



PRESTONWOOD STUDENT DEVOS



spring 2020



PRESTONWOOD
S T U D E N T S

Daily Devotions



The 7 Arrows of Bible Reading



Week of January 6th

Day 1

Genesis 1:1; Psalm 90:2; Romans 1:20

The lens, or worldview, in which we look at our life will define how we see everything else. The dictionary defines worldview as a “comprehensive conception or image of the universe and of humanity’s relation to it.” We must approach life with a biblical worldview. The Word of God remains constant. It is truth. You can trust what God says to us through the Bible. You can trust what the Bible tells us about God.

If someone were to ask you if God exists, how would you answer that person? What proof would you give?

From the very beginning, the Bible simply states the truth that God is eternal. In the first four words (Genesis 1:1) we see that God existed before the beginning of the world. Before time began, God was and He will always be. The word eternal means “everlasting; having no beginning and no end.”

The complex nature of nature illustrates what the verses we have read state—God is the Creator. We can rest confidently in the truth that God exists as even all of nature illustrates His great design.

How can looking at nature illustrate that God exists?

**Psalm 102:27;
Malachi 3:6;
Hebrews 6:17-18**

God is immutable. Mutable means “subject to change or alteration; inconstant.” If God is immutable, then He is unchangeable, constant, not mutable. We can rest confidently in the truth that our God is complete and perfect, so He has no need to change.

In fact, He has no need of anything. This means that when God says He will do something in His Word, He will do it. Our God is trustworthy. What He promises cannot be broken and what He sets forth cannot be stopped.

What are some promises and attributes of God that most encourage you in knowing He never changes?

Do you realize how the unchangeable nature of God reassures us of our salvation? If you have placed your trust in Jesus as your Lord and Savior, you will be saved. We will spend eternity in heaven with Him. Romans 10:13 reminds us that everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. God does not change His mind, and He knows the future. We can trust every step to a God who never changes.

How does knowing God never changes give you complete confidence in your salvation?

**Romans 2:23;
Matthew 5:48**

The dictionary defines perfect as “being entirely without fault or defect; satisfying all requirements; corresponding to an ideal standard or abstract concept.” You and I will never be perfect. It is very important that we understand that only God is perfect. He has no flaw and is not corrupted by sin as man has been. Therefore, our aim as a believer is not to seek perfection, but to pursue Him who is perfect.

According to Strong’s Concordance, the word perfect in Matthew 5:48 was derived from the Greek term teleios (“complete in all its parts; full grown; of full age; especially of the completeness of Christian character”)

What does it mean for us as believers to “be perfect, as our heavenly Father is perfect?”

Jesus is asking that we be complete in Him, that we imitate our heavenly Father, and that we do our best to become more and more like Him.

1 John 3:20; Hebrews 4:13; Romans 11:33-36

Omniscience is defined as “the state of having total knowledge; the quality of knowing everything.” God is sovereign; He has supreme power and authority. God is all-knowing. He made all things. He knows what has been and He knows what is to come.

How does knowing that God is all-knowing give us confidence in the things we don't know?

A. W. Tozer wrote of God's omniscience, “Because God knows all things perfectly, He knows no thing better than any other thing, but all things equally well. He never discovers anything, He is never surprised, never amazed. He never wonders about anything nor (except when drawing men out for their own good) does He seek information or ask questions” (A. W. Tozer, *The Knowledge of the Holy*, pp. 61–62).

In the face of infinite knowledge, our only response is reverence and honor. Our response is worship. We bring Him our limited understanding and ask for His wisdom. We can know this: His understanding has no limits.

Are there areas of your future you've been afraid to trust God with? Give those to Him now.

Hebrews 4:15-16; John 17:3; Jeremiah 9:23-24

We learned yesterday that God is omniscient. What is just as amazing however, is that this all-knowing God is also knowable. He is capable of being known. We saw the omniscience of God in Hebrews 4:13, and only a few verses down, we see that our God is knowable. We can draw near to Him.

Scripture teaches that we can have a personal knowledge of God, but this does not mean we will ever understand Him fully. Don't let this truth discourage you. Remember, the Bible also teaches that God is knowable. While God can never be exhaustively understood, He can be truly and personally known.

Because of Jesus, we can truly know God.

How did you come to know God? (Text/ tell someone your story of salvation today. Use social media to tell your story of how God is knowable)

The fact that we can know this God should lead us to eagerly and diligently study His Word so that we can understand Him as He has revealed Himself, and avoid any false view of God that will dishonor Him. “We should never grow apathetic in seeking to know God because we are, in fact, able and equipped to know Him and to please Him with our lives.” —Erik Thoennes

Daily Devotions



Week of January 13th

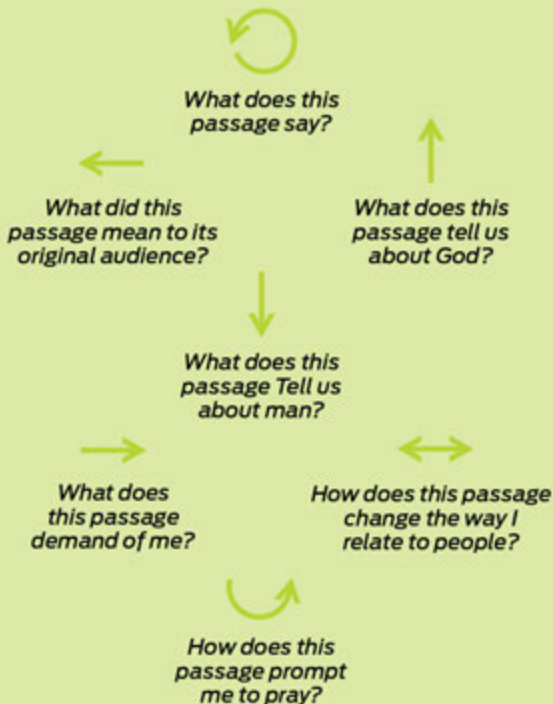
Day 1

Genesis 1:26-31; Ephesians 2:10

If you want to “discover yourself,” you have to search somewhere unexpected. Calvin said it this way, “Without knowledge of God, there is no knowledge of self.” Last week, we learned about who God is, and now we can ask, “Who am I?”

Your answer to the question “Who am I?” has probably changed a lot in your life. But Scripture clearly answers this unchanging truth for us. Genesis 1:26–31 tells us that we’re created in the image of God, and He has a specific purpose for us. Ephesians 2:10 then tells us that even after sin entered the world, the same remains—we are created by God to fulfill His purposes.

The 7 Arrows of Bible Reading



What are the different ways “man” is described in Genesis 1:26–27.

Why does it matter that we are the created and not the creator?

Jeremiah 17:9; Romans 3:23

Have you ever been frustrated with yourself, and the way you continue to live? We all get frustrated with ourselves, and Jeremiah 17:9 speaks to the root of this frustration.

How have you been frustrated with yourself this week?

This frustration points to the truth that we are imperfect. Whether reading the Old Testament or the New, Scripture makes it perfectly clear that God is perfect, and we are not. Romans 3:23 emphasizes this truth by telling us that we all fall short of His perfection.

Have you begun to grow comfortable with the frustration you're living in, letting yourself just sit in it? Let us not be those who are content with frustration, but rather those who respond and pursue obedience at all costs.

Spend the remaining time in prayer, asking the Lord to convict you of your imperfection and how you have been living it out.

Hebrews 13:8; 2 Corinthians 3:18

Constant. Consistent. Unchanging. Do those words bring you peace? In a world where change is constant, we are faced with the fact that even we change. In this, we can find comfort in the fact that those words that brought us peace also describe God: constant, consistent and unchanging.

Read Hebrews 13:8. How does this verse communicate that God is greater than us?

You may be asking, "Should I follow a god who doesn't change, who doesn't grow?" God doesn't have to change because He is already perfect. We change because we aren't.

Change itself isn't good or bad, but the way we change can be. 2 Corinthians 3:18 tells us about our changing nature, and what we are able to change and grow into. This all starts when we recognize how glorious God is.

How have you grown to reflect God's image this school year?

Isaiah 55:8-9; 1 Corinthians 3:18

The Lord holds all knowledge. But, what does that mean for us, and who we are? Nothing is a surprise to the Lord, and nothing is beyond His understanding, even the moments and events in our lives that we don't understand at all.

Read Isaiah 55:8-9. How does our understanding compare to the Lord's?

We weren't created to be God. Our knowledge and understanding are limited. But it's in this place of limit where we realize how much we need the Lord. We may know little, but God knows far more. Not only that, but God knows all. Rest in this truth today.

Read 1 Corinthians 3:18. How have you tried to be like God, attempting to know and understand all things?

How does knowing that God knows all things comfort you in circumstances that seem out of your control?

Isaiah 43:1-3; John 10:14-15

This week, we learned we are created, imperfect, always changing and limited. Today we are going to discover we are known. This means we are known even in our imperfection and constant change. In Isaiah 43:1-3, the Lord declares His intimate knowledge of Israel and the things He does for them.

List the verbs in Isaiah 41:1-3 that describe what the Lord does for His people.

John 10:14-15 describes the way the Lord knows and acts for His people. We see a two-way street emerge as John describes what it looks like for the Lord to know His people and His people to know Him.

What does John tell us the Lord does for those He knows?

The Lord, who knows you completely, laid down His life for you. Because He knows completely, He knows you need forgiveness. This is exactly what He offers.

Daily Devotions



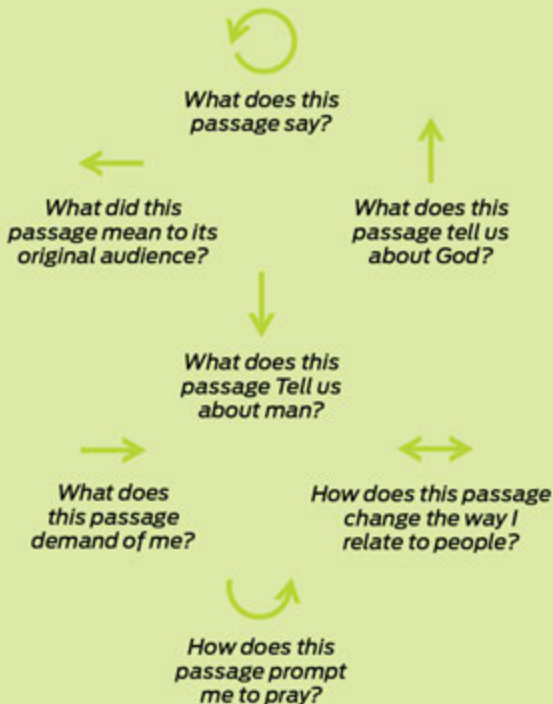
Week of January 20th

Day 1

Ephesians 4:1-16; Colossians 2:19

The Church is a body of individual believers who are unified through Christ by the Holy Spirit dwelling in their lives. In these Scriptures, Paul tells us two things about the body of Christ. First, we are only united through Christ as the Head of the Church. Christ, through His Holy Spirit that dwells in every believer, joins those believers together as a unified body. Secondly, Paul also gives specific descriptions and characteristics of how we as individuals are to be (humble, gentle, patient and loving), how to act toward each other, and how we are to use our gifts. Why? The hope is that being humble, patient, gentle, and bearing with one another in love will maintain the unity we have in Christ. It will ultimately show the world who Christ is. In other words, the Church is to be a picture of the love and transformation Christ can bring.

The 7 Arrows of Bible Reading



How can you practically model one of these characteristics (humility, gentleness, patience, love) this week?

Why do you think the Church is a picture of the transformation Christ brings?

**James 5:16;
Luke 17:3;
Galatians 6:1-2**

God designed people to be relational. We were created to have a relationship with God. We are also created to have relationships with others. Since God designed and implanted that desire within us, He also created a context (the Church) in which we can establish relationships that will help us become more like Christ. These relationships were designed to be a place of encouragement and accountability. Yesterday we looked at how the church, as a body, should function together, being unified by Christ and the Holy Spirit, bearing one another in love. What does that look like in a community? It looks like confessing to one another and praying for one another as described in James 5:16. It also looks like loving someone well by encouraging and lovingly correcting them with gentleness and grace. When we do these things, we are, as Paul puts it, “fulfilling the law of Christ.” In other words, we are loving Christ and loving others as ourselves (Mark 12:30–31).

Have you ever been lovingly corrected by someone you trust?

How well do you receive correction? How well do you give correction? Is it done in love?

**Colossians 1:28;
Ephesians
4:12-13**

Scripture is an amazing gift to mankind. According to 2 Timothy 3:16, Scripture was breathed out by God Himself, meaning it is His very Word given to us. God breathed Scripture so we can know Him. How incredible is that? The God of the universe wants you to know Him! Throughout every chapter and every verse, God shows the very character of who He is and what He has done for us. But, how can we love what we do not know? If we do not spend time reading His Word, both corporately as a Church and individually, how can we know Him? If we do not know Him, how can we love Him?

Another reason He gave us His Word is for the purpose of teaching, correcting and equipping. Scripture is to be the authority for correction and the foundation for teaching and equipping. Those things, along with knowing God, are important so that we (His Church) might become spiritually mature and equipped for His Work.

What has God showed you about Himself lately through His Word?

What does your daily time in God’s Word look like? Does it equip you or is it completely missing?

1 Corinthians 1:5, 7; 1 Peter 4:10; 1 Corinthians 12:12-26

If you have ever taken a biology course, you know how amazingly complex the human body can be. Every part carries out a necessary function to make you who you are, and allow you to do what you were created to do. In the same way, each part of the Church, as a body, is made up of individual parts that are necessary for the work of God. If you have asked for forgiveness and put your trust in Christ, God's Word says that the Spirit dwells in your life. This means the Holy Spirit makes itself at home in you. Part of the Holy Spirit's role as He dwells in your life is to bring gifts. No, not physical gifts, but gifts or talents He gave you specifically to use for the building up of the Church. These gifts were designed to be used in serving others selflessly so the Church might grow, and Christ's name might be known.

What gift has the Spirit given to you? (take the test here: sclk.me/31gcffA)

How are you using your gifts right now for the building up of the Church?

If you aren't, how can you use them this week to selflessly serve someone?

Matthew 28:19; Acts 1:8

Even if you have been coming to church for only a little while, these verses probably sound familiar. Matthew 28:19 are the words of Christ after He rose from the grave and was about to ascend into heaven. Before He ascended, He gave a command: "Go, tell everyone about Me and what I have done out of love for them; baptize them and teach them how to follow Me" (paraphrased).

As individuals, we are called to go and make disciples. It doesn't matter if we don't have a degree in biblical studies. It doesn't even matter if we haven't memorized the Bible from cover to cover. The simple truth is that we are called to go and share. We do not have to do this alone, either. In Acts 1:8, also before Jesus ascended into heaven, He gave a promise that a Helper—His very Spirit—would come upon them and empower them to carry out this command. In the next chapter of Acts, we see the promise come true! The Holy Spirit came upon the very first Church and empowered the believers. If you are a believer, the same Spirit is inside of you. So go out and share!

Is there someone in your life with whom you need to go and share the Good News? List his or her name and begin to pray for that person specifically.

Daily Devotions



Week of January 27th

Day 1

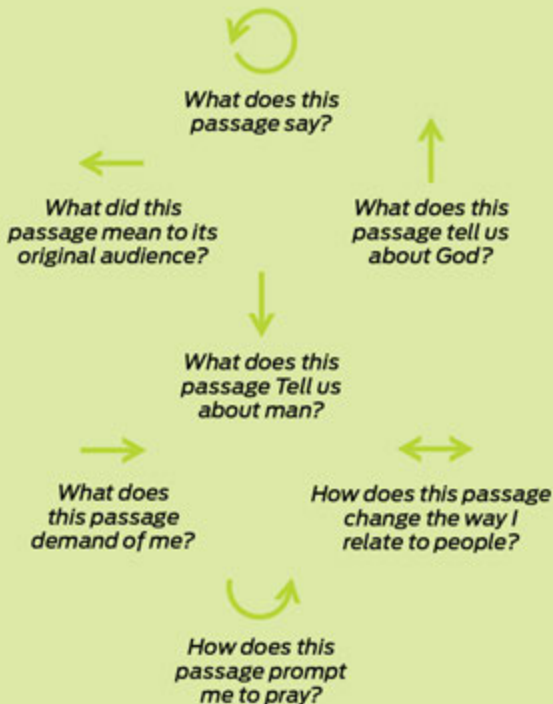
John 7:5; James 2:1

We like to think we are in charge of our lives. But the reality is that so much of our journey is determined before we even exit the womb. The family in which we are born or adopted into will likely determine our educational opportunities, our financial stability, our faith experience and possibly even our mental and physical well-being.

Family is an important part of our sphere of influence. And for many of us reading this devotional, that's good news. For others, it's not.

Jesus understood what it was like to live in family. In fact, He understood what it was like to have unsupportive family. In John 7, we see the brothers of Jesus encouraging him to "back up" His claims of deity by performing publicly for all to see. They weren't doing this because they were proud of Jesus. In fact, verse 5 says, "For not even his brothers believed him." That's right, the Savior of the world had flesh-and-bone family members who doubted Him.

The 7 Arrows of Bible Reading



Have you ever felt as if members of your family didn't support you on something? What was your response?

Do you sometimes extend less grace and love when a family member offends you?

John 15:13; 1 Corinthians 15:33

“So no one told you life was gonna be this way?”
(clap, clap, clap, clap)

I’ll give you a minute to croon the rest of the iconic show opener before I tell you that, though much of everyone’s favorite sitcom flew right in the face of Christian living, *Friends* did get one thing right: Friendship is important.

John 15:13 says, “Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.” That’s a bold statement, and it came from Jesus Himself. Scripture offers much discussion on the subject of friendship, but I think one of our biggest clues as to why it’s important is found in 1 Corinthians 15:33 where we’re told, “Bad company corrupts good character.”

You see, friendships shape us. God has a standard that He has called us to, and as a follower of Christ, that standard is holiness. Friendships have the power to push us toward that standard, or pull us away.

**What kind of friend are you:
one who corrupts, or one who
would lay down his/her life?**

**Do you feel like your character
has ever been corrupted by
someone you considered a
friend?**

Luke 10:25-37

God designed us to take care of each other. What a beautiful and safe design!

**Take a moment to praise God
for the people who have cared
for you.**

The story of the Good Samaritan challenges us to identify the sins and obstacles in our lives that keep us from caring for others. Is it prejudice? Selfishness? Apathy? Self-pity? Distraction? Fear? Busyness?

Allow the Spirit of God to convict you in any of these areas. “Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting” (Psalm 139:23–24).

In Christ, you have everything you need to love your neighbor as yourself. Your neighbors are not strangers to God. Your path is not by accident. Be the Good Samaritan to the strangers in your path today and every day.

Matthew 5:16; John 15:13

During WWII, a medic dragged more than 75 wounded Americans from a battlefield in Okinawa while snipers shot at him. His name was Desmond T. Doss, and his life is the subject of the movie Hacksaw Ridge. Doss was a devout Christian who felt a deep conviction that he should not kill another human being. He was also a patriot. Serving as a medic, he saved countless lives while risking his own. Medics were targeted by enemy snipers and were easily identified by the red cross painted on their helmets. That cross put Doss in danger, but it didn't keep him from fulfilling his duty.

**Who's your crew? Your team?
With whom has God sent you
into battle?**

**Do you take your "cross" off to
protect yourself in battle or
leave it on to give hope to the
wounded?**

John 13:35; Proverbs 27:17; Philippians 2:3-4; Hebrews 10:24-25

Have you ever traveled to a foreign country? It can be intimidating to interact with others in an unfamiliar language or culture. It's refreshing to find someone from the United States who understands you and can relate to your struggles. There's an instant bond formed because of your shared knowledge of home. This is what God intends for you to experience with your Christian friends. When Jesus was preparing His disciples for His death and Resurrection, He instructed them to love each other and take care of each other in His earthly absence. This is still His desire for His disciples today.

**Do you have close Christian
friends?**

**Do you allow God to use these
friends in your life to both
encourage you and convict
you?**

**Are you a faithful friend to
other Christian teens?**

Daily Devotions



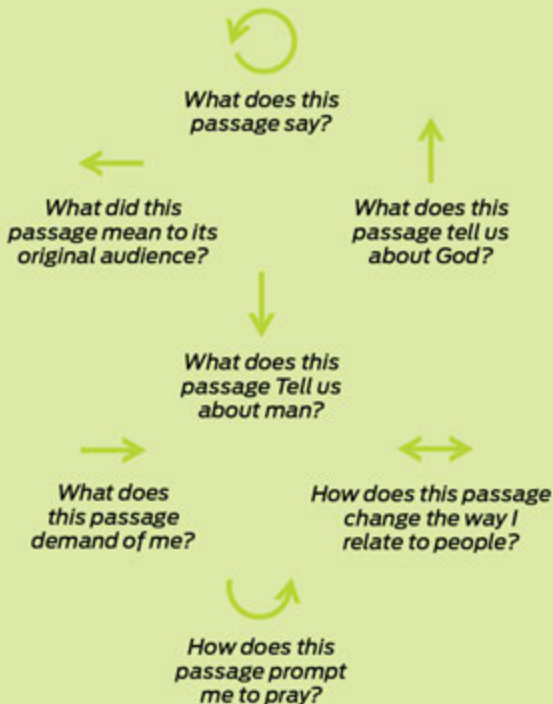
Week of February 3rd

Day 1

Luke 14:25-30

Before you begin this devo, read Luke 14:25–30, and make observations about the text. ... In this passage, Jesus is teaching a large crowd of people about the cost of following Him. If you're like many, you read verse 26 and were immediately thrown off. Jesus, telling His followers to hate? The word hate, within this context, is used figuratively and does not approve of a literal hate or detest for someone. What Jesus was saying, however, is there is a great cost to following Him, and giving Him priority within those relationships is of utmost importance if you are to call yourself a disciple of Jesus Christ.

The 7 Arrows of Bible Reading



In your life, are there any relationships you are placing above Christ's?

If one or two, or even three, come to mind, what steps do you need to take to put Christ first?

Luke 14:31-33

Prior to going to war, a king would assess whether he were able to defeat his opponent. If the king determined he was incapable of victory, he would conform to the ideas and “terms of peace” of the other king. A war is being waged against us, and we must be willing to count the cost of battle to determine what will aid in the fight versus what will hinder. Thankfully, the cost of going into battle does not fall on our abilities, but rather on the power of the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 6:10–13). The war was won on the hill of Calvary where Jesus submitted to the will of His Father. In the same way He submitted to His Father, we ought to submit to Jesus in face of battles.

In your life, do you tend to lean more on your ability to fight rather than on the power and strength of Christ? If so, how and why?

Luke 14:34-35

In a sentence or two, write what you believe your personal purpose is in life.

During Freedom we learned that disciples of Jesus remember their purpose. When we remember it, how much more likely are we to live it out? In Luke 14:34–35, Luke compares the value of salt with a disciple’s usefulness. As believers, we are created to be disciples of God, and our usefulness is evident as we live it out.

Think about the bee, even it has a purpose. Just as a bee’s purpose is to pollinate, believers are created to be disciples of Jesus, bringing glory to God. If a bee didn’t pollinate plants, it would be wasting its purpose. The same applies to disciples; when we neglect to live out our purpose, we are rendered useless and ineffective, having lost our “saltiness.”

Reflect back on your purpose statement. How well does that statement align with what God has called you to?

John 16:33

Before we begin, in bulleted points, write out your ideal Christian life

Part of counting the cost is being realistic and understanding that following Jesus does not equate to having great wealth and health. In fact, John confirms that while on earth, believers will have trouble. The same type of thought can be seen in Matthew 10:22. He writes that believers “will be hated by everyone because of me....” As believers, be real for a moment and evaluate your understanding of what it means to be a follower of Christ. If in your mind, you picture a good life, healthy body, great material possessions, and happiness around every corner, you might be believing in an unrealistic Christian life.

Reflecting back on your bulleted list, does your ideal Christian life fall under the description of a Christ-follower according to both authors?

If it doesn't, begin looking at persons in the Bible who radically followed Christ.

Luke 9:23; Matthew 26:39

A big characteristic of being a believer is denying yourself, picking up your cross, and following Jesus. Now some of this may be new terminology but “dying to yourself” is a fairly simple concept. It means to refrain from doing what you want to do. We see this in the life of Jesus. Right before His death, Jesus approached the Father and asked that, if at all possible, “this cup”—His sacrifice on the Cross—be taken from Him. In that moment, Jesus was willing to suffer death on the Cross because He had counted the cost of being the Son of God. In this life, God will ask us to do really hard things. Prior to those situations arising, we must decide in our minds that whatever God asks of us, we will do.

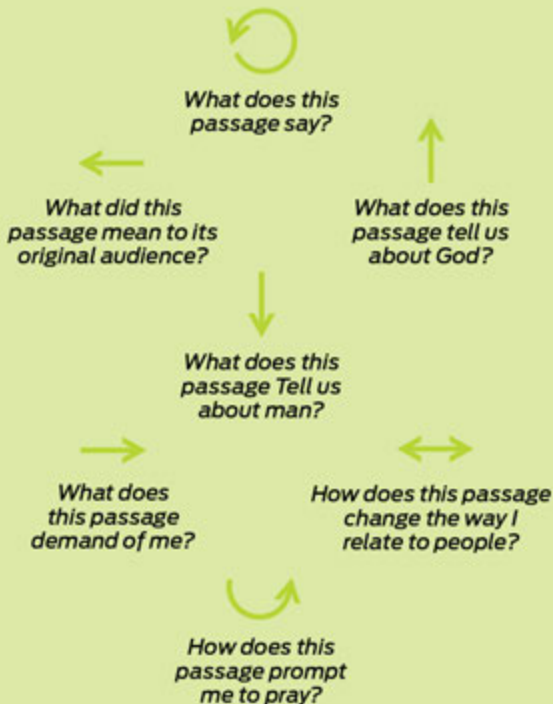
What is something God is asking you to do that you haven't yet done?

What is keeping you from being obedient to God's desire for your life?

Daily Devotions



The 7 Arrows of Bible Reading



Week of February 10th

Day 1

1 Corinthians 13:4-8

What's the purpose of dating?

1 Corinthians 13 is considered the “Love Chapter” by many and for good reason. This chapter gives us a great picture of what real, true love is supposed to look like. This understanding of love can be pretty overwhelming when you look at it, especially when you compare it to the current cultural understanding of love.

We use the word love all the time. We love Instagram and pizza, but the meaning of this love isn't the same as the love we should have for Christ or our future spouse. And that leads us to answer the question, “Am I ready?” You may be ready to love a unicorn Frappuccino in JHigh and HS, but not to love as a spouse loves his/her spouse. Before you can bring someone else into a dating relationship, you have to make sure you're personally ready for that same relationship. The best question you could ask yourself is this: “Am I in this for me?”

If the end result of dating is marriage, then are you ready for marriage?

If you are in a dating relationship currently, how would you answer the question, “Am I in this for me?”

Genesis 24

When asked about why students date, a common answer is “to find out what they want in a future spouse.” They want to know what works and what doesn’t, what they like and what they don’t like. However, can’t you know this before you date anyone? Have you ever made a list of what you are looking for in a spouse?

Spend five minutes and write a list of your top 10 qualities you are looking for in a future spouse.

In our story from Genesis 24, we see two people fall in love without ever having met each other, much less having been on a date. How would this ever work? Because Isaac and his family knew what they were looking for in a spouse. They had thought and prayed about it. They had, most importantly, given it over to the Lord. Abraham had a list of character qualities that were to be in Isaac’s future wife. Now, God may not have someone that fits all your qualities, but praying and knowing what qualities you seek allows you not to settle.

What are your top three priorities? Share them with your parents, and ask for their thoughts.

Philippians 4:6

As Paul closes his letter to the church in Philippi and provides some encouragement. He calls the church to rejoice in the Lord, and tells them to let their sensibleness be known. Then, he tells them the Lord is at hand and not to worry about anything. In general, this is very hard to do, especially if you struggle with anxiety and worry. But how can you not worry about anything?

By praying about everything! This applies to all of life—where you will be in 10 years, what college you will attend, if you will make the team, or whom you will marry. When was the last time you prayed about/for your future spouse? This should be a part of your regular prayer life. Think about it this way. Would you want your future spouse praying for you right now? Who wouldn’t want that!

Spend time right now praying about/for your future spouse.

Ephesians 6:1-3

What happened the last time you honored your parent(s)/guardian(s)?

Let's be honest; this is something most students, and kids, struggle with. Many times, parents ask their kids to do things they just don't understand or want to do. Disobedience ensues. But Scripture, in multiple places, tells us to honor our parent(s)/guardian(s) (Exodus 20:12; Proverbs 1:8; 6:20; 23:22).

As you get older, your parent(s)/guardian(s) will have rules about whom you date, how you date, and when you date. The question is, "Will you honor them in this?" Will there be things you disagree with? Yes. Does Scripture still apply? Absolutely!

Maybe you are currently dating someone your parent(s)/guardian(s) have problems with for whatever reason. Will you listen to the Lord, or will you give in to your own desires? In all that we do, we should honor our parent(s)/guardian(s).

What do you need to do today to show honor when it comes to a dating relationship?

Proverbs 6:27; 5:15-23

First off, if you are asking the question "How far is too far?" in a dating relationship, you have already gone or are considering going too far when it comes to your physical boundaries. The question should not be, "How far can I go?" but "What is the standard set before me?" When we begin to frame our thinking around pushing the limits, we will inevitably break them or push past them.

When we set the biblical standard at the beginning, although the temptation will still be there, you know the expectation. Once you know the standard, then you can begin to think about your boundaries and put them in place. If you are dating someone who can't respect those boundaries, then you shouldn't be with that person. This means they don't respect you and are in the relationship for themselves. You should be looking for someone who will only push you closer to Christ and not further away.

List three boundaries, based on the standard, that you will have for yourself.

Daily Devotions



Week of February 17th

Day 1

Genesis 1:27-28

There is a giant gap between the biblical vision of marriage and the world's casual view of marriage. Today's culture views marriage as a means to an end, and when it becomes difficult or inconvenient, the world tells us it's OK to jump ship. Marriage is a gift from God. He created it and designed it for a purpose much bigger than us.

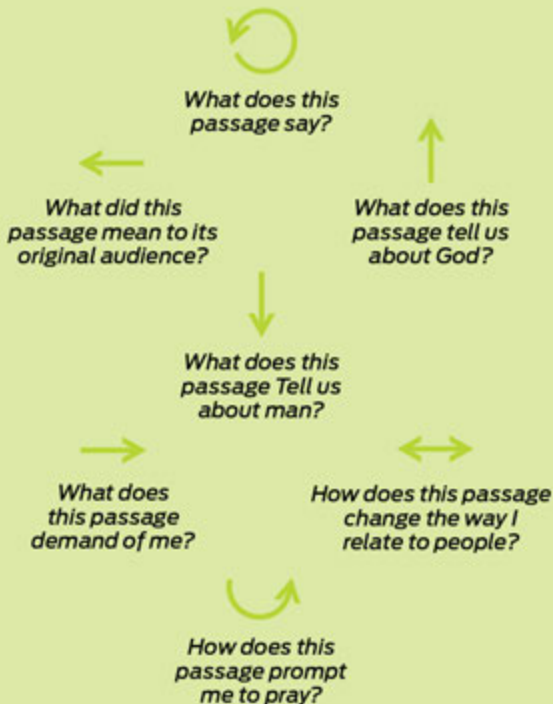
Think of a few examples in today's culture when marriage is viewed too casually.

At the very beginning of creation, we see God has a plan for marriage. He created both male and female, and commanded that they be fruitful and fill the earth. We see a distinct difference in the creation of man and woman compared to the rest of creation in chapter 1. These verses explain that we are created in God's image. This means, in very real ways, we reflect who God is. Real aspects of who we are display God's nature and goodness.

What does it mean that we were created in God's image? Why is this important?

How does knowing that God created marriage for a purpose bigger than ourselves change your perspective on it?

The 7 Arrows of Bible Reading



Genesis 2:18-24

From the beginning of creation, God orchestrated a purpose for marriage. To give God glory is the ultimate the goal of marriage. He knew man shouldn't be alone. God's blueprint for creation includes a central design of man and woman in marriage. God Himself made a being perfectly suited for man—a wife. In verse 24, we see God speak the earliest design of marriage into existence. There is a sacred bond of marriage seen between Adam and Eve.

The greatness and glory of marriage is beyond our own abilities. The only way to truly experience marriage as God intended is to view it in the same regard God does. This is a vision of marriage that is so much higher, deeper, stronger, more fun and more glorious than anything our culture portrays!

Reread Genesis 2:18-24. Why did God create Eve? Why do you think He created her so intentionally?

Why do you think honoring God's design for marriage is so important?

Genesis 2:24; Mark 10:6-9

Genesis 2:24 is God's Word of institution for marriage. Just as it was God who created woman out of man's rib, it is also God who establishes marriage. He creates a bond that is unbreakable. He says they will become "one flesh," meaning it is not up to man's power to destroy or take lightly. When a bride and groom are standing on their wedding day, it's not about their being on display—it's about God. God is the one who joins a husband and wife into one union. The world doesn't know this, which is one of the reasons marriage is treated so casually. It is only by walking in a God-honoring marriage that you will be able to experience the fullness of marriage the way that God intended.

What does Mark 10:9 say about the commitment of marriage?

What encouragement do you find from knowing that it is God who performs marriage?

Genesis 2:24; Ephesians 5:31-32

The ultimate thing to see in the Bible about marriage is that it exists for God's glory. Marriage is the doing of God, but it's also the display of God! It is designed by God to display His glory in a way that no other event or institution does. In Ephesians 5, we see Paul quoting Genesis 2:24, saying they will become one flesh. This points to a relationship far deeper and more permanent than any marriage displayed in media. This is a sacred covenant rooted in commitment to Christ.

We see in Ephesians 5:32 that marriage is modeled after Christ's covenant commitment to His Church. The design of marriage is patterned after Christ's relationship to His redeemed people. Therefore, the highest meaning and purpose of marriage is to put the relationship with Christ and His Church on display. The world wants to make marriage all about "us" and what makes us feel good, be happy, and look attractive. The most beautiful part of marriage is that it's so much bigger than just us.

How did Christ show His commitment toward His Church? (John 3:16)

How does marriage give God glory?

Ephesians 5:22-30

We've learned this week that marriage exists to bring God glory, i.e., it exists to display God and who He is. Being married and staying married, therefore, is not mainly about staying in love. It is about keeping that covenant. "Till death do us part" is the same kind of covenant that Jesus made with His Bride (the Church) when He died for her. Christ will never leave His wife. Ever. He promises to keep that covenant for eternity. Marriage is a display of that love and commitment. It puts the glory of Christ's love on display!

Every godly marriage will have challenging, rocky and hard times. But we can find refuge and strength in knowing that we are not alone! Jesus died for all sinners so that we may have a relationship with God through Him. Marriage is one way that we get to portray and experience that love. This is a real-life picture of how Jesus relates to His people.

Why is it important to have a godly perspective on relationships and marriage?

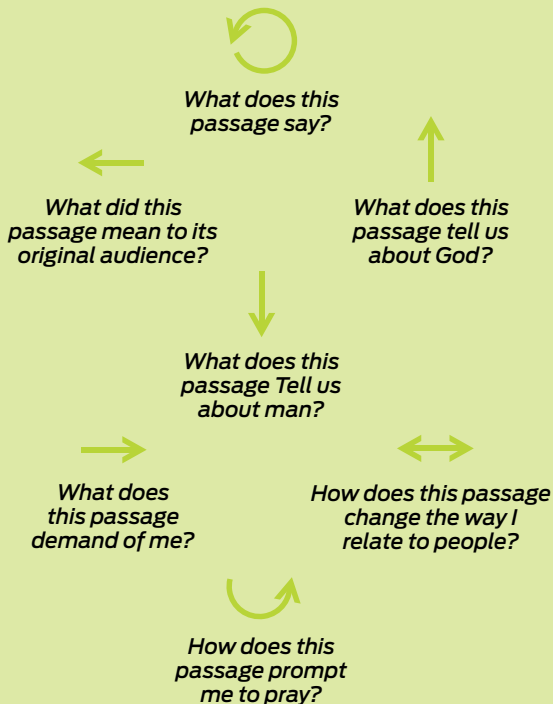
How does marriage display God's love?

Daily Devotions

Joshua 1:1-9



The 7 Arrows of Bible Reading



Moses had led the children of Israel for four decades. He was the one constant for a people who had wandered in the wilderness as an entire generation died off. One thing they could depend on. And now, he too was gone. The Book of Joshua opens by stating his death in a rather matter-of-fact manner: Moses was dead and now God spoke to Joshua. But we cannot underestimate the impact his loss surely had on a people who stood at the border of the promised land, preparing to go to war. The people were vulnerable, and this could have been a crushing blow for them, a demoralizing loss.

But God, of course, understood. He knew Joshua would need encouragement and He knew the people would need it as well. But He also knew the people needed something else more—much more. They needed Him. Good leaders are a gift from God. Great leaders are a blessing. But no leader, no matter how good he or she might be, is a substitute for God Himself. Moses was not who the Israelites needed. Joshua was not either. Nor would it be any of the judges, Samuel, Saul, David, Solomon, any other king, or any prophet. The leader the people needed was Christ Jesus—the One who God provided to lead us out of bondage of sin and into the rest of salvation in Him.

Have you ever lost a significant leader? What was the effect of that loss on you and others?

Joshua 1:10-18

As the children of Israel prepared to enter the land, don't miss God's promise of the rest they would find there (v. 13). Think about it: this was a people who had never had rest. Those who were children forty years before had left slavery in Egypt where there had been no rest. Then for the next forty years, they, and all who were born, were always on the move. Now, at the border of the promised land, they were about to go to war. But God was not just going to give them the land, He was going to give them rest.

We know from the Book of Hebrews, that rest in the promised land was a shadow of the greater rest we find in our salvation in Christ. In Christ, we are able, for the first time ever, to cast aside our labor—our innumerable attempts to be right with God—and rest in Christ instead as recipients of forgiveness and righteousness in Him. This is the rest our souls need. This is the rest the gospel gives.

What are some ways that you need to stop working and rest in Christ?

Joshua 3:1-17

God was about to do a mighty work before His people. They were about to see the swollen banks of the Jordan River become dry. They were about to cross through the dry riverbed as their parents had done forty years before as they passed through the Red Sea to escape Pharaoh's army. But they had to do something first. They had to consecrate themselves. Why? Because if their minds and hearts were not ready—not open to consider the glory of God—they would miss it, even if it was right in front of their faces. Doubt it? Go back and look at what happened to their parents in the Book of Exodus. Time after time, they had seen God's mighty hand work, only to miss it because they were not in the right heart posture to receive it.

And the same can be true of us. We, too, need to consecrate ourselves day-by-day, moment-by-moment. God is at work all around us everyday, but will we see it?

What are some ways you can consecrate yourself each day to see what God is doing and follow Him?

Joshua 4:1-16

When you first read Joshua 4:14, you might reflexively read it a second time. Surely you read it incorrectly the first time: God exalted Joshua? Shouldn't it be the other way? The Creator doesn't exalt His creation; creation is to exalt its Creator. The key to understanding this verse is to look ahead to Joshua 4:24. God exalted Joshua, as He had Moses, for a reason: so that He in turn would be exalted even more. What the Israelites would see Joshua do was not intended to stop there—it was to be a conduit pointing people to the One who was truly at work: God.

Do we see ourselves as Joshuas? Do we understand that God has positioned us where He has, and how He has, for a reason—to glorify God? Or are we ever tempted to steal God's glory instead? To take how He has gifted and blessed us and hoard it for ourselves? May we hold loosely to our glory and tightly to God's.

How can you point others to God this week through how He has blessed and gifted you?

Joshua 4:17-24

We would be wise to understand this passage in light of Deuteronomy 6:4-9. In that passage, known as the Shema, God had commanded one generation to teach the law to the next. But here we see that it should not stop there. Each generation is also to share what God has done for them. This coupling, the words and works of God together, provides a fuller picture of who God is and helps future generations see His beauty and splendor.

While the primary context of these two passages focuses on parents, it is broader than that. All of us are called by God to disciple others and this is to be our blueprint of discipleship. We are to teach others God's Word, but we are also to testify to how God has been kind to us. We are to talk about His provision, His protection, and His power. We are to celebrate who He is and what He has done.

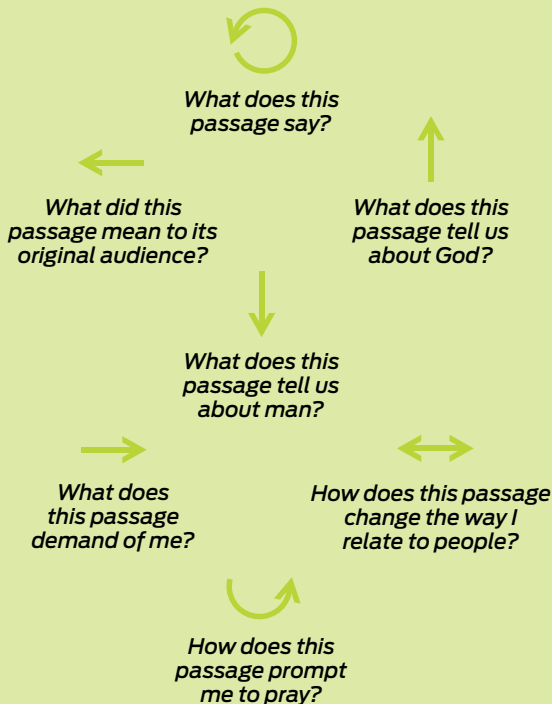
What are some of the “stones of remembrance” that you can share with others to point them to who God is and what He has done?

Daily Devotions

Joshua 2:1-7



The 7 Arrows of Bible Reading



Forty years before, twelve spies, including Joshua, had gone into the land. This time, it would not be twelve spies, but two. And this time, the spies' mission was not to scout the land to help determine the probability of victory; it was to scout the land, namely Jericho, to help determine the strategy for victory. The victory had been promised by God and this time the Israelites being led by the two faithful spies of the previous generation would enter the land in a posture of trust.

In this passage we are reminded that actions can be misleading. Both Moses' generation and Joshua's generation of Israelites began with the same action—from the outside they looked to be mirroring one another. However, the intent of their actions was very different. At best, the intent of Moses' spies was to act for faith—to find evidence that would help them develop trust in God. The intent of Joshua's spies, on the other hand, was to act from faith—to find what God had given them and perhaps how He had given it to them. Similar actions; different motivations. One scouting trip was done honoring God, the other rebelling against Him.

When have your actions seemed right from the outside, but you performed them with the wrong intentions or motivations? What happened?

Joshua 2:8-24

Word had traveled fast about what God had done for the Israelites. Rahab and the rest of the people of Jericho had heard about God drying up the waters of the Jordan River. They had heard of God giving the Israelites victory over the Amorites. And they believed. But while the people of Jericho believed in fear, Rahab believed in faith, which would lead to her deliverance from the coming judgment and inclusion with the people of God.

In these verses, we are reminded of the power of a testimony. Word of what God had done had traveled to Jericho because someone, somewhere, had told others what he or she had witnessed. It may have been one person; it may have been several people, or even many people, but someone's testimony ended up in Rahab's ears and led to her faith in God. And that is what we are called to do today as followers of Christ—we are to declare what God has done in Christ to others, trusting in God for our testimony to bear fruit.

What has God done, or is He doing right now, that you can tell someone else about today?

Joshua 6:1-14

Notice the verb tense the Lord used in verse 2. He used the past tense to speak of a future event. We know that God did not make a grammar mistake here; there is a reason why He used the past tense in this way here. He was affirming His sovereign authority over the situation. He was speaking of the future victory He will give Joshua and the Israelites in the past tense, because He had already willed it to happen and nothing can stop Him from bringing to pass what He wills. God's choice of verb tense was to reveal His identity to Joshua and to give Joshua courage.

We see something similar in Jesus' high priestly prayer in John 17. In verse 4, Jesus said to the Father, "I have glorified you on earth by completing the work you gave me to do." Here, we see Jesus used the past tense to speak of a future event; in this case, the cross. Just as Jericho's fall was sure in Joshua 6, so was Jesus' lifting up on the cross in John 17.

What sure promises of God do you need to rest in today?

Joshua 6:15-21

The Jericho account in the opening chapters of the Book of Joshua is full of faith, with Rahab's and Joshua's faith rising to the top. But we have to be careful not to miss another great example of faith: that of the Israelite soldiers. Here we see an army ready to go to war and likely full of a mixture of anticipation and nervousness. And yet, for six days, God had them take a stroll around their enemy's fortified city. Surely, this was frustrating for the Israelite soldiers. Perhaps even demoralizing as they had six good, long, close looks at their enemy's defenses. They could see the thickness and height of the city walls. They could appreciate the size of the city they walked around. Perhaps they even saw and heard the enemy troops as well.

Then, finally, on the seventh day, they were called to action—although it was not the action a soldier would expect. It must not have made much sense to the Israelite soldiers. It must have been frustrating. And yet, they did exactly what God had called them to do—in obedience and in faith. Sometimes God calls us to act in faith; at other times, like here, He calls on us not to act, in faith.

Consider a time in your life when God's plan was simply to move. How willing were you to follow His simple instruction? Why?

Joshua 6:22-27

The battle was over. The once thriving, formidable city of Jericho was now a smoldering mound of ruins. But Joshua wasn't done with Jericho just yet. It wasn't enough that the city was destroyed, he cursed the pile of ruins declaring that anyone who attempted to rebuild it would suffer greatly. This was not just an end for Jericho—it was to be *the end*.

But the end of Jericho was also a beginning for Rahab and her family. And in the same way, Rahab's beginning was not just a beginning, it was *the beginning*. Her old self was as dead as the city she was leaving behind, and she was now part of God's people. Her faith in God had given her a new life. Her life was changed forever in this one event.

We see here a word picture of the power of God to change us by grace through faith. When we trust in Christ, our old self is put to death and we have been giving new life in Christ.

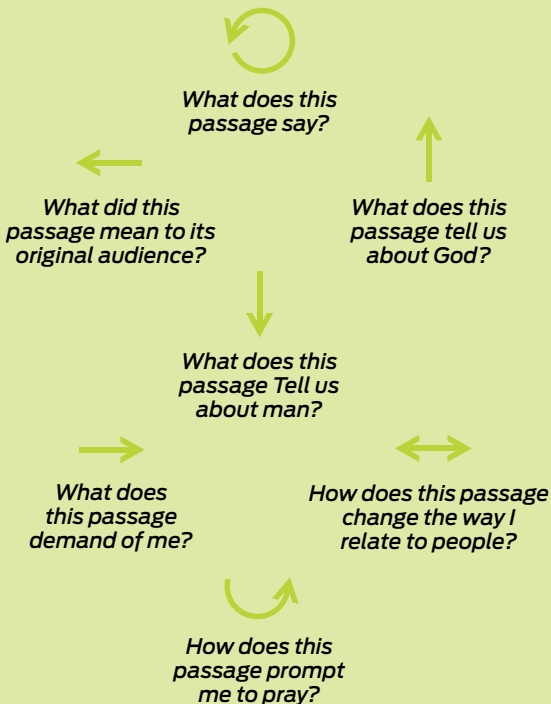
How do you tend to live as your old, dead self at times? Why? How do you fail to live as your new self at times? Why?

Daily Devotions

Joshua 10:1-8



The 7 Arrows of Bible Reading



Just as Joshua and the Israelites did not turn their backs on the Gibeonites—they had given them their word and whether they liked it or not, they were going to maintain their relationship even if it was difficult. We have been called to do the same. Consider this:

- You may be your Gibeon’s only friend. The Gibeonites were destined to destruction without Israel’s help. Israel felt that they didn’t need Gibeon, but Gibeon sure needed Israel.
- God put you in the path of your Gibeon. In this account, we see that God was providentially working through Israel’s strained alliance with Gibeon. The same is true with your Gibeon. God has placed you in relationship for a purpose—don’t forget that.
- You need your Gibeon. God knows your shortfalls, and though you think you have it all together, you don’t. None of us do. And one of our greatest failings is loving others. This is where our Gibeons are so helpful. We likely don’t need them for friendship or protection, but to keep us humble. To teach us how to love sacrificially and selflessly.

Who is your Gibeon? What can you do this week to reflect the love of Christ to him or her?

Joshua 10:9-15

“But God.” Pause right there and think about that phrase. How many stories in Scripture turn on a dime because of these two words? How many Old Testament passages heap hopelessness upon us until we read these two beautiful words? And how many testimonies in your life could be told that hinge on the words, “but God”?

Though the words “but God” don’t appear in this passage, these verses whisper its truth. The Israelites faced a formidable foe, “but God” would be the key to their victory. He was the One who cast the enemy into confusion. He was the One who threw hailstones at the enemy. He was the One who halted the sun in its place.

Likewise, “but God” is the key to our victories, both internal and external. “But God” is what takes hold of our sour attitude and gives us love in its place. “But God” is what gives us the courage to stand on the gospel when the culture around us pushes back. “But God” is what enables us to cling to our faith even in the darkest nights of pain and suffering. “But God” is the power of God working the gospel in us and through us. (See Eph. 2:1-10.)

**What is your “but God” testimony?
Who have you shared it with
recently?**

Joshua 10:16-43

Once the alliance of five kings was routed, the other cities in the southern half of the promised land fell in rapid sequence, like dominoes. It might be tempting to read through this passage rapidly, with eyes glazed over. It’s challenging to find meaning in such an abstract, sterile account of the southern campaign. But don’t do it! Appreciate the rapid pace of this part of the conquest because it will help you understand the importance of verse 43—after the southern cities were defeated, Joshua and the Israelites returned to their camp at Gilgal, presumably to rest.

Yes, God had been the One delivering victory after victory. And yes, there was still work to be done—the northern cities had to be defeated so that all of the land would be Israel’s possession. But God’s people needed rest. Just as God established Sabbath rest in the creation account and just as Israel abstained from collecting manna on the Sabbath, we see here a reminder of our limits as people. Even while doing the Lord’s work, we need to find time to rest.

**How do you guard time to rest as a
rhythm of life? Do you tend to fall
more toward working too much or
resting too much? Why?**

Joshua

11:1-23

Forty years before the Israelites entered into the promised land their parents had been given the same opportunity, but their faithlessness resulted in them missing out. As we know, that generation refused to enter into the land and was instead forced to wander in the wilderness until they all died off.

In verse 15, we see how Joshua and the next generation were wise not to repeat the same mistake of faithlessness. At the conclusion of the conquest, we read that Joshua was faithful to obey all God had commanded which led to the successful conquest of the land. God was not just after a portion of faithful obedience, He was after full faithful obedience. Each battle and each step in each battle was a step of faith for Joshua and the Israelites. They could not have picked and chosen which steps to take and which not to take. They had to walk fully in faith, and when they did, they were successful. God was not after their obedience in isolation—just as He is not after ours. Instead, He is after our faith, which is made known through our obedience.

In what areas of your life are you struggling to walk fully in faith? Why? What steps can you take toward more faithfulness?

Joshua

12:1-24

Thirty-one kings. Each one listed and counted as “one” in Joshua 12:9-24. It might be helpful to read these verses aloud to appreciate the repetition and the cadence. That is what we need to feel as we read these verses; we need to appreciate the scope of the victory God had given His people. A nation of the children of slaves had entered into the promised land—a choice land with many cities defended by mighty armies—and defeated each enemy that was before them. Thirty-one of them to be precise. But, also to be precise, Israel did not win any of these victories: God had won each one of them through Israel and for Israel. This is what God wanted the people to remember. He wanted them to be able to look back on the conquest and not remember one convoluted victory. He wanted them to remember precisely what He had done to give them the victory—what He had done thirty-one times. Each fallen king was a testament to God’s power and a reminder of His provision for His people. That is what they would need to remember.

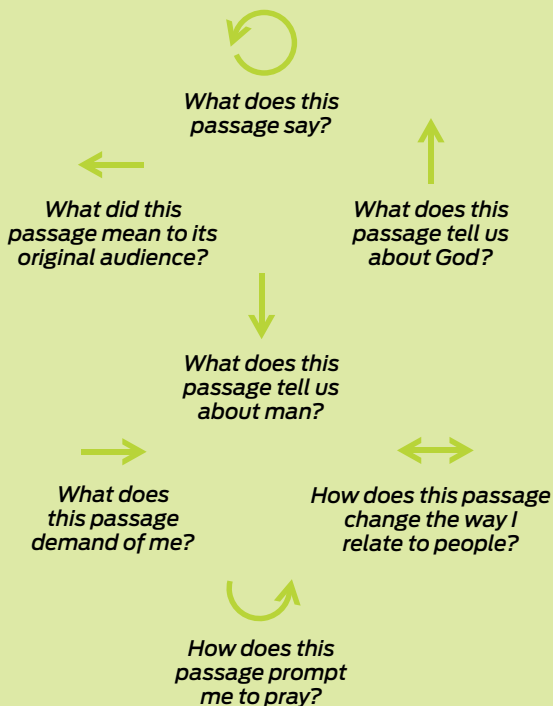
What have you done to record and remember the many victories God has won for you?

Daily Devotions

Judges 1:1-36



The 7 Arrows of Bible Reading



As the rest of events in the Book of Judges unfolded, we witness Israel’s slow fade from triumphant living to disobedient laziness. They had started so strong: the Israelites had sought the Lord’s direction and obeyed Him and because of this, they were triumphant over their enemies and they conquered the land. But it takes continuing faith and obedience, not one-time faith and obedience to live out God’s plan. Faith and obedience were not just necessary to enter the land and conquer it; they were just as necessary to live in the land and defend it. But instead, we encounter at least eight instances of disobedience in verses 21-36. Rather than believing and obeying, they decided to let their enemies remain in the land—in complete disobedience to God. At least eight times when God’s people rested from their faith in God, rather than resting in their faith in God.

It’s tempting to wag our fingers at the Israelites, but we shouldn’t be so fast to do so. Instead, we should ask ourselves a question—a challenging one: are we any different? How prone are we to rest in a single act of faith or obedience? How often do we obey half-way? How many times do we see victories in our lives give way to defeat not because God has failed us, but because our faith has faltered?

In what area of your life do you struggle to believe and obey?

Judges 2:1-13

God may very well have a sense of humor—just look at the giraffe—but He does not joke around. God knew the Israelites well; they were part of His creation and He had made them His people. He had delivered them from slavery and returned them to the land He had first given to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. He had guided them in the conquest of that land, going before them in battle as a Warrior, and He had given them the victory.

And all He expected in return was their allegiance. He had told them—many times—how to live and that the consequences of disobedience would be the removal of His presence and His power.

Over and over again, God had made a very direct connection between Israel's obedience and victory over their enemies. So it should have been no surprise that when the Israelites failed to do what He had called them to do—when they disobeyed—God merely did what He said He would do: His presence and power were removed and Israel was defeated by their enemies.

The faithfulness of God extends not only to His love and mercy, but to the consequences of sin. The God who is so faithful to provide, is just as faithful to discipline. Israel should have known this, and we should too.

How have you experienced God's faithfulness in disciplining you for your disobedience?

Judges 2:14-15

It's captivating to watch a small fire burn. Whether at a campfire or a backyard hotdog roast, many of us enjoy sitting around, watching the fire start, grow, and burn away.

Judges 2:14 opens by describing the Lord's anger burning against Israel. God's anger didn't spring up overnight. Like a campfire, it started slowly and grew through time, in proportion to Israel's growing sinfulness.

We'll never be sinless in this life, but we can, and need to, be aware of our sin so we can deal with it early. In Christ, our sin is forgiven, but it is not without consequence, not without discipline from God. When we ask the Lord to show us our sin, He will, so we can know of our sin, repent of our sin, and bask in God's grace and forgiveness that has quenched the flames.

When was the last time you invited God to reveal sin in your life? Why not do that right now?

Judges 2:16-23

There are words in Scripture that soothe and comfort us: “The Lord is my shepherd” (Ps. 23:1). “I am with you always,” (Matt. 28:20). “Find rest for your souls,” (Matt. 11:29). Then there are words in Scripture that provoke and unsettle us. Judges 2:17 tells us that God’s chosen people “did not listen to their judges.” The reason these words should disturb us and drive us to reflection, is because they follow this statement: “The Lord raised up judges,” (Judg. 2:16). Israel refused to listen to the very ones God had sent to rescue them. They spurned God’s good gift.

Who has God put into your life to speak truth to you? The obvious answers include pastors, mentors, and teachers. Sometimes, though, God speaks to us in a worship song, a morning devotional, a stranger, or even a child. God is still raising up people in our lives, but will we listen?

What might God be telling you through the people He has raised up and put into your life?

Judges 3:1-31

Sometimes when we are in the midst of a trial, we pray for God to show what we need to do to make it stop. What will bring the struggle to an end? But sometimes, God’s answer is, “nothing.” There is nothing we can do to end the trial; we will have to continue enduring it. Why is that?

Consider Judges 3:1-2 where it talks about the nations the Lord left in order to test all those in Israel who had experienced none of the wars in Canaan. This was to teach the future generations of the Israelites how to fight in battle, especially those who had not fought before.

Could it be that God allows us to sit in our trials and suffering at times because He is preparing us for something else? The best person to minister to the wounded is someone who has been wounded. So, when you experience intense pain, fear of the future, anxiety, sleepless nights, or other trials, ask God to help you remember what you’re going through. Don’t pray that it is put behind you; pray that it is remembered by you. Ask God to write it on your mind and your heart so that you will be ready to speak truth and empathy into another life when you find yourself safely on the other side, or even before.

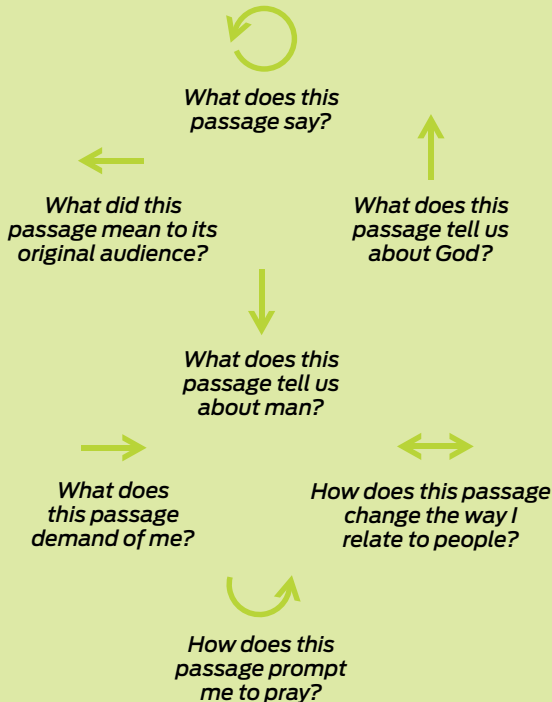
Who has helped you through a struggle because they could relate with you? How can you help someone because of what you have faced, or are facing?

Daily Devotions

Judges 4:1-7



The 7 Arrows of Bible Reading



Judges 4:1-7 talks about Israel *again* doing what was evil in God’s eyes. Does that word haunt you? It should. Like an accusing finger, the word “again” forces us to look deep within ourselves and ask God to uncover the areas where we fall short...again. Areas we are refusing to hand over to God and are instead pursuing our own pleasure and glory or are trying to find victory in our own power...again.

These agains are never in God’s plan. The agains of sin remind us that we are not letting the power of God, through the Holy Spirit, live fully in us. It’s not that we’re not trying hard enough; in fact, it may be that we’re trying too hard in our own power (Eph. 6:10).

God has promised His presence and His power. Even when we suffer for our agains, He has already made plans for our triumph and His glory. And He is right there pouring out His mercy, grace, love and forgiveness over us... again.

**What are the “again” sins in your life?
How can you surrender that area of your life to God’s control?**

Judges 4:8-23

Jael's story is one of proving one's allegiance. Her husband Heber had chosen to leave his people, the Kenites, and live among King Jabin of Canaan, who opposed God and His people. And though Scripture does not tell us what Jael thought of God and God's people, her actions do.

We can only imagine Jabin, wild-eyed and panicked, fleeing the battle, as he sought safety in the tent of his friend Heber. Jael, innocent and hospitable, invites him in. And then drives a tent peg through his temple, proving the Bible is not for the feint of heart.

Many times, as Christians, we talk about what we believe. We are quick to read books, attend church gatherings, and say we're praying. But do our actions point to the life-changing power of the gospel? Does our daily living reveal our faith?

So the question becomes: How much like Jael are we? Are our actions proving our allegiance to Christ? Are we loving the left-out, helping the hopeless, and comforting the crushed? Or are our actions betraying our claims to be followers of Christ?

Where is God calling you to take a stand for Him? What in your life is demonstrating your faith?

Judges 5:1-11

Over time, we tend to exaggerate what was good in the past as we simultaneously forget its pains and problems. The "good ole days" are often tinted by the rose-colored glasses of nostalgia that we choose to wear.

But sometimes we are wise to look back objectively and say, "Look where we've come from! Look at how hard things were—how much we messed things up—and yet how kind God has been to bring us to where we are today." Because in doing so, we are more able to see God's grace in our lives.

Deborah's song vividly recalls the hardest times in Judges 5:6-8: deserted main roads and villages, travelers afraid to be seen. War followed. Surely all the Israelites remembered the strain and trials.

We can do the same. When the past comes to mind and the pain comes with it, we can praise God for the fact that we're not there anymore. How did He give comfort and peace? Who did He provide to walk through those times together? How can we praise Him today for yesterday's troubles? Or if we are still in that season, we can praise God that He has not abandoned us along the way.

How can you see God's hand in your past, even in the most difficult times? How can you rejoice in Him for that today?

Judges 5:12-23

The Israelites were singing a song about Barak in Judges 5:12-23.

Barak, the leader of the Israelite army whose fears were real. The military man who refused to go into battle alone and demanded that Deborah go with him. In the midst of all his faults, the song remembers the victory: his prisoners (v. 12) and his leadership (v. 15) made it in the annals of history.

The grace and favor we find in Barak's story reminds us that we can cut others—and ourselves—a little slack for our moments of fear. Despite his shortcomings, Barak believed with the little faith he could muster, and God used it to bring victory over one of the most feared armies of the day.

We're rarely going to get it all right, but the faith of a mustard seed is all we need to see God triumph. He will lead and He will provide; we just need to believe. The victory depends on Him, not us.

Where do you need to show mercy to yourself and others?

Judges 5:24-31

Verse 24 says that Jael is the most blessed among women. But before her encounter with Sisera, we knew nothing of this woman. We don't know about her history, or her passions, or her children, or her gifts.

But we do know she was familiar with wielding a hammer and a peg. This was fitting for a Kenite, a nomadic tribe in the promised land. Jael had likely helped her husband set up tents many times before. She may have set up tents by herself, and each time she did, she surely never imagined that God would one day use such a mundane task to bring Him glory and secure victory for the Israelites.

God can use every tool in your toolbox: shiny and impressive, dull and worn, boring and common. Our job is to learn to use them and offer them all to Him for His glory.

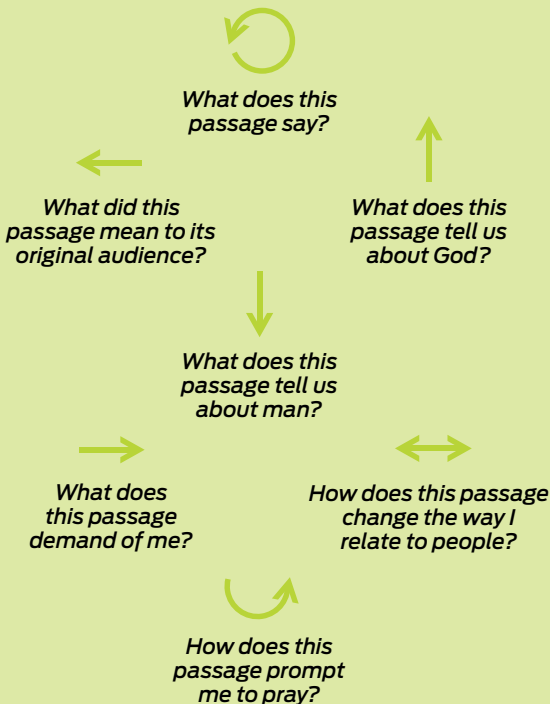
What tools and skills can God use for His glory? Are you offering them to Him?

Daily Devotions

Judges 6:1-24



The 7 Arrows of Bible Reading



The Midianites oppressed the Israelites and made life terrible for God’s people. They attacked them, destroyed their crops, stole their livestock, and laid waste to the land. And because of this, Israel was poverty-stricken (v. 6).

You might feel like an Israelite today, ambushed and decimated by your enemy. But we are wise to be sure we start with the very first verse in this passage when it says that Israel did what was evil in the Lord’s sight, and because of that, God handed them over.

When adversity comes, as followers of God, we should seek His face and ask, “Lord, is this chastisement? Are you using this difficult situation right now to pull me back to You?” Not all pain is God’s discipline, but God’s discipline is often painful. And if what we are experiencing is His loving discipline, we need to know that, so that we can identify and repent of the sin we have committed, rest in His grace and mercy, and enjoy renewed fellowship with our God.

For every sin in our lives, there is forgiveness and restoration and peace. But the first step is allowing our eyes to be opened, seeing the truth that only God can reveal.

Where in your past might God be pointing you back to unconfessed sin?

Judges 6:25-40

We are called to stand for God and point others to the gospel. But sometimes, when we have an opportunity to do just this—to speak truth in our culture—we freeze. We don't know what to say or perhaps how to say it, so we end up saying nothing. Or we take a careful approach, one where our risk is minimized, but so is the impact of the message we are called on to proclaim. Our bold verbalization of the truth becomes a quiet murmur lost in the static of the world in which we live.

As believers, we must remember that we have taken off our old selves; we have been renewed in our minds, and put on the new selves, according to God's likeness (Eph. 4:22-23). We need to remember that the stand we take for God is not taken alone—the Holy Spirit is with us and empowers us—and that ours is not the first stand God's people have taken.

How has God positioned you to take a stand for Him in your community? What will you do this week to take such a stand?

Judges 7:1-14

The way that God whittled down Gideon's army was far from random. First, He had Gideon send home all who were afraid. Fear is a deadly virus that can sweep through an army and destroy it before a single soldier steps onto the battlefield. Then, it seems that God further narrowed down the army based on who was wiser when it came to drinking water. The remaining force of three hundred men may have been small in number, but they were the bravest and wisest of Israel's army.

In much the same way, God has chosen "armies" for each of us—fellow believers to stand shoulder-to-shoulder with us in life, no matter what may come our way. Who is in your army? Perhaps it is a parent, who has modeled the humble, sacrificial love of Christ. Perhaps it is a long-term friend who has shown you what faithfulness looks like. Perhaps it is the teacher or pastor who has demonstrated how important it is to understand and live out the gospel.

God chose Gideon's army; He chose yours, too. And just like Gideon's, He knew exactly who you needed to go into battle with and speak strength into your heart.

Who has God placed into your life as your army? When was the last time you thanked Him for them? When was the last time you thanked them for standing faithfully by you?

Judges 7:15-25

We love transformations. From fixer-upper homes to total body makeovers to restaurant re-dos, we enjoy watching something not-so-great turn into something amazing. Gideon is one of the great transformations in Scripture. From a fearful, hiding thresher to a brave warrior; his story is a favorite because we see such drastic change.

Tucked into Judges 7:15 we discover what led to Gideon's transformation—he heard the account of the dream and its interpretation. In other words, he had heard God's Word, witnessed His powerful presence, and believed the truth. And that brought him to his knees in worship.

What we believe—the gospel—matters and it is designed by God to change us deeply and eternally.

When was the last time you responded to God in spontaneous worship? How can you add more worship to your life?

Judges 8:1-35

The Bible does not gloss over truth. You may read Judges 8, turn up your nose and think, “This is it?!?! That’s how the story of Gideon ends?” Ephraim had gotten their feelings hurt because Gideon had not called them first. So Gideon disciplined some local leaders with thorns and briars and then killed them. He also built an idolatrous idol out of the spoils of war, and to top it all off, we see that he had seventy children because he had “many wives” and at least one concubine (Judg. 8:30).

What happened? How did the story fall apart? It was such a great story of transformation—of faith—of God's power at work, and then, the next thing we know, we are reading of Gideon crashing and burning in a wreck that we cannot help but stare at with our mouths agape.

It's not the ending we would expect, or pen if we were writing the story. We'd rather have more of a fairy-tale story, where Gideon lived in obedient faith, as did the rest of Israel.

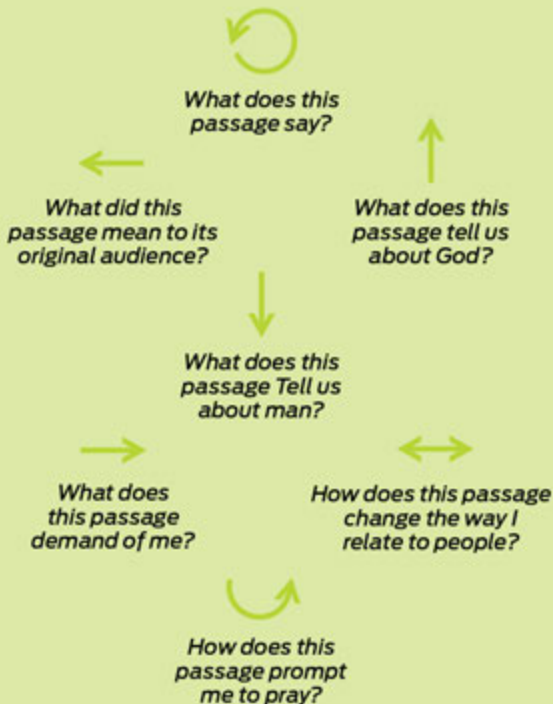
But Gideon's story, like all the stories in Scripture, is true. And true stories don't always end the way Hollywood stories end. Sometimes a victorious triumph is followed by sin. Sometimes a faithful act does not lead to a faithful life.

What are some of the seasons of defeat in your life? How can you walk in freedom from the past?

Daily Devotions



The 7 Arrows of Bible Reading



Week of April 6th

Day 1

John 11:25

John chapter 11 is the story of the death and resurrection of Jesus' friend Lazarus. This chapter reveals Jesus' sovereignty in that he waited to go to Lazarus knowing that he would raise him from the dead when he arrives. This chapter reveals Jesus' devotion in that even when Mary and Martha question him about his late arrival he responds with love and not condemnation for their lack of faith. In 11:25 Jesus reveals his plans for his people, he says "I am the resurrection and the life." When he says that he is the resurrection he describing a physical resurrection. In Him we will have a resurrected body and experience eternal life with Jesus. When he says, "I am the life" he is describing a permanent relationship with him that cannot be separated by death, our own sin, or our lack of faith. God's plan to ransom His people on the cross and enter into relationship with them is far greater than the earthly rule the people of the time expected. In verse 26 Jesus asked Marth, as he asks you, to enter into His plan with one question, "Do you believe this?" How would you respond?

Have you ever asked God for something specific only to find His plan was better than yours?

Do you have more faith in yourself than you do in God?

Matthew 21:1-7

In the Old Testament, there are 300 references to 61 prophecies about the coming Messiah. Matthew 21 includes the Messianic prophecy from Zechariah 9:9. Jesus very specifically and intentionally instructs His disciples to bring Him the donkey to fulfill this prophecy. An unbeliever may say, “Donkeys were a common form of transportation at the time. This very well could have been a coincidence.” Dr. Peter Stoner, mathematician and scientist, would disagree. Dr. Stoner used probability to evaluate eight Messianic prophecies and the likelihood they could be accomplished by one man. The probability of one man’s fulfilling eight of the 61 prophecies was 1 in 1017. Another way to think of that number would be to lay out silver dollars two feet deep covering the state of Texas. Mark one of these with a star, and the likelihood of a blind man finding it is the same as the likelihood that eight of 61 Messianic prophecies could be fulfilled in one man.

Our Sovereign Savior requested that donkey, knowing the same voices shouting “Hosanna” one day would turn to “Crucify Him” the next. In each fulfilled prophecy, in each step toward Jerusalem, you can hear the love song of redemption and how Christ chose to save all of humanity.

Has anyone ever questioned your faith or said that events in the Bible didn’t actually happen? How did you respond?

Leviticus 23:40; Matthew 21:8; Revelation 7:9

According to biblical scholars, we are living in the tension of the “already, but not yet.” Essentially this means Jesus has already come, our sins are forgiven, we know grace was purchased on the Cross, and we have the Holy Spirit within us. We are able to walk in the joy of knowing our ransom has been paid and we are children of God. Yet, we come to the end of each day with a long list of sins from which we don’t feel free. The struggle is real, and it is daily. Charles Spurgeon, one of the heroes of the faith, said, “There is hardship in everything ... except eating pancakes.” We continue to struggle because our sanctification will only be complete when Jesus returns.

The palm branches that were cut from the trees and waved as a symbol of victory are a reminder that we live in the “already, but not yet.” In Leviticus, God instructs His people to celebrate the seven-day Feast of Booths. During this feast, the people were to wave palm branches and rejoice in God’s provision in the wilderness after they had been brought out of Egypt. Palm branches were used again when the promised Messiah entered Jerusalem, coming to save His people from their sins. We see the palm branches again in Revelation 7:9 when God’s people, from every nation, are gathered around the throne worshipping God. When you are in the wilderness, God will provide; when you are saved, He has provided forgiveness for your sins and new life with Him, and we eagerly await the day when we will wave a palm branch and worship the God of our salvation.

How has God provided for you in the wilderness?

**Matthew 21:9-11;
John 12:13; Psalm
118:26; Romans 10:9**

The scene was set. The man who had raised Lazarus from the dead was entering Jerusalem on a donkey at Passover. The prophets had gone silent; the people had been waiting for 400 years for the Messiah who would set them free. The people came to see if this Jesus would throw off the oppressive rule of Rome and finally usher in a time of peace and prosperity for Israel. As Jesus enters the city the people begin to shout, “Hosanna!” which means “save now.” Is this divine insight into the true identity of Jesus as the Son of God or is this a demand shouted by a desperate people seeking an end to their suffering? Jesus did not save them the way they expected or on their timeline, but we can all relate to their mindset.

In the midst of suffering, it is easy to rely on our own understanding of what will be the best resolution to our pain. Yet we find ourselves frustrated in the waiting, and we are confused as to why God did not follow our plan. The people in the crowd were trying to write the story and did not realize they were being written into His story. In the moments of life when we believe we know the best way to make the pain stop, we can be confident that our loving God hears us, and is working out all things for His glory and our good.

Are you writing God into the story of your life or do you see yourself as a part of His story?

Luke 19:41-42

The Bible records that Jesus cried in public twice. The first was over the death of Lazarus and the second was in Luke 19. As Jesus approaches the city of Jerusalem, He is moved to merciful tears knowing that the shouts of “Hosanna!” will soon turn to shouts of “Crucify Him!” Although He is sovereign over what is to come, He feels the weight of the moment, and cries for those who lack the understanding of the moment. As He has compassion on those who do not see God’s plan for salvation unfolding in front of them, we, too, should have love and mercy toward those who don’t know Him. Are your friends going to come to know Jesus because you proved their beliefs were wrong? Consider this: When Jesus had risen from the dead, He could have shown up in Pilate’s bedroom, hands in the air, like BAM! “Guess I AM the Son of God?!” Jesus was not full of anger toward those who did not know the truth, but He wept for the hardened hearts in Jerusalem as they fulfilled His sovereign plans.

Do you find yourself angry and frustrated by those who don’t know Jesus?

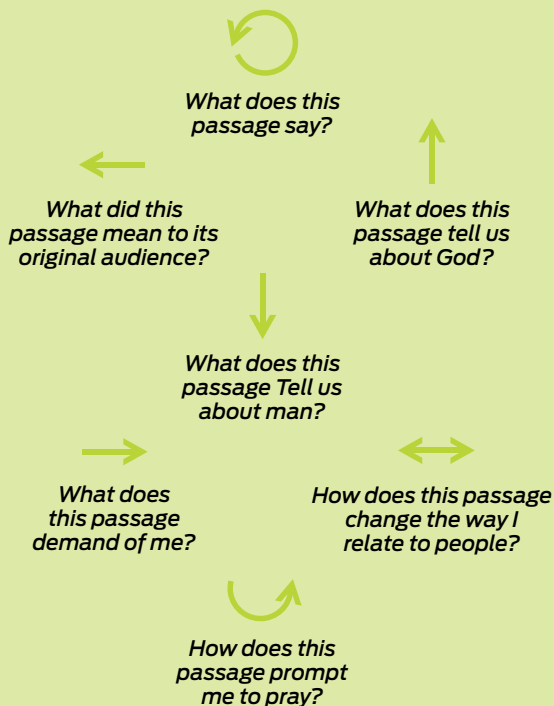
How does recognizing that God is in control help you to love those who may disagree or persecute you?

Daily Devotions

Matthew 28:1-6



The 7 Arrows of Bible Reading



The resurrection of Jesus Christ should give us joy—exceeding joy. The resurrection is what gives us life, when we trust in Christ, and hope—that Christ’s resurrection is the first, but not the last. One day all those who have died in Christ will rise as well. But as joyous as this is, there’s even more joy traceable to the risen Christ than we might realize.

Think of all of the things that exist because Jesus didn’t stay dead.

If it weren’t for the resurrected Jesus, the New Testament wouldn’t exist. If Easter didn’t happen, Jesus of Nazareth would have faded into the background with all of the other people Rome crucified. But we know the name of Jesus because He isn’t like anyone else who was crucified: He didn’t stay dead, He rose again.

When we stop and think about it, we realize that everything in the Christian life comes back to the risen Christ. “For every one of God’s promises is ‘Yes’ in him. Therefore, through him we also say “Amen” to the glory of God” (2 Cor. 1:20). All the promises of God are a mega-ton “Yes!” in Jesus!

What are some of the joys in your life that you can connect back to the resurrection of Jesus?

Matthew 28:7-8

Twice in these two verses we read the word “quickly.” The angel instructed the women to go quickly and then they departed quickly. The divine messenger had given the women good news—great news—to share, and their only proper response was to do as the angel instructed: to go in haste to tell others.

What about us? How quick are we to tell others of the good news we have received? Does the gospel continue to quicken the beating of our hearts as we consider how glorious God and His forgiveness through Christ is to us? And then does that quickening of our hearts quicken our feet? Let us never forget how beautiful the gospel is, and may we be ever-eager to share it with others. And at the same time, let us always remember that this is a message others around us are in desperate need of hearing. Let our love for God and gratitude and joy for what He has done for us, as well as our love for those who have not trusted in Christ, move us to act quickly in service to our King.

Who can you tell the gospel to this week?

Matthew 28:9-10

The women didn't seem to get very far in their mission to tell the other disciples about the resurrected Jesus. They departed quickly from the empty tomb, but “just then” Jesus met them and their mission changed—at least for a moment. It was no longer time to go quickly and tell; it was time to stop and worship. And that is what the women did—instinctively it seems. They went to Jesus and took hold of His feet, meaning they fell on their faces onto the ground in worship of the risen Savior.

In this moment, Mary and Mary Magdalene offer a compelling picture of worship, one we can strive to emulate. Their worship was genuine and spontaneous. It was a priority and unashamed. And it was given in humility and with great joy. This should be true of all of our worship—when we gather as a people and when we worship God on our own. May our worship continually be as if we are beholding the risen Christ for the first time.

What are some ways that you can keep your worship vibrant and meaningful?

Matthew 28:11-15

These verses provide the origin of the stolen body theory, one a handful of theories offered to explain away the resurrection of Jesus. The swoon theory suggests that Jesus did not die on the cross, He merely passed out. Then, He was revived in the coolness of the tomb, removed the stone, snuck past the guards, and escaped. The wrong tomb theory states that the disciples indeed found an empty tomb, because it was the wrong one; Jesus was still dead in another tomb. The hallucination theory holds that the resurrection appearances were just hallucinations.

The holes in each of these theories are not hard to find. If the disciples had conspired to steal Jesus' body and claimed He rose again, would they have continued to lie, even when most were tortured and executed for this claim? Could a severely beaten and crucified Jesus really have survived? And even if He had, how did He escape the tomb and sneak past the guards? Could the disciples really have gone to another tomb that happened to have Roman guards and a Roman seal on it? And if they had, why didn't the Jewish leaders present Jesus' body to stop the resurrection claims? Only a hard heart would neglect the obvious truth: Jesus rose from the dead.

Have you ever had to defend the resurrection to anyone? How did you do?

Matthew 28:16-20

Take a step back and consider the narrative Matthew covers in the final chapter of his Gospel. In just twenty verses, with five of those detailing the leaders bribing the soldiers to lie, we read of the women going to the tomb and then leaving the tomb to tell others (v. 1-10), the eleven disciples traveling to Galilee where they saw Jesus (v. 16), and then Jesus commissioning them and sending them out to make disciples of all the nations (v. 17-20). What we read is almost non-stop movement, starting at the empty tomb, the epicenter of the gospel, and moving out toward the ends of the earth. This is the purpose and the power of the resurrection: it compels action. We cannot experience the glorious resurrection of Christ and stand still. We must act; it is what our overjoyed hearts yearn to do, and it is what our Lord has called us to do.

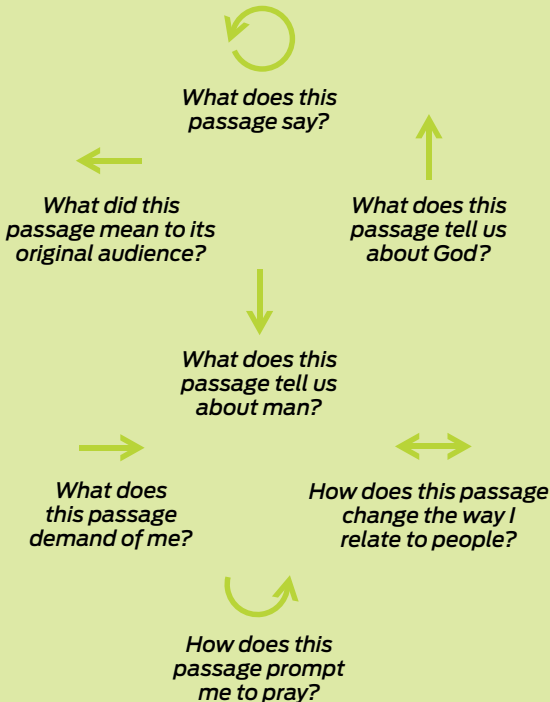
What are some actions you can take this week to carry the gospel further than you have before?

Daily Devotions

Judges 13:1-25



The 7 Arrows of Bible Reading



After the angel told the woman how the boy Samson should be raised, she reported all that she was told to her husband, Manoah, who then prayed. But his prayer was not what many of us would have expected. He did not thank God for this promised gift. Nor did he ask God for strength and wisdom to obey. Instead, he asked God to send the man of God back once more to teach them what they should do for the boy to be born. In other words, Manoah prayed for the very thing his wife had just been given.

If we are honest, we have to admit that there is some Manoah in each of us. We too are prone to ask God for the very things He has given. Perhaps it is because we doubt Him and want confirmation. Perhaps it is because we secretly hope He will give us a different answer the second time. Or perhaps it is because we just don't listen well. For whatever reason or reasons, we do the same. And this is why we need to pay attention to how God responded to Manoah. He sent the angel of the LORD back again! Let us never fail to remember that God is a patient God, full of grace and mercy for His people.

What have you asked God for repeatedly, even after He answered you? Why?

Judges 14:1-20

The ending of Judges 13 is one that gives readers unfamiliar with this account great hope and excitement. The boy who had been promised was born, grew, and the LORD blessed him. Then we read that the Spirit of the LORD began to stir him (v. 25). Before this, we had read that the boy, Samson, would be the one to save Israel from the power of the Philistines. And so, as we turn the page to chapter 14, we might expect Samson to gather an army and square off against Israel's enemy. After all, that's what you do when you are stirred by the Spirit, right?

But that is not what we see as Judges 14 opens. Instead of pursuing the Philistines, Samson pursued a Philistine—a single woman that he saw and wanted to take as his wife. Samson was stirred, but instead of acting on behalf of his people, or better yet God, he acted on his own behalf for his own selfish gain. We know that in the mysterious ways of God, He was using Samson's selfishness for His own purposes. Samson's selfish pursuit led to the Philistines being overthrown later on. But we cannot miss the warning: it is far too easy for us to live selfishly rather than selflessly even when God is at work within us.

When have you found yourself intending to seek God's glory only to end up pursuing your own?

Judges 15:1-20

As you read through the story of Samson, you might miss something that is quite profound. It's easy to miss because there are so many fascinating details to this story, but when we see it, we can't help but see how telling it is. Samson does pretty much everything on his own. Unlike the other judges before him, Samson does not form an army or partner with anyone else. He goes at it alone, at least as other people are concerned: he isn't opposed to partnering with three thousand foxes.

Seeing this affirms Samson's greatest weakness: pride. It seems that the mighty Samson believed he didn't need anyone else. He could take care of things himself. Why turn to others? They would probably just mess things up anyway.

But as part of the church, the bride of Christ, let us be quick to see the folly of Samson's solitary lifestyle. We know that God did not create us for isolation, rather for integration. We are to live fully integrated with others, relying on their strengths where we are weak and lending them our strength where they are weak. And that is what Samson missed: his strength was limited. He had weaknesses and was in need of others. May we be a humble people who do not share in his mistake.

How might you be prone to drift toward isolation at times? Why?

Judges 16:1-20

The old adage goes “Fool me once shame on you; fool me twice shame on me.” We can only wonder who gets the shame for being fooled three times as Delilah had been. Three times she asked Samson the secret of his strength and each time he had lied to her. We have to ask why. We aren’t told, but we can make an educated guess: Samson may have been teasing Delilah for his own enjoyment. That surely seems to fit with his character; everything else he did seemed to be for this reason.

If this is why Samson played with fire by teasing Delilah as he did, it tells us even more about his character. Before this we are told that Samson loved Delilah. That detail is not mentioned in his first marriage, or in the account of him pursuing a prostitute just before this. Samson loved Delilah, and yet he still put his own desires above hers. Samson provides us with a wonderful example of a terrible husband.

Later on though, we encounter a different Husband in Scripture, One who put His bride’s needs before His own. A Husband who laid down His life for His bride. A perfect Husband who is in the process of perfecting His bride for her good and His Father’s glory. A perfect Husband in Jesus Christ.

How can you sacrifice your own desires, and perhaps even your own needs, for someone else this week?

Judges 16:21-31

The Philistines likely believed they were just humiliating their prisoner. Perhaps they did it for their own safety too, lest Samson regain his strength somehow. Either way, there was Samson, chained up, and blind having had his eyes gouged out. If you have ever lost your eyesight or perhaps even lost a pair of glasses, you know how humbling it is not to be able to see. It can leave you feeling helpless—vulnerable. And that is perhaps how Samson felt in that moment, leading to his awareness of his need of God.

But there is something else going on here. What had gotten Samson into trouble so many times before this? That’s right: his eyes. His eyes had been the source of his stumbling through life for so long. He had looked at a woman and wanted her to be his wife, no matter that she was a Philistine. He had looked at honey and wanted to eat it, no matter that it was in a lion’s carcass and unclean. His eyes had betrayed him over and over again. Here, as his life came to a close, God was kind to remove the very thing that had caused Samson to stumble so many times before this. The Philistines removed Samson’s eyes out of spite; God removed them out of love.

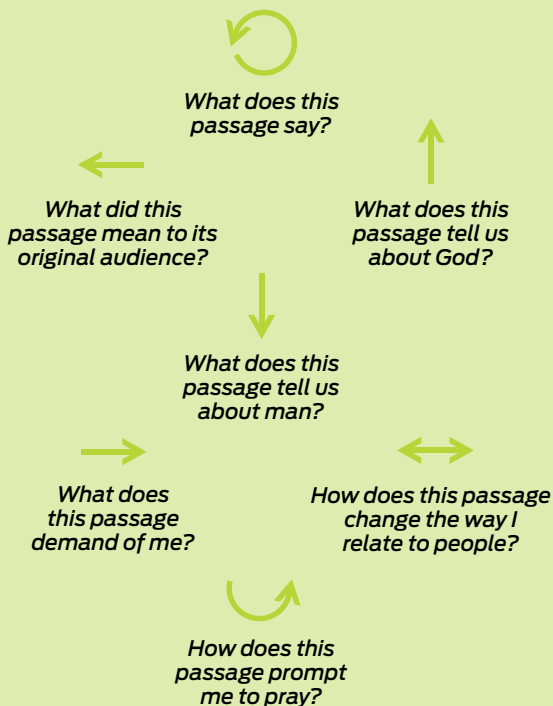
How has God taken something from you, even if it was painful, only to find out it was for your good?

Ruth 1:1-22

Daily Devotions



The 7 Arrows of Bible Reading



In these verses we see Naomi do what we are often guilty of doing as well: she failed to give God credit for the good in her life, yet blamed Him for what was not good. Nowhere do we see her acknowledging that the fullness she says she had—most likely referring to her husband and sons—was from the Lord. But she was quick to say several times that He was the One who took them away. This is why Naomi’s heart had become embittered. This is why she was quick to immerse herself in pity and despair instead of celebrating the reunion with others who seemed to care about her. Naomi’s life was not pleasant, but it was her unpleasant and bitter heart that she should have been more concerned about. And that is what we can learn from Naomi here: we, too, are in great danger of allowing our circumstances to dictate the posture of our heart. But when we do, we fail to remember the constant love, grace, mercy, and kindness of God poured out to us in the person of Jesus Christ. Our days may be bitter, but the love of Christ should compel us to recognize our condition before God is always pleasant.

How have you allowed your difficult circumstances to embitter your heart? What can you do to prevent that from happening in the future?

Ruth 2:1-23

You may be familiar with the infamous infomercial catch phrase, “But wait! There’s more!” Boaz may have originated it. As we read through Ruth 2, it seems as if he bellowed that several times. “Ruth, you aren’t merely to glean grain from the corners of my field, follow my workers and get the good stuff. But wait! There’s more! When you’re thirsty, help yourself to the water my young men will draw. But wait! There’s more! Etc.”

None of this was required or expected, apart from gleaning the corners of the field. Everything else was proverbial icing on the cake. Why did Boaz do all of this for Ruth? Some suspect there were romantic motives, but we don’t even see a hint of that in the text. It is more likely to recognize the abundant kindness of Boaz came from God moving in his heart. Boaz seems to have been a man who recognized God’s generous provision in his life and he was also able to recognize the kindness of others—in this case Ruth’s kindness to Naomi. And that is what compelled him to shower Ruth with blessings. May we do the same. May we be a people who are quick to recall God’s kindness to us and seek ways we can in turn be kind to others, namely by sharing God’s greatest act of kindness in providing Jesus Christ.

How can you be abundantly kind to someone this week?

Ruth 3:1-18

When Ruth reported to Naomi what had happened between her and Boaz, her mother-in-law made an interesting prediction in verse 18: Boaz would not rest until the issue of a family redeemer for Ruth was resolved.

Perhaps Naomi knew that Boaz was a type-A person who didn’t like to have loose ends in his life. Perhaps she understood that Boaz would be eager to marry Ruth if the closer family redeemer declined. Or perhaps Naomi understood that the same character that Boaz had shown in his generosity to Ruth would compel him to act quickly for her benefit. Surely Boaz understood how anxious Ruth would have felt. She had taken a great risk in uncovering his feet and asking him to take her under his wing (v. 9). Waiting for an answer would have been difficult—agonizing even.

In this we are reminded of our need to be sensitive to others. It is easy for us to be self-absorbed and fail to humble ourselves for the sake of others. But we are a people called to follow a greater example than Boaz—we are called to follow Christ Jesus, who humbled Himself on our behalf and who does not delay in saving those who call on His name.

Whose needs are you perhaps slow to be sensitive toward? What steps can you take to humble yourself for their sake?

Ruth 4:1-12

Earlier in the book, Naomi balked at her name. She did not want to be called Naomi any longer because it meant “pleasant.” Instead, she wanted to be called Mara because her life had become so bitter by God’s hand.

In this passage we see another name being emphasized. This time, the city elders and others at the gate blessed Boaz and called on the Lord to make his name well known in Bethlehem (v. 11). It is a prayer that God would answer far above what they may have imagined. Even though the lineage of Jesus is recorded in two different places in the Gospels, we don’t recall many of the names recorded in them. But Boaz is one that many of us recognize. His name had indeed become great in Bethlehem, but because of one of his descendants who would later be born there, the name Boaz is known far outside of the modest town. We can’t miss why—because Boaz was able to look on another with compassion and mercy. Because Boaz appeared to be a man who lived in a way not to make much of his name, but the name of another: the Lord.

How have you sought to make your name great only to see it backfire? When have you instead sought to make God’s name great and have seen Him bless you?

Ruth 4:13-22

Sometimes we forget that we don’t live in a vacuum. We forget that God’s work in our lives is not meant to end with us, but rather that we are to be a conduit to reveal His goodness to those around us as well. Yes, we are to delight in God’s kindness to us. Yes, we are to enjoy His provision. But we are also supposed to be quick to share what He has done for us with others so that they might share in our rejoicing and worship of the Lord.

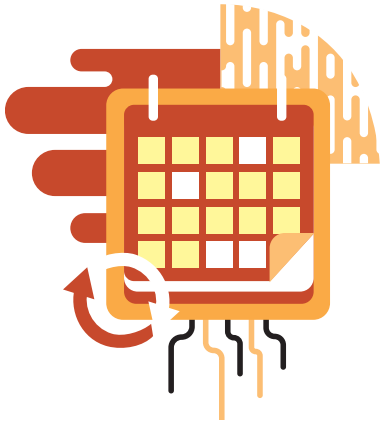
We see an example of this as the Book of Ruth winds down. Notice who speaks in these final verses. Not Ruth, whom the book is named after. Not Boaz. Not even Naomi. The final spoken words recorded belong to the women of the town—those who were spectators to what God had done.

This is to be our goal: we are to live in such a way that God’s work is evident to all those around us. May we be quick to speak of the glory of God to others, but may they also be quick to speak of Him because of what they have seen as we have laid our lives bare before them.

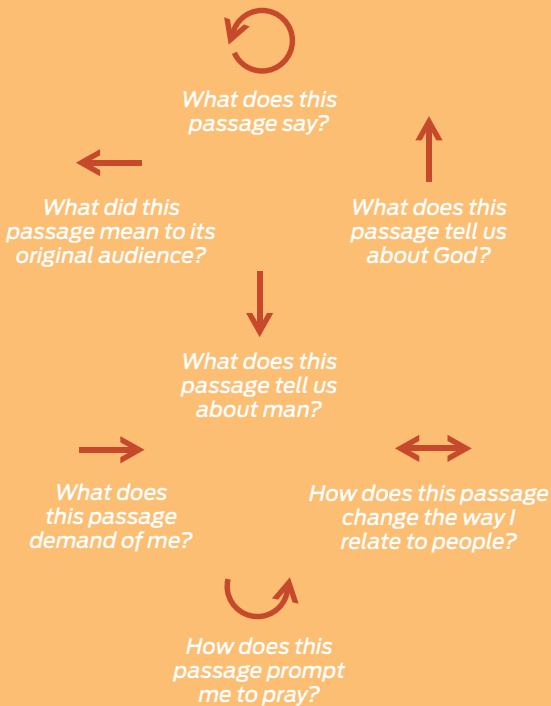
What are some ways that you can be more transparent with others around you so they might see God at work?

Daily Devotions

1 Samuel 1:1-18



The 7 Arrows of Bible Reading



We can learn much from Hannah here as she laid her soul bare before the Lord and whoever else happened to be worshiping near her. There was no plastic mask, no stiff upper lip, no façade. Only tears—many tears. Hannah was more concerned with presenting her pain before the Lord than presenting false strength before others. She was crushed in spirit. She was in great need. So she wept.

What we need to realize is that the tears rolling down Hannah’s cheeks were not a sign of weakness, but rather strength. Each tear, each sob, and each gasp for breath in between was an evidence of Hannah’s recognition that being real and transparent before God is what matters. We might fool others, but we will never fool Him, so why try? It does no one good. Instead, God wants us to be real with Him and with others. When we do, we see how God meets us in our greatest times of need—in our greatest anguish—to provide mercy, grace, love, and comfort. And we show others that they are not alone in their pain and can, too, cry out to the Lord.

What are some ways that you might be wearing a mask before others, or perhaps even before God?

1 Samuel

1:19-28

Hannah had carried the grief of not having a son for years (1:7), which makes it so surprising when she made good on her vow to dedicate Samuel and leave him to serve God with Eli. We would expect her to make such a vow when she was barren—attempting to bargain with God from such a place of weakness would lead most of us to make such a lofty promise. But then, when she cradled her son in her arms and nursed him, we would imagine her maternal instincts would have kicked into high gear, and the rationalization would have begun.

“Why would God finally give me a son, for me to abandon him? Surely that is not what He wants.”

We imagine this because it is what we would have likely done. We'd likely cheer Hannah on had she made the decision to keep her son. We might even want to see Hannah do this so that we might feel better. But that is not what we see. Instead, we see the shocking reality of Hannah following through on her promise and leaving her young son with Eli. Surely this was not easy for her. Surely she wept as she made her lonely journey home, her arms now empty. But what sustained Hannah was knowing God's goodness to her had provided a son and that same goodness would sustain her as she gave God's gift back to Him in worship.

What gift from God might you be holding on to instead of giving it back to God in worship? Why?

1 Samuel

2:1-11

We are a curious people. We remember for years the most minor of slights against us but are amnesiacs when it comes to remembering God's graciousness to us even five minutes ago. We major on the minors and minor on the majors so much of the time. Perhaps it is because deep down we believe we deserve God's goodness to us, so it is easier for us to take it for granted.

Notice, however, how Hannah began her prayer. After leaving her son in the care of Eli, she does not offer up a prayer of lament or a prayer seeking comfort from God. Instead, she offers an amazing prayer of praise—a prayer emanating from a rejoicing heart, rejoicing that was affixed not to Samuel, as we might expect, but to the Lord. Hannah rejoiced in the Lord because she did not take God's goodness for granted. She had not forgotten how God had answered her prayer or how He had lifted her up. So now, she lifted Him up. Yes, Hannah also boasted in the victory over her enemies, but even that was not the foundation of her praise. God's goodness was. And Hannah understood that God was just as good when she cradled Samuel in her arms as when she placed him in the care of Eli.

How has God been good to you in recent days? Be as specific as possible and worship Him as He is due.

1 Samuel

2:12-36

Generations before Eli, the Lord had commanded the Israelite parents to teach about Him and His ways to their children. (See Deut. 6:4-9.) Not long after, we saw how tragic failing to obey this command could be when an entire generation arose who did not know the Lord (Judg. 2:10), initiating the pattern of sin that plagued God's people throughout the time of the judges. Now here, we see once more the danger of neglecting the primary ministry for anyone who is a parent. Eli was the priest, and yet his sons were wicked men who did not respect the Lord (v. 12).

We are all accountable for our own sin and relationship with God. We cannot blame our parents for our rebellion against God any more than we can credit them for our salvation. Parents play a role, a key role, in our evangelism and discipleship and yet we are each accountable and will stand before God as such.

How have the spiritual authorities in your life pointed you to Jesus over and over again? What are some ways you can express gratitude for their faithful service?

1 Samuel

3:1-21

What we read in 1 Samuel 3:1 should sting: the word of the Lord was rare, and prophetic visions were not widespread. In other words, God was rather quiet, and that quietness was likely because of the sinful corruption of the people in that day—namely Eli's sons. God's people held His words in contempt, so He gave them what they wanted—less of them.

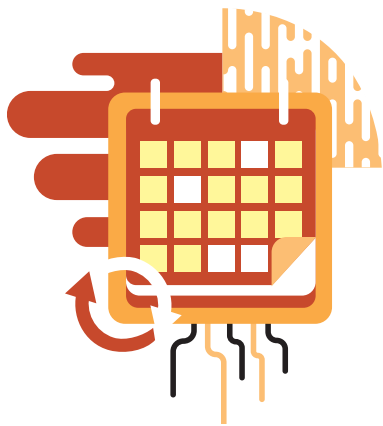
We live in a day when God's Word is abundant. Most of us have several copies of the Bible in our homes, in multiple translations. We have the Scriptures on our smartphones. We can access it on a number of free websites. And yet, perhaps we, too, hold God's Word in contempt. No, surely not like Eli's sons—we would never say we despise or reject God's Word—but by our neglect of it. How many days go by without us cracking open any of the numerous copies of the Bible we have all around us? How often do we nibble on God's Word rather than feasting on it?

We may long for God audibly to break the silence in our lives and world, but our neglect of what He has spoken to us in His Word should cause us to tremble.

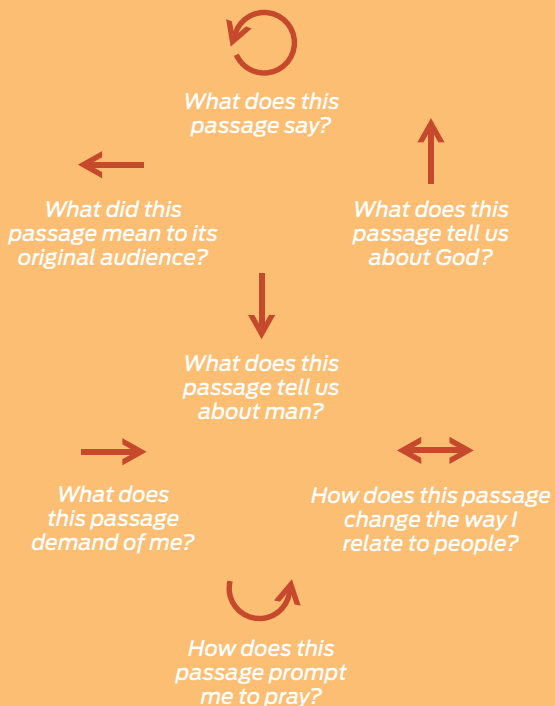
What is your plan to spend regular quality time in God's Word?

Daily Devotions

1 Samuel 4:1-11



The 7 Arrows of Bible Reading



The ark of God had become a superstition for the Israelites. Yes, the ark represented God’s presence with His people, but they seemed to have gone beyond that. They thought they could find victory in the ark itself instead of through the God of the ark. We should not be surprised to read of the defeat that followed. God is a jealous God, a consuming fire, and He will not allow His people to trust in anything but Him—for His glory and His people’s good.

God is no less jealous today. We may not have an ark to trust in, but we can make the same mistake just in different ways. We have our own superstitions. We can place our trust in church attendance—if we miss a week we fear God might chastise us, or rather, that He will bless us because of our faithful attendance. We can trust in our behavior, our theological knowledge, our denominational allegiance, and so forth. There is nothing inherently wrong with these—they are good things—but they are not the one thing upon which we must place our trust. Our trust is to rest on Christ and His completed work alone. All else is superstition, and it will not take our gracious God long to bring defeat into our lives, so that victory, trusting in Him alone, may follow.

What might you be prone to trust in rather than in Christ alone?

1 Samuel

4:12-22

Eli's daughter-in-law was close in her pronouncement, but not close enough. We read her declare that the glory of the Lord had departed because of the ark's capture (v. 21-22) and then she named her son Ichabod, which means "Where is the glory?" She was right to lament the departure of the Lord's glory, but she missed why His glory may have been gone. It was not because of the ark of the Lord's removal from the people but because of the people's faithlessness to the God of the ark.

We, too, should be just as quick to recognize the severity of God's glory—even to the slightest degree—being removed from around us. We, too, should mourn and lament when God is not glorified as He ought to be. But our first response should not be to look outside of ourselves for why His glory has been diminished, but rather within ourselves. We are here to be conduits of God's glory—ambassadors of the gospel which has taken hold of us and changed us into the image of Christ. May we earnestly desire to declare the glory of our God in word and deed so that others may join us in basking in its beautiful radiance.

What opportunities do you have to glorify God in the days and weeks ahead? How will you?

1 Samuel

5:1-12

The Philistines had a choice to make. They had witnessed the sobering, numbing power of God. The statue of Dagon, their false god, had fallen face-first before the ark of the Lord, then it was smashed into pieces. The message was clear: all will bow to the one true God, and nothing will stand before Him. Faced with this reality, the Philistines had to decide what they would do with this God. Their answer was to send the ark away out of fear instead of turning to the Lord in repentance.

God's power and holiness is indeed a barrier between sinful humanity and Himself; the Philistines were able to recognize this. But what they failed to understand is that God's desire is not for His holiness to drive people away from Him but toward Him. Yes, our sin has created an uncrossable barrier between us, but it is only uncrossable from our side. He has made a way—the way—to be forgiven of our sin so that we no longer need to recoil in fear before His holiness. And that way was pictured in the very ark they sent away. The ark was God's reminder that He was making a way for people to be restored into relationship with Him by Him approaching humanity, not the other way around. That way would be, of course, Christ Jesus.

As Christians, how should we balance a healthy fear of holy God with knowing God is our loving Father who accepts us entirely in Christ?

1 Samuel

6:1-16

The Philistines were pretty sure they needed to get rid of the ark from their presence, but they wanted to be completely sure. They wanted to know that if they removed the ark, they would also remove the plagues that had troubled them. So they devised an ingenious test. They hitched two untrained cows to the cart pulling the ark and placed their calves in a pen. Untrained cows would normally not be able to work together to pull a cart, and these milk cows would not be inclined to leave their calves behind. If the cows struggled to pull the cart, or turned toward the pen, which corralled their calves, the Philistines would know it was not the ark bringing trouble upon them. But if the cows pulled the cart down the road, they would know it was. When the cows indeed pulled the cart down the road, the Philistines knew for certain what had caused their troubles.

Don't miss this: God worked through unbelieving Philistines hitching cows to a cart. Why are we slow at times to believe that God is at work in our lives and wants us to know His will and His ways?

In what way or ways might you have missed God at work in your life recently?

1 Samuel

6:17-21

The ark had made its way to Beth-shemesh, or rather, the Lord had brought it there. New location; same result. When seventy men looked in the ark (or this phrase may mean they looked at the ark), God struck them down. In some way, these men had treated that which was holy, the ark, as if it was profane. They failed to treat the ark of the Lord with reverence. Just as it was a mistake to view the ark as a talisman, viewing it as a normal everyday item was just as much of a mistake. And seventy men paid for their irreverence with their lives. Then, the rest of the town, just like the Philistines before, hurried to rid themselves of the ark and send it on its way.

God is holy, and His holiness is not diminished in the slightest for His children—those who have trusted in Christ. Yes, our sins are forgiven. Yes, we have been given Christ's righteousness. And yes, we are welcomed to approach God as our loving Father. But even still, we should never forget that we always come before a holy God. Let us be careful never to treat He who is holy as if He is profane.

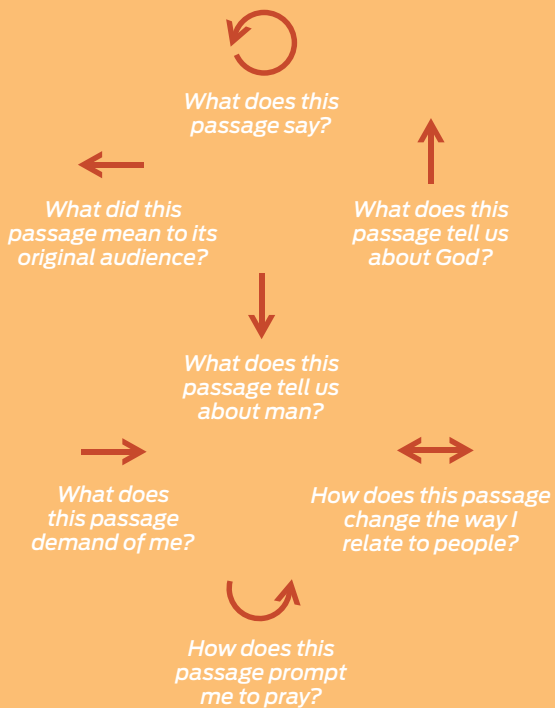
How might you tend to make a mistake in approaching God: too casually forgetting He is holy or too cautiously forgetting He is your Father?

Daily Devotions

1 Samuel 8:1-21



The 7 Arrows of Bible Reading



The Israelites had been led by a series of judges and prophets for generations, but as they turned their gaze toward the nations surrounding them, they noticed that the nations were all led by kings. So they wanted this too: to be led by a king. And that was their tragic mistake, not necessarily in wanting a king—God had said they would have kings (Gen. 17:6,16; 35:11; 49:10; Num. 24:7,17-19)—but in taking their eyes off of God and placing them on the nations around them. The root reason why their demand for a king displeased God was because the people chose the pagan nations around them as a template for their lives rather than God and His word. They rejected their call to be a holy nation serving a holy God and instead sought to blend into their surroundings. God did not call His people to be cultural chameleons but countercultural lions who followed His lead and timing and looked forward to “the Lion from the tribe of Judah”—Jesus Christ (Rev. 5:5; see Gen. 49:8-12). And He has called us to be the same.

In what ways might you be tempted to blend in instead of stand out for your faith in God?

1 Samuel

9:1–10:27

Let there be no doubt: Saul was an impressive man (9:2). When the Israelites thought of the archetype for a king, surely Saul was at the top of the list. He was impressive, and that is a core characteristic of a king. A king who is impressive is easier to follow and easier for the other nations to fear.

Little did the Israelites know, although they should have, that God was teaching them an important lesson. God was showing His people that their hope was not based on the leader of their imaginations but rather on One of His provision. The Israelites did not need a king who was tall, handsome, or who would strike fear into their enemies. They needed a King who, through His humility, would bring them, the enemies of God, into restored relationship with Him. God would show the Israelites this through the failure of Saul, the king who looked like a king and failed, pointing toward Jesus, the King who did not look like a king but who brought victory over sin and death.

In what ways do you see Jesus reflecting the qualities of a king and in what ways was He an unexpected king?

1 Samuel

11:1–12:25

Saul had led God's people to a great victory, and as the people basked in the aftermath, some called for those who had doubted their new king to be put to death (v. 12). Saul could have heartily consented to this demand, thereby ridding himself of potential adversaries. Instead, he stood before the people and declared that no one would be executed, but instead everyone should focus on the victory the Lord had given them (v. 13). Saul's response was the right one for a king; it was right for a man of God. In this critical moment, Saul demonstrated wisdom, mercy, and grace and pointed his people to the Lord. We should give credit where it is due.

But we should also look more broadly at Saul's reign than just one moment. It's not how you start, it's how you finish that matters. Saul may have started well, but we know he would soon trip and fall in his reign.

We need to be careful never to rest on past accomplishments and moments of obedience. Yes, we should be grateful for them and recognize God's kindness to give us these victories, but we should also never forget that our race is not done until we cross the finish line. We can also remember that God promises to finish the good work He began in us. There's hope for endurance and finishing well.

What victories has God given you in the past? How can they help you when facing persistent sin?

1 Samuel

13:1–14:52

Samuel, the man of God, had given Saul clear instructions. Wait for seven days. Then, he would come to Saul, make a sacrifice and show him what to do (10:8). Easy enough, until everything began falling apart around Saul. The king's army was in a bad place and his men began to leave. Saul had to do something. He had to act. So he did. He made the offerings to the Lord himself (13:7-10). And just as he was finishing, Samuel arrived as he had said—on the seventh day. Samuel the prophet would not be happy with Saul the king. Saul had done what he should not have done—the king does not make the sacrifice, the priest does. In Saul's moment of desperation, he sinned by stepping out of his God-given role and into that of another.

Have you ever felt like Saul? Have you ever been in a situation where everything was crashing down around you and all you could think was, “I need to do something!” Sometimes doing something is the worst thing we can do. Sometimes the best thing we can do is nothing. That is what Saul should have done. He should have done nothing and waited on Samuel, and more importantly, he should have trusted in the Lord. Sometimes it takes more courage and faith to do nothing and prayerfully wait on the Lord than to do something.

What might you be trying to do in your own wisdom and strength instead of waiting on the Lord?

1 Samuel

15:1-35

Soon after Saul performed the sacrifice he should not have made, he failed to obey God's implicit instruction to completely destroy the Amalekites and their possessions. Saul kept King Agag alive as well as some of the animals, presumably to perform a sacrifice to the Lord.

When Samuel confronted the king for his sin, he told him something quite profound: to obey is better than sacrifice (v. 22). Samuel was surely not saying that sacrifice—worship—is unimportant. We know that we were created for worship, and God demands worship from us. It's not a matter of worship being unimportant, but rather that obedience is central. If we truly are worshiping God—recognizing His great worth—then we will obey. We must. We cannot proclaim the glory of God from a posture of disobedience. Our disobedience disproves our worship. Obedience, on the other hand, affirms it. This is what Saul needed to understand. His supposed act of worship was nothing of the sort, because he was in a state of disobedience. And that is what we need to understand as well. Obedience and worship are fused together.

In what ways might you be disobeying God, and thus impairing your worship?

Daily Devotions



Week of May 25th

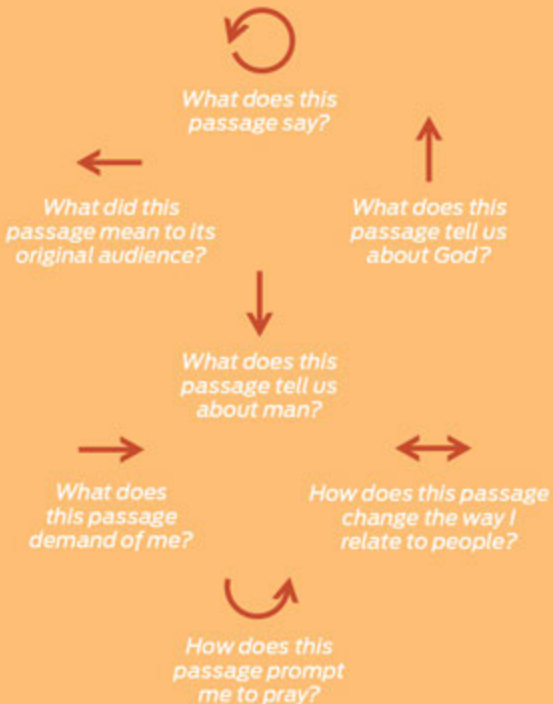
Day 1

Psalm 99:9

This week we will focus on God's holiness and what our response to His holiness should be. The word holy means "set apart for a purpose; to be morally and spiritually excellent." God is holy because He is morally excellent; He is absolutely perfect in every way. He is completely separate from other gods; no one is like Him (Exodus 15:11).

Psalm 99 celebrates not only the holiness but also the righteousness and forgiveness of God. He is so worthy of our praise! That is why verse 9 commands us to exalt (lift up) and worship (bow down). Notice those two different directions: We are to lift God up and bow ourselves down. When we bow down to God, we acknowledge our own weakness, sin and inability to save. We then acknowledge God's power, perfection and ability to save us.

The 7 Arrows of Bible Reading



**How can you exalt God today?
What are ways that you can
worship Him daily?**

Isaiah 6:3

God's prophet Isaiah has a vision of God, sitting on His throne in His holy temple. Try to imagine this incredible sight of the King of Kings seated on the throne, with a robe so enormous and majestic that it fills the entire room. Angels are flying all around, calling out with voices so loud that they shake the foundations as they declare how holy the Lord is.

Sometimes we forget how mighty and powerful God is. We see Him more on our level, but He is far above us. He is perfect and holy. We should be aware of God's holiness, which should then lead us to recognize our deep sinfulness, the same way Isaiah recognizes it. He feels completely unworthy to be in God's presence. But once again, we see God's mercy. God provides a way to remove Isaiah's sin and guilt, so that Isaiah can be made holy.

Spend time in prayer today thanking God for His holiness and mercy, and then spend time confessing your sins to Him. Ask God to remove your guilt and shame.

Psalm 71:22

We may not all have musical talent, but in Scripture we see many places where worshipping God involves music and singing. We are called to be worshippers. Worship is a lifestyle. Worship occurs when we come as we are and praise Him with all that we are. The "I can't sing" excuse won't fly. We don't have to be the soloist on stage, but our hearts need to be focused on God as we sing to Him and praise Him for how amazing He is.

Where is your heart and mind while worship is going on around you? How do you need to change the attitude of your heart when you worship?

We can worship God because He is holy. Holiness is such an important quality of God that it is in one of His titles: "The Holy One of Israel." He was known in the Old Testament as the unique, powerful, and holy God of the Israelites. His character never changes. He is the same today as He was back then, and He will stay the same forever. We can always count on Him. Praise the Lord!

Leviticus 19:2

God speaks to Moses, telling him to declare to the people of Israel that they are commanded to be holy the way that God is holy. This command applies to us today, and this is the primary way that we are supposed to respond to God's holiness.

Being holy means being set apart (separate and different) from the world and dedicated to the purpose God has for us. It means having nothing to do with sin. God cannot be in the presence of sin. We should not be comfortable with sin. We need to confess our sins to God, and run away from temptation when we find ourselves wanting to do things that go against God's Word. We should follow the Ten Commandments, including honoring our parents; keeping the Sabbath; and worshipping only God rather than idols (see Exodus 20).

How are you pursuing holiness in your daily life?

If you aren't, what can you do to start now?

Hebrews 12:10

Discipline—probably not one of your favorite words. You may not even fully understand it. Discipline is tied to love and holiness. It is different from punishment. Discipline is correction and instruction that is intended to mold a person's character. God disciplines His children because a) He loves them, and b) it makes them holy as He is holy.

In this verse, we read about how parents discipline their children in the best way that they can. But compared with God's best, a parent's best does not measure up. God truly knows what is best for us because He created us, and He loves us more than we can imagine. He can correct us and teach us the right way to go to make us more like Him: holy, perfect and pure.

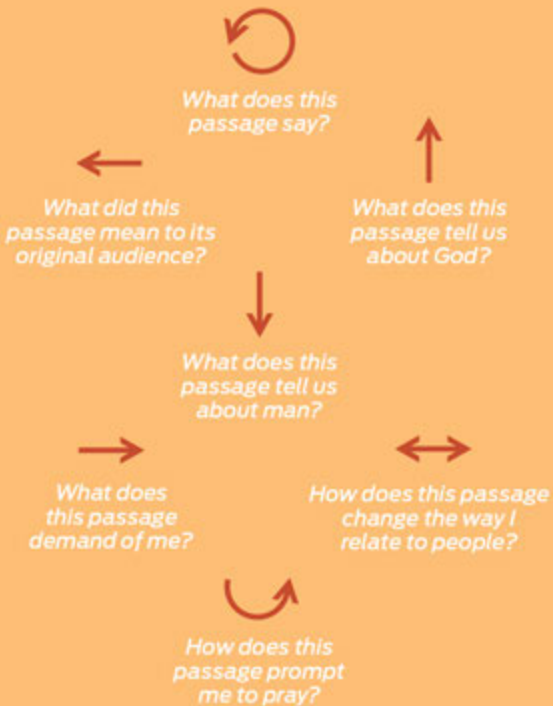
How have you seen God's discipline in your life?

How can you learn from His discipline in the future?

Daily Devotions



The 7 Arrows of Bible Reading



Week of June 1st

Day 1

Revelation 21:6

When we think of the universe, we think of adjectives such as gigantic, incomprehensible or even never-ending, but have we ever thought about the fact that God created that gigantic, incomprehensible, never-ending thing we call the universe? It is awesome to think this universe was created. It was created by Someone—He sculpted it, took time to understand it, and has power and authority over it.

This is shown in many different verses in the Bible, but one that truly shows His authority as the creator of all is Revelation 21:6. In this verse, John is being shown visions of a new heaven and new earth that God has created. God says He is the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. This can be seen as He is the One who was in the beginning, and created all of creation, and He is the One at the end, creating a new creation, one that is perfect once again.

Do you really believe God is the One in control of the universe? If so, why is it so hard to put our trust in Him?

Knowing this, how can you trust Him more?

Proverbs 21:1

How many times do we question the things going on in our world and in our governments? “Where are You in this, God? Are You present anymore?” Whenever we think of a bad leader—it could be a teacher or a dictator—we might question where God is, and whether He is actually in control of that person and what he or she is doing.

Proverbs 21:1 answers all these questions. King Solomon had been writing to the people of Israel. He wanted to impart wisdom to them so they would know how to live wisely and in reverence of the Lord. In this verse, we can see that God is in charge of a king’s heart. It is shown through a comparison of channeled waters and a king. Channeled waters are guided by the ways of the river and one can trust where they lead. In the same way, God guides and leads leaders, and we can trust that He is in charge of them.

When have you felt as though God has not been present in the leadership around you?

Ephesians 1:11

When you have two options before you, do you ask yourself, “What is God’s will?” We always put so much pressure on this question and feel that if we make the wrong choice, we are out of His will for our lives and are doomed. But what if this were not true?

Ephesians was written by Paul to the Church at Ephesus. In verse 11, he talks about how we have an inheritance; this inheritance is our salvation, being a child of God, and spending eternity with Him! In this, we are predestined with a purpose. This means He has made us all with a purpose, and He is the director of our lives. When we are walking in relationship with the Creator of our lives, we are in His will. Plain and simple. Since He is a good God, we can trust that it is not only His will, but His good will for us.

How often have you thought, “Am I in God’s will?”

What does it look like for you to trust that God is in control of your plans, and rest in that truth today?

Romans

8:28-32

Most likely, you have already walked through suffering or a hard time in your life. If not, you at least know somebody who has. Whenever we walk through a hard time, we normally do not feel as though God is good or that He is even there. But He is.

In Romans 8, Paul writes to the Christians in Rome, encouraging them to know and see that even in the suffering, God works all things for the good of those who love Him. This does not mean it's what we think is good for us, but what He knows to be good for us. He is the One who has created us, and has planned out our lives; therefore, He knows what is good for us even in the suffering. As we become more like Jesus in our everyday lives, we start having the same desires as He. His good becomes our good. We can trust and know that He has meant good for us, even in suffering.

What suffering is going on in your life, or the life of someone near you, right now?

How can this verse be put to use in that situation? How can you trust God in the suffering?

James 5:13-15

Life is such a miraculous thing! When parents first hear the heartbeat of their child or see their baby take its first breath, it makes them realize and see why life is so precious. Unlike the concept of life, the thought of death does not really give us the same feelings of excitement.

James walks believers through what it looks like to have faith in trials. He writes that whenever a person among us is suffering, we should encourage that person to pray and we should pray with him or her. Whenever someone is happy, we praise God. James also tells us if someone is sick, we pray for that person's healing. Healing may not always come on earth, but we know healing can be done either here or in heaven where there is no sickness and death. We can trust that He is the sovereign One over life and death.

How have you trusted God with your life, knowing that even in death, He is in control?

Whom do you know who needs to know the truth of this verse? How can you help him or her to know this today?

Daily Devotions



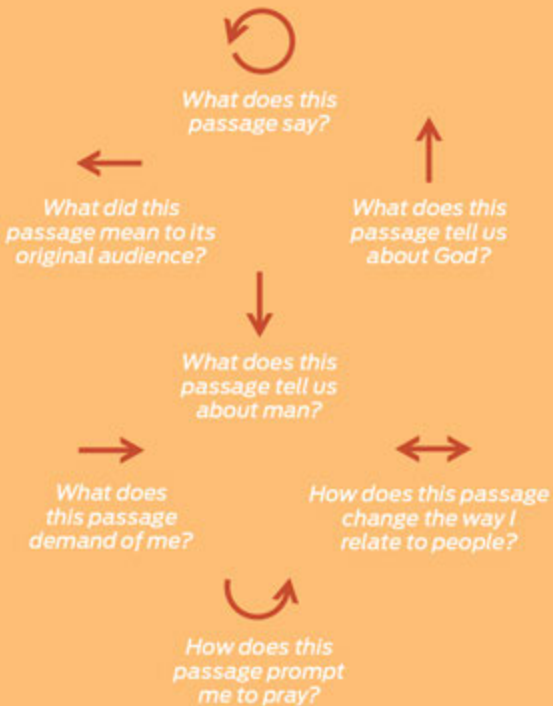
Week of June 8th

Day 1

Romans 8:1

As believers we can struggle with the idea of condemnation, and we carry a mindset that we have to repay God for what we have done wrong when Jesus has already paid the highest price. Within the book of Romans, Paul explains this exact struggle. He tries to show the power of God's unconditional love. It can be hard for us to fathom the idea of unconditional love because we live in a world where there is payment for everything we give or receive. With His unconditional love, He has graciously forgiven us. That forgiveness is there, whether we feel it or not. And it isn't for purchase, but is free for all who believe and accept it.

The 7 Arrows of Bible Reading



When have you felt His unconditional love?

How did it change your perspective on the situation or change your life in general?

Colossians 3:13

Throughout life we all experience hurts, trials and unknowns, and they come in many different forms. Those hurts can produce grudges, anger and bitterness toward others for some offense committed against us. Ultimately, they can lead to a hardened heart. So, where do we find the ability to forgive, but not seek revenge? Well, it can be found at the Cross. Paul urges us to forgive as we've been forgiven. The Cross reminds us that the debt of our sin has been paid. Forgiveness is not easy and can take time, and at times, forgiveness can be costly. Sin cost Jesus His life, and forgiveness will cost us our right to revenge. But it is freeing.

When has forgiveness cost you something?

How does the Cross represent forgiveness in your life?

Matthew 6:14-15

For many people, the act of forgiving others can be the hardest part of forgiveness. To take it a step deeper, the act of genuine forgiveness is even more challenging. Although it's challenging, it's crucial for us when maintaining an active relationship with God. Forgiveness is a central element to Christianity and can be an indicator of salvation. Meaning, when we are reconciled to God through Christ, our new life will be marked by graciousness and forgiveness.

Who is the one person in your life you struggle to forgive?

What is one way you can begin the process of forgiveness toward that person today?

“Forgive as you have been forgiven. Not because it's easy, but because it's at the core of who you are in Christ.”

Romans 3:23-24

It is a well-known fact that humans are imperfect. Within our culture, we can be quick to throw out phrases such as “We are only human” and in doing so, we quickly justify our sin. As believers we should understand this statement comes from the reality of sin, and without God’s redemptive grace, we would “fall short of the glory of God.” Even better, Paul didn’t stop at verse 23, he continued to write, “... justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.”

Why are we made right in the sight of God?

How does that influence our ability to forgive?

2 Chronicles 7:14

Our human nature can lead us to see the flaws and sin in other people’s lives and avoid the truth and reality of our own sin. Pride can get in the way, and often, we make excuses for our actions. The Bible tells us that unconfessed sin and unforgiveness can block our relationship with God. Some of us need to pray for humility so we can then realize we are no exception, and we need His grace just as much as the other. As believers we need to recognize our weakness and “turn from our wicked ways, then we’ll hear from heaven.”

Do you have the humility to see your own weakness?

What is one thing you can do to push pride aside and have the humility He calls us to have today?

20/20 Vision | 4 Weeks

seeing everything around us clearly

Freedom | 1 Week

counting the cost

Dating | 2 Weeks

what God says about dating and marriage

Conquering the Land | 3 Weeks

the life of Joshua

Judges | 3 Weeks

the cycle of sin and redemption

Easter | 2 Weeks

Kings | 3 Weeks

the story of Samuel & King Saul

Holiness | 3 Weeks

God's holiness, sovereignty, and forgiveness

