples urge us to "run with perseverance the race marked out for us" (v.1). Faith and endurance, or "perseverance," are closely related traits that God's people must maintain, even in temptation and adversity. The athletic imagery lends itself to the call to set aside anything that "entangles" or "hinders" us from enduring.

Question: How do you keep your focus on Jesus, in the midst of a world that clamors for your attention on so many fronts?

Friday, January 24TH "I have fought the good fight"

Scripture: II Timothy 4:1-8 NIV

Paul reminds Timothy that the gospel has unimpeachable validity. On that basis, he admonishes Timothy and calls to mind his often-embattled life of service, assuring Timothy that the bruising life of honest ministry is well worth it in the end. Paul speaks of a future that in some respects has already arrived, with us today. People will resist what they need most: sound doctrine. Self-gratification thus replaces finding gratification in God. Turning ones ears away from the truth is fatal, when salvation comes through hearing and obeying God's Word from Jesus Christ. Paul has battled for the cause of Christ, not allowing Christian truth to be watered down or dismissed. This has also been the striving focus of my 40+ years of ministry.

Question: How goes the spiritual battle within your own soul?

Sunday, January 26, 2025

Worship time of 10:00 am (Livestream @10:00 am)

Hebrews 12:1-3 and II Timothy 4:1-8 NIV

Pastor Kevin's message: **"Finish with Integrity"**

