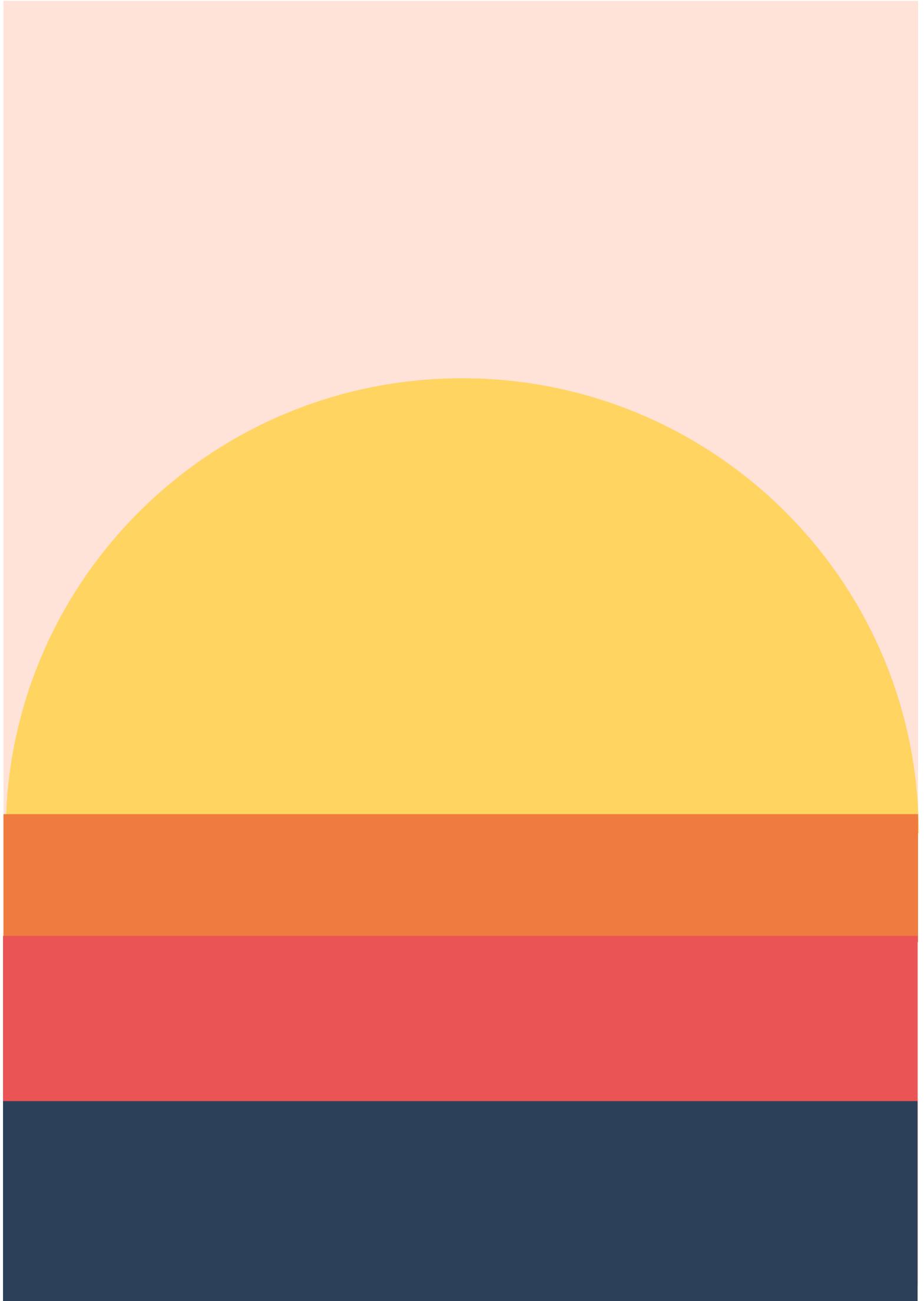


LEGACY

FINDING OURSELVES BY JOURNEYING THROUGH
LUKE AND ACTS



NOTES FOR THIS BOOK

This devotional study book was written to help guide you through the Gospel of Luke and the Acts of the Apostles. These two books of the Bible were written by the same person, Luke, and offer a glimpse into the life of Jesus Christ and the ways the apostles lived after Jesus ascended into heaven. Our desire in creating this guide is that you are able to discover yourself in the pages of scripture. You will see how Jesus paved the way for the disciples to spread the Gospel, and then you will see how the apostles paved the way for us to continue in their footsteps. These books of the Bible are our Legacy - we get to pick up where they left off.

This study is designed to go through one chapter of the Bible each day. Most days, you will be participating in the Lectio Divina method of study, with other days using the SOAP method of study (instructions for both methods are on the following pages). Here are a couple of tips to set you up for success in your time of devotion:

- **MAKE SURE YOU ARE SOMEWHERE QUIET WITH NO DISTRACTIONS**
- **HAVE A PEN AND JOURNAL WITH YOU, MAYBE EVEN A COUPLE OF HIGHLIGHTERS OR MARKERS**
- **IF YOU NEED MUSIC TO FOCUS, WE RECOMMEND WORSHIP MUSIC**
- **PRAY BEFORE YOU BEGIN YOUR QUIET TIME**
- **USE A PHYSICAL BIBLE INSTEAD OF A DIGITAL BIBLE**
 - If you do not have a physical Bible, let us know and we will be happy to provide you one for free
- **GET COMFORTABLE; EACH OF THESE DEVOTIONS SHOULD TAKE YOU ABOUT 20 - 30 MINUTES**

We hope that God reveals Himself to you in brand new ways through this study. May you grow to see yourself in the scriptures and may you feel empowered to live out your Legacy.

LECTIO DIVINA METHOD

Most days will require you to do the Lectio Divina method of devotions. This method treats the Bible as the Living Word of God and focuses on quieting yourself to allow God to speak through a specific passage. Lectio Divina is traditionally done in four parts:

LECTIO = "READ"

Take time to read through the scripture passage multiple times, typically 2-3 times. Feel free to switch between different versions (NIV, NLT, ESV, The Message, etc) if that helps you understand deeper. As you read through, write down or circle words or short phrases that catch your attention.

MEDITATIO = "MEDITATE"

Focus your attention on the words or short phrases you identified during your Lectio time. This is the part of the process where you invite the Holy Spirit to help guide you through scripture. Use the words or short phrases as a starting point and let your mind wander, thinking of ideas, feelings, pictures, places, anything that these words or phrases bring to mind. Take your time on this step, you should spend at least 5 minutes on this step. Write down what you want to remember

ORATIO = "PRAY"

This is the part of the process where you listen to God. Why did He bring your attention to this word or phrase? Why did you think of those ideas or feelings? What does God want you to hear from this passage? What are you being called to do, change, or leave behind? Write down what you hear from God.

CONTEMPLATIO = "CONTEMPLATE"

This final step involves simply resting in God's presence. Set aside at least 5 minutes to be still and be aware of God's work in your life. Thank Him for the blessings in your life and what He has shown you in this time of devotion. This is time to praise and worship God. Let it take as long as you'd like.

SOAP METHOD

Some days will require you to do the SOAP method of devotions. This is a form of reading scripture that is intended to get you to slow down and interact with the passage.

S

FOR SCRIPTURE

Open your Bible to the assigned passage for the day. Read through the passage and allow God to speak to you. When you are done, look for a verse (or two) that stood out to you that day. Write that verse out by hand.

O

FOR OBSERVATION

What do you think God is saying to you in this scripture? Ask the Holy Spirit to teach you and reveal Jesus to you. What is happening in this passage? Who is the audience? Are there any specific words that are repeated? What stands out to you?

A

FOR APPLICATION

Personalize what you have read, by asking yourself how it applies to your life right now. What is God saying to you today? How can you apply what you read to your personal life? What changes could you make in your life? Is there an action you need to take?

P

FOR PRAYER

This can be as simple as asking God to help you use this scripture, or it may be a greater insight on what He may be revealing to you. Remember, prayer is a two-way conversation, so be sure to listen to what God has to say! Write down anything God lays on your heart during your prayer time.

LUKE 1

This is a long passage, I promise all of the days won't be this long. But I thought it was really important to keep this chapter together because each section of this chapter leads perfectly into the next part of the story. When you read this, I want you to do 2 things. First, I want you to picture yourself as each of these people. Put yourself in Mary's shoes, imagine you are her cousin, Elizabeth. Then, I want you to think of a time when God unexpectedly blessed you and write your own song of praise to God. It doesn't have to be a song that rhymes or even goes to music, just write down your feelings about that moment and how thankful you are for God's blessing!

LECTIO DIVINA

LECTIO = "READ"

MEDITATIO = "MEDITATE"

ORATIO = "PRAY"

CONTEMPLATIO = "CONTEMPLATE"

LUKE 2

S

O

A

P

LUKE 3

In this chapter, you'll find the genealogy of Jesus. This is Jesus' family tree, it starts with Jesus and Joseph, then goes all the way back to Adam and then God! For today's activity, I want you to mark every name in Jesus' family tree that you know. This might only be a couple of names, like Jesus and God, or it might be a lot of names. Many of these men have incredible stories written in the pages of the Bible. As you have free time, look up each of these men and see what the Bible has to say about them. See how long it takes you to mark off every single name in this list...it's not an easy task! Then, think about all of the names that have lived between Jesus and your name!

LECTIO DIVINA

LECTIO = "READ"

MEDITATIO = "MEDITATE"

ORATIO = "PRAY"

CONTEMPLATIO = "CONTEMPLATE"

LUKE 4

This chapter begins with Jesus facing temptation. It shows how much we have in common with Jesus, which is a weird concept to think about. The Son of God felt and experienced a lot of the same things that we feel today. Right after His temptation, we read the story about how Jesus was rejected by His hometown, so much so that they literally wanted to toss Him off a cliff to get rid of Him. Maybe nobody has ever tried to throw us off of a cliff, but we have definitely felt rejection from people close to us. Your friends, your school, your church, maybe even your family. Rejection is hard, but Christ experienced the rejection of earth so that He would never have to reject us from His love. Identify all of the different experiences in this passage that you may have felt before in your life and then realize that Jesus has felt them, too.

LECTIO DIVINA

LECTIO = "READ"

MEDITATIO = "MEDITATE"

ORATIO = "PRAY"

CONTEMPLATIO = "CONTEMPLATE"

LUKE 5

S

O

A

P

LUKE 6

At the end of this passage, there is a story about two builders: one who has built his house on sand, and one who has built his house on rock. The one on rock is solid, but the one on sand is unstable and breaks down easily. Think about the things that you think are important in your life. Have you built those things on rock, so that they are sturdy and will continue to grow, or have you built them on sand so that they will only be important for a moment but could be eliminated in another moment? Do you need to make adjustments about what is built on rock or what is built on sand? Where would you place your faith in Jesus? What do you need to change in your life to make sure that your faith in Jesus is set up to grow and remain strong?

LECTIO DIVINA

LECTIO = "READ"

MEDITATIO = "MEDITATE"

ORATIO = "PRAY"

CONTEMPLATIO = "CONTEMPLATE"

LUKE 7

S

O

A

P

LUKE 8

This chapter is full of parables and miracles that all tie together. In the middle of this passage, we find a couple of verses telling a story about how Mary, the mother of Jesus, and His brothers come to talk to Him. Instead, Jesus says that His family is seated right in front of Him. Let's focus on this verse because it isn't Jesus rejecting His mother and brothers, instead it shows just how much He loves us and those around Him. It could have been very easy to tell people to leave or back away to make room for His family, most other people probably would have done that. But instead, He views us all as His family, not judging us based on if we are rich or poor or how the world might attempt to categorize us. He knows that His message of love and redemption is for the entirety of the world and He took advantage of every opportunity He had to spread that message to any who would listen.

LECTIO DIVINA

LECTIO = "READ"

MEDITATIO = "MEDITATE"

ORATIO = "PRAY"

CONTEMPLATIO = "CONTEMPLATE"

LUKE 9

In this chapter, we begin to see just how challenging it can be to be a disciple of Jesus. In one moment, Jesus is blessing the disciples with the ability to drive out demons and cure diseases. They are witnessing and performing miracles in their everyday life. Imagine how insane that would be, to just walk into school on a random Tuesday and your teacher decides that it's your turn to teach the class. It would be a weird reality of life to live, but this is what the disciples experienced all the time. But it's not all fun and rainbows. We also see the challenging conversations they were having with Jesus, where He tries to explain who He is, what He came to do, and what it means to truly live a life following Him. Life as a Christian is hard, really hard. Some of us have experienced that in ways that can really tempt us to leave it all behind. This is a chapter that is like water on a hot day. It reminds us that we are not the first ones to feel how hard it can be to follow Jesus. It's ok to feel exhausted by our calling sometimes, Jesus never said that life with Him would be easy, but He promised us that it would be worth it; eternally worth it.

LECTIO DIVINA

LECTIO = "READ"

MEDITATIO = "MEDITATE"

ORATIO = "PRAY"

CONTEMPLATIO = "CONTEMPLATE"

LUKE 10

S

O

A

P

LUKE 11

This might be the Christian version of telling you there is no Santa Claus, but, for those of you who do not already know: Jonah and the whale is not a true story. I know, I'm sorry for childhoods I just ruined. But this chapter talks about what's really going on in the book of Jonah. Jonah was a prophecy for Jesus! The fish was a symbol for Jesus spending 3 days in the tomb. Here, we see that Jesus is having a similar conversation to the one you are reading right now. This would have been a very well-known prophecy for those listening to Him preach, sort of like how the story of Cinderella is a really well-known story for us. Jesus hinting that He is Jonah would be about as crazy as if I were to tell you that I am Cinderella (I'm not). This is a relatively easy jump for our minds to make because we know the whole story of Jesus, but for those hearing this for the first time, this would be a hard message to hear. Try to put yourself into the shoes of the crowd and let your mind be blown by how many prophecies Jesus fulfilled just by living and dying for us. So, no, Jonah isn't a true story...but praise God that Jesus is the truest story of all time!

LECTIO DIVINA

LECTIO = "READ"

MEDITATIO = "MEDITATE"

ORATIO = "PRAY"

CONTEMPLATIO = "CONTEMPLATE"

LUKE 12

S

O

A

P

LUKE 13

This chapter is incredibly unique but also incredibly important. The majority of the passage is stuff we are used to seeing: Jesus performing miracles and correcting those who have the wrong idea of what it means to believe in God. But I want to focus on the very end of this passage. It's one of the few passages where we see just how much being the Messiah, the one who has come to save the world, is breaking His heart. He spends every second of His time on earth teaching and bringing others to salvation. But, here, at the end of this passage, we catch a glimpse at His heart. He knows His life is on the line, He must have been exhausted, and yet His heart for the unsaved never quits. He knows how broken the world around Him is and it would be so easy to just take a break, but instead He pushes on because of His deep love for His people. How lucky are we to have a Savior that never quits on us!

LECTIO DIVINA

LECTIO = "READ"

MEDITATIO = "MEDITATE"

ORATIO = "PRAY"

CONTEMPLATIO = "CONTEMPLATE"

LUKE 14

Right in the middle of this chapter, we find a parable that honestly could be written about any of us. Sometimes, as Christians, we get so caught up in attending church and youth group and hanging out with our church friends that we almost forget the whole point of being a Christian in the first place: to tell others about Jesus. When was the last time you talked to somebody about Jesus? Probably not within the last week, maybe not even within the last month. We are so busy inviting our Christian friends to our banquets and we are completely ignoring the people around us who so desperately want a taste of what we have. The next time somebody invites you to their banquet, think about who you know that you could bring with you. We can't forget the promise we made when we became Christians: to share this love of Christ with the rest of the world.

LECTIO DIVINA

LECTIO = "READ"

MEDITATIO = "MEDITATE"

ORATIO = "PRAY"

CONTEMPLATIO = "CONTEMPLATE"

LUKE 15

S

O

A

P

LUKE 16

What a way to start a chapter, right? I remember a time in elementary school when I was mad at my brothers because they would not share their ice cream with me, then I turned right around and refused to share my lemonade with my friend who lived next door. Why is it that we get so upset when we are treated unfairly, but often we don't notice when we are treating others unfairly? Or worse, we get mad when we are accused of treating others unfairly, refusing to even think that's something we are capable of. Read over this parable a couple of times and let yourself really sink into how uncomfortable it makes you feel. Try to wake up every day remembering this feeling of uncomfortableness and let it inspire the way you face every situation you encounter throughout the day. Forgive the times you face unfairness and let yourself be willing to be called out when you are behaving unfairly.

LECTIO DIVINA

LECTIO = "READ"

MEDITATIO = "MEDITATE"

ORATIO = "PRAY"

CONTEMPLATIO = "CONTEMPLATE"

LUKE 17

S

O

A

P

LUKE 18

At the end of this chapter, we read about a story where Jesus encounters a blind man. The blind man addresses Jesus as "Son of David." Over this Summer, Quake spent a lot of time talking about the life of David, including some of his mistakes. How incredible is it that God redeemed David's story so much that, even in the time of Jesus, people knew that the Savior of the world would come from David's family. The line the man keeps saying, "Son of David, have mercy on me," is even a nod to David's history. David experienced great mercy from God, because he deserved extreme punishment but instead God showed Him compassion and redeemed him. The Son of David is going to carry out that same mercy, but this time it is for the rest of the world. If somebody were going to talk about God's legacy in your life, what would they say? What is God constantly giving you over and over again, leaving His stamp on your life?

LECTIO DIVINA

LECTIO = "READ"

MEDITATIO = "MEDITATE"

ORATIO = "PRAY"

CONTEMPLATIO = "CONTEMPLATE"

LUKE 19

In this chapter, you will see that we have come to the part of Luke that begins to tell the story of Holy Week; the last week that Jesus spent on earth with us. We are going to be encountering some very familiar stories that some of you have probably heard no less than a dozen times in your life. Take extra time before each devotion to ask God to open your eyes as if you were reading this story for the very first time. Our God is a mighty God and this is a story of incredible love. It can be so easy to get numb to the details of this story as we hear them over the years of our lives. Pray against that numbness, ask God to help you feel every word for the very first time. Let your soul encounter Christ's sacrifice in a brand new way. As you wrap up this chapter, imagine yourself participating in the parade that Jesus experienced. Set aside a few moments of your day to go outside and lay a blanket on the ground as if you were laying it before God. Then, lay yourself down on that blanket and let it become a symbol for laying your life down in worship of a God who loves you so much. Live in this act of worship for as long as you can.

LECTIO DIVINA

LECTIO = "READ"

MEDITATIO = "MEDITATE"

ORATIO = "PRAY"

CONTEMPLATIO = "CONTEMPLATE"

LUKE 20

S

O

A

P

LUKE 21

As you know, this chapter takes place during Jesus' final week on earth. However, this part of the story might be a little unfamiliar to you because it's not typically part that we talk about in church during Holy Week. While this whole chapter holds a lot of wisdom, I want to draw your attention to the last couple of verses in this chapter. We know what Jesus was facing in the next couple of days: betrayal, arrest, trial, and eventually death on a cross. He definitely had a lot on His mind. Still, He spent every last second of His time before all of this took place teaching in the temple and praying by Himself. Even though He knew exactly what the next few days had in store, He didn't waste a single moment that could have been spent saving others. The same Jesus that never quit on His people then, still never quits on us now. He knows the struggles we will face and yet He never stops finding ways to show us His great love. May we never waste a single second of the life He has given us.

LECTIO DIVINA

LECTIO = "READ"

MEDITATIO = "MEDITATE"

ORATIO = "PRAY"

CONTEMPLATIO = "CONTEMPLATE"

LUKE 22

S

O

A

P

LUKE 23

This is a challenging chapter to encounter. The truth of what happened to Jesus, our Savior and friend, is gruesome. The one person in the history of the world who was perfect and without sin faced the greatest injustice that this world has ever seen. He took on the weight of our sin and suffered so that we could spend eternity with Him. When I was growing up, I always thought that people would say things like this to make me feel guilty. Like "look at what Jesus did for you, you better not sin anymore." But that's not what it is at all. Instead, it's the greatest act of love I could ever comprehend and constantly leaves me in awe and wonder. Instead, I think "look at what Jesus did for me, I am so humbled that He loves me so much, I better spend every second worshipping Him!" While this chapter may stir up some difficult emotions in you, I challenge you to embrace them. Let your heart be humbled by the love of our Savior and let your praises rise to God with every breath you take, knowing each breath is a gift made possible because of what Jesus endured in this chapter. Let this chapter be a love letter from God, to you.

LECTIO DIVINA

LECTIO = "READ"

MEDITATIO = "MEDITATE"

ORATIO = "PRAY"

CONTEMPLATIO = "CONTEMPLATE"

LUKE 24 & ACTS 1

Brace yourself, this is another long one, but it's worth it! The reason these 2 chapters are together on the same day is because, as you'll notice, they tell a lot of the same story. This is because the person who wrote the Gospel of Luke also wrote the Book of Acts. This is one of the only places in the Bible where we see this kind of continuation. The story ends in the Gospel of Luke when Jesus leaves the picture, and then picks back up again in the Book of Acts with what the apostles do after Jesus is gone. For these chapters, I want you make a timeline of events. Identify the similarities between the chapters, and then make sure you notice what is unique for each chapter, too. Notice how one sets up the other to continue the story!

LUKE 24

ACTS 1

ACTS 2

S

O

A

P

ACTS 3

This chapter is one of the most exciting because, in it, we see one of the first miracles of the New Testament performed by somebody other than Jesus. There are two things I need you to pay attention to in this chapter. First, that Peter and John don't heal the man and then just leave him on his own. Instead, the man goes with them and they continue to use the miracle to glorify God. Sometimes, we can be tempted to think that all we have to do is tell somebody about Jesus once and that's good enough. What we see here is that we have to build and invest in the relationship, not just sprinkle some Jesus and walk away. Bringing others to Christ means being available for discipleship. Second, don't lose sight of the fact that Peter and John are just ordinary people, yet they performed this incredible miracle through the power of the Holy Spirit. The same power that lived in Peter and John, and thousands of believers before us, lives in us today. How does remembering that fact change the way you live your life? Whatever you have to do to remind yourself of the Holy Spirit in you, do it...every day.

LECTIO DIVINA

LECTIO = "READ"

MEDITATIO = "MEDITATE"

ORATIO = "PRAY"

CONTEMPLATIO = "CONTEMPLATE"

ACTS 4

S

O

A

P

ACTS 5

When I was little, my Sunday School teacher used to use the story of Ananias and Sapphira to scare us into behaving. She would always say, "see, if you lie, you die!" Clearly, she wasn't my favorite Sunday School teacher, but I realize that she wasn't really that far off. When we read this story in this chapter, our first reaction is that it seems a bit harsh to just drop dead. But, if we think deeper, we have to ask ourselves the question: when did we stop viewing our sin as something that deserves harsh punishment? If sin wasn't a big deal, then why would Jesus have come to suffer the most horrific death on earth to save us from it? Today, we have become numb to the fact that our sins have real consequences, because we are so comfortable with the idea that Jesus has already forgiven them. While this is true, and we no longer have to live under the burden that our sins bring us, we can't forget that what happened to Ananias and Sapphira is absolutely what we deserve. Without Jesus, this story could easily be written about us every single day, probably multiple times per day.

Pray that we would be able to understand what we deserve so that we can truly be grateful for the grace that we receive through Jesus Christ our Savior.

LECTIO DIVINA

LECTIO = "READ"

MEDITATIO = "MEDITATE"

ORATIO = "PRAY"

CONTEMPLATIO = "CONTEMPLATE"

ACTS 6

On the surface, this chapter might seem unimportant. I would like to argue that it's one of the most relatable chapters in the entire book of Acts. In the first half of the chapter, we see that the church back then was struggling with some of the same issues that we are still struggling with today. You see, the disciples were taking their mission to spread the Gospel very seriously, but they were also realizing that they had focused too heavily on one part of their mission and had started to neglect the other parts: to care for those who are in need.

How often do we get so wrapped up in one part of our lives that we completely forget another? Like how we focus too much on our sports or our music and we forget a major school assignment. As Christians, we still experience this today. But the first church had a perfect solution: they held each other accountable. Before it got too out of hand, members of the church spoke up and called attention to the problem, then they all worked together to come up with a solution right away. Instead of getting defensive, the church leaders welcomed the conversation and wanted to do better. We have so much to learn from this chapter: we have to make sure we aren't too focused on one thing that we forget to care for others, we have to make sure we are willing to speak up when we see injustices taking place, and we have to be willing to be held accountable when we are falling short.

LECTIO DIVINA

LECTIO = "READ"

MEDITATIO = "MEDITATE"

ORATIO = "PRAY"

CONTEMPLATIO = "CONTEMPLATE"

ACTS 7

S

O

A

P

ACTS 8

This chapter is a little bit bittersweet. It's bitter because we have just experienced Stephen's death and what a tragedy that was for the early church. But we also see so many different stories about how the church was growing. One of my favorite stories in the entire Bible is found in this chapter, with Philip and the Ethiopian. This story is so powerful because it shows the Ethiopian's passion for understanding scripture and it also shows Philip's willingness to listen to the nudge of the Holy Spirit, even though he didn't know the situation he was waiting for. I often wish that I had the same level of passion about scripture as the Ethiopian. He knew what he was reading was important, but he also knew he didn't understand it and that he wouldn't be able to understand it on his own. Sometimes we can be arrogant about our Christianity, unwilling to admit when something doesn't make sense to us. Pray for God to make us more like the Ethiopian in this passage: willing to admit when we are lost and passionate to seek out help to get us back on track. When we acknowledge our shortcomings, we open up the door for God to come into our lives and work. Imagine the kind of growth we will experience when we stop trying to pretend like we have it all together and learn to rely on God instead! We might just be ready for a spontaneous baptism like Philip and the Ethiopian.

LECTIO DIVINA

LECTIO = "READ"

MEDITATIO = "MEDITATE"

ORATIO = "PRAY"

CONTEMPLATIO = "CONTEMPLATE"

ACTS 9

S

O

A

P

ACTS 10

When you think of Acts, you probably think of Paul, right? I know that I do. But have you ever noticed how much of Acts is actually about other apostles? Take this chapter, for example: it's entirely about Peter! While it may be easy to get wrapped up in the strangeness of the stories in this chapter, don't let yourself skip over verse 15: "do not call anything impure that God has made clean." I think this is a message that we can never get tired of hearing. Sometimes the world can persuade us to focus on all our unworthy; all of the sins we have committed and all of sins we are going to commit. Even worse, sometimes we are guilty of judging others because of the sins we know they struggle with, viewing ourselves as better than them because at least we don't struggle with that. This verse speaks directly against that. We don't have to view ourselves as unworthy anymore. Christ has made the ultimate sacrifice for us and He has made us clean so that we can live in eternity with Him. Likewise, He has made that same sacrifice for others. Christ's love is unending and available to all who receive His forgiveness. In the times when it can be easy to be burdened by how unworthy we have been, take time to remind yourself that God has already made you clean and you are not unclean anymore. Instead, the only name you possess is: His.

LECTIO DIVINA

LECTIO = "READ"

MEDITATIO = "MEDITATE"

ORATIO = "PRAY"

CONTEMPLATIO = "CONTEMPLATE"

ACTS 11

This is your second time hearing about Peter's vision. What stands out this time around that you might have missed the first time around? Is there anything that bothers you this time? What about something that unexpectedly encourages you? The privilege of scripture is that sometimes we encounter instances like this, where we get the same story back to back (we faced something similar in Luke 24 and Acts 1), only just slightly different. It makes you think: why is this in here again? If all scripture is God-breathed, then you would think He would know when He's repeating Himself. Well, the good news is: He does know, and it's usually for a very good reason. You see, this story is an odd one. On the surface, it's a weird vision, but digging deeper it's a very relevant commentary on humanity. We get so hung up on division, determining for ourselves who we believe qualifies for what. When we first read this vision, we focused on the freedom of not dwelling in our past uncleanness. What is God drawing your attention to this time? I pray that every time you read this vision of Peter's that God highlights something brand new for you. I pray that even if you read this vision 50 times that you find 50 new things to embrace as you seek to pursue Christ's heart for humanity. This is the timeless gift of scripture: it is alive and constantly giving life to our faith, all we have to do is breathe it in.

LECTIO DIVINA

LECTIO = "READ"

MEDITATIO = "MEDITATE"

ORATIO = "PRAY"

CONTEMPLATIO = "CONTEMPLATE"

ACTS 12

S

O

A

P

ACTS 13

One of the smallest details in this chapter is actually one of the most important. In verse 9, we see a small comment: "Saul, who was also called Paul"...this is the first time in all of scripture that Saul is called Paul and then he is never called Saul ever again the rest of the Bible. For such a huge detail, you would think it would be highlighted a bit more. Saul, who we have learned was known for persecuting Christians mercilessly, and who also saw face a life-altering intervention from God, has officially shed the shame of his name. In the last few chapters, we have read the message over and over again that we are no longer tied down by the sins of our past, for we have found freedom in the forgiveness and sacrifice of Jesus Christ. Here, we witness the shedding of Paul's old self and the birth of the new creation he has become in Christ. Later, Paul himself will write a beautiful piece of scripture found in a letter to the Corinthians: "if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: the old has gone, the new is here!" (2 Corinthians 5:17) In this chapter, we are witnessing the first time in scripture when Paul experiences this reality for himself. The old is gone, the new is here! What I love about how this happens in Acts 13 is that this new name is tucked into other verses, seemingly unimportant. Sometimes when God changes us into a new creation, it isn't in the most obvious or elaborate of moments. Sometimes, even when we have huge moments of revelation, the permanent change is subtler and happens a little bit later. Saul, who is also called Paul, and is never called Saul ever again. May you never be held back by your old self ever again, the new is here!

LECTIO DIVINA

LECTIO = "READ"

MEDITATIO = "MEDITATE"

ORATIO = "PRAY"

CONTEMPLATIO = "CONTEMPLATE"

ACTS 14

S

O

A

P

ACTS 15

At the end of this chapter, we see a pretty intense scene. Paul and Barnabas, who had been mission partners for a long time, face a disagreement so strong that it ends their partnership then and there. If you're reading this and wondering why on earth a fight between two pastors is in the Bible, keep reading. You see, Paul and Barnabas were undoubtedly both men of God and truly thought they had the correct opinion. You've been in this situation before, maybe with a friend or sibling, and no matter what the other person said you stood firm in the fact that your opinion was the correct one. What's important in this story is not that Paul and Barnabas disagreed and split up; disagreements happen all the time, often with this same result. What's important here is that they both continued on their ministry despite their disagreement. Yes, they were separate, but they both knew it was their mission was to spread the Gospel of Jesus Christ and they didn't let their own personality clash get in the way of what God had called them to do. When we face disagreements, especially with people in the church, we can be tempted to just give up on the church for a while. If we follow in Barnabas and Paul's footsteps, we can see that is not the correct decision. Disagreements should never distract us from the path God has placed us on. People will walk beside us for a season, but if God is pulling two people in separate directions, the best decision that we can do is to both follow where God is leading, even if that means we don't go together anymore. It can be a hard decision, choosing to follow God instead of sticking with our friends. I'm sure this disagreement was painful for Barnabas and Paul. But they stood firm in what God called them to do and even respected each other more because of it. If you are feeling like God might be calling you in a different direction, I pray that you would be brave enough to trust Him, even if it seems scary.

LECTIO DIVINA

LECTIO = "READ"

MEDITATIO = "MEDITATE"

ORATIO = "PRAY"

CONTEMPLATIO = "CONTEMPLATE"

ACTS 16

This chapter contains one of the craziest stories in the book of Acts, but you have to absolutely love it. Paul and Silas are in prison and it's not looking good for them. Instead of choosing to feel bad for themselves, angry about the situation they are in, or starting to panic about what might be next for them, they just spend the entire time singing and worshipping God! I have never been in prison, and I would like to think that my faith would be strong enough to spend the entire time singing, but realistically I know myself and I know I would be leaning more into the panic side of things. Instead, their worship causes an earthquake, enough to shake the jail cells open. Imagine yourself as the guard in this situation: if all of your prisoners escaped on your watch, especially 2 important prisoners like Paul and Silas, you would freak out too. But even the way that Paul and Silas remain in their cells speaks to their faith. I have faced situations much less serious than this and I can honestly say that my faith has shaken sometimes because I was afraid of what would happen if I wasn't in control. Every day, I pray for faith as radical as Paul and Silas in jail. I want to be able to praise God, even from sitting in jail. I want to choose to trust in God, even when a tempting door opens up in front of me. Will you be brave enough to pray for faith like Paul and Silas in your life?

LECTIO DIVINA

LECTIO = "READ"

MEDITATIO = "MEDITATE"

ORATIO = "PRAY"

CONTEMPLATIO = "CONTEMPLATE"

ACTS 17

S

O

A

P

ACTS 18

If you pay close attention, you will notice some entertaining contrast in this chapter. The first half of the chapter shows Paul's frustration with the Jews he keeps encountering, so much so that he even says he's only going to preach to Gentiles from now on. A bit extreme, but I think we have all been there at some point in our lives: so frustrated with one certain group we swear we will never interact with them again. Of course, that never lasts, but it's comforting to see that Paul experiences the same kind of frustrations we feel today. In the second half of the chapter, we meet Apollos: a Jew with a passion for scripture and sharing the Gospel. You see the contrast? Where Paul is lacking, in comes Apollos with a passion to do the very thing that Paul is struggling to accomplish. This happens all the time, but we don't often get to see it play out so clearly like this. We are called to share the Gospel, but we are also human and we all have our own individual strengths and weaknesses. This is what makes us unique, beautifully woven together by God, because what I lack God has created somebody to thrive, and where I thrive may be an area where another lacks. Paul and Apollos show us just how God can use different people in different ways to accomplish the same goal. We are not called to be everything to everybody. Let us ask God to make us brave with the strengths He has given us, and let us be humble enough to let others come aside where we are weak.

LECTIO DIVINA

LECTIO = "READ"

MEDITATIO = "MEDITATE"

ORATIO = "PRAY"

CONTEMPLATIO = "CONTEMPLATE"

ACTS 19

S

O

A

P

ACTS 20

It's ok to laugh when you read the story about Eutychus, I find that I almost always do.

Picture this: you're in church, and the pastor's sermon is a little bit boring, and you find yourself falling asleep. I did this a few times when I was younger and every single time my mom would whack my on the arm with the bulletin and tell me to pay attention or I wouldn't be allowed to take a VeggieTales movie home from the library that week (pretty good incentive, huh?). Well imagine that instead of getting whacked on the arm, you fall out of a window and DIE. You would think that if you are sitting in a window, you would try extra hard to not fall asleep, right? I often ask God why this story is in the Bible, because it is so ridiculous, and the best answer I can come up with is: sometimes life is just ridiculous. There are a few stories like this in the Bible that make you scratch your head and wonder why they are included, but I truly believe that these stories are present to show that God knows life is full of ridiculous moments, just as much as serious ones, and He wants us to know that those moments are ok, too. If you'll notice, Eutychus is raised from the dead by the end of this story. So, we see that, even in the ridiculous moments of life, God is still glorified! I challenge you to seek God in the ridiculous moments of your life. The sillier the better. We might forget to look for God in the random moments throughout our day, but if we continue to forget to seek Him out in those moments, we might be missing the miracles right in front of our eyes.

LECTIO DIVINA

LECTIO = "READ"

MEDITATIO = "MEDITATE"

ORATIO = "PRAY"

CONTEMPLATIO = "CONTEMPLATE"

ACTS 21

There is another little moment in this chapter that I want to make sure you do not miss. Verse 9 talks about 4 unmarried women, daughters of Philip, who were prophets. There is so much going on in such a simple, short verse. You'll remember that Philip is the man who listened to the nudge of the Holy Spirit and ended up helping the Ethiopian understand the Gospel, to the point where he then baptized the Ethiopian on the side of the road. Here we see that, not only did Philip have incredible faith, but it appears to have run in the family because 4 of his unmarried daughters have the gift of prophecy. This is important on two levels. First, back then, churches believed that women, especially unmarried women, did not have a valuable role in society. Second, many in the culture of the time also believed that women were forbidden to preach. In fact, many churches to this day even still hold this belief. This verse is important because it shows that God not only values women, but He blesses them with the same gifts He blesses men. To God, there is no Jew or Gentile, male or female, instead He just sees members of One Body and blesses those members of the body with gifts to be used to bring Him glory.

LECTIO DIVINA

LECTIO = "READ"

MEDITATIO = "MEDITATE"

ORATIO = "PRAY"

CONTEMPLATIO = "CONTEMPLATE"

ACTS 22

S

O

A

P

ACTS 23

In this chapter, we see Paul getting arrested and facing the Sanhedrin. You don't have to look carefully to see that there are a lot of similarities between Paul's story and the story of Jesus. Both men are arrested because they are a threat to what the Jews believe to be true, both men have no real accusations against them of anything they have done wrong, both men still have to face a furious Sanhedrin who are determined to do whatever it takes to kill them. The difference in the stories is slight, but significant. Jesus came and had to die for the salvation of the world. Therefore, Pilate was overwhelmed by the pressure from the Jewish leaders and eventually handed Jesus over to them to be executed. On the other hand, Paul is spared from the plot the Jews have formed against him. God provides a way out in the form of Paul's nephew, who overhears the plot and eventually plays a role in getting Paul transferred somewhere safer. In our lives, we will face many hardships, and it may be that we may not clearly see a way out. We may even notice similarities between our lives and Jesus'. Sharing the Gospel is not an easy mission, Paul's story still has some rough water ahead, but he never lost faith that God would be beside him every step of the way. As you go through each day, no matter how easy or hard it may be, try to find at least one way that God showed up beside you. When you become aware of God's presence in your life, even the biggest trials don't seem so scary.

LECTIO DIVINA

LECTIO = "READ"

MEDITATIO = "MEDITATE"

ORATIO = "PRAY"

CONTEMPLATIO = "CONTEMPLATE"

ACTS 24

S

O

A

P

ACTS 25

Things are starting to get a bit heated for Paul. At the end of this chapter, we see an interesting interaction between Festus and King Agrippa. It's clear that Festus is feeling similarly to how Pilate felt about Jesus: at a loss for how to punish a man who has done nothing wrong. But I'd like to draw your attention to verse 19. Festus is explaining Paul's evangelism about Jesus, but you can tell that he is confused: "some points...about a dead man named Jesus who Paul says is alive." Can you picture this conversation taking place today? Try imagining that conversation even taking place back then! The Good News of Jesus is still brand new, many people haven't heard it before and, when they do hear it, the reaction Festus has is a normal one. Stating the facts about Jesus makes for a peculiar story: a dead man named Jesus who Paul says is alive. You can hear the skepticism in his words. But the story of Jesus goes beyond just facts. Without the power of the Holy Spirit, the love of God, and the miraculous redemption of Jesus' blood, what's the point? The Gospel requires radical faith, to believe the impossible. Otherwise, we're left scratching our heads, like Festus, about a dead man named Jesus who Paul says is alive.

LECTIO DIVINA

LECTIO = "READ"

MEDITATIO = "MEDITATE"

ORATIO = "PRAY"

CONTEMPLATIO = "CONTEMPLATE"

ACTS 26

S

O

A

P

ACTS 27

In movies, there is often a common moment where one person says, "at least it can't get any worse," and then, without fail, it almost immediately gets worse. This chapter reminds me of that moment in a movie. Paul's life has been pretty rough recently and, just when you think it can't possibly get any worse, the ship he is sailing on gets caught in this terrible storm and wrecks. To make matters worse, Paul warned against this very thing. I can imagine it took a lot of self-restraint for Paul not to roll his eyes and mumble, "I told you so" when his warning proved true. Instead, as a prisoner, he still prioritizes delivering God's words and saving everybody on board. Think about how selfless you would have to be, to save those who were holding you captive and who had only ever treated you like the prisoner they saw you as. I challenge you to read through this story again and make note of all the times when you would have given up, just in this story alone. I counted 6 times for myself. What we can learn from Paul's faith, no matter his circumstances, is that his vision never once left God's. He could have given up so many times and might have had an easier life because of it. But his faith never wavered, quitting was never an option for Paul because he knew that whatever was ahead of him would always be worth it as long as he kept his sight set on God. We have never been promised an easy life, but we have been promised an Eternal Life, and that is worth every single hardship we may have to endure. Today, pray for faith like Paul in the middle of the storm: patient and unshakeable.

LECTIO DIVINA

LECTIO = "READ"

MEDITATIO = "MEDITATE"

ORATIO = "PRAY"

CONTEMPLATIO = "CONTEMPLATE"

ACTS 28

S

O

A

P