

## **PRAY**

Lord, I praise You for saving me and for providing a way for everyone “who fears You and seeks to do what’s right” to know You personally. Show me anywhere I need to make changes that I may live out Your best for my life and be most useful in leading others to do the same. Amen.

## November 11 – It’s Time for a Change!

### READ

Acts 10:1-12:5

Acts 11:9, 17-18, “*The voice spoke from heaven a second time, “Do not call anything impure that God has made clean.” ... So if God gave them the same gift He gave us who believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I to think that I could stand in God’s way?’ When they heard this, they had no further objections and praised God, saying, ‘So then, even to Gentiles God has granted repentance that leads to life.’”*

Acts 10:28-29, 34, “*... You are well aware that it is against our law for a Jew to associate with or visit a Gentile. But God has shown me that I should not call anyone impure or unclean. So when I was sent for, I came without raising any objection. ... I now realize how true it is that God does not show favoritism but accepts from every nation the one who fears Him and does what is right.”*

### THINK

Change is inevitable; it’s part of life. If the change is by *choice*, we might look towards it with great excitement and anticipation. But what about when it’s unexpected? When we’re blindsided by news that shocks us to the core? When we ardently believe something and – BOOM! – we have to change course and do something far outside of our comfort zone?

Peter had been boldly proclaiming the gospel, but only among fellow Jews. So, when God spoke to him in a vision and told him to go to the house of a Gentile and share the good news of Christ, he was shocked! Now, this may not seem like a big deal, but at that time, even coming into close contact with a non-Jew was forbidden; they were considered unclean. But Peter obeyed God, and a Gentile named Cornelius, and his household, accepted Christ.

You would think that others would celebrate the door opening to all, but Peter was met with significant opposition from his peers. For them, this was a bitter pill to swallow, and they called Peter on the carpet to explain his actions. Calmly, he told them about his vision, his revelatory change in thought, and the Gentile conversion experience. They recognized that God was at work, and they praised Him for making the gospel available to everyone!

When we surrender our lives to Christ, change is necessary. Consider your own spiritual transformation. How has Jesus made a difference in your life? Hopefully, this reflection inspires you to invite others — even if they belong to another faith altogether — to experience the repentance, salvation, hope, and joy only found in Christ!

## November 10 – Wasn't Expecting That...

### READ

Acts 8:1-9:43

Acts 9:1, 3-6, *“Meanwhile, Saul was uttering threats with every breath and was eager to kill the Lord’s followers. ... As he was approaching Damascus on this mission, a light from heaven suddenly shone down around him. He fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to him, ‘Saul! Saul! Why are you persecuting me?’ ‘Who are you, Lord?’ Saul asked. And the voice replied, ‘I am Jesus, the one you are persecuting! Now get up and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do.’”*

### THINK

Have you ever known someone you thought would never give Jesus a chance? To have said that about Saul would have been a massive understatement!

Saul was famous, but for the worst of reasons. He was known for killing Christians. And in today's reading, he's gunning for Damascus to capture and imprison Christ-followers. Along the way, however, Saul has a very unexpected and epic encounter with Jesus!

This run-in with Jesus completely changed his life; he did a spiritual 180 and became one of the most ardent, hardcore followers of Christ ever to walk the planet! The same man responsible for the death of numerous Christians would go on to plant churches, equip leaders, and lead countless others to accept the good news of Jesus!

What's most amazing about this story is not that Jesus COULD use a guy like Saul, but rather that He WOULD use a guy like Saul — whom He would rename Paul. This proves that God is bigger than our biggest mistakes, and He's willing and able to use anyone at any time.

Everyone we've ever looked eyes with matters to God. Don't ever believe that someone is out of His reach; never lose hope for the person you've been praying to accept Christ. And don't ever think that your past precludes you from being used by God in a big way!

### PRAY

God, Please help me to remember that no one is beyond Your reach. Give me the faith to always believe that You can use anyone at any time — including me. Today, give me the opportunity to help point someone towards an encounter with Christ. Amen.

## **PRAY**

Lord Jesus, Your presence and faithfulness encourage me to speak up for Your truth. I know that if I take a stand for the gospel that You will stand for me. Give me the courage needed and the words to say when the opportunity to share my faith arises. Amen.

## **November 9 – Take a Stand!**

### **READ**

Acts 6:1-8:1

*Acts 7:51-53, “You stiff-necked people! Your hearts and ears are still uncircumcised. You are just like your ancestors: You always resist the Holy Spirit! Was there ever a prophet your ancestors did not persecute? They even killed those who predicted the coming of the Righteous One. And now you have betrayed and murdered Him — you who have received the law that was given through angels but have not obeyed it.”*

*Acts 7:55-56, “But Stephen, full of the Holy Spirit, gazed steadily into heaven and saw the glory of God, and he saw Jesus standing in the place of honor at God’s right hand. And he told them, ‘Look, I see the heavens opened and the Son of Man standing in the place of honor at God’s right hand!’”*

### **THINK**

Have you ever wanted to give someone a good tongue-lashing? Stephen, the newly appointed disciple, did just that — to a very deserving audience. He literally gave his accusers a “come to Jesus” meeting for the ages!

Stephen brimmed with the Holy Spirit. The way he spoke and performed miracles in Jesus’ name drew much attention and ire from the men of a local temple who accused him of blaspheming Mosaic Law and the temple itself — both trumped-up charges. When asked to respond to the allegations, he first gave a brief run-through of Jewish history. Then, he got personal. He called the men “stiff-necked” (meaning obstinate and stubborn), charged them with murder, and then accused them of breaking the Mosaic Law themselves. Those listening didn’t take such harsh criticism well; they were enraged! He was challenging their authority, and they immediately decided to stone him to death.

But as we read Acts 7, we can take a moment to be encouraged by God’s response. Jesus didn’t swoop down and save Stephen or cause an earthquake to shake up the scene — but He did show up for him in even a greater way! Heaven opened, and Stephen was able to see Jesus standing at God’s right hand. And, as Jesus had done, Stephen asked God to forgive his accusers before simply falling asleep. How comforting to know that when we stand up for God, He makes a stand for us!

If you dare to speak about Jesus, you can expect opposition. The gospel is offensive. It cuts like a double-edged sword that, when wielded, can rouse anger. But trust that God is with you and, regardless of the outcome, that His truth and righteousness always prevail!

## **November 8 – Can't Stop. Won't Stop!**

### **READ**

Acts 3:1-5:42

*Acts 5:27-29, 42, "The apostles were brought in ... to be questioned by the high priest. 'We gave you strict orders not to teach in this name,' he said. 'Yet you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching and are determined to make us guilty of this man's blood.' Peter and the other apostles replied: 'We must obey God rather than human beings!' ... Day after day, in the temple courts and from house to house, they never stopped teaching and proclaiming the good news that Jesus is the Messiah."*

### **THINK**

Arrested 29 times for acts of civil disobedience — often on trumped-up charges — Martin Luther King, Jr., endured several violent attacks. He received threatening phone calls, and his home was bombed and set on fire — yet he, and numerous others, were undeterred. They believed in their God-given mission to secure fundamental rights and equality for all people.

Similarly, in today's reading, Peter and the apostles had just been released from prison — yet again! Did they keep a low profile after that? No! They continued to teach and heal in Jesus' name, and people were listening! This infuriated the religious leaders who deemed them a "threat" to civil obedience, the status quo. Yet despite the apostle's persecution and death threats, they, too, were undeterred. Nothing could stop their God-given mission to further the gospel. They feared God far more than anything man might do to them.

Have you ever been too afraid of what others might think to stand up for what's right or share what Jesus has done in your life? Then be encouraged by the brave men and women who've gone before you! Defending your faith and telling others about Christ is part of your walk with God. He wants to use you to reach others, to make a difference in His name!

No matter the opposition, Jesus is present. So, keep sharing your story! Don't allow temporary discomfort to keep you from your God-given mission!

### **PRAY**

Jesus, Thank You for reminding me that, no matter how uncomfortable I may feel, I must share my faith and take a stand for what's right. I praise You for Your constant presence and willingness to equip me for every situation. Amen!

Dear God, Thank You for sending Jesus to die on the cross for my sins and rise again to secure my future home in heaven. Convict my heart so that I may heed words of warning and walk within Your will every day. Amen.

## November 7 – A Word of Warning

### READ

Mark 16:19-20

Luke 24:50-53

Acts 1:1-2:47

Acts 2:40-41, *“With many other words he warned them; and he pleaded with them, ‘Save yourselves from this corrupt generation.’ Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day.”*

### THINK

In Newton's law of physics, he stated that for every action, there is an equal and opposite reaction. The same could be said about the name of Jesus! Since His birth, no other name has elicited so many reactions.

Jesus' followers knew He was no ordinary man. They watched as He taught, performed miracles, and spoke with such authority that it could only come from God. Prior to His ascension, He gave clear instructions to go and spread His message of hope and salvation.

Peter and John were some of the witnesses boldly communicating to those who opposed Jesus. Passionate Peter couldn't hide the truth — HE HAD TO SHARE! Standing before a large crowd, he unabashedly proclaimed Jesus as Lord: "Let everyone in Israel know for certain that God has made this Jesus, *whom you crucified*, to be both Lord and Messiah." Wow, that's brave! He wanted them to turn to Christ and, at the same time, blamed them for His crucifixion. Surely this stirred up a wide range of emotions! Many of them were probably a little weak in the knees because they'd been part of the mob yelling, "Crucify Him!" as Jesus stood before Pilate. And some of them who helped decide Jesus' fate were probably still skeptical or angered by Peter's words.

But God is always at work and convicts hearts at the mere mention of Jesus' name. Peter urged the people to repent from their sin, turn to Christ and go public with their faith through baptism. And Peter strongly warned them that NOW was the time to get right with God.

As they listened to Peter that day, 3,000 people's hearts were forever changed. Herein lies an important truth: A word of warning is only beneficial if it's heeded and applied. So, if you have yet to make Jesus the Lord of your life — truly consider this word of warning. If you already know Christ personally, remember that, like Peter, you have been called to share God's absolute truth, love, and hope with those around you.

### PRAY



Dear God, It's humbling to know that You have chosen me to be a part of your great rescue plan. Please open my eyes today to see the people around me the way you see them. Give me the boldness to take advantage of every opportunity You put in my path. Amen.

## **November 6 – Go!**

### **READ**

Luke 24:13-49

Mark 16:12-18

John 20:19-21:25

Matthew 28:16-20

Matthew 28:19-20, *“Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely, I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”*

### **THINK**

Have you ever been given a task that initially seemed overwhelming? Maybe it was closing a deal, parenting your first child, learning a new position on the field, or completing a project in school. How did it turn out in the end? Likely, once it was complete, you realized that it wasn't as hard as you thought and gained confidence in the final result!

For many, today's passage might seem daunting – until we understand exactly what Jesus is asking of us and equipping us to do.

God's plan to share His love with the world didn't end when Jesus ascended to Heaven. In fact, the work was just beginning. As His followers, He's counting on us to share His message of hope. And we don't need to be biblical scholars or move across the globe to obey this command. Jesus is telling us that as we go throughout our day — at work, the gym, a restaurant, the classroom, or the grocery store — we are to be ready to share with others what God has done in our life. We should always be on the lookout for opportunities to listen, empathize, and encourage others who don't know Christ.

You might be thinking, “Well, I still don't feel equipped. I don't really have a story to share.” If you are born again into God's family, then you have a story to share. Simply talk about your life before accepting Jesus, what led you to Him, and what He's done – and is doing currently – in and through you. And here's what's great! Jesus promised that He'll be with us always. He wants to partner with us in this process and give us the words to say. So, be confident and fueled by God's Spirit as you go and share the hope that's only found in Him with others. Do so, and you will be blessed!

### **PRAY**

## November 5 – Resurrection Power

### READ

Mark 15:42-16:11

Matthew 27:57-61

Luke 23:50-24:12

John 19:38-20:18

Matthew 27:65-66, *“‘Take a guard,’ Pilate answered. ‘Go, make the tomb as secure as you know how.’ So, they went and made the tomb secure by putting a seal on the stone and posting the guard.”*

Matthew 28:6, *“He isn’t here! He is risen from the dead, just as He said would happen. Come, see where His body was lying.”*

### THINK

Rumors were swirling and the Pharisees were haunted by the echo of Jesus’ words: “After three days I will rise again.” The man they killed wasn’t ordinary; the man was innocent. What if it was true? Would His disciples try to steal the body? The Pharisees panicked! To save face, they went to Pilate, the Roman governor, to insist that the tomb be sealed and guarded until after the third day. But their plan backfired in a major way.

On the third day, an angel rolled the stone away revealing a very empty tomb. And in the world’s most epic blunder, the Pharisees helped to prove Jesus’ words true by providing firsthand witnesses. The Savior had risen! Christ had robbed the grave! The guards could now attest to Jesus’ supernatural resurrection power!

Like the Pharisees, we often maximize obstacles and minimize God’s unstoppable power. As Christ-followers, we have 24/7 access to the same power that raised Jesus from the grave! Victory is ours when we refuse to allow a rock to block us from what The **Rock** wants to do in and through our lives!

### PRAY

Lord, You are all I need. Help me to surrender what I can’t control to You. Thank You for making a way for me to have supernatural resurrection power both here and in Heaven. Thank You, Jesus! Amen.