



Devotional

Oct. 4 - Dec. 30

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October 11–17, 2020: Weekly Devotion by Bernie Lieving

Welcome to the Gospel of John! It doesn't take reading more than a few verses to know that this 4th Gospel is very different from Matthew, Mark, and Luke. One of my favorite descriptions of this Gospel is Scottish biblical scholar William Barclay's: "For many Christian people the Gospel according to St. John is the most precious book in the New Testament. It is the book on which above all they feed their minds and nourish their hearts, and in which they rest their souls." (The Daily Study Bible Series, Westminster Press, 1975)

Who wrote this Gospel? The answer varies, dependent on the study Bible you are using. My three give answers from "The apostle John" (The NIV Study Bible) to a "disciple of John" (The New Oxford Annotated Bible) and a third says that regardless of the author, the important thing is that the Gospel is clearly the work of an eyewitness. (The CEB Study Bible) The apostle John is not named in the Gospel so if he is the author and wanted to remain unknown that makes sense. Interestingly, "the disciple whom Jesus loved" is mentioned five times so maybe John does appear in the Gospel.

Several things stand out for me in this week's readings: (1) Jesus (the Word) was with God in the beginning and everything came into being through Jesus and then John announces that "the Word became flesh and made his home among us." (2) Jesus' first miracle is turning water into wine at the wedding feast in Cana. Only John tells this story. (3) Jesus' words to Nicodemus: "God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but will have eternal life." (4)

The feeding of the five thousand made the people see him "as the prophet who is coming into the world." (5) Jesus enters Jerusalem several times in these first chapters. In the other Gospels he is there only once, when he went for the Passover and was ultimately crucified.

To use Barclay's words, what of these first chapters of John fed your mind, nourished your heart, and gave you a place to rest your soul?

Prayer: Pray for all who need to know and accept in their hearts that God loves them so much that God came to live as a human in Jesus who willingly died that they might know God's love for them.

WEEK THREE (OCTOBER 18–24)

Day 292: October 18, 2020

Full Plan: John 11:1–12:50

Abbreviated Plan: John 16:1–33

Jesus spends much of John 11 telling people that Lazarus' death won't be permanent. Yet, when a grieving Mary tells him Lazarus is dead, Jesus weeps. (v35) Why? Not because he believed death won. But so that in Jesus, we have someone who grieves with us. Even after Lazarus was raised from the dead, he still needed to be unbound. Even though we receive new life in Christ, we still need to be daily unbound from our old ways.

What God is revealing to me today, and how I will apply it to my life:

Day 293: October 19, 2020

Full Plan: John 13:1–14:31

Abbreviated Plan: John 17:1–26

Feeling unloved or incapable of receiving or sharing love? Read John 13-14. Jesus' last night with the disciples reminded them to love, showed them how to love, and prayed the Spirit's love upon them. And it begins with John 13:1: "He loved them until the end."

What God is revealing to me today, and how I will apply it to my life:

Day 294: October 20, 2020

Full Plan: John 15:1–17:26

Abbreviated Plan: John 19:1–42

Jesus gives us 3 key values in John 15-17: Love, Truth, and Unity. All are important. Love without the other two is inconsequential sentiment. Truth alone can lead to dogmatism. Unity alone can actually cause harm. The Holy Spirit helps ensure the balance.

What God is revealing to me today, and how I will apply it to my life:

Day 295: October 21, 2020

Full Plan: John 18:1–19:42

Abbreviated Plan: John 20:1–31

John portrays Pilate in ch. 18-19 as less of a villain and more of a curious seeker. He asked Jesus, "What is truth?" because Jesus did not fit into his way of thinking. When Jesus upends our thinking, are we open to him, or do we wash our hands of him?

What God is revealing to me today, and how I will apply it to my life:

Day 296: October 22, 2020

Full Plan: John 20:1–21:35

Abbreviated Plan: John 21:1–25

John begins with such a high view of Jesus (John 1:1) yet ends with an intimate view of how he relates to us. He connects to us personally (Mary, Peter), he had scars (Thomas), and he ate with his friends (fish). And it ends with a command to be the same for others ("Feed my sheep.").

What God is revealing to me today, and how I will apply it to my life:

Day 297: October 23, 2020

Full Plan: Acts 1:1–2:47

Abbreviated Plan: Acts 1:1–26

Acts 1-2. Pentecost is a glorious day of the church year. It hasn't (yet) been touched by commercialism, and the same Holy Spirit that appeared on that day is the same Spirit we can experience today. It is our entry point in the Bible. It is now our story.

What God is revealing to me today, and how I will apply it to my life:

Day 298: October 24, 2020

Full Plan: Acts 3:1–5:16

Abbreviated Plan: Acts 2:1–47

Acts 3-5 reveals these important truths about God. 1) God can heal, 2) God cannot be silenced, 3) God can empower us to share with others, 4) God cannot be lied to. Our response should then be: Be a conduit for God's healing, Proclaim God's truth, Share God's love, and Live with God's Integrity.

What God is revealing to me today, and how I will apply it to my life:

October 18–24, 2020: Weekly Devotion by Jay Kuhns

This week's passages are both incredibly impactful in the story of our faith, and for me personally as well. We begin with the famous story of Lazarus...Jesus friend who he publicly raised from the dead. Literally, a miracle before the people's eyes. Imagine being there, watching Jesus speak, and suddenly seeing Lazarus appear.

What I find so compelling about these passages as they lead up to Jesus' entry into the City, and his eventual crucifixion, is that he did it all with the combination of great courage and great faith in God. Would we make those same choices if we knew there was a price on our head?

The powerful images of what we know as the last supper, the washing of the disciples' feet, and the foretelling of betrayal all hit home for us, or at least they should. Are we true to God every minute of every day? Do we hold the feeling of Sunday worship with us all week long; or, is the return to the world of work on Monday somehow a convenient excuse to put God on hold until next Sunday?

My favorite passage in the Bible is part of this week's reading: John 15:5 - "I am the vine, you are the branches. Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit, because apart from me you can do nothing."

It says it all about a life committed to Christ. We are either connected to Him or we're not. There is no fence-sitting. There is no indecision. There is only Him...and the good news...He is with us!

The transition through the familiar, and still always upsetting resurrection holds us spellbound to the text. Jesus' demonstrates his ultimate love and sacrifice for us, while simultaneously following the will of God. Incredible. Imagine if God asked you to do the same thing?

Despite the tragic loss of their leader, the newly inspired and empowered disciples begin to preach confidently and passionately about the one true God, and His son Jesus.

Perhaps as we reflect on these familiar texts this weekend, we should challenge ourselves with this question: Am I doing enough as a believer to spread the word about Jesus?

Prayer: God in Heaven, Thank you for the amazing gift of your Son. May we spend time today quietly considering His life, teachings, example, love and sacrifice. We will not speak, but instead listen with our hearts and let our minds wander along with Jesus as he showed us the ultimate path to You. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

WEEK FOUR (OCTOBER 25–31)

Day 299: October 25, 2020

Full Plan: Acts 5:17–7:60

Abbreviated Plan: Acts 3:1–26

Acts 5-7 contains a biblical basis for civil disobedience. When the

laws of the land, and even of institutional religion, contradict the values and work of God's mission, Peter offers this word: "We must obey God rather than any human authority." (5:29)

What God is revealing to me today, and how I will apply it to my life:

Day 300: October 26, 2020

Full Plan: Acts 8:1–9:43

Abbreviated Plan: Acts 4:1–37

Acts starts with crowds becoming believers, but shifts to the stories of individuals. In Acts 8-9, each person is transformed because of a friend. Simon (Phillip), the eunuch (Phillip), Saul (Ananias), Dorcas (Lydia). We are to be that friend for someone else.

What God is revealing to me today, and how I will apply it to my life:

Day 301: October 27, 2020

Full Plan: Acts 10:1–12:25

Abbreviated Plan: Acts 8:1–40

Acts 10-12: 3pm is an important time in the Bible. It's when Jesus