



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 four

Jeremiah 1

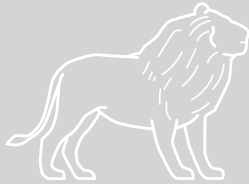
Daniel 3

Daniel 6

Jonah 1

John 1

Lukke 2



Jeremiah 1

1 The words of Jeremiah, the son of Hilkiah, one of the priests who were in Anathoth in the land of Benjamin, 2 to whom the word of the Lord came in the days of Josiah the son of Amon, king of Judah, in the thirteenth year of his reign. 3 It came also in the days of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah, king of Judah, and until the end of the eleventh year of Zedekiah, the son of Josiah, king of Judah, until the captivity of Jerusalem in the fifth month.

4 Now the word of the Lord came to me, saying,

5 "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you; I appointed you a prophet to the nations."

6 Then I said, "Ah, Lord God! Behold, I do not know how to speak, for I am only a youth." 7 But the Lord said to me,

"Do not say, 'I am only a youth'; for to all to whom I send you, you shall go, and whatever I command you, you shall speak.

8 Do not be afraid of them, for I am with you to deliver you, declares the Lord."

9 Then the Lord put out his hand and touched my mouth. And the Lord said to me,

"Behold, I have put my words in your mouth.

10 See, I have set you this day over nations and over kingdoms, to pluck up and to break down, to destroy and to overthrow, to build and to plant."

11 And the word of the Lord came to me, saying, "Jeremiah, what do you see?" And I said, "I see an almond branch." 12 Then the Lord said to me, "You have seen well, for I am watching over my word to perform it."

13 The word of the Lord came to me a second time, saying, "What do you see?" And I said, "I see a boiling pot, facing away from the north." 14 Then the Lord said to me, "Out of the north disaster shall be let loose upon all the inhabitants of the land. 15 For behold, I am calling all the tribes of the kingdoms of the north, declares the Lord, and they shall come, and every one shall set his throne at the entrance of the gates of Jerusalem, against all its walls all around and against all the cities of Judah. 16 And I will declare my judgments against them, for all their evil in forsaking me. They have made offerings to other gods and worshiped the works of their own hands. 17 But you, dress yourself for work; arise, and say to them everything that I command you. Do not be dismayed by them, lest I dismay you before them. 18 And I, behold, I make you this day a fortified city, an iron pillar, and bronze walls, against the whole land, against the kings of Judah, its officials, its priests, and the people of the land. 19 They will fight against you, but they shall not prevail against you, for I am with you, declares the Lord, to deliver you."

17 | Inferiority and Obedience



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.

FDR put it this way, "Courage is not the absence of fear, but rather the assessment that something else is more important than fear." God is greater than all things. He is greater than our doubts, our fears, our insecurities. Which can we surrender to God today so that we can obey His Will?

Daniel 3

1 King Nebuchadnezzar made an image of gold, whose height was sixty cubits and its breadth six cubits. He set it up on the plain of Dura, in the province of Babylon. 2 Then King Nebuchadnezzar sent to gather the satraps, the prefects, and the governors, the counselors, the treasurers, the justices, the magistrates, and all the officials of the provinces to come to the dedication of the image that King Nebuchadnezzar had set up. 3 Then the satraps, the prefects, and the governors, the counselors, the treasurers, the justices, the magistrates, and all the officials of the provinces gathered for the dedication of the image that King Nebuchadnezzar had set up. And they stood before the image that Nebuchadnezzar had set up. 4 And the herald proclaimed aloud, "You are commanded, O peoples, nations, and languages, 5 that when you hear the sound of the horn, pipe, lyre, trigon, harp, bagpipe, and every kind of music, you are to fall down and worship the golden image that King Nebuchadnezzar has set up. 6 And whoever does not fall down and worship shall immediately be cast into a burning fiery furnace." 7 Therefore, as soon as all the peoples heard the sound of the horn, pipe, lyre, trigon, harp, bagpipe, and every kind of music, all the peoples, nations, and languages fell down and worshiped the golden image that King Nebuchadnezzar had set up.

8 Therefore at that time certain Chaldeans came forward and maliciously accused the Jews. 9 They declared to King Nebuchadnezzar, "O king, live forever! 10 You, O king, have made a decree, that every man who hears the sound of the horn, pipe, lyre, trigon, harp, bagpipe, and every kind of music, shall fall down and worship the golden image. 11 And whoever does not fall down and worship shall be cast into a burning fiery furnace. 12 There are certain Jews whom you have appointed over the affairs of the province of Babylon: Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. These men, O king, pay no attention to you; they do not serve your gods or worship the golden image that you have set up."

13 Then Nebuchadnezzar in furious rage commanded that Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego be brought. So they brought these men before the king. 14 Nebuchadnezzar answered and said to them, "Is it true, O Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, that you do not serve my gods or worship the golden image that I have set up?"

15 Now if you are ready when you hear the sound of the horn, pipe, lyre, trigon, harp, bagpipe, and every kind of music, to fall down and worship the image that I have made, well and good. But if you do not worship, you shall immediately be cast into a burning fiery furnace. And who is the god who will deliver you out of my hands?"

16 Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego answered and said to the king, "O Nebuchadnezzar, we have no need to answer you in this matter. 17 If this be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of your hand, O king. 18 But if not, be it known to you, O king, that we will not serve your gods or worship the golden image that you have set up."

19 Then Nebuchadnezzar was filled with fury, and the expression of his face was changed against Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. He ordered the furnace heated seven times more than it was usually heated. 20 And he ordered some of the mighty men of his army to bind Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, and to cast them into the burning fiery furnace. 21 Then these men were bound in their cloaks, their tunics, their hats, and their other garments, and they were thrown into the burning fiery furnace. 22 Because the king's order was urgent and the furnace overheated, the flame of the fire killed those men who took up Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. 23 And these three men, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, fell bound into the burning fiery furnace.

24 Then King Nebuchadnezzar was astonished and rose up in haste. He declared to his counselors, "Did we not cast three men bound into the fire?" They answered and said to the king, "True, O king." 25 He answered and said, "But I see four men unbound, walking in the midst of the fire, and they are not hurt; and the appearance of the fourth is like a son of the gods."

Daniel 3

26 Then Nebuchadnezzar came near to the door of the burning fiery furnace; he declared, "Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, servants of the Most High God, come out, and come here!" Then Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego came out from the fire. 27 And the satraps, the prefects, the governors, and the king's counselors gathered together and saw that the fire had not had any power over the bodies of those men. The hair of their heads was not singed, their cloaks were not harmed, and no smell of fire had come upon them. 28 Nebuchadnezzar answered and said, "Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, who has sent his angel and delivered his servants, who trusted in him, and set aside the king's command, and yielded up their bodies rather than serve and worship any god except their own God. 29 Therefore I make a decree: Any people, nation, or language that speaks anything against the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego shall be torn limb from limb, and their houses laid in ruins, for there is no other god who is able to rescue in this way." 30 Then the king promoted Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego in the province of Babylon.

18 | Whose Side Is God On?



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.

Daniel 6

1 It pleased Darius to set over the kingdom 120 satraps, to be throughout the whole kingdom; 2 and over them three high officials, of whom Daniel was one, to whom these satraps should give account, so that the king might suffer no loss. 3 Then this Daniel became distinguished above all the other high officials and satraps, because an excellent spirit was in him. And the king planned to set him over the whole kingdom. 4 Then the high officials and the satraps sought to find a ground for complaint against Daniel with regard to the kingdom, but they could find no ground for complaint or any fault, because he was faithful, and no error or fault was found in him. 5 Then these men said, "We shall not find any ground for complaint against this Daniel unless we find it in connection with the law of his God."

6 Then these high officials and satraps came by agreement to the king and said to him, "O King Darius, live forever! 7 All the high officials of the kingdom, the prefects and the satraps, the counselors and the governors are agreed that the king should establish an ordinance and enforce an injunction, that whoever makes petition to any god or man for thirty days, except to you, O king, shall be cast into the den of lions. 8 Now, O king, establish the injunction and sign the document, so that it cannot be changed, according to the law of the Medes and the Persians, which cannot be revoked." 9 Therefore King Darius signed the document and injunction.

10 When Daniel knew that the document had been signed, he went to his house where he had windows in his upper chamber open toward Jerusalem. He got down on his knees three times a day and prayed and gave thanks before his God, as he had done previously. 11 Then these men came by agreement and found Daniel making petition and plea before his God. 12 Then they came near and said before the king, concerning the injunction, "O king! Did you not sign an injunction, that anyone who makes petition to any god or man within thirty days except to you, O king, shall be cast into the den of lions?" The king answered and said, "The thing stands fast, according to the law of the Medes and Persians, which cannot be revoked."

13 Then they answered and said before the king, "Daniel, who is one of the exiles from Judah, pays no attention to you, O king, or the injunction you have signed, but makes his petition three times a day."

14 Then the king, when he heard these words, was much distressed and set his mind to deliver Daniel. And he labored till the sun went down to rescue him. 15 Then these men came by agreement to the king and said to the king, "Know, O king, that it is a law of the Medes and Persians that no injunction or ordinance that the king establishes can be changed."

16 Then the king commanded, and Daniel was brought and cast into the den of lions. The king declared to Daniel, "May your God, whom you serve continually, deliver you!" 17 And a stone was brought and laid on the mouth of the den, and the king sealed it with his own signet and with the signet of his lords, that nothing might be changed concerning Daniel. 18 Then the king went to his palace and spent the night fasting; no diversions were brought to him, and sleep fled from him.

19 Then, at break of day, the king arose and went in haste to the den of lions. 20 As he came near to the den where Daniel was, he cried out in a tone of anguish. The king declared to Daniel, "O Daniel, servant of the living God, has your God, whom you serve continually, been able to deliver you from the lions?" 21 Then Daniel said to the king, "O king, live forever! 22 My God sent his angel and shut the lions' mouths, and they have not harmed me, because I was found blameless before him; and also before you, O king, I have done no harm." 23 Then the king was exceedingly glad, and commanded that Daniel be taken up out of the den. So Daniel was taken up out of the den, and no kind of harm was found on him, because he had trusted in his God. 24 And the king commanded, and those men who had maliciously accused Daniel were brought and cast into the den of lions—they, their children, and their wives. And before they reached the bottom of the den, the lions overpowered them and broke all their bones in pieces.

Daniel 6

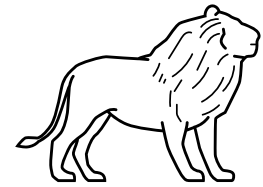
25 Then King Darius wrote to all the peoples,
nations, and languages that dwell in all the earth:
"Peace be multiplied to you. 26 I make a decree,
that in all my royal dominion people are to tremble
and fear before the God of Daniel,

for he is the living God,
enduring forever;
his kingdom shall never be destroyed,
and his dominion shall be to the end.

27 He delivers and rescues;
he works signs and wonders
in heaven and on earth,
he who has saved Daniel
from the power of the lions."

28 So this Daniel prospered during the reign of
Darius and the reign of Cyrus the Persian.

19 | Integrity Under Fire



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.

Jonah 1

1 Now the word of the Lord came to Jonah the son of Amittai, saying, 2 "Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and call out against it, for their evil has come up before me." 3 But Jonah rose to flee to Tarshish from the presence of the Lord. He went down to Joppa and found a ship going to Tarshish. So he paid the fare and went down into it, to go with them to Tarshish, away from the presence of the Lord.

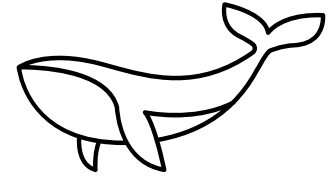
4 But the Lord hurled a great wind upon the sea, and there was a mighty tempest on the sea, so that the ship threatened to break up. 5 Then the mariners were afraid, and each cried out to his god. And they hurled the cargo that was in the ship into the sea to lighten it for them. But Jonah had gone down into the inner part of the ship and had lain down and was fast asleep. 6 So the captain came and said to him, "What do you mean, you sleeper? Arise, call out to your god! Perhaps the god will give a thought to us, that we may not perish."

7 And they said to one another, "Come, let us cast lots, that we may know on whose account this evil has come upon us." So they cast lots, and the lot fell on Jonah. 8 Then they said to him, "Tell us on whose account this evil has come upon us. What is your occupation? And where do you come from? What is your country? And of what people are you?" 9 And he said to them, "I am a Hebrew, and I fear the Lord, the God of heaven, who made the sea and the dry land." 10 Then the men were exceedingly afraid and said to him, "What is this that you have done!" For the men knew that he was fleeing from the presence of the Lord, because he had told them.

11 Then they said to him, "What shall we do to you, that the sea may quiet down for us?" For the sea grew more and more tempestuous. 12 He said to them, "Pick me up and hurl me into the sea; then the sea will quiet down for you, for I know it is because of me that this great tempest has come upon you." 13 Nevertheless, the men rowed hard to get back to dry land, but they could not, for the sea grew more and more tempestuous against them. 14 Therefore they called out to the Lord, "O Lord, let us not perish for this man's life, and lay not on us innocent blood, for you, O Lord, have done as it pleased you." 15 So they picked up Jonah and hurled him into the sea, and the sea ceased from its raging. 16 Then the men feared the Lord exceedingly, and they offered a sacrifice to the Lord and made vows.

17 And the Lord appointed a great fish to swallow up Jonah. And Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights.

20 | Man On The Run



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?

John 1

1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 He was in the beginning with God. 3 All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made. 4 In him was life, and the life was the light of men. 5 The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

6 There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. 7 He came as a witness, to bear witness about the light, that all might believe through him. 8 He was not the light, but came to bear witness about the light.

9 The true light, which gives light to everyone, was coming into the world. 10 He was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world did not know him. 11 He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him. 12 But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, 13 who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.

14 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. 15 (John bore witness about him, and cried out, "This was he of whom I said, 'He who comes after me ranks before me, because he was before me.'") 16 For from his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace. 17 For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. 18 No one has ever seen God; the only God, who is at the Father's side, he has made him known.

19 And this is the testimony of John, when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, "Who are you?" 20 He confessed, and did not deny, but confessed, "I am not the Christ." 21 And they asked him, "What then? Are you Elijah?" He said, "I am not." "Are you the Prophet?" And he answered, "No." 22 So they said to him, "Who are you? We need to give an answer to those who sent us. What do you say about yourself?" 23 He said, "I am the voice of one crying out in the wilderness, 'Make straight the way of the Lord,' as the prophet Isaiah said."

24 (Now they had been sent from the Pharisees.) 25 They asked him, "Then why are you baptizing, if you are neither the Christ, nor Elijah, nor the Prophet?" 26 John answered them, "I baptize with water, but among you stands one you do not know, 27 even he who comes after me, the strap of whose sandal I am not worthy to untie." 28 These things took place in Bethany across the Jordan, where John was baptizing.

29 The next day he saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, "Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world! 30 This is he of whom I said, 'After me comes a man who ranks before me, because he was before me.' 31 I myself did not know him, but for this purpose I came baptizing with water, that he might be revealed to Israel." 32 And John bore witness: "I saw the Spirit descend from heaven like a dove, and it remained on him. 33 I myself did not know him, but he who sent me to baptize with water said to me, 'He on whom you see the Spirit descend and remain, this is he who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.' 34 And I have seen and have borne witness that this is the Son of God."

35 The next day again John was standing with two of his disciples, 36 and he looked at Jesus as he walked by and said, "Behold, the Lamb of God!" 37 The two disciples heard him say this, and they followed Jesus. 38 Jesus turned and saw them following and said to them, "What are you seeking?" And they said to him, "Rabbi" (which means Teacher), "where are you staying?" 39 He said to them, "Come and you will see." So they came and saw where he was staying, and they stayed with him that day, for it was about the tenth hour. 40 One of the two who heard John speak and followed Jesus was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. 41 He first found his own brother Simon and said to him, "We have found the Messiah" (which means Christ). 42 He brought him to Jesus. Jesus looked at him and said, "You are Simon the son of John. You shall be called Cephas" (which means Peter).

John 1

43 The next day Jesus decided to go to Galilee. He found Philip and said to him, "Follow me." 44 Now Philip was from Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter. 45 Philip found Nathanael and said to him, "We have found him of whom Moses in the Law and also the prophets wrote, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph." 46 Nathanael said to him, "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" Philip said to him, "Come and see." 47 Jesus saw Nathanael coming toward him and said of him, "Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no deceit!" 48 Nathanael said to him, "How do you know me?" Jesus answered him, "Before Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I saw you." 49 Nathanael answered him, "Rabbi, you are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!" 50 Jesus answered him, "Because I said to you, 'I saw you under the fig tree,' do you believe? You will see greater things than these." 51 And he said to him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, you will see heaven opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man."

21 | Jesus, God with Skin On



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.

How do you make sense of the world? Do you live by a set of values, ideals, or perhaps even your own reason and logic? When you ask questions such as "what is the purpose of life?" Where do you find your answer? Take some time to meditate on the truth of this passage. In your pursuit, may you find Jesus as the way, the truth, and the life.

adapted from Deron Spoo's "The Good Book"

Luke 2

1 In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered. 2 This was the first registration when Quirinius was governor of Syria. 3 And all went to be registered, each to his own town. 4 And Joseph also went up from Galilee, from the town of Nazareth, to Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and lineage of David, 5 to be registered with Mary, his betrothed, who was with child. 6 And while they were there, the time came for her to give birth. 7 And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in swaddling cloths and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.

8 And in the same region there were shepherds out in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. 9 And an angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were filled with great fear. 10 And the angel said to them, "Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. 11 For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. 12 And this will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger." 13 And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying,

14 "Glory to God in the highest,
and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased!"

15 When the angels went away from them into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let us go over to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has made known to us." 16 And they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby lying in a manger. 17 And when they saw it, they made known the saying that had been told them concerning this child. 18 And all who heard it wondered at what the shepherds told them. 19 But Mary treasured up all these things, pondering them in her heart. 20 And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.

21 And at the end of eight days, when he was circumcised, he was called Jesus, the name given by the angel before he was conceived in the womb.

22 And when the time came for their purification according to the Law of Moses, they brought him up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord 23 (as it is written in the Law of the Lord, "Every male who first opens the womb shall be called holy to the Lord") 24 and to offer a sacrifice according to what is said in the Law of the Lord, "a pair of turtledoves, or two young pigeons." 25 Now there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon, and this man was righteous and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him. 26 And it had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ. 27 And he came in the Spirit into the temple, and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him according to the custom of the Law, 28 he took him up in his arms and blessed God and said,

29 "Lord, now you are letting your servant depart in peace,
according to your word;
30 for my eyes have seen your salvation
31 that you have prepared in the presence of all peoples,
32 a light for revelation to the Gentiles,
and for glory to your people Israel."

33 And his father and his mother marveled at what was said about him. 34 And Simeon blessed them and said to Mary his mother, "Behold, this child is appointed for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign that is opposed 35 (and a sword will pierce through your own soul also), so that thoughts from many hearts may be revealed."

36 And there was a prophetess, Anna, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was advanced in years, having lived with her husband seven years from when she was a virgin, 37 and then as a widow until she was eighty-four. She did not depart from the temple, worshiping with fasting and prayer night and day. 38 And coming up at that very hour she began to give thanks to God and to speak of him to all who were waiting for the redemption of Jerusalem.

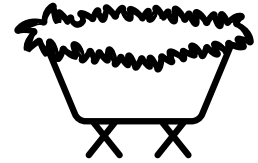
Luke 2

39 And when they had performed everything according to the Law of the Lord, they returned into Galilee, to their own town of Nazareth. 40 And the child grew and became strong, filled with wisdom. And the favor of God was upon him.

41 Now his parents went to Jerusalem every year at the Feast of the Passover. 42 And when he was twelve years old, they went up according to custom. 43 And when the feast was ended, as they were returning, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem. His parents did not know it, 44 but supposing him to be in the group they went a day's journey, but then they began to search for him among their relatives and acquaintances, 45 and when they did not find him, they returned to Jerusalem, searching for him. 46 After three days they found him in the temple, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions. 47 And all who heard him were amazed at his understanding and his answers. 48 And when his parents saw him, they were astonished. And his mother said to him, "Son, why have you treated us so? Behold, your father and I have been searching for you in great distress." 49 And he said to them, "Why were you looking for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?" 50 And they did not understand the saying that he spoke to them. 51 And he went down with them and came to Nazareth and was submissive to them. And his mother treasured up all these things in her heart.

52 And Jesus increased in wisdom and in stature and in favor with God and man.

22 | Welcome To Our World



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?

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."