

MONDAY, January 11, 2010:

Philip Yancey in his excellent book, Prayer, recounts the following story that illustrates how God doesn't always fit our expectations, but how we can still trust Him. Yancey expressed as follows:

"On a hill behind my mountain home, each spring a pair of red foxes raise a litter of kits. The parents have grown quite accustomed to me roaming the hill and think it not at all strange that I stop in front of the den and whistle a greeting. Sometimes the young ones poke their faces out of the crevice in the rock, sniffing the air and staring at me with alert, shiny eyes. Sometimes I hear them scrabbling around inside. Sometimes I hear nothing and assume they are asleep. Once, when a visitor from New Zealand stopped by, I took him to the den, warning him that he may see and hear nothing at all. 'They are wild animals, you know,' I said. 'We're not in charge. It's up to them whether they make an appearance or not.'

A bold young fox did poke his nose out of the den that day, thrilling my visitor, and a few weeks later I received a letter from him, now back home in New Zealand. As he reflected on it, oddly enough, my comment about foxes helped him understand God. He had just gone through a long season of depression. Sometimes God seemed as close as his wife or children. Sometimes he had no sense of God's presence, no faith to lean on. "He's wild, you know," he wrote. "We're not in charge."

I'm actually writing this devotional on December 30, 2009. It has been an unusual Christmas season for Sonja and me. It was our first as grandparents (!!), yet we spent several days in the hospital when my father-in-law took a turn for the worse. The last few days have been extremely hectic as we're trying to button up all the last minute details of getting into our new Center for Discipleship. I could go on, but you get the message. You've got stories just like mine.

The point is this: Sometimes you just have to trust God; and I have learned that when you do, He never lets you down.

SCRIPTURE: 2 Samuel 22:31

TUESDAY, January 12, 2010:

Genesis 11:32 *"...and Terah died in Haran."*

The difference between Terah and his son Abraham is that Abraham went the distance. Terah started out on the journey to the Promised Land, but he settled down in Haran and never made it any further.

Abraham made a lot of mistakes, but one thing that he did not do was quit.

What about you? Have you settled down into a comfortable routine that no longer challenges you? Are you, for the most part, just going around in circles with no real direction and purpose for your life?

What I am really asking you is: "Are you really living?"

SCRIPTURE: Isaiah 42:16

"It ought to be the business of every day to prepare for our last day." Matthew Henry

WEDNESDAY, January 13, 2010:

We are one week away from beginning our annual 40-days of Prayer & Fasting. I hope that over the next few days you will be carefully considering how you will push back the plate and anything else that will free up time and resources for you to spend more time with God.

One of the things that I'd like for you to consider limiting in your life is television. Studies have shown that a steady diet of television tends to make people physically lazy. It is so easy to find ourselves relaxing in a comfortable armchair instead of going out, doing something constructive and relating with family, friends, or God.

The fact that you are reading this devotional is evidence that you have a hunger to know God and be close to Him. So I have no doubt that you will be carefully considering how you should prepare yourself for our upcoming 40-days. Today's devotional is just a reminder of one way in which you may want to do so.

I pray that you have a great day. Be of good cheer!

SCRIPTURE: Psalm 119:37

*"The key to building a happy, even romantic relationship with our mates is for us to understand that men and women are different. For example, ladies, you need to clearly understand that your husband does not care what's on television. All he wants to know is what **else** is on television." _Zig Ziglar*

THURSDAY, January 14, 2010:

40-Days Preparations

I bet you would never think of breaking the Ten Commandments. These commandments are divinely inspired, time-honored commands that benefit the entire human race wherever they are observed.

Do you know which commandment is the longest? It is the fourth commandment, which is the commandment that requires us to observe the Sabbath and keep it holy.

In many ways, our 40-days of prayer and fasting is a Sabbath time. It is a time that we "rest" from many of our regular activities and focus on allowing our body, mind, and spirit to rest – to be in the presence of God.

I encourage you to not think of our 40-day season as a sacrifice; but instead, see it as a structured time to observe the Sabbath.

If you will notice, every time that God "rested", there followed an intense time of creativity and progress. The same will be true of you. If you will throw yourself into this year's 40-days, you will find that the rest of the year will be so much better.

SCRIPTURE: Exodus 20:8-11

"The graveyards are full of indispensable men." _Charles de Gaulle, 1890-1970

The moral: Rest! The world can carry on without you☺