



Lent Devotional Plan

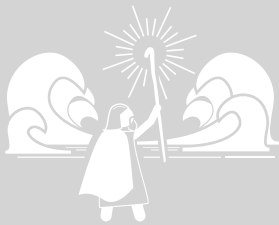
Adapted from Deron Spoo's
"The **Good** Book"

For Families

You will find a family specific devotional at the end of each booklet. Please choose whatever day and time to do them with your family (*over a meal, before they sleep, etc.*).



There is no specific day that each devotional corresponds with. **All devotionals have been tailored to be relevant for your children.**



week two

Genesis 22

Exodus 3

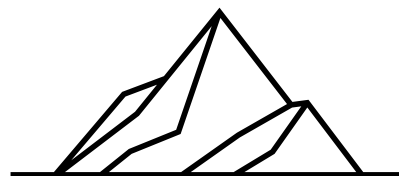
Exodus 14

Exodus 20

Judges 16

1 Samuel 17

5 | When God Asks Too Much



"And Abraham named that place The Lord Will Provide, so today it is said: 'It will be provided on the Lord's mountain.'" Genesis 22:14

Genesis 22 teaches us two valuable lessons about true faithfulness. Firstly, Abraham valued obeying God more than he valued understanding himself. Oftentimes, when we are faced with uncertainty and confusion, we tend to pray to God for understanding. For God to help us make sense of the events happening around us. Perhaps we ought to look at Abraham, and follow his example of obedience rather than comprehension.

Secondly, we must recognize the distinction between God and His gifts. While it's important to acknowledge and be grateful for the blessings that God brings into our lives, it's vital that we worship the Giver rather than the gifts themselves.

We must know the difference between God's test and Satan's temptations. Testing is God's method of bringing out our best, while tempting is Satan's method of reducing us to our worst. James 1:13 addresses this distinction saying "No one undergoing a trial should say, 'I am being tempted by God,' since God is not tempted by evil, and he himself doesn't tempt anyone."

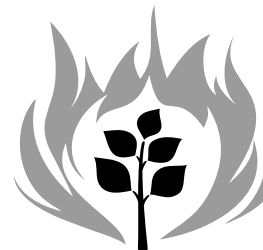
God doesn't delight in depriving us of good things. God's gifts for us aren't something that we need to pry from his closed hand. Instead, God has already opened up his palms and has provided all we need in life, beginning with our relationship with him.

In Genesis 22:12, God described Abraham accurately when he said, "Now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your only son from me." The event took place on Mount Moriah, predating the life of Jesus by two thousand years. It would be on another mountaintop two millennia later that another "only Son" would not be withheld. Ultimately, God's Son would be the sacrifice of the ages and for all eternity.

Reflection

What is God asking you to sacrifice on his behalf today? What is one practical way you can move away from selfishness toward surrender to him and his purposes?

6 | On a First-Name Basis with God



"God replied to Moses, 'I AM WHO I AM. This is what you are to say to the Israelites: I AM has sent me to you.' Exodus 3:14

When Moses first encountered God in the burning bush, the Lord told him that he had "observed" and "heard" and "[known] about their sufferings" (v. 7). For all of us, this is a comforting thought. We are often tempted to believe that in the midst of our suffering that God has abandoned us. It is pain that skews our ability to perceive God's presence in those moments. But Moses learned that God is closer to his people and far more concerned about their difficulties than he once thought.

Moses discovered two things at that moment. First and foremost, he learned the name of our Lord. He asked the Lord, "If I go to the Israelites and say to them, 'The God of your fathers has sent me to you,' and they ask me, 'What is his name?' what should I tell them?" (v. 13).

And God said "I AM WHO I AM." The Hebrew term could also be translated as "I WILL BE WHO I WILL BE."

"I AM" at once reveals and conceals God's true identity. God's self-given name reinforces the reality that he is always working, acting, and moving. God's name sets his true identity apart from our human expectations. God is as he chooses to be, not as we might wish him to be. God is somehow deeper than our efforts to define him. His identity is eternal.

The second thing Moses discovered was his own destiny. Contact with big names enlarges our world with a sense of grander purpose. After the first forty years in Egypt and second forty years of exile, Moses would spend his final forty years leading an exodus—the deliverance of Hebrew slaves from Egyptian oppression. Moses discovered that God's name brings fresh perspective and the opening of new possibilities. Moses's lifelong adventure began with knowing God's name.

Our culture is obsessed with celebrities. Knowing big names is seen as proof of our importance. But as Christ followers we know all big names are nothing when compared with the name of God. We have the privilege of knowing our Creator, which brings a sense of determination and destiny to our lives. We can say with all confidence that we share an intimate friendship with the God of the universe.

Reflection

The three eras of Moses's life help us understand our own lives. Moses spent forty years in Egypt (a period of ease), forty years in exile (a season of difficulty), and forty years leading the exodus (a time spent fulfilling his life's mission).

What season are you in right now? How might God be using the present to prepare you for your future? Whatever your season, realize that God is both present and at work in your life.

adapted from Deron Spoo's "The Good Book"

7 | When Life Seems Out to Get You



"Moses answered the people, "Do not be afraid. Stand firm and you will see the deliverance the Lord will bring you today. The Egyptians you see today you will never see again. The Lord will fight for you; you need only to be still." Exodus 14:13-14

After a series of miracles, the Israelites finally escape Egypt. But then, Pharaoh regrets his decision and chases after them. Now they are trapped between the army of Egypt and the sea. With nowhere to go, Moses cries out to the Lord to deliver them again. Why does God go to such great lengths in freeing his people? Why put them in this situation in the first place?

In response, Deron Spoo says, "God's purpose in the events of Exodus 14 was to make himself look good. This wasn't the work of ego. God is good. He simply wants us to recognize this truth. God's intent is to drive deep into his people's collective consciousness the fact that he can be trusted even when life seems to get us." God intended to establish a deep and lasting relationship with His people based on the unwavering trust in His character. This was not about making himself look good; rather it was about us seeing Him as good no matter the circumstance.

Three things God commands Moses to tell the people that we could apply to our lives especially in circumstances that may seem impossible. Don't be afraid. Stand Firm. See the Lord's salvation. Psychology teaches us our flight or fight response is an automatic reaction to an event we see as fearful. When God tells us not to be afraid, it is not necessarily for us to have no fear at all. Rather, we are commanded to fix our eyes upon Him in those moments of fear. Spoo writes, "courage isn't the absence of fear; courage is the decision to persevere in the presence of fear." We can persevere and stand firm because we know God will deliver us. And lastly, watch and see how God delivers us. It was beyond their imagination that God would split the sea and the people would walk on dry land. Perhaps a more logical response would be to either destroy their enemies or provide a different route. God can deliver us in the most unexpected ways.

Lastly, Exodus 14 ends with "when Israel saw the great power that the Lord used...the people feared and believed in him..." Notice the difference between the fear of their circumstance vs. the fear of the Lord. The first causes the people to be paralyzed. The second leads to a greater trust in him. It is a fear based out of awe and reverence of God. More importantly, is the fear of the Lord that teaches us we never have to be afraid of anything else. No matter what life throws at us, He will surely deliver us.

Reflection

Don't be afraid. Stand firm. See the Lord's salvation. How can you live this out in your own life? How can we fear the Lord in all that we do?

8 | Ten Keys You Can't Live Without



"I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the Land of Egypt, out of the place of slavery." Exodus 20:2

Two of the most commonly held views of the Ten Commandments deprive the commandments of their full impact and correct application. First, is the view that the commandments are nothing more than restrictions. This makes God, in essence, an eternal killjoy. With these rules, God sucks all the fun and adventure out of our lives for no other reason than he can.

Instead, try to see these commands as expressions of God's wisdom and love. Consider the concept of parenthood. A mother isn't being cruel when she chides her child for trying to touch the attractive flames of the burner on the stove. The parent, with wisdom gained from experience and education, offers instruction as a sign of compassion.

Second, is the view that the commandments are an insurmountable moral high bar. Consider another view. The Ten Commandments aren't a pole-vault bar; instead, they're a limbo bar. God doesn't ask us to jump over these commands. Instead, he asks only that we avoid stooping below these minimal requirements. God doesn't ask for a moral leap; rather, he desires that we not sink below our true worth.

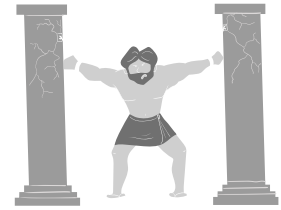
As a whole, these commandments tell us an important truth. Life is about relationships. The first four commands focus on loving God, while the final six detail what love for other people should look like. The Ten Commandments are commentary to the greatest commands to love God and love others, which Moses gave and Jesus endorsed. A life well-lived keeps these two relationships in proper working order. When we live only for ourselves, we miss the point of life and mistreat the relationships for which God created us.

What is the most frequently repeated command in the Bible? Remember, it's this: "Do not fear. Do not be afraid. Fear not." God's intent for life is freedom, not fear. This truth is a key to appreciating all of God's commands, especially the Ten Commandments. God offers us liberty. We don't have to live as idolaters nor adulterers or as overcommitted or untruthful people. We can experience freedom from sin in our lives under the life-giving guidance of a loving father.

Reflection

Read through the Ten Commandments again. Which command do you tend to ignore in your own life? Most of God's commands are simple and direct. What we typically lack is not the ability to understand but the willingness to obey. Regarding the command you're inclined to neglect, ask God for the needed strength to change.

9 | God Can Use Even Your Failures



"Some time later, he fell in love with a woman named Delilah, who lived in the Sorek Valley." Judges 16:4

What does the life of Samson teach us? What spiritual insights might Samson offer us? Whereas many personalities in the Bible model ways we should aspire to live, Samson offers an example of what we should avoid.

First, avoid temptation. Samson was aware of Delilah's motives. He was willing to see how far he could go without experiencing failure. He thought he was clever and in control. Only too late did he realize he was neither. In the New Testament, we're clearly instructed how to respond to the reality of temptation in our lives: "Flee from youthful passions" (2 Tim. 2:22). Samson chose to flirt rather than flee.

Second, avoid the mistake of confusing physical power for spiritual strength. The truth may be summed up like this: thinking we're strong is a weakness, but acknowledging our weakness makes us stronger.

It's worth the time to consider three or four of your most glaring spiritual weaknesses. What is your greatest temptation? Owning our biggest temptations is the surest defense against them. When we understand the sins we're most prone to commit, we can take the necessary steps to avoid any situation that introduces temptation.

Samson does offer a redeeming quality worth admiring. As the story of his life drew to a close, Samson experienced for himself the God of second chances. Judges 16:22 almost twinkles on the page when it says that "[Samson's] hair began to grow back after it had been shaved." These words describe what was happening not only to his follicles but also with his faith. In a dark prison, growth was happening. Along with the length of his hair, the depth of Samson's commitment to God began to mature. He was a model for all of us who suffer from personal mistakes. God may choose to use our weaknesses and mistakes. God redeems our mistakes as we renew our desire to serve him.

We're meant to grow until we die. Through our seasons of compromise and commitment, God will mature our faith even when we fail. God wants our strength, but it's good to know that he will use even our weaknesses.

Reflection

Looking at your life with the end in mind, how do you want to be remembered? What are the three or four words you want people to associate with you once your life is complete? Are you living by these qualities today?

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10 | Why Hard Times Help



"Then David said, 'The Lord who rescued me from the paw of the lion and the paw of the bear will rescue me from the hand of this Philistine.'" 1 Samuel 17:37

David had confidence in God. David declared, "The Lord who rescued me from the paw of the lion and the paw of the bear will rescue me from the hand of this Philistine" (v. 37). As a shepherd, he had dealt with his fair share of hungry lions and charging bears. He was no stranger to conflict. He had learned from stress-filled days and lonely nights the sufficiency of the Lord's strength. God had preserved David's life on more than one occasion, and David trusted he would do it again.

David acknowledged a simple truth: past experiences prepare us for present and future challenges. For a shepherd, guarding sheep was no easy occupation. Each encounter David had with a bear or a lion prepared him for this encounter with Goliath. God has a way of using our unique experiences to prepare us for our eventual destinies.

The balance of David's confidence in God and confidence in himself was exactly that—a balance. Confidence in God without confidence in ourselves translates into foolishness. We can't expect God to regularly rescue us from our lack of experience. A failure to learn and prepare can lead to our ultimate undoing. On the other hand, confidence in self with no confidence in God is arrogance. Our own strength has its limits. God's strength knows no boundaries.

Don't go looking for adversity; it will find you. Hard times may come in the form of difficult people, unpredictable circumstances, or fears that seem beyond your control. While none of these Goliaths feel glorious at the moment, their purpose is to form in us the character of Christ.

When David walked away from the battlefield, he carried with him Goliath's sword to fight on other battlefields. The sword that once threatened his life became the very tool used to protect his life. The simple truth is this: today's greatest threats can become tomorrow's most reliable resources.

We all face hard times; it's as simple as that. As important as knowing how to face those challenges is remembering who faces the challenges of life with us. God's presence in our greatest source of confidence and courage.

Reflection

What great fight do you face today? Ask God not only for a good outcome; ask him to also produce a more confident character in you through that experience.

Genesis 1

25 God made all sorts of wild animals, livestock, and small animals, each able to produce offspring of the same kind. And God saw that it was good.

26 Then God said, "Let us make human beings in our image, to be like us. They will reign over the fish in the sea, the birds in the sky, the livestock, all the wild animals on the earth, and the small animals that scurry along the ground."

27 So God created human beings in his own image.

In the image of God he created them;
male and female he created them.





Made in the Image of God

Did you know that God, the creator of the universe, was the one that created you?

Even though God created the beautiful sky and the amazing animals that we see outside, nothing is as special as His best creation: you!

You're His greatest creation and you might be thinking to yourself, "how?"

Well, God didn't make you like everything else that He made.

He made you special by making you in His image and that makes you more like God than anything else He created.

If God is our creator and He knows us better than anyone else, we can put all of our trust in Him. We can trust Him with our lives, families, and even friendships.

Reflection/Prayer

1. What do you love the most about yourself? How do you feel about being made in the image of God?

2. Do you believe that God has the best plans for you?

3. As a family, come up with one fun way to remind yourselves of this truth

(i.e. do a self portrait activity, come up with a phrase that everyone can remember)

Prayer: "Dear God, Thank you for creating us in your image. Thank you for making us special and knowing what's best for us. Jesus, help us remember that we can trust in you..."