



For God So Loved...

Day 1: Look Up and Live

Daily reading: Numbers 21:4-9

Israel was mired in thankless self-pity. God would have none of that human sinfulness. So he sent snakes, poisonous to the point of death. The people repented, and Moses was told: "Make a bronze snake, put it on a pole, and tell the people to look up and live." In John 3:14-15, and 17 Jesus refers to that miraculous story when he says, "Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the desert, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, that everyone who believes in him may have eternal life.... For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him." God sent his Son not to curse us, but to bless us; not to inflict pain and impoverishment of our spirits, but to lift us up and draw us to himself. God would have us not live in the darkness of our sin, but in the light of his love. Pray for God's abiding presence in your life, that you may "look up and live" no matter your circumstances.

Day 2: Gospel in a Verse

Daily reading: John 3:16-21

John 3:16 has been translated into more languages than any other verse in the Bible. For many Christians it is "the gospel in a verse." It does indeed encapsulate the heart of the gospel, but to understand this passage, we need to put it into context. A Pharisee named Nicodemus has come to Jesus by night. In John's Gospel, night is a symbol of disbelief. John lets us know from the start that this is a passage about moving from the darkness of disbelief to the light and life and belief. Jesus and Nicodemus enter into a conversation about being born "from above" (a better translation than "again"). While Jesus is referring to spiritual birth (coming alive spiritually), Nicodemus can't see past the literal meaning of Jesus' words. Let John 3:16 give you new insight into what it means to be born anew in Christ.

Day 3: He Loves

Daily reading: John 3:16-21 (again)

Sometimes familiarity can block our vision—like living in the shadow of a mountain range and taking it for granted, or like having a beautiful home and failing to recognize it as such. John 3:16 is like that. Having it memorized may even stifle a full appreciation of its depths. Today we take a closer look at the best-known verse of the New Testament, hoping to take from it a deep appreciation of its message. Note that God is the mover, the subject of the sentence. He loves. He gives. That makes us, "the world," recipients of his love and gift. That's grace. Second, catch the scope of the love of God—"the world." This is the same world that opposes God in so many ways. It takes in every individual and every nation of every time. From the start the church had a sense of global scope. We have far too many village churches who have narrowed the vision of this verse. Third, God proves his love by sacrificing his Son. What deeper, more significant gift could God give than his one and only Son?

Day 4: Believe

Daily reading: John 1:9-13

To "believe" in Jesus in the New Testament context includes more than just intellectual assent. Believing also refers to one's heart, loyalty, fidelity and commitment to Jesus and the Kingdom he has come to inaugurate and proclaim. As a result of Martin Luther's reforming work, this is the theological center of what Lutherans believe. We are saved by the grace of God alone, not by anything we do. Our

salvation is through faith alone, a confident trust in God, who in Christ promises us forgiveness, life and salvation. The Bible is the norm for faith and life, the true standard by which teachings and doctrines are to be judged. God gives us, through faith, the power to become children of God. What we believe is truly important. Ask God to help you see your heart, loyalty, fidelity and commitment to Jesus in a new way.

Day 5: Eternal Life

Daily reading: John 17:1-3

The Greek word translated “eternal life” means “the unending life of the age to come.” In John’s theology this is both a future hope and a present reality; an “already but not yet” reality in Jesus. It can be experienced now, but will not come to fullness until God completes the restoration of all things. John 17:3 says, “This is eternal life, that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.” Notice the present tense! To “know” God and Jesus is relational, present, and leads to abundant life now. When we dig into the Bible we discover how our limited understanding of time and space shape how we read. It’s hard for our minds to comprehend an “eternity” that begins now. Ask God for deeper insight into what eternal life can mean for you today.

Day 6: Interpretation

Daily reading: John 16:12-15

What prevents us from just interpreting the Bible the way we want? First, since we believe that engaging with the Bible means engaging in a conversation with God, we trust that the Holy Spirit will show us the way. Second, we rely upon the community of faith to guide us. We trust the wisdom of the community, and trust that where two or three are gathered in Jesus’ name, he’s right there! Third, we trust in God’s grace. We will get some things wrong. The church has gotten all sorts of things wrong over the course of history. God’s love won’t let us go even if we get it wrong, because God’s love isn’t dependent upon us getting it right. Fourth, we focus on the center, the gospel. We hold this tightly and hold everything else loosely. Fifth, we remember that we don’t worship a book. Instead we worship the One to whom this book points. Ask God through the Holy Spirit to “guide you into all truth” today.

Day 7: Resurrection

Daily reading: 1 Corinthians 15:12-22

Corinth was a thriving center of industry that valued philosophers and honored the gods. After starting a church in Corinth, Paul leaves to start other churches. The Corinthians write to him, asking many questions. One question focused on resurrection. In chapter 15, Paul reminds them, and us, that the resurrection is important and that he’s not making it up. The cross of Christ, and his resurrection, is clearly the center of the theology Paul shares throughout the world. How important is Christ’s resurrection to you? Ask God to give you new insight into the meaning and significance of the resurrection.