

Devotionals for week of March 17, 2024

Our devotional section provides additional spiritual input for helping you go further and deeper in your journey with the Lord. It is our desire, our hope, and our prayer that this devotional section will be a helpful Spiritual Life tool for you to utilize on a regular basis. Each day's devotional will typically consist of Scripture, commentary, and a prayer response. Current Devotionals can be accessed each day online at www.capecodchurch.com/devotionals or by using the Cape Cod Church App (select "Connect" on the bottom main page and then "Daily Devotional" on next page). Be sure to check Saturday and Sundays for special postings of poems, stories, etc. Printed copies from the prior week are available at the Connection Desk.

God's Expanding Love – The Path of Revival & Spiritual Awakening – A Devotional Journey

We are on a 12-week Devotional Journey, entitled, "God's Expanding Love" and it puts before us "The Path of Revival & Spiritual Awakening." This path shows us a "superior kind of love" and its intended role in human existence. In actuality, our 12-week Devotional Journey consists of three four-week series:

Devotional Series One - "God's Amazing Love" - Love begins with God. 1 John in Scripture declares that "God is love." It doesn't merely say that God has love or God is loving, or God gives love. It says, "God is love." Through the gift of redemption in Jesus Christ, those who truly believe are established in a forever love relationship with God. Out of our relational experience with our God who is love, we are transformed through his amazing love.

Devotional Series Two - "God's Love Extended" - We are called to share this amazing love with a world of people who have yet to be established in a forever love relationship with God.

Devotional Series Three - "God's Loving People" - Staying close to God with the ongoing experience of his amazing love and our extending that love to people in the world who desperately need God, are both things that we easily fall short in. God established his church for the very purpose of being the catalyst we all need for our staying vitally close to God and for our effectively reaching the world for Christ. It is through the encouragement of loving and supportive relationships with fellow-believers that we are powerfully helped to stay close to our loving God and to touch the world with his redemptive love.

Devotional Series Three - "God's Loving People"

Today we begin week four of a four-week Devotional Series entitled, "God's Loving People." Week one: God's Kingdom Team. Week two: Being the Body of Christ. Week three: Called to Koinonia. Week four: Led by Faith. We begin week four: Led by Faith, with the following:

Monday – God's Loving People – Led by Faith – Trusting in God's Promises Today

But He led forth His own people like sheep and guided them in the wilderness like a flock; He led them safely, so that they did not fear; but the sea engulfed their enemies. So He brought them to His holy land, to this hill country which His right hand had gained. Psalm 78:52-54

Today's thoughts from today's verses:

The Scriptures designate the Jewish people as God's chosen people and the land of Canaan as the promised land. In our country it was popular years ago to view the United States of America as a modern "chosen people" and "promised land." "America the Beautiful" says, "America, America, God shed His grace on Thee." While not as common a view these days in terms of Divine exaltation, it is still popular to think of our nation with a rather exalted image when it comes to power, privilege, and provision. It's not hard to see how parallels between the origins of Israel and America were made and why borrowing the "chosen people" and "promised land" designations came about. In this week's Devotional we turn to the account of God's chosen people entering the promised land. While we certainly are not borrowing the "chosen people" and "promised land" designations for ourselves as a church with our relocation and growth in more recent years, there is much to learn from God's relocation project of His people in the book of Joshua. The passage above speaks of God's people getting out of Egypt and into the promised land, but it is said in terms that show that what happened was absolutely and totally a work of God. How to live by faith individually and collectively so that what happens going forward is absolutely and totally a work of God is our focus this week.

Today's prayer response from today's thoughts:

Lord, I want to discover the promises you have for your people today and trust you for them fully. Help me to understand and give myself to all you have in store for us as your people today. I pray that the work that you alone can do will be done in me and your church like never before. Your will be done for your honor and glory. Amen!

Tuesday – God's Loving People – Led by Faith – Overcoming Past Failures Now

After the death of Moses the Lord's servant, the Lord spoke to Joshua son of Nun, Moses' assistant. He said, "Moses my servant is dead. Therefore, the time has come for you to lead these people, the Israelites, across the Jordan River into the land I am giving them. Joshua 1:1-2

But Christ *was faithful* as a Son over His house—whose house we are, if we hold fast our confidence and the boast of our hope firm until the end. Therefore, just as the Holy Spirit says, "Today if you hear His voice, do not harden your hearts as when they provoked me, as in the day of trial in the wilderness, where your fathers tried Me by testing Me, and saw My works for forty years. Therefore, I was angry with this generation, and said, 'They always go astray in their heart, and they did not know My ways'; as I swore in My wrath, 'They shall not enter My rest'" So we see that they were not able to enter because of unbelief. Hebrews 3:6-19

But the Lord was angry with me on your account, and would not listen to me; and the Lord said to me, 'Enough! Speak to Me no more of this matter. Go up to the top of Pisgah and lift up your eyes to the west and north and south and east, and see *it* with your eyes, for you shall not cross over this Jordan. But charge Joshua and encourage him and strengthen him, for he shall go across at the head of this people, and he will give them as an inheritance the land which you will see.' Deuteronomy 3:26-28

Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of *it* yet; but one thing *I do*: forgetting what *lies* behind and reaching forward to what *lies* ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. Philippians 3:13-14

Today's thoughts from today's verses:

Joshua is about to lead a new generation into the land that God had promised. While there will be new failures, it is this new generation that God considers prepared for entering the promised land. There was a lot that happened

between God's bringing His people forth from Egypt and this moment when He is about to bring them into the promised land. The generation that went before this new generation was not permitted to enter the promised land because of past failures. The adults of this new generation came out of Egypt as children and saw the mistakes of the generation that went before them. They are like the anchor leg of a relay team who will run the last leg of a race. It is absolutely essential that they finish by faith. Getting into the promised land will require of them significant faith dependence on God for bringing them across the Jordan River. For the leadership and for the people they serve, crossing the Jordan River will be an important part of their being a people who live by faith.

The significant thing here is that a new generation of God's chosen people will be led over the Jordan and into the promised land by new leadership because of past failures of both the previous generation and its leaders. The Scripture above attributes unbelief on the part of the previous generation as being the reason for God's anger toward them and the consequence of not being allowed to enter the promised land. In addition, the Lord was angry with Moses when at a particular point during the time he led God's people in the wilderness, he let his own anger toward the people keep him from properly carrying out God's instructions for providing water out of the rock at Meribah. Because of this disobedience/unbelief, God did not permit Moses to enter into the promised land and instead brought his life to an end after being allowed at least to gaze upon the promised land from the peak of Pisgah on Mount Hor.

Past mistakes of those who have gone before or even our own mistakes in the past can powerfully interfere with our responding in faith to God's promises for us today. How easily our view is captured by a backwards focus instead of a forward one that helps us journey toward the fullness of what God has in store for us. We do look back but only to learn from past failures so that we can go forward in ways that keep us from repeating those failures and allow us to experience the victory of faith in the actual fulfillment of what God has promised to bring about for us.

Today's prayer response from today's thoughts:

Lord, I want to forget what *lies* behind and to reach forward to what *lies* ahead. I want to press on toward the goal for the prize of your upward call. I know I don't have to be stuck in the past only dreaming of the future. Help me to be released from the past. Help me to not repeat the past. Help me to press on victoriously into the fullness of all you have promised me. Amen!

Wednesday – God's Loving People – Led by Faith – Blazing a Trail for Future Generations

So Joshua told the Israelites, "Come and listen to what the Lord your God says The priests will carry the Ark of the Lord, the Lord of all the earth. As soon as their feet touch the water, the flow of water will be cut off upstream, and the river will stand up like a wall." So the people left their camp to cross the Jordan, and the priests who were carrying the Ark of the Covenant went ahead of them. It was the harvest season, and the Jordan was overflowing its banks. But as soon as the feet of the priests who were carrying the Ark touched the water at the river's edge, the water above that point began backing up a great distance away at a town called Adam, which is near Zarethan. And the water below that point flowed on to the Dead Sea until the riverbed was dry. Then all the people crossed over near the town of Jericho. Meanwhile, the priests who were carrying the Ark of the Lord's Covenant stood on dry ground in the middle of the riverbed as the people passed by. They waited there until the whole nation of Israel had crossed the Jordan on dry ground. Joshua 3:9, 13-17

But, beloved, we are convinced of better things concerning you, and things that accompany salvation, though we are speaking in this way. For God is not unjust so as to forget your work and the love which you have shown toward His name, in having ministered and in still ministering to the saints. And we desire that each one of you show the same diligence so as to realize the full assurance of hope until the end, so that you will not be sluggish, but imitators of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises. Hebrews 6:9-12

Listen, O my people, to my instruction; incline your ears to the words of my mouth. I will open my mouth in a

parable; I will utter dark sayings of old, which we have heard and known, and our fathers have told us. We will not conceal them from their children, but tell to the generation to come the praises of the Lord, and His strength and His wondrous works that He has done. For He established a testimony in Jacob and appointed a law in Israel, which He commanded our fathers that they should teach them to their children, that the generation to come might know, *even* the children *yet* to be born, *that* they may arise and tell *them* to their children, that they should put their confidence in God and not forget the works of God, but keep His commandments, and not be like their fathers, a stubborn and rebellious generation, a generation that did not prepare its heart and whose spirit was not faithful to God. Psalm 78:1-8

Today's thoughts from today's verses:

The journey of our lives includes special junctures that we seek to reach and how often the last stretch for getting to those junctures requires the overcoming of a significant obstacle. This was the case for the Israelites. The significant obstacle looming before them that must be overcome before entering the promised land was getting an entire nation across the overflowing Jordan River. The Lord revealed the way He would provide for them to get across. When the feet of the priests carrying the Ark of the Covenant would touch the water at the river's edge the waters of the Jordan River would part for all of them to cross into the promised land. What happens next is where we see "living by faith" modeled for us. We are told the people left their camp (by faith) to cross the Jordan. We are also told that the priests were out in front of them and that they stepped into the water (by faith) and the waters were parted. The people crossed over (by faith) while passing by the priests who stood (by faith) in the middle of the riverbed on dry ground. Ultimately, the whole nation of Israel crossed the Jordan River onto the dry ground of the promised land. Truly the journey of getting to and entering the promised land was a wonderful exercise in "living by faith."

Just as the generation that died in the wilderness was an example of unbelief to the new generation that Joshua led into the promised land over the Jordan River, so this new generation was an example of "living by faith" to their children, to subsequent generations, and even to us today. We see in the Scripture above that God calls us to be imitators of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises. Living by faith must permeate every aspect of our walk with God individually and collectively. When we look back at the relocation of our church a number of years ago, we readily see that "living by faith" permeated the entire process. The vision of our church at that time saw our new facility as a means for positioning ourselves to reach and equip people with true faith in ever increasing numbers for generations to come. And now we see that we have been fulfilling this vision and we have been reaching people in increasing numbers. May it be that we remain positioned to do so for years to come. May we so "live by faith" in this regard that again and again in the words of the Scripture above, "children yet to be born will arise and tell to their children the praises of the Lord, and His strength and His wondrous works that He has done – may they tell them to put their confidence in God and not forget the works of God, but keep His commandments and not be like some past generations who were stubborn and rebellious, did not prepare their hearts, and whose spirit was not faithful to God."

Today's prayer response from today's thoughts:

Lord, help me to faithfully share your praises, your strength, and your wondrous works which you have done. May I be a faithful example of one who thoroughly puts my confidence in you and keeps your commandments fully. Thank you for the blessing of being a part of a church that is increasingly reaching people for Christ, is positioned to do so for generations to come, and consistently seeks to "live by faith" and stand on your promises together. Amen!

Thursday – God's Loving People – Led by Faith - Staying on Course with Our True Mission

Now the gates of Jericho were tightly shut because the people were afraid of the Israelites. No one was allowed to go out or in. But the Lord said to Joshua, "I have given you Jericho, its king, and all its strong warriors. You and

your fighting men should march around the town once a day for six days. Seven priests will walk ahead of the Ark, each carrying a ram's horn. On the seventh day you are to march around the town seven times, with the priests blowing the horns. When you hear the priests give one long blast on the rams' horns, have all the people shout as loud as they can. Then the walls of the town will collapse, and the people can charge straight into the town.”
Joshua 6:1-5

Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of *it* yet; but one thing *I do*: forgetting what *lies* behind and reaching forward to what *lies* ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. Let us therefore, as many as are mature, have this attitude; and if in anything you have a different attitude, God will reveal that also to you; however, let us keep living by that same *standard* to which we have attained.
Philippians 3:13-16

Therefore, do not throw away your confidence, which has a great reward. For you have need of endurance, so that when you have done the will of God, you may receive what was promised. For yet in a very little while, He who is coming will come, and will not delay. But My righteous one shall live by faith; and if he shrinks back, My soul has no pleasure in him. But we are not of those who shrink back to destruction, but of those who have faith to the preserving of the soul. Hebrews 10:35-39

Today's thoughts from today's verses:

The Israelites getting into the promised land was one thing, but dwelling there safely and securely was another matter. While the promised land was a land flowing with milk and honey, it was also a land occupied by godless people who lived in ways that were fundamentally opposed to the life of faith and obedience God was seeking to produce in His chosen people. So, the inhabitants of the land were a threat to God's chosen people both physically and spiritually. God's plan for His people included conquering and displacing the inhabitants of the promised land and it began with Jericho. Our opening passage at the beginning of the week came from Psalm 78 and included these words, “So He brought them to His holy land, to this hill country which His right hand had gained.” The words, “He brought them to His holy land” refer to Israel's getting into the promised land. This truly required faith dependence and was an exercise of “living by faith.” Israel “occupying” the land by faith is represented by the words, “This hill country which His right hand had gained.” The story of Jericho is the start of God gaining the land by His right hand and it truly required faith dependence. It was the beginning of Israel exercising faith in God's provision that they would need to repeat over and over again throughout the long process of occupying the promised land.

Israel's journey of “getting there” is all for the purpose of “being there.” What Israel did, once they were in the land, would become their legacy. As Israel occupied the land much of their legacy was determined by the opposition they faced and how they handled it. From the Scripture above we can say that opposition is anything that keeps us from pressing toward the goal and causes us to fall below the standard to which we have attained. While many of the difficulties Israel faced came from without, the difficulties we need to be concerned about are ones that can come from within ourselves. Here are some of the internal difficulties we need to be cautious about: It is easy for a church that is growing in leaps and bounds to become proud. It is possible for a church with such an extensive and well-equipped campus to gravitate in the direction of becoming a Christian sub-culture. And it is possible for Christian service and activity to become a substitute for true spiritual connection with God. Such things happen when, as it says in the Scripture above, we shrink back from living by faith in God alone whose presence, power, and provision can miraculously protect, sustain, and enable us to “occupy” victoriously. Living by faith and “occupying” well for the long haul are matters of diligence and endurance and these are gifts from God that we desperately need Him to bestow on us. May He mercifully grant us the diligence and endurance we will need to face and handle all dangers.

Today's prayer response from today's thoughts:

Lord, deliver me and our church from pride in success, isolation from the world, and substitutes for you. I know these things slip in when we shrink back from genuinely “living by faith.” Grant us the gifts of diligence and endurance so that in faith dependence we “occupy” well for the long haul. Be merciful to us for our good, your kingdom’s sake, and the honor and glory of your holy name. Amen!

Friday – God’s Loving People – Led by Faith – Succeeding through God’s Strength Alone

Study this Book of Instruction continually. Meditate on it day and night so you will be sure to obey everything written in it. Only then will you prosper and succeed in all you do. This is my command—be strong and courageous! Do not be afraid or discouraged. For the Lord your God is with you wherever you go.” Joshua 1:8-9

I shall remember the deeds of the Lord; surely I will remember Your wonders of old. I will meditate on all Your work and muse on Your deeds. Your way, O God, is holy; what god is great like our God? You are the God who works wonders; You have made known Your strength among the peoples. You have by Your power redeemed Your people, the sons of Jacob and Joseph. Psalm 77:11-15

Today's thoughts from today's verses:

Our Scripture above reminds us that God is our redeemer and that He is with us for the long haul. We are absolutely dependent on God for our redemption and meditating on His Word and remembering His deeds and wonders will help us to keep the following in mind: dependence on God for redemption and *everything else* is what a life of faith is all about. Our journey of faith included relocating our church and then occupying well our new campus which we have been doing well for some time now. The challenge remains for us to continue doing this as we keep “living by faith.” We must not confuse “living by faith” with being strong. Being strong can happen without God. We can be strong in terms of power, privilege, and provision and bypass God. If we “live by faith” as a church we will be strong as a church in the things that truly matter to God.

If this is the cry and prayer of our hearts, God will supply everything we need. May God bless us richly as we labor together in faith. What has taken place in the past, what we are experiencing now, and what we anticipate will lie ahead for us as a church can only be attributed to the working of God and would be impossible without Him. We can only imagine what God will accomplish as we go forward with a focused faith. Listening to God’s voice alone, doing only what He wants, and relying fully on His power is crucial. Such vigilance will ensure that we avoid the traps that lie before us as well. If we will faithfully seek Him, depend on Him totally, and long for Him to be glorified and honored, we will know His continued presence, power, victory, and blessing in our church and in our lives.

Such a mission as ours is not an impossible one. God gave it to us, He has been at the center of it from the beginning, and He is out ahead of us paving the way for the future. He has been faithful and we can be confident that He will fulfill the promises He has made to us. There is nothing to fear when we rely on the God of all possibility to do in us and through us that which is impossible for us to do on our own. Praise God that we are not alone. We are united with Him and each other and are going forward together in the joyous mission of reaching people for Christ and helping them to live fully for God and His kingdom by faith.

Today's prayer response from today's thoughts:

Lord, I know that in my life and in the life of our church you are out ahead paving the way for the future as we seek to be your loving people who are genuinely led by faith. Being able to listen to your voice alone, do only what you want, and rely solely on your power is the cry of my heart. Help us all to faithfully seek you, depend on you totally, and long for you to be glorified and honored. Grant that we will know your continued presence, power, victory, and blessing in our church and in our lives. Amen!

Wrap Up:

Right after Christmas we began a four-week Devotional Series entitled, “God’s Amazing Love.” That was followed by a four-week Devotional Series entitled “God’s Love Extended.” Today we wrap up our third and final four-week Devotional Series entitled, “God’s Loving People.” In actuality, these three four-week series make up one large series on a “superior kind of love” and its intended role in human existence.

Love begins with God. 1 John in Scripture declares that “God is love.” It doesn’t merely say that God has love or God is loving or God gives love. It says, “God is love.” Through the gift of redemption in Jesus Christ, those who truly believe are established in a forever love relationship with God. Out of our relational experience with our God who is love we are transformed through his amazing love (Series one – “God’s Amazing Love”). We are then called to share this amazing love with a world of people who have yet to be established in a forever love relationship with God (Series two – “God’s Love Extended”). However, our staying close to God with the ongoing experience of his amazing love and our extending that love to people in the world who desperately need God, are both things that we easily fall short in. God established his church for the very purpose of being the catalyst (Series three – “God’s Loving People”) we all need for our staying vitally close to God and for our effectively reaching the world for Christ. It is through the encouragement of loving and supportive relationships with fellow-believers that we are powerfully helped to stay close to our loving God and to touch the world with his redemptive love.