



SLG Gospel of John
Week 2 Day 8-14

Daily Devotion Guide
Life Together Series: Five-Year Plan
www.totalgrowth.org

Week 2

Day 8-14

I. Invocation and Adoration:

1. Invocation Prayer

“Lord, make me an instrument of Your peace;
Where there is hatred, let me sow love;
Where there is injury, pardon;
Where there is discord, harmony;
Where there is error, truth;
Where there is doubt, faith;
Where there is despair, hope;
Where there is darkness, light;
And where there is sadness, joy.
O Divine Master, Grant that I may not so much seek
To be consoled as to console;
To be understood as to understand;
To be loved as to love.
For it is in giving that we receive;
It is in pardoning that we are pardoned;
And it is in dying that we are born to eternal life.” Amen.

(Believed to be the “Prayer of St. Francis”, printed in Paris in French, in a small spiritual magazine called *La Clochette*)

2. Adoration through Psalm 136

(We’ll use this Psalm, not for today’s Bible reading, but for the sake of focusing our thoughts on God.)

Read slowly this passage at least three times and each day gather one thought about this psalm that points to God’s character and translate it into a prayer of adoration.

II. Confession

Pause now and ask the Holy Spirit to reveal to you your sins and ask for forgiveness.

III. Thanksgiving

List, one by one, things for which you should give thanks.

Day 8

IV. Scriptural Reflection: John 3:14-21

This week we shall continue the study of the Gospel of John. Read slowly and reflectively the assigned passage twice at least and consider the questions below each day.

- (1) It appears that Jesus continues to talk until 3:21. How appropriate was Jesus' use of Moses and the bronze snake as an analogy of His work of salvation? (See Num. 21: 4-9)
- (2) We often associate the snake with evil, what does this analogy teach us about the use of symbols in the Bible?
- (3) 3:16 makes a very clear statement about eternal death and eternal life, and many people opine that a God who can send people to death is not a God of love. Read v. 18 carefully a few times. How does this verse answer this criticism?
- (4) Substitute your own name in v.16 and read over it a few times.
- (5) What is the verdict declared by Jesus as He sees the response of the people to Him and His ministry? (v. 19)
- (6) In contrast to the one who does evil, how does the one who lives in truth respond to the light and why?
- (7) What is the main message to you today and how may you apply it to your life?

V. Meditative Reflection: Nicodemus

“But whoever lives by the truth comes into the light so that it may be seen plainly that what he has done has been done through God.” (Jn. 3:21)

Although it is quite obvious that the reason why John chose to mention Nicodemus visited Jesus at night twice (3:2; 19:39) was to highlight the secrecy of his visit. In those days with no electricity and properly paved roads, to venture out in the evening was only for special or urgent reasons. As a Pharisee, Nicodemus was afraid that his visit to Jesus might arouse criticisms from his peers, and perhaps would even adversely affect his status among them. However, to venture out at night also indicated his genuine desire to seek the truth.

We did not know the immediately outcome of his visit to Jesus, but the path to the Kingdom of God was laid out to him in no uncertain terms. “No one can enter the Kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit”; and the gospel message was presented in an unprecedented manner, “For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life” (3:5, 16).

Given the sincerity to seek the truth, I believe that Nicodemus could have been one of the Pharisees who went to John the Baptist to hear his message pointing him to Jesus as the Lamb of God (Matt. 3:7). Together with the signs he saw in Jerusalem performed by Jesus (3:2), he must have believed in Jesus in his heart, although not openly. However, at the trial of Jesus, probably together with Joseph of Arimathea, he did not side with his peers in the council (Lk. 23:50). Although they could not prevent the death of Jesus, they eventually pushed aside all fears, and stepped forward to bury Jesus (19:38-39).

Nicodemus was certainly one of those who lived “in the truth” and thus came “into the light” (3:21), while most of his peers hated the light for fear that their evil deeds would be exposed (3:20). Of course, his sincere effort to live in the truth did not yield him salvation, but it did prepare him to acknowledge Jesus as the True Light through Whom he had eternal life — something that he did not accomplish for himself, but was done through God (3:21).

Day 9

IV. Scriptural Reflection: John 3:22-36

Read slowly and reflectively the assigned passage twice at least and consider the questions below each day.

John the Baptist’s final testimony about Jesus:

- (1) As John’s disciples and the “Jew” brought their dispute to John:
 - a. What did they already know about John and Jesus?
 - b. What was their motive in telling what John already knew — many had switched to be baptized and to follow Jesus?
- (2) Read carefully John’s response:
 - a. What is the essence of v. 27?
 - b. Who is he not?
 - c. In using the bride and bridegroom’s analogy:
 - i. Who is the bride? (See Mat. 25:1ff)
 - ii. Who is the groom? (See Rev. 21:2, 9ff)
 - iii. Who is the friend?
 - iv. Why is John’s joy now complete?
 - d. What conclusion does John draw in v.30 and why?
- (3) What is the most important lesson you can learn from John the Baptist?

- (4) Read carefully vv. 31-36. Jot down all that John said about Jesus. What can you learn about Christ?
- (5) Review the entire chapter 3 and highlight everything about “eternal life”. How important is eternal life to you and to Jesus’ mission?
- (6) What is the main message to you today and how may you apply it to your life?

V. Meditative Reflection: Eternal Life

“Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God’s wrath remains on him.” (Jn. 3:36)

One of the important features of the Gospel of John is its emphasis on “eternal life”. It mentions about eternal life at least 14 times, more than all the three Synoptic Gospels combined. One wonders why?

While we may not be too sure about the reason why John chose to make such an emphasis, but we do know that such an emphasis has great relevancy to the preaching of the gospel today.

I really admire Billy Graham in that in all the years of preaching the gospel, he has made the same emphasis as John’s, while many evangelists would not even mention eternal life in their so-called gospel message. They turn their emphases on things like, “the meaning of life”, “life of significance”, “fulfillment” or “healing” — all of temporal values only.

Such a change in emphasis has created a church with no eternal perspective and a so-called faith community that focuses only on success and meaningfulness of their earthly pursuit. Such a Christianity without eternal perspective necessarily downplays the seriousness of sin and its consequence and creates a one-sided view of God — that of love but void of wrathful judgment. This error of the Social Gospel Movement of more than one hundred years ago is rearing its ugly head once again these days, but the Word of God remains unchanged as John 3:16 makes plain what the gospel is all about and is worth repeating:

“For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life.”

Day 10

IV. Scriptural Reflection: John 4:1-12

Read slowly and reflectively the assigned passage twice at least and consider the questions below each day.

- (1) Why did Jesus have to leave Judea and go back to Galilee?
- (2) To the disciples, Samaria was not a welcoming town to the Jews, and it was a place that they “had to pass through”. As it turned out, it was a divine appointment for the Samaritan woman. How might this incident speak to your current situation?
- (3) Why did Jesus have to stop and sit down at the well? How does it speak to the extent of His “incarnation”?
- (4) Why was the woman surprised that Jesus asked her for a drink?
- (5) In what way(s) is cross-cultural evangelism easier and in what way(s) might it be harder?
- (6) Jesus, of course, was thirsty, but what do you think the real reason was behind His asking her for a drink?
- (7) How did Jesus use the water from the well as an object lesson to teach the truth?
- (8) How did the woman respond to His self-revelation and why?
- (9) What is the main message to you today and how may you apply it to your life?

V. Meditative Reflection: The Word Made Flesh

“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.” (Jn. 4:6)

A well-meaning leader of a church once felt frustrated by the poor health condition his pastor was in. His pastor was a very good pastor who loved the Lord and the people he served. But the demand of ministry, especially in a church of that size, had ruined his health. This leader confided in me that his was a case of poor management of his time and task, and it was not only unbiblical, in his words, “He was not following the example of Jesus”. In his mind, Jesus must have been a very well-balanced minister who would have taken good care of His physical body.

To his surprise, I showed him the passage in Isaiah 53 which vividly describes not only Jesus’ condition on the cross, but as a norm, “a man of sorrows and familiar with sufferings” (Isa. 53:3). I also reminded him of passages like John 4:6 in which Jesus experienced fatigue like any ministers would.

I am so thankful that Jesus, although He has never sinned, has chosen “to be made like His brothers in every way in order that He might become a merciful and faithful high priest in service to God” (Heb. 2:17). Yes, indeed, in times of frustrations and extreme fatigue, I can always approach the throne of grace and say to the Lord, “Lord, you do understand because you’ve been there!”

Day 11

IV. Scriptural Reflection: John 4:13-26

Read slowly and reflectively the assigned passage twice at least and consider the questions below each day.

- (1) What is the living water that Jesus talked about?
- (2) How is it different from other types of water?
- (3) From the woman’s reply in v. 15, do you think she really understood what Jesus meant?
- (4) How did Jesus help her understand her thirst and the true meaning of the living water that He offers?
- (5) Are you now thirsty (answer honestly), and why?
- (6) In order that the woman could drink of this living water, why was it essential that the issue with her personal life had to be first dealt with?
- (7) Is there any personal issue in your life that has yet to be dealt with so that you will not be thirsty anymore?
- (8) Why did the woman, all of a sudden, talk about the place of worship?
- (9) What is worshipping in spirit and in truth? What is not?
- (10) How can you apply it to your Sunday worship and your attitude toward your place of worship?
- (11) What is the main message to you today and how may you apply it to your life?

V. Meditative Reflection: Worship in Spirit and in Truth

“Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for they are the kind of worshippers the Father seeks.”(Jn. 4: 23)

The conversation between Jesus and the Samaritan woman was a fascinating one:

- the setting was most unusual, with a Jewish man needing to quench His thirst from a Samaritan woman;
- the timing was also most unusual, as normally no one in her right mind would draw water from the well under the noontime heat of Palestine;
- the broader timing was also unusual in that it appeared to be a chance-occurrence — Jesus and His disciples were only “passing through”; and
- the woman was not just an adulterous woman, but a notorious one who made Elizabeth Taylor pale in comparison!

But this story has occupied a very important role in the history of the gospel in that it signifies the universality of the gospel that reaches beyond the people of Israel. At the same time, many valuable truths are also expressed through this story, one of which touches on the core of what is true worship.

One should not be too quick to dismiss the importance of worshipping together with other saints in a formal worship setting. This is not the core of the message. The core message is that without a worship that is in spirit and in truth, no matter how vibrant the music is, how powerful the preaching is and how prayerful the service appears to be, it will not be God-pleasing; it is not what God desires.

To be able to worship in “spirit” implies a prior relationship with God and therefore no one who is unsaved, even a seeker, can worship God.

But this “prior relationship” is not just a matter of status, i.e. just being saved does not mean that you will necessarily worship “in spirit”, it has to be “in truth” and that implies a genuine relationship that is living and unhindered. Unfortunately, with the hectic and pressured lifestyle to which most of us are subjected, not to mention the sins that have entangled us during the week, it is not natural for us to suddenly be able to worship “in spirit” and “in truth” as we come to the sanctuary of the Lord. Therefore, it is imperative that we should come to worship “prepared” and that includes

- the avoidance of late night activities the night before worship that could wear us down and distract our minds to focus on God;
- a thorough examination of our life and confession of our sins before we come to worship; and
- a cultivation of a heart of hunger and thirst for the Word and the presence of the Lord through consistent daily devotion.

Without the above, I am afraid, to worship in spirit and in truth is just an illusion. For years, I have made clear to the congregation that I would not attend any banquet on

Saturday night, and if my presence is really needed, I would leave as early as possible, so that I would not displease the Lord with an unprepared heart on Sunday.

Day 12

IV. Scriptural Reflection: John 4:27-38

Read slowly and reflectively the assigned passage twice at least and consider the questions below each day.

- (1) How did Jesus end His conversation with the woman in v. 26?
- (2) How did the woman respond to the word of Jesus?
 - a. What was her purpose in coming to the well?
 - b. Why did she leave her water jar behind?
- (3) How does v.6 describe Jesus' physical condition?
- (4) Did the disciples believe that Jesus might have eaten, judging from v. 33?
- (5) Do you think when Jesus talked to the disciples, He still looked tired? Why or why not?
- (6) What is Jesus' food? Why did He use food as an analogy? What is your food today?
- (7) In Samaria, the time for seeding is in November/December, and harvest time would be in April. So when Jesus asked them to look, they could only see bare fields at the time; yet Jesus said the harvest was already "white". Read v. 30 carefully: What might Jesus be pointing to and what might the disciples be seeing? (Remember people in those days dressed normally in white)
- (8) What is the main message to you today and how may you apply it to your life?

V. Meditative Reflection: We Are All the Same

**“Then, leaving her water jar, the woman went back to the town and said to the people, ‘Come see a man who told me everything I ever did.’”
(Jn. 4:28-29)**

John introduces us to two characters who could not have been more different, one immediately after the other.

Nicodemus was a Pharisee who prided himself not only as a learned scholar of the Scriptures, but as man of purity and righteousness, at least from the point of the Law.

On the other hand, this Samaritan woman was not only despised by the Jews as a

pervert of the Law of Moses, but was also a social outcast whose lifestyle was even despised by her own people — that probably was the reason why she had to fetch water from the well under the noontime heat when no one would be there.

However, both were sinners who knew they could not enter the Kingdom of God and more precious, both admitted their need for salvation.

The sheer fact of initiating his contact with Jesus and the reply by Jesus clearly showed that Nicodemus knew he could not enter the Kingdom of God on his own. Although the woman did not initiate her contact with Jesus, the fact that she left her water jar behind was a powerful symbol of her leaving her old sinful lifestyle behind as she believed in Jesus and even testified immediately to the people of her town (4:28-29).

As much as these two stories of contrast were well-known to Christians, from time to time I still find people in the church revere the “Nicodemuses” and despise the like of the Samaritan woman in their midst. They have failed to understand both their own depravity and the power of the gospel in making us into “new creation” in Christ (2 Cor. 5:17).

Day 13

IV. Scriptural Reflection: John 4:39-54

Read slowly and reflectively the assigned passage twice at least and consider the questions below each day.

- (1) V. 6 points out that the time the woman drew water from the well was at noon, a very hot hour of the day in a desert land. Can you imagine why?
- (2) And now, she openly talked about her adulterous life. What effect does drinking the Living Water have on a person?
- (3) From what the people of Samaria said of the reason for their belief, can you define what “true faith” in Christ is?
- (4) Was it your experience too?
- (5) How does the statement in v. 44 echo that of v. 3?
- (6) Why did the people in Galilee respond differently from the people in Jerusalem although they saw and heard the exact same things in Jerusalem at the Passover Feast?
- (7) What kind of faith did this royal official have when he asked Jesus for help?
- (8) How did Jesus test his faith?
- (9) How did he respond to Jesus’ words?

(10) How special was his faith?

(11) What kind of faith did he and his household have after the healing of his son?

(12) What is the main message to you today and how may you apply it to your life?

V. Meditative Reflection: Not Just an Emotional Decision

**“We no longer believe just because of what you said: now we have heard for ourselves; and we know that this man is the Savior of the world.”
(Jn. 4:42)**

I find it a bit disturbing when the church puts too much emphasis on mass evangelistic rallies that feature the testimonies of celebrities. Do not get me wrong, I am not against it at all. In fact, any outreach events that seek to share the gospel biblically should be supported by all. The only thing that concerns me is when we take the raising of hands or coming forward to indicate a decision to believe in Christ at its face value. As most of us know, a very small percentage of those who so-called made a decision for Christ would go to church subsequently, let alone become committed followers of Christ. This phenomenon is particularly common when decisions are made purely as a response to some emotional testimonies of celebrities.

The problem lies in the hearers projecting the experience of the celebrities onto themselves. Their stories become theirs emotionally. But the conviction and rejection of their sins, the giving up of their former lifestyles, the owning of Christ as their Lord and Savior — these are not transferable and must be acted upon by the hearers themselves. In many cases, when the emotion of the event fades and they face lives “as the rubber meets the road”, their commitment (if we can even call it as such) vanishes also.

This is why the conversion of the people in the town of the Samaritan woman was so precious. No doubt, they were much affected by the conversion and the testimony of the woman. Who wouldn't! A notorious adulterer openly confessed her past and pointed them to Jesus. It definitely deserved attention; it definitely evoked an inner desire to believe. But they had to make sure for themselves who Jesus really is, in order that they would take the same step of open confession of sin. As a result, it was the staying by Jesus for another two days that enabled them to make a genuine and lasting decision, and declared, “We no longer believe just because of what you said: now we have heard for ourselves; and we know that this man is the Savior of the world.” (Jn. 4:42)

IV. Scriptural Reflection: John 5:1-15

Read slowly and reflectively the assigned passage twice at least and consider the questions below each day.

- (1) Some older manuscripts added that whoever first dipped into the stirring water would be healed. If this were true, do you think it was an act of God? Why or why not?
- (2) On the other hand, if it was not true, why would people still line up, including this invalid of 38 years?
- (3) Of all people, why did Jesus only heal this invalid?
- (4) “Do you want to be well” appears to be a superfluous question. In what sense was it not superfluous, but very important question to this man?
- (5) How did Jesus heal the man and how special was His method of healing?
- (6) Mark the different reactions to this miracle:
 - a. How did the man react to his healing? What does it tell us about him?
 - b. How did the Jews react to his healing? Why did they not choose to rejoice over his healing, or at least rejoice at the manifestation of God’s power in their midst?
- (7) Why did Jesus choose to show Himself to the man again?
- (6) What is the main message to you today and how may you apply it to your life?

V. Meditative Reflection: Faith and Miracle

“The man went away and told the Jews that it was Jesus who had made him well.” (Jn. 5:15)

John tell us that “a great number of disabled people used to lie (at the pool at the Sheep Gate) — the blind, the lame, the paralyzed” (Jn. 5:4). Upon the reading of the healing of the invalid by Jesus, we cannot help but ask, “Of all the sick lying at the pool, why did Jesus choose to heal this man?”

However, as we read this story further, it becomes obvious that this healing turned out to be a curse rather than a blessing to this man.

For sure, it was a dream come true for this man who had been paralyzed for 38 years. To be more exact, he would have given up his dream for healing long time ago. It was just another day at the pool, perhaps, more for begging for money than for healing. But the joy of being given a new lease on life must be exhilarating, and yet we do not read about any jumping, any praising of the Lord, and certainly no worshipping at Jesus’ feet or enquiring

as to who Jesus is! He simply “picked up his mat and walked”.

To say that he returned to normality would be true — a return to his former way of life which was sinning. That was why Jesus chose to confront him with these words, “See, you are well again. Stop sinning or something worse may happen to you” (Jn. 5:14). Did this man listen to Jesus? Obviously not: no sooner that he knew where Jesus was, he told the Jews so that they could persecute Him!

I have come across people who were miraculously healed by God of sickness that could have lead to certain death. When I said “miraculously healed by God”, I was not putting words in their mouths, they themselves recognized it. But, like the invalid of this story, their healing was not followed by repentance and faith in Jesus Christ. Unlike the invalid they did express gratitude, but such gratitude was short-lived and like the invalid, their lives returned to normality — and they continued to live in sin.

To me, the moral of the story is that genuine faith does not depend on miracles!

VI. A Time for Silence

You have meditated much with your intellectual faculty today. Now have a moment of silence (the length is up to you, 5 or even 30 minutes), and ask God quietly, “Lord, is there any important message from you today that I might have missed? Show me, your servant is listening?”

VII. Supplication

Use the following chart to cover people and ministries that you want to remember before the Lord, apart from praying for yourself:

	Your family	Other people	Church Ministries	Other Ministries	City & World	Others
Sunday						
Monday						
Tuesday						
Wednesday						
Thursday						
Friday						
Saturday						

VIII. Benediction

“May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in Him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.” Amen. (Rom. 15:13)