

Daily Devotions

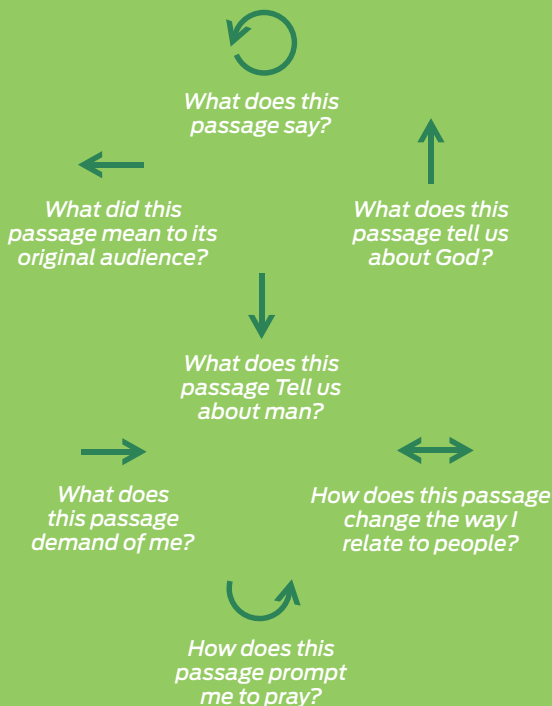


Day 1

Matthew 3:1-6

When Isaiah prophesied that there would be a “voice crying out, “Prepare the way for the Lord; make his paths straight!” he was using instructions that people in his day were familiar with. When a king comes to town, you clear the path. This is how you prepare for the arrival of the king. And yet, Jesus did not come to conquer in the way earthly kings conquer. And when John the Baptist made his declaration, his command was to “Repent!” In this new Kingdom, with a new kind of King, what kind of preparation is required? It is not a physical clearing of a path to make way for Him to ride through the town. It is a preparation of the heart, of repenting from sin that hinders our closeness with God. In this way, repentance is like making straight paths for the Lord in our hearts as we throw aside any sin that might entangle us.

The 7 Arrows of Bible Reading



What would it look like for you to prepare your heart for the Lord today?

Matthew 3:7-12

Sometimes, when we read a verse like verse 10 that says that trees without good fruit will be cut down, we can kind of freak out and find ourselves falling into a trap of performance where we think that we have to work really hard to produce good fruit. (In these verses, Jesus is specifically talking to the religious leaders. But He says something similar to all His disciples in John 15.) In response, we try really hard to be loving, and joyful and patient and kind. But truthfully, that kind of legalism and performance doesn't produce fruit. This is where we must remember that love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control are fruit of the spirit, not disciplines of the flesh. We do not discipline our way into being more patient. We do not discipline our way into being more loving. Spiritual fruit comes from abiding in Christ, from staying close to Him. To produce good fruit, our focus must be on Christ, not the fruit. The Holy Spirit will produce the fruit, it is our job to abide with Him.

How do you need to change your focus so that abiding in Christ is your primary goal (instead of many of the other good things that often take His place)?

Matthew 3:13-17

God could have chosen from any number of descriptors or names to call Jesus, but He chose "my beloved Son." And then if you fast forward later on when Jesus teaches His disciples to pray, He begins with "Abba," which is basically a way to say "my beloved father." And then throughout the rest of the New Testament you see over and over again how God adopted us as His children, how we are no longer slaves but sons, and how we receive all the blessings and inheritance of dearly loved children.

God is not quiet about His love for us and His design for us to be a family. And yet, how easy is it for us to forget that we are His children, loved for who we are and not what we do? We so easily believe that if we don't have enough quiet times then God won't love us as much. Or we forget that we are a family and so we don't prioritize our relationships with other believers.

What part of your identity as God's child and a member of God's family is hardest for you to believe and live out of?

Romans

6:1-11

Understanding that baptism is tied to our identity, and therefore weighty, is critical to understanding these verses. Paul is asking the question, “If you are in Christ and have been adopted into His family and are being made like Him, then don’t you realize that means you died to sin just like He did?” Repentance is not just a one-time thing we do when we come to Christ. It is a characteristic that believers embody at all times in their walk with Christ. Why? Because when we identified with Christ, we died to sin. Being in Christ means that we don’t live in sin. We don’t walk in darkness. We live in righteousness. We live in the light. And when we sin, we repent, confess, and allow the Holy Spirit to transform us.

In what areas of your life might you need to repent in order to live out of your identity, as one who has died to sin?

Luke

3:1-22

Running away from sin because it’s “bad” will never be enough motivation to keep anyone out of darkness. We need a clear vision of our identity, clarity on the gifts we receive in Christ, and a full experience of a loving relationship with God. We need to know the hope of what He has called us to and see the wealth of the glorious inheritance He has promised us. We need to experience the immeasurable greatness of His power and His strength. These things are what best motivate us and empower us to live out of our true identity. Being in Christ is not about receiving a list of dos and don’ts. And too often we have limited it to that. But my prayer is that God would open the eyes of your heart to see and receive everything Paul prays in these verses so that you would know who you are in Christ and have freedom to live out of your true identity as a child of God.

In what ways is our identity in God’s family different than the one you experience with your earthly family? In what ways is it similar?