

God's Story Our Story



December 27, 2015

Devotion: Use this resource at home to guide your household's daily devotions. You can do this alone, as a couple, as a family; in the morning, during the day, or at night. Find a routine that works best for you.

Pray: Light a candle and open your devotion time with a prayer.

Voice of heaven, speak in us this day. Stir our hearts with your Word. Let us find both our happiness and our power in you. Amen.

Reflect: Reflect on the key verse from Sunday's reading.

I have baptized you with water; but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit. Mark 1:8

Study: Study the reading and consider the background.

Mark's gospel begins with a fiery preacher and a challenging message. No silent night here, no gift-bearing visitors. John the Baptist awaits his cousin, Jesus, by a stream in the wilderness. Temptations await Jesus on the other side. Soon, by the lakeshore, the divine call will be irresistible.

Read: Read the following daily readings to deepen your understanding of Sunday's text. After the reading, ask the follow-up questions.

Sunday, Mark 1:1-20, *Beginning of Good News*

Monday, Psalm 91:9-12

Tuesday, Malachi 3:1-7, *The Coming Messenger*

Wednesday, Isaiah 40:1-11, *Comfort, Comfort*

Thursday, Isaiah 44:1-8, *God's Blessing on Israel*

Friday, Joel 2:28-29, *God's Spirit Poured Out*

Saturday, Isaiah 42:1-9, *The Servant, a Light to the Nations*

How do these Old Testament readings tie into the gospel reading for Sunday?

Connect: Connect in conversation with others in your household. Discuss the following questions, or simply check in with "Highs" and "Lows."

What was a high point of your day? What was a low point?

Why do you think Jesus' ministry began with his baptism? What does your baptism mean to you?

How do you make it known that Jesus is your savior? What could you do to make Christ known through the way you live your life?

DO: By acting on what we learn, we make God's word come alive. Do the following activity this week.

Make a list of 5 ways your life could be a proclamation of Jesus' presence in your life. Focus on doing more of one of those throughout the week.

Bless: Close your devotion with a blessing.

May God fill your life with the good news of eternal life. Amen.

God's Story Our Story



January 3, 2016

Devotion: Use this resource at home to guide your household's daily devotions. You can do this alone, as a couple, as a family; in the morning, during the day, or at night. Find a routine that works best for you.

Pray: Light a candle and open your devotion time with a prayer.

Author of life, you have so much to say to the world. Teach us to see and understand what you are doing, this day and every day. Amen.

Reflect: Reflect on the key verse from Sunday's reading.

At once his fame began to spread throughout the surrounding region of Galilee. Mark 1:28

Study: Study the reading and consider the background.

As Mark tells it, Jesus launches into ministry from the very beginning. Immediately on the Sabbath, he enters the synagogue, starts teaching and casting out demons. Next they go to Simon's home, and Jesus heals Simon's mother-in law. On the same day, the whole town shows up seeking healing. The next day he heals a man with a skin disease. It seems there is not to be a moment's rest. Yet in the midst of the rush, Jesus takes time to be still and pray.

Read: Read the following daily readings to deepen your understanding of Sunday's text. After the reading, ask the follow-up questions.

Sunday, Mark 1:21-45, *Jesus' Ministry Begun*

Monday, Psalm 103:1-5

Tuesday, Isaiah 42:10-20, *A Hymn of Praise*

Wednesday, Psalm 2

Thursday, Psalm 113

Friday, Psalm 146:5-10

Saturday, Psalm 108:1-4

What do you read in these Psalms and Isaiah that might suggest that Jesus is the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies?

Connect: Connect in conversation with others in your household. Discuss the following questions, or simply check in with "Highs" and "Lows."

What was a high point of your day? What was a low point?

What was the mood or vibe of Jesus' ministry when he first began? Pay attention to the shift in perspective over the three years of his ministry as we travel from his baptism to the cross to resurrection from now until Easter.

Why do you think Jesus spent time and energy healing the sick and casting out demons? What work is there to be done in your community?

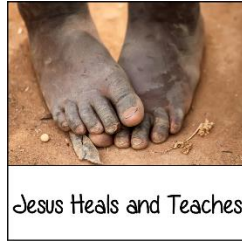
DO: By acting on what we learn, we make God's word come alive. Do the following activity this week.

Jesus took time from his busy mission to be still and to pray. Set aside time each day this week to be still and to pray. If stillness is a challenge for you, try praying while walking, doing yoga, or even dancing.

Bless: Close your devotion with a blessing.

May God speak to you in the noise and in the quiet. Amen.

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January 10, 2016

Devotion: Use this resource at home to guide your household's daily devotions. You can do this alone, as a couple, as a family; in the morning, during the day, or at night. Find a routine that works best for you.

Pray: Light a candle and open your devotion time with a prayer.

Healer of our every ill, open our hearts to hear the truth of your word, that we might be transformed, and in our newness, transform the world around us. Amen.

Reflect: Reflect on the key verse from Sunday's reading.

So many gathered around that there was no longer room for them, not even in front of the door; and he was speaking the word to them.

Mark 2:2

Study: Study the reading and consider the background.

Jesus' ministry is still so new, he hasn't had enough time to gain many enemies. The crowds are flocking to him. But forgiveness – that is a scandalous thing. When he dares forgive someone – that is when the sickness of this world becomes entirely visible, as it zeroes in on Jesus as its target.

Read: Read the following daily readings to deepen your understanding of Sunday's text. After the reading, ask the follow-up questions.

Sunday, Mark 2:1-22, *Jesus Heals and Teaches*

Monday, Psalm 103:6-14

Tuesday, Mark 2:23-28, *Pronouncement about the Sabbath*

Wednesday, Mark 3:1-6, *The Man with a Withered Hand*

Thursday, Mark 3:7-12, *A Multitude at the Seaside*

Friday, Mark 3:13-19a, *Jesus Appoints the Twelve*

Saturday, Mark, 3:19b-30, *Jesus and Beelzebul*

What kinds of work did Jesus do in the early days of his ministry?

Connect: Connect in conversation with others in your household. Discuss the following questions, or simply check in with "Highs" and "Lows."

What was a high point of your day? What was a low point?

What do you think is the relationship between forgiveness and healing? How has forgiveness and healing affected your life?

Jesus defied his tradition's laws and rituals to demonstrate a greater good. What traditions, laws or rituals might be standing in the way of a greater good today?

DO: By acting on what we learn, we make God's word come alive. Do the following activity this week.

Consider someone that requires your forgiveness or your apology. Forgive that person or ask for forgiveness. Ask what you might do to further reconciliation.

Bless: Close your devotion with a blessing.

May God heal and teach you each and every day. Amen.

God's Story Our Story



January 17, 2016

Devotion: Use this resource at home to guide your household's daily devotions. You can do this alone, as a couple, as a family; in the morning, during the day, or at night. Find a routine that works best for you.

Pray: Light a candle and open your devotion time with a prayer.

**Let your word be a seed of the heavenly realm among us, God.
Grant us ears to listen and hearts to attend to your word. Teach us
to understand what you are saying to us. Amen.**

Reflect: Reflect on the key verses from Sunday's reading.

He began to teach them many things in parables, and in his teaching he said to them: "Listen! A sower went out to sow." Mark 4:2-3

Study: Study the reading and consider the background.

How can we say what God's kingdom is like? Even Jesus used metaphor to talk about it, and around it. To crowds hungry for hope, he talked of scattered seed and dramatic crop yields, of the revealing of truth, of a tiny promise that grew into shelter for many. He gave them as much as they were able to hear.

Read: Read the following daily readings to deepen your understanding of Sunday's text. After the reading, ask the follow-up questions.

Sunday, Mark 4:1-34, *Parables in Mark*

Monday, Psalm 126

Tuesday, Mark 3:31-35, *The True Kindred of Jesus*

Wednesday, Mark 4:35-41, *Jesus Stills a Storm*

Thursday, Mark 5:1-20, *Jesus Heals the Gerasene Demoniac*

Friday, Mark 6:30-44, *Feeding the Five Thousand*

Saturday, Mark 6:45-52, *Jesus Walks on Water*

How do Jesus' healings and miracles support his teachings?

Connect: Connect in conversation with others in your household. Discuss the following questions, or simply check in with "Highs" and "Lows."

What was a high point of your day? What was a low point?

Which of Jesus' parables are the most difficult for you to understand? Why? What modern parables tell the stories of people today?

What does the parable of the sower tell you about God's word? How might you be a sower of the word? How might you be good soil to receive God's word? How might you be the seed that spreads God's word to the world?

Do: By acting on what we learn, we make God's word come alive. Do the following activity this week.

Plant herb seeds in a pot. Take good care of your plant so you can use the herbs in your cooking this summer.

Bless: Close your devotion with a blessing.

May God plant God's word in you. Amen.

God's Story Our Story



January 24, 2016

Devotion: Use this resource at home to guide your household's daily devotions. You can do this alone, as a couple, as a family; in the morning, during the day, or at night. Find a routine that works best for you.

Pray: Light a candle and open your devotion time with a prayer.

God of healing, you who walk among us. Whether it happens physically, or in our mind's eye, we are stretching out our hands to you. Amen.

Reflect: Reflect on the key verses from Sunday's reading.

He took her by the hand and said to her, "Talitha cum," which means, "Little girl, get up!" And immediately the girl got up and began to walk about (she was twelve years of age). At this they were overcome with amazement. Mark 5:41-42

Study: Study the reading and consider the background.

Jesus was always being interrupted. No sooner had he returned from the far side of the sea, he encountered a leader of the synagogue asking for help for his gravely ill daughter. Midway on the journey to her bedside, as the crowd pressed in on him, a woman touched his clothes, and he paused to address her also-deep need. Continuing on his way, he came to the girl's bedside and performed yet another miracle. But he did not yet want it revealed to the world.

Read: Read the following daily readings to deepen your understanding of Sunday's text. After the reading, ask the follow-up questions.

Sunday, Mark 5:21-43, *Jairus' Daughter Healed*

Monday, Psalm 131

Tuesday, Mark 6:53-56, *Healing the Sick in Gennesaret*

Wednesday, Mark 7:1-23, *The Tradition of the Elders*

Thursday, Mark 7:24-30, *The Syrophenician Woman's Faith*

Friday, Mark 7:31-37, *Jesus Cures a Deaf Man*

Saturday, Mark 8:1-10, *Feeding the Four Thousand*

How do the people healed in these stories respond to Jesus' healing?

Connect: Connect in conversation with others in your household. Discuss the following questions, or simply check in with "Highs" and "Lows."

What was a high point of your day? What was a low point?

What differences and similarities do you notice between the healing of the woman and the healing of the little girl? What do these difference sand similarities mean to you?

The woman was considered unclean because of her hemorrhaging. Who is considered unclean in your community? How do people become acceptable? Or how do you change your idea of what is acceptable?

Do: By acting on what we learn, we make God's word come alive. Do the following activity this week.

Consider what ails you in body, mind, or spirit. Ask Jesus for healing. Ask again. And again.

Bless: Close your devotion with a blessing.

May God heal you in body, mind, and spirit. Amen.

God's Story Our Story

January 31, 2016



Devotion: Use this resource at home to guide your household's daily devotions. You can do this alone, as a couple, as a family; in the morning, during the day, or at night. Find a routine that works best for you.

Pray: Light a candle and open your devotion time with a prayer.

Great one, you do nothing by halves. You give us an entire kingdom. How silly of us to gather in what we think we need, when you already provide it. Let us hear your word today and know it for truth. Amen.

Reflect: Reflect on the key verses from Sunday's reading.

Immediately the king sent a soldier of the guard with orders to bring John's head. He went and beheaded him in the prison, brought his head on a platter, and gave it to the girl. Then the girl gave it to her mother. When his disciples heard about it, they came and took his body, and laid it in a tomb. Mark 6:27-29

Study: Study the reading and consider the background.

Jesus goes home to teach. He is not made welcome. No one believes that a hometown boy could be responsible for the miracles that have been bandied about. And so he and his students leave that place. He sends them out to teach and heal, two by two. He tells them not to get too comfortable anywhere.

Nobody in that region quite knew who they were dealing with. Was it Elijah, returned? Another prophet? Was it John the Baptist, raised from the dead? It was a time of questions.

Read: Read the following daily readings to deepen your understanding of Sunday's text. After the reading, ask the follow-up questions.

Sunday, Mark 6:1-29, *Death of John the Baptist*

Monday, Psalm 122

Tuesday, Mark 8:11-13, *The Demand for a Sign*

Wednesday, Mark 8:14-21, *The Yeast of the Pharisees and of Herod*

Thursday, Mark 8:22-26, *Jesus Cures a Blind Man at Bethsaida*

Friday, Mark 9:9-13, *The Coming of Elijah*

Saturday, Mark 9:14-29, *The Healing of a Boy with a Spirit*

How are Jesus' and John the Baptist's words and actions shaking things up? Who is most offended by their words? Why?

Connect: Connect in conversation with others in your household. Discuss the following questions, or simply check in with "Highs" and "Lows."

What was a high point of your day? What was a low point?

Why do you think Jesus sent the disciples in twos with little provisions? How might your life look different if you went about your life's mission sparsely equipped?

John was beheaded in part because of a gross imbalance of power between the rulers and those they rule. Where do you see imbalances of power in your community? What can be done to empower those with little power?

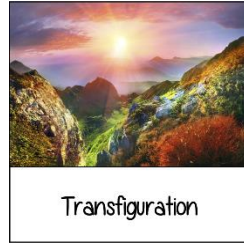
DO: By acting on what we learn, we make God's word come alive. Do the following activity this week.

Do something for Jesus that is outside your comfort zone. Talk to someone about your faith, visit someone you don't know well, attend a protest for something you believe in, run in a race for a cause, or try something else.

Bless: Close your devotion with a blessing.

May God push you outside your comfort zone for Jesus' sake. Amen.

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February 7, 2016

Devotion: Use this resource at home to guide your household's daily devotions. You can do this alone, as a couple, as a family; in the morning, during the day, or at night. Find a routine that works best for you.

Pray: Light a candle and open your devotion time with a prayer.

Light of the world, transform our understanding. Show us the truth we grasp only dimly. Amen.

Reflect: Reflect on the key verses from Sunday's reading.

Six days later, Jesus took with him Peter and James and John, and led them up a high mountain apart, by themselves. And he was transfigured before them, and his clothes became dazzling white, such as no one on earth could bleach them. Mark 9:2-3

Study: Study the reading and consider the background.

Who do you say that Jesus is? On this question hangs today's scripture reading. Do we seek the way of glory, the way of the cross, or understand the journey with Christ as somehow at the intersection of the two? Given a glimpse of glory, Peter, James and John show an interest in staying at the top of the mountain.

Read: Read the following daily readings to deepen your understanding of Sunday's text. After the reading, ask the follow-up questions.

Sunday, Mark 8:27-9:8, *Transfiguration*

Monday, Psalm 27:1-4

Tuesday, Mark 9:38-41, *Another Exorcist*

Wednesday, Mark 9:30-37, *Passion Prediction (Ash Wednesday)*

Thursday, Mark 9:42-50, *Temptations to Sin*

Friday, Mark 10:1-12, *Teaching about Divorce*

Saturday, Mark 10:13-16, *Jesus Blesses Little Children*

Why do you think that, immediately following Jesus' transfiguration of blinding white, Jesus' words become so relatively dark?

Connect: Connect in conversation with others in your household. Discuss the following questions, or simply check in with "Highs" and "Lows."

What was a high point of your day? What was a low point?

Why do you think Jesus' transfiguration was a turning point in his ministry? How did the revelation affect his disciples?

What do you think Jesus meant when he rebuked Peter for speaking about his identity? Consider how the public glorification of Jesus' mission might detract or distract from his journey toward the cross.

Do: By acting on what we learn, we make God's word come alive. Do the following activity this week.

Who do you say that Jesus is? Write a list of all the descriptions and names for Jesus that speak to you. Post your list somewhere in your home and add to it as new descriptions and names are revealed to you throughout the week.

Bless: Close your devotion with a blessing.

May God reveal God's self to you every day. Amen.

God's Story Our Story



February 10, 2016

Devotion: Use this resource at home to guide your household's daily devotions. You can do this alone, as a couple, as a family; in the morning, during the day, or at night. Find a routine that works best for you.

Pray: Light a candle and open your devotion time with a prayer.

Holy one, Lord of life, guide us through your confusing sayings. Help us learn even from the truths we are afraid to hear. Amen.

Reflect: Reflect on the key verse from Sunday's reading.

He sat down, called the twelve, and said to them, "Whoever wants to be first must be last of all and servant of all." Mark 9:35

Study: Study the reading and consider the background.

Still convinced of glory and victory, Jesus' disciples are not excited to hear talk of betrayal and death. Even as the time draws near, the disciples have not yet been able to grasp what he has been teaching. Jesus places one of the little ones in the middle of the assembly and declares once again the upside-down nature of the good news he is offering.

Read: Read the following daily readings to deepen your understanding of Sunday's text. After the reading, ask the follow-up questions.

Sunday, Mark 8:27–9:8, *Transfiguration*

Monday, Psalm 27:1-4

Tuesday, Mark 9:38-41, *Another Exorcist*

Wednesday, Mark 9:30-37, *Passion Prediction (Ash Wednesday)*

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Connect: Connect in conversation with others in your household. Discuss the following questions, or simply check in with "Highs" and "Lows."

What was a high point of your day? What was a low point?

Why do you think Jesus' transfiguration was a turning point in his ministry? How did the revelation affect his disciples?

What do you think Jesus meant when he rebuked Peter for speaking about his identity? Consider how the public glorification of Jesus' mission might detract or distract from his journey toward the cross.

Do: By acting on what we learn, we make God's word come alive. Do the following activity this week.

Who do you say that Jesus is? Write a list of all the descriptions and names for Jesus that speak to you. Post your list somewhere in your home and add to it as new descriptions and names are revealed to you throughout the week.

Bless: Close your devotion with a blessing.

May God reveal God's self to you every day. Amen.

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February 14, 2016

Devotion: Use this resource at home to guide your household's daily devotions. You can do this alone, as a couple, as a family; in the morning, during the day, or at night. Find a routine that works best for you.

Pray: Light a candle and open your devotion time with a prayer.

Good and holy teacher, what we understand of your ways is so tiny that it might fit through the eye of a needle. Keep teaching us, we pray, and give us time to catch up to you. Amen.

Reflect: Reflect on the key verses from Sunday's reading.

Jesus said, "Truly I tell you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or fields, for my sake and for the sake of the good news, who will not receive a hundredfold now in this age—houses, brothers and sisters, mothers and children, and fields with persecutions—and in the age to come eternal life. But many who are first will be last, and the last will be first." Mark 10:29-31

Study: Study the reading and consider the background.

As his journey of teaching and healing continues into the region of Judea, Jesus continues to confuse and scandalize his listeners. Even his disciples are shocked by the difficult lessons he teaches. An apparently perfect life of following the law is not enough, he indicates. A deeper turning over of one's life to God is required.

Read: Read the following daily readings to deepen your understanding of Sunday's text. After the reading, ask the follow-up questions.

Sunday, Mark 10:17-31, *First Last and Last First*

Monday, Psalm 19:7-10

Tuesday, Exodus 20:1-21, *The Ten Commandments*

Wednesday, Deuteronomy 5:1-21, *The Ten Commandments*

Thursday, Psalm 52

Friday, Psalm 62

Saturday, Jeremiah 32:1-25, *Jeremiah Buys a Field*

What do these readings say about the relationship between God and God's people?

Connect: Connect in conversation with others in your household. Discuss the following questions, or simply check in with "Highs" and "Lows."

What was a high point of your day? What was a low point?

In what areas of your life do you rank first? Where do you rank last? What do your rankings say about you? What would God say about your rankings?

What would you be willing to part with to inherit eternal life? What would be difficult to part with? Why?

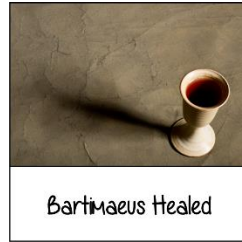
Do: By acting on what we learn, we make God's word come alive. Do the following activity this week.

Discuss with your household an amount of money you would be willing to give to serve another household in your community with a greater need. Take your gift to your pastor and ask that it be anonymously handed on to a household in need.

Bless: Close your devotion with a blessing.

May God invite you warmly into God's kingdom. Amen.

God's Story Our Story



February 21, 2016

Devotion: Use this resource at home to guide your household's daily devotions. You can do this alone, as a couple, as a family; in the morning, during the day, or at night. Find a routine that works best for you.

Pray: Light a candle and open your devotion time with a prayer.

Glorious one, help us to focus on your glory and not our own. Help us to discern when to raise our voice, and when to listen to what you have to say to us. Amen.

Reflect: Reflect on the key verse from Sunday's reading.

Jesus said to him, "Go; your faith has made you well." Immediately he regained his sight and followed him on the way. Mark 10:52

Study: Study the reading and consider the background.

Despite repeated lessons, some of Jesus' disciples continue to seek out a place of honor. They do not see the meaning of what he has been teaching. As they leave Jericho, a blind beggar named Bartimaeus sees what they cannot, is healed, and begins to follow.

Read: Read the following daily readings to deepen your understanding of Sunday's text. After the reading, ask the follow-up questions.

Sunday, Mark 10:32-52, *Bartimaeus Healed*

Monday, Psalm 34:11-14

Tuesday, Psalm 111

Wednesday, Mark 11:12-14, *Jesus Curses the Fig Tree*

Thursday, Mark 11:15-19, *Jesus Cleanses the Temple*

Friday, Mark 11:20-26, *The Lesson from the Withered Fig Tree*

Saturday, Mark 11:27-33, *Jesus' Authority Is Questioned*

How do these stories move people from not seeing toward seeing?

Connect: Connect in conversation with others in your household. Discuss the following questions, or simply check in with "Highs" and "Lows."

What was a high point of your day? What was a low point?

What blind spots exist in your sight of Jesus? What do you struggle to understand?

How do you think Jesus heals today? What does it mean to be healed?

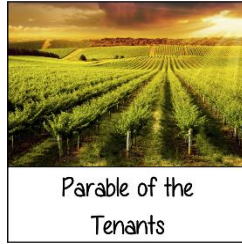
Do: By acting on what we learn, we make God's word come alive. Do the following activity this week.

See Jesus this week. Notice all the places Jesus is alive and active in your life. Write down all your Jesus sightings. At the end of the week, appreciate Jesus' presence in your life.

Bless: Close your devotion with a blessing.

May God give you sight and healing. Amen.

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February 28, 2016

Devotion: Use this resource at home to guide your household's daily devotions. You can do this alone, as a couple, as a family; in the morning, during the day, or at night. Find a routine that works best for you.

Pray: Light a candle and open your devotion time with a prayer.

Creative, creating one, let your words challenge us, engaging our imaginations in a revolutionary story that reshapes our understanding of the reality around us. Amen.

Reflect: Reflect on the key verse from Sunday's reading.

When they realized that he had told this parable against them, they wanted to arrest him, but they feared the crowd. So they left him and went away. Mark 12:12

Study: Study the reading and consider the background.

In the midst of a controversy over authority, Jesus is unable to provide an answer that would satisfy those who questioned his authority. Rather than continue trying to reason with them, he offered a parable. His words are the continuation of an ongoing verbal battle. A little story set in a vineyard becomes a flimsily veiled threat to the chief priests, the legal experts, and the elders.

Read: Read the following daily readings to deepen your understanding of Sunday's text. After the reading, ask the follow-up questions.

Sunday, Mark 12:1-12, *Parable of the Tenants*

Monday, Psalm 86:8-13

Tuesday, Mark 12:13-17, *Taxes to Caesar*

Wednesday, Mark 12:18-27, *The Question about the Resurrection*

Thursday, Isaiah 5:1-7, *The Song of the Unfruitful Vineyard*

Friday, Psalm 121

Saturday, Hebrews 1:1-4, *God Has Spoken by His Son*

What tone do these stories and parables take? How do Jesus' words shape Jesus' journey?

Connect: Connect in conversation with others in your household. Discuss the following questions, or simply check in with "Highs" and "Lows."

What was a high point of your day? What was a low point?

What do you find most challenging about following Jesus? What could you do to make following easier?

Who in the world suffers because of the lifestyle you lead? What could you do to change how your lifestyle affects the world?

DO: By acting on what we learn, we make God's word come alive. Do the following activity this week.

Write a parable that Jesus might tell to describe your life. Are you the bad guy, the good guy, or a blend of both? How does your parable end?

Bless: Close your devotion with a blessing.

May God teach you and give you courage to follow. Amen.

God's Story Our Story



March 6, 2016

Devotion: Use this resource at home to guide your household's daily devotions. You can do this alone, as a couple, as a family; in the morning, during the day, or at night. Find a routine that works best for you.

Pray: Light a candle and open your devotion time with a prayer.

Lord of life, direct our gaze toward what we need to see. Grant us the ability to attend to what truly matters. Amen.

Reflect: Reflect on the key verses from Sunday's reading.

Jesus answered, "The first is, 'Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord is one; you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength.' The second is this, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no other commandment greater than these." Mark 12:29-31

Study: Study the reading and consider the background.

How do we find our way to the realm of God? How do we sort through the hundreds of commandments offered in Holy Scripture? How shall we be judged? Such questions were brought before Jesus by all the people he encountered, whether experts disputing a point of law, disciples seeking to learn, or everyday people negotiating situations that were anything but theoretical.

Read: Read the following daily readings to deepen your understanding of Sunday's text. After the reading, ask the follow-up questions.

Sunday, Mark 12:28-44, *The Great Commandment*

Monday, Psalm 89:1-4

Tuesday, Psalm 102:12-17

Wednesday, Psalm 121

Thursday, Psalm 116:12-19

Friday, Psalm 22:1-2, 14-21

Saturday, Deuteronomy 6:1-9, *The Great Commandment*

How is the theme of love woven throughout these readings?

Connect: Connect in conversation with others in your household. Discuss the following questions, or simply check in with "Highs" and "Lows."

What was a high point of your day? What was a low point?

How is love for God, others, and self woven into your life? Of these three, do you love one more than another? Why or why not?

Who do you find it difficult to love? Why? What could you do to love even more?

DO: By acting on what we learn, we make God's word come alive. Do the following activity this week.

Determine who you find it the most difficult to love. Learn something new about them this week. Google or Wikipedia to increase your knowledge so that you can stand in their shoes. Knowledge leads to understanding, understanding leads to acceptance, and acceptance leads to love.

Bless: Close your devotion with a blessing.

May God fill your heart with understanding, acceptance, and love. Amen.

God's Story Our Story



March 13, 2016

Devotion: Use this resource at home to guide your household's daily devotions. You can do this alone, as a couple, as a family; in the morning, during the day, or at night. Find a routine that works best for you.

Pray: Light a candle and open your devotion time with a prayer.

Spirit of life, inhabit our reflections, our actions, our hope. Guide us to understand all things in light of your great promises. Amen.

Reflect: Reflect on the key verse from Sunday's reading.

Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.
Mark 13:31

Study: Study the reading and consider the background.

Across from the temple, great edifices and porticoes of stone, Jesus responded to yet another question from his disciples. "When will we see the end of all things?" No one knows, he says, and many will mistakenly attempt to declare the time, but a disciple's priority is not to predict, but merely to stay alert.

Read: Read the following daily readings to deepen your understanding of Sunday's text. After the reading, ask the follow-up questions.

Sunday, Mark 13:1-8, 24-27, *End of the Age*

Monday, Mark 13:9-13, *Persecution Foretold*

Tuesday, Mark 13:14-23, *The Desolating Sacrilege*

Wednesday, Mark 14:1-2, *The Plot to Kill Jesus*

Thursday, Mark 14:10-11, *Judas Agrees to Betray Jesus*

Friday, Mark 15:1-5, *Jesus before Pilate*

Saturday, Mark 15:6-15, *Pilate Hands Jesus over to Be Crucified*

How do these stories take a dark turn? Why do you think so many were against Jesus?

Connect: Connect in conversation with others in your household. Discuss the following questions, or simply check in with "Highs" and "Lows."

What was a high point of your day? What was a low point?

How are you prepared for the end of all things? How are you unprepared? How are you prepared to live a long, healthy life?

What do you imagine the end of the age will be like? What will happen to the earth? To humanity?

DO: By acting on what we learn, we make God's word come alive. Do the following activity this week.

Prepare for the future. Make a living will. Read also this document prepared by Thrivent on wills and estate planning.

<https://www.thrivent.com/about-us/files/10193.pdf>

Bless: Close your devotion with a blessing.

May God prepare your heart and mind for whatever is to come. Amen.

God's Story Our Story



March 20, 2016

Devotion: Use this resource at home to guide your household's daily devotions. You can do this alone, as a couple, as a family; in the morning, during the day, or at night. Find a routine that works best for you.

Pray: Light a candle and open your devotion time with a prayer.

God of great and small, use every occasion to teach us. In all the places we journey, the public square and own dwelling places, grant us sacred encounters with you. Amen.

Reflect: Reflect on the key verses from Sunday's reading.

Many people spread their cloaks on the road, and others spread leafy branches that they had cut in the fields. Then those who went ahead and those who followed were shouting,

"Hosanna!

Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord!

Blessed is the coming kingdom of our ancestor David!

Hosanna in the highest heaven!" Mark 11:8-10

Study: Study the reading and consider the background.

The road, at last, has taken Jesus and the disciples to Jerusalem. The dance with the powers of the world has been going on for a while. But now matters begin to come to a head. They enter the city to great acclaim amid a public spectacle. Although things would change quickly, in this moment there is hope, and joy, and love.

Read: Read the following daily readings to deepen your understanding of Sunday's text. After the reading, ask the follow-up questions.

Sunday, Mark 11:1-11, *Triumphal Entry*

Monday, Mark 14:3-9, *Woman Anoints Jesus*

Tuesday, Mark 14:43-65, *The Betrayal and Arrest of Jesus*

Wednesday, Mark 14:66-72, *Peter Denies Jesus*

Thursday, Mark 14:12-42, *The Lord's Supper*

Friday, Mark 15:16-39, *Crucifixion*

Saturday, Mark 15:40-47, *The Death and Burial of Jesus*

Notice and discuss the high points and low points of this emotional and eventful week.

Connect: Connect in conversation with others in your household.

Discuss the following questions, or simply check in with "Highs" and "Lows."

What was a high point of your day? What was a low point?

How does your life reflect shifting views or emotions toward Jesus? When in your life have you felt close to Jesus? When have you felt a distance?

How might you explain the events of Holy Week to someone who has never learned of Jesus before? What do these events mean to you?

Do: By acting on what we learn, we make God's word come alive. Do the following activity this week.

Make a timeline of your life. Mark events that signify high points and low points. Mark also where Jesus was during those times. How were your faith practices during those times? See if you notice any patterns. What do you learn about yourself and about Jesus?

Bless: Close your devotion with a blessing.

May God walk with you on your Holy Week journey. Amen.

God's Story Our Story



March 24, 2016

Devotion: Use this resource at home to guide your household's daily devotions. You can do this alone, as a couple, as a family; in the morning, during the day, or at night. Find a routine that works best for you.

Pray: Light a candle and open your devotion time with a prayer.

Holy one, as the night falls, as our focus narrows to an upper room, a meal, a garden, a prayer, help us to stay alert. Amen.

Reflect: Reflect on the key verses from Sunday's reading.

While they were eating, he took a loaf of bread, and after blessing it he broke it, gave it to them, and said, "Take; this is my body." Then he took a cup, and after giving thanks he gave it to them, and all of them drank from it. He said to them, "This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many." Mark 4:22-24

Study: Study the reading and consider the background.

In an upper room, the disciples and Jesus gather for the Passover meal. He speaks to them of betrayal and faithfulness. They claim they will never deny him. Out in the garden, in a mood of despair, he asks them to keep vigil with him, but they are unable to stay awake.

Read: Read the following daily readings to deepen your understanding of Sunday's text. After the reading, ask the follow-up questions.

Sunday, Mark 11:1-11, *Triumphal Entry*

Monday, Mark 14:3-9, *Woman Anoints Jesus*

Tuesday, Mark 14:43-65, *The Betrayal and Arrest of Jesus*

Wednesday, Mark 14:66-72, *Peter Denies Jesus*

Thursday, Mark 14:12-42, *The Lord's Supper*

Friday, Mark 15:16-39, *Crucifixion*

Saturday, Mark 15:40-47, *The Death and Burial of Jesus*

Notice and discuss the high points and low points of this emotional and eventful week.

Connect: Connect in conversation with others in your household.

Discuss the following questions, or simply check in with "Highs" and "Lows."

What was a high point of your day? What was a low point?

How does your life reflect shifting views or emotions toward Jesus? When in your life have you felt close to Jesus? When have you felt a distance?

How might you explain the events of Holy Week to someone who has never learned of Jesus before? What do these events mean to you?

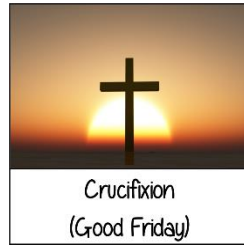
Do: By acting on what we learn, we make God's word come alive. Do the following activity this week.

Make a timeline of your life. Mark events that signify high points and low points. Mark also where Jesus was during those times. How were your faith practices during those times? See if you notice any patterns. What do you learn about yourself and about Jesus?

Bless: Close your devotion with a blessing.

May God walk with you on your Holy Week journey. Amen.

God's Story Our Story



March 25, 2016

Devotion: Use this resource at home to guide your household's daily devotions. You can do this alone, as a couple, as a family; in the morning, during the day, or at night. Find a routine that works best for you.

Pray: Light a candle and open your devotion time with a prayer.

Holy, mighty, suffering one, help us not to turn away from suffering, but to let it break our hearts open, as it breaks yours. Amen.

Reflect: Reflect on the key verse from Sunday's reading.

Then Jesus gave a loud cry and breathed his last. Mark 15:27

Study: Study the reading and consider the background.

It was neither a gentle nor merciful death. Before the execution, the soldiers mocked Jesus and beat him. He was hanging on the cross all day, and passersby could see him die, bit by bit, while they, too, offered their insults. Only a very few stood vigil for him.

Read: Read the following daily readings to deepen your understanding of Sunday's text. After the reading, ask the follow-up questions.

Sunday, Mark 11:1-11, *Triumphal Entry*

Monday, Mark 14:3-9, *Woman Anoints Jesus*

Tuesday, Mark 14:43-65, *The Betrayal and Arrest of Jesus*

Wednesday, Mark 14:66-72, *Peter Denies Jesus*

Thursday, Mark 14:12-42, *The Lord's Supper*

Friday, Mark 15:16-39, *Crucifixion*

Saturday, Mark 15:40-47, *The Death and Burial of Jesus*

Notice and discuss the high points and low points of this emotional and eventful week.

Connect: Connect in conversation with others in your household.

Discuss the following questions, or simply check in with "Highs" and "Lows."

What was a high point of your day? What was a low point?

How does your life reflect shifting views or emotions toward Jesus? When in your life have you felt close to Jesus? When have you felt a distance?

How might you explain the events of Holy Week to someone who has never learned of Jesus before? What do these events mean to you?

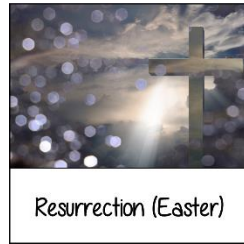
Do: By acting on what we learn, we make God's word come alive. Do the following activity this week.

Make a timeline of your life. Mark events that signify high points and low points. Mark also where Jesus was during those times. How were your faith practices during those times? See if you notice any patterns. What do you learn about yourself and about Jesus?

Bless: Close your devotion with a blessing.

May God walk with you on your Holy Week journey. Amen.

God's Story Our Story



March 27, 2016

Devotion: Use this resource at home to guide your household's daily devotions. You can do this alone, as a couple, as a family; in the morning, during the day, or at night. Find a routine that works best for you.

Pray: Light a candle and open your devotion time with a prayer.

Resurrected one, grant us courage to go out on the road, seeking you. Remind us that your mission is just beginning. Amen.

Reflect: Reflect on the key verses from Sunday's reading.

As they entered the tomb, they saw a young man, dressed in a white robe, sitting on the right side; and they were alarmed. But he said to them, "Do not be alarmed; you are looking for Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has been raised; he is not here. Look, there is the place they laid him." Mark 16:5-6

Study: Study the reading and consider the background.

Some of Jesus' followers went to the tomb to anoint him, very early in the day, as soon as it was permitted. When they arrived, they found an empty tomb and a messenger who sent them out from that place with good news to share.

Read: Read the following daily readings to deepen your understanding of Sunday's text. After the reading, ask the follow-up questions.

Sunday, Mark 16:1-8, *Resurrection*

Monday, Psalm 118:21-27

Tuesday, Mark 16:8, *The Shorter Ending of Mark*

Wednesday, Mark 16:9-11, *Jesus Appears to Mary Magdalene*

Thursday, Mark 16:12-13, *Jesus Appears to Two Disciples*

Friday, Mark 16:14-18, *Jesus Commissions the Disciples*

Saturday, Mark 16:19-20, *The Ascension of Jesus*

Mark has several endings. It is speculated the last two may have been added throughout the centuries. How does Jesus' story read differently when ended at verse 8?

Connect: Connect in conversation with others in your household. Discuss the following questions, or simply check in with "Highs" and "Lows."

What was a high point of your day? What was a low point?

How does Jesus' resurrection shape your life? How would your life be different if you didn't have Jesus in it?

What makes you different from people who do not believe in the death and resurrection of Jesus? What makes you the same? How does Jesus see those that are different from you?

Do: By acting on what we learn, we make God's word come alive. Do the following activity this week.

Send Easter cards to family and friends. Let them know how Jesus positively impacts your life.

Bless: Close your devotion with a blessing.

May God raise you up to new life each and every day. Amen.