



SLG Gospel of John
Week 3 Day 15-21

Daily Devotion Guide
Life Together Series: Five-Year Plan
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I. Invocation and Adoration:

1. Invocation Prayer

“Lord, you who ‘made the moon to mark the seasons, and the sun knows when to go down’, have seen fit to give us yet another year of life to experience the reality of your power, your faithfulness and your goodness. Whatever may befall us in this New Year, we know they come from the Father of heavenly lights and all good gifts do come from you. We know that there will be new truths to discover, new miracles to witness, new sins to forgive and be forgiven, new souls to embrace and to care for, new sorrows to grieve and be comforted, and new joy to experience and share; but we do not want to face them alone by ourselves; we need you to walk alongside us and to guide us every moment of every day, so that we may live a life that pleases you and glorifies you. In Jesus’ name. Amen.”

2. Adoration through Psalm 137

(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.

IV. Scriptural Reflection: John 5:16-29

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.

Note: Jesus is explaining in detail His relationship with the Father. In reading this section, we need to bear in mind one important thing and that is although Jesus speaks of the Father and Him as two “persons”, the separation of the Son from the Father and vice versa is an impossibility, as John 1:18 clarifies, the Son gives expression to the Father, but they are essentially one (Jn. 10:30).

- (1) In an effort to tell the Jews who He is, Jesus points out that “My Father is always at work”.
 - a. What does He tell them about His relationship with God?
 - b. What is God doing these days?
 - c. What is the Son doing then?
 - d. Why then is His work not a violation of the Sabbath? (See Matt. 12:8)
- (2) In what way are Jesus and the Father one according to v. 19?
- (3) What are the two “greater things” than what they have seen (i.e. the healing of the invalid) that the Son will do? (vv. 21-22)
- (4) At the appearance of Jesus, how is eternal life and eternal condemnation determined? And why? (vv. 23-24)
- (5) Since this is how a person comes to have eternal life, what does v. 29 mean?
- (6) Why does the Father give Jesus the authority to judge “because He is the Son of Man”? (v. 27)
- (7) What is the main message to you today and how may you apply it to your life?

V. Meditative Reflection: Sabbath Rest

“My Father is always at His work to this very day and I, too, am working.” (Jn. 5:17)

It is true that “By the seventh day God had finished the work He had been doing, so on the seventh day He rested from all His work” (Gen. 2:2). However, the seven days refer clearly to the making of the earth into a habitable place with lights, air, water, land and the living things therein, with the crowning creation of men and women on the sixth day. And thus, “God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it He rested from all the working of creating that He had done” (Gen. 2:3).

While God had rested from His initial work of creation, our Lord Jesus Christ reminds us that Father God has not rested from working which can clearly be seen in the Old Testament — the visiting of the Adam and Eve in the garden of Eden, the continued interaction with Adam’s offspring after the “fall” of Adam, instituting, preparing, implementing His great plan of salvation through the race of Israel, revealing Himself and His precepts in many different ways, not to mention the continued maintenance of the universe He has created. In other words, God is not a remote, uninterested, absentee-God. He is a personal God who continues to care for His creation, especially men and women whom He has created in His own image.

Therefore, one of the reasons for establishing the Sabbath is to serve as a constant reminder, in fact a weekly reminder to all mankind who their Creator is. By observing the Sabbath, the people of Israel are affirming to themselves and to the rest of the world that there is no other God but Yahweh who has created the heavens and the earth, and it carries added significance to a world that sneers at the idea that there is a Creator God today!

It is true that with our faith in the Lord of Sabbath, our Lord Jesus Christ (Matt. 12:8), we have entered into the rest of God through Him (Heb. 4:3). Our weekly worship still serves, among other purposes, the same old purpose of the Sabbath, and that is to declare to the world who their Creator is and to invite them to enter into the same rest that we have in Jesus Christ.

Day 16

IV. Scriptural Reflection: John 5:30-43

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

Jesus continued to rebuke the Jews for their hatred towards Him based on His perceived breach of Sabbath law and making Himself equal with God:

- (1) Jesus said the Jews really had no excuse for not believing in Him, because there was at least a four-fold testimony about Him. Can you discern what they were?
 - a. Vv. 33-35: how did the Jews respond to this testimony and why?
 - b. V. 36: why is this testimony weightier than the last one?
 - c. Vv. 37-38: How did the Father testify concerning the Son?
 - d. Vv. 39-40 (also vv. 45-47): How “weighty” is this testimony?
- (2) Have these four witnesses strengthened your faith in Christ?

- (3) The Jews “diligently studied the Scriptures” and yet they would not believe in Jesus. What were the reasons?
- (4) How does this remind you of your own attitude in studying the Scriptures today?
- (5) Part of the sin of the Jews lied in their “accepting praise from one another” (v. 44). Examine yourself whether this is also your sin.
- (6) What is the main message to you today and how may you apply it to your life?

V. Meditative Reflection: Diligent Study is not Enough

“You diligently study the Scriptures because you think that by them you possess eternal life.” (Jn. 5:39)

It is quite surprising to read what Jesus said of the Jews who persecuted him: “You diligently study the Scriptures because you think that by them you possess eternal life.” (Jn. 5:39). One wonders why those who would devote themselves to pursue eternal life through the study of Scriptures “diligently” would miss the mark. Did Jesus not promise, “Seek and ye shall find”? (Matt. 7:7)

This is such a solemn reminder to all of us who appear to have a hunger for the word of God and devote much time to the “diligent” study of the Scriptures and the listening to sermons that are biblical. Diligence in itself is not enough, we need the right attitude.

Jesus goes on in this passage to point out what their problems are:

- “You do not believe the one He sent” (v. 38): in other words, they diligently study the Scriptures without the intention to believe and obey. They pick and choose what to believe and what to obey; worse, they study likely for the sake of gaining head-knowledge which is the most dangerous approach to the Word of God;
- “You do not have the love of God” (v. 42): Indeed, the attitude of approaching the Word that pleases God is for the cultivating of our love relationship with Him. Have you and I grown in our love for God during our pursuit of His Word? If not, like the Jews, we have missed the mark.
- “How can you believe if you accept praise from one another” (v. 44): this is perhaps the flaw of even the most God-loving believer. Even with the proper attitude of loving God, the study of the Scriptures necessarily increases our knowledge of things spiritual. And as people naturally see the change in our lives, they would come and consult us and hold us in high esteem. “Fire tests silver, and heat tests gold. But people are tested by the praise they receive” (Prov. 27:21). Once pride creeps into our lives, it hinders not only our ability to truly know the Word of God, but also in our ability to love Him.

IV. Scriptural Reflection: John 6:1-15

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

- (1) How did the Galileans differ from the Jews of Jerusalem in their reception of Jesus?
- (2) Look up Mark 6:32-44 for the reason why Jesus wanted to feed the crowd?
- (3) John said Jesus was testing Philip with His question. What did Jesus hope to hear from Philip?
- (4) What was Philip's reply? What might be the underlying thoughts behind his answer?
- (5) How did Andrew's response differ from Philip's, especially in terms of his attitude toward the "problem" they were facing?
- (6) What was the result of his action? Is there a lesson to learn for us?
- (7) We know from the other gospel accounts that the disciples were involved in the handling of the food distribution:
 - a. What would this miracle mean to the disciples?
 - b. What might be the significance of having leftovers?
 - c. What might be the significance of having filled 12 baskets with the leftovers?
- (8) How differently did this crowd respond to the miraculous sign of Jesus (from the Jews in Jerusalem)?
- (9) In what ways were they not different from the Jews in Jerusalem?
- (10) Why did Jesus choose to go away from a crowd that believed in Him?
- (11) What is the main message to you today and how may you apply it to your life?

V. Meditative Reflection: People is the Focus of Jesus' Ministry

“Jesus looked up and saw a large crowd coming toward him. So he said to Philip, ‘Where can we buy bread for these people to eat?’ ” (Jn. 6:5)

Poor Philip, he was singled out by Jesus to answer an impossible question, “Where can we buy bread for these people to eat?”

They were likely on the north side of the Sea of Galilee and on a mountainside that would likely be a fair distance from town. Even if they could go into a nearby town to buy food, without any means of transportation, how could they even carry enough food to feed five thousand people? Furthermore, as Philip put it, “Suppose we were able to buy enough bread for each person to have just a bite. That would take more than half a year's pay”

(6:7). Obviously it does not necessarily mean that they did not have the money, but rather that it would cost a lot of money and Philip did not think it was their responsibility to feed — they should know better to have brought enough food for their journey.

John did not choose to tell us Jesus’ intention for testing Philip, likely because Mark has already made it plain in his gospel account: “When Jesus landed and saw a large crowd, He had compassion on them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd. So He began teaching them many things” (Mk. 6:34). Philip’s answer was a very practical, pragmatic and sensible one. But his underlying thoughts failed to identify with the heart of Jesus. He saw their ministry to the crowd as mere teaching of the Word, and since the teaching was done, it was time to disperse them, and time for their own rest.

While Philip appeared to have failed the test, Andrew came close to the heart of Jesus. At least, he took the trouble to check around to see if he could do something about the “problem”. While to his disappointment, most if not all the people, did not come prepared; only a little boy had five small loaves of barley bread and two small fish. As ridiculous as his response to Jesus was

- His action was of his own initiation, done without being asked, which shows that he did not see the people as a “problem”, but as hungry people he wished to feed; and
- As much as he could not provide the solution, he brought to Jesus’ attention all he could come up with!

And his action resulted in one of most famous miracles of Jesus, the focus of which is often overlooked. It is not only a miracle of being able to feed five thousand mouths with only five loaves of barley bread and two small fish, it is a miracle that shows the compassion of Jesus. He sees every one of us not just as souls needing His salvation—as essential as it is—He sees us as human beings with body, soul and spirit! “Ministry” to Jesus is never just a task; it is always about people, as undeserving as this crowd was who only cared about their stomach! (Jn. 6:26)

Day 18

IV. Scriptural Reflection: John 6:16-24

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

It is helpful that we also read the parallel passage in Mark 6:45-52 which gives more details and insights in this event.

- (1) We know the impact the last miracle had on the people, what might the disciples learn about Who Jesus is and what He could do?
- (2) Can you think of any possible reasons why Jesus did not join them right away? (see vv. 22-24)
- (3) Did Jesus know in advance that the disciples would face the strong wind?
- (4) Why did Jesus choose to join them now by walking on water, and not simply appearing on the other side of the lake?
- (5) What might the disciples learn from this miracle that they might not have from the last one?
- (6) How should they have responded to the storm and the sudden appearance of Jesus on the water had their hearts not been hardened?
- (7) What has this miracle demonstrated to you? How can you apply it to your life?
- (8) What is the main message to you today and how may you apply it to your life?

V. Meditative Reflection: Who is Jesus?

“But He said to them, ‘It is I; don’t be afraid.’”(Jn. 6:20)

While we are reading chapter after chapter in the Gospel of John that Jesus kept performing one miracle after another, we are amazed and therefore are a little puzzled as to why Mark could still describe the disciples’ hearts as hardened (Mk. 6:52). In particular, Mark remarks that the disciples “had not understood the loaves”.

However, if we examine our hearts, we too have experienced God’s answers to our prayers time after time, and often the timing and the manner of which could only be described as miraculous. Yet, when we face a new challenge in faith, we are just as afraid and terrified as before and seem to have to start from scratch and re-learn putting our trust in God.

Part of the problem of the disciples was not unlike the Israelites in the wilderness, and that was too many miracles had taken away the “awe” factor and if they had to face prolonged time of trial or crisis, they turned the need to exercise their faith into fear and even complaint.

What the disciples should have understood from the miracle of the loaves is not so much Jesus could perform miracles, but who He is — none other than the Creator God. This appears to be what they now have learned from this latest miracle, as they “worshiped Him, saying, ‘Truly you are the Son of God’ ” (Matt. 14:33).

The next time we come across our trial of faith, let's learn to focus not so much on instant miraculous deliverance, but on who Jesus is — the Creator God who says to us, "It is I", because in every storm of life, He is still there with us.

Day 19

IV. Scriptural Reflection: John 6:25-40

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

- (1) Why did the crowd pursue Jesus so relentlessly? (6:15, 26)
- (2) We understand that the crowd that followed Jesus was in general quite poor. Was Jesus being too harsh on them?
- (3) What other perishable things do people pursue or work for other than food?
- (4) Why are people not interested in "food that endures to eternal life"?
- (5) What is the significance of v. 27 when it comes to
 - a. Our sharing of the gospel with others and
 - b. Our own focus of life?
- (6) It is Jesus who led the crowd to think in terms of "work" (v. 27):
 - a. Why then does He equate "faith" with "work"?
 - b. What is the important message He conveys?
- (7) These people had already seen and personally tasted of the miracle of bread and fish:
 - a. How could they still ask for a "miraculous sign"?
 - b. From what they said in v. 31 (referring to manna from heaven) what kind of a miracle they were hoping to see that qualified as a "miraculous sign"?
 - c. Why was manna not the "true bread of heaven"?
- (8) What is the "true bread of heaven"? (v. 35) How does "it" differ from manna? (v. 33)
- (9) It is obvious that the people still did not get it (v. 34): according to Jesus
 - a. Who will be the ones who will believe in Him? (v. 37)
 - b. How does v.39 speak to the "eternal security" of all believers?
 - c. What will happen to all who die believing in Jesus Christ? (v. 40)
- (10) What is the main message to you today and how may you apply it to your life?

V. Meditative Reflection: Do Not Work for Food that Spoils

"I tell you the truth, you are looking for me, not because you saw miraculous signs, but because you ate the loaves and had your fill." (Jn. 6:26)

The crowd that relentlessly pursued Jesus for the wrong motive was hardly unique. Even today, churches are full of professed Christians who pursue Christ for the wrong reasons. Allow me to share with you the insight of John Calvin in this respect:

“On the contrary, they expect nothing greater from Him than to live happily and at ease in this world. This is to rob Christ of His chief power; for the reason why He was given by the Father and revealed Himself to men is, that He may form them anew after the image of God by giving them His Holy Spirit, and that He may conduct them to eternal life by clothing them with His righteousness.

It is of great importance, therefore, what we keep in view in the miracles of Christ; for he who does not aspire to the kingdom of God, but rests satisfied with the conveniences of the present life, seeks nothing else than to fill his belly. In like manner, there are many persons in the present day who would gladly embrace the gospel, if it were free from the bitterness of the cross, and if it brought nothing but carnal pleasures. Nay, we see many who make a Christian profession, that they may live in greater gaiety and with less restraint. Some through the expectation of gain, others through fear, and others for the sake of those whom they wish to please, profess to be the disciples of Christ. In seeking Christ, therefore, the chief point is, to despise the world and *seek the kingdom of God and His righteousness*, (Matt. 6:33.) Besides, as men very generally impose on themselves, and persuade themselves that they are seeking Christ in the best manner, while they debase the whole of His power, for this reason Christ, in His usual manner, doubles the word verily, as if by the oath He intended to bring to light the vice which lurks under our hypocrisy.” (Calvin’s Commentaries, Vol. XVII, 240.)

Food for thought!

Day 20

IV. Scriptural Reflection: John 6:41-59

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

- (1) Why did the people not believe that Jesus is the Bread from heaven? (vv. 41-42)
- (2) In what way was their doubt justified?

- (3) In what way was their doubt not justified? (See Jn. 5:33-47, the 4-fold testimony)
- (4) On what basis did Jesus ask them to stop grumbling?
- (5) What was their problem according to Jesus? (v. 45)
- (6) In reiterating that He is the Bread of Life that has come down from heaven (vv. 46-51), what else did Jesus ask them to do to “believe” in Him?
- (7) Would you have understood what Jesus meant at the time?
- (8) What does He really mean in v. 51?
- (9) V. 52 suggests that some did believe in Him: it is easy to understand why some of them did not believe. The harder question is “Why would some of them believe?” What do you think?
- (10) Jesus went on to explain to them that His flesh and His blood could really be consumed and those who eat and drink of Him will have eternal life and will be raised at the last day. As hard to understand as it was, if they were sincere in searching for the truth, what question should they ask? What question(s) would you have asked?
- (11) What is the main message to you today and how may you apply it to your life?

V. Meditative Reflection: The Truthfulness of His Word

“Very truly I tell you, the one who believes has eternal life. I am the bread of life.” (Jn. 6:47-48)

I have to admit if I were in the crowd listening to the word of Jesus, I would be totally bewildered, because I would have taken His “Bread of Life” as a metaphor only, and yet, Jesus insisted that His flesh is real food and His blood is real drink (v. 55). Indeed, I would be totally confused. That is why I do not blame those who had doubts and started to grumble. The more interesting question is why some of them believed; this is what v. 52 suggests and this is an important lesson that we should learn, and that is: if we do not understand the meaning of the Word of God, that does not negate its truthfulness a bit. The problem lies with us and not the truthfulness of the Scriptures.

Of course, after the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, what Jesus said here all makes perfect sense, and with the words He spoke in instituting the Lord’s Supper, it becomes crystal clear that His bodily death on the cross atoned for our sin and death; His blood so shed cleanses us of all our inequities. By believing in Him, His resurrected life now comes into our life which is eternal life. What’s more: His resurrection guarantees our being raised from the dead on the last day!

However, this had to be total mystery to the hearers on that day inside the synagogue in Capernaum. Yet, some chose to believe, but not without cause. They believed in what

Jesus said earlier in 5:33-47—the four-fold testimony that has born witness to Jesus Christ, namely the testimony of John the Baptist (5:33-35), the many miracles that Jesus has already performed (5:36), the testimony of the Father not only in empowering Him, but in descending upon Him with His Spirit at Jesus’ baptism (5:37) and “the Scriptures that testify about” Him (5:39).

These testimonies were enough for them to believe in Him though they may not understand the meaning of some of His words; that does not negate His truthfulness one bit.

Day 21

IV. Scriptural Reflection: John 6:60-71

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

- (1) Some of the disciples were grumbling too:
 - a. Since they were “disciples”, shouldn’t their attitude be different from the people?
 - b. As hard as Jesus’ teaching was, how should they approach it?
- (2) As much as the teaching was hard, why would they be “offended”? In what ways might they be offended?
- (3) What did Jesus say was their problem? (v. 62)
- (4) If the Spirit gives life and the flesh counts for nothing (v. 63), how then should this principle be applied to the real eating of His flesh and the real drinking of His blood?
- (5) What ultimately determines whether someone would believe in Christ? (v. 65)
- (6) Vv. 66-67 are some of the saddest verses in the Bible
 - a. What could Jesus have done to prevent it?
 - b. Why didn’t He?
- (7) What is your answer to v. 67?
- (8) What is the reason for your answer?
- (9) Is it the same as Peter’s? Why or why not?
- (10) What is the main message to you today and how may you apply it to your life?

V. Meditative Reflection: The Sifting of Followers

“You do not want to leave too, do you?” (Jn. 6:67)

John 6:66-67 contains one of the saddest words in the Bible as many of Jesus' disciples made a conscious decision to turn away and no longer followed Him. Jesus then turned to the "Twelve", His closest followers and asked, "You do not want to leave too, do you"? These words carried a deep sense of grief and disappointment.

Leon Morris is right in implying that this had to happen, true disciples were sifted from the false: "Many attached themselves to Him, some of them wholeheartedly, some very loosely. But then came a time when their allegiance was tested...it was the part they could understand rather than the part they could not that bothered them." (NICNT, John, 338).

William Barclay points out that the Greek word for "hard" means not "*hard to understand, but hard to accept*":

"The disciple knew quite well that Jesus had been claiming to be the very life of God come down from heaven, and that no one could live this life or face eternity without submitting to Him.

Here we come upon a truth that re-emerges in every age. Time and again it is not the intellectual difficulty which keeps men from becoming Christians; it is the height of Christ's moral demand. At the heart of all religion there must be mystery, for the simple reason that at that heart there is God. In the nature of things man cannot ever fully understand God. Any honest thinker will accept that there must be mystery.

The real difficulty of Christianity is two-fold. It demands an act of surrender to Christ, an acceptance of Him as the final authority; and it demands a moral standard of the highest level. The disciples were well aware that Jesus had claimed to be the very life and mind of God come down to earth; their difficulty was to accept that as true, with all its implications. To this day many a man refuses Christ, not because He puzzles intellect, but because He challenges his life." (The Daily Study Bible Series, John Vol. 1, 226-7)

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 God make clear to you His will for you and may He give you the vigor, the perseverance and the humility to press on toward the goal and win the prize for which God has called you heavenward in Christ Jesus.” Amen. (Adapted from Phil. 3:13-14)