



Lent Devotional Plan

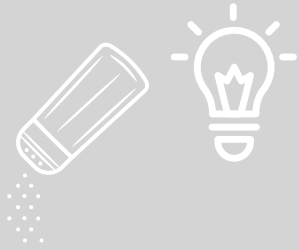
Adapted from Deron Spoo's
"The **Good** Book"

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 five

Matthew 5 1

Matthew 6

Matthew 7

Luke 8

John 3

Luke 15

Matthew 5

Seeing the crowds, he went up on the mountain, and when he sat down, his disciples came to him.

2 And he opened his mouth and taught them, saying:

3 "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

4 "Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.

5 "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.

6 "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.

7 "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.

8 "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.

9 "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.

10 "Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

11 "Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. 12 Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

13 "You are the salt of the earth, but if salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything except to be thrown out and trampled under people's feet.

14 "You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. 15 Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. 16 In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.

17 "Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. 18 For truly, I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the Law until all is accomplished. 19 Therefore whoever relaxes one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever does them and teaches them will be called great in the kingdom of heaven. 20 For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.

21 "You have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not murder; and whoever murders will be liable to judgment.' 22 But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother will be liable to judgment; whoever insults his brother will be liable to the council; and whoever says, 'You fool!' will be liable to the hell of fire. 23 So if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, 24 leave your gift there before the altar and go. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift. 25 Come to terms quickly with your accuser while you are going with him to court, lest your accuser hand you over to the judge, and the judge to the guard, and you be put in prison. 26 Truly, I say to you, you will never get out until you have paid the last penny.

27 "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall not commit adultery.' 28 But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lustful intent has already committed adultery with her in his heart. 29 If your right eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it away. For it is better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body be thrown into hell. 30 And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. For it is better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body go into hell.

Matthew 5

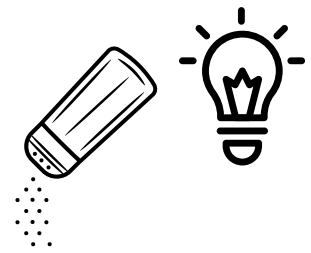
31 "It was also said, 'Whoever divorces his wife, let him give her a certificate of divorce.' 32 But I say to you that everyone who divorces his wife, except on the ground of sexual immorality, makes her commit adultery, and whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery.

33 "Again you have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not swear falsely, but shall perform to the Lord what you have sworn.' 34 But I say to you, Do not take an oath at all, either by heaven, for it is the throne of God, 35 or by the earth, for it is his footstool, or by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King. 36 And do not take an oath by your head, for you cannot make one hair white or black. 37 Let what you say be simply 'Yes' or 'No'; anything more than this comes from evil.

38 "You have heard that it was said, 'An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.' 39 But I say to you, Do not resist the one who is evil. But if anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also. 40 And if anyone would sue you and take your tunic, let him have your cloak as well. 41 And if anyone forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles. 42 Give to the one who begs from you, and do not refuse the one who would borrow from you.

43 "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' 44 But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, 45 so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven. For he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. 46 For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? 47 And if you greet only your brothers, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same? 48 You therefore must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.

23 | What Does Jesus Want?



Matthew 5:3-12 contains a series of short sayings called the Beatitudes. To Jesus, attitude is important. Psychologists speak of a person's explanatory style. Good and bad happen to us all. A positive or negative attitude originates from how we explain these circumstances to ourselves. Jesus holds in front of us the perpetual truth that even when life is unfair, God is still good. That should become our explanatory style as well.

In addition to attitude, Jesus spoke about identity in Matthew 5:13-16. Two pictures in particular capture the character of a Jesus follower.

1. "You are the salt of the earth" (v. 13). In Jesus' culture, salt was a symbol of wisdom. In fact, the phrase "lose its taste" is a single Greek word: *moranthē*. This is a word that ultimately found its way into English as the word *moron*. Jesus commands his followers to reflect wisdom to the whole world. More dangerous than thinking the wrong thoughts is the refusal to think at all. "Engage your mind!" commands Christ. We're exhorted to live wisely and reject the moronic norm.
1. "You are the light of the world" (v. 14). In this second picture, Jesus mentioned two lights of varying intensities, the light of a simple candle that illuminates a single room. Why mention these followers are to shine with the same integrity, each follower shines with a different intensity. Stay-at-home parents may shed light only on the few lives under their care, while those with a public platform may influence thousands. Whether public or private, each of us is called to live a life that reflects the brightness of God, making integrity our primary concern and leaving it to God to determine the level of intensity.

In the final paragraphs of Matthew 5, Jesus repeated a phrase several times: "You have heard that it was said...But I tell you." With each repetition, Jesus cited a familiar commandment from the Older Testament and then exposed the heart attitude from which these evil things originate. Perhaps Jesus is teaching us that character doesn't originate from outer appearances or actions from inner decisions and devotion.

Reflection

What is your greatest weakness as a follower of Jesus? As you consider this question, you may want to look through the list of sins Jesus mentioned in Matthew 5, asking God to show you how you've failed. But don't limit yourself to confessing your sins and asking for forgiveness. Consider your greatest strengths as well. Take a few moments to thank God for how he has gifted you.

Matthew 6

1 "Beware of practicing your righteousness before other people in order to be seen by them, for then you will have no reward from your Father who is in heaven.

2 "Thus, when you give to the needy, sound no trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may be praised by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. 3 But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, 4 so that your giving may be in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

5 "And when you pray, you must not be like the hypocrites. For they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners, that they may be seen by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. 6 But when you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

7 "And when you pray, do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do, for they think that they will be heard for their many words. 8 Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him. 9 Pray then like this:

"Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name.
10 Your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.
11 Give us this day our daily bread,
12 and forgive us our debts,
as we also have forgiven our debtors.
13 And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.

14 For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you, 15 but if you do not forgive others their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.

16 "And when you fast, do not look gloomy like the hypocrites, for they disfigure their faces that their fasting may be seen by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. 17 But when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, 18 that your fasting may not be seen by others but by your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

19 "Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, 20 but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. 21 For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

22 "The eye is the lamp of the body. So, if your eye is healthy, your whole body will be full of light, 23 but if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light in you is darkness, how great is the darkness!

24 "No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money.

Matthew 6

25 "Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? 26 Look at the birds of the air: they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? 27 And which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his span of life? 28 And why are you anxious about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin, 29 yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. 30 But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is alive and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? 31 Therefore do not be anxious, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' 32 For the Gentiles seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. 33 But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.

34 "Therefore do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble.

24 | Why Worry Never Works



As important as it is to integrate good habits into our character, it's equally important to avoid habits that may prove destructive. The final section of Matthew 6 is Jesus's full-frontal assault on the damaging habit of worry. The word worry is used seven times throughout Matthew, six of which appear in the latter part of this chapter.

The New Testament word for worry reveals why the condition is so damaging. The Greek term *merimnate* could also be translated "don't go to pieces." Worry can fracture our hearts and minds, and it may even ultimately break our trust in God. Worry distracts us from our greatest focus: becoming like Jesus himself. Following Jesus is difficult with a fragmented soul.

Jesus's teaching on worry was nothing short of sheer genius. He spoke of birds and flowers so that whether we look up to the sky or down to the ground, a living illustration of the uselessness of worry is constantly before us. Jesus commands us not to be concerned with what is around us (clothes) or what is in us (food). Both external matters and internal concerns are under God's watchful care. Jesus concluded his teachings on worry with one of his best-remembered quotes from the Sermon on the Mounts: "Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be provided for you. Therefore, don't worry about tomorrow, because tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own" (vv. 33-34).

Two words in Jesus's declaration deserve clarification: kingdom and righteousness.

Kingdom. Simply stated, God's kingdom is God's rule in the hearts of people. To cut off the suffix -dom from this word the word king. God wants nothing more than to be king of your life and my life, your heart and my heart. Jesus doesn't want to make us more religious; he wants to make us more alive. When the rule of God becomes the defining reality of our lives, worry is no longer welcome.

Righteousness. As mentioned earlier, righteousness is to be in the right relationship with another person. For the Jesus follower, if our relationship with God is in good standing, no circumstance can alarm us because nothing can truly harm us.

In the journey of following Jesus, we're invited to receive vital disciplines to ensure a growing relationship with him—generosity, prayer, and fasting. We're also asked to surrender all that is unnecessary in our lives—worry, anxiety, and fear. Jesus's kingdom and God's righteousness demand nothing less.

Reflection

Are you more comfortable asking for God's help or giving yourself over to his care? Are you more inclined to receive or surrender as you pray? God's kingship over our lives means that we're free to ask him to provide and protect.

adapted from Deron Spoo's "The Good Book"

Matthew 7

1 Judge not, that you be not judged. 2 For with the judgment you pronounce you will be judged, and with the measure you use it will be measured to you. 3 Why do you see the speck that is in your brother's eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye? 4 Or how can you say to your brother, 'Let me take the speck out of your eye,' when there is the log in your own eye? 5 You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother's eye.

6 "Do not give dogs what is holy, and do not throw your pearls before pigs, lest they trample them underfoot and turn to attack you.

7 "Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. 8 For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks it will be opened. 9 Or which one of you, if his son asks him for bread, will give him a stone? 10 Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a serpent? 11 If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask him!

12 "So whatever you wish that others would do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets.

13 "Enter by the narrow gate. For the gate is wide and the way is easy[a] that leads to destruction, and those who enter by it are many. 14 For the gate is narrow and the way is hard that leads to life, and those who find it are few.

15 "Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves. 16 You will recognize them by their fruits. Are grapes gathered from thornbushes, or figs from thistles? 17 So, every healthy tree bears good fruit, but the diseased tree bears bad fruit. 18 A healthy tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a diseased tree bear good fruit. 19 Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. 20 Thus you will recognize them by their fruits.

21 "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. 22 On that day many will say to me, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?' 23 And then will I declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.'

24 "Everyone then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock. 25 And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on the rock. 26 And everyone who hears these words of mine and does not do them will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand. 27 And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell, and great was the fall of it."

28 And when Jesus finished these sayings, the crowds were astonished at his teaching, 29 for he was teaching them as one who had authority, and not as their scribes.

25 | Life over the Long Haul



While it may be easy to initially enter into a relationship with Jesus, it can be incredibly difficult to stay the course of faithfulness and transformation for the rest of our lives. However, this is exactly what Jesus calls us into – a life of discipleship. Jesus invites us to take up our cross daily and follow him, allowing his presence to transform us into his own image.

Matthew 7 specifically focuses on the choices that people can make in the process of following Jesus. This is important to Him because our choices ultimately form our character and will shape the way that we relate with others, with God, and even with ourselves.

Verses 1-6 cover the topic of judging others. While Jesus does not expect us to naively be unaware of the reality and existence of evil in our imperfect world, we are not to live in a mindset of unchecked negativity and suspicion towards others. **Verses 7-11** present to us our choice between a life full of prayer or a life of prayerlessness. Some people are afraid of “praying the wrong way” and so choose to not pray at all. However, Richard Foster offers this insight: “In the same way that a small child cannot draw a bad picture so a child of God cannot offer a bad prayer.” Thus, as children of God, we can choose to pray – even when we feel like we do not know how, and even when we can’t always put our thoughts into words. **Verse 12** talks about how we can choose to treat other people. Jesus here states “whatever you wish that others would do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets”. Confucius, Plato, and the noted Jewish rabbi Hillel all have stated some version of this. However, their statements suggested what you don’t want done to yourself, don’t do to others. Jesus’ approach however encourages taking initiative in doing good, rather than a prohibition against bad, which encourages us to act in the best interest of others. **Verses 13-14** presents to us the choice of choosing our path of life – either the narrow or the broad road. While the broad road may be easier, it is ultimately not the best choice. On the other hand, the narrow road will present its challenges, but will prove to be the best choice to make. **Verses 15-23** cover the topic of choosing who we allow to influence our lives. Jesus here warns against false teachers and those who may take advantage of others for their own gain. While he doesn’t advocate suspicion toward others, he cautions us to select carefully those we place in positions of influence over us.

Finally, **verses 24-27** talk about the choice that we have in who we become. Jesus says that those who hear his words and do them are wise and will be able to stand the test of time.

Reflection

Verses 28-29 demonstrate the crowd's reaction to Jesus’ teaching because he taught them as one who had authority. Have you allowed Jesus and his teaching to have the final say in your life? Why or why not? What area is God asking you to release unto his authority? Take a moment to pray through these questions.

Luke 8

1 Soon afterward he went on through cities and villages, proclaiming and bringing the good news of the kingdom of God. And the twelve were with him, 2 and also some women who had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities: Mary, called Magdalene, from whom seven demons had gone out, 3 and Joanna, the wife of Chuza, Herod's household manager, and Susanna, and many others, who provided for them out of their means.

4 And when a great crowd was gathering and people from town after town came to him, he said in a parable, 5 "A sower went out to sow his seed. And as he sowed, some fell along the path and was trampled underfoot, and the birds of the air devoured it. 6 And some fell on the rock, and as it grew up, it withered away, because it had no moisture. 7 And some fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up with it and choked it. 8 And some fell into good soil and grew and yielded a hundredfold." As he said these things, he called out, "He who has ears to hear, let him hear."

9 And when his disciples asked him what this parable meant, 10 he said, "To you it has been given to know the secrets of the kingdom of God, but for others they are in parables, so that 'seeing they may not see, and hearing they may not understand.' 11 Now the parable is this: The seed is the word of God. 12 The ones along the path are those who have heard; then the devil comes and takes away the word from their hearts, so that they may not believe and be saved. 13 And the ones on the rock are those who, when they hear the word, receive it with joy. But these have no root; they believe for a while, and in time of testing fall away. 14 And as for what fell among the thorns, they are those who hear, but as they go on their way they are choked by the cares and riches and pleasures of life, and their fruit does not mature. 15 As for that in the good soil, they are those who, hearing the word, hold it fast in an honest and good heart, and bear fruit with patience.

16 "No one after lighting a lamp covers it with a jar or puts it under a bed, but puts it on a stand, so that those who enter may see the light. 17 For nothing is hidden that will not be made manifest, nor is anything secret that will not be known and come to light. 18 Take care then how you hear, for to the one who has, more will be given, and from the one who has not, even what he thinks that he has will be taken away."

19 Then his mother and his brothers came to him, but they could not reach him because of the crowd. 20 And he was told, "Your mother and your brothers are standing outside, desiring to see you." 21 But he answered them, "My mother and my brothers are those who hear the word of God and do it."

22 One day he got into a boat with his disciples, and he said to them, "Let us go across to the other side of the lake." So they set out, 23 and as they sailed he fell asleep. And a windstorm came down on the lake, and they were filling with water and were in danger. 24 And they went and woke him, saying, "Master, Master, we are perishing!" And he awoke and rebuked the wind and the raging waves, and they ceased, and there was a calm. 25 He said to them, "Where is your faith?" And they were afraid, and they marveled, saying to one another, "Who then is this, that he commands even winds and water, and they obey him?"

Luke 8

26 Then they sailed to the country of the Gerasenes, which is opposite Galilee. 27 When Jesus had stepped out on land, there met him a man from the city who had demons. For a long time he had worn no clothes, and he had not lived in a house but among the tombs. 28 When he saw Jesus, he cried out and fell down before him and said with a loud voice, "What have you to do with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I beg you, do not torment me." 29 For he had commanded the unclean spirit to come out of the man. (For many a time it had seized him. He was kept under guard and bound with chains and shackles, but he would break the bonds and be driven by the demon into the desert.) 30 Jesus then asked him, "What is your name?" And he said, "Legion," for many demons had entered him. 31 And they begged him not to command them to depart into the abyss. 32 Now a large herd of pigs was feeding there on the hillside, and they begged him to let them enter these. So he gave them permission. 33 Then the demons came out of the man and entered the pigs, and the herd rushed down the steep bank into the lake and drowned.

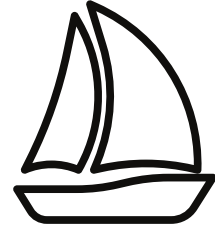
34 When the herdsmen saw what had happened, they fled and told it in the city and in the country. 35 Then people went out to see what had happened, and they came to Jesus and found the man from whom the demons had gone, sitting at the feet of Jesus, clothed and in his right mind, and they were afraid. 36 And those who had seen it told them how the demon-possessed man had been healed. 37 Then all the people of the surrounding country of the Gerasenes asked him to depart from them, for they were seized with great fear. So he got into the boat and returned. 38 The man from whom the demons had gone begged that he might be with him, but Jesus sent him away, saying, 39 "Return to your home, and declare how much God has done for you." And he went away, proclaiming throughout the whole city how much Jesus had done for him.

40 Now when Jesus returned, the crowd welcomed him, for they were all waiting for him. 41 And there came a man named Jairus, who was a ruler of the synagogue. And falling at Jesus' feet, he implored him to come to his house, 42 for he had an only daughter, about twelve years of age, and she was dying.

As Jesus went, the people pressed around him. 43 And there was a woman who had had a discharge of blood for twelve years, and though she had spent all her living on physicians, she could not be healed by anyone. 44 She came up behind him and touched the fringe of his garment, and immediately her discharge of blood ceased. 45 And Jesus said, "Who was it that touched me?" When all denied it, Peter[g] said, "Master, the crowds surround you and are pressing in on you!" 46 But Jesus said, "Someone touched me, for I perceive that power has gone out from me." 47 And when the woman saw that she was not hidden, she came trembling, and falling down before him declared in the presence of all the people why she had touched him, and how she had been immediately healed. 48 And he said to her, "Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace."

49 While he was still speaking, someone from the ruler's house came and said, "Your daughter is dead; do not trouble the Teacher any more." 50 But Jesus on hearing this answered him, "Do not fear; only believe, and she will be well." 51 And when he came to the house, he allowed no one to enter with him, except Peter and John and James, and the father and mother of the child. 52 And all were weeping and mourning for her, but he said, "Do not weep, for she is not dead but sleeping." 53 And they laughed at him, knowing that she was dead. 54 But taking her by the hand he called, saying, "Child, arise." 55 And her spirit returned, and she got up at once. And he directed that something should be given her to eat. 56 And her parents were amazed, but he charged them to tell no one what had happened.

26 | Is Jesus Strong Enough?



In the Gospels, Jesus performs thirty-five miracles which are broken into four categories: overriding nature (9), exorcisms (6), physical healing (17), and resuscitations (3). In this passage, we see a miracle from each of these categories.

The first is when Jesus and his disciples get onto the boat after Jesus finishes telling the crowds the parable of the sower and the seeds. Storms were common on the Sea of Galilee and some of these disciples were experienced fishermen, yet when the storm came, they were all afraid. Only His Divine Nature has the power to turn the tides, the winds, and other things of this world we may face. And this is only the first type of His miracles.

Next, Jesus came across Legion, who possessed one of the men Jesus encountered upon landing on shore. A legion in the Roman era was a group that contained more than 6,000 soldiers. It was Legion versus Jesus. The numbers seem to be in favor of Legion yet they were no match for the power of Jesus. He cast them into a herd of pigs. Jesus is able to overcome any evil we may face.

The final two are of the healing type: the healing of the bleeding woman and the resuscitation of Jairus' daughter. Jairus approached Jesus in the crowds to come heal his dying daughter. While wading through the crowds, a woman who suffered from an incurable blood disorder touched His robes, and His power went out from Him. He was not in a hurry, despite Jairus' daughter dying, and gave this woman his full attention and brought not only the physical healing but also emotional wholeness to her life. Jesus is strong enough to heal all that we may face.

Once Jesus arrives at Jairus' home, they are told the girl is already dead. Although it seems too late, Jesus does not give up. With a gentle word and caring touch, Jesus is able to bring this girl back to life, reclaiming her from death. Even death has no power over Jesus.

Many say Jesus was an amazing teacher or moral philosopher, but he was so much more. What sets Jesus apart from the rest of the teachers and philosophers was his divine power as seen in these miracles. He came not only to teach and impart wisdom, but to bear the burdens of this world with His divine power.

Reflection

Luke 11:9-10 says, "And I tell you, ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks it will be opened."

What would you like to see God do in your life? Have you asked Him? Unless it contradicts His Word or nature, he will answer in the best way possible.

John 3

1 Now there was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews. 2 This man came to Jesus by night and said to him, "Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher come from God, for no one can do these signs that you do unless God is with him." 3 Jesus answered him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God." 4 Nicodemus said to him, "How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born?" 5 Jesus answered, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. 6 That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. 7 Do not marvel that I said to you, 'You must be born again.' 8 The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear its sound, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit."

9 Nicodemus said to him, "How can these things be?" 10 Jesus answered him, "Are you the teacher of Israel and yet you do not understand these things? 11 Truly, truly, I say to you, we speak of what we know, and bear witness to what we have seen, but you do not receive our testimony. 12 If I have told you earthly things and you do not believe, how can you believe if I tell you heavenly things? 13 No one has ascended into heaven except he who descended from heaven, the Son of Man. 14 And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, 15 that whoever believes in him may have eternal life.

16 "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. 17 For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. 18 Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God. 19 And this is the judgment: the light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil. 20 For everyone who does wicked things hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his works should be exposed. 21 But whoever does what is true comes to the light, so that it may be clearly seen that his works have been carried out in God.

22 After this Jesus and his disciples went into the Judean countryside, and he remained there with them and was baptizing. 23 John also was baptizing at Aenon near Salim, because water was plentiful there, and people were coming and being baptized 24 (for John had not yet been put in prison).

25 Now a discussion arose between some of John's disciples and a Jew over purification. 26 And they came to John and said to him, "Rabbi, he who was with you across the Jordan, to whom you bore witness—look, he is baptizing, and all are going to him." 27 John answered, "A person cannot receive even one thing unless it is given him from heaven. 28 You yourselves bear me witness, that I said, 'I am not the Christ, but I have been sent before him.' 29 The one who has the bride is the bridegroom. The friend of the bridegroom, who stands and hears him, rejoices greatly at the bridegroom's voice. Therefore this joy of mine is now complete. 30 He must increase, but I must decrease."

31 He who comes from above is above all. He who is of the earth belongs to the earth and speaks in an earthly way. He who comes from heaven is above all. 32 He bears witness to what he has seen and heard, yet no one receives his testimony. 33 Whoever receives his testimony sets his seal to this, that God is true. 34 For he whom God has sent utters the words of God, for he gives the Spirit without measure. 35 The Father loves the Son and has given all things into his hand. 36 Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him.

27 | The Original Come-To Jesus Meeting



For many of us, we are far more familiar with John 3:16, "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life." But to grasp the weight of this truth, it begins with understanding what Jesus meant by the phrase "born again" in our passage this morning. Clearly in our text, Nicodemus struggled with Jesus' words because how could someone be born again? Again, he is caught up in the physical reality and limitations that he misses the deeper truth of Jesus' words.

To provide some context, Nicodemus was a religious leader, a Pharisee who lived according to all the rules and regulations of the Mosaic commandments. The only way to live was through fearful obedience. And so you can imagine the questions Nicodemus struggles with when Jesus says the only way to the Kingdom of God was to be born again. What did Jesus mean by that? Deron Spoo writes that to be born again was that "God offers a new beginning to anyone, anywhere, at any moment. There are no hoops to jump through. No religious rigors to perform. Dirty lives can be made clean. Lives lived distanced from God are allowed to come home."

And there was no better way to describe the invitation to this life with God than to be born again. God's attitude toward you is not of wrath and judgment, but one of grace and love. Some are under the impression God is only here to judge us and condemn us based on whether we do "good" or "bad". John 3:16 disagrees. Some think God doesn't care about the world and is distant from us. John 3:16 disagrees. Some think we cannot be with God because of what we've done in our past. John 3:16 disagrees.

Spoo writes of an experience of when this verse became a reality for him. He writes "When I was a young man, my pastor visited my home to talk with me about my relationship with God—or rather my lack of relationship with God. He asked me to read John 3:16 and then explained very clearly to my young mind that the phrase "For God loved the world" could just as easily read, "For God loved Deron." My simple heart embraced a mysterious faith. I made a fresh start. God moved my heart toward him that day."

For God so loved you (insert your own name), that he gave his one and only Son that we might find eternal life in Him. There is no greater proof of his love than this. Romans 5:8 teaches us that God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

Reflection

If you could have a conversation with Jesus, what would you ask him? What would you talk about? What do you think Jesus would say to you?

It seems the longer we have been a follower of Jesus, we often fall into the same practices of a religious leader. It's easy for us to make our faith about practices and behavior. Take some time to meditate on this passage and remind yourself how much you are loved by Him because of what He has done for you. How does that change the way you live for Him?

adapted from Deron Spoo's "The Good Book"

Luke 15

1 Now the tax collectors and sinners were all drawing near to hear him. 2 And the Pharisees and the scribes grumbled, saying, "This man receives sinners and eats with them."

3 So he told them this parable: 4 "What man of you, having a hundred sheep, if he has lost one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the open country, and go after the one that is lost, until he finds it? 5 And when he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders, rejoicing. 6 And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and his neighbors, saying to them, 'Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep that was lost.' 7 Just so, I tell you, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance.

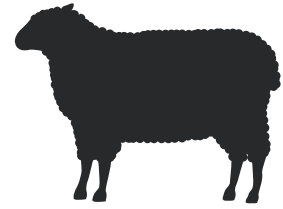
8 "Or what woman, having ten silver coins, if she loses one coin, does not light a lamp and sweep the house and seek diligently until she finds it? 9 And when she has found it, she calls together her friends and neighbors, saying, 'Rejoice with me, for I have found the coin that I had lost.' 10 Just so, I tell you, there is joy before the angels of God over one sinner who repents."

11 And he said, "There was a man who had two sons. 12 And the younger of them said to his father, 'Father, give me the share of property that is coming to me.' And he divided his property between them. 13 Not many days later, the younger son gathered all he had and took a journey into a far country, and there he squandered his property in reckless living. 14 And when he had spent everything, a severe famine arose in that country, and he began to be in need. 15 So he went and hired himself out to one of the citizens of that country, who sent him into his fields to feed pigs. 16 And he was longing to be fed with the pods that the pigs ate, and no one gave him anything.

17 "But when he came to himself, he said, 'How many of my father's hired servants have more than enough bread, but I perish here with hunger! 18 I will arise and go to my father, and I will say to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you. 19 I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Treat me as one of your hired servants.''" 20 And he arose and came to his father. But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and felt compassion, and ran and embraced him and kissed him. 21 And the son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.' 22 But the father said to his servants, 'Bring quickly the best robe, and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet. 23 And bring the fattened calf and kill it, and let us eat and celebrate. 24 For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found.' And they began to celebrate.

25 "Now his older son was in the field, and as he came and drew near to the house, he heard music and dancing. 26 And he called one of the servants and asked what these things meant. 27 And he said to him, 'Your brother has come, and your father has killed the fattened calf, because he has received him back safe and sound.' 28 But he was angry and refused to go in. His father came out and entreated him, 29 but he answered his father, 'Look, these many years I have served you, and I never disobeyed your command, yet you never gave me a young goat, that I might celebrate with my friends. 30 But when this son of yours came, who has devoured your property with prostitutes, you killed the fattened calf for him!' 31 And he said to him, 'Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours. 32 It was fitting to celebrate and be glad, for this your brother was dead, and is alive; he was lost, and is found.'"

28 | God is Looking for What He Loves



In this chapter, Jesus tells three parables that have been called “the gospel in the gospel” – the lost sheep, the lost coin, and the prodigal son.

As an agrarian society, the crowds that Jesus spoke to would know sheep and shepherding well. A shepherd would be able to look at his herd and know if one was missing, which in the case of Jesus’ parable, one was. The sheep did not mean to go astray, it just did not know. This is also the fact in our world today. Some people do not know that they are wandering from God. But He is our shepherd and wants to have a personal and protective relationship with us. We may not be aware of God all the time, but he is fully aware of us.

In Jesus’ day, houses had dirt floors and little lighting, so it seems pretty easy to lose a coin. A coin of this time would be worth a days wage, and I would be very desperate to find it if it meant that I could get my food for the day. No one would lose this on purpose; it was an accident. Today, some people don’t realize that they are neglecting their relationship with God by accident. It is easy to take our eyes off Jesus when we get so caught up in things going on in our lives: work, family, church, friends. We sometimes think that we are too busy to keep our focus on God, but He is never too busy to keep his full attention on us.

The last parable tells us about a son who wants to take his inheritance early (which usually only happens after the father dies). This is an intentional act. Prodigal means to spend freely which is what we see comes to pass with this younger son. But it seems that he is not the only one who is prodigal. We see that the son is prodigal in his finance, we see that the father is prodigal in his love. The father is able to forgive his son freely as if the son had never left in the first place. It’s amazing to think that sometimes our intentional actions can draw us so far from the Father’s love. We end up like this youngest son and at our lowest point realize that we too need to come back to the Father’s house and receive His love that He pours out so freely.

Whether it is by ignorance, accident, or intention, God never stops looking for us. In v20, when the son was a long way off, the father saw him, and he came running to embrace his son. He was waiting to celebrate the return of his lost son. God is ready and waiting to receive us home with joy!

Reflection

The groups get progressively smaller in the parables: 100 sheep, 10 coins, and 2 sons. We can see that the relationship draws closer and closer. We are the one that God is always searching for.

Meditate or listen to the lyrics of Reckless Love by Cory Asbury. How does it make you feel that He wants to have a right relationship with you? What is holding you back from experiencing His lavish love for us?

adapted from Deron Spoo’s “The Good Book”

Matthew 6

28 "And why worry about your clothing? Look at the lilies of the field and how they grow. They don't work or make their clothing,

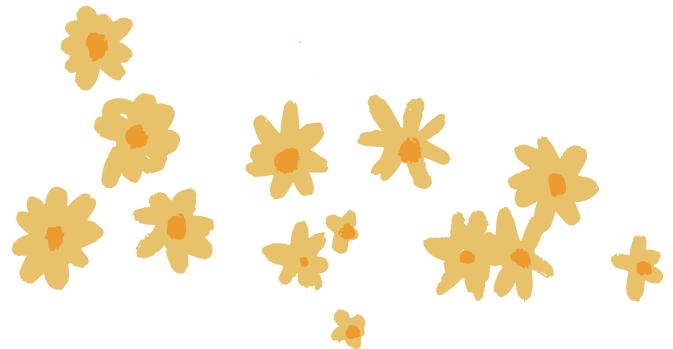
29 yet Solomon in all his glory was not dressed as beautifully as they are.

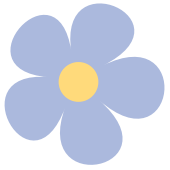
30 And if God cares so wonderfully for wildflowers that are here today and thrown into the fire tomorrow, he will certainly care for you. Why do you have so little faith?

31 "So don't worry about these things, saying, 'What will we eat? What will we drink? What will we wear?'

32 These things dominate the thoughts of unbelievers, but your heavenly Father already knows all your needs.

33 Seek the Kingdom of God above all else, and live righteously, and he will give you everything you need.





No Worries!

In today's bible passage, we get a glimpse of what it looks like to not worry and to trust in God. I understand that it's not easy at times. We can't help but worry about our families, what we care about, and what tomorrow may look like. It may even feel natural to worry because a lot of times we just care a lot. Well, today's bible passage teaches us that we don't have to worry anymore. As a matter of fact, God doesn't want our hearts and our lives to be filled with worry. And the reason is quite simple: Jesus wants us to trust that He will take care of us. If God can take care of the beautiful flowers and even feed the birds we see outside, how much more will God take care of His children?

In verse 33, we learn that all we really need to do is love God, seek Him, and His righteousness. Nothing more and nothing less! All we basically need to do is love Him and God will do the rest! He takes care of our families and knows what tomorrow will look like. God simply knows the best so let's trust in Him!

Reflection/Prayer

1. What do you often worry about?

2. Do you think God can take care of the things you are worrying about?

3. What is God asking us to do instead of worrying? (refer to Matthew 6:33)

Prayer: "Dear God, Thank you for teaching us what it looks like to not worry and to trust in You. Help us

to give our worries to you and to have the faith to believe that You know what is best for us."