



# Lent Devotional Plan

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

# For Families

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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 four*

Jeremiah 1

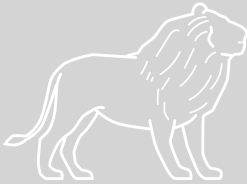
Daniel 3

Daniel 6

Jonah 1

John 1

Lukke 2





# 17 | Inferiority and Obedience



**"I chose you before I formed you in the womb; I set you apart before you were born. I appointed you a prophet to the nations." Jeremiah 1:5**

For today's passage, we look to our next prophet. He was the author of Jeremiah, Kings, and Lamentations. The book of Jeremiah begins after the reign of Saul, David, and Solomon when Israel was united under one king. After Solomon, there was a civil war that split the nation - the northern tribes became Israel and the southern tribes became Judah.

Israel was captured by Assyria. The Israelite survivors went on to intermarry creating the Samaritan race, but Judah remained. Assyria was then overtaken by Babylon, another large empire. This is where Jeremiah picks up the story. Babylon eyeing Judah as their next conquest.

Jeremiah's response to God's calling is not unlike others that God has called throughout the Bible. Many had shown hesitation to the great command - Abraham, Moses, Mary. Jeremiah tried to come up with an excuse to avoid having to obey the calling, "I am only a youth"(v6).

Everyone starts out as a "youth." There will always be someone older, or someone you think is more wise or experienced. The truth is, we are all underqualified to serve God. God calls on exactly the right person at exactly the right time. He equips those He calls. He also calls those he has equipped through the giftings that He has imparted to us. So be bold and confident in what God has put on your heart. God's will is higher than what inadequacies we may feel.

God goes on to give Jeremiah the words to speak to God's people. He gives Jeremiah visions to affirm Jeremiah's calling. We too need to seek the Lord in our callings. There are many ways that God speaks to us - Scripture, Prayer, the Holy Spirit, Circumstances, and other people. But it is important to use discernment to affirm what He is telling us, just as Jeremiah did.

Jeremiah had his fair share of doubts and feelings of inferiority. But these never stopped him from obeying the Lord. "Be strong and courageous. Do not fear or be in dread of them, for it is the Lord your God who goes with you. He will not leave you or forsake you" (Deuteronomy 31:6). We will always have things to fear or insecurities that come to haunt us, but even when we don't feel strong, know that we are strong for the Lord is with us.

## Reflection

What are you insecure about? How do you feel that you are inferior? Are these hindering us from accepting God's calling? Take some time to reflect on how God could be presenting an opportunity for us to practice obedience.

# 18 | Whose Side Is God On?



**"But even if he does not rescue us, we want you as king to know that we will not serve your gods or worship the gold statue you set up." Daniel 3:18**

Never assume God is on your side. Instead, make every effort to be certain you're on God's side. Many of history's most dangerous and destructive people have been those who assumed that God supported their every action and agenda.

This ancient account of friends, flames, and faithfulness opens a treasure trove of truths that can enrich our faith today. We'll highlight three: the importance of community, the nearness of God, and the courage necessary to face uncertainty.

1. The importance of community. We must not overlook the simple truth that these three young men benefited from one another as they faced the pressure of conformity and the possibility of death. Their boldness resulted from being banded together in their resolve. By ourselves we aren't as strong as we think; in community we become stronger than we imagine.
2. The nearness of God. As the friends entered the fire, Nebuchadnezzar saw something he didn't expect and couldn't fully explain. Another in the fire. Exactly who was the fourth person in the fire? Some believe this was a pre-incarnation appearance of Jesus. Others assume the fourth person was an angelic being. While it's understandable to speculate, the fact is, we aren't told. Regardless, the appearance of the fourth person in the fire represents the unmistakable presence of God in a dire situation.
3. The courage necessary to face uncertainty. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were given no guarantee of being rescued from the fire. They told the king, "If the God we serve exits, then he can rescue us from the furnace of blazing fire, and he can rescue us from the power of you, the king. But even if he does not rescue us, we want you as king to know that we will not serve your gods (vv. 17-18). The three friends never assumed God was on their side, but they made every effort to ensure that they were on God's side.

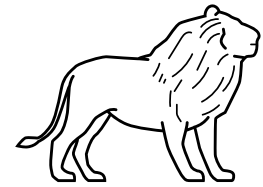
God ultimately restored the nation of Judah, in part because of faithful individuals like Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. The Persian rise to power would open the door for Jewish refugees to return to their homeland. This restoration wouldn't have happened if the Jews had smugly assumed that God was on their side. Restoration came because God's people determined to be on God's side, come what may. Such attitudes make and change the course of history.

## Reflection

Can you recall a specific circumstance when you sensed the unmistakable presence of God during a test or trial? Even if you can't recall an exact situation, the truth is this: you are never truly alone. The promise of God for the Christ follower is summed up in Hebrews 13:5: "I will never leave you or abandon you." Indeed, you never face the fires of life by yourself.

adapted from Deron Spoo's "The Good Book"

# 19 | Integrity Under Fire



**"He rescues and delivers; he performs signs and wonders in the heavens and on the earth, for he has rescued Daniel from the power of the lions." Daniel 6:27**

Daniel was an individual of unquestionable integrity. If one truth is remembered from his story and experiences, it's certainly this one. In a world overrun with sketchy personalities and shaky organizations, it's refreshing to encounter at least one person who lived indifferent to the pressure to conform. Daniel reminds us that life is lived best when we compromise least.

Integrity is a head-to-toe commitment. A person of integrity chooses to be the same person from top to bottom, no matter who sees, or whether anyone sees at all.

Daniel's closest associates, who proved to be his most jealous rivals, searched for any evidence of intentional corruption or unintentional negligence. Finding nothing, they determined that his weakest point was the strength of his commitment to the Lord.

For his integrity, Daniel was thrown into a lion's den. It was a common custom among ancient kings to keep an enclosure filled with living lions. On occasion a lion would be released into the king's garden for the monarch to hunt. Killing a lion was a way of illustrating the absolute power of the king's office. A den of lions also happened to come in handy when an occasional execution was required.

What happened—or rather what didn't happen—to Daniel is nothing short of miraculous. The lions refused to devour him. Under the supernatural protection of God, Daniel's body, like his integrity, remained untouchable. The story was different for Daniel's political rivals when they were tossed into the lions' enclosure. From the fate of these men we learn that Daniel's life was spared not because the lions lacked an appetite but because of God's abundant protection.

Daniel's integrity should inform and inspire our own. As we face our own critics and lions, enemies and intrigue, we need to recognize that God is our only true and ultimate judge.

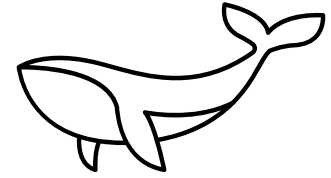
Jonathan Edwards, an American theologian from the eighteenth century, once said, "Resolved: That every man should live to the glory of God. Resolved second: That whether others do this or not, I will." May integrity be the resolution of our entire lives, no matter what others choose to do with theirs.

## Reflection

John Stott once said, "Apathy is the acceptance of the unacceptable." Have you accepted apathy in some area of your life that demands integrity? Is it a relationship? Your marriage? A private matter? Your job? Integrity involved fighting against apathy to live a life honoring to God. Listen to God speak to you today. Reject apathy. Embrace integrity.

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# 20 | Man On The Run



**"The word of the LORD came to Jonah son of Amittai: 'Get up! Go to the great city of Nineveh and preach against it because their great evil has come up before me.' Jonah got up to flee to Tarshish from the LORD's presence. He went down to Joppa and found a ship going to Tarshish. He paid the fare and went down into it to go with them to Tarshish from the LORD's presence." Jonah 1:1-3**

Jonah is one of the shorter books of the Old Testament about a prophet called to preach God's word and decided to run away. We would assume that as a prophet, he would be a great man of God, but as we see from the very beginning, he too was an ordinary man on his own journey with the Lord. The Lord calls him but he jumps on a boat to go the opposite direction. A couple of the key themes we see throughout Jonah are God's sovereignty and God's love for all people.

Jonah's reaction to God's calling is contrary to many others we have seen in the Bible that respond in faith. Jonah's response is one of selfishness. It wasn't for no reason that Jonah was wary. Nineveh was a great city of the Assyrian Empire. The Assyrian Empire was taking over all of the surrounding lands which displeased many of the surrounding nations, even pushing them to hatred. Yet, God called upon Jonah to ask them to repent. God was showing them mercy. Jonah and many others would be very displeased at having to show love to a people that had caused so much destruction. Thus, Jonah's reaction was not unwarranted.

But upon Jonah starting his escape, God steps in causing great winds to blow the ship off course. This creates chaos on the ship among the pagan sailors and Jonah. Jonah is called out for having brought this madness upon the crew and confesses that he is in fact a man of God, running from the Lord's presence.

This brings up two key points to this chapter. The first is that non-Christians (the pagan sailors) can act with greater integrity than Christians at times. Unlike Jonah who was only looking out for his livelihood, the sailors first tried to save Jonah, displaying God's love for people.

The second point is that building relationships with others can lead to transformed lives. Jonah was willing to sacrifice himself in order to save the sailors. This act built enough trust in the sailors for them to be able to turn towards the Lord. The journey and shared struggle through difficulties brought Jonah and the sailors into a transforming relationship leaving them to the Lord.

## Reflection

How can we practice self-sacrifice today? Who are the sailors or the Ninevites that God is calling you today? It may not be easy and they may not be friends, but ask God to give you boldness in obeying His will. It is easy to walk in self-preservation, but can we take steps of faith to follow Jesus today?

# 21 | Jesus, God with Skin On



**"And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth... For from his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace." John 1:14-16**

John is one of the 4 gospel accounts in the New Testament that speaks to the life of Jesus. Often referred to as the beloved disciple of Jesus, John wrote in a way that was deeply personal. John understood what it meant to live in the fullness that God has in store for us. Knowing God is not some extraordinary thing that requires a lot of guesswork; rather, in Jesus we can experience His fullness.

In the beginning...John takes us back to the creation account before the world was even created. In the beginning was the Word, and that Word was Jesus Himself. And in our passage, it says Jesus became flesh and dwelt among us. Meaning, even though he was fully God, he became fully man so that he could identify with humans. Hebrews 4:15 tells us that as our high priest, he is able to empathize with our weaknesses. He understands the pains and trials we experience in life because he has gone through them himself. He is not a distant God, but one who is deeply personal.

However not only does he identify with us as humans, he also fully reveals the identity and glory of God. John reveals this by repeating three words throughout this chapter. Light. Grace. Truth. Jesus is the light in a world that is full of darkness. Just as this light was crucial for life, spiritual light is essential to our being. Jesus is the only one who is able to bring light to the very darkest parts of our lives.

Jesus gives grace to those who are undeserving. Since the beginning, God was on a mission to restore our relationship with Him. Notice how grace is not about making our lives better, but it is about making us new. And this "grace upon grace" is unending. Deron Spoo writes, "grace reconciles our past with forgiveness and empowers our future with hope."

Lastly, Jesus is the truth for all of us to see. For many of us, the sources of truth can range from experiences to ideas and reason. However, in Jesus, truth is not merely a collection of statements or propositions, truth is a person. Truth is not something we simply observe, but truth is something to be experienced in Him. God's desire is that we would all come to know, love, and understand him. And the only way for us to do that is through Jesus because only He is the complete embodiment of God's light, grace, and truth.

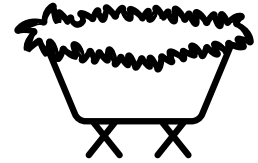
## Reflection

Would you describe your relationship with God as personal or distant? Do you believe he knows you and desires an intimate relationship with you? How can you invite him into the dark parts of your life? Believe that he knows and is able to empathize with you.

adapted from Deron Spoo's "The Good Book"



# 22 | Welcome To Our World



**"While they were there, the time came for her to give birth. Then she gave birth to her firstborn Son, and she wrapped him tightly in cloth and laid him in a manger, because there was no guest room available for them." Luke 2:7**

Luke begins in verse 1 by naming Caesar Augustus who reigned as emperor of Rome from 27 BC to AD 14 to highlight to his readers that the birth of Jesus was not just a fun story of a miraculous event. Rather, Luke was making it clear that the birth of Jesus Christ was a real historical event – God becoming human, the Almighty becoming an infant.

The humility of God and the counter-cultural ways of the kingdom are in full display at this nativity scene. Mary and Joseph were poverty stricken – so much so that their only option in birthing Jesus was in a dirty manger. Jesus' first baby crib was a feeding trough made for animals.

God encountering the shepherds is another example. During this time, shepherds were considered outcasts who would not have been able to perform sacrificial rituals in the temple because of their constant occupational demands. This meant that they did not have the access to worship God.

But God, in his choosing of Mary and Joseph to care for Jesus, as well as the shepherds to announce the arrival of his very own Son, reveals that perhaps his heart is for all people to come to know him. Perhaps God's plan of salvation is not just for those who have had the means or the access. No, God, even in this nativity scene, was showing us that the good news is for everybody.

A few days after Jesus was born, Mary and Joseph took Jesus to the temple in Jerusalem to dedicate him to God. While they were there, they encountered a man named Simeon. The Holy Spirit at some point prior revealed to Simeon that he would not die until he met the Messiah. Upon seeing the baby Jesus, he praised God saying "Now, Master, you can dismiss your servant in peace, as you promised. For my eyes have seen your salvation." What an incredible encouragement this must have been for Mary and Joseph, as well as a reminder for them as they raised Jesus throughout the years.

Finally, Luke 2 ends with the only recording we have of Jesus' adolescence. It states "And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and with people." All the components of growth are mentioned – mental, physical, spiritual, and relational. Although he was God himself, he went through all the stages of maturing as a human being. This shows us the goodness and necessity of our own growth and journey in faith, relationships, and health. God becoming one of us demonstrates to us the sanctity of our own human lives and journeys.

## Reflection

Do you see your own need for growth and maturity as a burden? Or, do you see it as a beautiful opportunity to live as Jesus did? How does understanding that God lived as a human like us change the way that we approach each day in our work, our conversations, and in our families?

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# Psalm 23

1 The Lord is my shepherd, I lack nothing.

2 He makes me lie down in green pastures,  
he leads me beside quiet waters,

3 he refreshes my soul.  
He guides me along the right paths  
for his name's sake.

4 Even though I walk  
through the darkest valley,  
I will fear no evil,  
for you are with me;  
your rod and your staff,  
they comfort me.





## Everything We Need

In the bible, we learn about the life of King David. Before becoming a king, David had a special job to take care of sheep. In other words, he was a shepherd. In today's bible passage, we get to read from King David's psalm while learning more about who God is.

In verse 1, David starts by saying, "The Lord is my shepherd."

What does it mean for God to be our shepherd? Well, it's simple! God is the one to take care of us. He helps us, leads us, and teaches us how to follow Him.

We don't need to do things alone. We can always ask God to help us. He is our shepherd!

Verse 1 doesn't end there too! David finishes the verse by saying, "I lack nothing." In other words, "I have what I need." At the end of the day, we have everything we need and that is because we have God! Because God is our shepherd, we can trust that we don't lack anything. All we need to do is love God and trust in Him to provide for all of our needs.

### Reflection/Prayer

1. What does it mean for God to be your shepherd?

2. How can you trust God as the shepherd of your life?

3. What do you think about God being everything you need? Share with your family.

Prayer: "Dear God, thank you for loving and guiding us as our kind shepherd. Help us to be thankful for

who you are in our lives. We have everything we need in this life because we have you."