



Week Three Devotion

Day 1

But he answered and said, "It is written, 'Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God.'"

Matthew 4:4 NIV

Have you ever uttered the words, "Never mind, I'll just do it myself?"

It's easy to do. To find yourself in a situation where things aren't happening fast enough, or not going the way you thought they would and to begin thinking about how you're going to get yourself out of this mess or how you're going to fix things.

In our text, Jesus has been fasting for 40 days. He's hungry. Satan tempts him by stating what seems like the obvious solution, by turning stones into bread so he can eat. But Jesus quotes Deuteronomy 8 and reminds the enemy that while yes, he could take things into his own hands, it is better to follow God's plan, God's word. One of the key reasons we need to be a student of the word is so we can recall what it tells about those situations that tempt us to leave God out of the equation, trying to solve things with our basic instincts. Another reason, so we can humble ourselves like Jesus did and place our challenges into the Father's hands knowing that He will take care of us and whatever the outcome, our reliance on His word pleases Him more than us showing our individual brilliance in problem solving.

Many of us remember to pray for God's will in tough situations, but how many of us search his Word at the same time? Let these words from David be our prayer; "I desire to do your will, my God; your law is within my heart." Psalm 40:8 NIV

Consider this: Think of a recent challenge or problem you've faced. Be honest with yourself, did you look to God's word for wisdom, or did you try to fix it yourself?

Day 2

Now when Jesus saw the crowds, he went up on a mountainside and sat down. His disciples came to him, and he began to teach them.

Matthew 5:1-2 NIV

Albert Einstein once said, "Education is not the learning of facts, but the training of the mind to think."

Remember a time when you had a coach, a teacher, or a mentor where you found yourself engrossed by his or her words. My guess is that it was a combination of your passion for the subject matter and the manner of how you were taught that made this person a favorite.

Two things immediately stand out in our reading today; Jesus wanted to teach, and his disciples came to him to listen. As a disciple today, this should be true for us. Jesus taught on God's law in a way nobody before him had ever done. Religious leaders were often rebuked, and humble sinners found their lives changed. But more importantly, was the fact that his students didn't simply memorize verses but allowed Jesus's teachings to transform their lives. Jesus told them that the man who heard his words and acted on them was like building his home on a foundation of rock.

The apostle Paul told the church in Rome to be "transformed by the renewing of their minds..." It's clear that studying the word of God was meant to be more than just reading His word, but about an entire exercise of listening, doing, and allowing our lives to be changed.

Consider this: The next time you read your Bible, think about the lesson it's trying to teach you and how you can apply to your life.

Day 3

Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. These commandments that I give you today are to be on your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates.

Deuteronomy 6:4-6 NIV

Deuteronomy 6:4-6 provides the basis for a traditional Jewish prayer called the *Shema*. Jesus, like every other Jew, recited the Shema regularly, when I say regularly, I mean very regularly. Jews recite the Shema twice daily, (in the morning and evening) and at the climactic final prayer of *Yom Kippur* each year. It is among the first prayers taught to Jewish children, and the traditional last words before death.

Given its importance in the Jewish tradition, it is no wonder that Jesus cited this verse when asked about the greatest commandment in the Law (Matthew 22:34-40). However, in his customary style, Jesus was not content to simply repeat the old and recite what was known. Rather, he added another layer that forces us to think outside ourselves when he emphasized how important it is to “love your neighbor as yourself.”

Consider this: As you read through the Bible, look for this recurring theme of the importance of loving God and loving others. How would it change our lives if we were thinking of The Greatest Commandment when we wake in the morning and when we fall asleep at night?

Day 4

The grass withers, the flower fades,
But the word of our God stands forever.

Isaiah 40:8 NASB

In 1995, a Christian rock band by the name of Dead Artist Syndrome, released a track that was an implicit ode to Marilyn Monroe aptly named, "Young, Sexy, and Dead." Although a bit of a morbid title, the ethos of the song was that no amount of fame, riches, or youth would exempt one from the inevitable fate that befalls all people, just look at Marilyn Monroe.

In Isaiah 40:6, it states "All flesh is like grass, and all its loveliness is like the flower of the field." There is a sense of our true state, our fleetingness. Although we understand that we are finite with a definite beginning and end, we also need to be reminded of it.

When we are honest with ourselves, isn't it very easy to live as if we have all the time in the world? How many times have we heard shocking news that someone we admired, loved, or was acquainted with had suddenly passed away? The litany of the famous, like Monroe, who are now gone testifies to how short life truly is. In contrast, the Word of God is infinite and enduring, it will never suffer this fate that we all know too well. "The word of God stands forever." Amen!

Consider this: In light of your mortality, what legacy do you hope to leave behind? Are you living for your own kingdom, or for Christ's kingdom?

Day 5

n He

Teach me, Lord, the way of your decrees,
that I may follow it to the end.
Give me understanding, so that I may keep your law
and obey it with all my heart.
Direct me in the path of your commands,
for there I find delight.
Turn my heart toward your statutes
and not toward selfish gain.
Turn my eyes away from worthless things;
preserve my life according to your word.
Fulfill your promise to your servant,
so that you may be feared.
Take away the disgrace I dread,
for your laws are good.
How I long for your precepts!
In your righteousness preserve my life.

Psalm 119:33-40 (NIV)

Imagine driving down the road on a road trip. You have been going for a few hours and you are beginning to get tired. Your mind begins to wonder, maybe you feel a little drowsy, but you know that you HAVE to keep focused on the road ahead to get where you are trying to go. So, what do you do? You might get some snacks to keep yourself energized, turn the radio up to jam to the music, or maybe listen to a podcast to stimulate your mind or entertain yourself. "He" is a Psalm of focus and intentionality. Much like when you are driving, when you are striving to live after Christ, it is easy to drift, lose sight of where you are going, or get distracted by the things that do not matter. This Psalm is all about praying and seeking focus. It is about turning away from the distractions and turning to the habits that help you zero-in on God and his word.

Consider this: What is something that is distracting you or causing you to drift from God and his word? Today, choose to "turn" back and focus in on God.