

Inner Strength, Self-Control

Monday, 7/26/10 – Read Proverbs 25:28

My Observations _____

A Question to Answer: One of the outcomes that the Spirit of God works within us is self-control or inner strength. This is the capacity, the strength, to respond to people and to life from the deep, spiritually-aware center of our souls ... as opposed to simply reacting impulsively. ... Today's proverb says that the lack of this inner strength is like being unprotected, vulnerable to all the influences that constantly barrage us. Do you ever feel vulnerable to outside influences? What's that like for you?

Tuesday, 7/27/10 – Read Psalm 81:1-3 and Psalm 73:25-26

My Observations: _____

A Question to Answer: The Hebrew scriptures understood that real strength, inner strength, spiritual strength does not lie in our human fortitude. God is our strength. Have you ever felt that -- that God brought a strength to your heart, a strength that you could depend on? If you have, describe what it was like to feel God's strength within you. If you're not sure, talk with God about that in your prayer today. Ask God to make you aware of those moments when God is the strength within you.

Wednesday, 7/28/10 – Read Ephesians 3:14-19

My Observations: _____

A Question to Answer: We're going to spend two days, today and tomorrow, with this passage from Ephesians. Today focus on verse 16. The prayer is that the people would be "strengthened in their inner being" by the Spirit of God. This is specifically a prayer for the fruit of the Spirit. Will you make this your prayer today? Will you pray that God's Spirit will strengthen your inner self?

Thursday, 7/29/10 – Read Ephesians 3:14-19

My Observations: _____

A Question to Answer: This prayer focuses on love in verses 17-19 -- being rooted in love, knowing the unknowable love of God. Inner strength (self-control) as a fruit of the Spirit is finally about love. It is allowing love to flow up from the roots until we are filled with God's fullness of love. In other words, it's God's love that brings strength. Is that your experience? Do those who love show a divine strength in their lives? Can you think of an example -- someone whose loving was an expression of an inner strength?

Friday, 7/30/10 – Read Ephesians 1:17-21

My Observations: _____

A Question to Answer: Here is an awesome thought: the power and strength of God that is at work in you is the same divine power that raised Christ from the dead. (Check verses 19-20.) ... Take a few moments today to ponder this ... and think of it as literally real ... the power of resurrection is already at work in your life. How would it change the way you think about yourself and about your life if you were sure that the power of resurrection was moving through you?

Saturday, 7/31/10 – Read Ephesians 4:14-15

My Observations: _____

A Question to Answer: The fruit of the Spirit is self-control or inner strength. It may help us understand this fruit by thinking about its opposite. Little children do not yet have the inner strength to choose their responses; they develop self-control slowly over a number of years. In the words of today’s reading, little children are tossed to and fro; they are blown about by the winds of emotion and desire. That’s charming in little children -- but not so attractive in adults. Inner strength is the capacity to choose our responses, rather than simply being driven and controlled by emotions, urges, and desires -- the way little children are. ... Remember a time when you were able to choose your response, rather than simply being driven by your desires or emotions. Was the Holy Spirit present in your choosing?

Sunday, 8/1/10 – Read Ephesians 6:10-17

My Observations: _____

A Question to Answer: The fruits of the Spirit are not human achievements; they are the work of the Spirit of God in the human heart. AND we have a part to play; we actively cooperate with the Spirit. Today’s reading focuses on our participation -- by actively incorporating into our lives spiritual resources: truth, real goodness (“righteousness”), the good news of peace, trust (“faith”), knowing that we are loved by God (salvation), the word of God. ... Which of these resources do you need to pay more attention to this week? What is one thing you will do to incorporate this resource into your life?

What do I hear God saying to me today?

What action do I intend to take this week?

Each day this week, take a few minutes. Begin with PRAYER. Then READ through the Bible passage indicated on the inside of this guide. WRITE down your own thoughts, reactions, observations. ANSWER THE QUESTION to begin connecting the Bible with your life. Use additional paper or your own notebook if you need more space to write.