

Book Review: *Between Sundays*
David P. Stevens

Between Sundays, by Steve Miller, Start2Finish Publishing, Fort Worth, TX, 2019, 143 pp., ISBN-13: 978-1941972939. Cost: \$10.99.

Steve Miller captures the essence of living the Christian life on a daily basis (between Sundays). His book is comprised of thirteen chapters and is designed for use in one quarter of Bible class, but can be used for personal study, in-home Bible study groups and a variety of other uses. Each chapter is followed by questions for discussion. He begins with an introduction and concludes with acknowledgements. There are no indexes.

The book examines thirteen topics: observance of the Lord's Day (Sunday); living by faith, personal Bible study; developing love, being light and salt, serving the Lord and others, practicing the Golden Rule, developing moral purity, working honestly, balancing responsibilities to God, self and others, praying without ceasing, fulfilling one's personal role and responsibilities in the home, and being a faithful member of the church of Christ. The emphasis is on maintaining integrity between one's profession of faith on Sunday and performance of that faith in daily life.

A brief synopsis of each chapter will help the reader to understand the basic concepts contained therein.

Chapter one presents the importance of the Lord's Day (Sunday) in the life of the Christian. Miller shows that in our present culture, there is tension between attending the assembly of the saints and cultural activities that distract from time spent worshipping God. Worship services are "shorter, more superficial, and fewer" (p. 13) in order to accommodate a secular schedule of events that have now crowded onto Sunday. One of the chiefest distractions is sports. The assembly of the members of the body of Christ is for the purpose of worshipping God. We cannot worship God by proxy. We must participate. In order to do this, we must be present.

Chapter two highlights living daily by faith. Our faith must be integrated into everything we do. Faith is the trust that we put in another. Biblical faith is the trust that we put in God. A Christian's faith is made up of: knowledge of the Word of God; mental assent to that Word; confidence or trust; and obedience. Miller demonstrates each of these with scripture. Obedience is exemplified by the Old Testament worthies mentioned in Hebrew 11. Faith is proved by obedience to God. Faith is demonstrated through good works.

Chapter three serves to remind us to continually study the Bible, God's Word. The Word of God is the basis of the Christian life. God desires that we read His Word and study it diligently. Bible study should be integrated in the daily life of the Christian. Miller laments the fact that the Bible is being neglected today in American society. When our Bibles are closed, precious souls will be lost, spiritual growth cannot occur, and spiritual discernment will be impaired. Miller lists seven benefits of Bible study: convicts of sin, purifies from the pollutions of sin, imparts strength, instructs us, gives us a spiritual weapon to use against sin, makes us fruitful, and gives us power to pray. Miller shows the importance of combining personal study of God's Word with the structured Bible classes offered by the local congregation.

Chapter four develops the necessity of practicing the commandments to love God and to love neighbor. Love for God requires giving God first place in our lives and inclining our hearts to do His Will. Love for neighbor involves a committed love that seeks the highest good of our neighbor. We must love God with our entire being: heart, soul, mind and strength (Mark 12:29-31). We must love our neighbor as ourselves. The definition of “neighbor” is given by the Lord in Luke 10:29-37. The Good Samaritan showed mercy to the individual who was in need. Our neighbor is one who stands in need. Mercy is compassion demonstrated by kindness and concrete acts done in behalf of another person. Love is the cure for hate!

Chapter five uncovers the Christian’s duty to be a good example to others. Christians have the power of influence (they are salt and light). When Christians live out their faith between Sundays, they manifest that light to the world. Influence “is the capacity to influence the character, development, or behavior of someone or something” (50). Influence can be positive or negative. It is personal and relational. It is also powerful.

Chapter six focuses on service. This chapter focuses on how a Christian is a slave to Christ and a servant to all. “If any man serve me, let him follow me, and where I am, there shall also my servant be: if any man serve me, him will my Father honour” (John 12:26). Miller offers the example of Paul in Christian service and the example of Dorcas. He affirms that the first mile involves obligation, but the second mile involves heart (love of Christ in us).

Chapter seven considers the Golden Rule. The Golden Rule is affirmed in the words of Jesus in Matthew 7:12, “Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets.” Christianity is “other-oriented.” The Golden Rule is often stated: “Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.” Miller defines the statement as a positive affirmation that enjoins us to give the absolute best that we have to offer to someone else. It is not reciprocal. I do something for you and you, in return, do something for me. Love acts for the highest good of another. What are some things that we desire from others? Miller lists the following— we want: to be accepted and liked, forgiveness, appreciation, and the benefit of the doubt (74-75). The Golden Rule forces us to continually think of others and act for their highest good.

Chapter eight causes us to consider the moral standard by which we live daily. Miller affirms that an absolute moral standard exists in the context of the Law of Christ given in the New Testament. The Old Testament is not our moral standard today. The culture that we live in with its moral and ethical systems is not our standard today. When Christians live out their faith on a daily basis between Sundays, they must follow the moral teaching given in the law of Christ. Christians do not follow the lusts of the flesh. They pursue life in the Spirit. Worldliness involves the pursuit of the lusts of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life (I John 2:15). Jesus Christ and the New Testament prophets and apostles have given us moral principles to guide us as well as lists of specific sins that involve conduct that God’s disapproves. A Christian respects God’s boundaries and lives within them. Christians are called to holiness and must reflect God’s holiness each day as they live between Sundays.

Chapter nine reviews the role of labor in the lives of the saints between Sundays. The work ethic is a biblical principle given by God to Adam and Eve in the Garden of

Eden (Gen. 2:15-20). Work was a part of the life of Adam and Eve after the Fall (Gen. 3:17-19). Miller affirms, "Work is difficult, but it is not a curse" (89). Under the Law of Moses, a person was to work six days of the week and rest on the Sabbath (Ex. 20:8-10). In the Christian age, it is still God's plan that people work (I Thess. 4:10-12; II Thess. 3:7-12). Christian work ethics are God-given and involve: integrity, honesty, commitment, humility, truthfulness, accountability, faithfulness, trustworthiness, positive attitude, behavior and diligence with the best effort, respect and obedience (91). Miller goes on to list five areas of concern in the workplace: the use of the tongue, honesty, use of alcohol, greed and pride.

Chapter ten is an appeal for balance in one's daily life and rebuke of busyness. Christians are often distracted by the things of this world and sacrifice the more important things to the mundane. This causes us to lose family relationships, relationships in Christ, service to God, and productivity in the kingdom of God. Miller offers three solutions to busyness: set goals, eliminate excuses and redeem the time.

Chapter eleven shows the importance of having an active prayer life between Sundays. God must be an important part of our daily lives. Knowing God helps us communicate with God. God is love. He is a God of grace. He is merciful. He is just. He is perfectly righteous. Prayer is entered into by us knowing and trusting in God. We must pray continually. We must pray in faith. We must pray before making major decisions in our lives. When we pray, we know that God will answer. The answer may be yes or no or involve delay. Whatever the answer, God always has our best interests in mind.

Chapter twelve takes up the discussion of the various roles and responsibilities one has in the home. The family is a necessary component of life in society. God designed marriage and the family from the very beginning of human life on the earth. Marriage between one man and one woman for life is God's sacred design. Miller affirms that only sexual infidelity or death severs the marriage relationship (123). In marriage the goal is oneness. This involves compatibility, commitment, and companionship. Children born to the marriage union are a blessing from God. Many challenges face the home in American culture today. Miller lists the following challenges: absentee parents, alcoholism, alternative lifestyles, anti-Christian culture, busyness, child molestation, dishonesty, divorce, euthanasia, financial pressures, gambling, hedonism, homelessness, homosexuality, humanism, immaturity, immoral speech, incest, infanticide, in-laws, lack of communication, living together, materialism, media, minimal interaction, mobility of society, pornography, postmodernism, racism, relativism, sexual immorality, substance addictions, suicide, teen pregnancy, traditional values breakdown, transgenderism, unbalanced work, and family environment (129). On a daily basis, a Christian must contend earnestly for the truth and righteousness that will preserve the home as God would have it to be.

Chapter thirteen relates the Christian obligation to be faithful to God. All New Testament Christians are members of the church of Christ. When an individual obeys the gospel, he/she is added by the Lord to the church. Once we are "in Christ," we have obligations to both God and others. Faithfulness to God requires adherence to God's Word. The New Testament church is not a denomination. It is born of the gospel of Christ. The church must glorify God between Sundays. The church must

stay focused on its mission. The church must maintain its distinctiveness from the world.

Miller completes his book with acknowledgements to those who helped him in its production.

One weakness of the book, in my judgment, is the use of the English Standard Version. The ESV, for instance, double brackets Mark 16:9-20 because the translators do not believe that these passages are authentic. However, the author cites Mark 16:16 on page 135. Also, the ESV alters Gen. 3:16 in such a way that the passage loses its connection to Paul's remarks in I Tim. 2:11-15 where the apostle emphasizes the position of submission for women in the church and in the home. Other weakness of the ESV could be referenced.

Overall, *Between Sundays* is a basic study of the elements of the Christian life that must be lived out on a daily basis. The questions at the end of each chapter provide a means of review and highlighting the main points in the chapter. The book is not an in-depth treatment of the passages of Scripture referenced. However, many Scriptures are cited by the author in attempt to ground his comments in the authority of God's Word. If all of the passages cited are studied in addition to the comments in the book, a greater perspective of the authors intent will be gained.