

friends as some of my most cherished friendships. My willingness to share God's Word provided blessings beyond measure.

Psalms 16, 17; Romans 10:1-13; Matthew 24:15-31

Saturday, July 12

Pray for your pastors' purity.

Pure motives.

Pure thought-life and faithfulness to their spouses.

Matthew 24:32-51 *"Therefore keep watch, because you do not know on what day your Lord will come. But understand this: If the owner of the house had known at what time of night the thief was coming, he would have kept watch and would not have let his house be broken into. So you also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him." (vv.42-44)*

When I was 9 years old, my dad died very unexpectedly. None of us was prepared for the shock, loss, and change that would follow. However, as I look back over those events so many years later, I can see how my family had indeed *kept watch* coming up to that tragic event. We were a family of believers in Jesus. We were surrounded by other believers who walked with us not only then, but for years to follow. In fact, it is amazing to me to remember how so many different people stood in the gap left by my father's absence. Jesus truly tended to us as we felt like lost sheep, and kept us in the fold. Radical change came when we least expected it, but by faith and His grace, Jesus carried us and held us close. I can't imagine what we would have done if that hour had come and we hadn't known our risen Lord!

Deuteronomy 34:1-12; Psalms 20, 21; Romans 10:14-21

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P. O. Box 380, Winter Park, FL 32790

Good News Daily

July 7–12, 2008

Monday, July 7

Pray for your pastors' families.

God's peace and protection.

A growing love relationship with their spouses.

A commitment to quality and quantity time together.

Romans 8:26-30 *In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express. (v.26)*

Over the last 2 years, God has been pushing me out of my comfort zone. In areas where I knew I had nothing to give, God has assured me that I do, *with His help*.

My prayer life had always been a private matter. Outside of praying with my children, the only time I prayed aloud or with others was corporately in church. However, during a time of change at my church, I was asked to lead others who were interested in praying for the changes we were going through. I can't describe how uncomfortable this made me feel! I was to e-mail prayer requests to others committed to prayer, and lead a once-monthly prayer gathering.

In my quiet time with God, He began to give me a sense of peace about this situation. Once I had agreed to trust Him to show me how, He did! With each e-mail, He would give me words and thoughts that I know were not my own, but His. My season of fear became one of blessing, and our prayers were answered most assuredly.

Numbers 32:1-6, 16-27; Psalms 1, 2, 3; Matthew 23:1-12

Tuesday, July 8

Pray for wisdom for your pastors.

The mind of Christ.

Godly decision-making.

Understanding of biblical truth.

Psalm 5 *In the morning, O LORD, you hear my voice; in the morning I lay my requests before you and wait in expectation. (v.3)*

It has been my practice over the last few years to carve out time in the morning to spend with the Lord. However, mornings at my house can be rather hectic—kids off to school, husband off to work, early appointments.

Some days my quiet time was getting pushed later and later, and some days missed altogether.

Now each day I still have my quiet time but, in addition, I don't get out of bed until I have been in prayer with Jesus. Once my husband has left to start the coffee, I get to spend a few wonderful, quiet moments with my Abba, Father. I thank Him for a new day, praise Him for the many blessings in my life, ask blessing, direction and protection over my family, and wait for a few moments in expectation for anything He wants to share with me. For me, it has become a beautiful way to begin the day that the Lord has made. I praise Him for inviting me to begin my day with Him!

Numbers 35:1-3, 9-15, 30-34; Psalm 6; Romans 8:31-39; Matthew 23:13-26

Wednesday, July 9

Pray for your pastors' ministry focus.

Clear vision.

Commitment to biblical priorities.

Remain true to their God-given gifts and strengths.

Deuteronomy 1:1-18 *The LORD your God has increased your numbers so that today you are as many as the stars in the sky.* (v.10)

As Moses is addressing the Israelites before entering the Promised Land, we find him confirming God's fulfillment of a promise He made to Abraham hundreds of years before. In Genesis 15:5, God said, "Look up at the heavens and count the stars—if indeed you can count them. So shall your offspring be." This is just one example of the many promises the Bible records that God has made and kept.

A few years ago, I joined a Bible study in which we not only study God's Word, but we also share our prayer requests, seek Godly counsel from each other, and report on how God has answered our prayers. Since joining, I keep a prayer journal, and as I look back through it, I am so blessed to be reminded of how faithful God has been. And that's just from the last few years! Through my lifetime of challenges and blessings, He has never failed me. If you haven't done so recently, I encourage you to remember all the ways He's walked with you and kept His promises.

Psalm 119:1-24; Romans 9:1-18; Matthew 23:27-39

Thursday, July 10

Pray for your pastors' health.

Protection of their body and mind.

An extra portion of stamina and strength.

Commitment to stress-releasing activity.

Deuteronomy 3:18-28 *At that time I commanded Joshua: "You have seen with your own eyes all that the LORD your God has done to these two kings.*

The LORD will do the same to all the kingdoms over there where you are going. Do not be afraid of them; the LORD your God himself will fight for you." (vv.21-22)

Fear is an emotion that we are all familiar with. A recent Bible Study helped me redefine it this way: *False Evidence Appearing Real.*

Lately, I've begun to wonder how many opportunities to walk with Jesus in my life and ministry I have missed because I was afraid I couldn't do what He was asking me to? How many times did I believe the lies of the enemy? I think the number is rather large. That's why I love this conversation between Moses and Joshua. If Joshua can trust that God Himself will literally fight for him and the Israelite nation, can't I trust Him to direct my life? I need to keep Proverbs 3:5-8 always before me. It begins this way: "Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding..." God's perfect plan for me does not include fear, but rather complete trust in Him.

Psalm 18:1-20; Romans 9:19-33; Matthew 24:1-14

Friday, July 11

Pray for your pastor's spiritual growth.

A heart for God and the lost.

Fresh biblical insights.

Personal devotions not related to sermon preparations.

Deuteronomy 31:7-13, 24—32:4 *Then Moses commanded them: "At the end of every seven years, in the year for canceling debts, during the Feast of Tabernacles, when all Israel comes to appear before the LORD your God at the place he will choose, you shall read this law before them in their hearing. Assemble the people—men, women and children, and the aliens living in your towns—so they can listen and learn to fear the LORD your God and follow carefully all the words of this law. Their children, who do not know this law, must hear it and learn to fear the LORD your God as long as you live in the land you are crossing the Jordan to possess."* (vv.10-13)

When we were new to our church, our children were very young. Though I was *very* nervous, I accepted God's asking me to help in a variety of children's ministries. Oral tradition is vital to children, especially when they are too young to read. Reading Bible stories and sharing my experiences was a primary method I used for teaching them, and over time I began to build relationships with them and their parents. As I began to spend more time in these ministries, and as the children got older, I spent more time in my Bible to be sure I was prepared for their questions. I also had many cherished ladies, with more wisdom and understanding, begin to walk with me, encourage me, and strengthen my faith. Today, almost eleven years later, these same children are teenagers, and it is beautiful to see how God is working in their lives. I also count those families and my "encouraging"