



PRESTONWOOD STUDENT DEVOS



fall 2019



PRESTONWOOD
S T U D E N T S

Daily Devotions



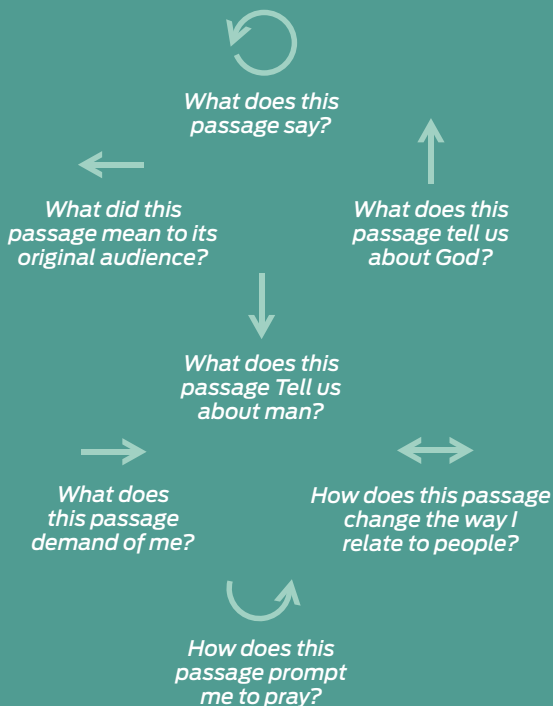
Week of September 2nd
Day 1

Exodus 13:1-16

God commanded His people to consecrate—set apart as the Lord’s—every firstborn male, both humans and animals. All the earth and its inhabitants belong to the Lord, not just the firstborn (Psa. 24:1). Why consecrate the firstborn males? Because God wanted His people to remember what He had done in Egypt—how He spared the firstborn from the plague of death by the blood of a lamb.

In this command, God called His people to look back and ahead. God’s rescuing His people out of Egypt did not start or end with providing life for the firstborn males during Passover. He also provided life to all the people by rescuing them through the Red Sea, providing food and water, and guiding them through the wilderness. But all of these acts of God’s deliverance pointed toward a greater rescue—the one from sin and death that would come through Christ. This is what He wanted them to understand. Their rescue, as amazing as it was, pointed to this greater rescue ahead—a rescue promised in Genesis 3:15 and fulfilled in Christ Jesus.

The 7 Arrows of Bible Reading



How does looking back at God's work in your life help you look ahead with hope and assurance?

Exodus 13:17-22

This passage is short, but packed full of important details of the Exodus account. In this brief text, we see the depth of God's guidance of His people toward the promised land. Joseph's prophecy and request were fulfilled in Genesis 50:22-26. God was not only guiding His people, but He was also with them.

The more we know and learn about God, who He is and what He has done in and through Jesus Christ, the more we'll be in awe of Him and the more we'll be driven toward mission, wanting to make His name great across all the Earth.

How have your studies of God in Scripture grown your understanding of Him and helped you live on mission?

Exodus 14:1-12

God's ways are amazing. He planned to receive *glory*, or *weightiness*, through Pharaoh's hardened heart (it refused to give Him glory). And in the end, that is what happened (14:31; 15). Pharaoh's pursuit of his glory resulted in God receiving glory. This is how God works—He can use everything and anything for His glory.

What about us? We have been called to give God glory in all we do (1 Cor. 10:31). But how will we do this? Will we be like Pharaoh, used by God while being unaware or even unwilling? Or will we engage with God on His mission to proclaim His glory to the nations? God gives us opportunities each day to do this—to show those around us how beautiful and amazing He is, to show an unbelieving world the gospel. Let us be a people who seek these opportunities and then take advantage of each one as we rest in God's power to make the most of them.

How has God positioned you to show His glory to others around you today? The rest of the week?

Exodus

14:13-31

If you have ever walked through mud, you know how difficult it can be. Actually, very few of us have ever *walked* through mud, we usually *trudge* through it. Now, imagine the children of Israel stepping foot onto the floor of the Red Sea—imagine how deep and heavy that mud would have been. How slippery any rocks on the floor would have been. These things would have been true had God not dried it. Instead, God’s people crossed the Red Sea on dry ground, surely making their travel much easier and faster as the Egyptians closed in hot pursuit.

What miracles of God have strengthened and deepened your faith the most? Why?

Exodus

15:1-21

Israel got it wrong almost every time throughout the Book of Exodus. They refused to trust God over and over again. They grumbled against Moses and God. But this generation did have their moments, like this one where they worshiped God on the far bank of the Red Sea. Exodus 15 records a wonderful song of worship God’s people declared to the Lord. God had just rescued them through the waters of judgment and this time they didn’t miss the opportunity to give God the worship due Him.

In this moment, we are reminded of our need to be aware, because there are plenty of times when we have more in common with Israel in Exodus than we care to admit. We can be just as clueless—perhaps more even. We can also miss times to offer God the worship due Him. This isn’t just in the “high” moments like Israel experienced in Exodus 14-15. We need to fight to worship God without ceasing—in the “highs” of life, as well as the “lows.” This is our goal: to respond properly to God’s day-by-day, minute-by-minute acts of grace and mercy in our lives.

What has God done today that is worthy of worship?

Daily Devotions



Week of September 9th

Day 1

John 8:31-32

Every day we are bombarded with messages that conflict with God's Word. The effects of this are broad; those who don't know the truth are quick to take on others' opinions as their own. Those who do know the truth may still be quick to doubt because of the many conflicting messages in our culture. As a result, we are led to make decisions based on what the world says instead of what the Word says.

These conflicting messages can often feel like a trap. Yet, Jesus tells us that freedom is found in the truth of His Word. It is only through our consistent surrender and obedience to the Word of God that we are able to differentiate between the conflicting messages around us.

The 7 Arrows of Bible Reading



Who does Jesus say His disciples are?

Why should Scripture be our source of truth? How does the truth of Scripture compare to the messages around you?

Matthew

4:18-25

When your relationship with Jesus first began, what did you expect it to look like? Did you think that following Jesus meant you would be happier? That you would have less friends? That life would be easier? We all have expectations of what following Jesus would look like. These expectations can significantly shape our walk with Him if we are not careful to surrender them consistently to God's Word.

What are some expectations you had (or still have) about following? How have these expectations been right or wrong?

In Matthew 4, we see some of the earliest days of Jesus' ministry. What do you think it would be like to have been one of Jesus' disciples? Surely the disciples must have had some expectations of what walking closely with Him would really be like.

What expectations do you think Jesus' first disciples held, based on what you read today?

Matthew

5:3-6

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus spent time teaching what following Him actually looked like. His teaching was very countercultural because it flew in the face of tradition. The Beatitudes highlight the good life, the life that pursues righteousness. This view of true goodness is completely countercultural.

Each of these beatitudes represents an internal characteristic. Jen Wilkin called these specific beatitudes the "character of a disciple." So, what do these internal characteristics look like? Those who are poor in spirit recognize how unworthy they are of God's grace but also how dependent they are on Him. Those who mourn are those who experience grief over sin. The meek are those who treat others with humility and exhibit self-control. Those who hunger and thirst for righteousness are those who long for righteousness that can only come from God.

How do these characteristics—humility, mourning, meekness—look different from the traits that the world values?

Which beatitudes describe you? Which ones don't describe you? Why?

Matthew

5:7-9

Yesterday, you began to unpack the countercultural teachings of Jesus. Today, you are going to study three more beatitudes as you learn what the character of a disciple looks like lived out.

We are not supposed to live according to these beatitudes simply because they bring blessings. The blessings are real, but living the Christian life is, in fact, difficult. The Christian life is characterized by mercy, purity and peace. We don't naturally want to show mercy, maintain purity, or create peace, but this is where we are called to obey and live according to God's higher standards.

What is often the first reason why you are obedient to Jesus in these areas? Is it because you want to be obedient or is it because you want the benefits of it?

Why should obedience be our greatest desire?

Matthew

5:10-12

In the final few beatitudes, there is a shift in focus. Here, Jesus describes how the world responds to His disciples.

These beatitudes are not about the characteristics of disciples or the choices they make; rather they are about how disciples will be treated. As we follow Jesus, there are many things that are simply out of our control. What is the only way we could control whether or not we are persecuted? It would be to stop following Jesus, the very thing stirring up persecution. But, as we choose to boldly follow Jesus, we will see that persecution should be expected and should be considered a blessing.

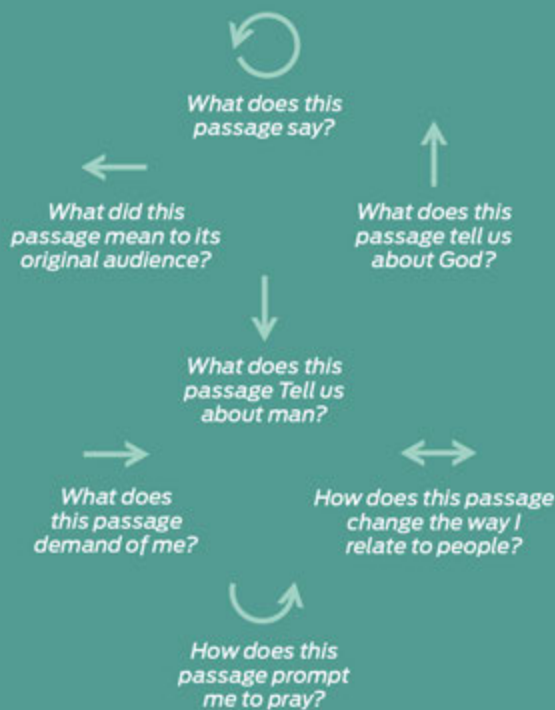
Why does Jesus urge us to see persecution as a blessing?

This week, we addressed the expectations we had about following Jesus compared to the realities of following Him given in Scripture. What surprised you about Jesus' teachings?

Daily Devotions



The 7 Arrows of Bible Reading



Week of September 16th

Day 1

Mark 1:35, Luke 5:16, John 6:15, Matt. 6:6

What is the common theme of these four verses?

Technology is everywhere! Whether you have a smartphone or flip phone, everyone can agree that phones are a huge part of daily life. Think about the last time you felt stressed about a test. What did you do? If we're being honest, you likely jumped on your phone and looked at the latest on Instagram to escape reality for even just a moment.

Jesus shows us in these verses the ultimate example of what we should do in times of stress and preparation: isolate and pray. Taking the time to sit and pray gives room for the Holy Spirit to move through us. In this way, when we don't give ourselves time away from these distractions, we allow technology to limit us.

In what ways do you see technology limiting you?

When was the last time you got away to pray?

Day 2

Colossians 3:1-3, John 10:10

Technology gives us access to everything! Whether you have a question, want to update your friends, want food, or need a ride, the Internet has the all answers. But if we are not careful, all of that easy access can ultimately lead to distraction and/or destruction without the correct filter.

Paul's instruction in Colossians 3 shows us how we should begin to filter the way we look at the things on the Internet through Scripture and biblical worldview.

What does Paul mean by "things above"?

As believers, it's essential to focus on God and go to Him for everything we need. When we begin to lose focus on Jesus, we allow room for the Enemy to take hold of us and for sin to begin to rule over our lives rather than allowing the Word to guide us.

Is what you're watching or doing on your phone contradicting Paul's instructions?

Day 3

Genesis 1:27, Psalm 139:13-16

While technology seems to give us all the answers, it can also make us question everything about ourselves. In the new age of social media, it's so easy to get caught up in how many followers we have or the number of streaks we can hold on Snapchat. These things start to imprint the thoughts in our minds and tell us that we are not good enough.

List all of the ways you are described in these verses:

Do you truly believe that these things are true about you?

Most days, it's easy to believe that God's Word is true when it comes to who Jesus is, but when it comes to who Jesus says we are, we find it harder to believe. Comparison, the killer of joy, comes easily when your phone is filled with unreachable expectations. Your identity can never come from a post on social media, but only comes from how Jesus defines you in His Word.

James 3:4-10

List the comparisons James makes to the tongue:

Back in the days before the smartphone and Internet, most communication was by word of mouth. Technology has given us a brand-new form of communication. For the most part, we have our conversations over text and DMs and don't feel the need to have in-person conversations. So, while technology does have the power to limit us, if treated with care, it can be a great tool! But be mindful: James warns us here that we hold the power of life and death in the way that we communicate. If we aren't careful, our words can be hurtful and destructive. In this same way, if we encourage one another and speak highly of the Lord in what we text and post on social media, God will be glorified!

In what ways can you glorify the Lord today through your phone?

Philippians 4:8

It's easy to get caught up in the habits of what we view, what we say/post and how we allow it to make us feel, but Paul, in his letter to the Philippians, urges us to do the opposite.

Paul challenges us to filter everything we do through these six lenses: true, honorable, just, pure, lovely and commendable. Just as we learned yesterday, our phones and social media can be an incredible tool if we use them in the right way. This filter that God's Word gives us will make the ultimate difference in whether technology limits and distracts us or technology is a tool that we use to glorify God.

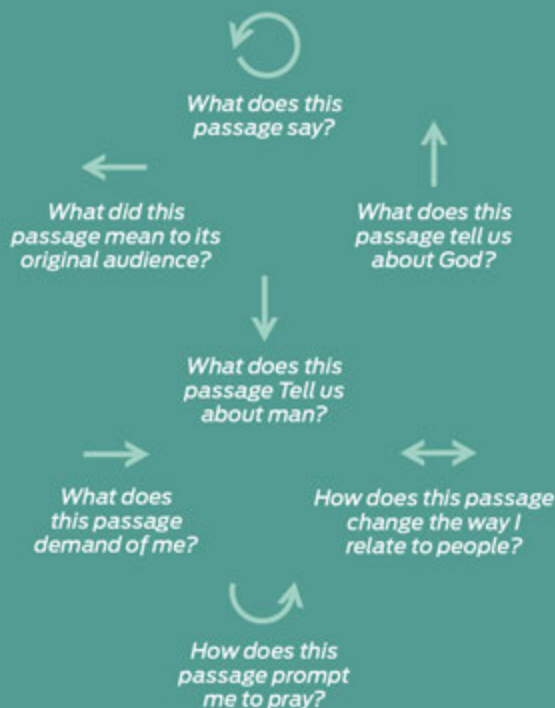
Decide: How can you use your phone/social media to glorify God every day?

Challenge: Look at your last three posts on social media. Do they pass the filter test?

Daily Devotions



The 7 Arrows of Bible Reading



Week of September 23rd

Day 1

Luke
17:33

Narcissism sounds like a harsh word, one we hardly ever connect to ourselves. Zachary Malito defined narcissism as “the act of being self-absorbed, with a desire for self-promotion, greatness, and significance.” When we look at narcissism for what it truly is, we realize that we, too, may possess it.

In Luke 17, Jesus talks about how His followers should be prepared for the coming kingdom. In verse 33, He addresses where our focus should be.

Those who desire to “preserve their life” are those who are consumed by the idea of what their earthly life should look like. But, those who are willing to “lose their life” are those who put Jesus first, ahead of everything in their lives, including themselves.

Why do you think that Jesus says those who want to keep their life will lose it?

Would you consider yourself a narcissist (based on the definition above)? Why or why not?

Acts 8:9-13

When you think about how you want to view yourself, and how you want others to view you, what comes to mind? Unfortunately, the desire for others to think well of us can become an all-consuming trap of self-focus. Not only that, but when people build us up or tear us down, that doesn't ease the desire, but fuels even more self-focus.

Luke introduces us to a man named Simon. Simon was special, noticed, and well thought of by others. He also promoted himself as being someone great. Any of us, in this same situation, would be quick to focus on ourselves. As a new Christ-follower, Simon was now going to navigate what greatness truly meant in light of Christ, rather than in light of himself.

If you were Simon, what would you think about yourself?

Based on what Simon thought about himself and what others thought about him, what do you see happening in Simon's future?

Acts 8:18-19

Why do you think Simon wanted this "power"? While we may be quick to believe Simon wanted it only for the reason he mentions, we know the backstory of Simon. We know he prided himself as a magician and had an elevated view of himself.

Simon didn't want this power for others, but for himself. His experience of God's power only fueled his selfish desire for more greatness and fame. Like Simon, we, too, are quick to make our walk with the Lord about ourselves instead of about Him, focusing only on what it does for us.

How does Simon's desire for this power reflect his narcissistic tendencies?

In what ways have you been tempted to look at elements of your walk with the Lord as something for your own gain?

Acts

8:20-23

Peter knew that Simon's self-focus wasn't the biggest issue, but it pointed to the greater issue: his flawed perspective on God. The same is true for us.

When are you most likely to overly focus on yourself?

Considering what you just answered, how might you have a flawed view of God in that area? Give an example.

Have you ever thought about how your self-focus relates to your wrong view of God? So often, we spend a lot of time assessing what others think of us, our reputation, our status, and how we present ourselves to the world. We spend hours on Snapchat and Instagram mostly commenting and posting about ourselves. But we aren't thinking about whether or not we look like Christ. We lose sight of the fact that we are supposed to represent Him in the first place. Nothing is more important than Christ. Nothing matters more than living your life devoted to Him.

Philippians

2:3-4

The story of Simon shows us what happens when our view of ourselves affects our actions and reveals what we really believe about God. Not only is narcissism dangerous territory to wade into, but it is a territory where many of us find ourselves.

So, where do we go from here? Do we simply stop trying to focus on ourselves? In the book of Philippians, Paul shows us how to flee narcissism. The way to flee narcissism isn't just to stop doing it, but to commit to something else, something greater found only in a relationship with Jesus.

In what ways have you acted in selfish ambition this week?

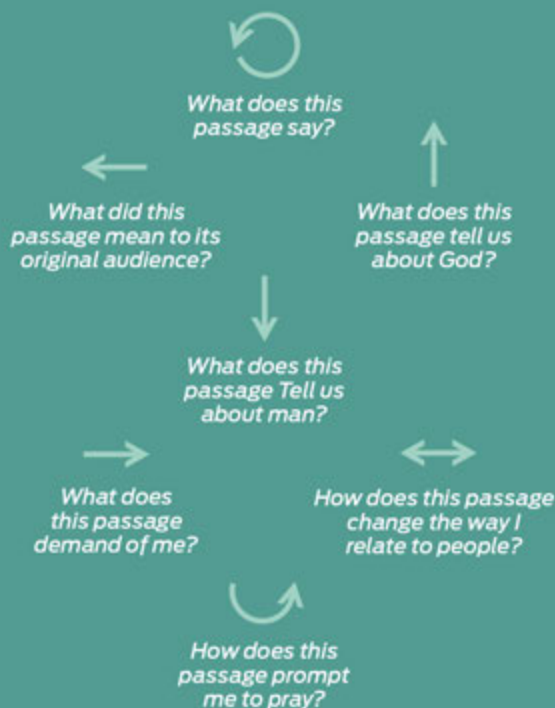
What personal interests have already begun to consume your mind today?

How can you prioritize the interests of others today?

Daily Devotions



The 7 Arrows of Bible Reading



Week of September 30th

Day 1

1 Peter 2:16

Before reading the verse - how would you define freedom?

As we end our series on media and technology, it's important to take a step back and do a little self-examining. It's really easy to walk in the mindset that, regardless of what you do, you'll never be good enough. But the good news is that as believers of Jesus, we know we get to live and walk in the freedom of who Jesus is. But what is freedom?

How does 1 Peter define freedom?

As 1 Peter tells us, our freedom in Christ—as a free gift given to us—allows us to be servants of God. Being a servant doesn't place you in chains and bondage, but rather allows you to be fully used by God and gives you the freedom in knowing that at the end of the day you are forgiven! This week we're going to unpack all the freedom we receive from Jesus!

Day 2

Romans 8:1-4, Galatians 5:1

When it comes to trying our very best to be good enough, we tend to put ourselves in a never-ending cycle of focusing on the bad things we do. It's easy to find yourself caught up in all your mistakes and constantly find different outlets to attempt to feel just a little bit good enough.

Honesty Hour – What outlets do you find yourself using to feel good enough?

The Cross is the ultimate representation of where we first see freedom take its true and purest form. Look at Romans 8:1 one more time: “there is no condemnation” (emphasis added)! Condemnation literally means: “expression of very strong disapproval.” No disapproval, no judgment, no “feeling of not being good enough” can be found in the Cross! By dying on the Cross and bearing the penalty of our sin, Jesus made it possible for us to live under grace rather than law and to be free from the power of sin so that we can walk in love.

What does freedom in the Cross mean to you?

Day 3

Eph. 2:8-10, Rom. 10:9-10, Acts 13:38-39

The best part about the Cross is that the promise of freedom doesn't stop at His sacrifice! From the Cross, we are given the greatest gift. The free gift to choose salvation!

The salvation we receive is not because we were nice to someone, is not based on how many likes or followers you can manage to get (can I get an amen?), or by living a life that seems perfect. No! Salvation is a gift freely given to us because of the sacrifice Jesus made on the Cross.

Have you received this gift? If the answer to this is no, text your TGL or a staff member and ask that person about how to receive this free gift! If yes, what does this gift mean to you?

The one thing this gift requires of us is a choice to say yes to salvation.

This freedom is like no other. There's no need to try to be good enough because, through His sacrifice and salvation, we are free!

1 Timothy 1:13–17, Galatians 5:13

Hallelujah! We are free!

There is so much beauty in the life that freedom gives us, but from time to time, our flesh makes us feel as if we are unworthy of freedom. Paul is the ultimate example of this.

In verse 13, Paul is quick to bring his sins to the light and even calls himself “the foremost” in terms of sinners in verse 16. Paul, formerly known as Saul, was considered the worst of sinners (you can read his story in Acts 9), but here in 1 Timothy, he is able to walk in the freedom of Jesus and praise God for it! If someone such as himself can be free—of course you can be, too!

What sticks out to you most about Paul’s testimony in 1 Timothy?

And just as Paul’s freedom journey led him to be one of the world’s greatest missionaries, this freedom we receive will never make us look to our mistakes but will motivate us to love others and share this truth with them!

When was the last time you shared the freedom you’ve received with someone else?

John 8:36, 2 Corinthians 3:17

In Jesus alone, we receive a full pardon and freedom from trying to be good enough. Nothing we can or will ever do will change that or take it away from us!

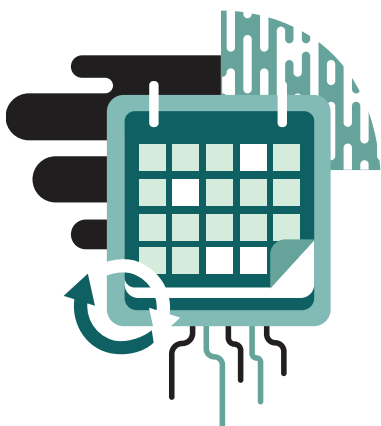
Hallelujah, we are free indeed! One of the coolest things in Scripture is when words repeat themselves. It’s believed that when Jesus says the same thing twice in a sentence, that it is very important! Freedom is important to Jesus because it is why He came to earth—to free us from sin and restore things to the way they should be.

What specific things in your life has spiritual freedom given you?

One of the many gifts we receive in freedom is the Holy Spirit. We know from 2 Corinthians that wherever the spirit is—so is freedom. Praise the Lord! Freedom will never have an expiration date like milk. It will never sour. Freedom is a daily gift by the grace of God through Jesus. Walk forward into this weekend knowing that you are free!

How can you share this freedom this weekend?

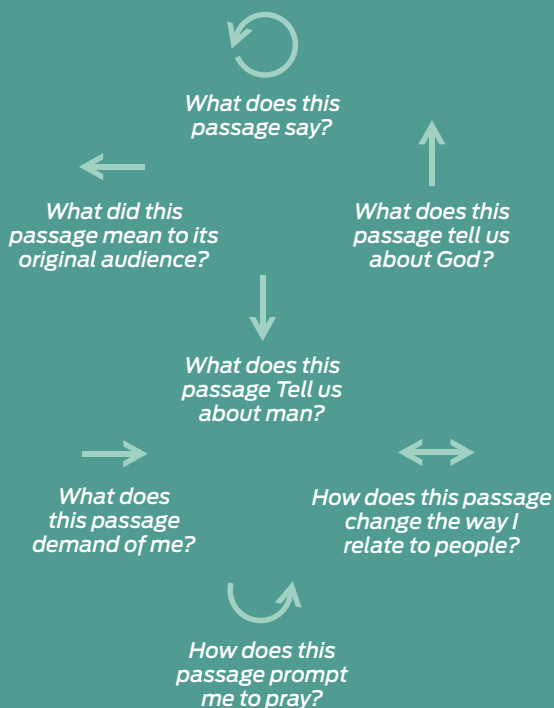
Daily Devotions



Week of October 7th
Day 1

Exodus 15:22-27

The 7 Arrows of Bible Reading



How many times had God given them life to this point? They should have known God was more than able to preserve their lives. Right?

How many times had God shown His power—including the first plague where He took good water and made it undrinkable? They should have known God was more than able to give them water. Right?

Who was leading them to the precise location where they found no water? They should have known God was more than able to guide them on the path they needed to be on. Right?

Instead, they complained, as if God was either unable to provide for His people's needs, uncaring about His people's needs, or unaware of His people's needs. Take your pick. Israel either viewed God as weak, sinister, or clueless. This was the nature of their grumbling and the nature of ours as well. As we dive deeper into this passage, we see the depth of Israel's sin and the nature of our sin as well.

How have you grumbled against God recently? What does this show about how you viewed God in that situation?

Exodus 16:1-12

The children of Israel's memory was amazingly short, but thankfully God's love and patience was even more amazingly long. Soon after the people grumbled about lacking water, seeing God provide supernaturally, and then being led to springs of water, they grumbled once again—this time because they were hungry.

But instead of giving the people what they deserved (judgment from heaven) God gave them what they did not deserve (bread from heaven). Notice how He gave it to them, though. That detail is just as important as the provision itself. God gave them the food they needed each day—as a way to teach them what they needed to learn: God is faithful, they could trust Him.

As you consider God's goodness to you, don't miss this: What God gives matters, but so does how, when, and why. God is the giver of perfect gifts (Jas. 1:17), and He gives these gifts in the perfect way, in the perfect timing, for the perfect reason: His glory and our good.

When have you seen God provide perfectly in your life?

Exodus 16:13-36

The Israelites revealed greedy and distrustful hearts when they refused to follow God's instructions and attempted to hoard the manna. When we seek to hoard what God has given to us—which is everything—we reveal greedy and distrustful hearts too. Our greed drives us to seek what we need, what we want, what will make us happy. At the same time, we declare to God—intentionally or unintentionally—"I do not trust You. I do not believe You know what I need and want. I do not believe You care. I do not believe You know what is best."

In reality, we are just as susceptible to these moments as Israel was. We are no different. We rationalize our hoarding just as easily, just as persuasively. Because of this, we are to be just as grateful to God for His mercy—the mercy that falls freely from heaven and which we depend on so greatly every morning.

What are some things you might be hoarding today: time, possessions, relationships, or something else?

Exodus

17:1-16

Once again—yes still another time—the people of Israel complained because they had no water to drink. Again, they asked why Moses led them into the wilderness to die. This time, when Moses cried out to God, he said something that was quite ironic although he had no way of knowing at the time: He was worried the people would stone him. Little did Moses know, a stone—more precisely a rock—would not take his life, but would be the object God used to provide life-giving water to the people. We have to wonder if Moses caught onto this afterward.

For the people, God provided water in a way they would never expect—no one would think of water flowing from a rock. But for Moses, there was an added wrinkle to God's miraculous provision.

How has God turned around situations for His glory and your good?

1 Corinthians

10:1-13

Our greatest take-away in this passage is seeing Paul refer to the rock that Moses struck as Jesus, but there is more for us here. We too often need to be reminded of our spiritual neglect, of our sin, of our failure to live out our true identities in Christ.

The message Paul communicated to the Corinthians applies to us as well. We are not alone in our failings. We are not the first who have acted so foolishly, and until Jesus returns, we will not be the last. We too are called on to learn from the failings and faithfulness of God's people who have gone before us. We are not to study the Israelites in Exodus or the Corinthians in 1 Corinthians with contempt, but rather with humility, recognizing all of us are in desperate need for God's grace—not just unto salvation, but throughout it as well.

Who are some individuals or people in Scripture or church history you can learn the most from?

Daily Devotions



Week of October 14th

Day 1

Exodus 18:1-12

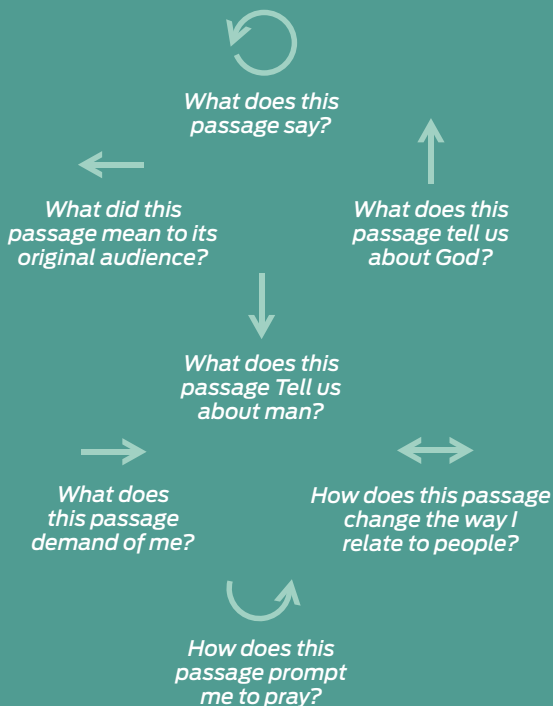
When Moses went out to greet Jethro, he asked his father-in-law how he was and then invited him to join him in his tent. There, he told Jethro of all that had happened—all the Lord had done to that point. But notice something: Jethro had already heard what God did for His people (v. 1).

Why does this matter? Because it shows us something important about sharing good news and rejoicing in it with others. Jethro didn't interrupt Moses and tell him that he didn't need to share the stories again. Instead, it seems he wanted to hear about everything again. Good news cannot be heard too much, and surely Moses' first-hand account added deeper richness to what Jethro had heard before.

For us, this is a reminder that good news—and the gospel is the best news of all—is worth telling and hearing repeatedly. We cannot hear the gospel preached too much; we need it to seep down from our minds into our hearts daily. We also can't share the gospel too much. Just like Jethro and Moses, the gospel is worthy of rejoicing over every single time it is shared.

**When did you last hear the gospel?
Share it? Rejoice over it?**

The 7 Arrows of Bible Reading



Philippians 2:14-15; 3:1

Jethro offered a positive example of what it looks like to rejoice with others in what the Lord has done, but as we have seen, the children of Israel struggled to get there. Jethro heard and rejoiced, yet the children of Israel experienced and grumbled. With every sigh, complaint, and accusation, the Israelites revealed hearts that were ungrateful for all God had done.

In Philippians 2:14-15, Paul warned us about being constant complainers, like the Israelites. There is no place for grumbling and arguing, because when we fail to reflect minds, hearts, and a worldview transformed by the gospel. Our complaining is camouflage that makes us appear more like the world than our true selves—forgiven people who have been given Christ's righteousness. But if we cast aside grumbling and arguing and rejoice in the Lord instead (Phil. 3:1), we will shine as beacons of light in the dark would around us. This is why we fix our gaze on Christ—who He is and what He has done—so we can anchor our joy on this unchanging truth and not on our ever changing situations in life.

What about the Lord makes you rejoice? What has He done recently to make you rejoice?

Exodus 18:13-18

The next day after Moses recounted all the Lord had done, Moses went out and judged the people from morning until evening. Jethro noticed how Moses heard case after case and how Moses was not the only one who had such a long day; the people stood and waited for their cases to be heard just as long. But notice what Jethro did next: He asked Moses what was going on. Then, only after Moses confirmed what he had seen did Jethro play the judge for Moses.

Showing such wisdom and restraint is difficult for us at times. We tend to rush from observation to judgment, a problem only heightened by the information and digital age we live in. But true wisdom takes time to listen. It takes time to consider that we might not see the whole story, or that we might not see the story clearly. Wisdom is not just what we share, it is how we share: in humility, with love and respect.

How does approaching others in humility reflect the gospel?

Matthew

7:1-6

Confrontation is difficult for many of us. We are uncomfortable with it. We aren't sure if the risk is worth it. At times, we question our place to confront someone else, especially when some have used this passage to argue that we should not confront others. However, when we look closely at this passage, we see Christ clarifying the right way to confront someone, not forbidding confrontation.

Jesus said that before we confront someone else about an issue, we should examine ourselves in the mirror, looking for that issue specifically. We are not looking for perfection here, but hypocrisy. Are we about to share any wisdom that we have not followed ourselves?

We also need to make sure our motivation for confronting the person is right. We confront a person for one reason: to help that person. In this way, our confrontation is a selfless act of love—we take on the risk solely for the other person's gain. Because we care about others and we care about how they reflect the gospel in how they live, we confront. We then hope and pray that they would do the same for us.

Who might you need to confront for God's glory and their good? Who has confronted you in the past who you might want to thank and encourage for their love for you?

Exodus

18:19-27

Jethro's suggestion that Moses share his burden of judging the people was wise—it was a way for Moses and the people to be more efficient and to avoid burn-out. Sharing our burdens with others is more than that; it is gospel-centered as well.

When we carry our burdens by ourselves, we are walking in pride. We want to show others, and ourselves, that we are strong enough to carry the weight or that no one else can help us. But when we gladly invite others to come alongside us and share the load we have been given, we walk in humility—the natural posture of people under the power of the gospel. We recognize that we are not strong, but weak. We are not independent, but dependent on Christ and His church. Christ's strength is manifested in our weakness, His glory in our humility and neediness, and His love in His faithful provision. Sharing burdens with one another, like all of what God does in our lives, is for His glory and our good.

When have you refused to share a burden? Why? What happened?

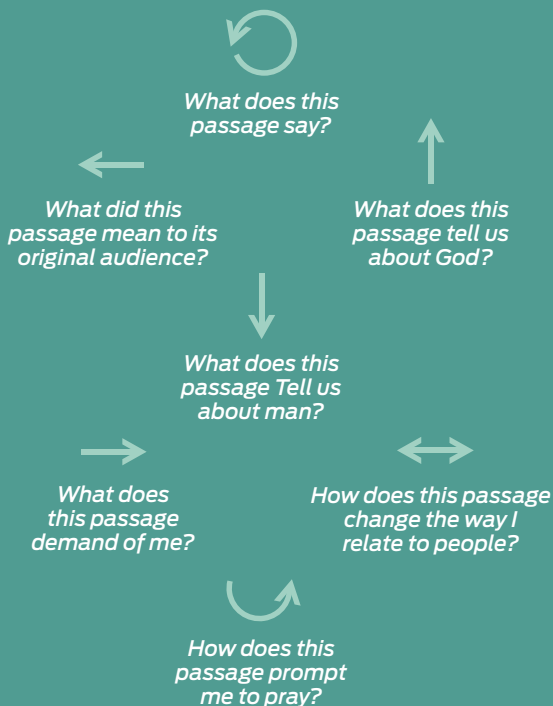
Daily Devotions



Week of October 21st
Day 1

Exodus 19:1-25

The 7 Arrows of Bible Reading



When Moses returned from the mountain and shared what God had told him, the people's response was clear: "All that the Lord has spoken we will do" (v. 8). The Bible doesn't give us much else to evaluate this response, but we would have to believe it came from a sincere heart and a genuine desire to obey God. However, we also know it didn't last. As we continue through Exodus, we read more about the law God gave to the people through Moses. Then we come across Exodus 32 where the people who pledged obedience to God disobey Him by having Aaron make the golden calf. Their words of obedience quickly dissolved into acts of defiance.

Israel declared they would obey God at the foot of the mountain where God was meeting with Moses, but their obedience was tested when God seemed distant, or maybe even gone. Our challenge is the same. Our obedience is tested in the crucible of daily life, when God is not as apparent to us either. It is in these moments that the strength of our faith will be revealed both to ourselves and to the watching world around us.

When is it most difficult for you to maintain faith and obedience to God? Why?

Exodus 20:1-2

In these opening two verses, God expressed why He has the authority to give these commands to His people (He is the LORD, their God) and why they should follow each one (what He has done for them). Why should the Israelites not have any other gods? Because God is their one true God. He is the One who created and who sustained them. Why were the Israelites not supposed to steal? Because they have seen God provide so generously to them and should trust that He will provide all they need without needing to resort to taking from someone else.

Like the Israelites, we need to consider our obedience through this same lens: who God is and what He has done. Both are essential for us to remember, because both fuel the love and gratitude in us that is the proper motivation for our obedience. This is at the heart of the gospel: We do not obey God for His acceptance and love, but from His acceptance and love bestowed upon us in Christ. What we do matters, but why we do it matters just as much.

What tends to be your motivation to obey God?

Exodus 20:3-11

As the preamble of the Ten Commandments was essential for Israel to understand *why* they should obey them, the first command was foundational to understand *how* to obey them. If someone refrains from having other gods, the rest of the commands will follow. At this first command's core is the uniqueness and primacy of God over everything else, including ourselves. If we hold to this proper view of God—that He alone is good and worthy of our love and full devotion—we will come to see the commandments as natural expressions of our lives of worship rather than burdens.

How could we make an idol to worship when the one true God is always with us and worthy of all our worship? How can we misuse the Lord's name and disrespect Him when we understand how glorious He is and what He has done for us? How can we refuse to set aside time to worship Him when our hearts, transformed by the gospel, want to worship Him non-stop? How can we mistreat other people for our own selfish gain, when Christ served us with such humility?

When it comes to obeying God, it all begins with knowing Him, loving Him, and revering Him.

In what area—knowing God, loving God, or revering God—can you grow more to fuel your obedience?

Exodus

20:12-17

As you read through the last six commands, you might notice that not all of the commandments concern external actions. Instead, some are focused on the internal posture of one's heart. Not murdering someone is surely external, but not coveting is internal. Honoring parents is both. There is an external act of obedience in mind, but honor goes deeper than that—there is an internal respect and love as well. When you consider the commandments more deeply, they each have an internal and external aspect to them. They each begin in the mind and heart and carry over to the actions of our hands.

This is what Jesus expressed in the Sermon on the Mount when He referenced two of the commandments: murder and adultery (Matt. 5). Jesus' point was that obeying these commands runs deeper than just monitoring behavior; they begin in the heart—in the forms of hate and lust respectively. If hate and lust do not have a foothold in our hearts, then murder and adultery will not follow. Obedience begins in the heart before it is ever seen in our lives.

Why is it important that we look to the internal condition of our hearts when addressing external sins in our lives?

Exodus

20:18-26

Moses used “fear” in two senses. The first is to be afraid like we often think of it—as the people were demonstrating by recoiling from God. This is a fear we can cast aside in Christ, because for those of us in Him, there is no condemnation (Rom 8:1). We do not have to be afraid of judgment. Holy God has brought us close to Him. He has adopted us as His children through His Son's righteousness and sacrifice on our behalf.

Our identity as God's children is precisely what fueled Moses' second use of “fear.” This speaks of reverence, of ascribing weightiness to God. God is no less holy. He is no less just. God's punishment of sin did not go away; it was poured out on Jesus. For this reason, we fear Him—we never forget who He is and what it took for us to be declared right with Him. We never forget the cross. We never forget the gospel.

Do you tend to have the proper fear of God? Or are there times when you are afraid of Him, forgetting about grace? Or do you take Him too lightly, forgetting about His holiness?

Daily Devotions



Exodus 32:1-6

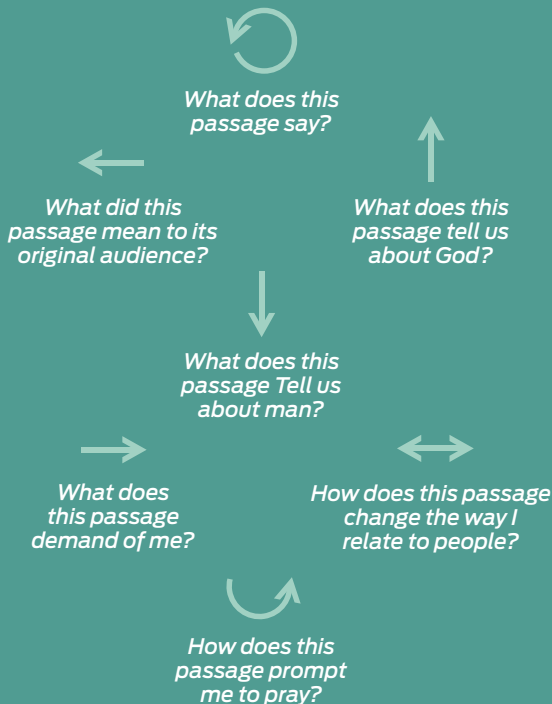
Moses went up the mountain to meet with God. We aren't told how much time had passed, but notice how the people felt about how long he had been gone: to them Moses "delayed" in coming down. This drove them to feel abandoned by Moses and more importantly, God, and to ask Aaron to make an idol.

But notice God's perspective of how long it had been. Later, God told Moses that the people had "quickly" turned away from Him (v. 8). Apparently, the Israelites did not take long to violate the commands they swore to uphold. They acted hastily in calling for Aaron to fashion an idol to worship.

Like the Israelites, our perception of time can mislead us, especially when it feels as if God is not paying attention or has abandoned us. Like the Israelites, we can act hastily and turn from God. This is when we need to remember God is never far off, and He always works in His perfect timing, even if it does not feel that way.

How have you seen the perfection of God's timing?

The 7 Arrows of Bible Reading



Exodus

32:7-10

The children of Israel did not just see time differently than God did, they also saw His presence differently. While Moses was up the mountain meeting with God, the Israelites concluded that God was absent and all of His focus was on top of the mountain while they were neglected at its base. They failed to understand that God is omnipresent (not contained in one place) and that He is omniscient (knows and is fully aware of all).

They pleaded with Aaron to make a god they could see, touch, and worship. They thought God was distant from them and they wanted to make a god that would always be present. Notice God's awareness to what happened though. God told Moses exactly what the people did—even what they said. God was not absent. He was not distracted.

The same God who was ever-present with Israel in the wilderness, the same God who was all-knowing of all Israel did, is with us as well. He is just as aware of our lives too. This is a great comfort for us; it reminds us we are never alone and nothing happens to us apart from God's full knowledge and His sovereign hand.

Does God's presence in and awareness of your life encourage you or concern you? Why?

Exodus

32:11-14

God told Moses to stand back so He could wipe the rebellious Israelites off the face of the earth, and He would start a new nation with Moses. This may have been God's way of inviting Moses to speak up for the people. If it was, Moses didn't miss the cue. Although the people of Israel grumbled against Moses and were difficult, Moses stepped forward as the mediator they needed. But don't just marvel in what Moses did, look at how he did it.

Notice that as Moses pleaded for the people, his argument for sparing the people was comprised of three main points: they were God's people, God would not be glorified if He were to wipe them out, and God had made promises to this people. Not a single argument was made on behalf of the people.

So it is with the gospel. Christ is our mediator—a greater One—and He makes constant appeal to the Father on our behalf. Not based on what we have done or might do, but on what He has done and the righteousness He has given us.

How might you be prone to try to rest in your work instead of Christ's work on your behalf? Why?

Exodus

32:15-20

Moses pleaded for the people and God relented in bringing the disaster upon the people. But notice what happened when Moses arrived at the camp. Hearing God explain what the Israelites had done was one thing, but hearing it and seeing it was another. Witnessing how the Israelites had rebelled against God and how they had scorned Him was too much for Moses. He was filled with a righteous indignation that prompted him to act. He burned the golden calf, ground it into a powder, spread it over water, and made the people drink it.

How we view Moses' actions here tells us quite a bit about our view of God. If we see Moses as over-reacting, we might want to pause and consider if we appreciate the gravity of this sin and the holiness of the One it was against. Sin is never to be taken lightly—even by those of us who are in Christ. Yes, all our sin is forgiven, but even the “smallest” sin is still an act of open rebellion against God and dishonors Him.

**How do you tend to view sin?
How does the gospel frame
that perspective?**

Exodus

32:21-35

We have to appreciate Aaron's response to Moses' question of what happened. “It was the people. They made me do it. When I threw the gold into the fire, this calf just happened to pop out!” Yes, we have to appreciate Aaron's response, not because it is admirable in any way, but because we tend to respond the same way to sin.

We deflect. We minimize. We rationalize. We are just like Aaron, and just like our ancient ancestors Adam and Eve in Eden. Our sin keeps us from even owning up to our sin. That is the downward cycle of our hearts and minds.

Thankfully, God has not left us in our depravity. Instead, He has given us new hearts and He is in the process of changing our thinking, to see our sin as He sees it, not as how we prefer to see it.

Christians can make the mistake of languishing in our sin and failing to grasp grace. We can forget that Christ paid for all our sins. At the same time, we are just as prone, if not more so, to view our sin too lightly. We can abuse grace. We want to avoid both extremes and instead see our sin as forgiven, yes, but it still carries consequences for us and those around us.

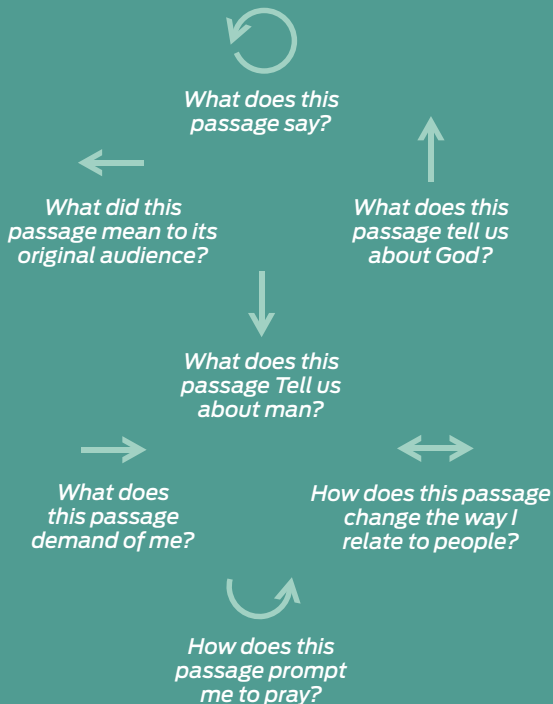
**What is your perspective of your sin?
Do you tend to minimize it or sink
into it?**

Daily Devotions



Exodus 36:1-38

The 7 Arrows of Bible Reading



When did Bezalel, Oholiab, and the other skilled craftspeople understand how God had blessed them with their abilities? Or that God was going to use them in such an incredible act of worship to Him? Was it only when Moses called on them to begin working on the tabernacle, or was it before?

Even though we do not have the answer to this question in Scripture, we have to wonder if Bezalel and Oholiab ever thought they didn't have much to offer God before the tabernacle. Did they see the ways they were gifted as fairly useless? They weren't great leaders like Moses. They weren't priests like Aaron. They may not have even been warriors. They were *just* artisans.

If they ever had these thoughts and feelings, that must have changed the day Moses called on them to work on the tabernacle. In that one moment, they connected what they deemed the sacred and the secular, only to learn that such a division is unwarranted. All we do is to be done for God's glory as acts of worship. Apart from sin, it is all sacred.

In what "ordinary" ways has God gifted you? How have you, or can you, use these in service to Him?

Exodus

37:1–38:31

For many of us, reading the second half of the Book of Exodus is challenging. It is full of details and can be quite repetitious. So we might be inclined to speed through these chapters or even skip over them. But we have to resist this urge and consider why God gave them to us. What is He wanting to communicate in this large section of Exodus? The answer is found in the very thing that makes us stumble: the preciseness of the details.

As we read of a table being made (37:10-16), it is noteworthy that God didn't just command His people to make a table. He didn't even command them to make a table of a certain size. He prescribed the size, the materials, and even intricate details of the table. In doing so, He is expressed two things. First, that worship of Him is serious business. We are not to approach a holy God lightly. God takes this seriously, and we should too. Second, the same care for details that God expresses here is given to us as well. God cares no less for the small, seemingly trivial details of our lives than He did for the tabernacle. Knowing this doesn't make sections like this easier to read, but it at least helps us appreciate them.

What “small” detail of your life do you need to trust that God knows and cares about?

Exodus

39:1-43

God was precise in giving directions for the construction of the tabernacle, which partly revealed His character. But attention to details did not end with God; He held His people to the same standard as they constructed the tabernacle. This is why Moses inspected the work before the project was declared officially over. He wanted to make sure they had done exactly as God had commanded. Not a single corner could be cut. God was worth their full obedience and that is what they needed to offer Him before a single offering could be given through this new structure.

In a similar way, our faithful obedience reflects our love for and value of God. We too are called on to give God our best—of our time, energy, and resources—and to do so with joy. Nothing less will do. This is our act of worship. This is our sacrifice of praise.

In which areas of life might you be holding something back from God? Why?

Exodus 40:1-33

God's timing was perfect. It always is. God instructed the Israelites to set-up the tabernacle on the first day of the first month of the year—New Year's Day. It is hard to imagine a better way to begin a new year than with the establishment of the tabernacle. But there was even more to God's timing than that.

The Israelites had been rescued from slavery in Egypt through the Passover in the middle of the first month of the year (Ex. 12:1-3). One year later, they were about to celebrate the first anniversary of the Passover with the tabernacle completed. It was a testament to God's faithfulness. He had delivered His people and He was with them, guiding them toward their home.

What spiritual markers in your life remind you of God's faithfulness?

Exodus 40:34-38

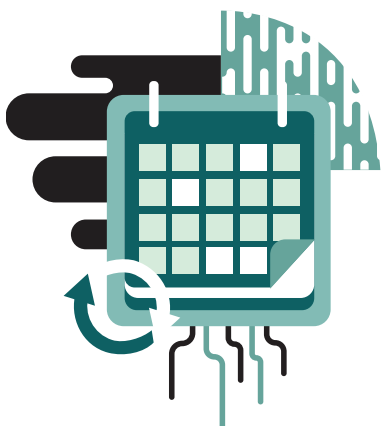
The Book of Exodus ends with a summary of what followed. The Israelites packed up and moved whenever the cloud was taken up from the tabernacle. The cloud during the day and pillar of fire at night were ever-present reminders of God's presence and guidance and of His grace and mercy.

The cloud and pillar were what the people followed out of Egypt the year before. Although the people had grumbled against God repeatedly, even though they had rebelled against Him by worshiping the golden calf, the book ends with Him leading them the same way. He was faithful, even as they were faithless at times. He would continue to be faithful, even after the people refused to enter the land He had given them.

It's a fitting end to the book. God's unchanging faithfulness on display for a people who did not deserve it. It's a fitting picture for God's relationship with Israel of the Old Testament, and it is a fitting picture for us. It is a picture of the gospel.

How have you seen God's undeserved faithfulness in your life?

Daily Devotions



Week of November 11th

Day 1

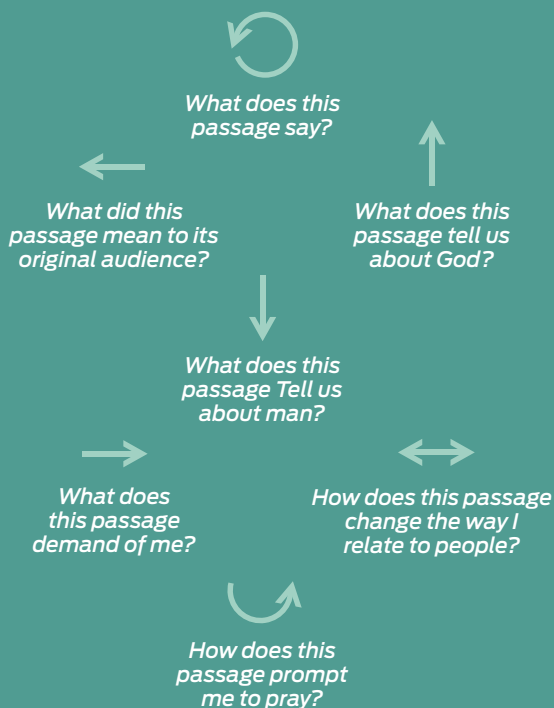
Leviticus 1:1-17

The Book of Leviticus opens by describing several types of recurring offerings the people could offer at the tabernacle. Each of these sacrifices was to be offered in a certain way and had a specific purpose.

The first offering is the burnt offering, a voluntary animal sacrifice where the entire animal was burned and the fire and smoke were a pleasing aroma to God. While the Burnt Offering involved atonement for sin (v. 4), it also signified a person's full dedication to God, pictured by the sacrifice being completely burned.

In this offering, we see images of Christ's full dedication to the Father expressed through His life obedience and His willing sacrifice on the cross. Christ gave Himself fully for us to make atonement for our sin. Our only reasonable response is total surrender to Him. The voluntary nature of this offering captures both Christ's willingness to endure shame on our behalf and our proper motivation in living for Him. Our obedience is not to be offered by compulsion, but instead to be motivated by love and gratitude.

The 7 Arrows of Bible Reading



What area (or areas) of your life are you holding back instead of fully surrendering to God? What is preventing you from giving this (these) to God joyfully?

Leviticus

2:1-16

The second offering described in Leviticus is the grain offering. Like the burnt offering, this was a voluntary sacrifice. As the name suggests, this sacrifice did not involve an animal, but grain. The fine flour was mixed with oil and frankincense and burned with the fire and smoke being a pleasing aroma to God. This offering pictured a person's gratitude for God's provision and his or her desire to live with generosity in response.

We can look at this offering, like the burnt offering, and see how it points to Christ. He is the One who demonstrated unmatched humility and generosity in taking on the flesh, coming to earth, and offering Himself so we might have forgiveness and eternal life. Believers should also seek to demonstrate scandalous generosity to those around us, so they might see the beauty and power of the gospel.

How can you be more generous this week with your time and resources?

Leviticus

3:1-17

The third offering is the fellowship offering. Once again, like the burnt offering and grain offering, this was a voluntary sacrifice. Unlike the grain offering, this was an animal sacrifice but unlike the burnt offering, the entire animal was not consumed in flames. The part of the animal that was burned produced an aroma pleasing to God. The fellowship offering was given to express gratitude for a person's relationship with God. Implicit in this offering is the awareness of a person's sins being atoned for.

Once again, it is not difficult for us to connect this offering to Christ. Jesus was the willing sacrifice who provided forgiveness for our sin to remove the barrier between God and those who trust in Him. Because we have been given Christ's righteousness, we are not spiritually neutral before God; He has restored relationship between holy God and forgiven humanity. As believers, each of our days should be marked by deep gratitude and joy for the relationship with God we have been given in Christ.

What can you do today to live out and enjoy the relationship with God that Christ has provided?

Leviticus

4:1–5:19

The fourth and fifth offerings are the sin offering (Lev. 4) and the guilt offering (Lev. 5). These two offerings were not voluntary; both were to be made as a result of sin and reaffirmed the need for forgiveness. The sin offering was made after unintentional sin or uncleanness. The guilt offering was made after intentional acts against others or after desecrating what was holy.

Both of these offerings point to the one-time sacrifice Jesus made for all sin—intentional and unintentional. Jesus' sacrifice was necessary to provide forgiveness that gives the believer confidence that he or she is accepted by God. Not even a single sin remains to bring condemnation from God. This is the source of the believer's hope and joy. Even as believers continue to sin, remembering the scope and depth of Christ's sacrifice for sin should cause us to seek to cast aside sin and to live holy lives pleasing to the Lord.

What sins have you committed but not yet confessed to God? How can you rest in His complete forgiveness and acceptance of you in Christ?

Leviticus

16:1-34

After reading the details of how the Day of Atonement was to be honored each year, we find that another aspect of this day was the people's rest and self-denial (vv. 29-31). The Day of Atonement was a Sabbath for God's people.

In a practical sense, God likely commanded this so the people would be able to focus on the significance of this day. Work and the typical distractions of life were set aside. But there may be another reason: Rest and self-denial are central to the gospel.

God's people were to rest, affirming there was nothing they could do to earn forgiveness for their sins. This truth was accentuated in their being spectators during the ceremonies of the Day of Atonement.

Likewise, the people of Israel were to practice self-denial because humility—that of Christ taking on the flesh and being the Suffering Servant and that of a person who comes to Him in total neediness for salvation—is a defining characteristic of the gospel.

Which do you find more difficult to maintain as a follower of Christ—rest or self-denial? Why?

Daily Devotions



Week of November 18th
Day 1

Numbers 12:1-16

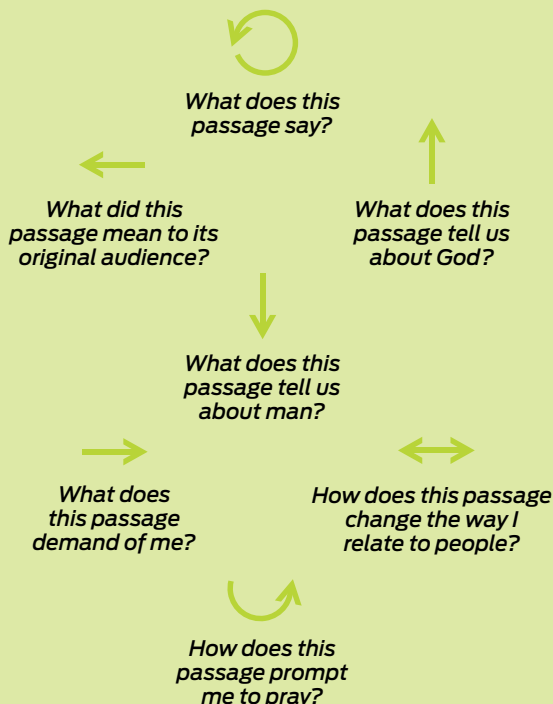
It was bad enough when the Israelites rebelled against Moses, but the rebellion of Miriam and Aaron surely hit him harder. Like we see happen in many confrontations, Aaron and Miriam hid the true motivation of their criticism behind a more palatable excuse: Moses' marriage to a Cushite woman. But that was not their main cause for concern. Rather, it related to Moses' role as God's primary spokesperson.

When Miriam and Aaron confronted the man God had chosen to speak for Him, God chose to speak for Himself. God pronounced judgement on them for their sin and in His anger, gave Miriam a skin disease. Aaron immediately repented and asked Moses to do something about Miriam's disease. God's servant responded by lifting his voice in intercession to God and Miriam was healed.

This account offers a picture of how we are to respond to God when He reveals Himself to us. God's self-revelation shows us two things: who He is and who we are. When we see God for who He is and what He has done, we can properly see ourselves for who we are.

In what ways does seeing the truth of God's character humble you?

The 7 Arrows of Bible Reading



Numbers 13:1-33

The way God told Moses to send the Israelite spies into the land was a reminder to him and the Israelites of His promise to give them the land (Num. 13:2). The land of Canaan was a good land, flowing with milk and honey, which made it a land worth fighting for. God would drive the people out of the land so His people could take possession of it. They had nothing to worry about. Yet, they rebelled against God and refused to go into the land where they would have had rest and all of their needs provided for.

Later in Scripture, the land of Canaan is used as a picture of heaven—our place of rest. (See Heb. 4.) The Israelites had left slavery in Egypt and endured a trek through the wilderness to make it to the promised land, which their sin prevented them from entering. Likewise, through Jesus, we are freed from the slavery to sin, yet we continue to live in the wilderness—a fallen and broken world. However, in light of eternity, our journey to our promised land is short, and we are called to trust God in faithfulness as we journey on, placing our hope in His promise to bring us home to the place of our rest.

How might the hope of what God has in store for you in heaven change the way you approach each day now?

Numbers 14:1-25

Faith in God leads to obedience to His commands. God has revealed Himself to us so that we would turn to Him in faith and love Him, and then through that faith and love, obey Him. But our obedience is short-circuited immediately when our faith erodes. Faithlessness hinders love, which in turn blocks obedience. This was what the Israelites experienced.

After the Israelites' rebellion, when God pronounced judgment on them, He first declared how patience He had been with His people. He then threatened to do away with them completely. But Moses interceded on behalf of the people, appealing to the glory and promises of God.

Each day, we encounter people who have not trusted in Jesus for salvation. They, too, stand under the righteous judgment of a patient God (2 Pet. 3:9). God invites us to join Him on His mission of making His presence known. We do this by proclaiming the gospel, but also by praying earnestly for those who don't know Him, that they might repent of their sin, turn to Jesus, and experience life.

Who will you pray for who doesn't know Jesus? How will you tell them about Jesus this week?

Numbers 14:26-45

There is a difference between grieving sin and grieving the consequences of sin. When we grieve the consequences of sin, we are distraught by being disciplined or because we missed out on something that we wanted. The focus is on us. But when we grieve sin itself, we are distraught because our fellowship with God has been disrupted because of our sin and that we are failing to glorify God as He deserves. The focus is on God.

The Israelites' willingness to go into the promised land without the presence of God, shows that they hadn't repented of their sin. They didn't want God's presence; they wanted God's presents. They wanted what God could give, not God Himself. They were fine with dwelling in the land without God, and the consequences for their actions were dire.

The worst place for us to be is in sin because it disrupts our fellowship with God. Having anything without God is far worse than having nothing with God. We need to remember this, let God drive it into our hearts, and be quick to grieve over our sin—not its consequences. When we do, we will experience the freedom of living in the presence of our mighty God who loves us beyond measure.

How have you grieved over sin recently—have you focused on the sin itself or the consequences of sin?

Numbers 16:1-50

Once again, we encounter a rebellion against Moses. But we have to see Israel's repeated lack of trust in Moses for what it really was: lack of trust in God. This was their root problem. This was what had to be addressed over and over. Rebelling against Moses was merely the symptom. Rebelling against God was the disease needing to be cured.

Moses' task was not an easy one. It is difficult to lead in even the best of circumstances, when the leader is focused on God as are the people he or she leads. But it's even more difficult when a leader is tasked with guiding a sinful people, especially when they constantly rebel against his or her authority too.

While most of us may never be in charge of leading a massive group of hard-hearted people through the wilderness, we are all called to take the message of the gospel to a world that wants nothing to do with it. Our job is simple: live the gospel; preach the gospel. But because the gospel is offensive, people will despise us. Like Moses, we must remember it is not really us who they despise and reject, it is Christ. And so, like Moses again but even more so like Christ, we must show compassion to the people we have been called to love and serve as we pray that through our kindness and perseverance, they might be reached with the gospel we proclaim.

How does praying for people change the way you see them?

Daily Devotions



Week of November 25th

Day 1

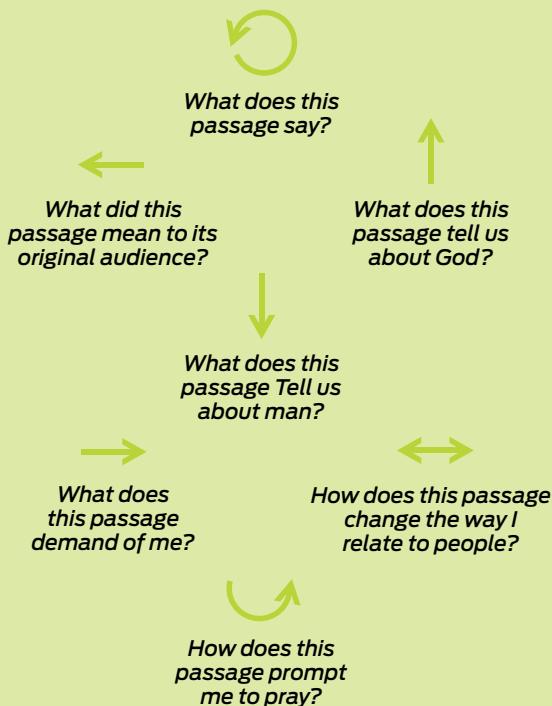
Numbers 20:1-29

In Numbers 20 the people rose up against Moses and Aaron because they had no water to drink. In response, Moses and Aaron fell on their faces before God. God spoke to them and commanded Moses to speak to a rock and He would make it yield water. But because of his anger toward the people, Moses rebuked the Israelites, asked if he and Aaron had to provide water, and struck the rock twice instead. Because of Moses' failure to obey God, God declared that he would not be allowed to enter into the promised land; he would die in the wilderness instead.

God's demand for obedience is absolute. There is no such thing as "half-way" obedience. Even the most minuscule deviation from God's commands is an act of disobedience. We are called to be holy just as God is holy (1 Pet. 1:15-16). God's holiness refers both to His uniqueness in being separate from creation and His perfect purity. This is our standard as well. We are to be different from our culture. We are to obey perfectly. And even one act of unfaithfulness earns condemnation. But thankfully, we have been provided a way to be forgiven of our transgressions in Jesus, the One who perfectly obeyed and who takes our sin and credits us with His righteousness when we believe.

How have you obeyed God partially at times believing that was good enough?

The 7 Arrows of Bible Reading



Numbers 21:1-7a

At the beginning of Numbers 21, the Israelites revealed they had the ability to trust in God's faithfulness. But they also revealed they were quick to forget that same faithfulness. When the Canaanites fought against the Israelites and took some of their people captive, God gave His people victory. But then, when they bypassed Edom, the Israelites became impatient and quickly forgot what God had done for them. They began to complain about lacking food and water and detested what God had been providing. God responded to their sin by sending snakes into their camp to discipline them.

We are no different than the Israelites. We can think back over our lives and lose count of the victories God has given us. But we are so prone to forget all the good that God has done for us, often because of trivial needs or minor inconveniences in life. We too are quick to forget God's faithfulness and we too need God's gift of discipline at times to remind us that if God was willing to provide Jesus to die on the cross to address our greatest need, we can surely trust Him to provide for our daily needs as well (Luke 12:24).

What are some things that God has done for you in the past that you can remember today to help you remain faithful in the face of need or temptation?

Numbers 21:7b-8

God provided Israel with an intermediary, Moses, who interceded on their behalf when they repented of their sin. It was through Moses' appeal that God provided a way for the people to recover from the consequence of their sin. The people wanted God to take away the serpents from the camp, but God had a better plan. He wanted them to experience what it was like to be doomed to die, but to be saved by placing faith in Him, and in doing so, experience new life from that day forward.

In a similar way, God has provided a way for us to be saved from our sin by lifting Jesus up on the cross. Our sin deserves God's wrath, but instead, He placed that wrath on His Son in our place. For anyone to be saved, all it takes is turning away from sin and looking to Jesus in faith, believing and trusting that He has done what is required to remove God's wrath from us. But for many, that is easier said than done. And for many who have trusted in Jesus, it remains difficult to continue to trust in the completed work of Jesus. That is why we are grateful that Jesus is an ever-present intercessor, always at the right hand of the Father making appeals to Him on our behalf.

Who has God placed in your life for you to be an intercessor, praying for them and telling them what Christ has done?

Numbers

21:9-35

When we walk in obedience to God's commands, He both walks with us and before us. Jesus has already given us victory over sin and death so as we live, we are free to follow God no matter what may come our way. We are not promised lives of comfort and free of pain. In fact, being followers of Jesus in a broken world means that we will, not that we might, face persecution (Mark 10:30). But just as God told Moses that He had already given King Og into his hands, God has already won the victory over His enemies.

As we live each day, we go forward in confidence living from the victory that Jesus has already won for us. Jesus has defeated sin and death, so in the face of any persecution we will face, we continue striving to live the way He has called us to—with faith and with joy.

How does knowing that God goes before you and with you give you confidence as you face opposition?

John

3:1-21

The necessity of belief for salvation is repeated several times in John 3. For anyone to be saved from sin, belief—or trust, or faith—in who Jesus is and that He has done everything necessary for salvation from sin is required. If we place our faith in Jesus Christ, He will give us eternal life. But that is not where it ends.

Trusting in the finished work of Christ also means living from the victory that He won on the cross. After we've placed our faith in Jesus, our salvation can never be taken away from us (Rom. 8:38-39). Neither persecution, death, nor even our own sin can separate us from the love of God. We can trust this to be true, even in the face of doubt, because even though it is our faith in Jesus that saves us, it is not our faith in Jesus that sustains our salvation. What sustains our salvation is the completed work of Jesus—His life, death, burial, and resurrection—and the unending power of God to preserve our salvation no matter what.

What kind of doubts do you face in your walk with Christ, and how does His completed work on the cross help you continue to believe?

Daily Devotions



Week of December 2nd

Day 1

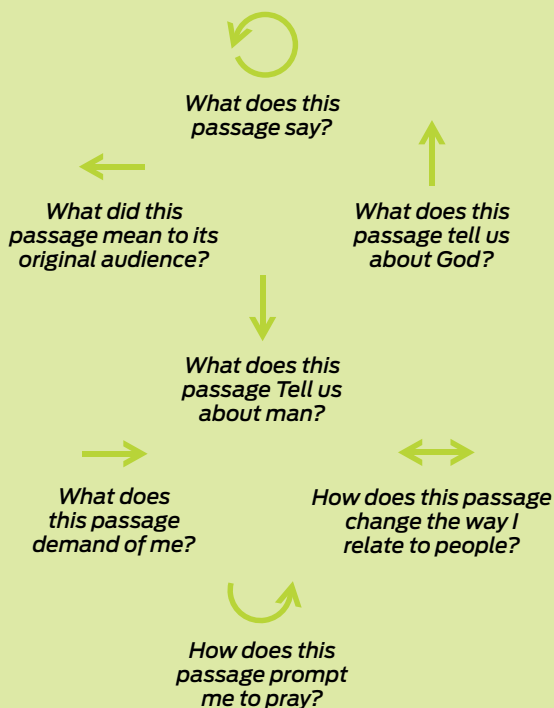
Numbers 22:1-41

In Numbers 22 the Moabites saw the Israelites encamped in the wilderness and feared for their lives. The Moabites had heard of what the Israelites had done to the Amorites and feared that the same fate would come to them. So Balak, king of Moab, sought the help of a diviner named Balaam to curse the Israelites. But God came to Balaam and told him not to go to Balak because the Israelites were blessed (v. 12).

This is a fascinating account full of mystery (who exactly was Balaam and why was he so prone to listen to God?) as well as the supernatural (a talking donkey!). But don't lose sight of an important detail that is easily missed: the Israelites were not present in this story. They don't see the fear of the Moabites. They don't see Balaam's encounter with a talking donkey. They don't hear the oracles Balaam shares. Instead, they are over there, off in the distance, while this account unfolds. Even when the Israelites could not see it, God was working for their good. God is always working all things for the good of those who love Him (Rom. 8:28).

How has God's faithfulness helped you remain faithful to Him even in the midst of difficult circumstances?

The 7 Arrows of Bible Reading



Numbers 23:1-30

In Balaam's first oracle to Balak, God declared that those whom He has blessed cannot be cursed (v. 8). In the second oracle, God declared Himself to be for Israel like a wild ox (v. 22). In both of Balaam's first two oracles, God's message to Balak, as he tried to curse Israel, was that God cannot be controlled. No person, no matter how powerful he or she may be, can coerce God to do that which He has not desired to do. God had blessed Israel and He would not change His mind because He is faithful and true.

No one and nothing can thwart God's plans for His people. Not even Satan can do anything to curse the people of God (Job 1:12). Our God is like a wild ox and He fights for us. Even though we may face persecution and difficult times, there is nothing that can stop God from fulfilling all that He has planned and promised. God has placed stories of His work for His people in the Bible so that we can see how He works for the good of His people, and in doing so, realize He works for us in the same way.

How can seeing the unstoppable faithfulness of God change the way you approach difficult situations today?

Numbers 24:1-14

In Balaam's third oracle, God gave the diviner a vision of the future blessing that the Israelites would enjoy, and He warned Balak not to come against His people. The promise of blessing that God gave Balaam was a promise of abundant provision and powerful leadership. The warning that God gave Balak was a warning of destruction should he attempt to fight against Israel.

God's promise of eternal life for us is a promise of shelter in His presence and provision that we will delight in (Rev. 7:15-16). We live in a broken world full of broken people, and we look forward to a life with God where brokenness will be no more. As we live today with this hope, we are called to proclaim the good news that Jesus has died on the cross for our sins. The hope that we have is not just for us. The message of the gospel is a message for all the world. God has saved us to display the immeasurable riches of God's grace for the rest of eternity, and He calls us to start now by inviting those who don't know Jesus, to trust in Him and enjoy His presence and provision forevermore.

How can your guarantee of eternal life motivate you to share the gospel today?

Numbers 24:15-25

Balaam's final oracle to Balak was a promise to preserve and protect the people of God. While this oracle would come to pass in part through King David, King Jesus would be its ultimate fulfillment.

Because of our sin, we were separated from God (Eph. 2:1). But on the day when we trusted in Christ, His righteousness was credited to us (Rom. 3:21-26; 2 Cor. 5:21). The righteousness of God that has been given to us does not mean that we no longer sin. But it does mean that Jesus' life was given to us as He took our sin onto Himself. It means that because our sin has been removed and we have Christ's perfect righteousness, we are completely protected from the eternal consequences of sin and our credit as being obedient to the Father is fully preserved.

When we trust in Jesus, we do not trust in Him merely for our salvation and then place that salvation in a safe place to take out again in the future. Our trust in Jesus runs throughout each day, and each minute, of our lives. We trust in His forgiveness, but we also trust in His rule over us, knowing He has done everything necessary for our salvation and righteousness, yet we are called to live in obedience out of love and gratitude for what He has done.

What is your motivation for obeying God? Why?

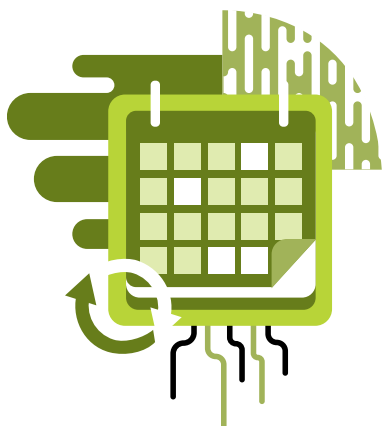
1 Corinthians 15:20-28

Through Adam, sin and death came into the world. Through Jesus, salvation came into the world; sin and death has been conquered. Jesus' work on earth reversed all the wrong done by Adam, and his descendants, for those who trust in Him. Where Adam disobeyed, Jesus obeyed. Where Adam doubted, Jesus trusted. Where Adam went into the ground and remained there, Jesus went into the ground and burst forth on the third day.

Jesus was the firstfruits of the resurrection, which means He is not the only one who will experience it. All those who have trusted in Him have the same future hope in store. One day, we too will spring forth from the clutches of death into everlasting life. But that life does not begin on that day, it is completed on it. One day Christ Jesus will return, and He will make all things new and kill death for good. At the death of death and the restoration of all things, the rule and reign of Christ will be unchallenged and unhindered. We can trust in God's ability to conquer all things now, since He has already conquered death, which is our greatest enemy.

How does knowing Jesus conquered our greatest enemy, death, give you boldness when sharing the gospel?

Daily Devotions



Week of December 9th

Day 1

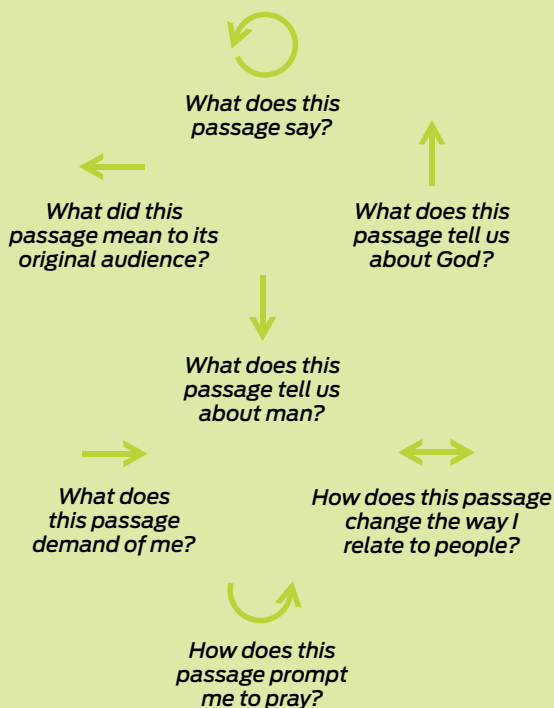
Deuteronomy 31:1-18

When was the last time someone told you to not be afraid (or when was the last time you told yourself that)? What's interesting about fear is that it forms an inverse function with knowledge. The less we know, the more we might fear. Perhaps it was a lack of knowledge that also tempted the Israelites to fear as they stood on the precipice of entering Jericho. They knew this was coming after forty years of wilderness wanderings, but they didn't know what the end result would be. And maybe this is why Moses countered their fears with knowledge by saying that God would be the One going with them; in fact, it would be He who would be going before them. This is why Moses implored them to be strong and courageous; they could stand courageously because God was with them, fighting on their behalf.

The courage and fearlessness the Israelites were called to display is the same we as Christians are called to live out today. Sure, we live in uncertain times and we are, without a doubt, finite people who don't know what the future holds. However, we do know the One who does know, and because of that, we can stand strong and courageously.

What situation are you facing that you need God to help you cast aside fear?

The 7 Arrows of Bible Reading



Deuteronomy 31:19-22

“Easy believe-ism” is a mindset that thinks all is well if one simply believes some of Christianity’s basic truths. No change of heart or transformation of character is needed—just mental affirmation.

One of the problems with this mindset—other than the fact that it is unbiblical—is the fact that “easy believe-ism” tends to come crashing in on itself when life isn’t going so well. In other words, it’s easy to believe in God when things are good, but when things are not so good or when tragedy strikes and all you have is “easy believe-ism,” you won’t have the foundation and support you need to get through.

In these verses, God told of a similar situation that would occur with His people. Notice the connection between God giving them this land filled with abundance and them eventually forsaking God and turning toward idols. They needed God and God helped them by giving them the land He promised. And then, instead of living in constant thankfulness and dependence upon God, they satisfied themselves with the gifts of God instead, eventually giving way to idolatry and “easy-believe-ism.”

In what ways have you fallen into easy believe-ism, focusing more on what you believe than who you have been made in Christ?

Deuteronomy 31:23-32:52

It is difficult, if not impossible, to lead people where you have never been yourself. It’s hard to do that from a leadership capacity in the world of business, and it’s even harder to do from a spiritual capacity as we seek to disciple others in the faith. Sure, you may be theological gifted and can teach and instruct others about the gospel in general, but in terms of leading someone to navigate life with a Christian worldview in mind, leadership of that kind requires a personal journey.

Maybe this was Moses’ emphasis in verse 46 when he urges them to take to heart all of these words that day as a warning and to pass them onto their children to follow. Moses could have just said, “Write these down and teach them to your kids,” but instead he emphasized that they should first take God’s word to heart, internalize it, let it change them, and then command their children to do the same. Why? Because the parents could never take the next generation of disciples where they needed to go until the parents had gone there themselves. A good reminder for us all.

How can you learn from your experiences—both your successes and your failures—to disciple someone else?

Deuteronomy 33:1-29

When a person goes to their grave being a blessing to other people, it speaks volumes about them. And that is what we have here with Moses. Instead of writhing in anger over the fact he wouldn't be joining the people in the promised land, he nevertheless sought to bless his people once more before he departed from this world.

Of course, while wanting to be a blessing to people is good and noble, what you believe will bless them the most is even more important. Here Moses gave us an example of blessing others by wanting them to be happy in God, and the way he went about that was by reminding them of God initiating a relationship with them. He said, "How happy you are, Israel! Who is like you, a people saved by the Lord? He is the shield that protects you, the sword you boast in. Your enemies will cringe before you, and you will tread on their backs." Moses decided to exit this life by reminding his fellow Israelites that God is good, and it is in Him, and not their own strength or cleverness, that they were protected from their enemies. May we likewise serve those around us by reminding them of God's goodness to them in their own lives.

In what ways are you seeking to be a blessing to others around you? How are you striving to do this?

Deuteronomy 34:1-12

Even though it's not difficult for our flesh to imagine a bitter and angered Moses being denied access to the promised land, there is also much grace and mercy in this passage in him just being allowed to catch a glimpse of the promise he had held onto for so many years

Of course, Moses wasn't the first only to see only a partial glimpse of God's promise. Abraham, to whom the initial promise was given, only saw the start of his lineage through Isaac, and not the vast number of people who would come from his line. The apostle Paul was only able to catch a glimpse of what would eventually happen because of his missionary and church planting efforts. Now, we could add name after name to this list, which only begs the question, "why?" Why only the glimpses and never the full experience? One answer is because the glimpses allow us to carry a spiritual legacy forward that is intended to outlast ourselves. As Christians, we get to play a part in God's story of redemption, something far beyond and before ourselves. And in that, we can find more than enough joy in the glimpses He gives us because those glimpses point us to the very face and heart of God.

In what ways do you anticipate God allowing you to play a role in His plans without seeing the final outcome?

Daily Devotions



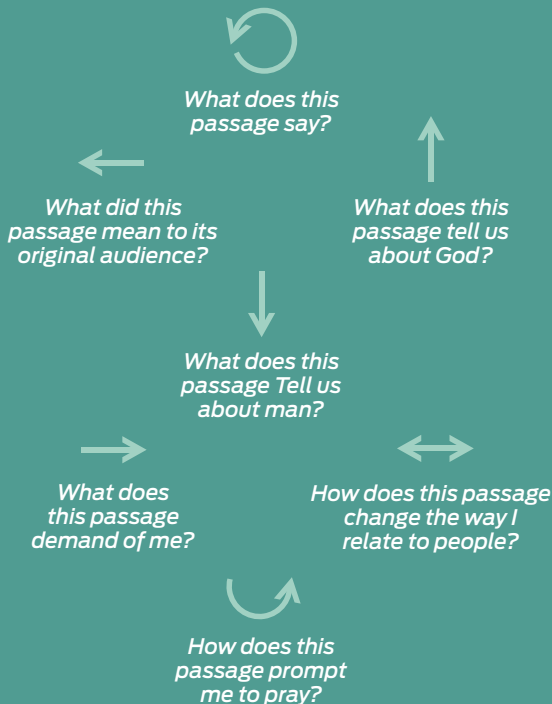
Isaiah 9:1-3

The relationship between happiness and joy is interesting. To some, these two words are synonyms. To others, they describe very different experiences: Happiness is a situational feeling while joy is an ongoing decision. They may overlap, and often do, yet one can be joyful (as Christians are commanded) while not feeling happy. While the second perspective is valid, we must be careful not to divorce these two ideas, if they are not the same. Christians' joy should fuel our happiness. The sullen but joyful Christian should not be what the world thinks of when they think of us.

The reason rests in the source of our joy: Christ Jesus (Phil. 4:4). We are commanded to be joyful at all times because the source of our joy is consistent—our salvation through Christ, the gospel. No matter what might be happening in our lives—or how difficult and painful it might be—Christ is always there and He is always the same. Our salvation is secure; we are a forgiven people who have received His righteousness. This is why we rejoice—even at times through tears.

When you think of the gospel, what is your usual emotional response? Why?

The 7 Arrows of Bible Reading



Isaiah

9:4-5

We were once captive to sin and death, but in Christ, we have been set free. Jesus didn't just take this old yoke off of us and cast it aside, He shattered it; it can never be placed on us again. This is the good news of the gospel.

As amazing as that is, our freedom does not end there. Our freedom is not just understood in terms of *from*, but also *for*. Our freedom is not to be used as an opportunity to sin in an abuse of grace, but rather for service of others (Gal. 5:13). As believers, we have the ability to refrain from sin and to obey God. One way we obey God is by submitting to His authority and loving and serving others. This is the freedom we have, and it is found in voluntarily yielding to our Father and placing others' needs above our own.

Which aspect of your freedom tends to be more challenging for you: abstaining from sin or obeying God? Why?

John

16:33

As Jesus wrapped up His upper room discourse the night He was betrayed, He explained that He told the disciples these things to give them peace. But in the very next sentence, with no transition or explanation, Jesus told them they would suffer. If we only see peace as a tranquil stream, this makes no sense. But if we understand peace as more than that—as the peace Christ gives us within us, with others, and with God—reconciling these two ideas is no problem. Peace from the Lord and suffering for the Lord are not mutually exclusive. As we suffer on His behalf, we can know we are following His example. In this, our pain is being used for His glory and purposes; this is what fuels our inner peace.

As Jesus wrapped up this idea, He explained another way peace and suffering work together: As we suffer in the world, we can know that one day all such suffering will end. Jesus has won and one day when He returns, He will make all things new. This is our future hope because we have been given peace with God our Father through Jesus' suffering.

What can you do now to prepare your mind and heart to remember the Lord's peace the next time you experience suffering?

Isaiah

9:6-7

We have to be careful: judgment removed is not justice satisfied. We might believe it is at times if we focus on one aspect of the gospel—how we are no longer under God’s judgment. Of course, this is certainly true—gloriously so. Yet, we have to take a step back and look at the gospel more broadly to see God’s justice displayed. God did not just remove judgment from us and cast it aside; He placed it squarely on His Son. God’s full judgment was poured out on Christ. He bore the penalty for our sin. This is why God is just.

When we remember this, we can better understand God’s complete and unwavering justice. He always acts justly because being just is part of His nature—it is one of His attributes. Therefore, all He does is just. This justice is a hallmark of His kingdom. We see it in the gospel—how we become part of His kingdom—and we see it in how He administers His kingdom. All He has done, all He does now as He advances His kingdom, and all He will do when His kingdom comes in fullness is marked by justice.

How does God being just give you confidence and hope in life today?

Matthew

5:38-42

Believers know God is just. Our trust and hope in the gospel hinge on His justice. Still, we often find it difficult to live under God’s justice in day-to-day life. People wrong us. People hurt us. People reject us. In our flesh, we want to lash out—to get even—to administer justice. Often, we feel vindicated in this desire—especially when we are wronged on behalf of Christ.

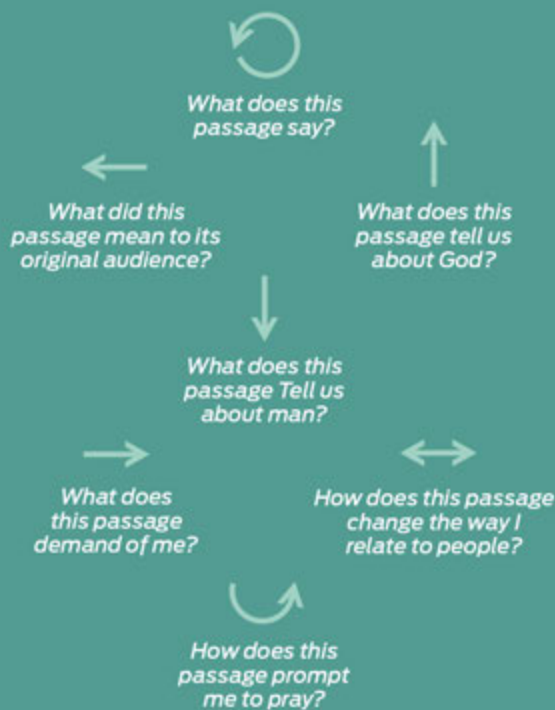
But Christ has called on us to set aside this desire, not to pursue justice on our own, but to trust in Him to bring about justice in His time and in His way. We may not see it right now, but we can know justice is coming, and we can rest in that. This is why Jesus told His followers to bear wrongs with patience and love. Because we don’t have to worry about righting any wrongs against us: that is God’s role, not ours.

When have you tried to pursue justice on your own instead of trusting in God’s justice? What actions did you take?

Daily Devotions



The 7 Arrows of Bible Reading



Week of December 23rd

Day 1

Matthew 1-2

Of all the Gospels, Matthew's account of Jesus' birth gives the greatest insight into the role of Jesus' earthly father, Joseph. When reading chapters 1 and 2, we see that:

- Joseph was carefully chosen as Jesus' earthly father. Read Isaiah 11 and Matthew 1:1–17.
- Joseph was equipped for God's plans. When Joseph learned that Mary was pregnant and he knew the child was not his child, he could have had Mary killed for having sex outside of marriage while she was engaged to him because, during this time, it would have been lawful to punish a woman with death for that kind of sin. Even so, Joseph was unwilling to do so. This seems to be an indication of the compassion and grace that God had been shaping in him in preparation for his very important role.
- Joseph sought to please God and not his peers. You have to assume people were talking about this scandalous situation and judged them both considerably.
- Joseph's obedience brought glory to God but not a life of ease for himself. Being chased by a murderous king, tasked with raising the Messiah, and moving internationally several times is no picnic. At the same time, he got Jesus. He had a daily reminder of the hope that this broken world would be redeemed and made new.

Joseph inspires us to pray for the faith to obey the Lord in the face of worldly pressures and the courage to follow God's plan even when it's difficult.

Do you obey out of love and trust for the Lord or out of fear of the consequences? How is that different?

Luke

2:8-20

He's here! The redeemer has come. The One promised by the prophets. The One who would bring justice and set His people free. Who should be the first to know? The answer to this question speaks directly to the heart of God, a group of shepherds. Yep, shepherds. During Old Testament times, after the Babylonian exile, the job of being a shepherd became synonymous with being dishonest or untrustworthy. These would not be the men selected to go and share about the arrival of the Savior. Who would believe them? To the religious elite, they were considered unclean and not allowed to go to the temple to atone for their sins. These men could not approach the presence of God and had no means of their own to seek atonement for their sins.

Although we see these things as reasons that exclude them from this special place in the Gospel, God sees these as perfect reasons they are qualified for the job. God did not need credible witnesses, He is sovereign and fully in control of how this story plays out and who believes. God allows us to be a part of His story not because He needs us, but because it brings us into His presence. God knows that we can't atone for our sins (Romans 3:23) and we are in desperate need of His grace and redemption (Romans 3:24). Yet God sends His angels to this unclean, unreliable group of sinners and proclaims, "For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord."

Do you ever feel unworthy to enter into the presence of God? Does that weight make you run to Him or hide from Him?

Luke

2:22-35

Let's be honest. How many of you have ever heard of Simeon? I think that most people skim through this little story about Jesus' presentation at the temple and think that it's weird, and move on. When you slow down and imagine this scene playing out, there is so much we can learn about who God is.

Simeon was righteous, and the Holy Spirit was upon him. Most Jews during this time believed the Messiah would be a great military leader that would defeat Rome and set them free. Instead, Simeon "came in the Spirit into the temple" (v. 27) and when he sees baby Jesus, he knows He is the Messiah. Simeon grabs Jesus (can you imagine Mary's face!) and begins to describe the future plan God has in store for little Jesus with more detail than the angels had told Mary and Joseph. A few things stand out:

- God's power and control in all circumstances is on display in this encounter. It's so good to rest in the promise of God's goodness and not our own qualifications.
- Simeon had to wait for the fulfillment of God's promise. Most of us are not very good at waiting. The Bible is filled with stories of people who had to wait faithfully on the Lord, but God was at work in the waiting.

Simeon reminds us that God is in control and that His Spirit will sustain us in our waiting.

How does God's control over all things impact our ability to patient in our waiting?

Matthew

2:1-18

Herod the Great was given the title “King of the Jews” by the Roman Senate in 40 B.C. There were several problems with this title: First, Herod was only half Jewish and second, there already was a “King of the Jews” in Jerusalem at the time. Once appointed “King of the Jews,” Herod was run out of Jerusalem and forced to turn to the Romans to help him take back the city. After three years of war, Herod returned to rule once again. For the remainder of his reign, Herod sought to win the acceptance of his people by rebuilding the temple, helping during a famine, and even cutting taxes. At the same time, his fear of losing his position drove him to exercise his power and control with gruesome force. Over time Herod became paranoid, untrusting and violently erratic.

In Matthew 2 we learn that, having heard the true King of the Jews had been born, Herod’s position was challenged once again. The only way to truly control the situation was to be sure the Messiah would not live to threaten his crown. Herod ordered every male child in Bethlehem that was 2 years old and under be killed. In the end, Jesus escaped. God was in control and Herod was not.

Do you struggle to submit to your parents’ authority?

How can you seek out the peace that comes from submission to God’s plan?

Matthew

2:1-3

Over the past few weeks, we have learned about a few key persons of Christmas and their role surrounding the birth of Jesus. We wrap up our week by looking at the wise men’s incredible journey to find baby Jesus. We don’t know much about the wise men except that they were scholars, specifically astronomers. Seeing an unusual star in the sky, they would have recognized it as significant. With their knowledge of prophecies of the coming King and of astrology, they followed the star to worship the newborn King.

How did Herod and Jerusalem react when they heard the news of the King born of the Jews?

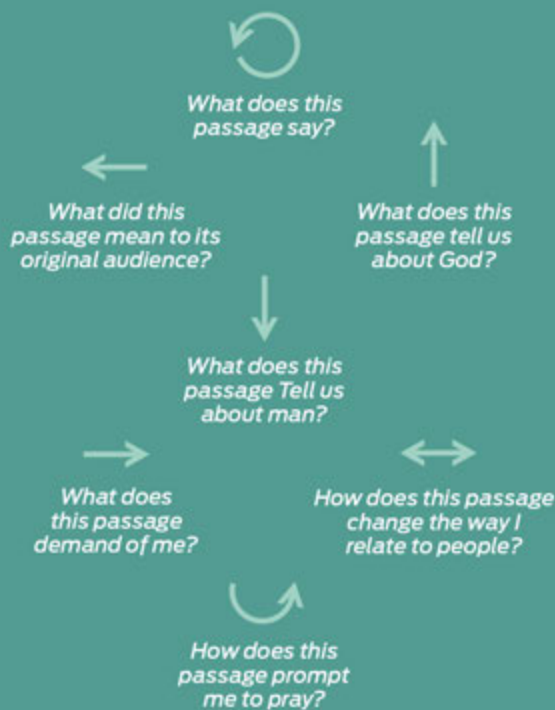
There is so much we can learn from the wise men in just these three short verses. They sought after Jesus, even though it cost them. The journey was long and hard, yet they knew they had to find this king. Seeking and following Jesus will cost us something as well, but Jesus is worth it all. The Bible says that if we seek Him, we will find Him (Jeremiah 29:13). Just as He did for the wise men, God draws each of us uniquely and personally to Himself. He wants to be found. He is guiding us to Himself if we will just decide that the journey is worth it.

What might it cost you to seek and follow Jesus?

Daily Devotions



The 7 Arrows of Bible Reading



Week of December 30th

Day 1

Philippians 3:12-16

There is something exciting about the start of a new year. It feels like a clean slate. An opportunity to start fresh. A time to make different plans. To dream big. At the first of the year we make resolutions. We determine how we want to look and act. We decide what we want to do differently. We are resolved (“firm in purpose or intent; determined”) to make this year the best.

So, set S.M.A.R.T. resolutions:

Specific (Give your goal a what, when, where and how.)

Measurable (Make sure you have markers of how much, how many, and how often to see you are accomplishing your plan.)

Attainable (Make a resolution you can keep. Know your steps to reach/meet your goal.)

Relevant (Is this the right resolution for this time in your life?)

Time-Bound (Put a specific time frame on your goal.)

Write your resolutions for this next year (Personal Goals. Spiritual Goals. Physical Goals. Future Goals.).

How does looking at Paul's resolution help you shape yours?

1 Timothy

4:7-15

It is much easier for us to make resolutions that are temporary. We want to get in shape, make better grades, be a better friend, get along with our parents, use our phones less. While these are all great aspirations, they should not be our ultimate aim or ambition. So, set those resolutions—do seek to work out more and gossip less—but above all, seek Jesus. Seeking godliness (conforming to the laws and wishes of God) has value in this life and in the life to come. Setting spiritual resolutions takes steps toward looking more like Jesus. This comes from spending time in His Word and seeking Him in all that we do.

Why do you think it's easier to set resolutions that only impact improving ourselves physically?

Look back at your goals from yesterday. Where does God fit in them?

What is stopping you from setting spiritual resolutions?

Romans

7:16-25

According to U.S. News, approximately 80 percent of resolutions fail by the second week of February. That's not the most encouraging statistic as we are making decisions to look more like Jesus this next year. Even Paul points out in Romans that in his own strength, he keeps failing when he tries to do what is right. So how do you follow through on your resolutions? Matthew 19:26 says, "But Jesus looked at them and said, 'With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible.'" So how do you follow through on your goals? Discipline is needed. If we aren't asking the Holy Spirit to guide and lead us, we are going to grow discouraged. God will show you His plan for your next steps.

Are there any resolutions you need to adjust to honor the Lord better in this year?

Spend time thanking Jesus that nothing is impossible with Him!

James 1:22; 4:14-17

There is a difference between intending to do something and following through with that decision in obedience. Intention is defined as an act or instance of determining mentally upon some action or result. You must set your mind to seek holiness, but you must follow through with action as well. You can want to argue with your parents less, do well in school, or read your Bible more. But unless you actually do what you intended, it's really just wishful thinking. To obey means to submit or conform in action to the commands and instructions of another. This year let's look at our resolutions not as something we wish to do better, but as an opportunity to be obedient to God. Resolve to seek holiness. Delayed obedience is really disobedience.

You know what to do; you know what Scripture says, but you keep saying you'll do it later. Are there some habits/decisions that you have been procrastinating from resolving to do?

Is there an area of your life you need to give to the Lord so you can follow through on your spiritual resolutions?

Ezekiel 36:25-28; Psalm 139:1-4; 23-24

As this first week of 2020 ends, it's important that we keep a proper perspective on who we are in Christ. Remember that a spirit of repentance (deep sorrow, or remorse for a past sin or wrongdoing and a true desire to amend that behavior) is going to be what enables us to follow through on the spiritual resolutions we've set this week. None of us is perfect. It is why we needed Jesus to come and be our Savior. Constantly seek the Lord and ask Him to reveal any area in your life that does not reflect Him.

Spend time in repentance now. Is there anything that is hindering you from honoring Him with your life this year?

Spend time giving thanks for all God has done. Thank Jesus for saving you! Be grateful the Holy Spirit is there to guide you in each of your decisions. Then truly resolve to honor Him in all you do.



Redemption | 1 Week

God redeems His people

Unchained | 4 Weeks

freeing yourself from self-focus

Promises | 3 Weeks

God provides for His people

Elevate | 3 Weeks

God receives worship from His people

Lost | 4 Weeks

wandering in the wilderness

Christmas | 2 Weeks

New Years | 1 Week

