

REACH

FOR TODAY | FOR THE FUTURE | FOR ETERNITY

WEEKLY DEVOTIONAL GUIDE

THIS BOOK BELONGS TO



All this is for your benefit, so that the grace that is **reaching** more and more people may cause thanksgiving to overflow to the glory of God.

– **2 CORINTHIANS 4:15**

REACH DEVOTIONAL GUIDE

As we engage in these devotionals, we encourage you to reach for God's Word and to commit 10 - 15 minutes each day in quiet time with the Lord. The pages that follow provide three daily devotionals a week for five weeks. We encourage you to use the other days of each week for prayer, solitude, worship or any other spiritual discipline that you would like to practice.

WORSHIP NOTES WEEK ONE

VISION

SERMON NOTES | JOURNAL | ACTION STEPS

Attend worship each week and use this book to journal your own thoughts, ideas and prayers taken from the weekly sermon message. Use the lined sections as your own space, or create action steps to help you grow and develop your unique role in our ministry during the REACH campaign and beyond.

Lined writing area for sermon notes, journaling, and action steps.

DATE

WEEK ONE | LIGHT THE WAY

DAY ONE

► READ 2 CORINTHIANS 4:5-12

Over 2,000 years ago, the darkness of the night was pierced by angels shining with the glory of the Lord all around them as they heralded the arrival of our savior, Christ the Lord. Love came down, and the light of the world lit up the darkness. Not just on that night, but on every night to come. As Christ's body, the Church gets the blessing of shining the light of Christ into every corner of the world so that all people might know God's glory. With each act of love and obedience done in the name of Jesus, the light gets a little brighter.

But sometimes it feels like the darkness is getting darker too. As the verse says, we can be afflicted, perplexed and persecuted. While we might not undergo the physical persecution that some of our brothers and sisters in Christ endure around the world, we live in a society that often rejects the light of Christ and ridicules those who carry that light.

We light the way by relying on the strength and power of the Holy Spirit.

Take heart, friends, for even though we are but earthen vessels, we have the power and strength of the Holy Spirit. We have the promise of Jesus that He will be with us always. We know that because of Jesus, we are more than conquerors.

This week, let's consider how we might light the way by pointing others to the One who is the Way, the Truth, and the Life of Jesus Christ.

1. What do you think is the "treasure" in verse 7?

Lined writing area for reflection question 1.

2. When have you felt the strength and power of the Holy Spirit at work in you?

Lined writing area for reflection question 2.

3. Spiritual disciplines can be a wonderful way to stay connected to God and grow in relationship with Him. These include prayer, studying and meditating on God's Word, practicing solitude, worship and even spending time in nature. What are some ways that you stay connected to God on a daily basis?

Lined writing area for reflection question 3.

LET US PRAY

Dear God, thank You that when we are weak, You are strong. Help us to give ourselves over for Jesus' sake so that His light can shine through our earthen vessels. Give us fortitude during the next five weeks to engage in these devotionals as a means of listening for Your wisdom and guidance. Show us, Lord, how to best reach into the darkness with the light of Christ. May we light up the darkness with Your love, grace and hope. In Jesus' name we pray, amen.

Notes:

Lined writing area for notes.

WEEK TWO | REACH PEOPLE FOR JESUS CHRIST

DAY TWO

▶ READ JOHN 4:7-29, 39-42

When Jesus met the Samaritan woman at the well, she was going about the ordinary, daily business of drawing water. That particular moment became an extraordinary one that changed her life and the lives of many of the people in her village. Even though we presume that she was avoiding the people of her town by drawing her water from the well during the heat of midday when most people did not venture out, after she met Jesus she did not hesitate to run and tell those same people about her encounter. Not only does Jesus call us to follow Him, He calls us to join in the extraordinary blessing of sharing His Good News with others.

When we share our stories — our testimonies — from a place of authentic joy and thanksgiving, we invite others to get to know Jesus for themselves. Some of the other Samaritans believed in Jesus because the woman told them about her encounter. But, more significantly, her story was the spark that ignited their desire to know Jesus for themselves. The Bible tells us that they invited Jesus to stay with them and many more became believers.

The Bible also tells us to be prepared to give an answer, with gentleness and respect, for the hope that we display to others (1 Peter 3:15). If we are following Jesus, our walk should look different from the rest of the world. The way we live becomes its own testimony, inviting others to walk alongside us and eventually to follow Jesus of their own accord. But the way we live becomes an invitation for others to ask us about our hope, our joy and our love. Our answer can be as simple as saying, “I do it all because of the grace of God,” or it can be a story that we tell over coffee. Whatever our story is and wherever we are called to tell it, let’s be ready.

1. In verses 13 and 14, what does Jesus say He is offering the woman?

2. According to verse 29, what did the Samaritan woman say to the others in her town?

3. Have you ever shared your story or testimony with another person? What was the result?

4. If someone asked you why you have hope, what answer would you give that person?

5. What are some ways you can live out your faith on a daily basis?

LET US PRAY:

Dear God, thank You for the living water that Jesus offers to all of us. Help us to drink deeply from this water so that we can live in a way that brings You glory. Give us courage to share our testimony through conversations and moments of shared grace with other people. May we live out our hope in such a way that others are drawn to your love, mercy and grace. In Jesus’ name we pray, amen.

Notes:

WEEK TWO | REACH PEOPLE FOR JESUS CHRIST

DAY THREE

▶ READ LUKE 19:1-10

The story of Zacchaeus has some familiar echoes to the other two passages we have read this week. Like the disciples and the woman at the well, Jesus met Zacchaeus where he was (literally up in a tree), and Zacchaeus’ response was immediate. However, in this story, Zacchaeus is looking for Jesus; straining to see a glimpse of Him as he passes by, unaware that Jesus is heading straight for his tree. Sometimes we think we are the ones searching for God. What joy we feel when we realize that God has been pursuing us all along.

Zacchaeus’ response reveals the transformative power of Jesus’ call. Just as the disciples were willing to leave everything, and the Samaritan woman was willing to go and tell her good news, Zacchaeus was transformed from a person who took to a person who gave ... generously. In proclaiming that he would give back four times the amount of money he gained by misusing his position in the community, Zacchaeus was going over and above what was expected.

Zacchaeus didn’t earn his salvation because he was willing to give away his money; he received his salvation because he believed in Jesus. His willingness to give was evidence of the transformation that took place within his heart when he invited Jesus into his home. A heart that has been transformed by the power of Jesus Christ is a heart that is willing to give one’s time, talents, money and resources generously.

Jesus told His disciples that the greatest commandment is to love God and the second greatest is to love our neighbor as ourselves. We demonstrate our love by giving of ourselves to strengthen, empower, comfort and support others.

1. According to verse 10, what has the Son of Man come to earth to do?

2. How do you give of your time, talents, money and resources to others?

3. When have you given above and beyond what was expected? What was the result?

4. Where can you step out of your comfort zone and give extravagantly?

LET US PRAY

God in Heaven, thank You for the indescribable blessing of being called and equipped to share Your light with others as the Church. Help us to not take that calling for granted, nor to keep the light hidden away for ourselves. Lord, give us boldness and faith to let Your light shine brightly in and through us in our thoughts, words and actions. May the brightness of our light increase as we reach out to others with the love of Christ. In Jesus’ name we pray, amen.

Notes:

WORSHIP NOTES WEEK THREE

DISCIPLE THEM IN FAITH

SERMON NOTES | JOURNAL | ACTION STEPS

After we “reach” people for Jesus Christ, we then “disciple” them in faith. This week we will explore this second component of our mission statement as we look at examples of discipleship from the early church. How did the first followers of Jesus disciple one another?

DATE

WEEK THREE | DISCIPLE THEM IN FAITH

DAY ONE

▶ READ ACTS 2:42-47

The early church understood the importance of community. Branded as suspicious by the Roman government and heretical by the Jewish leaders, the church needed to band together as a family to resist the temptation to give up their faith amidst temptation, trials and persecution. This week we will study three passages from the Book of Acts, which records the earliest efforts at discipleship, aided by the power of the Holy Spirit.

In today’s passage, we read that the early believers devoted themselves to the apostles’ teachings. The Greek word for devoted, *proskartereō*, means to “continue steadfastly,” to “give one’s self continually” or “to persevere and not faint.” This wasn’t a once-a-week commitment — it was a continual, daily activity. Once we answer the call to follow Jesus, we have to keep following Him. As we walk in His footsteps, He continues to transform and refine us, making us into disciples. Take note, friends, discipleship is a process meant to be shared in community. How can we be transformed unless we are demonstrating that transformation as we live life alongside other people? We all know that people can be wonderful at times and at other times, people can be ... not so wonderful. Jesus calls us to love all of those people, and we learn how to do that by the grace of God and through experience.

The result of the discipleship of the early believers in community was that the Lord increased their number on a daily basis. Growth occurs when the Holy Spirit is on the move and when we allow the Spirit to work in and through us. We are more effective at serving Jesus as we learn what it means to follow Him and we allow the Spirit to knit us together into a community.

1. To what four activities did the community of believers devote themselves?

2. How has being a part of a church community impacted your own walk with Jesus?

3. What are some of the discipleship opportunities at the church in which you currently participate? How have these strengthened your faith?

4. What new opportunity would you like to try?

LET US PRAY

Dear God, thank You for giving us the Church, the body of Christ. What a blessing to be able to join together in community as we grow in faith. As we reflect on the discipleship opportunities available to us, give us guidance and wisdom as to where You are calling us to get plugged in to the life of the church. May we be people who show our devotion to Christ by devoting ourselves in love to one another. In Jesus’ name we pray, amen.

Notes:

WEEK FOUR | HELP THOSE IN NEED

DAY TWO

▶ READ MATTHEW 25:34-40

It is all too easy to pass by the least and the lost of this world without even seeing them. Rather than seeing their humanity, we only see the need, which often isn't pretty. There isn't much beauty to be found in prison, on the street corner, or in the sterile confines of a hospital room. It takes courage to move into the forgotten places of this world and allow God to open our eyes to the pain and heartache that surrounds us. Sometimes, it might seem easier to simply keep our eyes closed and move right on by.

*We help those in need
by seeing each
other's humanity.*

But today we read that Jesus is found in those places and with those people whose needs can seem overwhelming. Jesus told us that He didn't come to save the righteous, but to save the sick. He came to bring love and hope to those who have forgotten what love and hope look like. Jesus invites us to join Him in the midst of people's needs, to allow Him to break our hearts for the things that break His heart so that we see past those needs and into the heart of the people.

Friends, love and hope looks like you and me — the Church — reaching out in love to help those who can't help themselves. Love looks like having the courage to allow God to open our eyes and move our hearts and see every single human being as a person whom God loves and adores. Love looks like stepping into uncomfortable places and reaching out as the hands, feet and voice of the body of Christ.

1. What are the different situations of need that are described in this passage?

2. What needs stir your heart with love and compassion?

3. Have you ever participated in a local or global mission project or trip? How did you feel before that experience? How did God grow your faith through the experience?

4. How can you boldly reach out with the love of Christ?

LET US PRAY

Heavenly Father, help us to see those in need through Your eyes. Break our hearts for what breaks Yours, God, and equip us to move into those places of need and serve as Your hands, feet and voice. Give us the courage to step into the brokenness of the world with the faith that You, God, move mountains. May we be people who love all people with the love given to us through Christ. In Jesus' name we pray, amen.

Notes:

WEEK FOUR | HELP THOSE IN NEED

DAY THREE

▶ READ 1 JOHN 3:16-24

We know that Jesus Christ loves us because He laid down His life for us; so we are called to lay down our lives for one another. The concept sounds familiar doesn't it? Isaiah said something similar when he called us to pour ourselves out for one another. We learned from Jesus' calling of the disciples that we need to go "all in" for Jesus, but it seems we need to go "all in" for one another as well.

Does this seem difficult or downright impossible? The only way we can possibly love one another as God loves us is by first abiding in God's love. John says it in the reverse when he questions how the love of God could abide in anyone who doesn't have pity on a brother or sister in need. Jesus talked about this concept himself in John 15, telling us that unless we abide in Him, we will not bear fruit. Apart from Jesus, we can do nothing. With Jesus, we can be earthen vessels who are never emptied even though we continually pour ourselves out for others.

And so it seems we have circled back around to where we began this devotional — whatever we do, we have to do it through the strength and power of the Holy Spirit. Whether we are reaching people for Jesus Christ, discipling them in faith, or helping those in need, we have to first make sure we are abiding in Christ so that we can love God and others with all that we have to give.

This is the collective call of the Church. Jesus stands at the altar and says, "Come, follow Me. Follow Me when you are scared and when you are confident, when you have sorrow and when you have joy, when you are in the valley and on top of the mountain." If we stay close to Jesus, if we abide in His love together as a church, we will be blessed beyond measure as we extend our blessings to those who need them the most.

1. According to 1 John 3:24, how do we know for sure that Christ lives in us?

2. Now look at John 15. What does it mean to abide in God's love?

3. What areas of your life do you need to give over to Jesus so that you can abide in Him more fully?

LET US PRAY

Heavenly Father, Thank You for the gift of the Holy Spirit who gives us assurance that we are abiding in Jesus even as He abides within us. Help us to focus daily on abiding in Your love so we can love others well. As we meet the physical needs of our community, may we reach their spiritual needs as well by pointing them to Jesus Christ. As we extend our hospitality, may we open the doors wide and invite people to participate in the life of this church. As we grow, may it be a fruitful growth that brings glory to You and increases the power of Your Kingdom. In Jesus' name we pray, amen.

Notes:

DAY TWO

▶ **READ MICAH 6:8**

As the body of Christ, the Church is called to walk in obedience to God's Word. We are to live in such a way that the world takes notice and God's name is glorified, and we accomplish that by residing in the world but abiding in God. In order to align our hearts with God's heart and reach for what matters, we have to be obedient.

Today's verse tells us that God requires us to act justly, love mercy and walk in humility. All the things we have talked about in the last five weeks fall into this requirement. Jesus is our example of how to do this well. As Methodists we believe that God's grace moves us towards perfection in Christian love. John Wesley called this sanctifying grace. This doesn't mean we are so perfect that we are incapable of sinning, it means that we believe God's power and strength can make our love for one another perfect ... holy. To get to that point, we walk in obedience and we strive to stay connected to God through Jesus in the power of the Holy Spirit.

We reach for what matters by reaching out in obedience.

That's where the Church becomes such a gift in the life of a believer. We are to keep each other accountable and encourage one another as we follow after Christ. We are to bear one another's burdens and share in one another's joy and pain.

Our walk of faith will not be complete until we reach home and enter into God's presence in heaven. Until then, we should be seeking God, following after the footsteps of Jesus and going where He leads us, with obedience.

1. How are you obeying God's call and following Jesus?

2. Practically speaking, what would it look like to act justly, love mercy and walk in humility?

3. Pray and consider where God is calling our church to join Him in growing His Kingdom. What did the Spirit reveal to you? How can you be a part of that call?

LET US PRAY

God in heaven, although we are finite beings and You are an infinite God, You have called us to make Your glory known to those who do not know You yet. What a remarkable blessing and privilege. Thank You. As we walk through life, show us how to seek justice, love mercy and walk humbly after Jesus. Encourage and strengthen us, convict and correct us, and guide us into perfect love and unity as the body of Christ. May we love one another with Your extravagant love. In Jesus' name we pray, amen.

Notes:

DAY THREE

▶ **READ 2 CORINTHIANS 4:13-18**

Being thankful matters. An attitude of gratitude can give us a more godly perspective on just about any situation. We have to be mindful that not only are we called to meet the needs of those around us in love, but for the ultimate purpose of causing thanksgiving to rise up and bring glory to God. We reach out to others in love and obedience, but also because we are thankful for what God has done and is doing in our lives. We are thankful that regardless of our circumstances, we can keep on moving forward without losing heart because we know that eternity awaits us. Eternity with God singing His praises in everlasting joy and peace. Ultimately, we are reaching out with things of this world — resources, time and people — for the purpose of reaching into eternity.

We reach for what matters by reaching out in thanksgiving.

Our passage begins with Paul reiterating that we speak because we believe. By faith we accept God's grace and mercy offered through Jesus, we trust Jesus as we follow Him back to the heart of God, and we reach out to others speaking God's truth because we know it to be true. We tell others about God's love because we know what that love feels like. We help people through the dark valleys, the bright mountaintops and every place in between because we are grateful for Jesus who leads the way and is The Way. We give with gratitude and thanksgiving out of the overflow of our gratitude and thanksgiving for God.

1. What are you most thankful for in your life?

2. What about The Woodlands UMC makes you thankful?

3. How can you demonstrate your thankfulness to others?

4. Write a prayer thanking God for everything He has done in your life.

LET US PRAY

Heavenly Father, as we have reflected and prayed for the specific ways You have worked in and through us in our personal lives, let us thank You for the powerful work You have done, are doing and will do through The Woodlands United Methodist Church. As we reach into the future, help us to listen to Your voice, follow Your call and give our resources with grateful generosity. Show us how we can continue to bring You glory as Your church as we reach people for Christ, disciple them in faith and help those in need. May we always remember to thank You and to live in a way that demonstrates our gratitude to You, God. May You continue to bless our church so that we can use those blessings to bless others. In Jesus' name we pray, amen.

Notes:

