

PRAY

Dear God, Thank You for being so ever-present. Strengthen my faith in You and deepen my dependence on You. Surround me with people who encourage me to draw closer to You, and help me to encourage others in the same way. In Jesus' name, Amen.

September 30 – Just a Little Faith

READ

Luke 5:1-39

Mark 1:40-2:22

Matthew 8:1-4, 9:1-17

Mark 2:2-5, *“Soon the house where He was staying was so packed with visitors that there was no more room, even outside the door. While He was preaching God’s word to them, four men arrived carrying a paralyzed man on a mat. They couldn’t bring him to Jesus because of the crowd, so they dug a hole through the roof above his head. Then they lowered the man on his mat, right in front of Jesus. Seeing their faith, Jesus said to the paralyzed man, ‘My child, your sins are forgiven.’”*

THINK

“You just need a little faith!” This phrase is easier said than done. When life is great, faith is easy. But when the rubber hits the road and things don’t go according to plan, it’s hard to trust that God is in control.

In today’s reading, Jesus gives a pat on the back to a couple of men’s faith. They were convinced that He could heal their paralyzed friend. Since so many had gathered to hear Him speak, the men couldn’t get close enough to ask Jesus for this miracle, yet they were determined. They went to the trouble to carry the man onto the roof, dig a hole, and lower him down before the Savior. Surely, this required great effort. But they had faith that Jesus was the solution, and He most definitely was!

We should note two key points in this story. First, that having faith in God’s abilities pays off. The Bible says that if even we just have faith the size of a mustard seed (the smallest seed), we can move mountains. Wow! That’s pretty amazing. Second is the importance of surrounding ourselves with the right people. Are those closest to you people who point you towards Jesus — strong in faith, and obedient to God? Because friends are like elevators, they can take you up or pull you down.

Faith and friends of faith are crucial to our success. Trust that God is for you and has great things in store for your life. If you lack people of faith in your life, the church is the best place to meet such friends. After all, “you just need a little faith” as you pray for God to orchestrate such relationships and usher in the healing needed in your life!

September 29 – Go Fish!

READ

Mark 1:14-39

Matthew 4:12-25, 8:14-17

Luke 3:23, 4:16-44

John 4:46-54

Matthew 4:19, *“Come, follow Me,’ Jesus said, ‘and I will make you fishers of men.’”*

THINK

"Step outside, open your hands, and just let the fish jump in!" – No Fisherman Ever

We all know that in order to catch fish, you have to go to the water, cast, reel, and repeat. You have to work to get the fish's attention; sometimes it takes trying various methods and different kinds of bait. If you're lucky you might catch one right away, but there's usually a lot of waiting involved. Although fishing requires a lot of effort and, at times, seemingly endless patience, the payoff is quite rewarding!

Jesus paints this picture in today's verse. As His followers, fishing must be our hobby. With patience, we look for opportunities to engage in conversation. We employ creative tactics using a variety of common interests to connect with others. Sometimes “fishing for men” produces quick results, and other times it takes years of consistent praying and persistent inviting. But, if we are willing, God works through us in amazing ways to catch the attention of people still living in darkness. The greatest thing we can do is show them the life-saving relationship that only Christ offers!

So, are you fishing for lost souls? Are you angling to gain the attention of those without hope? Just as Jesus called upon Andrew and Peter to be fishers of men, He has called you. It's time to get hooked!

PRAY

Jesus, Open my heart to seek out the lost and invite them to experience You. Help me not be easily distracted and to remain focused as a fisher of humanity. Give me patience as I trust You to do the catching. Amen!

PRAY

Lord Jesus, Thank You for meeting me right where I am. I place my trust in Your provision and unconditional love. Thank You for satisfying the deepest needs of my heart. Amen.

September 28 – Your First Thirst

READ

John 3:1-4:45

Luke 3:19-20

John 4:7-14, *“When a Samaritan woman came to draw water, Jesus said to her, ‘Will you give me a drink?’ ... The Samaritan woman said to Him, ‘You are a Jew and I am a Samaritan woman. How can You ask me for a drink?’ ... Jesus answered her, ‘If you knew ... who it is that asks you for a drink, you would have asked Him and He would have given you living water.’ ‘Sir,’ the woman said, ... ‘Where can you get this living water?’ ... Jesus answered, ... ‘Whoever drinks the water I give them will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give them will become in them a spring of water welling up to eternal life.’”*

John 4:39-41, *“Many of the Samaritans from that town believed in Him because of the woman’s testimony, ‘He told me everything I ever did.’ So when the Samaritans came to Him, they urged Him to stay ... And because of His words many more became believers.”*

THINK

Headed home to Galilee, Jesus stopped at a well to rest and spoke with a woman thirsting for love. She’d been married to five men but had been tossed aside and rejected. When she met Jesus, she was living with a man out of wedlock, who likely dealt with commitment issues (another form of rejection) and was headed down the same dead-end path — until she came face-to-face with the Savior!

Due to shame, she’d avoided others by going to get water when no one else would be around. Little did she know that Love Himself had gone out of His way to quench her thirst for acceptance. But first, Jesus wasn’t shy about confronting her sin! Without taking offense, she was amazed by what He knew, and instead of keeping a low profile as she returned to town, she boldly went public with her faith, telling her story to others who also chose to believe in Jesus.

Seeking satisfaction apart from God only leads to an insatiably parched existence. But if we confront our sins and drink the water of life, God meets us with a fierce and all-encompassing love that satisfies the soul.

What are you thirsting for right now? Purpose? Attention? Courage? A breakthrough? Because God’s Word says that if we delight in Him, He will give us our heart’s desires. So, stop looking to mortals to fill the gaps of what only the Immortal can provide. Believe that Jesus is the answer!

September 27 – Most Powerful Weapon

READ

Mark 1:12-13

Matthew 4:1-11

Luke 4:1-15

John 1:19-2:25

Matthew 4:10, *“Jesus said to him, ‘Away from me, Satan! For it is written: “Worship the Lord your God, and serve Him only.””*

THINK

Have you ever considered how often you feel the sway of temptation? If you’re trying to eat a healthier diet, that favorite snack or sweet treat is especially tempting. If you’re trying to save money, you might be tempted by impulsive spending or a “great deal” on something you don’t really need. If you’re striving to date God’s way, in the heat of the moment lust can quickly lead you astray. But although temptation is inevitable, it’s not all-powerful! In fact, the path to victory is clear and simple — it can be done, but it won’t be easy!

As we read today, Jesus was sent into the wilderness to be tempted for forty days. In a weakened state, His body craving food, Satan shows up to tempt Him three times, telling Him to turn stones into bread, offering Him wealth, and appealing to His ego. Did Jesus cave in, launch into a lengthy conversation, or even entertain the thought? No! He only responded by quoting Scripture. God’s Word is a powerful weapon that we, like Jesus, should employ when facing temptation. When we respond to Satan’s promptings with absolute truth, not only are we reinforcing God’s power in our lives, we make the devil flee.

When temptation rears its ugly head, don’t cave in. Instead, stand up, turn to God’s Word, and emerge from the fight with the faith and power to be victorious!

PRAY

Lord, I know that temptation is inevitable. Help me, in such moments, to turn immediately to the strength of Your Word. Lead me away from sin and guide me to victory, just as Jesus did! Amen.

September 26 – Starstruck

READ

Matthew 2:1-3:17

Luke 2:41-3:18, 21-22

Mark 1:2-11

Matthew 2:1-2, *“After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the time of King Herod, Magi from the East came to Jerusalem and asked, ‘Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We saw His star when it rose and have come to worship Him.’”*

THINK

At the time of Jesus’ birth, the Wise Men saw the Savior’s star and traveled westward with one purpose in mind — to bow down and worship Jesus. However, the star didn’t guide them all the way to Bethlehem. Only after inquiring about the newborn King did they receive the final direction they needed.

Every day we pass by hopeless people searching for something to fill the God-shaped hole in their lives. Yes, they may have heard about Jesus, but a personal relationship with Him seems like a distant possibility. That’s why, as Christ-followers, we must be the light — the bright star — for the lost, leading the way to a life of purpose and hope. At first, like the Savior’s star, they may only catch glimpses of Christ in us. But as we love, invite, and pray for them, we can become the beacon of light that illuminates the way to the Savior.

Have you found the total fulfillment, hope, and joy of having an intimate relationship with Christ? Or, are you still wandering in search of what only Jesus can provide? If so, be wise, seek the Savior, and learn what it means to find true and lasting soul satisfaction.

PRAY

Heavenly Father, Thank You for guiding me to the Savior. I know that You, alone, are my source of total satisfaction. And give me the courage to reach out to others who are searching for the lasting fulfillment that only You can provide. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

September 25 – Unlikely Guests

READ

Luke 1:39-2:40

Matthew 1:18-25

Luke 2:15-16, *“When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, ‘Let’s go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about.’ So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in the manger.”*

THINK

We’ve all had those “You’ll never guess who I ran into” moments. They make us shake our heads as we think how crazy it was to run into *that* person in *that* place! Surely, Mary and Joseph felt something similar as the shepherds, complete strangers, excitedly arrived on the scene. Picture this small group of weathered men asking to see Baby Jesus. Did Joseph instinctively wrap protective arms around his family? Was it awkward? What could they possibly have in common?

Of all the characters in the Bible, only a very small percentage received direct communication from God. We can only wonder if the shepherds, Mary, and Joseph compared notes about their own heavenly visions and visitations that so greatly encouraged their faith. What a conversation!

This goes to show that whenever we think, “What could we possibly have in common?” the answer is simple — Jesus! We never know when God is going to use us to encourage or inspire someone by sharing our story. Some of the most unlikely connections happen when we are willing to reach out to the people around us and invite them to experience Christ!

PRAY

Dear Lord, Because I’ve received Your grace and the gift of salvation through Christ, I want to share it with others. Provide opportunities for me to invite the unlikeliest of guests and give me just the right words to say. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

New Testament Chronological Bible Devotionals

September 24 – In God

READ

Mark 1:1

Luke 1:1-38, 3:23-38

John 1:1-18

Matthew 1:1-17

Luke 1:38, *“I am the Lord’s servant, and I am willing to do whatever He wants.”*

THINK

Life in first-century Israel was certainly no cakewalk for an unwed expecting mother. In fact, the consequences were extreme. Imagine Mary as a young girl facing public scorn, social alienation, and the possibility of death by stoning. Yikes!

Mary could have been bitter. She could have said, “Why me, God?” and begged for him to choose someone else – but she didn’t. Mary responded to God with enthusiasm.

Enthusiasm means “In God.” It comes from two words: en theos. Mary placed her faith in God and willingly said, “I’ll do whatever God wants.” For us to be used by God, we, too, must respond with enthusiasm!

The Bible says that if we trust in God and are eager to serve Him, that nothing can harm us. How do you respond when God calls on you to serve? Because chances are, nothing He asks of us could be as consequential as what He asked of Mary.

Enthusiasm is contagious, so help it spread this Christmas season with a willing heart to do whatever, whenever God wants to use you!

PRAY

God, I pray for Your will to be done in my life. Give me the courage, faith, and enthusiasm of Mary to do whatever You ask of me to do. In Jesus’ name, Amen.