



Summer Lovin' Devotions

Week Ten

August 13-19, 2017



Sand and Sea

As you begin each day: Take some deep breaths and acknowledge that you are in God's presence. As you read, pay attention not just with your mind, but also with your heart. Are there words or phrases that stick out to you? If yes, take time to consider them. Carry the words with you throughout the day and let God continue to work with you on what has been brought to your attention. If you get distracted as you read, that is okay. Use the distractions as a reminder to thank God for those happy distractions and as a reminder to give to God those troubling distractions.

All scripture is from the New Revised Standard Version unless otherwise noted.

Day 1—Praying on the Beach

3 We came in sight of Cyprus; and leaving it on our left, we sailed to Syria and landed at Tyre, because the ship was to unload its cargo there. 4 We looked up the disciples and stayed there for seven days. Through the Spirit they told Paul not to go on to Jerusalem. 5 When our days there were ended, we left and proceeded on our journey; and all of them, with wives and children, escorted us outside the city. There we knelt down on the beach and prayed 6 and said farewell to one another. Then we went on board the ship, and they returned home. -Acts 21: 3-6

A day at the beach can be lots of fun! Swimming, boating, building sandcastles, picnics, and looking for seashells. There is some preparation that goes into the day, including applying sunscreen, packing lots of water and snacks, and bringing water toys. When a family plans a day at the beach, I suspect that praying is not a part of the beach fun that is planned. Should that be a part of the day?

That is what happened for Paul and his travelers as they were departing from Tyre in the Acts passage above. The friends gathered on the shore, prayed together, and said their goodbyes. How hard would it be for you to pray with one another before setting out for the beach or any other fun family and friend activity? Try praying for one another, for a safe and fun day, and for safe travels. God wants our whole hearts every day. We can best make that happen when we invite God into the activities we do and the places we go. Believe it or not, church and the supper table are not the only places to pray.

Prayer: Almighty and Everlasting God, guide me to go to You in prayer often and in all circumstances. As summer comes to a close, be with me and those dear to me, as we play and travel and enjoy the summer fun yet to come. Amen.

Day 2—Abundance on the Beach

15 The angel of the Lord called to Abraham a second time from heaven, 16 and said, “By myself I have sworn, says the Lord: Because you have done this, and have not withheld your son, your only son, 17 I will indeed bless you, and I will make your offspring as numerous as the stars of heaven and as the sand that is on the seashore. And your offspring shall possess the gate of their enemies, 18 and by your offspring shall all the nations of the earth gain blessing for themselves, because you have obeyed my voice.” Genesis 22: 15-18

One of the hardest passages in the Bible is the one where God asks Abraham to sacrifice his son, Isaac. For those who are parents, this is even more difficult to grasp. At the last minute, however, God stopped Abraham and spared Isaac. It was the faithfulness that Abraham exhibited when he did not “withhold his son,” that God decided to bless Abraham. God promised to bless Abraham and make his “offspring as numerous as the stars of heaven and as the sand that is on the seashore.” If you wonder how abundant sand is, just try getting the grains of sand out of your swimsuit or your shoes after a day at the beach. Sand is too numerous to count, just as the stars are too numerous, as well. We are the offspring of Abraham; we are the descendants whom God promised, “shall all the nations of the earth gain blessing.” There is abundance of sand on the beach, and there is an abundance of blessing that comes from the God of Creation.

How are you blessing others because you have been blessed by God? What are you doing to thank God for the gift of Jesus and the eternal life He offers?

Prayer: God of Faithfulness, thank You for blessing me by sending Your Son Jesus to die for me. Help me to be a blessing to others by sharing Christ with them. Amen.

Day 3—Cherishing Life on the Beach

13 For it was you who formed my inward parts; you knit me together in my mother's womb. 14 I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are your works; that I know very well. 15 My frame was not hidden from you, when I was being made in secret, intricately woven in the depths of the earth. 16 Your eyes beheld my unformed substance. In your book were written all the days that were formed for me, when none of them as yet existed. 17 How weighty to me are your thoughts, O God! How vast is the sum of them! 18 I try to count them—they are more than the sand; I come to the end—I am still with you.
- Psalm 139: 13-18

A favorite activity along the ocean shore is exploring tidal pools. These are the places where the high tide has left water behind in the crevices of the rock. Some tidal pools have water that remains all the time. It is here that life is the most abundant: crabs, starfish, and small fish, to name a few. Many a person have been blessed by picking up a rock and discovering a starfish clinging to the surface beneath. God cherishes the life on the beach that survives in hidden places. So, too, God cherishes our lives. That is why God carefully *“knit me together in my mother's womb.”* To be *“fearfully and wonderfully made”* brings a kind of peace knowing that in this great big world, we are never alone. We are constantly in God's thoughts, so much so that in the words of the Psalmist, *“I try to count them- they are more than sand.”* Each and every one of us matters to God, and there is no place where we can hide from the love and presence of God.

God cares for and cherishes you. What are you doing to care for and cherish yourself? What changes might you make to honor God in the way you care for your own body?

Prayer: God of Life and Love, thank You for creating and cherishing me. Help me to be the best person I can, caring for others and caring for myself. Amen.

Day 4—Teaching on the Beach

1 That same day Jesus went out of the house and sat beside the sea. 2 Such great crowds gathered around him that he got into a boat and sat there, while the whole crowd stood on the beach. 3 And he told them many things in parables, -Matthew 13: 1-3a

Jesus was no stranger to the sea and the beaches around them. Much of Jesus' ministry was near the Sea of Galilee. The scripture in Matthew 13 tells how Jesus, so inundated with people that were eager to learn from Him, had to get into a boat and teach from the water. His teaching even included using the water. Do you remember the story of Jesus calming the storm in Mark 4: 35-41? Jesus was fast asleep in the bow of the boat, and a storm raged around them. With one command, Jesus calmed the waters. Then there was the story of how Jesus turned water into wine at the wedding in Cana in John 2: 1-11. In the midst of the wedding celebration they discovered the wine was all gone. Jesus blessed the water and made the best wine ever, thus saving the reputation of the bridegroom.

Jesus had much to teach about from the shores of the Sea. You will find those teachings in the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John in the Bible. These are not meant to be historical stories of old, but meaningful messages that can guide each of us in our daily living.

What is your favorite Gospel passage? What connects you best with Jesus' teachings?

Prayer: God of the sea, thank You for the life that comes from water. Guide me each day to read Your Word and connect with the message of hope that You offer. Amen.

Day 5—Building on the Beach

24 *“Everyone then who hears these words of mine and acts on them will be like a wise man who built his house on rock. 25 The rain fell, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on rock. 26 And everyone who hears these words of mine and does not act on them will be like a foolish man who built his house on sand. 27 The rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell—and great was its fall!” -Matthew 7: 24-27*

Sand castles....the structures dotting beaches around the world. Primitive ones. Elaborate ones. We come upon them as we walk the shore and are amazed at the details within. Regardless of the design--those created with buckets by children or those sculpted by professionals-- they are not permanent. The tides will sweep in or the rains will fall, and the sand castles will be laid to waste.

Jesus tells a parable about *“a wise man who built his house on rock”* and *“a foolish man who built his house on sand.”* *The one built on the rock was able to withstand the storms, but not so the house built on the sand. This is a parable about where we are called to put our own trust. When we trust in things of this world--the stock market, people who disappoint us, worldly possessions, it is as if we have built our lives on the sand. The tide and the storms will surely come, and when they do, our sandy lives will be laid to waste, just as the sand castles are. Jesus calls us to build our lives on Him. The building materials that will sustain us through the storms are prayer, worship, scripture, and group study with other followers of Christ.*

Where do you put your trust? Can your life withstand the storms that are surely to come?

Prayer: God of Grace, please help me put my trust in You, that way when the storms of life rage around me, I can rest in Your loving arms and know peace. Amen.

Day 6—Praising the Creator of the Beach

¹*O come, let us sing to the Lord; let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation!* ²*Let us come into his presence with thanksgiving; let us make a joyful noise to him with songs of praise!* ³*For the Lord is a great God, and a great King above all gods.* ⁴*In his hand are the depths of the earth; the heights of the mountains are his also.* ⁵*The sea is his, for he made it, and the dry land, which his hands have formed.* ⁶*O come, let us worship and bow down, let us kneel before the Lord, our Maker!* —Psalm 95: 1-6

How often do you pause and praise God for the beauty of creation around you? The imagery of Psalm 95 is a great model for praising God. *“Let us sing to the Lord; let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation!”* Even if you *“Can’t carry a tune in a bucket,”* you can sing God’s praises. After all, it says make *“a joyful noise!”* It doesn’t say sing like an opera star or play like a concert pianist. Simply praise the Lord! *“O come, let us worship and bow down, let us kneel before the Lord, our Maker!”* Next time you are admiring a sunset, marveling at the harvest, holding a tiny baby, playing on the beach, or whatever reminds you of God’s creation, take a moment and praise God. We are each abundantly blessed by God the Creator.

Prayer: God of Creation, thank You for the beauty that surrounds me all the time in the people and the nature among us. Open my eyes so that I notice the beauty in my midst, taking time to praise You for all You have created. Amen.

