

How to Live a Good and Meaningful Life – August 17 & 18, 2019
Follow-up Bible Studies

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Day One: Genesis 32:22-32

- Where did Jacob go, and who was with him (22)? Describe their river crossing (23). What happened when Jacob was left alone (24)? How did the man try to get Jacob to stop wrestling him (25-26)? How did Jacob respond (26)? In this bizarre encounter, only by realizing the man's true identity would Jacob demand such a thing. How do you think he knew it was God wrestling him?
- How and why was Jacob given the new name of Israel (27-29)? Wrestling with God is good and worthy of remembrance. How does this sit with you? In what ways does this story paint a picture of life being a strenuous journey toward the kingdom of God?
- How did Jacob get the blessing he asked for (29)? What name did he give to that place (30)? Why (30)? What did he do after seeing God "face to face" (31)? How did the Israelites remember this moment in their history (32)? Ask the Lord how he wants *you* to embrace struggle as part of the journey toward God.

Day Two: Daniel 4

- Summarize King Nebuchadnezzar's salutations (1-3). What sort of first impression do you think he's trying to make? Describe the circumstances of his dream (4-5). What did the King do in response to it (6-9)? Summarize the dream (10-17). Out of all the wise men, why did Nebuchadnezzar trust Daniel the most (18)?
- How did Daniel process the King's request, and what was his interpretation of the dream (19-26)? What advice did he then issue (27)? Nebuchadnezzar's sense of invincible self-sufficiency, symbolized as a large tree, will soon be cut down to suffering. What would you say to him as he stands on this precipice?
- Summarize the dream's fulfillment (28-33). Imagine verse 30 with the King speaking from a place of humility, maturity and gratitude. What would it say instead? Describe Nebuchadnezzar's remarks about his restoration (34-37). What does it look like to live committed to bring honor and glory to God, to walk humbly, etc.?

Day Three: Luke 15:11-32

- Who are the characters in this parable (11)? What did the younger son want (12)? Where did he go, and what did he do there (13-14)? What downturn did he experience (15-16)? How would you sum up this son's misguided approach to life?
- What did the younger son eventually realize (17)? Describe his plan (18-20). What happened "while he was still a long way off" (20)? What did the son say to his father (21)? Summarize the father's response (22-24). The son expected vengeance but instead received the better word of extravagant forgiveness. What is the Holy Spirit speaking to your heart about this?
- How did the older son learn of his brother's return (25-27)? What was his response (28-30)? What did the father say (31-32)? Consider any ways you may block someone's access to God's better word of forgiveness. Repent.

Day Four: Romans 8:18-30

- How do "present sufferings" compare to future glory (18)? What are your own "present sufferings"? What insights does this verse offer on how to interpret them? What can they produce in you?

- Describe the way creation waits (19, 22). Where do you see this eagerness and strain in the world around you? What about within yourself? What exactly is creation awaiting (19-21)? What about believers in particular (23)? What does it mean to hope in the Lord (24-25)? Ask God to make you a person of Christian hope.
- What role do both prayer and the Holy Spirit play in nurturing hope (26-27)? Confess your weakness to the Holy Spirit; tell him all the ways you feel tempted and vulnerable to traps on your journey toward God's kingdom. Ask him to help you pray.
- What hope is there for those enduring darkness (28-30)? When you suffer, picture the Lord calling, justifying and glorifying you. He is for you! Goodness can follow catastrophe! May it be so for you.

Day Five: Ephesians 4:29—5:5

- What should we avoid (4:29)? What should we be sure to speak about (29)? Whom should we not grieve (30)? What must we get rid of (31)? Which of these sins are a particular struggle for you? Repent and ask the Lord for power to avoid such traps.
- How should we treat one another (32)? Focus on Paul's command to forgive, "just as in Christ God forgave you." What does it look like to do this? How can forgiving in this manner free you from the trap of bitterness and lead you toward God's kingdom?
- Whose example should we follow (5:1)? What does this entail (2)? What behaviors should not be among us (3-4)? Why (3)? What should we exude instead (4)? Recall times when suffering or self-denial produced thanksgiving and gratitude in your heart. What meaning did this bring to your life? What is Paul's final warning in this text (5)? Read Hebrews 12:1-3. Ask God to help you throw off sin's entanglement and walk toward an inheritance of his kingdom.