

Life's Missing Ingredients

THE ABUNDANT LIFE (*SECURITY*) – DEVOTIONAL

SUNDAY

Thought – God created us to be whole and in relationship. Then sin entered the world, but we still have that inner longing to feel safe and secure. We will explore a variety of ways longing manifests in the lives of ourselves and our loved ones.

Prayer – *God, your plan was for us to be whole and centered in you. May we be willing to look closely as you guide our minds and hearts. Amen.*

NOTES:

MONDAY – Read James 1: 19-20

Thought – Anger

Post this at all the intersections, dear friends: Lead with your ears, follow up with your tongue, and let anger straggle along in the rear. God's righteousness doesn't grow from human anger. So throw all spoiled virtue and cancerous evil in the garbage.... (The Message) Anger rarely does any good, in fact, it puts up gigantic walls. Let it go. Let it go. And again, let it go. Draw a garbage can in your notes and add some issues that are festering and threatening your sense of peace and security.

Prayer – *God, there is this black knot in the middle of my gut. Right now, I offer it up to your care, because it's doing me absolutely no good. Please teach me your mercy and grace. Amen.*

NOTES:

TUESDAY – Read 2 Corinthians 12: 9

Thought – Shame

....."My grace is all you need. My power works best in weakness." So now I am glad to boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ can work through me. (NLT) Shame is a very different concept than guilt. It can be helpful in recognizing needed changes in behavior or attitude. On the other hand, shame implies that we are defective or unworthy. What has been your experience with either shame or guilt, and how has that impacted your sense of security?

Prayer – *Lord, you always see me with loving eyes and are always ready to help me be honest about my shadows. What a gift! Amen.*

NOTES:

WEDNESDAY – Read John 14: 27

Thought – Fear

“I am leaving you with a gift—peace of mind and heart. And the peace I give is a gift the world cannot give. So don’t be troubled or afraid.” (NLT) In those darkest times, when you are paralyzed with anxiety, breathe in God’s peace. His peace is the central gift of the circle of security and it’s waiting for you, right now. Look out a window up at the sky. Now pick out a cloud and send your deepest fear to rest gently in the middle of its beauty. *“Don’t be troubled or afraid.”* God says so.

Prayer – *For holding my fear, I give thanks. Amen.*

NOTES:

THURSDAY – Read James 1: 5-6

Thought – Doubt

If you don’t know what you’re doing, pray to the Father. He loves to help. You’ll get his help, and won’t be condescended to when you ask for it. Ask boldly, believingly, without a second thought. People who “worry their prayers” are like wind-whipped waves.” (The Message) There is nothing wrong at all with serious questions for God. In fact, that’s how we move from baby food to the full-meal-deal of spiritual maturity. What question do you have for God today? Ask *boldly, believingly*, with persistent respect and an open heart and mind.

Prayer – *God, your ways are so far beyond my grasp that I know I’ll never completely understand your Mystery. But for today, open my eyes. Please fill my heart and mind. Amen.*

NOTES:

FRIDAY – Read Colossians 3: 13

Thought – Forgiveness

Make allowance for each other’s faults, and forgive anyone who offends you. Remember the Lord forgave you, so you must forgive others. (NLT) Forgiveness is such a complicated, sticky web that is difficult to untangle without God’s help. In terms of *security*, the unhealed wounds on a hardened heart are just that, unhealed wounds. Security is about safety, sanctuary, and a willingness to see others as God sees us—with grace and mercy. What are your thoughts?

Prayer – *Lord, in your infinite wisdom, please, oh please, help me! Amen.*

NOTES:

SATURDAY – Read Psalm 100: 3

Thought – Belonging

“Acknowledge that the Lord is God! He made us, and we are his. We are his people, the sheep of his pasture.” (NLT) The world is full of people who feel they are outcasts and do not belong. They sit next to you at church, stand in front of you in the grocery line, and look back at you from your mirror. God longs for you to realize that you really, truly, without reservation and needing no list of references or achievements, are all welcome into the family of God. All means all!

Prayer – *Lord, right now I offer myself again, wholeheartedly to you. Help me remember that I will always belong in the center of your love. In your holy name I pray. Amen.*

NOTES:

THE ABUNDANT LIFE (*SECURITY*) – GROUP GUIDE

PRAYER – *God, we acknowledge that you are already here. May our hearts be open to your presence and to your direction. Amen.*

BIG IDEA – Especially during times of uncertainty, there is a deep longing for authentic security. We will learn about a connected relationship with God, who is our source of intimacy, optimism, and security.

Scripture – Read **Daniel 1: 4-5, 8, 9, 17, 6: 7-10, 16-21**

Discussion Questions:

- The story of Daniel is more than a fiery furnace and a den of lions. At a deeper level, Daniel's narrative is about *sojourners*, *the true source* and *sanctuaries*. Daniel was part of a group of Jewish exiles in Babylon around 587 BCE. Probably chosen for their status, looks and intelligence, Daniel, (a teenager) and his three friends were part of a re-culturation process: eat like us, worship like us, convince your people to be like us. We will even give you new names. King Nebuchadnezzar had a detailed plan. What do you notice about cultivating their minds and bodies in *Daniel 1: 4-5*? How did King Nebuchadnezzar underestimate Daniel in *Daniel 1: 8*?
- An early subtext of the story of Daniel is that he lived the life of a *sojourner*. Babylon was his temporary home, rather than the home of his heart. Later, David said in *Psalms 39: 12* “*For I am your guest—a traveler passing through, as my ancestors were before me.*” (NLT) How did Daniel's refusal to “defile himself” mark him as “not from around here”? Fast forward to today. How are you called to be a *sojourner* in terms of what marks you as “different”?
- Early in Daniel's story we see God's provision for him in *Daniel 1: 9, 17*. What form did that provision take? Early on in *Daniel 2: 17-19* Daniel recognized that God was his *true source* of security. Over and over again, through dream interpretations, rejection of power, a life of simplicity, and worship of the one true God, Daniel was securely anchored. What do you think an anchor has to do with *security*?
- Who would ever imagine a den full of hungry lions as an image of sanctuary? Not 80-year-old Daniel! He was in the service of a third king now, and there was a plot to test his allegiance. Read *Daniel 6: 7-10*. Put these verses in your own words. You may remember the rest of the story from Sunday School, *Daniel 6: 16-21*. Things went crazy but Daniel stayed the course. This is important for us, because in the middle of panic and pandemic, God-in-us is our safe haven, our anchor of *security*. What are some of the lions in your den? Are they about fear, abandonment, worthiness, anger, control, shame, guilt? Feel free to share as you feel able.

TAKE AWAY – God leads the way for us to become beacons of hope and optimism to a troubled world.

PRAYER – *Pray the Lord's Prayer.*