



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 six

Mark 15

Matthew 28

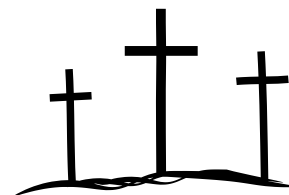
Acts 1

Acts 2

Acts 9

Acts 10

29 | Every Scar Tells a Story



"And at three Jesus cried out with a loud voice, 'Eloi, Eloi, lemá sabachtháni?' which is translated, 'My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?' Mark 15:34

All four gospel's embrace the reality of Jesus' death. While the book of Mark might not be the most thorough account, Mark was deliberate in his description. His account moves the eyes of the reader in a purposeful direction. Above the cross, on the cross, and at the foot of the cross.

1. **Above the cross.** "When it was noon, darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon" (Mark 15:33). The darkening skies communicated that the events on the cross had cosmic ramifications. Creation itself experienced the effect of Jesus' self-sacrifice. The darkness at midday was a sign of the day of the Lord (see Amos 5:18). The day of the Lord was God's chosen moment of dealing with the distance between himself and humanity.
2. **On the cross.** "At three Jesus cried out with a loud voice, 'Eloi, Eloi, lemá sabachtháni?' which is translated, 'My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?'" (Mark 15:34). The apostle Paul summarized this moment well: "[God] made the one who did not know sin [Christ] to be sin for us" (2 Cor. 5:21). We can all identify with feelings of guilt and regret when we make a mistake. And if our mistake hurts another person, we likely experience estrangement from the person we wronged. The emotions in the aftermath of sin can be overwhelming. So imagine, if you can, bearing the overwhelming weight and strain of sin and from all humanity. Jesus felt the effects from the sin of all who lived before him, all who were his contemporaries, and every person in future history, including us.
3. **At the foot of the cross.** The opening statements of the gospel of Mark is "The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God" (1:1). Mark's purpose was to introduce his readers to Jesus as he really is—God's Son. At the foot of the cross, Mark's gospel comes full circle: "When the centurion, who was standing opposite [Jesus], saw the way he breathed his last, he said, 'Truly this man was the Son of God!'" (15:39).

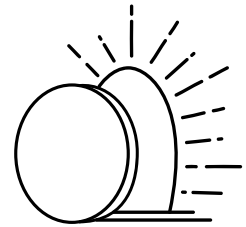
God sent Jesus to complete a task. From eternity, Jesus entered our time with something to finish. And finish it he did. Jesus accomplished something of cosmic significance. He took on your sin and mine. He opened the way to God. Jesus' scars tell these stories. The wounds on his hands, feet, head, and side show the extent and extreme of God's great love for humanity.

Reflection

Visualize yourself at the foot of the cross. You may even imagine yourself in the place of the Roman soldier. What would you have told Jesus at the moment of his crucifixion? Why not tell him now? Perhaps the most fitting statement would be to join the centurion and confess that you too recognize Jesus as the true Son of God.

adapted from Deron Spoo's "The Good Book"

30 | Beating Death



"Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" Matthew 28:19

The resurrection of Jesus changes everything. All of life, no matter your current circumstances, is infused with an eternal hope. The resurrection of Jesus brings a promise to all his followers of a new heart, a clear mind, a strong body, and a life unending in quality and quantity. The Bible doesn't merely teach life after death; the Bible teaches life instead of death.

Matthew 28 described the resurrection of Jesus as a real, historic event. While there were no witnesses to the resurrection itself—no one saw Jesus physically emerge from the tomb—there were four groups that were witnesses to the wake of the resurrection. Each group serves in a unique way to remind us that the resurrection changes everything.

The first human witnesses of the resurrection of Jesus were women, a fact not to be overlooked. In the first-century Jewish world, women weren't to be trusted. A woman's word was considered so untrustworthy that it wasn't accepted in any reputable court of law.

With this worldview in place, why would Jesus permit women to be the first witnesses to the reality of the resurrection? Why would he choose women to be the first to preach the good news? Perhaps Jesus is forcing us to consider what was truly important at this moment. It is as though he was stating boldly and for all time, "This isn't about you; this is about me. No matter who is doing the telling, the truth of my resurrection still holds."

The resurrection changed the purpose and direction of the disciples' lives. No longer was life a matter of making money, earning respect, or competing for success. Life was now redefined around knowing Jesus and making him known to the world. No longer could the disciples claim their destinies as their own. The future of every true Christ follower is firmly in the hands of God. No longer should any follower of Jesus fear the prospect of being alone. Jesus isn't a past memory but a permanent personal presence.

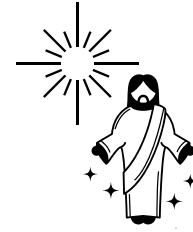
The world is a place of pressure. Circumstances constantly threaten to crush us. Popular wisdom encourages us to wear a thick skin to survive. But with Jesus' power and presence inside us, we have the substance to hold strong under even the most crushing forces. The final words of Jesus comfort us and grant us courage: "Remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age" (v. 20).

Reflection

Every week when Christians gather for worship, it's an open celebration of the resurrection of Jesus. Have you forgotten this? Have you gotten into a rut with worship? What one thing can you do to personally transform worship from a mindless routine to a meaningful recognition of Jesus' resurrection?

adapted from Deron Spoo's "The Good Book"

31 | Where Is Jesus Now?



"And when he had said these things, as they were looking on, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him out of their sight." Acts 1:9

The book of Acts was written by Luke, who also wrote the Gospel of Luke. While his gospel account recorded the life of Jesus until his resurrection, the book of Acts records the 40 days after his resurrection and the birth of the church. For it was through the church, the ministry of Jesus was to be continued. The ministry of Jesus was consumed with one topic of conversation: the Kingdom of God. Showing up over sixty times in the New Testament, the Kingdom of God simply means "God's rule in the hearts of his people." Deron Spoo continues, "the term is Jesus' way of referring to God's kingship in our lives and in our world. God wants to rule our hearts and minds. That's how his kingdom spread."

And so after his resurrection, Jesus spends 40 days reminding his followers about the importance of His Kingdom. To which Jesus tells them in verse 8, "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth." Jesus assures us that all power has been given to us to spread His kingdom to the ends of the earth. And when Jesus had said these things, as they were looking on, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him out of their sight.

Theologians describe this event as the ascension. This was the last visible event of Jesus and three important applications for us to learn. First, Jesus went to a real place. This gives us hope that we will one day join him in heaven where we can dwell in His presence for eternity. It reminds us that we will see Jesus again. It gives us the assurance that death is only the beginning of our eternity with Him. Second, Jesus went to a place called heaven as a full person. Deron Spoo writes, "Into the presence of God, Jesus took the full personhood of his humanity. He now represents all of us before the presence of God forever." And finally, the ascension assures us of his certain return. After Jesus departs, our passage shows two men in white robes, who tell the followers that Jesus will return. That just as Christ has disappeared, he will appear again.

As followers of Jesus, we are called to wait expectantly for his return. To wait is to receive the power of His Holy Spirit and be faithful to expanding the Kingdom of God in our lives. The promise of His return provides the only perspective that helps us to see beyond just the events of today or even the struggles of tomorrow. Because He will return, we can face today. Because He is coming for us, we can put our hope in Him.

Reflection

Many of us see Jesus as Savior, who has saved us from our sins. Do we also see Him as Lord over our lives? Deron Spoo writes, "the Kingdom of God is simply His rule in the hearts of his people." Does God rule in our hearts? What are the areas in our lives we can submit to His rule?

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32 | Happy Birthday to Us



"They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching, to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread, and to prayer." Acts 2:42

Acts 2 described the birth of the church. Acts tells us that "when the day of Pentecost had arrived, [the disciples] were all together in one place" (2:1). This particular Pentecost would be more than a celebration; it would be an invasion. Instead of God sending his instructions to his chosen people, he poured out his Holy Spirit on his followers: "Suddenly a sound like that of a violent rushing wind came from heaven, and it filled the whole house where [the disciples] were staying. They saw tongues like flames of fire that separated and rested on each one of them" (vv. 2-3). Two important images help us understand what was about to take place.

First was the image of wind. In the Hebrew language, wind and breath are the same word: ruach. In Genesis 2, God formed Adam from the dust of the earth and then blew breath into his body, thereby lending him the gift of life. Act 2 is God's act of breathing life into the church. The second image is that of fire, which is a symbol of power. The church, at its inception, was given the gift of power. Yet life and power were just the beginning of God's generosity to the newborn church. His ultimate gift to the church was the Holy Spirit. At Pentecost, "[the disciples] were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in different tongues, as the Spirit enabled them" (v.4).

The early church had an ironclad grip on certain core practices and priorities. Whatever was happening around them, they didn't allow themselves to be distracted from these nonnegotiables.

The church was devoted to worship: "Every day they devoted themselves to meeting together in the temple" (v. 46). The church was devoted to the practice of community. "Now all the believers were together and held all things in common" (v. 44). And they were devoted to service, allowing the love of God to spill over the edges of the church into the world around them: "Every day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved" (v. 47). The early church hung on to the practices of worship, community, and service as though life depended on it. The church was devoted to being a group of people who followed Jesus and lived life according to his teaching.

The church is a group of people who follow Jesus and choose to live according to his teaching. To do this well, we require God's personal, powerful presence in the Holy Spirit. We also need to be devoted to being rightly related to God in worship, to others in community, and to the world through service. May our churches today be just as devoted.

Reflection

Consider J. Oswald Sanders's definition of the Spirit-filled person as one who surrenders to God the entirety of his or her identity—will, mind, emotions, and strength. Based on this definition, are you Spirit filled? Why or why not? Which aspect of your identity from this four-part list do you need to surrender to God today?

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33 | When Jesus Interrupts Your Life



"Falling to the ground, he [Saul] heard a voice saying to him, 'Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?'" Acts 9:4

In Acts 9, we are introduced to Saul, better known as the disciple Paul. On his way to Damascus, he would be transformed from someone persecuting Christians to one that would eventually be an instrumental leader in the church. Paul went on to write the most New Testament books which still have a great influence on our understanding of the Gospel today.

Jesus initiated Saul's journey by interrupting him. He calls out to Saul asking why he is persecuting Him. It's important to note that Jesus considered himself one with His disciples as we see in verse 4. This is where Paul's personal relationship with Jesus began - upon hearing His voice. Saul was not the only person Jesus interrupted in Saul's transformation. Jesus also called upon Ananias, one of his disciples. Ananias was scared at first after hearing of Saul, but Jesus reassures him that this is of His doing (v15-16). Ananias is only mentioned one other time in the Bible (Acts 22), but in this small, faithful act, we may never have had Paul. Here we see God speak audibly to both Paul and Ananias, but this is usually the exception and not the norm throughout Scripture. Instead, He typically speaks to His people in three ways: Scripture, others, and circumstances. **Paul tells Timothy, in 2 Timothy 3:16-17 that "All Scripture is inspired by God and is profitable for teaching, for rebuking, for correcting, for training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work."** Reading Scripture helps us to learn to recognize God's voice so that we may be "complete." **The next way God speaks to us is through others.** We can see how God used Ananias to speak into Saul's life (v17). It is moments like these that show God is working when others offer great insight or instruction into our lives without having context, but being faithful to what God puts on their hearts. **The last method is through our circumstances.** We probably pay way too much attention to discern the action or attitude of others rather than asking "how is God speaking to me through these circumstances?" Don't be mistaken though, Scripture is the first and foremost source of God's voice. Donald Whitney puts it like this, "Scripture alone should be the standard by which all spiritual experiences are evaluated" and "all other experiences with God that do not begin with Scripture should be informed by and interpreted by Scripture." Nothing of God's Will will ever contradict the plain teaching of the Bible.

But just as Saul heard Jesus on the road and was forced to rely on Jesus (for he lost his sight), Ananias was coming to bring truth into his life. Through it all, we see Jesus coming to transform the persecutor Saul into the disciple Paul. We must be like Paul and recognize when God is speaking to us and follow Him faithfully.

Reflection

How may Jesus be "interrupting" your life today? Is He speaking to you through Scripture? Is He speaking to you through your conversations with others? What is He trying to teach you through your circumstances today? Do you recognize God's voice in your life?

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34 | God Loves the People You Can't Stand



"Again, a second time, the voice said to him [Peter], 'What God has made clean, do not call impure.'" Acts 10:15

The early church was made up of Jews. At the time of Jesus, the people were divided into Jews and Gentiles. The Jewish people were descendants of Abraham. Everyone else outside of Abraham's descendants were Gentiles. There was a clear division between these people. Even at the temple, from the diagram that Pastor Andy had shown, only the Jewish were allowed inside the temple whereas the Gentile court was outside the temple walls. Acts 10 is the story that challenged this division to welcome all people.

The chapter begins with Cornelius, a Gentile, meeting an angel, telling him that his prayers and acts were received by God (v4). Even before Cornelius considered himself a believer and was baptized (v44-48), God heard him. God gives us His full attention even before people give their lives to them. God then commands Cornelius to find Peter.

Peter (along with all of Jesus' other disciples) was Jewish. There was great enmity between the Jews and the Gentiles and that was not something that was easy to overlook by someone of Peter's upbringing (see Galatians 2:11-14). In a dream, Peter once again denies God three times (v16; see Luke 22:54-62). This time, God is offering Peter to eat ritualistically unclean animals in Jewish culture (non-Kosher) and tells him in v14, "What God has made clean, do not call impure."

At this time, when Cornelius' people came to call upon Peter, Peter was in Joppa. Joppa has come up before in the book of Jonah. Here we see two drastically different responses to God's calling to speak to the Gentiles: Jonah catches a ship heading the other way, whereas Peter willingly follows God's call.

When Cornelius meets Peter and recounts his story to Peter, Peter finally understands that his dream was not about food but about people (v34). That all can receive God's salvation through accepting and believing in the Good News of Jesus Christ. After this sermon, the Holy Spirit came down upon all of Cornelius' household and they were baptized that day.

God had used Peter to open His church to not only Jews, but to all people. This was a major turning point in the early church. This is where Paul's ministry was focused on after his conversion in Acts 9. It was this chapter that opened the door for many of us to be able to receive God's great gift of forgiveness having not been descendants of Abraham. God loves all people, so we too can love all people.

Reflection

Who is God calling you to love today? Is it an enemy? Do you see how God loves them just as much as He loves you?

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.

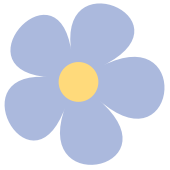
30 And if God cares so wonderfully for wildflowers that are here today and thrown into the fire tomorrow, he will certainly care for you. Why do you have so little faith?

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."