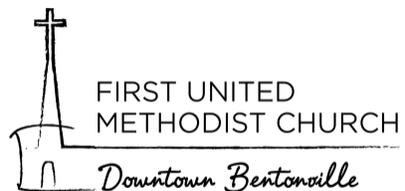




CHRIST FIRST

Devotional and Worship Series

Prayers | Presence | Gifts & Service | Witness



Praying the Devotional

The first question people generally ask when participating in this style of devotional prayer is, “Why are you asking me to read the same piece of Scripture every day? I read it yesterday, I got it!” The answer is that we need to set aside what we think “reading” Scripture means. God does not want us to read Scripture; God wants us to let Scripture read us!

What does that mean? How can Scripture read us? We discover the answers to those questions through meditative prayer and Scripture study. Every day, take at least 15 minutes to work through the guided devotional. Work on internalizing the text, perhaps even memorize it! You will be amazed at how God speaks to you through the Scripture if you spend the week memorizing the text, and asking God to speak to you through the process.

This may come to be the most treasured part of each day! This is 15 minutes dedicated to you and God. Perhaps you might like it so much, that this time with God grows longer and longer. If you enjoy this form of prayer, perhaps you could make this your daily practice. Follow the Revised Common Lectionary texts each week, and you will be worshiping along with the texts that the pastors at FUMC Downtown Bentonville will generally use in worship.

Here is a great source for the weekly lection:

<http://lectionary.library.vanderbilt.edu/>

Prayers

October 8th: Matthew 11:5-13

Theme: What are we to pray for? The Holy Spirit, the guidance of the Spirit.

⁵ And he said to them, "Suppose one of you has a friend, and you go to him at midnight and say to him, 'Friend, lend me three loaves of bread; ⁶ for a friend of mine has arrived, and I have nothing to set before him.' ⁷ And he answers from within, 'Do not bother me; the door has already been locked, and my children are with me in bed; I cannot get up and give you anything.' ⁸ I tell you, even though he will not get up and give him anything because he is his friend, at least because of his persistence he will get up and give him whatever he needs.

⁹ "So I say to you, Ask, and it will be given you; search, and you will find; knock, and the door will be opened for you. ¹⁰ For everyone who asks receives, and everyone who searches finds, and for everyone who knocks, the door will be opened. ¹¹ Is there anyone among you who, if your child asks for a fish, will give a snake instead of a fish? ¹² Or if the child asks for an egg, will give a scorpion? ¹³ If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!"

Pray:

Jesus I am giving myself completely to you in this time of prayer. As I read and pray with you, speak to me. Help me to focus on the words, themes, and thoughts in this Scripture that you want me to wrestle with.

Read:

Read the text through at least five times slowly. Focus on the words. Imagine Jesus is speaking them to you. Other thoughts will try to intrude. Tell them to wait, and come back to the text.

Write:

What is the word or theme that Jesus seems to be speaking to you? Write it here.

What do you sense Jesus teaching you to do with the theme he has given to you?

Take Away: Thank Jesus for this moment, and ask Jesus to guide you throughout the day. Take your word or thought, and write it on a note card. Put that card in your pocket, and reflect on it throughout the day.

Presence

October 15th: John 1:35-42

Theme: If we are to grow in faith and discipleship we must go and see. If we are to develop faith we must spend time with Jesus in the company of the church. Often our presence in the Body of Christ is what others are coming to see.

³⁵The next day John again was standing with two of his disciples, ³⁶and as he watched Jesus walk by, he exclaimed, "Look, here is the Lamb of God!" ³⁷The two disciples heard him say this, and they followed Jesus. ³⁸When Jesus turned and saw them following, he said to them, "What are you looking for?" They said to him, "Rabbi" (which translated means Teacher), "where are you staying?" ³⁹He said to them, "Come and see." They came and saw where he was staying, and they remained with him that day. It was about four o'clock in the afternoon. ⁴⁰One of the two who heard John speak and followed him was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. ⁴¹He first found his brother Simon and said to him, "We have found the Messiah" (which is translated Anointed). ⁴²He brought Simon to Jesus, who looked at him and said, "You are Simon son of John. You are to be called Cephas" (which is translated Peter).

⁴³The next day Jesus decided to go to Galilee. He found Philip and said to him, "Follow me." ⁴⁴Now Philip was from Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter. ⁴⁵Philip found Nathanael and said to him, "We have found him about whom Moses in the law and also the prophets wrote, Jesus son of Joseph from Nazareth." ⁴⁶Nathanael said to him, "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" Philip said to him, "Come and see." ⁴⁷When Jesus saw Nathanael coming toward him, he said of him, "Here is truly an Israelite in whom there is no deceit!" ⁴⁸Nathanael asked him, "Where did you get to know me?" Jesus answered, "I saw you under the fig tree before Philip called you." ⁴⁹Nathanael replied, "Rabbi, you are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!" ⁵⁰Jesus answered, "Do you believe because I told you that I saw you under the fig tree? You will see greater things than these." ⁵¹And he said to him, "Very truly, I tell you, you will see heaven opened and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man."

Pray:

Jesus I am giving myself completely to you in this time of prayer. As I read and pray with you, speak to me. Help me to focus on the words, themes, and thoughts in this Scripture that you want me to wrestle with.

Read:

Read the text through at least five times slowly. Focus on the words. Imagine Jesus is speaking them to you. Other thoughts will try to intrude. Tell them to wait, and come back to the text.

Write:

- What is the word or theme that Jesus seems to be speaking to you? Write it here.
- What do you sense Jesus teaching you to do with the theme he has given to you?
- **Take Away:** Thank Jesus for this moment, and ask Jesus to guide you throughout the day. Take your word or thought, and write it on a note card. Put that card in your pocket, and reflect on it throughout the day.

Gifts & Service

October 22nd: John 21: 15-19

Theme: Feeding the one for whom Jesus cares, shepherding those in need, building the kingdom with every act of love, every gift, every offering.

¹⁵ When they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, “Simon son of John, do you love me more than these?” He said to him, “Yes, Lord; you know that I love you.” Jesus said to him, “Feed my lambs.” ¹⁶ A second time he said to him, “Simon son of John, do you love me?” He said to him, “Yes, Lord; you know that I love you.” Jesus said to him, “Tend my sheep.” ¹⁷ He said to him the third time, “Simon son of John, do you love me?” Peter felt hurt because he said to him the third time, “Do you love me?” And he said to him, “Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you.” Jesus said to him, “Feed my sheep. ¹⁸ Very truly, I tell you, when you were younger, you used to fasten your own belt and to go wherever you wished. But when you grow old, you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will fasten a belt around you and take you where you do not wish to go.” ¹⁹ (He said this to indicate the kind of death by which he would glorify God.) After this he said to him, “Follow me.”

Pray:

Jesus I am giving myself completely to you in this time of prayer. As I read and pray with you, speak to me. Help me to focus on the words, themes, and thoughts in this Scripture that you want me to wrestle with.

Read:

Read the text through at least five times slowly. Focus on the words. Imagine Jesus is speaking them to you. Other thoughts will try to intrude. Tell them to wait, and come back to the text.

Write:

What is the word or theme that Jesus seems to be speaking to you? Write it here.

What do you sense Jesus teaching you to do with the theme he has given to you?

Take Away: Thank Jesus for this moment, and ask Jesus to guide you throughout the day. Take your word or thought, and write it on a note card. Put that card in your pocket, and reflect on it throughout the day.

Witness

October 29th: John 9:13-34

Theme: Once we have begun to experience the transformation that Jesus gives, our responsibility is to witness.

¹³They brought to the Pharisees the man who had formerly been blind. ¹⁴Now it was a sabbath day when Jesus made the mud and opened his eyes. ¹⁵Then the Pharisees also began to ask him how he had received his sight. He said to them, "He put mud on my eyes. Then I washed, and now I see." ¹⁶Some of the Pharisees said, "This man is not from God, for he does not observe the sabbath." But others said, "How can a man who is a sinner perform such signs?" And they were divided. ¹⁷So they said again to the blind man, "What do you say about him? It was your eyes he opened." He said, "He is a prophet."

¹⁸The Jews did not believe that he had been blind and had received his sight until they called the parents of the man who had received his sight ¹⁹and asked them, "Is this your son, who you say was born blind? How then does he now see?" ²⁰His parents answered, "We know that this is our son, and that he was born blind; ²¹but we do not know how it is that now he sees, nor do we know who opened his eyes. Ask him; he is of age. He will speak for himself." ²²His parents said this because they were afraid of the Jews; for the Jews had already agreed that anyone who confessed Jesus to be the Messiah would be put out of the synagogue. ²³Therefore his parents said, "He is of age; ask him."

²⁴So for the second time they called the man who had been blind, and they said to him, "Give glory to God! We know that this man is a sinner." ²⁵He answered, "I do not know whether he is a sinner. One thing I do know, that though I was blind, now I see." ²⁶They said to him, "What did he do to you? How did he open your eyes?" ²⁷He answered them, "I have told you already, and you would not listen. Why do you want to hear it again? Do you also want to become his disciples?" ²⁸Then they reviled him, saying, "You are his disciple, but we are disciples of Moses. ²⁹We know that God has spoken to Moses, but as for this man, we do not know where he comes from." ³⁰The man answered, "Here is an astonishing thing! You do not know where he comes from, and yet he opened my eyes. ³¹We know that God does not listen to sinners, but he does listen to one who worships him and obeys his will. ³²Never since the world began has it been heard that anyone opened the eyes of a person born blind. ³³If this man were not from God, he could do nothing." ³⁴They answered him, "You were born entirely in sins, and are you trying to teach us?" And they drove him out.

Pray:

Jesus I am giving myself completely to you in this time of prayer. As I read and pray with you, speak to me. Help me to focus on the words, themes, and thoughts in this Scripture that you want me to wrestle with.

Read:

Read the text through at least five times slowly. Focus on the words. Imagine Jesus is speaking them to you. Other thoughts will try to intrude. Tell them to wait, and come back to the text.

Write:

- What is the word or theme that Jesus seems to be speaking to you? Write it here.
- What do you sense Jesus teaching you to do with the theme he has given to you?

Take Away: Thank Jesus for this moment, and ask Jesus to guide you throughout the day. Take your word or thought, and write it on a note card. Put that card in your pocket, and reflect on it throughout the day.