

Bible study for this week 2/20/12~2/26/12

***February 20 (Monday), 2012** {[Numbers 9:19~23](#)} Key: I waited patiently for the Lord; and He inclined to me, and heard my cry. ([Psalm 40:1](#)) "Parked For Now" Bible In One Year: [Leviticus 26~27](#); [Mark 2](#)

Parking my car has been a lifelong problem for me. It really wasn't a high priority with my driving instructor, so I never learned to back up into a parking space until many years later. He also skipped the parallel parking lesson, and I still avoid that unless there's enough space for two or three cars.

I've also struggled to understand a statement I heard when I was a young Christian: "God can't steer a parked car." I took that as a challenge to shift my life into motion, and along the way God would guide me in the right direction. It's an interesting thought, but it's not always the way God works. Occasionally, God *does* want us to "stay parked" for a while.

At times, when Moses was in the wilderness, God kept the Israelites in one place. He led them by a cloud, and when it stayed still for many days, "the children of Israel . . . did not journey" ([Num. 9:19](#)). Waiting isn't always easy, but sometimes God wants us to stay right where He has put us. The psalmist reminds us, "Wait on the Lord; be of good courage, and He shall strengthen your heart" (27:14).

You may feel that you're stuck and just spinning your wheels in your service for God. But keep your heart open to God's leading. Then you'll be ready to shift gears when you hear God say, "Let's go this way."

Meditate: Praying, resting, waiting, trusting—These are words that tell a story; As we wait for God to lead us, He responds, "Just seek My glory."

Aphorism: **God orders our stops as well as our steps.**

***February 21 (Tuesday), 2012** {[John 6:53~69](#)} Key: Simon Peter answered Him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life." ([John 6:68](#)) "Running In The Right Direction" Bible In One Year: [Numbers 1~3](#); [Mark 3](#)

One of the most difficult experiences in my years as a pastor was telling a member of our church that her husband, her son, and her father-in-law had all drowned in a boating accident. I knew the news would shatter her life.

In the days following their tragic loss, I was amazed as she and her family responded with unusual faith. Sure, there was deep brokenness, haunting doubt, and confusion. But when nothing else made sense, they still had Jesus. Rather than deserting Him in the midst of their desperately difficult days, they ran to Him as the only source of hope and confidence.

This reminds me of the reaction of the disciples to Jesus. After some of them "went back and walked with Him no more" because He was hard to understand ([John 6:66](#)), Jesus turned to His inner circle, and asked, "Do you also want to go away?" (v.67). Peter got it right when he responded, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life" (v.68).

Whatever you face today, be encouraged by the words of Peter and by the example of a family who went through the fire with their faith intact. As long as you're running in the right direction—to Jesus—you'll find the grace and strength you will need.

Meditate: Jesus is the One to run to When our lives bring grief and pain; He provides His strength and guidance With a peace we can't explain.

Aphorism: When all is lost, remember that you haven't lost Jesus. Run to Him.

*February 22 (Wednesday), 2012 { [Romans 5:1~5](#) } Key: Hope does not disappoint. ([Romans 5:5](#)) "Short-Timers" Bible In One Year: [Numbers 4~6; Mark 4:1~20](#)

I served in the Armed Forces many years ago and have always been thankful that I was able to give those years to my country. I must say, however, that my most memorable time in the service was the brief interval when I was a "short-timer."

Short-timers are soldiers who have but a few weeks before discharge. They spend their last days "mustering out"—visiting the commissary and the quartermaster's office to clear accounts and return equipment. What I remember most about that period was my jaunty pace and the happy, carefree spirit with which I carried out my tasks. I had duties but few worries, for I knew I was going home.

Now that I'm an "old-timer," once again I'm a short-timer. It won't be long before I'm discharged from my duty here. Again, my pace is jaunty and my spirit is light for I know that very soon I'll be going home. That's the outlook that Jesus and His apostles called "hope" ([Acts 24:15; Rom. 5:2,5](#)).

Hope, in the biblical sense, means certainty and assurance. It is the firm, unshakable, indomitable belief that we will be raised from the dead (as Jesus was) and will be welcomed into our eternal home. That's enough to put joy in our heart and a spring in our step this day!

Meditate: God has given us a life abundant As we serve Him in this world below; Though our time on earth is surely fleeting, Hope of heaven makes our pathway glow.

Aphorism: The risen Christ will come from heaven to take His own to heaven.

*February 23 (Thursday), 2012 { [Acts 17:16~31](#) } Key: "[Paul] seems to be a proclaimer of foreign gods," because he preached to them Jesus. ([Acts 17:18](#)) "Foreign Worship" Bible In One Year: [Numbers 7~8; Mark 4:21~41](#)

During a trip to the Far East, I visited an unusual shrine made up of hundreds of statues. According to our guide, worshipers would pick the statue that looked the most like an ancestor and pray to it.

A few years ago, I read about a student named Le Thai. An ancestor worshiper, he found great comfort in praying to his deceased grandmother. Because he was praying to someone he knew and loved, he found this to be personal and intimate.

But when he came from Vietnam to the US to study, Le Thai was introduced to Christianity. It sounded like a fairy tale based on American thinking. To him, it was the worship of a foreign God (see [Acts 17:18](#)).

Then a Christian friend invited him to visit his home on Christmas. He saw a Christian family in action and heard again the story of Jesus. Le Thai listened. He read John 3 about being "born again" and asked questions. He began to feel the pull of the Holy Spirit. Finally, he realized that Christianity was true. He trusted Jesus as his personal Savior.

When friends see Christianity as foreign worship, we need to respect their heritage while sharing the gospel graciously and giving them time to explore Christianity. And then trust the Spirit to do His work.

Meditate: Man gropes his way through life's dark maze, To gods unknown he often prays, Until one day he meets God's Son—At last he's found the Living One!

Aphorism: God is the only true God.

*February 24 (Friday), 2012 { [2 Corinthians 6:3~11](#) } Key: In all things we commend

ourselves as ministers of God: in much patience, in tribulations, in needs, in distresses. ([2 Corinthians 6:4](#))“Being Real”Bible In One Year: [Numbers 9~11; Mark 5:1~20](#)

An antique dealer thought the wrinkled old baseball card she found might be worth \$10. After posting it on eBay, she began to wonder if it might be more valuable than she had thought. She removed the posting and consulted a professional evaluator who confirmed that the photo on the 1869 card showed the Cincinnati Red Stockings, the first professional baseball team in the US. The card sold for more than \$75,000.

Mike Osegueda’s article in *The Fresno Bee* said that even though the card was creased and discolored, the most important thing was its authenticity—it was real.

Paul and his companions suffered greatly while spreading the gospel. In 2 Corinthians 6, he listed their outward trials, their inward traits, and their spiritual resources (vv.4~7). Try to imagine the circumstances in which all these things interacted—beatings, patience, prison, kindness, distresses, love. Although broken physically, depleted emotionally, and tested spiritually, the authenticity of their faith in Christ clearly shone through. “As sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things” (v.10).

In our walk with Christ, there’s no substitute for spiritual authenticity—being real.

Meditate: O to be like Thee! O to be like Thee, Blessed Redeemer, pure as Thou art; Come in Thy sweetness, come in Thy fullness; Stamp Thine own image deep on my heart.

Aphorism: **There’s no substitute for being real.**

***February 25 (Saturday), 2012** {[2 Peter 1:16~21](#)} Key: Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, . . . rightly dividing the Word of truth. ([2 Timothy 2:15](#))“Imagine That!”Bible In One Year: [Numbers 12~14; Mark 5:21~43](#)

My friends and I were anticipating a contemplative time looking at a collection of artwork about the prodigal son who returned home to a forgiving father (Luke 15). When we arrived at the information table, we noticed the brochures, books, and a sign pointing to the artwork.

Also on the table was a dinner plate with bread, a napkin, and a glass. Each of us privately pondered what the significance of the plate could be. We wondered if it represented communion fellowship between the prodigal son and his father when he returned home. But as we examined it more closely, we realized simultaneously: Someone had left a dirty plate on the display table. And it wasn’t bread, but leftover cookie bars! Our imaginations had been wrong.

We had a good laugh, but then it made me think about how sometimes we imagine more than what’s really there while reading the Bible. Rather than assuming that our speculation is correct, however, we need to be sure our interpretation fits with the whole of Scripture. Peter said that “no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation” ([2 Peter 1:20](#)). As we depend on the Spirit’s instruction, a careful study of the context, and the wisdom of respected Bible teachers, we’ll avoid seeing things in the Word that aren’t really there.

Meditate: We must correctly hear God’s Word, Or we will be misled; We must give careful thought and prayer To what the Author said.

Aphorism: **A text out of context is often a dangerous pretext.**

***February 26 (Sunday), 2012** {[Deuteronomy 6:1~9](#)} Key: Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. ([Matthew 22:37](#))“Under New

Orders”Bible In One Year: [Numbers 15~16; Mark 6:1~29](#)

Herman Wouk’s thrilling World War II novel *The Caine Mutiny* contains an excellent illustration of what happens when someone becomes a follower of God.

In the novel, a young man from an influential family has enlisted in the Navy. On the day of his induction, his mother drops him off in her fancy car and then kisses him goodbye. He shakes hands with the guard as he enters the building, and the door closes behind him.

His mother, suddenly worried that he might not have enough money, rushes up to the door. But the guard politely stops her. When she demands entrance, he refuses to let her in. She can see her son standing inside the door, so she reaches for the doorknob. “He’s my son!” she cries. The guard gently removes her hand from the knob and says softly, “I know, Ma’am, but he belongs to Uncle Sam now. He’s a sailor.”

When we believe in Jesus Christ and become His followers, we are under new authority. We are subject to new commands. Now we belong to Him. What was once important to us loses its significance. We evaluate things differently. Our new desire is to love and serve the Lord with all our heart ([Deut. 6:5~6](#)). Have you joined His ranks?

Meditate: Jesus my Lord will love me forever, From Him no power of evil can sever; He gave His life to ransom my soul—Now I belong to Him!

Aphorism: **Followers of Christ get their marching orders from Him.**