

BEATING THE ODDS

WEEK 1: IN OUR CHOICES

DAY 1: READ PROVERBS 1

What is the attitude of your heart? When you receive guidance, instruction, wisdom and correction, do you reject it or do you readily welcome it? When we recognize the Lord's love for us, we no longer see His instruction as prison walls, His words as lectures and His lordship as despotism. We begin to see what truly matters. Today, challenge your heart to ponder, pray and listen for the Lord to reveal, guide, instruct, correct and inspire you. Treat His words as prized possessions so that complacency, lavish distractions, sin and callous disregard do not become paving stones on a path toward destruction.

DAY 2: READ 2 TIMOTHY 3:1-9

A lost world looks around at other broken, lost people for validation, approval and comparison. If we continue to base our decisions, priorities and discernment on the broken people and things around us, our decisions will leave us looking exactly like the broken, empty people Paul describes in this passage. As followers of Christ, we listen only for the Lord, looking to His word for truth and being sensitive to the Holy Spirit for direction. Are you still basing your actions, thoughts and decision-making based on the world around you or the unchanging truth of His word? Yield to Jesus and choose to not be "burdened with sins and led astray by various passions, always learning and never able to arrive at a knowledge of the truth."

DAY 3: READ 2 TIMOTHY 3:14-17

As a believer, listening for the voice of the Lord means knowing His word and choosing to obey what He says is true, right and important. Are you struggling to make an important decision? Are you uneasy about something? Pray about it and look to scripture. What does the Bible say? Does it line up with scripture? Do you trust the Lord's words to be sufficient for you? Whether the times ahead are good, bad or every kind of crazy, let's be rooted in God's word, confident in His power and readily equipped to minister the soothing ointment of Jesus to everyone!

DAY 4: READ MATTHEW 13:1-43

What kind of seeds are you planting and where are you planting them? Are you planting weeds and still expecting wheat? What are you feeding your mind, body and spirit? Do your surroundings, hobbies and relationships help or hinder your pursuit of looking, sounding and acting like Jesus Christ? What choices can you make to plant better crops in better fields? What can you do to cultivate health, growth and produce lasting spiritual fruit in Jesus?

DAY 5: READ 1 CORINTHIANS 3 & JAMES 3

In Matthew 15:13, Jesus tells the disciples, "every plant that my heavenly Father has not planted will be rooted up." Lasting, healthy change comes from decisions rooted in the Father. Growing, changing, repenting is not easy, but there is ultimate life in Christ for all who seek Him. Are you making decisions because of ambition, sin, feel-good trends and flavor-of-the-day therapies or is your ultimate goal in life to better pursue, know and imitate Christ? What's something new you can do to better prioritize your pursuit of Jesus today? What things would need to shift or change? Do it!

DAY 6: READ 2 TIMOTHY 4:1-8

It is impossible to ignore the active, living presence and work of God in the world when we are participating in His mission. When we do not go out and put into practice the spiritual life we have received in Jesus Christ, we can lose sense of His presence, our purpose and what salvation in Jesus really means. A life actively engaged in sharing the Gospel, loving others, striving for righteousness and growing deeper in relationship with God is not wasted. Let your obedience and active participation in His mission be proof of the beautiful ways He can redeem broken, sinful people like us.

DAY 7: READ HEBREWS 11:23-40 & 2 TIMOTHY 3:9-13

All of these people chose to obey the Lord and make hard decisions because they trusted Him with their lives. While God spared the lives of some like Moses, Rahab and David because of their obedience to Him, many others in this passage lost their earthly lives, but received the assurance of a better, eternal life because of their faith. Our obedience to the Lord does not guarantee an easy, pain-free life of earthly success, but just like all those mentioned in this passage, they endured immense hardship, pressing on with faith in our Father for a better spiritual legacy in Christ for the world to encounter and enjoy rescue. Will you choose to prioritize His will and obey, even if the immediate outcome doesn't look great?