



WHERE LIFE & PURPOSE CONNECT

## **Grow, Pray, Study for the Week of March 10, 2024**

### **Weekly Prayer**

Lord, I need your presence on the long roads of my life. The road between fear and hope, the road between the place where all is lost and the place of resurrection. Like the disciples walking the road to Emmaus, I need your company. Jesus, stand with me in your risen power, and bless me, dear Lord. Amen.

### **Monday, March 11**

#### **Scripture: Luke 24:13-16, 30-32**

On that same day, two disciples were traveling to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem. They were talking to each other about everything that had happened. While they were discussing these things, Jesus himself arrived and joined them on their journey. They were prevented from recognizing him.

After he took his seat at the table with them, he took the bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. Their eyes were opened, and they recognized him, but he disappeared from their sight. They said to each other, "Weren't our hearts on fire when he spoke to us along the road and when he explained the scriptures for us?"

#### **Observation**

This is the story of two friends walking on the Emmaus Road together when the risen Jesus is suddenly with them, although they don't recognize that it is Jesus. They are on a very familiar road, having a not-uncommon experience of greeting a stranger. But oh, what a surprise this road and this experience becomes! The moment that they recognize Jesus is at the table is when he breaks the bread. They remember what he said would happen. In the breaking of the bread and the blessing of the cup, we remember.

#### **Application**

Two friends helped each other recognize the presence of Christ in their midst. Often it is a friend who helps us see and hear more clearly what has happened. Who has been that kind of friend to you? Are you that kind of friend to someone else? This is one of the things that happens in a Faith Group.

## **Prayer**

Thank you, Lord, that you come and enter into the ordinary experiences of our lives. It takes trust to let others into my life so they can help me see where you are present. Help me to identify those people I can trust. Then help me to be this kind of friend to others. Amen.

## **Tuesday, March 12**

### **Scripture: Luke 24:13-35**

On that same day, two disciples were traveling to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem. They were talking to each other about everything that had happened. While they were discussing these things, Jesus himself arrived and joined them on their journey. They were prevented from recognizing him.

He said to them, "What are you talking about as you walk along?" They stopped, their faces downcast.

The one named Cleopas replied, "Are you the only visitor to Jerusalem who is unaware of the things that have taken place there over the last few days?"

He said to them, "What things?"

They said to him, "The things about Jesus of Nazareth. Because of his powerful deeds and words, he was recognized by God and all the people as a prophet. But our chief priests and our leaders handed him over to be sentenced to death, and they crucified him. We had hoped he was the one who would redeem Israel. All these things happened three days ago. But there's more: Some women from our group have left us stunned. They went to the tomb early this morning and didn't find his body. They came to us saying that they had even seen a vision of angels who told them he is alive. Some of those who were with us went to the tomb and found things just as the women said. They didn't see him."

Then Jesus said to them, "You foolish people! Your dull minds keep you from believing all that the prophets talked about. Wasn't it necessary for the Christ to suffer these things and then enter into his glory?" Then he interpreted for them the things written about himself in all the scriptures, starting with Moses and going through all the Prophets.

When they came to Emmaus, he acted as if he was going on ahead. But they urged him, saying, "Stay with us. It's nearly evening, and the day is almost over." So he went in to stay with them. After he took his seat at the table with them, he took the bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. Their eyes were opened and they recognized him, but he disappeared from their sight. They said to each other, "Weren't our hearts on fire when he spoke to us along the road and when he explained the scriptures for us?"

They got up right then and returned to Jerusalem. They found the eleven and their companions gathered together. They were saying to each other, “The Lord really has risen! He appeared to Simon!” Then the two disciples described what had happened along the road and how Jesus was made known to them as he broke the bread.

### **Observation**

To human eyes, the crucifixion had ended everything. The two disciples “had hoped” Jesus was the promised redeemer (but apparently, their words implied, he wasn’t). Jesus, again unrecognized at first, explained to them how the Scriptures pointed to him. When he, although a guest, took the host role, broke the bread, and blessed it, they recognized him.

### **Application**

It seems likely that Cleopas, who was there, told Luke this story. Unrecognized, Jesus asked, “What are you discussing...?” They shared their dashed hopes, confusion, and the ray of hope the “empty tomb” reports evoked. Does this testimony ring true to you? How does the first-hand flavor of the resurrection stories help you trust their integrity?

### **Prayer**

Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening. Open my ears and my mind to your voice. Help me to see the greater purpose in the journey that I am living. Amen.

## **Wednesday, March 13**

### **Scripture: Luke 24:44-49**

Jesus said to them, “These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you—that everything written about me in the Law from Moses, the Prophets, and the Psalms must be fulfilled.” Then he opened their minds to understand the scriptures. He said to them, “This is what is written: the Christ will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, and a change of heart and life for the forgiveness of sins must be preached in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things. Look, I’m sending to you what my Father promised, but you are to stay in the city until you have been furnished with heavenly power.”

### **Observation**

As he did on the road to Emmaus, Jesus explained the Scriptures to all the disciples. He taught them to reflect on the big picture of Israel’s history from Moses to the Psalms, to see that in the Christ (anointed one) there is salvation and justice. That was more than just information. He commissioned them to share his message of repentance and forgiveness of sins. “You are witnesses,” he said, promising that God’s power would help them spread his message to all nations.

### **Application**

Your personal story of a changed heart and life is powerful to the non-religious and nominally religious people you interact with wherever you live, work, or play. You are a

disciple, and like the first disciples, are a witness to God's life-changing work through Jesus Christ. In what ways can you share your personal story of a changed heart and life with those who know you?

### **Prayer**

God, keep me alert for chances to faithfully share your story. Give me courage when afraid, confidence when unsure, patience when anxious and passion when indifferent. Help me share my personal story of a changed heart and life. Amen.

## **Thursday, March 14**

### **Scripture: Matthew 22:34-40**

When the Pharisees heard that Jesus had left the Sadducees speechless, they met together. One of them, a legal expert, tested him. "Teacher, what is the greatest commandment in the Law?"

He replied, "*You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your being, and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: You must love your neighbor as you love yourself. All the Law and the Prophets depend on these two commands.*"

### **Observation**

Most of us are driven or motivated in life by certain desires. We may be motivated by our desire for affirmation, wealth, power, pleasure, love, or recognition. For some there is also a yearning to make a difference. When asked for the greatest commandment, Jesus replied with a statement that summarized the entire Old Testament. What is most important? A relationship with God and one another – a relationship defined by love.

### **Application**

Surely, we were created as human beings with something more in mind than to simply gain the affirmation of others, experience pleasure, and attain wealth. What do you think God's purpose for human beings is?

### **Prayer**

God, thank you for the words and example of Jesus. In his life, you offer a way for me to live. In the midst of all the desires this world has to offer, keep me centered on your will and your way of unconditional love. Amen.

**Friday, March 15**

**Scripture: Micah 6:8; Matthew 5:14-16; Matthew 6:31-33; Matthew 18:19-20**

He has told you, human one, what is good and  
what the LORD requires from you:

to do justice, embrace faithful love, and walk humbly with your God.

You are the light of the world. A city on top of a hill can't be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a basket. Instead, they put it on top of a lampstand, and it shines on all who are in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before people, so they can see the good things you do and praise your Father who is in heaven.

Therefore, don't worry and say, 'What are we going to eat?' or 'What are we going to drink?' or 'What are we going to wear?' Gentiles long for all these things. Your heavenly Father knows that you need them. Instead, desire first and foremost God's kingdom and God's righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.

Again I assure you that if two of you agree on earth about anything you ask, then my Father who is in heaven will do it for you. For where two or three are gathered in my name, I'm there with them."

### **Observation**

There are many scriptures that act as summaries of God's mission for us – verses that call us to a purpose or mission greater than ourselves. Micah summarized the proper relationship to God. Jesus provided teaching that could connect us to God's greater purpose.

### **Application**

How do these verses connect with your life purpose or mission? How might you fulfill these verses through your career or family life? Do other verses come to mind when you think of your life purpose?

### **Prayer**

Show me once again, O God, what you would have me be and to do. Help me to connect my life with your greater purpose. Let others see your light through my words and actions this day. Amen.

**Saturday, March 16**

**Scripture: Genesis 12:1-9**

The LORD said to Abram, "Leave your land, your family, and your father's household for the land that I will show you. I will make of you a great nation and will bless you. I will make your name respected, and you will be a blessing.

I will bless those who bless you,  
those who curse you I will curse;  
all the families of the earth  
will be blessed because of you."

Abram left just as the LORD told him, and Lot went with him. Now Abram was 75 years old when he left Haran. Abram took his wife Sarai, his nephew Lot, all of their possessions, and those who became members of their household in Haran; and they set out for the land of Canaan. When they arrived in Canaan, Abram traveled through the land as far as the sacred place at Shechem, at the oak of Moreh. The Canaanites lived in the land at that time. The LORD appeared to Abram and said, "I give this land to your descendants," so Abram built an altar there to the LORD who appeared to him. From there he traveled toward the mountains east of Bethel, and pitched his tent with Bethel on the west and Ai on the east. There he built an altar to the LORD and worshipped in the LORD's name. Then Abram set out toward the arid southern plain, making and breaking camp as he went.

**Observation**

Abram (later God would change his name to Abraham – meaning "father of many nations" – as a symbol of God's promise) sensed God calling in a specific direction without knowing the specific destination. To move in God's direction, Abram would have to abandon everything he had known. Something new lay ahead, but he would have to leave the familiar.

**Application**

Abram did not go alone. He brought his family with him. Rarely do we travel alone. Others may trust us and come along, or we meet others along the way that encourage or give us direction. They may even provide greater meaning in our journey. Who is someone unexpected that you have met in life and has confirmed for you that your direction is right?

**Prayer**

God, show me the way that will honor what you want for me. Help me to stay close to you so that I may reach all that you have for me in this world and in the world to come. Use me to draw others closer to you. Amen.