



# Lent Devotional Plan

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

# For Families

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



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



# *week six*

Mark 15

Matthew 28

Acts 1

Acts 2

Acts 9

Acts 10



# Mark 15

1 And as soon as it was morning, the chief priests held a consultation with the elders and scribes and the whole council. And they bound Jesus and led him away and delivered him over to Pilate. 2 And Pilate asked him, "Are you the King of the Jews?" And he answered him, "You have said so." 3 And the chief priests accused him of many things. 4 And Pilate again asked him, "Have you no answer to make? See how many charges they bring against you." 5 But Jesus made no further answer, so that Pilate was amazed.

6 Now at the feast he used to release for them one prisoner for whom they asked. 7 And among the rebels in prison, who had committed murder in the insurrection, there was a man called Barabbas. 8 And the crowd came up and began to ask Pilate to do as he usually did for them. 9 And he answered them, saying, "Do you want me to release for you the King of the Jews?" 10 For he perceived that it was out of envy that the chief priests had delivered him up. 11 But the chief priests stirred up the crowd to have him release for them Barabbas instead. 12 And Pilate again said to them, "Then what shall I do with the man you call the King of the Jews?" 13 And they cried out again, "Crucify him." 14 And Pilate said to them, "Why? What evil has he done?" But they shouted all the more, "Crucify him." 15 So Pilate, wishing to satisfy the crowd, released for them Barabbas, and having scourged Jesus, he delivered him to be crucified.

16 And the soldiers led him away inside the palace (that is, the governor's headquarters), and they called together the whole battalion. 17 And they clothed him in a purple cloak, and twisting together a crown of thorns, they put it on him. 18 And they began to salute him, "Hail, King of the Jews!" 19 And they were striking his head with a reed and spitting on him and kneeling down in homage to him. 20 And when they had mocked him, they stripped him of the purple cloak and put his own clothes on him. And they led him out to crucify him.

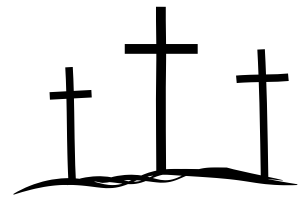
21 And they compelled a passerby, Simon of Cyrene, who was coming in from the country, the father of Alexander and Rufus, to carry his cross. 22 And they brought him to the place called Golgotha (which means Place of a Skull). 23 And they offered him wine mixed with myrrh, but he did not take it. 24 And they crucified him and divided his garments among them, casting lots for them, to decide what each should take. 25 And it was the third hour when they crucified him. 26 And the inscription of the charge against him read, "The King of the Jews." 27 And with him they crucified two robbers, one on his right and one on his left. 29 And those who passed by derided him, wagging their heads and saying, "Aha! You who would destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days, 30 save yourself, and come down from the cross!" 31 So also the chief priests with the scribes mocked him to one another, saying, "He saved others; he cannot save himself. 32 Let the Christ, the King of Israel, come down now from the cross that we may see and believe." Those who were crucified with him also reviled him.

33 And when the sixth hour had come, there was darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour. 34 And at the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, "Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani?" which means, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" 35 And some of the bystanders hearing it said, "Behold, he is calling Elijah." 36 And someone ran and filled a sponge with sour wine, put it on a reed and gave it to him to drink, saying, "Wait, let us see whether Elijah will come to take him down." 37 And Jesus uttered a loud cry and breathed his last. 38 And the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom. 39 And when the centurion, who stood facing him, saw that in this way he breathed his last, he said, "Truly this man was the Son of God!" 40 There were also women looking on from a distance, among whom were Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James the younger and of Joses, and Salome. 41 When he was in Galilee, they followed him and ministered to him, and there were also many other women who came up with him to Jerusalem.

# Mark 15

42 And when evening had come, since it was the day of Preparation, that is, the day before the Sabbath, 43 Joseph of Arimathea, a respected member of the council, who was also himself looking for the kingdom of God, took courage and went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. 44 Pilate was surprised to hear that he should have already died. And summoning the centurion, he asked him whether he was already dead. 45 And when he learned from the centurion that he was dead, he granted the corpse to Joseph. 46 And Joseph bought a linen shroud, and taking him down, wrapped him in the linen shroud and laid him in a tomb that had been cut out of the rock. And he rolled a stone against the entrance of the tomb. 47 Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Jesus saw where he was laid.

# 29 | Every Scar Tells a Story



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.

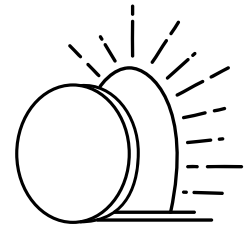
# Matthew 28

1 Now after the Sabbath, toward the dawn of the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to see the tomb. 2 And behold, there was a great earthquake, for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven and came and rolled back the stone and sat on it. 3 His appearance was like lightning, and his clothing white as snow. 4 And for fear of him the guards trembled and became like dead men. 5 But the angel said to the women, "Do not be afraid, for I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified. 6 He is not here, for he has risen, as he said. Come, see the place where he lay. 7 Then go quickly and tell his disciples that he has risen from the dead, and behold, he is going before you to Galilee; there you will see him. See, I have told you." 8 So they departed quickly from the tomb with fear and great joy, and ran to tell his disciples. 9 And behold, Jesus met them and said, "Greetings!" And they came up and took hold of his feet and worshiped him. 10 Then Jesus said to them, "Do not be afraid; go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee, and there they will see me."

11 While they were going, behold, some of the guard went into the city and told the chief priests all that had taken place. 12 And when they had assembled with the elders and taken counsel, they gave a sufficient sum of money to the soldiers 13 and said, "Tell people, 'His disciples came by night and stole him away while we were asleep.' 14 And if this comes to the governor's ears, we will satisfy him and keep you out of trouble." 15 So they took the money and did as they were directed. And this story has been spread among the Jews to this day.

16 Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. 17 And when they saw him they worshiped him, but some doubted. 18 And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 19 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, 20 teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

# 30 | Beating Death



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?



# Acts 1

1 In the first book, O Theophilus, I have dealt with all that Jesus began to do and teach, 2 until the day when he was taken up, after he had given commands through the Holy Spirit to the apostles whom he had chosen. 3 He presented himself alive to them after his suffering by many proofs, appearing to them during forty days and speaking about the kingdom of God.

4 And while staying with them he ordered them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father, which, he said, "you heard from me; 5 for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now."

6 So when they had come together, they asked him, "Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?" 7 He said to them, "It is not for you to know times or seasons that the Father has fixed by his own authority. 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." 9 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. 10 And while they were gazing into heaven as he went, behold, two men stood by them in white robes, 11 and said, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into heaven? This Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven."

12 Then they returned to Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is near Jerusalem, a Sabbath day's journey away. 13 And when they had entered, they went up to the upper room, where they were staying, Peter and John and James and Andrew, Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew, James the son of Alphaeus and Simon the Zealot and Judas the son of James. 14 All these with one accord were devoting themselves to prayer, together with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and his brothers.

15 In those days Peter stood up among the brothers (the company of persons was in all about 120) and said, 16 "Brothers, the Scripture had to be fulfilled, which the Holy Spirit spoke beforehand by the mouth of David concerning Judas, who became a guide to those who arrested Jesus. 17 For he was numbered among us and was allotted his share in this ministry." 18 (Now this man acquired a field with the reward of his wickedness, and falling headlong[d] he burst open in the middle and all his bowels gushed out. 19 And it became known to all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, so that the field was called in their own language Akeldama, that is, Field of Blood.) 20 "For it is written in the Book of Psalms,

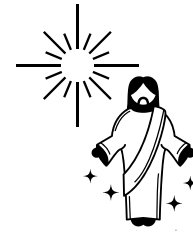
"May his camp become desolate,  
and let there be no one to dwell in it';

and

"Let another take his office.'

21 So one of the men who have accompanied us during all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, 22 beginning from the baptism of John until the day when he was taken up from us—one of these men must become with us a witness to his resurrection." 23 And they put forward two, Joseph called Barsabbas, who was also called Justus, and Matthias. 24 And they prayed and said, "You, Lord, who know the hearts of all, show which one of these two you have chosen 25 to take the place in this ministry and apostleship from which Judas turned aside to go to his own place." 26 And they cast lots for them, and the lot fell on Matthias, and he was numbered with the eleven apostles.

# 31 | Where Is Jesus Now?



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?

Read Revelation 19 and see the picture of Jesus' glorious return. How does knowing that He will return change your perspective on life? How does it change your understanding of your limited time here on earth?

adapted from Deron Spoo's "The Good Book"

# Acts 2

1 When the day of Pentecost arrived, they were all together in one place. 2 And suddenly there came from heaven a sound like a mighty rushing wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. 3 And divided tongues as of fire appeared to them and rested on each one of them. 4 And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance.

5 Now there were dwelling in Jerusalem Jews, devout men from every nation under heaven. 6 And at this sound the multitude came together, and they were bewildered, because each one was hearing them speak in his own language. 7 And they were amazed and astonished, saying, "Are not all these who are speaking Galileans? 8 And how is it that we hear, each of us in his own native language? 9 Parthians and Medes and Elamites and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, 10 Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, 11 both Jews and proselytes, Cretans and Arabians—we hear them telling in our own tongues the mighty works of God." 12 And all were amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, "What does this mean?" 13 But others mocking said, "They are filled with new wine."

14 But Peter, standing with the eleven, lifted up his voice and addressed them: "Men of Judea and all who dwell in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and give ear to my words. 15 For these people are not drunk, as you suppose, since it is only the third hour of the day. 16 But this is what was uttered through the prophet Joel:

17 "'And in the last days it shall be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams; 18 even on my male servants and female servants in those days I will pour out my Spirit, and they shall prophesy.

19 And I will show wonders in the heavens above and signs on the earth below, blood, and fire, and vapor of smoke; 20 the sun shall be turned to darkness and the moon to blood, before the day of the Lord comes, the great and magnificent day.

21 And it shall come to pass that everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.'

22 "Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you by God with mighty works and wonders and signs that God did through him in your midst, as you yourselves know— 23 this Jesus,[c] delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men. 24 God raised him up, loosing the pangs of death, because it was not possible for him to be held by it. 25 For David says concerning him,

"I saw the Lord always before me, for he is at my right hand that I may not be shaken; 26 therefore my heart was glad, and my tongue rejoiced; my flesh also will dwell in hope. 27 For you will not abandon my soul to Hades, or let your Holy One see corruption. 28 You have made known to me the paths of life; you will make me full of gladness with your presence.'

29 "Brothers, I may say to you with confidence about the patriarch David that he both died and was buried, and his tomb is with us to this day. 30 Being therefore a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him that he would set one of his descendants on his throne, 31 he foresaw and spoke about the resurrection of the Christ, that he was not abandoned to Hades, nor did his flesh see corruption. 32 This Jesus God raised up, and of that we all are witnesses. 33 Being therefore exalted at the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he has poured out this that you yourselves are seeing and hearing.

## Acts 2

34 For David did not ascend into the heavens, but he himself says,

"The Lord said to my Lord,  
"Sit at my right hand,  
35 until I make your enemies your footstool."

36 Let all the house of Israel therefore know for certain that God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified."

37 Now when they heard this they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Brothers, what shall we do?" 38 And Peter said to them, "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. 39 For the promise is for you and for your children and for all who are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself." 40 And with many other words he bore witness and continued to exhort them, saying, "Save yourselves from this crooked generation." 41 So those who received his word were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls.

42 And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. 43 And awe came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles. 44 And all who believed were together and had all things in common. 45 And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need. 46 And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts, 47 praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved.

# 32 | Happy Birthday to Us



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?



# Acts 9

1 But Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest 2 and asked him for letters to the synagogues at Damascus, so that if he found any belonging to the Way, men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem. 3 Now as he went on his way, he approached Damascus, and suddenly a light from heaven shone around him. 4 And falling to the ground, he heard a voice saying to him, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?" 5 And he said, "Who are you, Lord?" And he said, "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. 6 But rise and enter the city, and you will be told what you are to do." 7 The men who were traveling with him stood speechless, hearing the voice but seeing no one. 8 Saul rose from the ground, and although his eyes were opened, he saw nothing. So they led him by the hand and brought him into Damascus. 9 And for three days he was without sight, and neither ate nor drank.

10 Now there was a disciple at Damascus named Ananias. The Lord said to him in a vision, "Ananias." And he said, "Here I am, Lord." 11 And the Lord said to him, "Rise and go to the street called Straight, and at the house of Judas look for a man of Tarsus named Saul, for behold, he is praying, 12 and he has seen in a vision a man named Ananias come in and lay his hands on him so that he might regain his sight." 13 But Ananias answered, "Lord, I have heard from many about this man, how much evil he has done to your saints at Jerusalem. 14 And here he has authority from the chief priests to bind all who call on your name." 15 But the Lord said to him, "Go, for he is a chosen instrument of mine to carry my name before the Gentiles and kings and the children of Israel. 16 For I will show him how much he must suffer for the sake of my name." 17 So Ananias departed and entered the house. And laying his hands on him he said, "Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus who appeared to you on the road by which you came has sent me so that you may regain your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit." 18 And immediately something like scales fell from his eyes, and he regained his sight. Then he rose and was baptized; 19 and taking food, he was strengthened.

For some days he was with the disciples at Damascus. 20 And immediately he proclaimed Jesus in the synagogues, saying, "He is the Son of God." 21 And all who heard him were amazed and said, "Is not this the man who made havoc in Jerusalem of those who called upon this name? And has he not come here for this purpose, to bring them bound before the chief priests?" 22 But Saul increased all the more in strength, and confounded the Jews who lived in Damascus by proving that Jesus was the Christ.

23 When many days had passed, the Jews plotted to kill him, 24 but their plot became known to Saul. They were watching the gates day and night in order to kill him, 25 but his disciples took him by night and let him down through an opening in the wall, lowering him in a basket.

26 And when he had come to Jerusalem, he attempted to join the disciples. And they were all afraid of him, for they did not believe that he was a disciple. 27 But Barnabas took him and brought him to the apostles and declared to them how on the road he had seen the Lord, who spoke to him, and how at Damascus he had preached boldly in the name of Jesus. 28 So he went in and out among them at Jerusalem, preaching boldly in the name of the Lord. 29 And he spoke and disputed against the Hellenists. But they were seeking to kill him. 30 And when the brothers learned this, they brought him down to Caesarea and sent him off to Tarsus. 31 So the church throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria had peace and was being built up. And walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, it multiplied.

32 Now as Peter went here and there among them all, he came down also to the saints who lived at Lydda. 33 There he found a man named Aeneas, bedridden for eight years, who was paralyzed. 34 And Peter said to him, "Aeneas, Jesus Christ heals you; rise and make your bed." And immediately he rose. 35 And all the residents of Lydda and Sharon saw him, and they turned to the Lord.

## Acts 9

36 Now there was in Joppa a disciple named Tabitha, which, translated, means Dorcas. She was full of good works and acts of charity. 37 In those days she became ill and died, and when they had washed her, they laid her in an upper room. 38 Since Lydda was near Joppa, the disciples, hearing that Peter was there, sent two men to him, urging him, "Please come to us without delay." 39 So Peter rose and went with them. And when he arrived, they took him to the upper room. All the widows stood beside him weeping and showing tunics and other garments that Dorcas made while she was with them. 40 But Peter put them all outside, and knelt down and prayed; and turning to the body he said, "Tabitha, arise." And she opened her eyes, and when she saw Peter she sat up. 41 And he gave her his hand and raised her up. Then, calling the saints and widows, he presented her alive. 42 And it became known throughout all Joppa, and many believed in the Lord. 43 And he stayed in Joppa for many days with one Simon, a tanner.

# 33 | When Jesus Interrupts Your Life



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?

# Acts 10

At Caesarea there was a man named Cornelius, a centurion of what was known as the Italian Cohort, 2 a devout man who feared God with all his household, gave alms generously to the people, and prayed continually to God. 3 About the ninth hour of the day[a] he saw clearly in a vision an angel of God come in and say to him, "Cornelius." 4 And he stared at him in terror and said, "What is it, Lord?" And he said to him, "Your prayers and your alms have ascended as a memorial before God. 5 And now send men to Joppa and bring one Simon who is called Peter. 6 He is lodging with one Simon, a tanner, whose house is by the sea." 7 When the angel who spoke to him had departed, he called two of his servants and a devout soldier from among those who attended him, 8 and having related everything to them, he sent them to Joppa.

9 The next day, as they were on their journey and approaching the city, Peter went up on the housetop about the sixth hour to pray. 10 And he became hungry and wanted something to eat, but while they were preparing it, he fell into a trance 11 and saw the heavens opened and something like a great sheet descending, being let down by its four corners upon the earth. 12 In it were all kinds of animals and reptiles and birds of the air. 13 And there came a voice to him: "Rise, Peter; kill and eat." 14 But Peter said, "By no means, Lord; for I have never eaten anything that is common or unclean." 15 And the voice came to him again a second time, "What God has made clean, do not call common." 16 This happened three times, and the thing was taken up at once to heaven.

17 Now while Peter was inwardly perplexed as to what the vision that he had seen might mean, behold, the men who were sent by Cornelius, having made inquiry for Simon's house, stood at the gate 18 and called out to ask whether Simon who was called Peter was lodging there. 19 And while Peter was pondering the vision, the Spirit said to him, "Behold, three men are looking for you.

20 Rise and go down and accompany them without hesitation, for I have sent them." 21 And Peter went down to the men and said, "I am the one you are looking for. What is the reason for your coming?" 22 And they said, "Cornelius, a centurion, an upright and God-fearing man, who is well spoken of by the whole Jewish nation, was directed by a holy angel to send for you to come to his house and to hear what you have to say." 23 So he invited them in to be his guests.

The next day he rose and went away with them, and some of the brothers from Joppa accompanied him. 24 And on the following day they entered Caesarea. Cornelius was expecting them and had called together his relatives and close friends. 25 When Peter entered, Cornelius met him and fell down at his feet and worshiped him. 26 But Peter lifted him up, saying, "Stand up; I too am a man." 27 And as he talked with him, he went in and found many persons gathered. 28 And he said to them, "You yourselves know how unlawful it is for a Jew to associate with or to visit anyone of another nation, but God has shown me that I should not call any person common or unclean. 29 So when I was sent for, I came without objection. I ask then why you sent for me."

30 And Cornelius said, "Four days ago, about this hour, I was praying in my house at the ninth hour, and behold, a man stood before me in bright clothing 31 and said, 'Cornelius, your prayer has been heard and your alms have been remembered before God. 32 Send therefore to Joppa and ask for Simon who is called Peter. He is lodging in the house of Simon, a tanner, by the sea.' 33 So I sent for you at once, and you have been kind enough to come. Now therefore we are all here in the presence of God to hear all that you have been commanded by the Lord."

# Acts 10

34 So Peter opened his mouth and said: "Truly I understand that God shows no partiality, 35 but in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him. 36 As for the word that he sent to Israel, preaching good news of peace through Jesus Christ (he is Lord of all), 37 you yourselves know what happened throughout all Judea, beginning from Galilee after the baptism that John proclaimed: 38 how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power. He went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him. 39 And we are witnesses of all that he did both in the country of the Jews and in Jerusalem. They put him to death by hanging him on a tree, 40 but God raised him on the third day and made him to appear, 41 not to all the people but to us who had been chosen by God as witnesses, who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead. 42 And he commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that he is the one appointed by God to be judge of the living and the dead. 43 To him all the prophets bear witness that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name."

44 While Peter was still saying these things, the Holy Spirit fell on all who heard the word. 45 And the believers from among the circumcised who had come with Peter were amazed, because the gift of the Holy Spirit was poured out even on the Gentiles. 46 For they were hearing them speaking in tongues and extolling God. Then Peter declared, 47 "Can anyone withhold water for baptizing these people, who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?" 48 And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Then they asked him to remain for some days.



# 34 | God Loves the People You Can't Stand



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?

# 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.

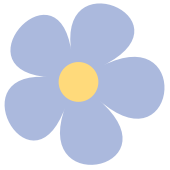
30 And if God cares so wonderfully for wildflowers that are here today and thrown into the fire tomorrow, he will certainly care for you. Why do you have so little faith?

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."