

NEW BEGINNINGS

**STARTING NEW, THROUGH
GOOD AND BAD**



OCTOBER 2018

Day 1

What is something that took your breath away when you saw it for the first time? Explain why it took your breath away?

In the original *Star Wars* movie, the Millennium Falcon is chasing a Tie Fighter in space. They are trying to get the ship before it gets to a moon in the distance. As they draw closer to the moon they realize it is not a moon but a space station. They are overwhelmed and in awe of the immensity of this “technological terror”. What an awesome and terrible creation of man. We would all be in awe if we encountered a space station like this in outer space. Today we go back to the beginning when God created all things. Ask God to teach and encourage you about his creation and how He created it all for our enjoyment.

Read Genesis 1

What do we see about the earth and about God in verse 2?

Think about this description. How does it make God’s creating all things even more powerful?

How do you see that all the things in creation are not accidental but they were created specifically and with intention?

How was man the greatest in God's creation? What makes us different?

What was the command given to man in 28? What does this mean?

God created you in his image. He has commanded you to care for his creation. How can you do that in your life to God's honor and glory?

PRAYER – Give thanks to God for creating all things, including man.

Day 2

Describe a time when you did something wrong and were caught and disciplined. What did you learn through that experience?

We all get in trouble at some point in our lives. We make foolish and sinful decisions. And though we want to blame it on other people, or even say that the devil made us do it, we have to own up to the fact that we did it because of evil desires within us. Hopefully as we deal with the consequences of our actions, we learn something about our own selves and most importantly about our faith in God. I can remember a time in ministry where I made some foolish decisions, not thinking about others but myself. It almost railroaded my ministry. God in his grace did not allow that but I learned some important things about trusting in the Lord and serving Him in all my decisions. It was a painful but important lesson to learn. Ask God to show you your sin and to grow you in your faith as you deal with that sin.

Read Genesis 3

Summarize in your own words Adam and Eve's sin in the garden. What drove them to do what they did?

Summarize the consequences of their sin in verses 8 to 19.

What are two ways God showed grace to Adam and Eve instead of killing them, which they deserved?

What did God have to do with Adam and Eve according to verses 22 to 24? Why?

How do you think God's grace impacted Adam and Eve, as they began life outside of the garden?

When you realized you were a sinful, rebellious person and your only hope was through walking with Jesus, how did that truth impact your life?

PRAYER - Thank God for forgiveness and second chances.

Day 3

When you see pictures of natural disasters, what thoughts, feelings and questions go through your mind? Write down at least 3.

1.

2.

3.

It was pretty incredible to follow the news in 2018 of the volcano erupting in Hawaii. What was more incredible was to see the lava did not just come out of the mountain, but that it traveled underground and eruptions were popping up in communities and forests all around the base of the volcano. I had all kinds of thoughts and questions. First, God's is pretty powerful in all he has created. Second, why would anybody want to live that close to a volcano, active or inactive. That is crazy. Third, is a sense of helplessness. There is nothing man can do to stop the eruptions, just evacuate, run and keep people away from eruption areas. Many times a natural disaster requires many people to start over again. This was true with the flood. Ask God to convince you of His truths as you read today.

Read Genesis 6:9-7:24

How would you describe the destruction of the flood?

How many people survived? Why? (See 6:8)

Look at 8:20-22. What did Noah do as soon as he got off the ark?

What did God think of his sacrifice? What promise did God make to Noah and all of mankind?

How do we see God fulfilling this promise to us even today?

Then what command does God give Noah in 9:1 that he gave to Adam and Eve? Why is this an important command?

Noah and his family were spared. They had a chance at beginning all over again. We have the chance to live out that new beginning by telling people about Jesus. Who are 3 people you can pray salvation for, that they can have a new beginning in Jesus? Write their names and how you can pray for them along with salvation.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

PRAYER – Pray for the above 3 people

Day 4

Describe a time when someone forced you to do something you did not want to do. Why did they force you? How did it go? What did you learn?

In high school, I was not a big dancer, or prom person. I still am not to this day. I skipped my Junior Prom. Well senior year I had a few girls ask me to the Junior Prom. I said not to the first two. Then my parents stepped in when the third girl asked me. They told me I skipped my prom and I would not skip it again. They forced me to go with the 3rd girl. Why did they not step in with the first one? I went. I was miserable and I had to face the two girls I said not to. I learned to not skip things or my parents would force me to go later. There are many times as children and even as adults where we are forced to do things out of our control. Hopefully we can learn and grow through those experiences. Today we look at the Tower of Babel story. Ask God to teach you today.

Read Genesis 11:1-9

Building a tower is not bad in and of itself. What was wrong with what the people were doing, especially as you consider the command gave to Adam and to Moses?

What do we see about the unity of the people in the first part of the story?

What was God's solution to the problem?

What did the people do after God confused their language?

The people ended up going into all the earth, being fruitful and multiplying. What does this show us about God's power to do what he wants? What important trait of man does this show?

In what ways was this a new beginning for the people at that time?

What is something God might want you to do, that you are saying no to because you don't want to? How does this story make you reconsider?

PRAYER – Ask God to help you be obedient to his commands no matter how comfortable or uncomfortable they may be.

Day 5

What would be your thoughts, questions and reactions if God told you He wanted you to sell everything and move to Africa?

If you read about some of the first missionaries in history, they sacrificed a whole lot to go where they felt God called them to go. They gave up the comforts of their homes, communities and families to go live in a foreign and often hostile land. Many missionaries became very sick in their new homes and many even died. It was a steep price to pay to take the Gospel to new areas of the world. Yet, God used their efforts in time to bring many people to faith in Jesus Christ. Ask God to challenge your thoughts and attitudes as you think about giving up everything to serve Him wherever He calls you.

Read Genesis 12:1-9

Look at verses 1 to 3. What command does God give to Abram?

What promises does God give Abram following this command?

What would he give up to obey God?

According to verse 4, what questions did Abram ask God before he left for an “unknown” land? What does this say about the character of Abram?

Who else was involved in this journey?

Look at verses 6 to 9. What happens when Abram finally reaches the land of promise? What does God say? What does he do?

Abram had a new a beginning, away from his pagan family, now serving the Lord. He trusted the Lord to provide for Him and guide Him. Think about your life, do you trust the Lord in all things? Explain your answer.

PRAYER – Ask God to grow your faith, to show you where and when He wants you to go and serve Him.

Day 6

What is something you have struggled with that gave you a new outlook on life and changed things you do or don't do? Describe it below.

I have been watching a super hero TV show. One of the characters received custody of his daughter. He is all she has. It began to impact how he looked at fighting bad guys in his city. He was more cautious and even second guessed going into certain situations that impacted the team he served on, almost getting some of them killed. Being a dad gave him a new outlook on life. It made him appreciate the things we take for granted, like family. Today we look at Jacob's struggle with God in an all-night wrestling match. Ask God to help you see the lessons in the struggles you deal with as you study the Bible today.

Read Genesis 32:22-32

Jacob was afraid of Esau so he sent his family ahead. How would you describe in your own words Jacob's encounter with God?

What would be the physical reminder of Jacob's wrestling with God?

What would that physical reminder be a good thing for Jacob in his future struggles and doubts?

What was Jacob's name changed to? Why is that significant?

Jacob named that place Peniel. What does that mean? Why was that a good name for Jacob, his people and us today?

1. Jacob –
2. His people –
3. Us today -

What physical “scars” or reminders has God given you to remind you of his faithfulness and work in your life?

PRAYER – Give thanks for those reminders and that God would continue to remind you of his faithfulness in your life.

Day 7

Describe a time when you were betrayed by someone close to you. How did you react? What did you learn about yourself and about God?

In *Monsters University* Mike and Randall were the nerdy guys that were trying to fit in with the cool guys. It seemed to no avail. Then when it came time to for a team for the big competition, Mike needed one more player. He turned to Randall who apologized as he joined the cool guys team. Mike was betrayed by his best friend. But that opened the door for Sully to join the team. And of course Sully would become Mike's best friend in the long run. Betrayal was turned into a new friendship for Mike. Ask God to help you read and understand how His word applies to your life today.

Read Genesis 37:12-28

How much did Joseph's brothers hate him? What were they willing to do to him to show that hatred?

Why did they hate him so much? Read right before our passage.

How did God provide a way out so Joseph would not be killed?

Where was Joseph taken?

How would this new beginning be a negative new beginning?

Think about Joseph's story, how was this new beginning ultimately good?

God used Joseph's pain and betrayal for good. What are two hard relationships you have had that God has used for His good and for your spiritual growth?

1.

2.

PRAYER – For your hard relationships, that you would grow in your faith.

Day 8

What are reasons why someone would move?

What would be hard if you ever had to move?

We live in a world where many people are leaving their countries to move to European nations or America. The reasons are varied: famine, war, persecution, financial instability and the list can go on. In some countries an area is set aside for the refugees or immigrants. There is a sense of relief of being away from their hard situation and starting all over again. But there are also struggles finding jobs and an identity in a new nation. Joseph became 2nd in control of Egypt and after revealing himself to his brothers who sold him in slavery, he was ready to reunite his family. Ask God to encourage you with his word today.

Read Genesis 45:1-10 & 47:1-12

In verses 1 to 5, what do you think was going through the minds and hearts of the brothers as Joseph revealed himself? Speculate here.

He emphasized how God had provided for his every need. How does Joseph provide for the needs of his brothers according to these verses?

Read Genesis 47:1-12

How did God use Pharaoh, a pagan, to help Joseph's family start over?

How was this new start good for God's people?

God provided for his people. What is something new you have had to do where God provided for you? How did he provide for you?

PRAYER – Thank God for his provision. Ask Him to help you trust him when things change.

Day 9

Describe a near death experience either for you or someone you know. How did that experience change the person involved?

Schindler's List is a through provoking movie. Oscar Schindler started out buying Jews to help him make money during World War 2. But then somewhere in the midst of making money he started to care for the Jews and his new mission became about saving as many Jews as he could. Seeing many Jews near death changed Oscar. He wanted to save them. At the end of the movie he looks at his car and says how many Jews he could have bought if he had just sold it. His life changed because of the new venture he started. Ask God to change your life as you read the Bible today.

Read Exodus 2:1-10

What thoughts and emotions do you think went through Moses mother as she made the basket and then eventually put him out in the water?

How do we see God provide for Moses mother and Moses?

In verse 10, when Moses went to live in the house of Pharaoh, what kinds of things would change for him?

Think about the all the verses before this, why did Moses not forget his own people?

How do we see God at work in Moses life in this part of his story?

God changes our situations sometimes so we can lead more effectively for him. How has God done that in your life?

PRAYER – Ask God for opportunities to serve him in new and old ways.

Day 10

Describe something miraculous you or someone you know has experienced. How did it change you or the people involved?

I met a Bible smuggler in China once. He shared an experience where he was stopped by Chinese authorities and they opened his suitcase which was full of Bibles. Bibles were illegal and would be confiscated and he could be imprisoned. The officials looked through his suitcase, closed it up, and said nothing wrong here. They took the suitcase and went on their way to distribute Bibles to Chinese people. That event changed all of us who heard that story. It was amazing how God worked in that situation. It really encourages and emboldens our faith. Today we look at another incident in the life of Moses. Ask for God to grow your faith today.

Read Exodus 3

Look at verses 1 to 6. What do you think was thinking and feeling as he encountered God and God spoke to him at the bush? Write down several thoughts.

God has seen the suffering of his people. God chose Moses to deliver them. What excuses does Moses give through this chapter to not lead?

How does God answer those excuses?

What do we see about the power of God in leading his people and being in control of even the Egyptians?

If you are in Christ, you have experienced an awesome miracle. So what are 2 ways you can be leading the people God has put in your life.

1.

2.

PRAYER – Give thanks for your changed life and pray for an opportunity to lead the people God has put in your life.

Day 11

When you think about the Red Sea what are 2 or 3 thoughts that immediately come to mind?

I think body of water, one of the biggest miracles in the Bible and the movie *The 10 Commandments*. That is just what popped into my mind as I write this. Deep, I know. But this is a great story of the power of God and the ultimate deliverance of Israel from the clutches of Egypt. It is a story we hear all the time. Do we take time to step back and think about what God did for his people? Do we step back and see what implications this has for us and our salvation? Ask God to help you think about these things today as you read the Word.

Read Exodus 14

Look at verses 1 to 9. How do you see it was God who wanted the Israelites pinned between the Egyptians and the Red Sea?

Why would God do that?

What do we see about the Israelites in verses 10 to 14?

Why did they still not believe even after all they had seen God do with the plagues in Egypt?

How does God demonstrate his power over nature and man in the rest of the story?

The Israelites had a new beginning. They made it through the Red Sea. Their enemies' bodies washed on the shore. God was giving them a new start. What can you take away from this story that encourages you in your faith and in new beginnings?

PRAYER – Ask God to help you trust Him in what He is doing in your life even when it does not seem clear.

Day 12

Who is someone you would consider to be a great leader? Why are they a great leader?

What would be hard about taking that leader's place when they were done leading?

This is the situation in Israel. God was going to start a new phase in the life of his people. The leadership mantle would pass from Moses to Joshua. I have to be there was lots of fear and questions in the minds and hearts of Joshua and of the people. We don't like change. We like consistency. Yet God often makes changes. The question is do we trust him in the midst of the change? Ask God to encourage you as you read the Bible today.

Read Deuteronomy 31:1-8

What does Moses say about himself in verses 1 to 2? Why would this be hard for the people to hear?

What important truth does Moses remind them of in verses 3 to 5? Why is that important?

How does Moses encourage his people in verse 6? Why did they need to hear this truth?

To show that Joshua is the man to lead, what important things does Moses say to Joshua in the presence of the people in verses 7 to 8.

“Be strong and courageous. Do not fear. God goes with you.” How do those words encourage you as you think about your walk with the Lord?

PRAYER – Ask God to give you courage and take your fear away in the situations you are facing in your life.

Day 13

What is one of the hardest things God could ask you to do? Why?

I think most of us would have a pretty long list here. Some of the things on that list: leaving our family and friends to go somewhere new, sharing our faith with a hostile person, talking to people, giving up a job that we love, helping someone who is in need, give money to the church or some ministry, etc. God more often than not asks us to do hard things. These requests reveal how much we trust ourselves and how much we trust God. How about you? Do you trust God enough to do anything to serve Him? Ask God to challenge you in this area as you read His word today.

Read Joshua 1

The day of Moses death came. God tells Joshua to go into the Promised Land. What promises does he give him in verses 3 to 5? List them all.

How did God know there was probably some fear according to verse 6?

Look at verses 7 to 8. What role was God's word to play in the success of his people?

Think about that command and promise. We need to read and obey God's Word. There are promises if we do and curses if we do not. How are you doing in reading and obeying God's word? Explain your answer.

God then encourages Joshua to be strong and courageous again in verse 9. According to verses 10 to 18, how do we see that the people trusted God, his plan and command to follow his commands?

What is your biggest struggle with following God's commands or trusting Him to work in and through your life?

PRAYER – Pray about those struggles. Ask God to grow your faith.

Day 14

What are some of the reasons people walk away from the church and do whatever they want to do?

In the story the *Prince and the Pauper*, the Prince really wants to get out of the palace and live life on his own terms instead of doing all that is expected of him. The life of the Pauper looks so good to him. You get to do what you want. So they switch lives. For many Christians this is their mentality when they get out on their own. They have had to follow the rules of their parents, people in the church and teachers from school. They want to do what they want to do. There are many who walk away from the church experiencing this newfound freedom. What they don't see are the long term consequences physically, socially, emotionally and most importantly spiritually. Today we see a new beginning for God's people, and not a good one. Ask God to open your eyes to His truths and your own life as you read and study.

Read Judges 2

How did Israel mess up according to verses 1 to 5?

What was the people's reaction? Why?

Joshua died. What important detail are we told about God's people in verse 10?

Think about all the miracles God's people experienced under Joshua. How did their children grow up not knowing the Lord? What was not done by their parents? What was not done by the leadership?

God's people did not obey. They trusted more in Joshua than in God. What was the result and consequences according to verses 11 to 15?

Is your faith in men, only obeying to please them, or is your faith in God, obeying because you want to please Him? Explain.

PRAYER – Confess your trust in men, ask God to grow your faith in Him.

Day 15

What are the changes that happen in life when a couple has a baby?

In what ways does having a baby make us better as people?

Babies change your life. My wife and I have had 4. On one hand they expose many of your insecurities and sin. I realize my selfishness of my things, my time and things I like to do. A question I wrestle with is do I entrust them to the Lord as far as their walk with him, when they go away from our presence. Having children has made me a better person too. I have grown in my faith. I have learned balance in my life. It has made my wife and I communicate even more being responsible for these other four lives. Today we take a glimpse at the end of the Ruth's story and how her baby was a new beginning for God's people, that in some ways is not realized until the New Testament. Ask God to help you read and understand His word today.

Read Ruth 4:13-22

Naomi lost her husband, sons, home and came back empty. How did the baby change things for her?

How do we see that the child became more her child than Ruth and Boaz's child?

What was the sacrifice Boaz and Ruth were willing to make with their first born child when you think about it?

Look at verse 17. Who would Ruth and Boaz's offspring be? Why is that significant?

Read Matthew 1:5-16. What do we see is even more significant about the birth of Obed?

How has a relationship with Jesus Christ restored your life?

PRAYER – Give thanks for a new life in Christ. Pray that for a non-Christian God has placed in your life.

Day 16

What is a disappointing decision that someone close to you has made?
Why was that decision so disappointing?

In *Field of Dreams* Ray Casella, the main character, had a father who loved baseball. His father wanted him to play baseball. But Ray, he wanted to do everything the opposite of his father. Once he graduated he joined the 60's movements of love, peace and war. He never played baseball. His father was disappointed and heart broken and Ray did not really care. He was doing what he wanted. Does that sound like someone you know when it comes to life or faith? Does that sound like you? Ask God to impress on your heart his word today.

Read I Samuel 8

Look at verses 1 to 9. What family disappointment did Samuel have to deal with in his life?

Then what big disappointment did he deal with in the Israelites?

What was God's response to their request? Why do you think God told Samuel to obey the people?

Then in verses 10 to 18 Samuel tells all the people what the king will do. What does he tell them? List them all.

After Samuel says all these things what was the people's reaction? What is exposed about their own hearts?

Who are two people that you do or are tempted to place more faith in than God? Next to their name write down why?

1.

2.

PRAYER – It was a new sad beginning for Israel. Confess how you trust men more than God. Ask God to rule over you.

Day 17

What are 3 ways or reasons people place a lot of emphasis on looks?
Next to each thing, write if that is right or wrong and why.

1.

2.

3.

Let us not kid ourselves. The first thing we do with people is judge them based on their appearance. We judge them by cleanliness, smell, clothes they wear, brand of shoes, how they walk, which side their hair is parted on, the size of their nose, if they wear glasses and the list goes on. We make judgments about that person, right or wrong. Most of the time it is wrong. This is human nature to judge based on what we see. God's people did the same thing in the Bible. A new beginning came for God's people in that they wanted a human king. That king led them to failure and defeat. We continue that story today. Ask God to convict you of his truths today.

Read I Samuel 16:1-13

Summarize verses 1 to 5, the situation, Samuel's state of mind and what God asked him to do.

Samuel took Saul's failure to serve the Lord personally. Why do you think he was so affected by Saul's failure?

In verse 6, what trap does Samuel almost fall into? How does God respond to this in verse 7?

How was David not the logical pick to be king of Israel?

David was God's pick. God had him anointed king. It shows you that God does not pick the most popular, the best looking, the strongest. But God looks at the heart when calling people. How does this encourage you in your faith and to be bold in living out your faith?

PRAYER – Confess how you fall into the trap of looking at the outside. Ask God to change your heart, make you more like Jesus Christ.

Day 18

What is the worst fight you have had against a friend or family member? What were the results of the fight? Did you fix things with them? Explain.

In the history of our country, the Civil War is the ultimate example of families fighting against each other. There were many stories of family members, in particular battles, that faced against each other. It is hard for us to fathom family members needing to be ready to kill each other on the battlefield. As we come to I Kings 12, we see a nation in turmoil and what will happen because they had turned against the Lord. It was a new beginning in the history of God's people, and not a good one. Ask God to convict you of His truths as you read today.

Read I Kings 12:16-24

List all the ways we see a nation in turmoil in verses 16 to 20.

How did the people decide who would follow Jeroboam and who would follow Rehoboam?

What was Rehoboam ready to do? Why did he not follow through?

God said that this “divided” kingdom was from him. What does this show you about the character of God?

How have you seen God at work in a hard situation you have dealt with?

PRAYER – Ask God to teach you through good and bad situations.

Day 19

What is the biggest thing that you lost and eventually found? What was it like when you found it? What did you feel and do?

God's people lost everything because they sinned against God. The walls of Jerusalem were torn down. Their temple was destroyed. The people were sent into exile. They were left hopeless and without a place to call home. I don't think any of us can know exactly what this feels like. We have not had to deal with this kind of situation. But God used two great men, Ezra and Nehemiah, who came back from exile and let the people in rebuilding their temple and their walls. A new beginning was ahead for God's people as they would be restored to their city and to their place of worship. Ask God to encourage you in your faith as you read today.

Read Ezra 6:13-18

How were the people able to finish the temple according to verse 14?

What does this show you about the power of God and the people of Israel?

How did the people celebrate?

Read Nehemiah 12:27-43

What did the people do when the wall's construction was completed?

How did their actions show that this accomplishment was not about them but all about God?

What has been your biggest accomplishment? Have you given thanks to God? How if you have? Why not if you have not?

PRAYER – Give thanks to God for all He has done in your life.

Day 20

Who is someone you know, or studied, or read about, real or fictional, who had everything, only to lose it all? Describe why they lost it all and what they lost.

Robin of Locksley from Robin Hood was a man who had it all. He was of nobility. He stood to inherit a lot of land and wealth when he would get his inheritance. Robin decided to go to Jerusalem to fight in the Crusades. It was there that he lost so much: friends, battles and ultimately his home back in England. When he came home everything was in shambles. Wicked King John was on the throne and there were authorities who had taken everything away from the people. Thus a legend was born. Robin became Robin Hood, to steal from the rich and give to the poor. Today we look at the life of Job, a man who lost everything, but eventually was blessed in so many ways at the end of his life. Ask God to encourage and challenge you in your faith as you read the scriptures today.

Read Job 42

Job prayed according to verses 1 to 6. What important things did he say in his prayer to show he understood who he was and who God was?

Job's friends treated him horribly. What did God command the friends to do? What do we see here about the grace and mercy of God?

And Job did this. What reasons could Job have used to hold a grudge and not made the sacrifice for his friends?

In addition to forgiveness and his restored friendships, what other ways did God bless Job according to verses 10 to 17?

When you start to follow Jesus, you have to see you have lost everything because of sin, then see your need for Jesus. When you start to follow him you have a new beginning. List 3 things that have changed in your life because of following Jesus Christ.

1.

2.

3.

PRAYER – Give thanks to God for your faith, for forgiveness.

Day 21

What picture do you have in your mind when Jesus returns one day? Describe that picture.

Many men lost their lives on the battlefield in Gettysburg. I cannot imagine being the north, who won the battle, on one hand celebrating their victory. Yet on the other hand, as they look out over the landscape and see the loss of life from both sides of the conflict. The battle came at a great cost. As Christians we look forward to Jesus coming back. We know that when Jesus comes back that is it, many will be found guilty and will spend all eternity separated from God. Today we look at Isaiah and how the people promised to lose everything because of their sin, are also promised to be restored by God. What a beautiful new beginning that would be for God's people. Ask God to teach you His truths today.

Read Isaiah 66:15-24

How did Isaiah describe God's judgment in verses 15 to 17?

How should a picture like this motivate you to share your faith with the non-Christians God has put into your life?

What hopeful things does Isaiah share with the people in verses 18 to 23?

How is this a picture of us sharing our faith today? Where should we be going and proclaiming God's word to?

Verse 24 serves as a reminder of God's judgement to Christians. What point does this verse make to us?

Who are 3 people God has put in your life who are not Christians?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

PRAYER – Pray salvation for those 3 people, that they would have a new beginning, a relationship with Jesus.

Day 22

From your reading of history or even fiction, think of two great cities/nations or civilizations that fell. Name them. Next to them write how they fell and if they are with us today.

The Roman Empire was powerful. They basically ran much of the world in their day. Nobody could stand up against them. Pride comes before a fall. Bad leadership, lack of unity, greed and many other factors led to the breaking up of the empire. There is no Roman Empire today. In fiction you have the empire in *Star Wars*. The Empire was ruled harshly by the Emperor. It was so harsh that people from a variety of star systems rose up in a rebellion. Ultimately they defeated the empire because the resistance was unified and fought together on many fronts. Big empires fall. We see that in God's people. The fall started when they asked for a human king, divided after Solomon and worshipped other gods. Today we read the promise God gave them because of their sin. Ask God to open your eyes to his truths as you read today.

Read Jeremiah 52

Look at verses 1 to 11. What happened in the first stage of Jerusalem's fall? List all the details.

Why do you think King Nebuchadnezzar kill all but Zedekiah? What point was he making?

What did Babylon do to Jerusalem in verses 12 to 30? List all that is in this section.

Now look at this same section as well as verses 31 to 34. How did Babylon show some grace to Israel?

What does this chapter show you about God's word and promises?

PRAYER – Confess your sin; ask God to bring revival to our nation.

Day 23

Imagine you were forcibly removed from your home and country and knew you would not go back for at least 50 years. What would you do? What would you not do?

When Jerusalem was destroyed most of the people were forcibly removed to live in exile. Daniel and his friends were some of those people. They had a choice, sit around and do nothing, waiting for 70 years. Or they could be productive in exile and serve the Lord there. Some served themselves in exile and became like the Babylonians. But Daniel and his friends decided to serve the Lord and make the most of their exile. We read a little about that today. Ask God to help you wrestle with his truths.

Read Daniel 1:8-21

How did Daniel risk his own life in this story?

How did the chief of the Eunuchs risk his own life?

How do we see that God blessed Daniel and his friends for taking a stand for God and not compromise their faith?

How do we see that these men were willing to live and serve in the situation in which they were placed?

How does this story challenge as you think about the following areas?

1. School –

2. Neighborhood –

3. Work –

4. Family –

What is one thing you can ask God to help you do this week to serve God right where he has placed you?

PRAYER – Pray about the last two questions you wrote about.

Day 24

Finish this sentence: Christmas has changed my life _____

I can imagine that the finished sentences would cover a wide variety of subjects and topics. Some people might mention time with family during the holidays that has been life changing. Others may answer that a specific gift they received really impacted their lives. I hope that most of us would say that the gift of faith has impacted us most, all because Jesus became man so that he could die for our sins. Jesus being born in that manger over 2000 years ago changed everything. Ask God if you have hope in Christ as you study His word today.

Read Matthew 1:18-25

Why was Joseph ready to divorce Mary? What were his reasons?

Yet he did not. Why? What does this show us about Joseph's faith?

What promise are we given about who baby Jesus would become?

Why do we need to be saved?

Have you been saved from your sins? How do you know?

What is an area of your life in which you struggle to trust in God? Why do you struggle in that area?

How can you show faith like Joseph did?

PRAYER – Ask God to grow your faith, and for the struggle above.

Day 25

What is something that someone has told you that totally confused or baffled you? Why were you confused?

Imagine you are a foreigner and not familiar with American culture and language. There are things Americans say that would be confusing. If someone who did something easily and then said, “that was a piece of cake”, you would look confused and wonder, what does cake have to do with what you just did? Or maybe someone in explaining a task says to you, “this is not rocket science”, again you would wonder where the study of rockets has come into the topic at hand. Or maybe you ask someone what they have been up to and they tell you, “I have been shooting the breeze.” What? How? What does that accomplish? We have phrases that would confuse people from other cultures. Yet we know what we mean. Jesus was the same way at times. Today we look at an encounter with Nicodemus that left the spiritual leader a little confused and yet it would be impactful in his life as Jesus explained. Ask God to teach you his truths today.

Read John 3:1-8

What hard phrase did Jesus share with Nicodemus? Why was it hard? What did Nicodemus think Jesus meant?

How does Jesus explain his meaning in verses 5 and 6?

Jesus was telling Nicodemus how he can be saved, a Christian. How can we get to heaven according to these verses?

How do we see from verse 8, that it is God who saves people and not us? Why is this humbling for us as people?

Think about these verses and your own salvation, what are 3 things you want to praise and thank God for?

1.

2.

3.

PRAYER – Give thanks to God using what you just wrote above.

Day 26

What are 3 huge events that have caused some kind of “new” beginning in our world? Write down the events and how it started something new.

1.

2.

3.

In the movie *Deep Impact* an asteroid hits the earth wiping out the whole Eastern Seaboard as well as many other foreign cities in Europe. Millions of people died. The place where our government was housed, gone. It was a new beginning for the people of the world. It was a time to come together and rebuild and in some ways to start over. Now this is a fiction movie but there are events in our history that have made us rethink who we are and what we do and what we believe. Things changed and new beginnings were seen: The Civil War, World War 2, 9/11, shootings in schools and the list goes on. Then there are personal events that have started new beginnings: divorce of parents, death of a loved one, physical injury, academic achievements, etc. Lots of events that cause new beginnings. Today we read a series of events that have forever changed many people in the world. Ask God to remind you how these events have changed your life.

Read Luke 23

List the different events that happened in this story.

What lasting impact have these events had on mankind? List as many as you can think of.

Read Luke 24

List the different events that happened in this part of the story.

What lasting impact have these events had on mankind? List as many as you can think of.

As Christians why are these events pivotal to our faith and hope?

PRAYER – Give thanks for Christ's death and resurrection. Pray for salvation of 3 people you know who are not Christians.

Day 27

What is something that you have seen that has changed your life? How did it change your life?

Where do I start my list? Seeing the birth of all 4 of my children was life changing. When you see them come into this world, these miracles of life, made and formed by the hand of God. It left me in awe and wonder. Getting in a few near life ending accidents. It made me see clearly that God is in control of all things, that he knows the day of my birth as well as my death. The fact that I survived showed me He was not done with me yet and wants to keep using me. When my dad died suddenly of a heart attack it was a reminder to take advantage of time with loved ones and to deal with hurt and pain that is a hindrance in relationships. Life changing events. Today we look at an event that would forever change the disciples as well as many of those who witnessed it. It would become a new beginning for many as they would start to follow Jesus. Ask God to grow your faith as you study the Bible today.

Read Acts 2:1-13

Put yourself in the shoes of the people gathered together, how would the events of verses 1 to 4 be life changing for you?

How was God doing something new through his people? How would this event grow the church of Christ?

At the Tower of Babel God confused the languages and people split up and when their way. How is this event a reversal of the curse of Babel?

What were the different reactions to the people who were observing what these Christians were saying?

List someone you know that fits in one of the following categories:

1. Christian who is active in sharing their faith
2. Non-Christian who is curious about God
3. Non-Christian who mocks Christianity

PRAYER – Pray for each of the people you wrote down above.

Day 28

What do you look forward most to the ultimate new beginning, eternal life in heaven? List 3 things.

1.

2.

3.

I look forward to heaven so much. It will be a place of so many new beginnings: hair, flat tummy, rivers of chocolate, running and never getting tired, seeing God was really a New York Yankee fan and the list goes on. Heaven will be awesome. It will be a new beginning that will last for all of eternity. Are you excited for that time? I am. Ask God to encourage you in your hope and your faith as you read from the book of revelation today.

Read Revelation 21:1-8

Read verses 1 and 2 very carefully. What are we told about new heavens and new earth?

Think about those words. Where will heaven be according to John? Explain your answer.

According to verses 3 to 7, what kinds of things is God going to do?

What are 3 ways that these verses encourage you as you think about your own life, experiences and loved ones?

1.

2.

3.

What do these verses show about the character and power of God?

Then we have verse 8 as a reminder of what truth? What character trait of God does this verse reveal?

PRAYER – Give thanks for the hope of heaven. Pray for the unsaved in your life.