THE REAL ISSUE

“As a captive in a foreign land, Daniel determined in his late teens to be true to God. Ushered into the luxurious banquet hall of the Babylonian king, he refused to worship the king’s idols, drink the king’s wine, or eat the king’s unclean delicacies. Yet he did it with such grace that he eventually won the hearts of his captors.

“Daniel’s spiritual integrity continued throughout his life. When he was in his mid-80s, he faced perhaps his greatest test. Conning co-workers schemed against him. They slyly influenced the king to pass a decree forbidding worship of any god except himself for 30 days. Obviously Daniel could not comply. The price for disobedience was high.

“The prophet did not make his decision based on the consequences of his actions. He made it based on faithfulness to God’s Word. Had he considered the consequences, death in the lions’ den, he might have yielded. Being torn apart limb by limb by ferocious bloodthirsty lions is not a very pleasant thought. Anytime the consequences of a decision become the driving force in making a decision, we are likely to yield.

“One of the most successful coaches in the history of professional football was Vince Lombardi, of the Green Bay Packers. A reporter asked why they gave so much of themselves each Sunday. He queried, ‘Why is your team notably different? Why do you leave everything out on the field?’ The players responded, ‘We are not playing for the crowd in the stands or the millions in the television audience. We aren’t overly concerned about what the news media says. We are playing for one thing: Father. He played for the Father’s eyes.’

“Daniel did not play to the crowds. He lived to please his heavenly Father. He played for the Father’s eyes.’

“When the final films of life are shown, living life to please God is the prime purpose of their life was to please God. In making this fundamental decision, Daniel lived a centered life. God’s formula for true peace and lasting success is still the same today.”—Mark Finley, Solid Ground, p. 206.

Sunday

RESPONDING

Read Romans 2:1.

Joshua’s dad and mom divorced. In the years after the divorce Joshua acted out his anger at his situation by getting into trouble with the law. After a few years he straightened out his life. He was doing well in school, had an after-school job, and was being considered for an athletic scholarship for a local private school. Eventually he might even receive a college scholarship, which would mean that his mother wouldn’t have to worry about paying for college. Then some money was stolen from the place where he worked. Everyone acted as if Joshua had gone back to his old ways. Was that fair of them? Why or why not?

Monday

BIBLE ANSWERS ON CHRIST’S MINISTRY IN THE HEAVENLY SANCTUARY

Read Hebrews 4:14-16; Revelation 20:12; Revelation 22:11, 12.

Jesus was tempted just as we are. Through prayer and trust in His heavenly Father He resisted the devil and lived a sinless life. He understands what we face and go through. He offers us help in dealing with our struggles to overcome sin. He has the right to be our judge because He lived without sinning. And He knows us—everything about us! He knows what is in our hearts. We cannot deceive Him. He has begun the investigative judgment that will determine our faithfulness to Him.

What does God know about you and your heart?

How can you prepare to meet Jesus?

Fill in the blanks.

“Therefore, brethren, having ______ to enter the Holiest by the ______ of _______ by a new and living way which He con-

secrated for us, through the veil, that is, His flesh, and ______ a ______ over the ______ of God, let us ______

with ______ in full assurance of faith, having our ______ from an evil conscience and our ______ with ______ water” (Hebrews 10:19-22, NKJV).
Tuesday

REFLECTING

» Read James 2:12, 13.

These are the years when what your friends think of you is probably more important than even what the adults in your life think of you. At this time in your life you probably have a specially chosen group of friends you like to be with. They probably share your interests, likes and dislikes, way of dressing, things to do in your free time, and music that you listen to. And there may not seem to be room in your life for many other people. And that’s OK up to a certain point.

Good friends will help you get through this difficult time in your life when it seems as if your mind and body aren’t in agreement with each other about anything. Because you may feel awkward within yourself, you may not want to be around someone else who seems awkward in your social setting. Unfortunately, instead of being compassionate toward those who are unlike you, you may tend to exclude those people from your life based on what they seem like on the outside.

Jesus says we have to get over it. He was the ultimate example of not judging and not excluding. He treated everyone with respect and concern—even when He pointed out things in their lives that were clearly against God’s law. You can make sure that people are included in group gatherings, that you refuse to participate when others talk about them, and that you give gentle hints that might help them get along better with others.

And if you don’t? One day you may be in their position, and they may treat you the same way you’ve treated them. God says so.

Wednesday

BIBLE INSIGHTS

» In the Bible are texts telling us how God feels about judging. Below are a few of them. Please fill in the blanks.

1. “Do not _______ or you too will be _______.” For in the same way you _______ others, you will be _______ to you. Why do you look at the _______ of your brother’s eye and pay no attention to the _______ in your brother’s _______?” (Matthew 7:1-3, NIV).
2. “The Father _______ no one, but has _______ all _______ to the _______.” (John 5:22, NIV).
3. “Stop _______ by mere _______; but instead _______.” (John 7:24, NIV).
4. “You _______ by human _______; I pass _______ on no one.” (John 8:15, NIV).
5. “At whatever point you _______ another, you are _______; yourself, because you who pass _______ do the same things” (Romans 2:1, NIV).
6. “Speak and act as those who are going to be _______ by the law that gives freedom, because _______ without mercy will be shown to anyone who has not been _______ to the _______!” (James 2:13, NIV).
7. “Brothers and sisters, do not slander one another. Anyone who speaks _______ a brother or sister or _______ them speaks _______ the _______ and judges it. When you _______ the _______, you are not keeping it, but sitting in _______; there is only one _______ and _______; the one who is able to save and destroy. But you—who are you to _______ your neighbor?” (James 4:11, 12, NIV).

Thursday

CONNECTING

» Read John 5:22.

Review the memory text.

God says He, through His Son, Jesus Christ, is the only one who can judge people. And rightly so. They created us, and Jesus lived the life that is ours in this world. No one else in history has had the range of experience of being tempted and rejected as He has. Only He understands the experience of every person who has ever lived and will ever live.

So if we can’t have Jesus’ experience, what gives us the right to judge? Nothing and no one. All we can do is to ask Him for the grace to not do it again. For in the following space.

And what if we don’t? Jesus Himself tells us that in the same way we judge others, we will be judged. Think of a time when you’ve had the experience of being wrongly judged. How did it feel? How would you do things differently next time?

Remember, God is a God of second chances, if you’ve judged someone unfairly before, determine through His power to not do it again.

Friday

APPLYING

» Read James 4:11, 12.

Remember the proverb “Don’t judge any man until you have walked two moons in his moccasins”? Think of experiences you have had being judged or judging others. Think of some other ways to express experiencing what someone else has experienced in order to understand them. For example, Don’t judge a person until you have eaten the food they have eaten. Grab a pencil and write out some of your ideas in the following space.