



LAKE DEVOTIONAL

DEUTERONOMY 33:23

“And of Naphtali [Moses] said, ‘O Naphtali, sated with favor, and full of the blessing of the LORD, possess the lake”

EXPERIENCE

Living by a lake is a blessing, whether it is your regular residence, a summer home, or a week-long summer vacation. The Israelite tribe of Naphtali knew that blessing. Their inheritance in the promised land encompassed the entire western shore of the Sea of Galilee (the large fresh-water lake in Israel). What lake has been a blessing to you and why?

For many people in the U.S., lakes are a place of refreshment, rest, and recreation, particularly in the summer months. One of my favorite lake memories was taking my four kids on a “Dadventure” to a remote mountain lake. Our hike included having to ford a flooded stream, picking wild huckleberries along the way, and blowing up an inflatable raft we carried in our backpack. We swam and boated

across the lake to a rock outcropping where we spent a number of hours picnicking, swimming, exploring, laughing, talking, and meditating on the glories of God's creation of this beautiful mountain lake. By the time we returned to the cabin in late afternoon my wife shook her head incredulously at our scratched-up legs, our more than slightly burned skin, and the sheer exhaustion written on our smiling faces. As we recapped the day for her, our souls were brimming with the blessings of quality time together with Christ in the wilderness. It was not a relaxing day, but it was a refreshing day!

Your idea of refreshment may be different than mine, but likely you have been blessed to experience a refreshing day at a lake. How many thousands of summer picnics (July 4th specifically) are celebrated around America's lakes? Yet, how many of those picnics never engage a conversation, or any thinking, about how the creation points us to the Lord Jesus? Let's consider for a moment the Lord and his lakes.

CONTEMPLATION

Summer cottages did not encircle the harp-shaped Lake of Gennesaret (Sea of Galilee) during the time when the tribe of Naphtali lived along its banks or in Jesus's day either. However, the lake was a place where people experienced the blessing of refreshment. In Mark 6:30-44, the disciples were seeking a place along the lakeshore to rest and recoup after their missionary travels. Beside the calm waters, Jesus nourished the disciples and the crowds with spiritual food, teaching them late into the day. The Good Shepherd then satisfied over 5000 people's physical hunger with just five loaves and two fish—at the end having twelve baskets of leftovers—that's quite a picnic! The disciples had another picnic

years later with the resurrected Jesus on a beach along the lake. The Apostle Peter's relationship with the Lord Jesus was restored that morning over breakfast.

In Psalm 23:1-3, we read that David also found sustenance and rest, and his soul was restored beside calm waters. The geography of ancient Israel was obviously significantly different than the modern United States. Freshwater lakes abound here in the States. Shepherds, like David, had to find the freshwater pools resulting from the spring rains to water their sheep. As for recreational activities on the water, they are a more modern human phenomenon, but even so, we see in Psalm 104:26 God's blessing on aquatic play.

So, the challenge for us this summer is to see beyond the lakes' ability to provide physical refreshment, recreation, and a place to rest. Not unlike the disciples in Mark 6, we need to listen to what Christ is teaching us. We must open our minds and hearts to his revelation (special & general) via the Word and the waters. Time set aside for biblical creation meditation integrated with our recreation and relaxation will quench our spiritual thirst and refresh us in ways that recreation and relaxation alone cannot. Consider taking time to read the biblical passages of this devotional and to think over the questions from the "Do Your Own Lake Meditation" provided below.

PRAYER

Gracious God, keep me from expecting time at the lake or the cabin/cottage to provide true refreshment. I know only you Lord Jesus can restore my soul. Revive my mind and heart to seek you in prayer and meditation upon your Word and world that I might find the rest and rejuvenation I truly need (Matthew 11:28). Amen.

CONFIRMATION

In addition to the passages in the contemplation section above, Isaiah 41:17-20 provides another confirmation of freshwater lakes/pools as emblems of spiritual refreshment. God's people, who are poor, needy, and parched with thirst need the spiritual rivers and streams that produce pools (lakes too) of living water to quench their spiritual thirst. God's people must see and know, consider and understand that the Lord Jesus alone, the Living Word, is able to meet their deepest longings and needs.

DO YOUR OWN LAKE MEDITATION

- Use as many descriptive words as you can think of to describe the lake? Consider a vivid experience you have had with a lake.
- How do the features/creatures of lakes (water, depth, reflective surface, waves, stillness, fish, etc.) and your experiences of lakes prompt you to praise God, thank God, confess your sin to God, and/or delight in God?
- For what purpose might God have made lakes so refreshing and restorative?
- How is the time of refreshment at the lake a potential danger to your engagement of corporate worship and kingdom mission? How might this temptation to neglect the spiritual refreshment of corporate worship be avoided?