

## **Week 10 Daily Devotional**

### **I. Prayer to enter the Lord's presence:**

*Be still for a moment. "Lord, I give the day that is now past to you. It is yours. I give the day that is to come to you; help me to see where you are working and to join you there. Speak to me during these moments. I commit them and myself to you."*

### **II. Prayer of Confession:**

*"Lord, you are faithful to forgive me and cleanse me of my sin when I confess it to you. I confess my sin(s) of \_\_\_\_\_. Thank you for forgiveness." (1 John 1:9)*

### **III. Prayer of Thanksgiving:**

*Choose to be thankful, speak out loud of what God has done.*

*"Thank you, Father, for \_\_\_\_\_. Fill my heart and my mouth with gratitude throughout this day."*

## **IV. Scripture Reflection**

### **DAY 1**

#### **Read:**

Luke 1:1-4 Many have undertaken to draw up an account of the things that have been fulfilled among us, just as they were handed down to us by those who from the first were eyewitnesses and servants of the word. Therefore, since I myself have carefully investigated everything from the beginning, it seemed good also to me to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, so that you may know the certainty of the things you have been taught.

Luke 2:1-14 In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world. (This was the first census that took place while Quirinius was governor of Syria.) And everyone went to his own town to register. So Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem the town of David, because he belonged to the house and line of David. He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child. While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn. And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord. This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger." Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host

appeared with the angel, praising God and saying, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men on whom his favor rests."

**Reflect:**

The four gospels, Matthew, Mark, Luke and John are something like biographies yet they are much more. A biography may allow you to know something about a person but the gospels tell us how to actually have a relationship with a living person, Jesus. The gospel writers did not "make stuff up" or try to write "hype." Luke was a physician who did careful, first person research on the life and impact of Jesus. What he found was fantastic and outside the bounds of the "normal" but it was factual and within the bounds of the possible. Possible because it involved God, the one who can do all things.

**Respond:**

Are there some ways in which you have experienced a diminished confidence in the factual reality of the gospel? What are the sources of that loss of confidence? Perhaps they are news reports, scientific claims, testimony of disillusioned Christians, or unbelieving musicians or philosophers? Read Dr. Luke's opening again...there is no hyperbole there, no breathless religious hysteria. Pay attention to certain phrases like, "careful investigation" "orderly account" "eyewitnesses" and "confidence." Use your mind to reflect on reasons for your own confidence in the reality of the gospel. Think.

## **DAY 2**

### **Read:**

Luke 4:16-20 He went to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, and on the Sabbath day he went into the synagogue, as was his custom. And he stood up to read. The scroll of the prophet Isaiah was handed to him. Unrolling it, he found the place where it is written: "The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor." Then he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant and sat down. The eyes of everyone in the synagogue were fastened on him, and he began by saying to them, "Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing."

### **Reflect:**

Isaiah lived centuries before the fall of the Southern Kingdom to Babylon and yet he "saw" it in the distant future. On the other side of that fall and exile he saw a return to the land of promise and then even further out still he saw the King who would free all who were exiles into sin. Jesus stood in the middle of the Jewish place of worship on their key day of worship and read from Israel's greatest prophet, Isaiah, and said "Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing." He was not just saying a single passage was fulfilled but that the entire Old Testament is fulfilled in his life.

### **Respond:**

Think back to where we have been so far this year. Creation, fall, the rise of the line of Abraham, into Egypt, slavery, rescue from Egypt, wilderness wanderings, into Canaan, the Judges, the Kings, the Prophets, exile, return...then centuries of silence. Finally in the first century a man is born in the City of David who is the fulfillment of all human history before him and the point of all of human history to follow him. Your life today is a part of that history. Will you today make your life about Jesus? He is the point of human history so he is the point of this day. What might that mean for you today?

## **DAY 3**

### **Read:**

Acts 1:8 "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

Acts 2:1 When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. <sup>2</sup> Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. <sup>3</sup> They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. <sup>4</sup> All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them.

Acts 28:30 For two whole years Paul stayed there in his own rented house and welcomed all who came to see him. <sup>31</sup> Boldly and without hindrance he preached the kingdom of God and taught about the Lord Jesus Christ.

### **Reflect:**

Acts 1:8 outlines the entire book geographically and spiritually. The church would begin in Jerusalem then break out into the surrounding areas and eventually reach to the ends of the known world. This is the geographic story but the spiritual story is "you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you." The power was given so they would be effective witnesses to the reality of the gospel. This was not a man-made movement it was a "Spirit-powered" one. The book is called the "Acts of the Apostles" but it is better called the "Acts of the Spirit." It is important to note that the church only broke out of Jerusalem and into wider geographic and demographics because of persecution. God used the bad actions of enemies of the gospel to further his powerful purposes. The book ends with Paul in house arrest waiting what would be his eventual death, boldly and with no hindrances, making the Gospel known in the very heart of the Roman Empire.

### **Respond:**

What is holding back the Spirit's power in your life? It may not be what you think. Your personal challenges are not holding you back from effective ministry...they are likely what he wants to use to unleash powerful ministry. What trouble, difficulty, opposition, or suffering is present in your life that God wants to use to "unhinder" his power in your life? Are you fighting God on this rather than asking him to "unleash" his power through your weakness?

## **DAY 4**

### **Read:**

Jer. 2:12-13 Be appalled at this, O heavens, and shudder with great horror," declares the LORD. "My people have committed two sins: They have forsaken me, the spring of living water, and have dug their own cisterns, broken cisterns that cannot hold water.

John 4:5-24 So he came to a town in Samaria, near the plot of ground Jacob had given to his son Joseph. Jacob's well was there, and Jesus, tired as he was from the journey, sat down by the well. It was about the sixth hour. When a Samaritan woman came to draw water, Jesus said to her, "Will you give me a drink?" (His disciples had gone into the town to buy food.) The Samaritan woman said to him, "You are a Jew and I am a Samaritan woman. How can you ask me for a drink?" (For Jews do not associate with Samaritans.) Jesus answered her, "If you knew the gift of God and who it is that asks you for a drink, you would have asked him and he would have given you living water." "Sir," the woman said, "you have nothing to draw with and the well is deep. Where can you get this living water? Are you greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well and drank from it himself, as did also his sons and his flocks and herds?" Jesus answered, "Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks the water I give him will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life." The woman said to him, "Sir, give me this water so that I won't get thirsty and have to keep coming here to draw water." He told her, "Go, call your husband and come back." "I have no husband," she replied. Jesus said to her, "You are right when you say you have no husband. The fact is, you have had five husbands, and the man you now have is not your husband. What you have just said is quite true." Jesus declared, "Believe me, woman, a time is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. You Samaritans worship what you do not know; we worship what we do know, for salvation is from the Jews. Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks. God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in spirit and in truth." The woman said, "I know that Messiah" (called Christ) "is coming. When he comes, he will explain everything to us." Then Jesus declared, "I who speak to you am he."

### **Reflect:**

Jeremiah sums up the Bible story from the perspective of humanities failures. a) Forsaking the source our what our souls need. b) Futile attempts to create life for ourselves apart from God. Jesus' encounter with the Samaritan woman at the well beautifully illustrates this reality. The woman had tried to use relationships with various men to quench the thirst of her soul. This had not worked, yet she continued to try to make it work. It was similar to the laborious and endless work of returning to the physical well day after day because the effects of the water were temporary...they did not "work." Jesus offered her living water for her soul. What he offered her was permanent relief for her thirsty soul.

**Respond:**

What broken wells are you digging? The symptoms could be anger, jealousy, unforgiveness, passing judgment, trying to get "life" from relationships, over eating, over working, under working, pornography, or any number of negative effects. The cause of these things and much more is what the Prophets called "idolatry." These idols are what Jeremiah was referring to when he spoke of broken wells. Consider what is at the "bottom" of the struggles on the surface of your life. If you will think and pray about it you will likely find a "broken well" to be repented of.

## **DAY 5**

### **Read:**

Ezek. 10:18-19 Then the glory of the LORD departed from over the threshold of the temple and stopped above the cherubim. While I watched, the cherubim spread their wings and rose from the ground, and as they went, the wheels went with them. They stopped at the entrance to the east gate of the LORD's house, and the glory of the God of Israel was above them.

Ezek. 11:22-24 Then the cherubim, with the wheels beside them, spread their wings, and the glory of the God of Israel was above them. The glory of the LORD went up from within the city and stopped above the mountain east of it. The Spirit lifted me up and brought me to the exiles in Babylonia in the vision given by the Spirit of God. Then the vision I had seen went up from me, and I told the exiles everything the LORD had shown me.

Acts 2:1-4 When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them.

1 Cor. 6:19-20 Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your body.

### **Reflect:**

The visible presence of God fell on the mountain as God gave the law to Moses. Then it fell on the Tabernacle as the people journeyed with God through the wilderness. Then it fell on the Temple as God's people were permanently in the place God had promised to bring them and dwell with them. But then in Ezekiel the visible presence of God, his moving royal throne, is seen to depart from the Temple and head east to where Ezekiel and the other exiles were living in Babylon. Of course God is omnipresent...he is everywhere and not spatially limited like we are. But the visible manifestation of his presence was important to communicate to his people the important reality that he would be with them when they were committed to him. In Acts we see the visible manifestation of God's presence coming to individual believers at Pentecost. Pentecost was when the Jewish people celebrated the day God gave the law to Moses. Now God is doing a greater thing...he is coming to dwell directly in his people.

### **Respond:**

Read 1 Cor. 6:19-20 again. Ponder the reality that your physical body is the temple dwelling place of the Holy Spirit. What are you doing with that "Holy Temple"? Are you doing what

you want with your thoughts, your words, your actions? Are you doing what the "Holy One" wants done with his "Holy Temple."? Go into your day remembering you are the temple of the Holy Spirit.

**V. Prayer for others:**

*Pray specifically for the concerns of your life and the lives of others.*

**VI. Prayer of commitment:**

*"Lord God, I commit to love you with all my heart and with all my soul and with all my strength and with all my mind and to love my neighbor as myself. Empower me today to love you and others with everything that I am." (Luke 10:27)*

**This Month's Scripture Memory:**

Matthew 6:9-13

"This, then, is how you should pray: "Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, 10 your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.

11 Give us today our daily bread. 12 And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.

13 And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.