

Summer Lovin' Devotions

Week Eleven

August 20-26, 2017

The Joy of Sunshine



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—Lighting the World

¹⁴ “You are the light of the world. A city built on a hill cannot be hid. ¹⁵ No one after lighting a lamp puts it under the bushel basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all in the house. ¹⁶ In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven.

-Matthew 5: 14-16



Matthew is talking to YOU when he writes, ¹⁴ “You are the light of the world.” Because you have chosen to be a follower of Jesus, you are called to shine the light of Christ for others to see. That means that when you leave worship, you continue to practice your faith, not just leave it at the church. Because you are a follower, you are called to speak out against bigotry, hatred, and oppression. Because you are a follower, you are charged with loving those whom others deem unlovable. Because you are a follower of Jesus, others should be able to see Christ’s light in your eyes, in your actions, and in the way that you live your life.

How can you be the light of love for others? What is different about you because you are a follower of Jesus?

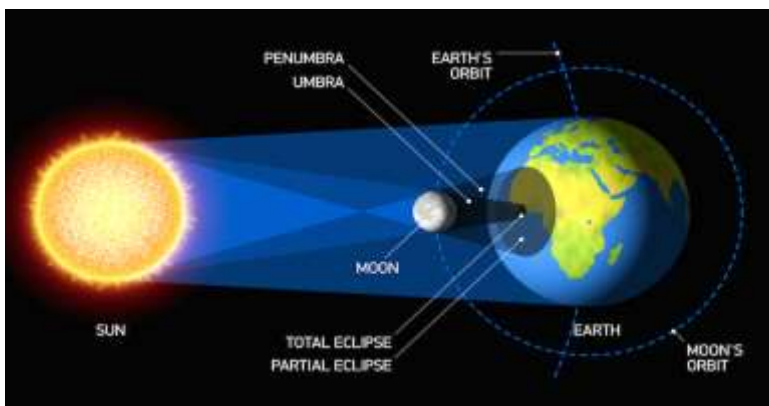
Prayer: Precious Lord, You bring light to the darkness. So, too, help me bring light to others because I follow Jesus. Amen.

Day 2—From the Rising of the Sun

³ What do people gain from all the toil at which they toil under the sun? ⁴ A generation goes, and a generation comes, but the earth remains forever. ⁵ The sun rises and the sun goes down, and hurries to the place where it rises. ⁶ The wind blows to the south, and goes around to the north; round and round goes the wind, and on its circuits the wind returns. -Ecclesiastes 1: 3-6

August 21, 2017 is a special day. Crossing the middle half of the entire length of the United States will be a solar eclipse. In Iowa we are lucky enough to experience an almost total eclipse at about 90% totality. For about an hour and a half, we will be plunged into near darkness as the moon comes between the earth and the sun. The solar eclipse is a rare occurrence because of how small the moon is, how large the sun, and the orbit of all three (including the Earth) at the time of a full moon. In ancient times people believed that God was punishing the world by making it go dark during the day. Of course, now we know that is not the case. Still, the eclipse gives us a reminder of the vastness of the universe. What are you planning to do when the solar eclipse occurs?

Prayer: Thank You God for the power of the universe and the creation that brings amazement all the time. Amen.



Day 3—Made by the Sun

⁸ Then God said to Noah and to his sons with him, ⁹ “As for me, I am establishing my covenant with you and your descendants after you, and every animal of the earth with you, as many as came out of the ark.

¹¹ That never again shall all flesh be cut off by the waters of a flood, and never again shall there be a flood to destroy the earth.” ¹² God said, “This is the sign of the covenant that I make between me and you for all future generations: ¹³ I have set my bow in the clouds, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and the earth. ¹⁴ When I bring clouds over the earth and the bow is seen in the clouds. ¹⁵ When the bow is in the clouds, I will see it and remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is on the earth.” ¹⁷ God said to Noah, “This is the sign of the covenant that I have established between me and all flesh that is on the earth.” - Genesis 9: 8-17

The first covenant God made with people was the rainbow given to Noah after the flood. God made the promise to never flood the whole world and destroy all living creatures ever again. God sent the rainbow to be the visual reminder of the invisible promise.

The science behind the rainbow, according the National Geographic Encyclopedia, is *“a multicolored arc made by light striking water droplets. The most familiar type rainbow is produced when sunlight strikes raindrops in front of a viewer at a precise angle (42 degrees). Rainbows can also be viewed around fog, sea spray, or waterfalls. A rainbow is an optical illusion—it does not actually exist in a specific spot in the sky. The appearance of a rainbow depends on where you're standing and where the sun (or other source of light) is shining. The sun or other source of light is usually behind the person seeing the rainbow.”*

Even knowing the science behind it, the rainbow is a wonder to behold. It is a short and fleeting phenomenon that must be enjoyed at the moment of discovery. Next time you see a rainbow, pause and consider the beauty, and remember that God promises to cherish us always and will never again destroy human kind.



Prayer: God of the Rainbow, Your promises are true. Thank You for caring for me and all of creation.

Day 4—Forgotten Wildflowers

²⁵ And can any of you by worrying add a single hour to your span of life? ²⁶ If then you are not able to do so small a thing as that, why do you worry about the rest? ²⁷ Consider the lilies, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin; yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not clothed like one of these. ²⁸ But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, how much more will he clothe you—you of little faith! ²⁹ And do not keep striving for what you are to eat and what you are to drink, and do not keep worrying. -Luke 12: 25-29

Our lives are constantly in motion, rushing from one thing to the next. If we go, go, go without pausing to take a breath and look around, we miss much of the beauty that is in our midst. Instead of taking the busy highway, turn your car off the beaten path, and see what marvels unfold before you. The road sides are teeming with beautiful wildflowers. Wild roses in pinks, black-eyed Susans in yellow, and purple Astor join the dance in the summer breezes. We miss out on these beautiful flowers when we spend all our time in the well-manicured lawns and on the concrete of our lives.

Don't forget to take time to see the wildflowers. The diversity in nature is the handprint of God on the creation around us. Just as we are to find time for nature, so too, God has time for us. Luke reminds us to stop worrying: *Can any of you by worrying, add a single hour to your span of life? If then you are not able to do so small a thing as that, why do you worry about the rest?* (Vs.25-26) If too much time is spent worrying, then there is little time to really enjoy the simple things of life, such as the wildflowers and people around us.

What is one thing you can do to alleviate some of the worrying in your life? What, instead, can you give attention to that will bring you joy?

Prayer: Lord God, You created the flowers just as You created us. You care deeply for us, so we ask that You will show us how to worry less and to find more joy in our lives. Amen.

Day 5—Lighting My Path

Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path. ¹⁰⁶ *I have sworn an oath and confirmed it, to observe your righteous ordinances.* ¹⁰⁷ *I am severely afflicted; give me life, O LORD, according to your word.* —Psalm 119: 105-107

*Thy word is a lamp
unto my feet,
and a light
unto my path.*
Psalm 119:105

Summer brings with it times for camping and hiking. One essential item for camping is a flashlight or lantern, especially if one is camping in a tent. It can guide you to your sleeping bag and also prevent you from tripping over tree roots and rocks on the path. Lighting the path

of life is what God has provided for us with the teachings in the Bible. But how will you know how to follow God unless you spend time reading and studying the words of the Bible? Within the scriptures of the Old and New Testaments are all that are needed to live life in light and goodness, and to find salvation

and eternal life. But if you don't spend time in study or reading, how will you know what is within the cover of the Holy Bible? As summer winds down, school starts, and the fall kicks off in earnest, please consider joining a Sunday school class or GIG to spend time in study with others. Better yet, start now!

Prayer: Almighty God, thank You for giving me all I need to live a life that is in You. Help me to read Your Word more and more. Amen.



Day 6—Living in the Light

⁵ This is the message we have heard from him and proclaim to you, that God is light and in him there is no darkness at all. ⁶ If we say that we have fellowship with him while we are walking in darkness, we lie and do not do what is true; ⁷ but if we walk in the light as he himself is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin. ⁸ If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. ⁹ If we confess our sins, he who is faithful and just will forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness. ¹⁰ If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.—1 John 1: 5-10

In the department store last week I overheard an adult belittle a child who was looking at toys. The adult wanted to leave but the child was not ready to go. Some angry words were spoken and then a cry came from the child, followed by these words,

“Mommy don’t hurt me.” The hairs on my neck stood up as I looked to the place where the child was, and I stood at the ready to intervene. With a swift tug, the mother was dragging the child out of the store, all the while the child was screaming.

Each of us must decide for ourselves if we will live our lives shrouded in darkness or illuminated in the light . The life of darkness is one that is filled with sin, hatred, and selfishness. It is difficult for Christ’s light to shine for us when anger and violence are the default behavior. The cycle of hate continues from one generation to the next when changes are not made.

Christ is the Light of the world, and those who follow Christ live in the light. The light is a constant place of safety and security if we put our trust in Jesus. Living in the Light means we allow the Holy Spirit to guide our actions and steer us away from violence and hatred. The unrest in our country comes from those who are choosing to live in the darkness, away from the light. Stopping hatred and violence starts with each one of us in our daily interactions with family and friends.

In what ways are you still living in darkness? What changes need to be made in your life to live in the Light?

Prayer: Lord God, there is so much darkness in the world as differences seek to divide people. In my own life, help me to do all I can to break the cycle of darkness and live in the light of Christ. Amen.

