

10-Day Spiritual Adventure

The Feast of Trumpets 8 Days of Awe & The Day of Atonement



Teshuvah

10 Days to Seek the Lord

September 28th - October 7, 2011

Feast of Trumpets September 28-29

Day of Atonement October 7-8

**A prayer and scripture guide to seeking the Lord
for a fresh touch of His Spirit**

Introduction

Welcome to the DAYS OF AWE spiritual adventure.

This 10-day adventure is designed to challenge you spiritually and create a dynamic for advanced spiritual growth. Each of the following pages is to be used as a work sheet for one day. Use the daily page as a guide to reflection, prayer and Bible study. It is a time of self examination. Paul tells us that if we would judge ourselves we would not be judged. (I Corinthians 11)

Performing Teshuvah

From the day after the Feast of Trumpets (2nd day) the Jewish people counted eight “half-holy” days until the Day of Atonement (or Yom Kippur) on the 10th day of the 7th month. These were called **Days of Awe** or **Awesome Days** because of the seriousness and significance of the approaching Day of Atonement. These days were filled with prayer, reflection, and repentance. The word Teshuvah means “turning” and reflects “return” more than “repentance”. The concept was one of taking time to regain any spiritual ground that had been lost; reconnecting with God, reflecting on the past, present and future. While I am not suggesting a return to Old Testament legalism or ritual, I do believe the Lord is directing this time of personal reflection in the lives of His people.

How to get the Most Out of this Adventure.

This 10-day spiritual journey notebook is designed to help you seek the Lord during this AWESOME time. First commit to doing it. Half-hearted efforts produce half-hearted results. Invest 10 days in your spiritual life. Carve out some extra time to spend with God, allowing the Holy Spirit to search your life. Shut off the TV. Turn off the computer. Commit a few extra hours. Is your spiritual life worth it? As you go through the spiritual journey notebook, use it as a journal to write down things God speaks to you, scriptures that come to mind, prayers prayed and answered. Use this notebook to chronicle your adventure. It will help you to get more out of your time with God. **Don't Just Read it as a Devotional;** rather use it as a guide to spend time honestly considering each point. Don't rush! The goal is not to finish the journal; it is to have met with God and be transformed by the experience. Don't just read the scriptures, but take time to meditate on them. What is really being said? How do they apply to your life? What might God be saying to you? Is the scripture you read to be obeyed? Believed? Responded to? Interact with the scriptures by taking time to allow them speak to you.

Meeting God Sometimes Requires Preparation

The Feast of Trumpets signified the beginning of the fall festive days. It was a call to gather the people to prepare themselves to meet with God on the Day of Atonement nine days later. We see a similar picture when God told Moses to go down the mountain and tell the people to consecrate themselves, wash their clothes and prepare to meet God on Mount Sinai.

Joy not Sorrow

As you progress through this adventure, you will no doubt be challenged in some areas of your life. Resist the urge to feel condemnation. Although you will probably experience repentance and feel some sorrow, some Jewish authorities claim this time should be primarily associated with joy because of the refreshing that comes from walking with God and allowing him to work in our lives. The Holy Spirit will always draw you to God for forgiveness and power. The devil will always push you away from God. So you will know who is bringing the guilty feelings by the direction in which you feel pulled.

Grace

Grace has been defined as, “unmerited favor.” However that is only half the meaning. Grace is also “divine enablement.” As you meet with God over the next few days, seek to experience both applications of grace. We need God’s free forgiveness for our failures, but we also need His power in our lives to move forward. Hebrews 4:16 says, “Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in a time of need.”

A Third Great Experience for the Church

The last three Jewish feasts, The Feast of Trumpets, the Day of Atonement and the Feast of Tabernacles have yet to be fulfilled spiritually. The last three feasts indicate to us a third great spiritual experience to come to the Church. The first experience is salvation as pictured in the Passover, Feast of Unleavened Bread and the Feast of First Fruits. The second is the Baptism in the Holy Spirit, pictured for us in the Feast of Pentecost. The third, yet-to-come experience is about sanctification and completion or perfection, as Jesus manifests Himself in and through the Church, which is His Body. During this time Ephesians 4:12 and 13 will become a reality. (Find an Amplified Bible and read these verses in that version.)

A Blessing for Your Journey

Our heavenly Father, I ask that you bless each and every person who takes this spiritual journey. As they walk with you through the next few days, I pray your Spirit would speak to them and reveal great and awesome things. Grant them a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Jesus Christ. Walk with them through the challenges as they examine their lives; grant them peace as they honestly reflect on the issues they are about to meditate on. More than anything else, I ask that their spiritual lives are supercharged by having taken the challenge. God, please remove all the obstacles in all our lives that have held us back and limited our faith.

May the Lord grant you great grace and mercy in your life and service for the Master.

Steve Highlander
July 2011
Nevada, MO

P.S. I would love to hear how the Lord impacted your life during this spiritual adventure. Feel free to write me and share a testimony make comments or ask a question. I would like to put your testimony on our web site to encourage others. You may remain anonymous if you wish. Please send all E-Mail to steve@stevehighlander.com

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The Feast of Trumpets

Wednesday, September 28, 2011

The feast of Trumpets was the 5th of 7 yearly feasts ordained by God and opened the fall festive season. As already mentioned the feast of Trumpets served as a reminder and a call to the people that the Day of Atonement was approaching and to prepare themselves for it.

Trumpets were used in the Bible for several specific purposes and have great prophetic significance. Prophetically speaking, a trumpet symbolized the voice of God speaking to His people. It was to get their attention as a trumpet would in a busy market area. A single trumpet was used to call the elders of the congregation together, while two trumpets blown together called the entire congregation. Trumpets were used to call the people to war and to prepare the camp of the Israelites to march forward. All of these pictures have significance for us today. God is speaking to His people. He is calling us to unity and service. We are in a warfare that will only get hotter as the end approaches. And He is calling His people to get up and move on with Him.

Reflection: Today you will reflect upon the various usages of the trumpets. Are you responding to God's call to gather with his body and grow? If you are a steward of God's people, how seriously are you taking your leadership role? What things need to be done differently? How are your relationships with other leaders and the people you serve? What do you need God to help you with? A single trumpet was used to call the leaders of the people together. Today God is calling leaders from different ministries and churches to come together, seek God and unite for the Kingdom of God. Are you more concerned about "your kingdom" than God's Kingdom? Are you so busy in your own ministry that you have a hard time seeing the bigger picture of what God is doing your area, your state, your country or the world? Are you hearing a trumpet call to gather with other leaders? How will you respond?

As a Christian you can ask yourself the same questions. While not everyone is called to lead, we are all called to serve – Jesus Christ and one another. In fact it is hard to serve the Lord unless we are serving others. How are your relationships in the body? Do you need to ask forgiveness for something, or perhaps forgive someone? The trumpets were used to assemble the people of God for instruction and worship. Today there is a prophetic call going out for Christians of different fellowships to gather together for worship, prayer and teaching. This might be in joint services or outside the walls of their regular churches, such as public meetings, home fellowships or other creative gatherings. We are instructed to not, "forsake the assembling of yourselves together as the manner of some, and so much more as you see the day approaching." Hebrews 10:25

Trumpets directed the army. We are also in warfare. Are you fighting the good fight of faith or have you forgotten that we have an enemy? Every Christian is called to war: for themselves and others in the body and for their families and friends. Are you showing up for role call? Are you a faithful soldier or would you have to be reported as AWOL in the spiritual battle that is raging? This feast also reminds us that we are called to a spiritual JOURNEY, not a perpetual camp. Are you following the Lord? Has your spiritual life made any real progress in the past weeks, months or even years? It is easy to "camp" around some experience, doctrine or event. The Feast of Trumpets reminds us that it is time to journey on and gain ground in our spiritual lives.

Seriously reflect on these issues and allow the Holy Spirit to speak to you and guide you in these matters. Take some additional paper and write out what the Lord tells you. Write down any scriptures that are significant. Make a journal of your prayer and reflection times. You may even want to write down your struggles and victories and any points of prayer or answers to refer back to.

Scripture Reading:

Leviticus 23:24-36, II Peter 3:18, Ephesians 4:11-16, II Timothy 2:1-5, II Corinthians 10:3-5

Days of Awe Number 1

Thursday, September 29, 2011

Reflection: Today concentrate on your relationship with Jesus Christ. How are things between you and Him? Don't be superficial. Examine your real relationship. Paul tells us not only to love in word and in tongue, but in deed and truth. Jesus said, "If you love me keep my commandments."

Does your "love walk" match your "love talk" when it comes to the Lord?

Jesus has two key roles in your life. The first is that of savior. That is what He did for us. Salvation is an ongoing thing and involves more than just the forgiveness of sins. While we HAVE BEEN SAVED, we also need Jesus to continue His work of salvation in our lives on a regular basis.

The second key role is that of Lord. Loosely translated that means "He's the Boss." Be honest. To what degree is Jesus "Lord" in your life? Talk to Him about this issue. We can make Jesus Lord in some areas and not others. What are some areas of your life that Jesus IS Lord? What are some areas that He IS NOT Lord?" Sins of omission are as serious as sins of commission.

Don't let the devil bring condemnation, just deal as honestly as possible about these things. Don't think of the dozens of things everyone else is doing or tells you that you need to do. Ask God what HE wants you to do and be at peace with that. Jesus is Lord, not everyone else.

There are several identities we have as Christians. These identities are in direct relationship to Jesus Christ. Examine your life in light of these various relationships.

1. We are the Bride of Christ. This speaks of our intimate personal relationship with Jesus. How would a bride and groom relate to each other? How is your intimacy with Jesus? Lovers love spending time with each other. Do you enjoy time alone with God or is your whole interaction with God in the midst of other people (services, Bible studies, outreaches)? Intimacy requires privacy.

2. We are Children of God and brothers and sisters of the Jesus. What dynamics of family come into play? Do you see God as your FATHER? What thoughts or associations does the word "father" bring up? As a child, what privileges and responsibilities do you have? Do you see others as being your spiritual family? Do you feel as if you are part of a spiritual family? Why or why not?

3. We are also called "servants." In tennis there is a saying, "improving your serve." How is your service for Jesus? Do you serve Him personally? Do you serve others in His name? How can you "improve your serve," when it comes to Jesus and the Church. Are you doing what God called you to do, where He called you to do it? You may be doing the wrong thing in the right place or the right thing in the wrong place. Finding your place in the Body of Christ releases the genuine flow of the Spirit into and through our lives. Many people are frustrated in their Christian service for several reasons: a) they aren't doing anything, b) they are doing the wrong thing, c) they are not in the right place, d) they don't have a clue they are supposed to be doing something, e) they want to do something and no one will let them or help them find their place. Ask God to show you what to do and where to do it. The scriptures are clear that our service will be judged and rewarded.

4. We are also called soldiers. Are you fighting "the good fight of faith?" Are you actively engaged in spiritual warfare for yourself, the church and others? Why or why not? How are you fighting? Do you feel effective? Why or why not? Do you feel you need additional weapons or training? Do you follow the orders of the Commander in Chief Jesus and his delegated spiritual leaders in the area of warfare? Ask God to show you what position you are to serve in the army and to better train and equip you for spiritual warfare.

Scripture Reading: John 15:1-27, I Corinthians 3:8-15, Matthew 25:1-46, II Timothy 2:3

Days of Awe Number 2

Friday, September 30, 2011

Reflection: A story was told of a missionary to the American Indians long ago. The chief of a tribe was converted and become a spiritual leader to his people. In time the missionary left and returned later to check on the spiritual progress of the tribe. He asked the chief, "How are things going with you?" The chief replied, "It is like two dogs fighting on the inside of me." "Which one is winning," the missionary asked? "The one I feed the most," said the chief.

Feeding the Enemy

We are our own worst enemies sometimes. Some people feed their flesh every day with spiritual junk food (in the form of entertainment, music, gossip, life in the world, problems, bills etc.) and throw their spirit a cold baloney sandwich a couple of times a week. Then they wonder why their flesh is so much stronger than their spirit. Alone time with God, Bible study, prayer fellowship and other spiritual disciplines may not always be the easiest or most exciting things (they can and should be, but are not always so) but they are the basics of strong, stable spiritual lives. Your spiritual journey is not a sprint, it is a marathon. Remember, you are in this for eternity. You want to cross the finish line and hear our Father say, "**Well done my good and faithful servant.**"

Today concentrate on your personal spiritual life. Are you doing the basics? How is your prayer life? Do you feel a genuine connection with God when you pray, or is it more routine. Write down how you would like for your prayer life to be. Do you keep a prayer journal? Do your prayers get answered generally? What needs to change? Jesus' disciples asked Jesus, "Teach us to pray?" Have you ever done that? Why not ask Jesus to teach you to pray and give Him a month to instruct you. Have you ever just asked God to show you what He wanted you to pray about? You may be in for an adventure.

Do you read the Bible or study it? Do you feel strengthened and refreshed when you've been in the Word? How would you like your Bible study time to be? What needs to change? Does most of your study come from other sources or do you study for yourself?

Do you have genuine fellowship? How is your relationship with the Body (church)? Is Church a joy or a bother? Are you "connected" or "loosely attached?" Why or why not?

How do you envision a dynamic church? Do you take time to prepare your heart and worship the Lord BEFORE you go to church? What can YOU do to make "church" better?

How would you describe your spiritual life? On a scale of 1-10 (10 being "on fire" and 1 being "what spiritual life?") where would you rate yourself? Are you satisfied with your spiritual life? What needs to change? How do you want it to be? How do you KNOW it should be?

NOTE: Don't allow satan to bring any condemnation for areas of weakness, struggle or failure. Set your heart to make a plan with God to work towards the areas you sense a need for improvement.

Scripture Reading: Acts 2:41-47, Jude verses 2-3, II Timothy 2:15, II Peter 1:2-11, II Peter 3:18

Days of Awe Number 3

Saturday, September October 1, 2011

Reflection: Today concentrate on your relationship with the Holy Spirit. Are you “Spirit Filled?” That might mean different things to different people. Is there evidence of the Spirit of God actively moving in your life? Paul tells us in I Corinthians that the MANIFESTATION (observable demonstration) of the Spirit is given to every person so everyone may profit.

I heard a preacher say once that he was on his way to speak at a revival when he stopped to eat. As he was sitting at the table the Lord directed his attention to the ketchup bottle. It said, “Shake well before using.” That became the topic of his sermon for the evening. Do you need a good “shaking” to get you useable? Perhaps some of the things going on in your life are the “shaking of the Lord” to stir up those things in your life that need to come to the surface. Ask God about this? What can you do to “stir up your gifts?” How can you better serve the Lord? What steps could you take to have a more dynamic and consistent relationship with the Holy Spirit?

Romans chapter 8 tells us a number of things the Holy Spirit does for us. Verse 14 tells us, “Those who are led by the Spirit of God are the Sons of God.” Do you seek the leading of the Spirit in your life?

Write down the various gifts you have personally been used in. Record a couple of specific instances for each gift. Reflect on the situations and the results. **The real proof of genuine spiritual gifts is long-term change (in you and those receiving the end result of the gifts) not the initial manifestation of the gifts.** Were people’s lives changed by God using you in those gifts?

What gifts do you experience most regularly? If you have not experienced any gifts of the Spirit, seek the Lord to use you and reveal to you what gifts you have.

It would seem that the gifts of the Spirit are activated with the experience of the Baptism in the Holy Spirit. Have you been baptized with the Spirit with any type of spiritual evidence?

Tongues seem to be a general and universal gift available to all believers. The Bible tells us the gift of tongues has two separate and specific purposes. One is a personal gift that edifies the speaker. The second is the gift of tongues, which combined with interpretation of tongues, is equal to prophecy, and is meant to edify the church. The personal gift of tongues is meant for everyone. Paul said, “I would that you all spoke in tongues.” Do you speak in tongues? If not, why not? If so, how often do you speak in tongues? Every day? Every week? Every once in a while? God wants you to.

Salvation is about forgiveness of sin and power over sin. However, the Baptism in the Holy Spirit is about service. They are two separate experiences. Paul told young pastor Timothy to “stir up the gifts that are in you.” Have you allowed any spiritual gifts to “settle to the bottom” in your life?

Scripture Reading: John 20:19-21, Acts 1:4-9, I Corinthians chapters 12 – 14, Romans 12

Days of Awe Number 4

Sunday, October 2, 2011

Reflection: Today you will concentrate on forgiveness. There are five areas of forgiveness that every person must deal with. **1. Getting forgiveness from God 2. Forgiving God (more on this later) 3. Forgiving yourself 4. Forgiving others and 5. Asking forgiveness from others.**

Some aspects of forgiveness are fairly simple and straightforward. You just need to do it if needed. Others are more subtle. Today and tomorrow you will deal with these five issues one at a time. Don't rush. Do spiritual business. Forgiveness is not easy. There are a lot of misunderstandings about forgiveness and many people who have been wounded struggle with the idea. This section may bring up some issues you will need to talk with someone else about. If you need help seek the counsel of your church leaders to help you steer through these important issues. The issue of unforgiveness is a major reason why many people do not grow spiritually and some ultimately fall away from God.

Do you need to ask God to forgive you for anything? Do it!

Some people need to forgive God. Oh, I know that God has never done anything wrong, but that doesn't mean we like everything He does. Forgiveness is ALWAYS about you, not the one you're forgiving. Have you been offended at God? Offense brings a lack of trust which kills faith and results in a dry, ritualistic spiritual life. If you are mad or even disappointed with God about anything, now is the time to talk with Him about it. God says, "Come, let us reason together..." Sometimes we think, "If I were God I wouldn't do it that way!" News flash: We aren't God; and thankfully so, because we would really mess things up. God is perfect and doesn't make mistakes. Not everything is God's fault. There's a devil to contend with and SOMETIMES, we create our own problems and blame them on God. If you've had a case against God, present it to Him and let Him bring you to a place of peace where you can trust Him again.

Many people need to forgive themselves. They say something like this, "I know God forgives me, but I just can't forgive myself." This is spiritual suicide. You can (and need to) forgive yourself. The fact of the matter is that Jesus died to pay your debt and take your punishment. If you refuse, or simply fail to forgive yourself, you are saying your failures are greater than Christ's sacrifice.

You may have made mistakes that have devastated your own life or that of others. Forgiveness is never deserved nor earned nor purchased; it is freely given and must be received.

If you struggle with not forgiving yourself, do this: Ask God to show you the issues. Take time to understand and build your faith in the fact that Jesus' sacrificial death and shed blood really did forgive and remove your sin-debt and punishment, and that you have no right to hold it against yourself anymore.

Find a mirror, look yourself in the face and say, "Your name here, I forgive you for all the stupid things you did to hurt me and others. By the grace of God and the power of the Holy Spirit, through the blood of Jesus I release you from all debt and punishment I have held against you and you are free to serve God. Go in peace!" Then receive that forgiveness and worship the Lord.

Scripture Reading: I John 1:5-10, Ephesians 1:7, Daniel 9:3-23,

Days of Awe Number 5

Mondayday, October 3, 2011

Reflection: Today we will continue with the issue of forgiveness, but today we'll look at forgiveness as it relates to other people.

Some of us need to forgive others. We often choose to ignore the offence and call it forgiveness. This is not forgiveness. Forgiveness is never earned, so the person you need to forgive can not make it up to you. You need to release it. Forgiveness is not about the other person, it is about you. Jesus spoke clearly in the Lord's Prayer, "Forgive us our trespasses AS (in the same manner, to the same degree) that we forgive others their trespasses against us." He went on to say, "If you don't forgive others, my Father won't" (can't continue) "to forgive you." This is a serious matter. If you are struggling to feel forgiven, it might be that you get forgiveness in the same measure you give it. Unforgiveness can create a "log jam" of backed up sins that need to be resolved before true forgiveness can be released in your life. Many people struggle with forgiveness because they have never dealt with unforgiveness, resentment and bitterness as sins in their own lives. They are so focused on their own hurt and pain and don't realize the spiritual cancer eating at their lives. The place to start is humbly asking God to forgive you for your unforgiveness. This releases God to work in your life.

Forgiveness does not mean that what someone else did was right. God forgives us and yet never condones our sin. Forgiveness does not mean that you must become vulnerable again. Forgiveness does not mean that the person will "get away with it," because God is released to work in their life and there is nothing worse that you can do to someone that God will do if they don't repent. Remember the scriptures say, "Vengeance is mine says the Lord, I will repay." He doesn't need our help, no matter how much we would like to help him out with particular people.

One last thought on forgiving others. Many people try to forgive and when a bad emotion pops back up they say, "Well I THOUGHT I forgave them, but I guess I haven't." Phooey. Forgiveness is not primarily an emotional issue. For the Christian it is a spiritual issue. You make a spiritual decision by the power of God to forgive. It is a done deal in the spiritual realm. You may still have emotional issues pop up from time to time, but it does not mean you have not forgiven, it means you must learn to bring your emotions into line with the spiritual decision and act you have already made. If you make a spiritual decision to forgive, you simply need to bring your emotions back to that decision and stand on it. The emotions will begin to fade away when you do that.

The final issue to consider today is asking forgiveness from others. Again Jesus was clear. He said, "If you bring your gift to the altar and there remember your brother has something against you, leave your gift at the altar, go and be reconciled to your brother, then come and offer your gift to God." If we know someone has something against us, we need to do what we can to "clear the air." You may not even be in the wrong, however Jesus said, "If your brother has something against you...go...." Make the transaction of forgiveness. Don't just say, "I'm sorry!" Say, "Would you please forgive me." This forces the other person to deal with the issue of forgiveness and does not allow them just to ignore it or slough it off with an, "oh don't worry about it." Only when forgiveness has been asked for, given and received has the transaction of forgiveness taken place. Only then are the spiritual and emotional issues resolved and peace can come. Broken relationships hinder your spiritual life and the body of Christ. Do you have someone you know you need to talk to? Don't put it off. Pray about it first, and then commit to go to that person in the near future. If it is someone in the church, go to them during this time frame and it may just release something spiritual in their lives too.

Scripture Reading: Ephesians 4:1-6 and 30-32, Psalms 133:1-3, Matthew 18:15-35

Days of Awe Number 6

Tuesday, October 4, 2011

Reflection: Today is a day of worship and praise. Instead of examining your life, spend time worshipping God. Put on some worship music and spend some time in God's presence.

Spend some time singing with the music and then some time just sitting quietly and letting the music minister to you. Relax in the presence of God. Worship is not just about music though. Spend time today vocally praising God without music. It might be your own song or it may just be words of praise and adoration.

Worship is also about Thanksgiving. Take time today to thank God for the many blessings in your life. Read the story of the 10 lepers who were cleansed by Jesus (scripture reading for today). Only one returned to give Him thanks and only one was totally healed and restored. (The rest were just cleansed, which means they were no longer contagious but still had the scars of the disease.) Thanksgiving goes beyond healing and brings wholeness to our lives, body, soul and spirit.

Worship and praise was vocal, and while we can "praise God in our hearts," it is not what the scriptures indicate we should do. If you have a hard time vocalizing praise and worship, or even prayer, today is the day to make a breakthrough. Speak out loud (hey, shout if you want to, it is liberating). Speak out as many names for Jesus as you can think of (King of Kings, Lord of Lords, Bright and Morning Star, Rose of Sharon – go ahead, keep thinking, you'll come up with more and add some of your own.)

Our "worship" is often confined to repeating what someone else has already expressed (songs, hymns, devotionals, written prayers in books). Today make your worship personal. Resist the urge to just repeat what others have already said. Write a poem, make up a song, write a love letter to Jesus, or create something artistic, anything to personally share your heart of worship. Praise and worship are somewhat different. They have been referred to as "twin sisters". That is, they look a lot alike, but are really different things. Praise is when we talk or sing about Jesus to others. Worship is when we focus directly on Jesus and our words are directed towards Him and it doesn't matter if or who hears us, because we are not speaking to anyone else.

Find someone today and praise Jesus to them. Share a testimony with someone. Talk about the goodness of God. Witness to a lost person. Today, make it a point to participate in both praise and worship.

Praise and worship is an ongoing part of a vital, vibrant spiritual life. How is your everyday praise life? Could it use some improvement? What can, or do you need to do, differently? What hinders your worship life? What can you do to change it? Do you worship at church? Do you ONLY worship at church? Seek to make worship a more significant part of your Christian life.

Practice the scriptural exhortation in Psalms 150:

"Praise ye the LORD. Praise God in his sanctuary: praise him in the firmament of his power. Praise him for his mighty acts: praise him according to his excellent greatness. Praise him with the sound of the trumpet: praise him with the psaltery and harp. Praise him with the timbrel and dance: praise him with stringed instruments and organs. Praise him upon the loud cymbals: praise him upon the high sounding cymbals. Let every thing that hath breath praise the LORD. Praise ye the LORD."

Scripture Reading: Hebrews 13:15-16, Psalms 100:1-5, Psalms 105:1-5

Days of Awe Number 7

Wednesday, October 5, 2011

Reflection: Today is a day to examine your spiritual attitudes. In the book of Ephesians 4:23 (Amplified Bible) Paul admonishes Christians to “be constantly renewed in the spirit of your mind {having a fresh mental and spiritual attitude}.” In Philippians we are told to, “Let this mind be in you that was in Jesus Christ....”

Our attitudes are important. Two things drive our actions: 1. Our belief system 2. Our attitudes. Both of these operate as the “programming” that makes us act and react in certain ways. We often try to change the way we act or react with little long-term success. Real outward change starts with real inward change. Thinking differently will cause you to act differently. The Amplified Bible uses the word “fresh”. It brings to mind something that has gotten “stale.” Sometimes over a period of time our once-fresh spiritual and mental attitudes get stale and need to be “freshened up a bit.”

Today take a hard look at your attitudes. Some may be obvious and some may not be obvious. Since they are the way we think, seeing them might not be easy, so ask God to reveal any “bad” or “stale” attitudes.

Some areas to reflect on would include your attitude toward your spouse, your church, your leaders, other Christians, or other churches. You will want to examine your attitudes toward God, your Christian service or lack thereof. What is your attitude toward prayer, Bible study, and fellowship with other Christians?

The Bible tells us that we “have the mind of Christ,” and to “let the mind of Christ work in us.” Spend some time thinking about Jesus’ attitude toward some of these issues. Do you feel your attitudes line up with Jesus Christ’s?

Motives have a lot to do with attitudes. Examine your motives today. Look at various areas of your Christian life and service. Why do you do what you do? Do you secretly love the affirmation you get from others? Do you serve because of your own sense of fulfillment? Do you feel obligated to do things just to please others?

The Bible tells us that, “Jesus was moved with compassion....” Is compassion a motivating attitude in your life, or do think people deserve what they get?

Ask God to help identify any false or impure motives in your Christian life and allow God to purify and perfect them.

Scripture Reading: Romans 12:1-2, Ephesians 4:23, Philippians 2:14-15

Days of Awe Number 8

Thursday, October 6, 2011

Reflection: Today we will deal with the issue of humility. Humility operates in two directions: 1. towards God, and, 2. towards others.

First we need to define “humility.” I like the “unofficial” definition of “having nothing to prove.” Although, I am sure that is only one aspect of Biblical humility. Biblical humility is not putting yourself down, but rather it is a proper estimation of yourself in the light of God’s grace. In Romans 12 Paul tells us, “let no man think of himself more highly than he ought to....” Either extreme is pride. Abasing ourselves can often be false pride. And of course, exalting ourselves is outright pride. Putting ourselves down often hinders our ministries because we don’t properly acknowledge the gifts, abilities and areas of service we’ve been called to. Paul had no problem calling himself an apostle, but it was a proper estimation, because he usually added, “by the grace of God.”

Today’s scripture reading will bring out some of these points. In Philippians it says, “Jesus made of himself of NO REPUTATION....” He did not run around seeking to tell people how important He was, but rather, “took on Himself the form of a servant....”

Humility is an attitude. We usually have two choices; we can humble ourselves or humiliate ourselves. Humiliation often happens when we actually seek to impress others.

Humility also relates to our service and our motives. Examine these areas.

Humility is closely related to the issue of Hypocrisy. The word hypocrite actually means “one who wears a mask” or an actor, and comes from the Greek theater where the early actors would change masks to reflect a change of emotion.

Sometimes we “put on masks” to hide what is really happening in our lives. We put on spiritual masks to hide fear, doubt, unbelief, hurt or other things “good Christians” shouldn’t feel. Sometimes we put on masks to go to church or when we hang out with different groups. We act one way with some people and another with others, switching masks to “blend in”. Do you wear any masks? At work? At church? When you are with friends?

Humility has a lot to do with congruency. To be congruent means to be equal. An equation that is congruent is the same on both sides, e.g. $5+6=8+3$. Being congruent in our lives means we are the same inside and out. We don’t try to act more spiritual (or less spiritual) than we are. We are simply consistent with what is really going on in our lives. Incongruency produces a lot of spiritual pressure in our lives, and of course, the Bible says, “Pride goes before a fall.”

Humility also demonstrates itself in “transparency.” Something transparent means that you can “see through it”. As you reflect on this issue of humility, consider how “transparent” you are to others. Are you a “what you see is what you get,” type of person? Or do you want people to see something better, or at least different? We all have areas that we want to ‘cover up,’ and we shouldn’t just flaunt or ignore our faults, and expect others to “get over it.” God has asked us to “be real” with others and this means to be somewhat vulnerable.

This brings up one other issue to reflect on. Often our church settings and relationships are a hindrance to real humility and transparency. Because of false expectations about faith, or spirituality or other issues of spiritual peer pressure, people don’t feel like they can be transparent and not be judged. Do you have this problem? Is it just pride or are there real issues? What can you do about it?

How do you treat others who have spiritual, emotional or doctrinal “handicaps?” Do people feel comfortable being themselves around you? In your experience, do people share their hearts and struggles with you? Do your relationships seem to be superficial? If so, who is keeping them that way, you or others?

How are you doing in the area of humility? Allow the Spirit of God to search your heart and enjoy the freedom of congruency in your life as God helps you develop a proper spiritual assessment of who you are in Jesus. **Scripture reading:** Phil. 2:9, Romans 12:3-21

Day of Atonement

Friday, October 7, 2011

Reflection: The Day of Atonement was the only day in the entire year that the High Priest could enter the very presence of God in the Holy of Holies. He had to come with blood for his own sins and the sins of the people. This day, the sins of the people were covered (atoned) for another year. Everything done in the past few days was done in preparation for this day. The Jews believed that their fate was sealed for another year on the Day of Atonement. This day, their names were written in the book of life for the next year. Hebrews tells us that Jesus offered one sacrifice and entered into the holiest place once to obtain eternal redemption for us. Praise the Lord that we don't have to wonder from year to year if we will be saved.

On the Day of Atonement the sins of the people were experientially taken away. You have spent time the last few days allowing God to speak into your life. Today you will want to do three things: 1. Seek to enter into the presence of the Lord, 2. Seek to enjoy a new sense of freedom in the Lord. 3. Spend some time discussing your future with the Lord.

In the Old Testament only the high Priest could enter God's presence. Today we have been invited into God's presence through the blood of Jesus who made a way for us. **Read Hebrews 9:19-22**

Do you know what God's will and purpose is for your life? What do the next few weeks, months or years hold for you. Ephesians 2:10 tells us, **"For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God has foreordained that we should walk in them."** God already has a plan for your life. Spend time today seeking God for your future. Proverbs says, **"Where there is no vision, the people perish."** Without a vision you will spin your wheels; spiritually speaking.

Read and reflect on Paul's words in **Philippians 3:7-16** (especially verses 13 and 14). This is the essence of what this spiritual adventure has been about. Here Paul shares his strategy for dealing with the past present and future. Paul uses three action words in relation to the past present and future: forget, reach and press. Put these words into action in your life today.

Forgetting the past does not mean "I don't remember," it means "I am not chained to it any longer."

Reaching relates to the future. It indicates a bit of stretching and straining to reach for something just out of your reach. You will not realize dreams or goals without some active effort.

Pressing relates to the present. Today I "press toward the mark of God's calling in my life." Do you have something that you are aiming at? The old adage is true: "If you aim at nothing you will hit it every time." Pressing indicates some effort. Put daily effort into your spiritual life. Press through the hindrances and obstacles that hold you back from a greater relationship with God and greater service for God.

You will want to **read Hebrews chapters 9 and 10**. These chapters explain how Jesus fulfilled the Old Testament ritual for the Day of Atonement. Reflect on some particular passages in these two chapters. 9:8-14, 24, 27-28, 10:10, 19-23, 26, 35-36. What has Jesus done for us? How can we come into God's presence? What did Jesus do for our consciences? How should you respond to what Jesus has done? Does trial and tribulation mean something is wrong with us or our relationship with God?

My prayer is that this adventure will help you build some new habits and energize your walk with the Lord. God bless you. If you have any questions or comments or would like to share a testimony of how this spiritual adventure has impacted your life please email me at steve@stevehighlander.com, I would love to hear from you. With your permission I would like to place your testimony on our web site to encourage others. You may remain anonymous.