

ACTION STEPS FOR THE WEEK	
Monday Action Step 1	
Tuesday Action Step 2	
Wednesday Action Step 3	
Thursday Action Step 4	
Friday Action Step 5	
Saturday Action Step 6	
My biggest area for prayer and work this week	

DAILY DEVOTIONS FOR:

THE GAMES WE PLAY (Part 1)



"The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full."
 ~ Jesus (John 10:10)

MONDAY

READ: John 10:1-21

Growing up, my sister and I used to spend hours playing board games. One of the games we played frequently was *The Game of Life*. This was a great game to play....when I was winning. It was not so much fun when I was not. The problem with this game, or similar games like *Monopoly*, is that the winning person usually got quite rich at the expense of the other players who quickly became quite poor. (Again, fun when you are winning...)

Fortunately, the life that Christ has for us is nothing like these board games. We can *all* experience His abundance without anyone else being depleted or short-changed. The riches of His grace, mercy, and love are enough for each of us. Now, that is fun no matter what!

1. The world encourages us to get ahead, even at another's expense. Meanwhile, Christ encourages us to put Him at the head and see what happens. Which one of these two choices are you living out?
2. What did Jesus do for us according to verses 11,14&15 so that we could experience the abundant life He has for us?
3. What are some ways that "the thief" (i.e.—the devil) tries to keep you from this life?
4. What can you do to stay close to your Shepherd and away from the thieves and wolves?

PRAYER

- ◆ Thank Jesus for being the Good Shepherd who gave His life for you, so you could experience the fullness of God
- ◆ Confess to God, if necessary, seeking fulfillment from the world instead of from Christ
- ◆ Ask God to help you stay near the Shepherd
- ◆ Ask God to use you to draw others to the Shepherd

SATURDAY

READ: Ephesians 1:1-14

H.G. Wells, famous historian and philosopher, said at age 61: "I have no peace. All life is at the end of the tether." The poet Byron said, "My days are in yellow leaf, the flowers and fruits of life are gone, the worm and the canker, and the grief are mine alone." The literary genius Thoreau said, "Most men live lives of quiet desperation." Ralph Barton, one of the top cartoonists of the nation, left this note pinned to his pillow before taking his own life: "I have had few difficulties, many friends, great successes; I have gone from wife to wife, from house to house, visited great countries of the world, but I am fed up with inventing devices to fill up twenty-four hours of the day."

A relationship with Christ makes life complete. Without that relationship, there is a void, a vacuum in life. Many people can attest to that void. But when we have Christ, He will provide the forgiveness, love, purpose and guidance all of us truly need.

1. How has Christ brought fulfillment to your life?
2. How can verses 4-7 encourage the fact that God has always had a great plan and purpose for your life?
3. How are you going about fulfilling that purpose?
4. Who do you know that needs to hear about God's purpose for life?

PRAYER

- ◆ Thank God for the purpose and plan He has for your life
- ◆ Confess to God, if necessary, not working to fulfill that purpose
- ◆ Ask God to help you fulfill His purpose and plan for your life and to share Him with others

FRIDAY

READ: Matthew 6:19-34

Here are some “Fun Facts” (not really) about stress. Stress can lead to numerous physical symptoms including headaches, upset stomach, elevated blood pressure, chest pain, and problems sleeping. Research further suggests that stress also can bring on or worsen certain symptoms or diseases. Consider the following:

43% of all adults suffer adverse health effects from stress.
75% to 90% of all doctor's office visits are for stress-related ailments and complaints. Meanwhile, besides the problems listed above, stress can also play a part in heart problems, diabetes, skin conditions, asthma, arthritis, depression, and anxiety.

Is it any wonder that Christ tells us *not* to worry and seeks to guide us into rest and peace in Him?

1. On a scale of 1 to 10, with 1 being “not at all” and 10 being “totally,” explain how much worry and stress control your life?
2. Stress can often occur as we try to balance conflicting interests. (Like balancing living the culture's way and living God's way.) What does Jesus say about this in verses 19-24?
3. In verses 25-34, Jesus calls us to no longer focus on seeking the world's things, but rather seek Him first and solely. How are you doing with this?
4. What things can you do to tackle worry in your life?

PRAYER

- ◆ Thank Jesus for promising to provide all you need if you focus on Him alone
- ◆ Confess to God, if necessary, trying to live for Him and for the world at the same time
- ◆ Ask God to help you live for Christ alone
- ◆ Ask God to defeat worry and stress in your life

TUESDAY

READ: Psalm 23; Matthew 11:28-30

In John Bunyan's classic work, *Pilgrim's Progress*, the main character, Christian, is on a journey. His most steadfast companion on this journey is not a person, but rather a backpack of sorts that is filled with rocks and weights. No matter how much Christian would like to rid himself of this burdensome companion, he cannot....until he comes face to face with the cross.

“He ran thus till he came...upon that place which stood a Cross, and a little below, in the bottom, a tomb...just as Christian came up to the cross, his burden fell from his shoulders, and from off his back, and began to tumble; and so continued to do till it came to the mouth of the tomb, where it fell in, and that was the last I saw of it. Then Christian was glad and full of light, and said, with a merry heart, ‘He has given me rest by His sorrow and life by His death.’”

1. What are some burdens that you have been carrying around with you for a long time?
2. What kind of peace and rest do we see our great Shepherd giving in Psalm 23
3. As you read through Psalm 23, you see the Shepherd “making,” “leading,” “guiding,” “preparing,” etc. All of those require our participation to experience His rest and peace. With that in mind, what do you think you must do or change to experience this?
4. What is your reply to Jesus' invitation in Matthew 11?

PRAYER

- ◆ Thank God for the rest and peace He offers you
- ◆ Confess to God, if necessary, not doing your part to follow the Shepherd and experience the green pastures of His peace
- ◆ Ask God to help you follow the Shepherd
- ◆ Ask God to help you change what you must to experience more of His rest and peace

WEDNESDAY

READ: Romans 8:1-17

After a little boy was given his first slingshot, he practiced nonstop. One day, while practicing in his backyard, he spied his grandmother's pet duck. On impulse he took aim and let fly. The stone hit, and the duck fell dead. The boy panicked. Desperately he hid the dead duck in the wood pile, only to look up and see that his sister Sally had seen it all.

After lunch that day, Grandma said, "Sally, let's wash the dishes." But Sally said, "Johnny wants to do it. Don't you, Johnny?" And she whispered to him, "Remember the duck!" So Johnny did the dishes. Later Grandpa asked if the children wanted to go fishing, but Grandma said, "I'm sorry, but I need Sally to help make supper." Sally smiled and said, "Johnny wants to do it." Again she whispered, "Remember the duck."

Sally had Johnny virtually enslaved with one little phrase, "Remember the duck."

1. It is easy for Satan to enslave us much the same way that Sally did to Johnny. He just keeps reminding us of all we have done wrong. What sin does Satan often whisper "Remember..." to you?
2. What do verses 1 and 2 say about this?
3. Verse 11 states that the same Spirit that raised Christ from the dead lives in you. Satan would have you believe you are powerless to get over your past sins, but how does this verse change that?

PRAYER

- ◆ Thank Jesus that His death and resurrection has defeated ALL your sins
- ◆ Confess, if necessary, allowing Satan to keep you down by constantly whispering "Remember..." in your ear
- ◆ Ask God to help you overcome sin and Satan through the power of His Spirit within you
- ◆ Pray for someone you know who is overrun with sin

THURSDAY

READ: John 14:1-6; Isaiah 49:8-15

My Boy Scout career was short and not so sweet. On one camping trip, we arrived near dusk at a basecamp and were told to hike 500 yards to our camp site....4 miles later...

Lost, tired, and hungry, we preteen boys were getting pretty ornery. Not only that, it was now getting quite dark and even the leaders weren't sure where exactly we were. Finally, a scout leader from another troop found us and lead us safely to our camp site. That was not a fun few hours!

Sadly, though, many people live their lives like my fellow Boy Scouts and I lived those few hours—lost, confused, and desperate for rest. This is a true shame because all the while Christ is seeking to show us, and them, the way.

1. Have you ever been lost somewhere? How does it feel to be lost?
2. How does Jesus reply to Thomas when he states that he and the other disciples don't know the way?
3. What does God say about this in Isaiah 49:9-13?
4. Who is guiding you on the road of life? Give evidence to support your answer:
5. Who do you know who needs Jesus to lead their way?

PRAYER

- ◆ Thank Jesus for being the way, the truth, and the life
- ◆ Confess to God, if necessary, trying to make it through life your own way with your own directions
- ◆ Ask God to guide you all the days of your life
- ◆ Ask God to use you to help others be guided by Him