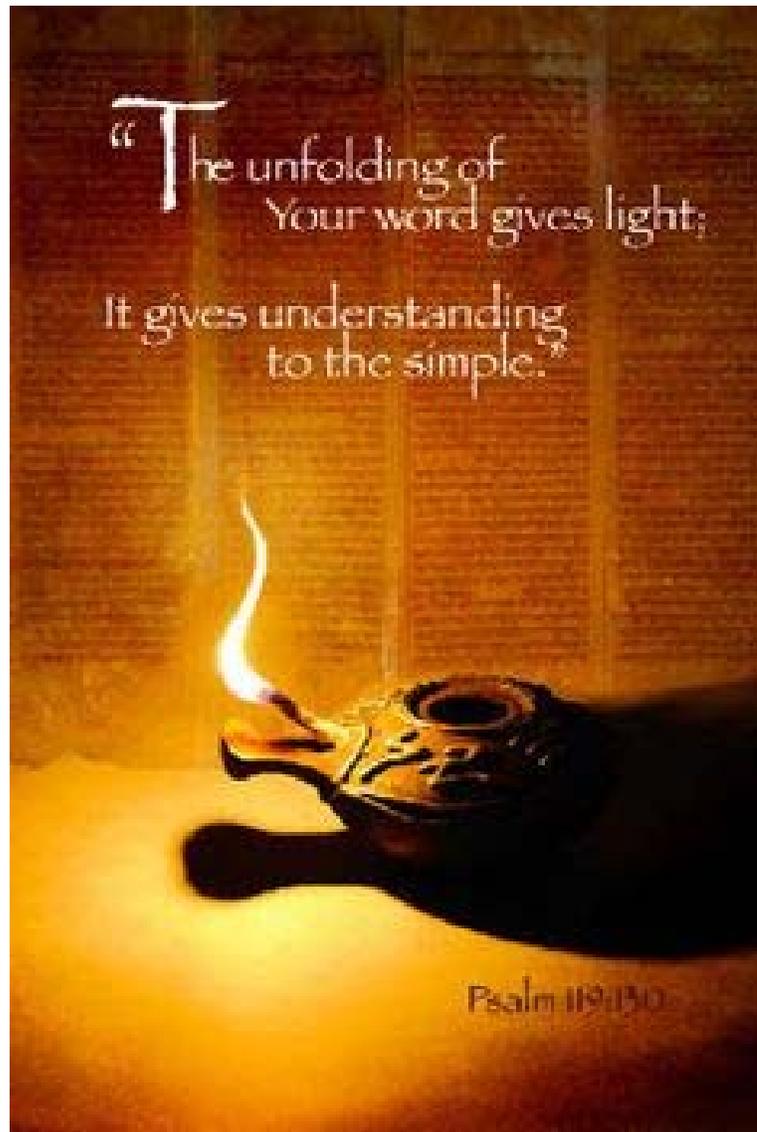


# Daily Devotional

February 2017



"The unfolding of  
Your word gives light;  
It gives understanding  
to the simple."

Psalm 119:130

## Foreword

In our study of the book of Philippians, we are putting together, piece by piece, a call to devoted obedience to the Lord and service to others. We will complete the second chapter of Philippians in our first lesson in February.

Then, I thought it might be good for us to see what this looks like in every day life by turning to the book of Ruth. How marvelous that God would use a Moabite woman with a pagan background to teach us something about what devotedness looks like. Only the grace of God at work in the life can accomplish such a thing—I trust it will challenge your heart and mine!



When we complete our reading in the Book of Ruth, we will move to a topic we studied some time ago—*The Mission and Disciplines of the Christian Way of Life*. This is a topic that we will not complete in our devotions in February, but will return to throughout the year.

In His grace,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Kevin Redig". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Kevin Redig

*All Scripture quotes have been taken from either the NKJV (1992 edition) or the NIV (1984 edition).*

# Philippians Wrap-up

## Wednesday, February 1: Read John 1

There is a real flow to what Paul has been developing in Philippians 2 from Verse 12 onward, and in concluding this section, we don't want to miss it. Picture a body of Believers and let's use our fellowship for the purposes of illustration. Imagine us collectively: "*working out our salvation with fear and trembling;*" being used by God to achieve His purposes, not even a whisper of murmuring among us; and, because of our moral purity and love for one-another, we shine like a beacon of hope among those trying to find meaning in life!

So where is all of that to lead us? Is that the end goal for our fellowship? As I said, there is a perfect flow to Paul's narrative. For all of the above is preparation for our fellowship to "*hold out the Word of Life*" (Philippians 2:16) to the lost world around us. If becoming more like Jesus Christ is the end goal of our vertical relationship with God, then sharing the Gospel is the goal of our horizontal relationships.

Now let me mention one thing. The word translated "hold out" in Verse 16 can also be translated "hold fast." Both are good translation and both are possible, so which is it? Are we to hold fast to the Word of truth by which we were saved, or are we to hold it forth to others? Study the context and see what you think. As for me, in this world those who are rescued are always morally obligated to turn around and try to rescue those still in peril. And when it comes to the Word of God:

*That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched—this we proclaim concerning the Word of life.* 1 John 1:1

God is developing a people who are spiritually growing and actively engaged in proclaiming His mercies, through Jesus Christ, to the uttermost ends of the earth!

# **The Message of Ruth**

## **Thursday, February 2: Read Matthew 1**

You are probably confused about why I introduced a study of Ruth and then had you read the first chapter of Matthew's Gospel. After reading the chapter, it is possible you are even more confused unless you read the genealogy closely (and who does). If you did, perhaps you took note of the mention of the names Boaz and Ruth. They are the hero and heroine of the book of Ruth. However, they are much more than that. For Boaz, as the "kinsman-redeemer" within the narrative, is a type of Christ who is the redeemer of the whole world. And Ruth points to the manifestation of the new life that results when a person—even a pagan individual from a nation often an enemy of Israel—puts their faith in Christ.

Dare I suggest that these lessons are valuable enough in and of themselves that God arranged to have them as part of the genealogy of Jesus that is recorded as part of His Word. There is one more thing to note before we begin our study. Almost anyone reading through the four chapters of the book of Ruth will be touched by the devotedness of Ruth, the uprightness of Boaz, the providence of God and the blessing that comes to Naomi. It is a marvelous narrative describing the lives of real people and real circumstances. However, what is easy to forget is that this narrative occurs during the time in history also covered by the book of Judges. This often shocking book documents the persistent downward spiritual spiral of the people of Israel. It is a terrible time.

Here is what I love about the book of Ruth—even when things are looking dark, God is at work! May He be so in our lives as a devoted Ruth or an upright Boaz in order to bring glory to Himself in our own dark times.

# The Message of Ruth

## Friday, February 3: Read Ruth 1

Isn't this just a delightful narrative to read? For me, there is just something uplifting about it that is hard to pinpoint. Maybe it is because, although I often find myself to have a somewhat cynical view towards people (especially politicians), I almost always have a positive view towards the future. My optimism is not in terms of things necessarily getting better, but with a deep confidence that God is in charge. God knows how to take care of His own, and in the end all of His purposes will come to fruition.

Ruth reinforces this point for me, and it also reminds me that there are two ways to look at life. On the one hand, it is a very dark time in Israel's history. Further it is a dark time in Naomi's life. Her husband has died, her two sons have died, and she is alone in a foreign country with two foreign daughters-in-law. She most definitely is viewing life from the perspective of negative circumstances. In fact, when she returns to Jerusalem she tells family and friends to call her by her new name, Mara, which means bitter. We have to have a certain sympathy for her, as she has had to endure some difficult trials. And yet as readers of this first chapter, it is also possible to see that, in spite of the circumstances, God is at work.

He orchestrates Naomi's return to Jerusalem. And then most amazingly, He provides this wonderfully devoted daughter-in-law who not only strongly declares her devotion to Naomi but also to Naomi's God, the Creator of heaven and earth! Do you remember reading about how "Bitter" gave thanks for Ruth? Neither do I. So here are my questions for all of us: Do we view life solely based upon circumstances, or what we see God doing? And when we see Him at work, do we give thanks and then make ourselves available for His purposes? Ruth did!

# The Message of Ruth

## Monday, February 6: Read Job 13

So what did you think about Ruth after yesterday's first chapter? Isn't she compelling? Remember when she said these words:

*Don't urge me to leave you or to turn back from you. Where you go, I will go. . . Your people will be my people and your God my God. . . May the Lord deal with me, be it ever so severely, if anything but death separates you and me. Ruth 1:15-17*

When I consider Ruth, one character quality comes to mind—devotedness! It is typically behind the scenes and often unsung, but I think it is worth emulating. Here are a few things we can learn about devotedness from our text:

- It is a fixed attitude perpetuated through time. In Ruth's mind, the period is until death!
- It is unconditional. Did you notice Ruth expressed her devotion to Naomi apart from any conditions?
- It is multi-dimensional. Ruth was going to commit herself to Naomi's people, Naomi's God, and her geographic location.
- Her devotion is non-negotiable. Ruth asked Naomi to never again bring up the subject of leaving her.

What I really have in mind is that we should have this same kind of devotion to our heavenly Father. It is not something we can do in our own strength, but nonetheless very desirable as He enables. For another Old Testament example, I see this same kind of devotedness in Job:

*Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him. Job 13:15*

Paul says it in slightly different terms in Philippians 1:21:

*"For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain."*

I am already thinking that I want to be like Ruth—as devoted to God as she was to Naomi! How about you?

# The Message of Ruth

## Tuesday, February 7: Read Hebrews 12

We have already examined Ruth's great statement of devotion in Ruth 1:16-17. For today, I asked you to read Hebrews 12, which in Verse 1 refers to the great cloud of witnesses which surrounds us. I take that to be the faithful witnesses of all ages, including those many giants of the faith mentioned in Hebrews 11.

I have been struck by Ruth's devotion, and I hope you have too, a devotion that consists of service perpetuated in time. Isn't that really what characterized so many of the great role models in Scripture, men like Abraham, Daniel, Jeremiah? They served in ministry day in and day out, in good times and hard times, as free men and as captives, at home and in exile. Did you catch how Hebrews 12 challenges us to follow their example—that we too would

*...run with perseverance the race marked out for us.*

Here is my prayer, based upon the structure of Ruth 1:16-17, and with the saints mentioned in Hebrews 11 and 12 clearly in mind:

*Oh, Lord, as the saints of the past have walked by faith, so I too will seek to depend upon You. As they served You wherever You called, so too I will serve when You call and where You plant. As they developed a deep and abiding relationship with You, so too I will seek to know and keep You as my first love. As they ministered to the end, so too will I look to serve until the day I am called home, finally face to face with my Lord. This is a calling beyond me, yet I know that it is You who works in me both to will and to act according to Your good purposes. Might this be for Your glory and my blessing. Amen!*

I trust this reading might prompt you to a similar type of prayer.

# The Message of Ruth

## Wednesday, February 8: Read Ruth 2

There are a number of different story-lines that run throughout this chapter. First, we meet a new character—Boaz! We also learn what kind of man he is: God-centered (Verse 4), observant (Verse 5), protective of the weak (Verses 8-9), willing to praise a good deed (Verse 12) and generous (Verses 15-16). Second, we have Ruth, doing just what we would expect a devoted person to do, working from morning to evening in order to secure food for herself and her mother-in-law that they might survive.

Then we have my favorite part, which is built around the words, “*As it turned out. . .*” (Verse 3) You see Ruth just went out and started to glean in a field in which she saw harvesters at work. She didn’t know whose field it was. She didn’t know she was distantly related to Boaz by marriage until Naomi told her that night (Verse 20). Some might think this is just a coincidence, I would tell you it is most definitely Providence. You see by the end of the story Boaz is going to “redeem” his family member’s property, and in doing so, acquire a wife (Ruth) and mother-in-law (Naomi).

Under the Mosaic Law, Boaz was said to be a “kinsman-redeemer,” and is a type of Jesus Christ as our great redeemer! Whenever a lost person is redeemed, that is, brought out of a hopeless condition and into one of great promise through faith in Jesus Christ, you can count the fact that God has providentially been working behind the scenes. You can count on that every bit as much as you can know that it was God’s plan when Ruth ended up in the fields of Boaz, and received grace and mercy from His hand, and was ultimately redeemed from servitude into family status! Praise God our Redeemer lives, and is at work in our lives!

# The Message of Ruth

Thursday, February 9: Read Romans 14

Did you take notice of Ruth 2:12 when we read it yesterday? It is worthy of further considerations and will be the subject of today's devotional. Boaz is speaking and he says,

*May the Lord repay you for what you have done.  
May you be richly rewarded by the Lord, the God of  
Israel, under whose wings you have come to take refuge.*

Now if Boaz says this compatible with his role as a type of Jesus Christ, then this is an immensely important statement. For I can think of few things I would like the one who redeemed me, the Lord Jesus Christ, to say more than this: *may the Lord repay you, richly reward you. . .the very One in whom you have taken refuge.* This is a rich commentary on a life well-live and should be the goal of every Christian—to do that which the Lord recognizes, that which is worthy of reward, and that which comes from a dependent relationship centered in Him!



Continued on the next page.

# The Message of Ruth

Thursday, February 9: Read Romans 14

(Continued)

What profound imagery from this little book of Ruth! Perhaps you are not quite seeing it yet. Doesn't this sound a lot like the words Jesus used in the parable of the talents:

*"Well done, good and faithful servant!  
You have been faithful with a few things;  
I will put you in charge of many things.  
Come and share your master's happiness!"*  
Matthew 25:21

And the reason for reading Romans 14 with today's devotion was to draw your attention to the truth that every single believer is going to have their lives evaluated before the judgment seat of God. In this judgment, condemnation is not on the line, but the issue of reward is at stake:

*For we will all  
stand before God's  
judgment seat. . .  
each of us will give  
an account of him-  
self to God.*  
Romans 14:11-12  
(See also I Corinthians  
3:11-15)



Perhaps Boaz had physical blessings in mind, but this is most certainly a spiritual issue that applies to eternity as well. Might we have the devotion of Ruth during similarly dark times!

# The Message of Ruth

## Friday, February 10: Read Leviticus 25

Perhaps you noticed the phrase *kinsman-redeemer* in Ruth 2:20 (and again in 3:9) and were wondering about its meaning. Its origin can be traced back to Leviticus 25 and Deuteronomy 25 as part of the Mosaic Law. You see what God did, as part of the social code for His people, was to provide a *built-in-rescuer* who would step forward when things looked their bleakest. This served by way of a *type* pointer to the role of the coming Messiah in rescuing us from the bleakness of sin.

You can get an idea of how the *kinsman-redeemer* system worked in our reading for today. If economic problems forced an Israelite to sell part of the land that was his ancestral allotment, or even sell himself into a form of slavery, a relative, typically a close one, could step forward and *redeem* either the land or person by making payment.

It is important for us to realize, that as He has done in so many ways, God is constantly laying a foundation of understanding regarding the coming Savior. For every human being is born in slavery to sin (Romans 3:23) and is in need of a redeemer. Jesus is our *kinsman-redeemer*, and yet for that to be true, he needs to be closely related to us. What does the Bible say?

*Since the children have flesh and blood, He too shared in their humanity so that by His death he might destroy him who holds the power of death—that is, the devil—and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death. Hebrews 2:14-15*

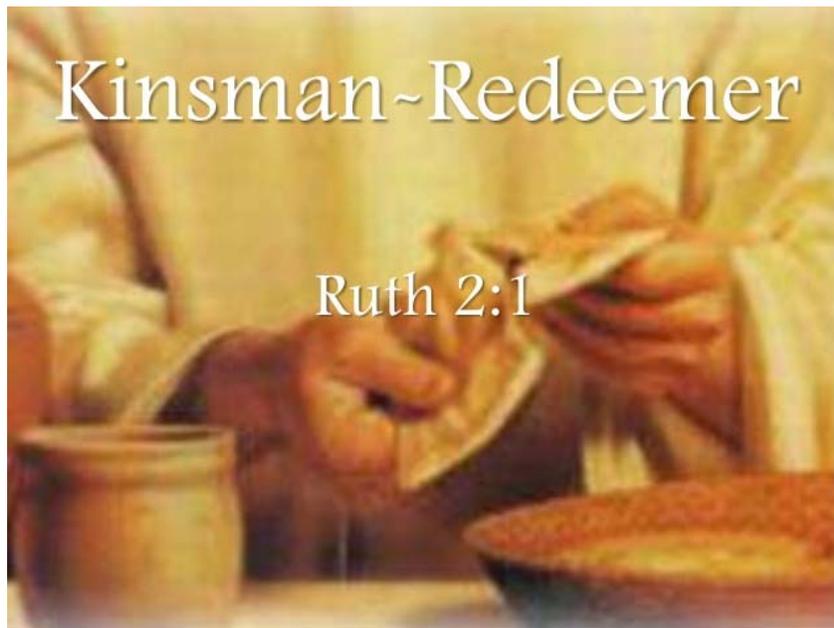
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# The Message of Ruth

Friday, February 10: Read Leviticus 25

(Continued)

Jesus Christ is fully God and became fully man at His first coming, that He might be one of us, and thereby qualified to redeem mankind from the slave-market of sin. The price of redemption? The infinitely "*precious blood of Christ*" as of a Lamb (I Peter 1:19). Isn't it a blessing to connect with Ruth and know that we too have a Kinsman-Redeemer?



# The Message of Ruth

## Monday, February 13: Read Ruth 3

You can see that what we learned yesterday about the *kinsman-redeemer* has come to the fore in Chapter 3, for in Verse 9 Ruth is very plainly asking Boaz to “redeem” her. In reality, this is a marriage proposal and a whole lot more. That’s the reason for Boaz’s somewhat cryptic response. He understands the full scope of her request which is unfolded for us in Chapter 4.

In the meantime, I want us to consider what a great example of virtue is displayed by both Ruth and Boaz. At the advice of her mother-in-law, Ruth cleans up and puts on her best clothes—whatever that might be for a refugee, without a husband, who is forced to scavenge for daily food; and then she puts herself at the feet of Boaz and simply says, “*I am your servant, Ruth.*” In light of the customs of the day, she was asking Boaz to act as her redeemer, which would entail a number of things including marriage. How does Boaz respond?

- He expresses his delight in her request.
- He underscores the inner character he has recognized in Ruth.
- He makes it clear he is willing to act.
- He places principle above personal desires by submitting to the legal process of his day.
- And he continues to act discreetly in the best interests of Ruth by protecting her reputation.

As application—consider two things. First, what do you suppose it would look like if Hollywood made a movie out of all this? It wouldn’t be a story of devotion and simple faithfulness any more, would it? Second, wouldn’t this be a great model for young people to understand and follow in their relationships with the opposite sex? Virtue shines through in any day and age doesn’t it? I don’t know about you, but I would like to have Boaz and Ruth for friends!

# The Message of Ruth

## Tuesday, February 14: Read Ruth 4

As we can see, Boaz wasted no time in getting things settled. For he goes to the city gates, the place where business was conducted, and he makes contact with the only individual ahead of himself in terms of precedence as a kinsman-redeemer. Then he gathers together witnesses, ten of the town's elders, to make sure that any transaction that occurs is legal.

Something very interesting occurs. The man with the first right of refusal is very interested in expanding his land holdings, but he does not want what goes with that land. Boaz understands that it is a package deal, somewhat complicated by the traditions that have developed from the Mosaic Law. For what is really at stake is the land of Naomi's husband, responsibility for Naomi and Ruth, and the responsibility to carry on the family name of Elimelech and Mahlon through any future son that Ruth might have. The unnamed kinsman-redeemer wants no part of this—and so passes the option to Boaz who immediately announces his intention to redeem the land, take Ruth as his wife, and maintain the family name.

Again, I remind you, that Boaz is a type of the Lord Jesus Christ as our Kinsman-Redeemer. For Jesus was equally willing to redeem each and every one of us from the slave market of sin and paid the purchase price of redemption by means of His death on the cross. The language is not normal for us, but what a *Kinsman-Redeemer* we have! He is One who not only redeems us, but brings us into a permanent family relationship. Blessed as Naomi is with the child soon born to Ruth and Boaz, we are much more blessed by our family relationship with our great Redeemer!

# The Message of Ruth

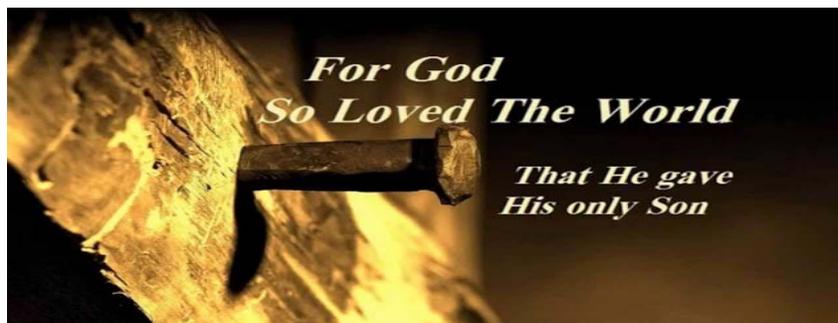
Wednesday, February 15: Read Revelation 21  
(Luke 7)

Did you notice the only thing missing from the close of Ruth Chapter four was, “And they lived happily ever after?” Let me remind you that this entire narrative is set right in the middle of one of the darkest times in Israel’s history, toward the close of the book of Judges. As a point of application, our great Redeemer is always at work—even in the darkest of times.

Knowing this, do you think it is worth it to pursue devotion and righteousness? Ask Ruth and Boaz at the close of Chapter 4! Now, I wish I could tell you that, if you do the right thing, things will always work out well for you like they did for Ruth, Naomi, and Job. Unfortunately, that’s not always the case. Sometimes illnesses aren’t healed, relationships not restored, and so on.

Does this mean something is wrong or God is not able? What does the Bible tells us? Let me provide several scriptures to answer that question.

*God so loved the world that He sent His only begotten  
Son. . . John 3:16*



Continued on the next page.

# The Message of Ruth

Wednesday, February 15: Read Revelation 21

(Luke 7) (Continued)

This is a world in rebellion and the very world that He knew would crucify the Son; and yet God loved His creation enough to send Him!

And then, do you want to know the heart of Jesus?

*For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost.*

Luke 19:10

*The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cured, the deaf hear, the dead are raised and the good news is preached to the poor.* Luke 7:22

Nonetheless, this is still the Devil's world and it is still in rebellion towards its Creator. What then is our hope? The love of God, the capability of God, and His promises for eternity.



*And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying,*

*"Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people.*

*God Himself will be with them and be their God.*

*And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying.*

*There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away."* Revelation 21:3-4

# The Christian Way of Life

## Thursday, February 16: Read Genesis 1

*We are going to review a series we did some time ago called *The Mission and Disciplines of the Christian Way of Life*. By the nature of this kind of study, we will not be working our way through any particular book, but rather through a number of topics. Nonetheless, we will continue with reading a selected chapter a day and focus upon reminding ourselves of the singular mission given to us by our Lord, and the many disciplines with which we must become familiar in order to accomplish the mission we have been given. I think you will find these reminders to be very helpful. We won't do them all at once, but spread them out in several sessions during the course of the coming year.*

Does it help an organization to know its mission? Apparently the U. S. Army thinks so, because for many years it has fostered a "Soldiers Creed." The mission-mindset it attempts to foster is clear in the following excerpt:

*I stand ready to deploy, engage, and destroy, the enemies of the United States of America in close combat.*

Now as we turn to the pages of Scripture, it becomes clear that God has, on a number of occasions, given a mission to mankind. For example, consider Genesis 1:28:

*So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created them. Then God blessed them, and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth.*

Continued on the next page.

# Christian Way of Life

## Thursday, February 16: Read Genesis 1

(Continued)

Now it is true that was a long time ago, so what about now during the time period when God is working through the Church? Our mission couldn't be more clear, given by Jesus Himself:

*"All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to Me. Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."*

Matthew 28:18-20

Notice that Jesus first establishes His authority, and then gives one command—to make disciples!

Does the Church seem to you like it is fully engaged in its mission? Are the lost being converted and then taught everything that Jesus taught and revealed to us in His Word? I would suggest that we have lost our focus, that we have a *mission problem*. That is one reason why 78% of the people in America who claim to be Christians don't seem to hold values or live lives compatible with Biblical Christianity!

# Christian Way of Life

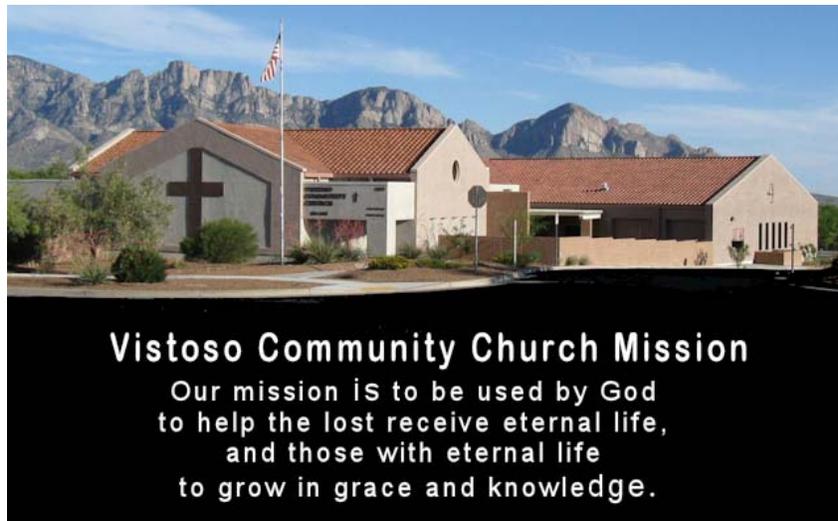
## Friday, February 17: Read II Peter 3

What exactly does our mission entail? What does it mean to “make disciples?” I think the Scriptures reveal that there are several components to disciple-making. First, through the proclamation of Gospel truth and the convicting ministry of the Spirit, it is bringing a person to the point they ask:

*What must I do to be saved? Acts 16:31*

Should they respond by faith to the person and work of Jesus Christ, then conversion, the first part of disciple-making, has occurred. A lost soul has been brought into the Kingdom of God! After that there is the growth aspect. Consider Peter’s final words to the churches to which he ministered:

*...grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. II Peter 3:18*



Continued on the next page.

# Christian Way of Life

## Friday, February 17: Read II Peter 3

(Continued)

And then one more component from II Timothy 2:2:

*And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others.*

Did you catch it? Those who are discipled are, in turn, to disciple others. Here is my summary of what it means to follow through on our God-given mission:

*To make disciples is to cooperate with the Spirit of God in holding out the truth of the Gospel that lost men and women might become part of the family of God. And then to continue the process by doing everything possible to foster growth in “grace and knowledge.” And make no mistake—disciples are to, in turn, produce disciples!*

Now when I look at the church in America and hold it up against our Mission, again, I would suggest that we have a *mission problem*. What happens when a military unit loses sight of its mission? They stop training, which in time means they can't shoot straight, meet the physical rigors of combat, and neglect their equipment. In short, they suffer a loss of readiness. How about the church, what happens when it loses sight of its mission? Same thing! It becomes politically correct, substitutes entertainment for preaching the Word, exchanges the Gospel that can eternally save for a social gospel. In short, the Church suffers a lack of readiness to fulfill our role as God's witnesses to a lost and spiritually needy world! Troops that are found to be non-combat ready should feel a certain shame, so too should the church that has ceased to be the salt and light that God intended!

# Christian Way of Life

## Monday, February 20: Read Luke 8

Let me show you what it looks like to be *mission-minded*.

*Now the man from whom the demons had departed begged Him that he might be with Him. . . but Jesus sent him away, saying, "Return to your own house and tell what great things God has done for you." And he went his way and proclaimed throughout the whole city what great things Jesus had done for him.*

Luke 8:38-39

This newly-saved man just wanted to be with his Savior. Of course, this is very understandable and analogous to the church fellowship that sees itself as a place of refuge for Christians, where we can *hunker down* while the world around us falls apart. But look at the answer that Jesus gives—go tell others what God has done! And, the man goes not just where Jesus tells him to go, but beyond! That's what it looks like to be fully caught up in our mission!

Here is a question for you that I hope brings some conviction. Do you see your current mission in life as one of being retired (or preparing for it)? If so, that would make us a retired-church, and where is the sense of mission in that? How much better to see ourselves as a church with the one mission of making disciples that happens to consist of retired persons. That would mean that being retired is a current stage of life, which allows more time to hold out the Word of life to those with whom we recreate and socialize and our extended families. Praise the Lord He has put us on mission in sunny Arizona. But, in any event, if soldiers deployed around the world are prompted by their creed to "always place the mission first," can we, as Christians with a singular *great commission* do anything less?

# Christian Way of Life

## Tuesday, February 21: Read Ezekiel 33

Of course, the Great Commission is a very well known passage of Scripture. But perhaps somewhere in the back of your mind you are thinking, “You have made a strong case for our mission as Christians, but you have built it all on just one verse of Scripture!” First, there are many more New Testament references to our singular mission (Acts 1:8 and Luke 24:44-48 are two examples). Let me show you a very powerful statement of mission in the Old Testament and its application in our day. Here is what we can glean from Ezekiel Chapter 33:

- In Verse 2, we are introduced to *the actors on the stage*: the sword, the watchman, and the people.
- The tension within the storyline is developed in Verses 3-6. Will the watchman be faithful because his deliverance depends upon it? (Verse 6) Will the people respond to the grace of God in repentance because their deliverance depends upon it? (Verse 5)
- This narrative has as its background the physical realm. Would the watchman be faithful to warn the people of the city of the approach of a band of marauders? Will the people respond in order to fight off their attackers?
- However, in context, it is meant to convey a spiritual message. Prophets like Ezekiel and Jeremiah were Israel’s spiritual watchmen. The first issue is would they be faithful to convey God’s message to the people? The second, would the people respond to the message in repentance? And as always, there are consequences for all associated with obedience or disobedience.

Now perhaps you are thinking—what does this have to do with the Church and the day in which we live? We’ll make the application in tomorrow’s devotional. In the meantime, give it some thought and see what conclusions you reach.

# Christian Way of Life

## Wednesday, February 22: Read Genesis 33

Perhaps you are thinking yesterday's narrative in Ezekiel is just too far removed from our day and doesn't really have any application to us. Consider this to see if you might not change your mind:

- The actors on the stage were the sword, the watchman, and the people. Do we have a category of *at-risk* people in our day? Of course, every member of the human race is born lost and on the broad road headed to destruction. (Matthew 7)
- Is there pending judgment, that is the sword, for this group?



*... it is appointed for men to die once, but after this judgment.* Hebrews 9:27

- How about the watchman, who fills that role?

*Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us. . .* II Corinthians 5:20

The drama today is identical in nature: Will we as watchmen be faithful to declare the message of the Gospel and in doing so warn the people? Will the lost respond before it is too late?

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# Christian Way of Life

Wednesday, February 22: Read Genesis 33

(Continued)

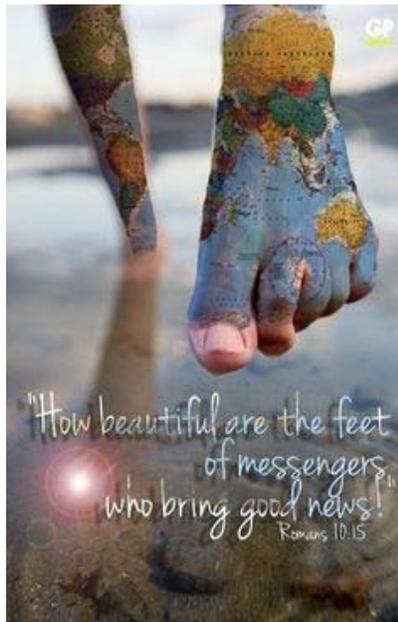
And then as a final point to consider—look at the identical attitude on God’s part. In Ezekiel 33:11, God says,

*“I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live.”*

And what is God’s message in our day regarding the lost?

*... God our Savior, who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. I Timothy 2:3-4*

*The Lord is not slack concerning His promise. . . not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance. II Peter 3:9*



The spiritual parallels are so strong they are impossible to miss. So, what is the take-home lesson? Not only has God always given a mission to those who are His, that mission is wrapped up in His desire to “deliver” that which His hand has created!

What a remarkable privilege that we have been given such a high calling (our mission). What a privilege that we have the opportunity to be engaged in rescuing those who will otherwise perish for all eternity!

# Christian Way of Life

## Thursday, February 23: Read Acts 2

Today we move into the disciplines of the Christian Life, things like worship, prayer, and Bible study. Let me begin with an understanding of the balance between our singular mission and our many disciplines. By this I mean that we have one mission to make disciples of all nations, but we have many disciplines. Here is the principle:

*The mission/discipline distinction is not one of priority or importance, but one of focus and organization.*

Let me show you by continuing to use our analogy of the soldier. We have already seen their mission: to defeat the enemy in close combat. So what kind of mission ready soldiers do you have if they fail in the disciplines associated with being a soldier: can't shoot, can't find their way, can't carry their combat load over distances, etc. On the other hand, it is possible to forsake the mission for the love of a particular discipline! That would be the soldier who spends all his time at the firing-range, but doesn't want to shoot at anything other than bulls-eyes.

Are you seeing the application? Are we really ready for the mission if we don't know God's Word, how to pray, or how to engage in worship with other Christians? Of course not! And then there is the Christian who has pages of Bible study notes and has never shared the Good News with anyone. Both are out of balance!

Consider it this way. Without worship, you are not really a disciple yourself because you are not preparing for your mission. Without disciple-making, your worship is contradictory because it springs from failure of mission (disobedience).

Continued on the next page.

# Christian Way of Life

## Thursday, February 23: Read Acts 2

(Continued)

Who is the most effective disciple-maker? One who is fully capable in the disciplines of the Christian Life. And, that's the story of the early Church.

*Disciplines: And they continued steadfastly in the apostles doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers. Acts 2:42*

*Mission: Day after day, in the temple courts and from house to house, they never stopped teaching and proclaiming the good news that Jesus is the Christ.*  
Acts 5:42



# Christian Way of Life

## Friday, February 24: Read Luke 10

In order to introduce our first discipline, I would like you to consider the following hypothetical. Imagine for a moment that, in order to both encourage you in your walk and to guide your efforts for the remaining days you have on this earth, you were going to have a short face-to-face meeting with Jesus. At this meeting He is going to pass on to you the *one thing* He would like you to keep in mind. What do you suppose it would be?

Interestingly enough, the Bible tells us what it would be in Luke 10:38-f. Before we begin to unpack this passage, let me remind you of the differences in how I am using the terms mission and discipline. Our mission is the big picture task that the Lord has given us to accomplish, individually and, in particular, corporately. And, as we have seen, that is to represent Him to a lost and dying world that the lost, for whom Christ died, would hear the good news of the Gospel from us, turn to Christ, and believe.

On the other hand, the disciplines of the Christian Life are those habits and practices in which we engage every day in order to become conformed to the image of Christ (that's the vertical aspect of the Christian life). The disciplines help us be both prepared and fully engaged in our mission of reaching the lost (that's the horizontal component of our Christian life). So please don't let my use of these terms cause confusion. It is as simple as thinking about the daily disciplines that will help us accomplish our mission from the Lord.

Continued on the next page.

# Christian Way of Life

**Friday, February 24: Read Luke 10 (Continued)**

So with that said, what is the *one thing* in terms of a daily discipline which the Lord is communicating to us? Well, I can tell you one thing it is not—excessive busyness!

*But Martha was distracted with much serving. . .*

Luke 10:40

Most churches would love to have as many Marthas as possible. Now to her credit, she did welcome Jesus into her home, and then went to work putting her gifts of hospitality into practice. One problem, the Lord of glory was in her home and she was too busy to pause to hear what He might have to say. Perhaps you think I am being too hard on Martha? Not only does the text say she was “distracted,” there is also only one imperative verb in the whole passage. That is Martha’s *command* to Jesus to order Mary to help. When your efforts at ministry lead you to boss Jesus around—something is out of balance! More tomorrow.



# Christian Way of Life

## Monday, February 27: Read John 17

So Martha was involved in doing *important* work for the Lord. (It really was for the Lord!) And now look at what Jesus said to her:

*"But one thing is needed, and Mary has chosen that good part, which will not be taken away from her."*

Luke 10:39

This passage should really get our attention. For Jesus not only identifies the *one thing needed*, but He also calls it the "good part" and something that cannot be "taken away." We have just found our first discipline of the Christian Life! What was Mary doing? She was sitting at the feet of Jesus and hearing, literally to hear with understanding, what He had to say.

Let me give you a few points to consider on this marvelous little narrative:

- As we seek to follow Jesus as His disciples, we are going to constantly be on guard against the tendency to allow the good to be the enemy of the best. Here is an example, there are times when focusing upon the Lord through prayer, reflection, and Bible study is the most important thing we have to do! To do anything else, at that point, is to let the good be the enemy of the best.
- Although it may be a part of "sitting at Jesus feet to hear His Word," I want to be certain that you understand you cannot just reduce this to Bible study.

Continued on the next page.

# Christian Way of Life

Monday, February 27: Read John 17

(Continued)

I have pointed you to the following many times:

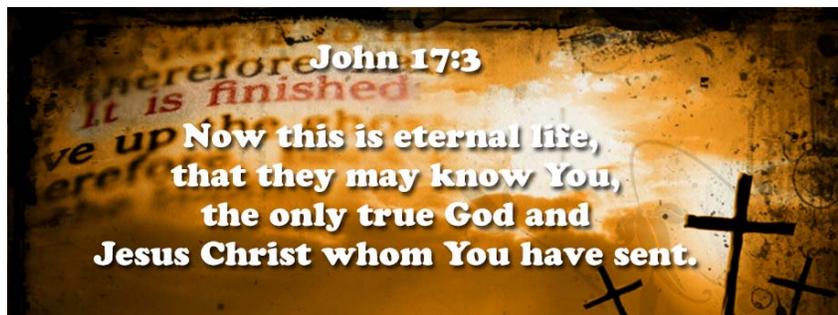
*"But you do not have His word abiding in you, because whom He sent, Him you do not believe. You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me. But you are not willing to come to Me that you may have life."*

John 5:38-40

This is what can happen when you come to the word as a medium of scholarship—to get facts, figures, and quotes. It must be seen as the written Word behind which stands the Living Word! It must not be seen as a medium of scholarship, but one of fellowship with our Lord and Savior. Notice how eternal life defined in this way, it is relational:

*And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent. John 17:3*

By way of application, I encourage you to try to open your daily quiet time with a simple prayer based upon John 17:3. You will be blessed by the results.



# Christian Way of Life

## Tuesday, February 29: Read John 15

I am trying to build a case for the first discipline of the Christian Life. That is to daily sit at the feet of Jesus and listen to what He has to say! We saw it in Luke 10, but is it anywhere else in Scripture? How about John 15:5:

*"He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing."*

Could it be that "to abide" is very closely related to "sitting at His feet and listening?" The word translated "abide" is a command in the Greek. Notice how, apart from abiding, we can accomplish nothing in terms of fruit. Furthermore, note the repetition of the term "abide" in Verses 4-10. This is another way to emphasize its importance. The word abide means to remain in a particular location, to wait, to dwell. Can you see how, when these are applied relationally, they are very similar to the idea found in Luke 10 of giving Jesus our regular focused attention.

At this point the concept of grafting a branch into the vine can be very helpful. For when a branch is grafted into a vine, it must first be tightly bound, followed by a period of waiting while internal changes occur. These changes involve the *growing* of the woody fibers of the vine into the branch and vice versa. Do you see the beautiful picture of what happens when we regularly come to the Lord and listen—receiving His mind through the study of His Word, listening to the voice of the Spirit, and meditating upon His ways and His thoughts.? This, in turn, opens the way for His life to be manifest in our lives in the form of bearing fruit. Until this happens, there is no way for real fruit, that which is pleasing to the Lord, to be born in our lives. In fact, until this happens the branch is simply not ready to bear fruit. Do you desire for your life to bear fruit? Begin by focusing upon abiding in the true vine that is Jesus Christ and in Him alone.

VISTOSO  
  
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He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit... *John 15:5*

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