

Devotions – November 21-27, 2021

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Sunday, November 21, 2021

Text: Mark 6:31 NIV

“Then, because so many people were coming and going that they did not even have a chance to eat, he said to them, “Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest.”

What is your favorite story? Is it a childhood favorite, or maybe a recent read? Maybe it's a Bible story, one you were taught as a little child? I can still remember sitting with my grandpa reading Uncle Arthur's Bedtime stories. I now have a 7-year-old daughter of my own and part of our evenings are dedicated to reading. My husband and I have found that picking the right story is imperative; there's nothing worse than trying to keep the attention of a 7-year-old when the story doesn't seem to interest her. So picking a story that she can visualize, as if she's part of it, is very important. There's a story, a marvelous story written by a marvelous Savior. A story that we are all part of, we are an intricate and necessary part of this awesome story. When I think about this, that I have a part in His story, that He created me for a reason, He created me just as I am to play a role in His story, I stand amazed. How could someone like me, who stumbles all too often, and seems to be exhausted most days, how could I be a productive part of His story? And yet here I am, here you are, part of His story.

As the plot seems to thicken in this story, our lives seem to be more chaotic and busier than ever. In the midst of this chaos, it's possible we have lost sight of the importance of rest. I'm not talking about the rest we get from sitting in our recliner on Sunday afternoon and turning on the game or crawling into bed at night, finally settling in from another long day. Although this type of rest is important, there is a deeper more necessary rest that we may be missing. St. Augustine wrote, “You have made us for yourself, O Lord, and our hearts are restless until they rest in You.” It's doesn't matter how much sleep you get. Without the right kind of rest we will always be restless.

What does it mean to rest in Christ, what does that look like? It means to give it up, to lay it down, to surrender whatever “it” may be to God. We all have an “it”, something that nags on us, brings us down, steals our joy. No matter what your “it” is, what's important is that we learn through consistent practice to surrender our “its” to Him. Resting and surrendering looks different for everyone. I don't think it really matters what this looks like for you, but the important thing is that we find our niche with God, our special time, our moments of deep connection. When we give Him our time and reflect upon His goodness, we build a deeper relationship with Him. We are also surrounded by so many blessings, blessings we take for granted, blessings we neglect to see, blessing that are disguised as something else, but if we look hard enough, they are there. So today take time to rest, to truly rest in the presence of your Savior, to “tell God what you need, and thank Him for all He has done” (Philippians 4:6).

Recharge your spiritual battery because you have a huge role in this awesome story of grace and goodness!

Let's pray: *Lord, today I am grateful that You made me part of this wonderful story. That You made me perfectly, and wonderfully. Let me take some time to rest in You, to give You my cares, to surrender my burdens and to thank You for Your unending love and mercy. Amen*



Monday, November 22, 2021

Text: Colossians 3:23 TPT

“Put your heart and soul into every activity you do, as though you are doing it for the Lord himself and merely for others.”

“It is not what a man does that determines whether his work is sacred or secular, it is why he does it” (A. W. Tozer). I love Tozer, he has an amazing way of saying the most profound things in ways that are so easy for me to understand. What you do, your work can be sacred or secular, it just depends on you. You see it doesn't matter what you do, because we are all an intricate part of God's story, no matter what our daily tasks are. The question is, why are you doing them? Is it for the glory of our Savior or is it because you “have to”? It doesn't matter if you work in customer service or caregiving, if you're an engineer or an entrepreneur, a stay-at-home parent or a grandparent who's working hard to leave a legacy. Everything you do has the ability to be sacred or secular, it just depends on you. Never underestimate your ability to influence others, never underestimate your ability to encourage others, no matter what you do.

God gave us the wonderful ability to work. Work isn't just going to a job every day. It takes on many forms. Whether you punch the clock from 9-5 or you're retired, whether it's physical or mental, you still have work to do. Whatever that may be, remember that this is all part of God's story, the story that He wrote for you and for me and you have the ability to make it sacred or secular. Some days work can be frustrating, and some days our work can be fulfilling, but every day our work is important. Every day what we do has the ability to shine God's light in a world that so desperately needs a little sunshine.

Let's pray: *Lord, today I am grateful for work. I am grateful for the tasks you have entrusted to me and I pray that you give me the strength to do everything for your glory. Amen*



Tuesday, November 23, 2021

Text: 1 Corinthians 7:35

“I am trying to help you and make things easier for you and not make things difficult, but so that you would have undistracted devotion, serving the Lord constantly with an undivided heart.”

Being Present

I decided I was going to write one of these devotionals on distractions, focusing on the spaces were God put us. As I started to type, my phone went off, and I had to laugh. Here I am, yet again... distracted.... We live in a world that is filled with distractions, from the phones in our hands, to computers on our desks, to the TV's on our walls. I'll be the first to say that I would have a hard time living without all this technology, but I'll also admit, this technology, if not handled correctly, can have a great impact on my relationships. Lately I have given quite a bit of thought to the spaces where God has put me, my home, my business, my church. Spaces where I am both needed and necessary. So, I ask you, what are your spaces? Where did God feel he needed you? Is it your home, your work, your church? What space did God assign to you in this season of life, and are you living to your full ability in that space?

This year I have faced a bit of anxiety and I don't think I'm alone in this. When I took time to analyze this anxiousness, I realized that I was anxious about so many things that were beyond my control and honestly were outside of my spaces. I understand it's good to be aware of current events and what's going on in our world, but this can become dangerous too. It becomes dangerous when we spend so much time focusing on things that are outside of our spaces, things that we can't control, that we neglect to nurture everything that God has placed within our spaces. Earlier in 1 Corinthians 7, Paul says, "We are to live as those who live in the world but are not absorbed by it" (vs. 31). We need to focus on not being absorbed by the many things in this life that we cannot control.

I have found that it is so very important to make a conscious effort to live within the spaces that God has assigned to us, the spaces that are part of the story He wrote into our lives. (And here's where I circle back to distractions). If distractions like social media or the nightly news are causing you to live outside of your spaces, if you find yourself in constant debates and battles with someone you don't know or someone you're probably not going to influence, stop. Delete

the app, turn off the TV, and be present. Be present for your spouse and your child, your friend, and your coworker, your mom or your sister. Be present in the spaces where God has put you.

Let's pray: *Lord, today I am thankful for the spaces you have given to me. Let me live today and every day in those spaces, being fully present and a constant encouragement. Amen*



Wednesday, November 24, 2021

Text: Hebrews 13:1-2 TPT

“No matter what, make room in your heart to love every believer. And show hospitality to strangers, for they may be angels from God showing up as your guests.”

“Casual everyday encounters are actually divine appointments planned by the Master of the Universe” (Donna Thomas). So many times, I believe we take for granted these casual encounters. We don't realize the impact we have on those we meet; we forget that God placed that person in our story at that moment for a reason, a divine purpose. We minimize the influences we have on those that we see every day and we underestimate the importance of our role in their story. Not only did God place someone in your life; He placed you in someone's life.

Our faith teaches us love, love first and foremost. To love our Lord, and then to love our neighbor. To love the difficult and to even love the enemy. It's been difficult, I hope I'm not alone in saying this, and many days instead of reflecting God's light to others, I just want to retreat. It's easier to avoid the difficult neighbor than to love them. But Jesus didn't want us to take the easy road, he didn't say, “If you have differing political views, just avoid each other. He said to “love your neighbor as yourself” (Mark 12:31). And maybe at times it does mean stepping away from a situation for a bit, to offer grace and take time to reassess the situation. But this doesn't mean that we stop loving, that we stop praying for this person. It's so hard, and I often wonder, as Jesus looks at our world in 2021, how he'd react. When the angry person approached Him, furious about something (insert any current debate here), I wonder what parable He would tell? What would he say to help us understand and cope with the chaos and separation in our world? What would He do if He were walking with us today? How would He show love?

I know that none of us have all the answers, but daily we can look to the life of Jesus. We can focus on His example of love. We can love those who are difficult, and we can make connections with those who seem impossible. We can do our best to love the unlovable, to judge less and

extend ourselves more. The concept of embracing those whom we despise is a challenge but there is one thing I am certain of. I am certain that I have disappointed God. I am certain, that to Him, I have been unlovable, and I am also quite certain that I have been challenging. But He has always been there. Sometimes I know He's there, I can feel the Holy Spirit cheering me on. And other times I can hear Him in the background quietly assuring me that I will make it through another tough day. So today, challenge yourself to look at every person, every meeting as a divine appointment, to love like Jesus and never stop wondering, "Why has God placed this person in my life at this moment?"

Let's pray: *Lord, today I am grateful for the divine appointments, let me be conscious of this, knowing that every meeting is planned by you. Lord, let me reflect your love and light to all those I meet. Amen*



Thursday, November 25, 2021

Text: Hebrews 12:28 TPT

"Since we are receiving our rights to and unshakable kingdom, we should be extremely thankful and offer God the purest worship that delights his heart as we lay down our lives in absolute surrender, filled with awe."

If you're reading this on Thursday, today is Thanksgiving, and there is nothing more fitting than to take a moment to reflect upon gratitude. I work in customer service and every day I am sure that I say, "Thank You!" at least 50 times. I can't help but think about that phrase, about thankfulness, about deep authentic gratitude. How often do I say that phrase out of habit because it's part of our culture? When these words come out of my mouth as a customer walks out the door, am I truly thankful or is it just something I say habitually? And even deeper, when I am thanking God for all the blessings He has surrounded me with, is it routine, or is this gratitude coming from a place of deep relationship, of genuine thankfulness.

Today is a great day to reflect upon those words, "Thank You!" It is the perfect day to think about sincere gratitude. Gratitude to both our Lord and Savior, and to those people who so richly bless our lives. Our story is filled with grace, God's boundless grace and unending mercy! And our stories are filled with people, people who bless us in so many ways. In the days ahead, when you say "Thank You!" let the words resound in your heart. Whether you are thanking the Lord or someone who has touched your life, if even for a moment, take a moment to truly feel that gratitude and know that you are blessed!

Let's pray: *Lord, today I am thankful for You, and for those You have surrounded me with. Today and everyday let me overflow with gratitude for all the blessings You have given to me. Amen.*



Friday, November 26, 2021

Text: Matthew 19:21-22

“Jesus said to him, ‘If you really want to be perfect, go now and sell everything you own. Give your money to the poor and your treasure will be transferred into heaven. Then come back and follow me for the rest of your life.’ When the young man heard these words, he walked away sad for he had great wealth.”

There are so many things we can get from this story. A lot of people think it has to do with money, and although Jesus is talking to the man about money, I feel like it's deeper than that. Jesus is talking to a very wealthy man. This man is so consumed with his money that it is the one thing he is not willing to give up for Jesus. He loves his money so much that he was willing to sacrifice eternity. Jesus was making a point to this man. It's okay to have things in our lives that are important to us, but it's not okay to have things in our lives that consume us, things that are more important than our relationship with Christ. When I read this verse I think, if Jesus were having this conversation with me, what would He tell me to give up? Would it be my money, my friends, my bad habits? Maybe judgement, or comparison, or my Friday night old fashioned? What are the things that consume me, the things that make it difficult for me to nurture my relationship with Jesus? This takes a great deal of self-reflection, complete honesty and sometimes tough truthfulness. I don't think any of us want to admit that there could be things that we put before Jesus.

We are consumed by so many things. There are people who are consumed with the device in their hand, those who are consumed with the need to be right. There are those who are consumed by money and those who are slaves to bad habits. What's consuming you? What has become your idol? The biggest question, the most difficult question, what has become more important than your relationship with Christ? And if Jesus walked up to you today and said, "Give it up," could you? Today take time for reflection. Is there anything Jesus could be telling you to give up so that you can have a stronger, deeper relationship with Him? Is there anything preventing you from living out the story He has written for you?

Let's pray: *Lord, today I am thankful for my relationship with you. Help me to see things that may be a stumbling stone to a deeper more honest relationship with you. Amen*



Saturday, November 27, 2021

Text: Hebrews 4:15

“We don’t have a priest who is out of touch with our reality. He’s been through weakness and testing, experienced it all – all but the sin.”

If you’ve ever dealt with small children, you know the best way to get their attention is to get to their level. The fight about the toy at the Family Dollar is best resolved by squatting down and getting at eye level with your child. Or when a child gets hurt, bending down to hug them as we tell them it’s going to be okay. I love this concept; I think about it often when I think about how God sent His Son to this earth. God came down to our level. There is no better way to finish up a week of gratitude than to reflect upon the greatest gift we have ever been given, God in the flesh. He’s no longer an unrelatable God. He is now a God that understands our every human emotion. He knows sadness, He knows joy, He knows what it feels like to be energized, and He knows what it feels like to be exhausted. Our God knows how we feel, in every circumstance.

As you continue on your journey through this story that God has so awesomely written, know that you are never alone. Know that God knows how you feel, nothing is hidden to Him, He understands your moments of exhaustion and frustration, and He understands your moments of tiredness and irritability. He’s there to celebrate with us in the moments of joy and to smile with us when the good things happen. He is there through it all, and He understands. I used to believe that God was on a pedestal, and sometimes felt that He was unrelatable. But that changed when I realized that He sent His Son, He sent Jesus for you and for me. We can rest assured that Jesus felt our every emotion, He laughed and He wept, He felt delight and anger. He knows what you have faced, and He knows what you are facing, He understands. Don’t be afraid to give Him your every care, to tell Him exactly how you are feeling, because He knows, and He truly can relate. Blessings to you on your journey through this story. Know that Jesus is with you every step of the way!

Let's pray: *Lord, today I'm grateful that you gave us Your Son. I am thankful that You can relate to my every emotion, to my joy and sadness, my celebrations and my frustrations. Thank you for walking with me on this journey. Amen*

*Give Thanks to the Lord,
for He is good.
Psalm 107:1*

