

God's Story Our Story



April 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.

God of promise and hope, you have charged us with the task of witnessing to your word. Teach us to love and to share what you have given us with the world. Amen.

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

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

Study: Study the reading and consider the background.

Jesus left his followers with the promise of the Holy Spirit, which would be God's presence with them at all times and in all places. Jesus also left them (and us) with hope that one day Jesus would return, and this world would be restored to the world God intended. In the meantime, we have been given the charge to create God's intended world with our thoughts, words, and actions.

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

Sunday, Acts 1:1-14, *You Shall Be My Witnesses*

Monday, Acts 1:15-26, *Matthias Chosen to Replace Judas*

Tuesday, Acts 2:1-13, *The Coming of the Holy Spirit*

Wednesday, Acts 2:14-36, *Peter Addresses the Crowd*

Thursday, Acts 2:37-42, *The First Converts*

Friday, Acts 2:43-47, *Life among the Believers*

Saturday, Acts 3:11-26, *Peter Speaks in Solomon's Portico*

What themes do you see in the speeches given by these early believers?

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 can your witness be helpful to those who do not know Christ? What would you say to someone who asks you about Jesus?

What do you hope for? What keeps you hoping?

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

Write a speech you might give to a group of people who do not know Christ. Tell how Jesus has affected your life personally. Post your speech to your blog or social media.

Bless: Close your devotion with a blessing.

May God fill you with the hope and anticipation of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

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April 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.

God of wonder and amazement, we are in awe of the miracles around us. Help us to see you in all things, and keep us mindful and present. Amen.

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

But Peter said, "I have no silver or gold, but what I have I give you; in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, stand up and walk." Acts 3:6

Study: Study the reading and consider the background.

Peter and John offered healing in Jesus' name as their witness to Jesus' love for humanity. The people who were used to seeing the man asking for alms were filled with wonder and amazement at the sight of the lame man walking. There are many things about Jesus and about God's world that can fill us with wonder and amazement. Are we open to seeing?

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

Sunday, Acts 3:1-10, *Peter Heals in Jerusalem*

Monday, Acts 4:1-22, *Peter and John before the Council*

Tuesday, Acts 4:23-31, *The Believers Prayer for Boldness*

Wednesday, Acts 4:32-37, *The Believers Share Their Possessions*

Thursday, Acts 5:1-11, *Ananias and Sapphira*

Friday, Acts 5:12-16, *The Apostles Heal Many*

Saturday, Acts 5:17-42, *The Apostles Are Persecuted*

How did early believers back up their words with their actions?

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?

Who in your community has a need that you could fill? Ask your pastor to connect you with people who could use the gifts you have to offer.

What fills you with wonder and amazement?

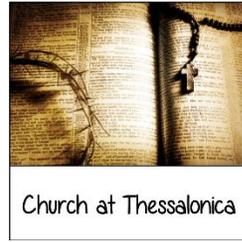
Do: By acting on what we learn, we make God's word come alive. Do the following activity this week.

Keep two jars on a counter in your kitchen. Throughout the week, put a dollar in one jar for every time you catch yourself with a negative thought or action. Put a dollar in the other jar for every time you catch yourself with a positive thought or action. At the end of the week see which jar has more money. Donate all the money to a local charity.

Bless: Close your devotion with a blessing.

May God bless others through the gifts you share. Amen.

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April 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.

God of patience and acceptance, although Paul and Silas preached a message of love, people responded with fear and anger. Help us to proclaim your message of love so that it may be received with acceptance and hope. Amen.

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

And Paul went in, as was his custom, and on three sabbath days argued with them from the scriptures, explaining and proving that it was necessary for the Messiah to suffer and to rise from the dead, and saying, "This is the Messiah, Jesus whom I am proclaiming to you."

Acts 17:2-3

Study: Study the reading and consider the background.

Paul and Silas took on the religious authorities directly, arguing on the Sabbath and proclaiming Christ the Messiah. Religious authorities tried to quell the rebellion by imprisoning those who aided the Christians. But Jesus' message of love endured, despite the culture of fear.

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

Sunday, Acts 17:1-9, *Church at Thessalonica*

Monday, 1 Thessalonians 1:1-10, *Thanks to Thessalonica*

Tuesday, Acts 6:1-7, *Seven Chosen to Serve*

Wednesday, Acts 6:8-15, *The Arrest of Stephen*

Thursday, Acts 7:1-53, *Stephen's Speech to the Council*

Friday, Acts 7:54-8:1a, *The Stoning of Stephen*

Saturday, Acts 8:1b-3, *Saul Persecutes the Church*

Why do you think Stephen's message so threatening?

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 words are spoken or heard in your community that are threatening to you? To others? How might you hear or speak those words differently so that they can be received with acceptance and hope?

What does it mean to you that Jesus is the Messiah?

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

Our words can be powerful. Write a one- to three-page story of something about your life as you live it right now. What creates meaning in your life? Create a tag cloud with your story (try tagul.com). What word or words are biggest? Which are smallest? Share your tag cloud with a friend.

Bless: Close your devotion with a blessing.

May God fill you with words of love, acceptance, and hope. Amen.

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April 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 unity, there is so much work to do in this world to make it the creation you intended. Show us how to work together to create a world of unity, peace, and love. Amen.

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

For Christ did not send me to baptize but to proclaim the gospel, and not with eloquent wisdom, so that the cross of Christ might not be emptied of its power. For the message about the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. 1 Corinthians 1:17-18

Study: Study the reading and consider the background.

Paul spread the good news of God's love far and wide. He planted churches and helped set those new Christian communities on a path toward justice and peace. But he didn't work alone. In all the places where churches thrived, there were community leaders who helped shape and sustain the new churches and their missionaries. Aquila and Priscilla, tentmakers by trade, were some of the leaders who aided Paul in his work and helped build the church in Corinth.

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

Sunday, Acts 18:1-4, *Church at Corinth*

Monday, 1 Corinthians 1:10-18, *Factions in the Corinthian Church*

Tuesday, Acts 8:4-25, *Philip Preaches in Samaria*

Wednesday, Acts 8:26-40, *Philip and the Ethiopian Eunuch*

Thursday, Acts 9:1-19a, *The Conversion of Saul*

Friday, Acts 9:19b-22, *Saul Preaches in Damascus*

Saturday, Acts 9:23-31, *Saul in Jerusalem*

How have the people in these stories been transformed by the message of Jesus Christ?

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?

Who do you consider your people? Who are not your people? What makes them the same or different? What could you do this week to expand your circle of people?

How is God's word a message of hope for you? How is it a message of condemnation?

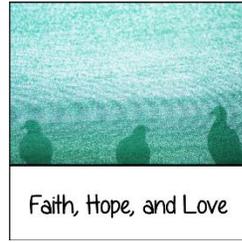
Do: By acting on what we learn, we make God's word come alive. Do the following activity this week.

Use your gifts to help a missionary. Whether it's money, time, or talent, discover who your community's missionaries are and share your gifts with them. Write about the experience in your church's newsletter.

Bless: Close your devotion with a blessing.

May God bring you into unity with all people. Amen.

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May 1, 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.

Loving God, your love can transform any dark thing into light. Help us to love as you love, with patience, kindness, selflessness, and joy. Amen.

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

Love is patient; love is kind; love is not envious or boastful or arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice in wrongdoing, but rejoices in the truth. It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

1 Corinthians 13:4-7

Study: Study the reading and consider the background.

Love is the glue that binds humanity together. It is a living, breathing thing that gives life to those who hold it within themselves and give it away. Today's reading describes clearly how love operates and thrives in this world.

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

Sunday, 1 Corinthians 13:1-13, *Faith, Hope, and Love*

Monday, 1 Corinthians 2:1-5, *Proclaiming Christ Crucified*

Tuesday, 1 Corinthians 2:6-16, *The True Wisdom of God*

Wednesday, 1 Corinthians 3:1-23, *On Divisions in the Church*

Thursday, 1 Corinthians 12:1-11, *Spiritual Gifts*

Friday, 1 Corinthians 12:12-31, *One Body with Many Members*

Saturday, 1 Corinthians 14:1-25, *Gifts of Prophecy and Tongues*

How do these readings describe Christian living?

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 love shape you? Who do you love? Who loves you? Who is hard to love? What could you do to make it easier to love those who are harder to love?

What are your spiritual gifts? Who has spiritual gifts that complement yours? How can you do more together than you could do by yourself?

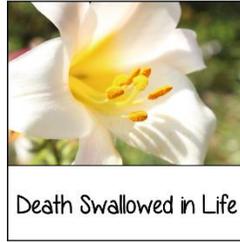
Do: By acting on what we learn, we make God's word come alive. Do the following activity this week.

Find someone with complementary gifts. Work together to accomplish a project you would have trouble accomplishing on your own – a food drive at your church, a video of your church's outreach programs, visiting the sick or shut-in, etc.

Bless: Close your devotion with a blessing.

May God fill you abundantly with spiritual gifts. Amen.

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May 8, 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.

Eternal Creator, you have given us a world where sin and death seem to hold all power. But we know the truth – you are all powerful. Remind us that you have conquered sin and death, and that in you we will live forever. Amen.

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

But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have died. For since death came through a human being, the resurrection of the dead has also come through a human being; for as all die in Adam, so all will be made alive in Christ.

1 Corinthians 15:20-22

Study: Study the reading and consider the background.

To quell a debate over life after death, Paul wrote quite eloquently about new life made possible by the death and resurrection of Christ. Not only has Christ given us new life here on earth – a life driven not by fear, but by hope, faith, and love – but Christ has also made possible eternal life with our creator, God.

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

Sunday, 1 Corinthians 15:1-26, 51-57, *Death Swallowed in Life*

Monday, 2 Corinthians 4:1-15, *Treasure in Clay Jars*

Tuesday, 2 Corinthians 4:16-5:10, *Living by Faith*

Wednesday, 2 Corinthians 5:11-6:13, *The Ministry of Reconciliation*

Thursday, 2 Corinthians 8:1-15, *Encouragement to Be Generous*

Friday, 2 Corinthians 9:1-15, *The Collection for Christians at Jerusalem*

Saturday, 2 Corinthians 10:1-18, *Paul Defends His Ministry*

What kinds of behaviors do these readings suggest for the Christian community?

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?

If death is inevitable, what is God's role in the death of a loved one?

What about an untimely death?

Who have you lost? Tell a story about them.

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

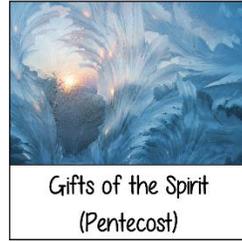
Volunteer to bake some treats the next time there is a funeral at your church. If you are available, volunteer to serve at the funeral lunch.

Try to notice how different people respond to death.

Bless: Close your devotion with a blessing.

May God remind you that Christ is victorious over death. Amen.

God's Story Our Story



May 15, 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 Spirit, your fire burns within us. Spark the flame so that we are moved to carry your flame into the world, spreading the good news of God's love to all who will hear. Amen.

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

All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability. Acts 2:4

Study: Study the reading and consider the background.

On the day of Pentecost (50 days after Christ's resurrection), many were gathered together when God sent God's Holy Spirit to enter the world and motivate people to serve God and others. It was a community event that sparked the spread of Christianity worldwide.

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

Sunday, Acts 2:1-4, *Gifts of the Spirit (Pentecost)*

Monday, 1 Corinthians 12:1-13, *Gifts of the Spirit*

Tuesday, Acts 10:1-33, *Peter and Cornelius*

Wednesday, Acts 10:34-43, *Gentiles Hear the Good News*

Thursday, Acts 10:44-48, *Gentiles Receive the Holy Spirit*

Friday, Acts 16:6-10, *Paul's Vision of the Man of Macedonia*

Saturday, Acts 16:11-15, *The Conversion of Lydia*

How does the Holy Spirit move and act within these stories?

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?

Who are the people in your community that help spread the word of God? How can you support them in their work?

Tell about a time you felt the presence of the Holy Spirit in your life.

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

Light a small bonfire in your backyard fire pit or barbecue. As you enjoy the fire, share stories of where you have seen God working in the world this week. Make smores.

Bless: Close your devotion with a blessing.

May God fill you with God's Holy Spirit. Amen.