

WALKING WITH JESUS



Vermilion
Valley
Vineyard
Church
Devotional
Book
2023-24

Walking with Jesus – Vermilion Valley Vineyard Church Devotional

DECEMBER 24

Welcome to the Vermilion Valley Vineyard devotional book, 'Walking with Jesus'. It is designed to move us through the Gospel Story from the cradle of Bethlehem to the cross of Golgotha, through 85 devotional thoughts written by those who call V³ home and its friends.

We start with Luke 1 and drawing from the words of Zachariah in Luke 1:68. "praise be to the Lord the God of Israel because he has come to his people".

'Come to his people', it was the fulfillment of the promise, that was spoken of, in Genesis 3:15. It had come true, the time, when the words that were spoken by the sages of days gone by, the proclamation of the fiery prophets, who warned and foretold of a day when God would come and live among his people, had finally arrived.

Today is a nation we celebrate, Christmas Eve, yes, an evening, though festive, only pointing to a pinnacle that altered and adjusted all humanity. The night before the Christ child comes, the night is long, our path seems clumsy, our way, uncertain. That night, only multiplies, our terror and our fear as we face difficulties.

But the One, who promised the one to come, who he would make all things right, spoke his perfect, Word and our flesh rejoices. We, that lived in darkness, have seen his glorious light and we with resolve, we arise and follow in the rays of his light.

This forerunner announces the arrival of the promised one with his fiery message and strange garb, He would point to the one that was gentle of heart and kind to the broken. The One that has been promised, the One who would be called Emmanuel.

Father, we thank you, that you remembered us, you were not willing to let us go, even though we were unfaithful, we sought other gods, we worshiped the creation more than the creator, you were unwilling to let us go into our ignorance and foolishness. You entered our rat race to show us mercy incomprehensible and love unfathomable, so today we ask that You, Jesus Christ, be born in us afresh. Amen.

DECEMBER 25

'WALKING WITH JESUS' Devotional by Gail Collins

Genealogy of Jesus: Matthew 1:2-17 and Luke 3:23-38

Birth of Jesus: Matthew 1:18-25 and Luke 2:1-7

Adoration of the infant Jesus: Matthew 1:1-12 and Luke 2:8-20

Circumcision and Presentation in the Temple: Luke 2:21-38

The flight into Egypt and return: Matthew 2:13-21

In Matthew chapter 1 and Luke chapter 3, the genealogies of Jesus are listed but they don't match. After researching I found that these very scriptures are used by many skeptics to discount the Bible. I chose to believe God knows all of the connections of these people and that Jesus is the fulfillment of prophecy through them. Instead, I chose to focus on some of the names listed and how God could use some of the greatest and least to bring His son into the world. Adam, who is known for original sin is listed. Kind David was an adulterer and a murderer.

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Uriah, the man David had murdered is mentioned. Rahab was a prostitute and a Gentile. These are just a few examples. God took some events that were evil and used them for our good and His glory!

When Jesus was born, the Heavenly Hosts appeared to the shepherds. It must have been very overwhelming and magnificent! Was it an open vision from heaven? Could others see and hear it from afar? Why were they chosen to receive such a message? They were considered to be dirty, lowly and of no value in their culture.

They were given the greatest message before any King, High Official or High Priest! When the angels left, were the shepherds face down on the ground too scared to move? Did curiosity overtake the fear and they got up to rush to seek out what they had been told? They went and found Jesus wrapped in torn pieces of cloth, not in royal garments. He was sleeping in a feeding trough; maybe the very trough where they had fed their livestock. It had to be very perplexing! The God who made the food for sheep was now lying in place of that food. He would become the lamb who was sacrificed and the body and blood (food) of the New Covenant. After finding the evidence, the shepherds spread the message even though in society, their word wouldn't hold much validity.

Mary treasured all of this attention in her heart. Just like the shepherds, she probably wondered "Why me? Why us? Why were we chosen to bring salvation (Jesus) in physical form and nurture it (Him) to maturity?"

In keeping with Jewish law and the laws of Moses, Joseph and Mary had Jesus circumcised on the eighth day after his birth. He was officially named and recognized by the Temple. After the required forty day purification of Mary, Jesus' parents took him to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord and offer sacrifice. Here they met Simeon and Anna. They both had waited nearly their whole lives to see the Messiah. Simeon was bold to take hold of Jesus and proclaim he could now die in peace. Initially Simeon spoke such marvelous words to Mary and Joseph. His tone took on a dreadful, prophetic tone when he told Mary a sword would pierce her soul. What new mother wants to hear that about her newborn child?

When Jesus was born, the North Star appeared. It drew the Magi or Wisemen from the east to seek out this new king whose birth was announced in the heavens. King Herod was in power over Judea at that time. He was threatened by the idea of a king being born and dethroning him. He discovered the Magi first saw the star as much as two years earlier. This is why it is believed he had the males of the region who were two years and younger killed. The number of young boys killed varies from as few as 6 to as many as 144,000. According to a Catholic Encyclopedia, Bethlehem was a small town and estimated there to only be six to twenty children of that age. Herod may have had all the young boys throughout Judea slaughtered. Regardless of the number, Herod was so fearful of losing power that he was willing to kill them all.

Before the Magi left, they were warned about Herod's plans and told not to return to him. In a dream Joseph was instructed to take Mary and Jesus and escape to Egypt. God had rescued the children of Israel from slavery in Egypt nearly 1300 years earlier. Now he was rescuing them by going back to Egypt to escape an evil ruler among His own chosen people. Hosea 11:1 "When Israel was a child, I loved him, and out of Egypt I called my son."

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Could God have brought Jesus into the world with all the royal amenities he was deserving of? Yes, but He chose to use the foolish things to confound the wise. He chose not to be a respecter of persons and reveal himself to the one's society had outcast. I'm so thankful the Lord loves us so much that He humbled himself to come as a baby as to be able to identify with us on human terms. Father thank-you that you allowed a sword to pierce your heart so that we could be redeemed from our sin. Thank-you Jesus for becoming the lamb who was sacrificed in my place so that I can receive your inheritance. I love you my Most Holy God!

Amen

December 26

Hey, this is Larry and Denise Lauer, we have entitled our devotional Obedience, here is the first section, it is based on Matthew 2:22-23.

After hearing that Herod, the King who wanted baby Jesus killed, was indeed dead. Joseph was told of a dream by the angel of the Lord to take Mary and the baby back to the land of Israel, being obedient and completely fulfilling what the Lord had spoken.

As in life, drum roll please, we get comfortable, relaxed even lazy. It happened as Joseph and his little family is trying to get back to normalcy of life. On the way back home, Joseph learns through another dream, he is warned not to go back home but to Galilee, because Archelaus, son of Herod was now in charge trying to fulfill his father's order.

Joseph took Mary and Jesus to a town called Nazareth, a village less than originally desired but safer. Once again obeying the command of God which came through a dream. In this case, it was a life and death situation.

And here is the second section of our devotional, it is found in Luke 2:39-52.

After attending an annual Passover festival in Jerusalem, Joseph and Mary were to return to Nazareth leaving Jesus, he was 12 years old, with friends and other travelers or so they thought. Instead, he stayed behind at the Temple with religious teachers, for which they were amazed at his understanding and questions. Mary and Joseph were frantic when he didn't show up after 3 days, when they found him that asked him, 'Why would He stay at the Temple? Jesus replied, "But why did you need to search, you should of known that I would have been in my Father's house", but they didn't know what he meant. Jesus returned to Nazareth with his human parents and lived under their authority for the next 18 years. We feel that these show the importance of obedience when we hear God's word. When God has a plan for us, we need to listen and obey.

DECEMBER 27

This is Brett Guthrie and here are my thoughts on Matt 3:1-17, Mark 1:2-11, Luke 3:1-22, John 1:19-34. Whatever some might think about John, no one would dare to deny his success. Almost in spite of himself, John attracted large crowds. His message had a great impact on many. John's preaching was not only the warning of impending judgment, but it was also a call to action. John called upon men to repent and to be baptized. What does John mean by the term "repent"? It means to have a change of mind, to turn around. By repentance John means much more than just a change of one's thinking. It includes this, but it also involves more. I believe that there is an element of sorrow or remorse. Repentance is also, a change of heart and mind that results in a change of course, a change in lifestyle. Matthew does not have our Lord go into detail as to how one's life should change as a result of true repentance. In Matthew, Jesus merely lays down the general requirement: "Therefore, produce fruit that proves your repentance" (3:8). John is calling upon his audience to repent by renouncing and forsaking any human systems other than faith in Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of sins and the gift of eternal life.

To follow Jesus in the waters of baptism is to publicly acknowledge our separation from sin, determination to bring forth fruit unto God, and consecration to His service. May we learn to live in the world, and yet avoid worldliness. Let us seek to prepare men and women for the return of our Lord by teaching about sin, and by calling on men to repent of their sin and turn to Christ for salvation. Let us be like John in finding our joy in pointing others to Christ, rather than seeking the spotlight ourselves.

DECEMBER 28

Hi there, my name is Brandon Smith, and my devotional thought is coming out of the scriptures that are found at Matthew 1:1-17, 4:1-11, Mark 1:12-13, Luke 3:23-38, 4:1-13. These scriptures include the list of ancestors of Jesus and the temptation in the wilderness. With all the promises in the Old Testament and prophecies that were to be fulfilled by the Promised One. As we read through the genealogy of Jesus Christ, we can see time and time again the fulfillment of promises of the kingly tribe that he is to come from. It also teaches us that, even in the ancestry of Jesus Christ, that there were still some very terrible people. There were wicked kings, terrible tyrants, people of ill repute. It seems as if the Bible doesn't hide the ugly of humanity from us. It lets us know that the ugly can be all around us, and yet it is still we that determine who we are. Another thought was: After John the Baptist. Baptizes Jesus, it says that the Spirit of God descended like a dove and Jesus was driven into the wilderness. There he spends 40 days and nights fasting. Wow, what I think is remarkable is the fact that Jesus does not give in to temptation. He stands firm, the struggle is real. We can relate with that struggle and Jesus faces that struggle on the same terms that we do. He continues to be faithful to God. He sets before us an example to follow that we too can partner with the Holy Spirit and confront any temptation coming our way, and we can be faithful to our Father. Praise God, that we have the ability to respond to temptation, It is our God-given 'Response-ability'.

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My name is Tom Duesterhoft, and my devotional message comes from John 1:35 – 2:13. These verses have Jesus gathering his disciples, those whom he chose and also is the telling of the miracle of turning the water into wine at a wedding.

Two of these disciples were John the Baptist's own students, they immediately followed after Jesus when they heard John say, 'there is the Lamb of God'. I'm sure the disciples were familiar with the teaching of Genesis 22, when God provided a lamb for Abraham to sacrifice, these two disciples told others, we have found the very person Moses and the prophets spoke about. What did Moses have to say about this one that would come. Let's look at Deuteronomy 18:18. 'I will raise up a prophet from among the brethren like unto thee, and will put my words in his mouth, and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him.' I can't help but wonder what John the Baptist thoughts were watching his students simply walk away from him. I think he smiled. Because I know what Jesus said about John. There was none greater born of a woman than John the Baptist. Yet John's students left him, and John said not a word. What was so great about John? The very words he said about Jesus, 'He, Jesus, must increase while I, John, must decrease.' These very words are true for all of us today. I must say before Jesus it was all about me, me, me, me. I did what I wanted, when I wanted, and doing this' put me in the darkest of all places. Like so many throughout time, I have to get outside of myself before we cry out for help, that was me and Jesus was waiting. I now know he is always waiting for any and all. Now I have him out in front of me, His simple, yet incredible words have guided, changed, and saved me for myself and this world. These simple and incredible words are for any other ears to hear, he simply says 'follow me', I am walking away from this fallen world and its ways and following the one that is the way. Just as the disciples did.

We should all know about Jesus turning water into wine. I think a lot about this passage because I drank a lot of wine and liquor. It was one of the things that led me into the darkest days of my life. Many people think since Jesus turned water into wine, it must be OK to drink it. I had this same thinking, It is OK to drink some, but not all of it as I did.

Many like myself have NO off switch or moderation button when it comes to drinking. I know from scripture the Lord has nothing good to say about the drunkard, because I was one. But with the Lord's help and His calling me to be His disciple, I had to put that behind me, along with other worldly ways. I do think much about this wine, Jesus made from water. I'm sure some that drank it, were drunk, maybe drunk as a skunk, as they say. But personally, I believe they became instantly sober, and had some kind of buzz they had never experienced before. Their stumbling fog became walking straight and thinking clear. Their bad attitude became gratitude. Any anger into bliss, from lustful to loving thoughts, from wanting more to being satisfied, from a filthy mouth to a faithful heart.

I look forward to this wine with Jesus one day. He did this great miracle before it was his time. Yet he still did it, just think of the greatness, when it is his time to come, and He will do it. Come, Jesus, come.

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This is Michelle Hansbraugh, and my devotional is coming from Matthew 21:12-13, Mark 11:15-17, Luke 19:45-46

Jesus went to the temple and was angered when he saw the merchants and the loan sharks. They were taking advantage of the Gentiles. The high priest of the church let the merchants set up in the only area the Gentiles could come and worship God. They were not allowed past this point for fear of punishment of death. To worship “Ya-Way” at this temple was distracting as it was crowded with merchants and people buying and selling. They were likely peddling the sacrifices to take into the temple instead of bringing them from home, being a true sacrifice as it was intended. They didn’t have sacrificial love of God in their hearts. The gentiles couldn’t worship God. there wasn’t room for them. This angered Jesus very much. so much so that he started flipping tables and throwing the merchants out.

They were mistreating the people who were there to worship. Jesus hated mistreatment, hypocrisy, and religion. Once he did that the people were able to come get fed and healed. The loftiest of the priests were in the center of the temple. The gentiles were on the fringes. Jesus teaches on the fringes. Most the time, you see, Jesus’ teaching in a field, a boat, a house. In the trenches. This is where people could go to hear him, without the high priests or any judgement. I’m sure, they wouldn’t have been caught dead, being among the people Jesus hung out with. He wanted the unsaved. God isn’t lofty. He isn’t “religion”. He is love and sacrifice. He is healing and grace and forgiveness. I think Jesus wants us to be wise in how we are in our lives. We are a walking testimony of God’s love. We need to be wise with our words and actions. We don’t have to pretend to be perfect. We just need to show love. Ask God today how you can further his kingdom. Pray to him. Let Jesus flip your table if needed and get rid of the chaos. Listen to his quiet words.

December 31

Come into His presence with thanksgiving & into His courts with praise

The pinnacle of this week has been _____

January 1

Hey, this is Jill Jones, and my Devotional is coming from John 3:22-36

Jesus and the disciples went into the Judean countryside where Jesus was baptizing people. At this same time John the Baptist was baptizing people at Aenon. John’s disciples went to him with concerns. Because more and more people were going to Jesus to be baptized and less were coming to John the Baptist.

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John's response was 'No one can receive anything unless God gives it from Heaven. 'John also expressed joy at the success of Jesus and stated' He must become greater and greater, and I must become less and less'. So much comes to mind when reading these verses and the response of John the Baptist. When reading his response about us not being able to receive anything unless God gives it serves as a reminder to me that all I have and all that I have accomplished was only because God blessed me with the ability to gain or accomplish these things. Everything we have is because He has given it to us.

Now when John the Baptist expressed joy at the success of Jesus, and stated that he knew that he had to become less and less for Jesus to become greater, those verses made me wonder...How would many of us be in that situation? Would we be able to step aside and let Jesus be the 'star of the show'? John the Baptist did it with such ease. This serves as a reminder to me, that I need to make sure to keep Jesus as my focus and not be self-centered. Sometimes it's easy to fall into that 'it's all about me' mentality. It should always be about HIM.

These verses end with the reminder that anyone who believes in God's son will have eternal life and anyone who doesn't obey Jesus will not. I know that I need to remain strong in my belief and not just by talking about it. I need to do my best to 'walk the walk' as a follower of Jesus.

January 2

Hello, My scripture lesson is found in Matthew 4:12, Mark 1:14, Luke 4:14, John 4:1-42, and I have entitled my devotion, 'Just let God do it.'

A lot has happened to us all, this past year. We lost loved ones, our health and so much more. Sometimes it takes us hitting bottom to realize we're not alone. God's here with us every day. You see, it is up to us and sometimes we blow it.

We are all given choices, and half the time, we make the wrong decision. Sometimes, we just need to stop and realize that God has us. If we choose His way, because He does know both, the beginning, and the end of all our actions. So, because he knows. Where to go? And when to go? He simply wants time to walk with us, as He did in the beginning, when we were just beginning our walk with Him. He desires to talk with us and that we would live life the way He desires for us to live.

We need to Choose to do it his way. We may not like it or even understand at first, but in the end, we will know it was worth it. The rewards are great, not always as we see them at the time.

Whether good or bad? He's always with us, He request is that we choose Him to be the focus of all our desires. To walk with him and to partner with him to bring his Kingdom into this broken world. I came the closest to God than I have ever been in this past year. Oh, I have learned He has been with me all my life, but this year was a battle is still difficult, but He is fighting with and for me. You see, after losing Lonnie, my soul mate in 2020. I learn to lean more on God, yet I still felt incredibly lonely. But God was so faithful to me and got me through those days of transition.

Then the first of this year, I entered the battle for my life for 'My Life.' Long story made short, I was given no hope, with a diagnosis of 4th stage cancer. The surgery is more complicated with my

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diagnosis of stage 4 COPD. My chances are not good and that's when I decided to just to 'let God do it.' He knows how it's going to end, and that is surely something I don't know. In my Prayer, I said, 'OK. Whatever! Whenever! I'm Yours.'

For me, I will follow your footsteps, I feel like I have been through hell and back, but he has me here today, to let everyone know that "He is real." He loves us all, just stop, Breathe, and think of Him, when you make a choice.

The battle is still on. I'm at Stage 4 cancer with stage 4 COPD. But I am still Doing life. filled with God
Will you make Him, Your Lord even in the tough times,
God bless you, Paula Courson.

January 3

Hey there, my name is Cat Wolf and my devotional message is entitled, A Prophet Has No Honor in His Own Country

We have all heard the phrase "familiarity breeds contempt" however Jesus experienced it repeatedly as recorded in the four gospels. In Matthew 4:54-57 those who knew his family were offended by him. They mocked him by calling him the son of Mary...denying his virgin birth and alluding to their belief that he was conceived in adultery, not by the Holy Spirit. Even though the prophet Isaiah was quoted in Matthew 4:13 "...The people who sat in darkness have seen a great light, and upon those who sat in the region and shadow of death, Light has dawned." It was written long before the savior became flesh approximately 700 to 740 BC and being religious scholars, they should have recognized the Word made flesh was dwelling among them!

In Mark 1:15 Jesus proclaims: "...The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel." But again, in Mark 6:1 it is recorded "Then He went out from there and came to His own country, and His disciples followed Him. 2 And when the Sabbath had come, He began to teach in the synagogue. And many hearing Him were astonished, saying, 'Where did this Man get these things? And what wisdom is this which is given to Him, that such mighty works are performed by His hands! 3 Is this not the carpenter, the Son of Mary, and brother of James, Joses, Judas, and Simon? And are not His sisters here with us?' So, they were offended at Him.4 But Jesus said to them, 'A prophet is not without honor except in his own country, among his own relatives, and in his own house.'" 5 Now He could do no mighty work there, except that He laid His hands on a few sick people and healed them. 6 And He marveled because of their unbelief." It's sad that they recognize his giftings, but they still reject him, because they know his humble beginnings! Even sadder is the loss to the community because he could not do any mighty work there because of their unbelief based on familiarity to his past.

Luke's recording of the event was even more painful, when Jesus confronted them for their unbelief: 4:23 He said to them, "You will surely say this proverb to Me, 'Physician, heal yourself! Whatever we have heard done in Capernaum, I do also here in Your country.'" 24 Then He said, 'Assuredly, I say to you, no prophet is accepted in his own country. 25 But I tell you truly, many widows were in Israel in

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the days of Elijah, when the heaven was shut up three years and six months, and there was a great famine throughout all the land; 26 but to none of them was Elijah sent except to Zarephath, in the region of Sidon, to a woman who was a widow. 27 And many lepers were in Israel in the time of Elisha the prophet, and none of them was cleansed except Naaman the Syrian.’ 28 So all those in the synagogue, when they heard these things, were filled with wrath, 29 and rose up and thrust Him out of the city; and they led Him to the brow of the hill on which their city was built, that they might throw Him down over the cliff. 30 Then passing through the midst of them, He went His way.” So now it is not enough to mock him and his mother, but they actually try to kill him! It is also recorded in John that “a prophet has no honor in his own country. “

In light of this account in all four gospels, my questions are:

What does my Savior want me to learn from “a prophet has no honor in his own country”?
Who have I judged because of their family’s background instead of that person’s merit and character?
Who have I written off because of religious differences?
What opportunities have I missed out on because of my own prejudice or cowardice?
Who else has suffered because of judgments I have made?
What opportunities, breakthroughs or friendships have gone by the wayside?
What dreams did God place in my heart and what am I doing with them?
Have I bought into the lies of the enemy, spoken out of the mouths of peers and family members?
In light of these questions, I accept that there is a need for repentance for me and a need for a whole-hearted pursuit of the destiny God has for me! Jesus never bought into the devil’s lies, instead he pursued the destiny that God had placed into his heart. He was not alone here are some Old Testament examples:

- Joseph was called by God to save Israel as a little child but was sold into slavery by his own brothers. He later became second in command to the ruling nation of the day and saved his entire family who opposed him and wanted to kill him!
- David was mocked by his brothers when he wanted to confront Goliath, but David killed the giant!
- Hannah was accused of being drunk at church when she was crying out of her soul to God for a child, but this barren woman was given a child of her own...the prophet Samuel who anointed David as king!
- Rahab (a known prostitute) protected the spies sent from Israel and saved her entire family....she is listed in the lineage of Christ in the gospel of Matthew (1:5)
- Ruth left her own country and her own people to take care of her mother-in-law knowing it meant a life of sacrifice of poverty in a foreign land. As she gleaned the fields for fallen grain, she met the man of her dreams who saved her and her mother-in-law. She too is listed in the lineage of Christ!

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I try to be grateful for those who have contributed (good or bad) to my life, but I cannot let them define who I am, or who God is for me. I have to listen to that still small voice of my Father who loves me. I also need to open my heart to the God given gifts of those around me, never should I sabotage the callings of my brothers and sisters in Christ? In the end it will be me who stands to give an account of my life, I may not be accepted by those who think differently than me, but I will be accepted by God!

January 4

Hello, my name is Stephanie Holycross and the Scriptures that I am drawing my devotion from are Matthew 8:14-15, Mark 1:21-31, Luke 4:31-39

As I'm studying the scriptures I am stirred with the song "Promises" by Maverick City Music featuring Joe L Barnes and Naomi Raine. It just affirms that God is faithful and true, when He speaks, it will come to pass. I believe in the power of prayer and healing. I have been healed from the spirit of depression and I have seen others healed from diseases and other ailments. I know that some feel that God doesn't heal miraculously today. Some believe that God only heals a person if he or she has enough faith. Others believe physical healing today only occurs through medicine, but that does not mean God isn't involved in the process. I have seen miraculous healing with and without medical help. I have also seen unbelievers healed through petition prayer by loved ones, so why would anyone be so silly to think that the almighty God could only heal one way or another.

There are times when we try to solve our own problems or find our own answers. Other times we pray once or twice, and then allow discouragement to paralyze our petitions. We also need to understand that we are children of the Almighty God, that we are who His word says we are and believe in what He says we can do. We have been called to walk in His steps. The key is for us to believe in Him. Jesus healed throughout his life on earth; we must still believe he is able to do it as he works in/through us. We really just need to remember we are not God and that we need Him, it is only through Jesus that we have any authority via prayer and healing.

In all three scriptures, there is the story of Jesus healing Peter's mother-in-law of a high fever. After she had been healed, she had gotten up and began to wait on them. There are two points I believe they were trying to get across in their writings. One is that she didn't receive her healing because of her works. Peter's mother-in-law was healed only by God's loving grace, and two She had gotten up and served because she was thankful for His loving grace.

In Mark 1:21-31 and Luke 4:31-39 Jesus was not just reciting passages of scripture he was actually teaching the word of God and the people noticed. Their minds and hearts had been opened, and they were understanding that the Jewish rabbis had been speaking legalism and tradition. In these verses they recognized the difference, and that Jesus came with authority. After the teachings and Jesus rebuking the demon, the news about Jesus spread quickly. I believe this is just another reminder that we are to spread the good news.

All three books emphasize Jesus' power and authority but also his gentle caring love. Through our personal relationship with Him we learn how much we are loved, who we are in His eyes and the

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power and authority we are given through Holy Spirit. We are to give God the praise and worship he deserves, spreading the good news and serving Him because of his loving Grace and Faithfulness.

January 5

My name is Robbie Koch, and my devotional scriptures are Matthew 4:23, 8:16-17, Mark 1:32-39, Luke 4:40-44. It is with God's help; He has helped me removed the drinking days from myself. My starting date was October 11, so I have a birthday coming up in this October 11, it is my 18th years. But if I continue in God's word, the Bible, there will be another demon that will leave me and it will be the 'best' birthday ever, this demon was with me and living in before I ever had my first drink or my first experience with drugs, and it is porn.

Luke 5:31 Jesus cast out a demon and that is what God is doing for me, Jesus healed many people back then, but He is still healing people today including myself. I've been in AA for a long time, but my life began when I met Pastor Jay and Brandon my life begins. Crowds follow Jesus spreading the good news about the kingdom, we are doing that right now. Matthew 8:16-17 tells us that many demons possess people that Jesus cast out. A friend told me to, "wipe your knees off and start again." I didn't understand then, in men's group, but I do now. With so many attempts and failures, but I cannot let my heart grow hard, you have to keep trying. God knows me so well, he's going to make it work for me, nothing has ever been easy for me. Purity is easier said than done. What better verses for myself, because it is being cast out, as I am writing this, after so many fails and attempts, I'm finally becoming a man of God and is quitting now. I want to talk about the people, God put in my life, who are the only people who told me You can succeed Robbie.

Rachel Fear probably has no idea how much she has helped me to stay Walking in the Light. The moment Pastor Jay let me help him with the prayer cards for the people, in Iraq traveling from Iran, trapped in the sex trafficked industry. He asks me to pray that God's great Kingdom would lift these broken girls and boys out of brokenness and into the arms of people who would love them like Jesus loves them, The Church. Don't tell God doesn't have something to do with me being free for the first time in my life. So many people have helped me men's group, V 3 Church. Greg Hansbraugh says, "stop feeding the beast, and He will die." Scott Covington, always says we do everything for God's glory, my life began at V3, and I hope like heck it ends there. The Holy Spirit that raised God from the dead is the same Spirit urging me to write this. Let that sink in Friend, Today, "My Prayer is that My Heavenly Father is proud of me, his son.

January 6

Hey there, This is the scriptures for Randy Fletcher, my devotional thoughts are based on Matthew 8:1-4 and Matthew 9:1-4; Mark 1:40-2:12; Luke 5:1-26; John 5:8-9. From my earliest childhood memories, I remember my Sunday school teacher teaching me, a simple prayer, "God's Will be done". It was an additional phrase that was put on to all prayers, just in case, you were asking for something that you were not to receive. I'm sure I've prayed many prayers with the wrong motivation

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asking for wealth or health or something that would make my life better. When hindsight tells me, that God was working to make my future better and I was more concerned about 'Right-now'. I was concerned about appearances, and He was making my 'unseen', worthy of eternity. But I don't think I frustrated or bothered Jesus to the point that he was indignant.

Yet in the scriptures that I was to study, there is a place that it said Jesus was indignant. Some Manuscripts translate mark chapter one, verse 40 that Jesus was full of compassion, but the NIV translates that that he was indignant. I can't help but pause. And think, why was Jesus indignant? How many times have you been in a discussion with someone? And all of a sudden, their emotion, their tone changes, and it is as if they are frustrated or irritated at you. When that happens to me, my first question I usually ask is. "Is it something I said?". Thinking I may have said something, that came out wrong or came out offensive.

In this scripture, uniquely to Mark, it reads in verse 40-41, a man with leprosy came to him and begged him on his knees. If you are willing, you can make me clean. And verse 41, Jesus was indignant.

In all the recorded interactions that we read that Jesus had with sick and broken people. There isn't one time that I've read that he was unwilling to heal. Could it be, the idea of holding back healing is a reflection, of what we think, God thinks of us. Maybe that should be a part of our repentance process. Maybe we should repent of that because we have completely misunderstood God's tremendous love for us. We may gravitate to the idea that his love for us is performance-based. Maybe we have equated his love with our type of love and that it is self-seeking. We come to Jesus with our brokenness and even our request for healing may reveal a deeper level of brokenness that we've been never aware of. In all these scriptures. Jesus responds with healing, because we are followers of Jesus, may we catch a view of the bigger picture that our brokenness in this humanity may help us to see Our Heavenly Father in a better light. That he is truly a healing, and I insert, 'Willing' God.

January 7

Come into His presence with thanksgiving & into His courts with praise

The pinnacle of this week has been _____

January 8

This is the January 8th reading for the Vermilion Valley Vineyard Devotional Book, Walking with Jesus, insights from Judy Mattis

The scriptures that have been given to me, are found in Matthew 9:9-13, Mark 2:13-17 and Luke 5:27-32. All three of these talk about the story of Jesus and the tax collector, Matthew. The purpose, of these stories, is to encourage the disciples to show mercy to others.

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There were several meanings for the word, 'mercy', in the dictionary, as I read how Jesus taught about being merciful and he urged them to develop an ability to give and receive mercy. The dictionary's meaning that seemed to fit what Jesus is encouraging us to do, "is to develop the power to forgive or be kind", sometimes being kind to someone who has wronged you, can lead to forgiveness. Through my many years of living, there's been times, when I felt the need for forgiveness, sometimes wanting it from others and sometimes needing to give it to others.

Since studying these scriptures, it has shown me, that being kind can lead to extending forgiveness. Jesus showed kindness to the tax collectors and the others, who were ostracized by the religious leaders.

I believe if you ask him for help to be kind to those who have wronged you, it could eventually lead to forgiving them.

January 9

Hello, this is Val Cross and I have entitled my devotional, "The Man with the withered hand". It is found in Luke 6:6–11. And it reads, "On another Sabbath day, a man with a deformed right hand was in the synagogue while Jesus was teaching. The teachers of religious law and the Pharisees watched Jesus closely. If he healed the man's hand, they planned to accuse him of working on the Sabbath. But Jesus knew their thoughts. He said to the man with the deformed hand, "Come and stand in front of everyone." So, the man came forward. Then Jesus said to his critics, "I have a question for you. Does the law permit good deeds on the Sabbath, or is it a day for doing evil? Is this a day to save life or to destroy it?" He looked around at them one by one and then said to the man, "Hold out your hand." So, the man held out his hand, and it was restored! At this, the enemies of Jesus were wild with rage and began to discuss what to do with him

Zechariah 7:12 says, "They made their hearts as hard as stone, so they could not hear the instructions or the messages that the LORD of Heaven's Armies had sent them by his Spirit through the earlier prophets. That is why the LORD of Heaven's Armies was so angry with them."

You see, the right hand was the hand of power back in Jesus' day. The restoration of the withered hand portrays the deliverance brought to Jesus' people. Jesus will begin to move in your life when you sense the loss of your own personal power. We may be in a situation where you feel hopeless – powerless over situations in your life, addictions in your life but that is where God will meet you. One of the reasons we don't feel the power of God is because we have not come to the fact that we have a withered right hand. We have no power in and of ourselves. As it says in, 2 Cor 12:10, 'That's why I take pleasure in my weaknesses, and in the insults, hardships, persecutions, and troubles that I suffer for Christ. For when I am weak, then I am strong.'

If it was in one's power to do good to someone in such dire need, it would be wrong, not to do so, whatever the day of the week. The Sabbath was not designed to make men suffer. The Pharisees seem to have lost sight of this. May God help us, Not to become blind to these truths.

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January 10

Hey there, my name is Tom Deusterhofs, my devotional thought comes from Matthew 4:24-5:12, Mark 3:7-13, Luke 6:17-23

We must know that before this sermon, Jesus had performed many miracles. Not only to heal and help people, but also to draw them, near to him, so that they could hear the good news, the message, the Word of God. It is what is important, then and now. This sermon was spoken many times and to many crowds, because it speaks a lot about the basic truths that Jesus was trying to communicate. This sermon speaks, into, who we must become and what we will face. Just as he faced difficult moments, he tells us that we are going to face some also, moments of being mocked and persecuted, but We should be glad. Why? Because this shows and teaches us that, we are no longer of this world.

We are separated from it. The world loves its own, but not us, because we are, of Jesus. Some of these characteristics and virtues, we already have, others we will have to work on. This is where repentance comes in. Exchanging the old for the new. We should always be trying to become more like him. I think of these many crowds, Jesus spoke to, as I think of many of them today. I say this in prayer, Father. All the people that are in this world, they need you, But only a few truly want you. But for me, I bow before you because, I need you. But I bow before you freely, because I choose to, because I want you, Amen.

This sermon speaks to me. It reveals to me that we all need God because we were created by him to be with Him. We are not complete without him, but when we realize this void in our lives and we see that we are not complete without him. Our need turns into our want, a want, a personal and real desire for Jesus, because only in Him, Our Creator, is there true and satisfying relationship.

January 11

Insights from Ruth Hunt on the scripture Matthew 5: 14 – 16.

I have entitled my devotional, Beacon of Light.

You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead, they put it on a stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in Heaven.

Growing up in VBS (Vacation Bible School) during the summers or in Sunday School class as a child we often sang the song: "This Little Light of Mine." Many times, we were holding a candle or small flashlight. The words "this little light of mine, I'm going to let it shine" (3 times) followed by "hide it under a bushel 'no', I'm going to let it shine." (3 times) As a child, I thought it was about the light that I held in my hand. Years later, I came to understand that it was about ME and my life.

In our world, we see light used to help people find their way to safety or to find their way home. Examples are the lighthouses for ships, the airport beacons for airplanes and streetlights. Light reveals what is there and shows the way. Light is used often throughout the Bible as good as opposed to darkness (which is bad). All Christians are light as it says in Ephesians 5:8 and must shine

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as lights as it says in Philippians 2:15. Christ calls himself “the Light of the world” as it says in John 8:12. As lights of our world, we are to set Christian examples by our good living. As Disciples of Christ, we are to be forward, unafraid to share our commitment to our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, and to become a beacon of light for others.

Prayer: Lord, help us to always do as Jesus would do, to set good examples for others, and to shine our light to draw others to Your word.

January 12

Devotional submitted by Gail Collins based on the scriptures:

Matthew chapter 5: 17-42, Mark chapter 9: 43-48, Luke chapter 16: 16-30.

In the book of Matthew chapter 5 Jesus begins the sermon on the mount and the teaching of the Beatitudes. We love to watch movies that depicts Jesus telling us “Blessed are...” and the redemption we are promised to receive as a follower of Christ. Those words bring comfort and hope. Then suddenly that sermon turns to one that examines us to the depths of our souls! It’s like God pulls out a magnifying glass and finds the tiniest defects. Murder, adultery, divorce, eye for an eye! What happened to the blessings of the beatitudes? Jesus made it clear that the Law is still important, and all of the Law will be fulfilled! These scriptures challenge our ability to keep the law even to our very thoughts. And this challenge was given by Jesus himself. The impossibility of humans keeping the Law makes us surrender to our only hope of salvation, Jesus the perfect Law keeper!

Then in Mark chapter 9 verses 43-48, we are told to cut off body parts that have caused us to sin. That it is better to enter eternal life maimed than go into hell with a complete body. Would cutting off an arm or a leg keep us from breaking the law? Would plucking out an eye keep us from picturing lustful things in our minds and hearts? The root of these sinful things goes much deeper than our physical body parts. We need to tear out the roots of sinful thoughts and actions. When we allow these weeds to take root, they spread quickly and choke out the good things God has planted in our lives. We need to stop cooperating with the enemy and chop off or pluck out anything that is hindering the growth of healthy relationships, habits and goals. The enemy’s plan is to steal, kill and destroy. God’s plans are to give us abundant life which includes love, peace, joy, grace, mercy, provision, health, family, friends and so much more!!!!

Then in Luke chapter 16 verses 16-17 we are told how important the Law is. That it is easier for heaven and earth to disappear than for the least stroke of a pen to drop out of the Law. A capital “L” is used like a proper name that is living and active and can’t be ignored! The Law still has to be obeyed/fulfilled even when grace/mercy has been paid. A judge must hand down a sentence because the law has been broken and the offender needs to be punished. But when we are about to be put in handcuffs and carted away, Jesus turns the bailiff away from us and puts his own wrists in the cuffs. He allows himself to be put in the cell on death row. He did all of this before we were even aware of it. Before we knew that our record had been expunged. Before we knew we would be told we are “free to go”! Once we are aware that we no longer have criminal charges against us, it is our responsibility to accept the resolution of our case. The required penalty has been fulfilled. The judge sits at his bench giving his expectations before we go back out into society. He asks us to carefully

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consider what miraculous thing has just happened to us. He advises us to not ever return to the actions that got us here in the first place. He has granted us a taste of true freedom again. There is no one else to step in our place to take our punishment again. As it says in Hebrews 6: 4-6- “It is impossible for those who have once been enlightened, who have tasted of the heavenly gift, who have shared in the Holy Spirit, who have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the coming age, if they fall away, to be brought back to repentance, because to their loss they are crucifying the Son of God all over again and subjecting him to public disgrace.”.

God’s grace was free to us but priceless to the Father. It cost Jesus his life! If we choose to keep on sinning and abuse this grace, we essentially tell God we don’t want to abide by the covenant/agreement. Thus, the verses in Luke chapter 16 continue at verse 18 where the Lord discusses divorce and the committing of adultery. Even though there are legitimate reasons for divorce, there are real effects when we choose that path. Just as in a marriage we have to remain in the covenant. We can’t allow in things that sever the one flesh back into two. God is a jealous God. He is jealous for us and wants to remain in covenant with us! Our part in the covenant includes staying in relationship with our betrothed. Resisting the devil so he will flee no matter how many times he comes back dangling a new shiny apple.

Then in Luke 16: 19-30, Jesus continues with the story of Lazarus and the rich man. We are never given the rich man’s name, but we get a picture of his status. Dressed in purple (the color of royalty), and fine linen. He was an A-lister/Elite of his day. He walked daily passed Lazarus who sat outside the rich man’s gate. Lazarus is poor, hungry, and covered in sores that dogs came and licked. Lazarus longed for scraps of food from the rich man’s table. It is doubtful the rich man ever laid eyes on Lazarus. Then Lazarus died and was taken to the side of Father Abraham in Paradise. The rich man also died and was in torment in hell. Now he did lay eyes on Lazarus and begged Abraham to have him come give him a drip of cool water to cool his tongue. Why ask Lazarus to do it and not Abraham himself? Abraham reminds the rich man of the good life he lived while on the earth and how Lazarus lived in agony. They spoke across a great chasm/gorge that was set between Paradise and hell. Those in Paradise could see the agony of those in hell but chasm prevented from going to help them. The rich man realizes he is forever lost and again begs for Lazarus to do something for him. To rise from the dead and warn his family so they will repent. The rich man had daily opportunities to help Lazarus but chose to ignore him.

Why did Jesus tell this story? Was it to teach us that when we are comfortable with our lives, we may be enjoying the best we will ever know? That our blessings are meant to be used to relieve others’ agony? Was it also to teach the absolute separation from the source of life if we refuse the invitation to follow him? It is definitely a very sobering story that will make us examine how we treat “the least of these” spoken of in Matthew 25:40. Jesus did rise from the dead and has warned us of the “place of torment”. Let us look for those who are poor, hungry and covered in sores. Let us shoo the dogs away and take them to eat more than scraps from our tables. Let us clothe them, befriend them and give them a cool drink! Lord Jesus, thank-you that you came to warn us of living for ourselves and the joy that awaits us when we trust in you! Amen

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January 13

Hey, this is Phil Pucek and my devotional thought is coming from Matthew 5:43-6:6 and Luke 6:27-36.

The Golden Rule (Lk 6:31) says 'Do unto others as you would have them do to you'. Yet, in today's world we are told 'If it feels good, just do it' ignoring what effect your actions have on others. In the Sermon on the Mount, we are told by Jesus to 'Love all, even our enemies' (Matt 5:43-46). The question should be raised 'How can we do what we want with no regard for others and say that we follow Jesus?' As followers of Christ we need to show our love for others by thinking of how your actions will affect them before we act or 'Just do it'. Acting in love we will be able to eliminate most of the conflicts we find in our lives.

The giving of alms, which is found in Matthew 6:1-4, in bible times was an act of charity and only solicited by the unfortunate. The hypocrites, feigning principles, literally sounded horns under the pretext of calling the poor to receive their alms, with no other design than to gratify themselves by giving alms in public and receiving their reward. When we give, we should give in private, and God will see in private and reward openly.

As the hypocrites pray, Matthew 6:5, they pray in public to be seen by man. As we pray, Matthew 6:6, we need to pray in private in our prayer closets.

January 14

Come into His presence with thanksgiving & into His courts with praise

The pinnacle of this week has been _____

January 15

Hey, This is Brett Guthrie and I am sharing from Matthew 6:7-15, Luke 11:1-4.

Prayer is not getting things from God, that is the most initial stage; prayer is getting into perfect communion with God, I tell Him what I know He knows in order that I may get to know it as He does. This is what Jesus is showing us about our Father. Why pray if he already knows what we need? Because God wants to have a relationship with you and not be to you a genie in the bottle granting wishes. God is looking at you and listening to you all the time, not just when you need something. Think of prayer as a conversation.

The prayer begins by declaring that we desire God. Not only do we desire God, we desire God's plan and purpose to be accomplished in this world and in our own lives. We recognize that God's name is holy, and we want to be holy and revered in all the earth. We want God's kingdom to continue to conquer peoples and nations through the proclamation of the word. We want all people to belong and submit themselves to God's kingdom. We want God's will to be done in everything. Our prayers

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are to be filled with seeking God, seeking his glory, and seeking his will. Prayer is not an exercise, it is the life. Prayer imparts the power to walk and not faint.

To ask for our daily bread is a reminder of Israel's time in the wilderness where God provided for his people every day. Every day that they woke up, God had taken care of them. Their shoes did not wear out. Even though they did not know where water and food would come from; God brought them the water and the food they needed at just the right time. They had what they needed for survival. This is a picture of our ability and willingness to trust God when we do not know how we will be cared for tomorrow. It is truly living hand to mouth or paycheck to paycheck. It is a complete dependence on God. What a blessing that we can pray for our physical needs and concerns! I have what I need because you, Lord, have given it to me.

January 16

Life is a struggle for everyone, and I have had my fair share. I believe I have learned and grown from my struggles, and I try to thank God for all of them. I personally have had issues with anxieties and depression, to the point of being so depressed I didn't want to go on, and so anxious that I would stand in the streets waiting for my children to return home safely. Over the years thru hard work and study, I have learned that God is in control, not me. Matthew 6:25-34 and Luke 12:22-32. By putting my faith in God and knowing he will take care of me, I have been able to relax and let go of these worries. Sometimes, in my head, I will sing the old hymn, that is titled " God will take care of me. " . Something else I have personally struggled with is being judgmental. As a newly born Christian, I did look at non-Christians as not up to my standards.

I would see sometimes the things going on and think that could never be me. I would never do that. I had spent some time studying the Bible, deep diving, and really thought of myself as fireproof. But as the old saying goes, never say never. Now I have to say I have 2 reminder scriptures to help me. Psalms 23:1-4. He makes me lie down in green pasture and Psalms 46:10. Be still and know I am God. To me, this means, sit down, and shut up. God put me in a time out and it lasted for years. Not any of my lessons have been easily learned and I have daily struggles. As I stated, I have and love to learn from the bible, and bible verses are good reminders for me, and to share with others to stay on the right path. But like I also stated, it is hard, letting God not me have control. Because of my past, the only person I thought I could count on was me. I thought I needed to take care of myself. I didn't understand I was putting myself in God's place in my life, and this was not what God wanted. As long as I relied on myself for my life, my safety, my security, there was no room for God. From what I have been told, this is a common issue with people who have had abusive or neglectful parents, it hard for us to have trust even in God.

I am a person of pretty simple means. I never came from money and don't have any now. I don't lust after riches and always lived by the saying that the best things in life are free. I joke around sometimes and say God is saving me from myself by not letting me win the lottery because he knows I'd act a fool. But I know that every good gift comes from God. That a friendly face, a child laughs, and all of God's creations are priceless. He gave them all to us for free. What a blessing. I'm not saying I have never had bouts of jealousy or envy, cars, houses, clothes, jewelry but I know these are

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temporary things in a temporary world, and I'm just passing thru. (John 14:3). The thing I have been most envious about in my life is, a good Christian marriage. I have sat alone in church on more than one occasion crying over the adorable couple in front of me, thinking why I can't have that. But I know all the choices I have made in my life fall back on me and me wanting to be in control and not letting God take the lead. One question I have always asked myself is, who am I? I authored a little children's book about this and the answer I came up with is, "whenever you wonder, who you are, just go outside, you don't have to go far. Go outside in the day or at night and you will see the most wonderful sights. You can find God's creation out in the open air, and you are a part of this wonderful affair. God made you to laugh, and to play and to sing, bringing glory to God is a wonderful thing.

Never again ask. Who am I? Because you are the most loved, said the voice in the sky. "

And those are my thoughts, sincerely yours, Lisa Bey

January 17

Hey this is Greg Hansbraugh and my devotional thought is coming from Matthew 7:6-12. Let me read it to you . "Do not give what is holy to the dogs; nor cast your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn and tear you in pieces. "Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened. Or what man is there among you who, if his son asks for bread, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will he give him a serpent? If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask Him! Therefore, whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets. May God bless the reading of His word..

Let's look at the context of verse 6. Dogs were rarely kept as pets during Jesus' time. They roamed the streets, looking for scraps or trash to eat, searching for weaker animals to prey on. Swine, or pigs, were seen as unclean animals, satisfied to roll and eat in their own filth.

Verse 6 is a warning for us, be cautious of wasting your time, or hanging out with those who see no value in you or would torment you. Don't lose your best to the world.

Verses 7-12 speaks of the way we should conduct ourselves. It starts by telling us what, or rather whom, we should be seeking. We should be seeking the Kingdom first, seeking the Lord.

The next few lines speak into our willingness to do good for those we care about, noting that if we as sinners can have such good in our hearts, imagine, what God will do for us with his unfailing and immense love! His word tells us that if we seek Him, and ask Him, He will provide.

The last line we should take as a command. If we are to treat others like we wish to be treated, we should be extending grace, and offering love, slow to anger, quick to forgive. Isn't that what we also want from our father? The summary is this, don't waste your time on those who choose to live in the filth of the world. Let them see Jesus in you but be separate from them. Instead, make sure you are seeking the Kingdom, aspiring to understand the love that God has for you. He wants you to bring your needs to Him. He wants to provide for you. But He wants you to seek Him and ask Him. He wants you, to be an active partner in this relationship with Him.

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January 18

Hello, this is Pamela Sorrell, and my devotional is found in Matthew 7:13-23, Matthew 12:33-35, Luke 6:43-46, Luke 13:23-27

As I was reading the Scriptures assigned - I internally felt a sense of urgency, the need for transparency, and wisdom. In our society, we have heard "Have it your way", "Just do it", "fake it until you make it", and "Be all, you can be".

In these verses, there is a direct challenge to that way of thinking. The scripture clearly states, "We are to enter through the narrow gate" and also "Small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it. It also warns us of the false prophets. They look nice, talk nice, and may even have an abundance of knowledge, but by their fruit, we should recognize them. It goes on to say, " A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor a bad tree bear good fruit." Then in verse 21, it says, " not everyone who says, Lord, Lord will enter the Kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of the Father."

Again, it is the sense of urgency at is found in Matthew 12:33-35 when it reiterates that a good tree equals good fruit, and a bad tree equals bad fruit. and the scripture says "out of the overflow of the heart; the mouth speaks, it is true, what is inside will be seen on the outside, eventually.

It doesn't seem like our society has it in the correct order. They say, "Have it your way" and "Just do it" and "fake it, until you make it" and "Be all, you can be".

It needs to be our desire to be more then these shallow sayings, it should be something like "Have it His way", or "Pray before acting", or " Be all, that He has called you to be"

It is my prayer, that at the end of this journey, that we call life, That I will be remembered, not only by my name, but also by the fruit in my life.

January 19

Hello, this is Larry Lauer and Denise Lauer, our devotional thought is found in Matthew 7:24-29, Mark 1:21-22, Luke 6:47-49

Hey, this is Larry, when I look at these readings and think of how many times in my young Christian life, that I was just reading Gods words and moved on through the verses, not really understanding, but just reading them. Even though I was expecting to see changes in my life, I didn't, because I was merely reading the words, not making a life changing foundation needed because of those words. As life went on, and faced

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with challenges of life, I continued to be attacked with things I didn't understand because I still hadn't been able to make that connection. When I finally saw the light, and things began making sense knowing the importance of faith, foundation and believing God's word to the fullest, my life turned around.

Hi, this is Denise Lauer, in these verses, they seem to be teaching us, that, "Anyone who listens to Jesus' teachings and obeys him, is wise". What is it that keeps us from listening to God's word and obeying? Is it a Lack of faith, lack of trust, rebellion, or loss of independence?

We've read it, heard it preached and lived it but yet we sometimes use "Free will" to do as we please, BUT we will suffer the consequences, when we don't listen and obey. By listening to God's word and obeying a foundation, of authority, is being built in our lives.

We need a strong foundation, be it God's word, building a house, finances, faith, marriage, EVERYTHING has to have a strong foundation without it, it will collapse, and we will experience failure.

January 20

Hi, there, My name is Libby Willett. This is the devotional thought that goes along with the scriptures, which are Matt. 8:1-15, Mark 1:29-45, Luke 7:1-17, John 4:46-54. Here we go,

The leper boldly came to Jesus knowing full well that our Lord was able to heal him. He knelt before him in deep respect and said you can make me clean, if you are willing. Our leprous friend is only half right. Our Lord is always willing, we know this, from Old Testament scriptures, such as Isaiah 43:22-24, where God feeds for Israel to come to him also Isaiah 53:4-5, he took our infirmities and sickness, he was wounded and bruised for our transgressions.

Jesus said to this leper I am willing, but before he said this, he reached out and touched him. As our Lord touched the leper, he broke the Levitical law, which is found in Leviticus 13:45, this alone speaks volumes to us, only God has a right to change or break this law. This shows his undying love for humankind. We need to remove all of our 'IF's. It's a prayer of fear, if it uses 'if', instead

'Say thanks for forgiveness'

'Say thanks for creation'

'Say thanks for salvation'

'Say thanks for Eternal Life'

While humbly praying for anything, we can know, 'he can' and 'he will', so thank him at the same time as the prayer is prayed.

January 21

Come into His presence with thanksgiving & into His courts with praise

The pinnacle of this week has been _____

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January 22

Jesus the compassionate healer

This is Jim Plank, your Area Overseer, and it is my privilege to be a part of the V3 Walking With Jesus Devotional Book, Let's take time as we begin this time together to pause for and breath in and out slowly a few times. Center your thoughts on God and invite Him to speak to you, take time to thank God for his faithful provision in the good and the challenging times of life.

In the gospels we see people in all kinds of places and spaces of life. They are real people not that different from today. There is a lot of space taken in the gospels to show the physical healing side of Jesus' ministry on earth. In the early chapters of Matthew, we see Jesus' arrival on earth as a baby. Then in chapter 4 verse 17 we see Jesus announcing that the Kingdom of God is near. He is announcing that God's Kingdom is arriving. That brings us to the point then were Jesus begins to demonstrate what it looks like for the Kingdom to move in and among people.

We see that Jesus went about healing people from all kinds of disease in different places because the Kingdom is at hand. Jesus had compassion on people and brought relief to their issues. There are 22 recorded stories of healing recorded throughout the gospels. In our reading for today we see a dead girl raised, a sick woman healed, and 2 blind men have their eyes opened because God's Kingdom is breaking into a world that is messy and full of chaos. We see Jesus moved with compassion when He saw the pain people's lives. He relieved the pain and chaos by healing them.

As believers we are carriers of the Kingdom. We are commissioned to bring life wherever we go. To bring healing and life to a world that needs hope beyond themselves.

PRAYER: Jesus give us compassion for those around us that need healing. Thank you, Father, for the privilege of being a Kingdom carrier no matter where I go. Amen

January 23

My Devotional comes from Matthew 8:23–34, Mark 4:35–41, Mark 5:1–20, Luke 8:22–39.

Insights from Deb Hale, I have entitled my devotional, BIG FAITH.

"Where is your faith" I bet the Lord has wondered that many times when dealing with me. I tend to like to think I have control over things. As I have grown closer to God, I have realized what little control I have on anything. What did try to control my life give me? Well...lots of frustration, anger, and anxiety and fear. I could also add pride to that list, you see, I actually thought that the salvation of my family depended on how "good" of a Christian I was. It blows my mind now to think I actually was prideful enough to think I could control the salvation of my family better than God could.

The disciples were fearful of the storm that they couldn't control. But they forgot about the fact that The Creator of the elements was right there with them. "Where is your faith?" I wonder how Jesus sounded when he said this. Did he say it with hurt and sadness? Didn't they witness greatness? Didn't

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they call him master? Yet they still didn't have faith in Him. Or perhaps he said it with frustration in his voice?

Maybe he was not surprised at all, and actually was using his teaching voice to show them how far they still had to learn and grow. They then travel onto Gadarenes. Here Jesus, casts out a legion of demonic spirits from a man who had been tortured by the spirits for a long time. He was crazed and living completely isolated and alone with the dead in a cemetery. Jesus just arrives and the demon's tremble. They cry out for mercy! They knew they would be cast out and begged not to go into the bottomless pit. Jesus effortlessly commands them to leave the man and drives them into pigs feeding in the area. The pigs are so taken over the runoff of a cliff to their death. The people of the town are in awe, but that quickly fades and changes to fear. They fear Jesus and His strength. They feared him so much they asked him to leave. But the man who was delivered by Jesus, begs to go with Him. You see, he had an intimate experience with Christ and knew Jesus was there to save him.

I find it very telling that the ones who did not have an intimate experience wanted Jesus to leave. They had not experienced the love of God they had only seen the power. Perhaps that made them feel "out of control" of the situation. Faith and trust, go hand-in-hand. They did not have faith in Jesus; therefore, they did not trust him or the power that he held. What are you not trusting God with? What are you trying to control that you need to hand over? Do not fear what the Lord has in store for you. No matter what this world holds for us. We are promised an eternity of bliss in heaven with the Lord. Let go and let God work. Watch what miracles he will work in your life if you let him.

Let's no longer be "of little faith"

January 24

Hey, this is Wendy Lambert, and my scripture lesson is from Matthew 9:1-17, Mark 2:1-22, Luke 5:17-39, John 5:8-9. I have entitled it, Healing the paralytic, the call of Levi, the question about fasting. It is so easy for us to judge others. Many times, people put a lot of blame on God for things that are the fault of the enemy. We have the tendency to put God in a box and limit him because we don't understand past our own experiences. Just when we think we know it all, God shows up in a big way to give us clearer understanding of who he is and what he desires from us. God wanted us to know who he is, and that's why he gave us his word. He wanted a connection and a relationship with us. In the story of the healing of the paralytic, God reacted to the ones of great faith who believed he could heal their friend and then also acted on it. God used the broken to show them and others how awesome he is. In the call of Levi, it's funny how Matthew just followed him, and he never asked any questions, he just did it. Jesus used him to make his point when he said that "it's not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick." Sometimes, it's in the Brokenness that he can reach us best. We have a tendency to get too busy and get distracted or maybe we're so used to being self-sufficient that we lack the ability to just be humble and ask God to put his hand on our situations. Jesus just wants our 100% cooperation and for us to be willing to do whatever he asks us to do, "even if it kills us".

When he asked Matthew to follow him, Matthew left everything behind and that's what we're called to do because this is not our home. In being obedient, the banquet that we can look forward to is out of this world! In the question about fasting, this reminds me that my timing is

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not always God's timing. He's the only one who can see the future and he has our best interest at heart. He's a good father and we need to try to see the bigger picture, whether it's visible or not and whether we feel it or not. God can see what's best for everyone and he has a way of making things happen so that there's absolutely no doubt that his hand was on the whole situation. Being even a small part of that bigger picture brings so much joy that it's overwhelming at times. I truly am My Brother's Keeper. God does for us that we cannot do for ourselves and he uses us for the bigger scheme of things if we are willing. He meets us where we are, but he loves us too much to leave us where we're at.

January 25

Hey this is Darlene Walker and here is my Devotional for V3 Walking with Jesus, Devotional Book.

Matthew 9:18-34, Mark 5:21-43, Luke 8:40-56.

The scriptures I had to choose from where the woman who had bleeding for 12 years and the daughter of a synagogue leader who died, two blind men, and the demoniac, that could not speak. Jesus healed all of these. In two Jesus said, "Your faith has healed you." The other two he just did it.

Somehow faith and suffering seem to be tied together. But where does faith come from. Why did the religious leaders of that day who studied the bible daily find it so hard to have faith that these Miracles were from God. They even hated Jesus.

But a desperate woman who had suffered, physically, spiritually, socially, and mentally for 12 long years still could have hope and faith that just touching Jesus's hem of his robe would be enough to heal her. Why would God allow her to suffer for so long? Why didn't she just give up instead of still believing and praying for a miracle? And why didn't Jairus ask Jesus for help before his daughter was dying or already dead.

When Jesus healed these people, someone had asked for it usually. All of them were considered unclean and unable to go into the temple and be with normal society. When Jesus made them well or alive again, he also restored their cleanliness so they could worship God again and be part of a community. The devil always wants us to be alone, divided, and to feel far away from God.

Jesus always wants us to have life abundantly. Most of the people who were healed had suffered for some time. We look at suffering as a punishment but maybe God looks at it as a tool for growing faith?

Prayer: Father God, please open my eyes to your truth and give me courage to live your way daily.

Thank you for Jesus and hope of eternity with you. Please grow my little faith. Help me to always keep hoping that you still do miracles today. Give me the courage to ask You for spiritual, physical, and emotional healing so I can receive the blessings you have for me even if they do come from suffering. In Jesus name, Amen

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January 26

These are the scriptures that I will be using, they are Matthew 9:35-10:16; Luke 9:1-5; and Mark 6:4-7 which we will be reading, Then Jesus told them, “A prophet is honored everywhere except in his own hometown and among his relatives and his own family.” And because of their unbelief, he couldn’t do any miracles among them except to place his hands on a few sick people and heal them. And he was amazed at their unbelief. Then Jesus went from village to village, teaching the people. And he called his twelve disciples together and began sending them out.’

Most scholars agree that the Gospel according to Mark was written through the eyes and experiences of Peter. If there's anyone in the Bible that has experience failure and falling short of the mark, I think it would be Peter.

It is in Mark's Gospel that he clarifies that Jesus was amazed at the lack of faith of some people of His own hometown. But the thing that is powerfully significant is that, after that event, of him being amazed, at their lack of faith, he continues to travel to other villages teaching, and he sends the 12 disciples out, and they begin to teach with power to heal and to cast out demons. Truly, they were advancing the Kingdom and presenting the gospel without the stigma of being so familiar. It causes me to question if any of the disciples went back to Jesus’ Hometown to give them another chance to see the greatness of the message without the weight of the familiarity.

I do believe that Jesus Christ is the perfect example of a man of God. But I think it's powerfully significant that instead of being disappointed about the lack of faith of his own people, that saw him grow up and had heard of the stories of His birth and odd circumstances surrounding his life. He uses that amazement to fuel a new direction with new possibilities. I wonder was his leaving his hometown a form of grace so that another could come and preach the same gospel of repentance. For us today when you are faced with seemingly tragic events that fall short of your expectation, what if it is simply one step closer to finding what it is to succeed.

Sometimes a new hope is birthed out of our disappointment

January 27

Hello, My Name is Kim Coe, and it is my privilege to share my Devotional Narrative which is from Matthew 10:17-36, Luke 12:2-9, John 13:1.

In these passages we find the words of Jesus spoke directly to his disciples. They are words spoken from a heart of pure and deep love to those who have chosen to follow him. These words of Jesus were for the disciples then and they are for his disciples now. Words to strengthen our faith and prepare us for life as a believer and follower of Jesus.

Words of preparation:

“Be on your guard”- be aware and be prepared.

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We (servants and students) are not greater than Jesus (our Master and Teacher). He endured persecution and so will we.

People will oppose you, reject you and mistreat you. Even your own family and friends.

Some will be arrested, put on trial, and martyred because of their faith in Jesus.

Words of instruction:

Do not be afraid. Do not fear those who oppose you and want to silence you. They can kill the body but only God has authority over your soul.

Be bold in telling everyone about Jesus. Everything you have learned about Jesus and the difference He has made in your life.

Do not worry about what to say because Jesus promises you will be given the words to say.

Acknowledge me in front of others here on earth and I will acknowledge you in heaven before the Father and angels!

Words of encouragement:

Reminding us of his deep love and tender care.

He is intimately aware of every detail of your life. - Even the very hairs of your head are numbered by the One who lovingly created you.

Not one sparrow falls to the ground without His knowledge, and you are worth more than many sparrows. -You are more valuable to God than anything in the world!

Words of Kingdom Perspective:

“But the one who stands firm to the end will be saved.”

Jesus tells us both the cost and the reward of loving Him and being his faithful follower and servant.

The eternal reward of being with Him forever far outweighs the troubles and trials we will experience here on earth.

Let us all take these words of Jesus and learn Kingdom Perspective!

Remembering that in the midst of every difficult, hard, painful situation we find ourselves in we are deeply loved and intimately cared for by the One who came for us. Keeping our eyes focused and our hearts fixed on the eternal reward of being with Jesus forever! Amen!

January 28

Come into His presence with thanksgiving & into His courts with praise

The pinnacle of this week has been _____

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January 29

Hello, This is Curtis Hunt and the scriptures that I will be using are- Matthew 10:40-42 “Those who welcome you are welcoming me. And when they welcome me they are welcoming God who sent me. If you welcome a prophet because he is a man of God, you will be given the same reward a prophet gets. And if you welcome good and godly men because of their godliness, you will be given a reward like theirs. “And if, as my representatives, you give even a cup of cold water to a little child, you will surely be rewarded.”

Mark 9:41 If anyone so much as gives you a cup of water because you are Christ’s—I say this solemnly—he won’t lose his reward.

Luke 10:16 Then he said to the disciples, “Those who welcome you are welcoming me. And those who reject you are rejecting me. And those who reject me are rejecting God who sent me.”

John 13:1-3 Jesus knew on the evening of Passover Day that it would be his last night on earth before returning to his Father. During supper the devil had already suggested to Judas Iscariot, Simon’s son, that this was the night to carry out his plan to betray Jesus. Jesus knew that the Father had given him everything and that he had come from God and would return to God. And how he loved his disciples!

If someone gives someone else a cup of water, then they will be rewarded. This sounds rather simplistic in terms of today’s world. When we go through the line at any fast-food chain restaurant, we can request a glass of tap water and they comply with our request without a second thought. Can you think of an example that exemplifies this verse? Perhaps I can...

We were visiting friends at their condo at Daytona Beach, Florida. For several days, we watched from our balcony as people on rented motor scooters raced up and down the hard sand next to the water line. They appeared to be having a great time. The next day, we rented two motor scooters so we could have a similar experience. After acquiring our rented scooters, we went down to the water’s edge and headed north near the water’s edge. The packed sand made for a good travel surface, and we rode along beside the dancing surf.

As we continued our journey, we began to notice something. The width of our trail of packed sand between the edge of the surf and the soft sand was decreasing. Several miles north of our entry point it became obvious. The tide was coming in and the packed sand was now under water! The packed sand trail was gone.

The soft sand was almost impossible to navigate. The soft sand came up around the tires and engulfed the exposed wheel. Without the hard, packed sand, further travel was extremely difficult if not impossible. Now we better understood why we had seen four- wheel drive vehicles stuck in the soft sand yesterday and before.

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At this point there was a break in the concrete walls, so we rode up to the Main Street that parallels the beech. This street was four lanes of fast moving auto traffic. It only took a moment to realize that it was not safe for two small scooters. We next rode inland on a side street searching for another lesser traveled north/south street that would take us back south to our starting point.

I soon determined that this street didn't exist, so I made a "U-Turn" in the side street and headed back. My wife ATTEMPTED the same turn but lost control and soon she was laying in the street under her bike.

I quickly got her up and helped her move to a parking lot for a soda shoppe. The pavement was very hot and she tried to sit up but got light-headed and had to lay back down. She needed some water! I went into the soda shoppe and requested a large glass of water and a few napkins. I would use this water to give her a drink and could also wipe her forehead with the water-soaked napkins. The clerk asked for 25 cents. I was wearing swimming trunks and had no money. It didn't matter that I urgently needed this water without delay.

There were customers sitting in the shoppe sipping their drinks. Most of the customers were "normal" or "average" appearance in this beech setting. One table had a lone man sitting and he looked a little "rough". He didn't fit the picture of the clientele of this area.

I was relieved when one of the shoppe customers came up to the counter and gave the clerk a quarter. Guess who? The Good Samaritan was the guy who didn't fit the picture. It is often difficult to get around our faulty perceptions when God is at work for us.

I gave my wife water to drink and rinsed her brow with cool, refreshing water. Isn't it amazing how beneficial and restorative fresh water can be when we most need it.

Isn't this like turning to God and actually listening to Him when our times become difficult?

Have you ever experienced a blessing from God coming from the least expected source?

Have you experienced something very simple and perhaps something that we take for granted being a blessing at a moment when we find ourselves lacking this basic necessity?

January 30

Matthew 11:1 (King James Version): And it came to pass, when Jesus had made an end of commanding his twelve disciples, he departed thence to teach and to preach in their cities.

My name is Wes Lewis, and this is a summary of my journey.

My life has been a journey which has always been, in varying efforts, with God. They have always been there with me, even though I have sinned and sometimes tremendously and haven't always acknowledged them. Overall, my journey has been good, but it sure has been interesting. I have been through some really good times, really bad times, and times in between. My life has thrown me

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awesomely tremendous situations and yet it has thrown me some good and bad twists and turns. Examples include my life with Dad, Mom, and my older brother (only sibling) Jim and experiences in grade school (including with my schoolmates, joining band in 4th grade with playing trombone, much like Jim did) while living in Fairmount, IL; the divorce of my parents in 1975 due to Dad's alcoholism condition; Mom's subsequent remarriage 1977 to another man (Thurman who she met at our next door neighbor's house) that was not only a businessman and auctioneer, but turned out to be a womanizer and cheater (Mom and I moved from Fairmount to Tilton to be with him); my attendance at Southview Junior High from 1977 to 1979 (including meeting new schoolmates, continuation of band, branching out to act in the West Side Story musical at Southview with a non-singing part); my subsequent ascension to Danville High School in 1979 (including meeting more new schoolmates, my continuation of band activities, attendance with one date at one homecoming, with another date at one prom, and yet another date with my grade school best friend at her prom in Georgetown), along with everything else that happened in between. Then, came the year 1982. Here is a mini-summary of what happened in 1982:

- Dad passed away in February.
- Thurman announced to Mom in February that he would divorce her. One of his big reasons for this was that he was in major hot water with the IRS which resulted from his unwillingness to report the true cost of his merchandise inventory in his Schedule C's of multiple prior years' tax returns and he believed that he needed to pay off Mom to go away and not spread "untruths" about it.
- The divorce finalization of Mom and Thurman in May.
- The high school senior award I received for achieving straight A's in social studies from junior high all the way through high school. This win was for Dad, who got me into this.
- My graduation from DHS in June.
- My entrance into Illinois State University in August, which resulted in another interesting sub-journey that lasted until 1986.

There is more. 1986 included my graduation from ISU with a BS degree in accounting, passing the CPA Exam in 1986 on the second try and the award of my CPA certificate (which I dedicated to my DHS accounting teacher), along with getting my first real job which would be start of a 36+ year career in auditing and accounting, which have been very rewarding and challenging overall and included various moves both job-

wise and geographically, and me obtaining six additional professional certifications; meeting my future wife in Bloomington in 1989 of which marriage followed in 1990 (my one and only marriage which lasted ten years and was full of tumultuous and bad times and the start of my acquisition of banjos); my diagnosis as having Type 1 diabetes in 1990, along with everything else that happened in between. Then, came the years 1999 and 2000, which included us getting a beautiful foster child and then separation and eventual divorce in September 2000 (this time period is a story in and of itself and will blow the year of 1982 away); my diagnosis as having atrial fibrillation in 2001 and the continual care

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that I have received over the years; the passing of Mom in 2009 from lung cancer while living in Arizona (this is yet another story in itself); the passing of Jim in 2016 from COPD and Vtak in his heart's bottom chamber (yet another story); the peak and eventual twilighting of my career from 2008 to 2022 in which I served as a Chief Audit Executive for most of those years; my very short-lived dissention into depression with alcohol from 2018 to 2021; my eventual move back to my hometown area of Vermilion County in July 2022 to a home that I am now buying along with venturing into the remote contract consultant career world; the October 2022 40th reunion and community outreach day for the DHS Class of 1982 and subsequent continuation of those efforts since; my formation of a start-up karaoke and music business in July 2023, and last but not least, reuniting with a longtime friend and high school classmate that moved back to the area to care for her mom and sister (now deceased). I have developed love for and have fallen in love with her steadily since we first reunited in the Greenville, South Carolina area during my time in North Carolina from 2005-2008. I know that she loves me as a special friend and family member. But I also believe that she doesn't love me, let alone being in love with me in the same way I love her.

As you can see, my journey has been continual and it's not stopping anytime soon. Through it all, God has been with me. However, it was not until about five years ago that I started to really understand and serve him. My relationship with God has steadily improved since then and a lot of heavenly things have happened since (more prayer, repenting, letting God into my life, my increased faith in Him, my increased reading of The Bible, regular attendance at church, attendance and participation in V3's men's group, etc.).

God, I love you! Thank you for the blessings that you have given to me. Please continue to guide me in my journey and give me the tools to be victorious for you! I am Christian, but I will continue to pray to you to enable me to become Christian. Amen.

January 31

Hey there, this is Scotty, and my devotional is found in Matt. 11:25-12:14, Mark 2:23-3:6, Luke 6:1-11. It seemed like to me. That in Jesus's public ministry, the Pharisees were always trying to find fault in his life and the way he did his day-to-day living.

They seem to emphasize many religious rules and laws, that were written by man and seemed to put less emphasis on God's laws.

In these verses, Jesus is teaching the Pharisees that doing good deeds such as feeding the hungry are more significant than following man's laws. That's showing love and kindness is the way that God wants us to do life.

This scripture reminds me of a time when I was running the prison laundry for a few months. I had five guys working for me, I always treated them with dignity and respect, and they, of course reciprocated it. I remember returning to work after the weekends and they would always ask about my weekend and if I got to see and spend time with my granddaughter. They always love the stories about my weekends. So, as we got closer to the Christmas holiday, I could just tell that their attitudes were changing, and they were getting depressed.

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So, I chose to value them, above the rules of the institution, I decided to try to cheer them up and have a small Christmas party over in the laundry. (Obviously not the one in California that Governor Newsome goes to.)

So, I went to the commissary and bought some chips, candy bars and pizza and pops, and we had ourselves 'a party', on our last day before the Christmas break. As the day finished and we were saying our goodbyes, I could tell that their spirits had been lifted and so basically, at the end, I concluded that bending a rule, to value someone above other things that so often take precedence may not be such a bad thing. Jesus believes that showing love to His Creation is one of the things that we as His followers should keep in front of us at all times.

February 1

Hello this is Lisa Gray, and my devotional thought is coming from Luke 7:36-50 but it is connected with these other scriptures, Matthew 12:15-21; Mark 3:7-21; Luke 6:17-19.

We all have times when we experience anxiety about things we have done.

Doing something wrong has consequences that sometimes require us to forgive or be forgiven.

It takes courage to face our wrongs, as well as extend grace to others.

Forgiveness works through our ongoing willingness to give up certain claims against another. Even if we understand forgiveness as the right response, what if we don't really want to? How can we pray with integrity, to God, to forgive us for our sins, if we can't forgive those who sin against us?

Forgiveness means letting go of resentments that keep us tied to the wrongs committed against us. It means to heal and move forward without allowing anger, to control our mental or emotional wellbeing.

What often is not underscored is that one of the main reasons the Lord commands us to forgive others is so that we are no longer under the power and injury of the injustice that we have experienced. In other words, receiving and giving forgiveness is one way the Lord heals us and brings wholeness to our lives.

So, what do we really get from what Jesus wants us to know?

We are learning what true forgiveness means.... We are weak...where HE is strong...and God knows our heart...and forgives us...where we fall short. So, we need to forgive as God forgives us.

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February 2

Hello, my name is Larry Cross and the general scriptures that I'm drawing from are found in Matthew:12, Mark:3, Luke:11, but specifically Matthew 12:22-30.

Before I dig into the Scripture. I would like to look at the spiritual perspective of this situation. The man was possessed by a demon, and as the scripture teaches us, Satan comes to Kill, Steal and Destroy. He stole this man's sight, so he could not see the truth. Then he tried to destroy his power of creation. It looked like Satan had this man conquered. But then Jesus came, into this man's life, he was then able to see that Jesus is the Way, the Truth, and the Life. Jesus is teaching the disciples that if they would speak to the situation and 'Do not doubt', it would be done for them.

They brought to Jesus, a demon possessed man, who was blind and mute. Jesus cast the demon out and healed the man. In casting out the demon, the people alluded that Jesus must be the 'Messiah' because no one had been able to deliver this man.

When the religious leaders heard the crowd asking, 'Is he the messiah? they were threatened and tried to dishonor him by saying, it was by the power of Satan that he cast out this demon.

Jesus impressed on them, how important unity is, "Together we stand, divided we fall".

He taught them, that Satan would never fight himself nor his kingdom. if that was possible, by what power are their sons casting demons out. He makes it very clear that He is casting out demons by the Spirit of God. That is the same Holy Spirit, that we are empowered with.

Jesus lets us know that He is more powerful than anything that could come against us. When he cast out that demon, Jesus overpowered Satan, in doing that he shows that he was the strongest man.

Today, He's telling you to choose what team, you will be on. It is your choice, The Creator of the universe or Satan's, that is why, Kingdom work should be a priority for you. Because If we're not working for him, we're working against him.

February 3

Hello, These are the scriptures for my devotional, it is the familiar story of the Sower,, I will be drawing from Luke's telling of what Jesus taught, and it goes like this: "A farmer went out to sow his seed. As he was scattering the seed, some fell along the path; it was trampled on, and the birds ate it up. Some fell on rocky ground, and when it came up, the plants withered because they had no moisture. Other seed fell among thorns, which grew up with it and choked the plants. Still other seed fell on good soil. It came up and yielded a crop, a hundred times more than was sown." That was Luke 8:5-8.

You might not know this about me. But I am the keeper. Of 19 chickens, 17 hens and two Roosters.

One of the Roosters we keep off to the side by himself. He's very rude to the hens. But every

morning I get up and I go out to the chickens to feed them. I feed them crumbles and scratch. And

scratch is consistent with a mixture of. Meal and seeds. Before we had a doorway into the chicken

run, I would have to throw the feed through the Avery's net so the chickens could eat. And throwing

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the seeds and the meal. Sometimes the wind would come and blow the seeds everywhere. Some would land in the chicken run, some would land on the sidewalk, some would be blown to places that I never seen where it landed.

When I read this story, I realized that the farmer went out sowing the seeds and the seeds went everywhere. Some places would have great likelihood of the seeds growing into a full plant and producing a fruit or vegetable or grain that it was supposed to make. Sometimes the seed would be blown onto a pathway and sometimes it would land among the stickers, the thorns. Sometimes it would be blown into a rock pile. But what I notice is the seed went everywhere and Jesus tells us that the seed is represented as the word of God. The word of God reaches everyone, those likely to grow from it and those that are likely to ignore it and not see the benefit of the seed. But the farmer gives the seed liberally to all the ground because it is the ground that determines when the seed will produce, and the seed determines what is produced.

There is a place in John, that tells us that the Heavenly Father is the gardener, He's the farmer and he is continually scattering the seeds of life into His creation.

Today. I hope you look around and see that Your Heavenly Father is scattering seeds of Truth in your life and may it produce a bumper crop this year.

February 4

Come into His presence with thanksgiving & into His courts with praise

The pinnacle of this week has been _____

February 5

Hey there, This is Teneko James and my devotion is coming from Matthew 13:12-43; Mark 4:21-34; Luke 13:18-21, I have entitled it; Precious Moments

Studies have found that children who have stories or fairytales read to them, regularly, are more willing to express their feelings and communicate their thoughts more effectively. This is possible because stories create presence (providing readers with a sense of being somewhere), causes listeners to listen with intent, process information provided by the storyteller, assess the message being conveyed, and determine how they feel about it. Stories not only appeal to our senses and emotions, but they also take our attention captive, leaving a lasting impression on the reader/listener for years.

I can remember the excitement I felt, as a child, when my teacher would call the students to gather around her, on the rug, to read a story. The inflections in my teachers voice as she changed it from a whisper (as the creeping things crawled), to a loud and BOOMing voice (as the giants walked

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the earth) in the story, causing chaos and confusion. The class was captivated, lost in our little imaginations, but craving and demanding more of the story be told. My teacher would always follow up with questions like: Are those giants (or other character(s)) mean; what do you think the little pigs (in the three little pigs) were feeling; The Big Bad Wolf is dressed as grandma; what do you think he is up to? These questions would spark debate, revealing the plethora of divided opinions within the group. The teacher would always remind the class that we would get to see whose opinion was right at the end of the story.

I can also remember the reassurance, safety, and comfort I felt as I nestled closely to my mother, right before bedtime, as she would prepare to read my bedtime story. My mom would read a lot of Grimm's Fairytales, and classics like The Three Little Pigs Red; but most bedtime stories were about manners, character, obedience, and morals. While my mother's goal, during story time, was to get me relaxed and off to sleep as quickly as possible. She did not know she was planting valuable moral seeds that has stayed with me through adulthood.

Can you relate to any of these Storytime experience?

This is why I believe one of the greatest gifts God has given the world is the gift of stories and storytelling. Because of a story's powerful impact on a listener, it should come as no surprise that Jesus also used stories, called Parables (a simple story used to illustrate a moral or spiritual lesson), to teach his disciples godly character and righteous behavior on earth. Imagine the disciples sitting at the feet of Rabbi Jesus, as he ministers to them using what would become the Biblical Parables. We can only imagine the vivid images their imaginations created, as Jesus encouraged them to not hide their light, but stand out and be an example to the world, using the parable of the Lamp Stand (Mark 4: 21- 34).

Today, I challenge you to find a comfy spot and have Storytime with Jesus. Dive into the parables and ask the Lord questions, via prayer, about how to become a great storyteller for his glory. I am certain that he will respond. Let's do our part to spread seeds of faith, to fulfil the message found in the parable of the Mustard Seed, which highlights the growth of God's kingdom from a tiny beginning to worldwide size.

February 6

Hi, Scott Covington here, I just wanted to share with you my insight on a couple of parables, that are found in Matthew 13:44-52. The Kingdom of God is like the most wonderful treasure, we have ever found in the darkest days of our life. As you search for happiness, Jesus is waiting to have a relationship with you, you see, your happiness is the treasure is hidden from us.

As it is a choice, God gives us to receive His Kingdom into our lives. Once we have made the choice to choose to walk with Christ, he will reveal many more wonderful treasures. He has waiting. For us, as the treasures are revealed to us, they are for us to share with others. Not to keep for ourselves, not to bury and hide from the world. We cannot buy this treasure. As it is delivered to us in the way of a new heart, and by grace, You cannot barter or sell anything you own to receive this new heart and grace. But we have to come to our Lord and Savior in repentance. To receive this gift the Holy Spirit.

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As we receive the Holy Spirit, our new heart, then we must start throwing away all the trash of our old life. And replace it with joy, love and compassion. Of our new life we must turn away from our selfish ways our sin and start our new life in Christ Jesus. This takes Patience., not ours, but from God. We have to take instruction from His living Word, the Bible. We must stay in His word to have the pearls. Our new life revealed to us from the living word of God. So, if you are finding yourself lost, discontented and disconnected, look to Jesus. He is knocking at your door. Open the door and he will come in and fellowship with you. May our Savior, Lord Jesus Christ, give you mercy, His love and peace. May you find comfort in his living word. God bless you.

February 7

This is Joyce Deusterhoft, and my devotional is for February 7th. It is found in Matthew 8:23-27. Trust in Jesus. He has the ability to control the storms of our lives. The loss of our son, Troy, was like a storm, ferocious, strong, and unpredictable. Our fear was not knowing what my next day would be like, loneliness, anxiety, despair started to creep in. Overwhelming grief gripped our hearts. John 16:33 says, "I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace, in this world, You all will have tribulation, but take heart, I have overcome the world." As our faith became stronger through those difficult days, our storms seemed to become weaker. We learned through the most difficult time of our lives, that If we trusted in the Lord with all of our heart, we would find that our faith would guide us. I believe that is true for everyone. Keep the Faith.

February 8

Howdy, this is Matt Browning, and here is my ideas about Matthew 16 5-6. Beware of the yeast of the Pharisees in my life I compare yeast to my alcohol and the Pharisees as my motorcycle family. The alcohol started off to be a little at a time and grew in time to be more than necessary. It was always present with everything I did with my motorcycle family. It seemed to be the glue that held the family together. When I was drinking with the family, I felt a sense of belonging and self-righteousness in my life. The code and conduct of the family became my way of life. I believed at the time there was nothing wrong with this way of life and felt I was happy with it. Over the years of watching family members lose everything. jobs, relationships, and their lives due to the drinking. I couldn't continue to watch this; I started distancing myself from the family. At this point the drinking and the lifestyle started to lose its shine. Then my wife was diagnosed with cancer. This was very hard on us. We thought in order to get through this we needed to have God in our life to help us through it. That's when we started going to church. We felt the Lord's presence every time we went, and the sermons seemed to really speak to us. We tried to go every Sunday for 2 years before she passed. All of our motorcycle family showed up for the funeral to pay their respects. From this point forward the motorcycle family slowly but surely started to disappear. After spending 2 years of finding myself. I finally came back to church. This is where the word of God is my yeast now and my church family is my Pharisees.

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February 9

Hello, this is Reese Imier, and the scripture, I'm going over is Matthew 9:14, Mark 6 and Luke 9.

These passages cover Jesus' teaching about the new Kingdom and traveling and healing people with his 12 disciples. Jesus gives his 12 disciples, a list of do's and don'ts to follow when spreading his word. Some of these rules were to travel light with no food nor any money nor extra clothing, also to stay only, where you are welcome.

These readings teach on a man named Herod and how he kills John the Baptist, to simply not embarrass himself, by breaking his oath in front of his guest. It also teaches about people who didn't accept Jesus. And the excuses they gave for not accepting him.

In my short life I have witnessed many things that I can connect to these scriptures, one thing is you can still today travel and spread the word of Jesus without means of money, food, or a place to stay. I see traveling revival groups doing that even today, they travel town to town and only stay where they have their necessities met. They may stay at missions or churches, parking lots, places where they can give and receive as well, keeping the cycle going. This truly has to be God's work and have his favor in allowing this to happen, especially in the modern world we live in.

Going through life, it seems I always meet people who lack Jesus in their life or simply don't believe in him. People who do things to appease the people around them, without thinking of the outcome of their action. These people always seem to have a rebuttal for the miracles and an answer for why Jesus just can't be.

But hasn't this been the case for all of Jesus's existence here on earth? It says in Luke 9, people couldn't accept him, for he was, even when he walked the earth beside them and performed miracles right in front of them. Jesus talked about these types of people and they are still around with us today. Dealing with these people for me is easy. I show them the way of Jesus instead of preaching it. I treat others the way I want to be treated and when asked to help, I lend a hand. So when people ask me why and how I walk the way I do, I give all the credit to Jesus and they now have to stop and think about them.

The more I've sat down and read scripture, I have found the words and laws of Jesus are still alive and relevant and can be used every day in our lives.

February 10

Greetings family, this is Dave Brant and my scripture lesson is coming from Matthew 14:13-36, Mark 6:32-56, Luke 9:10-17, John 6:1-59. Let's start with a short word of prayer. Jesus come and lead us and soften our hearts for what you want for your people. Please, lead us to your paths and touch our minds and hearts and lead us into your ways, In Jesus name amen.

Just after the feeding of the five thousand. Jesus sent the disciples across the sea. He went up the mountain to pray. When Jesus was ready the boat was too far out to have them return. So, Jesus walked on the sea. When they saw Him, they were afraid thinking it was a ghost, Jesus spoke up not to be afraid. Peter replied, Lord if it is You command me to come to You on the water. Jesus said,

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Come. Peter got out of the boat and came to Jesus. He started to be distracted and began to sink where Jesus immediately reached out and took hold of his hand. Jesus said you of little faith why did you doubt.

How often we find ourselves in this very situation. Jesus standing right there with His hand out ready to assist us. Yet we are so self-absorbed and caught up in our surroundings. Wondering, where on earth Jesus is and why we have this turmoil. How we feel defeated, desolate and overcome. Finally, when we come to our senses and focus on God. We realize He has been there the whole-time hand stretched out to help, but we chose to do it on our own. Is it possibly something we are to learn from?

I encourage you to always find yourself reaching out for His guidance and trust Him in all you do. It doesn't matter how small the item, He wants to help. He loves us and so long as we are willing to let Him lead, He will. Many times, the bible tells us to give our troubles and cares to God. The more we do this it creates a habit that makes it easier to follow the next time. Be thankful in troubles though it is hard to do. If we are thankful in the bad times, it is even more grand in the good times. He is faithful and true. He truly loves us and cares. Don't lean on yourself but reach out and let God lead. Thank you Heavenly father for your faithfulness and love. Lead us closer to you, amen.

February 11

Come into His presence with thanksgiving & into His courts with praise

The pinnacle of this week has been _____

February 12

Letting Your Light Shine

Chuck Davis

Luke 11:33-35

Metaphors are seductive. We tend to regard them as real instead of figurative. Jesus argues an absurdity. IT is obvious that no one turns on a light and the covers it up. I'm sure Jesus got a chuckle from the crowd. In Matthew, Jesus says that "You are the light of the word."

Now the metaphor changes. The eyes become a metaphor. I used to try to think of this as a lesson on literal eyes. It didn't work very well. So, what does the metaphor say? I think it has to do with how we see things. Some people with perfectly good eyes think darkly. They tend to be conspiracy theorists. Everything is nefarious. No matter how bright things may appear, they are not satisfied until they discover some dark underbelly. No one's intentions are pure or anything close to it. If the eyes are the lamp of the body. "When the eyes are healthy, the whole body is full of light.

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Perhaps an extension of this insight is to become the kind of person who brings light into the darkness others are experiencing. I suspect that Jesus is right, “See to it, then that the light within you is not darkness.” Recalling Matthew [5:16], “Let your light shine before others so that they may see your good works and glorify your Father who is in heaven.”

If I may presume to put words in the mouth of Jesus, “Stop pessimistically spreading your darkness. There is too much hope for that.”

February 13

Hey this is Rhonda Hardy, your V3 Health Advisory Director and my devotion is coming out of Matthew 15:32-39 and Mark 8:1-10 both testify to the feeding of 4,000 men plus women and children with just 7 loaves of bread and a few small fish. In summary, a large crowd had been following Jesus for 3 days. After 3 days of travel, there was nothing left to eat. The Bible tells us that Jesus “had compassion on them” and didn’t want to send them away hungry as “they might faint on their way home”. The disciples ask Jesus where they were to get the people food as they were in a desert. Jesus asked them how much bread they had and they answered, “7 loaves and a few fish”. Jesus orders the crowd to sit down, then he blesses the bread and fish giving thanks to God, breaks it, gives to the disciples, and the disciples give distribute to the people. After feeding over 4,000 people, 7 full baskets of pieces were left over.

I feel like Jesus could have asked the Father to send down manna from heaven, have birds bring food, or supernaturally give the people a feeling of satiety, etc, but He chose not to. As our perfect example, He had the people sit and calmed them, then brought the small amount of food before the Father giving thanks to bless it. After blessing it, He broke it and gave it to His disciples who then distributed it among the people. All the people in the crowd got to see and experience the blessing from this miracle as Jesus lives out how He came to serve and not be served.

Just like the food in these passages, Jesus’ body was blessed and broken. Now his Spirit is distributed to us all as this shared miracle of His life, death, and resurrection.

One thing I would like to mention: just days before this miracle occurred, Jesus fed the 5000 + using 5 loaves and 2 fish. After witnessing that miracle, the disciples still asked Jesus where He expected them to get food reminding Him the current location of desert and Jesus didn’t even mention their faith or lack thereof. I love this.

February 14

Hello this is Teneko James and my devotional insights are coming from Matthew 16: 13-20; Mark 8: 22-30; Luke 9: 18-21; and John 6: 60-71. I have entitled it, “**The Tea**”

If you dabbled around on social media, you would notice most of the dialog includes various phrases, lingos and/or acronyms. For example, you might have run across the most popular acronyms like LOL, which stands for “Laughing Out Loud, or AFAIK, which stands for “As Far as I Know.” As I read the scriptures above, I was reminded of another popular internet phrase, “The Tea.”

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When someone is “spilling the tea or “sharing the tea” it refers to gossiping, sharing inside information, and/or sharing exclusive details about a situation or person. At times the information being shared can be positively edifying and at other times the gossip can condemn, shame, and even ruin a person reputation.

It seems a lot of “tea” was being spread about Jesus and his ministry throughout the regions in the New Testament. Jesus continuously asked his disciples “Who do the people say that I am?” Basically, Jesus wanted to know what “tea (gossip, rumors),” were being spread about his identity. The disciples went on to give him a laundry list of rumors: “they say you are John the Baptist;” “they say you are the Prophet Elijah.” The Bible tells us Jesus’ popularity continued to grow along with the rumors. Everyone from the fishermen at sea, the shop keepers, and the Pharisees in the temple were discussing and making determinations about Jesus’ mission, character, and identity.

I am sure the disciples were constantly defending their faith in Jesus and his mission. I am sure some of their families thought they were crazy for abandoning hopes and dreams in life, to follow Jesus.

Not much has changed since then. The world is still serving false narratives about who Jesus is, what his message was about, and there is even debate if he was a real person. There are websites, organizations, social media groups, and church groups whose whole objective is to spew lies, hatred, and sway people to stay as far away from Jesus and Christianity as possible.

But please note how Jesus handle the situation. He did not confront the world about their “tea.” Christ, instead, asked his disciples a simple question: “Who do you say that I am?” The question called for the disciple to close out the world and its opinions and turn their thoughts to themselves. This caused the disciples to reflect on their personal relationship with Jesus, which led to a confession of faith, ultimately distinguishing them from the rest of the world because they can identify him on an intimate level.

Do not allow the world and their “tea” to distract your focus. Fix your face and turn your heart towards Jesus and feast on the “Bread of Life.”

February 15

He Who Loves His Life Will Lose It. Devotional From Larry Hawkes

Matthew 16:24 Then Jesus said to His disciples, "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it. "

Mark 8:34 When He had called the people to Himself, with His disciples also, He said to them, "Whoever desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake and the gospel's will save it."

Luke 9:23 Then He said to them all, "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me. For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will save it. "

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John 12:25 He who loves his life will lose it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life.

Do we have time for Jesus today?

The world offers so many things that are interesting and fun. The internet keeps us busy watching videos on YouTube, reading posts and comments on Facebook, firing off our latest retort on X, formerly known as Twitter. The Bible tells us "You are bought with a price...", that we are now Bond Servants as Jesus was. So, our task is to listen for the prompting of the Holy Spirit and follow it. To learn to be obedient. To learn how to love as Jesus loved. "For the Son of Man does nothing except what the Father tells him to do." "Thy Kingdom come, thy will be done..." And the Apostle Paul says "Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord..."

How do we do that?

We need to repent daily. Have you repented recently? "Father, forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us." It helps to have a morning ritual. We awake with gratitude in our heart. "Thank you, Jesus, for another day. For another opportunity to talk with you in prayer. For another opportunity to learn about you in your Word. For another opportunity to tell someone about you as I go about my day."

He who has been forgiven much, loves much.

Do we even realize how much we have been forgiven? Our creator gave us the breath of life and we have been disobedient to him ever since. We have focused on what we want, not what He wants for us. "...but whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst. But the water that I shall give him will become in him a fountain of water springing up into everlasting life." When we drank of that "Living Water" we were cleansed. "And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." "Therefore if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed." Free to love as Jesus loved.

Therefore...

"...I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, 'But the righteous man shall live by faith.'"

February 16

This is Curtis Hunt and the title of my Daily Devotional is

Jesus Heals a Boy Possessed by a Spirit

Scriptures: Matthew 17:14-21, Mark 9:14-29, Luke 9:37-43a, Luke 17:6

Have you ever had a pesky problem that just would not leave? This can be annoying and can challenge us when we are experiencing the limitations of our patience and our resources.

When I was a child, my father had some sort of medical problem. After consultation with his doctor, he was referred to a community surgeon who could make surgical repairs to correct his problem. My father agreed to the surgery and it was scheduled. After he recovered from the surgery, the problem was gone. The surgery had been a success! All was well.

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Except that the problem returned long after the surgical intervention had corrected the problem. When it was evident that the problem was really back with all of the manifestations as previously experienced, my father once again consulted with his physician and the surgeon. As before, the surgeon scheduled the surgery that would once again correct the problem. As happened before, the surgery corrected the problem. Once again, the surgery had been a success and all was well. Apparently, the first surgical intervention must have missed something or was not as thorough as needed. Finally, having to endure the problem was a concern of the past!

My father went through recovery and was thankful for the successful surgery that had finally corrected the problem. You can appreciate his relief. But then his frustration when after a while the symptoms returned. He was thinking how he did not want to go through life having the same surgery over and over. He knew that the tissues and the scar formations from the previous surgeries would not tolerate surgery after surgery. He was deeply focused on an approach that was different from repetitive surgeries that, at best, only offered temporary correction.

His concerns were ‘heard’ by his younger brother-in-law who was a new physician and was in a residency program at Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minnesota. My uncle encouraged him to come to Mayo Clinic for an evaluation before taking the next step. After careful consideration especially since Mayo Clinic was a long way away, my father agreed to this step.

He found that Mayo Clinic was thorough and methodical in their medical evaluation process. After a comprehensive clinic visit, they found that the surgeries he had experienced back home only corrected the symptoms and did not address the cause of his problem. They outlined a different surgical procedure that, while more aggressive, would correct the cause of the problem. He agreed to this more extensive surgery. After he recovered from this surgery, he never again experienced the original problem during his lifetime.

The Disciples failed to heal the boy. The public realized they had failed. Have you ever experienced a failure in your life?

Failure does not leave us with good feelings. Failures can be demoralizing if we do not keep it in context. Failures can be embarrassing or humiliating if they are known to other people. If our failure is big enough, it can result in painful consequences.

Someone said that failure can make us ‘bitter’ or it can make us ‘better’. Would you agree? Clearly, we need to learn from our failures. We learn not to make that mistake again. We may learn that we might need some sort of help in the future to move ahead. We certainly do not want to withdraw and pull back from engaging with others out of fear of repeating the failure.

In this story, the Disciples found they could not give the man’s son any relief from his affliction. Like the first surgeon, they thought they could resolve the boy’s problem. However, it was something that was beyond their knowledge and skill level. They used the ‘tools’ in their ‘bag’, but they found they needed a different tool that was not available to them. The Disciples are confused and they lack understanding.

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The Disciples asked Jesus in private why they could not cast out the demon from the boy. Perhaps they had a spirit of pride based on their past accomplishments that had just been destroyed. Maybe they wondered why it worked before, but not this time.

Jesus responded that if they go into a spiritual battlefield with their own strength, power, pride, self-sufficiency, etc. then they have probably lost the battle before it really begins. Faith is experienced and exercised through prayer. Faith bridges the gap between the divine and human weakness. Faith is experienced and exercised through prayer.

Times change, but the enemy uses the same tactics. Why? Because they work! Man's nature does not change. We behave the same today as men did thousands of years ago.

Earlier I mentioned that failure can hurt us. However, it can hurt us in a good way if it drives us to Jesus, energizes our faith and opens our pathway to prayer.

February 17

Hey this is Kyra Grace, and upon reading the assigned scriptures - in Matthew 18:1-9; Mark 9:33-50; Luke 9:46-50; and John, 13:2.

What impresses me is the importance that Jesus puts on children.

Question - it is certain that he is talking about those of young age - Is it also applicable to those who are young in faith. I believe so.

Jesus is calling us to come as a child. The disciples are discussing who could be the greatest in the kingdom of heaven, Jesus simply replies - "I tell you the truth, unless you change and become like little children you will never enter the kingdom of heaven,"

Change - stop being like you are.... Find significance in serving, not positioning.

He goes on to say "therefore, whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven."

Then comes a warning - Verse 5 - "And whoever welcomes a little child like this in my name welcomes me. But if anyone causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to have a large millstone hung around his neck and to be drowned in the depths of the sea."

Jesus loves the innocent. I believe He wants us to live a life they can look up to, identify with, learn from. Open the door for others to see Jesus in you!

February 18

Come into His presence with thanksgiving & into His courts with praise

The pinnacle of this week has been _____

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February 19

Hey this is Jordan Hale and the scriptures that I will be drawing from are Matthew 18:10–22, Luke 15:3–7, Luke 17:3–4, John 20:23

What Jesus is saying here in Matthew 18 is not to look down on young believers in Christ. I consider myself a new Christian or “a little one” as it says in the King James version.

We need to be so careful not discourage or frustrate the new Christians or childlike believers. We NEED THEM, they are a part of our Army. They may be a Private now but one day they may become a Sergeant Major. They are so important.

God is willing to leave those who are closest to him to seek after the one who is lost. They don't even know they need God yet; He chooses to chase after them. We need to love everyone in that same way.

When my wife and I decided to sell our house and move, I witnessed this. God placed me where he knew I needed to be to see Him. He surrounded me with the people who would show me His love and draw me to Him. Everything fell into place, and I started to notice a change in the way I saw things. The first thing God worked on in my heart was forgiving my enemies. I did not want to forgive them, because I was so hurt by them. After months of wrestling with God and living with the conviction, I finally gave in. I allowed God to soften my heart.

I wrote each man, a letter, explaining how I was working on being a better man. I apologized to them and told them I forgave them. I find it interesting how the first thing God asked of me after he forgave me of my sins was forgiving my enemies for hurting me. But I now realize by doing that I am reflecting God 's love and grace.

70 times 7 Jesus says we are to forgive. These scriptures are about loving each other by being patient when we don't understand, lovingly correct each other, the way Christ would and by doing this we are furthering the kingdom of God.

February 20

Hello, this is Julie Gay, and I have drawn my devotional from the parable of the unforgiving servant- which is found in Matthew 18:22 through 35.

Jesus answered,” I tell you, not seven times, but seventy times seven times. Therefore, the kingdom of Heaven is like a king who wanted to settle accounts with his servants. As he began the settlement, a man who owed him ten thousand bags of gold was brought to him. Since he was not able to pay, the master ordered that he and his wife and children and all that he had be sold to repay the debt. “At this the servant fell onto his knees before him.

Here is my Devotional: As we look to Our Father in Heaven for forgiveness, we must also forgive others for what they have done to us. In forgiveness, we will find His peace granted to us. If we expect others to forgive us, we must first forgive them.

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Some will give forgiveness for your actions, other's will not, but we still must forgive them. In our pridefulness, we will sometimes want those who have maliciously taken actions upon us, brought to their knees by their slander and gossip against us. There is always a "choice" that we forgive those who have harmed us in different ways, being owed money to us, gossiped about us, or even slandered our name. We can find healing, in this kind of forgiveness, towards others, as it allows us to release our anger and hurt that is often based on our selfish pride. As we follow in Jesus' way, he will provide us with Peace and Joy, in that we are obedient to His command. In this alone, it sets me free from our "worldly WAYS." We endeavor to leave it at the Cross! The more We "FOLLOW CHRIST" THE MORE HE shows us the way out of Our selfishness. Let each of us be uplifting, kind, compassionate, and forgiving to all, as they, too are the CHILDREN OF GOD!! So do not hold onto those behaviors, thoughts and actions that reflect this world's ways and patterns, but let our lives reflect the Love that He has given us.

As we go into each day, Pray in the morning, Pray in the afternoon, and Pray in the evening.

Remember, we are on a directional path to the "KINGDOM OF GOD" that we might leave more of ourselves at the foot of the Cross as we continue our journey. May GOD lead, hold, and keep us from the evils of this world. I will leave you with these words, "Put others before yourselves, and LOVE your neighbor as you Love yourself.

February 21

Hey this is Greg Hansbraugh and my devotional thought is coming from Matthew 8:18-22. Let me read it to you. "And when Jesus saw great multitudes about Him, He gave a command to depart to the other side. Then a certain scribe came and said to Him, "Teacher, I will follow You wherever You go." And Jesus said to him, "Foxes have holes and birds of the air *have* nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay *His* head." Then another of His disciples said to Him, "Lord, let me first go and bury my father." But Jesus said to him, "Follow Me, and let the dead bury their own dead." May God add a blessing to the reading of His word.

Here Jesus was recently healing the sick and casting out demons in the town of Capernaum. There started to be a large crowd gathering. Jesus always wants people to focus on where healing and grace comes from, the Father. I'm sure He wanted to not allow gossip to start to spread through a large crowd of a "magician or sorcerer" amongst them. He ordered the disciples to get into a boat and travel to the other side of the lake. When speaking with the scribe, Jesus is saying He has no true home here, He isn't tied to this world. He is here to fulfill the prophecies concerning Him and bring salvation to those who will accept Him. He is letting the scribe know that this is a journey.

When Jesus says, "Follow Me, and let the dead bury their own dead", He is talking about those who don't know and accept Him. Without Jesus, they are truly destined for death, not eternal life with Jesus in Heaven. In other words, let those who are already dead tend to their dead, following Jesus brings life.

In summary, understand that your journey here is only temporary. Don't attach yourself to the world, as it not destined for life. Only your willingness to walk away from the world and follow Jesus as a disciple can bring you everlasting life. Know that the journey isn't always easy, but the reward is eternal.

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February 22

Here it is, My Devotional by Amy Kamplain. My Scripture is Matthew 11:20-27, 13:16-17, Luke 10:13-24 and John 13:2

Reading these verses calls to mind just how important where you look influences what you see and hear. You can have perfect human vision and hearing but if you are looking in the wrong direction what you see and hear won't be what you should be seeing and hearing, nor will it be the best for you. The first glasses were invented in the late 1200's and people started using hollowed out horns to improve their hearing around the same time. Since then, the world has spent countless time and money trying to have perfect vision and hearing but little time making sure they are looking in the right direction. We need to repent and turn from looking at what the world and Satan are tempting us with and turn towards Jesus. When we look to Jesus we not only will see and hear perfectly but we will no longer be influenced by the world. All the darkness and negativity Satan uses to tempt us to look away from Jesus and follow him will no longer have any influence on us. By looking to Jesus, we will see and hear what is best for us in God's kingdom and to be better able to bring more of God's kingdom into our lives and the lives of those who we encounter on our journey. I pray this season you will look in the right direction and turn towards Jesus.

February 23

The scriptures that have been given me are found in Matthew 22:34-40, Mark 12:28-34 and Luke 10:25-42. These scriptures share when the Sadducees and the Pharisees got together to test Jesus, asking Him what the greatest commandment in the Law was, to which Jesus replied, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all you mind". And "Love your neighbor as yourself". In our culture, love is everywhere. It's in our music and in our movies. We talk about love all the time. Seems like we already know how to love. And yet Jesus specifically commanded us to "Love God" and "Love your neighbor as yourself" as if we don't know. So, I must ask "Why"? And the answer is in reading the whole commandment. Loving God with our heart is loving with our emotions. But loving with our soul and mind is obedience. When we love with our mind and soul, we are choosing to love even when we don't feel like it. It is obedience. It is obedience in that we treat people with respect, that we love them as our Creator loves us, even when they are different than us, even when we don't feel like it.

When I started being obedient in reading scripture, spending time in God's word daily, I started realizing how much He loves me. It is in His words! Psalm 139 is a personal love letter to me from Him. Verse 1 "You have searched me, Lord, and you know me. Verse 3 "you are familiar with all my ways". Verse 13 "For You created my inmost being: You knit me together in my mother's womb." He is telling me how He knows me completely, how much He loves me, and how special I am. I found His words by loving Him and being obedient in spending time with Him.

When I follow Jesus' commands to love God and love my neighbor, I find what is best for me. I find a relationship with my Father.

Sandy Duncan

Vermilion Community Restoration, Board President

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February 24

The Lord's Prayer – Matt. 6:9-13, Luke 11:1-4, insights from John Smith.

In this manner, therefore, pray: Matt. 6:9-13
Our Father in heaven, Hallowed be Your name.
Your kingdom come. Your will be done
On earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our debts, As we forgive our debtors.
And do not lead us into temptation But deliver us from the evil one.
For Yours is the kingdom and the Power and the glory forever, Amen.

Our Father in heaven, Honored is another word for hallowed.
Forever is another word for Your Kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us our daily bread, means, Look to the Lord each day.
Forgiving our debts and debtors means, Forgiving all things monetary and/or otherwise.
Don't lead us into temptation and deliver us from the evil one means; We are helpless by ourselves
and need Jesus to help us on our path to righteousness.
For Yours is the kingdom and the power and glory forever, Amen,
means God is the creator of all things, We attribute all glory and honor to God.

The Importunate Friend – Luke 11:5-8

Known as the parable of the persistent neighbor, because of the man's persistence and because in the ancient world, hospitality is a moral obligation, the other man arose from bed and gave his friend all he needed. These verses are about persistence.

Encouragement to Pray – Matt. 7:7-11, Luke 11:9-13

Ask, seek and knock is what these verses talk about.

Always ask from our Father, seek him and you will find him, knock and the door will be open to you, basically meaning his people receive, find and the door will be open to them

Please read this out loud and compare this to the words I have changed.

Our Father in heaven, honored be Your name, forever Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.
Look to GOD each day, forgiving all things monetary and otherwise. We are helpless by ourselves and need Jesus to help us on our path to righteousness. GOD is the creator of all things, we attribute all glory and honor to GOD, Amen!

These verses teach us how to pray and to let us know to pray without ceasing, which means without stopping and persistent in our prayer Amen!

February 25

Come into His presence with thanksgiving & into His courts with praise

The pinnacle of this week has been _____

February 26

Hello this is Annie Villatoro, and these incredible verses are found at Matthew 12:22-42; Mark 3:22-27; Luke 11:14-32.

The pharisees accuse Jesus of casting out demons by the power of bezebul, the prince of demons. These accusations arise from their disbelief in Jesus' authority. Jesus' response with parables, stating that Satan cannot cast himself out, and that a kingdom divided against itself cannot stand. This passage highlights the spiritual battle between good and evil. Jesus responds shows the importance of recognizing and aligning with the kingdom of God. These parables also serve as a warning against attributing the work of God to evil forces. As believers, we are called to discern the source of spiritual manifestation, and to stand firm on our faith all while knowing that the power of God surpasses all things. Let this passage encourage you to remain steadfast in the trust you have in God's power especially in times you face opposition. Let it be a reminder to seek wisdom and discernment through prayer and studying the word of God. This will allow us to recognize and resist the schemes of the enemy. When dealing with situations where our faith is challenge, we must examine our response and attitudes in such circumstance. We should only rely on God's truth and authority. I truly believe these scriptures offers valuable insights into spiritual warfare, discernment, and standing firm in our faith. God's ultimate authority calls us believers to align ourselves with his kingdom, while exercising discernment, and recognizing his work.

February 27

Letting Your Light Shine

Chuck Davis Luke 11:33-35

Metaphors are seductive. We tend to regard them as real instead of figurative. Jesus argues an absurdity. IT is obvious that no one turns on a light and the covers it up. I'm sure Jesus got a chuckle from the crowd. In Matthew, Jesus says that "You are the light of the word."

Now the metaphor changes. The eyes become a metaphor. I used to try to think of this as a lesson on literal eyes. It didn't work very well. So, what does the metaphor say? I think it has to do with how we see things. Some people with perfectly good eyes think darkly. They tend to be conspiracy

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theorists. Everything is nefarious. No matter how bright things may appear, they are not satisfied until they discover some dark underbelly. No one's intentions are pure or anything close to it. If the eyes are the lamp of the body. "When the eyes are healthy, the whole body is full of light. Perhaps an extension of this insight is to become the kind of person who brings light into the darkness others are experiencing. I suspect that Jesus is right, "See to it, then that the light within you is not darkness." Recalling Matthew [5:16], "Let your light shine before others so that they may see your good works and glorify your Father who is in heaven." If I may presume to put words in the mouth of Jesus, "Stop pessimistically spreading your darkness. There is too much hope for that."

February 28

Hey, this is Lisa Bey, and this devotional finds its basis from Matthew 10:26-33, Matthew 12:31-32, Mark 8:14-15, and Luke 12:1-9

This sermon of Jesus served as a warning of what I really need to fear in my life. As I go through life and my search for understanding of the Kingdom of God and its ways in my life. I have looked in many places, but Jesus warns us here, to be careful of the leaven or false teachings that creep into our ears, and eventually into our hearts, make sure I balance what is being said against what he has taught us through the Word. Don't fear the one that can take your life but fear the one that can condemn your soul. He also warns us, that I, not only have to say, I am a Christian but live a life that is Christian. Which takes in all the teaching of Jesus.

His final warning here is to not blaspheme the Holy Spirit. " Blaspheme means to make to nothing or useless. " If I am claiming to be Christian out of one side of my mouth, and profaning Jesus with the other side of my mouth? Or if I say I love God and hate my neighbor? Or If I am at church on Sunday seeking to please God and the club on Friday night seeking to please me? What God's Spirit is teaching me and working through me will be brought to nothing with my half-hearted commitment. Jesus says this is behavior that is destined to nullify anything of the Kingdom of God in your life, and John, in the Book of Revelation, says that Jesus will SPEW you out of His mouth if you are Luke-warm. I am thankful for reminders like this, they help me to look at my life and ask myself, if my actions and words are lining up, with 'Who Christ is calling me to be'. I am called to be a bearer of the Image of God.

February 29

Hi there. This is Charlie Teeters. And my scripture devotion is coming from Luke chapter 12. Verses 11 through 21, it's the story about the rich fool.

Luke 12:13-21 Someone in the crowd said to him, "Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me." Jesus replied, "Man, who appointed me a judge or an arbiter between you?" Then he said to them, "Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; life does not consist in an abundance of possessions." And he told them this parable: "The ground of a certain rich man yielded an abundant harvest. He thought to himself, 'What shall I do? I have no place to store my

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crops.’ “Then he said, ‘This is what I’ll do. I will tear down my barns and build bigger ones, and there I will store my surplus grain. And I’ll say to myself, “You have plenty of grain laid up for many years. Take life easy; eat, drink and be merry.”’ “But God said to him, ‘You fool! This very night your life will be demanded from you. Then who will get what you have prepared for yourself?’ “This is how it will be with whoever stores up things for themselves but is not rich toward God.”

When I look at this scripture, I realize that to give stuff to God is the right thing to do. I believe that there are ways to give to Him like...Doing nice things for people, Praying, even repenting. That reminds me of a time I was going over to Tony’s, a friend’s house. And as I was going down the street on my bicycle, I saw a lady in a garage that was unloading some bags of groceries. As I got closer to her, I asked her if She needed help and she quickly said No, about the same time that her bag tore, and the groceries came plummeting to the ground. I ‘Leaped’ off my bike and picked the groceries up and help her with the rest of the bags. She told me she isn’t comfortable around strangers, and I assured her I understood. After helping with the rest of the bags, I got back on my bike to finish my journey and she told me ‘God bless you’. That event made me feel good and it seemed that I helped her just when she needed help. Now I get to share that story time and time again...

March 1

Howdy, my name is Walt Parsons, and my devotional is from Matthew 6:19-51, Luke 12:22-48.

I once heard a man talking and he looked pretty smart, so I listened to what he had to say.

He was talking about your headstone and the dash between the years. That's our lifetime and when you compare it to eternity it's as small as it appears on the head stone. So why would we want to throw eternity away for this cruel and at times brutal world we are in. We worry about all the things we can't take with us when we come to the end of our dash mark. All that worrying can't add a day to your life. What it does do is steal your joy during your days here.

God provides for all the animals and flowers he created, and He loves you so much more than all of them. You are favorite creation so why would he not provide for you.

Life is more than worlds expectations. Do you truly believe and trust in God or are just hoping Jesus is real. Churches say stay ready for the return of Jesus. I don't know when Jesus will come in the clouds. No one does only the father, but I believe we are called to be ready every day for the spirit to use us at any minute of the day or night. We focus on the world's issues mainstream media, Political arguments, Sports, and all other distraction. I think we need to focus on the 10 miles perimeter around us cause if we don't, we will miss the one God puts right in front of us to minister to and show the goodness of God.

Remember whatever you treasure is surely where your heart is

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March 2

My Scriptures are Matthew 5:25-26; Matthew 10:34-36; Luke 12:49-13:9. These Bible scriptures focus on the themes of reconciliation, division, and judgment. In Matthew 5:25-26, Jesus emphasizes the importance of resolving conflicts with others before it escalates to the point of legal action. That's why we should never hold grudges with one another and solve things quickly.

In Matthew 10:34-36, Jesus acknowledges that following Him can sometimes bring division among families and loved ones.

As I grew deeper into my faith and more spiritually, I tried to bring my siblings to Christ and seemed to cause a division.

Finally, in Luke 12:49-13:9, Jesus speaks about the urgency of repentance and the need for bearing good fruit. This scripture clearly says on Matt 13:8 Jesus will unroot inside of you and will FERTILIZE your spirit. We are called to be good stewards and produce good fruits by his power.

On these devotionals using these passages, they explore the difficulties and challenges that come with following Jesus, and seeking reconciliation, and the need for personal transformation through repentance and producing good fruit, It is obvious, they can't be overstated.

- Ozzy V.

March 3

Come into His presence with thanksgiving & into His courts with praise

The pinnacle of this week has been _____

March 4

This is Ruth Hunt, and my scriptures are Matthew 21: 1-9 (also found in Mark 11: 1-10)

As they approached Jerusalem and came to Bethphage on the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two disciples, saying to them "Go to the village ahead of you, and at once you will find a donkey tied there, with her colt by her. Untie them and bring them to me. If anyone says anything to you, say that the Lord needs them, and he will send them right away." This took place to fulfill what was spoken through the prophet: "Say to Daughter Zion, 'See your king comes to you, gentle and riding on a donkey, and on a colt, the foal of a donkey,'" The disciples went and did as Jesus had instructed them. They brought the donkey and the colt and placed their cloaks on them for Jesus to sit on. A very large crowd spread their cloaks on the road, while others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road. The crowds that went ahead of him and those that followed shouted,

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“Hosanna to the Son of David!” Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!” “Hosanna in the highest heaven!”

When Jesus entered Jerusalem, the whole city was stirred and asked, “Who is this?”

“Jesus hath need of them.” Jesus rode the colt - the unbroken, never before ridden colt. The young colt remained calm while Jesus rode it. Jesus was not only in control of the colt; but, He was in control of the entire day. He knew where He was going, and He was fully aware of what was going to happen this day and this week. Jesus could have walked the approximately two miles. He was used to walking. But he chose to fulfill the Old Testament prophecy (Zechariah 9:9). “See, your king comes to you, righteous and victorious, lowly and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey.” Jesus fulfilled the prophecy by not coming on a horse, as a conquering general. He came on a colt, which was customary for royalty. He came as the Prince of Peace.

Carrying palm branches and other branches was a symbol of victory and success. The crowd was openly showing adoration. Jesus was going to save them. Hosanna means “save or “save us.”

Jesus showed that he wasn’t afraid of the chief priests and Pharisees. He knew they were plotting to kill him. Mark tells us “Jesus entered Jerusalem and went into the temple courts. He looked around at everything, but since it was late, he went out to Bethany with the Twelve.”

The next day, when He reached Jerusalem, Jesus entered the temple courts and discovered those who were buying and selling there. He overturned the tables of the moneychangers and the benches of those selling. He began driving out those who were buying and selling. He would not allow anyone to carry merchandise through the temple courts. When the chief priests and teachers of the law heard this, they began looking for a way to kill him.

Prayer: Jesus, you came to Jerusalem as a humble leader. Even on that joyous Sunday, you knew the events that would follow later in the week. And yet, you endured the terrible torture so we could have eternal life. Thank you, Jesus.

March 5

Have you ever been so angry that you wanted to flip a table? If you didn’t already know this, Jesus did that very exact thing. Some Christians like to use this as an excuse for their actions claiming it’s ok to do this because Jesus did, and some non-Christians use it as an argument that Jesus wasn’t so loving. In today’s devotional we are going to discuss the following verses Matthew 21:10-19; Mark 11:11-17; Luke 19:45-46; and John 2:13-17.

Let’s start with a little background. It is the time of Passover, which is a time where the Israelites celebrate how God miraculously freed them, from slavery. Not all the Jewish people, lived in Jerusalem where the temple is located and because they were spread out and came from all over to celebrate and worship, they would buy their offering or sacrifices when they arrived. Being from all areas, their currency was also different so they would need to exchange it in order to purchase the

offering or sacrifices when they arrived. The problem wasn't with the exchanging and purchasing per se it was with the actual money changers and the sellers working in tandem with each other, taking advantage of people, capitalizing, and using the religious holiday, to pad their own pockets. **ALL OF THIS HAPPENING IN THE HOUSE OF GOD!** This was also "Holy Week" where Jesus enters triumphantly, is tried, crucified, and is risen from the dead. Already knowing all of this at that time, we can understand a little better, why Jesus had gotten so angry.

After studying, these verses God brought to my attention, two lessons:

1 He reminded me, that there are different types of anger and there are times, it is ok, to "Flip A Table" and,

2 We do not want our fleshly desires of non-sacred things, to fill our temple (bodies) and steal our relationship with him.

So, let's discuss the different types of anger, and when it's ok to flip a table, like Jesus. I laugh and joke a lot with friends and family that I am a loud, tell it like it is, hot headed Italian. When I get angry, I yell, have a come to Jesus moment with you, and then everything is good, let's sit down and have a meal together. In all reality that is not ok, even though some Christians may think it is, it's actually just rage or repressed anger, not a good reason to flip, a table like Jesus. What Jesus had was "RIGHTEOUS INDIGNATION," he was upset at the injustice, that broke God's heart. Jesus did not sin in anger, like some non-Christians believe he literally was clearing the temple of sin, **REBUKING INJUSTICE!**

There are times I do things, that feel good in the moment, fleshly or worldly things that have my focus on the wrong kinds of "idols." This can clutter up opportunities for genuine worship. In these verses, Jesus asserted that HE was the true temple. He was angry, at what was being done to the temple, but knew that He, too, would be beaten and abused. When we trust in and focus on Jesus, our lives can be used for their true purpose, service to Him. We were made to worship. God has made us to love and serve Him. Our bodies are temples, where the Holy Spirit dwells within us. With the presence of sin, our lives get messed up, but through Christ Jesus we are cleansed. We fulfill our purpose by focusing on what makes God happy by having a personal relationship with him, through worship and loving and serving others through him. I know this isn't always easy believe me I pray about it every day, and I know that through His grace I will accomplish what he created me to be. Father, I Thank you for making and creating us to worship you, please help us focus on living for you and knowing when it's the right time to flip a table or two through righteous indignation. Thank you for guiding us on the right path to fulfilling our purpose, In Jesus's name, Amen!

Stephanie Holycross

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March 6

Hello, my name is Annetta Devore. My devotional thought is coming from Mark 11:20-33. The story is about the withered fig tree and the priests conspiring against Jesus and questioning his authority.

It reads this way,

As they left Bethany the next day, he was hungry. Off in the distance he saw a fig tree in full leaf. He came up to it expecting to find something for breakfast but found nothing but fig leaves. It wasn't yet the season for figs. He addressed the tree: "No one is going to eat fruit from you again—ever!" And his disciples overheard him. They arrived at Jerusalem. Immediately on entering the Temple Jesus started throwing out everyone who had set up shop there, buying and selling. He kicked over the tables of the bankers and the stalls of the pigeon merchants. He didn't let anyone even carry a basket through the Temple. And then he taught them, quoting this text:

My house was designated a house of prayer for the nations.

You've turned it into a hangout for thieves.

The high priests and religion scholars heard what was going on and plotted how they might get rid of him. They panicked, for the entire crowd was carried away by his teaching. At evening, Jesus and his disciples left the city. In the morning, walking along the road, they saw the fig tree, shriveled to a dry stick. Peter, remembering what had happened the previous day, said to him, "Rabbi, look—the fig tree you cursed is shriveled up!" Jesus was matter-of-fact: "Embrace this God-life. Really embrace it, and nothing will be too much for you. This mountain, for instance: Just say, 'Go jump in the lake'—no shuffling or hemming and hawing—and it's as good as done. That's why I urge you to pray for absolutely everything, ranging from small to large. Include everything as you embrace this God-life, and you'll get God's everything. And when you assume the posture of prayer, remember that it's not all asking. If you have anything against someone, forgive—only then will your heavenly Father be inclined to also wipe your slate clean of sins." Then when they were back in Jerusalem once again, as they were walking through the Temple, the high priests, religion scholars, and leaders came up and demanded, "Show us your credentials. Who authorized you to speak and act like this?" Jesus responded, "First let me ask you a question. Answer my question and then I'll present my credentials. About the baptism of John—who authorized it: heaven or humans? Tell me." They were on the spot and knew it. They pulled back into a huddle and whispered, "If we say 'heaven,' he'll ask us why we didn't believe John; if we say 'humans,' we'll be up against it with the people because they all hold John up as a prophet." They decided to concede that round to Jesus. "We don't know," they said. Jesus replied, "Then I won't answer your question either."

Like the fig tree, some Christians look good on the outside but are producing no fruit. By cursing the fig tree Jesus shows, what will happen to hypocrites, those that reject his teaching will wither and die. At the temple, he cast out those who exploited others while claiming to serve God. When the religious leaders questioned Jesus' authority, they were only concerned about protecting themselves, not the truth. Their internal argument betrayed them, as the hypocrites they were. Jesus refused to

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answer them rather than argue with them because they did not deserve an answer and his priority was to minister to others.

Ask yourself. Am I producing fruit? Or just putting up appearances.

Prayer: Father, please help me to produce good fruit in my life so I can represent you well to others around me and help me not to get caught up in religious arguments and miss an opportunity to minister to others and the wisdom to know the difference. Amen.

March 7

Hey, it's me, Gary Jones, thought I would share with you the insights, I had with these scriptures: Matthew 21:33-46, Mark 12:1-12, Luke 20:9-19

This parable is about God and man's relationship.

The man who planted the vineyard is God. The vineyard is us. The tenants are the religious leaders of the day. The man (God) sent servant after servant to collect his harvest, but they were beaten and sent away empty handed, and some were killed. Finally, the man (Father God) sent his son (Jesus) to collect the harvest. The tenants seeing that he was the heir to the man they killed him thinking they could get the inheritance. But all they got was killed and new tenants moved in to tend to the vineyard.

Jesus also speaks of the cornerstone. He is the cornerstone. "The stone the builders have rejected is now the cornerstone". I think the builders in this part are the Tenants. They rejected the man's son and killed him, by doing so they made the Son even more important.

Pay attention to the signs God puts in front of you. They could be servant after servant. Also, the second Half of my study is found in Matthew 22:1-14, Luke 14:15-24

In these parables Jesus uses a story to tell an important lesson. A man was preparing a great feast and invited many guests. At the time for the banquet, he sent his servant to tell the people he invited. All those people had excuses as to why they couldn't go. So the man had his servant go out into the street and invite anyone and everyone. This once again reminds me of God's grace and patience. This is an open invitation to God's love that is for everybody not just the one's initially invited. To me in this story once again the man is God, and the great banquet is heaven.

God wants us all to be a part of his Kingdom. Just as the man sent his servant to invite guests God sends messengers and circumstances into our lives to invite us into a relationship with Him. The excuses by the guests reflect our distraction with worldly things. Sometimes we prioritize worldly things over our relationship with God. Don't let these distractions keep us from knowing God's love

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March 8

Hi, this is Annie Villatoro, and my devotional thought comes out of Matthew 22:15-46, we witness Jesus navigating through various attempts to test him with questions. His responses did not only show his wisdom but also deliver profound truths about honoring earthly authorities, affirming the reality of resurrection, emphasizing love for God and others as central to fulfilling God's law. By doing this he is asserting his own authority as the Son of God.

When the Pharisees and Herodians questioned Jesus by asking whether it was lawful to pay taxes to Caesar. Jesus responded by asking them for a denarius which has Caesars image on it, "Render therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's" (Matthew 22:21). This response demonstrated Jesus's wisdom while emphasizing the importance of honoring both earthly authorities and God.

The Sadducees, who denied the resurrection, voiced a hypothetical scenario about marriage in the afterlife. Jesus responded to their argument by highlighting their misunderstanding of Scripture and affirming the reality of the resurrection. He mentioned that in the resurrection, people will be like angels in heaven and that God is not God of the dead but of the living.

An authority later asked Jesus about the greatest commandment in the Law. Jesus responded by quoting Deuteronomy 6:5, stating that loving God with all one's heart, soul, and mind is the greatest commandment. He then added that loving one's neighbor as oneself is equally important. Jesus then turned the tables on his questioners by asking them about Psalm 110:1 ("The LORD said to my Lord, "Sit in the place of honor at my right hand until I humble your enemies, making them a footstool under your feet"). He challenged their understanding of the Messiah, pointing out that David himself referred to the Messiah as his Lord. Instead of them answering Jesus question, The Pharisees remained silent. Matthew reported, no one was able to answer him, nor did anyone dare from that day ask him another question. This exchange highlighted Jesus authority as the Son of God, The Messiah.

March 9

Hello, this is Tim Agee, and I am kind of new around here but Pastor asked me to give a devotional thought on Matthew 23:1-39; Mark 12:37-44; Luke 20:45 through chapter 21 verse 4. Jesus spoke a great deal about the Pharisees and scribes in the New Testament. Matthew chapter 23 is a more scathing rebuke of them. He also spoke of it in Mark chapter 12 and Luke 20.

Jesus is very clear in the Matthew account. He actually gives them seven rebukes about their teachings and the way they are hypocritical in what they teach verses what they do. He actually outright calls them directly hypocrites at least five times. The book of Matthew was written "to" the Jews but also "for" us. They would have known instantly what it meant to them and their culture, so it's important for us to look at what it means to us and our culture.

The point that Jesus was making was obvious, we should not be hypocritical in any way. It seems though that Jesus is making a bigger point. That being He sees the motivation of what we do in our

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hearts. In the accounts Mark and Luke, they further the event of the widow and her offering. She gave all that she had from her heart. The others gave from their abundance and as a “show”. The take away is that as Christians, whether it’s time, talents, or money we should always give with a glad, open heart. Not a show for anyone, but to give back what God has so lovingly blessed us with.

A final thought is that Jesus said to store up our rewards in heaven where moth and rust do not destroy. He also said that if you receive your rewards on earth (or if our motivation is for others to see) then we have been paid here and those rewards will not

March 10

Come into His presence with thanksgiving & into His courts with praise

The pinnacle of this week has been _____

March 11

This is Gail Collins, and my devotional is coming from Matthew 24:1-14, Mark 13:1-13, Luke 21:5-19.

All three of these passages of scripture deal with the disciples asking Jesus about the end times. When I have read these scriptures in the past, I use to think these things were far away and not likely to happen in my lifetime. After the past several years, these things don’t seem so far away. They are harsh and make great end time movies.

They had just left the temple and the disciples were admiring the beauty of the temple stones. They pointed them out to Jesus, but Jesus told them how these stones would not be left one upon another. What was viewed as strong and indestructible would be brought to ruin. I believe Jesus was not just prophesying a physical destruction but a spiritual one as well. That what the religious leaders had built up in the hearts and minds of the Jews would come crashing down as God’s Kingdom was established.

Their conversation continued on the Mount of Olives. The disciples asked Jesus the same questions we are asking now. “When will these things happen? What will be the sign of your coming and the end of the age?” Jesus gives them a strict warning not to be deceived and that many will come in his name claiming to be him; and that many people will be deceived.

Wars and rumors of wars; nation against nation; famines, earthquakes, pestilences, fearful events and great signs from heaven. It’s much like the headlines in our news and social media feeds. Before these things were to happen; Jesus warns the disciples about their own coming persecutions and being handed over to governors and kings. They would be witnesses to the leaders in government.

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Throughout their trials and tribulations, Jesus tells his disciples not to worry and trust him to with the words to say at that time.

The warnings go beyond government leaders to the people whom the disciples loved and trusted. Brother against brother; father against his child; children rebelling against their parents. Some would be betrayed to the death. They are warned of being hated by all men because of Jesus. At this point, I'm sure the disciples were questioning why they had followed him. Yet still remembering all they had already witnessed. Events such as feeding of thousands of people from a few small loaves of bread and 2 small fish. Unwrapping the grave clothes when Lazarus was raised from the dead. Seeing 2000 pigs go over a cliff into the water when Jesus cast demons out of a man.

They also would have remembered when Jesus asked them who they thought he was. Peter answered, "You are the Christ. The son of the living God." Matthew 16:16.

Then Jesus tells them that many will turn away from faith and betray and hate each other. False prophets will appear and deceive many people. There will be an increase in wickedness and the love of most will grow cold. He instructs them to stand firm to the end and they would be saved. He finally tells them the end will come after the whole world has been preached the Gospel of the Kingdom.

They witnessed an increase in wickedness and the love of many that grew cold as they watched their Messiah betrayed, beaten, and hung on a cross as those in the crowd mocked him. In the same city just a few days before where praises echoed for Jesus, now "crucify" was being shouted. Once Jesus had died, they must have really questioned their ability to stand until the end. History records all but one of the disciples were martyred for their faith.

So here we are 2000 years later asking the same questions as the disciples. When and what? Are we going to be brought before governors and kings? Will we be betrayed by our loved ones and friends. Will we be hated by all men because of Jesus? Will we trust the Lord to give us the right words to say when we are brought before our adversaries? Will we face death because of our faith in Him? Will we be able to stand until the end and be saved?

I ask myself these questions every day. I have to remind myself of Jesus words in John 14:6 "...I am the way, the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me." John 6:68..."Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life." And in Psalm 46:10 "Be still and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth."

We need to keep our eyes on Jesus and know Him and His Word to keep us standing firm until the end. When those false prophets come, if we know the Word of God, we will recognize when the enemy trying to deceive us. Our devotion is to the one who has the words of eternal life.

Dear Jesus, thank-you for your words of eternal life. Thank you for your warnings of harsh things to come. Help us to trust you when the adversary comes so that we can stand firm until the end. Give us the words to say when we stand before those who would hate us because of you. Let us be your witnesses and don't let our faith and love for you grow cold. In your precious name Lord! Amen

March 12

The End Times

Matthew 24:15-36, Jesus said “So when you see standing in the holy place ‘the abomination that causes desolation.’ Spoken of through the prophet Daniel –let the reader understand – then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. Let no one on the housetop go down to take anything out of the house. Let no one in the field go back to get their cloak. How dreadful it will be in those days for pregnant women and nursing mothers! Pray that your flight will not take place in winter or on the Sabbath. For then there will be great distress, unequalled from the beginning of the world until now – and never to be equaled again.”

“If those days had not been cut short, no one would survive, but for the sake of the elect those days will be shortened. At that time if anyone says to you, ‘Look, here is the Messiah!’ or ‘There he is!’ do not believe it. For false messiahs and false prophets will appear and perform great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect. See, I have told you ahead of time.”

“So, if anyone tells you, ‘There he is, out in the wilderness,’ do not go out; or, ‘Here he is, in the inner rooms,’ do not believe it. For as lightning that comes from the east is visible even in the west, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. Wherever there is a carcass, there the vultures will gather.”

“Immediately after the distress of those days ‘the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from the sky, and the heavenly bodies will be shaken.”

“Then will appear the sign of the Son of Man in heaven. And then all the peoples of the earth will mourn when they see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory. And he will send his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of the heavens to the other.”

“Now learn this lesson from the fig tree: As soon as its twigs get tender and its leaves come out, you know that summer is near. Even so when you see all these things, you know that it is near, right at the door. Truly I tell you, this generation will certainly not pass away until all these things have happened. Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away.”

The Day and Hour Unknown

“But about that day or hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father.” Mark 13:14-32. These verses are almost verbatim as those in Matthew 24 above.

Luke 21:20-33 In Luke 21:20 Jesus said “When you see Jerusalem being surrounded by armies, you will know that its desolation is near.” The rest of chapter 21 in Luke is very much like Matthew Chapter 24 quoted above.

Luke 21:25-28 “There will be signs in the sun, moon, and stars. On the earth, nations will be in anguish and perplexity at the roaring and tossing of the sea. People will faint from terror, apprehensive of what is coming on the world, for the heavenly bodies will be shaken. At that time they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. When these things begin to take place, stand up and lift up your heads, because your redemption is drawing near.” When do you think the End Times will come? What do you think the End Times will be like? Do you think the End Times will be in your lifetime? Do you wonder if we are in the End Times? Will you survive the

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End Times? The study of the End Times is called “eschatology.” Eschatology is theological expectations of the end of the present age, human history, or the end of the world itself. The end of the world or end times is predicted by several world religions, which teach that negative world events will reach a climax. Prophets and authors have been saying for centuries that the End Times are about to happen. I remember in the late 1950’s and early 60’s reading three books about the “Beginning of the End” and the ‘Apocalypse” or “Armageddon.”

Second Timothy 3:1-5 “But mark this: there will be terrible times in the last days. People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, without love, unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not lovers of the good, treacherous, rash, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God—having a form of godliness but denying its power. Have nothing to do with these people.”

Luke 21:36 “Be always on the watch, and pray that you may be able to escape all that is about to happen, and that you may be able to stand before the Son of Man.”

2 Peter 3:4 They will say, “Where is this ‘coming’ he promised? Ever since our ancestors died, everything goes on as it has since the beginning of creation.”

Matthew 24:42,44 “Therefore keep watch, because you do not know on what day your Lord will come.” “So, you must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him.”

Acts 2:37-39 When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, “Brothers, what shall we do?” Peter replied, “Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off—for all whom the Lord God will call.”

2 Peter 3:11-13 “Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming. That day will bring about the destruction of the heavens by fire, and the elements will melt in the heat. But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, where righteousness dwells.”

1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 “Brothers and sisters, we do not want you to be uninformed about those who sleep in death, so that you do not grieve like the rest of mankind, who have no hope. For we believe that Jesus died and rose again, and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him. According to the Lord’s word, we tell you that we who are still alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will certainly not precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so, we will be with the Lord forever. Therefore encourage one another with these words.”

Repent, live a Holy life, and always be prepared for the return of Christ!

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March 13

Hey, this is Scott Covington, and my devotion is coming out of Matthew 24:37-25:15, Mark 13:33-37, Luke 17:26-36, 19:12-13.

I have notices that God brings judgement but it is coupled with mercy just as I have seen in Genesis 6:5-7 The Lord saw how the wickedness of the human race had become on the earth, and that every inclination of the thoughts of the human heart was only evil all the time. The Lord regretted that He had made human beings on earth, and His heart was deeply troubled the Lord said, "I will wipe from the face of the earth the human race I have created--and with them the animals, the birds and the creatures that move along the ground—for I regret that I have made them." But Noah found favor in the eyes of the LORD.

Every morning most of our world, wake and start our day, thinking of our wants. Do we not plan our day in the mindset of "Getting what we want." as in the days of Noah everyone was going through there day doing as "THEY" pleased. Noah had been telling everyone that the day was coming of a disastrous flood. In this time all were self-seeking, wicked and hateful to others.? Do we not, in this time, only think of ourselves, our wants, and our needs, are we not hateful, gossiping, living in sexual promiscuity, and living a life of sinful pleasures?! As I, too, lived "IN THE WORLD" this way also!

After many years, until I reached the age of 58, I tried filling the hurt and loss I felt in my heart with all the sinful pleasures I desired to fill a void in my "HEART." It was not until depression, and just the will to Live took over my thoughts!! when I found myself in Addiction, Jail, and just no will go on, did I find myself needing to change.

On the day I Left a Jail cell, I surrendered my Life to Christ Jesus! Hallelujah!! That same day I found a weight lifted off my heart!! I sought "THE KINGDOM OF GOD," meaning, I no longer was self-seeking, I was no longer thinking only of myself. We do not know the day or time OUR LORD is coming back, but I promise as Noah said, He is coming back!! My direction has changed now, I am finding peace and joy instead of just wanting to die!!

Brothers and sisters, if you are finding yourself feeling Lost, Lonely, having no Joy in your life, let me tell you of a KING of KINGS, A PROMISE KEEPER, A CHAINBREAKER! His name is JESUS! He is a savior while you are still breathing, but when you have no more breath in you to "REPENT" He is LORD! Meaning you and I both will be judged by our sinfulness! Do not be caught on the day of judgement without the SON JESUS CHRIST interceding for you on that day! Eternity is a LONG time to be "LOST" forever and forever! There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth! God gives us each "Choice", what will your CHOICE be?

March 14

Hello, My Name is Kevin Coe, my devotional thought is coming from Matthew 24:45-25:46, Mark 13:34, Luke 12:41-46, John 5:29

Jesus is arguably the greatest teacher of all time. He told stories about everyday life, yet these stories had a spiritual meaning. We call them parables. A parable is an earthly story with a spiritual or

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heavenly meaning. Jesus is using parables to teach the people in the verses that were used for this devotion.

In these parables, there is a master and servants. The master directs or entrusts the servants to do something that the master deems important. When the master returns, he rewards the servant according to the work he was given. However, it is not what we would expect. Those servants who did what the master gave them are welcomed into eternal life. Those servants who did not do what they were told are cast into eternal punishment.

It is important to note in these verses that Jesus is not talking about working for our salvation. He is explaining that as Christ followers each of us are entrusted by Him to serve in the Kingdom. Ephesians 2:10 explains it in this way. “For we are God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.” We are servants of God who have been entrusted to do the works of the Kingdom.

What about the others that are called servants by Jesus? They are given work to be completed but their response to the call is very different. They ignore the work, and, in some cases, they are abusive to those who are actually building the Kingdom. They are not prepared when the master Jesus returns. They do not understand the greatness of the master.

The two types of servants represent the world in which we live. There is no middle ground. We are either servants in the Kingdom of God who are rewarded with eternal life or servants of another kingdom that leads to death. We are ready for His return, or we are not ready for it. Jesus gives us these words in Mark 13:33, “Be on guard! Be alert! You do not know when that time will come.” Are you ready for the master to return?

March 15

Howdy, my devotional is coming from John 12:20-50, and I will be using verses 20 through 23 for this devotional, and it reads like this, “Some Greeks who had come to Jerusalem for the Passover celebration paid a visit to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee. They said, “Sir, we want to meet Jesus.” Philip told Andrew about it, and they went together to ask Jesus. Jesus replied, “Now the time has come for the Son of Man to enter into his glory.”

Dr. Harold Reed was the president of Olivet Nazarene University, He also authored a book on leadership, and one of the chapters was labeled, ‘Leadership is Timing’. It goes without saying that Jesus was the leader of anything he was a part of, but I do believe his recognition of timing is important. Remember, at the wedding party when he told his mother my time has not yet arrived. He seemed to be aware of something that eludes the average reader. Many have suspected why he would say that. But most of it is just conjecture. But in the scripture, that we just read, Jesus

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specifically says now the time has come, knowing all the factors of this event is impossible from this point, but exposure and momentum of his message and ministry could not be ignored by the religious leaders of the day, and Jesus knew what their method of removal of a perceived problem was.

Here is the application of these verses:

Have you ever wondered why people do what they do? Here in the scripture, it tells us that Greeks came to see Jesus, but I think it's interesting who they came to, they came to Philip. Phillip's name was not an average Jewish name, it obviously was impacted by a Greek home.

Of all of the 12 disciples, John writes that the Greeks came to Philip. In their thinking, it must have been logical to go to Phillip if they wanted to see Jesus, it may have been because of commonalities they had with him.

Who is invited into your life? How did they know they could come into your life? What is it in your life that made them think they had a connection with you? Most people I interact with want to be understood, they rarely will come to an interaction, where they want to be misunderstood.

Sometimes people have heard rumors about you, they may know something about your past that makes them think you can understand where they're coming from. There have been times, that I've gone down to Julie's Shooting Star to sit at the bar and drink a Diet Coke or Coke Zero. My interactions used to be minimal unless Julie would point someone in my direction. But since we have begun 'Jesus on Tap', especially if I wear a 'Jesus on Tap' shirt into Julie's, I have instant credibility. Because people know who I am, or at least who I'm connected to. If I'm wearing a 'Jesus on tap' T-shirt, maybe their perception is that they will have a greater level of being accepted because they have heard about 'Jesus on Tap', and what it stands for.

Historically, one of the factors that allowed the Dark Ages to last so long was this idea of cloistering (hiding away) people of faith. Jesus talked about us being the light of the world and I don't think he wants us to hide our light under a bushel. I believe he wants us to go into the darkness, maintaining the character of the light, the virtue of the light, and to impact the darkness. These Greeks that had a desire to see Jesus, I believe that they were wandering in darkness, and they saw a light that looked welcoming to them, and it was named, 'Philip'. In this interaction Philip is playing the part of a 'Guiding light' that showed the Greeks, the Way called 'Jesus.'

March 16

This is Aunt Die Weddle and the scriptures that I am doing are Matthew 26:1-16, Mark 14:1-11, Luke 22:1-6, John 12:1-8. I have entitled my devotional, Was Jesus's Death Premeditated?

Premeditated means "done after being thought about or carefully planned, especially something unpleasant."

Jesus's birth and death were part of God's plan from the very beginning. He had to know His entire life what was ahead of him. In Matthew 26:7-13, a woman poured a vase full of expensive perfume

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on Jesus's head. He said, "She is preparing for my burial." Did she know why she was doing that? I don't know. But something inside her knew it was the thing to do.

Judas Iscariot betrayed Jesus for 30 pieces of silver. Matthew 26:14-16 and Luke 22:3 says Satan entered Judas. Then when Jesus was condemned to death, Judas was sorry. He returned the silver and hanged himself. Did he know what his betrayal would cause? I don't know. But it was part of God's larger plan.

In John 11:1-45, Jesus's good friend Lazarus became sick and died. Jesus waited until he was dead and buried for 4 days before going there. He knew all He had to do was say, "Lazarus, come out!" and Lazarus would then be alive and walk out of the tomb! Some of the Jews then believed in Him. Others went to the Pharisees and told them. So, was Lazarus's death premeditated? Yes, it was part of God's plan.

So, Jesus's whole life and death was premeditated from the beginning of time and Jesus knew the entire plan from the beginning and lived his entire life on earth to fulfil God's plan for the salvation of all of us. He was a PERFECT sacrifice for every one of our sins. We just need to be sorry for our sins and ask for forgiveness and we will spend ALL of Eternity with Jesus! Was that part of the plan? YES!!!! It was always the plan.

March 17

Come into His presence with thanksgiving & into His courts with praise

The pinnacle of this week has been _____

March 18

This is Curtis Hunt and here is my devotional, it is found in John 13, let me read it to you,

It was just before the Passover Festival. Jesus knew that the hour had come for him to leave this world and go to the Father. Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end. The evening meal was in progress, and the devil had already prompted Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot, to betray Jesus. Jesus knew that the Father had put all things under his power, and that he had come from God and was returning to God; so he got up from the meal, took off his outer clothing, and wrapped a towel around his waist. After that, he poured water into a basin and began to wash his disciples' feet, drying them with the towel that was wrapped around him. He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, "Lord, are you going to wash my feet?" Jesus replied, "You do not realize now what I am doing, but later you will understand." "No," said Peter, "you shall never wash my feet." Jesus answered, "Unless I wash you, you have no part with me." "Then, Lord," Simon Peter replied, "not just my feet but my hands and my head as well!" Jesus answered, "Those who have had

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a bath need only to wash their feet; their whole body is clean. And you are clean, though not every one of you.” For he knew who was going to betray him, and that was why he said not everyone was clean.

When he had finished washing their feet, he put on his clothes and returned to his place. “Do you understand what I have done for you?” he asked them. “You call me ‘Teacher’ and ‘Lord,’ and rightly so, for that is what I am. Now that I, your Lord, and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another’s feet. I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you. Very truly I tell you, no servant is greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them.

“I am not referring to all of you; I know those I have chosen. But this is to fulfill this passage of Scripture: ‘He who shared my bread has turned^[a] against me.’ “I am telling you now before it happens, so that when it does happen you will believe that I am who I am. Very truly I tell you, whoever accepts anyone I send accepts me; and whoever accepts me accepts the one who sent me.”

Our dog, Maggie came into this world with humble beginnings. She was just another mixed breed puppy and was put up for adoption. She was alone in the world. Our role became that as a rescuer when we adopted her.

We connected with her and she became part of our family in so many ways. She defined her role in our lives by always alerting us whenever someone drove into our driveway. For ten years, she was the first one to the front door to greet our guests even though the purpose of their visits were to see another member of our family. Yet, she never relaxed her duties and she never gave up her reaching out to greet arriving guests.

When we would return from a ‘trip’ to town, we would unlock the garage service door leading into the kitchen. Our practice would be to turn the knob and open it ever so slightly. Then a black nose would insert itself between the door and the frame. The black nose would open the door fully and we would be greeted by the welcoming committee of one that was so glad to see our return. Every single time! She would stand on the threshold two steps higher than us with tail wagging, expressing her joy at seeing our return and I do believe there was a smile on her face. Our entry back into the house was ALWAYS delayed, no matter how urgently nature might be calling us, as we shared greetings with this special member of our family. She was just there with her forever positive and unending love for us. We relished in it, often without conscious awareness of it.

Maggie humbled herself in the midst of others and shared her love unconditionally with everyone she met. She assumed the role of servant to us not only to alert us when someone was arriving but also greeting us with loving enthusiasm when we returned. She was a social creature and was quite content as long as she could be in the same space and share her love with us.

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In the story in John, Jesus humbles himself as he greets the disciples and washes their feet upon their arrival. Jesus shows his love for others, in this case the disciples, by serving their needs. Jesus goes on to encourage them to pass it forward by reaching out to others in the same manner that He has demonstrated for them.

During this season, we intensify our focus on others and how we can share our love more deeply with them. Our challenge might be that some people may be hard to love. When we reach out and open our hearts, we increase our ability to share the burdens our neighbors carry. Nevertheless, we share and reach out to others and allow Christ to work through us.

March 19

Hello there, my scripture is about the upper room betrayal that Jesus unveils before the event happens, it is found in Matthew 26:21-25; Mark 14:18-21; Luke 22:21-23; but I will read John's account of this event it is found in John 13:21-27. Here it is, "After he had said this, Jesus was troubled in spirit and testified, "Very truly I tell you, one of you is going to betray me." His disciples stared at one another, at a loss to know which of them he meant. One of them, the disciple whom Jesus loved, was reclining next to him. Simon Peter motioned to this disciple and said, "Ask him which one he means." Leaning back against Jesus, he asked him, "Lord, who is it?" Jesus answered, "It is the one to whom I will give this piece of bread when I have dipped it in the dish." Then, dipping the piece of bread, he gave it to Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot. As soon as Judas took the bread, Satan entered into him."

If all the books that have written on this event, we're stacked up one on top of another, I'm sure it would be one of the tallest skyscrapers in the world. So, there is no lack of ideas or concepts concerning this scripture.

The event portrayed in this story, does not stand alone. We believe that Judas, as well as every individual of Adam's race, had the propensity of betraying Christ. We don't know how long he thought of that. We don't know when he started thinking about the betrayal of Christ. We believe that he was committed to some principles of financial gain. For in the story that is referred to in the previous chapter a woman comes and anoints the feet of Jesus and Jesus specifically says it is for his burial and Judas complains that this perfume could have been sold and the money given to the poor. John 12:6, informs us "He did not say this because he cared about the poor but because he was a thief; as keeper of the money bag, he used to help himself to what was put into it." Personal gain ranked pretty high on his priority list, which more than likely played into the outcome of any decision-making process.

Decision making is complex, and some do it better than others, the processes are varied of time and perspectives, based on the impact of the projected outcome. But for all decision making, there comes

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a time that the decision has been made. In this story, it is interesting that the scripture says, 'Judas took the bread', the bread, which was dipped, was meant to declare, the man who would betray Christ.

The next words, we read are horrible and they are, 'Satan entered into Judas'. Up to that point, the decision was not yet made, the clay was still soft, all options are possible. Judas has come to the fork in the road, and no longer could it be something looming on the horizon. One path or the other, he chooses which path he is committed to. The outcome of that decision is looming on the horizon, but it will soon to be a reality. This is the tipping point, point of NO return.

In Jesus handing him the bread, it seems as if Judas felt that the decision had to be made and he yields himself to his dark demise and betrays Christ, for what is seen as a purchase of a slave.

I have learned in my life there are many decisions that cannot be made in the middle of a storm. We should make a lot of life's decisions, before we are confronted with a tirade of emotion that only fogs the process of clear thinking. May you be blessed to see the value of being guided by a few basic principles. Principles that allow us to make multiple decisions based on a clear, defined paradigm.

May those paradigms be based on 2 simple teachings

Loving God with all of your heart, mind, body, and soul

and Loving your neighbors as yourselves.

March 20

This is Steve Butler, and the scriptures that I will be using, for this devotional are Matthew 26 :26-29, Mark 14 :22-25, Luke 22 :15-22; I have entitled this devotional 'The Last Supper'.

As Jesus is breaking bread, He reminds us of His body that is broken for us through the completion of the New Covenant. This brings me back to when i made my covenant and commitment with Jesus, to be my personal Lord and Savior. Just as in the New Covenant of his purpose and promises, I made a choice to trust in those promises. It reminds me of the joy of being made new. In second Corinthians 5:17 it says Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation, old things have passed away. Behold all things have become new!" .

As in this doing away with the old covenant and lifestyle and the New Covenant and becoming new in Christ. So too is the semblance of The Last Supper.

What a joyous day, it was to become a new creature in Christ. So when you are feeling low or just not ready to handle the day or its challenges, or when the road in front of you seems too rough and the mountains seem unmovable. The waters appear too deep to cross, remember that you have direct access to the creator and author of your faith! To the One that can get you through. To The One who walks on the waters and scales the mountains of your troubled heart to be with you! He loves us so much and His mercies are new each and every day for those who are in Christ. So put ON, that new creature that you are and be refreshed in His promises.

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March 21

Hey, this is Walt Parsons and when I started looking at this devotional, The Betrayal of Jesus I was overwhelmed at the thought then it hit me. This is the perfect example of the 2 greatest commandments Jesus gave. Love God with all your heart, soul, and mind. Then love your neighbor like you love yourself including your enemy. At the last supper Jesus knew who was going to betray him and he still broke bread with him and washed his feet. He treated him just like the other 11. For us that follow Jesus and want to be led by his example. When we encounter people that betray our trust, we are to control our minds so that our heart doesn't harden with disgust, anger, and hate. Yes, it hurts, but as followers, we are called to live with a standard of love that is above our feelings. When we come to an event where there is conflict, we handle it with truth and out of love but mainly with peace. Looking at the other examples of the disciples all but one suffered brutal deaths and just like Jesus, they didn't resist evil, they only relied on the Father and the joy that was set before them in the kingdom of heaven.

It's not easy, but it's simple. God is Love and reflecting Him is a godly aim, also we are called to treat everyone with dignity and respect even when our butts are in the fire.

March 22

My name is Mike Harper, and my devotional is drawn from these scriptures, Matthew 26:30-35; Mark 14:26-31; Luke 22:31-38; John 13:31-38. Let me read to you the scripture that is found in John, and it reads like this, "When he was gone, Jesus said, "Now the Son of Man is glorified and God is glorified in him. If God is glorified in him, God will glorify the Son in himself, and will glorify him at once. "My children, I will be with you only a little longer. You will look for me, and just as I told the Jews, so I tell you now: Where I am going, you cannot come. "A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples if you love one another." Simon Peter asked him, "Lord, where are you going?" Jesus replied, "Where I am going, you cannot follow now, but you will follow later." Peter asked, "Lord, why can't I follow you now? I will lay down my life for you." Then Jesus answered, "Will you really lay down your life for me? Very truly I tell you, before the rooster crows, you will deny me three times!

What is it to deny Christ?

To a Christian, such a thing is not a reality, of course, you would never deny him, would you?

We say we love him. He is first in our lives. We are strong in our faith. But is this really true for you?

Do you remember those times? When your group of friends, who were talking about or doing something definitely unchristian. But you went along with it to be part of the group. You knew inside that you shouldn't, but you did. You know, you don't really think what they think., but you didn't want to be the weird Christian killjoy, so you did it.

Remember when you received that unexpected money? That was great! you got a new 'PlayStation' and four new games, and a pizza to boot. You meant to give some to the church or the homeless shelter, or at least a good cause? But you never got around to it.

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You know that friend or relative that was sick, depressed, in jail or at the hospital? That you kept meaning to go visit, but never did. You know, how you've meant to start reading your Bible more and praying more but haven't been able to find the time!

Do you still think you would never deny Christ?

March 23

Today's devotion is out of Matthew 26:44-49 and as I read this, I'm in awe at how just 5 little verses can stir up so much emotion. I am sad, angry, and overwhelmed with the feeling of being so loved that Jesus would go through all of this for me.

Let's breakdown the verses, starting with verse 44 "So He left them, went away again, and prayed the third time, saying the same words." Jesus had already left and prayed to our Father twice asking if it was possible for the wrath to be taken from him. Although Jesus knew the physical suffering of his human body was going to be intense, he wasn't praying to the Father like we do when confronted with overwhelming emotional or physical pain. Jesus was praying because the reality of bearing the sins of the world and facing separation from his Father was so overwhelming. Yet he still said, "unless I drink it Your will be done." as we can see Jesus was still committed to his purpose of being our savior.

Verse 45" Then He came to His disciples and said to them, "Are you still sleeping and resting? Behold, the hour is at hand, and the Son of Man is being betrayed into the hands of sinners." When I read this, it makes me think about how Jesus knew what was expected of him and that he just wanted his friends to be there for him and pray with him. It makes me sad to think of the loneliness Jesus must have felt while he awaited his death.

Verse 46 "Rise, let us be going. See, My betrayer is at hand." Here Jesus is showing His power and strength. He is ready, submitting to the Father's will, he is determined to see it through. We need to be ready like Jesus, watching for the attacks from the enemy. Our failure to pray will leave us as an easy mark. When we are alert and pray the enemy cannot get a foothold or turn our weaknesses into strongholds.

Verses 47-48 "And while He was still speaking, behold, Judas, one of the twelve, with a great multitude with swords and clubs, came from the chief priests and elders of the people." Truly Judas didn't really know Jesus's heart because they came with swords and clubs. Jesus goes out to meet them not to battle but to surrender. These verses are proving again that Jesus is showing His power and strength and that He is ready, submitting to the Father's will, determined to see it through.

Verses 48-49 "Now His betrayer had given them a sign, saying, "Whomever I kiss, He is the One; seize Him." 49 Immediately he went up to Jesus and said, "Greetings, Rabbi!" and kissed Him. Back in the day a kiss was a traditional greeting to show honor and submission with the less important person initiating the kiss. The irony is that Judas used something meant for honor to betray Jesus. Oh, the

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BETRAYL! This makes me so angry as Bugs Bunny would say “I want to hit him POW! Right in the Kiss’a.”

It is overwhelming to know that Jesus would go through all of this for me, and this isn't even the half of it, there is so much more of what Jesus bears because God loved us so much, he gave his only son to die on the cross for our sins.

God, I am so grateful for the good news of Jesus and my eternal relationship with you. Help me each day to share your word with others. When I become angry toward the injustice in our world, help me to embrace the hope given to us through Jesus. You are the source of strength and hope. I will trust and not be afraid for my future is found in you. Thank you for loving and rescuing me. In Jesus name Amen.

Stephanie Holycross

March 24

Come into His presence with thanksgiving & into His courts with praise

The pinnacle of this week has been _____

March 25

In Luke 23:13-16, we see Pilate's attempt to release Jesus, a man whom he knew was innocent, but was being falsely accused by the Jewish religious leaders. Pilate recognized that Jesus had not committed any crime deserving of death and that he was being brought before him simply because of the envy and jealousy of the religious leaders.

It's interesting to note that Pilate, in his attempt to release Jesus, asked the crowd if they wanted him to release the "King of the Jews." This was a title that the religious leaders had mocked Jesus with earlier, but it was a title that Jesus had never claimed for himself. Pilate, in his ignorance of who Jesus truly was, inadvertently acknowledged the truth about Jesus – that he was indeed the King of the Jews, and much more than that, the King of all creation.

This passage reminds me of the injustice that Jesus endured on our behalf. He was innocent, yet he was accused, mocked, and ultimately put to death on a cross. But through his death and resurrection, he conquered sin and death, and made a way for us to have eternal life.

As we reflect on this passage, we are reminded that the world we live in is often unjust. Innocent people are falsely accused and suffer the consequences of others' wrongdoing. But we can take comfort in knowing that God sees all and that justice will ultimately be done. We can also take comfort in knowing that Jesus understands our suffering and can sympathize with our weaknesses.

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Let us remember that Jesus, our King, is not just the King of the Jews, but the King of kings and Lord of lords. He is worthy of our worship and our lives. May we follow him faithfully, even in the midst of injustice and suffering, trusting in his goodness and his ultimate victory.

Thank you, Osman Villatoro.

March 26

Devotional based on Matthew 27: 15-66 and Mark 15: 6-41

Submitted by Gail Collins

These scriptures recorded in Matthew and Mark are two of the four accounts of the events leading up to the crucifixion of Jesus. Both start out with the Pilate planning to release a prisoner at the feast as was a custom. Pilate knew the Chief Priests and Elders were envious of Jesus. Why were they envious? Was it Jesus' fame among the people? Maybe it was his power to perform miracles? Pilate's wife had a troubling dream concerning Jesus which had to make Pilate question who he was dealing with.

When Pilate offered to release Jesus or the murderer Barabbas, the crowd chose Barabbas. Scripture records the Chief Priests and Elders stirred up the crowd. What did they use to persuade the crowd? Money, favors, status in the temple? Or possibly downgrade their status and thus downgrade their favor with God? When Pilate tried to ask why they would choose a known criminal over a man in whom he found no fault, the crowd wouldn't answer but kept shouting "Crucify!". Pilate did the politically correct thing and satisfied the people. As Pilate washed his hands of Jesus' blood, the people called for his blood to be on them and their children. They were blind to the fact that Jesus' blood is the only thing that could save them. But it needed to cover their hearts, not their hands.

Once the sentence of crucifixion had been handed down, Jesus was beaten and then sent off to the command post where a whole company (possibly as many as 480 soldiers) were waiting. In their preparation, the soldiers stripped Jesus and placed a scarlet robe and a crown of thorns on him. The Shroud of Turin shows the victim had a total of 33 piercing marks along the forehead and across the back of the skull. The thorns could have been as long as one and a half inches each. Jesus was also mocked, spit upon and repeatedly hit across the head with long staffs.

As Jesus was being led out to Golgotha, A man named Simon who was traveling through the area was forced to carry Jesus' cross. Did Simon even know who this man was or what he had been accused of? In some way we are all Simon, but we haven't been forced to carry the cross. We willingly have carried and still do carry it at times when we choose to willfully sin.

After Jesus was placed on display for the entire crowd, a sign was placed above his head that read "This is Jesus. King of the Jews". The soldiers cast lots for his garments. Even as he was dying, people were trying to get something from Jesus but not wanting to submit to his sovereignty. The crowd, Chief Priests, teachers and the two robbers crucified with Jesus continued to insult and mock him. "If

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you are the son of God, then save yourself.” They used the same tactic Satan has used to instill doubt since the encounter with Eve in the Garden. Doubt in who God is and what His word says.

Darkness, possibly a solar eclipse, covered the area starting at about noon until three in the afternoon when Jesus cried out to his Father “My God, my God. Why have you forsaken me?”. As he gave up his spirit, immediately the curtain that covered the Holy of Holies was torn in two from top to bottom. It is estimated the curtain was 4 inches thick, 60 feet long and 30 feet high. It would have required 300 priests to move it. There was a great earthquake which split open rocks and graves. Many holy people were raised from the dead and seen in the Holy City after Jesus’ resurrection. How were these events alone not enough to convince people Jesus was who he said he was? It was enough to convince the centurion and those with him that Jesus “Surely was the Son of God.”.

Joseph of Arimathea requested Jesus’ body from Pilate and placed him in a new tomb that was to be his own. Both gospels mention the women who were Jesus’ followers being present during all these events. Women were not considered of value in this culture, but they would be the first to witness the miracle of the resurrection.

The next day the Chief Priests and Elders sought to have Pilate seal the tomb. They did not want the idea that Jesus had risen from the dead to spread among the regions. Roman guards were posted, and a Roman seal covered the stone. Roman soldiers would lose their lives if the body came up missing or if they were found sleeping. A Roman seal would have been something across the tomb that would be evident if it had been tampered with. Guards and the sealed tomb made the resurrection of Jesus even more magnificent.

There were so many things wrong about the way Jesus was arrested, tried, convicted and put to death. It all involved selfishness, hatred, greed, envy and pride. He willingly laid down his life to free us from these sinful traits and many more. We have to quit putting him back on the cross and choose to live resurrected lives!

Dear Jesus, I am so thankful you took my place on the cross and into the grave and death. That you took my punishment and all the mocking and insults the enemy wanted to attribute to me. You endured such suffering, but I believe your greatest suffering came when you asked God why He had forsaken you. Thank-you dear Lord that I will never have to experience that feeling of separation from my Father in heaven because of your sacrificial act in my place. I owe you my entire life! I love you my Dear Jesus!

Amen

March 27

This devotional comes from the passage of scripture in the gospel of John 18:39 through John 19:37. The passage introduces a scene in which Jesus has been arrested by Roman soldiers and Temple (Jewish) guards who were sent by the chief priests and Pharisees; brought before Annas at the High Priests house; then to Caiaphas, the High Priest at the time; and, finally, to Pilate at the governor’s palace. The devotional passage continues to follow Jesus through the crucifixion and to His death on the cross.

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One aspect I find quite interesting about this passage stems from a question proposed by Pilate to Jesus in John 18:38 when he asks, “What is truth?” Ironically, truth begins to pour out of these verses beginning in that same verse when Pilate tells the people “I cannot find any reason to condemn Him” (GNT) or “I find no fault in Him at all” (NKJV). In John 19:4 and John 19:6, Pilate repeats he cannot find any reason to condemn Him. **TRUTH: There was no reason to condemn Him because there was no sin in Him (I John 3:5)**

More truth is brought to the forefront as Jesus is proclaimed as being the King of the Jews—not from His own mouth, but from the mouths of His adversaries! (John 18:39; 19:3; 19:14; 19:15; and 19:19) **TRUTH: Jesus was and is the foretold King. (Psalm 132:17; Isaiah 11; and many more)**

Additional events reported in this passage further supported the **TRUTH:**

John 19:24 prophesied from Psalm 22:18

John 19:28-29 from Psalm 69:21

John 19:33-37 from Zechariah 12:10

One might ask: why, with all this Truth laid out in front of them could they not see?! They were blinded by their sin. Romans 7:11 says, “Sin found its chance, and by means of the commandment it deceived me and killed me”.

Pilate feared man. Throughout the verses within this passage, we can see Pilate's struggle with wanting to do what he feels is right but proves to have a stronger desire to please the people in fear of losing his power, position, and perhaps even his life if he did not do what the people wanted. Proverbs 29:25 warns “the fear of man brings a snare” and Hebrews 2:15 talks about people who “live their lives as slaves to the fear of dying”.

The Jews, Jewish chief priests, scribes, and pharisees were blinded by envy (Mark 15:10; Matthew 21:38). The Bible speaks of envy as a cancer bringing disorder and every kind of evil (James 3:16; Proverbs 14:30) and being full of bitter envy can cause one to be a prisoner of sin (Acts 8:23).

In John 19:30 Jesus says, “It is finished” and “gives up His spirit”. This moment of His death took our sin. Praise be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! We can overcome our sins and see truth clearly now if we so choose through repentance and the power of the Holy Spirit living inside of us by accepting Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior. Don't forget that 4th nail on the cross that holds the sign—making and proclaiming Jesus as your King. These are my insights, Rhonda Hardy.

March 28

This is Tom Dueterhoff and I have a lot of scripture so I must jump directly into the brutality of these words. ‘The Dark, Hard Heart of Man.’

Crucify him, they shouted, they, the crowd, shouted these words, because Pilate, the Roman governor, asked them all, ‘What shall I do with Jesus?’. He had previously been arrested unjustly by the leading priests, teachers of the religious law. They had been plotting this for some time, and finally they got their man with the help of Judas. Judas' betrayal was the worse than a knife in the back, it was a kiss, a kiss of death.

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Pilate could not find any fault in Jesus, Pilate's wife sent a message to him saying, I had a terrible nightmare about this man, you need to let this man go, he is innocent. Pilate even gave the mob a choice, because it was customary to release one prisoner during the Passover. The choice was between Jesus, who is called the Messiah, or a murderer whose name was Barabbas. The mob shouted, "free, Barabbas:", Pilate washed his hands of this event, and the crowd said, "We and our children will take the responsibility of this crucified Jesus'.

I can only imagine Pilate's wife, horrified and crying off alone, but within range of hearing the words, 'crucify him'. There had to be some in the crowd, shouting these words of death, that only two days earlier had heard the message of true life from Jesus, and praised him. How fast we can go from receiving manna to the raging mob. He was beaten, mocked by his captors, spit on, made to wear a crown of thorns, humiliated by being stripped of any clothing and then nailed to a cross and mocked by these in the crowd. 'Look', they said 'he can't even save himself'. Jesus died the death of a guilty criminal.

When I was young in my faith, I blamed the Jews and their leaders for the death of Jesus. But one day, my tears flowed down my face onto the Bible, because I truly understood it. It was for me, my sinful ways, that put him on that cross. I knew and believed His blood covered my debt. His death revealed how brutal we had become, and that the life I was given by this one willing to die for me. Oh, what love. I look back now and know that day my tears soaked my Bible, I would start my transformation, by God's help, myself into the lifestyle that was reflected in the one that was crucified.

I come back to the wife of Pilate and her nightmare. Scripture tells us, she said, 'Jesus was an innocent man', but I can't help myself from wondering, did this bad dream reveal the truth, that her and all of us, 'We are the guilty ones', deserving of all that Jesus would go through?

I think of the water dripping from Pilate's hands, when he washed them from this choice. Did it cleanse this event from his conscience. But we all know, it took the blood, dripping from Jesus dying body to cleanse us. I think of the Father turning his back on his son, forsaking him because Jesus, the spotless Lamb of God, was the penalty for our guilt.

If he wasn't, Are we all not still guilty? God's chosen people, Israel, crucified Him, but one day they will see Him for who He is and always has been.

He took our sin upon Himself to the cross and was crucified for it. Crucify Him. We all did that.

Romans 9:25 says those who were not my people, I will now call my people,
and I will love them whom I did not love before.

How many leading priests and teachers of the religious law? How many in the crowd? Even Jesus' own disciples? How many were quick to say we are of Abraham's blood, all these with Jewish blood in their veins shouting crucify him, but the two that found no fault and seeing him innocent. Did not have this Jewish blood in their vein. The only two not shouting for blood. Those who were not my people, I will now call my people.

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March 29

For this sacred day, no devotional is written, only Mark's recording of the Crucifixion
Mark 15:1-39

Very early in the morning the leading priests, the elders, and the teachers of religious law—the entire high council—met to discuss their next step. They bound Jesus, led him away, and took him to Pilate, the Roman governor. Pilate asked Jesus, “Are you the king of the Jews?” Jesus replied, “You have said it.” Then the leading priests kept accusing him of many crimes, and Pilate asked him, “Aren't you going to answer them? What about all these charges they are bringing against you?” But Jesus said nothing, much to Pilate's surprise. Now it was the governor's custom each year during the Passover celebration to release one prisoner—anyone the people requested. One of the prisoners at that time was Barabbas, a revolutionary who had committed murder in an uprising. The crowd went to Pilate and asked him to release a prisoner as usual. “Would you like me to release to you this ‘King of the Jews’?” Pilate asked. (For he realized by now that the leading priests had arrested Jesus out of envy.) But at this point the leading priests stirred up the crowd to demand the release of Barabbas instead of Jesus. Pilate asked them, “Then what should I do with this man you call the king of the Jews?”

They shouted back, “Crucify him!”

“Why?” Pilate demanded. “What crime has he committed?” But the mob roared even louder, “Crucify him!” So to pacify the crowd, Pilate released Barabbas to them. He ordered Jesus flogged with a lead-tipped whip, then turned him over to the Roman soldiers to be crucified. The soldiers took Jesus into the courtyard of the governor's headquarters (called the Praetorium) and called out the entire regiment. They dressed him in a purple robe, and they wove thorn branches into a crown and put it on his head. Then they saluted him and taunted, “Hail! King of the Jews!” And they struck him on the head with a reed stick, spit on him, and dropped to their knees in mock worship. When they were finally tired of mocking him, they took off the purple robe and put his own clothes on him again. Then they led him away to be crucified.

Then the soldiers nailed him to the cross. They divided his clothes and threw dice to decide who would get each piece. It was nine o'clock in the morning when they crucified him. A sign announced the charge against him. It read, “The King of the Jews.” Two revolutionaries were crucified with him, one on his right and one on his left.

The people passing by shouted abuse, shaking their heads in mockery. “Ha! Look at you now!” they yelled at him. “you said you were going to destroy the Temple and rebuild it in three days. Well then, save yourself and come down from the cross!”

The leading priests and teachers of religious law also mocked Jesus. “He saved others,” they scoffed, “but he can't save himself! Let this Messiah, this King of Israel, come down from the cross so we can see it and believe him!” Even the men who were crucified with Jesus ridiculed him.

At noon, darkness fell across the whole land until three o'clock. Then at three o'clock Jesus called out with a loud voice, “My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?”

Some of the bystanders misunderstood and thought he was calling for the prophet Elijah. One of them ran and filled a sponge with sour wine, holding it up to him on a reed stick so he could drink. “Wait!” he said. “Let’s see whether Elijah comes to take him down!” Then Jesus uttered another loud cry and breathed his last. And the curtain in the sanctuary of the Temple was torn in two, from top to bottom. When the Roman officer who stood facing him saw how he had died, he exclaimed,

“This man truly was the Son of God!”

March 30

Silence

Jesus has died and now is laid in the tomb

March 31

Scripture for this Devotional Matthew 28:1-15; Mark 16:1-13; Luke 24:1-43; John 20:1-23.

Happy Resurrection Morning...

He is risen, He is risen indeed.....

Today, just as in Jesus' day, there were varied reactions to the resurrection, there are many responses as well. Even not responding is still a response in itself. It seems much of the world takes this stance, either ignoring or simply not addressing the claims that Scripture so loudly proclaiming. But to live on this side of eternity, the world must still respond to the empty tomb and as Believers, we have the opportunity to present Jesus boldly and without shame.

Peter looked in at the tomb and went away astonished by what he saw. At first glance, we can walk away shaking our heads in amazement as well. The world around us may look in and see the linen cloths and even remark "wow, something amazing happened here." But Peter's eyes weren't truly opened until he saw His Risen Lord and Jesus again commissioned him for service in the Kingdom (John 24:15-19). This opportunity to not only accept the resurrection but to then live it out is what Jesus extends to us. Peter's life was set on fire as a result. The world around us must see this same fire and passion in us. That way, they can respond affirmatively to all that Christ has done.

"He is not here; He has risen!" has to be one of the most hopeful statements in all of Scripture. We can know that whatever life brings, there is hope beyond the grave. The uncertainty, doubt, and worries of this life will never be able to shake the power of an empty tomb. We often walk around like half-charged phones, not realizing that there is a power source we can connect to. Jesus' resurrection gives us that power and He makes a way for us to declare freedom to a world that is still in bondage to the ugly reign of sin.

What I hope and pray for you this Easter season is for a fresh awareness of just how powerful the Gospel really is. This message has stood the test of time. It has held up under scrutiny and debate. It has not withered; it has not faded; in fact, it is just as alive and vibrant today as it was on the morning the believers discovered an empty grave. If you acknowledge that the tomb is still empty, it means you must do something with that information. It's too powerful to contain and hold in. It must be shared!

He is risen, He is risen indeed.